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Several delegations call on LG Ladakh

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
LEH: Several delegations called on the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta, at LG Secretariat to discuss key development and welfare issues.

Padma Shri awardee Dr Padma Gurmet, Director of National Institute of Sowa Rigpa, who received both Padma Shri from Government of India and recently State Award from UT Ladakh on Republic Day 2026 for contributions in medicine and art/craft, thanked GoI and UT Administration. He informed Rs 52 crore central allocation this year for National Institute of Sowa Rigpa, plans for establishment



LG Ladakh, Kavinder Gupta interacting with delegation.

of 15 new branches across India, plantation of 100 different medicinal plants at Trans-Himalayan Herbal Garden in Phey, and need to strengthen traditional healers in rural areas for elderly seeking treatment.

A Hemya-Khatpu delegation led by Nambardar raised telecommunication connectivity issues, need for multipurpose hall, residential hostel for students, and playground.

Zaskar delegation sought Rangdum's inclusion in new Zaskar district, Stod as block headquarters instead of

Karsha, and internal roads construction in Akshow village.

Stakmo delegation led by Nambardar Thiskey highlighted water shortage, requesting lift irrigation scheme from Indus River for drinking and agricultural needs.

Korzk delegation led by BJP State President Tashi Gyalson Khachu requested funds for Korzk monastery completion and residential rooms for monks.

An ex-serviceman who participated in skiing demanded fair trials and equal representation from all Ladakh parts for Khelo India Winter Games in ski and snowboarding events.

Giving a patient hearing, the Lt Governor reiterated UT Administration's commitment to people's welfare, informing funding requests from Central government for heritage sites renovation/restoration including monasteries as testament to Ladakh's ancient rich cultural heritage. He called Ladakh a treasure trove of medicinal plants, with Prime Minister mentioning its Sanjeevani-Sea Buckthorn and tremendous medicinal potential. He highlighted stepped-up efforts for reliable telecommunication and road networks across Ladakh, plus potable drinking water via Jal Jeevan Mission and KUSUM scheme for lift irrigation using solar energy.



DC highlights road safety month activities, relief to accident victims

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Dr Rakesh Minhas, on Tuesday highlighted the awareness and relief initiatives undertaken during National Road Safety Month from 1st to 31st January 2026 across Jammu district.

"A series of programmes were organised by the Regional Transport Office Jammu to promote responsible road behaviour and minimise road accidents," the Deputy Commissioner said at a press conference.

During the month-long campaign, he said, the RTO Jammu conducted road safety awareness camps, driver orientation programmes and medical check-up camps at multiple



DC Jammu, Dr Rakesh Minhas talking to reporters.

locations across the district. These activities covered public transport drivers, school bus and ambulance drivers, sleeper bus drivers, auto-rickshaw and e-auto drivers, besides general road users.

Sharing road accident data, the Deputy Commissioner informed that a total of 949 road accidents were reported in Jammu district during the year 2025, resulting in 215 deaths and 1205 injuries. He said the figures underline the need for sustained awareness and strict adherence to traffic rules.

Regarding relief measures, the Deputy Commissioner stated that under the Road

Accident Victim Fund Scheme, long-pending cases since 2022 have been reviewed and largely cleared. He informed that an amount of Rs 78.50 lakh has already been disbursed during 2025. In addition, Rs 97 lakh has been sanctioned in 107 cases, including 59 death cases and 48 injury cases, and the amount is being credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries.

The Deputy Commissioner reiterated that road safety is a collective responsibility and assured that the district administration remains committed to further strengthening awareness initiatives and ensuring timely relief to road accident victims and their families.

Regional Transport Officer, Jasmeet Singh was also present at the occasion.

India-US trade bonhomie strengthens with tariff reduction: Gaurav

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: BJP Spokesperson and Convenor, International Affairs, Gaurav Gupta has hailed the recent India-US trade understanding that includes reduction of tariffs on Indian goods and scrapping of additional punitive duties, calling it a constructive and forward-looking step that will further strengthen bilateral relations between world's two largest democracies.

In a statement issued here today, Gaurav Gupta said that the decision to reduce reciprocal tariffs on Indian exports from 25 per cent to 18 per cent, along with the removal of the additional 25 per cent punitive duty, reflects the growing trust, strategic partnership and economic cooperation between India and the United States. He termed the development as a major boost for Indian



exporters, industries and overall economic growth.

Gupta said that the reported trade understanding between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump is being viewed globally as a significant move to ease trade tensions and promote economic stability. Reports suggest that the tariff reduction and removal of punitive duties are part of a broader agreement aimed at expanding bilateral

trade and improving market access between the two nations.

