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J&K determined to...

government approach to deal with drug trafficking and drug abuse. The Lieutenant Governor said that Inter-departmental coordination on various aspects and challenges is ensured and regular NCORD meetings have been held in the last two years.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the forensic labs have been strengthened and modern equipments as well as manpower has been ensured. This has resulted in effective functioning of labs and strengthening of the entire legal justice framework through filing early charge-sheet and effective trial of cases.

Suspicious movement near...

the early hours of the day and reported the matter to the nearby Army camp, the officials said.

They said the Army troops immediately cordoned off the village and the adjoining forest area and conducted a thorough search operation.

However, there has been no trace of the suspected persons so far, the officials said, adding the search and cordon operation was continuing when the last reports were received.

Security forces on...

anti-national elements, particularly over ground workers (OGWs) who have been aiding militants. Police have chargesheeted nine such individuals in the past two weeks.

Five security personnel and four terrorists were killed last year in Doda, which has seen an increased instances of militancy recently.

"Doda borders several districts and the Himachal Pradesh so divulging exact numbers of terrorists operating in the district is not possible ... The heightened security measures have been put in place to combat militancy," the SSP told PTL.

He said the past attacks confirmed the presence of two groups in the higher reaches last year.

"All security checkpoints are on high alert, especially in view of the upcoming Republic Day. The formations in the periphery of the district are on maximum alert and our focus is on anti-national elements to dismantle the terror ecosystem," Mehta said.

Referring to the chargesheet filed against nine arrested OGWs, he said the focus is to cut off the logistical support to terrorists and weaken their capabilities.

"This crackdown is part of a broader strategy to ensure the safety and security of the region's residents," he said.

The SSP said all accused have overtly or covertly supported the terrorist groups in the district by giving them food and other logistics.

Modi to inaugurate...

of the Z-morh tunnel will open Sonmarg to tourism all year round, Sonmarg will now be developed as a great ski resort. The local population will not have to leave in winter & the travel time to Kargil/Leh from Srinagar will also reduce."

Modi replied, "I am eagerly awaiting my visit to Sonmarg, Jammu and Kashmir for the tunnel inauguration. You rightly point out the benefits for tourism and the local economy. Also, loved the aerial pictures and videos!"

The statement said the project will also promote tourism by transforming Sonamarg into a year-round destination, boosting winter tourism, adventure sports, and local livelihood.

Along with the Zojila tunnel, set for completion by 2028, it will reduce the route length from 49 km to 43 km and boost vehicle speed from 30 km/hr to 70 km/hr, ensuring seamless NH-1 connectivity between Srinagar Valley and Ladakh.

This enhanced connectivity will boost defense logistics, drive economic growth and socio-cultural integration across Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, it said.

The Prime Minister will also meet the construction workers who have worked meticulously amid harsh conditions in an acknowledgement of their contribution to this engineering feat, it added.

Meanwhile, security has been beefed up around the Z-Morh tunnel . The security has also been strengthened in many areas of the valley, including Srinagar:

"Security has been tightened near the Z-Morh tunnel. Multi-layered security arrangements have been put in place and the PM's security team, comprising SPG personnel, has taken over the venue," the officials said.

They said the venue is now off-limits for the public.

Jammu and Kashmir Police, paramilitary forces and the Army are part of the security apparatus for Monday's inauguration. Extensive area domination exercises, searches and patrols are being conducted for the smooth conduct of the event, the officials said.

They said sharpshooters have been deployed at vulnerable points while aerial and technical surveillance, including through drones, is also being undertaken. The area is being monitored round-the-clock, they added.

Seven people, including a local doctor, were killed in a terrorist attack near the tunnel site in the Gagangir area on October 20 last year.

Authorities have closed the Srinagar-Leh national highway from Saturday to Monday "due to icy road conditions caused by inclement weather and to facilitate maintenance work by road maintenance agencies".

However, it is widely perceived that the arterial road link between Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has been shut for the PM's visit.

Security has also been strengthened in Ganderbal district and the neighbouring Srinagar.

"Tight security is being maintained along the Srinagar-Sonamarg road passing through Ganderbal and area domination exercises are being conducted," the officials said.

The deployment of security personnel has been increased in vulnerable areas and checkpoints have been set up at several places, they said.

