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News Digest

Landslides Block Highway For Few Hours

Srinagar: Traffic was suspended on Srinagar-Jammu Highway for a few hours after rainfall caused landslides in Panthial area of Ramban district on Friday. A traffic official said that rain caused landslides at Panthial and other places on the highway. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) cleared stones and debris and at around 2pm, traffic was restored on the highway. Hundreds of vehicles including trucks carrying essential supplies got stranded for a few hours. The official said the road was thrown open after the stretch was cleared and stones from the hill-top stopped falling on the road.

Truck Crushes Pedestrian To Death

Kulgam: A pedestrian was crushed to death by a speeding truck here in South Kashmir's Kulgam district. A police official said that a truck (JK03E-2429) hit and injured a pedestrian who succumbed to his injuries at PHC Qaimoh. The victim has been identified as 35 year old Maqsood Ahmed Dar son of Ghulam Qadir, a resident of Wanpora Kulgam. The incident occurred at Trachloo village of the district. The official said that the truck driver Muhammad Younis Chando son of Muhammad Yousuf has been arrested and a case against him registered.

Police Arrest 5 For BSF Killings

Srinagar: Police Friday claimed to have solved Pandach militant attack and have arrested five accused in this regard and seized two ambulances and two motorcycles from their possession. Two BSF personnel from 37 Battalion were killed when suspected militants attacked them in Pandach area that falls in the jurisdiction of police station Soura. The incident had occurred on 20 May this year. Police had arrested 05 uncategorized militants of ISJK who helped in transporting, logistics, planning and executing the attack, in case FIR no 48/2020 u/s 302, 395 IPC, sections 16, 18, 7/27 Arms Act, sections 16, 18, 19, 23 ULAP Act of Police Station Soura. During further investigation, 04 vehicles were detained which includes 2 private ambulances functioning at SKIMS, a bike and a Scooty. The statement further reads, accordingly approval for seizure of the above vehicles ● P-02

Burglars Loot Sopore Market

Sopore: Burglars broke into the five shops in two different markets in North Kashmir's Sopore town of Baramulla district and decamped with goods and valuables worth lakhs of rupees. Local sources said that burglars stole cell phones and electronic goods from two shops at Iqbal Market Sopore. Similarly burglars decamped with valuables worth lakhs from 3 shops at Main Chowk Sopore. These shops are owned by Fayaz Ahmad Shah, Jan Muhamad Paray and Muhammad Iqbal Rather. Locals said that besides looting 5 shops, the burglars also tried to broke the locks of many shops but have failed in the bid. When contacted, a police official said that a case in this regard has been registered and investigation set into motion.

Situation Along LAC Delicate & Serious, Says Army Chief

LAC Tensions Most Serious Since 1962: FS Shringla



GEN MM NARAVANE visited Leh and reviewed security situation and operational preparedness along the LAC -Twitter

NEW DELHI: Situation along the Line of Actual Control in Eastern Ladakh is "delicate and serious" and the army has taken some precautionary measures to enhance security in the wake of new developments, Army Chief General MM Naravane

said on Friday. Army chief, who concluded his two day visit to forward areas in Ladakh, said that the morale of his troops present in the region was high and they were prepared to deal with any situation. Gen Naravane reached Leh on

Thursday for a two-day security review of the Ladakh sector, where India and Chinese armies have deployed almost 100,000 soldiers and weaponry in their forward and depth areas, according to the Hindustan Times. Army Chief said the situation

Rajnath Singh Meets Chinese Counterpart In Russia

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday met his Chinese counterpart General Wei Fenghe on the sidelines of a ministerial meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Moscow, Russia. The meeting, which took place at Hotel Metropol in Moscow, came at a time when Indian and Chinese soldiers are engaged in a tense standoff along the LAC in Ladakh. ● P-02



LIFE UNDER The Shadow of Gun: Civilians being evacuated from the encounter site in Pattan- KO Photo Abid Bhat

3 Unidentified Militants Killed, Major Injured

PATTAN: Three unidentified militants were killed in an encounter at village Yadipora in Pattan (Baramulla district) while an army officer and an SPO were also injured in the initial exchange of fire.