He further noted that the agreement is expected to benefit multiple sectors, including engineering goods, textiles, chemicals and automobile components, which have strong export linkages with the US market. The move is also seen as an attempt to reverse earlier tariff escalations that had created uncertainty among exporters and industries. Gupta said that strengthening economic cooperation with global partners like the United States aligns with India's long-term vision of expanding international trade, boosting manufacturing and enhancing technological collaboration. He added that the development will not only deepen economic ties but will also reinforce strategic and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Gaurav emphasized that

improved trade relations between India and the US will contribute positively to global economic stability and promote mutual prosperity. He expressed confidence that such constructive diplomatic engagements will open new avenues for investment, innovation and employment opportunities in both nations.

He also appreciated the leadership of both countries for adopting a pragmatic and cooperative approach to resolving trade differences through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Gupta said that India's growing global stature and proactive foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi have played a crucial role in strengthening India's international partnerships and ensuring greater economic opportunities for the country.

Minimum wages revised across J&K in 2022: Dy CM

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Tuesday said that the Jammu and Kashmir has revised the minimum wages in respect of the scheduled employments in October 2002 and any further revision will be done as and when the GoI notifies and implements the National Floor Wages under Code on Wages 2019, which shall be applicable to the Union territory.

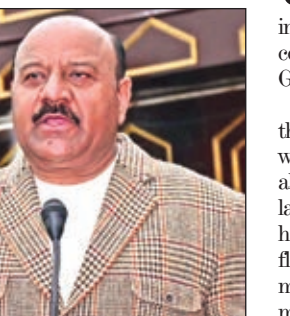
The Deputy Chief Minister, said this while replying to a question on enhancement of minimum wages, raised by Legislator Ali Mohammad Dar in the Legislative Assembly.

He said that the Government of India, through the Ministry of Labour and

Employment and the office of the Chief Labour Commissioner (Central), has issued notifications revising the minimum wage structure applicable under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948.

He added that these revisions are based on adjustments to the Variable Dearness Allowance (VDA), which is linked to the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW), and aim to address inflationary pressures and cost-of-living across skill for workers increases categories.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that under the latest available central notifications (effective October 1, 2024 and subsequently updated), the minimum wage rates for workers employed in the unor-



ganized sector and scheduled employments have been revised upwards for all skill categories including unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled workers along with higher rates for highly skilled workers.

He added that these revised wages take

into account both basic wage and VDA components, as notified by the Government of India.

The Deputy CM also said that, under the Code on Wages, 2019 (now in force w.e.f 21st of November 2025 in pan India also in J&K as part of the consolidated labour codes), the Government of India has established provisions for national floor minimum wage and strengthened mechanisms for periodic revision of minimum wages based on socio-economic criteria. He added that Minimum wages Act, 1948 has been subsumed under code of wages, 2019 and now wages will be governed under this code.

He further said that the Government of Jammu & Kashmir revised the minimum

wages in respect of scheduled employments vide S. O. 513 dated 12.10.2022. he informed that in terms of Section 3(1) (b) of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, appropriate Government is empowered to issue notifications for revision of the rates of minimum wages in accordance with the provisions of Section 5 of the Act, and the said revision shall remain operative till October, 2027. He further informed that as and when the Government of India notifies and implements the National Floor Wages under Code on Wages 2019 and same shall be applicable to the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

On the subject, legislators Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami and Hasnain Masoodi raised supplementary questions.

E-Bus service operates within SMR limits: Satish

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Minister for Transport, Satish Sharma said that as per the operational guidelines of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA), e-bus service is being operated within the Srinagar Metropolitan Region (SMR) limits.

The Minister said this while replying to a question raised by Rafiq Ahmad Naik. He informed the house that the Tral constituency falls out of SMR limits. While replying to a supplementary, the Minister said that consideration would be given to include Tral in the network, once new fleet of buses is received by the department.



Constituent Assembly of India had conceived & cultivated very unique safeguards in Article 60 to "Preserve, Protect, & Defend the Constitution

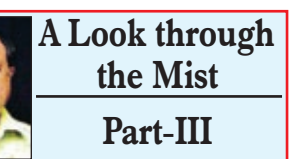
Every Action of Ours too Should Strengthen the Constitution

■ **DAYA SAGAR**
These days it is so common a phrase that President in India has to do everything as per the advice of council of ministers and hence how can the President be named as the guardian of constitution of India who will to the best of ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution when the 'ability' of President is in a way subordinate to the advice of the council of ministers in terms of Art -74 of the Constitution of India which reads on date , <" Art-74 (1) There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice: Provided that the President may require the Council of Ministers to reconsider such advice, either generally or otherwise, and the President shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration. (2) The question whether any, and if so what, advice was tendered by Ministers to the President shall not be inquired into in any court">. Yes most of the people in general will ask this question. The Answer is simple and that is that Article 74 has been amended two times , once in 1976 { congress rule : 42nd Amendment Act, 1976 (effective from January 3, 1977), which amended it to: , < Art-74 "(1)There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions,

act in accordance with such advice. (2)...."} and 2ndtime 1978(Janta Party Government < Proviso was added "Provided that the President may require the Council of Ministers to reconsider such advice, either generally or otherwise, and the President shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration.">). Before Amendment Art-74 only said that there will be council of ministers to aid & advise the president ,so then in the real spirit the president may not go by that advice in executing the office of President (or discharge the functions of the President).

