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Critical role for...

Auditor General of India. Our forefathers while drafting the Constitution had a clear opinion that the Auditor General would be the most important officer in the democratic processes, he said.

Baba Saheb Ambedkar had said that the position of the Auditor General is the most important in the Indian Constitution and he will be the only person who will see to it that there is no expenditure in excess of what the Parliament has voted for or what is provided for in the Appropriation Bill of the Parliament, the Lt Governor observed.

The Lt Governor impressed on the Government departments to take quick action on the shortcomings.

In the era of reforms, it should be the endeavor of audit community to present the audit report and necessary facts immediately so that action related to the evaluation of policies and programmes is taken without any delay, he added.

"Audit observation and recommendation should be seen as a guide so that every penny of public exchequer improves the living standards of the common man," the Lt Governor said.

All officers should change their thinking of looking at audit reports and audit observations as criticism of their work. If you read these reports carefully and follow the recommendations of the audit community, necessary improvements can be brought in governance, he added.

The Lt Governor commended the key endeavors of the Audit and Accounts Offices of J&K, over the last few years.

He said initiatives such as bulk settlement of pending audit paras, collaborative corrective action with UT departments to improve their operations, pension adalats, and progress in end-to-end computerization of pension cases showcase their commitment to innovation and efficiency.

These initiatives not only benefit the UT Administration's departments but also directly impact the lives of the ordinary citizens of our Union Territory, the Lt Governor added.

Pramod Kumar, Principal Accountant General (Audit), J&K and Abhishek Gupta, Principal Accountant General gave a brief overview of the extensive audit exercises and activities conducted by the office of Accountant General in the UT.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to Lt Governor; Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Santosh D Vaidya, Principal Secretary Finance Department; Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner Secretary GAD; Anand Jain, IGP Jammu and senior officers were present.

Northern Army Commander...

operation in the forest area of Rajouri to flush out any hiding terrorists was still underway, a day after two foreign terrorists of proseribed Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) outfit including the mastermind behind various attacks were eliminated.

Commander of 14 Sector Rashtriya Rifles Brigadier Soumet Patnaik informed that security forces safely evacuated trapped civilians, including women and children, from the scene of the encounter and paid rich tributes to the five fallen soldiers, saying "their sacrifice for the country gives us the motivation to finish off terrorism."

Capt Pranjal, who led a search party, faced heavy fire as he came out from his security cover to help trapped women and children flee to safety while continuing to engage the terrorists along with his team to ensure that they did not escape, according to Brigadier Patnaik.

Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commander Quari, who masterminded several attacks including the martyrning of 10 civilians and five army personnel, and his associate were killed in the two-day encounter which ended on Thursday afternoon.

"The encounter has ended but the search of the forest area (to flush out any other hiding terrorist) is still underway," Brig Patnaik, flanked by other army and police officers including Deputy Superintendent of Police, operations, Shanmi Kumar, told reporters at Rashtriya Rifles headquarters in Kalakote.

Briefing the media, he said the operation was an example of synergy between various security agencies on the ground and "this synergy will continue for more success".

Brig Patnaik described the killing of the two foreign terrorists as a major success for the security forces as Quari was a "trained sniper and IED (Improvised Explosive Device) expert who was trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan". He masterminded civilian killings including that of Dhangri (on January 1) and five security personnel in Kandi.

"The recovery of huge quantity of arms and ammunition from the slain terrorists indicates that they were in the area to step up terrorist activities and create fear among the local populace," he said.

He said credible information was received on November 19 about the presence of two terrorists in Kalakote and accordingly all security agencies were activated.

At 8.30 am, a search operation was launched in the forest area around some dhoks (mud houses). The search party led by Captain Pranjal came under heavy fire from the hiding terrorists, he said.

The officer said Captain Pranjal came out from his security cover to help trapped women and children flee to safety while continuing to engage the terrorists along with his team to ensure that they did not escape.

The other columns which were also operation ready were launched to join Captain Pranjal who, in the meanwhile, received a bullet in his head and sacrificed his life, he said, adding the terrorists taking advantage of undergrowth, boulders and difficult terrain moved inside the forest.

The brigadier said three more soldiers were fatally injured when the special forces and others came close to the terrorists inside the forest.

"The cordon was further tightened and throughout the night, UAVs, night-enabled cameras and other modern equipment were pressed into service to keep a close watch on the area.

"The next day at around 7.40 am, one of the terrorists tried to break the cordon but was engaged by paratrooper Sachin who also got injured and later succumbed," he said.

He said at around 1.30 pm on November 23, the second terrorist was also eliminated.

