

NSG deployed to provide counter-drone protection to Srinagar, Jammu IAF bases: DG

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

GURGAON: Counter-terrorism commando force National Security Guard has been deployed at the IAF stations in Srinagar and Jammu to provide anti-drone security cover to these vital installations, the force's director general M A Ganapathy said on Saturday.

The first-ever drone attack took place on June 27 at the Indian Air Force (IAF) station in Jammu where two unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which came from across the border; dropped bombs, injuring two airmen and damaging a portion of a building.

The two IAF facilities in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir are located close to the Pakistan border and are categorised as "sensitive" installations.

The National Security Guard (NSG) chief said the federal counter-terrorist and counter-hijack commando force is enhancing its "counter-terrorism profile" and preparing itself to meet emerging security challenges.

He said the forces' bomb disposal teams had neutralised improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and tiffin bombs, including those that were



brought by drones from Pakistan and dropped in Indian territory.

The director general (DG) was speaking during the 37th raising day celebrations of the force, also known as the 'black cats', at its garrison in Manesar here.

Ganapathy said the NSG "has been deployed" at the Srinagar and Jammu IAF stations to provide security cover to the facilities keeping in mind drone attacks and added that this system is working "successfully".

A senior officer added that this deployment "will continue till a full-fledged and independent counter-drone system is deployed at these two

bases".

The NSG has an array of anti-drone equipment, radars, jammers and drone killer guns that essentially work for perimeter security, the officer said.

Soon after the drone attack on the Jammu IAF base, he said, an NSG 'technical surveillance' team was sent to the station and it deployed its equipment there.

Later talking to the media, DG Ganapathy said drone warfare is a "new challenge" and all the security forces need to upgrade their capabilities and technology against such attacks.

"Drones are an easy way to create mischief, to drop bombs and payload like weapons and ammunition," he said.

All the security forces need to upgrade themselves vis-a-vis counter-drone technology and "I think we are capable to tackle this threat", the NSG DG said.

Asked why was the specially trained force not being involved in counter-terrorist operations being carried out in the Kashmir Valley, Ganapathy said the NSG has expertise in house intervention, hostage rescue and counter-hijack tasks and as and when

they are requisitioned, the force will respond.

Officiating as the chief guest of the event, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai lauded the commando force for its operations and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought an "independent security policy" for the country.

The minister said security threats are continuously evolving including the threats of 'lone wolf' attacks and aerial strikes.

The NSG was raised as a federal counter-terrorist force in 1984 to undertake surgical commando operations to neutralise terrorist and hijack threats.

It is also a special squad that provides armed security cover to at least 13 high-risk VIPs at present.

The NSG has five hubs in the country, apart from its main garrison here, and in each of them, a team of commandos is stationed in readiness 24x7 to respond to any threat situation within a 30 minute mobilisation time-frame. The five NSG hubs or bases are located in Gandhinagar, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Chennai and they were created post the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.

CS reviews mining ops, directs installation of helpline numbers



Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta chairing a meeting.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, on Saturday chaired a meeting to review mining activities towards ensuring the availability of construction material at reasonable prices in Jammu and Kashmir. Administrative Secretaries of departments of Revenue, Mining, Forest, Ecology & Environment, besides Director, Ecology, Environment & Remote Sensing, Member Secretary, Pollution Control Board (PCB), Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu, all Deputy Commissioners, District SPs, and concerned officers participated in the meeting. While emphasizing the availability of various minor minerals at reasonable prices, the Chief Secretary directed the concerned to expeditiously complete the registration process of auctioned mines for their early operationalization so that the supply of these minerals is augmented and consequently prices are stabilized across all districts.

