



*Jhelum Post News/Srinagar/April 15, 2015/ Asserting that the Government will take all pre-emptive measures to prevent any future threat from floods, Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today spelt out his broader plan to compensate the victims and restore infrastructure which was devastated when Jhelum burst its banks last year. Mufti Sayeed was speaking at a function at SKICC here today where, in the first phase, he distributed relief cheques amongst 650 uninsured small time traders and shopkeepers of Srinagar*

*district with turnover less than Rs. 5 lakh. The cash assistance, which was also given to destitute, was provided out of the Chief Minister's Relief Fund as a start-up incentive to those who were devastated when Jhelum ran riot and inundated large parts of the Valley from Anantnag to Baramulla districts. Another 1,000 victims of Srinagar district will be provided cash relief once their verification process is completed. Recollecting the horror of colossal floods of 2014 that left J&K grappling with a huge humanitarian crisis, the Chief Minister said the people have gone through very difficult times and restoration of their livelihoods is on top of his agenda. "I cannot rest till I compensate one and all. I have seen destruction and hopelessness surrounding us. Revival of assets and income will help rebuild lives of those who lost everything in floods," he said. Stating that last year's disaster has adversely affected the economic growth of the State, Mufti Sayeed said his Government will go step-by-step in providing relief to the people. To start with, he said all the uninsured traders and shopkeepers whose turnover is up to Rs. 5 lakh will be provided Rs. 1 lakh compensation, while as those whose turnover is less than Rs. 10 lakh will be given cash assistance of Rs. 1.50 lakh by the Government. The uninsured traders whose turnover was more than Rs. 10 lakh, will be given cash assistance of Rs. 2 lakh, he added. "We will also provide Rs. 50,000 each to the destitute. We disbursed relief in Srinagar today. The victims in Anantnag and Pulwama will be provided compensation tomorrow, to be followed by the victims of other districts," the Chief Minister said and added that he has*

*discussed with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the issue of prioritizing the infrastructure restoration in education, health, roads, irrigation and housing sectors. Referring to the massive damage caused when Jhelum went berserk, Mufti Sayeed said the Central Government has promised to rehabilitate and rebuild infrastructure by providing a special financial dispensation. "In my meeting with the Prime Minister, I have been assured of support in rehabilitating the affected populace and rebuilding infrastructure," he said and asserted he will only demand that much of funds from the Centre, which is the actual requirement of the State.□*

*Appreciating the preventive measures taken by the administration in informing the public and thwarting the flood threat due to prolonged periods of rain recently, the Chief Minister said he will seek expertise in designing houses that can withstand the fury of floods. "We will be seeking technical help in developing calamity-resistant prototypes," he stated and added that in future through better coordination of various agencies involved, advance information on threats posed by natural calamities will be made available to the people. Mufti Sayeed said the Government will go whole hog in restoring private infrastructure as well. "The damage to the houses has been unprecedented. Although the previous Government provided compensation to the victims under SDRF norms, we will leave no stone unturned to adequately compensate those whose houses have been fully or partially damaged," he added. Making a specific mention of the dredging of river Jhelum on Sopore-Baramulla stretch that saved it from inundation last year, the Chief Minister said the Government will strengthen river embankments and undertake de-siltation, absence of which was a major catalyst for disaster," he asserted. To keep Valley out of harm's way, Mufti Sayeed said the State Government will pursue with the Centre a Comprehensive Flood Management Programme to save the Valley from future threats when discharge in the rivers breaches the danger level. Describing the last 50 years as difficult for the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Minister said there are ways and means which we have to explore to bring the State out of political uncertainty. "I could have become the Chief Minister two months earlier. I have my goals. Politics is the art of possibilities, managing contradictions," he said while emphasizing to take the peace process forward. Recalling his earlier tenure as Chief Minister, Mufti Sayeed said his Government will facilitate and help initiate a sustained and meaningful dialogue with all internal stakeholders. "In 2002, when I was the Chief Minister, we took several steps that ensured peace on borders from Kargil to Kathua," he added.*

*Describing SAARC as a ladder to initiate a dialogue with all the neighbours for taking peace process forward, Mufti Sayeed said his objective was not to become the Chief Minister but work on a wider canvas to give people an inclusive and accountable government. Referring to the media as an important pillar of the society, the Chief Minister said it has a critical role to play in keeping the Government on its toes. "Media has to oppose and expose. We live in a democratic set up where the Fourth Estate enjoys equal rights," he said. Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister, Dr. Nirmal Singh, said the Government is pledged to compensate the tiny traders and destitute who were ruined in the September deluge. He said the Government is*

*aware about the difficulties being faced by those shopkeepers who saw their assets washed away in last year's floods. "The Government, with help from Central Government, will take all required measures to help the people who are in need," he added. Minister for Law, Justice & Parliamentary Affairs, Relief & Rehabilitation, Basharat Bukhari, Minister for PHE, I&FC, Sukhnandan Kumar and Minister for Public Works, Floriculture, Gardens & Parks, Syed Altaf Bukhari also spoke on the occasion. Minister of State of H&UDD and I&C, Mohammad Ashraf Mir, Minister for Health & Social Welfare, Asiya Naqash, MLAs, MLCs and senior officers of the State administration were also present on the occasion.*