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# Worship of ...

says, the Mother's strength is infinite. The true seeker who worships her with sincerity attains the essence of reality, from which all life's insights flow effortlessly.

I personally hold that Navreh and Navratri mark an inner journey. Over nine days of fasting, prayer, and discipline, Navratri transforms the devotee from within," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that our traditions outline four stages of devotion- attentively hearing the prayer, deeply contemplating it, internalizing it fully, and reaching samadhi, where the knower and the known merge as one. "I pray that all devotees experience these stages in life," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor also encouraged the youth to build a strong and lasting connection with the timeless traditions, rich spiritual heritage and wisdom that remain among our greatest treasures.

"Youth will not merely inherit India's legacy but reshape it and propel it toward a developed, sustainable tomorrow," he further said.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also felicitated Padma Shri Brij Lal Bhat.

K.K Khosa, President, Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Jammu; Deepak Dhar, senior Vice President and other office-bearers of Kashmiri Pandit Sabha and people from different walks of life joined the Navreh celebrations.

Padma Shri Dr SP Varma; Dr Ashok Bhan, Member, Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Brij Mohan Sharma, Principal Secretary Culture; Ashok Koul, BJP General Secretary (Organisation), J&K and Ladakh; senior officials and prominent citizens were also present.

## Choosing noise ...

weight of public trust, constitutional responsibility and national interest. Mehdi using controversy as a political tool is a dangerous trajectory. When controversy becomes habitual, it ceases to be meaningful. It becomes noise.

India today does not lack voices. It lacks restraint. It does not lack opinions. It lacks clarity. And it certainly does not need more provocation disguised as politics. India's democracy is strong enough to accommodate dissent, but it also expects its leaders to rise above rhetoric that divides or diminishes.

Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi must recognise that leadership is not measured by how often one trends on social media but by how responsibly one uses the platform entrusted to them. There is still time to course-correct, to move from rhetoric to reason, from provocation to purpose. Public life is not about how loudly one speaks, but how wisely. It is time for Mehdi to decide which path he wishes to take.

## India must ...

Singh was speaking at the National Defence Industries conclave, which was attended by top executives of leading domestic defence manufacturing firms as well as officials of defence public sector undertakings.

"For India's defence preparedness and strategic autonomy, it is essential that India becomes fully self-reliant in drone manufacturing," he said.

"From the drone's moulds to its software, engines, batteries and everything must be manufactured in India. This is no easy task," he said.

"In most countries where drones are manufactured, a significant number of critical components are currently imported from China," he added.

The defence minister also touched upon growing significance of artificial intelligence, robotics and other new and critical technologies.

"In today's era, innovations such as automation, artificial intelligence, and robotics are transforming manufacturing across the world. Alongside these, simulation technology is also opening up new possibilities," he said.

Singh also called upon the industry leaders to focus on improving quality of their products.

"This self-reliance is necessary not only at the product level but also at the component level. That is, from the drone's mould to the software, engine, and batteries -- all should be made in India," he said.

Singh argued that while the creation of any nation's defence industrial ecosystem relies on the contributions of industries, MSMEs and start-ups, it is equally driven by a clear policy push tailored to meet specific defence requirements.

The defence minister called for active contribution of the private sector and extended the Modi-led government's full support to transform India into a global hub for indigenous drone manufacturing.

Singh also launched the 14th edition of Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC-14) and the fourth edition of ADITI (Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX) challenges.

A total of 107 problem statements, including 82 under DISC-14 and 25 under ADITI Challenges 4.0, from the defence forces, Indian Coast Guard and Defence Space Agency were launched to promote breakthrough innovations in various domains.

A new initiative featuring 101 "innovation challenges" from defence public sector undertakings was also launched by Singh to encourage design-led innovation by MSMEs and start-ups.

## 'Jai Mata Di' ...

loudspeakers, marched along the yatra route towards the shrine for Mata's darshan.

Vibrant lights and elaborate decorations at the hilltop Bhawan and the base camp have added to the spiritual fervour and gaiety of Katra town. The nine-day festival got off to a grand start, with officials expecting a daily footfall of more than 20,000 to 30,000 pilgrims.

