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## PM condemns ...

the envoy said there is a 24/7 helpline for all seafarers, irrespective of nationality, and a quick response team set up by India's Director General of Shipping, apart from a dedicated control room by the Ministry of External Affairs to assist affected seafarers and their families.

Asserting that India has also strengthened maritime monitoring and preparedness measures, including through enhanced information sharing mechanisms, Doraiswami pointed out "with grave concern" the grave risk of marine pollution arising from attacks on commercial vessels in these waters.

He then pushed for the information network architecture and the role of India's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region, which he said, "should be further promoted by its inclusion in the IMO MSC environmental monitoring and coordination with other significant information sharing centres."

IMO's Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) deals with all matters related to maritime safety and maritime security which fall within the scope of IMO. The Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), hosted by the Indian Navy, was established by India in December 2018 to promote collaboration for maritime safety and security. Since its inception, the Centre has established 76 linkages in 28 countries.

Meanwhile, PM Narendra Modi today spoke to King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain and while discussing with him the current situation in West Asia, condemned attacks on the energy and civilian infrastructure in the region.

During his telephonic conversation with the King of Bahrain, the prime minister reiterated the importance of ensuring freedom of navigation and keeping shipping lines open and secure.

"Had a fruitful discussion with the King of Bahrain, His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa. Conveyed warm greetings on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr to him and the people of Bahrain.

"We discussed the current situation in the West Asian region. Condemned attacks on the energy and civilian infrastructure in the region, underscoring their adverse impact on global food, fuel and fertiliser security," Modi said in a post on X.

The prime minister also thanked the king for his continued support for the well-being of the Indian community in Bahrain.

This was the second time Modi spoke to the king of Bahrain since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. The Islamic Republic also retaliated by attacking several of its Gulf neighbours.

The prime minister has also spoken to several other world leaders, including those from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE, France, Malaysia, Israel and Iran since the conflict began.

## 31k Mata ...

the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi temple atop Trikuta hills to pay obeisance and seek the deity's blessings.

The divine vibrations of Vedic chants and rituals at the holy cave are invoking blessings of peace, prosperity, and well-being for all humanity, they said.

The board has implemented comprehensive, multi-layer security involving CRPF, Jammu and Kashmir Police, and Army personnel, with 24/7 CCTV surveillance via an Integrated Command and Control Centre, they said.

"Extensive facilities, including free battery car and pony services for the disabled, 24/7 sanitation, water, and food services, have been prepared for the expected influx of pilgrims," officials said.

The sacred Shat Chandi Maha Yagya has commenced at the revered Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, heralding the auspicious beginning of Chaitra Navratri 2026, officials said.

## LG, Omar...

auspicious occasions of Eid-ul-Fitr and Nauroz.

In his message on these festive occasions, the Chief Minister underscored the spiritual significance of Eid as a divine celebration after a month of fasting, prayers and self-discipline during Ramadan.

He noted that the festival is an occasion to offer gratitude to the Almighty and to celebrate the values of compassion, generosity and unity nurtured during the holy month.

"Eid is a joyous occasion that brings people together to celebrate the blessings of Ramadan. It strengthens the bonds of community and reaffirms the values of mutual respect and brotherhood. It is a time to spread happiness, extend kindness and lend a helping hand to those in need," he said.

The Chief Minister further observed that the festival reflects the rich ethos of communal harmony, shared heritage and cultural inclusivity that defines Jammu and Kashmir, reinforcing the spirit of unity and peace.

On this occasion, he prayed for lasting peace, sustained progress and prosperity for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and conveyed his best wishes to all those celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr worldwide.

CM also extended warm greetings to the people

on the auspicious occasion of Nauroz.

He said that Nauroz festival marks the arrival of spring and the beginning of the Persian New Year, symbolizes renewal, hope, harmony and prayed for peace to prevail in the world.

He said that the festival, celebrated with great enthusiasm in various parts of the region, reflects a rich cultural heritage and the spirit of togetherness.

The Chief Minister prayed for sustained peace, development, and prosperity in Jammu & Kashmir and hoped that the festival would bring joy and positivity to every household.

## New IT rules...

Income Tax Bill to replace the six-decade-old Income Tax Act, 1961. It does not impose any new tax rate and only simplified the language, which was required for understanding the complex Income Tax laws.

The Act has removed redundant provisions and archaic language and reduces the number of Sections from 819 in the Income Tax Act of 1961 to 536 and the number of chapters from 47 to 23.

The number of words had been reduced from 5.12 lakh to 2.6 lakh in the new Income Tax Bill, and for the first time, introduces 39 new tables and 40 new formulas, replacing the dense text of the 1961 law to enhance clarity.

New rules create stricter regulations around capital gains, stock exchange dealings and non-resident taxation while simplifying other disclosure mechanisms.

The notification, introduces more than 150 official forms -- numbered from Form 33 onwards -- covering a wide range of tax-related activities.

