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Police ASI, civilian...

on ASI Ashraf and Rouf Ahmed in which both the policemen lost their lives. Heartfelt condolences & sympathies with their families (sic), the party wrote on Twitter:

The J-K unit of BJP also condemned the martyrdom of the policeman, terming it barbaric . Party spokesman Altaf Thakur said it was an act of frustration and that terrorists are feeling frustrated and attacking unarmed policemen.

He extended sympathies to the bereaved family and urged the police brass to punish the militants involved in the act.

PM to hold...

Omicron variant of the coronavirus across 15 states and Union territories and 90 of the infected people have either recovered or migrated, according to the Union health ministry's data updated on Wednesday.

There have also been demands that the government allow booster doses of vaccines to be administered to those already fully inoculated against COVID-19, as has been done by many countries.

In a communication to the states and Union territories on Tuesday, the Centre said the Omicron variant of the coronavirus is at least thrice more transmissible than its Delta variant and asked them to "activate" war rooms, keep analysing even small trends and surges and keep taking strict and prompt containment action at the district and local levels.

e-Court fee...

e-Court fee system. The system gives an option to citizens to pay JSD online as well as offline- through stamp vendors

Pursuant to the selection of SHCIL as Central Record Keeping Agency, on September 22, 2021, an agreement with SHCIL was signed by Law Department of Jammu & Kashmir.

Rollout of e-Court fee system would provide citizens an easy mode of paying stamp duty and would also enhance the scope of work for stamp vendors and augment their income. It would also usher more transparency in the entire process.

SHCIL is a Government Company and has already implemented e-Stamping system in entire UT. The SHCIL so far has issued 43 lakh e-Stamp certificates and collected stamp duty of worth Rs. 510 crore through e-Stamping system in the intervening period, of 3 months, between agreement signing and rollout.

SHCIL representatives with the help of Law Department visited at each District Court and trained the officers as well as the stamp vendors there. Total 244 court officers and 373 stamp vendors have been trained so far.

Those present at the official rollout at the Civil Secretariat here included Secretary Law, Aehal Sethi; Vice President Stock Holding Corporation India Limited, Amit Dass; Assistant Vice President, Pramod Joshi; Senior Manager, Vikas Singla; Area Managers, Surinder Bhatia and Charanjit Singh.

Security situation in...

Rai said there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents and infiltration of terrorists from across the border has also come down significantly.

There were 417 terrorist incidents in Jammu and Kashmir in 2018, 255 in 2019, 244 in 2020 and 203 till November 30 in 2021, he said.

He said the estimated net infiltration to Jammu and Kashmir was 143 in 2018, 138 in 2019, 51 in 2020 and 28 till October 31 in 2021.

Will continue to...

to power. "It is the choice of the voters whom they want to give a chance but my request is that do not vote on the basis of religion," he said.

Without naming the BJP, the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said this government has no experience to rule but has a fondness for ruling.

"They stitched an alliance with a regional party (PDP) in 2015 and later, pulled out of it to have a proxy rule through the lieutenant governor. Earlier, people used to visit their elected representatives to seek redressal of their grievances but after the fall of the previous government, the miseries of the people have increased manifold as nobody was there to listen to their problems," he said.

Azad said though people were not happy with the previous coalition government, those who are now ruling Jammu and Kashmir seem to be happy and enjoying power with their workers getting all the work contracts.

He said a leader does not discriminate against people on the basis of religion and region.

"Divisive politics will ruin our great country," the former Union minister said, asking people to remain cautious against those who try to divide them on the basis of religion ahead of elections.

Referring to his close relations with leaders from other political parties, including those from the BJP, he said the times have changed and today, the situation has reached a point where leaders from different parties are treating others like "scorpions or snakes".

"It is very unfortunate.... We are all humans first and our motive should be serving the people irrespective of their religion or region. We are all Indians and the country belongs to all of us," Azad said.

