



Ocean of devotion sweeps through Hazratbal on Friday following Eid-e-Milad prayers

Dargah has always been a place of faith and peace, say devotees; IGP Kashmir reviews security



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Aug 28: An ocean of devotion swept through Dargah Hazratbal on Friday as thousands of devotees gathered at the revered shrine for congregational prayers following Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi (SAW), commemorating the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

The shrine, located on the banks of Dal Lake, witnessed a flow of devotees from different parts of Kashmir, who joined

congregational prayers and religious gatherings amid recitations of Durood-o-Azkar.

According to details obtained by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Holy Relic believed to be of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was displayed at the shrine, drawing devotees who offered prayers and sought blessings.

The atmosphere around Hazratbal remained deeply spiritual, with devotees filling the shrine premises and adjoining areas as religious scholars

and preachers spoke about the life, teachings and message of the Prophet, stressing peace, compassion, brotherhood and mutual respect.

National Conference president and former Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah also joined the congregational prayers at Hazratbal along with thousands of devotees. Several Milad gatherings, prayers and religious programmes were also held at mosques and shrines across Srinagar and other parts of the Valley, with men, women and

children participating in large numbers.

Manzoor Ahmed, a devotee from Soura, Srinagar, said Hazratbal has always been a place of faith and peace for him. "Coming here on this blessed occasion gives us a sense of spiritual connection and togetherness," he said.

Shafique Ahmad, another devotee from Habba Kadal, Srinagar, said the gathering reflected the deep faith of people across Kashmir. "The atmosphere is peaceful and spiritual.

People have come from different places to remember the Prophet and seek blessings," he said.

Congregations were also reported from other districts, including Bandipora, Baramulla, Kupwara, Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag, where devotees participated in prayers and Milad programmes. Several areas of Srinagar, including parts of the old city and uptown, also witnessed religious gatherings and processions as people marked the occasion.

IGP Kashmir | [More on P6](#)

MK Sinha takes charge as new J&K CID chief



KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 28: MK Sinha took over the charge as Additional Director General (ADG) of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) from Nitish Kumar, who has been transferred as ADG Armed Police J&K.

According to a statement, issued to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), he held a meeting with senior officers of CID J&K and reviewed the overall functioning of intelligence wing after assuming the charge.

Sinha is an IPS officer of 1996 batch and was functioning as ADG (HQR) PHQ J&K, while Kumar is an IPS officer of 1999 batch and was functioning as ADG CID/Director SIA J&K.

Senior officers of CID J&K welcomed Sinha and assured him full cooperation and commitment in discharging their duties, the statement said.

They also wished a successful tenure for the outgoing ADG Kumar for his new assignment as ADG Armed J&K, it added. (KNO)

14 JKAS officers inducted in Indian Administrative Service

Munir-ul-Islam, Shabnam Kamili, Rajinder Singh Tara, Tariq Ganai, Smitha Sethi in list

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Aug 28: As many as 14 officers from Jammu & Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS) have been inducted in the prestigious Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Department of Personnel & Trainings on Friday notified the list of officers of Jammu & Kashmir inducted into the AGMUT cadre of IAS under promotion quota.

As per the notification, the President has approved the select list of 2019 and 2020.

The 10 officers finding place in 2019 select list include Babila Rakwal (Commissioner Secretary, Science & Technology Department), Shabnam Shah Kamili (Commissioner Secretary, ARI& Trainings

Department), Rachna Sharma (Secretary in Department, Rural Development & Panchayati Raj), Leena Padha (Mission Director, Skill Development Mission), Rajinder Singh Tara (Secretary in the Department, Forest, Environment & Ecology), Tariq Hussain Ganai (Managing Director, J&K Medical Supplies Corporation), Munir-ul-Islam (Secretary in the Department, Information Department), Sajad Hussain Ganai (Mission Director, ICDS), Anoo Malhotra (Director General, Rural Sanitation), and Nitu Gupta (Secretary in the Department, Agriculture Production Department).

According to the notification, four officers have been inducted against vacancies of 2020.

The officers include Prediman Krishan Bhat (Commissioner State Taxes), | [More on P6](#)

Raksha Bandhan celebrated across Kashmir with fervour

Devotees throng temples, offer prayers, exchange greetings

Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Aug 28: Raksha Bandhan was celebrated across Kashmir Valley on Friday, with devotees visiting temples, offering prayers and seeking blessings on the occasion.

The festival, which celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters, was marked by religious ceremonies and family gatherings at various places across the Valley.

At the historic Shankaracharya Temple in Srinagar, devotees turned up in large numbers and were seen standing in long queues to enter the hilltop shrine and offer prayers.

Arun Kumar, a resident of Maharashtra who is visiting Kashmir with his family, told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that they decided to celebrate the



festival by visiting the temple. "Raksha Bandhan is a special occasion for us. We came here to offer prayers and seek

blessings for the happiness, peace and well-being of our families. This is our first Raksha Bandhan in Kashmir, and we

are enjoying it," he said. Another devotee, Amit Singh, said the peaceful atmosphere at the | [More on P6](#)

Army foils infiltration bid in Rajouri



Yogesh

Jammu, Aug 28: Army foiled an infiltration attempt from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu's Rajouri sector on Friday.

A source told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that soldiers noticed suspicious movement of an infiltrator along the LoC this morning. The intruder was challenged. "He opened fired which was retaliated to. The infiltrator is believed to be hiding in the area. Massive operations have been launched to spot the intruder and his accomplices," the source added. | [More on P6](#)

President promulgates regulation for setting up High Court bench in Ladakh

Chief Justice empowered to hold sittings in Ladakh

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Aug 28: Days after the Union Cabinet approved the establishment of a Bench of the in Ladakh, the President of India has promulgated the Union Territory of Ladakh (Sitting of Bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh in Ladakh) Regulation, 2026 to implement the decision.

According to the Regulation, a copy of which is in possession of news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Judges and Division Courts of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh may also sit at such place in the Union Territory of Ladakh as the Chief Justice may, with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, appoint.

The Regulation further provides that the Chief Justice



of the High Court may, at his discretion, order that any case or class of cases arising in the Union Territory of Ladakh shall be heard at Srinagar or Jammu, as the case may be.

It also specifies that the principal seat of the common High Court shall remain at the same place where the principal seat of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh was located prior to the commencement of this Regulation.

The President of India has the power under Article 240 of the Constitution to make regulations for Union Territories that don't have legislatures. Such regulations, | [More on P6](#)

J&K sees above-normal temps, IMD predicts dry weather ahead

Srinagar records maximum of 33.5°C; Jammu settles at 34.6°C
Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Aug 28: Weather remained largely dry across Jammu and Kashmir on Friday, with Srinagar recording a maximum temperature of 33.5 degrees Celsius, 4.2 degrees above normal.

According to the India Meteorological Department data accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News

Observer (KNO) the minimum temperature in Srinagar was recorded at 18.3 degrees Celsius, 1.6 degrees above normal, while no rainfall was recorded in the city during the past 24 hours. Qazigund recorded a maximum temperature of 32.6 degrees Celsius, 5.4 degrees above normal, while Pahalgam recorded 27.3 degrees Celsius, 2.6 degrees above normal. Kupwara recorded a high of 33.5 degrees Celsius, followed by Kokernag at 31 degrees Celsius and Gulmarg at 23.8 degrees Celsius. | [More on P6](#)



Third Vande Bharat on Jammu-Srinagar route soon: MoS Jitendra Singh

'Railways approves Udhampur halt following public demand'

Raja Syed Rather

Jammu, Aug 28: Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh, on Friday said that the third Vande Bharat train between Jammu and Srinagar will be launched soon, terming it a major development for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

In a video message shared by Singh and accessed by the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), he said that the Ministry of Railways has also approved a halt at Udhampur following a demand raised by the public.

He said the approval for the Udhampur halt was particularly significant as it was earlier believed that a stop there would not be feasible. Singh also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Railways and the Railway Minister for the development.

Reflecting on the expansion of the railway network in



Jammu and Kashmir, Singh said that when the Jammu railway station was established in 1972, it took nearly five decades for the railway network to advance further into the region.

He said the expansion gained momentum after Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, with railway connectivity extended to Kathua and subsequently to Udhampur and the Kashmir Valley.

Singh further said that railway connectivity to the

Kashmir Valley was once considered difficult because of the mountainous terrain, but the project was completed despite several challenges.

He also highlighted the construction of the world's highest railway bridge over the Chenab River in Reasi as a major engineering achievement. He said the railway journey has also emerged as an attraction for tourists, with many visitors travelling by train from Jammu to Srinagar to | [More on P6](#)

J&K sets target of 11,000 MW hydropower capacity by 2035

■ CS reviews project-wise milestones



KT News Desk

Srinagar, Aug 28: Jammu & Kashmir is set to witness a major transformation in its power landscape, with the Government charting a comprehensive, time-bound roadmap to raise its operational hydropower generation capacity to 10,969.65 MW by December 2035, more than three times the present installed capacity of 3,540.15 MW.

