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India, Australia underscore maritime freedom, supply chain security

defence trade mission to India. They agreed to explore further exchanges, including through the Joint Working Group on Defence Industry, Research, and Materiel.

The two ministers welcomed the growing strategic convergence between Australia, India, Japan and the United States in the Indo-Pacific and reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing collaboration on maritime domain awareness to increase interoperability among the partners.

Singh and Marles expressed strong support for the Quad Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration (IPMSC) initiative, to be implemented initially in the Indian Ocean Region as well as through subject matter expert exchanges and tabletop exercises.

In a social media post, Singh described his meeting with Marles as "excellent". "Together we reviewed the full range of bilateral defence cooperation and discussed ways and means to enhance it further. The India-Australia Defence Partnership is poised to make steady progress in the years to come," he said.

Fight against drugs requires constant alertness, unity: LG

and your dream of a safe, empowered and drug-free Jammu Kashmir. In 2021, I pledged a fear-free and drug-free Jammu Kashmir so that the shadows of drugs and terror that once loomed over our youth can be banished entirely. I can say with confidence today that the chains that once trapped our youth in the dark web of drugs are breaking apart, link by link, day by day.

Over the past 51 days we have carried out extensive, coordinated operations against narco-terrorists and drug traffickers. With a whole-of-government approach we are dismantling networks that had become entrenched. Raids have targeted drug smugglers and drug peddlers in villages and towns, supply chains have been broken, and narco-terrorists have been exposed," the LG said.

It is pertinent to mention that 923 FIRs have been registered against drug traffickers in the last 51 days. More than 1,000 drug smugglers and peddlers have been arrested, over 55 traffickers have been detained under PIT-NDPS provisions, 668 driving licenses have been cancelled, and recommendations have been made to revoke 124 passports. The Lieutenant Governor said that the fight against drugs is not limited to raids and arrests but the administration is also working on breaking the supply chain, generating public awareness and working towards the dignified rehabilitation for those suffering from addiction.

"We will ensure our youth are freed from the grip of addiction, return to the mainstream of society, and become the strength that will lead Jammu Kashmir toward a brighter tomorrow," he said.

Ladakh admin pushes 100 pc solar coverage

stalled on 1,496 government buildings across Ladakh with a cumulative capacity of 6.9 MW up to 2025-26.

As part of the drive to maximize the use of rooftop spaces and promote sustainable energy, all Heads of Departments and concerned officers have been directed to furnish details of government buildings that are yet to be covered but are feasible for solar installations.

The information will be submitted to higher authorities for further action aimed at expanding renewable energy infrastructure in the Union Territory.

Forest guard held in graft case

related to allotted works. Following negotiations, the accused allegedly agreed to accept ₹15,000 as illegal gratification.

The complainant, unwilling to pay the bribe, approached the Anti-Corruption Bureau seeking legal action against the accused.

After receiving the complaint, ACB conducted a discreet verification which reportedly established the prima facie demand of bribe by the public servant. Subsequently, an FIR under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, was registered at Police Station ACB Central Jammu and an investigation was initiated.

During the course of investigation, a trap team was constituted by the ACB. The team laid a successful trap and caught the accused, identified as Vaseem Ahmad Hap, son of Manzoor Ahmad of Hidayal, Kishtwar, presently posted as Forest Guard and looking after accounts work in the office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Forest Division Marwah, red-handed while demanding and accepting ₹15,000 from the complainant.

The accused was arrested on the spot, and the bribe money was recovered from his possession in the presence of independent witnesses associated with the trap proceedings.

Following the arrest, searches were also conducted at the residential premises of the accused government employee in the presence of an Executive Magistrate and independent witnesses.

ACB officials said further investigation into the case is underway. Jammu Business Directory

Mukesh Singh assumes charge as Manipur DGP

Manipur Police attended the occasion.

Following the reception, Singh held a brief introductory meeting with senior police officers, during which he outlined key policing priorities for the force. He underscored the importance of maintaining professionalism, upholding the Constitution of India and the Rule of Law, and ensuring effective coordination with sister agencies, Manipur Police said.

Mukesh Singh is a 1996-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the AGMUT (Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territories) cadre and most recently served as the Director General of Police (DGP) of Ladakh. He has been appointed to Manipur on a three-year inter-cadre deputation approved by the Centre in public interest.

