

## BRO inducts hi-tech snow cutting machines in Kashmir Valley



**SRINAGAR:** With snowfall blocking important highways and roads in the Kashmir Valley every winter, the Border Roads Organisation has inducted hi-tech snow clearance and cutting machines that clear one kilometer of snow in just three hours, officials said.

Snowfall in winter blocks important strategic roads including the Srinagar-Leh, Jammu-Srinagar, Gurez-Bandipora and Kupwara-Karnah highways which takes a lot of time for clearance, they said.

To deal with the problem, seven high-tech snow cutter FRESIA machines have been purchased from Italy for swift snow cutting and clearance of these important highways and passes.

BRO official said they have received four of the machines and the rest will

be imported soon.

Officials said new machines have been put to use at Jawahar tunnel on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, Tregbal in Bandipora-Gurez road, Nowgam in Handwara and Sadhna Pass in Tanghdar, Kupwara.

"These machines are state-of-the-art snow clearance equipment which will make clearance of highways easier and swift. With tremendous speed, these new machines can operate at an altitude of even 18500 ft and above and have the capability of clearing 500 tons of snow per hour, BRO officials said.

Officials said the machines can clear 1.5 meter high accumulated snow and 300 meter long in an hour. About one kilometer of the snow covered road will be cleared by the equipment in just three to four hours.

## 'Internet Express', A Train That Land Kashmiris In Communication Zone

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** The continuous internet suspension in the Valley has tripled the rush of passengers in Kashmir's train services that chugs from Baramulla to Banihal regularly.

Witnesses said that the train in Kashmir is accommodating three times more amid the continuous internet services in Kashmir.

They said that most of passengers from Kashmir visit Banihal and other places to use internet services. The broadband internet service in Jammu is working while mobile internet services are suspended.

Witnesses said that the people from Kashmir via train reach Banihal where nearly a dozen internet cafes are functional. "The people including businessmen and students visit Banihal via train and return home after using the internet services. The rush of people in in-



ternet cafes there remain all-time high, which increased after the resumption of train services in Kashmir. The train services in Kashmir remained suspended for more than three months due to security reasons since August 5, when the government in

centre abrogated the special status of Jammu and Kashmir (Article 370) and bifurcated the erstwhile State into two Union Territories—Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

An official in the Railway told KNO that the rush of passengers has increased

manifold following the resumption of train services in Kashmir post August 5. "We are witnessing a huge number of passengers on regular basis here. Even the intake capacity is twice less than what train accommodates regularly," he said. (KNO)

## HDFC Bank launches customised apps for large institutions

Mumbai: HDFC Bank launched myApps, a suite of white-label apps that will enable urban local bodies including Smartcities and municipalities, housing societies, clubs or gymkhana and even religious institutions to completely digitise their ecosystem. In an industry-first, the bank will offer customised app as a value-added service in addition to its complete suite of banking products.

Through the app, which will have the organisation's own branding and content, members can make payments for utilities and fees, make online bookings for various facilities, stay updated on latest announcements, and utilise a host of other features offered by the institutions. The organisation also gets easy access to reports on payments, facilities booked by members, requests and complaints registered. They can also use the app to broadcast notices and engage with members on various events.

These apps are a part of the bank's strategy to move take digitisation to the next level by focusing on providing value beyond basic banking services and tapping into the B2B2C space. The opportunity is large: 30 lakh places of worship, according to the 2011 Census; 6 – 8 lakh housing societies; 2,000+ clubs; and 500+ cities with a population of more than 1 lakh. Over time the bank will extend this solution to even more segments.

The myApps suite of products was launched at an event organised in Mumbai by Ms. Smita Bhagat, Country Head, Government & Institutional Business, Start-ups and E-Commerce, HDFC Bank and Ms. Sunali Rohra, Executive Vice President, Government and Institutional Business, HDFC Bank.

"As a lifestyle bank, it is our endeavour to be an integral part of our customers' daily lives and go beyond providing basic banking services. The myApps suite of products will provide our institutional customers with convenience, flexibility and the extra digital edge they need to ensure they are enhancing their services and further the Digital India mission" said Ms. Smita Bhagat. "At HDFC Bank, we have been at the forefront of digitisation initiatives and want to take this digital push to the last mile by tapping these largely underpenetrated segments."

## Operation on war-footing to restore traffic to remote areas

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Snow clearance operation was going on war-footing on Thursday to restore traffic to dozens of far flung and remote areas, including those near the Line of Control (LoC), which remain cutoff due to accumulation of snow.

Border towns of Keran, Karnah and dozens of far flung and remote villages remained cutoff for the fourth successive day in north Kashmir on Wednesday due to accumulation of snow.