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha paid obeisance at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine on the auspicious occasion and prayed for peace, prosperity, happiness and well-being of all, the L-G's office said on X.

A pilgrim from Rajasthan, 90-year-old R K Pawar, said, "I am happy to pay obeisance at the feet of Mata Rani, my sacred practice for the past seven decades. There is a huge rush at the cave shrine on the occasion of Chaitra Navratri."

He said rains cannot deter devotees from paying obeisance to the Mata. "Those who come here for the fulfilment of their wishes never go back empty-handed."

Another pilgrim, Mithlesh Kumar from Uttar Pradesh, said the beauty of Mata's abode is like the paradise that

none wish to abandon. "I have paid obeisance at the lotus feet of Mata. I do not have words to describe the beauty of the Bhawan. Such is the divinity that one wishes to stay here forever."

Sushma Tiwari from Bihar, patiently waiting at the serpentine queue outside the Bhawan, said the arrangements are excellent, with beautiful decorations and lights captivating everyone. "The atmosphere here is divine, as if part of Devlok (realm of Gods)."

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, which manages the yatra, has set up registration counters at the Katra railway station to ease the process for pilgrims in view of the expected influx during Navratri. "All arrangements for smooth yatra have been ensured," the board said.

A comprehensive, multi-layer security arrangement has been implemented involving Central Reserve Police Force, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and Army personnel, with round-the-clock CCTV surveillance via an Integrated Command and Control Centre, they said.

"Police, CRPF and shrine board security personnel have been deployed along the track from Katra to the Bhawan. Elaborate security arrangements have been made following a comprehensive review," police officials said.

In response to the heavy rush, crowd management systems integrated with CCTV and RFID surveillance have been put in place.

Extensive facilities including pony services for the elderly and disabled, sanitation, water, and food services have been prepared for the expected influx of pilgrims, the shrine board said.

The shrine has been adorned with indigenous and exotic flowers, and large pandals have been set up in the Bhawan area for the auspicious occasion, they added.

Meanwhile, in Jammu, long queues were seen at the Mata Kali temple, popularly known as Bawe Wali Mata, located at Bahu Fort. Hundreds of devotees lined up since before dawn to pay obeisance.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary paid obeisance at the temple and greeted people on Navratri. "I extend my greetings to the people on the occasion of Navratri. I wish everyone peace, prosperity and happiness," he said.

## J&K Bank ...

its employees. He also commended the Bank's role in extending modern banking services along the entire pilgrimage route for the convenience of devotees.

Earlier, while welcoming the dignitaries, General Manager Ashok Gupta expressed gratitude to the Shrine Board for its continued patronage and support. He reiterated the Bank's commitment to providing best-in-class services to the Shrine Board, devotees, and the general public.

"Operating at the Bhawan since the constitution of the SMVD Shrine Board, our branch remains dedicated to serving the Board, the establishments at Bhawan, the workforce, and the lakhs of devotees visiting the holy shrine. The Bank has also deployed a dedicated team to assist the Board in managing the cash received as public offerings," he said.

He further added that the Bank has established three branches and installed nine ATMs from Katra to Bhawan, ensuring seamless and accessible banking services for pilgrims. "On special occasions like Navratra, we make additional arrangements such as fresh cash availability and note exchange facilities to enhance convenience for devotees," he added.

Notably, prior to the inauguration on the first day of Navratra, General Manager Ashok Gupta performed pooja at the branch premises along with the Bank staff.

The function concluded with a vote of thanks by Branch head Bhawan Gourav Modi, who expressed gratitude to all the dignitaries and participants.

## RSS needs ...

have 86 'sambhags' (divisions), he said. However, he asserted, the working method of the RSS won't change.

"It will remain the same. That working method is to make friendships and bring in changes by leading by example, which is fundamental," he said.

