

Govt Brings New Act To Stop Child Marriages In J&K Underage Marriages To Be Annulled, Informers To Be Suitably Awarded

Augib Javeed

Srinagar: In order to keep a check on underage marriages, the Jammu and Kashmir government has drafted an Act for the prohibition of child marriages through which child marriage prohibition officers (CPMOs) will be appointed and people informing about the wedding of minors will be suitably awarded. According to an order from

the Social Welfare Department, a copy of which lies with Kashmir Observer, the Act will be known as "Jammu and Kashmir Prohibition of Child Marriage Rules, 2023" under The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (Centre Act 6 of 2007).

The Lieutenant Governor has empowered a number of officials in exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of Section 19 of the Prohibition



of Child Marriage Act, 2006. Under new rules, child marriage prohibition officers have been designated to keep track of the weddings of minors. The child marriage

prohibition officers include Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Chief Education Officer (CEO), Zonal Education Officer (ZEO), Block Medical Officer (BMO), Block Development Officer (BDO), Assistant Labour Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner (Panchayat), District Social Welfare Officer, Child Development Protection Officer, Tehsildar and Naib Tehsildar. The officers have been

asked to act as child marriage prohibition officer in terms of Section 16(1) of the Act within their respective jurisdiction.

The child marriage prohibition officer have been asked to act immediately upon any information of solemnization of any child marriage that he/she may received through any mode of communication including written or oral and has to initiate all necessary action. The officials **More on P6**

R-Day Passes Off Peacefully In Kashmir

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: Republic Day was celebrated across Kashmir on Thursday with functions held at all district headquarters of the valley amidst tight security arrangements, officials said here.

The main Republic Day function in the valley was held at the Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium at Sonawar here. Advisor to Lieutenant Governor Rajesh Rai Bhatnagar was the chief guest and presided over the function.

Braving bone-chilling cold, contingents of the police, CRPF, NCC and school children took part in the march past where Bhatnagar took the salute. After the parade, artistes from various parts of the union territory performed at the cultural event.

In his address, Bhatnagar highlighted the steps taken by the LG administration and the central government to improve the development scenario and security situation in Kashmir.

BJP workers led by the party's state general secretary Ashok Koul unfurled the national flag at Lal Chowk's clock tower.

While security force personnel were deployed in numbers to ensure smooth passage of the functions, the atmosphere in the city was visibly relaxed with fewer check posts set up to regulate traffic. Concertina wires were also not used to block the intersections in the city.

In a rare departure from practice, the internet on mobile devices was not suspended, which used to be a regular feature of the security drill after the 2005 IED blast, triggered by using a mobile phone, outside the venue of the Independence Day function here.

Similar functions were held at all district headquarters of the valley where respective deputy commissioners presided over the proceedings.

Reports reaching **More on P6**

G-20 In J&K A Message To Enemies of Humanity: LG

Says His Govt Will Avenge Every Drop Of Blood Shed On The Behest Of Neighboring Country

Observer News Service

Jammu: Asserting that Jammu and Kashmir is the "life blood" of the country, the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said on Thursday that the G-20 meeting being held in the Union Territory is a message to the enemies of humanity who were attacking the interests of "our citizens through cowardly acts of terrorism for decades".

"Today, Jammu and Kashmir is marching forward on the path to progress. I urge every section of the society to come forward and make the G-20 an inclusive event," Sinha said in his Republic Day address here on Thursday.

"Jammu and Kashmir is the life blood of India. It is the guiding lamp of the civilization and eternal sound of our social consciousness," he added.

Sinha said that under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, J&K is standing



tall with self-confidence, encompassing the great heritage and cultural values of the world's largest republic.

He said that J&K is not just a geographical entity but a vibrant and radiant ecosystem where different faiths are the guiding force of inclusive culture.

"It is the living embodiment of our oldest ideal Sarve

Bhavantu Sukhinah. Jammu and Kashmir is a rhythmic dialogue of social, cultural values, plurality and tolerance. Jammu and Kashmir is the aura of self confident India," he said.

'Will Avenge Every Drop Of Blood'

Mincing no words in attacking Pakistan, the LG said that his government will avenge every

drop of blood shed in J&K due to barbaric killings of innocents at the behest of the neighboring country. He also hailed the brave policeman, soldiers and central security forces for displaying unmatched heroism and the spirit of sacrifice in defending the motherland.

He assured the families who lost their loved ones that the entire nation stands with them and that his administration will take concrete measures to ensure that the families of bravehearts live a life of comfort and dignity.

"Sustained efforts of our security agencies have resulted in a marked decrease in terrorist incidents in Jammu and the security grid has been strengthened and anti-terror operations have been intensified through direct attacks on the ecosystem that supports and finances terror," he said.

Last year, he said, 180 militants were killed and there has been a **More on P6**

Vows Action Against Influential Land Encroachers

Islamabad: Pakistan said on Thursday that no backchannel talks were being held between Islamabad and New Delhi.

"At this moment, there is no such thing under way," Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar told the Senate - the upper house of parliament. She added that backchannel diplomacy was desirable when it was result-oriented.

Separately, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch at the weekly media briefing reiterated Khar's remarks about no secret **More on P6**

Amid a furore over the ongoing drive to retrieve state and Kahcharie land in the UT, Sinha reassured that the interests of common citizens will be protected and they will not be impacted by the anti-encroachment drive. "People are at the centre of governance. Legal action is being taken against influential people who had illegally encroached upon the government," he said. "For decades, the development and aspirations of common masses were held hostage by exploitative and anti-developmental land laws. Over the last two years, land owners have been empowered through a series of reforms," he added. The LG also informed that his administration has **More on P6**

No Backchannel Talks With India: Pak

Press Trust Of India

Mercury Falls After Snowfall, Rains In J&K Gulmarg Shivers At Minus 10.4 Deg Celsius

AGENCIES

Srinagar: Amid forecast for isolated to scattered light rain and snow in the next 24 hours, most parts of Jammu and Kashmir recorded a drop in minimum temperature on Thursday.

A meteorological department official here said that Srinagar recorded a low of 1.2°C against last night's 0.0°C. Today's minimum temperature, he said, was above normal by 2.2°C for the summer capital.

Qazigund, he said, recorded a low of minus 0.4°C against minus 0.2°C on the previous night and it was 3.7°C above normal for the gateway town of Kashmir.



Pahalgam, he said, recorded a low of minus 2.4°C against minus 2.6°C on the previous night and it was 3.7°C above normal for the famous tourist resort in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Kokernag recorded a low of minus 0.6°C against minus 0.7°C on the previous night and it was 2.0°C above normal

for the place, the officials said.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 10.4°C against minus 4.6°C on the previous night and it was 2.9°C below normal for the world famous skiing resort in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, he said.

In Kupwara town, he said, the mercury settled at minus 1.7°C against minus 0.6°C on the previous night and it was above 0.8°C above normal for the north Kashmir area.

Jammu recorded a low of 6.3°C against 10.1°C on the previous night. It was 2.4°C below normal for J&K's winter capital, he said.

Banihal recorded a low of 1.2°C (above **More on P6**

India Displays Its Military Might On R-Day Parade



Jammu and Kashmir tableau showcased new era of development, tourism potential at R-day parade on Thursday

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi: India's military prowess infused with a spirit of 'aatmanirbharta' and diverse and vibrant cultural heritage were showcased on the Kartavya Path as the nation celebrated its 74th Republic Day on Thursday.

'Nari Shakti' was predominantly the theme of the celebrations with President

Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a host of other dignitaries joining people and members of the armed forces in marking the august occasion.

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was the chief guest at the ceremonial event.

A combined band and marching contingent of the Egyptian Armed Forces also took part in the **More on P6**

THIS DAY IS AN OPPORTUNITY for all Indian citizens to strengthen the country's constitutional traditions and rededicate ourselves to the resolve to build a new India. Salute to all the Constitution makers and freedom fighters of India."

Bharat Jodo Yatra To Enter Kashmir Valley Today

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar: The Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi will resume from highway town of Banihal in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday after a day's break.

"The Bharat Jodo Yatra will resume from Banihal tomorrow morning. We will make up the distance that we could not do yesterday," Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh told reporters after finalising the Friday's schedule for the march.

The yatra will enter Kashmir valley on Friday for its last leg before culminating in a rally in Srinagar on January 30.



Ramesh said the yatra has passed through various districts of Jammu and covered almost 90 kilometres.

"Wherever we went, the yatra has been received well. People of all ages, genders and from all walks of life have realised that the **More on P6**

Slain JKP Constable Awarded Shaurya Chakra

Press Trust Of India

Srinagar- He was 'bindaas', a daredevil cop with a larger-than-life personality. Conferred with the Shaurya Chakra on the eve of Republic Day, Jammu and Kashmir Police constable Mudasar Ahmed Sheikh had killed a group of Jaish-e-Mohammad militants in Baramulla district before laying down his life.

"Constable Sheikh, alias 'Bindaas', of Uri (in Baramulla) made the supreme sacrifice while killing three Jaish-e-Mohammad militants during a joint operation with the Army at Kreeeri in the north Kashmir district on May 25 last year," officials said.

Sheikh has been conferred with the Shaurya Chakra - the country's third-highest peacetime gallantry award - for his unparalleled courage.

Giving details of the incident, the officials said "the police and the Army, acting on information regarding the movement of terrorists, established joint special checkpoints at **More on P6**

Grenade Found Near Ex-MLAs House

A grenade was found near the home of a former legislator in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Thursday evening, his son said. Last Friday night, an explosion was reported at his house in Lasana village of Surankote tehsil. His family had a narrow escape as splinters pierced the ceiling of several rooms. "I had gone for a condolence meet when I received a call from home that a grenade was found near the house. It was close to our boundary wall," Showkat, the son of former Surankote MLA and prominent Gujjar leader Choudhary Mohammad Akram, **More on P6**

BSF, Pak Rangers Exchange Sweets

The BSF and Pakistan Rangers exchanged sweets and greetings at various outposts along the International Border in Jammu on the occasion of India's 74th Republic Day on Thursday, officials said. The Border Security Force offered sweets to Pakistan Rangers and they reciprocated, the officials said. The exchange of sweets took place at border outposts in Akhnour, Samba, Kathua, Arnia and R S Pura in a cordial manner, a Border Security Force official said. Indian Army troops also exchanged sweets and greetings with their Pakistani counterparts **More on P6**

Highway Reopens For Traffic

Vehicular movement was restored on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway on Thursday after remaining shut for more than 24 hours due to shooting stones and landslides at Panthyal, officials said. "Traffic has been restored on the national highway from both sides," an official of the traffic control department said. The official said that after stones and debris from landslides were removed from the road around 11 am, light motor vehicles were allowed to ply first. The highway was closed due to shooting stones at **More on P6**

Teen Girl's Body Found After 26 Days

Body of teenage girl who had jumped into the river Jhelum in Khanpora area of north Kashmir's Baramulla district on December 31, was retrieved after 26 days on Thursday. Quoting an official, news agency KDC reported that the girl had jumped into river Jhelum near Khanpora bridge in Baramulla. He said that following the incident, a massive search operation was launched, however, there was no trace of her. The official said after 26 days her body was retrieved today near Veerwan area of the district. He said after **More on P6**

Flyer Arrested Over 'Hijacked' Tweet

A man was arrested for allegedly falsely tweeting that a flight going from Dubai to Jaipur had been hijacked, police said on Thursday. The incident took place on Wednesday. Moti Singh Rathore, a resident of Nagaur in Rajasthan, arrived at the Indira Gandhi International Airport after a Dubai-Jaipur was diverted to Delhi due to bad weather, Deputy Commissioner of Police (airport) Ravi Kumar Singh said. The flight landed at 9:45 am and was given clearance to depart at 1:40 pm. Meanwhile, Rathore tweeted "flight hijacked", the police said. **More on P6**

Blaze Damages House In Budgam



A residential house was damaged in a fire incident in Beerwah area in central Kashmir's Budgam district on Thursday. The house belonging to Khazir Mohammad Malla, a resident of Peth Malpora in Beerwah area was gutted after a fire broke out, which engulfed the structure, reports said. Gas leak, the reports said, was believed to **More on P6**

Vaccinating Honeybee: A New Tool For Protecting The Pollinators

The Conversation

Honeybees, which pollinate one-third of the crops Americans eat, face many threats, including infectious diseases.

