

Congress playing into hands of anti-national forces: Ravinder Raina

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir, Bharatiya Janata Party President Ravinder Raina said that the Congress party is playing into the hands of anti-Nationals and harming the National interests.

Ravinder Raina accompanied by the former Dy. CM Kavinder Gupta, BJP General Secretary Sunil Sharma and party Chief Spokesperson Adv. Sunil Sethi was addressing a Press Conference at party headquarter, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

Raina said that a reputed TV News channel has made a big disclosure on the negligence in the security of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Punjab on 05 January through a sting operation.

On the road leading to the Prime Minister's convoy, the protesters and radical groups continued to do their protests



J&K BJP President Ravinder Raina addressing a press conference on Wednesday.

threatening the PM's security and the Punjab police stood as mute spectators. The police were instructed by the Channi government of the Congress not to act on the protesters.

He said that it is clear that PM's security breach in Punjab was not a coincidence but a bloody plot, was not sudden but organized, was not a natural

but a hatched conspiracy and it was not spontaneous but sponsored act of violence.

"This incident shows not only the negligence of the Punjab Government but there was complicity too in the security lapse of the Prime Minister. For this, Congress high command will have to give an answer", Raina said.

"Sidhu calls it drama, Harish Rawat says that the bomb did not explode, Baghel ji says that there was no stone pelting, Srinivas says 'how's the josh', Nana Patole justifies the incident and Channi ji still does not believe that there was any danger - this duplicity shows what was the real purpose of Congress. Doing politics over

national policies has become the DNA of Congress. This is not the first time that the Congress, while hating Shri Narendra Modi, has started hating the country, the post of Prime Minister, the Constitution, the army and security, and the interest of the nation itself. Even before this - giving a clean chit to Pakistan on Pulwama, questioning the surgical strike, asking for proof on Balakot and repeatedly chiming in with the propaganda of Pakistan and China, hating only and only one person - it is the Congress. It has become a habit for the Congress Party. Now, it's clear that the Conspiracy against the PM's security directly links to top leadership of Congress party", Raina said.



After Kashmir apple, Iranian import emerging as threat to stored Himachal fruit

■ **SHAKEELA ANDRABI**
SRINAGAR: For last two years, home-grown apples have been facing stiff competition from duty-free fruits being imported from Iran under India's Free Trade Agreement. Large consignments of apples are also shipped to ports in Gujarat and Maharashtra, while some are routed to markets in north India.

The varieties produced in Himachal were sold in open market during the season, but about one lakh metric tonne of apples were kept in cold stores as well as controlled atmospheric stores in different parts of country including Chandigarh, Kundli & Sonapat in Haryana, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Hyderabad and Vijayawada. But now, after hitting Valley apple produce, cheap apples from Iran are threatening Himachal apple.

"The cheap imports from Iran have killed market for Kashmiri apples and conventional cold-stored apples from

Himachal as Iranian produce is bound to impact stored apples, making trade unviable and non-remunerative," said a member of Progressive Growers' Association (PGA). Growers from Himachal and Kashmir have been repeatedly urging the Government to raise the duty on Iranian apples. "It is mostly Red Delicious variety, grown in Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, that makes its way into India. Despite numerous representations to Centre by orchardists from Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, duty-free import of fruits has not been rolled back. Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Jai Ram Thakur recently asked the Union Government to raise the duty on apple import.

Now, apple growers in India fear that sale of Iranian apples in local markets, by passing import duty, will have a huge impact on local apples. To discuss the issue, representatives of various

fruit growers associations of Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Himachal held a meeting earlier last month in Srinagar, J&K. The main objective of the meeting was to prevent import of Iranian apples. These imported apples reach country via Afghanistan. As both Afghanistan and India, are members of South Asian Free Trade Zone (SAFTA), they do not impose duty on imports from each other. However, Iran is not part of SAFTA but apples from there reach India via Afghanistan, bypassing import duties and cess, complained farmers.

