

## !! Continuations from Page 1 !! 4 Army personnel...

firefight ensued. The terrorists have been injured and surrounded and operations are in progress, amidst acts of valour and sacrifice by own bravehearts in trying to prevent collateral damage to women and children in the highest traditions of Indian Army. #Whiteknightcorps salutes the supreme sacrifice," it said.

Officials said the operation has been intensified with induction of additional troops.

Local residents said that a cordon-and-search operation has been going on in the area since Sunday to track down terrorists operating in the area.

"Due to the operation we were asked to stay back at home and not venture out. Our children stayed back at home and did not attend the school," a villager told PTI.

The firing is going on in the forest area close to the village, he said.

Officials said the two terrorists trapped at the encounter site in Bajimaal appeared to be foreign nationals and had been moving around in the area since Sunday. They even took shelter at a place of worship, they said.

Former Minister and Additional General Secretary National Conference, Ajay Sadhotra paid rich tribute to four Army personnel

"Our hearts go to the families of the martyrs on losing their dear ones, who offered supreme sacrifice while fighting with terrorists for defending the Sovereignty and Integrity of the Nation," Sadhotra said in a message, adding that indebted nation salutes the valour of the warriors.

Sadhotra condemned the incidents of terrorism, saying terror violence has no place in a civilized society. Time has come to tackle the terrorists sternly, who have unleashed terror regime in our land of Kishis and Stuffs.

JKPCC Working President Raman Bhalla, Senior Vice President & Media Incharge Ravinder Sharma, DCC President Shabir Ahmed Khan and other leaders have said, "Today's martyrdom is a major loss and we express our deepest sympathies with their families and share their grief and shock. It's a matter of grave concern that terrorism has been on rise in various parts including in Twin border district."

The party fully stands behind army and security forces to deal with the threat of terrorism and to ensure the safety and security of common people and the jawans.

Expressing profound sorrow and grief, Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari, said, "I am deeply saddened to hear that the two Army captains, a JCO, and an Army Major, were martyred in the encounter with the terrorists in Rajouri. I am deeply shocked by the loss of lives. My heart goes out to the families of these brave hearts."

The latest encounter in Rajouri comes close on the heels of another gunfight in Behrote in Budhal area on November 17, in which one terrorist was killed.

Two earlier ambushes in the Mendhar area of Poonch and Kandi forest of Rajouri on April 20 and May 5 respectively had claimed the lives of 10 soldiers.

According to officials, 46 deaths have been recorded in terrorism-related incidents in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch and nearby Reasi district since January this year.

While 23 people, including seven terrorists and nine security personnel, were killed in Rajouri, 15 terrorists and five security personnel have been killed in Poonch district. Three terrorists were killed in Reasi district.

### CPO, 7 Sr...

General Prosecution, J&K; Irshad Ahmad Naik, Senior Prosecuting Officer as Sr. PO, CTC, Lethpora; Bilal Ahmad Khan, Senior Prosecuting Officer as Sr. PO, STC Sheeri; Farooq Ahmad Mir, Senior Prosecuting Officer as Sr. PO, PTS Manigam; Amit Prakash Sehgal, Senior Prosecuting Officer as Sr. PO, SKPAU; Ch. Asif Iqbal, Senior Prosecuting Officer as Sr. PO PTTI Vijaypur; and Mohd Sayeed Choudhary, Senior Prosecuting Officer has been posted as Sr. PO, APHQ. He shall also work in the office of Commandant General, Home Guard/CD/SDRF, J&K.

### Doctor, cop among...

311 (2)(c) of the Constitution to sack more than 50 employees, who were allegedly operating in shadows within the government and drawing a salary from the public exchequer, officials said.

However, they were helping Pakistani terror outfits, providing logistics to terrorists, propagating terrorists' ideology, raising terror finances and furthering secessionist agenda, they said.

The General Administration Department, in separate but almost identical dismissal orders, said the Lt Governor was satisfied with the action taken after considering the facts.

On the basis of the information available, the activities of the four employees are such as to warrant their dismissal from service. The Lt Governor is satisfied under sub-clause (c) of the proviso to clause (2) of Article 311 of the Constitution that in the interest of the security of the State, it is not expedient to hold an enquiry in the case of the employees, it said.

The officials said the dismissals were a part of the ongoing crackdown against the terrorist ecosystem and its key stakeholders who were surreptitiously inducted into the government machinery by previous regimes of different shades in the past.

