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Fervour, gaiety mark Mahashivratri celebrations across J&K

devotees.

A large number of people, including tourists, paid their respects, offering flowers and fruits to the deity and seeking his blessings.

The occasion was also observed at other temples throughout the valley.

Mahashivratri or Herath, which means the "night of Hara" (Lord Shiva), is an important festival for the Kashmiri Pandit community. It is observed on the 13th day of the dark fortnight of the lunar month of Phalgun, and marks the divine wedding of Almighty Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

An essential ritual of Herath involves soaking walnuts in clay vessels, symbolising fertility, prosperity, and divine blessings.

Largely dry weather till Feb 24 morning of February 17.

From February 18 to 24, the weather was likely to stay predominantly dry, bringing relief from frequent winter disturbances that affected parts of the region earlier this season.

Day temperatures were expected to show a gradual rise under prolonged sunshine, while nights might remain cold, particularly in higher altitude areas.

Shaderwah-Basohli road closed after being reopened

Jammu region, and over 250 vehicles carrying tourists had crossed the area when the avalanche occurred, the officials added.

A few dozen vehicles belonging to local vendors were, however, stuck. Official men & machinery had been pressed into service to clear the road, officials said.

The road connecting Shaderwah in Doda district with Basohli in Kathua district was reopened for traffic earlier in the day by Border Roads Organisation after the successful completion of a snow clearance operation that lasted more than two weeks.

Minor killed in road accident

Ittoo of Chowkund, Verinag.

A case in this connection was registered at the concerned police station.

India flexes superiority over Pak with 61-run win

istan's innings never quite took off and ended at 114 all out in 18 overs. Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah, Axar Patel and Varun Chakaravathy picked up two wickets each.

PCB chief Mohsin Naqvi left the Premadasa Stadium in Sri Lanka after Pakistan's shambolic show against India.

Axar Patel removed the dangerous-looking Usman Khan. Closing in on a half-century, the batter fell six short, getting out stumped to give Axar his second wicket of the innings. Mohammad Nawaz got himself an early boundary, but he holed out in the deep.

Things continued to go from bad to worse for Pakistan, who lost four wickets inside the Powerplay and with technically nothing on the board. They were all over the place. Salman Ali Agha got himself a boundary, but the Pakistan captain fell the very next ball to leave Pakistan reeling at 13/3.

Pakistan needed to chase down 176 after India posted a record-highest total of 175/7 in India-Pakistan T20 World Cup matches. Ishan Kishan set the tone with a smoking 77-run knock off just 40 balls before sizeable contributions from Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma and Rinku Singh in the end ensured India put up a challenging score on the board.

India were motoring along well, with a solid partnership brewing between Suryakumar and Tilak Varma. However, once Gautam Gambhir had a pretty strong animated chat with the two batters, right after the break, India lost two wickets in two balls, losing Tilak and the dangerous Hardik Pandya, for a first-ball duck.

Despite wickets falling, India continued to score at a 9-10 runs per over. Pakistan's fielding error didn't help their cause, with Shadab Khan gifting Suryakumar an easy four and another fielder failing to spot the ball. Usman Tariq, the much-talked-about spinner, finished with 4/24.

The Men in Blue lost Abhishek Sharma without scoring, but India scored at a decent rate, even as Pakistan tried to slow them down by introducing different spinners.

Playing XIs

India Playing XI: Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan(w), Tilak Varma, Suryakumar Yadav(c), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Rinku Singh, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakaravathy & Jasprit Bumrah.

Pakistan Playing XI: Saim Ayub, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Agha(c), Babar Azam, Mohammad Nawaz, Usman Khan(w), Shadab Khan, Faheem Ashraf, Shaheen Afridi, Abrar Ahmed & Usman Tariq.

Budget reflects yearning to be developed nation: Modi

Hai, Sahi Samay Hai", Modi said a "now is the time" sense of purpose has always been there within his government.

"But today, that sense of urgency has become a national conviction, a whole-of-society resolve. There is a new confidence in our nation," he said.

"Our national character has revealed itself even in times of different kinds of challenges and we are a bright spot of growth even in difficult global circumstances," he said.

Asked whether he has determined that India is now ready to launch into the next phase of development toward a moonshot for Viksit Bharat by 2047 and was it a now-or-never situation, Modi said the post-pandemic world order is opening new doors for India with countries eager to partner with it in trade and innovation.

"We have a young and increasingly skilled population; and we are focusing on strong growth accompanied by low inflation and macroeconomic stability. Our youth are creating waves in fields as diverse as space, sports and startups. We have ensured political stability and a reform-oriented policy environment," the prime minister said.

