# Cont. From Page 1

## 15 students killed in massive fire at coaching centre

Principal Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad, Director General of Police Rajeev Krishna and Lucknow Police Commissioner Amrendra Sengar, reached the spot to monitor the rescue operation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed anguish at the loss of life and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh from PMNRF to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given Rs 50,000.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath cut short his visit to Aligarh and returned to Lucknow after receiving information about the fire tragedy.

The building is located in the premium residential Aliganj neighbourhood dotted by commercial spaces, including coaching centres and cafes, and is walking distance to the Purania market.

Dr Amiya Agrawal, Medical Superintendent of the Trauma Centre at KGMU, Lucknow, said, "A total of 21-22 students were brought here. Five of them sustained injuries and have been admitted. Two students who jumped from the building suffered back injuries; their CT scans have been conducted and they are undergoing treatment. Fifteen students were brought dead and will be sent to the mortuary for post-mortem examination. Five bodies have already been sent, while the process of sending the remaining 10 is under way."

The fire spread rapidly within minutes, forcing students to scramble for safety as rescue teams rushed to the spot.

Eyewitnesses said several students jumped from the building to escape the fire and thick smoke. Many sustained serious injuries in the process. Videos and photographs from the scene, widely circulated on social media, showed chaotic scenes as rescuers and local residents tried to reach those trapped inside.

## LG pays obeisance at Mata Kheer Bhawani temple, prays for peace

years. The administration has made comprehensive and foolproof arrangements to ensure the convenience, safety and smooth conduct of the pilgrimage for all devotees."

The LG was accompanied by chief secretary Atal Dulloo, director general of police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat, divisional commissioner, Kashmir, Anshul Garg, deputy commissioner, Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, relief & rehabilitation commissioner Arvind Karwani, senior officials of police and civil administration and heads of Kashmiri Pandit organisations.

On the occasion, Sinha unveiled first-ever Mata Pritima Pooja Book for day-to-day pooja of the goddess.

MKBYWS convenor Kiran Watal said, with the release of the book, Mata's pooja can now be performed at any place in the world, even during travelling.

"MKBYWS thanks LG Sinha for excellent arrangements for the visiting devotees," Watal said.

MKBYWS general secretary Prem Sharma, senior vice-president Anil Gupta, joint secretary Gulshan Gupta and coordinator Suresh Gupta also hailed the LG for the superb arrangements.

## KPs celebrate Jyeshtha Ashtami

religious ceremonies, including special prayers, havan, devotional singing and distribution of prasad.

Kheer Bhawani Peeth was constructed at Janipur after the mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley in the early 1990s due to terrorism.

Over 20,000 earthen lamps were prepared as part of the celebrations, with devotees offering them while seeking fulfillment of their wishes.

## MHA assigns seniority to 5 IPS officers

the select lists of 2010, 2011 and 2012.

As per the notification, Sunil Dutt has been allotted the year 2005, while A K Mahajan and Rupender Kumar have been assigned the year 2006.

Rajnish Pran & Ashok Kumar Sharma have been given the years 2007 & 2009 respectively.

The assignment of seniority, as per the MHA notification, makes the officers eligible for consequential benefits including promotions, pensionary benefits and financial entitlements based on their revised seniority, in compliance with orders of the central administrative tribunal.

## Saxena lays foundation stone of high-altitude flower fields

fields in Leh, which would be the first such projects in the country.

Two flower fields would be created at Choglamsar and Stakna in Leh. The Choglamsar Park is spread over an area of 92,687 sq mt, and the Floriculture Project at the School of Agriculture Science and Technology, University of Ladakh, Stakna, is spread over 1.02 lakh sq mt of land.

The Flower Garden at Choglamsar is being developed as one of the largest organised high-altitude floriculture parks in the country and is the first project of its kind in Ladakh. The project assumes special significance as the idea originated during the LG's visit to the site on April 7, 2026, when he had directed that the area be developed as a dedicated floriculture park.

