

"I'd rather regret the things I've done than regret the things I haven't done."
—Lucille Ball

Making the Truth

West Asia conflict: PM Modi interacts with CMs, bats for 'Team India' spirit



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday reviewed with chief ministers of all but poll-bound states their preparedness and plans in the wake of the West Asia conflict.

The virtual meeting was aimed at ensuring synergy of efforts in the spirit of 'Team India', official sources said.

This is the first time that the prime minister held such a meeting with the chief minis-

ters on the West Asia conflict which started on February 28 with the attack by the US-Israel on Iran. Iran also retaliated by firing on its Gulf neighbours and Israel.

Those chief ministers who attended the meeting included N Chandra Babu Naidu (Andhra Pradesh), Yogi Adityanath (Uttar Pradesh), Revanth Reddy (Telangana), Bhagwant Mann (Punjab), Bhupendra Patel (Gujarat),

Omar Abdullah (Jammu and Kashmir), Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu (Himachal Pradesh), Pema Khandu (Arunachal Pradesh) among others.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah were also present in the meeting.

"The prime minister interacted with the chief ministers through video conferencing on the West Asia conflict and reviewed preparedness and

plans of the states. The meeting focused on ensuring synergy of efforts in the spirit of 'Team India', a source said.

The chief ministers of election-bound states were not part of this meeting due to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

The Cabinet Secretariat is going to hold a separate meeting with the chief secretaries of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, West Bengal. **▶ P11**

Petrol, diesel get Excise Duty drop

NEW DELHI: The government cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 per litre each, but retail prices will remain unchanged as refiners offset the reduction against higher input costs.

The reduction averts an increase in petrol and diesel price that had become necessary in view of rise in international oil prices by about 50 per cent in the last one month.

The cut in special additional excise duty on petrol from Rs 13 to Rs 3 per litre and on diesel from Rs 10 to zero will not lead to any change in retail pump prices as the reduction will be offset against fuel losses -- estimated by Oil Minister. **▶ P11**



J-K Assembly adjourned amid chaos over NLU demand, Khamenei death

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir assembly was adjourned for half an hour on Friday as a pandemonium broke out soon after the budget session resumed after a five-week recess.

Members from both the treasury and the opposition benches stood up, raising slogans and disrupting the Question Hour despite Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather repeatedly asking the legisla-

tors to take their seats.

While MLAs of the ruling National Conference, Congress, CPI(M), Independents and the opposition PDP raised slogans against Israel and condemned the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the BJP members held placards to press for a National Law University in Jammu.

As the House began, National Conference MLA and chief party spokesperson

Tanvir Sadiq, donned in a black dress and headgear, displayed a picture of Khamenei.

CPI(M) MLA M Y Tarigami demanded that the assembly condemn the Israel-US aggression on Iran.

They were joined by members from parties other than the BJP, with some of them wearing black bands on their arms and foreheads.

The NLU MLAs were also on their feet, demanding a National Law **▶ P11**

7 killed in avalanches on Srg-Leh NH

SRINAGAR: At least seven people were killed and several others were injured after multiple avalanches hit the Srinagar-Leh national highway on Friday, officials said.

The avalanches hit the stretch between Zero Point and Minimarg in the afternoon, leaving several vehicles trapped under the debris, they said.

The officials said a rescue operation was immediately launched after the incident and efforts were on to clear the snow and rescue the trapped. Jammu and **▶ P11**

West Asia crisis: Sinha hails Modi's decision to cut Excise Duty on fuel



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday hailed the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his historic decision to insulate households from supply disrup-

tions triggered by the West Asia crisis. In a post on X, the Lieutenant Governor has said:

"Prioritizing citizen welfare, Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji has taken historic decision to insulate households from supply dis-

ruptions triggered by West Asia crisis. The measures reflect his commitment to protect the standard of living for ordinary Indians.

Central excise duty slashed by Rs. 10 per litre on both petrol and diesel, shielding consumers **▶ P11**

CM says Iran war 'unjust & illegal', asks PM to mediate

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday condemned the "unjust and illegal war imposed on Iran" and requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to use his influence to end the war in the interest of humanity.

He made the statement in the Legislative Assembly as the Leader of the House after several National Conference MLAs pressed for it, even as BJP legislators maintained that the Iran crisis is an international issue and does not fall in the domain of the House.

"On behalf of myself and my colleagues, I strongly condemn this unjust and illegal war imposed on



Iran. I express my deepest condolences over the loss of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his associates and

all those who have lost their lives in this conflict," the chief minister said.

"I also make a sincere appeal to our prime minister to use all available diplomatic channels and relationships to help end this war at the earliest. This will benefit not just us, but humanity as a whole," Abdullah said.