The Chief Secretary expressed concern over the failure of successful bidders of the e-auction of minor mineral mines in completing the requisite codal formalities. The Chief Secretary asked

the Mining Department to initiate cancellation proceedings if they fail to apply for the statutory clearances within the stipulated time frame and consider re-auction of the defunct mines. Reviewing the issue of pendency of departmental NOCs, the Chief Secretary directed the Divisional Commissioners to hold special reviews and facilitate time-bound issuance of the same. The Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu were also directed to undertake regular market surveillance and ensure the availability of construction material at equitable rates across all districts. They were asked to analyze the difference in rates between districts and rationalize the same, besides ensuring enforcement of the notified rates by curbing any form of illegal mining or trade. They were asked to take strict penal actions against the delinquent agencies found to be associated with illegal activities and over-charging. Dr. Mehta further asked the Mining Department to install dedicated helpline numbers to facilitate grievance redressal on account of unavailability of construction materials at notified prices, besides periodically monitoring district-wise market rates and taking strict action against over pricing.

NC leader A R Rather's son Hilal Rather joins PC



Hilal Rather, joining JKPC in presence of party president and others leaders on Saturday.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Hilal Rather, son of veteran National Conference leader Abdul Rahim Rather, joined the Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference on Saturday.

Rather, who is out on bail in a case related to diversion of loan money taken from Jammu and Kashmir Bank, joined the People's Conference in the presence of party chairman Sajad Gani Lone.

Asked if he had consulted his father and NC leader Abdul Rahim Rather on joining Lone's party, Rather replied in the negative.

"I respect my father and he has been magnanimous in giving me space to take my own decisions. I have taken this decision on my own," he said.

Rather said he chose People's Conference as he wanted to work for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir who have immensely suffered due to the ongoing conflict.

Asked why he did not join the National Conference, he said he did not want to do negative politics. "I want to do positive politics," he asserted.

While welcoming Rather into the party, Lone said the People's Conference has arrived.

"Let there be no delusions...There are many who refuse to see reality as it exists and want to create reality as they want to see it.

"We have come, we have arrived and we will conquer for the betterment of people of Jammu and Kashmir," Lone added.

Rather is facing the investigation by the CBI into the loan taken from the J&K Bank for his ambitious township project in 2012, when his father was the finance minister of the erstwhile state. The loan was allegedly sanctioned without submitting any collateral and the money was diverted from the bank account.

The account had turned a non-performing asset in 2017.

Elections to Congress president's post to be held in September 2022: Sources

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Congress Working Committee on Saturday decided that the elections to the post of Congress president will be held in September next year, sources said.

During a nearly five-hour-long meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), which is the party's highest decision-making body, various leaders, including chief ministers Ashok Gehlot of Rajasthan, Bhupesh Baghel of Chhattisgarh and Charanjit Singh Channi of Punjab urged Rahul Gandhi to take over as the president.

Rahul Gandhi, in turn, thanked all the leaders for reposing faith in him and said he would apply his mind on their request, the sources said.

The CWC has decided that the elections to the post of Congress president will be held in September next year, a CWC member told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

Three resolutions, including one on the political situation of the country, have also been passed by the CWC, the leader said.

Interim Congress president Sonia Gandhi, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the three Congress chief ministers, among others, attended the meeting, the

first such physical meet of the CWC since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

G-23 leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad and Anand Sharma were among those present at the meeting at the All India Congress Committee headquarters here.

In her opening remarks at the CWC meeting, interim chief Sonia Gandhi said she is a full-time and hands-on party president and there is no need for leaders to speak to her through the media.

Her remarks came days after Kapil Sibal, one of the leaders of the group of 23 who had written to Sonia Gandhi for organisational overhaul last year, demanded that an immediate meeting of the CWC be convened and wondered who in the party was taking decisions in the absence of a full-time president.

In her opening remarks at the CWC meeting, Sonia Gandhi asserted that every member of the party wants a revival of the Congress, but that requires unity and keeping the party's interest paramount.

"Above all, it requires self-control and discipline," she added.

Recalling that the Congress had finalised a roadmap for electing a regular Congress chief by June 30 but that deadline was extended

indefinitely due to Covid second wave, Sonia Gandhi said today was the occasion for bringing clarity once and for all on the issue of the organisational polls.

A schedule for full-fledged organisational elections has been put before the CWC members, she said.

