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Pradhan resigns, Pralhad assigned charge of Education Ministry

role as Consumer Affairs Minister. A Rashtrapati Bhavan communique said the President, as advised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had accepted the resignation of Pradhan with immediate effect. It said that on the advice of prime minister, the President had directed that Joshi, Cabinet Minister, be assigned the charge of the Ministry of Education, in addition to his own duties.

Earlier in the day, Pradhan resigned from his post following the Cockroach Janta Party-led student protests across the country, demanding his ouster over the NEET paper leak controversy.

Pradhan said it was not a matter of "individual prestige" for him and he is disturbed to see the series of events that have unfolded in the last 10 days.

The CJP-led protests at Jantar Mantar, demanding Pradhan's accountability over the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak and irregularities in the CBSE's on-screen marking process, besides seeking wider reforms in the conduct of public examinations, started on June 20.

Marking their moment of triumph at Jantar Mantar, protesters broke out into dance, cheering and waving the tricolour. They were seen hugging each other as songs such as "Chak De India" played in the backdrop

The opposition, which had been seeking Pradhan's resignation, a debate in Parliament and had come out strongly in support of the violence against the students, was quick to respond.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi should apologise to youth. There should be strict action against those who unleashed lathis and pellet guns," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said after the resignation.

He described it as the "victory of truth" and said Modi's stubbornness had been defeated.

Bill to amend Paper Leak Law to be introduced in Par

which was notified in June 2024 in the wake of the alleged NEET-UG and UGC-NET paper leak controversies. While the existing law prescribes imprisonment of three to 10 years depending on the offence and a minimum fine of Rs 1 crore for organised examination fraud, the proposed amendments seek to make the law more stringent by increasing the minimum punishment for paper leak offences and raising the maximum fine to Rs 10 cr.

Before the 2024 law, there was no dedicated central legislation dealing specifically with unfair means and organised offences in public examinations.

The existing Act makes offences related to organised paper leaks cognizable, non- bailable and non-compoundable.

Sinha pays homage to Kargil war brave hearts

LG said. "I also bow in deep reverence to the families of our fallen heroes. Their selfless dedication remains an enduring symbol of our ultimate national pride," he added.

Machail Mata yatra to begin on July 28

tire distance by road before undertaking the final 1.7-km trek on foot to reach the shrine.

To ensure the safety and smooth management of the pilgrimage, the administration announced that pilgrims would be allowed to travel only between 5 am and 5 pm while a daily ceiling of 8,000 pilgrims was also imposed, official said.

On August 14 last year, a devastating cloudburst had ripped through Chisoti village, the gateway to Machail Mata shrine, killing 63 people, mostly pilgrims, injuring scores and leaving many others missing.

Def forces stand fully prepared to face any challenge: Rajnath

the defence forces stand fully prepared to face any challenge," he said in his address during a commemorative event at Drass on the eve of 27th Kargil Vijay Diwas.

Paying tributes to the bravehearts, who secured India's victory in the 1999 Kargil War, he said the courage, resolve and patriotism displayed under the harshest conditions continue to inspire both the military and the nation.

Expressing confidence in the defence forces, Singh stated that no one dares to cast an evil eye upon India as long as the patriotism and resolve of the valiant troops of the nation remain unwavering. "Their courage enables every citizen to pursue and realise their dreams without fear," he added.

Interacting with troops over Barakhana, he asserted that "While we feel a sense of pride recalling the Kargil victory, we

must remember that the challenges facing us have not diminished".

He reiterated Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's commitment towards the welfare of soldiers, adding that sustained emphasis was being laid on defence modernisation to ensure that the military was equipped with world-class weaponry and training.

The union minister acknowledged the defence forces for embracing the latest technologies, emphasising that their stories of valour and commitment are recognised not just nationally, but globally as well.

"This century belongs to us; the future belongs to us. Given the strides we have made towards self-reliance, I am confident that our defence forces will become the best in the world in the times to come," he said.

The event 'Shaurya Bhoj' at the Vishwanathan Stadium also featured a display of drones, robotic mules and Army Martial Arts Routine drills, as well as a cultural programme showcasing the rich heritage of the region.

Singh later joined Ladakh LG Vinai Kumar Saxena, Chief of Army Staff Gen Dhiraj Seth, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command Lt Gen Pratik Sharma, other serving personnel, Kargil War veterans, gallantry awardees, Veer Naris, the next of kin of the heroes, civil dignitaries and local citizens for the Shaurya Bhoj.

