

Modi hails Cabinet’s decisions, approvals

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hailed the Union Cabinet’s decision to extend the PM-KISAN scheme for another five years till 2030-31 with an outlay of over Rs 3.15 lakh crore, saying it will help farmers meet their needs related to seeds, fertilisers, and farming while improving their economic condition. Modi also welcomed the Cabinet’s approval of the expanded Khelo India Scheme and the enhanced budget for Assistance to the National Sports Federations (ANSFs), with a combined outlay of Rs 36,441 crore over the next five years. “We are committed to the empowerment and prosperity of our farmer brothers and sisters across the country. In this direction, today approval has been given to extend the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme ► **P11**

India calls for global scrutiny over Pak’s ‘ruthless’ crackdown in PoJK

■ **BJP urges global community to end silence**

NEW DELHI/JAMMU: India on Friday called upon the international community to scrutinise Islamabad’s “ruthless” use of force against peaceful protesters in Pakistan-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) and hold it accountable for the “atrocities”. Around 40 people were reportedly killed in the crackdown by the security forces in PoJK since July 27 amid local-body elections in the region. External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the Pakistani establishment continued to “unleash ruthless force” against peaceful civilians in PoJK. The PoJK has been witnessing massive protests since last month over in-



flated living costs, alleged administrative apathy and political discrimination and atrocities against minorities. The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) has been leading the protests. “This crackdown has resulted in the tragic death of over 40 civilians and serious

injuries to many,” Jaiswal said at a regular media briefing. “Its absolute disdain for the innocent people of PoJK was laid bare when the defence minister branded the protesting civilians as enemies. “Adding to this, the Special Assistant to the prime

minister on political affairs, openly admitted that the very ‘mujahideen’ that Pakistani establishment trained, armed and sent to bleed India have now turned their guns inward, weaponising themselves against the state,” he added. Jaiswal said the “so-called” elections stand as a “humiliating rejection” of the Pakistani establishment. “Facing a violent regime, the people have requested international organisations for an independent investigation into the unlawful killings,” he said. “We urge that the international community should scrutinise Pakistan’s actions and hold it accountable for its atrocities,” he added. Meanwhile, the Bharatiya ► **P11**

When the Law Fell Short: The Case for Protection of Hindu Deities Act



Shivang Satya Gupta
Editor-in-Chief

Freedom of expression is a foundational pillar of Indian democracy — but the Constitution has never treated it as absolute. Article 19(2) permits reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order and other recognised objectives. The real question facing India today is not whether speech should remain free — it should — but whether the deliberate, malicious degradation of Hindu deities deserves recognition as a distinct criminal wrong, rather than an incidental byproduct of laws written for an entirely different purpose. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita’s provisions on outraging religious feelings (Section 298, successor to the colonial-era IPC 295A) were designed to protect public order and the sentiments of a religious group — not the dignity of the deity itself. This is not a technicality. It means Indian law recognises Hindu deities as juristic persons capable of owning temple land and suing in court, yet offers no equivalent protection for that same deity’s dignity against calculated insult. The law defends the deity’s property. It does not defend the deity. Worse, decades of judicial interpretation have narrowed the provision further. Courts have consistently held that insults made carelessly, or without proof of deliberate

and malicious intent, fall entirely outside the law’s reach. In principle, this protects genuine artists and scholars from overreach. In practice, it has set the evidentiary bar so high that devotees seeking redress for calculated provocation are routinely left with no remedy at all. There are three cases which have same pattern: PK (2013) When this film’s treatment of Hindu worship practices sparked protests, vandalised theatres, and public outrage across Indian cities, the response Hindu devotees received was not a courtroom hearing — it was the street. No meaningful prosecution followed the outrage. The film

“**Sanatan Sabiyata needs adequate “protection. There is a need to examine whether the existing legal and constitutional provisions provide sufficient safeguards against deliberate and malicious acts that insult Hindu deities and deeply held religious beliefs when compared to the other religious sentiments**

continued its national run unaffected. For millions who felt their faith had been mocked for commercial gain, the episode exposed a hard truth: existing law gave them no real forum, only agitation as a last resort. The 2021 stand-up case: A comedian’s remarks about

