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Tech can lead to progress only if democratised: Modi

"Technology can lead to progress only when it is democratised," the Prime Minister said at Vivatech 2026.

"For the last decade, India has been going through a rapid transformation powered by technology," he added.

"From creating the world's largest digital identity system to the world's largest digital payments platforms, we are using technology at a massive scale for financial inclusion, education, telemedicine," the PM said.

Vivatech is Europe's foremost gathering of technology and innovation, and India has set up the largest national pavilion at this edition as a symbol of the potential for partnership between Indian and European innovation ecosystems.

"When it comes to technology, along with innovation, what matters is access. Technology can lead to progress, only when it is democratised. India believes that in this era of disruption, technology must deliver for all," the prime minister said.

Citing the example of AI (artificial intelligence), Modi said it must improve lives, widen access, drive growth and also "help us sustain a healthy planet".

"Our participation as the AI Country Partner at VivaTech 2026 reflects this very vision," he said.

Last week, Anthropic took its latest AI models - Fable 5 and Mythos 5 - offline to comply with a directive from the US administration to prevent their use by foreign nationals.

The unprecedented move has raised concerns about accessibility to AI solutions amid a fast-changing economic landscape where such solutions are being increasingly used across sectors.

In the last decade, India has been going through a rapid transformation powered by technology, Modi said. "From creating the world's largest digital identity system, to the world's largest digital payments platforms, we are using technology at a massive scale for financial inclusion, education, telemedicine, agriculture and more," he said.

Referring to his address at VivaTech in 2021, he said the world then was facing disruptions from Covid-19. "Today, the world is experiencing disruptions of other kinds. And, I reiterate the message I shared then at VivaTech 2021. Where convention fails, innovation can help," he said.

Modi also said with over 2 lakh startups, India was one of the most vibrant eco-systems in the world and urged attendees to visit the India pavilion.

"You will get a feel of India's immense energy. Be it the world's first single-piece 3D printed rocket engine, advanced genetic-engineering therapies, AI solutions that detect cancer and other critical diseases or improve cyber and network security, autonomous robots, smart cities, and mobility solutions," he said.

"India is an open society and has the world's largest talent pool," he said and added, "India is simplifying regulations and ensuring ease of doing business."

"From innovation to commercialisation, the country is supporting private enterprise through targeted incentives of over USD 50 billion," he said, adding that India is also providing one of the world's most affordable data and low-cost green energy.

"Our approach is clear. Our government will enable and industry will innovate. Startups will disrupt and global partners will scale with us. Together, we will move faster than ever," he said.

Inviting investments, Modi said, "Work with India and deliver for all".

Vice-Prez to visit Ladakh from June 19-21

Initiatives being undertaken in the border region under the Vibrant Villages Programme.

Later in the day, the vice-president will pay his respects at the War Memorial.

On June 21, he would participate in the International Day of Yoga celebrations at Leh. The event will witness the participation of youth, armed forces personnel, and members of various organisations in promoting the message of holistic health and well-being through yoga.

US, Iran sign initial deal to end war

land, but its fate is now uncertain, with conflicting information from the US, Iran and Pakistan.

"It's signed," Trump said as he left the dinner at Versailles, which followed his trip to the Group of Seven summit in France.

In a video posted online by a White House aide, Trump

was seen seated at a table next to Macron signing a paper copy of the agreement. Trump then handed the document and pen to Secretary of State Marco Rubio as people in the room applauded.

"This was not easy," Trump said right before he signed it, according to a video posted to social media by Macron.

In Tehran, a stone-faced President Masoud Pezeshkian signed the deal on behalf of Iran, according to the state-run IRNA news agency, which posted images of him holding up the deal with his signature and Trump's.

Text of the agreement still has not been formally released. US officials dictated draft language to journalists after days of secrecy, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Iranian state TV later released text that largely tracked what the US put out.

Much of the agreement would restore the status quo before the war, including ending hostilities, restarting talks between the US and Iran over Tehran's nuclear programme, and reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial passage for the world's oil and natural gas whose closure created a historic energy crisis.

The agreement opens the strait without tolls for two months, but does not preclude fees in the future, according to the drafts from both countries.

In return, the US will move to waive, but not eliminate, some wide-ranging sanctions against Iran.

The deal also affirms a commitment to Lebanon's territorial integrity in the face of Israel's invasion against the Hezbollah militant group.

That is one of the most delicate parts of the agreement because Israel has maintained it will continue to defend itself and to occupy vast swaths of Lebanon.