On January 4, 2023, a Georgia biotechnology company called Dalan Animal Health announced that it had received a conditional license from the US Department of Agriculture for a vaccine designed to protect honeybees against American foulbrood, a highly destructive infection.

To receive a conditional license, which usually lasts for one year and is subject to further evaluation by the USDA, veterinary biological products must be shown to be pure, safe and reasonably likely to be effective.

Dr. Jennie Durant, an agriculture researcher at the University of California, Davis, who specialises in honeybee health, explains why this vaccine is potentially an important step in ongoing efforts to protect pollinators.

What threat does this vaccine address?

The new bee vaccine, Paenibacillus Larvae Bacterin, aims to protect honeybees from American foulbrood. This highly destructive bacterial disease gets its name from the foul scent honeybee larvae exude when infected.

An outbreak of American foulbrood is effectively a death sentence for a bee colony and can economically devastate a beekeeping operation. The spores from the bacteria, Paenibacillus larvae, are highly transmissible and can remain virulent for decades after infection.

Once an outbreak occurs, beekeepers typically have to destroy any bee colonies that they know were infected to avoid spreading the disease. They also have to destroy the hive boxes the colonies were stored in and any equipment that may have touched infected colonies.

Beekeepers have used antibiotics preventively for decades to keep foulbrood in check and treat infected colonies. Often they mix the antibiotics with powdered sugar and sprinkle it inside the colony box. As often happens when antibiotics are overused, scientists and beekeepers are seeing antibiotic resistance and

negative impacts on hive health, such as disruption of the helpful microbes that live in bees' guts.

In 2017, the US Food and Drug Administration began requiring a veterinarian's prescription or feed directive to use antibiotics for foulbrood.

While this regulatory change sought to address antibiotic resistance, it limited beekeepers' access to antibiotics and their ability to treat foulbrood preventively. The vaccine would ideally provide a more sustainable solution.



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How effectively does the vaccine prevent infection?

Studies are still analysing its effectiveness. One published study demonstrated a 30 to 50 per cent increase in resistance to American foulbrood in a vaccinated queen's offspring.

While this might seem low, it's important to put the results in context. Given how deadly and contagious American foulbrood is, researchers did not want to directly

expose an outdoor hive to foulbrood using an unproven vaccine.

Instead, they conducted lab studies where they exposed test hives to around 1,000 times the number of American foulbrood spores a colony would typically be exposed to in the field. Dalan, the manufacturer, has field trials planned for 2023.

How do you vaccinate honeybees?

It's not done with tiny needles

When queen bees are shipped to a beekeeper, they are typically placed in a small cage with 50 to 200 worker bees that have been fed something called queen candy.

This substance is often made with powdered sugar and corn syrup and has the consistency of sugar cookie dough or modelling clay. Worker bees consume the candy, produce royal jelly and feed it to the queen.

The vaccine's delivery method uses this unique system. A beekeeper can mix the vaccine with the queen candy, which is then digested by worker bees.

They produce royal jelly and feed it to the queen, who digests it and then transfers the vaccine to her ovaries. Once she is transferred to the hive and begins laying eggs, the larvae that hatch from those eggs have a heightened immunity to American foulbrood.

Who will use the vaccine?

According to representatives at Dalan, limited quantities of the vaccine should be available starting in spring 2023 to commercial beekeepers and bee producers, with the aim of supplying smaller-scale beekeepers and hobbyists in the future.

How long will a dose last?

Dalan is still researching the specifics. Its current understanding is that it will last as long as the queen bee can lay eggs. If she dies, is killed or is replaced, the beekeeper will have to purchase a new vaccinated queen.

Is this a big scientific advance?

Yes, it is the first vaccine for any insect in the US and could help pave the way for new vaccines to treat other issues that have plagued the beekeeping industry for decades. Honeybees face many urgent threats, including Varroa mites, climate change and poor nutrition, which makes this vaccine an exciting new development.

Dalan is also working on a vaccine to protect bees against European foulbrood. This disease is less fatal than American foulbrood, but is still highly infectious. Beekeepers have been able to treat it with antibiotics but, as with American foulbrood, they are seeing signs of resistance.

Worst Impacts Of Sea Level Rise Will Hit Earlier Than Thought: Study



Press Trust Of India

The biggest increases in inundation will occur after the first two metres of sea level rise, covering more than twice as much land as older elevation models predicted, according to a study.

The current models of sea level rise suggest the most widespread impacts will occur after sea level has risen by several metres. The study, published in the journal Earth's Future, used high-resolution measurements of land elevation from NASA's ICESat-2 lidar satellite, launched in 2018, to improve upon models of sea level rise and inundation.

Previous assessments typically relied on radar-based data, which are less precise, the researchers said. "Radar is unable to fully penetrate vegetation and therefore overestimates surface elevation," said Ronald Vernimmen, a researcher at the research firm Data for Sustainability in The Netherlands.

Many coastal areas are lower than scientists thought they were. The underestimates of land elevation mean coastal communities have less time to prepare for sea level rise than expected, with the biggest impacts of rising seas occurring earlier than previously thought.

The researchers found that after those first few metres of sea level rise, the rate at which land area falls below mean sea level decreases.

They started using these more accurate measurements of land elevation when he realised that existing land elevation estimates were not suitable for

quantifying coastal flooding risk.

Using the new measurements of land elevation, Vernimmen and study co-author Aljosja Hooijer found coastal areas lie much lower than older radar data had suggested.

Analyses of the new Lidar-based elevation model showed two metres of sea-level rise would cover up to 2.4 times the land area as observed by radar-based elevation models.

For example, the Lidar data suggest a two-metre increase in sea level could put most of Bangkok and its 10 million residents below sea level, while older data suggested that the city would still be largely above mean sea level under that same amount of sea level rise.

In total, after two metres of sea level rise, the researchers estimate that 240 million more people will live below mean sea level.

After three and four metres of sea level rise, that number increases by 140 million and by another 116 million, respectively, they said.

The researchers noted that cities below future sea level may not necessarily be submerged because levees, dikes and pumping stations can protect some areas from rising seas.

Amsterdam and New Orleans are modern examples of this, they said. However, such protection measures can be expensive and take decades to implement, according to the researchers.

If vulnerable communities want to mitigate the most damage, they need to act before the sea rises those first few meters, they added.

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INOX Multiplex Remains Jam-Packed For Shah Rukh Starrer Pathan

Agencies

Srinagar: After the gap of three decades, the Bollywood charm of yesteryears made a comeback in Kashmir as for the first since its inauguration, the newly opened Cinema Inox in Srinagar remained jam-packed for the two consecutive days where 12 out of 14 shows were housefull. The theatre is screening Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan Starrer Pathan.

Owner of INOX multiplex Vijay Dhar said that 14 shows (7 shows each on Wednesday & Thursday) have been screened.

“All the seven shows yesterday were houseful as all the seats remained occupied in the halls,” he said, adding that the Inox remained jam-packed yesterday.

He further said that two shows today recorded less participation due to the Republic Day celebrations, adding that five more shows were housefull like yesterday.

About the jam-packed cinema, he said that the shows remained booked for two consecutive days and that for the first time; Shah-rukh Khan is being screened on a big screen in Srinagar, which is an achievement itself. “Pathan movie that is being screened nowadays is completely a worthwhile picture,” he said.

Pertinently, Kashmir’s first multiplex in Sonwar area of Srinagar was inaugurated by Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha in September last year. With this, cinema halls are back in Kashmir after a gap of three decades—(KNO)

Man Dies After Falling From Under Construction Hospital

Agencies

Srinagar: A 32-year-old welder from Bemina area of Srinagar died on Thursday after he fell from an under construction private hospital of Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadith at Chota Bazar area here.

A police official said that a welder by profession identified as Bilal Ahmad Zaindari (32), son of Ghulam Ra-

sool Zaindari of Bemina area, fell from an under construction building, belonging to Jamiat-e-Ahle Hadith today.

Bilal died on the spot, he said, adding that Police have taken cognizance of the incident. At SMHS hospital, he was declared dead.

The deceased belongs to a poor family and was the sole bread earner of his family—(KNO)

Nearly 30 Households In Syed Hamid Pora Without Power Supply

Agencies

Srinagar: Locals of Gulbadaab Galli, opposite graveyard, in Syed Hamid Pora, Nawab Bazar in city have expressed their anguish over non-availability of electricity amid ongoing harsh winters.

A local delegation said that nearly thirty households have been left without electricity since Thursday afternoon. “We faced the outage this afternoon following which we reached out to the authorities concerned to know the issue”, they said, adding the authorities assured that they were on job to restore the supply at an earliest”.

“At around evening, when we called them again, they (department) told us that it may take a while to rectify the issue”, they said. “However even after several hours since then also, we are

yet to see restoration of the supply”, they claimed.

“First the department kept us waiting for almost a day, promising the supply will be restored and now when we called them again they are saying it is too late for them to do anything now”, they said adding they are more concerned about themselves and not about the plight of common masses amid the prevalent harsh weather.

When contacted, AEE concerned Imtiyaz Ahmad said that the department had put its men on job to rectify the issue. “We are mindful of the sufferings of people, however due to darkness and as a sort of precautionary measure, the men on job were taken off the duty to avoid any exigency in late hours”, he said adding the supply will be restored by or before 10 tomorrow (Friday). (GNS)

Farooq Hoists Tricolor At His Residence

Observer News Service

Srinagar: National Conference (NC) President and Member of the Parliament from Srinagar Dr. Farooq Abdullah on Thursday hoisted the Tricolour at his Gupkar residence on the occasion of 74th Republic day celebrations.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Farooq said “Least we forget the Father of the Nation, Gandhi Ji, and numerous other freedom fighters, whose suffering and sacrifice have rendered the attainment of Independence and establishment of this sovereign democratic republic possible.”



