

NEET case: Court denies Lie-Detector Test appeal

NEW DELHI: A designated Delhi fast-track court dealing with the NEET paper leak case on Monday rejected a plea filed by three accused seeking to voluntarily undergo a lie detector test and brain mapping.

Special Judge Ajay Gupta rejected the plea by three accused, Mangal Lal Biwal, Dinesh Biwal, and Vikas Biwal, seeking permission for a polygraph (lie-detector) test and Brain Electrical Activation Profile (BEAP) examination, also known as brain mapping.

The plea sought the court's permission as the accused wanted to "demonstrate their bona fides" and assist the agency to conduct a "fair and transparent investigation." A reasoned order is awaited.

The court meanwhile adjourned to August 12 its order on taking cognisance of the CBI's chargesheet against the 13 accused in the case.

Meanwhile, a court ► **P11**

Lok Sabha clears bill to set up panel to appoint chiefs, members of Tribunals

Govt ready for debate on students' stir: Rijiju

NEW DELHI: Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju announced on Monday that the government is ready for a full-fledged discussion in Lok Sabha on the student protests and police action across the country and Union Home Minister Amit Shah will reply to the debate, provided the opposition promises not to disrupt and listens peacefully.

Rijiju's announcement came shortly after a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the Lok Sabha where the agenda of the House for the next three days was discussed with members from different political parties.

There has been a persistent demand from the opposition for a statement from the home minister on the police action against students protesting in the city last month. Shah has not been



Let voice of people be heard: Speaker

NEW DELHI: Amid a logjam in the Lok Sabha, Speaker Om Birla on Monday made an "emotional appeal" to floor leaders of parties, urging them to let the voice of the people be heard and allow the House to function without disruption. Since the Monsoon session began on July 20, the Opposition has been holding protests demanding a ► **P11**

seen in the House in the ongoing Monsoon session even though he has been regularly coming to Parliament House complex.

Rijiju also said that since the government is ready for the debate on the student protests in different parts of the country, the opposition can't create any turmoil and resort to any sloganeering during the discussion in the House as well as reply to the debate.

"We have made it clear to the BAC of the Lok Sabha that the government is ready for a full-fledged discussion on the student and youth agitations that have been going on in different parts of the country as well as police action. The home minister will give point-by-point reply to the debate on behalf of the government," he told reporters after the meeting of the BAC held in Parliament ► **P11**

Govt panel on Demographic Changes arrives on 3 days visit, meets officials

“PM Modi had announced the ‘High-powered Demography Mission’ on Aug 15 last year, which was approved by the Union Cabinet on Sep 11

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: A four-member government-constituted committee tasked with studying demographic changes in different parts of the country arrived here on Monday for a three-day visit, officials said.

Soon after the team's arrival, which is scheduled to undertake a detailed assessment of various areas during its stay, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo and Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhakar visited the panel at a hotel for a meeting, the officials said.

They said the meeting is part of the panel's consulta-

tions with senior officials as it gathers inputs for its assessment.

In May, the central government constituted a high-level committee headed by retired Justice Prakash Prabhakar Navlekar to study demographic changes arising from illegal immigration and other abnormal reasons, and to suggest measures to these changes.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the "High-powered Demography Mission" on August 15 last year, which was approved by the Union Cabinet on September 11.

In addition to the Census Commissioner, three distinguished experts -- Durga Shankar Mishra (Retired IAS), Balaji Srivastava (Retired IPS), and Shamika Ravi -- are the members of the Committee.

The Joint Secretary (Foreigners-I), Ministry of Home Affairs, is the Member Secretary of the Committee.

The officials said the four-member panel reached Jammu and a presentation

was given on demographic overview and changing trends before the arrival of the chief secretary and the DGP to meet the committee, which will continue its engagements till August 12.

The officials said the committee is scheduled to visit several areas of Jammu, including settlements inhabited by Rohingya and Bangladeshi immigrants, as well as areas along the International Border considered sensitive from security and administrative perspectives.

The Rohingyas are a Bengali-dialect-speaking Muslim minority in Myanmar. Following persecution in their country, many of them entered India illegally through Bangladesh and took shelter in Jammu and other parts of the country.

According to government data, over 13,700 foreigners, including Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshi nationals, are settled in Jammu and Samba districts of Jammu and Kashmir, where their population has increased by over ► **P11**

PoJK elections: 3rd phase held amid rigging, clashes

ISLAMABAD: The third phase of elections in Pakistan-occupied Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) was held on Monday in four constituencies, amid violence and allegations of rigging.