The ambitious roadmap, aimed at strengthening energy security, reducing dependence on external power and creating the foundation for long-term economic growth, was reviewed in detail during a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo on Friday.

The meeting besides ACS Power was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Law; Secretary, Revenue; MD, JKPCIL; concerned Deputy Commissioners; Heads of Power Projects and Representatives from NHPC along with senior officers from the Power Development Department.

The meeting focused on the physical and financial progress

of major hydropower projects under execution, their construction and commissioning schedules, as well as the milestones required to ensure timely addition of generation capacity over the coming decade.

The Chief Secretary stressed the need for sustained inter-departmental coordination, rigorous project monitoring and timely resolution of bottlenecks to maintain the pace of execution and unlock J&K's considerable hydropower potential.

The ACS, PDD, Ashwani Kumar took this occasion to remark that Jammu & Kashmir has an identified hydropower potential of 14,635 MW, of which around 24.21 per cent has so far been harnessed across the UT, Central Sector and Independent Power Producer (IPP) projects.

He added that Chenab Basin constitutes the largest share of the identified potential with 11,283 MW (77.1%), followed by the Jhelum Basin with 3,084 MW (21.1%) and the Ravi Basin with 500 MW (3.4%). Emphasising that the Department has now put in place a phased capacity-addition strategy to systematically

tap this vast potential and move J&K towards a position of greater energy self-reliance and eventual power surplus.

Giving out the details the Managing Director (MD), Jammu & Kashmir Power Corporation Limited (JKPCL), Rahul Yadav revealed that under the roadmap, the first major capacity additions are targeted by the end of 2026, when 1,636 MW is slated to be added through the commissioning of 1,000 MW Pakal Dul HEP, 624 MW Kiru HEP and 12 MW Karnah HEP, taking the cumulative installed capacity to 5,176.15 MW by December 2027, commissioning of the 37.5 MW Parnai HEP is scheduled to take the cumulative capacity to 5,213.65 MW, he added.

The MD further elucidated that the year 2028 will mark another significant jump, with 1,390 MW targeted through the 540 MW Kwar HEP and 850 MW Ratle HEP, raising the cumulative capacity to 6,630.65 MW.

By December 2029, a further 500 MW is expected from Central Sector projects, including

260 MW Dulhasti Stage-II and 240 MW Uri-I Stage-II, taking the total generation capacity to 7,103.65 MW, Rahul explained.

Moreover it was highlighted that the subsequent phase, covering 2031-2035, will see progressive commissioning of major projects in the pipeline, including 820 MW Kirthai-II, 390 MW Kirthai-I and the 1,856 MW Sawalkote HEP. With these additions, J&K is envisaged to reach an installed hydropower capacity of 10,969.65 MW by December 2035.

Reviewing the progress of projects presently under construction, the Chief Secretary called for close monitoring of construction milestones and coordinated resolution of issues affecting project execution so that the targeted commissioning schedules are adhered to.

He took detailed stock of each undergoing HEP from its Project Head. It was divulged that the 1,000 MW Pakal Dul HEP has achieved 85 per cent physical progress and 77.54 per cent financial progress. Filling of the Concrete Face Rock-Fill Dam (CFRD) has reached 89 per cent, while testing and commissioning

of Units 3 and 4 is scheduled for March 2027, followed by Units 1 and 2 in May/June 2027.

The 624 MW Kiru HEP has recorded 88.75 per cent physical progress and 73.21 per cent financial expenditure. Dam concreting up to the deck slab has reached 98.99 per cent, with final testing and commissioning targeted for March 2027.

The 540 MW Kwar HEP has achieved 37.82 per cent physical and 42.11 per cent financial progress. Excavation of the power house cavern is 99.6 per cent complete, placing the project on course for commissioning by March 2028.

The 850 MW Ratle HEP, meanwhile, has registered 31.53 per cent physical progress, with excavation of its underground power house cavern completed. The revised contractual milestones envisage full commissioning of the project by November 2028.

Among UT-sector projects, the 12 MW Karnah HEP has reached 93 per cent completion and is on track for wet commissioning, while the 37.5 MW Parnai HEP has achieved 72.5 per cent physical progress, with 98 per cent excavation of its Head Race Tunnel (HRT) completed.

The planned expansion is expected to have far-reaching implications for Jammu & Kashmir's development trajectory, providing a stronger and more reliable energy base for industry, infrastructure, tourism, services and emerging economic activities.

The decade-long roadmap thus represents a significant step towards transforming Jammu & Kashmir from a power-constrained economy into a more energy-secure and self-reliant region, with hydropower emerging as a key driver of its future economic growth.

IGP Kashmir reviews security at Hazratbal

■ Says anti-terror operations remain priority



Rehan Qayoom Mir

Srinagar, Aug 28: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir Zone Sujit Kumar on Friday reviewed security arrangements at Hazratbal and other congregation points in Srinagar.

Kumar, who took charge as IGP Kashmir on Thursday evening assured people that the Kashmir Zonal Police remains committed to their safety and security and reiterated that anti-terror operations remain a priority. IGP Kumar after assuming the office, visited areas witnessing large gatherings on the occasion of Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi (SAW).

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of his visit to Hazratbal, the IGP said the police are focused on ensuring peaceful and smooth congregational prayers while maintaining security arrangements across the city.

"I congratulate everyone and want to assure the people that the Zonal Police is always there for you," IGP Kumar said.

He also sought cooperation from the public in maintaining peace and law and order, acknowledging that heightened security arrangements and traffic restrictions could cause inconvenience to commuters, particularly around major religious gatherings.

"Many people are offering prayers today, so we seek your cooperation. We understand

movement is difficult for the public," he said.

The IGP said the police and other security agencies had put in place arrangements to facilitate the large gatherings and ensure the safety of devotees visiting Hazratbal and other religious places. During his visit, Kumar reviewed the security deployment, crowd-management measures and coordination between the police and other security agencies at locations witnessing large congregations.

TACKLING TERRORISM REMAINS FOREMOST PRIORITY

On the ongoing counter-terror operations in Kashmir, the IGP said tackling terrorism remained the foremost priority of the police and that the force would continue its operations against terror networks. "Our operations were the first priority in the past and they remain the first priority today as well," he said.

Pertinently, the visit came as thousands of devotees gathered at Hazratbal and other shrines and mosques across Kashmir for prayers and religious gatherings marking Friday following Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi (SAW), with security and traffic arrangements stepped up at major congregation points.

Police and security personnel were deployed at strategic locations, while arrangements were made to regulate the movement of people and vehicles around areas witnessing heavy footfall—(KNO)

Article 371 will protect Ladakh's unique culture, safeguard its interests: Rijiju

Raja Syed Rather

Leh, Aug 28: Asserting that Article 371 would help protect unique culture of Ladakh and safeguard its interests, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday said that Government of India is committed to providing special provisions to the region.

Addressing a gathering in Leh, Rijiju said, "Union Home Minister Amit Shah has given a commitment to the people of Ladakh regarding special provisions under Article 371."

"This is a very big commitment. Article 371 has special provisions for certain states. The process of providing special provisions for Ladakh, following the announcement by Home Minister Amit Shah and with the blessings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is now taking shape," he said.

Rijiju said the earlier provisions related to autonomous councils did not provide the same level of empowerment, adding that preparations were also underway for the creation of seven districts in Ladakh.



"Earlier, there were only two districts, Leh and Kargil. Now, with seven districts, there will also be seven councils. This is aimed at empowering people at the grassroots level and strengthening democracy," he said.

The Union Minister said, "PM Modi-led government is committed to the development of Ladakh and has assured its people that all necessary facilities, including

road connectivity and telecommunications in border areas, will be provided in a time-bound manner."

"We had said that in your border areas, complete road connectivity, telecommunication and all other facilities will be provided in a time-bound manner, one after another. The work being carried out under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is progressing in this

direction," he said.

Rijiju said the work being undertaken by the Government of India would lay a strong foundation for Ladakh's future, adding that development would continue in a phased manner.

"Everything cannot be done at once. The work will continue, but the commitment of our government towards Ladakh will always remain special," he said.

PM MODI TO VISIT LADAKH
Rijiju said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Ladakh again and would share his thoughts and plans with the people during the visit.

He said the Prime Minister has given special attention to the Himalayan regions, including Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir and the North-east, noting that these regions have distinct geographical and climatic conditions and require special focus from the government.