On the eve of India's 74th Republic Day, BJP members took out a Tiranga Rally at Lal Chowk. KO Photo Abid Bhat.

Bhatnagar Unfurls National Flag At SK Stadium

“J&K poised to become latest success story among Indian states”

Observer News Service

Srinagar: Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, unfurled the National Flag to mark 74th Republic Day celebration at Sher-e-Kashmir (SK) Stadium on Thursday.

He inspected the parade and saluted the contingents of JKP, BSF, CRPF, JKAP, SSB, ITBP, IRP, Women contingent, Forest Protection Force and NCC.

Speaking on the occasion, Advisor Bhatnagar extended warm greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir as well as members of Armed Forces, Paramilitary Forces, Central and UT level police forces for their contribution in maintaining the security and integrity of our nation

Bhatnagar remarked that formation of the Republic on 26th January 1950 was the first milestone in our march towards realizing the dreams of our people in the aftermath of Independence.

“The Constitution gave expression to the goals, ideals and values that guided our freedom struggle and laid the foundations for the structure of governance and committed to secure for all citizens; justice, liberty and equality as well as dignity”

he said.

Bhatnagar said that from the past three years, J&K is witnessing a new dawn, a dawn which promises hope, a dawn which reflects prosperity, progress and development. He added that our UT is poised to become the latest success story among Indian states. He added that the government is committed to build a strong Jammu and Kashmir and continue its march ahead with Mantra of 4 P’s – Peace, Progress, Prosperity and People first. He asserted that the present government is determined to ensure that every single citizen of UT enjoys prosperous and peaceful life.

Highlighting about some of the remarkable achievements of the present administration, Advisor Bhatnagar said that the health sector is one of the major sectors progressing rapidly from the last few years. He added that the LG led administration has taken some novel initiatives to amplify the medical care infrastructure across the UT so that the best and advanced medical care services are provided to the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir.

Bhatnagar also said that the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has registered a tre-

mendous decline in the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) during the last one year and has registered a 3 point decline from 20 to 17 in a single year much better than the national average which stands at 28. He added that two new AIIMS with the project Cost of Rs 4000 crore, one each at Jammu and Kashmir divisions are coming up.

He further said that 07 New Government Medical Colleges are being established with total outlay of Rs. 1595 crore, 15 Nursing Colleges are targeted, 08 are operational and 02 more (Rajouri and Pulwama) shall start shortly this year besides two Cancer Institutes (one each at Jammu and Kashmir divisions) with total cost of Rs. 212 crore have been established. He added that, out of 140 projects under Prime Ministers Development package (PMDP) with an outlay of Rs. 881.00 crore, 115 projects have already been completed and remaining 25 projects are in progress.

Advisor Bhatnagar observed that J&K is predominantly an agrarian economy with 70% of its population dependent on agricultural activities. He added that the progress of Jammu and Kashmir is directly associated with the development of farmers.

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HIGHWAY STATUS



Sgr-Jammu highway - (Open)
Mughal Road - (Closed)
Srinagar- Leh- (Closed)

<div><div>HIJRI CALENDAR</div><div>04 Rajab 1444</div></div>	PRAYERS	
	FAJR	6:06
	ZUHR	12:42
	ASR	4:18
	Magrib	5:59
	ISHA	7:22

This Day In History

- 661 - Rashidun Caliphate, then the largest empire in history, ends with death of Ali. Succeeded by the Umayyad Caliphate
- 1695 - Mustafa II becomes the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul on the death of Ahmed II. Mustafa rules until his death in 1703.
- 1880 - Thomas Edison patents electric incandescent lamp
- 1897 - British troops occupy Bida Gold Coast (Ghana)
- 1926 - US Senate agrees to join World Court
- 1926 - Physicist Erwin Schrödinger publishes his theory of wave mechanics and presents what becomes known as the Schrödinger equation in quantum mechanics
- 1945 - Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz and Birkenau Concentration Camps in Poland
- 1967 - Treaty signed banning military use of nuclear weapons in space
- 1973 - US & North Vietnam's William Rogers & Nguyen Duy Trinh sign cease-fire, ending longest US war and military draft
- 1976 - Morocco-Algeria battles in West Sahara
- 1985 - 15th Space Shuttle (51-C) Mission-Discovery 3 returns to Earth
- 1989- Detroit Red Wings center Steve Yzerman becomes the 4th NHL player to record 100 points in 50 games or less with a goal and 2 assists as Red Wings beat Toronto, 8-1
- 1989- German war criminals Fischer & Aus der Funten freed
- 1989- Kevin Johnson (Phoenix) begins NBA free throw streak of 57 games
- 1990- Australian Open Women's Tennis: Steffi Graf beats American Mary Joe Fernández 6-3, 6-4 for her 3rd consecutive Australian singles crown
- 1991- Dutch Pacifist Socialistic Party disbands
- 1992- Mike Tyson goes on trial for rape (he is found guilty)
- 1993- DC-3 crashes in Kinshasa, killing 12
- 1994- Carlos Reina succeeds pres Callejas in Honduras
- 1994- Romanian social democrats form government with anti-Semites
- 1995- Eric Cantona of Manchester United fined and banned from playing football after attacking a fan
- 1996- Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara deposes the first democratically elected president of Niger, Mahamane Ousmane, in a military coup.
- 1996 - France performs nuclear test at Mururoa atoll
- 1996- Germany celebrates its 1st Holocaust Remembrance Day

From KO Archives

Missing Garages Car Keeps Cops On Toes

Srinagar - Hijacking of an Ambassador car belonging to State Motor Garages this afternoon has sent a wave of apprehension through police and various security agencies who fear that it might be used in a Fidayeen strike on or before Republic day.

According to a NAFA report unidentified militants in a stolen Ambassador car (JK01 1199) gunned down one Tariq Ahmad, allegedly a police informer hailing from Handwara, in Nowpora locality of the city at noon today The gunmen later abandoned the car at Fateh Kadal and hijacked a State Motor Garages Ambassador (JK02 M 3721) from the area, the report quoting police sources said. The incident prompted police and other security agencies to sound an alert for the vehicle. The police and intelligence agencies the report said remained clueless till late Wednesday despite widespread checking of vehicles.

(KASHMIR OBSERVER, 27 January, 2001)

کاٹھی دروازہ کے میر خاندان کو صدمہ

حاجی رفیق احمد میر ساکنہ کاٹھی دروازہ انتقال کر گئے



یہ خبر انتہائی دکھ کے ساتھ دی جاتی ہے کہ حاجی رفیق احمد میر ولد مرحوم غلام احمد میر ساکنہ محلہ اشرف خان کاٹھی دروازہ سرینگر 26 جنوری 2023ء کو انتقال کر گئے۔ مرحوم کا نماز جنازہ 27 جنوری بروز جمعہ صبح 9:30 بجے مسجد جامع اشرف خان کے احاطہ میں ادا کیا جائیگا۔

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Friday | 27-01-2023

LG's Republic
Day Speech

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Thursday said that the security forces have launched a final assault on militancy and its eco-system to ensure “everlasting peace” in the union territory. In his address at the Republic Day, Sinha said the morale of security forces in J&K was high and all efforts to destabilize the peace would be given a befitting reply. He said the J&K situation was returning to normal and the evil designs of the enemy were being foiled. J&K, he said, had witnessed a 55 percent drop in civilian killings in 2022 and a significant decrease in the killing of security forces personnel as well. Sinha talked about the development in the UT for good measure saying the administration has launched a series of development initiatives, among them the metros for Srinagar and Jammu and the tubes on the Srinagar-Jammu highway.

This is also borne out by a recent report by Ministry of Home Affairs. On the development front, the report says that the BJP government at the centre has brought an investment of Rs 56,000 crores in just three years. Under the Prime Minister's Development Package in Jammu, the report mentions, J&K got about 63 projects in hydroelectricity at a cost of Rs 80,000 crore.

True, J&K has come a long way over the last four years. Situation is incrementally headed towards normalcy but we are not there yet. Ever since the withdrawal of J&K autonomy in August 2019, around 500 militants have been killed in the UT, most of them local youth. Though this has reduced the number of militants, the violence has lingered. There has been some uptick in the violence off and on but this hasn't dented the larger drift of normalcy in the union territory yet. Even when the violence has become more conspicuous in recent months - for example, the recent attack in Jammu - it is still on the margins in so far as its impact on daily life.

Tourism is at an all time high after many years. Last year, over one crore people visited J&K. Most hotels, according to UT's tourism department, are booked through winter. According to the tourist officials, this is the highest number of tourists Kashmir has received so far, beating by far even the pre-turmoil period record. This generated employment for the thousands of people who had lost their jobs during the Covid pandemic. And as things stand, tourism will continue. And this would make a wealth of difference to the economic well-being of people. Here's hoping for a truly peaceful year ahead.



Sushma Ramachandran,

“Total exports in the first nine months of the current fiscal (April to December 2022) are estimated \$332.8 billion. It looks as if the fiscal may record flat growth with exports at about the same level as last fiscal. Imports, by contrast, rose by 25 per cent to reach \$551 billion. This has led to pressure on the current account deficit (CAD) that could end the year at a worrying level of 3 per cent of GDP compared to only 1.8 per cent last year.

India's bid to become a serious player in global trade seems to be under threat as global headwinds have led to a slowdown in export growth. The buoyancy in world demand that had given an impetus to merchandise exports last fiscal has now moderated with the shift in geopolitical developments.

The Ukraine conflict not only pushed up inflation in western countries, but also led to aggressive rate hikes by central banks. It has now created the threat of a recession in 2023. Though experts in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) insist recession is still way off, the pent-up demand unleashed after the pandemic has not only subsided but also contracted all over the world. The impact is being felt on India's exports which have hit a roadblock in the current fiscal after touching a record level of \$420 billion in 2021-22.

The spurt in export growth in 2022 had led to hopes that India may achieve its target of cornering a three per cent share of world trade by 2027. The current flattening trend, however, indicates it may take a while to rise from the existing 2.1 per cent. This is a relatively low percentage given the fact that it is the world's fifth-largest economy. One of the reasons that trade flows have not expanded more rapidly compared to its Asian neighbours has been the lure of the large domestic market. It has been easier for corporates to focus on meeting internal demand, especially since export procedures were cumbersome and complex in the past.

In recent years, more policy initiatives have been taken to give a push to this sector, including the plan to focus on export products on a district-wise basis. Incentives have also been redesigned in order to make them compliant with rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO). But the sharp rise in exports during

the last fiscal had more to do with the resurgence in global demand which is now on a waning trend. Official data for December shows a 12.2 per cent decline in exports over the same month in 2021.