The Choglamsar flower park will serve as a demonstration and model floriculture centre where high-value flowers such as Lilium, Gladiolus, Tulips and other ornamental species, with strong market demand in national and international markets, will be cultivated. The garden will also function as a recreational and educational space for residents and tourists alike.

Under the project, for the first time, farmers will be trained in Floriculture, and later on, these fields will be handed over to them for commercial utilisation through the cooperatives.

The Floriculture Project at Stakna has been conceived as a livelihood-generation and economic-diversification initiative. The project aims to establish a model floriculture centre for promoting scientific flower cultivation in Ladakh and will focus on producing premium-quality cut flowers for marketing in metropolitan cities and other markets across the country.

On the occasion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Department of Agriculture, UT Ladakh, and the CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT), Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, under which scientific and technical support will be provided for the projects. The collaboration will facilitate the promotion of scientific floriculture in Ladakh through the introduction of modern technologies, capacity-building programmes, demonstration activities, development of floriculture infrastructure and identification of suitable floriculture crops for Ladakh's unique climatic conditions.

Speaking on the occasion, the LG said that the floriculture projects represent far more than the cultivation of flowers and mark the beginning of a new vision for Ladakh's development, combining economic growth with environmental sustainability and tourism promotion.

"These floriculture projects are not merely about growing flowers; they are about creating opportunities, strengthening livelihoods and building a greener and more prosperous future for Ladakh. They will provide our farmers and young entrepreneurs with a new and high-value economic activity while adding a unique dimension to Ladakh's tourism landscape. Equally important, these projects reaffirm our commitment to development that is in harmony with nature. I am confident that these gardens will emerge as model centres of high-altitude floriculture and give Ladakh a distinct identity in sustainable floriculture, eco-tourism and the green economy," he said.

The initiative aims at providing Ladakh's youth, farmers and entrepreneurs with a new and profitable agricultural alternative and opening up avenues for employment and enterprise development in the floriculture sector.

## NTA dismisses video claiming paper leak as 'fake'

said.

"The video is fake and the claims it makes are false," it said.

The agency said manufacturing and deliberately circulating such misinformation to defraud or alarm students was a "serious offence."

"NTA, with the support of I4C and law-enforcement agencies, is taking action against those responsible for originating this content," the agency said.

The NTA appealed to students, parents and the public to rely only on the official website and the agency's verified social media handles for information and not to amplify such material.

"Our 20 lakh-plus aspirants deserve a calm and fair process," it said.

More than 20 lakh medical aspirants took a second shot at the NEET re-exam on Sunday after the original test was cancelled due to paper leaks, an issue that became a hot potato for the government and triggered a popular protest movement.

Abhishek Singh, the Director General of the National Testing Agency (NTA), which has been receiving flak following the paper leak, said a "whole-of-government" approach helped it to conduct the mammoth exercise in record time.

In a statement, NTA said more than 20 lakh candidates appeared for the NEET (UG) 2026 re-examination across 5,440 centres in India and 14 centres abroad. The exam was conducted in 13 languages, including Hindi and English.

"This was not the NTA acting alone. It was Team Bharat - a chain of people across the country who showed up so that, for each candidate, the only thing that mattered that morning was the paper in front of them," the agency said.

"In all, around 7 lakh officials - police teams, observers and examination staff - were mobilised across India to conduct this examination, and it was done in a record 37 days. NTA is especially grateful to the experts from academic institutions across the country who gave their personal time to help prepare multiple sets of question papers," the NTA said.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan reviewed arrangements for the smooth conduct of the re-examination at the NTA headquarters in Delhi's Okhla.

"NTA apprised the minister of the logistical and technical arrangements put in place for the efficient and transparent conduct of the examination," the Ministry of Education said.

The NTA said extensive arrangements were made for all candidates, including more than 10,000 Persons with Disabilities.

