

LG felicitates 79 Cyclists of BSF's 'Pedal for Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' rally



LG Manoj Sinha flagging off cyclists at the 'Pedal for Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' rally.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday felicitated the 79 Cyclists, who participated in the 'Pedal for Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' rally, organised by Border Security Force. The Cycle rally was organised as a part of 79th Independence Day celebrations.

The Cyclists comprising 40 local youth and 39 BSF Personnel covered 79 KMs (BSF Campus Bandipora-Manasbal- Sumbal-Shalateng-Hyderpora-Bakshi Stadium- Frontier HQ, BSF Kashmir, Humhama) and celebrated the core ideal of our India's diversity, spirit of national unity and fostered a sense of common identity. The Lieutenant Governor congratulated the country's first line of defence, BSF, for paying a befitting tribute to the brave soldiers and officers who have shown incredible valour, courage, and sacrifice to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation. He said the rally will also encourage the youth to join BSF, Army and Police Force.

"BSF's 'Pedal for Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' rally passing through numerous towns and villages along the way inspired the young generation and reminded them about the vision of our founding fathers and their ideals of selfless service. It is a bounden duty of every citizen of J&K to pursue that path and build Jammu Kashmir of their dreams," the Lieutenant Governor said. The

Lieutenant Governor observed that all the cyclists are a living symbol of India's enduring tradition of courage. He said, the 79 kms symbolize the 79 years of India's independence, its journey in the last 79 years and each cyclist represents the true power of society, and every soldier embodies the nation's strength. "From Kashmir to Kanyakumari, India is one. The heart and soul of 140 crore Indians are united and we are a big family of 140 crore members. This spirit and bond of family must strengthen our unity. We must inculcate the spirit of 'Nation First' and every citizen must prioritize nation-building over personal interests," the Lieutenant Governor said. The Lieutenant Governor called upon the young genera-

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tion and people from all sections of society to self-introspect and take a pledge to dedicate themselves to the goal of Viksit Jammu Kashmir and Viksit Bharat. The Lieutenant Governor also urged the society to be cautious and vigilant against the divisive elements who are trying to disrupt peace and social harmony. He further called upon the enlightened citizens and civil society members to participate in Har Ghar Tiranga Abhiyan, and encourage every family to be part of this Maha Yagya. On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor also paid tribute to the civilians who were martyred in the

Pakistan-sponsored terror attack in Pahalgam. "Through Operation Mahadev and Operation Sindoor, we have avenged Pakistan's brutality. If the terrorist country Pakistan sheds the blood of our citizens, then it will have to pay a very heavy price," he said. IG BSF Kashmir Frontier, Ashok Yadav; IG STC BSF Kashmir, Solomon Yash Kumar Minz; Deputy Commissioner Budgam, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat; SSP Budgam Nikhil Borkar, other senior officials of BSF, civil and police administration, cyclists, and youth in large number were present at the felicitation ceremony.



Khatana says global rankings validate Modi Government's reform path

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Gulam Ali Khatana has welcomed a series of global recognitions that, he said, affirm the success of India's governance model and economic trajectory under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Citing the latest IMF findings, Khatana noted that India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has been ranked as the world's top real-time payments system, outperforming global giants like Visa. "It is a clear endorsement of India's leadership in digital innovation and financial inclusion," he said.



He also highlighted the Henley Passport Index 2025 report, which places the Indian passport eight spots higher, now offering visa-free access to 59 countries - a leap he described as "a milestone in enhancing India's global mobility footprint." On the economic front,

Khatana referred to Morgan Stanley's projection that India will become the world's third-largest economy by 2028, overtaking traditional powerhouses. Unlike earlier growth phases driven by select sectors, he said, the present momentum stems from a combination of digital infrastructure, resilient consumption, institutional reforms, and increasing global trust. "These rankings are not just numbers rather, they reflect the international community's confidence in the Modi government's policies and its vision for a developed India," Khatana asserted.