Total exports in the first nine months of the current fiscal (April to December 2022) are estimated \$332.8 billion. It looks as if the fiscal may record flat growth with exports at about the same level as last fiscal. Imports, by contrast, rose by 25 per cent to reach \$551 billion. This has led to pressure on the current account deficit (CAD) that could end the year at a worrying level of 3 per cent of GDP compared to only 1.8 per cent last year.

Despite the palpable slow-

port front. For instance, the surge in wheat exports ended abruptly with the decision to stop supplying due to the spike in domestic prices. Internal compulsions have similarly affected rice and sugar exports in the past.

With global recessionary trends deepening, a more strategic policy is needed to push exports in the coming fiscal. The focus must be on resolving exporters' specific problems, especially in relation to non-tariff barriers that have been affecting supplies to key markets. It is also essential to take a long-term approach by entering into free trade agreements (FTAs) that can give a competitive advantage.

On the plus side, the FTA with Australia and the

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down in export growth, however, there are signals that the outlook for the next fiscal may be better than expected despite the continued geopolitical volatility. One such is the report that Apple has achieved a record \$1 billion of mobile phone exports during December. This augurs well since this is a tech giant that had put all its apples, literally, in the Chinese basket until recently.

Export of agricultural products are also fast rising, but these have been impeded in the past by policy changes meant to protect the home market. This has prevented India from becoming a long-term player on the ex-

United Arab Emirates, both key markets, should give an impetus to trade ties with these regions. The one with the United Kingdom may be in the doldrums, but talks on a FTA with the European Union (EU) have been revived recently. This kind of support will have to be continued in the coming year if India is to make a place for itself at the high table of world trade.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer. The article was originally published by Deccan Herald

OTHER OPINION

The Competitive
Exam Obsession

Syed Mustafa Ahmad

LIFE in Jammu and Kashmir is narrowly conceived, particularly in the case of students and parents. Well, it is not their fault; when the main motive of life is to earn money by hook or by crook, parents deliberately and their children voluntarily or involuntarily choose that way that can give them money in heaps. KAS and NEET are two ways that have become the trademarks of learning. In fact, such is the impact of these two things that other professions and occupations have taken a back seat. Recently, social media, electronic media and print media were full of success stories, regarding KAS and NEET qualifiers. Yes, it is a moment of happiness that we produce good bureaucrats and doctors. But the main thing is that is life all about qualifying an examination or is it about knowing the world and yourselves?

In the present context, this line of demarcation has blurred a lot. Those students who have no inclinations towards these professions are called useless. Those students who are called useless, follow their own whims. They want to do something adventurous that can pacify their nerves. They don't want to be in a race of cut throat competition. They live the way they find life.

Our educational system never takes individual differences into account. From the beginning, we are taught that we are all going to become doctors, engineers, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs, etc. We are never taught that the main aim of life is to know one's life. When a person knows their worth, he or she opts a profession or an occupation according to his or her liking and necessity. However, in the present world, it is seen that the majority of people engaged in different professions are misfits. If someone wants to opt any profession or occupation, he or she is forced to prefer that profession that is not suitable to them. In this way, the menace of the educational system is to blame. It is this that produces narrow mindedness in our society.

In short, there should be a broad consensus on what the real meaning of life is. After knowing this, there should be pondering over different professions and their needs. Knowing all these things will enable us to respect every profession. We will be in a position not to give unnecessary hype to those things that are like others. William Bill Gates, Ellison, Jack Ma, Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, Warren Buffet, etc are some examples.

Mindful Fridays

BOREDOM IS A BLESSING

Psychological benefits of boredom



IT'S IMPORTANT TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE TRAIT BOREDOM: State boredom relates to feeling bored in a particular circumstance, whereas trait boredom describes one's susceptibility to boredom. Self-control, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse are all associated with traits of boredom

Wasim Kakroo

In this fast paced world, speed has become everything. If you are not doing things very fast, that seems boring to people around you. If some electronic gadget does not work quickly, that is boring. If your printer prints slowly, that is boring. If your internet connection is slow, that is boring. Capitalism has turned boredom into a sin and hence it has been very successful in selling things to us that were not that much important, had it not been important to kill boredom. As an example, think of internet speed. Initially in early 2000s, the internet connection used to be very slow, and scientists went into search for finding ways to increase the speed of internet and they gave us 2G, 3G, 4G and now 5G speed. A time will come when we won't be comfortable anymore even with 5G speed, because it is fed into our minds that speed is good and boredom is not only bad but sinful.

WHAT IS BOREDOM?

Fundamentally, boredom is, as Tolstoy defined it, "a desire for desires."

Online Merriam-Webster defines boredom as "the state of being weary and restless through lack of interest."

Boredom is an emotion. It is feeling weary because one is unoccupied or lacks interest in one's current activity.

When a person gets bored, it's usually because their present circumstance or activity isn't engaging them or giving much significance to their time and it is becoming emotionally and psychologically distressful for them to be in that activity. This urges them to perhaps change their focus to something

more rewarding at least at the emotional and psychological level.

It's important to distinguish between the state and the trait boredom: State boredom relates to feeling bored in a particular circumstance, whereas trait boredom describes one's susceptibility to boredom. Self-control, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse are all associated with traits of boredom.

HOW IS BOREDOM BENEFICIAL TO MENTAL HEALTH?

Humans have discovered ways to get rid of boredom through play and entertainment. To prevent boredom, adults read, engage in hobbies, or tell stories. Before the invention of TV and mobile devices, kids used to overcome boredom by playing outside or with a friend or sibling.

Nowadays, people spend a lot of time on various electronic devices. However, this easily available media might have gone too far in grabbing people's attention. Many people spend countless hours on devices in order to get a temporary relief from boredom.

It is simple to lose track of time and hence kill boredom while browsing TikTok, watching YouTube videos, or any reel videos. Without the person realizing it, an hour or two can pass quickly. People don't always feel rejuvenated after spending that much time doing mindless browsing. Most

people, rather, report feeling more worn out.

Spending so much time on gadgets might help us to kill boredom, but it also results in a different issue. The capacity of the brain to deal with boredom decreases as the number of people who experience it rises. The more people use such tactics to kill boredom, the more problematic it becomes for them to handle boredom when such devices are not available around.

BOREDOM HELPS IN RESTORING THE BRAIN:

Brain uses a lot of energy when it is concentrated on some intense activity. It goes back to its default setting when you end the activity. This is how the brains restores itself. One could consider the default state to be a resting state (and people may call it a state of boredom). At this period, a number of related brain areas are active. These areas appear to function as a networked unit. The default mode network is what is used in this situation.

Numerous crucial processes are taking place in the brain when humans are in this restorative state. It helps you organize your memory and think back on your experiences. The mind creates hypothetical situations and applies what it has learnt to potential future applications. People often reflect about both themselves and other people in their free time.

BOREDOM CAN HELP BE CREATIVE:

It's possible to be creative when you're taking rest and not doing particularly anything highly stimulating, which might help you come up with inventive answers to issues that are upsetting you. For instance, many claim to come up with brilliant solutions to issues they are considering while in the shower. This is due to the fact that while their body is occupied with and captive to a meaningless work (as per societal standards), their mind is free to wander.

The individual is unable to leave the shower or use a phone to entertain themselves. In such a situation, the ability to think through problems almost readily and frequently generates solutions to issues that have been on the back of one's mind.

Another example is going for a walk in the woods. It's a secure and tranquil setting in that moment. Within the first five minutes, the individual progressively becomes accustomed to the surroundings, which lowers anxiety. During the remaining portion of the stroll, the mind begins to drift. In such a state, the brain is engaged in original thought and the discovery of intriguing solutions at this time.

BOREDOM CAN HELP TO IMPROVE PATIENCE AND REDUCE IMPULSIVITY:

Since this fast paced world has made us fear boredom and inac-

tivity and we are provided all the means of killing boredom, it has led to the reduction in patience and hence increases in impulsivity. Learning how to handle boredom can hence lead to better patience levels and natural reduction of impulsivity.

HOW TO HELP KIDS TO ACCEPT AND HANDLE BOREDOM?

It is not the duty of parents to keep their kids amused all the time. Children are naturally imaginative and curious. They develop their creative faculties and acquire coping mechanisms as they age by being bored.

If they object that they are bored, acknowledge their feelings and ask them to suggest a solution. If they have trouble, suggest alternatives that don't involve electronic devices and technology.

For those who are scared, anxious, or depressed, boredom might be more uncomfortable or distressing. If so, they should get expert assistance from a professional clinical psychologist so that they can process their emotions and learn effective coping mechanisms.

Don't worry about getting bored. It is a typical aspect of life. Don't discount it or detest it. Instead, try to think of it as a chance to refresh your mind and come up with solutions to issues.

The author is a licensed clinical psychologist (alumni of Govt. Medical College Srinagar) and works as a consultant clinical psychologist at Centre for Mental Health Services (CMHS) at Rambagh Srinagar. He can be reached at 8825067196



MANY CLAIM TO COME UP WITH BRILLIANT SOLUTIONS TO ISSUES THEY ARE CONSIDERING WHILE IN THE SHOWER. This is due to the fact that while their body is occupied with and captive to a meaningless work (as per societal standards), their mind is free to wander

Palestinians: Israeli Troops Kill 10 In West Bank Violence

Jenin Refugee Camp (West Bank): Israeli forces killed at least nine Palestinians, including a 61-year-old woman, and wounded several others in a large-scale raid on Thursday in a flashpoint area of the occupied West Bank, Palestinian officials said. It was the deadliest single operation in the territory in two decades.

The Israeli military also fatally shot a 22-year-old Palestinian later in a separate incident.

The raid in the Jenin refugee camp increases the risk of a major flare-up in Israeli-Palestinian fighting days,

poses a test for Israel's new hard-line government and casts a shadow on US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's expected trip to the region next week.

Hamas, the Islamist militant group that controls Gaza, threatened revenge. Violent escalations in the West Bank have previously triggered retaliatory rocket fire from the Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces in the West Bank and on the country's border with Gaza went on heightened alert. Protesters poured into the streets across the territory, chanting in solidarity with Jenin, and Palestinian President

Mahmoud Abbas met top advisers to discuss a response to the raid.

A senior official said the Palestinians were expected to halt security coordination with Israel a move it has tried in the past with little success.

The sides maintain security ties in a shared effort to contain Islamic militants. Palestinian moves to suspend this coordination have been short-lived, in part because of the benefits it enjoys from the relationship and also due to US and Israeli pressure to maintain it.

The official, who spoke on condition

of anonymity pending a formal announcement later on Thursday, said the Palestinians also planned to file complaints with the UN Security Council, International Criminal Court and other international bodies.

The gunbattle erupted when the Israeli military conducted a rare day-time operation in the refugee camp that it said was meant to prevent an imminent attack against Israelis. The camp, where the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group has a major foothold, has been a focus of near-nightly Israeli arrest raids.

