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### Indian Army combat-ready, battle-hardened: Gen Seth

the rank of an Army Commander, he served as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the South Western Command (based in Jaipur) and the Southern Command.

During his military career spanning nearly four decades, he has had extensive experience across operational, strategic, capability development and institutional domains, contributing significantly to the Indian Army's combat effectiveness and long-term transformation.

Tenanting pivotal appointments earlier in strategic planning and capability development verticals of the Army Headquarters, he shaped its modernisation trajectory, capability roadmap and long-term force structuring initiatives.

In nearly four decades, he built an exceptional operational profile across diverse terrains and conflict environments, including counter-insurgency experience.

### LG to flag off first batch of pilgrims for holy cave shrine

fall during the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 am on Wednesday, bringing down the minimum temperature to 23.3 degrees Celsius, 2.7 notches below the season's average.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made by police and other agencies to ensure the smooth conduct of the pilgrimage.

In the borders areas too, security has been further stepped up to foil any infiltration bid by the terrorists based in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied J&K. The agencies concerned have called upon the border residents to act as their 'eyes & ears' and inform them about any suspicious movement in their villages.

### Machail Mata, Mindhal yatras suspended

ditions and the risk of shooting stones, both the Machail Mata Yatra and the Mindhal Mata Yatra shall remain suspended on Wednesday," officials said.

Pilgrims were advised not to undertake the journey and to remain at their homes or other safe locations until further advisories were issued.

The Machail Mata yatra in the scenic Paddar valley began on April 14 with the reopening of the doors of the 9,705-ft-high shrine after the winter closure. Around 90,000 devotees have visited the shrine so far this year.

The annual Mindhal Mata Yatra commenced on June 1 with the departure of the holy Charri (mace) from Balasu village to Mindhal Darbar in Pangti, Himachal Pradesh.

Last year, a devastating cloudburst had struck Chisoti village -- the gateway to the Machail Mata shrine -- on August 14, leaving 63 people, mostly devotees, dead, injuring scores of others, and leaving several missing.

### Security stepped up at railway station

the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in Anantnag district and the shorter but steeper 14-km Baltal route in Ganderbal district. The first batch of pilgrims will leave Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas in Jammu on July 2.

"When we talk about Amarnath Yatra, it is an extremely important event for the region. It also holds immense religious significance. Keeping this in view, all arrangements have been put in place," a senior railway official said.

He said that the railways had made elaborate arrangements for devotees with focus on three major fronts.

"The first priority is security. Ticket checking staff, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Government Railway Police (GRP) are working in close coordination to ensure that no untoward incident takes place at the station. Pilgrims' movement is being properly streamlined to ensure safe and hassle-free travel," he said.

"To assist pilgrims, the railways has also deployed scouts and guides at the station. The volunteers are helping passengers navigate the station, particularly as redevelopment work is underway, with efforts focused on minimising inconvenience to them," he added.

### IPS officer arrested in graft case

by using his purported influence over agency officials in return for the bribe, officials said.

"Searches have been conducted at multiple premises linked to the IPS officer and multiple digital devices, hard disks, and documents have been seized," a CBI spokesperson said.

The arrest stems from an FIR registered by the CBI on June 8 against Delhi Police Crime Branch Inspector Pradeep Singh, alleged middleman Rajkumar and businessman N Raja.

Last month, the agency arrested Singh, Rajkumar and five others in a trap operation, recovering Rs 25 lakh as trap money and another Rs 90 lakh, besides incriminating documents, the spokesperson said.

"During investigation, it was disclosed that the IPS officer had demanded illegal gratification claiming that he could exercise his personal influence and obtain relief for private persons in the cases being investigated by CBI in relation to the sale of counterfeit drugs in Puducherry," the officer said.

According to officials, Raja was facing a CBI investigation in an alleged fake drug manufacturing case registered earlier this year and got in touch with Singh, who allegedly gave an assurance that he would be able to influence the probe.

Singh then arranged a meeting between Raja and Gahlawat at his office in Aerocity, where the IPS officer allegedly demanded Rs 3 crore, including an upfront payment of Rs. 1.5 crore, in return for a "favourable investigation".

The businessman arranged Rs 1 crore through a hawala transaction, which was allegedly handed over to Singh, who in turn passed on Rs 50 lakh to another middleman, Prabhat, who was known to the suspect public servant, officials said.

"Accused Pradeep Kumar Singh kept the remaining Rs 25 lakh in his office. Thereafter, on June 8, 2026, accused Rajkumar and Pradeep Kumar Singh were apprehended," an official said.

