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Contact: 9886035550, 9886035551

# STATE TIMES

THE BOLD VOICE OF J&K

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Air surcharge 50 paise for Leh

**03 Tawi Festival 2026 to celebrate heritage, environment and ideas in Jammu**

**08 Chairman DLSA Reasi reviews civic amenities for Sub Jail inmates**

**09 LG, CM congratulate UPSC qualifiers**

Website : www.statetimes.in, Email: statetimes1@gmail.com

## Reviews Compliance Reduction 2.0 Make life easier for industry, common people alike: CM



CM Omar Abdullah chairing meeting in Jammu on Friday.

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review progress on Compliance Reduction and Derogulation 2.0, a comprehensive national initiative aimed at easing regulatory burdens and fostering a more business-friendly, citizen-centric environment across Jammu and Kashmir.

"We should endeavour to make life easy not just for industry, but for the common population as well," the Chief Minister said while emphasising this core governance philosophy. Under Phase 1 of the programme, the J&K Government had defined 23 priority reform areas and successfully achieved all set targets. Phase 2 builds on

this foundation, expanding the scope across 23 new critical and priority areas covering healthcare, education, tourism, and industry besides other sectors. The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, alongside Ministers Sakeena Itoog, Javed Ahmed Rana, Javid Ahmad Dar and

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### Inaugurates new Secretariat block

JAMMU: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday inaugurated a newly constructed block at the Civil Secretariat, Jammu, aimed at augmenting office infrastructure and improving the working facilities for employees. The new block is expected to significantly add to the available workspace, further strengthening administrative efficiency and overall functioning at the Secretariat. Dy CM Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani, MLA Bani Rameshwar Singh, CS Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary Estates Shaleen Kabra, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister Dheeraj Gupta, Director Estates Jammu Ashwani Khajuria and other concerned officers were also present on the occasion.

### Bail plea of five HDFC Bank officials rejected in fraud case

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
SRINAGAR: A court in Shopian district has rejected the bail of five HDFC Bank officials accused of large-scale financial fraud, the Crime Branch said on Friday. A spokesman of the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) said the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Shopian, rejected the bail applications of the accused persons arrested in connection with the fraud case at the Shopian branch of the bank. The accused are Adil Ayoub Ganai, Irfan Majeed Zargar, Mubashir Hussain Sheikh, Zaid Manzoor, and Javid Ahmad Bhat. The accused persons were arrested during the course of investigation and are presently lodged in judicial custody at Central Jail, Srinagar, the EOW spokesman said.

## 17 candidates from J&K crack UPSC Civil Services Exam

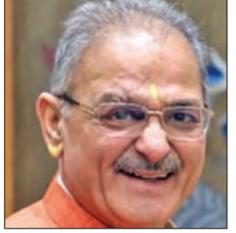
**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: As many as 17 candidates from Jammu & Kashmir have successfully cleared the prestigious UPSC Civil Services Examination, bringing pride to the Union Territory. According to available details, **Suvan Sharma from Jammu secured rank 148, followed by Sugandha Gupta (207) and Towseef Ahmad Ganaie (254). Other successful candidates from the Union Territory include Ritika Bhan (456), Sooyash Shivam (572), Muneeb Parrah (581), Ghulam Din (663), Dwarka Gaadhi (721), Akash (747), Koh-e-Safa (763), Yasaar (811), Abhishek (820), Pankaj (856), Mohd Ajaz (869), Azhar (886), Sarfraz (936) and Irfan (957).** Their success has been widely appreciated, with many describing it as an inspiration for aspiring civil servants across Jammu & Kashmir.

### Anuj Agnihotri tops civil services exam

NEW DELHI: Anuj Agnihotri, an MBBS graduate, has topped the civil services examination 2025, results of which were declared by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Friday. Rajeshwari Suve M and Akansh Dhull have got the second and third ranks respectively. Agnihotri qualified the examination with medical science as his optional subject. He has done MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Rajeshwari, who holds a Bachelor of Engineering (BE) degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE) from Anna University, Chennai, achieved the second rank with Sociology as her optional subject. Akansh, a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) graduate from University of Delhi, stood third in the rank with commerce & accountancy as his optional subject. Among the finally qualified candidates, top five comprises one woman and four men candidates. Raghav Jhunjhunwala and Ishan Bhatnagar have got the fourth and fifth rank respectively. Jhunjhunwala, who has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Economics from University of Delhi, ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9