At least one of the dead was identified by Palestinians as a militant, but it was not clear how many others were affiliated with armed groups.

Later in the day, Israeli forces fatally shot a 22-year-old, the Palestinian Health Ministry said, as young Palestinians confronted Israeli troops north of Jerusalem to protest Thursday's raid.

Tensions between Israelis and Palestinians have soared since Israel stepped up raids in the West Bank last spring, following a series of Palestinian attacks. The conflict has

only intensified this month, as Israel's far-right government came to office and pledged a hard line against the Palestinians.

Israel's new national security minister, far-right politician Itamar Ben-Gvir, who seeks to grant legal immunity to Israeli soldiers who shoot Palestinians, posted a video of himself on Thursday beside the Israeli police chief, beaming triumphantly. He congratulated security forces on a "successful operation," saying the government gives "backing to our fighters in the war against the terrorists."

CONTD. FROM 3RD PAGE

Govt Brings New

have to furnish quarterly return and statistics to the District Magistrate concerned and the Directorates of Social Welfare department.

The officials have to file petition before a Judicial Magistrate First class/ Metropolitan Magistrate for obtaining information prohibiting a child marriage.

They have to file petition for annulling a child marriage in District Court in case any of the contracting party to the marriage is minor.

They have also been asked to file petition before the District Court for maintenance and residence to the female contracting party of the marriage until her remarriage and to file petition before the District Court for the custody and maintenance of children of such marriages.

"Any person in the best interest of the child, may also file a petition through Child Marriage Prohibition Officer," reads the order.

The government has invited interested individuals, organizations, government, statutory bodies and all other interested stakeholders to provide their suggestions and comments to the Social Welfare Department on email id social-welfare.ciss@gmail.com within 15 days from the issuance of this notice beyond which no suggestions shall be entertained.

In October last, KO reported that the percentage of underage girls getting married has significantly flared up in 8 years. Overall, the proportion of women who were married before attaining 18 years of age increased by 0.9 percent from 2012 until 2020.

The Act has also empowered Child Marriage Prohibition Officer with the powers of Police Officer as prescribed in Section 156, 160, 161, 165 and 175 of Criminal Procedure Code subject to the condition that such powers are exercised by the said officer herself/ himself within her/ his jurisdiction for taking cognizance of offences prescribed under the Act.

It further reads that the District Magistrate shall ensure that in every Panchayat, a Committee comprising of the following persons is constituted to assist the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer in obtaining information about such child marriages, in prevention of such ceremonies and in annulling of such marriages.

It says that it shall be the duty of local priests of any religion bestowed with the solemnization of marriages, to inform the Child Marriage Prohibition Officer of her/ his area about the likelihood of such child marriages and shall refrain from solemnizing such marriages with a view to prevent such instances of child marriage.

The act has also announced suitable awards for such persons on whose initiatives/ information the incidents) of child marriages are prevented.

"The District Magistrates shall also felicitate such persons on suitable occasions of National importance," it reads.

However, Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department (SWD), Sheetal Nanda refuted the reports that the child marriages in the UT were high.

"If you compare the data of J&K with other states, the numbers are very less. We have formed an Act and we have put it out on the website. We request people and other stakeholders to give their suggestions" Nanda said.

She further added that the department will launch awareness campaigns throughout J&K regarding the child marriage act.

R-Day Passes

here said the Republic Day parade in Anantnag and Kulgam districts made for a spectacular view as the parade was held amid snowfall, which had painted the parade ground white at both places.

In Pattan area of north Kashmir Baramulla district, a group of school children took out a 'tiranga' rally to mark the Republic Day.

G-20 In J&K

corresponding reduction of 55 percent in civilian killings and 58 percent in the killings of security forces.

'Safety Of KPs Our Topmost Priority'

Reiterating that the safety of Kashmiri Pandits was the topmost priority of his administration, the LG said that all PM package and minority employees working in the valley have been deployed at safe places. Besides, he said, a nodal officer has been appointed in the Raj Bhavan and in every district to resolve issues related to their security and other problems.

"The long-standing issue of availability of land for their accommodations has been resolved, and construction of 3000 accommodations for our Kashmiri Pandit brothers and sisters shall be completed this year," he said.

He said although recruitment under the PM package and reserved categories is on the strength of the Kashmir Division cadre, the issue of their transfer was being examined by an empowered committee.

"The Kashmir Migrant Portal, which was launched in September last year for registering grievances for illegally encroached properties during the 1990s, has registered 8408

applications and action has been taken on 6336 applications, resulting in removal of encroachment on 2608 kanals of land," he added.

J&K Witnessing Industrial Revolution

Claiming that J&K was witnessing an industrial revolution for the first time since independence, the LG said that new private investment proposals worth Rs. 66,000 crore have been received within a period of around one year, during which 1455 industrial units started their operations

"This is, by far, the biggest industrial campaign in the history of Jammu and Kashmir in a year. The foundation stone of Emaar Group Shopping Mall and IT Tower shall be laid in March, 2023 and 52 other industrial units will also start their operations during the same month," Sinha said.

"Further, land has been allotted to 1711 industrial units which is also a new record in the industrial history of Jammu and Kashmir. Another 77 industrial units are being developed on private land and in the last three years, 500 start ups have come up which have ushered in a new social revolution," he added.

The LG added that sincere efforts are being made to revive the handloom and handicraft sector. He said his government is committed to provide training, design, technology inputs like GI tag and such other infrastructural support as are required for quality, branding and boosting global demand for the handicraft products.

'Youth Power Is The Strength'

Speaking about the initiatives taken for the youth of J&K, the LG said that in the last three years, 5.5 lakh youth have been empowered through Mission Youth, Financial Institutions and Central and State Government Institutions in this direction.

"Youth power is the strength of Jammu and Kashmir. Our youth are impatient and enthusiastic for rejuvenation of the Union territory. The administration has taken concrete steps to fully support our young men and women in building a bright future for themselves," the LG.

In the last three years, Sinha said, 33,000 posts have been filled on the basis of merit and the decades-old practice, where "jobs were sold to the highest bidder in the market, has been eliminated".

"I am aware that due to the harsh actions of the administration, job mafias are in disarray and they are attempting to incite sentiments of masses by spreading misinformation. I want to reiterate to our young men and women that no one will be allowed to compromise their future. The administration will ensure that merit is rewarded," he added.

'Tourism Sector Special In J&K's Economy'

Upbeat over the foothall of tourists in the UT last year, the LG said that the tourism sector has a special place in the economy of Jammu and Kashmir. He said a record 1.88 crore tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir last year, which is the highest since independence.

"After the launch of the New Film Policy in 2021, Jammu and Kashmir has emerged as the favorite shooting destination for film industry and permission has been granted for shooting of 150 films and web series in less than two years," he added.

He also added that his administration was strengthening facilities & infrastructure keeping in view the increasing number of devotees coming to visit Mata Vaishno Devi. Besides, he said, the work on Tawi Riverfront is going on in full swing.

"In the last two years, Mansar and Surinsar have been placed on the tourism map of the country. This year Sanasar Tulip Garden shall be opened for local people and tourists," he added.

'Reforms Made In Power Sector'

The LG said that his government had inherited a regressive legacy in the power sector, marred by losses and poor infrastructure. However, he added that unprecedented reforms have been launched to bolster and rejuvenate this ailing sector.

"The UT is likely to see a capacity addition of 3400 MW in the Hydro Power sector within few years from now. Availability of electricity has been enhanced in both Jammu and Kashmir Divisions," he said.

In his address, Sinha also listed achievements of his government over the last two years. In the health sector, he said, his government is spending Rs 2 Crore daily on the treatment of common masses.

"Health Insurance cover has been provided to 97% of the population and 80 lakh golden cards have been issued," he said.

Besides, Sinha said that promotions of over 2000 officers of important government departments which were "stalled" for more than two decades have been cleared by the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission.

"The culture of stop-gap arrangements which plagued departments for decades is being brought to a gradual end and efficiency, ability and hardwork of employees is being duly After a hiatus of 10 years, sixteen officers of the Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Services have been promoted to the Indian Administrative Services," he added.

Speaking about the operations of educational institutions, Sinha said that after three decades of stagnation, schools were operational

for 200 days last year, which is a statement of an emerging vibrant society that has broken free from shackles of the past.

The LG also spoke in detail about the measures taken for the benefit of tribal communities.

"The Prime Minister has built a Jammu and Kashmir in which Tribal Communities are not only freed from economic deprivation, but are also enjoying the fruits of social justice," he said.

The LG also listed developmental works, like road connectivity, water supply executed under the UT administration and central government schemes.

"The year 2022 was a year of achievements for Jammu and Kashmir. However, we have higher aspirations and bigger goals for J&K. We have to capitalize on the present opportunity and take a pledge to build a competitive Jammu and Kashmir which will be prosperous, safe and peaceful; where daughters are given equal rights and opportunities for development; where the rural and urban divide is diminished. Unitedly, we have to realize a fear-free, corruption-free, drug-free and employment-rich Union territory and build a glorious Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Vows Action Against

been successful to a great extent in curbing corruption by issuing land passbooks in three languages.

So far, 28 lakh such passbooks have been distributed, revenue records are being demystified for eliminating the possibility of manipulation. Through Aapki Zameen, Aapki Nigrani, land records have been made readily available to citizens, and the online revenue service delivery is preventing human intervention and mischief," the LG said.

"Similarly, the new land-use laws have ensured that people get a reasonable and fair price for their land and the interest of famers are protected," he added.

No Backchannel

diplomatic engagements with India.

"There is no backchannel diplomacy between India and Pakistan," Baloch said.

Speaking in the Senate, Khar went on to say that Pakistan had always taken initiatives to promote peace in the region but "right now, the cross-border hostility [from India] is of a unique type."

She said that Pakistan was asked at international forums sometimes to normalise its ties with India, but the world should look at the messages New Delhi was sending to Islamabad.

"The messages that we are getting are all conflagratory. Pakistan has the largest interest in unleashing [the potential of] this region but when you have a government on the other side whose prime minister says that their nuclear assets are not for Diwali [] then what can we do?" Khar told the senators.

Her remarks came days after Indian media reported that New Delhi has invited Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial to attend the foreign ministers' and chief justices' meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or SCO in Goa in May.

Baloch in her briefing said that Pakistan had received the invitation which was sent by India as host of the SCO meeting and was reviewing it.

"The invitation is being reviewed. A decision regarding participation in the meeting will be taken after deliberation," she said.

She said as in the past, the Indian invitations are being processed as per standard procedures and a decision will be taken in due course.

The spokesperson also said the SCO is an important trans-regional organisation that aims to strengthen economic linkages and cooperation among its member states in different fields.

Talking about the controversial BBC documentary targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Khar said that the broadcaster had shown the world what Pakistan had said already, adding that Pakistan had learnt from history but some countries in the region have not.