Polling started in Poonch Division's Bagh and Haveli districts at 8 am, while elections in seven constituencies have been indefinitely postponed.

Clashes between Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) workers were reported in some areas as the region's election commission classified most of the 803 polling stations in the four constituencies "sensitive or highly sensitive".

The Election Commission

had postponed polls on seven seats in Poonch Division in the third and final phase "due to concerns over the law and order situation".

India maintains that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable parts of it. New Delhi also asserts that Pakistan has been in "illegal and forcible occupation" of parts of these Union Territories.

The first and second phases of the polls in the region's so-called legislative assembly were held on July 27 and August 2, and were marred by violent protests and massive rigging allegations.

The establishment-backed PML-N ► **P11**

Parl panel flags security needs, recommends integrated surveillance at tourist spots in J-K

NEW DELHI: A Parliamentary panel has recommended an "integrated security and surveillance framework" for all major tourist destinations in Jammu and Kashmir with centralised monitoring facilities.

In its report on Administrative Governance, Socio-Economic Development and Border Security and Internal Security of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Border Security Management and Preparedness in the UT of Ladakh, the panel said clear inter-agency standard operating procedures be prescribed and reviewed before every peak tourist season to ensure a coordinated and timely response to any security-related incident.

The recommendations came in the backdrop of the terror attack on tourists on April 22 last

year in the scenic Baisaran valley of Pahalgam, where 26 people, mostly tourists, were killed by terrorists who had taken shelter in the higher locations.

The committee recommended that an integrated security and surveillance framework be developed for all major tourist destinations, incorporating comprehensive CCTV coverage, centralised monitoring facilities, regular vulnerability assessments and periodic security audits.

The committee further recommended that clear inter-agency standard operating procedures be prescribed and reviewed before every peak tourist season to ensure a coordinated and timely response to any security-related incident.

The committee had undertaken a study visit to Jammu, Srinagar, Gulmarg, Sonmarg and Kargil from May 11 to 15, 2026.

It undertook an "on-the-spot assessment" of the security arrangements at the tourist destination of Gulmarg; interacted with the representatives of the Jammu & Kashmir Police regarding the law and order situation in Sonmarg; and assessed the border security establishments and operational preparedness in Kargil through interactions with the representatives of the ► **P11**

MHA directs states to adhere to ‘Flag Code’

‘Vande Mataram to be sung at Red Fort’

NEW DELHI: In a historic first, the national song 'Vande Mataram' will be sung during the Independence Day celebrations at the iconic Red Fort on August 15, and the event's theme will be the contributions of youth power toward making India a developed nation by 2047, the government announced on Monday.

Defence Secretary R K Singh, addressing a press conference, said the plan to celebrate the success and contribution of youths during the event "predates" the students' protest at the Jantar Mantar.

"Youths are a critical part of our journey towards Viksit Bharat because they will both be contributing to it and will be hopefully gaining from it. That is the only reason," he said. "The plan to

celebrate the success and contribution of youth at the Independence Day celebrations predates any other event," Singh said.

"I can assure you that this planning predates the Jantar Mantar agitation," he added.

India will mark its 80th Independence Day on August 15, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading the celebrations from the Red Fort in Delhi.

Singh stated that as 2026 marks 150 years of 'Vande Mataram', the national song that inspired millions during the freedom struggle, will be sung from the ramparts of the Red Fort for the first time as a tribute to its enduring legacy. 'Vande Mataram' will be sung upon the prime minister's ► **P11**

Govt intensify efforts to build global biotech ecosystem: Dr Jitendra Singh



NEW DELHI: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, and MoS PMO Dr. Jitendra Singh has called for enhancing private sector participation in India's Biotechnology ecosystem, strengthening the industry outreach to promote indigenous products and technologies in

biotechnology and life sciences, and to encourage greater private investment.

Dr Jitendra Singh stressed the need to build stronger linkages between India's indigenous biotechnology capabilities, industry and investors so that promising innovations can move from research and development to commercialisation at a faster

pace.

The Minister's emphasis came during a meeting with senior officials of the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) in New Delhi, where a range of measures to expand investment, industry participation and market opportunities for India's biotechnology ecosystem were discussed.