'SVAMITVA' global governance model making citizen master of his destiny: Dr Jitendra



Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh chairing a high-level review meeting of the "Survey of India" at the Parliament House.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh today said that a success story like "SVAMITVA" (Survey Village and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) scheme has made the citizen master of his destiny, ending decades of dependence on Revenue officers and Patwaris. The programme, he noted, has emerged as a global model of citizen-centric governance, enabling self-mapping of land by citizens themselves. Chairing a high-level review meeting of the "Survey of India" at the Parliament House, Dr. Jitendra Singh hailed the National Geospatial

Policy 2022 as a game-changer that has democratized geospatial data, enabling wider accessibility and utility across government and public sectors. He pointed out that, in collaboration with the Registrar General of India, the harmonization of boundaries has been completed-marking a milestone in the transformation of the Survey of India in recent years.

Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized that the Survey of India's technical expertise underpins several flagship schemes, including the SVAMITVA scheme, AMRUT Mission, Smart Cities, Digital Twin Mission and NAKSHA Scheme. He outlined plans to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning

for technology upgrades, create synergies with other science and government departments, and ensure they can fully utilize the department's world-class facilities. The Minister directed the department to organize a national workshop with all ministries, departments, and states to enhance awareness about the vast capabilities of the Survey of India. He lauded the National Geodetic Reference Framework (NGRF), noting that 478 CORS are already operational with the collaboration of other departments. Recalling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's facilitation of bilateral MoUs with Russia and Nigeria in the field of geospatial data and surveying, Dr. Singh revealed that six more such international collaborations are under process. The meeting was attended by Secretary, Department of Science & Technology, Dr. Abhay Karandikar; Surveyor General of India, Shri Hitesh Kumar S. Makwana; and senior officials from the Department of Science & Technology and the Survey of India.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday emphasized the critical need for self-sufficiency in Jammu and Kashmir's agriculture and allied sectors, stating that these areas are the backbone of the region's economy and offer vast potential for employment.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while presiding over an event at the Shalimar Convention Centre, SKUAST-K, where he formally handed over appointment orders to newly recruited Veterinary Assistant Surgeons (VASSs) and Horticulture Development Officers (HDOs). Addressing the new appointees, the Chief Minister underscored the pivotal role of agriculture, noting its significant contribution to Jammu and Kashmir's GDP. "No matter how much we grow in other sectors, there is no alternative to agriculture and its allied sectors, which contribute the most to our GDP," he said. He dismissed



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah speaking at an event at SKUAST-K on Tuesday.

the notion of a competition between agriculture and tourism, highlighting that the primary opportunity for employment and growth lies within the agriculture sector. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah spoke at length about the government's focus on the dairy sector, announcing plans to establish one dairy processing unit in every two districts of J&K. He pointed out that only 4% of the daily milk production is currently processed, leaving a vast 96% raw material available for industrial use. "This is an area where we have the raw material for industry, and we don't need to import it or look for a market outside,"

he said. He added that processed milk could generate a much higher value for farmers compared to unprocessed milk. Chief Minister Abdullah also touched upon the challenges facing the agriculture sector, including the increasing population, shrinking agricultural land, and unpredictable weather patterns. He stressed the importance of adopting new methods and technologies, such as organic farming, vertical farming, and polyhouses, to ensure sustainable growth and self-sufficiency. He warned against the risks of relying on external sources for products like meat, citing concerns over quality and

handling. In his address to the new officers, the Chief Minister urged them to dedicate themselves to their roles. "Your office is not an office, your office is a field," he said, encouraging them to be connected to the ground realities. He stressed that their honest and proper work in the vital veterinary and horticulture sectors could bring about significant positive change in the lives of the people. Minister for Agriculture Production, Javid Ahmad Dar, also spoke at the event, stating that approximately 70% of the population of Jammu and Kashmir is directly or indirectly depend-

