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Modi arrives in NZ; visit set to unlock new avenues of cooperation

New Zealand, he will hold talks with Luxon on ways to further enhance economic, trade and commercial engagements.

The PM later met members of the Indian diaspora and expressed deep gratitude to the Indian community and underlined how their jubilant enthusiasm was palpable upon his arrival.

"The love and affection of New Zealand's Indian community touched me deeply. They have waited four decades for the visit of an Indian Prime Minister and their extraordinary enthusiasm and warmth were visible today. Their bond with India remains unwavering," Modi said in a post on X.

Earlier, New Zealand's iconic Sky Tower was lit in the colours of India's national flag. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal shared the visuals of the Sky Tower in a post on X and underlined that the gesture symbolised the bonhomie between the two partners.

Modi arrived in New Zealand after concluding a three-day visit to Australia, where he held summit talks with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and both leaders reinforced the vital role of the bilateral partnership in ensuring a peaceful Indo-Pacific.

A major highlight of the summit talks between the two leaders was their focus on significantly ramping up defence ties, especially in the maritime domain.

An agreement on civil nuclear energy to facilitate the commercial supply of uranium from Australia to India to fuel New Delhi's nuclear power projects was sealed after over two years of negotiations.

Modi was in Indonesia before that, where 14 agreements were inked to boost cooperation in critical minerals, maritime security and other key sectors.

Amarnathji Yatra boosting J&K economy, uplifting lives of people: LG

The concerned officers briefed the LG about the arrangements related to security, sanitation, health-care, accommodation, water and power supply and other essential services. It was informed that an effective feedback mechanism had been put in place and immediate steps were being taken to address issues highlighted by pilgrims.

During the review meeting, it was also informed that the number of RO water installations along the yatra track had been increased to ensure adequate availability of clean drinking water for pilgrims.

Sinha also interacted with yatrins and enquired about the facilities extended to them. The pilgrims appreciated the arrangements made by the line departments, administration, shrine board, police, Army, security forces and other stakeholders for their smooth pilgrimage.

"I invite all devotees of Baba Barfani to come, experience the darshan of Almighty Shiva, and let this pilgrimage be a journey of self-discovery and spiritual joy," he said.

"Today marks the eighth day of the yatra, and so far, around 1,70,000 pilgrims have paid their obeisance at the holy cave. J&K administration, police, Army, security forces, shrine board, and all other stakeholders have worked in complete synergy to ensure that the pilgrimage is hassle-free," he said while speaking to reporters.

"Compared to previous years, a significant number of pilgrims have arrived without prior registration. We have successfully facilitated their journey through the necessary protocols, ensuring a smooth process. Every effort is being made to ensure that all pilgrims return home with a positive experience. I am confident that in the coming days, devotees arriving from every corner of the country will carry back fond memories of their pilgrimage," he said.

100-bed hospitals, located at Baltal & Chandanwari, have been fully operational, handling an average of 1,300 to 1,400 OPD patients daily. These hospitals are playing a critical role in safeguarding the health of both the pilgrims and the dedicated personnel deployed along the routes.

"I appeal to all the pilgrims to strictly adhere to the guidelines established by the administration and the shrine board. The entire administrative machinery is working round-the-clock to assist you. In case of any inconvenience, please immediately inform the nearest camp director or deployed security personnel, and all possible assistance will be provided on priority," he said.

The LG was accompanied by SASB CEO Mandeep K Bhandari, IGP (Kashmir) V K Birdi, IGP (security) Sujit Kumar, IGP (traffic) M Suleman Choudhary, secretary (department of rural development & panchayati raj) Mohammad Aljaz, divisional commissioner Anshul Garg, JKPDC managing Director & Baltal Axis nodal officer Rahul Yadav, CKR DIG Rajiv Omprakashn, Ganderbal DC Jatin Kishore, Ganderbal SSP Sudhanshu Dhama, rural sanitation DG Anoo Malhotra and senior officers of shrine board, civil administration, police & security forces.