Checking and frisking of people and vehicles have been intensified while patrolling exercises are also taking place, they said.

Built at a cost of Rs 2,400 crore on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway, the strategic 6.5-km Z-Morh tunnel will be a major step towards making the Ladakh region accessible by road throughout the year. The work on the project began in May 2015 and was completed last year.

The soft opening of the tunnel was done in February 2024.

The tunnel is vital in terms of the defence needs of the country in the Ladakh region and also connecting the youngest union territory to the rest of the country.

Situated at an altitude of 8,650 feet, the Z-Morh tunnel is a two-lane road tunnel equipped with a parallel 7.5-metre-wide escape passage for emergencies.

The tunnel ensures seamless connectivity between Gagangir and Sonamarg, and will ease summer travel to Ladakh.

Along with the under-construction Zojila tunnel, the Z-Morh tunnel will ensure uninterrupted connectivity to Baltal and Ladakh regions for civilian and military traffic.

National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), which oversees the project, has said that the "engineering marvel" is a game changer for the region.

"The Sonamarg Tunnel in Jammu and Kashmir is a game-changer for the region, offering more than just a connection between Gagangir and Sonamarg. This engineering marvel is poised to unlock the full potential of the region's trade and tourism sectors," the NHIDCL said on X.

It said the tunnel is equipped with cutting-edge technologies that provide real-time updates and seamless connectivity for users. This futuristic infrastructure will not only enhance the travel experience but also set a new standard for road connectivity in the region.

CM reviews arrangements...

Atal Dulloo and Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir Vijay Kumar Bidhuri on the comprehensive preparations for the inauguration of the strategic 6.4 km tunnel on the Srinagar-Leh Highway.

The Chief Minister inspected the tunnel tubes and interacted with the engineers and workers involved in the construction of the project, expressing his appreciation for their efforts in completing this vital infrastructure.

He also visited the venue where Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to address a public gathering and formally dedicate the project to the nation. Reflecting on the region's tourism potential, CM Abdullah reiterated his vision of positioning Ganderbal as a premier winter sports destination. He emphasized that the Sonamarg Tunnel would not only ensure all-weather connectivity to Sonamarg but also supplement Gulmarg as another skiing and winter sports destination, unlocking new avenues for tourism and economic growth.

The Sonamarg Tunnel is a significant milestone in improving connectivity between Srinagar and Leh, ensuring all-weather access to Sonamarg and enhancing the region's economic and tourism prospects.

Grenade attack case...

grenade, one AK-series rifle, one pistol, 256 AK rounds, and 21 pistol rounds, the SP said.

He said one of the arrested persons is a surrendered terrorist, while the other is a

son of another surrendered-and-released terrorist. The third, identified as the mastermind of the attack, had been evading arrest in a narco-terror case and was in hiding. Investigations are on and more arrests and recoveries are expected in the case, Yehya said.

Two retired officials...

FIRs (01/2025, 02/2025, 03/2025, and 04/2025) have been registered at the Economic Offenses Wing (EOW) of the Crime Branch, Jammu. Investigations are underway to uncover further details in each case.

The Crime Branch has reiterated its commitment to taking strict action against those involved in fraudulent practices, emphasizing that such acts undermine the integrity of government institutions.

3-day orientation...

that the newly elected Members have taken advantage of the said training program for ensuring their effective role in the Assembly.

The Speaker also thanked the MPs and PRIDE team for conducting such orientation program.

Earlier, Former MoS, Dr Satya Pal Singh, delivered lectures on Parliamentary Privileges, Customs, Conventions and Etiquettes.

Director Pride, Lok Sabha Secretariat, P K Mallick, also delivered lectures and gave details on the literal meaning of Privileges and its scope in safeguarding the status and protocol of MLAs.

Additional Secretary, Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Dr Satya Prakash, gave lecture on the session of NEVA, (National E-Vidhan Application) under One Nation One Application and also highlighted the objectives of the programme.

During the session, the legislators also raised their queries and question regarding Privileges and other related issues.

Lastly, Secretary J&K Legislative Assembly, Manoj Kumar Pandit and P.K Mallick presented vote of thanks extending gratitude to the participating members, officers of various departments including the officers from PRIDE for making the programme successful. Later, the Speaker felicitated the MPs and PRIDE team.

