

Cont. From Page 1

Modi calls meeting of secys; to review deregulation push, reforms

comfort to people's lives and ensure "ease of living". A similar message is expected to be conveyed to the secretaries as well, the sources said.

The two principal secretaries to the prime minister, P K Mishra and Shaktikanta Das, and Cabinet Secretary T V Somanathan are likely to attend Tuesday's meeting.

The PM, who concluded his official visit to Seychelles today, attended the golden jubilee celebrations of the National Day of Seychelles as the Guest of Honour.

Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to attend the Independence Day celebrations in Seychelles.

He was currently on a three-day visit to Seychelles, starting Saturday.

The Independence Day celebrations coincided with the marking of 50 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Seychelles.

Indian armed forces participated in the national parade on Sunday night to commemorate the special occasion.

"India is proud to stand alongside Seychelles as a trusted friend and partner in its development journey. Our partnership continues to grow stronger with shared values and closer people-to-people ties. I am confident our friendship will grow even further in the times to come," PM Modi posted on social media.

In a special gesture, the Prime Minister honoured the Indian contingent by standing up as they marched.

"Contingents from the Assam Regiment and the Indian Navy took part in the National Day celebrations of Seychelles yesterday. It was yet another reflection of the enduring friendship between India and Seychelles," Modi said.

The Indian contingent comprised personnel from the Assam Rifles, the Indian Navy and an Indian Navy Marching Band, reflecting the longstanding defence partnership between the two countries.

Indian Naval Ships Tarkash and Ikshak also docked at Port Victoria.

Earlier on Sunday, Modi held wide-ranging talks with Seychelles President Patrick Herminie.

At a special ceremony, Modi was also conferred with 'Guardian of the Blue Horizon' by President Herminie for his green leadership and efforts towards advancing the interests of developing countries and his longstanding commitment towards promoting the Blue Economy.

LG performs 'Pratham Puja' at holy cave shrine

Purnima. This year's 57-day pilgrimage will formally commence on July 3, simultaneously via both traditional routes - the Pahalgam axis in Anantnag district and the Baltal in Ganderbal district.

The yatra would culminate on August 28 on the eve of Raksha Bandhan.

The government has made elaborate security arrangements across the UT to ensure smooth conduct of the pilgrimage.

Security has also been further stepped up all along the International Border and the Line of Control to foil any infiltration bid by the terrorists based in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied J&K.

On the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway also, tight security arrangements have been put in place.

Ladakh enforces ban on single-use plastics

have been directed to arrange reusable and eco-friendly drinking water facilities.

The use, sale, storage, distribution, transportation and supply of identified single-use plastic items, including plastic cutlery, straws, trays, thermocol decoration items, plastic flasks, ear buds with plastic sticks and plastic or PVC banners below 100 microns, have also been banned.

Woman BSF cop found hanging

Roy was found hanging from the ceiling fan hook with a rope. Her body was shifted to a hospital for post-mortem, officials said.

The cause of death was yet to be ascertained. Police had, however, registered a case in this connection and initiated inquest proceedings.

2 suspended after their arrest by ACB

cer (DFO), presently posted at the range office, Srinagar, and attached with the Command Office Ganderbal, and Younis Ahmad Ganie, Fireman, posted at the Fire and Emergency Services Headquarters, Srinagar, and currently deployed at the medical unit, Srinagar.

The order states that, in accordance with Rule 31(2) of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1956, both officials shall be deemed to have been placed under suspension with effect from June 26, 2026, the date of their detention, pending further orders.

During the suspension period, both officials will be entitled to receive subsistence allowance as admissible under the relevant service rules.

Bihar Gov, MoS Margherita to represent India at Khamenei's funeral

on behalf of the Government of India, marking New Delhi's official representation at the event.

"Bihar Governor Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain and Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita to attend the funeral ceremony of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on behalf of the Indian government," the sources said.

Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian had earlier sent a formal invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the funeral ceremonies for Khamenei.

On Saturday, Iranian state media Press TV reported that authorities in the Islamic Republic announced detailed arrangements for the two-day public farewell and funeral ceremonies of the late leader, with officials expecting one of the largest public gatherings in the country's history.