Prior to 'Shaurya Bhoj', Singh graced 'Shaurya Sandhya' at the Kargil War Memorial, where patriotic tunes set the tone for a solemn tribute to the heroes of Operation Vijay. 10 next of kin of the Kargil War heroes were felicitated in recognition of the courage, resilience and sacrifice of their families.

A Kalash containing 'Veeron Ki Mitti' was presented to the defence minister. Inter-faith prayers offered by religious teachers were followed by the solemn Beating The Retreat ceremony and the National Anthem. Thereafter, Singh lit lamps at the memorial in homage to the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice during the war.

Court directs Pak-based terror handler to appear by Aug 21

a resident of Angralla village in Reasi district, in compliance with the orders of the third additional sessions judge, Jammu, which is a designated court under the NIA Act, officials said.

The proclamation pertains to an FIR registered at Mahore police station under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), according to officials.

"The accused is a wanted cross-border terror handler involved in multiple UAPA cases, including the 2022-23 Katra and Narwal blast cases," officials said and added, "The action reflects the police resolve to bring to justice those operating from across the border and orchestrating terror activities in J&K."

A police team, in the presence of locals of Angralla village, visited the residence of the accused and executed the proclamation in accordance with law by publicly reading out the court's order," officials said.

According to the proclamation, the accused was directed to appear before the designated court on or before August 21.

Pak drones sighted, searches launched

places in the wee hours of this morning to trace any possible payload or evidence linked to the drone activity. However, nothing incriminating was recovered, officials said.

The searches were continuing when reports last came in. Details were awaited.

ACB files chargesheet against patwari

Baramulla.

The case was registered on April 16, 2024, following a complaint alleging that the accused had demanded bribe from the complainant for issuing revenue records and NOC required for processing building permission applications submitted by the complainant and his father.

During investigation, the ACB collected oral, documentary, electronic and scientific evidence, including the recovery of tainted currency notes and forensic examination of relevant exhibits. The witness statements and other corroborative material prima facie established the involvement of the accused in demanding and accepting bribe, officials alleged.

Officials said the competent authority granted prosecution sanction against the patwari before the filing of the chargesheet.

The accused were booked under section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018), read with Section 120-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and other relevant provisions of law.

The accused were produced before the Special Judge, Anti-

Corruption, Baramulla, along with the chargesheet. The court fixed November 12, 2026, as the next date for hearing in the case.

2 women killed as vehicle falls into gorge

tained serious injuries and were admitted to hospital. Officials identified the dead as Asha Devi (32) and her sister-in-law Meenakshi (30).

The injured included Asha's husband Ajay Kumar (35) & son Trisham (2), Meenakshi's husband Shiv Kumar & son Shivansh (2), and Naseeb Singh (35). They were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Police had taken cognizance of the incident.

US in talks with Iran amid ongoing strikes: Trump

which we might do -- or we can negotiate with them, which we're also doing right now," Trump said, adding, "we're talking to them."

Asked whether he had reached a final decision regarding launching "major strikes" against Iran, Trump indicated that diplomatic channels remain open and active as the administration weighs its next moves.

"No, I haven't. We're talking to them right now. I think they're getting more and more serious as the days go by... I consider that the smarter way, but the other's probably the easier way, doing what we're doing--and we can take that to a much higher level if we want to. We're prepared to do that, as you know. We're locked and loaded," Trump said.

When pressed on who within his administration is taking the lead in negotiations--specifically whether senior advisors Jared Kushner or Steve Witkoff are heading the dialogue--Trump remarked that the effort involves broad administration engagement, describing the talks as "a big deal."

"Sort of everybody... It's a big deal," Trump said.

Addressing public and political scrutiny surrounding the timeline of the conflict, the president maintained that he was not rushing the diplomatic or military process.

"We are talking right now and we'll see what comes of it... Despite what everyone says about the election, I'm not in a hurry," Trump added. "We have to do it right."

This comes as American military posture in the region remains active.

Earlier, US Central Command (CENTCOM) highlighted ongoing rapid-response drills across the theatre, noting, "U.S. Marines load an M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) onto a KC-130J Super Hercules during a training exercise in the Middle East."