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NC's position on statehood now no different from BJP's: MP Ruhullah

■ Says resignation will come after accountability

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Aug 28: National Conference (NC) Lok Sabha member Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi on Friday questioned his party's "shift" from its 2024 manifesto promise of restoring Article 370 and 35A to "seeking only" restoration of statehood, saying elected representatives should not adjust their political aspirations to what the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is "willing to concede". He further said that his resignation would come but only after accountability.

In a strongly worded letter addressed to NC president Dr Farooq Abdullah, Ruhullah said he was responding to the party chief's August 25 remarks in which he had said, "How long will you be a slave? You have to stand on your feet sometimes. When will you stand?"

Ruhullah asked: "Why should you object when I ask the very same questions?" He said Abdullah's remarks resonated with the



frustration felt by people in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that while Dr Farooq had criticised people for "begging from Delhi" for Article 370, the current political position of the NC was effectively limited to seeking restoration of statehood.

"We are not even 'begging' for Article 370. We are 'begging' for statehood -- a right the Supreme

Court itself has recognised, and the BJP promised in its 2024 Assembly election manifesto. In other words, the JKNC's position is now no different from that of the BJP's," he said.

The Srinagar MP argued that accepting statehood as the "outer limit" of Jammu and Kashmir's

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MBBS interns across J&K to protest from Aug 31

Demand Rs 30,000 stipend

Jahangeer Ganaie

Srinagar, Aug 28: MBBS interns across Jammu and Kashmir have announced a united protest from August 31, demanding an immediate revision of their monthly internship stipend from the existing Rs 12,300 to Rs 30,000. According to the interns, those participating in the protest will refrain from joining their duties from August 31 until their demand is addressed by the authorities.

The interns said the proposed protest is not confined to any particular medical college but represents a collective demand of MBBS interns

across Jammu and Kashmir. They have appealed to their colleagues to remain united and participate in the agitation peacefully.

The interns maintain that their present stipend does not adequately reflect the nature of their work, clinical responsibilities and the increasing cost of living. "During the compulsory internship, we are routinely posted in emergency departments, wards, operation theatres and other hospital services, where we assist senior doctors and remain involved in patient-care activities," they said.

They argue that despite being an important component of the public healthcare system, their remuneration has remained unchanged at a level they consider inadequate.

Health activist Dr Mohammad Momin Khan questioned the delay

in revising the internship stipend in Jammu and Kashmir, saying that young doctors should receive fair compensation for the responsibilities they shoulder during their internship.

"If Uttar Pradesh can enhance the internship stipend to Rs 30,000, why is Jammu and Kashmir still delaying a fair revision for its medical interns? Our interns deserve dignity, recognition and fair compensation for their contribution to the healthcare system," Dr Khan said.

The demand has received support from resident doctors at several government medical colleges.

The Resident Doctors Association (RDA), GMC Doda, expressed concern over what it termed the persistent delay by the J&K Government in revising the stipend. The



association said medical interns perform demanding duties and the existing remuneration has become inadequate in view of present economic conditions.

RDA GMC Doda urged Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and the Health Minister to intervene and direct the

authorities to revise the stipend without further delay.

Similarly, the Resident Doctors Association of GMC Rajouri extended its support, describing MBBS interns as an integral part of healthcare delivery. "Fair remuneration is not a privilege but a right,"

the association said.

The residents at GMC Srinagar also extended their "full and unwavering support" to MBBS interns and their proposed strike. They said interns currently receive Rs 12,300 and are demanding Rs 30,000, noting that interns work in emergency departments, operation theatres and ICUs, often putting in long hours while shouldering significant clinical responsibilities.

"Interns deserve dignity, justice and recognition," the GMC Srinagar residents said, reiterating their solidarity with the intern doctors.

The interns have reiterated that they are seeking a timely decision from the government and a stipend that would fairly acknowledge their contribution during the compulsory internship period—(KNO)

EDITORIAL

Kashmir's Economy Is Beyond Tourism

For decades, the popular imagination of Kashmir has been shaped by images of renowned tourist destinations. Tourism has dominated the narrative, often leading the outside world to believe that it is the region's only economic lifeline. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has rightly challenged this narrow perception, asserting that Kashmir's economic identity

extends far beyond tourism. The ground reality is that farming, horticulture, and industry contribute a major share to the economy. While tourism is important, it is agriculture and horticulture that feed the region, employ its largest workforce, and sustain its rural heartland. The horticulture sector alone, with its apples, pears, cherries, and walnuts, generates substantial

revenue and supports lakhs of families directly and indirectly. Yet, for too long, this sector has lacked the infrastructure and market access it deserves. The foundation stone laid for the fruit and vegetable mandi at Tangmarg is a welcome step. It addresses a long-pending demand of the area and will provide farmers with a nearby market, reducing post-harvest losses and

improving price realisation. One cannot help but agree with the Chief Minister's criticism of the opposition. If the land was available and the demand was long-standing, why did previous governments fail to act? This is a question of priorities. Development should not depend on who is in power; it should be a continuous process. Kashmir's economic identity is diverse

and robust. Tourism is important, but it is not the only story. The government must continue to invest in agriculture, horticulture, and industry, ensuring that the rural economy is strengthened and that the benefits of development reach every corner of the region. Kashmir's future lies in a balanced and diversified economy, not in a single sector.

Turning The Wheel Of Heritage: Sarnath's Path To The World Heritage List

India's cultural heritage is a living legacy that continues to inspire, educate, and connect people across generations. The inscription of Sarnath reflects the country's sustained commitment to conserving places of exceptional value while strengthening their role in education, cultural exchange, and sustainable development. As India moves forward, protecting its heritage will remain central to preserving its civilisational legacy and sharing it with the world.

Press Information Bureau

India's rich cultural heritage has gained another global recognition with the inscription of the Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath on the UNESCO World Heritage List at the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Busan, South Korea. As the place where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon, Sarnath is one of the four principal Buddhist pilgrimage sites associated with his life. The inscription takes India's tally to 45 UNESCO World Heritage properties, placing the country sixth globally and second in the Asia Pacific region. It also reinforces India's identity as the birthplace of Buddhism and its commitment to preserving heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.

A Milestone for India's Heritage

Heritage is more than a reminder of the past. It shapes the present and guides the future. It reflects the stories, traditions, and values that communities preserve and pass on across generations. Cultural and natural heritage are irreplaceable sources of identity, knowledge and inspiration.

On the evening of 25 July 2026, at the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Busan, South Korea, the Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. With this inscription, India now has 45 World Heritage properties recognised by UNESCO.

This recognition is more than a new entry on the World Heritage List. It celebrates India's rich cultural legacy, shaped by diverse traditions, remarkable architecture and a long history. It also reinforces the spirit of the World Heritage Convention, which seeks to protect places of Outstanding Universal Value for the benefit of present and future generations across 196 States Parties.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, better known as UNESCO, promotes the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage that holds exceptional value for humanity. This commitment is rooted in the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972.

As of July 2026, UNESCO's World Heritage List carried 1,273 properties across 173 countries, comprising 991 cultural, 240 natural and 42 mixed sites. As of October 2024, 196 States Parties have ratified the World Heritage Convention making it one of the most celebrated and acknowledged conventions by any United Nations Agency.

The idea of World Heritage is unique because it extends beyond national boundaries. While these sites remain within the territories of individual countries, their significance belongs to all humanity. They are recognised as a shared legacy that deserves collective care and protection for generations to come.

The Sarnath Story

Sarnath holds a special place in Buddhist tradition. Located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, it is one of the four key sites of Buddhist pilgrimage. The UNESCO World Heritage inscription covers two connected components: the Chaukhandi Stupa and the Archaeological Remains of Sarnath. The archaeological complex includes the Dhamek Stupa, Dharmarajika Stupa, Mulagandhakuti Vihara, the Ashokan Pillar and several other ancient remains. Together, they preserve the historic landscape of this ancient site.

Known in Buddhist tradition as Rishipatana, Ishipatana and Mrigadava, Sarnath is the place where Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon in the 6th century BCE. This sermon, known as Dharmachakra Pravartana or the "Turning of the Wheel of the Law", marked the beginning of the Buddhist Sangha and the establishment of the principles of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Over the centuries, Sarnath developed through royal, monastic and lay patronage. Numerous stupas, temples and viharas were constructed around the place associated with Buddha's first sermon and his meeting with his first five disciples. The

site reflects nearly sixteen centuries of continuous development. Its monuments date from the pre-Mauryan period of the 4th-3rd centuries BCE to the 12th century CE, when Sarnath declined and was destroyed. The site remained obscure until its rediscovery in the 18th century.