According to police an encounter broke out between militants and armed forces comprising of police, 29 RR and 176 battalion CRPF laid a siege in Yadipora village late last night. "In the morning, contact with the militants was established triggering a fierce exchange of fire. In the first assault, a militant was killed while an army officer sustained bullet injury in his chin," they said.

Defence spokesman in Srinagar Colonel Rajesh Kalia said that an army officer was injured in the firing "but he was stable."

Operation Suspended In Pulwama For Night

A gunfight between militants and government forces broke out in Babhura area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district on Friday. According to the reports, a joint team of Police, Army and CRPF launched a ● P-02

A police spokesman said during the cordon and search operation as the presence of hiding militants got ascertained, they were given the opportunity to surrender. "However, they refused to surrender and instead held two families comprising of 12 members ● PAGE 02

HRW Urges India To End Use Of Pellet Guns In Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Friday asked Indian police and paramilitary forces to stop using pellet-firing guns in Kashmir as they cause 'grievous injuries'.

"Time and again, Indian law enforcement's use of shotguns in Kashmir has resulted in shocking, grievous injuries of protesters and bystanders," said Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at HRW. "Indian authorities need to recognise that this weapon fired into crowds, even with violent demonstrators, will invariably cause indis-

criminate and excessive injury in violation of international standards."

"Indian leaders who claim that their policies are improving the lives of Kashmiris cannot disregard that security forces are maiming, blinding, and killing people," Ganguly said. "The Indian government should cease the use of shotguns firing metal pellets and review its crowd control techniques to meet international standards."

In a statement, the organisation said that pellets have caused thousands of injuries, ● PAGE 02

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LG Reviews Mega Projects Of Kashmir Division Govt To Incentivise Timely Completion Of Projects

SRINAGAR: In order to give a boost to infrastructural development in Kashmir Division, the Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today took a comprehensive review of various Mega Projects being undertaken under several Central Schemes and other projects in a meeting held at the Civil Secretariat. He also reviewed a host of upcoming developmental projects in the region.

The Lt Governor called for multiplying the efforts in bringing developmental reforms in



the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir to achieve the mission of inclusive socio-economic development of all. ● PAGE 02

Media Delegation Calls On LG

A delegation of journalists called on Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Friday and shared with him their perceptions about the ground situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The delegation comprised Bashir Manzar, Kashmir Images; Bashir Ahmad Bashir, Srinagar Times; Masood Hussain, Kashmir Life; members of JK Editors Forum comprising of Zahoor Hashmi, Aftab; Mohammad Aslam, Editor KNS; President Kashmir Press Club, Shuja Ul Haq, India Today; President Kashmir Editors Association, Rashid Raheem (CNS/Fajar); President J&K Press Association; Gh Hassan Kaloo, Mirror of Kashmir. ● P-02

COVID-19

1047 More Test Positive; J&K Tally Crosses 40,000 Mark

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir on Friday witnessed another spike as 1,047 fresh cases of Covid-19 tested positive including 74 travellers taking the total number of positive cases to 40,990 in the Union Territory.

Of the total 40,990 cases, 30,579 are from Kashmir and 10,411 from Jammu division. Among 1,047 new cases, 554 belong to Kashmir division while as 493 are from Jammu division, adding that the total number of positive cases in Kashmir division have reached to 30,579 including 24,474 recover-

ies while as total number of positive cases in Jammu division have reached to 10,411 including 6,961 recoveries and 81 deaths.

The officials said that total number of active cases in Jammu and Kashmir are 8,800 including 5,431 from Kashmir division and 3,369 from Jammu division.

With 676 more recoveries, the tally of total recoveries in Jammu and Kashmir has reached to 31,435 which is 76.68 percent of the total cases.

