

"If you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman."  
—Margaret Thatcher

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### India welcomes US-Iran ceasefire; asks nationals to 'expeditiously exit'

**NEW DELHI:** India on Wednesday welcomed the two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran and called for unimpeded freedom of navigation and flow of commerce through the Strait of Hormuz, while hoping that lasting peace will return to West Asia.

New Delhi said it continuously advocated that dialogue and diplomacy are essential to bring an early end to the hostilities. The conflict was triggered by US-Israeli strikes against Iran on February 28.

India's reaction came hours after Iran and the US agreed on the conditional ceasefire that included the opening of the Strait of Hormuz, the strategically key waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman that handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas).

"We welcome the ceasefire reached and hope that it will lead to a lasting peace in West Asia. As we have continuously advocated earlier, de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy are essential to bring an early end to the ongoing conflict," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"The conflict has already caused immense suffering to people and disrupted global energy supply and trade networks."

"We expect that unimpeded ► P11

### Sinha chairs 2nd University Council meet of Cluster University Srinagar



**JAMMU:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday chaired the 2nd meeting of the University Council of the Cluster University of Srinagar at Lok Bhavan, Jammu.

The University Council, which met under the chairmanship of the Lieutenant Governor, accorded in-principle approval to various agenda items and proposals including establishment of Abdul Ahad Azad Chair and adoption of postgraduate curriculum framework under NEP 2020 as per UGC guidelines.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the Cluster Univer-

### LG sacks two Govt employees

**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha has terminated the services of two government employees as part of his "zero-tolerance to terror" policy, officials said on Wednesday.

The dismissed employees have been identified as Farhat Ali Khanday and Mohammad Shafi Dar, the officials said. They said the dismissals were executed under ► P11

sity Srinagar to implement targeted reforms aimed at bolstering academic excellence and student welfare. He further directed the University for full implementation of e-office systems to modernize university administration and enhance operational efficiency.

The Lieutenant Governor emphasized the need for uniformity in recruitment rules for non-teaching positions across all universities within the Union Territory to ensure a transparent and streamlined process.

He directed the Cluster University Srinagar for increased youth participation under the "Viksit Bharat Yuva Connect" and various ► P11

### Over 600 heritage sites identified; CM Omar calls for expert engagement for tourism push

**JAMMU:** With over 600 heritage sites identified across Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday called for structured engagement with national and international agencies to unlock their tourism potential.

Abdullah was addressing a meeting on heritage promotion and cultural tourism to review measures for conservation and adaptive reuse of heritage assets aimed at boosting tourism in the Union territory.

The meeting was informed that over 600 heritage sites have been identified across Jammu and Kashmir, including both protected and unlisted monuments, reflecting the vast scale of opportunity in the sector, an official spokesman said.

Advocating a holistic and forward-looking approach, the chief minister emphasised the need to blend conservation with commercialisation and community engagement.

"Jammu and Kashmir's vast heritage wealth must be leveraged as a dynamic engine for tourism and economic growth, while ensuring preservation of its cultural legacy," ► P11



### Abdullah questions gain of US in West Asia crisis

**JAMMU:** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday questioned the outcome of the recent US-Iran ceasefire, asking what the United States achieved after nearly 40 days of conflict. Reacting to media reports of the reopening of the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz as part of the truce, Abdullah remarked that the passage was already "open and freely available" before the war began.

"So the ceasefire allows a strait to reopen, a strait that was open and freely available to everyone to use before the war started. What exactly did this 39 day war achieve for the US?" the chief minister said in a post on X with the hashtag "UnjustWar".

Iran, the United States and Israel reached a tentative, two-week ceasefire on Wednesday in the war that tore across West Asia and disrupted the global energy market, with US President Donald Trump pulling back from his threats to destroy Iranian civilization.

### NH shut on 2nd day, clearance underway

**JAMMU:** Traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway remained suspended for the second consecutive day on Wednesday as the work to clear the fresh landslides is going on amid heavy rains in the Ramban district, officials said.

The strategic 270-km highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, was blocked by multiple landslides early Monday. Though it was reopened for a few hours on Tuesday morning, two major landslides forced its closure, they said.

According to a traffic update issued at 10 am, the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway (NH-44) continues to remain blocked, with road clearance operations underway at Shalgarhi and Banihal.

"Road clearance is going on, but it will take some time. Moreover, there is continuous rainfall along the highway," the advisory said.

A traffic police spokesperson said movement has been stopped in both directions — from Jammu towards Srinagar and vice versa — due to a heavy landslide between Digdol and Khooni Nallah on Tuesday. "The road is completely blocked," he said.

Officials said more than 400 vehicles are stranded at various points along the highway.

Men and machinery have been pressed into ► P11



### IED defused on road in Shopian

**SRINAGAR:** Security forces on Wednesday detected and defused a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) planted by terrorists on a road in Shopian district, an Army official said.