The DGP stressed the need for impartiality and neutrality in the discharge of policing duties, emphasizing that public service must be carried out without bias and in accordance with established legal and constitutional principles.

Mukesh Singh succeeds Rajiv Singh, who has been appointed Secretary (Security) in the Cabinet Secretariat. Rajiv Singh, a Tripura cadre IPS officer, assumed charge as Manipur DGP on May 29, 2023.

Chief minister Y. Khemchand Singh on Sunday took to X and wished success to the new Manipur DGP. "I extend my best wishes to him as he takes on this important responsibility. With his vast experience and distinguished service record, I am confident that he will provide strong leadership in maintaining peace, law and order, and public safety across the state. Wishing him a successful tenure ahead."

Rly Divn earns Rs 66.50 lakh from ticket-checking drive

forms of irregular travel in the month-long drive. "The enforcement drive generated revenue of Rs 66,50,165," they said.

Railway officials said intensive checking was carried out by ticket-checking staff at railway stations, aboard trains and on platforms. The revenue was collected from passengers found travelling without tickets, without valid passes, present on

platforms without platform tickets and for other ticketing irregularities, they said.

Jammu Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Uchit Singhal said that ticketless travel not only causes financial losses to the Railways but also creates inconvenience for passengers travelling with valid tickets. He said the practice often leads to unauthorised occupation of seats, overcrowding and security-related concerns.

He said special checking squads are being regularly deployed by the division to address the issue. He added that the objective of such drives is not merely to collect penalties but also to create awareness among passengers about the importance of travelling with valid tickets.

He urged passengers to obtain valid tickets before commencing their journey through computerised reservation centres, the UTS mobile application, the IRCTC platform or ticket counters.

He also advised those visiting railway stations to receive or see off passengers to purchase platform tickets.

Singhal warned that passengers found travelling without tickets could face penalties and legal action under Sections 137 and 138 of the Railways Act, 1989.

Northern Railway's Jammu Division said similar enforcement drives would continue in the future to ensure transparency in railway operations and provide better facilities to genuine passengers.

PM SVANidhi transformed lives of countless street vendors: Modi

dors, who constituted a significant part of the informal workforce and often had limited access to formal credit, it aimed to support the growth of their businesses while promoting financial inclusion.

The scheme was launched in June 2020. It is a joint responsibility of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and the Department of Financial Services (DFS).

More than 1.12 crore collateral-free loans worth over Rs 17,800 crore have been disbursed under the PM SVANidhi scheme since its launch in June 2020, emerging as a key driver of financial inclusion and economic empowerment for street vendors.

The scheme has benefited over 75.5 lakh street vendors across urban India, helping them access formal credit, adopt digital payments and avail social security benefits.

Justice Sanjeev appointed as acting CJ of J&K, Ladakh HC

and Ladakh, to perform the duties of the office of the Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

According to an official notification issued under Article 223 of the Constitution of India, Justice Sanjeev Kumar will discharge the functions of the Chief Justice following the appointment of Justice Arun Palli, the incumbent Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, as a Judge of the Supreme Court of India.

The appointment ensures continuity in the functioning of the High Court until a regular Chief Justice is appointed.

Justice Sanjeev Kumar has been serving as a Judge of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh and brings with him extensive judicial experience. His appointment comes in the wake of the elevation of Justice Arun Palli to the Supreme Court, marking a significant development in the higher judiciary.

The notification stated that the President exercised the powers conferred under Article 223 of the Constitution, which provides for the appointment of an acting Chief Justice when the office of the Chief Justice of a High Court falls vacant or when the Chief Justice is unable to perform the duties of the office.

J&K leads UTs in census self-enumeration: Amit Sharma

2027. Over 6.67 lakh households voluntarily submitted their details through the official Self-Enumeration portal," Chief Principal Census Officer and Director Census Operations for Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma told reporters here.

Describing the response as highly encouraging, Sharma said, "Residents across districts actively participated in the exercise, with Pulwama, Jammu and Kulgam recording particularly strong responses".

He also appreciated the participation of residents from Leh and Kargil districts in Ladakh. Sharma thanked district administrations, principal census officers, field functionaries, media organisations and residents for contributing to the successful completion of the self-enumeration phase.