Sinha wishes speedy recovery to injured pilgrims

"Received the report of a road accident near Toldi Nallah in Udhampur, involving six Shri Amarnathji Yatra pilgrims from Rewa, Madhya Pradesh. The devotees were traveling to Pahalgam base camp for the holy cave darshan when their vehicle skidded off the road. One pilgrim is seriously injured, while the other five are in a stable condition and currently receiving care at GMC, Udhampur. The critically injured pilgrim has been shifted to GMC, Jammu," he said in a post on X.

"I have directed the divisional commissioner, Jammu, the deputy commissioner, Udhampur, and medical officials at the GMCs in Jammu and Udhampur to ensure that they receive the best possible treatment. I pray to Almighty Shiva for their swift recovery," the LG added.

Shopian operation enters day 7

Security forces were continuing searches for him, officials said.

The operation would continue till he too was found out and eliminated by the forces, the officials added.

3 JKAS officers transferred, posted

bilitation commissioner (migrants), J&K, for further posting. Monish Kumar, who was awaiting adjustment orders in the general administration department, is transferred and his services are placed at the disposal of J&K Sports Council for further posting.

Departmental inquiry ordered against retd Xen

charge executive engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Bakshi Nagar, will serve as the presenting officer.

The inquiry relates to allegations linked to FIR No 05/2020 registered by the anti-corruption bureau, Jammu, and the inquiry officer has been asked to submit the report within 30 days.

Saxena inaugurates 5 EV charging stations

first in Ladakh, have been established at Leh's Main Bus Stand, Tia Rong, Solar Colony, Chuchot Shamma and Khaltsi, while a sixth charging station near Magnetic Hill in Leh was in the final stages of completion.

Together, these charging stations will form the foundation of a comprehensive EV charging network across Ladakh, facilitating the growing adoption of electric vehicles and ensuring convenient charging infrastructure for both residents and tourists.

The new EV charging infrastructure has been designed in a way that owners of electric vehicles do not face any inconvenience while travelling within Ladakh or while charging their vehicles. Each of the charging stations is equipped with two fast-charging guns, enabling vehicles to be charged up to 80 per cent capacity within 30 mins to one hour, thereby making electric mobility more practical and convenient. They are also equipped with advanced fire safety measures and an emergency shutdown system for enhanced safety.

Saxena described the inauguration of the charging stations as a historic day for Ladakh's transition towards clean energy and sustainable transportation. He stated that the initiative was fully aligned with the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of making Ladakh a Carbon Neutral region and promoting clean energy while protecting its pristine environment and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

"The inauguration of these EV Charging Stations reflects our unwavering commitment to clean energy, sustainable mobility and environmentally responsible development. Ladakh's fragile ecology demands that we adopt technologies that minimise pollution and reduce carbon emissions. I am confident that the people of Ladakh, who have always embraced progressive initiatives, will wholeheartedly adopt this transition towards clean mobility," he said.

Saxena urged the citizens to gradually shift from conventional petrol and diesel vehicles to electric vehicles, noting that such a transition would play a crucial role in reducing pollution, conserving the environment and protecting Ladakh's unique ecological heritage.

9th batch of 8,796 pilgrims leaves for darshans of ice-Shivalingam

repeatedly urged unregistered pilgrims planning to undertake the yatra to postpone their journey by a few days.

Officials also announced that only registered pilgrims would be permitted to proceed to Kashmir, while unregistered devotees would be stopped at designated checkpoints until fresh registration quotas become available.

The 57-day pilgrimage to the cave shrine was officially flagged off by LG Manoj Sinha on July 2 morning from Bhagwati Nagar base camp here simultaneously for the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in Anantnag district and the shorter but steeper 14-km Baltal route in Ganderbal district. The yatra will conclude on August 28.