The Jammu and Kashmir assembly witnessed chaotic scenes on Friday soon after the second leg of the budget session began after a five-week recess, with the National Conference, CPI(M), Congress, PDP and Independent MLAs raising slogans in support of Iran and the BJP legislators demanding a National Law University in Jammu. **▶ P11**

CJI to interact with troops on first-ever Ladakh tour



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

LEH: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant arrived in Ladakh on Friday on an official visit, marking the first-ever tour of

and travel to forward areas to interact with troops guarding the country's borders, they said.

On his arrival in Leh, the CJI was accorded a warm reception by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, and the Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice Arun Palli, along with other judges of the high court.

The reception was also attended by senior dignitaries, including Ladakh Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra, Director General of Police Mukesh Singh, General Officer Commanding 14 Corps Lt General Hitesh Bhalla, and **▶ P11**

the Union Territory by a sitting CJI, officials said.

According to the itinerary, Justice Kant is scheduled to inaugurate district court buildings in Leh and Kargil,

Assembly passes 3 Appropriation Bills; forms panels

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Friday passed a motion to constitute three key House committees.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had moved a motion to elect 11 members each to the Committee on Public Accounts, Committee on Estimates, and the Committee on Public Undertakings, in accordance with Rules 344, 346 and 349 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the J-K Legislative Assembly, respectively.

The tenure of these committees will extend up to March 31, 2027.

The motion was subsequently put to a vote by Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, which the House passed through a voice vote.

The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly today also passed three **▶ P11**

BJP youth wing holds rally to project demand for National Law University



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Members of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), joined by several BJP

MLAs, took out a rally in Jammu demanding a National Law University (NLU) in the region but were stopped by police from marching to the Civil Secretariat at

the assembly.

The BJP and its youth wing BJYM have been accusing the ruling National Conference government of "dividing the Union territory on religious and regional lines" by announcing an NLU for Kashmir while denying one to Jammu.

The march was taken through the city under a 'Secretariat Chalo' call, and slogans such as 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', 'NLU for Jammu', and 'NC (National Conference) hai hai' were raised.

BJP MLAs Sham Lal Sharma, Yudhvir Sethi, Arvind Gupta, Vikram Randhawa, Sunil Bhardwaj, Shagun Parihar and Divyani Rana among others joined the rally and sat on a dharna. **▶ P11**

J-K aims to triple installed hydropower capacity to 11,000 MW by 2035: Omar

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday said the Union Territory possesses an estimated hydropower potential of about 18,000 MW, of which nearly 15,000 MW has been identified, and that it is on a fast track to triple its installed capacity to around 11,000 MW by 2035.

Replying to a question of MLA Javid Iqbal in Jammu and Kashmir assembly on Friday, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said: "J&K has an estimated hydropower potential of around 18,000 MW out of which around 15,000 MW has been identified".

He said that the 3,540.15 MW --

about 24 per cent of the identified potential -- has been harnessed so far. "This includes 13 projects with an aggregate capacity of 1,197.4 MW in the UT sector, six projects totaling 2,250 MW in the Central sector, and 12 projects with a combined capacity of 92.75 MW in the Independent Power Producer (IPP) or private sector", he said.

Chief Minister said that a comprehensive roadmap for the next decade has been drawn and is under implementation, and the UT is on a fast track to triple its installed hydropower capacity by 2035.

"The roadmap includes 3,063.5 MW from six under-construction hydroelectric projects and 4,507

MW from eight projects in the tendering, award, DPR or clearance stages. An additional 100-150 MW is expected to come from **▶ P11**

CM tables PDCL's ARs

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday laid on the Table of the House copies of Annual Reports of Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Corporation Limited (JKPDCL) for the year 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Speaker calls for law to combat Fake News

'Govt to ensure corrective measures'

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Speaker of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (JKLA), Advocate Abdul Rahim Rather on Thursday emphasized on the urgent need for framing a comprehensive legal framework to effectively tackle the growing challenge of fake news and misinformation across Jammu and Kashmir.

The Speaker made these remarks while speaking during Short Duration Discussion held in the Legislative Assembly on measures to address the spread of fake news and misinformation in Jammu & Kashmir. Highlighting the serious impli-



cations of misinformation on public trust and social harmony, Advocate Rather underscored that any proposed legislation must be carefully designed to ensure both **▶ P11**

DAC clears Rs 2.38L Cr defence procurement

NEW DELHI: In a major defence acquisition push, India on Friday cleared procurement of a fresh batch of five S-400 missile systems from Russia and 60 medium transport aircraft as well as a few other military platforms at a total cost of Rs 2.38 lakh crore to boost combat prowess of the defence forces.

The procurement proposals were approved by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the defence ministry's highest decision-making body on military procurement. It was chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh. While the defence ministry confirmed that the DAC cleared the procurement of S-400 missile systems and military transport aircraft, it did not specify the exact quantities. However, authoritative sources said the approval covers five S-400 units and 60 transport aircraft.

The IAF is procuring the military transport aircraft to replace its aging fleet of Soviet-era AN-32 and IL-76 planes. The top contenders for the multi-billion deal are Lockheed Martin's C-130 J Super Hercules, **▶ P11**