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IN BRIEF

Cabinet nods 2 pc DA hike for employees

NEW DELHI: The government on Saturday increased Dearness Allowance (DA) and Dearness Relief (DR) by 2 per cent, benefiting about 50.46 lakh central government employees and 68.27 lakh pensioners. The combined impact on the exchequer on account of an increase in both Dearness Allowance and Dearness Relief would be Rs 6,791.24 crore per annum, said Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw while briefing about decisions taken at the Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The approval to release an additional instalment of DA to central government employees and DR to pensioners with effect from January 1, 2026, represents an increase of 2 per cent over the existing rate of 58 per cent of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate for the ► P11

Oppn 'crushed women's dreams' by blocking Quota Bill: PM Modi

'DMK, Cong made it target of hatred'

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said opposition parties had "mercilessly crushed" the dreams of women by not allowing the women's reservation bill to pass in Parliament despite the government's best efforts. In an address to the nation, a day after a bill to implement women's reservation in legislatures was defeated in the Lok Sabha, Modi said the self-serving politics of parties like the Congress, the DMK, the TMC, and the Samajwadi Party has come at the expense of the nation's women, and that they had foiled efforts to grant 33 per cent reservation to women in legislatures. "I seek forgiveness from all women of the country," he said. The prime minister said opposition parties that opposed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam in Parli-



ment were taking women's power for granted. "Today, every citizen of India is witnessing how the march of India's women has been halted. The dreams of the country's women have been mercilessly crushed, and despite our utmost efforts, we could not succeed," he said. Modi said women had seen how parties like the Congress, the TMC and the DMK "celebrated their selfish politics" against women's

empowerment. "The opposition has committed a sin by opposing women's reservation, and they will surely be punished for this. Opposition parties have insulted our Constitution by defeating the bill," he said. The prime minister said the bill was aimed at giving wings to women's empowerment without taking anything away from anyone. "I expected the Congress to correct its past mistakes, but it missed an opportunity to script new history. The family-run parties do not want women to move forward as that could end their selfish politics," he said. He also accused the Congress of pursuing divisive politics, alleging it spread falsehoods about a North-South divide. "A woman forgets everything, but not her insult; this insult by the Congress ► P11

Drug-Free J&K Campaign

Rajouri prone to cross-border drug smuggling; will 'crush' menace: LG

"Relentless crackdown of J&K Police nets 63 smugglers, 45 FIRs filed in 5 days: Sinha

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

RAJOURI: The Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday joined Padyatra and addressed a public rally in Rajouri under Drug-Free J&K campaign. The Lieutenant Governor observed that border district Rajouri is sensitive and prone to cross-border drug smuggling. "But we are determined to crush these challenges, dismantle the drug trade and liberate society from addiction. From April 11, J&K Po-



lice had launched a relentless crackdown in Jammu Division. More than 45 FIRs were filed, 63 smugglers nabbed and massive drug hauls seized between the 11th and 15th. Regular Checks are now covering schools, pharmacies, drug agencies and this drive will continue relentlessly," the Lieutenant Governor said.

In his address, the Lieutenant Governor emphasised that not all wars rage on borders. He said some battles brew unseen and for years, countless Jammu Kashmir families have fought addiction within their walls and many have lost loved ones to it. "On April 11, from the hallowed grounds of Jammu's MA Stadium, we sounded the clarion call to total war by launching a resolute 100-day crusade against drug addiction. I believe addiction is no mere personal failing but it's a gaping wound in our society's fabric. Our terrorist neighbour deploys it as an insidious weapon, nurturing terror through drug smuggling and eroding our nation's strength from within. We shall prevail in this battle by uniting as one and every citizen rising with unyielding resolve," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant ► P11

Jawan hurt in mine blast; shell defused

JAMMU: An army soldier was injured in a landmine explosion, while a rusted shell was safely defused in a forward village near the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district on Saturday, officials said. The explosion occurred during an area domination patrol by an army column in the Balakot area, leaving an Agniveer injured, they said. The soldier was shifted to a hospital and his condition is stated to be "stable", officials said. As part of an anti-infiltration obstacle system, the forward areas are dotted with landmines, which sometimes get washed away by rain, resulting in such types of accidents. In a separate ► P11

Shabir Shah sent to 10-day NIA remand

JAMMU: Separatist leader Shabir Ahmad Shah was arrested by the NIA in connection with a three-decade-old terror case and remanded in the agency's custody for 10 days by a special court on Saturday, officials said. Shah was arrested by the Srinagar branch of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday in the 1996 case involving a terrorist attack on policemen during a militant's funeral, and was produced before the Patiala House Court in Delhi which allowed a three-day transit remand. The separatist leader, who was recently ► P11