In a televised interview, the commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Tehran Command, Brig Gen Hassan Hassanzadeh, who is also the head of the headquarters overseeing the funeral arrangements, said the ceremonies would be held on July 4 and 5 and include public farewell events, funeral prayers and a funeral procession.

According to Press TV, citing Hassanzadeh, the public farewell ceremony will begin at 6 am (local time) on July 4 at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Grand Prayer Grounds, which will open to mourners from that time onwards.

He said the venue would not permit public access before the scheduled opening, while the farewell ceremony would continue until 8:00 pm (local time). Funeral prayers have been scheduled for the morning of July 5.

Hassanzadeh said two main ceremonies have been planned in Tehran, with the first comprising the public farewell and funeral prayers at the Imam Khomeini Grand Prayer Grounds and the second involving the funeral procession at a separate location.

The IRGC commander said authorities had decided against using a single procession route after technical assessments concluded that no individual street in Tehran could safely accommodate the anticipated turnout.

On expected attendance, Hassanzadeh said planning had been based on maximum-capacity scenarios, with preliminary estimates projecting between 12 million and 15 million participants, while some assessments suggested the turnout could reach as high as 20 million.

Ali Khamenei was killed in US-Israeli strikes on February 28, earlier this year, leading to a widespread conflict in the West Asia region.

Earlier this month, the US and Iran agreed to a 14-point memorandum of understanding (MoU) aimed at ending the hostilities in the region and opening a 60-day dialogue window for technical talks, including discussions over the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear programme.

Following Ali Khamenei's death, his son Mojtaba Khamenei was appointed as the new Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic.

'India doesn't take notice of such events'

the sidelines of a regional security conference in Colombo last week.

"Dozens of these kinds of events take place in dozens of places around the world on a whole variety of subjects. There's nothing new, nothing special about these events," the Foreign Secretary said.

"As far as we are concerned, these are private events organised by private parties. There is nothing official about them," he said.

The Foreign Secretary was responding to a media query.

"Obviously, I cannot speak for the government of Pakistan, but as far as the Government of India is concerned, there is no official participation, no official support or involvement, in these visits," he said.

"It should be obvious, therefore, that anybody from India who is participating in these events, whether they are retired diplomats, retired military officials, or members of civil society, they speak for themselves and they represent their own point of view," Misri said.

The Foreign Secretary said India does not take any cognisance of these events.

"They do not in any way; they cannot in any way represent the view of the government of India. So that is the other important thing to keep in mind," he said.

"We really take no cognisance of these events. They really don't hold much value, as far as we are concerned," Misri added.

India leads major democracies in electoral transparency: CEC

an intergovernmental organisation that supports sustainable democracy worldwide.

"Seeing this process of Indian elections, in 2026 Bharat is currently leading all the large democratic countries of the world, and is also the chairperson of International IDEA," he said.

The Chief Election Commissioner described BLOs as the pillars of democracy.

"Once again, through all of you, my greetings to all the voters of Jammu & Kashmir, and greetings to all BLOs, BLO supervisors, AEROs, EROs, and DEOs," he added.

He also visited Budgam and interacted with BLOs, EROs, AEROs and other field functionaries of election department at National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), appreciating their dedication and commitment towards strengthening the electoral process at the grassroots level.

The interaction was held as a part of the CEC's three-day official visit to Jammu and Kashmir, aimed at reviewing electoral process, engaging with field functionaries and stakeholders across the UT.

He was accompanied by Chief Electoral Officer, J&K, Sanjeev Verma and District Election Officer (Deputy Commissioner), Budgam, Athar Amir. Senior officers of the district administration and election department were also present during the interaction.

The CEC emphasised the importance of maintaining the purity and accuracy of electoral rolls through continuous updation and verification. He also highlighted the significance of technology-enabled initiatives such as ERO Net, which have strengthened electoral roll management by improving efficiency, transparency and accessibility.

Interacting with the BLOs, Gyanesh urged them to continue discharging their duties with dedication, impartiality and a service-oriented approach.

