

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! SMVDSB approves initiatives...

of major infrastructure projects was reviewed including construction of the Exit Track at Bhawan, New Vaishnavi Bhawan, widening of the Yatra track from Sanjehat to Bhawan, slope stabilization works, construction of Shri Shankaracharya Ji Temple and allied amenities at Katra and School for Divyangjan at Chaitanya Ashram, Jammu. The Board directed strict adherence to timelines while ensuring the highest standards of quality and safety.

Regarding the newly developed helipad at Village Hutt, the Board approved that following execution of a revised MoU, SMVDSB will provide a one-time financial grant to Shri Shiv Khori Shrine Board under the Shrine Act for development and upgradation of pilgrim infrastructure. It was also approved that heli services for both Shrines will operate from the same helipad for the convenience of pilgrims.

The Board appreciated the community welfare initiatives of renovating 15 schools in Reasi and Udhampur districts damaged during the heavy rains of August-September 2025 within just five months.

The Board lauded the initiative of establishing a Sadhna Kaksh (Meditation Hall) at Bhawan; terming it a significant step towards enriching the spiritual well-being of pilgrims. Approval was also accorded for grant-in-aid to institutions under the SMVD Charitable Society, including Gurukul, Hospital, Sports Complex, College of Nursing.

The Board expressed appreciation for the greening initiatives undertaken by SMVDSB and approved a comprehensive Annual Green Plan for 2026-27. The Lieutenant Governor directed the CEO to reaffirm the commitment to environmental sustainability with particular emphasis on promoting a clean and green Katra Town and its surrounding areas.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Lieutenant Governor laid foundation stones for several pilgrim-centric facilities aimed at enhancing infrastructure and spiritual experience. These included construction of three new temples in Reasi district, restoration of two ancient temples in Jammu district at an estimated cost Rs 1.21 Cr, redevelopment of the Bhairon Ji Temple Complex and construction of staff accommodation at Bhawan and Bhairon Ji.

The Lieutenant Governor also inaugurated newly constructed cottages at Katra and launched an improvised Pouch Prasad containing dry fruits, an engraved coin depicting the Holy Pindies and a sacred Mooli (Kalava) for free distribution among pilgrims.

Earlier, the Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB presented a detailed overview of the Board's activities and progress achieved in implementation of decisions taken during previous meetings.

The meeting was attended by all Board Members including Mahamandeshwar Swami Vishveshvaranand Giri Maharaj, Balshwar Rai, Dr. Ashok Bhan, Sudha Murty, Gunjan Rana, Dr. K.K. Talwar, Kulbhushan Ahuja, Lalit Bhasin and Suresh Kumar Sharma.

Dr. Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor and Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Chief Executive Officer, SMVDSB also attended the meeting.

India's message on...

counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, and maritime security.

We will also make defence cooperation more comprehensive, he said.

"Along with AI and digital technologies, we will advance partnerships in semiconductors, health, and food security," he said.

The prime minister also touched upon India's approach towards the Indo-Pacific.

"The Indo-Pacific region is emerging as the growth engine of the world," he said.

The prime minister said India is committed to development, peace and stability across the entire Indo-Pacific region together with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Malaysian Prime Minister Ibrahim said India and Malaysia continue to expand collaboration in trade, investment, connectivity and defence. India has registered a spectacular rise in global trade and economic front, he said.

Congress running campaign...

Highlighting India's global standing, he added that the country is advancing rapidly in economic development and emerging as a trusted global partner. Chugh emphasized that the government's focus on self-reliance, reforms, and international cooperation has strengthened India's position on the world stage, a reality the opposition finds difficult to accept.

Amit Shah calls...

Some thinkers have spread the misconception that the Maoist problem is linked to development and that it is an issue of law and order, Shah added.

He cited development data and statistics of the 1980s, when the Maoist problem emerged and spread in areas in Telangana, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, especially Bastar, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha's border districts, to drive home his point.

"At that time, there were more than 100 districts more underdeveloped than Bastar. If the root cause of the problem is development, then when the problem grew, why did it not grow in those 100 districts that were more underdeveloped than Bastar? Some people call it a law-and-order issue. I do not agree with this either," he said.

Before the emergence of the Maoist problem, Bastar's law-and-order statistics were much better than those of many districts of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Shah pointed out.

