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### LG meets protesting...

"We have ended our strike," a spokesperson of the NHM employees said. Principal GMC Jammu Shashi Sudan said the contractual employees were engaged for three to six months and accordingly disengaged after completion of their contract period. "The government is going to fill up vacancies of paramedies through the service selection board and we are hopeful that many of them will get permanent jobs after qualifying the examination," she said.

The protesters had alleged that the government was exercising a "use and throw" policy with NHM employees who had joined service at the GMC at the peak of the first wave of COVID-19 last year when no one wanted to come out of their homes. "We were promised that if we served in the best way during the COVID-19 period, we will be regularised in the services. But instead of regularisation, they threw us out after using us during the worst COVID-19 period," one of the protesters had said.

### World’s largest tricolour...

about the organisation paying tribute to Gandhi on his birth anniversary on Saturday by displaying the world's largest national flag, which is 225 feet long and 150 feet wide, in Leh.

"This is a unique tribute to respected Bapu, whose passion towards Khadi is widely known. This festive season, do consider making Khadi and handicraft products a part of your lives and strengthen the resolve to build an Aatmanirbhar Bharat," Modi said.

### Cross-LoC trade...

case revealed that some of the traders having excess imports were channelising the surplus profits generated to terror organisations, while others are suspected to have links/connections with proscribed terrorist organisations," the NIA said.

During the searches conducted at multiple locations, the spokesperson said documents, digital devices and other incriminating material have been recovered from the premises of the suspects.

"Further investigation in the case is underway," the NIA said.

### Army recovers 30....

suspicious movement. Upon a search of the area, it was found that a contraband-like substance, most likely drugs, was dropped there," Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Baramulla Rayees Mohammad Bhat told reporters in Baramulla.

He said the peddlers trying to smuggle the drugs into the Indian side of the LoC ran away after observing the movement of troops.

The SSP said two bags with Pakistani markings containing approximately 25-30 kg of a drug-like substance were recovered.

"The exact nature of the heroin-like substance is being ascertained through the authorities concerned. The value of the suspected contraband is around Rs 20-25 crore in the black market," he added.

A cap, a couple of backpacks and a couple of gunny bags were also recovered from the spot, the SSP said.

He said legal proceedings have been initiated after the suspected contraband was handed over to the police and a case has been registered under the relevant sections of law.

"The huge drug haul along the LoC showcases the nefarious designs of the Pakistan-based narco-terror nexus and its inimical intent to abet terrorism and finance terror in India. This drug bust is a huge setback to the nexus," the officer said.

### Night curfew to...

people permitted to attend any indoor or outdoor gathering shall be strictly restricted to 25. However, in banquet halls in districts with positivity rate below 0.2 and weekly caseload 250, gathering shall be permitted upto 25 per cent of the authorized capacity, preferably in open spaces, for vaccinated persons.

There shall be no weekend curfew in any district, the SEC said.

As regards the educational institutions, class for 10th and 12th standard shall be permitted with limited in-person teaching not exceeding 50 per cent on a given day for vaccinated students and staff. Consent shall be obtained from the parents of all students who are willing to attend the school. The school premises should be thoroughly sensitized. Proper screening regarding vaccination should be done on the school gate. If students or teachers or other school staff shows symptoms of cough, cold or fever, they will not be allowed to enter the school. The Head of the school must ensure that the guidelines related to social distancing and COVID protocol are strictly followed.

SEC said the coaching centre for civil services, engineering, NEET shall be permitted with limited in person teaching for fully vaccinated staff and students, subject to condition that the head of the centre shall ensure the guidelines related to social distancing and COVID protocol are adhere to.

All other coaching centre shall continue to remain closed for onsiteight in-person teaching.

Night curfew shall continue to remain inforce in all districts from 2000 hrs to 0700 hrs next morning, the SEC said. But for those districts with positivity rate below 0.2 and weekly case load below 250, where it would be from 2200 hrs to 0600 hrs, the order said.

In view of the high incidence of cases in district Srinagar special campaign shall be organized to substantially increase vaccination coverage and achieve the target of 100 per cent first dose within earlier possible time, the SEC said.

### COVID: 102 new...

The death toll stands at 4,424, they said.

There were 46 confirmed cases of Mucormycosis (black fungus) in the Union Territory. No new case was reported since Saturday evening, officials added.