Chairperson of Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Dealers Union claimed that regular arrival of apples from Iran via Afghanistan would have a huge impact on the prices of local apples. He clarified that Indian apple farmers had no problem with import of Iranian apples, but there should be no tax evasion. The farmers also oppose the sale

of this apple at main Azadpur fruit Mandi in Delhi. Imported fruits should ideally be sold in new Mandi. "Traders are just taking a receipt from new Mandi but are selling it in main market, which is a violation," farmers alleged.

Apple farmers, led by Himachal Kisan Sabha, also took out a protest march in Shimla, the state capital, demanding MSP (Minimum Support Price) for apples. "In past few years, the cost of apple cultivation has increased considerably, leading to zero profit," said Secretary of Sabha, adding that is the practice continues, cartons currently available for Rs 40 or Rs 60 will go up to Rs 100. Labour charges too have almost doubled to about Rs 500 or Rs 600 per day. "We have sent a memorandum to Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur highlighting all these problems and have demanded that apples be brought under MSP," he asserted.

Preserve, promote rich Dogra heritage: Sham urges youth

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Sham Lal Sharma, former minister and J&K BJP Vice President has emphasized upon the need to preserve rich cultural heritage of Jammu as it is the youth, who must come forward and work relentlessly as Ambassadors to promote rich Dogri language. He was speaking at the Rashtriya Yuva Divas and Lohri Milan programme organised at Mubarak Mandi here on Wednesday. The programme was organised by Adv Purnima Sharma, Deputy Mayor along with Mahant Rohit Shastri, President Baba Kailash Devsthan Trust and Bunt Cartoonist.

Speaking further, Sham Sharma recalled contributions of Swami Vivekananda for the society as a dynamic youth reformist. He also asked the youth to follow the teaching of Swami Vivekananda. "Dogra cultural heritage is identity of Jammu people and we can't afford to lose our identity," said



Gen Secy (Org), BJP J&K, Ashok Koul and ex-minister, Sham Lal Sharma paying tributes to Swami Vivekananda.

Sharma, appreciating efforts of youth in different fields for keeping Dogra culture alive through their relentless performances at National and International level. He asserted that Bharatiya Janata Party will leave no stone unturned in preserving Jammu's identity i.e. Dogra culture and heritage.

While extending greetings on the occasion of Lohri and National Youth Day, Purnima Sharma, Deputy Mayor urged youth to disseminate richness of Dogra culture and language across the nation and abroad to make people aware about the nieceties of the old yet rich heritage through their per-

formances in various fields like theatre, folk-lore & folk music, Dogri songs, literature etc. She also appealed to people of Jammu and Kashmir to support and encourage the local, especially Dogra artists so that they can also grow and achieve new heights.

Ashok Koul, General Secretary (Org), BJP J&K said that youth of J&K should ensure substantial participation in cultural activities to highlight Dogra tradition and rituals. "BJP stands committed to extend every type of support to the Dogra youth, but at the same time every individual, rising above party and other affiliations, needs to come forward to work for this significant cause," he added.

Vice Chancellor SKUAST Jammu Prof J P Sharma said that children prefer to speak other languages like Hindi, English etc in schools, colleges and universities, under the pressure from authorities of the institution, but it must be remembered that eclipse of Dogri means delinking of our rich Dogri culture. Director Agriculture Jammu K K Sharma and Prof Madan Mohan Jha Director Sanskrit University also spoke on the occasion. During the programme, Sham Lal Sharma along with other dignitaries felicitated a number of persons who have worked relentlessly for promotion of Dogri language. Those who were felicitated on the occasion included Uttam Singh, Seema Anil Sehgal, Brij Mohan, Insp Rakesh Janwal, Varsha Janwal, Deepak Kumar, Dr Henja Mengi, Kripal Singh, Tanmay Sharma, Lakshya Sharma, Rohit Sethi, Vir Jee Pandita and Ashish Kohli.