"We are very proud of them (fallen soldiers). They fought well and they fought very hard, they fought for their brothers. They gave their lives for their country and it gives us the motivation to continue the operations to finish terrorism," the officer said. He said Lance Naik Bisht had also taken part in an encounter with terrorists in Budhal area of Rajouri on November 17 that had left one terrorist dead.

J&K PDD eases...

of Rs. 2225. In comparison, the new tariff for 2023-24 sees an increase in energy charges to Rs. 2175 (calculated at Rs. 4.35 per unit), maintaining fixed charges at Rs. 40, resulting in a total electricity bill of Rs. 2215.

Notably, despite the 15 per cent tariff increase, the withdrawal of the 15% Electricity Duty ensures no increase in the final electricity bill for consumers.

In a remarkable move towards enhancing power supply efficiency, the PDD has successfully implemented a series of reforms aimed at delivering improved and high-quality power supply to consumers at an affordable price.

A significant milestone in this reform journey is the restructuring of the power department by unbundling the departmental structure into two Distribution Companies (DISCOMS) and a Transmission Corporation. This long-awaited reform aligns Jammu & Kashmir with other Indian States/UTs, ensuring consumer services are enhanced while ensuring the sustainability of the power sector.

To facilitate this restructuring, a substantial financial package of Rs. 5000 Crores was allocated for the comprehensive upgrade of infrastructure under various Central Sector Schemes. This investment aims to create adequate capacities in almost every district, providing regular and quality power supply to citizens.

To ensure that the newly formed corporations are provided with a clean balance sheet, all the outstanding dues on account of power purchase, accumulated to the tune of Rs. 30700 Crores over several years, were taken over by the Government and cleared by availing soft loans under GOI Schemes like Atmanirbhar Bharat and LPS Rules 2022. Accordingly, a conducive platform has been provided to the discoms to operate on sound business principles and deliver optimal services to consumers, thereby enhancing overall consumer satisfaction levels.

In the present system as well, the discoms continue to grapple with high losses attributed mainly to power theft, poor metering and low tariff rates, which are a major cause of concern not only for the department but also threaten the overall efficiency of the sector. The high Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses, reaching 44% in Jammu and 58% in Kashmir as compared to the national average of 16.44%, have left DISCOMS unable to meet power purchase expenses, leaving aside other critical expenditures like Operations & Maintenance (O&M) and capital investments, which still continue to be supported by Government.

For ensuring financial sustainability of power sector, even GOI has launched schemes like Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) where-under conditional grants linked to the performance of discoms on certain pre-defined parameters have been provisioned.

The parameters which are required to be maintained for mainting the proper fund-flow under the schemes, the DISCOMS need to implement crucial measures such as adopting cost-reflective tariffs, reducing AT&C losses, reducing ACS-ARR Gap and various other reforms to ensure financial sustainability of the sector, there by ensuring uninterrupted power supply in line with the evolving living standards of consumers. In today's modern era, as the entire country progresses towards a digital India with a focus on on-demand services, the power sector is no exception.

It is analogous to any other commodity we purchase from the market, where the consumer pays, and the seller provides. Fundamentally, consumers seek nothing more than uninterrupted power supply, whether they are urban or rural consumers. Additionally, it is the duty of every utility to meet the expectations and needs of the consumers it serves.

IIT-J Breakthrough...

the process with hydrogen and oxygen, producing water, which is then reversed to extract hydrogen and oxygen. This stands in stark contrast to traditional gasoline-fueled engines that emit carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of the National Hydrogen Mission aligns with such sustainable energy initiatives, positioning India as a hub for the production and export of green hydrogen. This mission aims to foster self-reliance and energy independence for the nation.

In response to this national vision, Dr. B. Satya Sekhar's hydrogen research group has not only developed a hydrogen generation facility utilizing an electrolyzer powered by solar energy but also customized a DC-DC converter and designed a hydrogen refueling system. The ongoing work includes the development of a medium-pressure hydrogen compressor; further contributing to advancements in green hydrogen technology.

Dr. B. Satya Sekhar reflects on the continuous nature of scientific inquiry, stating, "Scientific ideas lead to ongoing research. There's always room for improvement and things that can be modified and added to improve it, and it's a great learning tool for us." This accomplishment showcases IIT Jammu's commitment to fostering cutting-edge research and innovation in the realm of sustainable energy solutions.

No corruption in...

No one can make a single allegation of corruption against any of the BJP ministers nor did any minister have to go to jail," he claimed.

The defence minister also attacked KCR over "non-fulfillment of promises" made to the people of Telangana, including giving one job to every family; providing three acres of land to Dalits, and waiving loans.

"Whatever promises he (KCR) made, he did not fulfill them," Singh alleged.

