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India, EU eye year-end FTA after Modi-Leyen talks

were very fruitful. We discussed possibilities for how we can further strengthen bilateral cooperation through joint efforts in the areas of trade, investments, circular economy, defence, IT, and other fields," Modi said on social media.

"We also talked about how we can strengthen the cultural relations between our countries," he said. It is not immediately known what the discussions on defence entailed.

German defence major ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) have been holding price negotiations with the defence ministry for the Euro 5 billion deal to supply six stealth submarines to the Indian Navy.

Shortly after the Modi-Merz talks, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the two leaders reviewed the progress in bilateral engagements and expressed satisfaction at the renewed momentum in the India-Germany Strategic Partnership.

They also noted the conclusion of the negotiations between India and the European Union for a free trade agreement.

"As India and Germany celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties in 2026, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen cooperation across diverse sectors, including trade and investment, defence and security, green and sustainable development, technology, innovation, education and mobility," it said.

"They welcomed the signing of the Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap and the operationalisation of transit visa waiver for Indian nationals transiting through Germany," it added.

The prime minister also held a separate bilateral meeting with South Korean President Lee Jae-myung.

"I had a very meaningful conversation with Lee Jae-myung, President of the Republic of Korea, in Evian. Just two months ago, I welcomed President Lee in India," Modi said in another social media post.

"The two countries are closely cooperating not only in trade and commerce but also in various future high-tech fields," he said.

Meanwhile, Modi emerged as the voice of the Global South as he urged global leaders at the G7 Summit in France to not let the most vulnerable countries suffer due to the disruptions caused by the West Asia crisis.

Addressing the Group of Seven (G7) Summit's Outreach Session on 'Reviving a Balanced, Shared and Sustainable Economic Growth for All', he called for strengthening international solidarity amid disruptions in fuel, fertiliser and food supply chains.

The PM said that the crisis caused by the US-Iran war will have a long-lasting impact on the Global South.

"The disruptions in fuel, fertiliser and food supply chains caused by the crisis in West Asia will continue to impact the Global South for a considerable period. If we genuinely seek to strengthen international solidarity, the most vulnerable countries should not be left to bear the burden of these crises alone," he said.

He urged global financial institutions to help developing countries absorb the shocks and maintain economic resilience.

"Our international financial institutions should develop support mechanisms that help developing countries absorb these shocks and maintain their economic resilience," he added.

Modi also noted that India's experience showcases that shared development can help transform aspiration into reality.

He highlighted India's growth story, describing it as a journey of "inclusion, scale and democratic empowerment." "It is inspired by 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas' (Together with all, Development for all, Trust of all, Efforts by all). And, it has been reflected in countless occasions such as India's G20 Presidency, the launch of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and more."

PM Modi noted that many societies are becoming ageing societies while India and other nations of the Global South have an abundance of young talent, entrepreneurship and skills.

In order to harness this complementarity, PM Modi called for creating a Global Skills Partnership, where nations can work together on skill mapping and promoting trusted skilled mobility.

"Like the vision of IMEC, can we work on connectivity projects with countries in Africa, Latin America and the Pacific Islands? By combining G7 capital, India's talent and

the ownership of Global South countries, we may also consider establishing an International Mobilisation Partnership for Accelerating Connectivity and Trade (IMPACT)," he said.

Earlier in the day, Modi also interacted with several world leaders, including his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni, UK PM Keir Starmer, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva.

PDD Inspector terminated from service over 'terror links'

Mohammad Ishfaq, a former teacher in the school education department, was accused of working for terrorist organisations. After his arrest, it was revealed that he had been misusing his teaching position to radicalise youth.

Another dismissal was of Tariq Ahmed Rah (laboratory technician) posted at the Sub-District Hospital in Anantnag district. He was accused of helping a terrorist escape to Pakistan.

The third individual, Bashir Ahmed Mir (Assistant Lineman) posted in the PHE Department, was an Over Ground Worker (OGW) of terrorists.

The fourth dismissal was of Farooq Ahmed Bhat (Forest Department), accused of working for a terrorist organisation and helping terrorists.