### Ashutosh Dixit takes charge as Vice Chief of IAF

in the Indian Air Force (IAF).

Air Marshal Dixit was accorded a guard of honour at the Vayu Bhawan - the headquarters of the IAF - as he took charge as the new Vice Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS).

Prior to the ceremony, the air officer visited the National War Memorial and laid a wreath to pay homage to the fallen heroes of the armed forces.

Before being appointed as VCAS, he was serving as the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CISC) at the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) here.

Air Marshal Dixit assumed the appointment of CISC on May 1, 2025, which he relinquished on June 30.

The HQ IDS said in an X post on Tuesday, "His tenure at HQ IDS was defined by landmark contributions that re-shaped the contours of integrated defence playing a pivotal role in Operation Sindoor, a defining moment in India's national security calculus; steering the release of 20 joint doctrines and primers that institutionalised tri services thought; conceptualising Ran Samwad 2025 and 2026, an unprecedented military dialogue platform; orchestrating the combined and joint commanders conferences 2025 and 2026; and anchoring the formulation of the Defence Forces Vision 2047 - a transformative roadmap for a technology-driven, integrated and future-ready military."

The armed forces conducted Operation Sindoor in May 2025 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack. Military officers and experts have often emphasised the integration of the three services demonstrated during the military action that lasted nearly 88 hours starting early May 7.

Air Marshal Dixit was commissioned into the fighter stream of the IAF in December 1986.

He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla; Defence Services Staff College, Bangladesh; and National Defence College, New Delhi.

The air officer is a "qualified flying instructor and experimental test pilot with over 3,300 hours of flying experience on more than 20 types of aircraft, including Mirage-2000, MiG-21 and Jaguar," the defence ministry earlier said.

Air Marshal Tejinder Singh is set to be the next CISC, according to officials.

### ATF, commercial LPG prices cut

Oil marketing companies also cut the price of commercial LPG by Rs 183.50 per 19-kg cylinder, the first reduction this year.

Commercial LPG will now cost Rs 2,930 per cylinder after touching a record Rs 3,113 last month as geopolitical tensions pushed up crude oil prices.

Alongside, the 5-kg marked-priced or Free Trade LPG (FTL) cylinder cost was also reduced by Rs 13 to Rs 808.50 per 5-kg cylinder.

Prices of domestic 14.2-kg LPG cylinders were left unchanged at Rs 942.

Last month, the government introduced an ATF price stabilisation scheme under which participating airlines could buy jet fuel at a fixed price of Rs 115 per litre for up to three years. Airlines that do not opt for the scheme continue to pay prevailing market rates.

Under the mechanism, if benchmark ATF prices rise above the base rate of Rs 86.32 per litre - equivalent to a retail price of Rs 115 per litre after airport charges, oil company margins and applicable taxes - the government will provide interest-free advances to oil marketing companies to bridge the difference.

When benchmark prices fall below the base rate, the excess amount will be recovered from the companies and credited back to the Consolidated Fund of India.

It was not immediately known how many airlines had opted for the stabilisation scheme.

Industry sources said the Rs 110 per litre jet fuel price is for domestic airlines.

State-owned fuel retailers revise ATF and commercial LPG prices on the first day of every month based on the average international benchmark price in the preceding month and foreign exchange rates.

Separately, Nayara Energy cut petrol prices by Rs 5 per litre and diesel by Rs 3 per litre across its network of more than 7,000 fuel stations, sources said.

The move follows a decline in global crude prices after concerns over supply disruptions eased with the de-escalation of hostilities in West Asia and the reopening of a key maritime route.

Nayara had been among the first retailers to raise fuel prices after the outbreak of the Iran conflict triggered a spike in international oil prices. On March 26, it increased petrol prices by Rs 5 per litre and diesel by Rs 3 per litre.

State-run fuel retailers followed, raising petrol and diesel prices by a cumulative Rs 7.50 per litre each in a series of revisions during the second half of May, reflecting higher international crude prices and elevated product costs.

State-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL), which together account for more than 90 per cent of India's fuel retail market, left prices unchanged. In Delhi, IOC continues to sell petrol at Rs 102.12 per litre and diesel at Rs 95.20 per litre.

The reduction effectively reverses Nayara's previous fuel price increase and marks the first retail price cut by any fuel retailer in more than two years.

Sources said Nayara, which operates a 20-million-tonnes-per-year refinery at Vadinar in Gujarat, has completed a refinery turnaround and is operating at full capacity to meet domestic demand.

### 'Digital India' has given India new identity worldwide: Modi

efficient and accessible, he said.

Modi said the government's strides in the digital world have ensured that India is making rapid progress in emerging technologies such as AI, semiconductors, quantum computing and more.

