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Veer Baal Diwas...

the Lt Governor. District Administration and Tourism Department have been directed to promote religious places of Sikh heritage in Poonch in a planned manner; he further added.

We are fully committed to the promotion of Punjabi language. I have instructed the Academy of Art, Culture & Languages to educate the citizens about the sacrifices of Sahibzades & spread timeless teachings of Sikh Gurus. The administration has already established Guru Nanak Dev Ji chair at Jammu University and promoting Punjabi language in school education, said the Lt Governor.

The Lt Governor also appreciated the endeavour of All J&K Sikh Coordination Committee to make the people aware of the bravery, sacrifice, and ideals of Sahibzade.

Mahant Manjeet Singh spoke on the sacrifices of Sahibzada Baba Ajeet Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh. He also expressed his gratitude to Lt Governor for heeding the demands of Sikh community pertaining to the installation of the statue of Baba Banda Singh ji Bahadur and efforts for promotion of Punjabi language in J&K among other issues.

Ajit Singh, Chairman, All Jammu & Kashmir Sikh Co-ordination Committee expressed gratitude to the UT administration led by Lt Governor for taking cognizance of various concerning issues of the Sikh community and moving forward towards resolving the same with alacrity.

Kavinder Gupta, former Deputy CM; Ravinder Raina, President, B-JP J&K; Devender Singh Rana, former Legislator; Baldev Singh Billawaria, Deputy Mayor; JMC, senior political and religious leaders and prominent citizens were present on the occasion.

Mukesh Singh, ADGP Jammu; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu; Avny Lavasa, Deputy Commissioner Jammu; senior officials of Police and Civil administration; members of Sikh Coordination Committee; eminent persons and intellectuals of the Sikh community were also present.

‘Concocted narratives’ were...

he added. "Any country with such a glorious history must be full of self-confidence and self-respect, however; concocted narratives are taught to infuse inferiority. There is a need to get free from the narrow interpretation of the past to move forward," he stressed. The Prime Minister said the new India is correcting the mistakes of the bygone decades by restoring its long-lost legacy.

On the occasion of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary on January 9 this year, Modi had announced that December 26 will be observed as 'Veer Bal Diwas'. The day reminds us that age does not matter when it comes to displaying extreme valour and sacrifice.

"Veer Bal Diwas tells us what is India, and what is its identity and every year, Veer Bal Diwas will inspire us to recognise our past and make our future. This will also remind everyone about the strength of our young generation," he said.

Modi said what happened in the wars of Chamkaur and Sirhind can never be forgotten while noting that these incidents occurred only three centuries ago on the soil of this land.

"On one hand there was the mighty Mughal sultanate blinded by religious fanaticism and on the other hand there were our Gurus gleaming in the knowledge and living by the ancient principles of India", the Prime Minister said.

"There were heights of terror and religious fanaticism on one hand and the other; there was the pinnacle of spirituality and kindness to see God in every human being," he said, adding, while the Mughals were backed by an army of millions, the Veer Sahibzades of the Guru had their courage.

"They did not bow down to the Mughals even though they were alone. This is when the Mughals walled them alive. Their bravery has been a source of inspiration for centuries," he said.

Noting that concocted narratives were taught and created a sense of inferiority in the country, Modi said despite this local traditions and society kept these tales of glory alive.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need to get free from the narrow interpretation of the past to move forward.

"That is why the country has taken the pledge of removing all traces of slave mentality in the Azadi ka Amrit Kaal. Veer Bal Diwas is like a life force for the Panch Prans", the Prime Minister added.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of the determination and bravery of Veer Sahibzade and said this establishes the role of the young generation in the destiny of a nation.

Modi said today's young generation is also taking India forward with the same determination and this makes the role of Veer Bal Diwas every December 26 all the more important.

Paying tribute to Sikh Guru Parampara, the Prime Minister said that it is not just a tradition of spirituality and sacrifice but also a source of inspiration for the concept of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'.

The biggest example is the cosmopolitan and inclusive character of Sri Guru Granth Sahib where preachings and commentary of saints from all over India are included.

"The life journey of Guru Gobind Singh Ji also exemplifies this trait," the Prime Minister said.

Referring to the fact that Panch Pyare' came from all parts of the country, the Prime Minister exuded pride that one of the original Panch Pyara was from Dwarka, land from where the Prime Minister also hails.

Modi said, 'Rastra Pratham'- country first, was the unshakable resolve of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and corroborated the point by recounting the immense personal sacrifice of his family.

"This tradition of nation First' is a huge inspiration for us," Modi stressed.