Iran has said Israel must withdraw under the deal, a condition Israel has already rejected.

The US and Israel went to war on Feb 28 in part to prevent Iran from ever getting a nuclear weapon.

Trump has cited various goals for the war, including at times vowing it would end Iran's nuclear and missile programmes and its support for Hezbollah and other proxy groups in the region. He also suggested it could lead to toppling the Iranian government.

The interim deal falls short of all those goals, but Trump hailed it Wednesday as "very strong".

He also opened the door to abandoning it: "It's a memorandum of understanding, and if I don't like it, we'll go back to shooting at them, dropping bombs."

The US agreement to immediately allow Iran to sell its oil freely and the offer to eventually lift all sanctions represent major concessions that go beyond the terms of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Trump withdrew America from that Obama-era pact in his first term, declaring it the "worst deal ever".

The Islamic Republic maintains that its nuclear programme is peaceful.

The accord likely will draw intense opposition in Washington, and it appears to be a major setback for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has come under criticism at home from the media, his opponents and even some allies as details emerge.

Under the Obama-era nuclear agreement with Iran that Trump pulled out of, Iran also agreed to restrictions on its nuclear programme and promised never to build an atomic weapon.

Some concessions to Iran - including the full lifting of sanctions and the release of frozen assets - would happen gradually and be linked to progress in the nuclear talks, according to officials from Pakistan, a key mediator.

They outlined some of the deal's major points on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

But in the meantime, the US will issue waivers to sanctions that allow Iran to sell oil freely.

The Islamic Republic's oil export revenues in 2024 were more than \$46 billion. Its main buyer of oil, China, is believed to have bought at below-market prices because of its willingness to ignore the sanctions.

Granting oil waivers at the start of the 60-day talks strips the US of a major point of leverage. Only at the conclusion of the overall deal in 2015 were sanctions on Iran's oil lifted.

The interim deal also opens the door to ending all sanctions Iran faces from the US and at the UN - including those over Tehran's weapons programs and human rights abuses - though it says the schedule for that will be worked out later.

Still, that far surpasses the 2015 deal, which only lifted some sanctions in exchange for Iran drastically reducing its enrichment and stockpile of uranium.

The accord would also provide Iran with at least USD 300 billion to rebuild - an extraordinary figure and another major benefit for Iran. The money also appears dependent on the progress of further negotiations.

Vance has said Gulf Arab nations would invest that amount. But Gulf countries would likely be reluctant to help Iran after Iranian attacks in the war destroyed oil facilities and other sites in their territory.

Trump reiterated Wednesday that the US would not contribute and said it was up to other countries if they wanted to invest.

The initial deal provides a major win for the global economy - the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas once passed before the war began.

Since then, Iranian attacks on shipping and the threat to vessels effectively shut the strait.

The strait's closure drove up energy prices around the world and made many basics, including food, more expensive. Iran let through some vessels that paid tolls, something never done before in the strait, which has long been considered an international waterway.

The US later provided military support to get other tankers out, but traffic was nowhere near levels before the war.

The deal also says the US will lift a blockade imposed on Iranian ports and that the strait will return to its pre-war traffic levels in 30 days, while acknowledging Iranian mines may need to be destroyed.

Akshay Kumar visits Bhawan, offers prayers

highly revered Shri Mata Vaishno Devi cave shrine in Trikuta Hills of Katra and offered prayers.

He undertook the pilgrimage amid tight security arrangements and spent time at the cave shrine performing religious rituals and paying obeisance.

His visit attracted considerable attention from devotees and visitors present at the shrine, many of whom gathered to catch a glimpse of the actor.

After offering prayers, he left the cave shrine for Katra town.

Pak currency recovered

area domination and search operation carried out by a Road Opening Party (ROP) of 118 Territorial Army near Bhattaduriyan along the main Poonch road.

During searches, forces came across a cache of Pakistani currency notes along with a handwritten slip containing Pak mobile phone numbers, officials said.

The recovered material was seized and taken into custody for further examination by the agencies concerned, the officials added.

HM, US envoy discuss counter-terrorism, anti-drug cooperation

India, Sergio Gor in New Delhi. Had a detailed discussion on further strengthening cooperation between India and the US in the area of security, particularly in counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics," Shah said in a post on X.

He said under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India was firmly committed to advancing the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and ensuring that the people of both nations benefit from the bilateral relationship.

In his post on X, Gor termed his meeting with Shah "excellent".