Director PRIDE also presented a memento to the Speaker.

Omar-led Govt...

"By implementing strategic measures and promoting these hidden gems like Mansar Lake, we can ensure sustained economic growth and prosperity for the region," he said.

Several public delegations met Abdullah during his visit, highlighting the need to enhance tourism infrastructure in the area to attract more visitors.

They expressed frustration over the lack of attention from the government since 2015, which has worsened issues such as inadequate access to basic utilities like electricity and water, a party spokesperson said.

The delegations also brought attention to the deteriorating state of the lake and its surroundings, urging immediate action to clean up the area and transform it into a premier tourist destination, the spokesperson added.

Additionally, they highlighted the poor condition of the roads leading to the area, the spokesperson said.

J&K witnessed driest...

Arif, said here. This marks the fifth consecutive year of below-normal precipitation in the Union Territory, he said.

The weather expert said a closer look at the rainfall trends over the recent years highlights an alarming pattern.

"2023 recorded 1146.6 mm which was 7 per cent below the normal precipitation, while 2022 witnessed 1040.4 mm "a 16 per cent deficit," he said.

Arif said 2021 saw the precipitation levels dropping to 892.5 mm which was a staggering 28 per cent deficit, and 2020 experienced 982.2 mm "a 20 per cent deficit.

With the 2024 figures nearing the record low of 802.5 mm in 1974, the region's precipitation levels continue to dwindle, he added.

The prolonged deficit has left rivers, reservoirs, and groundwater sources under stress, while farmers and residents face increasing challenges due to reduced water availability, leading to concerns over water scarcity and its impact on agriculture, hydropower, and daily life.

The monthly data for the year 2024 reveals the severity of the deficit, with the year starting off with a staggering 91 per cent shortfall in the month of January, the weather expert said.

He said February and March saw deficits of 17 per cent and 16 per cent respectively.

Although April offered some respite with a 48 per cent surplus as it was the only month to witness excess rainfall, deficits resumed from May onwards.

In May 67 per cent shortfall was recorded, 38 per cent in June, 36 per cent in July, and 2 per cent in August, he added.

The weather expert said the situation worsened towards the end of the year with deficits of 41 per cent in September, 74 per cent in October, 69 per cent in November, and 58 per cent in December.

He said the declining rainfall over the years emphasizes the urgent need for climate adaptation measures and comprehensive water management strategies to mitigate the effects of prolonged dry spells in Jammu and Kashmir.

Mehraj Mir, a local resident here, expressed concern over the low precipitations in the recent years, saying it is an alarming sign.

"It will create problems in the times ahead. The low levels of water would impact irrigation for agriculture and horticulture, and drinking water supply," Ahmad said. He expressed hope of an increased precipitation in the coming months to mitigate the deficit.

Ram Temple gives...

the completion of one year of the consecration of the idol of Ram Lalla, a three-day event has been organised by Shri Ram Jannabhoomi Tserth Kshetra Trust.

On the first anniversary of the consecration ceremony today, "We are all feeling proud... we are overwhelmed... The Ram Temple in Ayodhya is a reminder to the suppressed civilisations and cultures of the world that they can assert their rights democratically and constitutionally."

It was every Indian's dream to see the Ram Temple and they have waited patiently for this dream to come true, Adityanath said.

A positive beginning was made on November 9, 2019, when the judiciary unanimously ruled that the disputed structure in Ayodhya was Ramjannabhoomi. On August 5, 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for a grand Ram Mandir and on January 22, 2024, Modi ended the wait of 500 years by installing Ram Lalla's idol, he said.

The chief minister said that on average, one-and-half to two lakh devotees visit Ayodhya every day.

Ten years ago, nobody had thought that Ayodhya would get its rights. Before 2017, Ayodhya got electricity for three to four hours. The water of Saryu ji used to rot in Ram Ki Paldi, he said.

Thousands of years ago, after conquering Lanka, Lord Ram came to Ayodhya in the Pushpak Vimaan yet there was no airport here. But today, Ayodhya has an international airport, he said.

When the Ramjannabhoomi complex is completed, Ayodhya is going to become the most beautiful, spiritual, and religious dham. It will become the most magnificent city, he said.