"This is not linked to law and order and development. I can debate with anyone and prove with facts and evidence that this is an ideology problem. Those who say there is no ideological problem should explain why this movement was named Maoism. Because within this ideology lies the belief that solutions to problems emerge from the barrel of a gun," he said.

This ideology is not in keeping with the spirit of the Indian Constitution, in which the solution to every problem emerges through debate and democracy.

"They (Communists and Naxals) handed weapons to poor tribal youth and raised the slogan of a Red Corridor from Tirupati to Pashupatinath. And for four-and-half decades, they blocked development in the region," he said.

Shah said he has no hesitation in saying that if Bastar was not affected by the Maoist problem, it would have been the most developed district in the country.

"After 10 years, look at Bastar. It is going to become the most developed tribal region," Shah asserted.

Hailing the fight against Naxalism, he said 90 per cent of the area influenced by them had become free and the menace would be uprooted completely by March 31.

Religious conversion, infiltration...

condemnable." He cited the example of poet Narayan Vaman Tilak to underline the freedom of belief, while asserting that "ghar wapas" was the answer for those wishing to return to their original religion.

Those who want to come back, we pave the way for them, he said.

"The second reason was infiltration, for which the government needed to undertake extensive work," the RSS chief said.

He added that detection and deportation had begun slowly and would gather pace, citing the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise under which some individuals were identified as non-citizens and removed from electoral rolls.

"RSS workers also identified suspected infiltrators through language and reported them to authorities," Bhagwat said, adding that while Indian citizens, including Muslims, would be employed, foreigners would not be.

He said the third reason for population imbalance is low birth rate.

Responding to a question, the RSS chief said doctors have advised that marriages between the ages of 19 and 25 and having three children help keep both parents and children healthy, while psychologists believe that three children help siblings manage ego-related issues and ensure a stable family life in the long term.

He said population scientists warn that a population is threatened when the fertility rate falls below 2.3 and that a country is considered to be in decline at that level. "We are now going below 2.1 and are being saved only because of states like Bihar," Bhagwat said, adding that several countries had taken steps to reverse population decline.

Referring to India's population policy, he said the prescribed fertility ratio of 2.1, when rounded off, effectively means three children.

"All kinds of scientific research now indicate that we should have three children in a family," he said, stressing that it remained a matter of choice for men, women, and families, and should be considered as a broader social issue.

Citing the English book "Cheaper by the Dozen", the RSS chief said it showed that raising multiple children need not be a major concern.

Referring to the author's personal account of raising 12 children in the US, he said the book argued that having more children could be economical, and a film had also been made based on it.

He said marriage was not merely about a physical relationship between two individuals but an institution meant to create a family, which in turn formed part of society.

"It should not be the case that one marries without taking responsibilities," he said, adding that while remaining unmarried was a personal choice for RSS volunteers, family life involved duties and relationships that must be maintained.

Speaking on infiltration, Bhagwat said RSS workers also identified suspected infiltrators through language and reported them to authorities, adding that while Indian citizens, including Muslims, would be employed, foreigners would not be.

Vigilance is necessary, he said, noting that Hindu society had largely moved away from menial or routine jobs in pursuit of higher salaries, creating space for infiltrators to take up such work.

"We do not want to take away anyone's jobs, but our people should get jobs first," Bhagwat said, adding that even citizens who did not identify as Hindus should be given priority in local employment.

Referring to employment and technology, he said India had a large population and needed technologies that created more jobs.

While not opposing artificial intelligence, he said it should be used in ways that generate employment.

Bhagwat called for "production by the masses", instead of mass production.

The RSS chief further stressed the need for employment to prevent social unrest, saying an idle mind could lead to Naxalism, urban violence, and atrocities against women.

According to him, gross domestic product (GDP) was an imperfect indicator of economic health as it measured only tangible and measurable activities.

Citing the example of unpaid household work by women, Bhagwat said such contributions were not reflected in GDP figures. He called for both quantitative and qualitative production and said the rupee would strengthen against the US dollar regardless of GDP figures.

Referring to the Hindu population in Bangladesh, he said unity would enable them to influence local politics.

"Hindus in Bangladesh have chosen to unite and resist rather than flee," Bhagwat said, adding that the RSS would do whatever it could within its limited capacity for their benefit.

He also said that forces attempting to break the country would themselves be disintegrated and asserted that India would not fall prey to such tactics.