"Such a government, which has no mind, eyes, ears and a heart, has no right to remain in power and should be shown the door and made to sit at home," the former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said.

He also lashed out at the government for its "failure" to carry out development activities, address the issue of increasing unemployment and arrest the rising prices of essential commodities.

Later, talking to reporters, Azad said there is no government in Jammu and Kashmir and people are suffering immensely.

"Jammu and Kashmir has been pushed 20 years back by the August 5, 2019 decision, when the erstwhile state was disbanded and its special status abrogated," he said.

Delimitation draft rekindles...

of exploitation and discrimination due to unjust political manoeuvring over the decades as governance remained hegemony of chosen few", the BJP leader said while interacting with cross section of the people, who called on him to share their sense of satisfaction over the recommendations.

Rana said the Delimitation Commission Draft report based on the basic tenants the delimitation - population, geography, topography, area, physical features, contiguity, convenience of administrative units and facilities of easy communication and approachability of public convenience is the way forward for the political empowerment of the people of J&K. He said the Draft to an extent addresses the genuine grievances of the people of Jammu region as well who have a sense of deprivation and discrimination which was upheld by the Gajendragadkar Commission, Sikri Commission and Wazir Commission, but never corrected.

Rana said the proposed recommendations are in fact the course correction of the past political intrigues that have actually denied and deprived the majority

of the people across the Union Territory in general and the Jammu region in particular, of their right of being equal partners in the democratic process and governance mechanism. Instead of welcoming the just and logical recommendations, those opposing it are actually exposing their 'sense of political loss' which they assumed as their entitlement and birth right. He said democracy unfolding itself in its true form is uncomfortable for some, who see their monopoly getting threatened with common man-marginalized people of Jammu region, Gujjars, Dogras, Paharis of all the faiths-tasting the dividends of democracy for the first time in real sense of term, he said and slammed their brazen and shameless hue and cry over the issue.

"In their pursuit of retaining political hegemony, the self-styled champions of Jammu and Kashmir are stooping to lowest depths by indulging in promoting sectarian discord", Rana said and warned that this is going to boomerang with marginalised segments giving them a befitting reply. He asked them to read the writing on the wall as the people of Jammu and Kashmir are understanding their dubious tactics, which they perpetrated over the decades.

The BJP leader asked those opposing the recommendations as to what reservations and objections they had if the weaker sections, Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes, get politically empowered and become masters of their own destiny. He said the governance at the cost of subjecting marginalized sections of the people as subservient is against democratic ethos of the country. He cautioned the exposed leaders to desist from provoking the people, as the common man in Kashmir and Jammu are now well versed with their dubious politicking.

Rana congratulated the stakeholders and said that real victory will be only when the common people of Jammu and Kashmir, irrespective of region and religion, get politically empowered and rewarded.

JKPSC declares result...

had applied for the post, out of which 19,369 candidates appeared for the examination in both the Divisions on the date.

On the basis of the result, 279 candidates have been declared successful and have been shortlisted for interview/viva-voce against 91 posts.

The result of the shortlisted candidates is available on the official website of the commission under the domain www.jkpsc.nic.in.

As per the JKPSC, the result is provisional and is subject to scrutiny of original documents by the candidates at the time of the interview which is tentatively scheduled in the 3rd week of January, 2022.

J&K records 125...

since last evening. Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir administration this afternoon reviewed the public health system preparedness for the new COVID-19 variant Omicron after detection of three cases here, an official spokesman said.

Chief Secretary Arun Kumar Mehta chaired a meeting to review the public health system's preparedness for the new variant, which is reportedly three to four times more infectious than the Delta variant, the spokesman said.

Three cases of Omicron variant were reported in Jammu on Tuesday, all of whom are without any travel history and are now being monitored.

The Chief Secretary directed the district administration to enhance testing and contact tracing for positive patients and closely trace the infection trajectory to establish micro-containment zones at an early stage, the spokesman said.