The fifth dismissal was of Mohammad Yusuf (Driver, Health Department) posted in Srinagar. He was accused of providing weapons, cash, and logistic support to terrorists.

Rains, thunderstorms likely

22, generally cloudy conditions were expected with one or two spells of light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms, hailstorms, lightning and gusty winds at many places across Jammu and Kashmir, the department said.

According to the forecast, weather conditions from June 23 to June 25 were likely to remain partly to generally cloudy, with light rain, brief intense showers, thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds expected at a few places.

The MeT department said there was a possibility of hailstorms at isolated places accompanied by brief intense showers during the next five days.

2 killed in car accident

tained, officials said. It was also being verified if the car had more occupants, the officials added.

Police had taken cognizance of the incident.

White Knight Corps GOC reviews security along LoC

acted with troops, lauding their steadfast commitment and unwavering vigilance in safeguarding the country's borders.

"GOC White Knight Corps, accompanied by GOC Ace of Spades Division, visited forward areas in Naushera sector to assess the prevailing security environment and review the combat effectiveness of troops deployed along the LoC," the White Knight Corps said on X.

During the visit, Lt Gen Mishra was briefed on force posture, surveillance measures and ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening operational capabilities in the sector.

"Interacting with troops in forward locations, the corps commander lauded their steadfast commitment, high morale and unwavering vigilance in safeguarding the nation's frontiers," Army said.

PM rebuilt India as 'Bastion of Security': Shah

country had been rebuilt as a "bastion of security" that shields its citizens and responds firmly to threats during this period.

In a post on X, he said that under the Modi government's leadership, India had set examples of its resolute commitment to national security for the world to admire.

"In the 12 years of the Modi government, our nation has been rebuilt as a bastion of security that shields the citizens and unleashes destruction upon its enemies," Shah said.

"Whether it is responding to enemies across border with the firepower of surgical strike, air strike and Operation Sindoor, abrogating Article 370, eradicating Naxalism or fortifying internal security with over 12 accords in the Northeast, India has set examples of its resolute commitment to national security for the world to admire," he said.

The BJP-led NDA government under Narendra Modi recently completed 12 years in office at the Centre.

Last week, Modi became India's longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister, completing 4,399 consecu-

tive days in office and surpassing the record held by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Par Panel flags exam irregularities, seeks reforms

tained in the 364th report on Demands for Grants (2025-26) pertaining to the department of higher education to Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan.

The committee has endorsed Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's acknowledgement of June 16, 2024, that "a lot of improvement is needed in the NTA". It recommended that the National Testing Agency (NTA) expedite the implementation of the Radhakrishnan Committee's recommendations.

The parliamentary committee also recommended that the department and the NTA conduct additional widespread consultations with all stakeholders to adopt a protocol for the "foolproof" administration of nationwide competitive examinations, the report said.

"The Committee notes the steps taken by the ministry, including the constitution of a high-powered steering committee headed by K Radhakrishnan to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the high-level committee of experts (HLCE).

"However, despite these measures, the paper irregularities are still happening, leading to cancellation of examinations, thereby causing a lot of anxiety among students," the report said.

"The Committee also recommends the department of higher education to publish a time-bound implementation roadmap for the HLCE recommendations at the earliest," it added.

The HLCE was constituted by the Ministry of Education under the chairmanship of K Radhakrishnan, a former ISRO chairman, to implement critical systemic reforms in national competitive examinations conducted by the NTA.

The parliamentary panel noted that several firms involved in paper setting, administration, and correction have been blacklisted by one organisation/state government, but this is not impeding their securing of contracts from other states or organisations.

"The Committee, therefore, recommends that the department compile a nationwide list of blacklisted firms so as to bring clarity in this regard," the report said.

In its action taken reply, the higher education department said that the core activities of the NTA, including paper setting and correction, are not "outsourced".

"The NTA maintains records of penalised vendors, including terminations, blacklisting, and contract cessations, and does not engage vendors that have been blacklisted by the NTA.

"The procurement process adopted by the NTA incorporates mandatory self-disclosure clauses regarding blacklisting of the bidder by any government agency," it said.