To a query on how the Sangh grew even in adverse situations, Bhagwat said that publicity may help any organisation to expand, but the lifeblood of the RSS is different. "The Sangh does not grow through such mediums. It grows through its work and the affection amongst its karyakarta," he said.

Regarding the younger generation, Bhagwat said that Gen Z is drawn to honesty and service to the nation, underscoring that the Sangh's ideology is rooted in these values.

Asked whether Gen Z is inclined to attend RSS shakhas and whether the organisation is trying to attract them, Bhagwat said, "They do attend shakhas. Where this is not possible or shakhas are not held, our volunteers reach out to high-rise buildings and gated communities."

Discussions will also be held at Akhil Bharatiya meetings, the RSS' top-level organisational gatherings, on ways to attract Gen Z to shakhas, he said.

About social media, Bhagwat said it is extensively used by people, and there is a need for the RSS to increase "activism" on such platforms for a good cause.

"Memes and reels are already in circulation. Some content is being disseminated through the RSS' communication department, and our volunteers are also using social media. This will gain acceptance. I won't call it an expectation, but we will have to increase our activism there," he said.

He said the RSS' publicity department also holds meetings with media influencers and YouTubers. They are invited, briefed about various topics, and provided with relevant material, he said.

"Social media is an open platform, and therefore, it is important to communicate the right message with clarity and wisdom. Training swayamsevaks and encouraging them to use technology in a positive manner is an ongoing effort," he said.

Bringing people together and transforming society were both necessary and mutually reinforcing, he said. When a committed volunteer is developed, they take up constructive work, which spreads through society and contributes to desired change, said the RSS chief.

To a query about how he feels when, at times, his statements are twisted, Bhagwat said it makes him laugh, and he also feels pity for those doing it.

"This will happen because now people don't have much to say against the RSS. Hence, they do such things and interpret things wrongly," he said.

Bhagwat also spoke about the impression of the RSS among the people in its centenary year. Even those who believe in communism and other ideologies admit that, though they are opposed to the RSS, they accept that it is a good organisation. "Their numbers are large," he said.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari congratulated Tarun Bharat on its 100-year journey.

## Ram Temple ...

for me to touch this holy land." Recalling references from scriptures, she said, "Lord Shri Ram himself had described this place of his birth as superior to heaven. In Ramcharitmanas, Lord Shri Ram tells Sita ji that although everyone has described Vaikunth, I find Avadhपुरi dearer to me."

She emphasised the special place Ayodhya holds in the hearts of devotees: "This city of Ayodhya is most dear to all Ram devotees," she said.

Highlighting the cultural and constitutional significance of Lord Ram's legacy, Murmu said, "The very artistic line drawing of Lord Shri Ram's arrival in Ayodhya with Mata Sita and Lakshman ji after winning the Ram-Ravan war is adorned in the fundamental image of our constitution. This line drawing appears at the beginning of the very important Part 3 of the Fundamental Rights."

She expressed happiness over efforts to spread awareness about this depiction. "I am happy to know that this painting is spreading awareness and knowledge, and connecting the public with constitutional ideals and sacred cultural symbols," she said.

The president extended her festive greetings, saying, "I extend my heartfelt greetings to all Indians and Ram devotees living in India and abroad for the New Year. On Ram Navami, at the end of Navratri, we all celebrate the birth anniversary of Lord Shri Ram. I extend my greetings to everyone on Ram Navami in advance."

## India slams ...

Gulf nations including Qatar's LNG (liquefied natural gas) hub of Ras Laffan. Qatar accounts for nearly 40 per cent of India's LNG requirement.

"India had previously called for the avoidance of targeting civilian infrastructure, including energy infrastructure, across the region," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

"The recent attacks against energy installations in different locations across this region are therefore deeply disturbing and only serve to further destabilise an already uncertain energy scenario for the whole world," he said.

"Such attacks are unacceptable and need to cease," Jaiswal said without naming any country.

The fresh attacks resulted in further spike in energy prices globally with global crude oil prices hitting USD 115 a barrel.