Responding to a query about the division of the country by 2047, Bhagwat said, "People should envision an 'Akhand Bharat' by then.

Responding to questions during an interactive session, Bhagwat called for sensitivity and a sensitive approach to address caste-based conflicts.

Bhagwat said caste now exists largely for selfish interests and political purposes as its traditional occupational basis has disappeared.

He said politicians seek votes in the name of the caste because caste identities remained deeply ingrained in society.

"Politicians are driven by electoral considerations rather than ideology," he added.

"Caste now existed largely for selfish interests and political purposes, as the traditional occupational basis of caste had long disappeared," the RSS chief said.

He emphasised the need for a sensitive approach to caste conflicts.

Digital arrest: Swift...

the police initiated a detailed financial investigation, traced beneficiary bank accounts, and followed the money trail without delay.

Within just three hours of receiving the complaint, police traced Rs 11.90 lakh to a suspected Yes Bank account in Jodhpur and promptly placed the amount on hold by invoking the newly issued Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

Additionally, a lien of Rs 4.90 lakh was marked in subsequent layers of linked accounts. Further coordination with concerned banks enabled the tracing of another Rs 28 lakh in second-layer accounts. In total, Rs 39,90,482 of the defrauded amount was successfully secured.

DySP Albeena Malik, SHO PS CICE Jammu, said, "The timely reporting by the complainant and immediate action by our team helped prevent further siphoning of funds. The newly introduced SOP proved highly effective in freezing the proceeds of crime at multiple levels."

SSP CICE J&K, while appreciating the team's efforts, stated that this case marks the first operational use of the new SOP in a live investigation, demonstrating its strength in tackling cyber-enabled financial frauds. "Such prompt action sends a strong message to cyber criminals and reinforces public trust in the system," the SSP said.

The recovered amount will be remitted to the complainant's account shortly through the Court, providing significant relief to the victim and his family. The investigation was carried out by Inspector Pradeep Singh and IC Rakesh Choudhary under the overall supervision of SSP CICE J&K.

Blast in Pakistan mosque unfortunate: Farooq

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah on Sunday said the blast inside a mosque in Pakistan has shown that people are treading a path that leads to hell fire.

"It is unfortunate that now blasts are taking place inside mosques as well. It shows that how far we have gone from Allah.... We are treading the path which will lead to hell fire," Abdullah told reporters in Pampore town of Pulwama district.

The former chief minister had gone to the south Kashmir town to offer condolences to Mohammad Riyaz Hamadani for the death of his mother.

Abdullah said the entire Muslim world is in chaos and engulfed in violence.

Asked if Pakistan should be declared a terrorist state, the NC president refused to comment. A 32-year-old suicide bomber barged into the Khadijatul Kubra mosque in the Tarli suburbs of capital Islamabad on Friday and detonated his explosives when the worshippers were busy offering the weekly prayer. Initially, 31 worshippers were killed and 169 injured but authorities later said the death toll had risen to 36 after some critically injured died in hospitals. The Islamic State in Pakistan, an offshoot of Daesh, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Army Chief reviews counter-terror ops, operational preparedness

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi has reviewed ongoing counter-terrorism operations and the prevailing security situation during a visit to forward areas here, with deliberations also focussing on the infusion of advanced technologies to further enhance operational capability, the Army said on Sunday.

The chief of army staff attended a high-level security review meeting chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah and visited White Knight Headquarters in Jammu on Friday before touring the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri on Saturday.

"COAS visited Counter Insurgency Force (R), under the aegis of White Knight Corps to review the prevailing security situation and assess operational preparedness. "He was briefed on ongoing counter-terrorism operations, the effectiveness of the security grid and measures undertaken to maintain sustained vigilance," Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Indian Army wrote on X. The Counter Insurgency Force (Romeo), or CIF (R), is a specialised formation of the Army responsible for operations against terror networks in the challenging terrain of Rajouri and Poonch districts.

"Deliberations also focused on inter-agency synergy and the infusion of advanced technologies to further enhance operational capability," the ADGPI said.

The Army said the army chief commended all ranks for their unwavering dedication, professionalism and steadfast commitment to duty.

"He lauded their sustained efforts in maintaining a high state of readiness under challenging operational conditions. The interaction reaffirmed the Indian Army's resolute focus on vigilance, preparedness and operational excellence," the post said.