"And because of these developments, people are seeing this as a historic opportunity for India. Even as these developments were gaining momentum, the nation also witnessed the historic Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which infused the people with a sense of mission," he said.

Pointing to the the behavioural transformations that have taken root over the last few years, Modi said whether it was cleanliness or any other issue, people know that building a developed nation is not just about infrastructure or economy, but also about social habits.

"So, this is not a 'now or never' moment born out of compulsion. It is a 'we are ready' moment born out of preparation and inspiration. This Budget reflects this yearning to become a developed nation," he added.

Therefore, this budget should not be seen just as Budget 2026 but as the first budget in the second quarter of the 21st century, he said.

This budget consolidates the gains made since 2014 and builds upon them to impart momentum for the next quarter-century.

Just as the decisions and initiatives taken in the 1920s laid the foundation for Independence in 1947, the decisions we are taking now are laying the foundation for Viksit Bharat by 2047," he asserted.

Modi said none of his government's budgets have been made with an attitude of creating a run-of-the-mill 'bah

khata' documents.

"Because that is not our approach. It is my privilege that people's blessings have been with me for a long time, and I have served for 25 years as the head of government, first at the state level and now at the national level. If one takes a closer look at my approach in the last 25 years, it becomes clear that our work doesn't happen in bits and pieces," Modi said

"There is a broader strategy, a plan of action and an effective implementation that reflects the 'whole of the nation' thinking, continuity of purpose and a long-term vision, progressively unfolding step by step, year after year," the prime minister added.

Since 2014, the nation has come to view the Budget as far more than a ledger of numbers, facts, or ad hoc announcements, he said.

At every stage, the guiding focus has been nation-building, strengthening the economy and laying the foundations of Viksit Bharat, the prime minister said.

"This Budget represents the next level in this journey, imparting momentum to our 'Reform Express.' It is designed to accelerate momentum and prepare our youth for the opportunities of a rapidly changing world," he said.

He cited the pre-Budget Economic Survey to state that capital accumulation, labour formalisation, and digital public infrastructure together have elevated India's potential growth rate to 7 per cent.

"Productive spending has been a hallmark of our government. The high capital expenditure reflects our focus on infrastructure and capital investment, which are strong engines for long-term growth," he said.

The FY27 Budget sharply scales up capital expenditure to Rs 12.2 lakh crore - a 5-times increase compared to 2013 - as the Modi government reinforces its strategy of prioritising infrastructure creation, logistics expansion and investment in sunrise sectors to drive long-term growth.

"This reflects a conscious strategic choice to invest in assets that create productivity, jobs, and future economic capacity rather than short-term populism. This shows that our focus is on improving the quality of life for the people, creating jobs for our youth and advancing the nation's progress towards Viksit Bharat," Modi said.

For a long time, the prime minister said, high-quality infrastructure had been neglected, posing a challenge for the people and Indian businesses.

"Broken and outdated infrastructure has no place in a nation that aspires to create a Viksit Bharat," he said.

"Therefore, we revolutionised the sector with our speed, scale and focus on creating next-gen infrastructure, while upgrading the existing infrastructure. In the last decade or so, India has seen perhaps the most expansive infrastructure-building effort in our history, an unprecedented emphasis on quality! The most important aspect of this has been the way we have created infrastructure with the future in mind."

Highlighting the scale of expansion, he said the number of airports has doubled as orders for thousands of aircraft are placed, number of cities with metro services has more than quadrupled, rural roads and internet connectivity are expanding rapidly, and investments made in the transformational expansion of freight corridors, ports, and coastal connectivity.

On sectoral allocations, he said a capital outlay of almost Rs 3 lakh crore has been made for Indian Railways, with a priority on high-speed connectivity, freight capacity, and passenger safety.

Debate to remove LS Speaker on Mar 9: Rijiju

their protests as they did during the first part of the session, it would ultimately be detrimental to them.

"On March 9 in the Lok Sabha, we will have the debate on the no-confidence motion moved against the speaker. It is the rule to take it up on the first day. There will be a vote following the debate," he said.

The Budget Session began with the president's address to the joint sitting of Parliament on January 28 and went on recess on February 12. The Union Budget for 2026 was presented on February 1, and the session will resume on March 9, concluding on April 2.

Rijiju, who is on a visit to his Lok Sabha constituency, Arunachal West, mentioned that during the second part of the session, the government plans to identify specific ministries for discussions.

"In the Lok Sabha, we will discuss the demands for grants in five ministries and in the Rajya Sabha, we will discuss the working of five other ministries. In Rajya Sabha, it will not be on demands for grants but discussions on the ministries," he said.