India Displays

parade that started around 10:30 am and ended close to noon after a fly-past. The Egyptian contingent included 144 soldiers representing the main branches of the Egyptian Armed Forces and it was led by Col Mahmoud Mohamed Abdelfattah Elkharaaway.

The ceremony commenced with Prime Minister Modi visiting the National War Memorial and paying tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.

According to tradition, the national flag was unfurled followed by the national anthem with a booming 21-gun salute. However, the ceremonial salute this year was given with 105-mm Indian field guns, which replaced the vintage 25-pounder guns, reflecting upon the growing 'aatmanirbharta' in defence.

Nine Agniveers -- six men and three women -- were part of the Navy's marching contingent during the celebrations, a senior official said.

Shallow fog lowered visibility at the Kartavya Path as spectators strained their eyes to watch

aerial manoeuvres by a battery of 50 aircraft, including 45 from the Indian Air Force (IAF). They flew in different formations such as 'Bheem', 'Vajraang', 'Baaz', 'Tiranga', 'Garuda', 'Amrit' and 'Trishul'.

The fly-past included MiG-29, Su-30 MKI and Rafale fighters as well as C-130 Super Hercules and C-17 Globemaster transport planes. The Navy's IL-38 was also showcased at the event for the first and perhaps the last time.

IL-38 is a maritime reconnaissance aircraft of the Indian Navy that has served for nearly 42 years. The IL-38 is likely to be de-commissioned by the end of this year, sources said.

The military assets which were displayed during the parade included made-in-India equipment, showing the spirit of 'aatmanirbhar Bharat', officials said.

The main battle tank Arjun, the Nag Missile System (NAMIS) and the K-9 Vajra were also showcased.

All equipment from the Army which were part of the Republic Day celebrations are made-in-India, Chief of Staff Delhi Area Maj Gen Bhavnish Kumar had earlier said.

With 'Nari Shakti' being the theme, the Akash weapon system display had Lt Chetana Sharma at the forefront.

The marching contingents from the Army included one each from the mechanised infantry, the Dogra Regiment, the Punjab Regiment, the Maratha Light Infantry, the Bihar Regiment and the Gorkha Brigade. A camel band from the Border Security Force also took part in the parade.

The Republic Day celebrations were held on the revamped Central Vista avenue and was the first at the ceremonial boulevard after Rajpath was renamed to Kartavya Path last year.

Lt Commander Disha Amrith, a woman naval air operations official posted at a strategic base, led the Indian Navy's contingent of 144 young sailors.

The naval tableau, designed on the theme 'Indian Navy - Combat Ready, Credible, Cohesive and Future Proof', showcased the multi-dimensional capabilities of the force, 'Nari Shakti' and key indigenously designed and built assets under 'aatmanirbhar Bharat', officials said.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) showcased one tableau and equipment. The theme of the tableau was 'Securing Nation with Effective Surveillance, Communication and Neutralising Threats'.

Indigenously-developed Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP), a modular 8X8 wheeled combat platform, carried on a 70-ton trailer was displayed by the DRDO.

Three Param Vir Chakra awardees and three Ashok Chakra awardees also took part in the parade, and a 'veterans tableau' with the theme -- 'Towards India's Amrit Kaal with a Resolve of Veterans' Commitment' was also part of it.

The IAF contingent comprising 144 air warriors and four officers, was led by Sqn Ldr Sindhu Reddy. The air force tableau, designed on the theme 'Indian Air Force Power Beyond Boundaries', displayed a rotating globe highlighting IAF's expanded reach, whereby it has been able to provide humanitarian assistance across borders, as also exercises conducted with friendly countries.

A group of 'Shramyogis' involved in the construction of the Central Vista, the Kartavya Path, the new Parliament Building along with milk, vegetable and street vendors were specially invited for the parade.

A total of 23 tableaux -- 17 from states and union territories and six from various ministries and departments -- depicting India's vibrant cultural heritage, economic and social progress took part in the ceremonial parade with 'Nari Shakti' as the theme for majority of the floats.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt, Defence Secretary Girdhar Aramane, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari, Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar and Army chief Gen Manoj Pande also attended the celebrations

Singh tweeted in Hindi his Republic Day greetings and said, "This day is an opportunity for all Indian citizens to strengthen the country's constitutional traditions and rededicate ourselves to the resolve to build a new India. Salute to all the Constitution makers and freedom fighters of India."

Mercury Falls After

normal by 1.4°C), Batote minus 0.5°C (below normal by 2.2°C), Katra 5.6°C (1.3°C below normal) and Bhadarwah 0.6°C (1.4°C above normal).

Ladakh's Leh and Kargil recorded a low of minus 9.0°C and minus 8.1°C respectively, the official said.

While isolated to scattered light rain and snow are forecast, the MeT said that mainly dry weather (80%) was expected on January 27-28 and light to moderate snow and rain likely from January 29th night -30 (60%).

He said in the last 24 hours till 0830 hours, Qazigund received 20.0cm of snow, Pahalgam 40.7cm, Kokernag 35.0cm and Gulmarg 33.5cm. In the last few days, Gulmarg has received over 3ft of snowfall, he said.

Bharat Jodo

message of Rahul Gandhi is one of unity, love and harmony," he added.

Ramesh said he expects a good response to the yatra in Anantnag and Srinagar districts as well.

"There will be a press conference by Rahul Gandhi in Srinagar before the rally on January 30 which will mark the culmination of the yatra," he added.

Ramesh said that the yatra was a "revolutionary" change in the Indian politics.

"It's not an event like Narendra Modi does but a revolutionary transformation for Indian politics. This is a mass movement which will create awareness among the people while strengthening the Congress party as well," he said.

Responding to a question, the Congress leader said the statehood should be restored to Jammu and Kashmir.

"There are examples in our country where Union territories were upgraded to statehood. Jammu and Kashmir is the only state to be made a Union territory. Statehood should be restored to Jammu and Kashmir while Ladakh should be brought under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution," he said.

The march started from Kanyakumari on September 7 and entered Jammu and Kashmir via Punjab on January 19.

The marathon march will culminate with Gandhi unfurling the national flag at the party headquarters in Srinagar and addressing a grand rally at the Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket

Stadium on January 30.

Slain JKP

many places, including near Shrakwara-Najibhat Crossing in Kreeeri."

"When a group of terrorists travelling in a car noticed the police party, they started firing indiscriminately. The security personnel returned fire, leading to the deaths of three foreign terrorists."

However, Sheikh made the supreme sacrifice during the gunfire exchange, the officials said.

On October 5, Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited Sheikh's family during his maiden visit to the Valley following the abrogation of Article 370.

Shah met Sheikh's family and interacted with them. He also visited his graveyard and prayed for Sheikh.

Commenting on the award, Additional Director General of Police (Kashmir) Vijay Kumar said no salute was enough for a larger-than-life hero.

"No salute is enough for a hero who lived larger than life and whose sacrifice belittled death itself. Shaurya Chakra awarded to Shaheed CT Mudansir Sheikh alias Bindas for showing exceptional bravery while neutralising three foreign terrorists. Salute to the brave-heart," he said in a tweet.

Grenade Found

told reporters.

Police and Army personnel have cordoned off the area and a search is underway, he said.

Expressing fear, Showkat also questioned the security measures being enforced in the area.

"Why is this happening to us? This is the second such incident," he said while expressing faith in the security forces.

Security guards have been increased at our house and floodlights installed, Showkat added.

BSF, Pak Rangers

at forward posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in Rajouri and Poonch districts, according to the officials.

Republic Day was celebrated at the frontier headquarters here.

BSF Inspector General D K Boora unfurled the tricolour on the occasion and conveyed his warm wishes to all 'Seema Praharis' serving at the International Border and the LoC and their families. He also recalled the supreme sacrifices of BSF troops.

The IG said the BSF has always faced all challenges firmly to ensure the safety of Indians and will always be committed to the security of the nation.

Highway Reopens

Panthyal on Wednesday, which had also forced suspension of the Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra from Ramban to Banihal towns.

Teen Girl's Body

medico-legal formalities the body was handed over to legal heirs for last rites.

Flyer Arrested

Rathore was offloaded from the flight with his bag and the flight was allowed to leave after the necessary checks. He was handed over to the local police for further action, they said.

The accused told police that he posted the tweet as he was frustrated over the flight being stranded, they added.

A case was registered in the matter and Rathore was arrested, the police said.

Blaze Damages

have caused the fire.

A police officer confirmed and said that the

Kashmiri Santoor Craftsman Elated By Padma Shri Award



Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: Santoor craftsman Ghulam Mohammad Zaz, who was conferred with the Padma Shri award on the eve of Republic Day, on Thursday expressed happiness at the recognition for his art but feels it has come a bit too late.

"I am extremely happy for getting the Padma Shri but I would have been happier if this award had come when my grandfather, my father or my uncle were alive and making these instruments.

"I am nothing before them. Whatever I learnt I learnt from

them," 81-year-old Zaz told PTI at his Zaina Kadal residence here.

The master craftsman said he would continue making musical instruments, including the santoor, that fetched him the honour as long his life permits.

"This award has restored my faith that there are people who appreciate this kind of work. This is a dying art. Finally, someone has raised a voice for it," he added.

Zaz said he was the eighth generation in his family to be involved in making these stringed instruments.

"I don't know how it came to our family. Some say it was during the reign of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb while others say it was one of the crafts that came to Kashmir with Mir Syed Ali Hamadani (the 14th century poet, traveller and Islamic preacher)," he added.

Zaz also expressed his disappointment at the newer generations not showing interest in taking up the trade. But is hopeful that someone would pick up the threads and not allow it to die.

"How to save this art? Someone will come up...I don't think it will die," he said.

Kupwara Admin Receives Award For Meritorious Public Service

Observer News Service

KUPWARA: The District Administration Kupwara has been awarded with Jammu and Kashmir Government award on Republic Day 2023 for performance of meritorious public service in the District.

The award comprises Cash award of Rs.51000, a Medal and a Citation.

The people of Kupwara district and the officers of district administration Kupwara have

expressed gratitude and congratulated Deputy Commissioner Kupwara, Dr. Doifode Sagar Dattatray for his extraordinary skills and command over administration.

The Deputy Commissioner also expressed his good wishes for all the officers of administration and urged upon them to work with more dedication and honesty so that district administration Kupwara could achieve more and more awards for the best public service in the district.

NHM Presents Awards To Best Functionaries Of ASHA, PMU J&K

Observer News Service

JAMMU: National Health Mission on Thursday presented awards to the best functionaries of ASHA Programme in the UT of J&K.

A total of 108 best ASHAs, ASHA Facilitators, Block ASHA Coordinators, District ASHA Coordinators, State Trainers besides Block and District Programme Management Units bagged best functionary awards in recognition of their outstanding contribution towards making ASHA Programme and Centrally Sponsored Schemes a huge success in the UT of J&K.

The awards were comprised of Appreciation Certificates and cash reward worth Rs. 5000 per functionary which were presented by the respective District Development Commissioners in all the districts on the eve of 74th Republic Day. .