He sought to know how many youths got jobs and pointed out that exam papers

of recruitment tests were leaked. Singh claimed that no one would dare to leak question papers if BJP is elected to power in the state.

SIA arrests woman...

they added. According to police, Sarjan Barkati was a prominent figure in organizing large-scale protests, rallies and clashes with security forces in the 2016 summer agitation.

"During that period, he was instrumental in abetting youth to storm security forces establishments for which more than 30 FIRs were registered against him in various police stations of the Kashmir Valley," an official said.

History created with...

tourism and GDP contribution through high-tech computer and industrial policies.

Earlier, Secretary, IT Ladakh Amit Sharma, in his welcome address, expressed his gratitude to the contributors of digital initiatives. Acknowledging progress in e-Governance, smart classes, and responsive tourism, he emphasized the transformative power of technology. Sharma highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance connectivity, promote environmental well-being and improved healthcare. Emphasizing public participation, he urged for collective contributions from the august gathering towards ongoing UT Ladakh's progress.

Keynote addresses were also given by various dignitaries like Co-founder, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, Yotta Data Services, Sunil Gupta who highlighted the need for super-scale & super intelligence in India, spotlighting Shakti Cloud and Yantra Cloud initiatives. While, Partner-Government & Public Services, Consulting Leader, Deloitte India, NSN Murthy discussed the transformative impact of digitalization, citing Deloitte as an example and emphasizing the efficiency of services through digital lockers.

VP & Head of India Region at Iron Mountain, Anuj Kapur, provided insights into the company's history and role in managing government records. Industry presentations

The Conclave featured presentation by industry experts who covered the topics on Smart Display Solutions: Transforming Government by Sushel Bhat (Samsung), overcome challenges of Digital Transformation using Zero Trust Technology by Gagandeep Nanda (Zscaler), Securing Digital Transformation : Evolution of SOC by Mukul Kulshrestha (Inspira Enterprise) etc

The Conclave comprised a series of insightful panel discussions, each shedding light on crucial aspects of e-Governance and digital transformation initiatives. Amit Kumar Singh, Senior Director at Deloitte India, skillfully moderated a panel that included officers from diverse regions such as Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Karnataka, UP, and representatives from Iron Mountain, among others.

During the afternoon sessions, the respective panels delved into emerging technologies, exploring the transformative potential of blockchain, IoT, and cloud computing. Additionally, disruptive technologies like zero trust were discussed in the context of transforming governance. This session aimed to unravel the challenges and opportunities posed by these cutting-edge technologies in the public sector.

The discussion then shifted to the realm of Digital Governance, wherein the focus was on enabling citizen-centric services, promoting e-governance, and fostering digital inclusion. Moderated by NSN Murthy, a partner in Government & Public Services and Consulting Leader at Deloitte India, the panel included Amit Kumar Singh, Senior Director at Deloitte India, and Satyajit Rao Vagvala, Director of Government & Public Sector Advisory at Nangia Andersen LLP. Together, they delved into the strategies and technologies driving this pivotal aspect of governance.

The concluding panel discussion in the evening was a comprehensive exploration of digital governance. This session, enriched by insights from government officials and industry leaders, specifically emphasized citizen-centric services, the evolution of e-Governance and the imperatives of digital inclusion. This panel provided a holistic perspective on the role of technology in shaping the future of governance, highlighting innovative approaches and best practices from both government and industry standpoints.

Special presentations on leveraging Geospatial technology on disaster management by Dr Manoj Rajan, IFS, Chief executive Officer, Centre for e-governance, Government of Karnataka.

The Conclave concluded with the felicitation of great initiatives taken in IT domain all across the nation after a Cultural evening in this Digital Transformation Conclave Awards 2023 wherein Advisor to HLG Ladakh Dr Pawan Kotwal did the honours to the Award Winners.

This maiden historical mega Event held here has marked a significant step in Ladakh's journey toward Digital Transformation, serving as a pivotal platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration. Participants highly praised this Event for its insightful discussions, showcasing Ladakh's potential and fostering collaboration among stakeholders in the digital realm wherein Secretary IT Ladakh Amit Sharma expressed deep gratitude to them while assuring that more such mega events shall be organised in the UT of Ladakh in times to come.

Addl Secy I&B...

eco-system in J&K. She was also informed about the process of granting single window permission, subsidy component and the big ticket projects which were short by some of the prominent production houses of the country across different picturesque locales of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Additional Secretary on the occasion appreciated the efforts of department for participating in such big platforms and encouraged them participate in these kind of events in future also.

Cold wave hits...

The weatherman attributed the rise in minimum temperature last night to the arrival of a western disturbance that is expected to affect the system.