"Special arrangements were put in place for around 81 candidates with medical conditions, among them a child who had been in a road accident, and a child undergoing chemotherapy, who were determined not to miss an exam they had prepared for years," it said.

The agency said Aadhaar-based biometric and face authentication, CCTV surveillance, jammers and two-layer frisking with the support of state police were deployed at examination centres.

"Command and control centres for CCTV monitoring were established at the national level - at the NTA and at the Ministry of Education, at 34 Centrally Funded Institutions of the Department of Higher Education, in every State, and at District Collectorates," it said.

"There were some minor reports regarding people coming with wrong admit cards, people coming with some forged admit cards at a few places; impersonation cases were also found out," NTA DG Abhishek Singh said.

"At a few places, somebody was trying to take a mobile phone; action has been taken on that because that's the purpose of putting frisking, when you put CCTV cameras, when you put handheld metal detectors, to not allow any unfair means... and there were a few people who were trying to do that, but they were not able to," he said.

While a probe is underway into the alleged paper leak, the newly formed Cockroach Janta Party, led by Abhijeet Dipke, which started as an online campaign, has been holding protests in the country, demanding the education minister's resignation.

The NTA said the conduct of the exam drew on the support of CAPF and several central ministries.

## Jitendra launches 'IAS e-List'

talent identification and effective deployment of human resources across the country.

He said that easy access to information relating to officers' qualifications, experience, cadre and postings enables governments and institutions to make informed decisions and strengthens the overall governance framework.

Dr Singh said that the Civil List had evolved beyond being a mere directory of officers and today serves as a dynamic knowledge resource for governments, institutions and stakeholders.

Referring to its advanced search and hyperlinking features, he said that the digital format allows users to identify officers based on professional background, domain expertise and experience, thereby facilitating better administrative planning and policy implementation.

The minister said that the Department of Personnel and Training, in coordination with State Governments and various cadres, undertakes extensive efforts every year to update and maintain the database.

He said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to leveraging technology for improving governance processes while ensuring greater efficiency, accessibility and transparency.

## Pak Def Min's warning to India over Indus waters

lowed a series of strong statements from Indian leaders on the issue of river waters. Union Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil said India would ensure that its water resources were used in the national interest and asserted that "not a single drop" of India's share of Indus waters should flow outside the country.

The Indus Waters Treaty has long been considered one of the most important agreements between the two neighbours. Under the pact, India has control over the eastern rivers, Ravi, Beas and Sutlej, while Pakistan has rights over the western rivers - Indus, Jhelum and Chenab.

The western rivers are crucial for Pakistan's agriculture and irrigation network, making any dispute over their flow politically and economically sensitive for Islamabad.

During the interview, Asif also claimed that Pakistan had previously conducted multiple inspections related to water-sharing arrangements and accused India of withholding information on river flows. However, he acknowledged that he was not aware of all developments that may have taken place over the past year.

Pakistan has repeatedly objected to India's decision to keep the treaty in abeyance, arguing that any disruption to river flows could affect millions dependent on the Indus basin.

## Anand Jain appointed Ladakh DGP

pointed him as Director General of Police (DGP), Ladakh, with immediate effect.

According to an order issued by MHA, Jain, a 1999-batch AGMUT cadre IPS officer, has been transferred from Jammu and Kashmir and posted as DGP, Ladakh, until further orders.

Jain was presently serving as Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Armed Police, Jammu and Kashmir.

## SC refuses to entertain plea against collegium picks for HC judgeship

high court on the administrative side or seek remedy on the judicial side.

The bench disposed of the matter subject to the liberty as sought.

The apex court collegium had on June 2 approved the proposal for appointment of three judicial officers -- Chirag Bhanu Singh, Bhupesh Sharma and Yogesh Jaswal -- as judges of the Himachal Pradesh High Court.