Hindu deities at a New Year event led to arrest and a prolonged bail process that resolved without any final adjudication on the underlying conduct. Whatever view one takes of that case, it illustrates the same structural failure from the other direction: a law so imprecisely calibrated that it satisfies no one — critics call it prone to misuse, while devotees who felt genuinely aggrieved saw the matter fade without ever being tested on its merits. The temple-grounds filming controversy: When a global streaming series filmed an intimate scene on temple premises, a police complaint was lodged — and went nowhere. No consequence followed for a production widely seen by devotees as treating sacred space as a convenient commercial backdrop. Three different fact patterns. One shared outcome: the law offered devotees neither vindication nor deterrence. India already legislates targeted protections when general provisions prove structurally inadequate to a specific harm — POCSO for offences against children, the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act for caste-based violence, dedicated provisions under the IT Act for cyber offences. Each exists because Parliament concluded that folding a distinct wrong into general criminal categories under-protects the people it is meant to serve. The deliberate, malicious degradation of what a billion people regard as living divinity is no less specific a harm, and deserves no less precisely drafted a response. A protection of Hindu Deities Act should criminalise only acts done with proven deliberate and malicious intent to degrade — not criticism, satire, or scholarship; explicitly protect academic research, journalism, judicial proceedings, and ► **P11**

Sinha stresses forces’ readiness to counter asymmetric warfare

■ **EARTH NEWS SERVICE**

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha interacted with the officers attending Higher Command Course - 55 at Army War College, Mhow. In his address to the officers and faculty members of Army War College at Lok Bhavan, the Lieutenant Governor highlighted the pressing geo-political and geo-strategic challenges of the present era, along with a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy anchored in a “whole of government approach” aimed at dismantling the terror networks.



He said the transformation in Jammu Kashmir over past 6 years, is the result of a sustained commitment to re-

building trust, enabling citizens to lead lives of their own choosing and restoring the dignity that had ► **P11**

One killed, other injured in Kulgam terrorist attack

■ **LG orders intensified ops against terrorists**

■ **EARTH NEWS SERVICE**

SRINAGAR: A labourer from Chhattisgarh was killed and another from the same state was injured in a terrorist attack at a brick kiln in Kulgam district on Friday, officials said. The assailants targeted the labourers at the brick kiln in the Kelum area of the south Kashmir district late in the evening. Officials stated that two labourers were injured in the attack, and one of them succumbed to his injuries before he could be transported to a hospi-

tal. The deceased has been identified as Deepak Rattray (24), and the injured labourer is Bopinder (28), both hailing from Chhattisgarh. Bopinder was first taken to GMC Anantnag and later referred to SKIMS Hospital in Soura, officials added. The attack follows closely on the heels of another incident less than ten days ago, in which terrorists shot and killed a police officer in Anantnag town. Before this, two labourers were killed here in the summer ► **P11**

Shri Amarnathji Yatra suspended from Baltal

■ **EARTH NEWS SERVICE**

SRINAGAR: The annual Shri Amarnathji Yatra was suspended from the Baltal route on Friday due to inclement weather and to facilitate repair work on the track, officials said. The yatra has already been suspended from the Pahalgam route to carry out necessary repairs. Heavy rains lashed the Baltal area on Thursday night, triggering a minor flashflood at one location. However, no loss of life or damage to property was reported, officials said. Owing to the adverse weather and ongoing repair work, no pilgrim was allowed to proceed

towards the holy cave shrine from the Baltal route, they said. Repair work on the track is currently underway, officials added. ► **P11**

NH remains closed for widening

JAMMU: The 250-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, was closed for vehicular traffic on Friday, officials said. The closure was put in place to ► **P11**

Pak drone shot down along LoC; SFs bust terror hideout

■ **EARTH NEWS SERVICE**

JAMMU: A Pakistani surveillance drone was shot down by alert Indian Army troops during the early hours of Friday in the Chakala forward area along the Line of Control (LoC) in Khour Sector. According to reports, the drone approached the Chakala forward area from the Mandiyala (Chhamb), Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) side. The area falls under the operational responsibility of 3/1 GR and the jurisdiction of Police Post Paltanwala, Police Station Khour. Upon noticing the drone hovering over the forward area, troops of 3/1 GR deployed at Chakala Post-2 immediately opened fire, successfully bringing it down.