QR-based ID system launched for tourism stakeholders in Pahalgam

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

PAHALGAM: The authorities in Jammu and Kashmir have introduced a unique QR code-based identification system for all tourism service providers for the safety of tourists in Pahalgam, which was rocked by a deadly attack last year orchestrated by Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists. The system enables easy identification and verification of genuine and registered service providers, including pony-ride operators, hawkers, business establishments, as well as outside vendors, officials said. The initiative is seen as a major step by the authorities to restore the confidence of those visiting the popular



tourist resort in Anantnag district that was shaken by the brutal terror attack on April 22 last year. The attack in the Baisaran meadow left 25 tourists and a local pony-ride operator dead. "Each service provider has been properly vetted by police, registered by the authorities and has been provided a unique QR code that contains personal information and other details about that person," an official ► P11

Omar sees off 1st batch of Haj pilgrims CM emphasis timely completion of LD Hospital's extension block

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today bid farewell to the first batch of Haj pilgrims from Srinagar International Airport, marking the formal commencement of Haj operations 2026 from Jammu & Kashmir. On the occasion, the Chief Minister interacted with the pilgrims, extending warm greetings and wishing them a safe, peaceful and spiritually fulfilling journey. He expressed hope that the sacred pilgrimage would reinforce the values of compassion, unity and brotherhood. Speaking to the pilgrims, the Chief Minister prayed for



the successful completion of Haj and sought divine blessings for lasting peace, harmony and prosperity in Jammu & Kashmir, as well as the well-being of its ► P11

Toy car plot foiled, 4 terror suspects held

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police has arrested four "radicalised" men from Maharashtra, Odisha and Bihar who allegedly planned terror activities, carried out reconnaissance of sensitive locations to target them and attempted to recruit others through encrypted online platforms, officials said on Saturday. An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and related material were seized during the operation, police said. Two of the accused were in the process of assembling a remote-controlled toy car fitted with an IED to target crowded places, they alleged. The Special Cell apprehended two of the accused from Maharashtra and one each from Odisha and Bihar in a coordinated, intelli-

gence-led operation, the officials said. The four were influenced by extremist ideology centred around the idea of establishing a Caliphate and were promoting narratives such as "Ghazwa-e-Hind", the police alleged. "They were also allegedly inspired by the concept of a 'Lashkar from Khurasan' carrying black flags, which they used as part of their propaganda to radicalise others," a senior police officer said. He said the accused were active on closed and encrypted social media groups where content related to jihad, extremist ideology and weapons was shared. These platforms were allegedly used to identify, indoctrinate and ► P11

Govt summons Iran envoy over firing on Indian vessels

NEW DELHI: India on Saturday summoned Iranian envoy Mohammad Fathali and conveyed its strong protest after two Indian-flagged vessels had to reverse course in the Strait of Hormuz following an incident of firing by Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri conveyed to the envoy India's "deep concern" at the shooting incident involving the two ships, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. The foreign secretary noted the "importance that India attached to the safety of merchant shipping and mariners and recalled that Iran had earlier facilitated the safe passage of several ships bound for India", it said. "Reiterating his concern at

this serious incident of firing on merchant ships, the foreign secretary urged the ambassador to convey India's views to the authorities in Iran and resume at the earliest the process of facilitating India-bound ships across the Strait," the MEA said in a statement. It said that Ambassador Fathali "undertook to convey these views to the Iranian authorities". Several commercial vessels tried to cross the Strait of Hormuz after Iran on Friday announced that it has opened the waterway for commercial traffic. Tehran on Saturday said it has again closed the Strait of Hormuz, alleging that the US violated certain ► P11

LG opens Dr Raj Kumar Thapa memorial museum and library

EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday inaugurated the Dr Raj Kumar Thapa memorial museum and library, dedicated to the legacy of the additional district development commissioner, in Rajouri district. Thapa lost his life on May 10 last year when a Pakistani artillery shell hit his residential quarters in the border district during unprovoked shelling linked to Operation Sindoor. He is survived by his wife, a doctor, and their two children. Paying tributes, the lieutenant governor recalled



Thapa's selfless service and unwavering commitment to public welfare, saying the memorial would serve as a source of inspiration for generations to come, an official spokesperson said. A documentary highlighting Thapa's life and service was also screened on the occasion, he said. ► P11

Dr Singla gets addl charge; IAS Sihag posted as ADC

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Saturday assigned additional responsibilities to Dr Piyush Singla, IAS, Secretary to the Government, Information Technology Department, in the interest of administration. According to Government Order No. 806-JK(GAD) of 2026, dated April 18, Dr Singla, who is already holding additional charge of Administrative Secretary, Public Grievances Department, shall now also hold the charge of Administrative Secretary, Transport Department and Hospitality & Protocol Department. The order stated that he will discharge these additional duties alongside his existing responsibilities till Avny Lavasa, IAS, resumes her duties. Meanwhile, the Government has posted IAS Ravi Kumar Sihag as Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Rajouri in the interest of administration. ► P11

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