Additionally, he said all Deputy Commissioners were directed to ensure strict enforcement of COVID-appropriate behaviour, COVID-19 SOPs and protocols, and micro-containment zones, besides regulating large gatherings.

"Any breach on these accounts will lead to imposition of night curfews and further restrictions," Mehta added.

Moreover, the spokesman said divisional and district administrations were asked to establish buffer zones around the declared micro-containment zones and monitor the spread of the disease to guide further actions.

"All line departments were directed to appoint one nodal officer for ensuring COVID-appropriate behaviour adherence across all government offices with a special focus on industries and transport, the spokesman said.

The health department was asked to remain in a state of readiness by gearing up their manpower and machinery and firming up the inventory of oxygen supply and medicines, he said.

The health and medical education department was asked to ensure proper functioning of COVID-related infrastructure, including COVID-19 dedicated hospitals, ventilators, oxygen supported beds and oxygen plants.

The department was also asked to monitor international travellers through the Air Suvidha portal and accordingly make COVID containment arrangements to regulate their testing, quarantine and treatment in respective cases, the spokesman said.

India's Omicron tally...

in 575 days. The death toll has climbed to 4,78,325 with 318 fresh fatalities, the data stated.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been recorded below 15,000 for the last 55 days now.

The active cases comprise 0.22 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has further improved to 98.40 per cent, the highest since March 2020,the ministry said.

A decline of 907 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 0.51 per cent. It has been less than two per cent for last 79 days. The weekly positivity rate was recorded at 0.58 per cent. It has been below one per cent for the last 38 days, according to the ministry.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,42,01,966, while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.38 per cent.

The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive has exceeded 138.96 crore.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

India crossed the grim milestone of two crore on May 4 and three crore on June 23.

The 318 new fatalities include 233 from Kerala, 30 from Goa and 14 from Maharashtra.

Of the 233 deaths in Kerala, 33 were recorded over the last few days and 200 were designated as COVID-19 deaths after receiving appeals based on the new guidelines of the Centre and the directions of the Supreme Court, a Kerala state government release said on Tuesday.

For Goa, 29 deaths from the May to December period have been reported late.

A total of 4,78,325 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,41,367 from Maharashtra, 45,155 from Kerala, 38,295 from Karnataka, 36,691 from Tamil Nadu, 25,102 from Delhi, 22,915 from Uttar Pradesh and

19,688 from West Bengal.

The ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities. "Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

J&K may be...

the book, published by HarperCollins India.

He also says that Pakistan has been reduced to a hopeless situation by India and it has become quite clear that the country is no match for India in any field, whether diplomatically, economically or militarily.

"The Kashmiris' dependence on Pakistan was perhaps a big mistake for which they have paid the price. Indeed, their desire to join Pakistan or become independent has become a lost hope," he argues.

According to Vij, all these factors put together will surely make the Kashmiris have a serious rethink about their approach and aims for the future.

"What should they do? Should they still dream about independence or should they try and recover what they have lost? Can they really take on India with the assistance of a hopeless Pakistan? The answer is an emphatic 'No'," he says.

"It looks likely that after the first 2-3 years of resistance, the terrorism will start crumbling gradually in the Valley. Because of the extreme radicalisation in the region, they may manage to hold out for another 4-5 years at the most. Thus, in a period of 8-10 years, the Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is likely to be brought to an ineffectual state," he writes.

By then, he says, Pakistan would possibly be in such a financial mess that they would be forced to look towards India, which will be on the way to becoming an economic giant, possibly the third largest in the world.

He says the Kashmir imbroglio was primarily the outcome of the Pakistan-sponsored proxy war; and their greatest success has been in deeply radicalising the somewhat confused and disillusioned people of the Valley.

"Radicalisation in the Valley is a critical, perhaps the most critical, factor now. These Kashmiris are, however, the same people who welcomed the Indian forces in 1947 with open arms and friendly slogans such as 'Hamlawar hoshiaar, hum Kashmiri Hindu, Muslim, Sikh taiyar' (Attackers beware, we Kashmiri Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs are ready). Also, they are the same people who gave early warning about the intrusions by Pakistani forces in 1965 and 1971 and even during the Kargil war in 1999," the book says.