### Matter of great pride to serve nation: Kavinder after appointment as HP Guv



**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: Senior BJP leader Kavinder Gupta on Friday called the responsibility to serve the nation a matter of great pride and expressed his gratitude to the president, prime minister and home minister after his appointment as the governor of Himachal Pradesh. Gupta said, as the governor of Himachal Pradesh, he will uphold the dignity of the Constitution and perform his duties with dedication, impartiality and commitment. "It is a matter of great pride and responsibility for me to serve the nation in this important role," he said in a message. Gupta also expressed special thanks to President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for their continuous

ment as the governor of Himachal Pradesh. Gupta said, as the governor of Himachal Pradesh, he will uphold the dignity of the Constitution and perform his duties with dedication, impartiality and commitment. "It is a matter of great pride and responsibility for me to serve the nation in this important role," he said in a message. Gupta also expressed special thanks to President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for their continuous

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## JKCA 'scam' case: Court orders framing charges against Farooq, others

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: A local court here has directed the framing of charges against National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and other accused in the alleged Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) scam case. In a five-page order passed earlier this week, Chief Judicial Magistrate of Srinagar, Tabasum, directed that the matter be listed on March 12 for framing of charges. "List the main file on 12/03/2026 for framing of charge. After framing of charge statement of

approvers, i.e., accused no. 3 and 6 shall be recorded as evidence, in case they resile from their stand appropriate orders shall follow," the court said. However, the court rejected an application by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seeking to be made a party in the case. "Keeping in view the facts and circumstances of the case, provisions of law and Judicial precedents, ED cannot be made as a party in a case which is investigated, filed and prosecuted by the CBI and where no schedule offence is disclosed in the

charge sheet by the CBI. "Therefore, the applicant has no locus standi as per the law to seek the addition of charge in the present case. As such, the instant application on behalf of ED is not maintainable," the court said. The court also ruled that the ED application was vague and sought contradictory reliefs. "In some places of the application, the applicant is seeking addition of Section 411 & 414 of the IPC by exercise of powers under section 216 of the Cr.PC but the matter of the fact is that the

applicant is seeking to invoke repealed provisions of law because the Indian Penal Code is not applicable in the instant case and the said IPC was repealed with effect from 01/07/2024," the court added. The court said the power of the ED to investigate and enquire stands mainly connected to the offence of money laundering as defined in the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. "The ED cannot assume from the material gathered by it that a predicate offence stands committed. ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

### Rajnath calls for Indian maritime leadership amid West Asia crisis

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
KOLKATA: In this era of changing geopolitics, oceans have once again come to the centre of the world's power balance and it is India's responsibility to provide leadership with confidence and capability, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday, referring to the escalating conflict in West Asia. The unfolding developments in West Asia are "highly unusual" and the situation in the region could adversely impact the global economy, he said addressing an event here. "What is happening in West



Asia is highly unusual. It is difficult to make any firm comment at this stage on the direction in which conditions in West Asia might proceed going forward," he said. "If we look at the Strait of Hormuz or the entire ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

### IAF Su-30MKI crash in Assam: Both pilots martyred

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
NEW DELHI: Two pilots of the Indian Air Force (IAF) were killed in a crash of a Su-30 MKI fighter jet in Assam's Karbi Anglong district. The IAF confirmed on Friday the deaths of Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Purvesh Duragkar, a day after the Russian-origin aircraft went missing. The jet was on a training sortie and disappeared from radar

## India on verge of eliminating Maoists: Shah

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
MUNDALI (ODISHA): Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday asserted that the country is on the verge of eliminating Maoists by the end of this month, and said security forces will defeat those who dream of building a red corridor in Andhra Pradesh to Pashupati in Nepal. Addressing a function marking the 57th Raising Day of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at Mundali in Odisha's Cuttack district, he said the force acts as a catalyst for the country's econom-

ic growth by providing security to major establishments. "Today, I want to assure the Pashupati," he said. It will be a big achievement for the country's security forces under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to uproot Maoists from the country, Shah said. "Our security forces have reached the expectations, and the country is now on the verge of eliminating the red rebels," he said. In order to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, as aimed by the Prime Minister, the forces have



■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

### High-speed internet back in Kashmir after 5-day

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
SRINAGAR: High-speed mobile internet was restored in Kashmir on Friday, five days after a throttle was ordered as a precautionary measure against a spiralling of anti-US-Israel protests, officials said. The mobile internet and prepaid SIM card services are back to normal across the Valley, they said. Mobile internet speeds were throttled across Kashmir on Monday, in the wake of spontaneous protests against the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