The officials said Hassan, a self-styled president of Doctors' Association Kashmir (DAK) from Sopore in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, has been spearheading "secessionism brazenly and unabatedly" and had a "clear mission mandated from across and was instructed to orient the medical professionals in J&K, towards secession against India."

They said Hassan, who has established himself as a staunch separatist and would consistently provide moral and background support to secessionists and terrorists, is a "potential time-bomb" who can be re-installed by Pakistan and its terrorist-secessionist network at any given point in time to cause wide-spread violence and

disturbance against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India.

Rather, a resident of south Kashmir's Kulgam has a long history of terror links who got his adopted daughter married to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commander Habibullah Malik alias Sajad Jutt of Kasoor area of Pakistan's Punjab.

Malik remained active in the valley for several years before fleeing to Pakistan in 2005, officials said.

Rather's real job was to recruit gullible youth for terrorist outfits Hizbul Mujahideen and LeT, and build a network of overground workers and logistic supporters, they said.

He was first inducted into the government system in 1990 as a daily wageer and was subsequently regularised in 1998, they added.

Besides, several attacks on police and security forces, dozens of workers of mainstream political parties were killed by LeT terrorists under Malik's command, duly supported by Rather between 1998 and 2005, the officials said.

They said the investigation has also revealed that Rather gave shelter to Malik in his house. But when the noose tightened, Rather facilitated Malik's escape to Pakistan.

Malik not only spearheaded a wide terrorist network while being active in Kashmir but also continued to mastermind several attacks from across the border like the suicide attack on the Army in Hyderpora, Srinagar resulting in the deaths of eight personnel and Station House Officer of Chadoora Police Station Shabir Ahmad in 2013.

In cohorts with killed terrorist commander Abbas Sheikh of Kulgam, Malik established a terror outfit 'The Resistance Front' (TRF), as an offshoot of the LeT, which continues to pose a serious security challenge and is linked to dozens of innocent killings of Kashmir Pandits, non-local labourers and off-duty policemen, the officials said.

They said Malik has been sending money, weapons and contraband through drones and other means from Pakistan besides grooming and luring gullible youth to recruit them in terror ranks.

Being his close relative, Rather is the most important entity and confidante for Malik in Kashmir who continues to be in contact with him directly or indirectly through his daughter, the officials said.

Rather visited Pakistan on two occasions to meet Malik on February 5, 2016, and July 11, 2017, staying there for 18 days on the first visit and for 10 days during his second visit, they said.

The officials said constable Bhat was arrested last year following recovery of 1.8 kg of heroin and is presently under judicial custody for his involvement in narco-terror activities.

Bhat, a resident of the Kuman area of Kupwara district, was appointed as a special police officer in 2011 and was confirmed as a constable five years later even though he had studied only up to ninth standard, the officials said.

They said Bhat got involved in narcotic trafficking of an organised syndicate operating in Kupwara and successfully survived in the trade for more than a decade, using his official position and connections.

Bhat was part of the syndicate which was receiving heroin consignments sent from Pakistan through Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist handler Shakir Khan to fund terror activities in the valley, the officials said.

Mir, also a resident of Kupwara, was a Pakistan-trained terrorist who was initially appointed to the education department in 1994 and was later promoted as a teacher in 2007, the officials said.

They said investigations revealed that Mir was a senior functionary of the secessionist organisation Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH) founded by hardline Hurriyat conference leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

### Dismissed teacher paid...

Hizbul Mujahideen terror outfit before being arrested in 1991, the officials said. He was arrested by security forces and remained under detention for two years to be subsequently released in 1993, they said, adding immediately after his release, Mir made good use of his affiliation and influence within the secessionist-terrorist ecosystem to get himself appointed as a Class-IV employee in the education department.

Jammu and Kashmir was under Governor's rule at that time. Mir, a resident of north Kashmir's Kupwara district, was initially appointed to the education department in 1994 and was later promoted to the post of a teacher in 2007, a time when the PDP-Congress government was in power.

"Propriety and sanity would expect that after joining the government, Mir would refrain from indulging in anti-national activities. But he openly began preaching and practising secessionist ideology and emerged as the most active and remarkably senior functionary of secessionist organisation Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH) led by hardline Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani," the official said.