As concerns mounted over the escalating situation in West Asia, PM Modi spoke to Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Jordan King, French President Emmanuel Macron and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

In his conversation with the Omani Sultan, Modi also spoke about the need for free passage through the Strait of Hormuz, a strategically key shipping lane.

"We agreed on the need to prioritize dialogue and diplomacy for de-escalation and subsequent restoration of peace and stability," the prime minister said on social media.

Modi said he also reiterated India's condemnation of the violation of Oman's sovereignty and territorial integrity and appreciated the Gulf nation's efforts to facilitate the safe return of thousands of people, including Indian nationals.

"India and Oman stand for safe and free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz," Modi said.

Oman is among the Gulf nations bearing the brunt of Iranian retaliation following strikes by Israel and the US on Iranian targets.

Following his phone conversation with Macron on the situation in West Asia, Modi said there is an "urgent need for de-escalation, as well as a return to dialogue and diplomacy".

"We look forward to continuing our close coordination to advance peace and stability in the region and beyond," he said.

Macron said India and France are "working closely together to reduce tensions in the region and to keep diplomacy at the heart of our efforts for peace".

After speaking to Ibrahim, Modi said: "We also discussed the deeply concerning situation in West Asia and reaffirmed our shared commitment to de-escalation and the early restoration of peace and stability through dialogue and diplomacy."

On his talks with Jordan King, Modi said India and Jordan stand in support of "unhindered transit of goods and energy".

"We expressed concern at the evolving situation in West Asia and highlighted the need for dialogue and diplomacy for the early restoration of peace, security and stability in the region," Modi said.

"Attacks on energy infrastructure in West Asia are condemnable and can lead to avoidable escalation," he said.

"Deeply appreciated Jordan's efforts in facilitating the safe return of Indians stranded in the region," he added.

As the overall situation deteriorated further in West Asia, several global leaders called for de-escalation of the situation.

"It is time to open a path towards de-escalation in order to restore stability in the Middle East," French President Macron said.

"France calls for the immediate implementation of a moratorium on strikes targeting civilian infrastructure, whether related to water or to energy. Freedom and security of navigation must be restored," he said.

Macron said tempers must cool and hostilities must cease, in order to give a real chance to the prospect of a negotiated solution to the crisis.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz indicated that US President Donald Trump is willing to halt the military action.

After Iran attacked Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG facility, Trump threatened to blow up Iran's largest gas field if Tehran keeps up its attacks on Qatar.

## International cyber ..

incriminating evidence, clearly indicating a highly organised and technologically advanced criminal setup, they added.

According to initial investigations, the accused are part of a larger, well-coordinated cybercrime syndicate with connections extending beyond Jammu and Kashmir, officials stated.

"Part of the network was specifically designed to target victims in countries such as the USA, UK, and Canada, operate through international communication masking technologies, use psychological manipulation and impersonation tactics and launder money through modern digital and cryptocurrency channels," officials informed.

Explaining the technical modus operandi, officials said

the accused had established a covert, unregistered call centre infrastructure using VoIP-based systems, enabling them to generate international virtual numbers, mask their real location using server routing and spoofing techniques, and appear as legitimate service providers to unsuspecting victims.

International calls were being generated and routed through this call centre. A fake YahooMail.com website and Google advertisements were used to target victims, they said.

"Individuals across multiple countries were approached through organised call operations and online phishing ads. Once a victim clicked on the advertisement, a toll-free number appeared on their screen. This toll-free number was operated by the suspects, who then deceived innocent people into providing their banking and other personal details," the officials said.

They added that funds were subsequently transferred into various accounts, including mule accounts and cryptocurrency wallets, primarily USDT.

"The illicit proceeds were further layered, converted, and withdrawn to conceal their origin. Victims were contacted and deceived into believing that their devices or bank accounts were compromised and they needed to pay for technical support or avoid penalties," they said.

The fraudulently obtained money was then transferred through banking channels, digital wallets, and cryptocurrency, routed through mule accounts. It was subsequently converted into USDT and other cryptocurrencies, layered multiple times to evade detection and tracing. Notably, no cash transactions were involved, underscoring the fully digital and sophisticated nature of this crime, officials said.