Appealing to the public to cooperate with census staff, he said enumerators and supervisors would visit households during the month-long house listing operations, a key phase of census 2027 aimed at collecting information on housing and living conditions.

Highlighting preparations for the nationwide exercise, Sharma said house listing block demarcation and geo-tagging activities have been virtually completed across the two Union territories.

"More than 23,600 house listing blocks have been demarcated in Jammu and Kashmir and 567 in Ladakh", he said.

He added that extensive training programmes have been conducted for master trainers, field trainers, enumerators and supervisors to ensure uniform and professional conduct of census operations, including in remote areas.

According to Sharma, over 27,000 census kits have already been dispatched across Jammu and Kashmir and around 800 kits distributed in Ladakh to facilitate field operations.

He urged residents to provide accurate information during the exercise, saying the data collected would help in effective planning and implementation of welfare programmes.

Sharma also assured citizens that all information collected during census operations would remain confidential under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948, and would be used solely for statistical purposes.

Individual data, he said, is legally protected and cannot be shared with any agency or institution. The officer further said special arrangements have been made to ensure coverage of remote, border, tribal, migratory and nomadic populations so that no household or individual is left out of the census process.

Speaking on the occasion, Press Information Bureau Director, Jammu, Neha Jalali said Census 2027 would be India's first fully digital census, featuring mobile-based data collection and caste enumeration supported by robust institutional preparedness and data infrastructure.

She said the house listing and housing operations would collect information on buildings, households, housing conditions, family composition and living arrangements, which would support informed policymaking and development planning.

Jalali stressed the importance of public awareness and media participation in ensuring the successful conduct of census operations and called upon media organisations to continue disseminating authentic information about Census 2027. City & Local Guides

India, US finalise most aspects of trade deal

sides announced the framework for the first phase of the BTA.

"Mostly everything is finalised. As you know, US Ambas-

sador Gor said that 99 per cent of the things have been finalised. Discussions are going on about small issues, commas and full stops.

"While finalising, how will the legal changes that have taken place in the US be reflected in the final agreement, and what kind of changes will be made accordingly. After finalising that, I am fully confident that, with the US, we will conclude the first tranche of the BTA as soon as possible, sign it and start further discussions on how to have a more comprehensive BTA," he told reporters in Delhi.

The US team will be led by its chief negotiator Brendan Lynch. India's chief negotiator Darpan Jain is an additional secretary in the Department of Commerce.

The two sides are "proposed to finalise the details of the interim agreement and take forward the negotiations under the broader BTA on multiple areas, such as market access, non-tariff measures, customs and trade facilitation, investment promotion, and economic security alignment", the commerce ministry has said.

On February 7, India and the US issued a joint statement finalising the contours or framework of the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA) or an interim trade agreement. Now, both sides will have to finalise the legal text for that deal.

The framework reaffirmed the countries' commitment to the broader India-US BTA negotiations.

According to that framework, the US had agreed to reduce tariffs on India to 18 per cent from 50 per cent. It had removed the 25 per cent tariffs on Indian goods for buying Russian oil and was to cut the remaining 25 per cent to 18 per cent under the pact.

But, on February 20 this year, the US Supreme Court ruled against President Donald Trump's sweeping reciprocal tariffs, which were imposed under the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA).

After that, the US President announced the imposition of 10 per cent tariffs on all countries for 150 days, starting February 24. It would end on July 23.

In light of these changes, a meeting between the chief negotiators of India and the US scheduled for February was postponed. The two sides then met in Washington in April, when the Indian team, headed by Jain, visited America from April 20-23, 2026.

To carry forward those discussions, the US team is visiting India this week.

As the tariff landscape has changed in the US, both sides may wish to revisit the agreement's framework.

Under the agreed framework, India proposed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products.

New Delhi has also expressed its intentions to purchase USD 500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products, and coking coal over the next five years.

This meeting will be important, as India enjoys a comparative advantage over its competitor countries. Now, with all US trading partners facing a uniform 10 per cent tariff, the pact requires recalibration.

Sources said it is important that India should get an advantage over its competitor nations on the tariff front in the trade pact with the US. India's competitors include Southeast Asian nations, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

"The issue would come during this week's meeting," they said, adding that US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer would also visit India later, once "we have more clarity on the issues and the findings of the Section 301 investigations".

