

"Perfection is not attainable. But if we chase perfection we can catch excellence."

—Vince Lombardi

IN BRIEF

Rangers hold flag meeting along Border

JAMMU: The Border Security Force (BSF) and Pakistan Rangers on Thursday held a flag meeting along the International Border in the R S Pura sector here, officials said.

The meeting was held near Bulechak Border Outpost at the request of Pakistan Rangers over an incident of firing, the officials said.

They said the BSF clarified that the firing was part of a scheduled training exercise within its area of responsibility. The meeting was conducted in a cordial atmosphere, with both sides reiterating their commitment to maintaining peace and stability along the border, the officials said. They describe the interaction as part of established mechanisms to address operational issues and avoid any misunderstanding.

LA Bulletin: Feb 16 to be Off Day

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly Secretariat on Thursday announced that there will be an Off Day on Monday, February 16, 2026, following a unanimous decision taken by the House.

According to a bulletin issued by the Assembly Secretariat on Thursday, the business that was earmarked for February 16 will now be transacted on Friday, February 20, 2026.

The bulletin, issued under No. LA-1001-36/Legn/2026 and dated February 12, 2026, was signed by Secretary of the Legislative Assembly, Monokum (Manoj Kumar Pandit).

The announcement has been made in pursuance of the decision of the House, the Secretariat said. ▶ P11

BJP files plea to cancel Rahul's membership

NEW DELHI: BJP MP Nishikant Dubey on Thursday said he has given a notice to initiate a 'substantive motion' against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, and demanded that his Lok Sabha membership be cancelled and he be debarred from contesting elections for life.

Speaking to PTI videos in Parliament House complex, Dubey said that in his notice he has stated how the Leader of the Opposition visits foreign countries joining hands with the Soros Foundation, USAID, Ford Foundation and "colludes" with anti-India elements.

A substantive ▶ P11

HC to hear Malik's case next week

SRINAGAR: The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh will hear next week AAP MLA Mehrab Malik's petition challenging his detention under the controversial Public Safety Act.

Justice Mohammad Yousuf Wani heard the arguments of state counsels Sunil Sethi and Monica Kohli on Thursday.

The court listed the case for further hearing on February 19, Advocate Appu Singh Slathia told reporters after the court hearing.

The court had part heard the arguments of the state counsels last week.

Malik, the MLA ▶ P11

India clears 114 Rafale jets in Rs 3.6 Lakh Cr Defence push

Ministry seals deal to procure 8 Dornier aircrafts



NEW DELHI: The defence ministry on Thursday cleared a long-pending proposal to procure 114 Rafale fighter jets under a government-to-government framework with France, nearly 13 years after a similar acquisition was almost firmed up but it could not be sealed.

In total, capital acquisition of military hardware worth Rs 3.60 lakh crore was approved by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, to enhance the combat readiness of defence forces, according to an official readout.

Under the project, 18 aircraft will be supplied by Dassault Aviation, the maker of Rafale, in a fly away condition and the rest will be manufactured in India with over 50 per cent indigenous that will be to be met in phases, sources said.

Though the defence min-

istry did not provide the cost of the procurement, it is expected to be in the range of Rs 2,90 lakh crore to Rs 3.15 lakh crore.

The approval for procurement of the Rafale jets came just four days ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India.

However, a formal contract to seal the deal is unlikely before the end of the year as the defence ministry will now have to carry out negotiations with Dassault Aviation to finalise the cost and finer details of the weapons package.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also have to give a final approval to the acquisition programme.

In April 2019, the Indian Air Force issued an RFI (Request for Information), or initial tender to acquire 114 Multi-Role Fighter ▶ P11

Pahari quota: 2 BJP MLAs stage walkout



EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Two BJP legislators on Thursday staged a walkout from the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in support of extending reservation benefits under the Pahari quota to eligible community members, including Pakistani refugees residing in Jammu and other ▶ P11

in the plains.

Narinder Singh Raina and Arvind Gupta walked out of the House, stating they were not satisfied with the government's response regarding the extension of reservation benefits under the Pahari quota to community members residing in Jammu and other ▶ P11

Speaker assures debate on Social Media smear campaigns Govt has no institutional defence against misinformation: Pathania

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Thursday witnessed uproar over the unchecked spread of misinformation, prompting the Speaker to schedule a special half-hour debate on the absence of a formal institutional mechanism to deal with fake news.

The intervention came after a sharp attack by BJP legislator R. S. Pathania, who accused the Government of failing to put in place a credible regulatory and enforcement structure to counter the

growing influence of misleading digital content.

Raising the issue during

ROPEWAY PROJECT ROW

SMVD Shrine Board needs Rs 3,000 Cr for 'structured rehabilitation' of stakeholders

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Interestingly, to safeguard the Rs 250-crore ropeway project, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) has started deliberations on structured rehabilitation of stakeholders—ponywallas, pithus and palkiwallas, who projected a demand of Rs 20 lakh per head for rehabilitation of the stakeholders in the first round of talks which were held on Thursday.

The Shrine Board would require nearly 3000-crore to rehabilitate the stakeholders amid concerns that the proposed ropeway project along the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi

route in Reasi district might lead to livelihood loss.

