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MEA slams 'cosmetic' PoJK polls as 14 killed in police firing
must stand with us, stand with us, stand with us!" he said. The reported casualties and allegations of police firing were claimed by the eyewitnesses present, and there was no immediate official response from Pakistani authorities.

Meanwhile, MEA said the current "cosmetic electoral exercise" in PoJK was nothing but an attempt by Islamabad to "camouflage its illegal occupation and hide its grave human rights violations in the region" and asserted that entire Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas currently under illegal occupation of Pakistan are integral parts of India.

Addressing a media briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal referred to the ongoing protests in PoJK, noting that they reflected widespread public dissatisfaction over governance and economic conditions.

"We have seen reports regarding the so-called legislative assembly elections being conducted in the Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. India's position in this particular matter has been clear, consistent, and well known. The entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas currently under illegal occupation and forcible occupation of Pakistan, are integral and inalienable parts of India," Jaiswal said.

"The current cosmetic electoral exercise is nothing but an attempt by Pakistan to camouflage its illegal occupation and hide its grave human rights violations in the region. As we have stated earlier, the ongoing mass protest in PoJK, of which you are aware, is the direct consequence of economic exploitation, its denial of fundamental rights to the people and its administrative operations," he added.

Protesters in PoJK have complained of widespread electoral rigging, political interference and systematic suppression of democratic rights.

The complaints emerged as the region witnessed escalating tensions during the 52-day-long protest movement, with demonstrators demanding the release of detainees, withdrawal of cases against protesters, and acceptance of their broader demands.

The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) accused authorities of suppressing peaceful protests and undermining the democratic process through alleged electoral irregularities.

Protest leaders alleged that the electoral process has been manipulated to influence outcomes and it is undermining the will of the people and weakening democratic institutions. They have also accused authorities of restricting political dissent through arrests, intimidation and heavy security deployment.

Protesters also unequivocally denounced indiscriminate firing by Pakistani forces on demonstrators in Rawalakot as thousands of people prepared to march towards Muzafarabad following the collapse of talks between the JAAC and the authorities on Monday.

Earlier, the JAAC had set a 1pm deadline on July 27 for the authorities to issue an official notification accepting its demands, warning that failure to do so would result in thousands of protesters marching from Rawalakot to Muzafarabad.

Thousands of people subsequently gathered in Rawalakot and began the march after no agreement was reached.

Following this, the Pakistani security forces opened fire on the demonstrators in the region.

At least 14 people were killed and nearly two dozen injured during the brutality on Monday evening, eyewitnesses associated with the movement claimed.

Fin Deptt sets Aug 15 deadline for submission of APRs

this notice. Incomplete submissions or requests received after the stipulated deadline would not be entertained, the notice says.

Future belongs to those who seek new solutions: LG

"You are not merely job-seekers. You are the makers of India's future. In your hands rests your career as well as the direction of the nation's development. You are the strength of Skill India, the face of Digital India, and the true bearers of Aatmanirbhar Bharat," he told the aspirants.

Sinha also outlined six key objectives of the mega job fair. "The fair will ensure meaningful employment for youth to become self-reliant and contribute to society. It will also pave the way for industry-academia partnerships to bridge the gap between degrees and workplace skills," he said.

"The job fair will ensure that skill development programmes are aligned with digital literacy and technical capabilities and a roadmap will be created for simplified recruitment through on-the-spot interviews and direct hiring. It will also ensure entrepreneurship promotion to encourage job creators alongside job seekers and it will prepare a future-ready workforce to strengthen India's development journey," he added.

The LG urged students to embrace three guiding principles - never make dreams small, never stop learning, and always embrace innovation.

He stressed that colleges and universities must evolve into institutions that prepare students for life beyond examinations.

He also called upon industry representatives to act as recruiters, mentors and partners in shaping the future workforce.

"If industry and education work together, we can create an environment where knowledge and experience strengthen each other, and innovation and employment advance together," he said.

He underscored the growing interest of youth in entrepreneurship, citing that since 2020, lakhs of youth had become entrepreneurs. He recalled that the Union Territory led the country in PMEGP in 2021-22, and expressed confidence that the UT will carve a new identity in innovation, startups, and modern industries.

