

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Home Minister Amit...

development programmes in the Union Territory at a meeting to be held at Raj Bhavan in Srinagar.

Subsequently, he will attend another meeting at the Raj Bhavan in Srinagar where the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir will be reviewed, officials said.

On March 21, while replying to a debate on the working of the Home Ministry in the Rajya Sabha, Shah shared data on Jammu and Kashmir and said that between 2004 and 2014, there were 7,217 terrorist incidents, but from 2014 to 2024, the number dropped to 2,242.

During this period, the total number of deaths decreased by 70 per cent, the number of civilian deaths reduced by 81 per cent and the casualties of security personnel went down by 50 per cent.

From 2010 to 2014, an average of 2,654 organised stone-pelting incidents occurred every year, but in 2024, not a single such incident occurred.

There were 132 organised strikes during 2010-14, but there has been none in 2024. In stone-pelting incidents, 112 civilians were killed, and 6,000 were injured, but now stone-pelting has completely stopped.

In 2004, there were 1,587 terrorist incidents, while in 2024, this number was reduced to just 85. In 2004, the number of civilian deaths was 733, but in 2024, it was reduced to 26, and the number of security forces' deaths dropped from 331 in 2004 to 31 in 2024, Shah had said.

The home minister had said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation of democracy in Kashmir while adding that the government now "deals with terrorists by shooting them between the eyes as soon as they are spotted".

Security measures ahead...

and ensuring effective area and night domination.

The focus was on securing critical infrastructure and vulnerable areas with specific measures to protect vital assets and ensure safety, the spokesperson added.

The IGP issued directives to strengthen security in both urban and rural areas of the Valley, with round-the-clock patrolling and increased presence at key entry and exit points, the spokesperson said.

Birdi also emphasized the importance of briefing personnel on standard operating procedures and closely monitoring vulnerable areas to take swift action against suspicious activities.

Pak intruder shot...

on Friday night, officials said.

BSF troops, who are on high alert in view of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's scheduled three-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir from Sunday, lodged a strong protest with the Pakistan Rangers following the incident, the officials said.

"On the intervening night of April 4 and April 5, the alert BSF troops saw suspicious movements in the Jammu border area and an intruder was seen crossing the IB," a BSF spokesperson said.

He said the intruder was challenged by the troops but he paid no heed and kept moving.

"Sensing a threat, the BSF troops neutralised the intruder. The identity and motive of the intruder are being ascertained," he added.

The spokesperson said a strong protest has been lodged with the BSF's Pakistani counterpart.

According to sources, the BSF informed the police department, which sent the body for post-mortem and other legal formalities.

Later, around 1:10 pm, the BSF conducted a short-duration flag meeting with the Pakistan Rangers near the site of the incident, the sources said.

A strong protest was lodged with the Pakistani side over the infiltration attempt. The Pakistani side refused to accept the body of the intruder during the meeting, the sources said, adding that the deceased was aged around 35 years and was not found in possession of any incriminating material.

After the completion of the post-mortem examination and other formalities, the body was taken by police to the Agra Chak area of R S Pura, where a burial was conducted in accordance with Islamic rituals by involving a group of local Muslims.

LG, CM greet...

of the trust said. He said the yatra commenced from the historic Shri Raghunathji Temple and passed through the main city markets, including Residency Road, Rajinder Bazaar, Kanak Mandi, City Chowk, Purani Mandi, Link Road, Jain Bazaar, Chowk Chabutra, Pacea Danga, Moti Bazaar, Gita Bhawan, Ranbireswar Temple, City Chowk, Raghunath Bazaar and finally culminated back at Shri Raghunathji Temple.

He said the trustees of Dharmarth Trust -- former minister Ajatshatru Singh and Ranvijay Singh --along with the trust's president P S Pathania and secretary Ashok Kumar Sharma presided over the "Murti Poojan" ceremony at the temple.

This was followed by Rath Poojan and Dhvajarohan ceremonies, invoking divine blessings for the prosperity and well-being of all, the spokesperson said.

Ajatshatru Singh, the grandson of last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh, greeted people on the auspicious occasion.