Pertinent to mention here that the rehabilitation demands are projected by the stakeholders in compliance with the directives of the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

Talking to The Earth

News, Bhupinder Singh, who led the delegation of the representatives of various stakeholder groups which met the SMVDSB officials on Thursday, informed that above 13,000 stakeholders are

presently associated with the Yatra along the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi track which are likely to be affected with the commencement of the rope-way project.

Singh also informed that a demand of Rs 20 lakh per head along with other issues per projected with the Board officials. He added that the delegation also asked the Shrine Board to rehabilitate nearly 1300 stakeholders too who were allegedly removed by the Board in the last six years on one or other prettexts.

Meanwhile, the Shrine Board is planning a Rs 250-crore ropeway project to connect Tarakote Marg with Sanji Chhat along the 12-kilometre steep track leading to the cave shrine.

The Shrine Board today assured stakeholders that their rehabilitation plan would be finalised through

consultation. The assurance was given during a meeting chaired by Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB and was attended by senior officers of the Board along with a delegation led by Bhupinder Singh and representatives of various stakeholder groups, a spokesperson of the Shrine Board said.

Meanwhile, the meeting was held in pursuance of the decisions taken during the 76th Meeting of the SMVDSB under the Chairmanship of Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor, J&K, in compliance with the directives of the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The ▶ P11

No violation in 133 vehicle purchase: Govt

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday said that it has purchased 133 luxury vehicles in the financial year 2024-25 and maintained that procurement of official vehicles was strictly in accordance with prescribed norms, denying any lack of standardisation in the process.

In a written reply to a question by BJP MLA Ranbir Singh Pathania, Transport Minister Satish Sharma said the State Motor Garages Department purchased 133 luxury vehicles in 2024-25 and 10 in FY 2023-24.

He said there has been no deviation from norms in the procurement of vehicles by various ▶ P11

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'1400 illegal structures demolished'

JAMMU: A total of 1,425 illegal structures, including residential, have been razed across Jammu and Kashmir since the formation of the National Conference-led government in October 2024, the Assembly was informed on Thursday.

The demolished properties included the house of journalist Arfaz Ahmad Daing in Jammu, with the government saying due procedure under the J-K Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1988, and other relevant laws was followed prior to the action. ▶ P11

Govt: Efforts on to bring J-K youth in mainstream

NEW DELHI: The government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is working to bring the youth of Jammu and Kashmir into the national mainstream and prevent them from going on the wrong path, Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje said in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Replying to supplementary questions in the Upper House during the Question Hour, she said there was a time when incidents of stone pelting were commonly seen in Jammu and Kashmir, but the Union Territory is now moving towards creating employment.

"For the first time in the country, in the last seven years, new EPFO subscribers have joined, and in Jammu and Kashmir, 1.6 lakh new subscribers have joined. This is a very big thing in Jammu and Kashmir," she told the house.

"We are working under the leadership of the Prime Minister in bringing people of Jammu and Kashmir into the national mainstream and to ensure that they do not go on the wrong path."

Karandlaje said the people of Jammu and Kashmir are being brought to the national mainstream, and we will continue to do this, whatever the Opposition ▶ P11

House passes grants of PWD, I&C, L&E, SD & Mining Deptts

Committed to create robust road network: Govt

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Legislative Assembly today passed the grants amounting Rs. 5,29,842.67 lakh for Public Works, Rs. 86, 615.70 lakh for Industries and Commerce, Rs. 28, 526.22 lakh for Labour and Employment, Rs. 19,881.72 lakh for Skill Development and Rs. 6,492.81 lakh for Mining Departments through a voice vote.

The grants were passed after daylong debate and discussion by the Members in the House.

Deputy Chief Minister

Surinder Choudhary, who is in charge Minister for these departments, thanked the members for their suggestions and assured that their feedback would be considered for effective project implementation.

The Deputy Chief Minister, in his speech, said the Omar Abdullah led government aims to create a robust road network and connect habitations for enhanced socio-economic growth in the Union Territory. He highlighted that development of quality and extensive road network in Jammu and Kashmir is vital, given the topography ▶ P11

India alone will guide world on right path: LG Sinha attends Dyar Daham event at Mata Bhadrakali temple in Thalwal

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha on Thursday called upon the people to celebrate India's grand renaissance. He said for thousands of years, the sacred land of India has journeyed toward spiritual excellence, with our saints and great souls reaching the pinnacle of consciousness.

"In near future, India alone will guide the world towards the right path. The society, especially the youth should also recognize and harness its spiritual fire

alongside its technological & scientific prowess to surpass other nations in developmental journey," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor was speaking at the Dyar Daham celebrations, part of Ma-

hashivratri Festivities, at Mata Bhadrakali Asthan in Thalwal, Jammu. He paid obeisance to Maa Shakti and Lord Shiva, and offered his prayers for peace and prosperity to bless everyone.

The Lieutenant Governor

observed that India has always placed the pursuit of truth above all else. "Our ancient culture has long championed peace, global brotherhood, the erasure of social divides, mutual love among all, and steadfast adherence to dharma."

In today's world, where nations race ahead with one technological marvel after another, we must connect hearts just as deeply," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that India is sparking two revolutions at once – "The outer one empowers infrastructure, artificial ▶ P11



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