Meanwhile, Ladakh has registered three fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 20,812, officials said.

However, the active cases in the Union Territory dropped to 64 after seven patients were discharged after treatment, they said.

Ladakh has registered 207 deaths due to Covid -- 149 in Leh and 58 in Kargil -- since the outbreak of the pandemic last year. A total of 20,541 patients have recovered till date.

The officials said 3,355 people were tested for COVID-19 in the twin districts on Saturday and three of them -- two in Leh and one in Kargil -- tested positive.

Seven patients were discharged after recovery in Leh, bringing down the active cases to 64 -- 59 in Leh and five in Kargil, they said.

### Arms consignment dropped...

village of Phalain Mandal, about six km from the IB, late Saturday night after a villager informed police about a humming sound and dropping of a payload by a suspected drone from Pakistan.

Police immediately cordoned off the village and launched a search operation during which a yellow packet tied to strings and a wooden base to carry the payload was found, leading to the recovery of the arms and ammunition, the officials said.

A case has been registered and efforts are on to identify the persons who were supposed to receive the consignment on the Indian side.

Drone activities from Pakistan have witnessed an alarming increase over the past one year, posing a major challenge to security forces guarding the borders.

Security forces shot down two drones and recovered a large quantity of payloads including rifles, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), sticky bombs and narcotics at different places over the past one year.

The security grid at the border was also intensified after the dropping of two bombs by drones at the Indian Air Force (IAF) station in Jammu in June this year.

### NCB busts drugs...

after checking all were asked to go except the eight including Aryan Khan,"an NCB official said.

The official said the anti-drugs agency was keeping a close watch on this event on the cruise ship for the last 15-20 days after receiving information that a drug party will be organised. After confirmation, the NCB took the action, he added.

He said the suspects had hidden drugs in their clothes, undergarments and purses (by women).

Besides Aryan Khan, the arrested accused are identified as Mummun Dhamecha, Arbaaz Merchant, Ismeet Singh, Mohak Jaswal, Gomit Chopra, Nupur Sarika, and Vikrant Chhokar, the official said.

Aryan Khan has been booked under sections 27 (punishment for consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance), 8C (produce, manufacture, possess, sell or purchase of drugs) and other relevant provisions of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS).

An NCB official said the anti-drugs agency is likely to summon officials of the cruise company and the event management firm in connection with the seizure of banned drugs onboard the ship.

He said the NCB may question officials of Delhi-based event management company Namas'cray, registered as Canepus Trading Private Limited, and officials of the cruise company, Cordelia Cruises.

The (Delhi-based) firm was tasked with the management of the event onboard

Cordelia Cruises' Empress ship, which was supposed to take place from October 2 to October 4. All known organisers of the event are now under the scanner of the NCB, he said.

The NCB will now determine whether any of the organisers had any knowledge about the drugs being brought and consumed onboard during the three-day cruise in the Arabian Sea. Three additional directors of the event management company are now under the lens of the agency, the official added.

These three additional directors were tasked with selling tickets, preparing a guest list, inviting celebrities and helping with the musical events onboard the ship, he added.

Meanwhile, the cruise company in a statement on Sunday said it had nothing to do with this incident.

"Cordelia Cruises is in no way, directly or indirectly, connected to this incident. Cordelia Cruises had chartered its ship for a private event to a Delhi-based event management company, Jurgen Bailom, Chief Executive Officer and President, Waterways Leisure Tourism Pvt Ltd said in the statement.

We, at Cordelia Cruises, condemn all acts such as these and will strictly refrain from letting our ship out for similar events in the future. Nonetheless, Cordelia Cruises is extending our full support and cooperating with the authorities," it added.

In the holiday court, NCB's advocate Advait Sethna sought custody of the accused for two days on the ground that the investigation is at a nascent stage and more raids are being carried out to apprehend the supplier of drugs.

The NCB has apprehended one more person in the supply chain. Thus, NCB custody of these accused is imperative for proper investigation to unearth their links and nexus, the remand note said adding the arrested accused need to be confronted with each other so as to establish the link.

The NCB further said the three arrested accused have recorded their statements voluntarily.