The committee also referred to the finances of the NTA and reiterated its recommendation that the agency's surplus be utilised to strengthen its capabilities.

"It recommends that this corpus be used to build the agency's capabilities to conduct tests itself, or to strengthen regulatory and monitoring capabilities for its vendors," the report said.

Responding to the recommendations, the higher education department said that NTA is a self-sustained organisation, which does not receive government funding.

"At the beginning of the year, the NTA needs funds for booking centres, paying experts, software, and security, etc. The income and expenditure trend of the NTA shows that on an average, Rs 74.5 crore remain every year after incurring all expenses.

"The income remaining unspent in a financial year is utilised for preparatory activities for the next financial year. However, any surplus after budgeting for next year's activities can be appropriately utilised," it said.

Saxena approves constitution of Pashmina Board

ties. The establishment of the board marks a significant milestone in the UT administration's efforts to build a robust and sustainable ecosystem around Ladakh Pashmina, renowned globally as one of the world's finest and most luxurious natural fibers.

Ladakh is estimated to have nearly 2 lakh Pashmina goats. Establishment of the board is also aimed at increasing the number of Pashmina goats, thereby enhancing the income of the pastoral communities. It will also create new employment opportunities in the textile and handicrafts sector, increase value addition within Ladakh and reduce dependence on intermediaries.

"Ladakh Pashmina is not merely a fiber; it is an enduring symbol of Ladakh's cultural heritage, pastoral traditions and resilience. The constitution of the Ladakh Pashmina Development Board is a historic step towards ensuring that our nomadic communities receive the benefits they rightfully deserve and that Ladakh emerges as the global hub of authentic and premium Pashmina products. Our goal is to create an integrated, sustainable and globally competitive Pashmina ecosystem that safeguards livelihoods while preserving Ladakh's unique identity," Saxena said.

Recognising the need for an overarching institutional mechanism to strengthen the entire Pashmina value chain and create sustainable market linkages, the board has been envisaged to guide, supervise and augment available resources for the holistic development of the Pashmina sector in Ladakh.

The board will work to transform raw Ladakhi Pashmina into a premium, high-value product, improve market returns, and maximise benefits for all stakeholders, particularly the nomadic Changpa herders, who face some of the harshest living conditions and are the primary producers of raw Pashmina.

The newly constituted Board comprises two principal bodies - the Governing Body, chaired by the Lieutenant Governor, and the Executive Committee, chaired by the Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh. The Governing Body will provide overall strategic direction for the development of the Pashmina sector, approve long-term vision documents, policies, major projects and infrastructure initiatives, and facilitate convergence among government departments, financial institutions and industry stakeholders. It will also guide global branding, certification, export promotion and sustainability initiatives for the sector.

As part of its programme architecture, the Board will implement the Ladakh Pashmina Mission with a focus on improving the productivity and genetic quality of Changthangi goats, strengthening high-altitude rangelands through climate adaptation strategies, establishing local processing infrastructure, promoting artisan clusters and positioning Ladakh Pashmina as a premium luxury fibre in global markets through certification systems, digital traceability mechanisms and participation in international trade fairs.

Police bust major narco-terror network in Punjab

major suppliers of narcotic substances to Jammu district and responsible for supplying nearly 80 per cent of the

drugs trafficked into the district. The operation was launched following sustained surveillance and meticulous intelligence-based investigations.

Officials said the accused were part of the backward link network of notorious narcotics trafficker Lau Gujjar and his associates operating in Jammu and Kashmir. Investigations into previous NDPS cases and the arrest and questioning of several accused, including Lateef, Bachu, Majeeda and Mushtaq, led investigators to Suraj and Raju, who were identified as crucial links in the drug supply chain.

Officials stated that the accused supplied narcotics to nearly 20 forward links operating across Jammu district and adjoining areas of Samba and Kathua, thereby playing a central role in the distribution network.

During the operation, conducted jointly by teams of the Emergency Support Unit (ESU) Jammu, Miran Sahib police station, investigating officers from Bishnah and Miran Sahib police stations, along with Punjab police, extensive searches were carried out at the suspects' premises.