The US can impose any tariff rate under these investigations on its trading partners.

Further, in March, the US Trade Representative (USTR) also launched two unilateral Section 301 investigations against a number of countries, including India, over excess capacity and failures to eradicate forced labour in global supply chains.

India has strongly rejected allegations made by the US Trade Representative in those two investigations and has requested that the probes be initiated, as the initiation notice has failed to provide a cogent rationale to substantiate the claims.

The US was the second-largest trading partner of India in 2025-26. India's outbound shipments to the US grew marginally 0.92 per cent to USD 87.3 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 15.95 per cent to USD 52.9 billion. The trade surplus declined to USD 34.4 billion in 2025-26 from USD 40.89 billion in 2024-25.

US bombs Iranian military sites; Kuwait hit by drone

though the US Army still flies the Predator. The US military said no American troops were hurt in the attacks.

Kuwait, meanwhile, said its air defences had opened fire early Monday morning to intercept incoming drone and missile fire. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in a statement carried by the state-run IRNA news agency that US forces had targeted a telecommunications tower on an island. Breaking News Alerts

The Guard said it responded with an attack without saying where, likely referring to the attack on Kuwait. The country is home to US Army Central, the Mideast forward command for the Army.

The attacks represent the latest escalation between the US and Iran, even as both have insisted they are continuing to negotiate, particularly over Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

Over the weekend, the US fired a missile into the engine room of a Gambia-flagged cargo ship trying to break its blockade of Iranian ports.

A trickle of ships have made it out of the strait, but pressure continues on global energy supplies, as well as chemical fertiliser which has led to fears of food shortages. The Gulf region produces 30% of globally traded chemical fertilisers.

US President Donald Trump met with advisers on Friday but has yet to decide on whether to move ahead with a deal to extend the ceasefire and reopen the strait. Iran has said the deal had not been finalised.

Trump expressed optimism about the talks in a post on his Truth Social platform early Monday in Washington, mocking critics without addressing the ongoing crossfire.

"Iran really wants to make a deal, and it will be a good one for the USA and those that are with us," he wrote. "Just sit back and relax, it will all work out well in the end - It always does!"

ECI schedules RS polls for 27 seats on June 18

148 seats in the 245-member Rajya Sabha. The Congress currently holds four seats, the JMM one and the YSRCP three. Based on the present strength of parties in state assemblies, the Congress may improve its tally to five seats.

The JMM is likely to win two seats and the ruling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) is expected to open its account in the Upper House with one seat from Tamil Nadu in the by-polls.

The by-polls were necessitated after NCP leader Sune- tra Pawar and AIADMK leader C Ve Shanmugam resigned

from the Rajya Sabha following their election to the state assemblies. In Odisha, Debashish Samantaray resigned from both the BJD and the Rajya Sabha before joining the BJP.

In Maharashtra, the NDA is comfortably placed to retain the seat vacated by Sunetra Pawar. In Tamil Nadu, the lone seat is expected to go to the TVK with the support of allies and in Odisha the seat is likely to go to the ruling party.

In Andhra Pradesh, the TDP led NDA is poised to secure all four seats. In Gujarat, the BJP is expected to win all four seats, with the Congress likely to lose its only representation from the state.

In Karnataka, the Congress is set to secure three of the four seats, leaving one for the BJP. Kharage is expected to be re-nominated to the Upper House. In Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the BJP is expected to win two seats each, while the Congress is likely to get one seat in both states.

In Jharkhand, the ruling JMM-Congress alliance is expected to win both seats, though the BJP may attempt to force a contest. In the previous biennial elections held in March this year, the BJP secured 13 of the 37 seats contested across 10 states.

'TRF's Pahalgam attack claim originated from Pak'

was circulated through a TRF-linked propaganda handle called "Kashmir Fight" and explicitly referenced the attack using the hashtag #PahalgamAttack.

The attack left 26 people dead, including 25 Hindu tourists - 24 Indians and one Nepali national - as well as a local Kashmiri resident. According to eyewitness accounts cited by investigators, the victims were singled out on the basis of religion and shot at close range in front of their families before the attackers fled the scene.