Conference of CJs deliberates on people-centric judiciary, ways to cut case backlogs

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

BHOPAL: A two-day conference of chief justices of high courts at the National Judicial Academy here focused on building a modern and people-centric judiciary and deliberated on "stale litigations filed by the State", an official statement said.

The event, which concluded on Sunday, was guided by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and senior Supreme Court judges, and discussed ways to institutionalise judicial administration and formulate a National Judicial Policy, it said.

Chief Justices of 25 high courts took part in the conference.

The discussions centred on transitioning judicial governance from a traditional framework to a strategic, data-driven system to help high courts address contemporary legal challenges while maintaining institutional integrity, it said.

A strategic roadmap to reduce case backlogs was deliberated, including streamlining procedures and prioritising trials in cases involving offences punishable with imprisonment of up to seven years.

The conference also discussed the issue of "media trials", underlining that justice must be delivered in courtrooms to safeguard the presumption of innocence.

Issues related to "stale or unnecessary litigations filed by the State" were examined, with emphasis on reducing the government's role as a frequent litigant, it said.

The top judges also discussed reforms through digital innovation and linguistic inclusivity to strengthen access to justice. "The conference reaffirmed a collective commitment to creating a modern, accessible, uniform and citizen-centric justice system," it added.

Pak intruder apprehended along IB

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A Pakistani intruder was apprehended while attempting to sneak into the Indian side from across the International Border in Samba district on Sunday, officials said.

The Border Security Force (BSF) detected the intruder's movement near Border Outpost Ballar in Rangarh sector around 7 pm and took him into custody, they said. The intruder was immediately taken for questioning and further details are awaited, they said.

Thousands throng picturesque Sarthal to enjoy second edition of Winter Festival

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KATHUA: To promote tourism and showcase the pristine natural and cultural wealth of the region, the Tourism Department, in collaboration with the District Administration Kathua and Bani-Basohli Development Authority, organized the second edition of the Winter Festival at the picturesque Sarthal Valley in Bani Subdivision.

The festival was inaugurated by MLA Bani, Dr. Rameshwar Singh in the presence of an enthusiastic gathering of thousands of visitors, who thronged the snow-clad valley to be part of the celebrations.

The highlight of the festival was the mesmerizing performance by internationally acclaimed singer Sonali Dogra and popular artist Bishan Dass, who enthralled the audience with a soulful blend of Dogri, Hindi and Punjabi folk songs. Their captivating performances set an energetic and festive tone for the event.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Bani Dr. Rameshwar Singh said that the Sarthal Winter Festival has been a long-cherished dream of the people of Bani, as the area possesses immense untapped tourism potential. "Sarthal has all the attributes to emerge as another Gulmarg, matching the finest scenic profiles of the country," he maintained. The MLA stated that the District Administration Kathua and Bani Subdivision have taken comprehensive steps to ensure proper logistics and arrangements to elevate the festival to a new scale. He lauded the performances of renowned artists Sonali Dogra and Bishan Dass, along with local performers, for adding diversity and vibrancy to the mela and making it engaging for visitors.

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Kathua, Rajesh Sharma described Sarthal as a unique and iconic destination, blending pristine natural landscapes with the joy of snow, making it one of the most promising winter tourism locations in Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the Winter Festival is an effort to reconnect people with their heritage in the lap of nature while promoting sustainable tourism. The Deputy Commissioner emphasized that such initiatives aim to bring people closer to the region's culture and natural beauty, while generating livelihood opportunities for the local population.

The Deputy Commissioner also appreciated the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders and assured that the administration remains committed to organizing more such events to promote Sarthal Valley as a prominent winter tourism destination.

The festival also featured a series of cultural performances by local youth, providing them a valuable platform to showcase their talent. Traditional Pahadi cuisine stalls offered visitors an authentic taste of the region's culinary heritage, while fun-filled activities against the scenic backdrop of snow-covered mountains further enhanced the festive ambience.