"Such religious events not only preserve our age-old heritage but also inspire the younger generation to stay connected with their roots," he said.

Singh said the Dharmarth Trust remains committed to promoting cultural and spiritual values across the Union Territory.

CJ inaugurates new...

including officers from the High Court Registry, Deputy Commissioner, Kathua and DIG, JKS Range. He noted that this new court complex is a dream come true for the judicial officers, court staff and advocates, ultimately benefiting the litigant public.

The court building, equipped with modern infrastructure, comprises of six courtrooms, six judges' chambers, a bar room and a separate bar room for female advocates, a vulnerable witness room, server room, three record rooms, staff halls and dedicated rooms, a conference room, library, E-filing counter, E-Seva Kendra and spacious waiting areas on all three floors. It also included staircases and ramps for universal accessibility, three toilet complexes (one on each floor) with separate provisions for males, females and differently-abled persons. Besides, the facility features three service lift points with four elevators: two for the general public, one for staff and one reserved for Judges.

CJM Kathua, Ajay Kumar, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing deep gratitude to the Chief Justice and the High Court Judges for gracing the occasion with their presence.

The proceedings were conducted by Special Mobile Magistrate, Kathua, Amandeep Kour.

J&K Govt launches...

to protect youngsters and secure our future. We must address the root of drug abuse while ensuring that affected individuals receive timely counselling, support and rehabilitation," he said.

As part of the formal launch, Dulloo unveiled several initiatives, including the campaign's official web portal to provide a centralised interface for awareness activities and real-time updates.

Chairing a high-level review meeting following the launch, the chief secretary assessed preparedness of the departments for the extensive campaign to be rolled out in every panchayat, urban local body, academic institutions and major public spaces.

He directed the district administrations to ensure inclusive public participation, stressing that the quality of content and delivery must be of the highest standards.

"This effort requires sincerity, empathy and innovation. Districts may deploy mobile IEC vans, send personalised messages to the participants and create immersive awareness models that resonate with the local population," Dulloo said.

The chief secretary emphasised that awareness was only the beginning and rehabilitation and counselling must follow as essential support pillars.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary Education, Shantmanu; Principal Secretary Home, Chandrakar Bharti; Additional Director General of Police, Manish Sinha; Commissioner Secretary Social Welfare, Sanjeev Verma; Commissioner Secretary General Administration and Information , M. Raju and Director Information, Nitish Rajora, along with other senior officers in person and through virtual mode.

PM to open...

and dedicate to the nation various rail and road projects worth over Rs 8,300 crore in Tamil Nadu at around 1.30 pm, a release said.

These projects include foundation stones for four-laning of 28 Km long Walajapet - Ranipet section of NH-40 and dedication to the nation of 4-laned 29 Km long Viluppuram - Puducherry section of NH-332; 57 Km long Poondiyankuppam - Sattanathapuram section of NH-32 and 48 Km long Cholapuram - Thanjavur section of NH-36.

They will connect many pilgrim centres and tourist places, reduce distance between cities and enable faster access to medical colleges and hospitals, and ports

besides empower local farmers to transport agricultural products to the nearby markets and boost economic activity of local leather and small scale industries.

The bridge carries a deep cultural significance. According to the Ramayana, the construction of Ram Setu was initiated from Dhanushkodi near Rameswaram.

The bridge, linking Rameswaram to the mainland, stands as a remarkable feat of Indian engineering on the global stage. It is built at a cost of over Rs 550 crore. It is 2.08 km in length, features 99 spans and a 72.5-metre vertical lift span that rises up to a height of 17 metres, facilitating smooth movement of larger ships while ensuring seamless train operations, it said.

Constructed with stainless steel reinforcement, high-grade protective paint, and fully welded joints, the bridge boasts increased durability and reduced maintenance needs. It is designed for dual rail tracks to accommodate future demands. A special polysiloxane coating protects it from corrosion, ensuring longevity in the harsh marine environment.

In 1914, British engineers constructed the original Pamban Bridge, a cantilever (a long piece of metal or wood that extends from a wall to support the end of a bridge) structure with a Scherzer Rolling Lift span to connect Rameswaram Island with mainland India.