During the hearing on Monday, the bench observed there was nothing on record to indicate that the high court collegium had rejected the petitioner's name. "There is no rejection of your candidature at this stage. Please wait for some time," the bench said.

The top court observed that recommendation made by the high court collegium has already been approved by the Supreme Court collegium. It said the petitioner's name may have been under consideration or it may have been deferred and he need to have some patience.

"The narration of events which you have given clearly indicates that there was consideration," the bench observed.

It said the petitioner may avail remedies before the competent authority of the high court on the administrative side or the judicial side.

## Kavinder offers prayers at ancient Tara Devi temple

of the temple and highlighted the importance of preserving the rich cultural and religious heritage of the state.

On the occasion, Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil), Shimla Rural, Manjeet Sharma welcomed the governor and honoured him as a mark of respect.

The visit reflected the governor's deep regard for the spiritual traditions and cultural heritage of Himachal Pradesh and his commitment to promoting values of faith, harmony and collective well-being.

Senior officials of the district administration, temple authorities and devotees were also present on the occasion.

## We pray for early return of KPs to valley: Farooq

Pandit community should make efforts in this regard as well.

"I think people have to try themselves. Unless they make attempts, they cannot come. Preparations have been made, people in the valley want them to return. We also pray for their early return," Abdullah said while speaking to reporters during his visit to Kheer Bhawani temple in the central Kashmir's Ganderbal on the eve of annual Kheer Bhawani mela.

"It is the blessings of this deity that we are seeing brotherhood, which had been missing for many years, prevail again. We pray that the day is not far when Kashmiri Pandits return to their homes and live amongst us," he said.

Abdullah said the government had taken several steps to facilitate the return of Kashmiri Pandits.

Hundreds of Kashmiri Pandits from across the country thronged the Ragnya Devi temple here to celebrate the mela on Zaisht Ashtami festival.

## Congress slams Modi govt on rural wage figures

said.

Despite accounting for only 1.2 pc of India's workforce, these new data collection points account for 11 pc of the total sample, Ramesh said.

"Most importantly, their average wages run 50-55 pc above the old sample because newly added regions have far less agricultural employment and more higher-skilled workforces," Ramesh said.

In reality, an analysis of wages data shows that the genuine wage growth would have been around 4.3 pc per annum, which is the weakest growth in four years, he said.

"This is the entire political science of data doctoring at play," Ramesh said, taking a dig at the government.

## Doval, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang review ties

added.

According to MEA, the discussions were constructive and forward-looking.

NSA Doval also met the Secretary of Multilateral and Political Affairs of Brazil, Carlos Cozendey, on the sidelines of the BRICS NSAs' Meeting.

"Both sides welcomed the cooperation between India and Brazil under the BRICS framework and reviewed India-Brazil bilateral relations," noted the MEA.

The two-day BRICS National Security Advisors' Meeting is being held in New Delhi under India's chairship, bringing together top security officials from member countries to deliberate on evolving global security challenges and strengthen cooperation on key strategic issues.

During the meeting, the National Security Advisors/heads of delegation of BRICS Member Countries will exchange views on the theme 'Non-traditional security challenges confronting the world today', according to a statement released by the MEA.

The officials will discuss the rapidly evolving nature of national security challenges and the role of new technologies in emerging security threats. They will also review the outcomes of the recently held BRICS Joint Working Groups on Counter-Terrorism and on Security in the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

## US, Iran agree on roadmap for final deal within 60 days

sure effective implementation of the MoU and oversee progress on issues covered under the framework.

"The High-Level Committee has agreed upon a roadmap towards reaching a final deal within 60 days, laying the foundation for the immediate commencement of further technical talks," the joint statement said.

It added that a dedicated communication channel has been established between the parties for the period specified in the MoU to prevent incidents and miscommunication and to facilitate the safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.

The Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, is considered the world's most important oil transit chokepoint. It serves as a key route for crude oil exports from major Gulf producers, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE and Iran.