The minister further informed that the government will select five ministries for discussions in the Rajya Sabha and then five ministries for the Lok Sabha.

Noting that the second part of the budget session will be interesting, he said, "If the opposition doesn't allow the House to function, we will go for the guillotine. It will be a loss for them," he said.

When asked why this part of the session would be particularly interesting, he noted that it coincides with the upcoming assembly elections in four significant states - West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and Kerala - as well as the Union Territory of Puducherry.

"We will bring some important bills, including one critical bill. We will not disclose now as to what the bill is, but we will bring up one very important business in the second part. We will pass all these bills," he said.

Subsequently, eight opposition members were suspended for the remainder of the Budget Session for unruly behaviour in the House.

Last week, the speaker decided to step aside from his role as the presiding officer of the House, hours after the opposition submitted a motion for his removal from office, alleging that he had acted in a "blatantly partisan" manner.

Kedarnath temple to reopen on Apr 22

war Temple.

Following the rituals and special prayers, religious scholars and priests calculated the muhurat (auspicious timing) through panchang or Hindu calendar readings. The temple, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas, will be opened at 8 am on April 22.

The ceremony at Omkareshwar Temple, decorated with around nine and a half quintals of flowers, was attended by Kedarnath Temple's chief priest Rawal Bhimashankar Ling, Kedarnath MLA Asha Nautiyal, Temple Committee chairman Hemant Dwivedi, other officials, religious leaders, and hundreds of devotees.

Devotees offered prayers, raised chants of "Jai Baba Kedar" and partook of prasad at community feasts organised by donors.

With the announcement of Kedarnath Temple's reopening date, the schedule for the Char Dham yatra in the Garhwal Himalayas has also been finalised. The doors of Badrinath Dham will reopen on April 23, while Gangotri Dham and Yamunotri Dham will reopen on April 19, coinciding with Akshaya Tritiya.

India 'very successful' emerging economy: UN Chief

and China.

"It is absolutely essential that AI becomes a universal instrument for the benefit of humankind," Guterres said.

"The role of India, (which) is today a very successful emerging economy that is having a bigger and bigger role in not only the global economy but in its influence in global affairs, India is the right place to have this Summit and to make sure that AI (is) being discussed in depth, in all its enormous potential and also in all its risks, but that AI belongs to the whole world and not only to a

few," he said.

From world leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, to technology honchos, including Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, the Summit is bringing together leaders, policymakers and innovators from across the world for deep-dive discussions on the way forward for AI.

Guterres had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi late last year on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Johannesburg and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar when he was in New York.

"When one looks at the UN, you can imagine my frustration when I see the Security Council unable to take decisions, and it is clear that we need a fundamental reform of the Security Council, first of all, to represent the world as it is today and not after the Second World War. And second, to be able to take effective decisions for peace and security around the world," he said.

Guterres added that for a "fair" multilateral system, both in the UN and international financial institutions, emerging economies need to have a stronger voice and be at the centre of this networking.

"I see India in the centre of those emerging economies, and this is something I would be delighted to discuss with Prime Minister Modi because I have a lot of hope for the role that India can play in shaping this multipolar world," he said.

At the Summit, Guterres will be joined by senior UN leaders, including UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk and Under-Secretary-General and UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology Aman-deep Singh Gill.

Guterres further underlined that "it is always fantastic" to go to India, "a democracy with an enormous diversity and extraordinary civilisation and culture."

The UN chief elaborated that he is currently reading about how India, for centuries, has been the main factor of transformation of the world, "starting hundreds of years before Christ and going on for centuries, with an enormous influence of Indian culture, of Indian civilisation that we can see in China, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean."

"Even in the time of the Roman Empire, there were very strong connections with India and a very important influence of Indian culture in what is today the Mediterranean area.

"So, it is always an enormous pleasure to visit India," Guterres said.

Today's India represents land of opportunities: Kavinder

ation of nation-building. It is a phase that shapes character, instills discipline and nurtures a sense of responsibility towards society and the nation," he said and added, "Life's challenges strengthen resolve and teach invaluable lessons, enabling youth to emerge stronger and more committed to national service."

Highlighting the transformative power of organised youth, the LG said, "When young minds unite with purpose, they can change the direction of society. Student life is the first laboratory where the future of the nation is prepared."

"Today's India is an India of opportunities," he added.

In the age of technology and artificial intelligence, he reassured students that technology does not eliminate opportunities, but expands them. He urged youth to continuously learn, innovate and adapt, noting that human creativity, leadership and sensitivity can never be replaced by machines.