Income tax rules retain the proposed framework for house rent allowance (HRA) exemptions applicable to salaried taxpayers.

Under the new rules, eight cities -- Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad, and Bengaluru -- will qualify for a higher exemption limit of 50 per cent of salary, while all other locations will continue at 40 per cent.

At present, salaried employees in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai are allowed to claim HRA exemption of up to 50 per cent of their salary, while those living in other locations are eligible for a lower limit of 40 per cent.

The new rules notified seek disclosure of tenant-landlord relationship for claiming I-T deductions and increased responsibility of auditors and companies for tax credit claims on foreign income.

It also entrusts auditors with greater responsibility for checking PAN duplication and tax liability arising out of adverse audit observation.

It also clarifies how the holding period of assets will be calculated in specific cases to determine whether gains are short-term or long-term.

For converted securities such as shares or debentures, the holding period will include the time for which the original instrument -- like bonds, debentures, or deposit certificates -- was held before conversion.

## Syllabus row:...

chapter on former Pakistan president Muhammad Ali Jinnah included in the revised postgraduate political science syllabus under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The university, however, maintained that the chapter on Jinnah is part of academic curricula in several universities across India and aligns with the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines.

Led by ABVP Jammu and Kashmir secretary Sannak Shrivats, activists assembled on the university campus and raised slogans against the administration, seeking immediate removal of the chapter from the "Modern Indian political thought" module under the paper "Minorities and the Nation".

The protesters also tore posters of Jinnah and warned of intensifying the agitation if the content is not withdrawn.

"Our government should note that the Department of Political Science at Jammu University has released its syllabus for 2026-2028. In it, under 'Modern Indian Political Thought,' certain individuals are being presented as representatives of minorities, including Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. These are the same individuals who played a role in the partition of the country and propounded the Two-Nation Theory. Teaching about them poses a concern," an ABVP leader told reporters.

Shrivats said that academic freedom should not disregard national sentiments and termed the decision "unacceptable" to students.

"If the university administration fails to revoke this inclusion immediately, ABVP will be compelled to launch a strong democratic agitation across Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

He added that if minorities are to be represented in the curriculum, figures who "genuinely worked for minorities" should be included, not those associated with the country's division.

Head of the Political Science Department Baljit Singh Mann defended the syllabus, saying the inclusion of Jinnah and other thinkers is purely academic and consistent with the curricula followed by uni-

versities nationwide as well as the UGC norms.

He said excluding such topics would disadvantage students appearing for the National Eligibility Test (NET).

"In the module, we teach different thinkers of the modern Indian period, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Muhammad Iqbal. We also cover Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, M S Golwalkar, Mahatma Gandhi, B R Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel," Mann said.

He emphasised that the university does not promote any ideology but presents diverse viewpoints to enable critical evaluation.

"Our objective is to present different perspectives so that students can assess the merits and demerits and distinguish between right and wrong. This is an academic exercise, not advocacy," he said.

Mann said that several figures, including Jinnah, Iqbal and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, held nationalist views in their earlier years and understanding the evolution of their ideas is important for historical clarity.

He said the syllabus had been approved by a committee and was not the decision of any individual.

"These thinkers are part of UGC-recommended syllabi and are taught in universities across the country. If we exclude them, our students will be at a disadvantage in competitive examinations," he added, citing examples of universities in Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Kolkata where similar content is taught.

## EC's transfers...

I have always believed to be true - officers don't win elections for political parties, the leaders of political parties do," he added.

After announcing the schedule for the Assembly polls, the EC has ordered several reshuffles of senior officers, including the transfer of Chief Secretary Nandini Chakravorty, Home Secretary Jagdish Prasad Meena, and the removal of Director General of Police (DGP) Peeyush Pandey and Kolkata Police Commissioner Supratim Sarkar.

Polling for the West Bengal Assembly will be held in two phases -- April 23 and April 29 -- with the counting of votes on May 4.

## Weather swing ...

six degrees below the normal of 16 degrees. The maximum temperature on that day was reported to be 3-7 degrees lower than the seasonal average. However, the minimum temperature was approximately two degrees above normal, officials informed.

These lower daytime temperatures mark a departure from the unusually high temperatures seen in the valley in recent weeks. This winter brought a significant rainfall deficit, with Jammu and Kashmir recording its seventh consecutive winter rainfall deficit.

The core winter period from December 2025 to February 2026 ended with a remarkable 65 per cent shortfall from the normal, receiving just 100.6 mm of precipitation compared to the normal of 284.9 mm.

December's actual rainfall was 13.0 mm versus a normal of 59.4 mm, resulting in a departure of 78 per cent. In January, the area received 73.4 mm against a normal of 95.1 mm, reflecting a 23 per cent shortfall.

Although some Western Disturbance activity in January prevented a total collapse of the season's rainfall, overall precipitation remained below normal and could not compensate for December's deficit.