The rise in temperature has resulted in a reduction in early morning fog.

Workers from other parties join DPAP



DPAP Vice Chairman G M Saroori along with new entrants.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS Hussain Mintoo, Block KISHTWAR: A meeting was held in Democratic Progressive Azad Party Unit Kishtwar under the chairmanship of Ghulam Mohammad Saroori in which District President Shabir Hussain Lone, District General Secretary Sajjad Hussain Malik, District Secretary Tariq

parties joined the Democratic Progressive Azad Party in presence of party vice chairman G M Saroori. He took a pledge to strengthen the party by holding his hand.

District & Block Body (DPAP) Kishtwar welcomed all the members. Those who joined Democratic Progressive Azad Party were Rajinder Kumar, Naresh Kumar, Rajan Kumar, Rohan Shan, Neeraj Singh, Sahik Parihar, Shashi Shan, Raju Rathore, Mudasir Hussain, Rahul Kumar, Rajesh Kumar, Aneel Thakur Nisar Ahmed.

Enemies of peace are conspiring against people of J&K: Raina

■ STATE TIMES NEWS POONCH: Ravinder Raina, President, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu & Kashmir, paid heartfelt floral tributes to Shaheed Havaladar Abdul Majeed at Poonch.

Ravinder Raina said that Pakistan sponsored terrorists have once again tried to inflict wounds on our soils. Praising martyr Abdul Majeed, he said that patriotism ran through his blood, adding that a number of people from his family have so far served in the forces to serve and save the nation from the enemy. He said that we salute our brave jawans, who have time and again, proved their commitment and zeal to lay down their lives in the service of Maa Bharti. "Our brave jawans have fought valiantly. We bow and salute the bravery shown by our forces, which never leave any opportunity to save the motherland while making the supreme sacrifices. We won't allow anyone to do such subversive activities. We all need to fight collaboratively to fight off these evils", said Ravinder Raina.

Kathua Admn holds series of events under Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KATHUA: In a significant step towards promoting financial inclusion and driving economic growth in the Kathua district of UT J&K, a series of events were held by district administration under ongoing Govt. of India outreach programme, Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra which was started across nationwide on 15th Nov .2023.

The event was presided by Union Joint Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH, Kavita Garg, Deputy Commissioner Kathua



Joint Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH, Kavita Garg interacting with officials and locals at Kathua.

Rakesh Minhas, General Manager NABARD Ms. Anamika and other district officers in Panchayat Salar.

Under the guidance of

Chairman J&K Grameen Bank Mr. Sanjay Gupta, Team of Regional Office Kathua/Samba led by Regional Manager Mr. Abhishek Gupta also par-

DC Rajouri reviews status of online services



DC Rajouri, Vikas Kundal chairing meeting.

and Employment, Health, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (RDD), Handicrafts and Handloom, Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC), Forest, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and Education among others.

The Deputy Commissioner, at the meeting, delved into the detailed

analysis of 306 online services spanning 36 departments. The breakdown revealed a meticulous distribution, with 29 online services of Revenue Department, 01 of Youth Services and Sports Department, 17 of Social Welfare Department, 05 of PWD(R&B), 02 of the Cooperative Department, 08 of Mining Department

11 of PDD, 08 of Tourism Department, 17 of H& UDD, 05 of Jal Shakti Department, 04 of Agriculture Department, 48 of Transport Department, 07 of State and Taxes Department, 05 of Excise Department, 14 of Labour Department and numerous others spread across the diverse spectrum of governance.

Highlighting the essence of the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner said that the primary focus is on ensuring the seamless provision of these services to the public. The digital transformation aims to make these services hassle-free, effi-

cient, and easily accessible to the citizens of Rajouri.

Deputy Commissioner Vikas Kundal emphasized the paramount importance of providing services with utmost efficiency. He directed the officers to ensure a smooth and hassle-free experience for the public accessing these online services. This proactive step towards digitization reflects the commitment of the administration to embracing technology for transparent, accessible, and citizen-centric governance. The Deputy Commissioner expressed confidence that these efforts will significantly contribute to elevat-

ing the overall service delivery standards in Rajouri.

The administration remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering a digital ecosystem that empowers citizens and streamlines government services for the betterment of the community.

Among the others, CPO, Mohammad Khurshid; ACR, Imran Rashid Kataria; DPO Auqil Nuavid; DSEO, Sandeep Sharma; AD Employment, Muqlis Ali; CEO Education, Sultana Kouser; CMO, Dr. Rajinder Sharma; Director RSETI, Raman Sharma; ARTO, Pawan Kumar and other concerned officers.