He emphasised that unemployment cannot be solved through government jobs alone, as government vacancies were limited. Instead, he outlined three priorities - aligning skills with industry needs, promoting private sector job creation through MSMEs and SMEs, and bridging the transition from college to workplace through internships, mentorships, and career guidance.

"Let us resolve that this 77th Mega Job Fair will mark the beginning of a new chapter in the employment history of Jammu & Kashmir," the LG said.

Among those present on the occasion included higher education department secretary Ram Niwas Sharma, Cluster University, Srinagar, VC (Prof) Mohammad Mobin, Cluster University, Jammu, VC (Prof) K S Chandrasekar, IUST VC (Prof) Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, Desh Bhagat University president Sandeep Singh, Amar Singh College principal (Prof) Tehmina Yousuf, senior officials, representatives of leading industries, heads of educational institutes, and youth in large number.

Sinha enquires about condition of injured pilgrims

He met the injured pilgrims undergoing treatment at the hospital and wished them a speedy recovery.

A team of doctors briefed the LG about the treatment being provided to the injured pilgrims.

Sinha directed the hospital administration to provide the

best medical care to the injured.

He also instructed senior officers to ensure that all necessary assistance and personal care were extended to the pilgrims, and that arrangements for their safe return to their hometowns were prioritised upon their recovery.

Earlier, he said in a post on X: "Spoke with the deputy commissioner, Ganderbal, & health officials, and inquired about the condition of Shri Amarnathji Yatra pilgrims injured in a road accident earlier this morning at Ganiwan, Ganderbal. 39 pilgrims returning after darshans of Baba Barfani sustained injuries and are currently undergoing treatment at SKIMS. I have directed the health officials to ensure all necessary assistance and the best possible medical care. I pray to Almighty Shiva for the speedy recovery of the injured devotees."

Widespread rains likely across J&K

late afternoon to evening hours. The weather office also warned of heavy rainfall and brief intense showers in a few districts of Jammu division during this period.

For July 30 and 31, the weather department predicted one or two spells of light to moderate rain and thunder-showers at most places across the Kashmir. Brief intense heavy showers are also possible at isolated places, mainly during the early morning and late afternoon to evening hours.

MHA allows ad-hoc promotions in Ladakh

Union Territory Administration may, as a short-term measure, fill the available vacancies under the promotion quota through ad-hoc promotions until a regular promotion mechanism was put in place.

The MHA's decision follows the intervention of LG Vinai Kumar Saxena, who had taken up the matter with the Ministry, highlighting the acute shortage of officers in Group 'B' Gazetted Administrative Service posts. He had highlighted that regular promotions to these posts have remained pending as the relevant Recruitment Rules are yet to be notified, resulting in a shortage of Gazetted officers and affecting administrative functioning across various departments.

The decision will provide immediate relief to officials awaiting promotion and also to various departments facing shortages of gazetted officers, ensuring continuity in governance, faster decision-making and improved public service delivery across the Union Territory.

Saxena said this decision by the MHA would strengthen governance in Ladakh while addressing the genuine aspirations of officials awaiting promotion. "It will help overcome the shortage of gazetted officers, improve administrative efficiency and ensure uninterrupted delivery of public services. I have directed the Chief Secretary to start the promotion process immediately," Saxena said.

The Ministry has further advised that such ad-hoc promotions shall be made strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Personnel & Training's Office Memorandum dated April 3, 2013, along with subsequent amendments and other instructions issued from time to time, subject to fulfilment of all prescribed conditions.

Govt plans 44 airports for hub & spoke flights

hub, will enable seamless connectivity between Tier-II and Tier-III airports with international destinations through hub airports.

Passengers arriving from smaller cities will be routed through major hub airports such as Delhi for onward international connections.

At a function at the Amritsar airport to mark the launch of Hub and Spoke model flights, Civil Aviation Secretary Samir Kumar Sinha said four hubs and 40 airports would be developed.

From Amritsar, Air India will connect to 27 international destinations through Delhi under the model.

In a video message, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoohan Naidu said Hub and Spoke is an "aviation sovereignty" and an "opportunity" model for India.