The charge sheet showed that Mir had gained prominence in Kupwara as a staunch supporter and sympathiser of the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI).

"Being a Pakistan-trained terrorist and having a significant position in the secessionist camp, bestowed him with huge powers. Like many such other entities, his name would instil fear and awe in common people and local administration," an official said.

Continuing his secessionist and terrorist incitation, the officials said Mir played a major role in the 2008 Amarnath land row agitation and was openly propagating 'Jihad' against India and exhorting the youth to join terrorism.

A case under relevant sections of the law, including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, was registered against him at Kupwara police station on November 13, 2009.

In this particular incident, he not only incited and provoked youth to join terrorist ranks but also hatched a criminal conspiracy with other secessionist elements to orchestrate large-scale violence in Kupwara.

On July 23, 2010, the officials said he instigated, incited and provoked an unruly mob to commit violence and leading the violent mob he made forcible entry in the

police guard room at Kupwara district hospital and set the guard room on fire.

In this connection, another criminal case was registered against him and others in police station Kupwara, they said, adding for his incorrigible unlawful behaviour, he was finally detained under the provisions of the Public Safety Act (PSA) in 2010 and lodged in Central Jail Kot Balwal, Jammu for a period of six months.

"The strange and sad state of affairs is that despite being detained under PSA and arrested many times, no disciplinary action was taken against him by the department. He paradoxically was never marked absent despite being in jail for six months for one occasion and was shown on duty and paid full salary," the official said, adding this evidence shows the "influence and penetration of adversary" within the government system.

Not mending his ways, they said, Mir played a major role in the 2016 violent agitation that erupted after the killing of poster boy of Hizbul terrorist Burhan Wani and was at the forefront of mobilising mobs and instigating violence in Kupwara town.

"The actions of Mir were at a huge cost to human lives and property. Many young people were killed and many more got injured due to his incitation. Public and private property worth scores of crores got destroyed," the charge sheet reasoned.

"It is not a hidden fact that thousands of unscrupulous people, having affiliation with the secessionist-terrorist ecosystem and even the Pakistan-trained terrorists were appointed in government services blatantly throwing all norms to the winds."

Mir was dismissed along with an assistant professor (medicine) at SMHS Hospital, Srinagar, Nisar-ul-Hassan, constable Abdul Majeed Bhat and laboratory helper in the Higher Education Department Abdul Salam Rather in terms of Article 311 of the Constitution of India, they said.

### Terror ecosystem falling...

progress schemes have given a new positive vision to the people of the UT", he added. He said J&K has moved from terrorism to tourism and the youth are now looking for tablets and computers instead of stones and guns.

Coming down heavily on NC Vice President Omar Abdullah for his statement against the governance of the Union Territory, Chugh said in due course, after the consent of the Election Commission, elections would be held and it would expose the nepotism of Abdullah and Mufti families. He said people of J&K have seen a new light of hope and aspiration under the guidance of the Prime Minister Modi so they would not be anymore fooled by the ISI designs.

### Comm Secy Floriculture...

Floriculture, Parks and Gardens on October 31; Ashok Kumar Pandita, Additional Secretary, Revenue Department and Saleem Ahmad Collector, Land Acquisition Defence, Rajouri on November 30; and Sheikh Fayaz Ahmad, Commissioner/Secretary, Department of Floriculture, Parks and Gardens, Nisar Ahmad Wani Director, Employment, J&K, Sohan Lal Sharma Registrar, GCET, Jammu, and Parveen Akhter, Deputy Director (Administration) in the Directorate of Handicrafts and Handlooms, Jammu on December 31, 2024.

### CS fixes all...

our Industrial Estates and proposals received are sufficient to meet the target.

Dr Mehta stressed on streamlining the land use or change in land use in the UT for vibrant development of industrial sector, besides addressing issues related to different kinds of lands such as jhad, khola, khad etc in accordance with rules. He advised for constitution of a committee to look after the land use issues in new industrial estates. He directed for resolving all the issues related to development of these industrial estates at the earliest.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon the officers of the Department to accept applications exclusively through the Single Window System instead from different departmental portals. He advised them to carryout a random survey of the users of this Single Window Portal (SWP) each month to check their satisfaction and aspiration level and take measures accordingly.

He took this occasion to stress on the officers to publicize their achievements through social and other media. He asked them to make public aware about the big investment proposals received by the Department so far and the timelines during which these units would come to production here.