The TRF, a militant organisation active in Jammu and Kashmir and designated a terrorist group by both India and the United States, withdrew its claim three days later. On April 25, it used a newly created Telegram-based outlet titled "TheResistanceFront Official" to deny any involvement in the killings.

The NIA has described the retraction as an attempt by both the TRF and Pakistan to create plausible deniability in the face of global outrage and condemnation, including criticism from the United Nations Security Council.

According to the agency, digital forensics established that the internet protocol (IP) address used to publish the initial claim was traced to Battagram in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The Telegram account that issued the denial was traced to Rawalpindi and was registered using a Pakistani mobile phone number.

"TRF had claimed the Pahalgam attack 2.5 hours after the attack through social media posts. It withdrew the claim after three days. Analysis of both posts revealed that they were uploaded from Pakistan from handles associated with TRF," a senior NIA official said, quoting the agency's charge sheet filed before a Special NIA Court in Jammu.

The NIA formally took over the investigation on April 27, 2025, following directions from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Its charge sheet, filed on December 15, named Pakistan-based TRF chief Sajid Jatt as the mastermind behind the attack, alleging that he remained in direct contact with the three terrorists involved in the killings.

Three months after the attack, Union Home Minister Amit Shah informed Parliament that the attackers - Faisal Jatt alias Suleman Shah, Habeeb Tahir alias Jibran and Hamza Afghani - had been killed during Operation Mahadev, a joint operation by the Army, the CRPF and the Jammu and Kashmir Police in the Dachigam forest area near Srinagar.

The operation led to the recovery of the weapons used in the massacre as well as two mobile phones belonging to the terrorists. Investigators later discovered that both devices had been shipped to Pakistan by Chinese smartphone manufacturer Xiaomi, with company records showing deliveries to addresses in Karachi and Lahore.

A forensic examination of the phones uncovered screenshots stored in the AlpineQuest navigation application containing geographical coordinates adjacent to Baisaran meadows. The screenshots were taken on April 15 and April 16, 2025, indicating that reconnaissance and planning for the attack had begun at least a week before the attack.

Kavinder flags off NCC Mt Deo Tibba Expedition

the participants and encouraged them to uphold the highest traditions of courage, discipline and teamwork while representing the NCC in the high Himalayas. He said that adventure activities play a vital role in developing self-confidence, endurance, leadership qualities and a spirit of perseverance among the youth.

Gupta said that the National Cadet Corps is a symbol of character building, leadership, patriotism and discipline. He observed that NCC training equips young people with qualities that remain relevant throughout their lives and help them become responsible and active citizens.

"The youth participating in such expeditions do not merely climb mountains; they emerge as ambassadors of fitness, environmental conservation and national service. Courageous and disciplined young people become confident and responsible citizens of tomorrow, and they form the foundation of a developed India," he said.

He stated that the cadets participating in the expedition represent the immense strength and potential of the nation's youth. Their dedication, commitment and determination serve as an inspiration for young people across the country.

The governor extended his best wishes to the expedition team and expressed confidence that the challenging venture would inspire the cadets to scale greater heights in life and strengthen their spirit of adventure and resilience.

On the occasion, Major General Vikas Bhardwaj encouraged the cadets to maintain the highest standards of discipline, teamwork and determination throughout the expedition.

The Mt Deo Tibba Expedition, culminating at an altitude of 6,001 metres, is one of the NCC's premier mountaineering ventures. The expedition will test participants in glacier travel, snow craft, rope techniques and high-altitude survival skills. This year's ascent is expected to be particularly challenging due to heavy snowfall and demanding mountain conditions in the region.

The expedition team comprises cadets drawn from different parts of the country, who were selected after rigorous screening and training conducted at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (ABVIMAS), Solang Valley. The participants underwent intensive physical endurance, mountaineering and survival assessments before being chosen for the expedition.

The expedition is being led by Wing Commander Kunal Sharma, who has supervised the selection, training and preparation of the team.

Earlier, NCC officials briefed the Governor about the objectives, route, training schedule and safety measures associated with the expedition.

Deputy Director General Brig. Rajiv Kapoor, Secretary to Governor Shri Sandeep Bhardwaj, Group Commander Col. Aditya Verma, Expedition Leader Wing Commander Kunal and other senior military officers were also present on the occasion.