The government aims to develop 100 airports and 200 heliports in 10 years, the minister said.

Under the model, Air India has introduced 'Easy Connect' flights that will enable travellers from cities beyond major hubs to drop baggage and complete immigration at the origin airport and travel seamlessly to overseas destinations.

From Amritsar, Air India will have 'Easy Connect' flights to 27 overseas destinations within four hours of arrival in Delhi, including to cities in the US, Canada, UK, Europe, Australia, West Asia, and Southeast Asia, the airline said.

Air India will have two daily 'Easy Connect' flights from Amritsar starting on Tuesday.

"As part of the 'Easy Connect' programme, international travellers from Amritsar can complete through check-in to their final destinations, clear immigration formalities at Amritsar airport, and enjoy seamless transfers through Delhi without having to re-check baggage or change terminals," the airline said in a release.

In the coming weeks, Air India will start such flights from Ahmedabad, Goa, Kochi, and other Indian cities.

The first 'Easy Connect' service was launched from Varanasi on June 25.

India, China reaffirm importance of maintaining peace along border

year. "This is matter which was agreed between two side last year. In August 2025, both sides agreed to the re-opening of border trade through the three designated trading points, namely Lipulekh Pass, Shipki La Pass and Nathu La Pass," he said.

The two countries had withdrawn troops from several friction points along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh after multiple rounds of diplomatic and military negotiations.

In October 2024, India and China finalised a disengagement agreement covering Depsang and Demchok, the last remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh.

Shortly after the pact, Modi and Xi had met in Kazan, where they took a number of decisions to improve bilateral relations. The leaders met again on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Tianjin in August last year, during which Modi said India remained committed to advancing ties with China on the basis of mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity.

SIT may be set up to probe police excesses: SC

bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant referred to many incidents of violence.

At the outset, the bench, also comprising Justices Joy-malya Bagchi and V Mohana, asked why there should not be an independent probe into the allegations.

"Whosoever committed excesses, took law in their hands should be taken to task," the CJI said.

Taking note of the submissions of lawyers, the bench said a fair and independent probe into all allegations related to police excesses on protesting NEET students was required.

"Once there is violation of defined protocol, law must take care of it," the bench said. The CJI said that the bench is mulling independent, transparent and thorough probe into

all allegations.

A probe is also required to ascertain the attacks on 250 policemen and whether they were by students or some "miscreants", the court said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said students will not indulge in violence against police personnel, but some miscreants are involved in the incidents. Miscreants involved in murder, rape and NDPS cases entered the protest and perpetrated violence on police personnel, he added.

On Monday, the bench said an agitation cannot justify "police excesses" or a 'lathi charge'. The bench also said that the right to peaceful protest is absolutely guaranteed.

The CJP-led march on July 20 in Delhi witnessed clashes between protesters and security personnel, who used lathis and teargas shells to disperse crowds attempting to move towards Parliament.

The protesters were demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak issue.

Lok Sabha takes up debate on Anti-Paper Leak Bill

he said. He said the government enacted the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 as country's first comprehensive legislation to deal with unfair means in public examinations and was now proposing further amendments based on the experience gained during its implementation to make the law more stringent and effective.

"The Act covers examinations conducted by major recruitment agencies, including UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs), Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS) and National Testing Agency (NTA) for higher education admissions," he said and recalled that the 2024 Act made offences under its ambit cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable with stringent penal provisions.

Highlighting the key provisions of the Amendment Bill, the minister said the punishment for persons resorting to unfair means is proposed to be enhanced from imprisonment of three to five years to five to ten years, while the maximum fine is proposed to be increased from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 50 lakh.

For service providers involved in such offences, the maximum fine is proposed to be increased from Rs 1 cr to Rs 5 cr and the period of debarment from conducting public examinations from four years to eight years. Punishment for directors and senior management of service providers is also proposed to be enhanced from three to ten years' imprisonment to five to ten years, with the maximum fine being increased from Rs 1 cr to Rs 5 cr. The Bill also proposes to increase the punishment for organised crime from five to ten years' imprisonment to seven to ten years and enhance the maximum fine from Rs 1 cr to Rs 10 cr.