He said that the land allotments made by the Department should be periodically reviewed so that any allottee found violating any terms be considered for cancellation as per the rules in vogue. He told them to pace up the work on development of all the 46 new Industrial estates besides identifying new chunks of land out of retrieved land for this purpose.

During this meeting the Commissioner Secretary, I&C, Vikramjit Singh revealed that during this fiscal in these 7 months only the Department has realized an investment of Rs 2079.76 Cr in the UT. He also informed that 169 units making an investment of Rs 7096 Cr and employment generation potential for more than 21000 persons is commencing their production shortly.

It was given out that out of 28 new IEs, the IEs numbering 7 and 11 are being developed by IRCON and NBCC respectively and as per MoU, these are going to be completed by March 2024.

Moreover it was given out that the Single Window Portal onboard 182 services across 19 departments, which are PSGA compliant besides being integrated with national portal, RAS, eUnnat, DigiLocker, Umang, Sandes, NGDRS, e-Abghari, Vahan portals for ensuring 'Ease of Doing Business' in the UT.

Later on the Chief Secretary also inaugurated the Online NOC's and Private Land Bank Modules under the Single Window Portal that would greatly help the industrial units to seek NOCs from different departments or buy land patches online without having to physically visit offices or meet the buyers till final settlements are made.

## Kishtwar saffron earns GI tag, branded as Grade 1

### STATE TIMES NEWS

KISHTWAR: The traditional saffron growers of Kishtwar, particularly from Mandal and the Saffron Development Farm in Berwar, have achieved a significant milestone in the cultivation and global marketing of saffron.

With nature's blessings and the dedication and expertise of the growers, in alignment with the efforts of the District Administration Kishtwar, spearheaded by Deputy Commissioner Kishtwar Dr. Devansh Yadav and instrumental efforts of Saffron Development Office Kishtwar under the guidance of SDO Amarjeet Sen besides CAO Kishtwar

Amjad Hussain Malik, a monumental accomplishment has been realized-the GI labeling of Kishtwar Saffron, marked as Grade 1, a first for the region.

This triumph was realized through the diligent efforts of the concerned departments in collaboration with Zaffran FPO Ltd. The breakthrough came after 1150 grams of saffron flowers collected from Berwar was processed for physical and chemical analysis at the India International Kashmir Saffron Trading Centre (IISKSTC), Dussu Pampore, it yielded 110 grams of fresh saffron filaments and 20 grams of premium dry Lacha saffron, subsequently branded as Grade 1.

Packaged meticulously in 20 glass bottles with GI labeling and Grade 1 certification at the India International Kashmir Saffron Trading Centre, this marks a defining moment for the Kishtwar Saffron brand. This accomplishment signifies not just a remarkable achievement but also a commitment to further endeavors. The District Administration Kishtwar, in collaboration with the Saffron Development Office and FPOs, would continue to strive towards securing separate GI tagging specifically for Kishtwar saffron, ensuring the recognition and distinction it rightfully deserves in the national and international markets.

## Cold wave sweeps Kashmir, Pahalgam records low of minus 3.3 degrees Celsius

### STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Srinagar city recorded the coldest night of this season as the minimum temperature settled below the freezing point across Kashmir, officials said here on Wednesday.

Fog engulfed the valley in the morning hours, disrupting incoming air traffic to Srinagar international airport.

However, normal flight operations resumed soon as the fog dissipated due to increase in temperature.

The dense fog cover in the mornings is due to the intensifying cold wave conditions in the valley.

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 1.8 degrees Celsius compared to minus 1.2 degrees Celsius a night earlier, the officials said adding it was the coldest night in the city this winter.

Pahalgam was the coldest recorded place in Kashmir as the minimum settled at minus 3.3 degrees Celsius while Pulwama recorded a low of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius on Tuesday night, they said.

Qazigund, the gateway town to Kashmir, recorded a low of 1.0 degrees Celsius while Kupwara recorded a low of minus 1.4 degrees Celsius.

Gulmarg ski resort in north Kashmir and Kokernag in South Kashmir were the only places where the minimum settled above the freezing point on Tuesday night. Gulmarg recorded minimum temperature of 0.6 degrees Celsius while Kokernag recorded 0.3 degrees Celsius, they said.

