

Maximum : 28°C
Minimum : 16°C
Humidity : 67%
SUNSET Today 06:50 PM
SUNRISE Tomorrow 06:08 AM

OBSERVER

17 Muharram-ul-Haraam | 1442 Hijri | Vol: 23 | Issue: 195 | Pages: 08 | Price: ₹3

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News Digest

3 Killed In Twin Highway Accidents

Banihal- Three people were killed and two others injured on Saturday when two Kashmir-bound load carriers skidded off the road and plunged into a gorge along Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in Ramban district, police said. A mini load carrier, carrying poultry birds to Kashmir, rolled down into about 400-feet gorge near Digdole, at 4.40 am, killing 32-year-old driver Roof Ahmad and a co-passenger Mohammad Usman, a police official said. He said a large number of chicken also perished in the accident. Bodies of both the deceased, hailing from Magerkote village of Ramsoo, were recovered and handed over to their families for last rites after completion of legal formalities, the official said. In another accident, a goods-laden truck plunged into over 100-feet gorge at Chamalwas near Banihal, resulting in the death of a 19-year-old youth and injuries to two others, including the driver. The truck was also on ● P-02

Four People Injured In Bear Attack

Srinagar: At least four people on Saturday were attacked and injured by a bear in Lolab area of north Kashmir's Kupwara district. According to reports, a bear appeared in Lalpora village of Lolab on Saturday afternoon and attacked and injured four people before the Wildlife Department officials assisted by locals were able to tranquilize the beast. Two of the injured identified as Faisal Ahmad Ganale of Darpora and Sajad Ahmad Mir of Lalpora received injuries in face and foot and were hospitalised. The other two persons have received minor injuries and were discharged after receiving first-aid treatment, reports said.

Man Plots Murder Of His Wife To Remarry

Jammu: A man was arrested for allegedly plotting the murder of his wife to get married for the second time in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said on Saturday. Shanaz Akhtar was stabbed to death inside her house at village Mohra in the border district on August 30 and the roles of her husband Zulfiqar Ali and his helper Mohammad Aslam were under suspicion, Senior Superintendent of Police, Rajouri, Chandan Kohli said. "During investigation, it came to the fore that Ali told the helper of his vehicle (Aslam) that he wants to marry for the second time and assured him a handsome amount of money in helping his wife get killed," he said. After hatching the conspiracy, the SSP said it also came to light that the woman was stabbed with a knife by Aslam in presence of her husband. Both the accused have been arrested and further investigation into the matter is on, the officer said.

Minor Boy Dies Of Drowning

Srinagar: A minor boy on Saturday died of drowning in the interiors of Dal Lake in Rainawari area of the city. Six-year-old Ibrahim Ahmad Sheikh drowned in the interiors of Dal Lake at Dug Mohalla area of Rainawari in Srinagar on Saturday, an official said. He was taken out of the river and shifted to Gousia Hospital Khanyar where doctors declared him brought dead on arrival, he said.

Indian, Chinese Defence Minister Talks Remain Inconclusive

Press Trust Of India

NEW DELHI: As the situation in eastern Ladakh remains tense, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has conveyed to his Chinese counterpart Gen. Wei Fenghe that China must strictly respect the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and not make attempts to unilaterally change its status quo.

In the first highest level face-to-face contact between the two sides after border tension erupted in eastern Ladakh in early May, Singh told Wei during their talks in Moscow on Friday that China must work with the Indian side for complete disengagement of troops at the earliest from all friction points including Pangong Lake.

Asserting that India is determined to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, Singh also conveyed that China's actions amounting to a large number of troops, its aggressive behaviour and attempts to alter the status quo in Ladakh were in



Chinese Army 'Abducts' 5 Villagers

Amid the border tension between India and China, five people from Upper Subansiri district have reportedly been 'abducted' by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA). Five persons belonging to the Tagin community ● P-02

Ladakh Situation 'Very Nasty': Trump

Describing the situation along the India-China border as 'very nasty', US President Donald Trump has said that the Chinese are "going at it much more strongly" than a lot of people understand and he would "love" ● P-02

violation of bilateral pacts, according to an official statement released here on Saturday.