ADDC Surinder Mohan Sharma, CEO BBDA Babu Ram, CPO Ranjeet Thakur, Dy. Director Tourism Savita Chouhan, Dy. Director Tourism Manta Sharma, SDM Bani Sandeep Kumar, Tehsildar Pradyuman Attri, Asst Director Samba- Kathua Dr. Rajesh Raina, Asst Director Jammu Vishal Sadotra, Accounts Officer Dr. Annie Janwal and other senior officers and dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Winter Festival-2026 organised at Lal Draman-Doda

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

DODA: The District Administration Doda in collaboration with the Tourism Department, Jammu & Kashmir, NGO Tejas Ek Pahal and the Indian Army, successfully organized the Winter Mega Festival-2026 at the picturesque tourist destination Lal Draman, attracting a massive gathering of visitors and locals alike.

The grand event was organized under the visionary guidance of the Deputy Commissioner, Harvinder Singh and witnessed overwhelming public participation. The success of the festival was attributed to the dedicated efforts of the District Administration Doda, Tourism Department, Indian Army and the exceptional commitment of Chairman, NGO Tejas Ek Pahal, Akash Parihar along with his devoted team.

Chairman District Development Council, Dhananter Singh Kotwal was the Chief Guest, while ADC, Anil Kumar Thakur graced the event as Guest of Honour.

The event commenced with the lighting of the traditional lamp by the Chief Guest, marking the auspicious beginning of the festival.

The festival showcased vibrant departmental stalls, local food stalls and colorful cultural performances by local artists featuring rich folk traditions including Gojri, Dogri, Sarazi, Bhaderwahi and Kashmiri songs and dances. A spectacular Tiranga Rally consisting of students of the government and private schools, carrying a 50-metre-long Tricolour; added patriotic fervour to the event. The mesmerizing snow-capped landscape was further beautified by colorful rangoli decorations, captivating the audience.

A large number of people from all age groups participated enthusiastically, making the event a grand success.

The programme was also attended by DDC Member Yudhvir Singh, ASP Headquarters Doda Mohd Aslam, ACD Doda Din Mohd Afaq, SDM Phellail Singh, DySP Headquarters Krishan Rattan, officers of the Indian Army, political dignitaries, NGO representatives and members of civil society.

The Chief Guest and Guest of Honour were warmly welcomed by NCC cadets, who also participated in the Tiranga Rally. A traditional turban-wearing ceremony, featuring beautiful Kesari-coloured turbans, emerged as one of the major highlights of the event.

The welcome address was delivered by ACD Din Mohammad Afaq, who also served as the Nodal Officer for all event arrangements.

The programme featured captivating folk-dance performances by student groups and local artists. The Sarazi folk dance and song, performed in traditional attire, was highly appreciated, with the renowned Sarazi artist Surinder Parihar presenting the iconic Sarazi Kud, which remained the main attraction of the festival.

The Winter Mega Festival-2026 at Lal Draman successfully promoted local culture, tourism and community participation, reinforcing Doda's identity as a vibrant cultural and tourism hub.

India, Canada to forge 'shared work plan' to bolster security cooperation

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: India and Canada have agreed to formulate a "shared work plan" to guide cooperation on national security and law enforcement issues with a larger plan to have practical collaboration to address mutual concerns such as transnational criminal networks.

The decision was taken at a meeting between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and his Canadian counterpart Nathalie Drouin in Ottawa on Saturday.

The move is seen as part of efforts by the two sides to normalise their relations that came under severe strain following a diplomatic row over the killing of a Khalistani separatist in 2023.

NSA Doval's visit to Ottawa came as the two sides are making preparations for a likely trip to India early next month by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), sharing details of the Doval-Drouin meeting, said on Sunday that the two sides acknowledged the progress on initiatives aimed at supporting the safety and security of their countries and citizens.

"They agreed to a shared work plan to guide bilateral cooperation on national security and law enforcement issues and to enable practical collaboration on respective priorities," it said.

"During the meeting, it was agreed that each country would establish security and law-enforcement liaison officers and that their respective agencies would build on working relationships," the MEA said in a statement.

It said this "important step" will help streamline bilateral communications and enable timely information sharing on issues of "mutual concern" such as the "illegal flow of drugs, particularly fentanyl precursors, and transnational organized criminal networks".

"They also committed to formalising cooperation on cybersecurity policy and information sharing on cybersecurity issues, as well as continuing discussions on cooperation related to fraud and immigration enforcement, consistent with domestic laws and international obligations," it said.

NSA Doval also had a meeting with Canada's Minister for Public Safety Gary Anandasangaree on Friday.

The India-Canada relations hit rock bottom following then prime minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in 2023 of a potential Indian link to the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.