Recounting innumerable examples of inspiring children like Bharat, Bhakt Prahlad, Nachiketa and Dhruv, Bal Ram, Luv-Kush and Bal Krishna, the Prime Minister said that from ancient times to the modern period brave boys and girls have been a reflection of India's valour.

Adding that any country is identified by its principles, the Prime Minister highlighted that when the core values of a nation go through a transformation, the future of the nation changes with time.

He emphasised that the values of a nation can be preserved only when the present generations have clarity about the history of the land.

"The youth always seek a role model to learn and find inspiration. That's the reason we believe in the ideals of Lord Ram, find inspiration from Gautam Buddha and Lord Mahavir; and attempt to live through the sayings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, while also studying the ways of Maharana Pratap and Chhatrapati Veer Shivaji", the Prime Minister remarked.

Highlighting the culture and traditions of India that believes in religion and spirituality, Modi said that the ancestors of our land gave shape to an Indian culture that associates with festivals and beliefs.

He said, "we need to make that consciousness eternal, and that is why the country is trying to revive the glory of the history of the freedom struggle during the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav".

Work is going on to take the contribution of brave men and women and the tribal community to every person, he said and expressed happiness about the huge participation from every part of the country in the competitions and events organised for Veer Bal Diwas.

He reiterated the need to take the message of the life of Veer Sahibzadas to the world with full determination.

Guru Gobind Singh had four sons -- Chaar Sahibzades-- who sacrificed their lives for their faith. Two of his elder sons died in the battle of Chamkaur Sahib.

At the event, Modi also listened to 'Shabad Kirtan' recited by about 300 'Baal Kirtanis'.

Modelling data foresee...

through a massive resurgence of Covid infections, was different on various counts.

"But kindly do not panic. The situation in China is different. They resorted to strict lockdowns which resulted in lower exposure to the virus and a lower immunity by natural infection.

"Also the vaccine used predominantly in China is the inactivated Sinopharm/Sinovac vaccine which is inferior in evoking a robust immune response as compared to the adenovirus vectored vaccine used predominantly in India," he added.

Dr Koul said as there was no data on the percentage of the Chinese population that had been immunised, China might have opened up "abruptly".

"And we do not know the percentage immunized among those vulnerable to severe illness (like the old or those with comorbidities) in China, specifically about booster doses. Possibly they opened abruptly without adequate immunisation of the vulnerable," he said.

Dr Koul said the variants of Omicron circulating in China had a high transmissibility. These BE7 and XBB have been reported from India for a while but haven't caused any outbreaks so far. For any variant to survive it has to demonstrate some immune escape, which is why these sub variants of Omicron have survived. However, as a group, Omicron does not cause severe illness and most of the symptoms are those of the upper respiratory tract rather than the lower RT and the lungs," he added.

Dr Koul, however, warned that new and more virulent variants could emerge anytime. He also emphasised on genomic surveillance to stay on the lookout for emerging variants.

"This is the reason for the advisory from MOHFW (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India). India has a clear advantage of higher vaccinations and more natural infections during the Omicron surge," he said.

Asked if he recommended voluntary testing, Dr Koul said, "It is always better to be with 'eyes open' rather than 'closed'."

Dr Koul said those who were advised the precautionary dose but did not receive it

would be helped by boosting their immunity.

"International travel to countries with high Covid activity must be undertaken with caution and only if absolutely necessary," he said.

J&K HC pulls...

Several months before the fall of the government, Singh resigned from the BJP and floated DSSP following an uproar over his participation in a rally in support of an accused in the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua in January 2018. However; he defended his participation in the rally stating that he was there to "defuse the situation".

In February late year, the J-K High Court directed the government to evict former ministers and legislators who are in "illegal occupation" of government bungalows.

The Estates department, in its status report filed in the court, named 89 former ministers and ex-legislators who continued to occupy the govt bungalows.

Panel set-up...

The other members of the committee include Special Director General of Police, criminal investigation department, Rashmi Ranjan Swain, principal secretaries of Jal Shakti department Shaleen Kabra, Housing and Urban Development Department Dheeraj Gupta, Industries and Commerce Prashant Goyal, Public Works Department Shailendra Kumar; Power Development Department H Rajesh Prasad and Higher Education Department Alok Kumar.

Additional Director General of Police (Security) Shiv Darshan Singh Jamwal, Commissioner Secretary of Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment Sanjeev Verma, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir P K Pole, Administrative Secretary, Tourism Department Sarnad Hafeez, Administrative Secretary, Culture Department, Zubair Ahmad, Commissioner Srinagar Municipal Corporation Athur Aamir Ul Shafi and Vice Chairman J-K Lake Conservation and Management Authority, Bashir Ahmad Bhat were the other members of the committee.