There are five more connected persons who are under investigation and are likely to be produced before the court later. Eight persons were apprehended on the cruise by the NCB team and are under investigation for suspicious transactions constituting offences under the NDPS Act, the NCB's remand note said.

Aryan Khan's advocate Satish Maneshinde argued that his client was invited to the event being held on the cruise by the organisers.

No incriminating material has been recovered from him (Aryan Khan). There is no possession or evidence of consumption, he said.

Maneshinde said he would be filing an application seeking bail for Aryan Khan on Monday.

Although the sections under which Aryan Khan has been booked are all bailable offences, I am willing to settle for one day's NCB custody so that we can file for bail before the regular court, Maneshinde told the court.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Sunday said the law is same for everyone.

When asked about the NCB action, Pawar said he was not aware about the details.

The Congress, meanwhile, alleged that the raid conducted by the NCB was an attempt to deflect attention from the "real issue" of the drugs seizure at Mundra port in Gujarat.

The party also demanded a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the drugs haul at the port.

Last month, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) had seized 2,988.21 kg heroin, likely worth Rs 21,000 crore in the global market, from two containers at the Adani-operated Mundra port in Gujarat's Kutch district.

"There is a news that a Bollywood actor's son has been arrested. Where did this drug come from? The NCB has come out and all of sudden saying that it has caught drugs from a cruise ship," Goa Congress' spokesperson Shama Mohamed told reporters.

They are deflecting attention from the real issue. The real issue is Mundra port, the drug cartels in the country and drugs that is smuggled from Afghanistan, she alleged.

Seeking an SC-monitored investigation into the drug seizure at Mundra port, the Congress spokesperson said that drugs are smuggled into India from Afghanistan, which will fund terrorist organisations, separatist groups and eventually create political instability in the country.

The Maharashtra Congress welcomed the raid on the drugs party onboard the cruise ship, but expressed doubt if it was done to suppress the Mundra port drugs seizure.

"It is good if the government stops peddling of drugs and their consumption in the state. We welcome it. But at the same time, it has to be noted that there has been no action or discussion on the seizure of drugs worth Rs 21,000 crore at the Mundra port in Gujarat. There is room for doubt if such raids are being conducted to shift focus fro the last month's seizure," state Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe said.

### Petrol, diesel at...

This sent petrol price in Delhi to its highest ever level of Rs 102.39 a litre and to Rs 108.43 in Mumbai. Diesel rates too touched a record high of Rs 90.77 in Delhi and Rs 98.48 in Mumbai.

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

Petroleum Secretary Tarun Kapoor said oil companies are taking their own decision on aligning retail rates with the cost but they are ensuring extreme volatility is avoided.

"We are watching the situation and trying to ensure the impact of global volatility is moderated to a large extent," he said.

The basket of crude oil India buys has jumped to a near three-year high of USD 76.71 per barrel. International prices of petrol, against which local rates are benchmarked, have risen from USD 85.10 per barrel to USD 87.11 in just one day while diesel has gone up from USD 85.95 a barrel to USD 87.27.

This sudden spike in international oil prices follows global output disruptions but the entire increase in retail rates necessitated by such an increase is not being effected, another official with direct knowledge of the matter said.

"Just look at LPG rates. They have gone up from USD 665 to USD 797 in one month but oil companies haven't passed on the increase warranted from that," he said adding state-owned companies were absorbing a lot of volatility.

The increases, he said, have been "mild to moderate".

"Some people are making a big deal out of the 62 per cent hike in natural gas prices. But if you look at the rates previously at USD 1.79 per million British thermal unit were abnormally low and way below cost. They have now gone up to USD 2.9. They still are less than the cost of production of USD 3.5 per mmBtu and are certainly lower than the USD 4.2 price that was prevalent in India a decade back," the official said.

Naturally, the hike in natural gas price will warrant an increase in CNG price but the increase is again being moderated there too, he said adding internationally the price of LNG in the spot market last week soared to an unprecedented USD 35.

"Compare to what is happening worldwide, we have managed the situation well," the official said. "Some of the developed nations such as the UK have seen petrol pumps go dry but you won't have heard of such a situation anywhere in India. Our oil companies are not just moderating retail prices but also ensuring uninterrupted supplies."

Officials said India believes the situation internationally is temporary and abnormal and things should stabilise over the next few days and weeks.