The Road to Recognition

Sarnath's journey to World Heritage recognition has been a long and careful process. The ancient site was included in India's Tentative List of World Heritage in 1998. The proposal for its inscription was submitted for consideration by the World Heritage Committee in January 2025. This was followed by an eighteen-month long process involving technical meetings with UNESCO's advisory bodies and an evaluation mission by ICOMOS to review the worthiness of the proposed property. ICOMOS, acting as one of the advisory bodies of UNESCO, provides evaluations of cultural and mixed properties proposed for inscription. The process culminated in the historic decision taken at the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Busan, South Korea.

The Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath was nominated under criteria (iii) and (vi) of the UNESCO World Heritage List. Criterion (iii) recognises Sarnath's enduring spiritual significance as one of the four principal destinations of Buddhist pilgrimage, reflected in the many religious buildings and monuments constructed and rebuilt at the site over the centuries. Criterion (vi) recognises Sarnath's direct and tangible association with events in the life of the Buddha that hold outstanding significance for the Buddhist community, including his first sermon and his meeting with his first disciples after attaining enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya. The numerous structures built at Sarnath

over the centuries reflect the continuing importance of these events, the Buddha's teachings and the concept of Triratna.

The inscription also reflects the wider purpose of the World Heritage Convention. UNESCO seeks to preserve and promote heritage of Outstanding Universal Value for present and future generations.

Sarnath: A Global Legacy of Peace

Sarnath is far more than an archaeological site. It remains a global pilgrimage destination for Buddhists from Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Vietnam, South Korea, Cambodia, Mongolia and many other countries. As one of the world's most revered Buddhist pilgrimage centres, it reinforces India's identity as the birthplace of Buddhism and serves as a bridge for cultural ties and international engagement with Buddhist nations.

With Sarnath's inscription, three of the four principal Buddhist pilgrimage sites associated with the life of the Buddha are now included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. These are Lumbini in Nepal, the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodhi Gaya in Bihar and Sarnath in Uttar Pradesh. They join other important Buddhist World Heritage sites, including Sanchi, Nalanda and Ajanta in India, Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, Paharpur in Bangladesh, and Taxila and Takht-i-Bahi in present-day Pakistan.

The recognition also reaffirms India's commitment to protect Sarnath's Outstanding Universal Value. The Government will manage tourism sustainably and prevent unplanned development within the buffer zone to preserve the site's authenticity and integrity for future generations.

Enabling India's Heritage Success

Behind every successful nomination lies years of institutional groundwork. India's

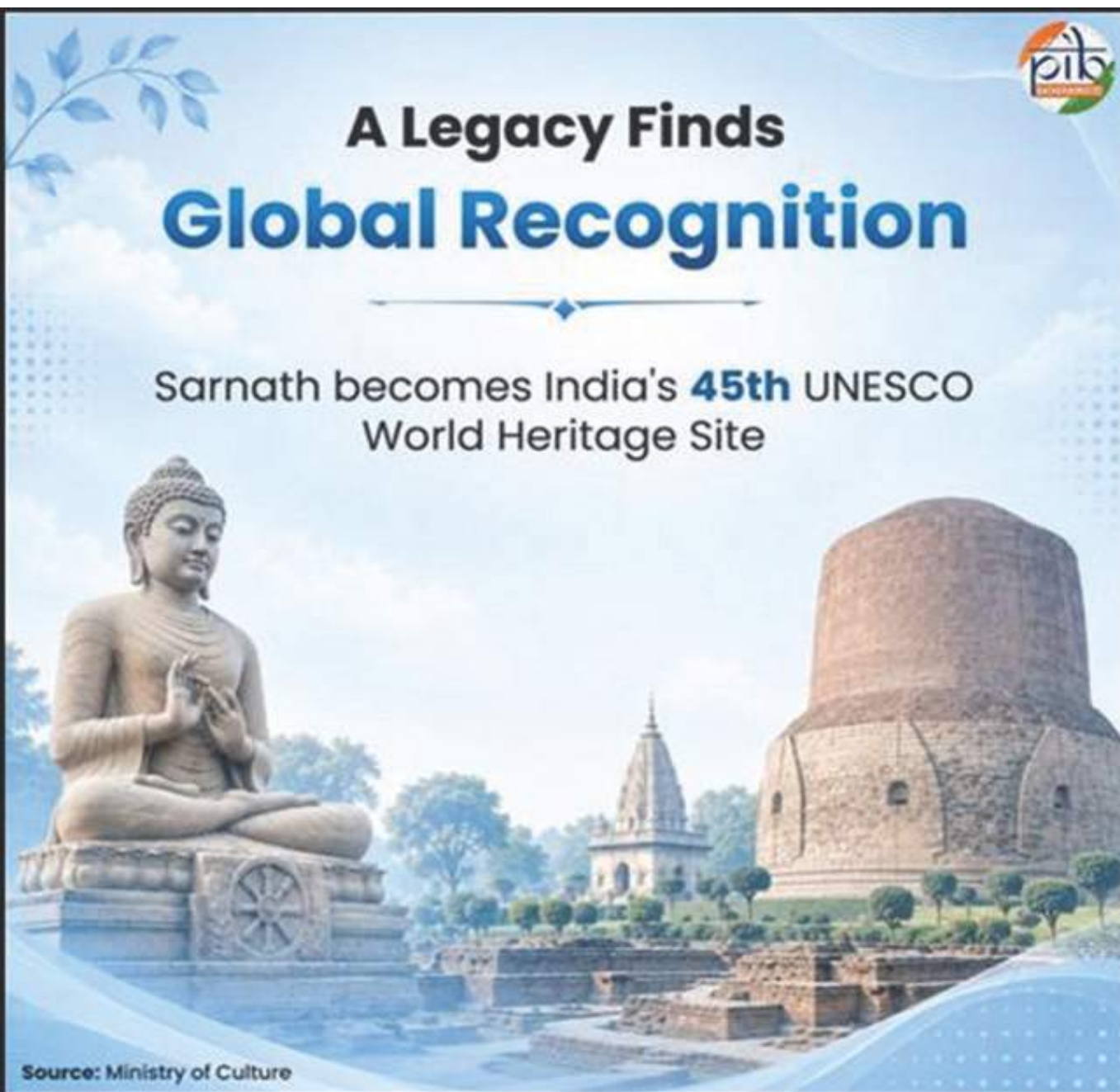
approach to World Heritage properties rests on close coordination between central agencies, State Governments, and international bodies.

The Ministry of Culture leads India's engagement with UNESCO on cultural matters. It implements India's commitments under UNESCO's cultural conventions and coordinates nominations for World Heritage Sites and Intangible Cultural Heritage elements. The Ministry also promotes international heritage protection standards and strengthens cultural diplomacy through UNESCO and international cultural cooperation.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the nodal agency for World Heritage related matters on behalf of the Government of India. It undertakes the conservation and maintenance of 3,688 centrally protected monuments, including 28 World Heritage properties. Its work also includes enforcement of two legislations—the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 and the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972—apart from providing visitor facilities such as drinking water, toilets, pathways and landscaping. Conservation and maintenance are carried out regularly, based on the needs of each monument and the availability of resources.

India's Growing World Heritage List

As of July 2026, India is home to 45 UNESCO World Heritage properties, comprising 37 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed site. This places the country sixth globally and second in the Asia Pacific region. Italy leads the list with 62 sites, followed by China with 61, France with 56, Germany with 55, Spain with 50, and India with 45. Mexico has 36 sites, the United Kingdom has 35, and Russia has 33.



India's first entries came in a single year. Agra Fort, along with the Taj Mahal, Ellora Caves and Ajanta Caves, was inscribed in 1983, opening a list that has since grown to cover forts, temples, caves, railways, stepwells, planned cities and national parks.

Last year, the Maratha Military Landscapes of India were inscribed at the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. With Sarnath's inscription this year at the 48th Session in Busan, India's tally now stands at 45 properties. India's Tentative List has also grown, now standing at 69 properties, the mandatory first step for any future World Heritage nomination.

Government's Initiatives to Promote India's Rich Cultural Heritage

India has taken several meaningful steps to protect, restore, and promote its vast cultural and natural heritage. These initiatives reflect the government's commitment to safeguarding the country's timeless traditions and historical treasures.

Retrieval of Antiquities: India has repatriated 669 antiquities, including 656 since 2014. The effort involves the Ministry of Culture, ASI, Indian Missions and enforcement agencies. Recently, 657 Indian art objects were handed over by US law enforcement agencies to the Embassy of India. Key returns include the Chola-period Shiva Nataraja, Saint Sundarar with Paravai, and Somaskanda.

Adopt a Heritage: Launched in September 2017 and revamped in September 2023, the Adopt a Heritage 2.0 programme creates a framework for collaboration with private companies, public sector units, NGOs, trusts, and societies. It focuses on developing and maintaining visitor-friendly amenities at Protected Monuments of National Importance. As on March 2026, a total of 30 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed under the programme. The programme is already demonstrating visible outcomes in terms of improved site management and enhanced public engagement, reflected in strong visitor participation at adopted monuments, which collectively recorded a total footfall of 13.59 million visitors during FY 2024-25.