6,269 pilgrims leave for cave shrine as LG reviews repair work

cials to prioritise vulnerable zones prone to mudslides and shooting stones.

To ensure safety of pilgrims, the LG directed the deployment of additional Mountain Rescue Teams and stressed the importance of sharing real-time weather updates with the yatris proactively.

He also instructed officials to ensure that essential services, including power, water supply, communication, and healthcare, remain fully operational.

Among others, the meeting was attended by divisional commissioner (Kashmir) Anshul Garg, SASB additional CEO Rahul Singh, Anantnag SSP Amod Nagpure Ashok, Srinagar SSP G V Sundeep Chakravarthy, Anantnag DC Bilal Mohiuddin Bhat, Srinagar DC Akshay Labroo, Ganderbal DC Jatin Kishore, Ganderbal SSP Sudhanshu Dhama, camp directors, senior officials of civil administration, police, Army, security forces, SASB, BRO, health, meteorological and other line departments.

Meanwhile, the yatra resumed after remaining suspended for six days due to inclement weather, with a fresh batch of over 6,269 pilgrims leaving Bhagwati Nagar base camp for Baltal base camp in the valley, officials said.

On July 19, the yatra was suspended as a precautionary measure following persistent rainfall and adverse weather conditions across Jammu and Kashmir.

Officials said the 18th batch of 6,269 pilgrims including 1,470 women, 25 children and 54 sadhus departed in a convoy of 223 vehicles under tight security arrangements at about 2.40 am for the Baltal base camp.

No convoy was dispatched for the Pahalgam route, officials said.

The pilgrimage resumed after the weather improved and the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway became trafficable after a three-day closure triggered by landslides and shooting stones at several locations on the Udhampur-Ramban stretch.

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 had marked the beginning of the country's one of the 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.

Vaishno Devi yatra resumes

personnel at vulnerable landslide-prone locations, officials said.

However, the new track remained closed because of the continued threat of shooting stones triggered by persistent rainfall. The helicopter and battery car services also remained suspended as a precautionary measure, the officials added.

"Weather conditions are being monitored continuously and further decisions on reopening the remaining facilities will be taken based on safety assessments," officials said.

The resumption of the pilgrimage was welcomed with enthusiasm by the devotees.

Authorities have urged pilgrims to follow advisories, cooperate with security personnel, and remain updated on weather-related announcements while undertaking the pilgrimage.

Woman killed in house collapse, toll reaches 27 in 1 week

by torrential rains, 12 people had lost their lives in Poonch & Rajouri districts on July 19, and 11 in Poonch, Rajouri & Doda districts on July 20. Following the July 19 deaths, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had cut short his stay in the Union Capital, where he had gone to lead a party protest in support of their demand for the restoration of statehood to J&K.

The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway also remained closed to vehicular traffic for three days, following multiple landslides on its Ramban-Banihal stretch. The road cleared of debris and reopened to traffic on July 24.

India to keep engaging with US on trade deal after new tariffs

It was earlier reported that Indian textile and apparel exporters are likely to be at a disadvantage against several Asian rivals under the new tariff regime.

CJP withdraws protest in 'good faith'

ing that the agreed-upon terms will be executed within the agreed-upon timelines."

Following the third round of talks with Union Ministers J P Nadda and Jitendra Singh at the Constitution Club, the CJP said that the central government had agreed to provide suitable compensation to the families of the NEET aspirants who died by suicide and assured to withdraw the FIRs lodged against protesters anywhere in India.

The CJP has presented a five-point demand charter before the government and will hold the next round of talks after four weeks.

Spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka said, "We had demanded compensation of Rs 1 crore for the families of NEET victims. The government has agreed to this, stating that an honorary compensation will be given to those families under whatever rules and regulations allow. Apart from this, we also placed a five-point demand charter before the government, which talked about broader educational reforms and exam reforms. We will meet the government again in about four weeks regarding that demand charter so that we can work together on broader reforms. If all these demands are agreeable to the government, then we would also like to withdraw the agitation."

"All our demands have been accepted, so we request the protesters to withdraw immediately and return home peacefully. We will inform you of our future strategy or any other issues. But we request the protesters to withdraw immediately," he added.