"We had a fruitful discussion on enhancing collaboration to combat terrorism, shield our people from narcotics and illicit drugs, secure our borders, and jointly bring criminals to justice in both nations," he said.

In another post, Gor said, "Back in New Delhi after a great trip to the G7 in France. Lots of positive outcomes between the United States and India!"

During his meeting with Trump on Wednesday, PM Modi raised the issue of seafarers' safety, urging that their protection be given the highest priority during the implementation of Washington's peace deal with Iran, even as the two leaders focused on taking steps to repair bilateral ties that witnessed severe strain over the past year.

Shah hell bent on making NDA 'National Defectors Alliance': Cong

said. "He (Shah) had assured the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi). But because of opposition unity and solidarity, the bill didn't pass. They got only 298 and they needed 362, if you go by 543 present and voting. So they felt hugely short of the two-thirds majority. And that was a humiliation. It was a setback for him," he said, adding the home minister did not expect that.

The Congress leader accused the home minister of orchestrating defections as a response to that "humiliation" of April 17.

"Shah has started on this massive programme to destabilise opposition parties," he alleged.

"He's (Shah is), you know, trying to break all opposition parties. But I can assure you that he's not going to succeed in getting a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. He's trying similar tactics in the Rajya Sabha. But ultimately, it's two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha that matters," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader claimed that all sorts of incentives

were being offered to opposition MPs to defect to the ruling alliance.

"You know, in the mutual fund industry, you offer different products and different schemes catering to the needs of individual investors. So, he's obviously offering a lot of incentives to individual MPs based on their needs and assessments. But, you know, this is an assault on the Constitution. It's an assault on democracy," Ramesh said.

"It is an absolute disgrace that the man who occupies the place that was once occupied by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is indulging in all these dirtiest of tricks in order to avenge the humiliation that he underwent," the Congress general secretary said.

Asked about Uttar Pradesh minister Om Prakash Rajbhar's remarks that a major split in the Samajwadi Party (SP) was on the cards, he dismissed the comments as "psychological games" that were part of Shah's strategy.

"He (Shah) is the master of sowing confusion. He is a weapon of mass distortion and disinformation --WMD, in the real sense of the term. So, he is trying to create a lot of uncertainty and sow the seeds of dissensions but he is not going to succeed. He can do whatever he wants, he is trying to save his job," Ramesh alleged.

He claimed the Modi government had to suffer "humiliation" for the first time in 12 years on April 17.

"So, there is a lot of bluff and bluster and the home minister is a master in this bluff and bluster. He is trying to create an impression that opposition parties are withering away, but opposition parties are united, there is solidarity, there is ideological and this 'National Defectors Alliance' will not get a majority whenever the Constitution amendment bill is brought into the Lok Sabha," he asserted.

Omar visits Kheer Bhawani temple, pays obeisance

essed the arrangements for the upcoming annual mela at the shrine.

Hundreds of devotees, mostly Kashmiri Pandits, are expected to visit the temple of Ragnya Devi, also known as Mata Kheer Bhawani, at Tulmulla in the central Kashmir district, to celebrate the annual mela on Monday.

The chief minister inspected various facilities put in place for the devotees and reviewed the arrangements for the smooth conduct of the mela.

"It is a sacred day. People come here from various parts of the country and world to pay obeisance and get blessings of the mata. I have come here in the capacity of the chief minister, and more so as MLA of Ganderbal constituency, to assess the arrangements and review the preparations," Abdullah told reporters after the visit.

He said he had spoken to the priests and others at the temple who raised some issues about the arrangements, and assured them that attempts would be made to address them before the mela starts on June 22.

To a question about the upcoming annual Amaranth yatra, he said the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board oversees the arrangements for the pilgrimage which begins this year on July 3.

"The board oversees the yatra and the biggest responsibility about the smooth yatra lies with the board. However, whatever support we have to give from the government side, we are doing that," he added.

The CM appealed to the pilgrims to pray for peace and brotherhood in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We hope that whether Mata Kheer Bhawani or Amarnath yatra, the pilgrims pay obeisance and pray smoothly. We hope that when they pray, they also pray for peace and brotherhood in J&K," Abdullah said.

Asked about the reports that Kashmiri Pandit colonies were being built in Shopian and Pulwama, the CM said those were transit accommodations and were being built everywhere.

"It is being built for PM package employees so that they get a good living space and work smoothly. The work started in PM Manmohan Singh's time and is going on," Abdullah said.