Gyan Bharatam Mission: Launched in 2025, the Gyan Bharatam Mission is the government's flagship initiative aimed at preserving, digitising, and disseminating India's vast manuscript heritage. The National Manuscript Survey was also launched in March 2026 for identifying, documenting and creating a comprehensive national database of manuscripts. During the survey, more than 1.19 crore manuscripts have been reported. The total number of digitized manuscripts available across the country is over 8 lakh, out of which more than 4.40 lakh manuscripts are available on the Gyan Bharatam portal at present for public access. The National Archives of India is also digitising archival records through Abhilekh Patal. As of February 2026, the portal hosted 18.23 crore pages, 0.73 crore reference media and 0.38 crore digitised records.

National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities: Implemented under ASI, the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities plays a crucial role in supporting conservation by building a reliable national database of India's built heritage and antiquities. As of March 2026, the Mission has documented 1.84 lakh monuments, including built heritage and sites, and 17.20 lakh antiquities across India.

Preserving the Past, Shaping the Future: India's cultural heritage is a living legacy that continues to inspire, educate, and connect people across generations. The inscription of Sarnath reflects the country's sustained commitment to conserving places of exceptional value while strengthening their role in education, cultural exchange, and sustainable development. As India moves forward, protecting its heritage will remain central to preserving its civilisational legacy and sharing it with the world.

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

Three Ways AI Will Change The Course Of Humanity

AI could drastically reduce healthcare costs, which have been largely immune to past technological advances

Dambisa Moyo

Over the long sweep of history, three forces have driven humanity's greatest transformations, for good and ill: disease, war and economic growth. By reducing costs and increasing the availability and productivity of a vast array of goods and services, artificial intelligence will have a profound impact on all three.

History is littered with plagues and pandemics that altered the trajectory of human population growth. The Black Death, for example, killed between 75 million and 200 million people across Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa between 1346 and 1353.

Thanks to technological advances and medical innovations that helped prolong life expectancy and reduce infant mortality, the global population has grown from 1 billion in 1804 to 2 billion in 1927 to more than 8 billion today. At the same time, however, the advent of effective contraceptives has helped contain population growth.

AI promises to accelerate this progress, improving both the quality and quantity of human life through preventive diagnostics, faster drug discovery and more personalized medical care. In doing so, it could reduce the human and economic costs of noncommunicable diseases like cancer and neurodegenerative brain disorders, including Alzheimer's. It could also enable faster responses to outbreaks of communicable diseases by predicting where viruses are likely to spread and how mutations might unfold. In fact, AI is already being used to combat antimicrobial resistance.

Perhaps most notably, AI could drastically reduce healthcare costs, which have been largely immune to past technological advances. As a 2022 American Enterprise Institute chart showed, US hospital service costs rose more than



those of all other goods and services over the previous quarter-century.

Wars represent the second force that has repeatedly changed the course of human history. An estimated 70 million to 85 million people died during the Second World War, nearly 30 million of them in the Soviet Union. These losses had far-reaching demographic and economic consequences for the USSR, especially since so many of those killed were working-age men. More generally, armed conflicts destroy productive capacity, disrupt everyday life and deter the investments needed to stimulate economic growth.

Technological advances have of course made war far more destructive. The First World War was the first large-scale mechanized conflict involving

mass-produced guns, tanks and aircraft. The Second World War, in turn, catalyzed a massive military-industrial buildup, pulling the US economy out of the Great Depression and fueling decades of post-war growth.

AI is now ushering in a new era of technology-driven conflict as countries increasingly rely on drones and autonomous weapons. In Ukraine, drones account for between 70 percent and 80 percent of battlefield casualties. AI-powered systems are also playing a growing role in the Iran war, from accelerating mine clearing in the Strait of Hormuz to tracking submarines and gathering intelligence.

The third major driver of historical change is economic upheaval. In the aftermath of the First World War,

hyperinflation devastated the German economy, setting the stage for the rise of Nazism. Similarly, the 1929 stock market crash — together with 1930s banking panics and the Dust Bowl — plunged millions of Americans into poverty, with encampments of displaced people ("Hoovervilles") springing up across the US.

But economic transformations can also bring enormous gains, even as they create disruption and despair. The Industrial Revolution unleashed rapid productivity growth, raised living standards, reconfigured societies and propelled human development to new heights.

Much of this was the result of rapid industrialization and mechanization, which continued to redefine the relationship

between capital and labor well into the 20th century, as workers moved from agriculture to manufacturing and then into the services sector. In the US, agriculture's share of employment fell from more than 40 percent at the turn of the 20th century to less than 2 percent today.

Early studies suggest that AI will supercharge productivity, particularly in knowledge-based industries, though evidence of its direct contribution to economic growth remains inconclusive. A 2018 McKinsey Global Institute report estimated that AI could add about \$13 trillion to global gross domestic product by 2030, while a 2023 McKinsey report projected that generative AI could deliver \$2.6 trillion to \$4.4 trillion in economic value annually.

Yet AI's destructive potential is just as great. Warnings of an AI-driven "jobocalypse" have become increasingly common in recent years, with Silicon Valley venture capitalist Vinod Khosla predicting that AI will be capable of performing 80 percent of existing jobs by the early 2030s, rendering traditional employment obsolete.

Whether or not these grim predictions prove accurate, widespread job displacement could upend the structure of economies and societies. It could also greatly expand the role of the state, as governments face growing pressure to provide income support.

To be sure, the AI super-cycle is in its early stages. But even now, it seems inevitable that the technology will radically change how we combat disease, fight wars, foster economic growth and, ultimately, understand what sets humanity apart.

Dambisa Moyo, an international economist, is the author of "Edge of Chaos: Why Democracy Is Failing to Deliver Economic Growth — and How to Fix It" (Basic Books, 2018).

Courtesy: Project Syndicate

How Exercise May Change The Brain's Emotional Networks

Physical activity is often described as medicine for the heart, muscles, and metabolism. Its effects on the brain may prove just as important. A workout may be capable of briefly changing the biological state in which thought and emotion occur.

William A. Haseltine

Exercise changes far more than the muscles and heart. A single bout can sharpen attention, alter stress hormones, and, for many people, improve how they feel. Scientists have known about this emotional lift for years. What remains less clear is what happens inside the brain as mood begins to change.

A recent study from the University Hospital Bonn offers a glimpse into that process. Twenty highly trained young men completed three separate sessions: low-intensity interval exercise, high-intensity interval exercise, and a control session in which they sat quietly on a bicycle. Before and after each session, the participants rated their mood and underwent brain imaging while resting. The results indicated that exercise may help preserve, and perhaps strengthen, communication between brain regions that help balance emotional reactions with inward reflection.