Sanjiv M Gadkar, MD, NHM J&K, while giving details, informed that two ASHAs per district, two ASHA facilitators per division, three Block ASHA Coordinators per division, one district ASHA Coordinator per division and one UT ASHA Trainer per division have been awarded for being best achievers in their re-

spective field. In addition, one District Programme Manager, one District Accounts Manager and 1 District Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, two Block Monitoring Evaluation Officers and two Block Accounts Managers per division have been selected for awards for their best performance.

Pertinently, ASHA Programme being implemented by NHM, J&K, is a bridge between the Health Department and the community. All the health schemes of NHM/J&K Government are being implemented by ASHAs and their Cadres at the grass root level. ASHA is a link through which the health care needs of the people are being catered.

Recognizing their importance for health care delivery at ground level and also during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bhupinder Kumar, Secretary, Health and Medical Education decided to present the best achievers awards for boosting the morale of ASHAs and ASHA Cadres in the UT of J&K.

At present, about 13000 ASHAs and ASHA Cadres have been working in the UT of J&K and about 300 officials of Programme Management Units are working at block and district level.



UNFAZED BY THE NAIL BITING COLD, shirtless Congress activists shout slogans in support of Bharat Jodo Yatra in Banihal on Thursday.

KO PHOTO, ABID BHAT

R-DAY CELEBRATIONS

LG Unfurls National Flag At MA Stadium In Jammu

Observer News Service

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha unfurled the National Flag at the UT level function on the occasion of the 74th Republic Day, here at MA Stadium on Thursday.

The Lt Governor inspected the contingents of the Republic Day Parade and took the ceremonial salute.

The Republic Day Parade consisted of smart contingents from Army, BSF, CRPF, SSB, IRP (Women & Male), J&K Police, JKAP, UT Disaster Response Force, J&K Fire and Emergency Services, J&K Forest Protection Force, J&K Excise Department, J&K Ex-Services League, NCC (Boys and Girls), Bharat Scouts and Guides (Girls & Boys), besides several school contingents, Brass & Pipe Bands of Army, BSF, J&K Police, J&K Armed Police and Band Troops (Girl & Boys) of different Schools.

Various schools and departments on the occasion presented spellbinding performances and spread awareness on Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir, Digital Journey of J&K and Swachh Bharat Mission.

Acrobatics on Motorcycle by the dare-devils of JKP, dance performances representing different regions of the nation based on the themes of unity, integrity and national integration, the history and heritage of Jammu Kashmir and displays by J&K Fire & Emergency Ser-



vices, JKRLM, Youth Services & Sports Department, remained the highlights of the Republic Day celebrations.

Earlier, the Lieutenant Governor laid wreath at Police Martyrs Memorial & Balidan Stambh and paid tributes to brave hearts & war heroes of Mother India who made supreme sacrifices while protecting the territorial integrity of the nation.

The Republic Day celebrations were attended by Chief Justice (A) Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court; Judges of the J&K and Ladakh High Court; Chief Election Commissioner of Jammu & Kashmir; Mayor, Jammu Municipal Corporation; Members of Parliament; DDC Chairperson, Jammu; Chief Secretary; DGP; Chairperson J&K Waqf Board; elected representatives of ULBs and PRIs; former Legislators; senior Civil, Police and Army officers; political and social leaders; prominent citizens, media persons and the citizenry.

Hosts Republic Day 'At Home'

JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha hosted the 'At Home' reception at the Raj Bhavan on the occasion of the 74th Republic Day.

The Lt Governor interacted with the invitees from different walks of life and exchanged Republic Day greetings with them.

Family members of the martyrs of Jammu Kashmir Police, Security Forces, ex-servicemen and the changemakers of Jammu Kashmir were among the special invitees.

The customary 'At Home' was attended by the Chief Justice (A) Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court; Chief Election Commissioner of Jammu & Kashmir; Vice Chancellors of the Universities; former legislators; PRI and ULB representatives; Heads and representatives of various social and political organizations; eminent citizens; National Awardees; prominent artists; sportspersons; media persons; besides senior Civil, Police and Army officers, and senior government officials

Govt Puts 15 Yrs Service Experience Requirement For SMC, JMC Heads In Abeyance

Agencies

SRINAGAR: In a move to allow incumbent commissioners of Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) and Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) to continue at their current places of posting, the Jammu & Kashmir government has put in abeyance a legal provision that mandated 15 years' service experience for officers to be posted as administrative heads of J&K's two biggest municipal bodies.

In a notification, the Housing & Urban Development Department has done away with the statutory requirement of 15 years of service experience for officers to be posted as commissioners in SMC and JMC.

As per sub-section (1) of section 45 of the Municipal Corporation Act, 2000, the government shall, by notification, in the

government gazette, appoint a class 1 officer of the government having a service of not less than fifteen years, as the commissioner of the Corporation.

The Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation (Removal of Difficulties) Order, 2023 states that the government may appoint any suitable officer as commissioner of the Corporation, irrespective of his service experience, for the smooth functioning of the Corporations.

The legal requirement of 15 years of experience has been put on hold by invoking section 427 of the Municipal Corporation Act, which empowers the government to remove difficulties in the implementation of the Act. "If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act or by reasons of anything contained in this Act to any other enactment for the time being

in force, the Government may, as occasion requires, by order direct that this Act shall during such period as may be specified in the order but not extending beyond the expiry of two years from the commencement orders have effect subject to such adaptations whether by way of modification, addition or omissions as it may deem to be necessary and expedient," reads the provision.

According to the notification, the Jammu and Kashmir Municipal Corporation (Removal of Difficulties) Order, 2023, shall deemed to have come into force w.e.f 01.01.2023 and shall remain in force for a period of two years or till it is revoked by the Government, whichever is earlier.

The incumbent SMC commissioner Athar Aamir Khan is 2015-batch IAS officer while his Jammu counterpart Rahul Yadav is 2014 -batch officer—(KNO)

R-DAY

ABVP Conducts March With 100-Foot Tricolor Through Lal Chowk

Press Trust Of India

SRINAGAR: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad on Thursday conducted a march with a 100-foot-long national flag through the historic Lal Chowk city centre here to mark India's 74th Republic Day.

Chanting 'Vande Mataram' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) activists from various parts of the country

marched from Sher-e-Kashmir park to the iconic clock tower in Lal Chowk.

Tight security was in place for the rally, which concluded peacefully.

This is the first time that the ABVP, the students' wing of the RSS, has held an event in Kashmir.

Earlier, the BJP's Jammu and Kashmir unit hoisted the Tricolour at the clock tower as part of Republic Day celebrations.

Uri Director Among 33 Selected For J&K Awards

Press Trust Of India

JAMMU: Uri film director Aditya Dhar, cricketer Umran Malik, and top tennis player Ankita Raina were among 32 people selected for the government awards in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday.

The award announced as part of the 74th Republic Day also included Deepak Kumar and Saroj Bala, who were killed fighting terrorists during an attack in Dhangri village in Rajouri district on January 1. The two have been selected for award in the field of bravery.

Bashir Bhaderwahi, a noted literary personality and prolific writer in Kashmiri and Urdu language, Ustad Mohammad Yaqoob Sheikh, who made significant contribution in the development of Kashmiri Sufi classical music, Vijay Kumar Sambyal, an Indian classical maestro, and Ramesh Gangloo, who founded Radio Sharda to promote Kashmiri language, music, and culture, were conferred with the Lifetime achievement awards, according to an order issued by the administration.

In performing arts, Union Territory selected actor Viduyt Jamwal, writer director Aditya Dhar, film director Mir Sarwar, and Kashmiri folk singer Noor Mohammad for the award.

Currently India's number one tennis player Ankita

Raina, whose family comes from South Kashmir, cricketer, known as 'Jammu express', Umran Malik, and footballer Ishan Pandita, were among those selected as outstanding sportspersons for the award.

Inshah Bashir (Basketball-Wheel Chair player), Ayeera Hassan Chisti (Wushu), Soham Kamotra (Chess), Rahul Jangral (Mountaineering), Muskan Rana (Gymnastics), Kritarthi Kotwal (Fencing), and Mannat Choudhary (Volley ball) were the other sportspersons selected for the award.

Dhian Singh (Writer), Rajeshwar Singh Raju (Hindi and Dogri writer), Dr Neelam Sarin (Hindi and Dogri writer), Ghulam Nabi Haleem (Kashmiri author), and Nisar Rahi (Pahari writer) were selected for the award in the field of literature.

Sculptor Ravinder Jamwal was awarded for excellence in arts & crafts, while Ravinder Pandita (Save Sharda Committee) was for social reforms & empowerment.

Daily Excelsior Special Correspondent Nishikant Khajuria, Tejinder Singh- Editor News18, Sominder Koul - Bureau Chief ANI, and Emmad Makdoomi from Greater Kashmir, got the award as outstanding media persons.

The life time award carries a cash award of Rs 1 lakh, while other award carry Rs 51,000 cash, a medal, and a citation.

High Court Celebrates 74th Republic Day

Acting Chief Justice Unfurls Tricolour At HC Jammu Wing

Observer News Service

JAMMU: The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh celebrated the 74th Republic Day on Thursday.

The main function of the Republic Day was held in the High Court Wing, Jammu, wherein Acting Chief Justice, Justice Tashi Rabstan, unfurled the National Flag and paid rich tributes to martyrs.

The event was attended by Justice Sanjeev Kumar, Justice Sindhu Sharma, Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Justice Puneet Gupta, Justice Mohammad Akram Chowdhary, Justice Rahul Bharti, Justice Moksha Khajuria Kazmi and Justice Rajesh Sekhri.

Also, Advocate General of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Secretary, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs as well as the Bar President, High Court Bar Association, Jammu and Senior Advocates of Jammu besides Registrar General and other officers and officials of the regis-



try of main wing of Jammu also participated in the event.

On the occasion, the contingent of Armed Forces played patriotic songs/tunes after unfurling of the National Flag.

Later, Justice Tashi Rabstan distributed sweets among the members of the Armed Forces.

Govt Okays Rs 39 Cr Project To Boost Commercial Floriculture

Observer News Service

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Government has approved a mega Rs 39-crore project with an avowed objective of exploring the huge floriculture potential keeping in view the varied agro-climate and ecological conditions in the Union Territory for giving boost to flower production.

"The project is expected to provide direct employment to 2000 besides creation of 330 new enterprises", Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Production Department said.

He said Jammu and Kashmir has long been known for its rich and diverse agri-ecozones, making it an ideal location for growth of a thriving floriculture industry. Abundantly endowed with natural wealth and

scenic splendor, the UT is completely conducive for cultivation of a wide range of flowers. The aesthetic value of flowers, their increasing use in the social events and potential of generating more money are attracting prospective entrepreneurs towards floriculture industry.

Splendid gardens and parks in J&K are being enjoyed by the tourists from across the globe.