Emphasising the importance of speedy justice, Dr Singh said the Amendment Bill provides for the establishment of Special Fast Track Courts to deal with offences relating to public examinations.

He said the Bill envisages completion of investigation within two months and completion of trial within three months from the date of filing of the charge sheet, ensuring expeditious disposal of such cases.

The Bill also empowers the Central Government to refer investigation of offences under the Act to a Special Task Force constituted for the purpose, thereby enabling swift and effective action against organised examination-related crimes.

The minister informed the House that the government has already initiated steps for establishment of Special Fast Track Courts in several locations to facilitate speedy disposal of such cases.

He also referred to the prime minister's announcement of a high-level task force comprising eminent experts to make the public examination system "leak-proof".

He added that substantial progress has already been made in implementing the recommendations of the committee constituted to strengthen the examination ecosystem.

He said the objective of the amendments is to ensure that students are rewarded for their genuine efforts while enhancing the credibility, transparency and fairness of public examinations.

Concluding his remarks, Dr Singh said the proposed amendments would reinforce deterrence against organised examination-related crimes, ensure speedy justice and further strengthen public confidence in the integrity, transparency and fairness of the country's public examination system.

Putin defends Russian war effort, blasts West

ternal threats with national unity and said the same spirit was evident today.

He also accused Western countries of applying "double standards" by selectively invoking the UN Charter while ignoring the principle of national "self-determination" when it did not suit their interests.

Claiming that Western sanctions had failed to achieve their objectives, Putin said that since 2022, "the West has set its Russophobic machine running at full speed," imposing a record number of sanctions that he described as ineffective.

The Russian president alleged that Russia's opponents, having failed to defeat the country "on the battlefield," had resorted to "outright terrorist methods" against the Russian people.

"But the people of Russia can never be broken. They never have been - and they never will be," he said.

Putin also defended Russia's political system, saying its institutions were built on "sovereign foundations" in accordance with the country's Constitution and were capable of repelling any hostile actions against the state.

The remarks come as the conflict in Ukraine continues, with Russia maintaining its military campaign while facing continued sanctions and military support for Ukraine from Western countries.

Meanwhile, as Zelenskyy has arrived in the US, Trump's meeting with the Ukrainian President in the Oval Office is expected to focus on the ongoing peace process between Russia and Ukraine. A White House official said "now is the time to end the war."

Earlier, Trump dismissed Zelensky's allegation that Russia was providing Iran with intelligence on US military bases, saying, "I don't think they've been doing it, certainly not at a high level."

Will never reach 'understanding' with US: Iran

nation and the victorious face of the resistance," which had "many effects on the international stage and especially in the region" and demonstrated the strength of the "Islamic nation and the resistance," against which "America and the Zionist regime were forced to retreat."

He also referred to remarks by late Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Hosseini Khamenei, saying Iran had made "preserving the territorial integrity of Lebanon and the complete and unconditional elimination of the Zionist regime's aggression" the first condition for any memorandum of understanding to end the "imposed war with the aggressor America."

Quoting the current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei, Babaei said, "There is no other way forward but jihad and resistance, and persistence in this path will bring the promised divine victory to the mujahideen of the true path."

Turning to the United States, he said, "America should not be allowed to fight whenever it wants and declare a ceasefire whenever it wants. The Islamic Republic of Iran must stand strong against America's will and not allow America to be an active player in the region."

He argued that "the will of the great Iranian nation has shown that America is passive, and America must remain passive in our politics as well," adding, "America's war is war, its peace is war, and its dialogue is war; therefore, we must be careful, because we will never reach an understanding with America, and it is the will of the nation that can always be decisive."

On the strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant share of global oil shipments passes, Babaei said, "The Strait of Hormuz created great power for the Iranian nation, and today it is the pinnacle of our power. This peak of power and dignity of the great Iranian nation must definitely be supported and protected."

In reference to the recent strikes in the Caspian Sea on Iranian vessels, Babaei issued a warning to Ukraine, saying, "We warn Ukrainian employers that any mischief by your contractor in the region and the Caspian Sea will result in a regretful response from the great Iranian nation."

Kavinder pays obeisance at Baba Lal ji Dhainpur Dham on Guru Purnima

he said. He remarked that their teachings continue to inspire society to rise above divisions and work collectively for the welfare of humanity.