He advised them to remain focused on facts, official processes and their responsibilities towards electors, and not get influenced by misinformation or narratives that may create confusion among citizens. He underlined the importance of voter awareness, informed participation and public trust in the democratic process.

He also encouraged BLOs to maintain regular engagement with citizens, address their concerns effectively and ensure that electors remain aware of their rights and responsibilities.

The interaction formed part of the CEC's ongoing visit to Jammu & Kashmir aimed at reviewing electoral preparedness, engaging with stakeholders and taking feedback from election functionaries at the grassroots level.

Pak airstrikes kill 36 in Afghanistan

erations were launched in response to multiple militant attacks across Pakistan.

Afghanistan condemned the strikes as a "cowardly act of aggression" and an "act of brutality."

Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban government, said the Pakistani forces targeted a home in Chamkani district, in Pakitia province, killing an elderly man and a child, while other family members were injured. When residents gathered to rescue people, the area was struck again, killing 28 villagers and wounding 158, he said.

Six people, mostly women and children, were killed in a village in Giyan district, Paktika province, when another home was struck, he said. A civilian home in Kunar province was also hit, causing no casualties but killing some 30 livestock. Militant attacks targeting Pakistan's police and security forces have surged in recent years. Authorities have blamed the Pakistani Taliban - known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP - and allied militant groups for most of the violence. The Pakistani Taliban are separate from but allied with the Afghan Taliban that returned to power in 2021.

The Pakistani security operation followed a militant attack targeting the regional headquarters of the paramilitary Rangers in Karachi that killed three soldiers. Security forces killed three attackers and arrested another assailant, whom the military identified as an Afghan national in wounded condition.

Multiple rounds of talks have failed to secure a lasting ceasefire. China also hosted the two sides in April and Beijing later said Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed not to escalate their conflict and to explore a solution.

Govt considers 50 pc increase in LS seats for all states

To implement it from the 2029 Lok Sabha elections,

changes were needed in the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, or women's reservation law.

According to the government's plan, Lok Sabha seats will be increased to a maximum of 850 from the current 543 to "operationalise" the women's quota law before the 2029 parliamentary polls following a delimitation exercise to be carried out on the basis of the last published census.

According to the Constitution Amendment Bill introduced in April, seats would also be increased in state and UT Assemblies to accommodate 33 per cent reservation for women.

The seats reserved for women in Lok Sabha and legislative Assemblies "shall be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a state or Union territory", the Bill said.

International buyer-seller meet will boost exports: Omar

Asked if representatives from some countries won't be able to attend the event due to the Iran-US war, the chief minister said the buyer-seller meet was being well-attended.

"I do not know how many foreign representatives you are expecting, but we have 40 buyers from 16 countries spread over several continents. There are people from Africa, Australia, North America, Europe and Asia. Perhaps there are very few places from where no one came. Maybe some people couldn't come due to the war, and we hope that they come the next time," he said.

"The two-day buyer-seller meet also includes an element of training and help," he said.

"We are trying to help the existing exporters or people who want to become exporters. The idea is to not only to promote the existing exporters to export more, but also to encourage those who don't export to start exporting," he added.

Asked about the number of tourists who had visited Kashmir this year, the chief minister said he would not go into the figures.

"Please do not go into numbers as we take a beating then. People are coming and there are traffic jams. Gulmarg is full, Pahalgam is full and people are earning livelihood. Let them earn," he said.

In response to a question on the situation in Middle East, Abdullah said he was hopeful that the MoU signed between Iran and the US was not sabotaged by a third country.

"The final agreement has not been signed yet. They have only signed an MoU. There is a difference between a final agreement and an MoU. Both countries have given themselves 15 days, yet the bombing continues. Iran has been bombed, Kuwait and Bahrain have been bombed. The war is not fully over yet," he said.

"We hope that the two countries use this time productively so that no third country can sabotage the ceasefire," Abdullah added.

Earlier, he inaugurated the two-day Jammu & Kashmir International Buyer-Seller Meet-2026 at SKICC and reaffirmed that the government was committed to transforming Jammu and Kashmir into a globally competitive export hub by expanding market access for local artisans, women Self-Help Groups (SHGs), handicraft producers and agro-based enterprises.