February's actual rainfall was only 14.2 mm compared to a normal of 130.4 mm, leading to an 89 per cent shortfall and unusually warm conditions with temperatures frequently exceeding normal levels by more than 10 degrees.

In the early weeks of March, daytime temperatures also remained several degrees above normal. For the first time in history, the famous ski resort of Gulmarg recorded a high of 17.2 degrees Celsius in the first week of March, which is 13.7 degrees above normal. The all-time high for March at the resort is 18 degrees Celsius.

However, due to the recent wet weather, daytime temperatures have decreased and are currently below normal. Experts believe this weather is better suited for the plants, as the warmer temperatures have led to an early spring bloom in some species.

Sameera Qayoom, an agrometeorologist at the Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), stated, "Wherever there has been no flowering so far, the current weather is favourable. The lower temperatures will delay bud burst and promote more normal flowering."

Qayoom noted that there has not been much flowering or pollination yet, so the rains are unlikely to have a significant negative impact, such as flower drop. "There won't be a huge impact from the rains, but if temperatures continue to decrease, it could delay pollination and harm the flowers," she said.

She emphasised that while this winter has seen abnormal weather patterns, temperatures are expected to stabilise and return to normal.

The warm temperatures this year have accelerated the blooming of tulips, leading to the early opening of the famous Tulip Garden in Kashmir. Qayoom also mentioned that rainfall could extend the lifespan of the tulips as long as temperatures re-

main average.

The Meteorological Department has informed that there is a possibility of intermittent light rain/snow at many places on Friday, but the weather would improve thereafter. It stated that while the weather is likely to stay generally dry from March 21 to 25, there is a chance of a brief spell of rain/snow at a few places on 23.

Between March 26 and 28, there is a possibility of light rain or snow, particularly in higher elevations, and another spell of rain or snow is likely from March 29 to 31, it said.

The MeT Office has advised farmers to resume agricultural activities after Saturday.

## BRO intensifies...

Basohli-Bani-Bhaderwah road, the BRO has intensified the clearance operations, officials said, adding that fresh snowfall took place on Thursday.

Doda district has remained cut off from Kathua for the past two days due to heavy snowfall, with additional deployment of men and machinery to restore traffic, they said.

Another operation is underway to clear a massive landslide at Malai Nallah on the Reasi-Mahore road in Reasi district, they added.

There were multiple landslides on the Reasi-Arnas-Mahore road at Chassana, Malai Nallah and Kansauli, and efforts are being made by the BRO to clear the route, officials said.

## India-China ....

designated banks for currency exchange, the Customs Department and the Dharchula administration to prepare a detailed action plan. This includes arrangements for transit camps, communication, banking services, security and medical facilities for traders.

Border trade with Tibet via the Lipulekh had resumed in 1992 after a long suspension. However, it was halted in 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jeevan Singh Ronkali, president of the Pithoragarh-based Simant Vyapar Sangathan, welcomed this decision. He said the resumption would allow traders to retrieve goods stored in warehouses in Tibet's Taklakot since the 2019 suspension.

## Selfish interests, ...

is gradually moving towards this understanding.

The RSS chief noted that selfish interests and the desire for dominance were the root cause of conflicts in the world, and said lasting peace can only be achieved through unity, discipline and adherence to dharma.

Bhagwat said dharma cannot remain confined to scriptures, but must be reflected in one's conduct.

Discipline and adherence to moral values require sustained practice and often involve personal hardship, he said.

While India believes in humanity, others believe in the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, he said, reiterating that the world needs harmony, not conflict.

Amid the ongoing conflicts, voices emerging from across the world have said that only India can end the wars because it is the country's nature, Bhagwat said.

He said that it is India's responsibility to restore balance in the stumbling world by giving it the foundation of dharma.

"People of India follow the law of humanity, but the rest of the world follows the law of the jungle. It is our job to restore balance in the stumbling world by giving it the foundation of dharma," he said.

## J&K ACB...

Secretary to the Government M Raju said in an order here.

The order was issued on the direction of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha.

The six-member committee will be chaired by the chief executive officer of the Jammu and Kashmir e-governance agency (JaKeGA), while the state informatics officer of the national informatics centre (NIC), J-K, will serve as a member.

According to the order, the assistant inspector general (AIG), administration, at the ACB headquarters will act as the single point of contact (SPOC) for the committee.

The TAC has been tasked with submitting its report to the Information Technology Department within 45 days from the date of issuance of the order, the order said, adding that the member secretary will coordinate meetings and ensure timely appraisal and vetting of documents.

The committee's terms of reference include examining and vetting the detailed project report (DPR) from technical, financial, administrative, legal and operational perspectives. "It will also assess whether the project's objectives, scope, deliverables, timelines and expected outcomes are clearly defined, realistic and aligned with approved policy frameworks," it said.