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# CS Kundra ...

flora and fauna, he stressed the importance of collaborative action and policy support.

On the occasion, the Chief Secretary inaugurated an exhibition showcasing Ladakh's "Big Seven" Schedule-I wildlife species, a Sowa Rigpa herbarium display of native medicinal plants, and eco-friendly felt products developed by the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust. A special postal cancellation was released in association with the Department of Posts, and a toll-free wildlife helpline was formally launched to encourage public participation in conservation initiatives.

Rajesh S., IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, UT Ladakh, who attended as Guest of Honour, described the celebration as an important chapter in Ladakh's conservation journey. He announced the documentation of a new bird record for the Union Territory and highlighted mounting pressures on the Trans-Himalayan ecosystem due to climate change, glacial retreat and shifting pastoral landscapes. Emphasising the sustainable use of medicinal plants such as seabuckthorn, he called for stronger community engagement in conservation practices.

Lieutenant General Hitesh Bhalla, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Fire and Fury Corps, reaffirmed the Indian Army's commitment to ecological stewardship in Ladakh. He outlined ongoing initiatives, including wildlife protection measures, anti-poaching support, sterilisation drives for feral dogs and collaboration in waste management.

A major highlight of the programme was the exchange of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Fire and Fury Corps and the UT Ladakh administration to advance snow leopard conservation, reinforcing civil-military cooperation in safeguarding the region's biodiversity.

During the event, Padma Gyalpo, Regional Coordinator of the AWC eBird Project, presented the first record for Ladakh and the second record for India of the bird species Lapland Longspur, documented during the Asian Waterbird Census conducted in collaboration with Wetlands International South Asia.

A special lecture was delivered by Dr. Sejal Worah, Programme Director of World Wide Fund for Nature India, who described the partnership between the Indian Army and the UT Administration as a model for wider conservation collaboration. She spoke about the challenges facing Himalayan ecosystems and underscored the need to protect fragile mountain environments, preserve traditional livelihoods and ensure local community participation in policymaking.

The event also recognised community-led conservation efforts, including those of Ama Tsoegpa Hanupata for juniper protection and the Brown Bear Trust, Kargil, for its sustained work in wildlife conservation.

Following the inaugural session, a comprehensive technical seminar was conducted focusing on medicinal and aromatic plants and their role in sustaining health, heritage and livelihoods. Experts from the National Institute of Sowa Rigpa, the University of Ladakh, the Nature Conservation Foundation and the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust deliberated on sustainable management of medicinal plants, pastoral livelihood systems, wild edible plants and biodiversity conservation strategies.

Deliberations also covered wildlife-friendly infrastructure planning, training for Army personnel on the PARIVESH Portal of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and a review of conservation initiatives undertaken by Honorary Wildlife Wardens in UT Ladakh.

A dedicated workshop sensitised Army personnel to key hotspots of endemic and rare species across Ladakh's wildlife sanctuaries. The technical session concluded with closing remarks by the Chief Wildlife Warden, who reiterated the administration's resolve to strengthen conservation efforts through collaboration, awareness and sustainable practices.

## Army, Ladakh...

and Fury Corps and the Forest, Ecology and Environment Department of Union territory administration under the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) programme, a defence spokesman said.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Lt General Hitesh Bhalla, General Officer Commanding (GOC), Fire and Fury Corps, and Ladakh Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra.

Describing the initiative as a "historic step towards wildlife conservation", the spokesperson said the partnership seeks to promote sustainable development and environmental protection in Ladakh's high-altitude ecosystems and reaffirms the shared commitment to preserving its rich biodiversity and fragile ecology for future generations.

The collaboration will focus on conserving flagship species such as the snow leopard, Himalayan wolf, 'bharal' (blue sheep), ibex, marmot and black-necked crane, along with protection of their natural habitats.

Officials said the Army has consistently worked towards balancing the twin responsibilities of safeguarding the nation's borders and protecting the region's flora and fauna.

As part of the initiative, a joint Snow Leopard Conservation Cell will be established to monitor conservation efforts and further the objectives of species protection in the ecologically sensitive region, they said, adding that the partnership would create a framework for adopting eco-friendly practices and strengthening coordinated conservation measures in Ladakh.

## PM Modi ...

Kuwait, HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. India condemns violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity and stands with its peo-

ple in this difficult hour," the prime minister said.