Calling upon students to think beyond traditional career paths, Gupta encouraged them to explore start-ups, self-employment and skill-based avenues. He said that today's youth must aspire to become job creators, not merely job seekers.

Referring to the inspiring vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for Viksit Bharat @2047, Gupta said that India's youth are its greatest strength. He stressed that self-reliant youth are the foundation of a strong nation, and affirmed that the youth are not just the future of India, but also its present driving force.

Speaking on Ladakh's unique identity and importance, Gupta said that educated and aware youth are the region's biggest strength. He urged students to stay connected with their language, culture and roots, while upholding the spirit of unity and the ethos of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat".

He assured that the Ladakh Administration remains fully committed to listening to students' concerns and resolving them with sensitivity and priority, reiterating that student welfare remains central to governance.

He congratulated the Association for the successful conduct of the event and expressed hope that the association would continue its commendable work for the benefit of students in the years to come.

He called upon the youth to uphold honesty, hard work and discipline, and to contribute meaningfully towards building a strong, self-reliant and developed India.

On the occasion, the LG also felicitated executive members of the association in recognition of their dedicated service and contribution towards student welfare and organisational strengthening.

Earlier, LSWA president Muzaffar Ali highlighted the key initiatives and sustained efforts of the association in supporting Ladakhi students.

The welcome address was delivered by Mansura Paldan. Cultural performances by Balti, Shina and Yaseen groups, along with a Ladakhi song, beautifully reflected the theme "Unity in Diversity - Spirit of Ladakh", showcasing the region's rich cultural heritage and harmony.

Sabrina Aamir presented vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to all dignitaries, participants and organisers for making the event a meaningful and inspiring success.

Among others, the programme was attended by Kacho Ahmad Ali Khan and Raj Kumar.

Doctors formed 'Ansar Interim' to carry out terror attacks

with active terrorists had been severed, officials said. Roles and operational codes were assigned to the members during the meeting.

Umer assumed the role of coordinator and, along with Gannie, handled finances and procurement.

It was in 2023 that the group decided to acquire fertiliser from the Sohna and Nuh areas of Haryana. On the instructions of Umer, NPK (commonly known as Potassium Nitrate in this context) was also procured from a chemical shop in Faridabad.

During interrogation, the arrested doctors said Umer began watching online videos to learn rudimentary Improvised Explosive Device (IED) construction and had managed to prepare Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP), one of the most notable peroxide explosives, which has been used in several terrorist attacks as the explosive filling for IEDs.

According to officials, Adeel had started to look for members for the new terror group and roped in an individual named Danish, alias Jasir, from South Kashmir.

Adeel took Danish to a rented accommodation within Al-Falah University in Faridabad, where both saw Umer and Gannie preparing TATP explosive materials.

Umer later tried to persuade Danish to carry out a 'fi-dayeen' (suicide) attack, but he backed out at the last minute, citing his poor economic condition and the belief that suicide was forbidden in Islam.

Umer, a 28-year-old doctor from Pulwama, is believed to have been the most radicalised member and key operative in a network spanning Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. Officials suspect he was planning a powerful Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast.

Evidence suggests his original plan was to place a VBIED in a crowded place, either in the national capital or at a site of religious importance, and then flee.

However, the plot fell apart when Srinagar police's meticulous investigation led to Gannie's arrest and the seizure of explosives. This likely caused Umer to panic, finally ending in the premature blast outside the Red Fort.

The intricate inter-state terror network was exposed after a small but significant incident involving the appearance of JeM posters on walls in Bunkpora, Nowgam, on the outskirts of Srinagar, on October 19.

Srinagar police registered a case and reviewed CCTV camera footage, leading to the arrest of three locals - Arif Nisar Dar alias Sahil, Yasir-ul-Ashraf, and Maqsood Ahmad Dar alias Shahid - all of whom had prior stone-pelting cases.

Their interrogation led to the arrest of Maulvi Irfan Ahmad, a former paramedic turned Imam from Shopian, who allegedly supplied the posters and used his access to radicalise the doctors.

Birla to represent India at Tarique's oath ceremony

on Sunday.

Rahman led the Bangladesh Nationalist Party to a spectacular victory in Bangladesh's parliamentary polls.

"The speaker's participation at this important event underscores the deep and enduring friendship between the peoples of India and Bangladesh, reaffirming India's steadfast commitment to the democratic values that bind our two nations," the ministry said in a statement.

"As neighbours united by a shared history, culture, and mutual respect, India welcomes Bangladesh's transition to an elected government under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, whose vision and values have received an overwhelming mandate of the people," it said.