The transactions carried so far seem to be running in several crores, they added.

A case has been registered under relevant laws, including charges of cheating, criminal conspiracy, and pertinent sections of the Information Technology Act.

"Follow-up raids are being conducted to apprehend additional suspects. Forensic analysis of seized devices is underway, and efforts are ongoing to identify victims and trace financial flows," they said.

Investigations into the wider network, including national and international connections, are continuing, officials noted.

## Domestic LPG ...

Iran. The escalation triggered sweeping retaliation from Tehran, effectively shutting the Strait of Hormuz - a critical shipping corridor used by major Gulf producers such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE to export crude oil, gas and LPG to key markets including India.

The shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz blocked India's access to almost 60 per cent of its LPG, leading to curtailment of supplies to commercial users and triggering panic buying by domestic users, which peaked to 87.7 lakh on March 13.

Bookings have since fallen to 56-57 lakh on March 18, said Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

"Panic booking is coming down," she said, adding that the government continues to prioritise the supply of available LPG to domestic households.

However, "LPG (supply) situation remains worrisome but there is no dry out at any LPG distributor," she said.

Commercial users are getting just a fifth of their requirement.

Sharma said domestic LPG production has increased by over 40 per cent in the last two weeks and the three public sector oil marketing companies have been making normal, pre-war levels of daily deliveries of LPG refills.

"Our supply has not dipped. Some days the supply has been higher (than pre-war times). On March 18, 54.91 lakh LPG cylinders were delivered against a booking of over 56 lakh," she said.

Oil companies are operating extra shifts to keep LPG deliveries in pace with the bookings. They delivered 62.5 lakh cylinders on March 13 and 60 lakh on March 14 - the peak two days of panic bookings.

LPG supplies are under close monitoring amid the prevailing geopolitical tensions, with no dry-outs reported at distributorships and domestic cylinder deliveries continuing uninterrupted, she said.

Online bookings have risen sharply to 94 per cent, while Delivery Authentication Code (a unique OTP that is sent to registered mobile numbers of actual users to ensure LPG is being delivered to correct customers) coverage has expanded to 83 per cent.

In addition, customers near a city gas network are being encouraged to shift to piped natural gas - a convenient alternative to LPG as the fuel continuously travels through pipes to household kitchens without the botheration of refill bookings.

"In the last two weeks, 1.25 lakh new domestic, commercial and industrial connections have been issued," she said.

Raids and inspections to stop black marketing continue with seizure of cylinders as well as FIRs in several states.

The Union government on March 18 wrote to all state governments asking them to take all steps to prevent black marketing and hoarding while taking stringent actions against violators.

Besides, alternate fuels such as kerosene are being promoted, she said adding commercial LPG stocks have been placed with states for using them as per their priority list.

## J&K to ...

dismissed as false a widely circulated notification on social media claiming moon sighting. The Trust said the document was fabricated and urged the public to rely only on official channels, warning of legal action against those responsible for spreading misinformation.

Similar confirmations came from Jamiat-ul-Ulama Isna Asharia Kargil, Majles-e-Ulama Leh, and the Anjuman Moin-ul-Islam Sharia Committee Leh, all of which reported no sighting of the Shawwal crescent and declared that Eid would be observed on Saturday following completion of 30 days of fasting.

Religious authorities across districts also called for restraint in sharing unverified information, stressing the importance of authenticated announcements in matters of religious observance.

With clarity over the date, preparations for Eid have gathered pace across the Valley and Ladakh. Markets in Srinagar, Kargil, and Leh have witnessed increased footfall, with shoppers purchasing essentials, garments, and confectionery ahead of the festival.

Eid prayers are expected to be held at Eidgahs and mosques across the region on Saturday morning, with clerics extending prayers for peace, harmony, and well-being of the people.

The coordinated announcements have ensured uniformity in observance across Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, bringing an end to uncertainty following a day of speculation fuelled by misleading social media posts.