Singh conveyed to Wei that the current situation should be handled responsibly ►PAGE 02

Encounter Rages On In Kupwara Woods

Observer Monitoring Desk

SRINAGAR- An encounter broke out between state forces and militants on Saturday in a forest area in north Kashmir's Kupwara district, police said.

Acting on specific information about the presence of militants in the forest area of Dana Behak in Warnow area of north Kashmir, state forces launched a cordon and search operation there, a police official said.

He said during the searches, the militants fired on the forces, who retaliated, ensuing an encounter.

The exchange of firing is going on and further details are awaited, the official said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Kupwara, Shriram Am-

Hizb Trying To Reestablish Its Base In North Kashmir: Army

Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) is trying to re-establish its base in north Kashmir, the Army said on Saturday, a day after three militants of the outfit were killed ● P-02

barkar was quoted by a local news agency KNO as saying that more reinforcement have been rushed to the spot and the operation will continue throughout the night.

He also refuted the rumors about the killing of a ►PAGE 02

Ease Of Doing Business Ranking

J&K Fails Again To Figure Among Top 20 States, UTs

Agencies

SRINAGAR: Jammu & Kashmir has yet again failed to figure among top 20 States/ Union territories in the ease of doing business ranking released by the Government of India on Saturday.

According to the state business reform action plan ranking-2019 released by Union Commerce and Industry ministry, J&K figures at 21st slot in the ease of doing business ranking.

This means Jammu & Kashmir has failed to make much



File Photo

improvement in the ranking despite tall claims by state's bureaucrats that they have minimized the regulatory burden and simplified procedures for doing business.

In 2018, J&K had figured at 22nd position among 36 States/ UTs in the ranking. Interestingly, all the neighbouring states/UTs figure much above than J&K in the ranking.

According to the ranking, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana Punjab figures at 7th, 12th, 16th and 19th position, respectively.

The hill states like HP and Uttarakhand, which have similar geographical features like Jammu and Kashmir, have shown impressive performance and figure at 7th and 11th position, respectively. ►PAGE 02

Kashmir Can't Be Removed From UN Agenda: Pak

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday said that the "India-Pakistan question" will remain a part of the United Nation Security Council's agenda till the people of the valley are granted an "impartial plebiscite".

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a series of tweets, said that the resolution over Kashmir is one of the oldest items on the UNSC's agenda.

"The question remains on the agenda since India has never implemented UNSC resolutions on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute," the ministry said.

The statement highlighted that India continues to deny Kashmiris' inalienable right to self-determination enshrined in ● P-02

J&K Govt Issues 12.44 Lakh Domicile Certificates

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir government said on Saturday that 12.44 lakh domicile certificates have been issued across 20 districts of the Union territory till the end of August.

According to an official spokesperson, 17, 18,887 lakh applied for the issuance of the certificates of which 12, 43,996 were issued the domicile till August 31 with two-thirds of them issued within seven to 15 days. He said the certificates issued include 2.86 lakh in Kashmir division and 9.45 lakh in Jammu division. ● P-02

...LOC HEATS UP

Pak Firing Kills Soldier, Injures 2 Others

Srinagar: A soldier was killed and two others injured on Saturday as India and Pakistan troops exchanged heavy gunfire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kupwara district.

Sepoy Bupinder Singh was killed while his two colleagues Lance Naik Venkatesh and Sepoy Shajal were injured on Saturday afternoon when Pakistani troops attacked their posts in Naugam sector of the frontier district, officials said. The injured soldiers, he said were removed to the army's Badamibagh cantonment hospital for treatment.

The Indian army, officials said gave a "befitting" answer to the ceasefire violation by the Pakistani troops.

Defence ministry spokesman Col Rajesh Kalia told news gathering agency GNS that details of the cross-LoC clash were awaited.

Meanwhile, Pakistani troops engaged in firing and intense mortar shelling in three sectors



File Photo

along the LoC in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said.

The firing and shelling from across the border in Shahpur, Kirni and Degwar sectors started around 9.15 am.

Indian Army personnel guarding the LoC gave a strong and befitting response to the cross-border fire, the spokesman said.

He said the exchange of fire was going on when last reports were received. There was no report of any casualty on the Indian side, the spokesman said.