The meeting of the CWC was convened after demands from some quarters to discuss important issues, including some defections in the recent past.

The meeting also came amid rumblings within the Congress' units such as in Punjab, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, states where the party is in power.

"I am, if you will allow me to say so, a full-time and hands-on Congress president," Sonia Gandhi said, which is seen by many as a response to Sibal's comments last month.

Sonia Gandhi also asserted that she has always appreciated frankness and there was no need to speak to her through the media.

"So let us all have a free and honest discussion. But what should get communicated outside the four walls of this room is the collective decision of the CWC," she said.

The G-23 leaders had been demanding that a CWC meeting be

convened, with Sibal last month wondering who in the party was taking decisions in the absence of a full-time president. He has asserted that the G23 leaders' grouping is "not a Jee Huzar 23".

Former leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Azad had also written to Sonia Gandhi to convene a meeting of the CWC at the earliest.

The Congress in its CWC meeting held on January 22 had decided it would have an elected president by June 2021. But it was deferred at the May 10 CWC meet because of the COVID-19 situation.

The latest meeting is being held in the wake of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence on October 3 in which eight people lost their lives. The dead included four farmers who were allegedly run over by an SUV belonging to the convoy of Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Kumar Mishra.

Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra, who has been named in an FIR, was arrested on Saturday by the Uttar Pradesh Police in connection with the moving down of the four farmers. The incident has given enough ammunition to the Congress party to corner the BJP government and recapture the lost political space.

J&K reports 82 new COVID cases

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir reported 82 COVID-19 cases and zero daily deaths due to the dis-



ease on Saturday, taking the union territory's infection tally to 3,30,967.

Fifteen of these were from Jammu division and 67 from Kashmir division, officials said.

They said Srinagar district recorded the highest number of 37 new cases, followed Baramulla with 12.

There are 855 active cases of the disease in the union territory, while the number of recoveries stands at 3,25,686, the officials said.

The death toll is at 4,426, they said.

There were 47 confirmed cases of mucormycosis (black fungus) in the union territory at present.

Samba District Judo C'ship on Oct 18

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu Kashmir Judo Association is going to organize Samba District Judo Championship on October 18, 2021 at JSN Higher Secondary School Vijaypur.

All the eligible Judokas asked to report to Manish Chatwal Organizing Secretary at Mobile No. 7006494826 for further information.

The championship is being organized under the aegis of J&K Sports Council and J&K Olympic Association.

Petrol, diesel prices hiked again

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Petrol and diesel price on Saturday was hiked again by 35 paise a litre to take retail rates across the country to new record highs.

With this hike, petrol is now at Rs 100-a-litre mark or more in all state capitals, while diesel has touched the 100-level in a dozen states. Diesel is nearing Rs 100-a-litre mark in Goa and Bengaluru.

The price of petrol in Delhi rose to its highest-ever level of Rs 105.49 a litre and Rs 111.43 per litre in Mumbai, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

In Mumbai, diesel now comes for Rs 102.15 a litre; while in Delhi, it costs Rs 94.22.

This is the third straight day of 35 paise per litre hike in petrol and diesel prices. There was no change in rates on October 12 and 13.

Since ending of a three-week long hiatus in rate revision in the last week of September,

this is the 15th increase in petrol price and the 18th time that diesel rates have gone up.

While petrol price in most of the country is already above Rs 100-a-litre mark, diesel rates have crossed that level in



a dozen states/UT including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Bihar, Kerala, Karnataka and Ladakh.

In Panaji, diesel now costs Rs 99.56 a litre while in Bengaluru it comes for Rs 99.97 per litre and Silvassa for Rs 99.86.

Prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes.

Shedding the modest price change policy, state-owned fuel retailers have since October 6 started passing on the larger incidence of cost to consumers.

This is because the international benchmark Brent crude is trading at USD 84.8 per barrel for the first time in seven years.

A month back, Brent was trading at USD 73.51.

Being a net importer of oil, India prices petrol and diesel at rates equivalent to international prices.