He said a tragedy was averted as the IED was "apparently meant to target security forces' vehicles".

The device was found ► P11

### CAG flags delay in accounts completion of PSUs, bodies

**JAMMU:** The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has flagged a massive backlog in the finalisation of accounts of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and autonomous bodies in Jammu and Kashmir, with large number of accounts remaining in arrears as on March 31, 2024.

The CAG urged the UT government to ensure strict adherence to timelines for preparation and submission of accounts to strengthen financial discipline, transparency and governance.

The audit panel warned that the persistent backlog undermines transparency and legislative oversight, and recommended that the government ensure companies, corporations and autonomous bodies submit their annual accounts within a stipulated timeframe.

The CAG report on Union Territory (UT) finances for the year ended March 31, 2024, said, "Accounts in respect of only four companies were audited up to 2022-23. In respect of 35 companies and corporations, audit of 139 accounts was in arrears for periods ranging from one to twelve years."

According to the report, eight autonomous bodies have together failed to submit 40 annual accounts, with delays ranging from three to 14 years.

The CAG stressed that delays in finalisation of accounts keep the results of government investments outside legislative scrutiny, hampering timely corrective measures and weakening accountability.

The report highlighted that several key entities have accumulated significant arrears.

Jammu and Kashmir Overseas Employment Corporation Ltd tops the list with 12 pending ► P11

### Bhagwat: RSS not looking for credit

**NAGPUR:** The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh does not wish that its name should be written in golden letters in history and instead wants to give full credit to society for its work over the last 100 years, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Wednesday.

The entire body of work of the RSS is built on the hard work of swayamsevaks (volunteers) and not due to anyone's grace. At the same time, the Hindutva organisation's work has not been hampered by anyone's lack of grace, he asserted.

Bhagwat was addressing a gathering at the unveiling of 'Rashtra Swaradhna', a book on the history of RSS's 'Ghosh Pathak' (band troupe) at a programme organised at Dr Hedge-

war Smruti Mandir premises, Reshimbagh, Nagpur.

All swayamsevaks have put in their full strength in creating a nation as per the RSS ideology, he said.

Praising the book and journey of 'Ghosh Pathak', Bhagwat said the book is very useful for swayamsevaks as it will help them know what the RSS has done since its establishment in 1925 and what it should do in times to come.

Bhagwat insisted the RSS does not want its name to be written in golden letters in history. Instead, the Sangh wants to give credit to entire society for its work. The organisation has chosen to achieve its goals based on the work power of the whole society, he maintained.

### Divisional level awareness prog of School Education Dept Public's role vital beyond Govt efforts: Abdullah highlights civic responsibility



**JAMMU:** Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday underscored the need for collective responsibility in addressing key social challenges such as drug

addiction, mental health and environmental safeguards, asserting that while several responsibilities lie with the government, many must be shared by society as a whole.

He made the remarks while launching a three-day divisional-level awareness programme organised by the School Education Department at the convention centre here.

Addressing a large gathering of students and stakeholders, the chief minister drew a distinction between responsibilities that fall solely within the government's domain — such as building roads, bridges and hospitals — and those requiring active public participation.

"Besides the government, the public has a crucial role in maintaining environmental safeguards and key public assets as ► P11

### 5 LeT operatives remanded to 10 days custody

**SRINAGAR:** A local court on Wednesday sent five operatives — two Pakistani nationals and their three local supporters — affiliated with proscribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit to 10 days police custody here, an official said.

The five were arrested following the uncovering of a "deep-rooted" interstate LeT module headed by Pakistani terrorist Abdullah, alias Abu Hureira, who had been on the run for 16 years and successfully established bases outside the Union Territory.

Hureira, along with another Pakistani terrorist Usman alias Khubaib and three Srinagar residents ► P11

### J&K Bank renews corporate tie-up with Bajaj Life Insurance Company

**SRINAGAR:** Reaffirming its commitment to enhanced customer convenience, J&K Bank has renewed its Corporate Agency Agreement with Bajaj Life Insurance Company for a further period of three years.

The agreement was renewed formally after the signing of the pact here at Bank's Corporate Headquarters in the presence of senior officials from both the organisations. General Manager (Retail, Agriculture & MSME — RAM) Rakesh Magotra represented the Bank along with DGM (Cross Selling) Shabir Ahmad Bulla and other members of the Cross Selling team. Executive Vice President & Business Head Zeeshan Andleeb at-



tended signing ceremony on behalf of Bajaj Life Insurance Company besides National Account Head Mukhtar Ahmad and other officials.

Speaking on the occasion, General Manager (RAM) Rakesh Magotra said, "The renewal of our partnership reflects the strength of a relationship built on shared values of customer-centricity and trust. As we move ahead in our growth journey, we remain focused on expanding our ► P11