"Once they see the economic progress and prosperity in the state, the better quality of education, better job opportunities, and the constant dialogues going on with them, including with religious teachers (maulvis), and they lose faith in Pakistan's ability to help them, they are likely to be more rational and amenable to a balanced solution and turn positively towards India," it says.

According to the author, the biggest priority and challenge before the central government will be to re-establish law and order, get the routine of daily life restarted and provide a first-rate administration.

Terrorism itself should be dealt with an iron fist, he says.

"The government should also work towards holding assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir as soon as the security situation improves and the proposed delimitation has been carried out. Restoring the democratic process at the earliest must remain a priority," he suggests.

"Bringing the Kashmiri Pandits back to their homeland in Jammu and Kashmir will be a litmus test of the success of India's Jammu and Kashmir policy. Finally, full statehood must be restored to Jammu and Kashmir (less Kargil and Ladakh) in a reasonable time frame," he adds.

The book has a foreword by veteran Congress leader Karan Singh who says all those concerned with the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly those in positions of authority, would do well to take Vij's "valuable suggestions with regard to the security, strategic, diplomatic and political challenges" seriously.

Deaths due to...

of the Action Taken Report on raising awareness about road safety, Road Safety Fund, strengthening of highway patrolling for prevention of accidents and fatalities, besides deployment of 136 Ambulances provided by MoRTH and operationalization of 102/108 Helpline Number.

Hirdesh Kumar, Commissioner Secretary to the Government, Transport Department briefed the meeting about initiatives taken by the government regarding road safety.

He also informed about the important aspects concerning road safety, including road safety action plan; functioning of road safety council, lead agency, and district road safety committees; category-wise cumulative registered vehicle population.

The meeting was briefed about the mechanism put in place for developing an intelligent traffic management system for Srinagar and Jammu cities under AMRUT scheme.

Discussions were also held on the Road Safety Audit of all existing roads; removal of encroachments, hoardings; fixing of road signages, speed limit, and other traffic calming measures; erection of crash barriers on the National Highway and other major roads; preparation of calendar for the training of Engineers in road safety; removal of unauthorised cuts on National Highways & other major roads and regulation of cross junctions.

Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to the Lt Governor; Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; Atal Dulloo, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department; Vivek Bhardwaj, Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Medical Education Department; Administrative Secretaries; Divisional Commissioners, besides Senior officers of Civil and Police Administration attended the meeting, in person and through virtual mode.

4 terrorists involved...

he also said that there has been an overall decline in terrorist incidents from 417 in 2018 to 203 in 2021 (till 30th November, 2021) and the law and order situation in Jammu and Kashmir has improved.

However, there have been a few targeted attacks on people belonging to religious minority communities by terrorists sponsored from across the border, he said.

Seven persons have been arrested in connection with attacks on religious minorities while four terrorists involved in these incidents have been killed. Seven accused including one absconder have been charge sheeted, he said.

The minister said a robust security and intelligence grid is in place to prevent any terrorist attack. In addition, day and night area domination, patrolling and proactive operations against terrorists are being carried out.

Besides, he said, round-the-clock checking at 'nakas' and road opening parties are being adequately augmented at strategic points to thwart any terrorist attack.

Rai also said the State Investigation Agency (SLA) has been constituted by the Jammu and Kashmir government for speedy and effective investigation and prosecution of terrorism related cases.

He also said that the SLA shall be the nodal agency for coordinating with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other central agencies.

Mehbooba likens Gen Zia's rule in Pak to 'today's India'

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday made veiled statements equating the BJP's rule with that of former Pakistani military dictator General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq and accused the saffron party of poisoning people's minds.

She appealed to the people, especially the youth of both Jammu and Kashmir divisions, to come together and fight for the lost honour .