Recently, the Iran-US war and restrictions on shipping through the Strait disrupted oil flows, triggering concerns over global energy supplies and contributing to volatility in crude prices.

According to the joint statement, the parties also agreed on the creation of a de-confliction cell, between the parties, the Lebanese Republic and facilitated by the mediators, to ensure the adherence of the termination of military operations in Lebanon as per the MoU.

In a post on X, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Pakistani and Qatari mediators have delivered "major progress" to end the Lebanon War. He said the first "real test" would be the Lebanon deconfliction cell.

A ceasefire brokered in Lebanon over the weekend appeared to remain in effect, with Israel easing some restrictions in areas near the border.

However, Israel and Hezbollah are not parties to the US-Iran understanding. Israel has said its forces will remain in southern Lebanon until security threats are eliminated, while Hezbollah said it will halt attacks only if Israel commits to withdrawing its troops.

The joint statement said the mediating parties will continue to do their utmost to ensure that the negotiations continue to be conducted in a constructive atmosphere with the aim of reaching a final deal.

Meanwhile, US Vice President J D Vance told the press that "peace requires give and take".

"This is a historic meet. Never before have Iranian and American leadership met at such a high level outside of Islamabad," he said on Sunday.

"What today really represents is the beginning of a technical negotiation that's not going to solve every disagreement, but is going to allow us to sit together as teams, for the first time really in history, to figure out what matters most to the respective parties, to settle those issues, to solve those issues, and get to a better tomorrow," he said.

"The reason why the political leadership of the respective countries is here is because we wanted to, first of all, set up the structure for these technical negotiations, and second of all, make sure that our teams have our full support and know they can always call on us to break through any barriers."

Vance, thanking the US president, said a great deal had "already been accomplished" and the team looked forward to seeing "how much more we can accomplish together".

"Can we change relations in the Middle East, or do we go back to doing things the old way?" he said. "Where Iran and the Gulf have had an unfriendly relationship, or Iran has been a driver of regional instability? We see a future where everyone can work together to promote peace and prosperity for everyone."

Pakistan and Qatar also thanked friendly countries for their support and contribution to the ongoing negotiations.

## Starmer resigns as UK PM

new leader and PM is elected by the governing party and pledged his "full and unequivocal support" to the new leader to "ensure an orderly handover of power".

Andy Burnham, who returns to the House of Commons after winning a crucial by-election last week, is seen as the frontrunner in the race to replace him at 10 Downing Street.

"The question my party is asking now is whether I am best placed to lead us into the next general election," said an emotional Starmer, in his address from the steps of Downing Street.

"I have heard the answer of my parliamentary party to that question and I accept that answer with good grace. Every decision I have taken has been about putting the country I love first. That is why I will resign as leader of the Labour Party," he said.

Starmer said that he had spoken to King Charles III on Monday morning to inform him of the decision.

He will now ask the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party to set out the timetable for selecting his successor, with nominations opening on July 9 and the process to be completed by the summer recess of Parliament, which is set for July 17.

"In the case of a contest, this will ensure a new leader is in place before Parliament returns in September. I will remain in post as Prime Minister until the contest is complete, and I will do everything I can to ensure an orderly handover of power," said Starmer.

"I will also give my successor my full and unequivocal support, knowing that they will inherit a Britain that is far stronger and fairer than the one I inherited two years ago, better prepared for the challenges ahead, and better able to ensure the Labor Party secures a second term in office," he said.

Starmer led the Labour Party to a landslide victory in a general election in July 2024. After an initial phase of popularity, his ratings as PM have plummeted in recent months over some controversial decisions.

"When I leave the biggest job in the country, I shall spend more time on the most important job, being the best husband I can to my fantastic wife, Vic, who has been a rock by my side through good times and bad, and being the best dad I can to my beautiful children, who are my pride and my joy," said Starmer, choking back tears.