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LG launches COVID...

of Covid vaccine to the 15-18 age group. A robust action plan has been prepared for the vaccination drive starting from today, an official spokesperson said.

The COVID-19 vaccination drive for the children in the 15-18 years age group will be carried out across the Union Territory. Online and walk-in registration, besides other required facilities are made at the vaccination centres.

School Education Department has also been asked to encourage the children to get vaccinated.

Chander Mohan Gupta, Mayor JMC; Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lt Governor; Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Dr Raghav Langer, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; Anshul Garg, Deputy Commissioner Jammu; senior health officials and students in large number were present during the launch of the vaccination drive.

Later in a tweet, the Lt Governor said, "COVID-19 vaccination starts for children aged 15-18 years in J&K. My humble request to the young friends to get vaccinated. Vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic."

The teenagers, who have turned up to get the first shot of COVID-19 vaccine, were excited and expressed a hope to get back to their schools soon.

"I was waiting for the day to get my dose of the vaccine as the pandemic forced us to stay back at our homes most of the time over the past nearly two years. We want to get back to the school as soon as possible," Harmanjot Singh, a student of Class 11 of a private school, said.

On December 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the inclusion of the 15 to 18 age group in the nationwide Covid immunisation programme from January 3.

Eligible teenagers will be administered Covaxin as it is the only vaccine with Emergency Use Listing (EUL) for the 15-18 age group, and it is also recommended by the 'COVID-19 Working Group' of the National Technical Advisory Group on immunisation.

The children taking the vaccine were kept under observation for 30 minutes and would be given the second dose after 28 days.

Parents accompanying their children also expressed satisfaction over the drive and possible resumption of offline classes.

2021 saw much...

the political spectrum of Kashmir, have nearly disappeared from the horizon and civil administration does not approve any requests for large assembly while heavy deployment of police and paramilitary troops ensure that no spontaneous demonstrations break out.

Political observers feel that the large-scale use of UAPA and Public Safety Act against dissenters has led to calm, which might be temporary in the long run.

The assessment has been proven right as Kashmir's police chief IGP Vijay Kumar listed managing the funeral of veteran separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani as one of the major achievements in the year-end media briefing.

The administration headed by Lt Governor Manoj Sinha seemed to have got the grip of the situation in the union territory as it successfully managed the fall out of the death of Geelani in September.

Given the popularity of the separatist leader, Geelani's death was expected to bring his followers out on the streets. It might have very well happened but the authorities sealed off some roads for few days and snapped internet services for about a week to ensure it did not happen.

With armies of India and Pakistan agreeing to a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in February, the guns along the border areas fell silent. As security forces eliminated most of the top leadership of the militants in Kashmir, many would have believed that the situation was almost peaceful in Jammu and Kashmir.

However, things took a dramatic turn in October as the ultras started targeting unarmed civilians including those belonging to minorities.

Nearly a dozen persons were killed by the militants, the security forces upped their operations but in the process questions were raised on the genuineness of the encounters.

One such encounter -- that took place at Hyderpora in November -- drew national and international attention after it came to light that at least two of the three killed in the operation were not linked to militancy.

For the first time since abrogation of Article 370, the police were forced to return the bodies of slain men they had dubbed as overground workers of terrorists. In the wake of Covid outbreak, the police started burying the bodies of militants in remote areas of north Kashmir with only close relatives of the deceased allowed to take part in the final rites.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah finally visited Jammu and Kashmir -- more than two years after the repeal of Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir and reorganising of the erstwhile state into two union territories.

Shah's visit came in the backdrop of rising civilian killings by militants who hit back at soft targets after suffering major setbacks at the hands of security forces earlier in the year.

The home minister's visit was high on symbolism as he addressed several constituencies during his extended four-day visit to the union territory.

His visit to the residence of a slain Muslim police officer, followed by a meeting with the families of those cops, political workers and ordinary civilians who fell to the bullets of the militants during year was a clear message to the nationalist forces that the government will not let them down even after they are gone.

Shah sought to boost the morale of paramilitary forces as he spent one night each in BSF camp (in Jammu) and a CRPF camp (in Pulwama area of Kashmir). He also paid tributes to the 40 CRPF jawans who were killed in the suicide bomb attack at Lethpora in Pulwama district in 2019.