Power shutdown

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, Jammu has informed that the power supply to Jagti, PHE, Migrant Colony, Bamyal, Panjgarain, Roop Nagar, Lower Roop Nagar; Housing Colony, Durga Nagar; Butta Nagar; Rangarh, BSE Mahal, Nanga, SM Pura and adjoining areas shall remain affected on January 14 from 9 am to 3 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Greater Jammu, part of Preet Nagar and adjoining areas of Gangyal shall remain affected on January 14 from 9 am to 1 pm. Likewise, the power supply to Sheethi PHE and adjoining shall remain affected on January 15 from 9 am to 1 pm.

Meanwhile, Superintending Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, O&M Circle, Kathua has informed that the power supply to Arazi Samba, Dansal, Mandi, Triloki di Chhapri and Garh shall remain affected on January 14 from 9 am to 1 pm.

GMC, CD Hospitals well-equipped to tackle Omicron cases

Equal precautions needed to stay safe against new variant: Dr Rahul

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: With the sudden spike in Covid-19 cases, the Chest Disease Hospital, GMC Jammu has geared up itself to face the fresh challenge.

Professor and Head of Department, Chest Disease, Dr Rahul Gupta said the CD hospital is well prepared to tackle Omicron cases. "The GMC Hospital and the CD Hospital each have 110 critical care and oxygen supported beds to deal with any eventuality. The oxygen plants at the twin hospitals and the 500 bedded DRDO hospital at Bhagwati Nagar Jammu are going to put up a strong front against the third wave.

The HoD advised the parents to get children between the age of 15 and 18 vaccinated. Patients with co-morbidity, senior citizens and health profes-



sionals have also been urged to get their precaution dose at the earliest. In his appeal to the public, Dr Rahul has cautioned them against visiting crowds, social gatherings and has repeated the request to observe Covid appropriate behavior, maintain social distance and general hygiene. He said 'symptoms of the Omicron variant of coronavirus may seem mild at first but that provide a scope of leniency towards Covid appropriate behaviour'.

ACS Health directs Bi-directional COVID-TB screening

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Health & Medical Education (H&ME), Vivek Bharadwaj on Wednesday chaired meeting of UT Level TB forum for community engagement interventions and community led TB response in J&K at Civil Secretariat Jammu.

In his opening remarks, ACS said that Community led response for TB is one of the key strategy to reach the unreached and support TB patients throughout their treatment and recovery phase and Community engagement is important for working in a collaborative manner with the communities for eliminating the TB from UT of J&K.

Mission Director, National Health Mission, Yasin M. Choudhary gave detailed presentation regarding status of implementation of National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) in the

UT of J&K including preparedness of (TB) Elimination Action Plan for UT of J&K.

The meeting was attended by Dr. Saleem Ur Rehman, Director Health Services, Jammu; Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Rather, Director Health Service, Kashmir; Dr Sameer Matoo, Project Director, J&K SACs; HoDs of Pulmonary Medicine, Community Medicine, GMC Jammu/ Srinagar; HoD Paediatrics, ASCOMS Jammu; WHO consultants; Representatives from NGOs & other agencies of the TB forum; STO Jammu/Kashmir; State Surveillance Officer Jammu/ Kashmir; Dr Mohd Shafi Koka, State Nodal Officer, NHM, J&K; Dr Om Kumar, Programme Manager & Dr Imtiyaz Shakeel Baba, Assistant Programme Manager from State Health Society, National Health Mission, J&K.

ACS urged upon all Officers

and Officials to work diligently to achieve all the Targets & Goals as per National Strategic Plan (NSP) 2017-2025 for Elimination of Tuberculosis from UT of Jammu & Kashmir before Year 2025.

The ACS directed for Bi directional testing of COVID-TB patients, HIV patients and NCD patients. He also directed all the Officers/Officials associated with the TB control Programme to launch a massive door to door awareness campaign among people and health care professionals regarding Tuberculosis by engaging policy makers and programme management units to ensure justice, rights, dignity of TB patients for effective service delivery and to supplement and compliment Govt. initiatives and to enforce TB patient friendly policies and programmes to reduce the stigma and discrimination associated with TB patients.

LG greets people on Lohri, Makar Sankranti

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, has greeted the people on the eve of Lohri (which falls on 13th January, 2022) and Makar Sankranti (which falls on 14th January, 2022).