Meanwhile, traffic on roads leading to border towns of Machil and Gurez remained suspended for the sixth successive day due to slippery road conditions and accumulation of several feet of snow.

"Snow clearance operation to restore traffic on Kupwara-Karnah and Kupwara-Keran roads was going on war-footing," an official of Police Control Room (PCR), Kupwara, told UNI over phone on Wednesday.

He said about two feet of snow has to be cleared on these roads before traffic could be restored to border towns of Karnah and Keran. "If the weather remains dry, most probably these border towns and their adjoining areas will be connected to district headquarter in the evening," he said.

However, he said traffic on Kupwara-Machil road, which remained suspended for the sixth day on Thursday, will take some more time. "Sadna Top received about 3 feet of snowfall while Z-gali recorded 2 foot of snow since Monday," he said.

Razdan pass, connecting Gurez, Neeru



and dozens of other areas near LoC with district headquarters Bandipora, also remained cutoff since Friday. The road was closed for any vehicular movement due to fresh snow and slippery conditions.

The authorities have already pressed into service snow clearance machines and cutters to clear the snow and put through the road, which remained closed for six winter months in the past.

However, he said about 80 per cent of the road has been damaged and it is

highly unlikely that these areas will be reconnected to district headquarter before March.

The government has approved a tunnel at Razdan pass to make it an all weather road.

Administration has stocked enough essentials, including rice, atta, sugar, LPG cylinders, medicine at areas which remained cut off during winter with their district and tehsil headquarters in both the district.

## Outrage over Govt's plan to convert Tagore hall into Cinema

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** People, particularly those associated with Art, Culture and Theatre, have strongly opposed the government proposal to convert historic "Tagore Hall" into a cinema in Srinagar.

"It is ill conceived proposal and Union Territory (UT) Jammu and Kashmir administration should reconsider it," former secretary of Academy of Art and Culture, who also headed Radio and Door-darshan, in Kashmir, Dr Rafeeq Masoodi said.

Several Art and Cultural associations besides Actor, Directors and others theatre personalities have also expressed concern over the proposal to convert the Tagore Hall, where renowned artists across the globe have performed and Film Festivals held in the past.

All cinema halls, wine shops and beauty parlors in Kashmir val-

ley were closed in early 90s after eruption of militancy. Almost all cinema halls were occupied by the security forces in the valley, including Srinagar. However, in 1996 when Dr Farooq Abdullah assumed office as Chief Minister of the state, financial assistance was provided to reopen cinema halls again in Srinagar.

Three cinema halls of "Broadway" in high security Batwara Badami Bagh Cantonment, "Regal" in the civil lines and "Neelam", a stone's throw away from Civil Secretariat, seat of the government, were opened. However, Neelam was the first to close and stop screening of films after a grenade blast. Neelam has been converted into a shopping complex while Broadway has also been closed. Khayam cinema has been converted into a hospital.

Security forces are still occupying majority of other cinema halls

in the valley. Last year, CRPF reopened a cinema hall in Anantnag, which also houses CRPF battalion headquarters. However, common people stayed away.

Now the UT administration has decided to convert the Tagore Hall, building during the regime of former Prime Minister Late Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in 60s, into a cinema hall since it is in safe zone, where a number of CRPF battalion and company headquarters are located near Indoor Stadium.

Dr Masoodi said 'we are not opposed to opening of cinema halls but why to convert the Tagore Hall cinema'.

"Let government or private agencies construct new cinema halls in the valley," he said, adding great Artists from across the globe have performed at Tagore Hall.

"Film festivals are being organized for the past few years in the hall," he said, adding almost every year Drama Festival is being held there. "Converting it into a cinema will destroy our history and culture associated with it," he said.

Actor, Doctor and Producer Raja Sarafraz also expressed similar views. "Tagore hall is not just a hall but the history of people of Jammu and Kashmir," he said and opposed the move strongly.

Similar views were also expressed by others associated with stage drama, Art and Culture and films.

Three wine shops also reopened at Broadway, Dalgate and Aclochi Bagh in Srinagar. However, Aclochi Bagh wine shop was closed after several grenade attacks and massive protests by the locals. Almost all beauty parlors are back doing good business in the valley, including Srinagar.

## Commuters suffer due to adverse railway timetable

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** Despite the government claims of considerable improvement in the situation, train service in valley is still subjected to curtailment in its sorties, between Baramulla and Banihal.

In normal times, the last train for Baramulla from Banihal leaves at 6.30 pm, but after the change in situation, in the aftermath of abrogation of Article 370, on 5th August 2019, forcing a more than a three month long shut down, train services were suspended for a period of 98 days.