Permanently Jammu division crossed 10 thousand mark on Friday as division witnessed huge spike

of positive cases in last two days. "Cases tested positive in J&K include 175 from Srinagar, 61 from Baramulla, 34 from Pulwama, 78 from Budgam, 48 from Anantnag, 34 from Bandipora, 69 from Kupwara, 21 from Kulgam, 04 from Shopian and 30 from Ganderbal in Kashmir division while as 493 from Jammu division include 322 from Jammu, 18 from Rajouri, 40 from Kuthua, 44 from Udhampur, 13 from Samba, 06 from Ramban, 07 from Doda, 11 from Poonch, 04 from Reasi and 28 from Kishtwar," officials disclosed. As per officials figures, ● PAGE 02

11 More Die Due To Covid-19, J&K Toll 756

Srinagar: Eleven more people died due to Covid-19 in Jammu and Kashmir in last 24 hours, taking the fatality count due to the virus to 756. Among the victims eight belonged to Kashmir Valley and remaining three to Jammu division. Regarding the deaths in the Valley, they said, three victims were residents ● P-02

Policeman Arrested On Charges Of Fraud

HANDWARA: A Policeman has been arrested on charges of forgery and fraud in North Kashmir's Handwara town. The arrest was made after one Mudassar Ahmed Sheikh, a resident of Shanoo Langate area filed a complaint at police station Handwara stating that a policeman working in the office of DySP DAR Handwara duped him and after taking Rs two lakhs provided him a fake appointment order in Jammu Kashmir Police Department.

Both the accused cop and the complainant hail from the same Shanoo Langate area of Kupwara district. The accused has been identified as Shabir Ahmed Dar (390/H) who is in lock-up and suspended as well. KNT reported that the accused

Shabir Ahmed Dar in 2017 handed over a fake appointment order to the complainant for SPO and for some time the accused asked him to accompany him and they both used to visit District Police Lines Handwara.

The complainant was sure that he has got the job of SPO. The accused even provided him with a fake belt number 349/spo and for at least 3 months, he deposited money into the bank account of the complainant saying it is his salary.

The complainant Mudassar Ahmed has submitted all the bank statements before the police.

Police accordingly took cognizance of the complaint and registered an FIR vide number 300/2020 under section 420, 468 ● PAGE 02

In FOCUS Kashmir's Banned Stones — Part I: Closure Of Century Old Quarry

Sanika Athavale

ONCE prosperous and self-sufficient, the miners of Athwajan belt eagerly await the 'better days' that will witness their children attending school again and their adult sons and daughters being betrothed.

The locals of the belt in the Pantha Chowk area on the outskirts of Srinagar remember the time when bank representatives were frequent visitors trying to embed the ideas of 'investments' and 'savings' in their minds.

With an air of disbelief, a local miner marvelled at the depreciated

reality of Athwajan since the blanket ban of 2016 which prohibited any sort of mining activity in the region.

"It is not just our source of income, but our self-respect and honour that has been attacked," Nazeer Bhat, a quarry holder, stated ruefully.

"The bankers who would beg us to take loans are now 'investigating' some of our people for non-repayment. We have been impoverished by the ban."

Dated 24-11-2016, the banning order cited, interestingly, the primary reason to be the 'bad face' or poor view presented to the travellers on the Srinagar-Jammu highway due to

mining activities, and the secondary reason as the 'ecological damage' inflicted by excessive mining.

With an alleged 'sleight of hand' and a few signatures, the Geology and Mining department had delegitimised the Athwajan belt four years ago, which was one of Kashmir's most vibrant economic hubs and an old spot for stone mining.

Stating that "no one was interested in knowing the shattered state of their lives," Bhat, also a member of the President United Quarry Association, mourned the loss of his ancestral business and livelihood. It is pertinent to note here that



the setback to the stone mining business is not exclusive to this ancient area. From the northern reaches of Pampore to the 'gateway

of Kashmir' in South Kashmir's Qazigund, miners are grinding bones instead of stones.

Claiming that they have been 'forced' to shut shop, the miners complain of administrative negligence, deliberately ignored malpractices, and enforced unemployment and poverty.

How Stone Mining Worked In Kashmir

The extraction of raw materials, construction aggregate (locally called bajri) in this case, for building infrastructure for various ruling empires has, historically, always been organised by Kashmiri families. After becoming a passed-down

family business over the years, the present day representatives of these old clans assert that they have been, quite literally, the 'structural' backbone of Kashmir.

This industry was remodelled, like all others, after India won her Independence and definitive departments and ministries were formed.

The families generationally employed in this occupation were allotted areas for business by the Department of Geology and Mining following its inception in 1960.

Soon, a 'royalty system' was also established to control the extent of mineral extraction and the wealth extracted from it.

These royalties had to be prepaid monthly at the offices of the authorities based on an ● PAGE 02