The search resulted in the recovery of a significant quantity of arms and ammunition, including one AK rifle with 40 live rounds, one Star pistol along with 29 live cartridges and four live 12-bore cartridges.

Police also recovered approximately 1.020 kilograms of narcotic substances believed to be heroin, along with an electronic weighing machine, packing material and adhesive tape used for packaging and distribution of drugs, officials said.

Additionally, law enforcement teams seized around Rs 11 lakh in cash, three mobile phones and three vehicles, including a Mahindra Thar, a Honda Amaze and a Maruti Swift, which were used for transportation and logistical support of the illicit operations, the officials added.

Police described the operation as a significant blow to narco-terror networks operating between Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. Legal proceedings had been initiated against the accused, while further investigation was underway to identify additional links and dismantle the broader network.

Jammu police reiterated its commitment to combating drug trafficking and narco-terrorism, asserting that stringent action would continue against those involved in the menace to ensure a drug-free society and strengthen public safety.

Trump praises Modi as 'tough negotiator' after talks on G7 sidelines

I say he is very tough, he is a tough trader," the US president said, as Modi sat beside him smiling and visibly amused.

Trump also said Modi loves the Indian people while also referring to the "Howdy, Modi!" event held in Texas in 2019.

As Modi interjected with a reference to the "Namaste Trump" event held in Ahmedabad in 2020, Trump said, "We will be going to India sometime in the future."

The remarks came during a press briefing after talks between the two leaders on the sidelines of the G7 Summit held in this French commune.

Their wide-ranging talks focused on the proposed bilateral trade deal, defence and security ties, and the West Asia crisis.

28 newly promoted DSPs adjusted; 32 transferred, posted

Malik as DSP SDRF, Jammu, DSP SIA, Jammu, Shahjhan Choudhary as DSP HQ, Baramulla, DSP CID SB, Samba-Kathua, Kosheen Koul as DSP 16 JKAP IR, DSP SIA, Kashmir, Zafar Mahdi as DSP HQ, Bandipora, DSP 8 JKAP Ajaz Ahmad as DSP Traffic, Rajouri-Poonch, DSP CID SB, Batote/Ramban, Shoket Ali as DSP Traffic, Doda/Kishtwar, DSP PTS, Manigam, Kulwant Singh as DSP CID CI, Baramulla, DSP Traffic, Samba, Sukhdev Singh as DSP 18 JKAP, Samba, and DSP HQ, Bandipora, Mohammad Rafee Rather as DSP CID SB, Srinagar.

DSP CTC, Lethpora, Tariq Ahmad Tak is transferred and posted as DSP Traffic, Anantnag, Nazir Ahmad as DSP 23 JKAP IR, DSP LCMA, Srinagar, Abdul Aziz Ganai as DSP 11 JKAP Sec, and DSP Security, Kashmir, Kubra Nazir as DSP ANTF, Kashmir.

DSP ANTF, Kashmir, Khurshid Ahmad is transferred and posted as DSP 11 JKAP IR, DSP CID CI, Kathua, Bharat Sharma as SDPO, Akhnour, DSP STC (Talwara) Khudmukhtar Dev as DSP 24 JKAP IR, SDPO (Akhnour) Virender Gupta as DSP CID SB, Jammu, DSP PCR (Jammu) Vijay Singh as DSP SB, Samba-Kathua, DSP 16 JKAP IR Kirpal Singh as DSP 18 JKAP IR, DSP 7 JKAP Sec Sunil Gupta as DSP Traffic, Samba-Kathua, and DSP CICE, Kashmir, Ashiq Hussain as DSP 10 JKAP IR.

DSP CICE, Jammu, Monika Thakur replaces Yasir Farooq Baig as DSP SOG, Baramulla. Baig is posted as DSP SIA, Kashmir.

DSP SOG, Ramban, Manisha Kumari is transferred and posted as DSP CICE, Jammu, DSP SOG, Kandi-Rajouri, Neeraj Badyal as DSP CICE, Jammu, DSP EOW, Srinagar, Showket Ahmad Bukhari as DSP LCMA, Srinagar, DSP 6 JKAP Mir Afaq Ahmad as DSP 10 JKAP IR, DSP CID CI, Pulwama, Hafizullah Mir as DSP 2 JKAP Women, DSP 13 JKAP Pir Atiqullah as DSP DAR, Handwara, DSP 7 JKAP Sec Neeraj Bhagat as DSP 18 JKAP IR and DSP 22 JKAP IR Ashwani Kumar as DSP 12 JKAP IR.