A Noticeable Lift in Mood

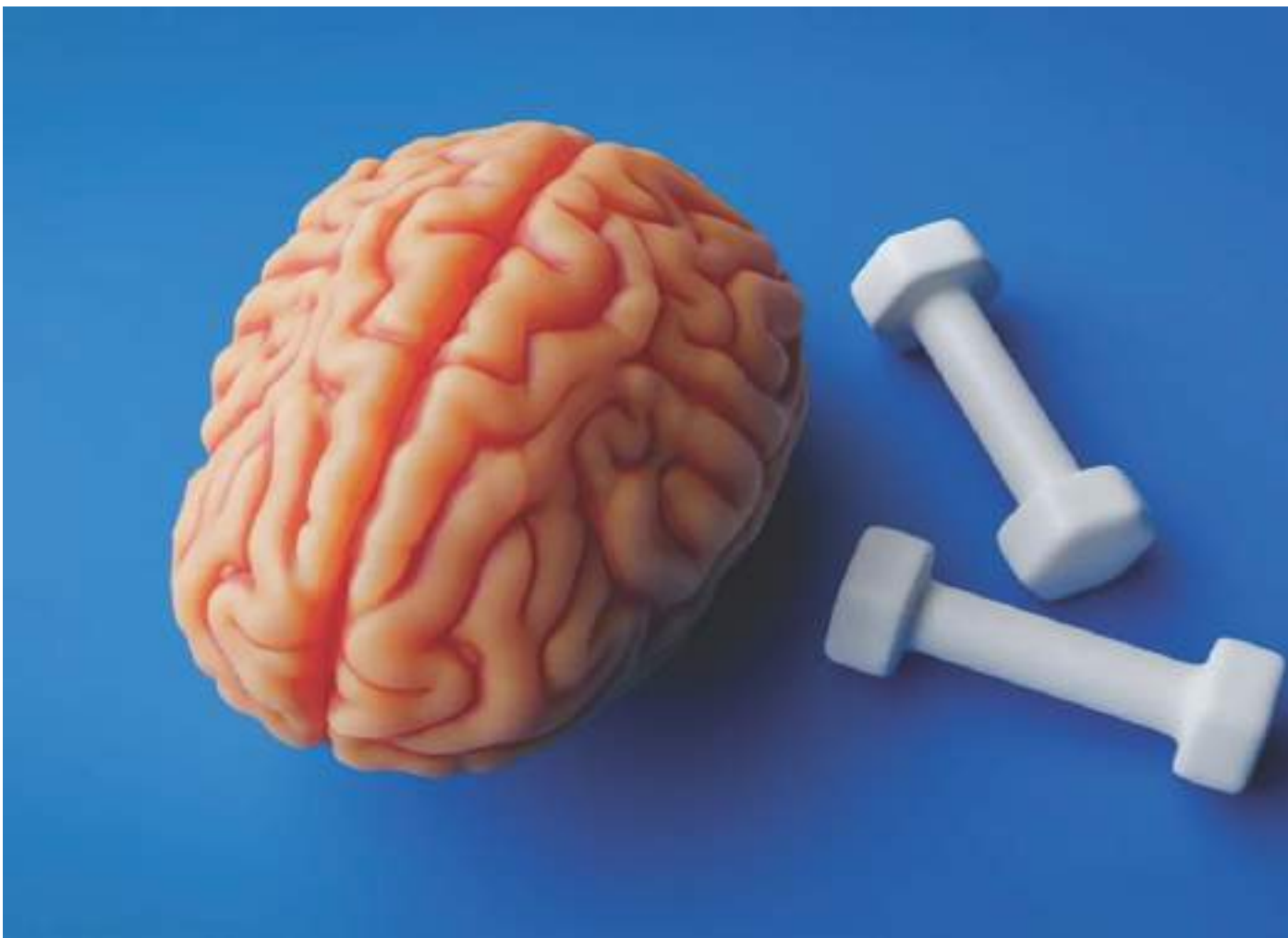
Positive mood rose significantly after both exercise sessions. The improvement was large after low-intensity exercise and similarly large after high-intensity exercise. High-intensity exercise produced a somewhat greater increase, although the difference between the two exercise levels did not reach the study's threshold for statistical certainty. Sitting quietly produced no comparable rise in positive mood.

The picture became more complicated when the participants rated negative feelings. Negative mood actually fell after the resting condition, while neither exercise condition produced a statistically clear decrease. Anxiety also remained largely unchanged across all three conditions.

That may sound surprising, but the participants entered the study with very low levels of depression, anxiety, and negative mood. They were also highly fit. There was therefore relatively little distress for exercise to reduce in the first place. The more interesting question was whether the improvement in positive mood had a visible counterpart inside the brain.

A Conversation Between Two Parts of the Brain

The study focused on the amygdala, a small structure deep within the brain that plays an important role in evaluating emotionally important information. Fear attracts much of



the attention in discussions of the amygdala, but its role extends well beyond fear. It helps the brain decide what matters emotionally.

The team then examined how activity in the amygdala rose and fell alongside activity elsewhere in the brain. At first, the results looked modest. An analysis across the entire brain found no significant exercise-related changes in communication with the amygdala. The study also failed to reproduce some earlier findings involving the insula and temporal regions.

One region, however, stood out. The precuneus lies toward the back of the brain and forms an important part of a network that becomes active when the mind turns inward. It participates in self-reflection, memory, and

the construction of our internal experience. Growing evidence also links it to the way we regulate emotions and direct attention.

Under normal circumstances, activity in the amygdala and precuneus often moves in opposite directions. When activity in one rises, activity in the other tends to fall. Scientists call this an anticorrelation.

During the control condition, this opposing relationship became weaker after participants spent time sitting on the bicycle. Exercise prevented that decline. High-intensity exercise went further, showing a tendency toward an even stronger opposing relationship between the amygdala and precuneus. Three areas within the precuneus showed significant

differences when the high-intensity session was compared with the control condition.

Why the Precuneus Matters

The importance of this finding becomes clearer when viewed through the lens of depression. People with major depression often show abnormal activity in the brain network that includes the precuneus. This network helps generate self-focused thought, and excessive activity within it has been linked to rumination, the repetitive cycle of dwelling on distressing thoughts.

Some studies have also found that the normal opposing relationship between the amygdala and precuneus becomes weaker in depression. In certain patients, the two

regions may even begin moving together instead of in opposition.

High-intensity exercise appeared to reinforce a pattern of brain communication commonly seen in healthy individuals and sometimes disrupted in affective illness. Earlier work from the same group also found that months of repeated aerobic exercise strengthened this same opposing relationship between the amygdala and precuneus.

Exercise for the Brain

Physical activity is often described as medicine for the heart, muscles, and metabolism. Its effects on the brain may prove just as important. A workout may be capable of briefly changing the biological state in which thought and emotion occur.

The next step is not to declare one exercise intensity superior to another. It is to understand which forms of activity produce useful brain changes, how long those changes last, and whether repeated exercise can reshape emotional networks in people who need that help most. If that proves true, exercise may eventually take on an even more precise role in mental health care. It could become one more way to influence the biology of emotional regulation through an intervention that is inexpensive, widely available, and already known to benefit the body.

The most promising lesson from this study is, therefore, not that a hard workout makes us happier. It is that even a single period of physical activity may leave a measurable trace in the networks through which the brain organizes emotion. Understanding that trace may help explain why movement has such a powerful influence on how we feel.

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William A. Haseltine, Ph.D., is known for his pioneering work on cancer, HIV/AIDS, and genomics. He is Chair and President of the global health think tank Access Health International. His recent books include My Lifelong Fight Against Disease.

Courtesy: Psychology Today

President Murmu Paves Way For High Court Bench in Ladakh

Press Trust Of India

Leh: President Droupadi Murmu has issued a regulation that establishes a bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in the Union Territory of Ladakh, paving the way for bringing higher judicial services closer to the people of the region.

The regulation, titled 'The Union Territory of Ladakh (Sitting of the Bench of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in Ladakh) Regulation, 2026,' was promulgated by President Murmu on August 27 and published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary on the same day.

Issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice, the regulation seeks to establish a high court bench in Ladakh and address related matters, fulfilling a long-standing demand from the people of Ladakh for improved access to higher judicial remedies in the geographically remote area.

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena welcomed the promulgation, stating that the notification was issued within seven days of the Union Cabinet's decision. He emphasised that this quick action



demonstrates the Centre's commitment to addressing the aspirations of the people of Ladakh.

On August 20, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal to enable sittings of a high court bench in Ladakh, aiming to make justice more accessible, especially for residents of remote and far-flung areas.

Saxena expressed gratitude to the prime minister and Union Home Minister Amit

Shah for the "historic step" towards bringing the high court closer to the people of Ladakh.

"For a geographically challenging region like Ladakh, access to justice cannot be separated from physical accessibility. This decision will substantially ease the difficulties faced by our people in accessing higher judicial remedies and will strengthen their faith in our justice delivery system," the lieutenant governor said.

Having high court sittings

within Ladakh is expected to decrease the time and expenses incurred by litigants who currently have to travel outside the Union Territory for high court proceedings.

The move will also make the justice delivery system more accessible to ordinary citizens, litigants, advocates and other stakeholders, while facilitating access to constitutional and legal remedies closer to their homes.

Saxena stated that the measure would ensure "easier,

faster and more accessible access to justice" for the people of Ladakh.

According to the regulation, the principal seat of the common High Court will continue to be at the same place where the principal seat of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh was located before the commencement of the regulation.

However, the judges and divisions of the High Court may also hold sittings in other locations within the Union Territory of Ladakh as designated by the Chief Justice, with the approval of the lieutenant governor of Ladakh.

The regulation further provides that the chief justice may, in his discretion, order that any case or class of cases arising in the Union Territory of Ladakh be heard at Srinagar or Jammu, as the case may be.

The regulation extends to the whole of the Union Territory of Ladakh and will come into force on a date to be appointed by the Administrator by notification in the Official Gazette.

The promulgation comes within a week of the Union Cabinet's decision on August 20 to enable sittings of a High Court bench in Ladakh.

Centre Appoints Key Officials in NTA Amid NEET Paper Leak Row

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: The Centre has appointed officials to key posts in the National Testing Agency (NTA), which has been facing flak for issues related to the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) paper leak and other concerns.

Anshuman Sharma, a 2005-batch Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax) officer, was on Friday appointed as Joint Secretary in the NTA for a tenure of five years, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

Sathiya S, Ravi Kumar Singh and Prasanna Venkatesh V have been appointed as directors in the examination body.