For over a century, it served as a critical lifeline for pilgrims, tourists, and trade. However, the harsh marine environment and growing transportation demands necessitated a modern solution. In 2019, the Government of India sanctioned the construction of a technologically advanced, future-ready replacement.

The new Pamban Bridge was constructed by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), a Navratna PSU under the Ministry of Railways overcoming several challenges, including environmental obstacles to logistical complexities, the Palk Strait's turbulent waters, strong winds, and unpredictable weather patterns created difficulties in the construction process.

Additionally, the region's susceptibility to cyclones and seismic activity necessitated careful planning and robust design. It shares similarities with other globally recognised bridges known for their technological advancements and unique designs. These include the Golden Gate Bridge in the United States, Tower Bridge in London and the Oresund Bridge in Denmark-Sweden. Each of these iconic structures, though different in design and functionality, represents a pinnacle of engineering excellence.

"Now, the new Pamban Bridge stands proudly in their company, combining cutting-edge technology with the challenges posed by India's coastal and seismic conditions," the release said.

UGC announces rules...

students moving to India after completing secondary education abroad.

However, it draws a firm line against qualifications obtained through franchising arrangements, stating that these would not be eligible for equivalence.

The rules are expected to significantly benefit Indian students who study abroad and seek to continue their academic or professional journey in India.

The regulations, however, do not apply to professional qualifications in disciplines such as medicine, pharmacy, nursing, law, and architecture -- areas governed by respective statutory councils in India.

"These regulations mark a positive step to align the Indian education system with global standards. It will provide a transparent and easy mechanism to recognise foreign qualifications obtained by the students. With this, we aim to enhance opportunities for students and promote academic exchange," said UGC Chairperson M Jagadeesh Kumar.

The UGC has also clarified that equivalence would be granted to qualifications awarded by foreign institutions duly recognised in their home countries. These include institutions listed by designated accreditation or recognition agencies.

"The process ensures only qualifications from reasonably reputed foreign institutions are recognised. This safeguards the interests of Indian students and the integrity of Indian higher education while matching global standards," Kumar said.

The UGC will also operate a dedicated online portal for receiving and processing applications for equivalence certificates. A standing committee of experts will examine these applications and make recommendations.

If an applicant is dissatisfied with a decision, they may seek a review through a review committee constituted by the UGC.

Equivalence certificates issued under the regulations will be valid for pursuing higher education and research in India, as well as seeking employment opportunities.

According to the UGC, the final regulations were shaped after "careful consideration of the extensive public feedback received on the draft regulations issued in 2023", reflecting a consultative and inclusive policy-making process.

MoHFW, JK Health Deptt hold national review meeting on Shri Amarnathji Pilgrimage

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The Department of Health & Medical Education, in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), conducted the national review meeting for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra (SANJY) 2025 here today.

The key stakeholders, senior officials and experts attended the meeting to review the past experiences, discuss preparedness and enhance the coordination framework for medical services during the forthcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra..

Secretary, Health & Medical Education (H&ME), Dr. Syed Abid Rashid Shah, who chaired the crucial meeting, highlighted the government's commitment towards ensuring a robust healthcare system for the pilgrims.

He emphasized the need for streamlining the process of issuance of Compulsory Health Certificates to the pilgrims. He asked for putting in efforts to ensure that the certificates are issued only after thoroughly assessing the health status of the intending pilgrim. This measure will help in curbing the morbidity and mortality rate, save numerous lives, he added.

Secretary Health also appreciated the states for deputing specialists and medical officers for Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra duties over the years. He expressed hope that the states and the Government of India institutions depute the staff as per the requisitioned numbers for the forthcoming Yatra 2025. He focused on the requirement of Cardiologists, Respiratory Physicians and Anesthetists.

The meeting was followed by release of the Yatra Booklet and distribution of certificates of appreciation among the States and MoHFW.

The States/MoHFW Institutions that participated included Delhi, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Telangana, Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and West Bengal.