Kathua to get gas pipeline, homeopathic college: Jitendra

anvil, and was expected to be implemented shortly, providing cleaner and more efficient energy access to residents and industries.

"The tender for North India's first Homeopathy College in the district has already been floated," he said and added that the foundation stone for the institution would be laid soon.

He said that the process of transferring land for the Arun jaitley Stadium at Hiranagar was underway. The stadium will provide modern facilities to aspiring athletes and promote sporting culture in the area.

Highlighting the development initiatives undertaken during the last 12 years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said a new culture of transparent, accountable and development-oriented governance had emerged across the country.

"The government has worked with the principle of inclusive development, ensuring that welfare schemes reach every citizen irrespective of caste, religion or region. Flagship initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana have benefited millions of households, particularly women, by providing clean cooking fuel, financial support and improving their quality of life," he added.

He said the financial assistance under the PM SVANidhi Scheme had enabled street vendors to access affordable credit and strengthen their livelihoods. Similarly, loans under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana had encouraged entrepreneurship and self-employment among lakhs of beneficiaries across the country, he added.

District level NCORD meeting held in Doda

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, JUNE 18

A meeting of the District Level Committee under the Narcotics Coordination (NCORD) mechanism was held today at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex, Doda, under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Doda Krishan Lal.

The meeting reviewed the prevailing situation regarding drug abuse and illicit narcotics activities and assessed progress of preventive, enforcement, rehabilitation and awareness measures undertaken by

concerned departments.

The meeting discussed the status of identified drug addicts and rehabilitation efforts, reviewed data on rehabilitated individuals and laid emphasis on strengthening rehabilitation mechanisms.

The District Magistrate directed the Employment Department to facilitate employment opportunities for rehabilitated individuals through Government schemes and to provide skill development, vocational training and self-employment opportunities for sustainable rehabilitation.

The meeting reviewed the status of portal updation of cases and disposal of

calls received through helpline mechanisms and directed all concerned departments to ensure timely updation and maintenance of accurate records.

The Chair reviewed the status of Youth Clubs and directed that their involvement in awareness generation and community mobilisation be strengthened, along with Nasha Mukta IEC campaigns and participation of schools, colleges and youth organisations in anti-drug initiatives, through sustained awareness programmes, outreach activities, sports events, cultural activities and preventive interventions to promote a drug-free culture among youth.

Dy CM emphasizes greater vibrancy in KVIB to spur employment, economic growth; urges aggressive outreach

SRINAGAR, JUNE 18: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary today called for infusing greater vibrancy into the Jammu and Kashmir Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) to generate sustainable employment opportunities and strengthen the Union Territory's economic landscape.

The Deputy Chief Minister made these remarks while chairing a comprehensive review meeting regarding functioning of KVIB at the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar.

During the meeting, he reviewed the progress achieved under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and the Jammu and Kashmir Rural Employment Generation Programme

(JKREGP) besides assessing establishment of units under both schemes during the current financial year.

Emphasizing the need for wider outreach, the Deputy Chief Minister directed the Board to launch an extensive awareness campaign through all available mediums, including social media platforms, to ensure maximum participation of the aspiring entrepreneurs under these schemes.

He stressed the importance of organizing awareness camps in schools, colleges and rural areas across Jammu and Kashmir so that people, especially youth and women, are fully informed about the benefits and opportunities available under various self-employment initiatives.



The Deputy Chief Minister instructed the officials to involve local public representatives in these awareness programmes and ensure their participation in outreach camps to strengthen

the public engagement and awareness at the grassroots level. Calling for institutional reforms, he urged the Board to re-visit its functioning by implementing

result-oriented measures aimed at improving the efficiency, transparency and service delivery. "Our objective is to create employment opportunities and eco-

nommic resources for the people who are willing to work, become self-reliant and emerge as job providers rather than job seekers," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

He directed the officers and employees to maintain the highest standards of transparency and accountability to ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach the deserving beneficiaries effectively and without delay.

The Deputy Chief Minister also emphasized the need for adopting best practices from successful implementation models in other regions to enhance the effectiveness and impact of KVIB programmes.

Special focus was laid on ensuring greater participation of

women in entrepreneurship and self-employment initiatives, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to economic development and financial empowerment.

The meeting also reviewed the functioning and progress of Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI) Clusters, with directions issued for their further strengthening to support the traditional industries, artisans and rural enterprises.

Commissioner Secretary Industries and Commerce, Vikramjit Singh and other senior officers of Khadi and Village Industries Board and other concerned departments were present during the meeting.