The former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir was referring to working towards the restoration of Article 370 of the Constitution that provided special status to Jammu and Kashmir. It was abrogated by the Centre in August 2019.

What is happening in our country is for everyone to

see. Our democracy and Constitution are being destroyed What is the difference between general Zia-ul-Haq's rule and today's India. They are poisoning our country like the Pakistani ruler did there, Mehbooba said without naming the BJP.

Addressing a public rally here, she referred to the recent lynching of a Sri Lankan national in Pakistan and said while the Pakistani prime minister was quick to criticize it, those involved in such gruesome incidents in India were being garlanded.

Mehbooba said while there was animosity against Pakistani founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah for dividing India and the Muslims, Today, there are hundreds of Jinnahs polarizing Indians. They belong to the party that did not

play any role in the freedom struggle. Today, they are claim to be nationalists and dub their opponents as traitors and anti-nationalists. None of them went to jail during the freedom struggle. They were not even hoisting the national flag on their headquarters until a few years ago, she said.

However, the former chief minister said this is a place of 'Ganga Jamuni Tehzeeb' (Ganges Yamuna culture) and the politics of Godse (the assassin of Mahatma Gadh) will not work.

Slamming the BJP for allegedly using the Army to disperse employees of the Jammu and Kashmir Power Development Department, who went on a strike against privatization last week, Mehbooba said, "They will repeat the practice outside Jammu

and Kashmir, too, as they want to get things done by training guns on army men's shoulders.

She hailed former prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee for victories in the 1971 and 1999 wars. She sought to know what the incumbent regime had done even as "China had taken a large chunk of land in Ladakh and built colonies in Arunachal."

Describing the Sangh's slogan 'Ek Desh, Ek Vidhan, Ek Pradhan, Ek Nishan' as the root cause of the Kashmir issue, she said it created discord among the people of Jammu and Kashmir who rejected the two-nation theory.

They will boast about revocation of Article 370 during the upcoming elections in different states to hoodwink the voters as

they failed to provide two meals, jobs, good education and hospitals to the people. They have only hatred to sell, she alleged.

Reiterating that the abrogation of Article 370 was unconstitutional as only a constituent assembly had the powers to revoke it, Mehbooba urged the people of both Jammu and Kashmir to come together and fight for restoration of their lost honour .

Mehbooba also defended her party's alliance with the BJP in 2014 saying her father Mufti Mohammad Sayeed wanted to take forward the political process initiated by Vajpayee, which "paved the way for ceasefire on the borders, opening of cross-border roads, reduced militancy and brought India and Pakistan closer."

Construction of protection wall commences at Kalka Dham temple

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AKHNOOR. Suresh Sharma, member District Development Council, visited the historic Kalika Dham temple located in village Ardhan, Panchayat Kathar of Block Maira Mandrian and started the protection wall to be construed with cost of 5 lakhs. This work was started on the land adjoining the temple vicinity so that there is no damage due to land erosion and rain.

Suresh Sharma said, "Devotees from far and wide come to this historic Kalka temple, along with the Kathar Panchayat, faith of many people attached to this temple. All of you are worthy of congratulations for being residents of this area".

Suresh Sharma added ,"in the coming time, I will try to do many construction works in this temple so that



DDC Member Suresh Sharma and others starting work.

facilities could be provided to the devotees coming here"

On this auspicious occasion, Shri Shri 1008 Mahant Brahmachari Pawan Swaroop Maharaj, Mandal Pradhan Dr Ramlal, Sarpanch Tarlochan Dutt, Naib Sarpanch Ajal Singh, Panch Ramprakash, Mandal Vice Presd. Bodh Raj Sharma, Mandal Gen.Sect.Master Chanchal Singh, Surinder Singh, Captain Fakir Singh, Ram Ratan Sharma, Booth Pradhan Sanjay Sharma, Madan Lal and other panchayat dignitaries were present.