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PM hails Cabinet's decisions

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hailed the Union Cabinet's approvals of four railway projects and a four-lane highway in Bihar and said these initiatives will improve connectivity, commerce and tourism.

Modi said a major boost has been given to railway infrastructure and connectivity across Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

"The Cabinet has approved four multi-tracking projects, adding important capacity to the Indian Railways network and benefiting lakhs of people. These projects will have many benefits like strengthening passenger and freight movement. Reducing congestion. Greater logistics efficiency. Better connectivity, commerce and tourism," he said in a post on 'X'.

The prime minister also said that connectivity's

Srinagar wakes up to CM's visit to review development projects

Omar inspects works across 8 constituencies

SRINAGAR: As a small number of early risers queued outside Srinagar's bakeries to get their fill of 'tchout' and 'nun chai' (bread loaf and salt tea) on Wednesday, perhaps the last person they expected to see was Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

And yet, known to be up early for his morning walks, Abdullah was seen with his cavalcade at 6.30 am, traversing narrow lanes of a city just stumbling out of slumber. He was on a tour with an entourage of ministers and senior officials --



spanning north and south of Srinagar -- to inspect ongoing development projects, assess public facilities and review the progress of key civic works aimed at improving urban infrastructure and public services.

Officials said the idea behind the early excursion was to gain a perspective on the ground reality -- rather

than solely relying on department briefings -- and cause minimal disruption for citizens.

The chief minister visited several places, from Downtown -- the interior areas popularly called 'Shehar-e-Khaas' -- to the Civil Lines areas.

He inspected a site for the proposed bridge at Barabar Shah; laid foundation stone for the comprehensive beautification, upgradation and junction improvement at Mirza Kamil Chowk in Hawal; inspected the ongoing conservation and restoration work at the historic Aali Masjid in Eidgah; and carried out

SC asks for report on NEET panel

NEW DELHI: Observing that there is a need to institutionalise the reforms in NEET exams, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the National Testing Agency to inform it about the steps taken to implement recommendations of the Radhakrishnan panel and the Nandan Nilekani committee.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to file a fresh affidavit in the matter.

"The Radhakrishnan Committee has correctly said it is a systemic problem which needs institutionalisation, which is the most important part of it. This process on paper everything is good. But then one exam happens and by the

US to re-evaluate J-K travel advisories: Gor

Envoy takes Shikara ride at Dal Lake

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The United States will reconsider the advisories on travel to Jammu and Kashmir as the Central Government and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah have taken steps to make it a safer place, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor said on Wednesday.

Jammu and Kashmir is an important part of India and an incredibly beautiful place, the US envoy said at a joint media briefing with Abdullah.

Gor reached Srinagar earlier in the day on a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

"The United States puts out travel warnings and every so often, we re-evaluate those



travel warnings. I cannot make any big announcements here today, but it is something we are going to look at.

"New Delhi, the chief minister here, the government here, we believe have made some incredible steps to keeping this area

Omar rules out 'raising' internal issues with US Envoy

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday said he will discuss the situation in the region with visiting US Ambassador Sergio Gor, but ruled out raising internal issues with Washington's representative, saying only the central government can resolve those issues.

"It is after a very long time that a US ambassador is visiting Jammu and Kashmir. ► P11

LG attends 23rd Foundation Day of SMVDU

Varsity emerged as beacon of knowledge, innovation: Sinha

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Wednesday attended the 23rd Foundation Day celebrations of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU). He felicitated the achievers and delivered a keynote address that outlined a vision for the University's future and its role in nation-building.

Extending warm greetings to the University family, the Lieutenant Governor described the day as a celebration of foresight, resolve, and sustained efforts that has transformed SMVDU into a centre of knowledge, innovation, and social responsibility. He emphasised that the University, blessed by Mata Vaishno Devi, carries in its name the tradition of devotion, strength, and faith, inspiring millions across India and the world.



Manual tallying of offerings at SMVD shrine to end: LG

JAMMU: The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) is taking significant steps to modernise and streamline the process of handling devotees' offerings, with the manual counting system set to be completely phased out within the next fortnight, Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha said on

The Lieutenant Governor said that a university is not built by its buildings but by ideas, dreams, and possibilities. He highlighted the role of visionary leadership, dedicated faculty, and curious students in shaping institutions that nurture not only knowledge but also humility, sensitivity, and responsibility towards society.