Dozen illegally built...

encroachments, including Dingyali, Gulshan Nagar, and Asrarabad in revenue villages Majeen and Ragoora, Sidhra, were identified for the drive. Despite issuing notices or warning in such areas, the land mafia along with a team of contractors with labourers continued their activities.

During the drive, 12 illegal houses and four plinths were demolished, retrieving 10 kanals of the JDA land on the spot, the official said, adding besides giving a strong message to all encroachers and other builders in the area that no one will get away with impunity.

The drive was a success, not only in removing illegal encroachments but also in raising awareness among residents about the importance of knowing the procedure for carrying out construction on the land with clear title under ownership as the government or the JDA land shall be retrieved, he said.

Vice Chairman, JDA, Pankaj Sharma said his department is committed to ensuring that public land is safeguarded against unauthorised encroachments and will continue such efforts in the future.

"The drive is a clear message to the public that they should ensure construction of housing after verifying the title of land and following the due procedure for construction of buildings," he said, advising public not to construct buildings on the acquired JDA land in Ragoora, Majeen, and Sidhra areas for larger public interest as the JDA has earmarked the land for development of township in the area.

Dark web, cryptocurrency...

Bhopal zonal unit and extension of the MANAS-2 helpline to all 36 states and UTs.

The main focus of the conference is on the sharing of real-time information from the National Narcotics Helpline 'MANAS' portal with the Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) of states and UTs, evaluating the progress of states in combating drug trafficking, and assessing the effectiveness of the Narcotics Coordination Mechanism (NCORD).

Other issues to be discussed at the conference include strengthening and enhancing the functionality of State Forensic Science Laboratories (SFSLS), utilising the NIDAAN database to bolster efforts against drug trafficking, implementing provisions of the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT-NDPS) Act, establishing special NDPS courts for the speedy trial of drug-related cases, and fostering a Whole-of-Government approach to ensure comprehensive collaboration among all agencies to combat drug trafficking and abuse effectively.

Senior journalist Ashwani...

Club Jammu has expressed profound grief and sorrow over the untimely demise of Sunita Chandra, wife of Ashwani Kumar, former President of the Press Club.

"Sunita Chandra passed away this evening at AIIMS, New Delhi. Her loss has left an indelible void in the lives of her family and those who knew her", a statement by the Press Club stated.

In a condolence meeting held at the Press Club, office bearers, executive committee members and members paid tribute to her memory and extended heartfelt sympathies to Ashwani Kumar and his family in this difficult time.

The family is traveling to Jammu from Delhi tonight, and all final rituals will be performed in Jammu.

The Press Club of Jammu stands in solidarity with the bereaved family and prays for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

"Members of the Press Club of Jammu, are deeply saddened by the untimely passing of Sunita Chandra, wife of Ashwani Kumar, our esteemed colleague and former president of the club.

Her loss is a profound sorrow for the family and the journalistic fraternity alike. During this time of grief, our thoughts and prayers are with Shri Ashwani Kumar and his family. May they find strength and solace in the cherished memories they shared with her.

We pray to the Almighty to grant eternal peace to the departed soul and give courage to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss", the statement added.

Salary benefits withdrawn by employee cannot be challenged after 2 years of retirement: HC

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: In a landmark judgment , DB comprising of Justice Sanjeev Shukla and Justice Puneet Gupta held that emoluments drawn by an employee during the final 24 months of service cannot be questioned when calculating retiral benefits as per art.242 of J&K CSR.

Adv. Aditya Sharma appeared on behalf of one Tarlok Chand employee of the judicial department and challenged the order passed by the respondent whereby the gratuity and other pension benefits of the petitioner were withheld on account of extra salary withdrawn by the petitioner.

Adv. Aditya Sharma submitted that as per the Art 242 of J&K CSR the retiral benefits cannot be withheld if it is questioned after 24 months and it has to be as per the last withdrawn salary.

The petitioner was working as process server in the office of Principal District Judge Kathua at the time of retirement and the extra salary which he was taken was not come into the notice of any of the authorities and thus the same cannot be questioned after so many months of the retirement of the petitioner. It was further submitted by the counsel that given excess salary on the account of negligence on the part of the respondents and thus the petitioner adjusted his way of life accordingly and thus it will be harsh at this stage when he had retired from the services and huge recovery is being asked to be recovered from him without there being any act or omission attributable to the petitioner.