In a message, the Lt Governor said, these festivals are a strong symbol of our shared ethos and culture.

"Lohri, the harvest festival, celebrated across the country, brings the promise of growth, prosperity and fosters spirit of sharing in our lives. It is also a joyous occasion to salute the indomitable spirit of our farmers and to recognize their invaluable contribution in nation-building. Sankranti indicates the beginning of auspicious period of the year", observed the Lt Governor.

"May these festivals bring prosperity, happiness and joy for all", the Lt Governor said.

Meanwhile, the Advisors to LG, Farooq Khan and R R Bhatnagar have also extended greetings to people on the auspicious occasion of Lohri and Makar Sankranti.

In their messages, the Advisors hoped that Lohri will bring joy and good health for all. These festivals mark the harvesting season of crops as the winter season ends and ushers in spring, they added saying that we all should recognize the contribution of our farmers on this occasion as a token of respect to these nation builders.

Advisors expressed hope that the people will celebrate the festivals amid strict observance of Covid SOPs for their safety and safety of their brethren as well.

Mughals too used Mughal Road only for reaching Kashmir Valley and not to benefit locals

Even after Independence Rajouri & Poonch Districts remained neglected

■ **DAYA SAGAR**
Like Doda area (Kishtwar; Doda and Ramban Districts) of Jammu Province of J&K Rajouri and Poonch Districts too have remained neglected. The fate of Mughal Road started in 1978/79 is enough to explain the neglect. Even Agriculture and Horticulture have not been given a fair treatment. These districts too can produce temperate fruits. I had never tasted as good a peach (Aardoo) as had been served to me (from Poonch) by Chander Mohan.

The pulses and the local sweat rice of Rajouri has been introduced to no one outside. Educationally and administratively too these areas have remained very backward.

Although the Mughal emperors passed through these districts on way to Kashmir Valley they too did not do much for these areas. Even during pre 1947 days of the rule of the Maharaja nothing was done for promotion of tourism in these areas. Poonch was a Jagir of J&K State. The Maharaja of J&K had made Srinagar the summer capital and exposed only Kashmir Valley to the outside world. No doubt Maharaja of J&K had resource problems. Ofcourse the State Governments have after 2010 appeared showing some 'extra' interest for development of infrastructure in these districts but no larger projects have been worked out yet to compensate the shortfall.

These areas had suffered the most during

the 1947 Pakistan sponsored tribal attack on J&K. After 1990 Militancy too spilled a lot of innocent blood in these districts. Whatever little development was taking place that too was stalled. Majority of the people in these areas depend on government schools and are economically poor. The disturbances after 1990 have further dismantled the government school education infrastructure. The recent firing/ bombardments from across the LOC even in September 2017 have uprooted many families along the LOC thereby affecting the local economic activities and schooling of kids in addition to causing injuries/ death and mental strains. Displacements from the villages along LOC have remained a routine for last more than 6 decade. One can imagine how unstable are local conditions for them.

In addition to there being enough scope for promotion of pulses and fruits in these districts, there exists a lot of scope for development of commercial tourism in these districts. These districts have a number of historical places as well as religious places. Around and near these religious/ historical places there are a number of sites of tourist interest with very pleasant and cool climate during hot summer days.

The Shrines and places of Pilgrim like Budha Amarnath Temple Mandi, Gurdwara Nagli Sahab, Dashnamni Akhara Poonch, Ziarat of Shahdara Shrief Rajouri, Ziarat Budgnyal Dora Poonch, Ziarat

Batalkot Mandi, Ziarat Guntrian Poonch, Ziarat Panrote in Surankote, Ziarat Chote Shah Mendhar can provide a bait to the visitors/ tourists.

If paid due attention stay of tourists for a couple of days could be easily planned in some areas of these districts. There is enough scope for development resorts and recreational places in these districts worth local tourism and conduct of tourists to Kashmir Valley via these two districts (scenic spots of Pir Panchal region can be made tourist attraction).

Health and holiday resorts could be promoted.