The fifth increase in its rates in less than a week's time has sent petrol prices above Rs 100 in most major cities of the country.

Similarly, the eighth increase in prices in 10 days has shot up diesel rates above Rs 100 mark in several cities in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

State-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) resumed daily price revisions on September 24 after international oil prices neared a three-year high. Global benchmark Brent crude is trading above USD 78 per barrel.

In eight price increases since September 24, diesel rates have gone up by 2.15 paise per litre. Petrol price has increased by Rs 1.25 per litre in five instalments this week.

When international oil rates fell in July and August, retail prices of petrol and diesel in the Delhi market were reduced by Rs 0.65 and Rs 1.25 per 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 during this period.

India is dependent on imports to meet nearly 85 per cent of its oil needs and so benchmarks local fuel rates to international oil prices.

### Efforts to be...

Public Outreach Programme of the central government, said Jammu and Kashmir has got functional District and Block Development Councils for the very first time and the onus of development lies mainly with these PRIs.

He appealed to elected PRIs to make budgetary planning and allocation for development works according to the priority of their respective areas.

The minister handed over 16 tractors and one tiller among the beneficiaries of different government-sponsored schemes of agriculture and horticulture sectors.

The minister also e-inaugurated newly constructed assets worth Rs 12.74 crore comprising two PMGSY roads, one ANMT school in Billawar, four Panchayat Ghar buildings and dedicated 1,000 PMAY houses , an official spokesperson said.

He also virtually laid e-foundation of District Development Council building in Kathua and three Block Development Council buildings to be constructed at Dinga Amb, Billawar and Barnoti blocks.

"The initiatives like SWAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas) are launched to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural areas which will bring transparency and will also facilitate monetization of rural residential assets for credit and financial services," the minister said.

Singh said the benefit of high density plantation in Jammu and Kashmir is now extended to the farmers having small land holdings which will open their income avenues.

Later, the minister also met the deputations of District and Block Development Council, Urban Local Bodies, panches and sarpanches besides civil society members and listened to their issues and demands.

The minister assured the deputations that redressal of their issues will be taken up at appropriate forums.

### Traffic at Jammu...

or jack up fares to make up for the cost of keeping 30 per cent of seats empty.

The load restriction on airports is placed keeping in mind the length of the runway, its quality and heat factor.

Considering the importance of the airport, the administration under Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha proactively took up the issue with the DGCA, Airport Authority of India (AAI) and the Indian Air Force, leading to the issuance of the NOTAM on Thursday.

"The governance mindset has changed from lackadaisical to moving the needle," an official said. "The runway was extended and strengthened which allowed for night landings a couple of months back."

Also, the issue involved market dynamics as well as traveller perception about the safety of Jammu and Kashmir.

There has been a steady rise in passenger footfall at the Jammu airport situated at Satwari, officials said, adding besides religious tourism, the scrapping of Article 370 has led to more trade and business visits.

Jammu provides air connectivity to the sacred and highly revered Vaishno Devi shrine and Amarnath cave.

The removal of load penalty will result in the cost of operations to Jammu for an airline reducing immediately, resulting in ticket prices coming down.

"On the same variable cost, they can now fly more passengers and so their cost of operations will come down," an official explained.

While the NOTAM was issued by IAF, it involved coordination with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and AAI and the trigger for change came from the government of the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

### Reach every household...

to create such a country and it should be our ultimate target," he said and added, "The work has just started, not finished. So the need to work with patience is more important."

The Sarsanghehalak emphasized attending Shakhnas regularly as it is important to remain physically, intellectually, and organizationally strong.

"Every Swayamsevek has to perform his duty with dedication and commitment", he said and stressed the need for character building and personality building.

He narrated examples of Ramayana to give importance to character building. "A Swayamsevak should be an example for the whole society", he said.

On this occasion, Sanghehalak of North Zone, Prof. Sita Ram Vyas and Sah-Sanghachalak of Jammu and Kashmir Province, Dr. Gautam Mangi were also present.

### Civilian injured in...

gunshot injuries and was immediately shifted to SMHS hospital for treatment. However, he succumbed to injuries at the hospital during the night, the officials said.

Dar was the second person killed by terrorists in the city here on Saturday.

Earlier, on Saturday evening, terrorists shot dead Majid Ahmad Gojri, a resident of Chattabal Srinagar, at Karan Nagar.