Authorities have put in place multi-layered security arrangements along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and at all transit camps to ensure the safe and smooth movement of the yatra convoys. A multi-tier security setup has been activated in and around the Bhagwati Nagar base camp.

The commencement of the yatra marks the beginning of one of the country's most revered spiritual pilgrimages and reflects the coordinated efforts of the administration and all stakeholder departments to facilitate a secure, seamless and memorable pilgrimage experience for every devotee.

Traffic restrictions will remain in force on various stretches of the highway till August 28, with daily advisories and sector-wise cut-off timings to regulate traffic, officials said.

Vande Mataram turned patriotism into duty: VP

Permanent Exhibition on Journey of Vande Mataram and the International Seminar on 'Sardar Patel's Vision: Integration, Unification and Federalism', organised by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla. Geographic Reference

Paying tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the VP said that Patel united not only territories but also the hearts of Indians, laying the foundation for one nation, one Constitution and one common destiny.

"Vande Mataram transformed love for the motherland into a sacred national duty, inspiring generations of freedom fighters with courage, sacrifice and hope," he said in a statement issued here.

Emphasising that patriotism must be reflected every day through honesty, excellence and unity of purpose, he urged citizens to carry forward the timeless message of Vande Mataram and Sardar Patel's enduring vision by renewing their commitment to a united, confident and inclusive India.

Earlier, the VP was to arrive at Shimla to inaugurate a seminar on Sardar Patel's vision, but his programme was cancelled due to bad weather conditions.

One Nation, One Election panel eyes rollout by 2029 LS polls

tional experts, civil society organisations, educationists and other stakeholders.

An overwhelming majority of those consulted have supported the idea of simultaneous elections, said the BJP MP from Pali in Rajasthan.

"We have found that almost 99 per cent of stakeholders, particularly from civil society and various organisations, favour simultaneous elections. The effort now is to evolve a mechanism that is acceptable to all political parties," he said.

Asked about the timeline for implementation, he said the committee was examining various options, indicating that the reform could become operational by the time the next general elections are due in 2029. Political Commentary Blog

He said there was also a possibility of bringing some states into alignment before that if political parties and the chief ministers voluntarily agree to synchronise their electoral cycles.

Highlighting the economic rationale behind the

proposal, Chaudhary cited findings placed before the high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind.

He said that an economic study submitted to the Kovind committee estimated that holding elections separately across the country results in an economic loss of nearly Rs 7 lakh crore, while synchronised elections could generate equivalent gains for the national economy.

"Elections are now not confined to one state. If elections are held anywhere in the country, they have an impact on other states because the economy is interconnected," Chaudhary said.

Using Goa as an example, he said that elections in any major state affect tourist arrivals in Goa, while elections in the coastal state itself impact its tourism industry.

"The economy today is globalised. An adverse impact in one state affects other states as well. Frequent elections have economic consequences beyond state boundaries," he said.

The BJP MP also argued that repeated elections disrupt governance and adversely affect education, as teachers are routinely deployed for election-related duties, including preparation of electoral rolls, training and polling work.

"As a result, teaching in government schools suffers. The worst affected are children from economically weaker sections who depend on government schools. This is a serious concern if the situation continues over the coming decades," he said.

Chaudhary described simultaneous elections as a "major electoral reform" envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying it would help the country achieve its goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

"The details will emerge with time. The objective is to build a broad consensus and evolve a practical mechanism acceptable to all," Choudhary said.

Trump agrees to fresh Iran talks, says ceasefire over

of direct talks subsequent to signing their memorandum of understanding in Switzerland, as well as indirect negotiations in Qatar, but there has been no sign of diplomatic progress since.

Despite Iran saying it had launched attacks on US assets in Qatar and the Gulf state accusing Tehran of attacking one of its tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, Doha appeared on Friday to back continued diplomacy.

Reports said the Qatari delegation was in Tehran to "try to reinforce Qatar's role as a mediator following events on Tuesday", when Doha condemned Tehran for what it called an "unacceptable assault" on one of its LNG tankers. Iran denied the accusation.