While Shah's visit was aimed at reviewing the security situation and plugging the loopholes, the political class back home feel the graph of the security situation was going downwards.

After over two years of curbs, the political activity seemed to pick up towards the last quarter of the year with mainstream political parties like National Conference, People's Conference and new-entrant Apni Party holding rallies and workers' conventions across the union territory.

While PDP also did the same in Jammu region, it failed to get permission from authorities most of the time when it tried to hold similar events in the valley.

The politicians believe that the easing of curbs on political activity was due to the government's realisation that it cannot hold down dissent by force too long.

"It was due to the farmers' agitation that the government has relented a bit but the activity is still nowhere near it should be in a vibrant democracy," veteran communist leader M Y Tarigami said.

National Conference spokesman Imran Nabi Dar added that the results of District Development Council elections were also in part responsible for the lifting of curbs.

"There was a general realisation following the DDC elections that they cannot put down dissent by force for too long. People will speak whenever they are given a chance," Dar said.

He said dissent was an important part of democracy "but it has been criminalised in Jammu and Kashmir".

Both the political leaders felt that 2021 was disappointing but they were hopeful for the coming year.

"This year was full of disappointments as none of the expectations were fulfilled. The expectations were raised by the assurances given by the Prime Minister during the all party meeting in Delhi. Contrary to bridging the gaps, the gulf is widening at all levels," Tarigami said.

The Communist leader said while the Prime Minister accepted that there are distances between Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir, there have been no conciliatory steps.

"Look at what is happening in villages and the city as well. Distances have increased and hearts have broken due to the widening gap. Instead of reaching out, the beaten tracks are followed. Harsh laws are used to silence the society including media," he added.

Dar said the gravity of the situation can be gauged from the fact the dissenting works of local media are disappearing from their archives.

They might be disappointed with 2021 but the political class of Jammu and Kashmir is hopeful of a better year ahead. It is evident from the second rung leaders changing parties and other events which usually take place before an election.

J&K records 176...

recorded a maximum of 57 cases followed by 46 cases in Jammu district.

There are 1,498 active cases in the Union Territory, while the number of recovered patients was 3,35,774, the officials said.

The death toll in the Union Territory due to the disease was 4,530 as no fresh fatality was reported in the past 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the officials said there were 51 confirmed cases of mucormycosis (black fungus) in the Union Territory as one fresh case was reported since Sunday evening.

Intruder killed in....

recovered a huge consignment of weapons and narcotics in two separate incidents along the International Border (IB) in the Union Territory's Samba district.

The alertness of troops deployed on the border led to the seizure amid heightened terrorist activity on the Pakistani side, Boora said, adding that Pakistan continues

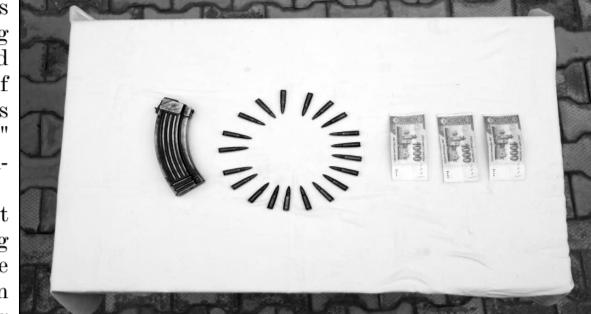


Arms, ammunition and drugs recovered by BSF troops along IB in Arnia sector.

and the seizure included three AK rifles along with five magazines, four pistols along with seven magazines, five packets of heroin and some assorted ammunition.

The sack was noticed during patrolling and it had the markings of "Fauji Fertilizers Company Limited" of Pakistan, the officials said.

This is the first major seizure along the IB in 2022. The troops who were on patrol seized the bag which had Pakistani marking, leading to



Ammunition & Pakistani currency recovered by army at Bhimber Gali Sector.

to make attempts to push terrorists and smuggle arms and narcotics into Jammu and Kashmir.

In a separate incident, the BSF also seized a consignment of arms and heroin along the IB near the Chamlial outpost.

The consignment was found in a white-coloured sack

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