The drone was subsequently recovered from the site along with a 64 GB memory card and batteries, which have been taken into custody for further ► **P11**

IFFJK: DIPR extends film submission closing date

SRINAGAR: The film submission deadline for 1st International Film Festival of Jammu and Kashmir (IFFJK) 2026 has been extended until 1st August, 2026 11:59 PM, to provide filmmakers final opportunity to register their entries for participation in the inaugural edition of the festival. The IFFJK, organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), is scheduled to be held from September 7 to 10, 2026. The festival aims to establish Jammu & Kashmir as a vibrant destination ► **P11**

SC agrees to dissolve Omar's marriage with estranged wife

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to dissolve the marriage of Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah with his estranged wife Payal Abdullah after taking note of their submissions that they have “embraced freedom”. The apex court took note of the submissions of senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the National Conference leader, that an application has been filed under Article 142 of the Constitution seeking dissolution of marriage as the parties have settled the matter. “We will make it a part of our order and will dispose of it in terms of that,” a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said. The bench will pass a formal order. “Both of them have embraced freedom. It’s all settled. (Article) 142



filed. Your lordships may grant divorce,” Sibal told the bench. “When did this application come on record?” the bench asked. It was informed that the application was filed on July 22. ► **P11**

Govt approves Rs13.75Cr for heritage projects

SRINAGAR: The Government of Jammu & Kashmir has approved two major heritage conservation projects worth ₹13.75 crore for the restoration and revival of the historic heritage site of Purmandal in Samba and the conservation and upgradation of the historic Imambara Zadibal in Srinagar. The twin initiatives reaffirm the Government’s commitment to preserving Jammu & Kashmir’s rich religious, cultural and architectural heritage while enhancing facilities for pilgrims, devotees and visitors. The Government has approved a Rs 7.16 crore project for the restoration and revival of the historic heritage site of Purmandal in Samba. The initiative aims ► **P11**

LG launches academic initiatives at Cluster University World favours multidisciplinary thinkers over specialists: Sinha

■ **EARTH NEWS SERVICE**

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Friday that the 21st century would belong to young people who can integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines and discover innovative solutions to complex challenges. He made these remarks while inaugurating a series of new academic programmes at Cluster University Jammu. Sinha said the world today demands multidisciplinary thinkers rather than specialists confined to a single subject. “I believe that the 21st century will welcome those young people who are not specialists in just one subject but



can integrate knowledge from multiple fields and discover new solutions,” he

said while addressing a gathering after launching the university’s “design your degree” programme and other academic initiatives at Lok Bhawan here. “The future belongs to those who recognise possibilities, not boundaries. This initiative empowers students to shape their own academic journeys, combining subjects according to their interests, talents and aspirations,” the Lieutenant Governor said. He said the frontiers of knowledge are expanding and the problems facing society are multidimensional, requiring multidisciplinary approaches for meaningful solutions. Sinha inaugurated integrated ► **P11**

COAS unveils XWG diesel effective at –42°Celsius

NEW DELHI: Army Chief Gen Dhiraaj Seth on Friday unveiled indigenously developed Xtreme Weather Grade (XWG) diesel, which can remain effective at temperatures as low as minus 42 degrees Celsius, and described it as a “game-changing” indigenous innovation that would enhance mobility, operational readiness and mission reliability. Compliant with BS-VI standards and IS 1460:2025 specifications, it can be used in the Indian Army’s existing ► **P11**

AIIMS Awantipora to be ready by Dec’26: Centre

NEW DELHI: The physical progress of the upcoming AIIMS at Haryana’s Rewari and Jammu and Kashmir’s Awantipora are 64.85 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively, with both projects targeted for completion by December 2026, the Lok Sabha was informed Friday. In a written reply on the current status of the AIIMS at Rewari, Awantipora, Bengaluru (Karnataka) and Darbhanga (Bihar), Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav further said pre-investment work is in progress for AIIMS Darbhanga and the target date of completion is July 2029. However, no AIIMS has been approved for Bengaluru, Jadhav said. Further, responding to a question on the reasons for voluntary retirement of senior doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, Jadhav said during 2025, six doctors at the institute opted for voluntary retirement on personal grounds. The minister said resignations, voluntary retirements, and subsequent filling up of vacancies in AIIMS across the country are continuous administrative processes. ► **P11**