Sathiya is an IRS (Income Tax) officer, Singh belongs to the Indian Police Service and Prasanna is an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer.

Amit Samdariya, a 2016-batch Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Indirect Taxes) officer, has been selected for appointment as joint director in the NTA, another order issued on August 27 by the Personnel Ministry said.

The move assumes significance as the Centre has recently announced a comprehensive overhaul of the examination system at the NTA, including implementing a four-tier paper checking process, removing 600 experts, and onboarding domain specialists, among other changes.

The move followed a row over the NEET paper leak, that led to resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as the Education Minister last month.

Pradhan resigned on July 25 amid Cockroach Janta Party-led protests across the country seeking his ouster over the NEET paper leak issue. The 36-day protest had ended with his resignation.

A day after Pradhan's resignation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the constitution of a high-powered task force headed by Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani to recommend reforms to make the exam system leakproof.

The task force on Friday invited suggestions on comprehensive reforms in public examinations, including measures to fix accountability and strengthen institutional arrangements.

ED Arrests 3 More People In Pan-India Digital Arrest Case

Press Trust Of India

Panaji: The Enforcement Directorate arrested three more people as part of its investigation in a money laundering case linked to a pan-India cyber fraud case involving transactions worth Rs 30,000 crore, sources said on Friday.

With this, the total arrests made in the case by the Central agency's Panaji office have risen to five. Two persons from Mumbai were arrested earlier this week.

According to sources, Bhushan Suryakant Moye, Vilas Narayan Pawar and Shailesh Dagdu were taken into custody

on Thursday under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. A special court in Panaji has sent them to ED custody till September 1.

On August 23, the ED arrested Fahim Moin Hussain Sayed and Naim Mueen Sayyed, who remain in its custody.

In a statement, the agency said its probe began after the Goa Police registered an FIR on June 9, 2025. The case pertained to a Goa-based woman, who was allegedly placed under digital arrest by cyber fraudsters and duped into transferring Rs 2.60 crore to some "Secret Supervision Accounts" between May 21 and June 2, 2025.

Digital arrest is a cybercrime in which fraudsters posing as law enforcement officials threaten people through audio or video calls, virtually holding them hostage and pressuring them into transferring money online.

The government had clarified that digital arrest is not legal in India and such crimes should be immediately reported to the national cyber helpline number 1930 or at the web portal cyber-crime.gov.in.

The agency found that the money embezzled from the Goa woman was deposited in 400 bank accounts, withdrawn in

foreign currency through RBI-licensed money changers.

Agency officials had said the money trail in this case led to an "interconnected" network of commodity trading, travel and forex entities, which undertook banking transactions worth more than Rs 27,850 crore and Rs 2,904 crore deposited in cash, including Rs 584.70 crore through 61,448 bulk note acceptance machine transactions across multiple locations in the country.

The bank accounts of these entities have been found linked to as many as 300 cyber fraud complaints and 163 FIRs filed across 20 states and Union

Territories, involving an aggregate reported loss of Rs 417.49 crore, the ED said.

The agency conducted two rounds of searches in Goa and Mumbai in July and the latest on August 21, seizing about Rs 3.25 crore in cash.

The ED probe found that the shell or dummy companies named drivers and employees living in single-room accommodations as their directors, a classic modus operandi in such cases. (AGENCIES)The government had clarified that digital arrest is not legal in India and such crimes should be immediately reported to the national cyber helpline number 1930 or at the

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The agency found that the money embezzled from the Goa woman was deposited in 400 bank accounts, withdrawn in cash and then converted into foreign currency through RBI-licensed money changers.

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CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Ocean of devotion

Zone Sujit Kumar reviewed security arrangements around Hazratbal and other key locations, with police and other security personnel deployed to facilitate the smooth and peaceful movement of devotees.

The district administration had made arrangements for the gathering, including medical facilities near the shrine, while Traffic Police implemented route plans and diversions to regulate vehicular movement in and around Hazratbal.

Many people were also seen enjoying the famous halwa-paratha outside Hazratbal, giving a boost to the business of local vendors. (KNO)

14 JKAS officers

Bhawani Rakwal (Project Director, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan), Smitha Sethi (Managing Director, J&K Housing Board) and Anuradha Gupta (DG, Youth Services & Sports). (KNO)

Raksha Bandhan

shrine made the occasion special. "The atmosphere here is very peaceful. Visiting the temple on Raksha Bandhan and offering prayers gives us a sense of spiritual fulfilment," he said.

Raksha Bandhan is traditionally observed on the full-moon day of the Hindu month of Shraavan, with sisters tying rakhis on their brothers' wrists and praying for their well-being. (KNO)

Army foils

"Searches are underway in the Rumlihdara area of Nowshera and senior officers are monitoring the situation," he said. (KNO)

Third Vande Bharat

experience the scenic beauty along the route. (KNO)

J&K sees

In the Jammu region, Jammu city recorded a maximum temperature of 34.6 degrees Celsius, 1.6 degrees above normal. Katra recorded 32.5 degrees, while Banihal and Batote recorded 30.4 and 28.1 degrees Celsius, respectively.

The IMD forecast mostly fine weather across Jammu and Kashmir on August 29 and 30,

though isolated areas, particularly in the Jammu region, may receive thundershowers.

From August 31 to September 2, there is a possibility of thundershowers at some places in Jammu and Kashmir, but the weather is expected to remain dry for most of the period. No major wet spell is expected, the forecast said.

However, high-intensity showers are possible

at a few places during August 31-September 2, leading to a possibility of flash floods, it said.

Mostly fine weather is expected on September 3 and 4, with isolated thundershowers possible, particularly during the early morning and late afternoon hours. The forecast for these dates remains uncertain and may undergo changes, the IMD said.

The weather advisory also suggested orchard spraying in parts of Kashmir on August 29 and during morning hours on August 30. Spraying has been advised against from August 31 to September 2 due to the possibility of thundershowers.

The weather office advised people, particularly those in vulnerable areas, to remain alert

to the possibility of flash floods during the period of intense showers. (KNO)

President promulgates

once promulgated, carry the force of law, equivalent to an Act of Parliament, and are binding within the respective Union Territory. (KNO)

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ONE SPORT ONE SPIRIT ONE CHAMPIONSHIP ONE LEGACY

PM Jan Dhan Yojana has had unparalleled impact, transformative outcomes: PM Modi

PTI

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), which completed 12 years on Friday, has had an unparalleled impact and transformative outcomes.

Launched by Modi as one of his very first programmes on August 28, 2014, the PMJDY has witnessed a transformation in India's financial landscape, and the scheme has become a torchbearer for financial inclusion worldwide. As the world's largest financial inclusion initiative, PMJDY continues to redefine access to banking for all Indians.

The PMJDY ensures that every unbanked adult has access to a basic bank account with no minimum balance requirement and no maintenance charges. Each account comes with a free RuPay debit card, offering an accident insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh, encouraging digital transactions and financial security.



Account holders are also eligible for an overdraft facility of up to Rs 10,000, providing a safety net during emergencies.

"Unprecedented scale and transformative outcomes! Jan Dhan Yojana has had an unparalleled impact," Modi wrote on X, referring to a post of MyGov

India, the government of India's innovative citizen engagement platform.

MyGov India said in a series of social media posts that there was a time when access to formal banking depended on where someone lives, financial standing or simply

how far the person concerned was from a bank. Today, India's banking landscape tells a different story, with crores of Jan Dhan accounts, wider rural access, greater participation by women and banking reaching the last mile, it said. "A bank account is more

than a number. It is a financial identity. From 14.7 crore Jan Dhan accounts in 2015 to 59 crore in 2026, India has expanded formal banking access at an unprecedented scale, bringing millions into the financial system and enabling greater participation in the formal economy," MyGov India said.

Financial inclusion becomes meaningful when women are part of the journey. Today, nearly 33 crore women hold Jan Dhan accounts, representing 56 per cent of all Jan Dhan account holders. This wider access to formal banking is helping more women participate in the financial system, strengthening household and community-level financial inclusion. With 46 crore Jan Dhan accounts held across rural and semi-urban India, financial inclusion is reaching communities beyond major cities. These represent 78 per cent of all Jan Dhan accounts, reflecting a banking network reaching deeper across India.

PM Modi condoles death of Norway's King Harald V

PTI

New Delhi, Aug 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday condoled the death of Norway's King Harald V and said he was deeply touched by his warmth and profound sense

of service to his nation. King Harald V, who was Europe's oldest monarch, has died. He was 89.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of His Majesty King Harald V of the Kingdom of Norway. I fondly recall meeting His Majesty during my

visit to Norway earlier this year and was deeply touched by his warmth and profound sense of service to his nation. My heartfelt condolences to the Royal Family and the people of Norway," Modi said in a post on X. King Harald V went into exile in the

United States as a child during the Nazi occupation of his homeland. The popular king modernised the royal house but refused to follow in the footsteps of other ageing monarchs who have abdicated in recent times. His son has automatically become King Haakon VIII.