The international trade event is being organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organisation (J&K TPO) in association with the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO). More than 30 international and national buyers from over 14 countries are participating in the meet, which also features over 20 live demonstrations under the 'Know Your Artisan' initiative and showcases more than 100 handicrafts, handloom and agro-food products from across Jammu and Kashmir.

The event featured dedicated pavilions established for women Self-Help Groups and the specially curated 'Know Your Artisan' initiative, aimed at creating direct engagement between buyers and the craftsmen behind the region's world-renowned products.

The chief minister also inspected exhibition stalls put up by participants from different districts of Jammu and Kashmir, including women SHGs, artisans and entrepreneurs displaying traditional handicrafts, handloom products, food items, crafts and other locally manufactured products. He also visited the stalls established by foreign buyer delegations and appreciated their participation in strengthening international trade linkages with Jammu and Kashmir.

In his address, he welcomed the delegates from across the world and described the buyer-seller meet as an important platform for strengthening Jammu and Kashmir's export ecosystem.

He said Jammu and Kashmir had historically been a place for export of its products, though not through conventional export channels. Buyers from India and abroad have traditionally travelled to Kashmir as tourists, purchased local products and, in the process, have become ambassadors of Kashmiri craftsmanship in global markets. Many of these interactions, he noted, evolved into enduring business relationships spanning decades.

He, however, said the changing circumstances and a prolonged decline in tourism had disrupted this traditional model, compelling artisans and handicraft producers to actively seek markets beyond the region.

He said craftsmen who once relied on buyers visiting them had to travel across the country and abroad to rebuild commercial linkages and sustain their livelihoods.

Highlighting the government's efforts to facilitate this transition, he recalled that the process of organising structured buyer-seller meets in Jammu and Srinagar was initiated during his tenure in the Union Commerce and Industry Ministry to reconnect local producers with national and international markets.

He said the present edition of the buyer-seller meet marks a significant evolution by extending participation beyond traditional exporters to include women Self-Help Groups, rural entrepreneurs and artisans from remote areas who had previously remained outside such trade platforms.

He noted that nearly 98 per cent of Jammu and Kashmir's exports currently originate from four districts, leaving enormous untapped potential across the rest of the region. He stressed that achieving the ambitious export targets set for the coming years would require not only supporting existing exporters but also creating a new generation of exporters from rural and underserved regions.

He said buyer-seller meet such as this provides an effective mechanism for connecting emerging producers with international markets and exposing them to export opportunities that were previously beyond their reach. The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the recommendations and interactions emerging from the event would help increase export volumes while also diversifying Jammu and Kashmir's export basket by introducing products that have so far remained outside global markets.

He remarked that while a handcrafted shawl or carpet tells one story, meeting the artisan behind it adds another dimension by creating a personal connection that enhances the product's value and strengthens its appeal in in-

ternational markets.

Saying that this edition of the buyer-seller meet is distinguished both by the diversity of its participants and its inclusive approach, Abdullah expressed optimism that the two-day event would prove mutually beneficial for buyers and sellers alike by fostering lasting commercial partnerships and opening new avenues of trade.

Among others, the event was attended by CM's advisor Nasir Aslam Wani, CM's additional chief secretary Dheeraj Gupta, I&C secretary Vikramjit Singh, FIEO CEO Ajay Sahai, J&K TPO's MD Sudarshan Kumar, senior officers, exporters, artisans, entrepreneurs, women Self-Help Groups, foreign delegates and trade representatives.

8 newly-elected MPs take oath as RS members

Chugh, the six other new members included Jitendra Meghji (Gujarat), M Nagaraja (Karnataka), Rajendra Hiralal Jain (Maharashtra), Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi (Manipur) and Alka Singh (Rajasthan).

Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, Leader of the House J P Nadda, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal were present at the oath-taking, both inside the chairman's chamber as well as in the House.

Kharge took oath in Hindi while holding a copy of the Constitution in his hand.

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi and MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were present during his oath-taking.