He appreciated the Kuwaiti leadership's continued support to ensure the safety and well-being of the Indian community in that country.

During Modi's talks with the Amir of Qatar, both leaders emphasised the urgent need to restore peace and stability in the region through dialogue and diplomacy.

"Spoke with my brother, HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar. We stand firmly in solidarity with Qatar and strongly condemn any violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Modi said.

The prime minister also conveyed his appreciation for the Amir's continued support and care for the Indian community in Qatar during this challenging time.

Over the last two days, Modi has spoken to the King of Bahrain and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, and condemned attacks on the two countries, asserting that India stands in solidarity with their people in this difficult hour.

The prime minister has also spoken to King Abdullah II of Jordan and conveyed deep concern over the evolving situation in the region.

Modi has spoken to United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu too.

Around 90 lakh Indians live in the Gulf and West Asia. About 10,000 Indian citizens live, study and work in Iran, while more than 40,000 live in Israel.

Currently, the airspace of West Asia is almost closed. With flight services disrupted due to the military escalation in West Asia, hundreds of Indians are stranded in Dubai, Doha and other key hub airports.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which met on Sunday, expressed concern over the safety and security of the large Indian-expatriate community in the region.

The CCS also directed all departments concerned to take necessary and feasible measures to assist Indian nationals affected by the developments.

"It (CCS) expressed serious concern over the safety and security of the large Indian expatriate community in the region," an official statement issued after the meeting said.

India has in the past successfully evacuated thousands of its citizens from different parts of the world, including West Asia, amid conflicts.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has said Indian missions across the region are in continuous contact with Indian citizens and helplines have been activated.

Khamenei was killed in a major attack on Iran launched by Israel and the US on Saturday. His death was confirmed on Sunday.

US President Donald Trump has said the heavy and pin-point bombing of Iran would continue through the week or for as long as necessary.

## Lt Gov Gupta ...

masked dances and deliver prophecies. Describing the practice as unparalleled, he said it remains a source of collective pride for the people of Ladakh.

Reiterating the Administration's resolve to safeguard Ladakh's heritage, the Lieutenant Governor stated that monasteries, folk arts, indigenous languages and ancient festivals form the living foundation of the region's identity. He said the Administration is actively pursuing documentation of intangible cultural heritage, extending support to local artists and aligning traditional festivals with sustainable tourism initiatives.

Addressing the youth, he urged them to embrace modern education and opportunities while remaining firmly rooted in their traditions, language and cultural values. He called upon young Ladakhis to act as responsible custodians of their heritage in a rapidly changing world.

The Lieutenant Governor expressed appreciation to the head lamas and the management of Matho Monastery for sustaining the sacred festival with unwavering devotion through generations. He also sought blessings from the oracles for peace, prosperity and the well-being of the people of Ladakh and the nation.

Among those present were Director General of Police Ladakh Mukesh Singh, Administrative Secretaries Bhupesh Chaudhary and Shashanka Ala, Deputy Commissioner Leh Romil Singh Donk, Senior Superintendent of Police Leh Shree Raam, the Nambardar of Matho and representatives of various religious and political organisations.

## Shekhawat unveils ...

representation at such a prominent international platform would enhance visibility among global travellers, tour operators and industry leaders.

Officials from the Union Territory said the pavilion has been designed to immerse trade professionals in Ladakh's landscape, culture and adventure offerings, following preparations that began in late 2025 with coordinated efforts on promotional strategy, booth design and stakeholder engagement. The Minister's presence at ITB Berlin also coincided with his participation in the UN Tourism Ministers' Summit on empowering emerging destinations, a theme that aligns with Ladakh's evolving identity as a region seeking balanced growth with ecological responsibility.

The pavilion presents vivid imagery of Ladakh's dramatic terrain and heritage.

Among the attractions showcased are the deep blue waters of Pangong Lake and the pristine expanse of Tso Moriri, along with the stark beauty of Nubra Valley, where double-humped Bactrian camels traverse the cold desert landscape. The region's spiritual heritage is reflected through visual narratives of Hemis Monastery and Thiksey Monastery, monasteries that stand as enduring symbols of centuries-old Buddhist traditions. Adventure tourism circuits, including trekking routes, river rafting on the Indus and winter sports activities, are also being promoted to international buyers seeking distinctive high-altitude experiences.