And in a call with his Qatari counterpart on Friday, Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty called for a "return to the negotiating table".

The war was started by the United States and Israel, who launched a massive wave of surprise attacks on Iran on February 28, despite ongoing diplomacy, which killed much of Tehran's senior leadership including supreme leader Ali Khamenei. Iran retaliated by effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, and launching strikes on Israel and the US interests across the Gulf.

Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel, prompting it to invade.

The wider war was subsequently halted by a ceasefire agreement on April 8, but there have been sporadic outbursts of violence ever since.

Most have been sparked by disagreements over the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran insists it must have control over and has expressed a desire to charge fees for transiting it.

It did not have such powers before the war and while the strait comprises Omani and Iranian territorial waters, under international law the two cannot generally block passage or charge tolls.

NMC approves 50 addl MBBS seats for GMC Sgr

an increase of 50 MBBS seats. With this approval, the total annual intake capacity of GMC Srinagar will rise from 200 to 250 seats, effective from the upcoming academic year 2026-27.

It is pertinent to mention that last year for the academic session 2025-26, the GMC Srinagar had got approval of additional 20 seats, increasing the total number of seats from 180 to 200.

The approval follows a rigorous evaluation by MARB under the provisions of the Undergraduate Medical Education Standards Regulations (UGMSR), 2023.

NIA files charge sheets against 6 Kashmiri separatists

Armed terrorists had blended with the procession, which was jointly led by the accused Hurriyat leaders, and fired indiscriminately at police personnel during the violence, in which several police officials were injured.

Some government vehicles were also extensively damaged in heavy stone pelting.

As per NIA's findings in the case, the accused Hurriyat leaders had actively incited the violence, raising anti-India, pro-Pakistan and secessionist slogans.

They had also delivered inflammatory speeches advocating armed struggle, NIA said.

Meticulous investigation by the anti-terror agency clearly established that the mob violence was part of a larger, pre-planned criminal conspiracy of the Hurriyat to use the funeral procession as a platform for propagating separatist ideology, mobilising public support against Government of India, provoking public disorder, and inciting violence against law enforcement agencies, while demonstrating the strength of the Hurriyat in Jammu & Kashmir, the statement said.

An FIR was initially registered in the case at the Shergarhi police station in Srinagar on the day of the violence.

The NIA took over the case in April 2026 on the directives of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Sheikh Hasina eyes return to B'desh despite death sentence

Yunus came to power following the collapse of the Hasina government in August, 2024.

The two sides initiated efforts to stabilise the rela-

tions after Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, accompanied by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, represented India at the inauguration of Tarique Rahman as the prime minister in Dhaka on February 17.

Rahman became the prime minister following his party's landslide victory in the parliamentary polls. Hasina's Awami League party was barred from contesting the polls.

In April, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman visited India as part of efforts to repair the strained bilateral ties following more than 18 months of heightened diplomatic tension.

It was the first high-level visit to India by a senior member of the new Bangladesh Nationalist Party government.

After the fall of the Hasina government, the South Asian nation, with a population of around 175 million, has seen a growing shift toward religious conservatism amid a prolonged period of political instability.

The closing months of 2025 witnessed the rise of radical right-wing and overtly anti-India forces, raising concerns across the region.

Awaiting nod for protest at Jantar Mantar: Omar

The NC had announced a sit-in protest in the national capital on July 20, the opening day of Parliament's monsoon session, to press the Centre to restore J&K statehood.

The party has also invited 52 leaders of political and religious outfits across the country to join its protest. "The party is yet to get permission for the protest," he said while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event.

"On July 20, a programme will take place, if we get permission for it. We are trying to get the permission," he said.

Referring to permission granted to the Cockroach Janta Party for the protest, the chief minister said that while the digital outfit received approval within 24 hours, NC had been waiting for the past 4-5 days.