Prominent national level institutions who participated in the meeting included AIIMS of New Delhi, Raipur, Jodhpur; Bhubaneswar Patna, Bhopal and Rishikesh, PGIMER Chandigarh, JIPMER Puducherry as well as Banaras Hindu University Medical College, RML Hospital, LHMC, Safdergung Hospitals, New Delhi and Aligarh Muslim University Medical College. Additionally, SKIMS Medical College and Government Medical Colleges of Jammu, Srinagar; Anantnag participated in the meet. The meeting featured a comprehensive overview of Emergency Medical Response (EMR) activities presented by Dr. L Swasticharan, Additional DDG & Director EMR, MoHFW. He outlined the emergency response strategies and best practices. Dr. Sujata Chaudhary, Additional Director General Health Services, MoHFW, further elaborated on national level coordination efforts to enhance the medical response mechanisms for SANJY.

Waqf Bill gets President's assent

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday gave her assent to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was passed by Parliament earlier this week.

Murmu also gave her assent to the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, 2025.

"The following Act of Parliament received the assent of the president on April 5, 2025, and is hereby published for general information: The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025," the government said in a notification.

Parliament early on Friday approved the Bill after the Rajya Sabha gave its nod to the contentious legislation following an over 13-hour debate.

The discussion witnessed staunch objections from opposition parties, which termed the Bill "anti-Muslim" as well as "unconstitutional", while the government responded that the "historic reform" would benefit the minority community.

The Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha with 128 members voting in favour and 95 opposing it. It was passed in the Lok Sabha early on Thursday, with 288 members supporting it and 232 against it.

Parliament had also approved the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod. The Lok Sabha had already given its assent to the Bill.

After the president gave her assent, it has also become a law.

Congress MP Mohammad Jawed and All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday challenged the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Supreme Court, saying it violated constitutional provisions. Jawed's plea alleged the Bill imposed "arbitrary restrictions" on Waqf properties and their management, undermining the religious autonomy of the Muslim community. The petition, filed through advocate Anas Tanwir, said it discriminated against the Muslim community by "imposing restrictions that are not present in the governance of other religious endowments".

Mega cultural festival "UDAAN 2025" concludes at CUJ

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The four-day long cultural festival "UDAAN 2025" Virasat aur Vikas Ki reflecting the vivid and rich cultural diversity of the nation concluded today at Central University of Jammu.The four day long "UDAAN 2025" Fest was inaugurated by Vice Chancellor Prof. Sanjeev Jain. He urged the students to get in touch with their cultural roots and appreciate the diversity that lies in it. He also highlighted the need of preserving the same for the next generation.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of Yasha Mudgal, Commissioner Secretary to the Government, Tourism Department, as the chief guest. During her address, Mudgal appreciated the university's efforts in promoting cultural activities among students and emphasized the importance of events like UDAAN in encouraging participation, creativity, and collaboration.

Dr. Ritu Bakshi, Dean Students' Welfare, expressed her joy for the successful conclusion of the event, saying, "UDAAN 2025 was filled with energy, enthusiasm, and a spirit of togetherness. UDAAN 2025 Fest provided students an opportunity to showcase their talent by participating in different clubs. featured various competitions in vibrant fields like dance, music, quiz, debate, creative writing, poster making, painting, terracotta, mehendi, paper craft, handicraft, photography, short film making and the University was looking like a mini Bharat with the colourful dresses representing various dance forms, songs, paridhan etc.

The Valedictory session was further followed by prize distribution session wherein the students bagging the first, second and third winning positions were rewarded accordingly for their best performances under different clubs. Cash prizes were also given to the winners.

She conveyed her best wishes and thanked the team, convenors and co-convenors for their valuable contribution in making this fest a grand success. She also conveyed her thanks to the students and participants for their overwhelming response and presence who left no stone unturned to make 'UDAAN 2025' a grand event. The special thanks was extended to Prof. Sanjeev Jain, Vice Chancellor for extending all the support, guidance and resources for such events.

Police directs VDGs to report suspicious movements, drone activity along Pakistan border

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Saturday directed Village Defence Guards to keep a close watch on suspicious movements of anti-national elements and any drone activity along the border with Pakistan in Jammu district and inform the forces, officials said.