ent on agriculture and allied sectors. He affirmed the government's commitment to supporting this vital sector and urged the farming community to leverage the benefits of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) and other flagship schemes to boost the rural economy. He congratulated the newly appointed officers and encouraged them to approach their work with dedication, innovation, and a people-centric focus. The Minister emphasized that coordinated efforts between the government, field officers, and the farming community are essential for achieving sustainable growth, food security, and economic prosperity in the region. Also present on the occasion were Shaileendra Kumar, Principal Secretary Agriculture Production Department, Prof. Nazir Ganai, Vice-Chancellor, SKUAST-Kashmir, along with other dignitaries and the families of the new appointees.

Saving strays, forgetting victims; Maneka Gandhi's PFA must compensate human sufferings



JAMMU: Animal welfare in India has long been championed by prominent voices, one of them Maneka Gandhi, whose work in promoting compassion for animals, especially stray dogs, has earned her both admiration and criticism. True, her organisation 'People for Animals' (PFA) stands for protecting, sheltering, and defending animals but the harsh reality on India's streets is revealing an uncomfortable gap between advocacy for strays and accountability for those who suffer. Every week, we hear of children mauled by packs of stray dogs, elderly attacked while taking morning walks, or daily wage earners bitten while simply going about their work. These victims, often from the poorest segments of society, not only suffer grievous physical injuries but also face crippling medical bills, psychological trauma, and, in tragic cases, loss of life. Their plight rarely gets the same sustained attention from animal rights activists as the animals themselves do. It is here that the moral and civic responsibility of leaders like Maneka Gandhi becomes inescapable. If PFA, which vocally advocates for saving and sheltering stray dogs, wields the influence to prevent mass culling or relocation, it should also share the burden when they cause harm. Humane advocacy cannot be one-sided; it must include a plan for protecting both the animal and the human.

Stray dogs do deserve compassion but the compassion for them should also match compassion to humans who become victims. In many municipalities, mass sterilisation drives are slow or ineffective in controlling numbers. Dog populations grow, sometimes forming aggressive packs in urban and semi-urban areas. And, when civic bodies move to control stray populations more aggressively, animal rights groups often challenge these steps legally and politically. In effect, these interventions 1 by people like Maneka Gandhi shape the policy environment in which stray populations thrive unchecked. If she claims ownership of the moral cause of saving

strays, she should also claim ownership of the consequences of that cause. That means acknowledging that dog bites, maulings, and fatalities are happening, and taking real, tangible steps to help the victims. The way forward is clear. Maneka Gandhi's organisation-PFA--should create a dedicated Victim Compensation Fund for those injured or killed in stray dog attacks. If she has so much love for animals, she should demonstrate some sort of compassion for humans as well. Therefore, PFA should take the moral responsibility of looking after the victims of stray dogs by meeting their medical expenses in full. PFA should also devise a mechanism to bear the entire compensation for families who lose their dear ones, especially innocent children and infants due to attacks by stray dogs. Such a framework would not only bring relief to victims but also enhance the moral credibility of the animal welfare movement, showing that it does not turn a blind eye to human suffering. Maneka Gandhi and her PFA should understand that the problem is not limited to stray dogs alone. Stray cattle - another byproduct of our broken livestock management system - cause significant harm on roads, in farms, and in cities. They cause traffic accidents, destroy crops, and injure pedestrians. Victims of stray cattle-related incidents - from farmers whose fields are destroyed to motorecyclists who collide with cattle at night - also deserve compensation. Maneka Gandhi, with her decades of advocacy, is uniquely positioned to lead this change. Her organisation has the reach, credibility, and infrastructure to set an example. A transparent, well-managed compensation fund could become a model for the rest of the country - proving that animal rights groups can be both passionate and responsible.