At the same time, the Union Territory has used the Berlin platform to emphasise responsible tourism practices. Eco-conscious initiatives such as community-based homestays, carbon-neutral trekking packages and wildlife conservation efforts in Hemis National Park are being presented as models of sustainable mountain travel. These efforts align with the Ministry of Tourism's Travel for LIFE pro-

gramme, which encourages environmentally responsible visitor behaviour, particularly in fragile high-altitude ecosystems that have witnessed rising tourist footfall since Ladakh attained Union Territory status in 2019.

Tourism stakeholders, including the All Ladakh Adventure & Tour Operators Association, have welcomed the pavilion's inauguration, expressing optimism that focused B2B engagements in Berlin will open new European markets and encourage partnerships in tour packaging, aviation connectivity and boutique high-altitude accommodation. Lieutenant Governor Kavinder Gupta has consistently advocated the use of global platforms to widen Ladakh's outreach, and officials view the Berlin showcase as a continuation of that broader strategy.

As ITB Berlin 2026 progresses, the Leh-Ladakh Pavilion stands as a concerted effort to deepen international engagement while reinforcing the Union Territory's identity as a high-altitude destination that blends adventure, culture and environmental stewardship within the framework of the Incredible India campaign.

## Ladakh LG...

and reflect the true essence of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat. He appealed to citizens to use organic and natural colours and celebrate responsibly with sensitivity towards the environment.

The Lt. Governor prayed that this festival of colours brings happiness, prosperity, and good health to every citizen of Ladakh and the nation.

## Digital census ...

serve as a reflection of the governance reforms underway. He informed the gathering that Census 2027 will be the first fully digital and paperless census exercise in the country. The initiative, he said, is designed to ensure accurate, clean and transparent data collection, enabling evidence-based planning and informed decision-making across sectors.

Highlighting the broader national vision of "Viksit Bharat 2047," Sharma underlined the crucial role of the Directorate of Census Operations in strengthening data-driven governance. He noted that reliable demographic data will act as a foundation for policy formulation and inclusive growth strategies.

The Director further stated that Census 2027 aims to reach every individual across the country, ensuring comprehensive coverage. He added that initiatives such as "Census as a Service (CaaS)" and digital enumeration are aligned with ongoing administrative reforms focused on efficiency and citizen-centric delivery.

Officers present at the meeting reiterated their collective resolve to contribute towards the national objective of making India a developed nation and one of the top three global economies by 2047.

The meeting concluded with a pledge to implement the spirit of the Seva Sankalp Resolution in both intent and execution. Officers from Jammu, Srinagar and Leh offices assured full cooperation and adherence to timelines set for the preparations leading up to Census 2027.

## Ladakh allows ...

examined on the principle of parity and equality. Authorities also noted that adequate specialist strength is currently available under the National Health Mission in the Union Territory.

The revised policy stipulates that doctors opting for Senior Residency or higher academic courses must complete the remaining bond period after finishing the course. The duration spent in Senior Residency or higher studies will not be counted towards the compulsory service tenure. Failure to complete the balance bond period will attract liability to pay the prescribed bond amount as laid down in the 2022 order.

The department has outlined procedural requirements for availing the benefit. Eligible doctors must submit proof of selection or appointment to the course along with a formal request addressed to the Director, Health Services, UT Ladakh. Additionally, a certificate duly signed by the Principal or Head of the Institution must be furnished by January 31 and July 31 each year, confirming that the candidate is undergoing the course.

All other provisions of Government Order No. 16/2022-H&ME dated June 20, 2022, remain unchanged.

The order has been issued with the approval of the Competent Authority and circulated to senior officials, including the Additional Secretary, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; Chairman, JKBOPEE; Deputy Commissioners of Leh and Kargil; and Director Health Services, UT Ladakh, among others.

With this amendment, the Union Territory administration has aligned the policy for PG Specialists with the existing provisions applicable to undergraduate doctors, offering greater academic flexibility while retaining the obligation of compulsory service.

## India issues ...

strategically located strait of Hormuz shipping route triggering surge in global oil prices.

The US military has said six of its personnel were killed in the conflict so far.

The US-Israeli strikes have killed at least 787 people, the Iranian Red Crescent Society said. At least 11 people were killed in Israel, according to reports.

Pertinent, as the conflict in West Asia widened, India on Tuesday emphasised the interest of one crore Indian nationals in the region and voiced concern over consequences for the Indian economy due to possible disruptions in energy supplies even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed the evolving situation with leaders of Oman, Kuwait and Qatar.