## J&K admin considering winter vacation for schools in view of cold wave

### STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The Jammu and Kashmir administration is "seriously" considering winter vacation for schools in the valley in view of the minimum temperatures dropping below the freezing point over the last three days, a senior official said on Wednesday. "I cannot say anything definitely till a formal announcement is made but we are seriously considering it (winter vacations). A proposal has been submitted in this regard (to the administration)," Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, V K Bhiduri told reporters here.

Bhiduri said while it is easy for the administration to announce winter vacations, it also has to ensure that the

students do not suffer academically. "We have to balance both things. The academic session of schools is planned and we have to figure in several things, including board examinations. The way the weather has changed, the government is considering this issue (winter vacation). A formal announcement will be made in a day or two," he said. The officials said schools are likely to be closed in a phased manner according to past practice.

"We may not close all the

classes in one go. Maybe primary classes will be closed in the beginning, then middle level and later senior secondary classes. In all likelihood, the primary classes will continue only till the end of this week," he said. The minimum temperature in Kashmir valley has fallen significantly since Sunday night with the mercury in a freefall in Srinagar where the minimum temperature last night was minus 1.8 degrees Celsius two degrees below normal for this time of the year.

### Two arrested after arms recovery

#### STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Security forces have apprehended two suspected terror operatives from Bemina area of the city and recovered arms and explosives from their possession, officials said here on Wednesday.

The two suspects, hailing from Kupwara district, were apprehended during mobile vehicle checking at Bemina in Batamalo area of the city late on Tuesday night after recovery of arms and explosives from their possession, the officials said.

The recoveries included two pistols and 10 grenades, they said, adding the suspects were being questioned by security forces.

### Hunter found dead with firearm injury

#### STATE TIMES NEWS

SAMBA: A 40-year-old hunter was found dead with a firearm injury near his farm in Samba district on Wednesday, officials said. Sunil Singh had suffered a gunshot in the head during hunting in Gurha Salthia forest area and apparently died on the spot, the officials said.

They said his licensed 12-bore gun was lying near the body which was removed from the scene for postmortem.

Police have started inquest proceedings to ascertain the exact cause of his death, the officials said, adding it is premature to say whether Singh died of a bullet from his own gun or someone else fired at him.

## Promise of pre-poll freebies corrupt practice under Representation of People Act, SC told

### STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Promise of pre-election freebies by political parties is a corrupt practice and "bribe" under the Representation of the People Act which is a ground for declaring an election to be void, the Supreme Court was told on Wednesday.

A three-judge bench was deliberating on pleas including the one filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay opposing promises of such handouts by the parties during polls.

The petitions have sought direction to the Election Commission to invoke its powers to freeze the elec-

tion symbols of these parties and cancel their registration.

Senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, appearing for the petitioner, told the bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud that the 2013 judgement delivered by a two-judge bench of the apex court in the matter of S Subramaniam Balaji vs The Government of Tamil Nadu and others required reconsideration.

In its 2013 judgement, the apex court had noted that after examining and considering the parameters laid in section 123 of the Representation of People Act (RPA), it arrived at a conclu-

sion that the promises in the election manifesto cannot be read into section 123 for declaring it to be a corrupt practice.

Hansaria submitted before the bench also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra that the judgment of the top court in the case of S Subramaniam Balaji does not lay down the correct law.

"Under section 123 of the RP Act, 1951 'bribery' is deemed to be corrupt practice for the purpose of the Act. The expression 'bribery' has been defined to mean any gift, offer or promise by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or

his election agent of any gratification with the object of inducing an elector as a reward to his candidature..."

"Thus, the promises made by the political party is nothing but a bribe within the meaning of Section 123 (1)(A) of the RP Act, 1951, which is a corrupt practice, and if other conditions mentioned in the said section are fulfilled, is a ground for declaring the election to be void under Section 100(1)(b) of the Act," Hansaria said.

The hearing in the matter remained inconclusive and will continue Thursday.

The apex court had earlier direct-

ed listing before a three-judge bench pleas against the practice of political parties promising pre-election freebies, saying it appeared the issues raised before it require an "extensive" hearing.

It had noted there are certain preliminary issues that may be needed to be deliberated upon in these petitions. The issues included the scope of judicial intervention with respect to the reliefs sought in these pleas, whether any enforceable order can be passed by this court in these writ petitions and whether the appointment of a commission/expert body by the court would serve any purpose.