### Ladakh Admn to...

under the SVAMITVA scheme for measuring the 'Abadi Deh' of revenue villages in Leh district, the spokesman said.

He said the SVAMITVA scheme aims to provide an integrated property validation solution for rural Ladakh.

"The demarcation of inhabitant (abadi) land in rural areas will be done using drone surveying technology with the collaborative efforts of the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department, Revenue Department of UT Ladakh and the Survey of India," the spokesman said.

He said the property validation would enable village household owners to use their homes as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits.

"It provides the record of rights for inhabited rural areas in villages and creates geo-tagging of each property. It also aids in updating property and asset registers to strengthen the demand assessment process of Gram Panchayats so that the legal record of property holders is available with the UT administration," the spokesman said. He said that based on the record of rights, the UT administration can issue property cards to household owners which would enable monetisation of rural residential assets for purchase of credit and other financial services.

## Intellectuals, academicians gather in Srinagar to revive tradition of 'Kashmiriyat'

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Taking a leap from virtual to the real world, a group of intellectuals and academicians gathered here on Saturday in an attempt to revive 'Kashmiriyat', a tradition of unity and communal harmony in the strife-torn valley.

The group known as "Samanbal" (a place where people meet) was initiated on a new social media platform where voices from the valley and displaced Kashmiri Pandit community were conversing often about reviving the centuries-old culture of religious syncretism in Kashmir.

The group was initiated by Javed Dar from Baramulla, a post-graduate in political science, along with Maiser Majeed from Ratnipora, who is also a post-graduate in the same subject, and Dr Nusrat Amin, an assistant professor in the Kashmir University who teaches Urdu.

Renowned artist Inder Salim, a member of the displaced community, said, "It is history which is repeating itself. Pandits and Muslims belong to the same milieu. The desire to communicate with each other is there despite political narratives. There will be an urge between the two communities to create new dynamics of reaching out to each other."

Inder Salim, who wears his name as a badge of 'Kashmiriyat' as it includes a Pandit and a Muslim name, had specially flown from Delhi for this gathering.

Mohd Amin Bhat, a renowned writer and TV personality, who broke down many times during the get-together, said, "The circle of life was complete when I met my brothers. It was a reunion of detached parts of myself."

Dar and Maiser said they were pained by whatever happened in 1990s and this group's creation was a part of their desire for the truth and to work out in a way to bring the displaced community back or at least understand an unbiased narrative.

"We were guided by Dr Nusrat and some others and today we are happy that finally we are meeting physically," says Dar.

The meeting was graced by senior IAS officer Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Secretary of Tribal Affairs Department and holding charge of Chief Executive Officer of Mission Youth, who said it was a nice attempt by the organisers to host such an event and urged them to hold many more such meets in remote areas of the valley.

"It is good that people have moved away from their comfort zones in holding such a unique meeting and I am glad to be present here," he said.

Mantasha Binti Rashid, a Kashmir Administrative Service officer of 2011 who is currently posted with the Srinagar Development Authority, said the meeting was a demonstration of power of the virtual world.

"From the boundaries of the Internet, we met physically only to understand the connection that Muslims and Pandits share in the valley. Irrespective of difficulties, Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims are inseparable," she said.

Dr Nusrat Amin said that there is a narrative being built on some social media platforms that the entire Kashmiri Muslim community was responsible for the 1990 exodus which had stirred animosity between the two communities.

"The aims of this group was to find voices which will bridge the divisions between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits and I am glad that we have achieved it," she said and pointed that some Kashmiri Pandits had joined the event through video-conferencing.

Inam-ul-Nabi, a renowned political and social activist, spoke about his association with Kashmiri Pandits and said, "The two communities have been banks of the same river since 1990 and there is a need to build broken bridges and bring our brothers and sisters back to the valley. We are all sons of the same soil and this truth needs no political narrative."

Dr Samreen Gilani, a TV anchor and assistant professor of Kashmiri languages in Central University, also echoed Nabi's sentiment of bringing Kashmiri Pandits back to the valley. Saima Shafi, also famous as 'Kralkoor' (potter girl), recalled her association with Kashmiri Pandits and said that there is a need to engage with the displaced community at the grassroot level. "If we are able to convince even 10, I am sure hundreds will follow."