Reflecting on SMVDU's journey, the Lieutenant Governor lauded its achievements in education and research. He noted that faculty members have secured around 140 research projects, including international collaborations, and established a state-of-the-art AI and Deep Learning Lab. The University has received 14 patents, incubated 30 start-ups, and launched innovative programmes such as peer-learning. He urged the institution to strengthen

ACB books officials over encroachment

SRINAGAR: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Srinagar has registered FIR No. 16/2026 following a Joint Surprise Check and subsequent verification into allegations of illegal construction of a multi-storey building in the flood basin/fringe area of River Jhelum at Rajbagh, Srinagar.

The verification revealed alleged violations in the grant and subsequent modification of building permissions, including substantial increase in the plinth area and building height without obtaining mandatory NOCs from concerned departments. It also revealed alleged encroachment of approximately 2.9 Kanals of State/Kahcharai land and construction over drainage infrastructure and within the prohibited river-fringe area.

The FIR names then Senior Town Planner SDA Muneer Ahmad Khan, then Joint

Holy Mace of Shri Machail Mata pilgrimage proceeds for Paddar

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The 'Pavitra Charri' (Holy Mace) of the Shree Machail Mata Yatra, accompanied by thousands of devotees, left the Gori Shankar Temple in Sarkoot for Sub-Division Paddar early Wednesday, an official said.

Earlier, the Holy Mace had embarked on its journey from Jain Bazar in Jammu, reached Doda, and arrived in Kishtwar on Tuesday evening, the official said.

The annual pilgrimage to the 9,705-foot-high Machail Mata shrine in the scenic Paddar Valley of Kishtwar commenced on July 28 and is scheduled to conclude on September 8.

Several lakh pilgrims have visited the shrine so far this year, including around one lakh devotees who paid



obesance before the formal start of the annual yatra, following the opening of the shrine's doors in April.

Following completion of the road, with only the final 1.7 km to be covered on foot, the shrine will remain open to pilgrims until December before closing for the winter months due to heavy snowfall in the region, the officials said.

They said the District Administration Kishtwar, under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Sharma has

2nd Edition of ICC's MSME Conclave 2026

MSMEs true builders of India's economic resilience: LG Sinha

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha attended the 2nd edition of the ICC MSME Conclave 2026 in Jammu earlier on Wednesday. He delivered a keynote address at the Conclave, highlighting the transformative role of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the rise of Nano Global Capability Centres (GCCs), and the centrality of technology-led growth in shaping India's economic future.

The Lieutenant Governor underscored that India's economy stands at a defining crossroads where agility, innovation, and technology are rewriting the rules of enterprise. He said the theme of the conclave- "Shaping the Future of MSMEs, Nano



GCCs & Technology-led Growth" - is timely and visionary.

The Lieutenant Governor reaffirmed that MSMEs are powering employment, driving exports, and nurturing entrepreneurship across

3 family members killed in accident

JAMMU: Three members of a family were killed, and two others injured after a vehicle skidded off a hilly road and plunged into a gorge in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Wednesday.

The accident occurred near Panasa village late Tuesday night when the driver of a an SUV lost control while negotiating a curve en route from Thanole to Thub village.

They said Prem Singh (50), his wife Turi Devi (45), and mother-in-law Durgi Devi (70) were found dead by rescuers, who retrieved their bodies from the wreckage.

Two other passengers travelling in the

Dr Jitendra Singh pushes faster RDI Fund disbursal

NEW DELHI: The monthly joint meeting of Science Secretaries chaired by Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences and MoS PMO, was marked by three important announcements.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that the RDI Fund 'Conflict of Interest' policy was protected by stringent safeguards to ensure protection of Taxpayers' Money as well as private capital. However, he added that suggestions from stakeholders are most welcome and wherever feasible more safeguard could be considered. The Minister was apprised that stringent protocols are being followed for both fund disbursement and conflict-of-interest safeguards to ensure transparency, fairness and accountability, given that the RDI Fund involves public money. He was also informed that the framework has robust mechanisms to protect the integrity of investment decisions, with further safeguards being considered wherever required.

During the meeting, Dr. Jitendra



Singh was apprised that the disbursement of RDI funds to some of the selected firms has already been completed, while the process for disbursement to the remaining selected firms is underway and will be completed shortly.

The Minister was also apprised that the process for selection and announcement of Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs) is underway and is