NC won't sell its morals for power: Omar on TMC, Sena splits

inaugurated and reviewed several development projects worth nearly Rs 300 cr across different sectors. "My government remains focused on fulfilling promises made to the people and ensuring that developmental benefits reach every section of society," he said.

He also met public delegations, who raised issues related to roads, drinking water supply, electricity, healthcare facilities, employment and other civic concerns. Assuring prompt action, he directed officials to examine the demands and address genuine grievances on priority.

Highlighting the government's commitment to development, Omar said the ongoing projects would strengthen infrastructure and improve public services in various districts. He maintained that governance and public welfare remain the administration's primary focus.

The chief minister reiterated that National Conference's political decisions would be guided by its ideology and commitment to the people of Jammu and Kashmir rather than political expediency.

"We have our own principles and political legacy. We will continue to stand by them irrespective of changing political equations," Omar said, underscoring that NC would not compromise its values for power or political advantage.

CM Omar Unveils Rs 100 Crore Development Package for Bandipora

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, JUNE 17

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today gave Bandipora district a massive developmental boost by inaugurating and laying the foundation stones for 18 major projects worth approximately ₹100 crore. These multisectoral projects span higher education, roads, bridges, clean drinking water, urban development, and agriculture infrastructure, aiming to directly address the key needs of the local population.

Major initiatives include the construction of the Government Degree College at Ajas (₹14 crore), a foot-bridge over the River Jhelum at Tundipora-Hakbara (₹10.62 crore), a female student hostel at Government Degree College Bandipora (₹10 crore), and a school building at Kaloosa (₹3.71 crore). Other works include the Markundal-Hajin road upgrade (₹7.13 crore), a water supply augmentation scheme (₹6.66 crore), a multi-storey car parking facility (₹3.74 crore), and residential apartments for Panchayati Raj Institution members.

During his visit, the Chief Minister chaired a high-level review meeting to evaluate the developmental scenario, public service delivery and

the progress of various schemes. The review meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, Ministers Sakina Itoo (through virtual mode), Javed Rana, Javid Ahmad Dar and Satish Sharma, Advisor to the Chief Minister Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Gurez Nazir Ahmad Khan, MLA Bandipora Nizamuddin Bhat, MLA Sonawari Hilal Akbar Lone, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Deputy Commissioner Bandipora Indu Kanwal Chib, senior officers; Heads of Departments; and district officers.

Noting Bandipora's progress in the last financial year, Chief Minister Abdullah urged all departments to maintain their developmental momentum. He emphasised that the government has cleared administrative and financial approvals well in advance this year. This proactive step ensures that departments in Bandipora can utilise the working season fully and execute projects timely, rather than rushing at the end of the financial year. The Chief Minister added that this step is vital for the district due to challenging geographical and climatological conditions.

Bandipora's rich natural wealth, the Chief Minister called for the scientific cultivation of medicinal and

aromatic plants. He directed that the possibility of setting up a specialised industrial estate for medicinal herbs be explored. This initiative is expected to enhance local entrepreneurship, create fresh jobs for the youth and add significant value to the district's natural resources.

Local lawmakers also raised constituency-specific demands regarding developmental aspects which the Chief Minister promised would be swiftly reviewed and resolved.

Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister distributed vehicles to beneficiaries under the UMEED initiative and inspected stalls set up by local self-help groups. He also met with the public delegations from Gurez, Tulail, and Sonawari, assuring them of timely and equitable redressal of their developmental concerns.

A special highlight of the visit was an open interaction between the Chief Minister and the students of Government Degree College, Bandipora. The session was hosted by a female student, followed by a lively interaction session where students asked candid questions about governance, jobs, and public policy. Praising the confidence of the students, the Chief Minister encouraged the young generation to actively participate in democracy and nation-building.