Bringing tourist from Kashmir valley to these districts via Mughal Road and return of tourist again through Kashmir valley will do no good to these districts so the Jammu-Poonch 4 Lane project need be put on priority number one. Yugal Kishore Sharma (MP) has recently made some reference to 4-laning and he must set his first priorities on getting this project executed on ground since all these years the so often talked "project" has remained limited only to the statements made by the politicians from time to time.

Rather tourist on way to Kashmir Valley could be motivated to take route through these districts also.



Mughals used Rajouri-Poonch track just for reaching Kashmir Valley and did no particular good for common cause to these areas like resorts/ parks around natural streams.

The "same" Mughal Road if constructed ambitiously can throw enough opportunities even to explore and exploit heritage tourism since there also exist ruins of Mughal culture, Sarais, Tombs and Baradaris alongside the road worth promoting commercial tourism.

There used to be nearly 3 dozen sarais enroute Delhi, Lahore and Srinagar. After crossing Blimber, Novshera, the Mughal caravan would stay at Chingus Sarai, from Rajouri and Thana Mandi Sarai onwards, the road was a zigzag affair turning down to Surankot (now a tehsil headquarters in Poonch district). Mughal road can surely be turned into a favourite road link connecting Jammu through Rajouri/ Poonch to Srinagar via Shopian. The Mughals would pass through Gujrat (then Punjab), Kotla Arab Ali Khan, Bhimber, Jhangar, Novshelara, Chingus, Rajouri, Thanamandi, Surankot, Bafiaz village (on the bank of river Poonch), Noori Chamb (near Village Behramgala, 45km from Poonch).

The mountain peaks around the Noori Chamb waterfall remain covered with snow

throughout the year. The Lucksar and Kolsar alpine lakes are the main sources feeding the Noori Chamb waterfall. These high-altitude lakes are located at around 3500 Mt above MSL. There are beautiful forests of fir and deodars in and around), Chandimarh (about 2km ahead of Noori Chhamb and had a Sarai with baradari), Poshana (a beautiful village too had a Sarai. Remains under 5- 8 ft snow in winter and nearly whole population migrates to Rajouri), Pir ki Gali (Pir Panchal Pass), Aliabad Sarai (some ruins can still be located), Shopian, Khampora village - Sarai (nearly 15- 16 km short of Srinagar in Badgam District bordering Pulwama and Shopian Dist. Some Sikh families still live in this sarai) and Srinagar. The Mughal caravan would be accompanied by local people under the command of Jagirdars of the area. Jahangir died in Kashmir, while traveling back to Lahore, his intestines were removed and buried inside Chingus sarai on the advice of the royal Hakem.

Aliabad Sarai is still available in some shape where Royal Mughal Caravan after crossing Pir Panchal would halt for few days to relax and enjoy the rich scenic lands/pastures/ peaks around. The old remnants can be revived to original styles. Ofcourse the track passes through a less wavering topography and landscape as compared to Jammu - Srinagar national highway except that about 30 Kms of the road negotiates the area

that may be about 11000 ft above MSL (Dubjan to Chata Pani) and remains under snow from December to March in addition to 5-6 kms of the road being prone to possible avalanches and landslides which makes travel on this road unsafe. Hence the construction of tunnels should have been thought of in 1980 itself that would do away with all negatives making it all weather road. Any how it could be included now since lot of work on road is yet to be completed. The climate enroute from Jammu to Rajouri could be somewhat warm in summers but thereafter climate and surroundings would be soft. Ofcourse on way to Poonch Chingus and Lambari (Novshera) Forts could be of interest to tourist. But unless some easy and comfortable spots for stop overs and stay are promoted commercial tourism cannot be generated, a lot need be done in this direction by the government. The circuit can surely contribute reasonably to local economy but for that work on four Lane Jammu Poonch highway has to be given first priority along with employing modern methods for completing Mughal road too. Hope the senior BJP leader and MP Jugal Kishore Sharma who has recently shown interest in the 4-laning of the highway too would work committed to carry the project beyond statements. To be continued

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