The meeting focused on the implementation of the BIRAC Research, Development and Innovation Fund (BIRAC-RDIF), strengthening industry engagement in biotechnology, integrating Life Sciences Global Capability Centres (GCCs) with the domestic biotech ecosystem, leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility ► **P11**

Ex-terrorist gets life term for murder inside mosque

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: A court here has sentenced an ex-terrorist to life imprisonment for the 2020 murder of a former terror outfit chief inside a mosque, observing that violence in a place of worship cannot be tolerated.

Pronouncing the judgement on August 6, Principal Sessions Judge, Srinagar, Haq Nawaz Zargar said such acts strike at values of harmony and communal peace, and deserve strong judicial condemnation.

The court sentenced Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Dar (60) to life imprisonment for the murder of Abdul Gani Dar alias "Abdullah Gazali" (78), former

chief of the erstwhile Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen outfit.

Gazali was found brutally murdered inside the Jamiat-e-Ahli Hadith mosque in the Gawkal area on February 13, 2020. Dar, hailing from the Dalgate area of Srinagar, was arrested for the murder days later.

Gazali, a resident of Beerwah in Budgam district, was a co-accused in the murder of Jamiat-e-Ahli Hadith chief Maulana Showkat Shah, who was killed in a blast outside the same mosque ahead of Friday prayers on April 8, 2011.

"When anger enters a place meant for prayer, faith is wounded, peace is shattered, and the very purpose of such a sacred place stands ► **P11**



RBI appoints Jha as Regional Dir for J-K, Ladakh

JAMMU: Prabhakar Jha, Chief General Manager has taken over charge as Regional Director, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh with effect from August 10, 2026.

Before joining RBI Jammu, he was ► **P11**

UPI transactions remain free for consumers: FM

NEW DELHI: UPI payments remain free for consumers, and any future merchant charges (MDR) will apply only to certain categories of merchant transactions, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

Allaying apprehensions in certain sections that charges may be imposed on UPI transactions, the minister asserted that the vast majority of merchant transactions, including low-value transactions to roadside vendors, will continue to remain free.

She was replying to discussion on The Taxation and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which the Rajya Sabha returned with a voice

vote to the Lok Sabha, thus completing the parliamentary process.

The minister said the proposed legislation aims to amend Section 10A of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

The amendment is an enabling provision, and it does not impose any tax or transaction charge on UPI users, she added.

Sitharaman said the Bill enables the government to specify, through notification, the electronic payment modes that will continue to receive statutory protection against charges.

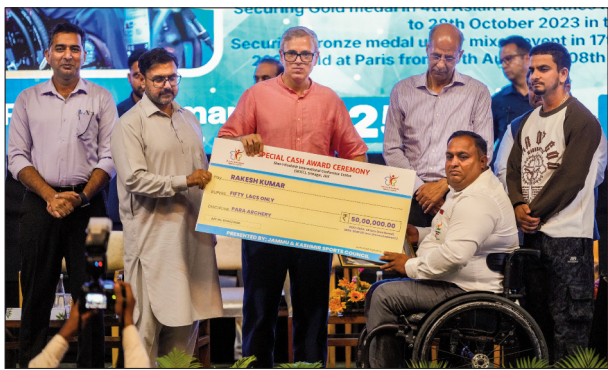
Once the Bill is passed by Parliament, the UPI and Services Steering Committee headed by NPCI will ► **P11**

CM Abdullah hands over Rs 2.71 Cr cash awards to outstanding athletes

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday presented cash awards amounting to Rs 2.71 crore to 580 outstanding sports persons and international athletes from Jammu and Kashmir at a Special Cash Award Ceremony held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC) here, recognising their achievements in the field of sports.

The cash awards pertain to the years 2023-24 and 2024-25. The Chief Minister personally handed over awards to 22 sportspersons, while the awards to the re-



maining beneficiaries were disbursed through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) directly into their bank accounts.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister congratulated the awardees and said the cash awards marked the beginning of the Government's efforts to provide greater support and encouragement to sporting ► **P11**

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CM greets artisans on getting award from Prez

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday extended a congratulatory message to artisans who received the prestigious national handloom award from President Draupadi Murmu.

"Chief Minister extended warm congratulations to artisan ► **P11**

Man accused of siphoning Rs 1.96 crore held in Samba

SAMBA: A 32-year-old man, who worked as an accountant at a private company in Delhi, has been apprehended in Jammu and Kashmir for allegedly misappropriating about Rs 1.96 crore from his employer nearly three years ago, police said on Monday.

The accused, Triloki Sharma, was arrested from a factory in Samba district on August 4 with the assistance of local police, they said. Police said the owner of a private company ► **P11**

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