"This too will open new avenues for growth and opportunity. Our focus will remain on creating a future where tech-

nology serves humanity, empowers every citizen and drives sustainable development," he said.

Modi said Digital India is the strong foundation of a developed and self-reliant India and over the past 11 years, it has played a crucial role in empowering the poor and deprived while making the lives of citizens easier.

"From the expansion of optical fibre networks to digital transactions, the unprecedented success of this campaign has drawn the attention of the entire world towards India," he said, adding, "When over a billion people embrace technology, the impact is transformative!".

Officials noted that before 2015, public services often meant long queues, paperwork, and limited connectivity but Digital India helped bridge the digital divide by expanding internet access and bringing services online.

The programme also promoted the democratisation of digital technologies through affordable internet and digital access at population scale.

Over the last decade, Digital India has become the foundation of India's digital economy and Digital Public Infrastructure. India now leads global real-time digital payments, with UPI handling nearly 49 per cent of worldwide transaction volume.

### Sinha visits Bhagwati Nagar Yatri Niwas

ities, help desks, sanitation, power and water supply, emergency and other essential services and facilities, ensuring a seamless and hassle-free experience for the devotees.

The LG directed the officials concerned to enhance manpower management to seamlessly cater to the heavy influx of devotees.

He also emphasised regular public announcements at Bhagwati Nagar and Tawi Riverfront to make sure that yatris receive essential information on time.

He also interacted with the devotees of Baba Barfani and wished them a safe, peaceful and blessed pilgrimage.

The LG was accompanied by DGP Nalin Prabhat, special DG (coordination PHQ) S J M Gillani, divisional commissioner Ramesh Kumar, IGP Bhim Sen Tuti, CRPF IG (Jammu sector) Amol V Homkar, IGP traffic M Suleman Choudhary, deputy commissioner Rakesh Minhas, JMC commissioner Devansh Yadav and senior officials from civil administration, police and security forces.

### Gadkari announces completion of Viaduct, Tunnel on NH

faster and all-weather connectivity to the valley," he added.

The projects are expected to significantly reduce travel time, improve road safety and facilitate the seamless movement of tourists, local commuters, defence vehicles, freight and essential supplies throughout the year.

The Ramban-Banihal stretch of NH-44 serves as a vital link between the Jammu region and Kashmir and is frequently affected by landslides and adverse weather, disrupting traffic and the movement of goods and passengers.

Meanwhile, the LG expressed gratitude to Modi and Gadkari for completion of 810 m long Viaduct near Ramsoo in Ramban district and 3.5-km AT-03 Tunnel connecting Digdole to Panthyal on National Highway-44.

"Heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari for transforming J&K's highways and road connectivity. The completion of 810m long Viaduct near Ramsoo in Ramban district and 3.5-km AT-03 Tunnel connecting Digdole to Panthyal on NH-44 is yet another monumental feat," he said.

"These key infrastructures secure smooth and all-weather movement of locals, tourists, freight and security forces, while ensuring a safer and seamless journey for the pilgrims of Shri Amarnathji Yatra, bypassing landslide-prone stretches," the LG added.

The landmark road infrastructures are scheduled to open for traffic on July 3.

### Southwest Monsoon covers J&K, Ladakh; MeT warns of heavy rains

Kashmir.

"The first Western Disturbance is currently influencing the region and will weaken by tomorrow. The second Western Disturbance will arrive tomorrow night and remain effective until Saturday morning. This will be followed by the third Western Disturbance, which is expected to impact the region from Saturday afternoon through Sunday," the department said.

Though Jammu was lashed by heavy rains overnight, the region reeled under intense heatwave today. Kashmir too witnessed intense heatwave as maximum day temperatures remained 5-6 degrees Celsius above normal across most parts of it.

### Panel on demographic changes meets Shah

ording to an official statement.

The committee members said that a detailed questionnaire has been prepared to seek relevant information from states and UTs in advance to make the visits more meaningful and interactive, it said.

Appreciating the strategy, Shah directed Home Secretary Govind Mohan to provide all possible assistance to the committee in its day-to-day work as well as during its visits to states and UTs.

He suggested that the high-level committee provide its recommendations at the earliest.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the 'High-powered Demography Mission' on August 15, 2025. The Government of India has constituted a high-level committee to study the demographic changes arising from illegal immigration and other abnormal reasons, and to suggest measures to deal with these demographic changes," the statement said.

The committee also comprises Census Commissioner Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan and three distinguished persons -- Durga Shankar Mishra (Retired IAS), Balaji Srivastava (Retired IPS), and Shamika Ravi (member of PMEAC), it said.