Abdullah also alleged that some people were trying to "sabotage" the NC plan.

"We have been trying for four-five days. Some people are engaged in sabotaging our programme. They have changed their dates and matched them with our dates," he said, without naming anyone.

The 52 leaders that have been invited include Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, and Rahul Gandhi, DMK chief M K Stalin, TMC's Mamata Banerjee, SP's Akhilesh Yadav, BSP's Mayawati, RJD's Lalu Prasad Yadav, NCP's Sharad Pawar, UBT's Uddhav Thackeray, AAP's Arvind Kejriwal, YSR Congress's Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, BRS's K Chandrabashekar Rao, AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, and SAD's Sukhbir Singh Badal.

Tamil Nadu chief minister and Tamilara Vettri Kazhagam chief C. Joseph Vijay, CPI's D Raja, and Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal have also been invited.

India's strength lies in unity in diversity: Kavinder

sent during the programme. Gupta said the two events commemorated two enduring pillars of India's national consciousness. "While 'Vande Mataram: Ek Yatra' exhibition reflects the cultural and emotional awakening that inspired millions during the freedom movement, the seminar revisits Sardar Patel's visionary leadership in unifying the nation and laying the foundation of a strong and united India," he added.

Describing "Vande Mataram" as the soul of India's freedom struggle, he said Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's immortal composition inspired generations of freedom fighters with the spirit of sacrifice, patriotism and national service.

"The exhibition is not merely a display of historical documents and photographs but a living chronicle of India's national awakening, especially for the younger generation," he said.

Paying rich tributes to Sardar Patel, he said his contribution extended far beyond the integration of over 560 princely states. He recalled Patel's exemplary leadership during the Bardoli Satyagraha, his organisational skills, discipline and unwavering commitment to nation-building, which earned him the title of "Sardar."

He also appreciated Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative in establishing the Statue of Unity at Kevadia, Gujarat, describing it as a lasting tribute to Sardar Patel's unparalleled contribution to national integration and a powerful symbol of the spirit of "Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat."

He appealed to scholars, researchers, students and citizens to look beyond the exhibition and imbibe the ideals and values of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in their lives.

He especially urged the youth to visit the Statue of Unity at Kevadia, Gujarat, whenever they have the opportunity, describing it as an inspiring experience that offers a deeper understanding of the Iron Man's extraordinary contribution to national integration.

He said it was the collective responsibility of every citizen to preserve and carry forward Sardar Patel's enduring legacy of unity, integrity and patriotism.

On the occasion, the governor released the Coffee Table Book on Vande Mataram, the seminar proceedings on "Darsana of Radhakrishnan: Eternal and Temporal," and a multilingual poetry volume on Dr S Radhakrishnan.

He also visited the "Vande Mataram: Ek Yatra" exhibition, curated by noted researcher and author Akhilesh Jha, with significant contributions from co-curator Ms. Rashmita Jha and researcher Ms. Shreyasi Jha.

Earlier, Prof Shashi Prabha Kumar, Chairperson, IIAS, welcomed the governor and highlighted the institute's year-long programmes marking its 60th Foundation Year.

She underlined Sardar Patel's enduring vision of unity and federalism and reaffirmed the institute's commitment to presenting India's history and civilisational heritage in its true perspective.

Prafulla Ketkar, Editor of Organiser Weekly, spoke on Sardar Patel's historic contribution to the creation of a united India. Prof. Himanshu Kumar Chaturvedi, Director, IIAS, welcomed and honoured the governor and briefed the gathering on the exhibition and the international seminar.

Mehar Chand Negi, Secretary, IIAS, presented vote of thanks.

Prof Mahavir Singh, Vice Chancellor of HP University, Shimla, Prof Preeti Saxena, Vice Chancellor of Himachal Pradesh National Law University, Ghandal, Purushottam Tiwari, Principal Auditor General, fellows and other prominent people were also present on the occasion.