Two Hizb Men Found Dead In Gurez

The state forces on Saturday recovered bodies of two Hizbul Mujahideen militants from Kishanganga River near the Line of Control (LoC) in Gurez Sector of Bandipora district. The bodies of Nisar Ahmad Rather from Dadsara village of Tral and Sameer Ahmad Dar from Dogripora village in Pulwama were found by the police and army along with ammunition at Tulail village in the frontier area, a police ● P-02

Carjacking Triggers Alert On Jammu Highway

JAMMU: All checkpoints along Jammu-Pathankot highway have been put on alert and security strengthened following an incident of carjacking by unidentified armed persons in the neighbouring Punjab, a police official said on Saturday.

The director general of Punjab Police had sounded an alert in his state, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir after three persons snatched a private car from its owner after injuring him with a firearm in Dinanagar area of Gurdaspur on Friday evening.

"After receipt of communication from the Punjab DGP, all the checkpoints have been alerted and security strengthened as a preventive measure to deal with any situation," the police official said.

He said the patrolling in the areas bordering Punjab was also intensified during the night. ● P-02

LG Sinha Inaugurates SCERT

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Saturday inaugurated the State Council of Education, Research and Training (SCERT) on the lines of NCERT to assist the administration in implementing policies for human resource development, an official spokesperson said.

The LG also announced union territory-level awards for the teaching fraternity in Jammu and Kashmir from next year.

In an online event, the LG, while addressing scores of teachers and students from across the union territory, greeted the teaching fraternity on the occasion of Teachers' Day, which is ● P-02

In FOCUS / Kashmir's Banned Stones—Part II: Penalties, Nexuses And Costly Homes

Sanika Athavale

After Kashmir witnessed mass socio-political detentions and a total political reshuffle in August 2019, works that were never finished, half finished, or nearly finished in the former state's offices were brusquely shifted to New Delhi and the eager stone miners' wait for their clearances got longer amid complicated red-tapism.

The pandemic and the suspension of 'normal' since the outbreak of Covid-19 has further stretched the sarkari offices' working timelines,

that the common citizenry already mocks for being sloth-paced.

As it has been established that none of the stone-quarry holders have been successful in procuring environmental clearances yet, it's understood that no mine has had the permission to operate. Legally.

But, on the contrary, government officers from departments overlooking civil works, planning, and infrastructure have been pulling up contractors for not completing tendered jobs.

"It's baffling," remarked Zeeshan Rehman, the acting chairperson of the Senior Contractors Coordination Committee (J&K).

"After raising my issue of non-availability of raw materials," he continued, narrating his own experience, "I received official permission to ply tippers. But what good is that? I may rent and drive a tipper around, but where will I get my 'aggregate' from?"

Shafeeq Hussain Bhat, a self-employed tipper driver, confirmed that in spite of a ban on the extraction of stones, quarries are operating because of high demand from official quarters.

Unassociated with the mines and their legal problems, he brings his vehicle to the road whenever he gets an order.

He loads the aggregate, what he



calls 'maal', onto his lorry after paying the quarry, and delivers it to its final destination where he receives his payment from the civil contractors.

Many "royalty-hunters" have caught him and his peers since their covert trips began. "They seize our vehicles - only to be released as per the whims of the police officials, and fine us anything between Rs 15,000 and 30,000."

He said that he lost about one lakh rupees in such penalties since last year's SRO-powered ban.

"On a good day," Bhat continued, "I earn anywhere between Rs 1500 and 2000. My troubles are very serious. There're about 700 tippers in northern belt of Pampore - where I come from. They're all in very deep stress."

He has understood, from the

changes in the industry's modus operandi, that the 'royalty system' has stopped and a new model of 'penalties' has been put in its place.

Unsorting the clutter of the new process, while trying to explain it, he said, "They're not taking royalties anymore. That system was straightforward. I had receipts that let me proceed with my trips. The miners are ready to pay their royalties like they've been for so many years."

But the authorities, he said, are not ready to operate like that anymore for reasons best known to them.

"The government," Bhat informed, "has banned stone crushers but is ironically demanding the completion of civil tenders with a ban on the production of the raw material. Hence, like this, we are ►PAGE 02