## Israeli warplanes pound Tehran, Beirut

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
DUBAI: Israeli warplanes pounded Beirut and Tehran on Friday as Iran launched another wave of retaliatory strikes against Israel and Gulf countries. There was no sign of the war letting up on its seventh day, as US President Donald Trump appeared to rule out negotiations with Iran and called for its "unconditional surrender." The strikes in Lebanon were the heaviest since a 2024 ceasefire ended the last war between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah, who fired rockets at Israel in the opening days of the latest conflict. Tens of thousands have fled Beirut's suburbs



and southern Lebanon after sweeping Israeli evacuation warnings. The war has escalated to affect more than a dozen countries across the Middle East and beyond. The United States said it had struck an Iranian drone carrier at sea as it waged an unrelenting campaign against the country's navy that earlier included torpedoing of a warship in the Indian Ocean. The US and Israel have battered Iran with strikes, targeting their military capabilities, leadership ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

**ROZA TIMING**

SEHR TIME: 05:28 (MARCH 8)  
IFTAAR TIME: 06:34 (MARCH 7)

**WEATHER**

Temperature (Jammu)  
Max: 31.8°C Min: 17.1°C

Humidity  
Max: 76 Min: 43

Temperature (Srinagar)  
Max: 24.5°C Min: 6.6°C

Humidity  
Max: 72 Min: 56

Sunset: 18:31 Hours  
Sunrise: 06:53 Hours

## Focus on making Indian agri products export-oriented, globally competitive: PM Modi

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asked farmers to leverage India's diverse climate to increase productivity and export strength, and stressed on scaling up high-value crop produce to make the country's agri products globally competitive. Addressing a post-budget webinar on 'Agriculture and Rural Transformation', Modi called for a "unified approach involving experts, industry, and farmers to meet global quality and branding standards", and highlighted the importance of setting clear goals to connect local farmers with global markets. "Today the world markets are opening, and global demand is shifting... It is



necessary to have more discussion on making our agriculture export-oriented. We have a diverse climate, and we must take full advantage of it. We are rich in agro-climatic zones," he said. The prime minister noted that the export-oriented pro-

duction would lead to rural employment through processing and value addition. The Budget for 2026-27 has also focussed on high-value agriculture, including cashew, cocoa, sandalwood, Modi said, adding that the National Mission on Edible Oil and Pulses and the National Mission on Natural Farming are all strengthening the agriculture sector. He also highlighted the budget proposal of promotion of Agarwood in the North East, and temperate nut crops in the Himalayan states. "If we scale high-value agriculture together, it will transform agriculture into a globally competitive sector," Modi added. The prime minister said that today the world is becoming more conscious about health, with a strong focus on holistic healthcare and organic food. "We must place greater emphasis on chemical-free and natural farming. Natural farming creates a

highway to reach markets across the world," he said. Stressing that agriculture is also a strategic pillar of India's long-term development journey, he said that the government has continuously strengthened the agriculture sector. "Nearly 10 crore farmers have received more than Rs 4 lakh crore through the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. This year's Union Budget gives a strong push to agriculture and rural transformation," Modi added. On the fisheries sector, Modi said India is the world's second-largest fish producer with about 4.5 lakh tonnes of fish being produced in our various reservoirs and ponds. There is a potential ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9

### J&K's pension bill projected to double in 10 years, OPS unsustainable: Officials

**■ STATE TIMES NEWS**  
JAMMU: The pension bill of the Jammu and Kashmir government is set to double in the 10-year period between 2020-30, with approximately 2.48 lakh retired employees being paid allowances, officials said. The Jammu and Kashmir administration also said there is no proposal under consideration to revive the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), asserting that it would be fiscally unsustainable in the long run and could pose significant risks to financial stability. As per official data of the government, Rs 5,829 crore were paid as pension to retired employees in 2020-21 and the figure is set to go up to Rs 11,798 crore in 2030-31. This is as per a govern-

ment reply to a cut motion in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly recently. The year-wise pension outgo over the last five years has shown a steady rise - Rs 6,668 crore in 2021-22, Rs 7,463 crore in 2022-23, Rs 8,364 crore in 2023-24, Rs 9,350 crore in 2024-25 and Rs 9,127 crore in 2025-26. Based on the number of employees retiring, the pension outgo is projected to increase further in the coming years. It is estimated to be Rs 11,798 crore in 2030-31. Officials said that the expansion in pension commitments may continue till the early 2040s, after which the burden is expected to stabilise as employees covered under OPS ■ CONTD ON PAGE 9