6 AGMUT cadre IAS officers from J&K among 72 transferred

Additional Chief Secretary (Social Welfare), holding additional charge of Director (UTCS), has been posted as Additional Chief Secretary (Social Welfare), while continuing to hold the additional charges of Director (UTCS) and Additional Chief Secretary (SC/ST/OBC).

Santosh D Vaidya, AGMUT cadre IAS officer, presently serving as Principal Secretary (Finance) in Jammu and Kashmir, on joining GNCTD, has been posted as Principal Secretary (Home) with additional charge of Principal Secretary (Finance/Planning), Principal Secretary (Industries) and Chairperson, DSIIDC.

In another key move, Pandurang K Pole, currently serving as Secretary (Higher Education & TTE) with additional charge of Secretary (Education), has been posted as Secretary (GAD) with additional charge of Secretary-cum-Commissioner (Labour) and Secretary (Cooperation).

Vijay Kumar Bidhuri, presently serving as Secretary (Urban Development) holding additional charge of Secretary (Environment & Forests), has been posted as Secretary (Urban Development) with additional charge of Secretary (Environment & Forests) and Chairman (DPCC).

Niraj Kumar, who was awaiting posting, has been appointed as Special Secretary (SC/ST/OBC).

Saloni Rai, currently serving as DC, Udhampur, on joining GNCTD, has been posted as Deputy Commissioner/District Magistrate (North), GNCTD.

Farmers fully protected: Shah on US trade deal

that the Modi government's policies had protected farmers, dairy and agricultural exports globally.

"The new digital PDS will end corruption, eliminate middlemen and ensure transparent grain delivery to the poorest citizens," Shah said while addressing a gathering here after launching India's first Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Public Distribution System.

"I want to tell the prince of Congress, Rahul Gandhi, who talks about farmers in Parliament, how much grain did you buy from farmers? Compare 10 years of the UPA government and 10 years of the Narendra Modi government. We have bought 15 times more grain than you at the support price," he said

"In your time, the farmers' budget was Rs 26,000 crore, and in Narendra Modi's time it has risen to Rs 1,29,000 crore. You waived loans once, but Narendra Modi has worked so that farmers do not need loans at all by giving Rs 6000 per year directly into their accounts for ten years."

"They say Modi has harmed farmers through trade agreements with the European Union, England and America. I have come to tell the farmers of the country that Rahul Gandhi is lying and misleading them. Modi ji has protected farmers in all these trade agreements. No one needs to worry," Shah added.

"This is the land of dairy. Rahul Gandhi, you are spreading false rumours that Modi has ended our dairy sector through these trade deals. We are the ones paving the way for dairy growth. Narendra Modi ji has provided complete security to the dairy sector in both agreements. These agreements have opened the path for Indian fishermen's products and agricultural produce to reach global markets. I want to assure you once again, Narendra Modi cannot compromise with your interests; this is impossible."

Shah emphasised that the digital transformation would redefine food grain delivery by embedding transparency directly into the distribution chain.

"Now digital transformation is being realised in providing cheap food grains to the poor," Shah said, adding that the rollout includes modern systems such as CBDC-based payments and Annapurthi Grain ATMs developed in Gujarat.

Driving home the governance message, he asserted that technology would dismantle long-standing leakages: the new system, he said, "will completely eliminate corruption and end middlemen," ensuring that citizens in remote villages, aspirational districts and backward regions receive their full entitlement of food grains directly and transparently.

India stepping forward to guide world towards peace, prosperity: LG

The LG urged people to harness power for societal transformation and craft a blueprint for a prosperous India that lights the world's path.

"Sant Kabir's eternal wisdom and his message pave a brighter societal path, deepening our unity while forging spiritual and material triumphs for the nation. The legacy and philosophy of Sant Kabir is shining brightest today, awakening society's inner soul," he said.

"India's greatest strength is its ability to master tech and tradition, microchip and mantra. Our ancient roots and digital branches, modern tools and timeless values of ancient sages are perfect blueprint for the 21st century success and prosperity," he added.

Sinha emphasised that India's timeless mantra "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"-the world as one family-holds unprecedented relevance today.

"As global divisions deepen in economic and strategic realms, India's timeless wisdom offers a vision where unity, peace, and joy become a universal way of life," he said.

The LG also called upon all sections of society to discharge their shared duties to eliminate economic gaps & social division, and embrace inclusion and constitutional values for true harmony.

Responding to demands, he reiterated the commitment of Government of India to resolve the issues of reservation in promotion and a gazetted holiday on Sant Kabir Jayanti in UT of J&K.