However, despite this potential, the sector has not been able to make a significant contribution to the horticulture economy in the region so far. The main reasons for this are the small number of growers and enterprises, lack of aggregation platforms and weak post-harvest and branding efforts. And, to fill up these gaps the J&K government recently approved this ambitious project to boost com-

mercial floriculture in the region.

"The Indian floriculture industry has been shifting from traditional flowers to cut flowers for export purposes. India has a dynamic Rs 15,000 crore domestic floriculture sector which exported produce worth Rs. 771.41 crore in 2021-22. Moreover, commercial floriculture has higher potential per unit area than most of the field crops and is therefore a lucrative business", he said.

"One of the key focuses of the project is cluster-based area expansion of small ornamental nurseries, which will help to increase output and productivity. The project shall undertake protected cultivation of cut flowers, aromatic plants, loose flowers, and bulbous ornamental crops, as well as annual flower seed production. The project also included technology up-

grades for existing ornamental nurseries, building aggregation platforms and post-harvest interventions like on-farm distillation units, seed processing units, walk-in cold storage, transport, branding and marketing efforts," he added.

The new project aims to address the challenges facing the floriculture industry in J&K through a number of latest technological interventions and strategies. The objectives of the project included increasing output from the pre-COVID levels of Rs 28 crore to around Rs. 85 crore per year in the next four years, supporting each production cluster with end-to-end value chain, post-harvest and processing facilities, branding, and market access, and capacity building of human resources for increasing employment in floriculture and al-

lied sectors.

The project shall restore 2.25 hectare of area under cut flower production apart from adding 24 hectare of nursery area, creating four clusters (85ha) for lavender cultivation, increasing the area under loose flower production, and expanding the area under seed/bulb production. It also included exposure visits and trainings for stakeholders and business development and contract farming agreements with breeder and seed companies.

The project's key outputs included upgrading 54 nursery units to high-tech operations, re-operationalizing 150 units, adding an additional 400 hectare of area under cultivation (total 587 ha), creating 330 new enterprises and training 2000 new growers in aromatic flower and bulb/seed

production. It also aims to produce over 27 crore ornamental nursery plants and 4000 L of aromatic oils worth Rs 4.8 crore annually (from 5th year) and undertake skilling of 4000 growers in cluster mode. The total outlay of the project is Rs. 39.03 crore.

Overall, the new project represents a major step forward for the floriculture industry in J&K. With a focus on cluster-based area expansion, technology upgrades, post-harvest and marketing efforts, the project has the potential to help establish a sustainable and profitable floriculture industry in the region. It is hoped that this project will help to create new opportunities for growers and entrepreneurs, and will contribute to the overall economic development of J&K.



Anantnag Girl Bags Prestigious 'Bal Rashtriya Puraskar' Award

Agencies

ANANTNAG: A 16-year-old girl from South Kashmir's Anantnag district was on Thursday awarded the very prestigious Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) 2023 award.

Hanaya Nisar, a resident of Kokernag area of Anantnag, has been given this award as she had represented India and won the Gold Medal in the 3rd World SQAY Martial Arts Championship held in Chingju, South Korea in October 2018.

Hanaya, who is an 11th class student said that she feels very much honoured to receive this prestigious award and everyone around her including Mir Salma Rashid, whole Sqay Federation of India, family and relatives are very much happy. Hanaya has so far won dozens of gold medals in Martial arts at International, National and state level.

She has recently won gold medal in 23rd Sqay National Championship held in Jammu besides that she was given Champion of Champions title by Sqay Federation of India.

"I guess the sports infrastructure needs more improvement

as the biggest challenge that they have also faced is of Sponsorship that almost every sports person faces and I guess that is something which can create a great impact on your journey," she said when asked about sports infrastructure in J&K.

On asking about her future plans, she said she wants to continue playing Sqay Martial Arts and wants to pursue law as well.

The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar ('Prime Minister's National Award for Children'), formerly called the National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement, is India's highest civilian honour for children, awarded annually by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Bal Puraskar is given to children aged five to 18 for their achievements in six categories: Art & Culture, Bravery, Innovation, Scholastic, Social Service, and Sports. Each PMRBP awardee receives a medal, a cash prize of Rs1 lakh, and a certificate.

This year, eleven children from across India were awarded for their outstanding achievements in the fields of art and culture (4), bravery (1), innovation (2), social service (1), and sports (3). (KNO)

ICC Name Babar Azam Cricketer Of The Year & ODI Player Of The Year

Agencies

DUBAI: Pakistan skipper Babar Azam was Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy i.e. the ICC Men's Player of the Year title for the calendar year of 2022. Babar is only the second Pakistan cricketer to win the prestigious award after Shaheen Shah Afridi, who won it in 2021. The 28-year-old was also named as the Men's ODI Player of the Year.

Across formats, Babar scored 2598 runs in 44 matches at an average of 54.12, which included eight centuries and 15 half-centuries. Apart from this, Pakistan also reached the 2022 T20 World Cup final under his captainship. This, despite of losing their opening two matches in the competition to India and Zimbabwe.

Babar was the only player to breach the 2000 run mark in the year gone by. The Men's ODI Player of the Year for the past two years continued his form in the 50-over format, scoring 679 runs in nine matches.



In Tests, despite Pakistan winning only one of their nine matches, the captain accumulated 1184 runs from the same. A memorable moment of him in the whites arrived in the second Test against Australia in Karachi.

With Pakistan requiring 506 runs to win in close to six sessions that remained, Babar notched up 196 runs off 425 deliveries and walked off to a standing ovation, having scored the highest by a Test captain in the fourth innings of a Test.

Rybakina, Sabalenka To Meet In AO Women's Final



Agencies

MELBOURNE: What all seemed so different, so daunting, even, about trying to win a Grand Slam title to Elena Rybakina a little more than six months ago is now coming rather naturally.

And if she can win one more match, she will add a championship at the Australian Open to the one she collected at Wimbledon.

Rybakina, a 23-year-old who represents Kazakhstan, reached her second final in a span of three major tournaments by beating Victoria Azarenka 7-6 (4), 6-3 at Melbourne Park on Thursday, signaling a rapid rise toward the top of tennis.

"Everything was new at Wimbledon," Rybakina said after hitting

nine aces in the semifinals to raise her tournament-leading total to 44. "Now I more or less understand what to expect."

That could come in handy Saturday, when she will face No. 5 seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus. Sabalenka reached her first Grand Slam title match at age 24 by beating unseeded Magda Linette 7-6 (1), 6-2 in Thursday's second semifinal.

Sabalenka improved to 10-0 in 2023, winning all 20 sets she's contested this season.

More importantly, the victory over Linette gave Sabalenka her first taste of success in a Slam semi after going 0-3 at that stage until now, losing each previous attempt by a 6-4 score in the third set.

Eyes On Gill, Ishan As India Meet New Zealand In T20s



Press Trust of India

RANCHI: India are set for a T20 appetizer ahead of their marquee Test series against Australia when they take on the touring New Zealanders in a three-match series, beginning in Ranchi on Friday.

With less than two weeks left for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy matches against Australia that will determine India's World Test Championship final fate, a T20 series in the midst of a packed ODI calendar ahead of the 50-over World Cup may seem purposeless.

As a result, Hardik Pandya, who led a 2-1 series win over Sri Lanka earlier this month, is back leading the T20 side with some regulars and fringe players in the squad.

While skipper Rohit Sharma,

Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Mohammed Siraj and Mohammed Shami are rested, the likes of Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav, Ishan Kishan and Kuldeep Yadav will get an extended run before they assemble for the Test series camp at Nagpur from February 2.

There is also the welcome addition of attacking Mumbai opener Prithvi Shaw, who returns to the team on the back of a series of superlative performances in domestic cricket, including a record-breaking 379 against Assam in the Ranji Trophy.

It's been over a year since the 23-year-old last played for India, in July 2021, and it remains to be seen if Pandya is tempted to fiddle with his set opening combination of Gill and wicket-keeper-batter Ishan Kishan.

Gill is in the form of his life,

especially in ODIs, where he scored a career-best 208 against the Kiwis, to go alongside two centuries in his last four innings.

When it comes to the T20 format, the elegant Punjab batter may look a bit iffy but he has shown that he has all the shots in his armoury to cement the opening slot.

In such a scenario, it remains to be seen how Pandya slots in the spirited Shaw, who may have to wait for his chance.

India were at their marauding best in the ODIs and will expect some fightback by the Kiwis, led by Mitchell Santner in the T20 leg.

Left-hander Devon Conway showed his imperious form for the Black Caps, scoring 138 off 100 balls, as they gave India a run for their money in their defence of 386 in Indore.



Russia's Path To 2024 Olympics Takes Shape, Ukraine Objects

Agencies

LAUSANNE: Russia's path to sending a team to the Paris Olympics next year became clearer on Thursday amid fierce objections from Ukraine.

The International Olympic Committee indicated on Wednesday it favors officially neutral teams from Russia and its ally Belarus at the 2024 Olympics despite a plea from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to exclude them entirely. A day later, Russia and Belarus were invited to compete at the Asian Games, a key Olympic qualifier.

Russia typically competes as part of Europe but has a tense relationship with many of the countries set to host qualifying events there. Russia and Belarus have been barred from almost all international competitions in Olympic sports following the invasion of Ukraine.

Zelenskyy has said he told French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country is hosting the Olympics, that Russia should have "no place" there. Ukraine is seeking to rally support against the IOC-brokered plan.

"IOC has been disregarding Russian war crimes, claiming that 'No athlete should be prevented from competing just because of their passport', while Ukrainian athletes continue to be killed by Russia because of their passports. I urge all sports figures to make their stance known," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba wrote on Twitter on Thursday.

Ukraine boycotted an Olympic qualifier in judo last year when Russians were allowed to compete as

neutrals. In Russia, there was praise from the IOC plan from Igor Levitin, an aide to President Vladimir Putin who holds influential government and sports posts.


"I think it is already a success. Olympic society understands that the Olympic Games cannot be staged without Russia," said Levitin, who is the senior vice-president of the Russian Olympic Committee, in comments reported by state news agency Tass.

Some Russian officials expressed unhappiness at the IOC declaring it would not allow athletes found to be "actively supporting the war in Ukraine." Russian Olympic Committee president Stanislav Pozdnyakov said on Wednesday he opposed "any restrictions, extra requirements or sanctions."

The IOC statement on Wednesday referenced the civil war in the former Yugoslavia at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona. The country was under United Nations sanctions so Yugoslav athletes were allowed to compete individually only as "Independent Olympic Participants."

They didn't take part in team sports such as soccer and basketball.

That would be stricter than previous IOC measures against Russia in the years-long fallout from one of the largest doping cases in sports history. Russians competed under the name "Olympic Athlete from Russia" at the 2018 Winter Olympics and as ROC — short for Russian Olympic Committee — in 2021 and 2022, without their country's anthem or flag but with national colors on uniforms.



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