"This high-level committee will scientifically assess the demographic changes occurring in various parts of the country due to illegal immigration and other abnormal

reasons, analyse their causes, and recommend appropriate policy, legislative, and administrative measures," the statement said.

### Non-supply of chargesheet copy can't be ground for default bail: SC

ation and creating forged documents. Further, they are being assisted by bank officials for the deposit of the cyber fraud proceeds into their bank accounts, the CBI said.

The accused in this case had moved the Bombay High Court seeking a default bail on the ground that although the chargesheet was filed within the prescribed timeline, he was not served with a copy of the chargesheet.

The apex court said the courts have rightly held that the non-filing of a copy of the chargesheet cannot become a ground for default bail and the submission of the appellant cannot be accepted.

### Kavinder calls for mission-mode campaign against drug abuse

statewide anti-drug awareness campaign, which would subsequently be carried to different districts across the state.

Representatives, educationists, social workers and youth from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and other parts of the country participated in the programme.

The governor described the initiative as a significant step towards realising the vision of a drug-free India.

Explaining the significance of the campaign's title, Gupta said the word "Elevate" symbolises rising higher, but true elevation lies in living a healthy, purposeful and service-oriented life.

He expressed happiness that the initiative was being developed into a nationwide people's movement to inspire youth to choose a meaningful and disciplined way of life.

"If the ideas and objectives of the campaign are implemented effectively at the grassroots level, Himachal Pradesh can make remarkable progress towards becoming a drug-free state," he said.

"Youth are the nation's greatest asset, and protecting them from the menace of drugs is a shared responsibility of every section of society," he added.

Calling for a united social movement against drug abuse, Gupta said that teachers have a particularly important role to play in shaping young minds. If educators regularly counsel students, guide them with care and treat them like members of their own family, many young people can be prevented from drifting towards addiction.

He said India is moving towards the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047, and safeguarding the country's youth from drugs is essential for achieving that vision. He urged every citizen to stand shoulder to shoulder in the fight against substance abuse and contribute towards fulfilling the national resolve of Nasha Mukht Bharat.

Expressing concern over changing social structures, Gupta said that the decline of joint family systems and the rise of nuclear families have reduced the guidance once provided by elders, leading to increasing loneliness, stress, depression and vulnerability among young people. He stressed that stronger family bonds, open communication and emotional support are essential to address these challenges effectively.

Referring to Himachal Pradesh as Dev Bhoomi, the Governor said that even this sacred land is not untouched by the growing menace of drugs. He expressed confidence that when the youth of Dev Bhoomi remain free from addiction, they will contribute significantly towards making the State stronger, healthier and more prosperous.

On the occasion, the governor honoured individuals for their outstanding contribution towards creating awareness against drug abuse and released a booklet on drug awareness.

Delivering the keynote address, Director of NIT Jalandhar and Additional Director of NIT Srinagar, Prof. Vinod Kumar Kanojia, described Himachal Pradesh as a symbol of India's spiritual consciousness, natural grandeur and simplicity. He said the towering mountains of the State inspire people to think higher and strive for excellence. He also highlighted the growing need to create awareness among youth about the harmful effects of excessive mobile phone usage.

Earlier, National Outreach Head of Elevate, Shri Sanyog Dutt Sharma, welcomed the Governor. Vidya Bharati Himachal Pradesh Sangathan Mantri Shri Gyan Kumar spoke on the harmful effects of drug abuse, while eminent social worker Shri Gopal Kishan emphasized the need to strengthen public awareness campaigns for a Drug-Free India. Shri Manish Sharma, Member of the Anuvrat Vishwa Bharati Society, proposed the vote of thanks.

Governor's secretary Sandeep Bhardwaj, students from various schools, representatives of educational institutions, social organisations and other distinguished guests were also present on the occasion.

### India asks Pak to free 188 prisoners; seeks consular access to 13

ensure the safety, security and welfare of all Indian and believed-to-be-Indian prisoners, pending their release and repatriation to India."

The government said sustained diplomatic efforts had resulted in the repatriation of 2,661 Indian fishermen and 78 Indian civil prisoners from Pakistan since 2014. Of these, 500 fishermen and 20 civil prisoners had returned to India since 2023, underscoring continued engagement between the two sides on humanitarian issues despite strained bilateral ties.

### Cloudbursts hit Doda, trigger flash floods

Bhalessa belt. Restoration work will begin once weather conditions improve," the officials added.

Meanwhile, the administration has advised residents to avoid unnecessary travel in vulnerable areas and strictly follow official advisories until road connectivity is restored.