



# The Earth News

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## ‘Need to reposition Jammu around its heritage, history’ Value over volume, J&K plans to develop 9 new tourism destn: CM

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

**JAMMU:** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said his government is planning to develop nine new tourism destinations across the Union Territory, expressing hope that the World Bank will put aside its “traditional sort of reluctance” to fund any project in J&K.

He also asserted that Jammu’s positioning in tourism sector needs to be built around its heritage, around its history, around the religious side of it and the border part of it, while saying that the government plans to push for ensuring pilgrimage sites and des-



tinations other than Mata Vaishno Devi shrine gets atleast 10-15 lakh footfalls.

Seeking support of tourism players in promoting the industry in the UT, Abdullah highlighted the

challenges posed by “ridiculous prices” of air tickets to and fro Kashmir and hoped for a relief by the inauguration of direct train by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in ▶ **P11**

### MEA urged to help remove negative travel advisories

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said the Ministry of External Affairs should influence western countries to withdraw advisories asking their citizens not to visit Jammu and Kashmir, saying it will be the biggest proof that the situation has changed for better in the region.

He said his government would be working with the Centre, particularly the MEA, to focus on those countries that have

“very firm” travel advisories.

Attending a tourism event in the national capital, Abdullah, who also holds the Tourism portfolio in the Union territory government, said he is increasingly of the view that J-K needs to be repositioned, not as a destination for “volume tourism”, but one for “value tourism”.

“First, we will review the tourism policy in light of whatever has ▶ **P11**



### Manufacturing ecosystem growing, J&K on path to Aatmanirbhar UT: LG

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

**JAMMU:** The manufacturing ecosystem in Jammu and Kashmir is growing, and today’s project dedicated to industrial development will give momentum to the mission of an “Aatmanirbhar Union Territory”, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Monday.

Inaugurating a manufacturing unit of a private company in Kathua district, the LG said the progressive industrial policy and several key interventions in the last few years have strengthened investors’ confidence in J&K.

Sinha, who virtually inaugurated the manufacturing unit of Superior Polymer India Pvt Ltd in

Kathua district, said, “UT’s manufacturing ecosystem is growing, and today’s project dedicated to industrial development will give momentum to the mission of Aatmanirbhar J&K.”

He said the commencement of this greenfield project is an important milestone, promising a positive impact on the local economy and employment generation, and a significant push to the industrial development of the region.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, the administration is committed to the advancement of the industrial sector in

Jammu and Kashmir.

“We have ensured a workforce prepared for industrial jobs. We have empowered marginalised sections of society to broaden the skilled workforce. Our handloom and handicraft exports surged after building the industrial ecosystem,” the Lieutenant Governor said.

He said the progressive industrial policy and several key interventions in the last few years have strengthened investors’ confidence in the UT of J&K and attracted private investment.

“We have been successful in creating a conducive environment for the growth of ▶ **P11**

### PUBLIC MATTERS

➔ Terrorism and security Concerns

➔ Daily Wagers' Regularisation

➔ Drugs, Substance Abuse on Rise

➔ Rising Criminal Activities

➔ Unemployment Crisis for youth

➔ Recruitment Exam Scandals

➔ Delayed Public Service Delivery

## Hajj Quota slashed: Abdullahs, Mufti urge Centre to intervene

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

**SRINAGAR:** Ruling and Opposition parties have come together to voice their concern after the reported cancellation of 52,000 Hajj slots by Saudi Arabia for Indian pilgrims and urged the central government to take up the matter with their leadership.

While Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and his predecessor Mehbooba Mufti sought the Ministry of External Affairs’s intervention, NC chief Farooq Abdullah urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to

look into the issue.

“The reported cancellation of Hajj slots for over 52,000 Indian pilgrims, many of whom have already completed payments, is deeply concerning. I urge Hon’ble Minister of External Affairs @ DrSJaishankar to engage with the Saudi authorities at the earliest to explore a resolution in the interest of all affected pilgrims. This measure is crucial to ease the distress of thousands hoping to undertake the sacred pilgrimage this year,” J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah posted on

his official X handle.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said the sudden decision to reduce the Hajj quota has caused immense distress for both the pilgrims and tour operators.

“Disturbing news emerging from Saudi Arabia. Reports indicate that 80% of India’s private Haj quota has been cut abruptly. This sudden decision is causing immense distress for pilgrims and tour operators across the country. Urge the Ministry of External Affairs to immediately intervene by ▶ **P11**

## Rana being interrogated for 8-10 hrs daily by NIA

**NEW DELHI:** Mumbai terror attacks key mastermind Tahawwur Hussain Rana is being interrogated for eight to ten hours daily by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) sleuths to unravel a larger conspiracy behind the dreaded strikes, official sources said on Monday.