After the resumption of train service, the shuttles between the two sides of Jawhar tunnel were reduced and the last train from Banihal for Baramulla would leave at 3 pm, subjecting the commuters to a

great difficulty. Those who worked in government offices would not get the train facility, or would have to use alternative, but troublesome means of transport or to

they have got no relief by the fresh timetable announced by the railway authorities.

Mohammad Ashraf, an employee from Anantnag, working with a



look for accommodation in the town.

In a recent decision by the railway authorities to reschedule the timetable of train service recently, the last train from Banihal was extended by one hour at 4 pm.

Despite the change in schedule, commuters have complained that

use another mode of transport from Jammu, thinking that they will use train service to come to various areas of valley along the railway route, they reach Banihal, beyond 4 pm, with the result they get stuck up in Banihal for the night.

They further said that in case they opt to proceed ahead, using small or medium public transport, vehicle owners overcharge them and demand exuberant rates, ranging from 500 to 600 hundred rupees per person.

People have demanded an immediate reconsideration of the railway timetable schedule and to extend it at least up to 5 pm, so that daily commuters viz students, employees, businessmen or those who come to Banihal from Jammu, with an aim to catch the train get much needed relief. (CNS)

### SHORT TAKES

#### Dullo seeks proper maintenance of medical equipments in hospitals

**JAMMU:** Financial Commissioner, Health and Medical Education Department, Atal Dulloo today chaired a meeting with regard to the maintenance of Bio-Medical Equipments in the health care facilities of Jammu and Kashmir.

Bio-Medical Equipment Management and Maintenance Program, was launched in J&K in November 2019 for better management and maintenance of medical equipments.

During the meeting, held here at the Civil Secretariat, he took inputs from Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and Medical Superintendents (MSs) about the functioning of medical equipments at their respective health facilities.

He directed to address all important issues on priority basis and asked the concerned officers to take responsibility for effective delivery of health care services.

Seeking timely supply of spare parts, the FC directed the officials of Medici (service provider) to complete all the repairs on major medical equipments, like CT Scans, on urgent basis. He also directed them to expedite the process of tagging of medical equipments and updating information about the engineers deployed at district level for better coordination.

The meeting was attended by Director Health Services, Jammu, Renu Khajuria; Mission Director, National Health Mission, J&K, Bhopinder Kumar; Managing Director, J&K Medicines Supplies Corporation Limited, Shiv Kumar Gupta; and representatives of Medici.

Director Health Services, Kashmir along with CMOs and MSs attended the meeting through video conferencing.

#### J&K's diverse Tourism attractions showcased at SATTE- Expo 2020

**NEW DELHI:** Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Department has launched a massive publicity campaign at the ongoing 3-day South Asian Trade and Travel Exchange Expo (SATTE), 2020, to showcase diverse tourism attractions of twin regions of Kashmir and Jammu.

The 3-day South Asian Trade and Travel Exchange Expo (SATTE), 2020, sponsored by J&K Tourism Department and supported by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has been organized here from January 8 to January 10, 2020.

The 27th Edition of the SATTE has witnessed participation of over 1000 delegates from over 50 Countries and 28 Indian States.

Aimed at building new business partnerships, SATTE is an important avenue for the promotion of tourism. Director Tourism, Jammu, Deepika K. Sharma, attended the Expo and also participated in the panel discussion on the theme "Adventure Tourism: Unlocking New Avenues".

She was an invitee for the discussion along with DDC-Niche Tourism, Ministry of Tourism, GoI, Arun Srivastava, Deepak; CEO, Nepal Tourism Board, Raj Joshi; MD, Far Horizon Tours, Sanjay Basu and Director, Snow Lion Expeditions, Vinayak Koul.

The Session was moderated by Vice President, ATOAI & MD, Holiday Moods Adventures Tejvir Singh Anand. Speaking on the occasion, Deepika Sharma said that J&K encompasses two distinct regions—Jammu and Kashmir with their distinct identities. "Incredibly diverse beauty that's tough to match, it's a dream destination for many," she informed the participants. She said that despite volatile situation there, J&K continues to enjoy the distinction of being one of the most sought after holiday locales for nature and adventure lovers. "Be it camping, a safari or a trek, water rafting, skiing or paragliding; Base Jumping, Golfing, Angling, Boating, the adventure in Jammu and Kashmir, takes on a different meaning," she added.

She thanked the Panelists, Travel/Tour Operators who come from within and outside the Country to participate in this event and hoped that with their active support and assistance, J&K region will become best adventure tourism destination in the Country.