Gupta, who was accompanied by his wife Bindu Gupta, also expressed hope that the sacred occasion of Guru Purnima would inspire people to imbibe the virtues of humility, discipline, devotion and service to society.

He conveyed his heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the people on the auspicious occasion and prayed that the blessings of the revered Guru continue to guide everyone towards a life of peace, prosperity and righteousness.

'No fixed criteria for inclusion of languages in 8th schedule'

was considering the proposal to include Bhojpuri in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Rai said demands for the inclusion of several languages, including Bhojpuri, have been raised from time to time. "However, the evolution of languages and dialects is a dynamic process shaped by socio cultural, economic and political developments, making it challenging to establish uniform criteria for inclusion," he said.

The minister informed the House that previous efforts to formulate such criteria through the Pahwa Committee (1996) and the Sitakant Mohapatra Committee (2003) did not arrive at conclusive recommendations.

He said the government is aware of the sentiments and aspirations of speakers seeking constitutional recognition for their languages.

At the same time, he stressed that requests for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule must be examined in light of these sentiments as well as other relevant considerations.

"Since at present there are no fixed criteria for any language to be considered for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution, no time frame can be fixed for consideration of the demands for inclusion of more languages," the minister said.

The Eighth Schedule currently recognises 22 languages, granting them constitutional status and enabling their use in various official and administrative functions.

Over the years, several linguistic groups have sought the inclusion of their languages in the Schedule, arguing that constitutional recognition would help promote and preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Trump expresses frustrations with Netanyahu before White House meeting

war and the expansion of the Abraham Accords, according to a White House official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the meeting.

"We have a little difference," Trump said when asked by reporters if he and the Israeli prime minister were on the same page with Iran. "But pretty close, yeah."

Trump has had a hot-and-cold history with Netanyahu over the years, but upon his return to the White House last year, their alliance seemed stronger than ever.

When they started the war together in February, it was with a united front, touting their respective militaries as acting in lockstep to take out Iran's leadership and pave the way for a government more friendly to the West.

But as Iran fought back - sending drones and missiles slamming into US bases and high-rises in cities in the Gulf, and choking off the Strait of Hormuz - Trump came under immense pressure both at home and by allies in the region to end the conflict.

Since then, Netanyahu, who wanted to continue the fighting in Iran and against its ally, Hezbollah, in Lebanon, has been sidelined as Trump sought a deal with Tehran. His visit to the White House this week comes as the disagreements with Trump and Vice President JD Vance have burst into the open over the war in Iran and more.

Permanent commission allowed for women in Indian Coast Guard

to a PA, subject to the fulfilment of stipulated conditions. "This progressive step reflects the Government's commitment to Nari Shakti and equal opportunity in the nation's maritime security apparatus."

Incidentally, this came two years after the Supreme Court pulled up the ICG and the defence ministry for not allowing permanent commission to women despite changes being brought into the Army, Navy and Air Force rules following its orders.

In February 2024, the Supreme Court had criticized the government's stance questioning why women were not given permanent commissions in the Coast Guard while they were in the Army, Navy and Air Force.

The court was unconvinced by the government's argument about functional differences and instructed them to formulate a gender-neutral policy promptly. As a result, the Supreme Court urged the government to develop a fair and gender-neutral policy.

Addressing the Union Government, the then Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, heading a three-judge bench stated: "You speak of 'Nari Shakti'. Now show it here. You're in the deep end of the sea. In this matter, you must come up with a policy that treats women fairly. After 2009, no woman has been inducted. Why are you being so patriarchal? You don't want to see the face of women in the Coast Guard?"

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Coast Guard officer Priyanka Tyagi seeking the grant of permanent commission to eligible women short-service commission officers of the force.

In April that year, in another hearing on the matter, the Supreme Court told the ICG to note "the march of time" and directed that Tyagi, who was released from service in December 2023, to be reinstated as an interim measure till it decides on her plea for parity with male counterparts.

"Look at your resistance to having a single woman in the Coast Guard. This was the same resistance (first female advocate in India) Cornelia Sorabjee when she was told you are not good enough.