Discussion on Goa anti-conversion bill only in state assembly: Sawant

PTI

Panaji, Aug 28: Amid mounting opposition to the draft anti-religious conversion legislation, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant has said that any discussion on the bill will take place in the state assembly during the monsoon session starting August 31.

The cabinet-approved Goa Prohibition of Unlawful Conversions of Religion Bill, 2026, proposes strict punishment for religious conversion allegedly carried out through force, coercion, undue influence, allurement, fraudulent means or marriage.

The Opposition parties, including Congress and AAP and Independent MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lorencio, have opposed the bill, claiming that it could trigger communal disharmony in the state.

Reacting to the opposition on Thursday, Sawant said, "Let the bill be tabled in the House. We will discuss it there."

The chief minister refused to comment further on this proposed legislation.

The bill will be introduced in the state assembly during the upcoming three-day monsoon session.

Under the bill, offenders may face up to life imprisonment, and it proposes fines of at least Rs 50,000 and compensation of up to Rs 5 lakh to victims.

The proposed legislation also seeks to declare the marriage as "void" if it is found that it was done only for religious conversion.

Offenders, including Hindu priests and Muslim clerics, could face a minimum of 10 years' imprisonment.

Unlawful conversion of a minor, a person with disabilities, a woman, or a member of the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes would attract rigorous imprisonment of 5 to 14 years along with a minimum fine of Rs 1 lakh, it was stated.

Amit Shah celebrates Raksha Bandhan with girls suffering from Type-1 diabetes

PTI

Ahmedabad, Aug 28: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the Centre is providing free insulin for life to all children suffering from Type 1 diabetes, who require insulin injection to battle the condition.

Celebrating Raksha Bandhan with girls from his parliamentary constituency, Gandhinagar, who are suffering from Type-1 diabetes and require insulin injections for life, Shah said the lifelong requirement of such injections places a significant financial burden on their families, which is now being taken care of by the Central government's scheme to provide free insulin for life to all such children.

"In this direction, an integrated system comprising screening, diagnosis, insulin/treatment, monitoring and follow-up has been established to provide insulin lifelong to children suffering from Type-1 diabetes in the Gandhinagar



Lok Sabha constituency," Shah said.

He added that the Centre is providing free insulin for life to all such children under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "This visionary initiative, which even many developed nations are currently striving to implement, is a testament to the Modi government's commitment to the principles of 'service, compassion and security,'" he said.

Shah also extended his best wishes for Raksha Bandhan to all the girls, wishing them good health and a bright future.

According to a government statement, under the leadership of Shah, children aged 0 to 18 years suffering from Type-1 juvenile diabetes in the Gandhinagar parliamentary constituency are receiving the benefits of the Modi government's initiative.

Shah said public service

is not merely a responsibility but the guiding principle of compassionate governance for the Modi government.

"Only when the health of our daughters is secure will the future of the family and society be secure. This initiative to provide free insulin to our daughters on the auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan also symbolises our commitment to their protection and health," Shah said.

India, Kuwait hold inaugural key dialogue in Delhi to bolster defence cooperation



PTI

New Delhi: India and Kuwait on Friday held a key dialogue during which the two sides agreed to bolster bilateral defence cooperation across a wide range of areas, including training, military exercises, industry, and research and development.

The inaugural meeting of the India-Kuwait Joint Defence Committee (JDC) was held in New Delhi.

The first meeting of the JDC marked an important step towards operationalising the objectives outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Cooperation between the two countries, signed during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kuwait in December 2024, the defence ministry said in a statement.

"Both countries agreed to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation across a wide range of areas, including training, military exercises, military medicine, staff talks, defence industry, and research and development (R&D)," it said.

The meeting was co-chaired by joint secretary in the ministry, Amitabh Prasad and Brigadier General Raed Alsakran of the five-member Kuwaiti delegation.

The Indian delegation comprised representatives from the three services, the

Department of Defence Production, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Armed Forces Medical Services and the Ministry of External Affairs.

Ahead of the JDC meeting, Brigadier General Raed Alsakran laid a wreath at the National War Memorial here, and paid homage to the fallen heroes.

The Kuwaiti delegation visited the DPSU Bhawan in New Delhi on the first day of their visit, where discussions were held with representatives of the Indian defence industry on potential areas of mutual cooperation. An industry interaction with the Kuwaiti delegation is also scheduled for the second day of the visit, it said.

India and Kuwait enjoy traditionally warm and friendly relations, rooted in historical ties that have stood the test of time.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1962.

The relationship was upgraded to a Strategic Partnership during the visit of the prime minister to Kuwait in December 2024. Geographic proximity, historical trade links, cultural affinities, and the presence of a large Indian community in Kuwait continue to sustain and nurture the longstanding and multifaceted relationship between the two countries, it said.

Comprehensive set of reforms undertaken to simplify defence export SOP: MoD



PTI

New Delhi, Aug 28: The government on Friday said it has undertaken a comprehensive set of reforms to simplify the defence export standard operating procedure (SOP), under which stakeholder consultation has been "dispensed with" for exports of non-lethal defence items to most destinations, while retaining "appropriate safeguards" for the sensitive countries.

Stakeholder consultation has also been dispensed with for exports of all items for international tenders and exhibitions, enabling Indian companies to showcase their products and pursue international opportunities more expeditiously, the defence ministry said.

The ministry's Department of Defence Production (DDP) has undertaken a "comprehensive set of reforms" to simplify the defence export SOP and the open general export licence (OGEL) framework, in line with Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a reliable, competitive and trusted global defence manufacturing and export partner, while advancing the objectives of Make-in-India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat, it said.

Taken up under the guidance of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, these reforms seek to reduce procedural requirements, facilitate faster access to international markets and enable Indian defence companies to respond more effectively to global business opportunities, while "ensuring that national security considerations remain fully safeguarded", the ministry said in a statement.

On the simplification of the defence export SOP, it said, "Stakeholder consultation has been dispensed with for exports of non-lethal defence items to most destinations, while appropriate safeguards have been retained for the sensitive countries."

High-powered task force invites suggestions on examination reforms

PTI

New Delhi, Aug 28: A high-powered task force, set up by the Centre amid the recent protests by student bodies over paper leak allegations at the Jantar Mantar, on Friday invited public suggestions on comprehensive reforms in public examinations, including measures to fix accountability and strengthen institutional arrangements.

The Centre in July announced the constitution of the six-member high-powered task force (HPTF) chaired by Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani to examine and recommend reforms related to the conduct, security, design and governance of public examinations - particularly those conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

According to a statement issued by the Union Ministry of Personnel, the task force is examining measures to strengthen



institutional systems, ensure examination integrity, deploy appropriate technologies, augment infrastructure, promote accessibility, and safeguard student well-being.

The primary objective is to develop a robust, secure, transparent, equitable and future-ready public examination system, the ministry said in the statement. Seeking to

quell the unrest and incorporate ground-level feedback from the protesting students and academicians alike, the task force said it considers it "extremely useful to benefit from the experience, knowledge and perspectives of all the stakeholders".

Suggestions have been invited from students, parents, teachers, academic institutions, exam-conducting bodies and civil society

organisations.

The key focus areas for public feedback include the conduct and security of examinations, assessment methodology, governance structures, accountability mechanisms, and the prevention, detection and redressal of malpractices.

The task force has also sought inputs on leveraging technology, such as secure computer-based testing, creating inclusive frameworks for diverse socio-economic and regional groups, establishing robust grievance redressal systems, and mitigating student stress throughout the examination cycle. The suggestions may relate to the conduct and security of public examinations, examination design and assessment methodology, governance, accountability and institutional arrangements, and prevention, detection and redressal of examination malpractices, the

statement said.

Use of technology, including secure computer-based testing, creation and augmentation of examination infrastructure, inclusive examination framework for better access across social, economic, regional and linguistic groups, transparency, grievance redressal and stakeholder communication are some of the other areas on which suggestions may be sent.

Besides, suggestions have also been invited on measures to promote student well-being throughout the examination process, and on any other measure that may add value to the examination system, the statement said.

The stakeholders have been requested to submit their suggestions by September 13. Submissions can be made in English, Hindi or regional languages through a designated website, phone, WhatsApp or email.

Holy Relic of Prophet Muhmmad (SAW) displayed at Dargah Hazratbal as devotees pray on Friday following Eid-e-Mila-un-Nabi (SAW)

Pics: Jahangir Shah (KNO/KT)