The alternative, continuing with a policy that saves strays but leaves their victims to fend for themselves, will only deepen public resentment and erode the moral authority of the cause itself. Already, there is growing anger about alarming rise in dog populations and the risks humans are confronted with. It is time for Maneka Gandhi to lead the way, not only in saving strays but also in the rescue of the victims of stray dogs and stray cattle.

LG congratulates J&K people for making Shri Amarnathji pilgrimage rich spiritual experience for devotees

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday felicitated the officers of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, Administration, J&K Police, Army, CAPFs, BRO, service providers, medical professionals, members of Non-Governmental Organisations, and other stakeholders for the successful conduct of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra-2025.

At a felicitation ceremony held at Raj Bhawan Auditorium, the Lieutenant Governor congratulated the people of J&K for making holy pilgrimage a rich spiritual experience for devotees.

"More than 4.14 Lakh devotees from across the country and the globe paid obeisance to Baba Barfani. Their enthusiasm and devotion and successful holy pilgrimage was a befitting tribute to the enemy's design of destabilising peace in J&K UT," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor expressed gratitude to the officers, civil society groups, Swachhagrahis, sanitation workers, volunteers, ponywalas, pithuwalas, Disaster Response Forces, Army, Police and Security personnel, media fraternity and all the stakeholders for their collective and coordi-



Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha felicitating ADGP Armed J&K Anand Jain.

nated efforts during the Yatra. He also lauded the dedication and commitment of intelligence agencies, and all the officials engaged in Yatra duty who diligently made the journey of pilgrims safe and convenient.

Their incredible team spirit and hard work has ensured a safe, hassle-free and spiritually enriching Yatra that will be celebrated and remembered for years, he said. "Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra is a confluence of humanity and faith. Every pilgrim is now a brand ambassador for Jammu Kashmir," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor asked the officials to analyze and apply the experiences and lessons learned from this year's pilgrimage, and take up the works on priority for better experience of the pilgrims in

future. He also expressed gratitude to the Government of India for the continuous support and guidance for the successful conduct of the Yatra. On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor paid homage to the innocent civilians killed by Pakistan-Sponsored Terrorists in Pahalgam. This year, comprehensive arrangements were put in place on both Yatra Tracks. To ensure the health and well-being of pilgrims, a comprehensive medical support system was established. Two 100-bed hospitals at the base camps, and a dedicated team of 1,222 medical professionals worked around the clock to provide health care services to pilgrims. Along the Yatra route, over 90 medical facilities provided a combined capacity of 560 clini-

cal beds, and 26 dedicated oxygen booths were also set up. For emergency response, a fleet of 45 ambulances, including 9 equipped for critical care, was deployed. Several groundbreaking safety measures were introduced this year. For the first time, emergency communication systems were installed at seven key points on the Yatra track, successfully resolving nearly 100 distress calls. Real-time health screening was also arranged for pilgrims. There has been a 9% reduction in natural deaths compared to previous years. A pre-paid system has been successfully implemented, with 1.84 lakh pilgrims utilizing services like palanquins and ponies through this facility. The system has created a transparent and efficient process, effective-

ly curbing overcharging and providing prompt resolution for any complaints. Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, in collaboration with the Rural Sanitation Department, adopted a zero-landfill approach to protect the environment. This initiative involved installing 7,000 toilets and engaging 6,500 'Swachhagrahis' who diligently worked to maintain cleanliness during the holy pilgrimage.

A wireless intranet network has been established for real-time monitoring of the yatra track. This year, PTZ cameras, static and head-count cameras, and RFID readers were installed on the Yatra track to ensure the safe journey of the pilgrims. This year, the Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board dedicated new Yatri Niwas facilities at Pantha Chowk, Srinagar, and Baltal, Ganderbal, to serve pilgrims. Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Nalin Prabhat, DGP; Lt Gen Prashant Srivastava, GOC 15 Corps; Dr Mandeep K Bhandari, CEO Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board, senior officers of Civil, Police Administration, J&K, CAPFs, Army and Shrine Board attended the felicitation ceremony.