The surge in international oil prices ended a three-week hiatus in rates on September 28 for petrol and September 24 for diesel.

Since then, diesel rates have gone up by Rs 5.6 per litre and petrol price has increased by Rs 4.30 a litre.

Prior to that, the petrol price was increased by Rs 11.44 a litre between May 4 and July 17. Diesel rate had gone up by Rs 9.14 a litre during this period.

CU JDI organises Nukkad Natak on Global Hand Washing Day at SMHS

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The Cultural Unit of the Joint Directorate of Information Srinagar in collaboration with Angel's Cultural Academy & SMHS hospital organise a Nukkad Natak on Global Hand Washing Day and Covid-19 Awareness at SMHS Hospital Srinagar.

The Nukkad Natak programme was organised to raise mass awareness about the importance of Health Hygiene & COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviour. On the occasion, Mask Distribution were distributed among the participants and others.

Besides, through the Act the artists advised the participants to keep following all the guidelines of the Health Department regarding COVID-19 and take vaccine to avert the third COVID-19 wave and guard themselves against the deadly virus.

DM Ramban warns suppliers against violation of notified minor mineral rates

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

RAMBAN: District Magistrate, Ramban, Mussarat Islam on Saturday advised the general public to file complaint against suppliers to the District Minerals Officer, if suppliers charge more than notified rates by the suppliers.

He also called upon the transporter unions to strictly adhere to the transportation charges notified by the Transport Commissioner, J&K, recently.

The District Magistrate said the Government will not tolerate the violation of the notified market



Ladakh faced "discrimination" and 80 per cent of the resources spent on Kashmir Valley went into local leaders' pockets without benefiting people, the RSS chief said.

Now this has changed and people's lives there are "happier", he claimed.

Article 370 also came in the way of taking action against terrorists but now nobody fears terrorists, he added.

"People who had put stones in the hands of their

children instead of books have stopped praising them (terrorists). There is an atmosphere....Tomorrow elections will be held and new government will be formed," the RSS chief said.

But sometimes we get complacent and lethargic when "hurdles are removed", Bhagwat said, adding, "The problem has not gone away. Was Article 370 the problem? The reason why Article 370 had been created was the problem. "There is one section, which....persuaded by Pakistan and with communal feelings in the heart says (demands) Azaadi (freedom/independence). And these sections are still

there," Bhagwat said.

Many in Kashmir identify with Indian nationalism, he said.

But there are some others who are happy that "corrupt leaders have gone to jail" and there is development, but "in their hearts they feel even with all this, if we get independence, it will be good," Bhagwat said. "And the problem lies there," he added.

"We will need to speed up efforts for assimilation," the RSS chief said, adding that Indian society should take benefit of the "good atmosphere" prevailing now and "reach out to all of them and establish close relations....make them feel that they belong to Bharat."

Unemployment rate in J&K, falling hunger Index in India reflect total failure of Modi's economic policy: Congress

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The highest unemployment rate of 21.6 percent recorded in Jammu and Kashmir, which is highest in the country is very serious issue while the country's latest hunger index falling below Pakistan and Bangladesh has shown the failure of the Mofi Govt's economic policies.

Referring to two documented reports which have been published recently, reflecting highest unemployment rate of 21.6, percentage in Jammu and Kashmir as well as country falling in the international hunger index as very alarming and a total failure of Modi government's economic policies, said JKPC Chief Spokesperson Ravinder Sharma. He said this shows the plight of the common man in India due to wrong economic policies and unprecedented price hike in the country. Under Congress led UPA government, 27 crores of citizens were brought out of poverty whereas 23 cr people have reportedly slipped into poverty line under BJP regime, reflecting the poorest performance of Modi government. Expressing grave concern over the highest unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir in the country, he said that it is the gift of BJP to educated youth of Jammu and Kashmir for seven years. Sharma regretted that BJP and government makes false claims and boost of great achievement in various fronts but their own official surveys prove them wrong and false. The party has charged the government of misleading the people and making false claims whereas the data has proved that Modi government has totally failed on economic front.