The NIA officials are ensuring Rana’s medical check-up and he is being allowed to meet his lawyer, according to the order of a Delhi court that had on early Friday morning granted 18-day custody to the probe agency following his extradition from the US, they said.

The sources said Rana is being grilled by the NIA investigators for around eight to ten hours daily to probe a larger conspiracy behind

the 2008 dastardly strikes orchestrated by Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba and in which 166 people were killed and over 238 injured.

“Rana has been cooperating during the questioning,” a source said, adding that a team of NIA officials led by Chief Investigating Officer Jaya Roy is interrogating him.

The sources said Rana has so far asked for only three things -- a pen, paper sheets or notepad and Quran -- which have been provided to him.

They said there has not been any specific food-related demand raised by Rana so far and he is being provided with “food items which are given to any ▶ **P11**

## Machail Mata temple reopens

**JAMMU:** The revered shrine of Shree Machail Mata in Jammu and Kashmir’s Kishtwar district has been reopened for pilgrims after winter, heralding the commencement of the annual Yatra season, officials said on Monday.

The temple was thrown open on the occasion of Baisakhi on Sunday with Jammu divisional commissioner Ramesh Kumar reviewing the arrangements for the annual pilgrimage, the officials said.

The event marked the shifting of the idol of Goddess Machail Mata (Durga) from the house of local priest Pehalwan Singh to the temple amid religious rituals and a grand fair.

The reopening of the temple was also attended by BJP MLA from Padder-Nagse-ni Sunil Sharma and Kishtwar deputy commissioner Rajesh Kumar Shavan, the officials said. ▶ **P11**

### IN SHORT

#### Rs 1800 cr drugs seized

**AHMEDABAD:** In a joint operation, the Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad and the Indian Coast Guard have seized over 300 kg of drugs worth Rs 1,800 crore which were dumped into the Arabian Sea by Pakistani smugglers who fled across the international maritime boundary on being chased, officials said on Monday.

The seized contraband is suspected to be methamphetamine and has been handed over to the Anti-Terrorist ▶ **P11**

#### One killed, 10 injured in Ramban

**BANIHAL:** A 75-year-old woman was killed and 10 of her relatives were injured after a mini-load carrier fell into a ditch in Jammu and Kashmir’s Ramban district early Monday, police said.

The members of the extended family belonging to the Bakerwal nomadic community were heading for Kashmir from Teryath village in Rajouri district as part of their bi-annual migration in search ▶ **P11**

## On Ambedkar birth anniv, Modi leads charge on political rivals PM claims Cong turned SCs, STs, OBCs into ‘second-class citizens’

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

**HISAR:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday led the BJP’s nationwide charge on its political rivals and the ruling party’s push to be identified closely with Bhim Rao Ambedkar on the birth anniversary of the iconic figure, especially among Dalits.

Amid the political heat over the Waqf (Amendment) Act, Modi sought to put the Congress and its allies opposed to the law in a corner, accusing them of destroying the Constitution by enacting a Waqf law, now amended, in 2013 above the constitutional values espoused by Ambedkar.

The prime minister travelled to Haryana to launch several development projects as he championed his government’s commitment to Ambedkar’s ideals.

Modi launched a scathing attack on the Congress on the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar, accusing the party of turning Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs into “second-class citizens” while in power.

Addressing a gathering after flagging off the first commercial flight from the Maharaja Agrasen airport Hisar to Ayodhya and laying the foundation stone of



### In Cong rule, India saw blackouts: PM

**YAMUNANAGAR:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said there were blackouts under the Congress rule before 2014 but India’s

power production has doubled in the last decade and it is now exporting electricity.

Addressing a gathering after laying the ▶ **P11**

a new terminal building at the airport, he alleged the Congress has become the destroyer of the Constitution framed by Ambedkar.

The Congress “crushed” the Constitution whenever its government faced danger, Modi alleged and pointed to the 1975-77 Emergency to reinforce his claim. “The spirit of the Constitution is to have a uniform civil code, which I call a secular civil code. But the Congress never implemented it.”

He referred to the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code by the BJP government in Uttarakhnd to say, “See the misfortune of this country. Those who carry a copy of the Constitution, these Congress people, are opposing that.”

The Constitution has a provision of reservation for the SCs, STs and OBCs, but the Congress never cared for them, the PM claimed.

“Babasaheb Ambedkar wanted to bring equality, but the Congress spread the virus of vote bank (politics) in the country. He wanted every poor person to live with dignity, with heads held high, to dream and fulfil them. But the Congress made the SCs, STs and OBCs second-class citizens,” he said.

Sharpening his attack on the main ▶ **P11**

JAI MATA DI

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