Radhakrishnan congratulated and welcomed the new members into the House.

Yasin Malik named as main accused in Sarla Bhat's killing

two years to stitch up the chargesheet against the five accused persons.

The SIA said the voluminous 737-page chargesheet, painstakingly compiled after an exhaustive investigation, brings together a formidable body of oral, documentary, forensic, ballistic, medical and electronic evidence accumulated over decades and analysed meticulously.

"The filing of the chargesheet after nearly 35 years marks a historic milestone in the pursuit of justice for victims of terrorism and stands as one of the most significant breakthroughs in the investigation of legacy terror crimes in Jammu and Kashmir.

"More importantly, the chargesheet sends a powerful and unequivocal message that time can never become a shield for terrorism. No matter how many years have elapsed, those responsible for terrorist atrocities will continue to remain answerable before the law," officials said.

"The case demonstrates that while terrorism may delay justice through fear, intimidation and violence, it can never permanently defeat the rule of law," the officials added.

"The investigation has revealed the involvement of Yaseen Malik along with Khurshid Ahmad Chalkoo, Abdul Hamid Sheikh, Mohammad Yousuf Sofi alias Idrees and Ghulam Mohammad Taploo in planning and executing the abduction and brutal killing.

"While Abdul Hamid Sheikh, Mohammad Yousuf Sofi alias Idrees and Ghulam Mohammad Taploo are dead, Malik is presently in judicial custody in another case," officials said.

Officials said legal proceedings, including proclamation proceedings, had been initiated against absconding terrorist Khurshid Ahmad Chalkoo, who had pulled the trigger.

"The chargesheet establishes offences punishable under Sections 364, 341, 302 read with 34, 201 and 120-B RPC, Sections 3(2), 3(3), 4 and 6 of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 (TADA), and Sections 7 and 27 of the Indian Arms Act, 1959," the officials added.

SC rejects urgent hearing on Ram temple donation row plea

glory of Ayodhya," the plea said.

The SIT constituted by the Uttar Pradesh government has commenced its inquiry into the matter without the registration of an FIR or any regular criminal case, it alleged.

AK rifle, grenades recovered from terrorist hideout

zine, 30 rounds of ammunition, an Under Barrel Grenade Launcher and three UBGL grenades, officials said.

The hideout was later destroyed by the forces. Kavinder calls upon youth to stay rooted in rich cultural traditions

Later, the governor participated in the valedictory function of the three-day annual Maa Shoolini Mela.

"The blessings of Maa Shoolini have made the fair a vibrant symbol of Himachal Pradesh's rich cultural heritage, deep-rooted faith, and enduring social harmony. Such traditional festivals serve as a living celebration of the state's age-old traditions, folk culture, and shared social values," he said.

Every year, lakhs of devotees from different parts of the country visit the state to pay obeisance at its revered Shakti Peeths, ancient temples, and holy shrines. "Religious tourism strengthens spiritual values while making a significant contribution to the state's economy by creating livelihood opportunities for local communities," he said.

Emphasising the immense potential of pilgrimage tourism, Gupta advocated the development of an integrated religious tourism circuit connecting the major temples and shrines of Himachal Pradesh.

Such an initiative, he said, would enable pilgrims from across the country and abroad to visit multiple sacred destinations during a single journey, thereby boosting tourism, generating employment for the youth, and showcasing the state's rich cultural and spiritual heritage on the global stage.

Gupta also made a special appeal to the younger generation to remain connected with their cultural roots, traditions, and values. "A society which takes pride in its heritage builds a stronger and more prosperous future," he said.

Stressing the importance of communal harmony and brotherhood, he said that unity in diversity remains India's greatest strength and would continue to serve as the foundation for building a Viksit Himachal and a Viksit Bharat.

He prayed to Maa Shoolini to bless every citizen with happiness, good health, peace, prosperity, and continued progress.

He extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the district administration, the Mela Organising Committee, and the people of Solan for organising yet another successful edition of the annual Maa Shoolini Mela and expressed confidence that the festival would continue to strengthen the bonds of faith, culture, and social unity for generations to come.