In its second statement since the US-Israel strikes on Iran and Tehran's subsequent retaliation, India once again called for "dialogue and diplomacy" to end the conflict, noting that New Delhi has critical stakes in the security and stability of West Asia and the current developments "evoke

great anxiety".

New Delhi said it will continue to closely monitor the evolving situation and take relevant decisions in the national interest, adding it is in touch with the governments in the region as well as other key partners.

"In recent days, we have not only witnessed an intensification of the conflict but also its spread to other nations. The destruction and deaths have mounted, even as normal life and economic activities come to a halt," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

"As a proximate neighbour with critical stakes in the security and stability of the region, these developments evoke great anxiety."

The ministry said almost one crore Indian citizens are living in West Asia and their safety and well-being is of "utmost priority" for New Delhi. "We cannot be impervious to any development that negatively affects them," it said.

The conflict in West Asia intensified with Iran continuing to pound several Gulf countries in retaliation for the joint attack against it by Israeli and US. The US and Israel have also carried out fresh strikes on Iran.

As part of its offensive, Iran has blocked the strategically located Strait of Hormuz shipping route triggering surge in global oil prices.

"Our trade and energy supply chains also traverse this geography. Any major disruption has serious consequences for the Indian economy," the ministry said.

The Strait of Hormuz handles nearly 20 per cent of the world's total oil and gas supplies. About 50 per cent of India's oil imports or roughly 2.6 million barrels a day pass through the Strait.

Iran has carried out a wave of attacks mainly targeting Israel and American military bases in several Gulf countries including the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

The Iranian retaliation increased after Tehran announced early Sunday that its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had been killed in the Israel-US strike.

"As a country whose nationals are prominent in the global workforce, India is also firmly opposed to attacks on merchant shipping. Already, some Indian nationals have lost their lives or are missing as a result of such attacks in the last few days," it said.

"In this background, India strongly reiterates its call for dialogue and diplomacy. We raise our voice clearly in favour of an early end to the conflict. Already, many lives have been regrettably lost and we express our grief in that regard," it added.

It is learnt that at least three Indian nationals were killed in Iranian attacks on two merchant vessels in the waters off Oman.

The statement by the MEA, however, was silent on the killing of Ayatollah Khamenei.

The ministry said Indian embassies and consulates in the affected countries remain in close touch with Indian nationals and community organisations, issuing regular advisories.

"They have also extended all possible help to those stranded by the conflict. The embassies and consulates will continue to be proactive in addressing various consular aspects of this conflict," it said.

"We are in touch with the governments of this region as well as other key partners. The prime minister and external affairs minister have held discussions with their counterparts," it added.

Following his phone conversation with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, PM Modi said India stands "firmly" in solidarity with the Gulf nation and strongly condemns any violation of its "sovereignty and territorial integrity".

"We emphasised the urgent need to restore peace and stability in the region through dialogue and diplomacy. I also conveyed my appreciation for his continued support and care for the Indian community in Qatar during this challenging time," he said.

The prime minister described his phone conversation with Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah as "productive" and conveyed to the him that India condemns violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"We underscored the significance of dialogue and diplomacy in restoring regional peace and stability. Appreciated the Kuwaiti leadership's continued support to ensure safety and well-being of the Indian community in Kuwait," Modi said on social media.

In his phone conversation with Oman Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Modi "deeply appreciated" Oman's continued support to the Indian community.

"Condemned the violation of Oman's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We agreed that sustained diplomatic engagement is essential for earliest restoration of regional peace and stability," the prime minister said.

India had issued the first statement on February 28, hours after the US and Israel launched the military offensives against Iran.

"We had expressed our deep concern at the commencement of the conflict in Iran and the Gulf region on February 28. Even at that time, India had urged all sides to exercise restraint, avoid escalation and prioritise the safety of civilians," the ministry said.

"Unfortunately, in the holy month of Ramadan, the situation in the region has deteriorated significantly and continuously," it said.

Since Sunday, Modi has held phone conversation with President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Crown Prince and Prime Mibnister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman and King of Bahrain Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa.

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In a related development, the Indian embassy in Iran has relocated most Indian students from Tehran.

"Due to the heightened risk perception in Tehran city, the Embassy of India has relocated most Indian students who were in Tehran," the Indian mission said.

The students were taken to locations outside of Tehran. The embassy arranged transportation, food and accommodation for the students.