They also called for strong inter-agency synergy to secure the region.

"Village Defence Guard (VDG) members were specifically instructed to immediately report suspicious movements of anti-national elements or any drone activity near the International Border to senior formations," a senior officer said.

These instructions were conveyed during a series of meetings chaired by Superintendent of Police Brijesh Sharma in areas along the International Border, including Pargwal, Garkhal and Kanachak in the Akhnoor sector.

The meetings focused on sensitising the Village Defence Guard members to the prevailing security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir; the officials said.

They were deemed necessary in view of threats of cross-border infiltration and the increasing number of terror incidents in the Jammu region, the officials said.

Emphasis was laid on remaining vigilant and maintaining close coordination with security forces, they added.

To enhance coordination and response, officers from the Indian Army and the Border Security Force were also present during the interactions.

A meeting was also held with members of the nomadic population in the Lower Rajpura area to address their concerns and encourage their participation in maintaining local security awareness.

59th annual Maha Ann Yagya on April 12

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SUNDERBANI: The country's famous 59th annual Maha Ann Yagya which shall be conducted on April 12, 25 at Guru Gaddi 1008 Sad Guru Baba Kanshi Giri Ji (Bangang Wale), Banpuri-Bhajwal Sunderbani. As part of this celebration, a nine-day "Shri Ram Katha" event is underway at the Guru Gaddi premises since from April1,2025.

Renowned scholar Thakur Lal Shastri Ji from Vrindavan Dham narrated the fourth day of the Ram Katha from Vyas - Peeth.

This spiritual discourse is a continuation of a 58-year old tradition at Guru Gaddi at Banpuri- Sunderbani.

During the narration, Thakur Lal Shastri Ji emphasized the importance of satsang, saying, "Without satsang, discernment is not possible. Without the company of the wise, discernment is not possible."

He further explained that the Shri Ram Katha is not just an ancient story, but a sacred river of stories that cleanses the mind, just as the holy Ganges cleanses the body. The lessons from the Shri Ram Katha offer remedies for emotional, mental, and spiritual ailments, such as anger, pride, and attachments.

We are delighted to organize this spiritual event, which aims to spread the message of love, compassion, and righteousness," said Guru Gosain Brij Bhushan Ji Maharaj, the present Guru Gaddi Aseen. "We invite everyone to join us on this spiritual journey and experience the divine power of Ram Katha."

All are welcome to attend the remaining days of the Ram Katha and experience the spiritual journey.

A Spiritual Devotional Event "Bhajan Sandya" shall also will be organized on April 10 from 7pm onwards followed by 59th annual Maha Anayagya on April 12 and the conclusion with Baisakhi celebration with offering Guru mantra and Guru diksha to disciples by Guru Gosain Brij Bhushan Ji Maharaj.

Bollywood Actor, Isha Koppikar; MD & CEO NSE call on LG

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Bollywood Actor, Isha Koppikar called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. Meanwhile, Ashish Kumar Chauhan, Managing Director and CEO, National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday.

He discussed various issues related to financial literacy and industrial development with the Lieutenant Governor.

BGSBU to offer PG Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

RAJOURI: Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU), Rajouri, has announced the start of a new Postgraduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communication, set to commence from the upcoming academic session.

This marks a major milestone, as BGSBU becomes the only institution in the Pir Panjal region to offer a specialized program in Journalism and Mass Communication. Prof. Jawaid Iqbal, Vice Chancellor of BGSBU, stated, "In today's rapidly evolving media landscape, there is a growing demand for skilled professionals who are both ethical and technically sound. The launch of this diploma program reflects our dedication to preparing students for meaningful careers in media and communication. We envision this course as a platform to nurture critical thinkers and effective communicators who will contribute positively to society."

The Vice Chancellor said, "The diploma will be open to graduates from all academic backgrounds. It includes modules on print, electronic, and digital media, with a strong focus on hands-on training, multimedia storytelling, and industry engagement." Prof. M. J. Warsi, Dean Academic Affairs added, "This program is a timely addition to our curriculum, aimed at empowering students with the knowledge and tools to engage critically with media and society."