After hearing the counsel Adv. Aditya Sharma Division bench quashed the order passed by the respondent whereby the gratuity and pension of the petitioner was withheld and it was further directed to release the same as per the last drawn salary of the petitioner.

Court rejects bail of ISJK commander

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: 3rd Additional Sessions Judge Jammu Madan Lal rejected the bail application of one Malik Umaid alias Abdullah ISJK Commander who was arrested by SOG Jammu in the year 2021.

According to the police case that instant FIR was registered on April 4, 2021 u/s 13/17/20/23 ULA Act. On the information received through reliable sources at PS Jhajar Kotli, Jammu to the effect that some militants with arms and ammunition were present around Jhajar Kotli area. The Police party along with team of SOG Jammu started conducting patrolling and checking near Dumel Naka Suketar at about 7.30 pm the Police party stopped one person carrying one black colour bag (Puma company) who on seeing police party tried to flee from the spot. The police party chased and apprehended him. On questioning the said person disclosed his name as Malik Umed S/O Ab. Rashid Malik RIO YariporaKulgam. During checking of his bag 01 star pistol without magazine and 08 rounds wrapped in a cloth and cash amounting Rs 1, 13,000/- were recovered from his possession.

While rejecting the bail application, 3rd Additional Sessions Judge Jammu Madan Lal after hearing both the sides observed that the trial of the case is at the mid stage, only 08 PWs have been examined and charges have been framed on July 2, 2022. The offences charged against the accused are punishable with imprisonment for life. The case law cited by the petitioner is older in point of time and the case-law cited by the Prosecution is recent in point of time, so the latter has to be given preference and the ground taken by the petitioner that there is delay in the completion of trial cannot be accepted as ground for grant of bail in view of the case-law cited by the Prosecution. Therefore, considering the facts, evidence recorded and yet to be recorded, relevant provisions of law and case-law, the application of the applicant is pre-mature and without merits. The applicant has failed to make out a case for grant of bail, at this stage, so the application cannot be allowed and bail cannot be granted.

Govt implements expenditure rationalization measures for fiscal prudence

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: To ensure fiscal discipline and enhance economic efficiency during the current financial year 2024-25, the Jammu and Kashmir Government has sanctioned the rationalization of expenditures.

The new guidelines aim to implement austerity measures across various departments and sectors. The highlights of the expenditure rationalization include a reduction in revenue expenditure, limiting spending to 30% of the budget allocation in the last quarter of the fiscal year, with a 15% cap in March.

Payments will only be made for executed works and procured goods and services, with no advance payments allowed unless it involves government loans or disaster relief. A 10% economy cut has been imposed on budgets for operational expenses, telephone, advertisements, hospitality, and sumptuary activities.

The government has emphasized strict economy measures for organizing seminars, conferences, and workshops, with a strong discouragement of holding such events outside J&K and at private venues.

The purchase of new vehicles is strictly discouraged unless for critical operational needs, and only economy class travel will be permitted for officers within the country. International travel will require specific approval from the Finance Department. Additionally, no new furniture will be purchased unless for newly established offices, and no new posts will be created. Filling of vacant posts will only be allowed through authorized channels such as JKSSB or JKPCS and with concurrence from the Finance Department.

Local fund utilization will also fall under the ambit of these austerity measures. The government has directed all departments to strictly adhere to the General Financial Rules (GFRs), CVC guidelines, and other relevant instructions to ensure proper governance and prevent wastage of resources.

These measures are aimed at ensuring a balanced and responsible approach to expenditure, particularly in non-priority sectors, to safeguard the efficient use of government funds and contribute to the state's overall fiscal health. The compliance of these measures will be overseen by administrative secretaries and financial advisors, with regular reports submitted to the Finance Department.

Two JKAS officers transferred

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: The Government on Saturday transferred two JKAS officers. As per GAD order, Rakesh Kumar, JKAS, Additional Secretary, Finance Department, has been transferred and posted as Additional Deputy Commissioner, Reasi vice Kulbushan Khajuria, JKAS, who has been transferred and shall await further orders of adjustment in the GAD.