Text of the Art-74 before amendment was very clearly worded & there was no ambiguity in it saying : "There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions." > . So it could be believed that the Constituent Assembly was well aware of the spirits that were being laid down in Article -60 for retaining the President as Protector Preserver & Defender of COI & other contents of Art-60 since the position & role of the President very intimately & importantly also reflects from a good number of articles in constitution (which too will be referred briefly here) which could also be easily read between the lines from the spirits contained in some articles of COI.

The intensions of the framers of Constitution of India and what role &



A Look through the Mist Part-III

responsibility they had conceived to be enshrined in the CHAIR of President of India could be well sensed from the contents of (i) Article- 53 - Executive power of the Union shall be vested in President as also without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provision, the supreme command of the Defence Forces of the Union shall be vested in the President and the exercise thereof shall be regulated by law (ii) Art-60 Oath or affirmation by the President, (iii) Art-61. Procedure for impeachment of the President is veryvery intricate, (iv) Art-74. Council of Ministers to aid and advise President, (v) Art-75. Other provisions as to Ministers.-(1) The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President, (vi) Art-77. Conduct of business of the Government of India.- All executive action of the Government of India shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the President ; (vii) Art-78 (Duties of Prime Minister as respects the furnishing of information to the President, etc.) too makes the President important (viii) Art-79. Constitution of Parliament.-(There shall be a Parliament for the Union which shall consist of the President, and two Houses to be known respec-

tively as the Council of States and the House of the People), (ix) in US after President is incapacitated due to any reason due even death or resignation the VP becomes the president where as in India after elected president dies or resigns the VP can not become regular President and there have to be election of new president (Art-54, Art-55-manner of election of president , Art-62 filling the vacancy in office of President), (x) in terms of Art- 143 : President has power to consult Supreme court and (xi) Actions of the President too are subject to judicial review by SC (art-124) & hence can not be simply considered with any possibility of being simply discretionary in case Art-74 is taken in unamended form ,

Similarly after President dissolved the Lok Sabha there have to be new elections with in 6 months for Lok Sabha . So the duty assigned to President has not been casually inked but has been very seriously inked so any considerate mind would immediately visualise that the contents of the Art-60 are actual spirits of the doctrine of basic structure of COI and hence would have been protected by dismissing the amendments made to Art-74 had any body gone to Apex Court or had the issue come before the court in some other context. Some one may contest why has not the SC suo moto taken the subject, I have no answer for that. The basic structure doctrine (from Kesavananda Bharati

judgement 1973) protects core features like democracy, rule of law, separation of powers, judicial review, and the parliamentary system (including checks and balances). It is very pertinent to mention here that a part of Section -55 of the 42nd Constitution amendment Act of 1976 i.e adding Section- 4 to Art 368 was found against the basic structure doctrine and was seen by SC as tilting toward parliamentary sovereignty (reducing judicial checks), and hence was struck down in Minerva Mills v. Union of India (1980) for violating basic structure (e.g., limiting judicial review). [Clauses (4) and (5) were ins. in article 368 by s. 55 of the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976. Section-4 has been declared invalid by the Supreme Court in Minerva Mills Ltd. and Others Vs. Union of India and Others (1980) 2 S.C.C. 591.]

In the COI with Art 74 in original form President is not bound to go by the advice of council of ministers and the debate over issues between President and Parliament or Council of ministers has to conclude with reasoning's & not simply by numbers. So President had been given a long rope in case very controversial or questionable advice / bill/ proposal about subject requiring rejection of that so as to protect the Constitution from the only institution that could demolish the constitution by amend-

ments i.e Parliament . The Parliament or the Council Ministers had to hold back till President was convinced in the greater interest. Not only that even President not giving assent was subject to judicial review. Hence in the original form there was no ultimate discretionary power flowing to President , the presidents considerations too had to stand to technical test .

The related section of the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 (making advice of council of ministers explicitly binding on President through Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, s. 13, for cl. (1) (w.e.f. 3-1-1977) } and even related section of the 44th{ the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Act, 1978, s. 11 (w.e.f. 20-6-1979)} which do appear casting ultimate shadows on the role that has been assigned to the President on oath under Art-60) must be seriously reviewed for needed parliamentary corrections/ actions or judicial review in the direction of strengthening the safeguards to preserve protect & defend the constitution since they could be taken against the basic structure of constitution and should have been struck down is a strong scholarly critique worth sharing with some students of constitution.

(The writer is a Sr Journalist & analyst of J&K Affairs)