DC Ganderbal reviews ongoing SANJY-2026 arrangements at Baltal Base Camp amidst inclement weather

GANDERBAL, JULY 25: *In view of the prevailing inclement weather during the ongoing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY)-2026, Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore, today visited Baltal Base Camp to review the preparedness of stakeholder departments and assess the facilities put in place for the safety and convenience of pilgrims.*

During the visit, the Deputy Commissioner inspected the on spot Registration Centre, Yatri Niwas, accommodation facilities, medical aid centres, and other essential services available at the Base Camp. He reviewed the functioning of various departments and directed the concerned officers to ensure that all facilities remain fully operational despite the prevailing weather conditions so that pilgrims do not face any inconvenience.

The DC also visited various locations within the Bal-



tal Base Camp and interacted with pilgrims from different parts of the country to obtain first-hand feedback regarding the facilities being provided.

Interacting with local shopkeepers, vendors and service providers, the Deputy Commissioner stressed that every stakeholder associated with the

Yatra has an important role in ensuring a safe and comfortable pilgrimage.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned departments to remain on alert, maintain close coordination and ensure prompt response. He further instructed field officers to undertake regular inspections and maintain con-

tinuous monitoring to facilitate smooth conduct of the Yatra. Later, the Deputy Commissioner chaired a review meeting at Baltal to assess the preparedness of all stakeholder departments for the smooth conduct of the ongoing Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra. At the outset, the concerned officers briefed the meeting on weather forecast, condition of Yatra track, accommodation facilities, registration arrangements, deployment of manpower and telecommunication systems. Reviewing the arrangements department wise, the Deputy Commissioner directed all concerned agencies to maintain round the clock vigilance, strengthen inter-departmental coordination and ensure uninterrupted essential services for the pilgrims.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that all departments should remain fully prepared in view of the inclement weather and ensure prompt response to any issue flagged by Yatris.

Div Com Jammu reviews rain damage restoration works across Jammu Division

JAMMU, JULY 25: Divisional Commissioner Jammu Ramesh Kumar today chaired a meeting to review the damage caused by recent rains in all districts of Jammu division and to take stock of ongoing restoration and relief works.

The Div Com directed the Managing Director of JPDCL to ensure that all restoration works pertaining to damaged power infrastructure are completed on a priority basis so that supply to affected areas is normalised at the earliest.

Reviewing the pace of relief operations, the Div Com took stock of the ex-gratia disbursement to affected families across all districts and directed Deputy Commissioners to expedite the process so that no eligible beneficiary is left out.

The meeting undertook a detailed review of the power and water supply position in the affected areas. With more rains forecast on July 29 and 30, the Div Com di-

rected all Deputy Commissioners to arrange essential commodities, including foodgrains, LPG cylinders and other items of daily use, well in advance so that there is no disruption in supply during the spell.

He also directed the Health Department to ensure sufficient stock of medicines at all health facilities in vulnerable areas and to position adequate medical staff so that any emergency can be met promptly.

The Power and Jal Shakti Department officers apprised the meeting of the status of water supply pumping and the functioning of tube wells and dug wells in the affected districts and were directed to restore these on priority.

The Div Com underlined the need to strengthen flood protection measures and ensure public safety. He directed that school buildings found unsafe or damaged be locked and not used until repairs are carried out, keep-

ing in view the safety of children.

He directed that roads closed due to landslides, shooting stones or damage be restored and opened for traffic on a war-footing basis, and directed the departments concerned to take up immediate repair and desilting of drains and water channels to prevent water-logging in case of further rains.

All Chief Agriculture Officers were directed to assess the crop damage suffered by farmers in the affected areas and submit a report at the earliest for extending due assistance.

All Chief Education Officers (CEOs) were directed to take an immediate call on declaring a holiday in schools in the event of heavy rains, to ensure the safety of students.

The Div Com also sought a comprehensive district-wise assessment of damage to roads and other public infrastructure, along with a

status report on ex-gratia relief distribution, from all Deputy Commissioners.

Concluding the meeting, the Div Com directed that the water level of rivers, streams and nallahs across the division be kept under constant watch and that people be alerted well in time in case of any eventual-ity.

The Div Com assured that the administration is prepared to deal with any emergency arising out of the prevailing weather and appealed to the public to cooperate with the district administrations and follow advisories.

Among those present were Deputy Commissioners and Additional Deputy Commissioners of different districts, Chief Engineers of the Power Development Department (PDD), Jal Shakti (PHE) and PWD (R&B), Director Agriculture, Director School Education and other officers concerned of line departments of the division.