India is expected to host over 200 G20 meetings during its yearlong Presidency of the influential group which will culminate with an annual summit on September 9 and 10 next year.

The G20 or Group of 20 is an intergovernmental forum of the world's major developed and developing economies.

It comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK, the US, and the European Union (EU).

J&K youth will...

PDP responsible for migration of Kashmiri Pandits, the BJP leader said "Late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was Home Minister while as Dr. Farooq Abdullah was Chief Minister when migration of KPs took place but both the leaders miserably failed to deliver on ground and stop migration of their own people. Everyone is questioning when they were at helm so why they failed to rein in anti-national elements. These leaders casted evil eye on J&K and were concerned only for their profiteering", Chugh said and added, "Pakistani slogans were reverberating in streets of Kashmir when KPs migrated but Abdullah and Mufti surrendered before anti-national elements and kept grave silence on the miseries of the hapless community".

"The moist eyes of Dr Farooq, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti will yield nothing today as they failed to protect the lives of Kashmiri Pandits in their times', Tarun Chugh said.

He said people know their double-speak and hypocrisy. "Today you (NC, PDP and Congress) are wailing over KPs wellbeing but what measures you did in your times", he questioned.

He said that BJP will not allow corruption and militancy in J&K onwards. "Those involved in corruption or indulged in militancy in anyway will be taken to task sternly. The terrorism narrative will not work further. B-JP will make J&K an epicenter of tourism activities across India", he said

Hitting hard on former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's observations that upcoming election would be contested for rights and dignity of J&K which saffron party snatched on August 5, 2019, the BJP leader said "We are ready for the challenge. Let all of us come to know what kind of rights NC and others will get back by contesting elections. Actually their amalgam PAGID has been rejected by people of J&K. People are fed up from violence and bloodshed which was pampered by their dynastic politics over decades. Their bogus narrative will not work further. People want peace and development now", Chugh added.

"Abdullahs, Muftis and Gandhis narrative and their dynastic politics was meant to disintegrate J&K from the Union of India. But I want to tell them that J&K has treaded path of peace, prosperity and development under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi. J&K has achieved a lot of success during recent years. Earlier government was formed here with few hundred votes. In DDC elections 22 lakh people cast their votes which showed the confidence of people of J&K on PM Modi", he asserted.

To a query, the BJP leader said the elections would be held in coming months. "The assembly elections in J&K would likely be held in coming 3 to 4 months and BJP will come up as a winner with majority", he added.

Two dead as...

district -- were found dead during the rescue operation, the official added. The bodies were pulled out from the gorge and are being handed over to the relatives of deceased for last rites after completion of legal formalities, he said.

COVID-19: Mock...

stable and they have been kept in isolation at the hotel they had checked in, they said.

After a person who recently returned from China tested positive in Uttar Pradesh, state Health Minister Brajesh Pathak on Monday appealed to all those who have recently travelled to foreign countries to remain in home isolation until they get tested for COVID-19.

"In case anyone tests positive, they should immediately inform the administration and we will make all arrangements," he said.

"We have received information about a Covid-positive patient in Agra and his sample has been sent for genome testing. There is nothing to worry about as the situation is under control and the patient is in home isolation," he told PTI.

Karnataka, which was one of the worst affected states during the pandemic, took the lead in introducing precautionary measures on Monday by directing the use of masks at cinema theatres and educational institutions.

It also made two doses of Covid vaccination compulsory at bars, restaurants and pubs which will be allowed to operate only up to the seating capacity for the New Year till 1 am on January 1, it said.

Further, masks have been made compulsory at places where large crowds gather for New Year. Children, pregnant women and senior citizens have been advised to avoid such places.

The decisions were taken at a meeting headed by the state's Health Minister K Sudhakar and Revenue Minister R Ashoka, who is in-charge of Disaster Management, along with technical experts.

There is no need to panic or fear; and what the government has announced are only preventive measures aimed at controlling the virus spread and its impact, the ministers said.

"In the wake of the spurt in COVID cases in China and other countries and the health crisis there, we have been advised by the health experts to monitor international passengers. So they will be monitored at two dedicated hospitals - Bowring and Wenlock at Bengaluru and Mangaluru respectively, where there are international airports in the state," Ashoka said.

Wearing masks will be mandatory in all schools and colleges, and staff will be asked to ensure that students sanitise their hands before entering classes.

Tamil Nadu Health Minister Ma Subramanian too had on Sunday urged people to wear masks in crowded places, saying Covid protocol had never been relaxed in the state.

The Delhi government has approved a budget of Rs 104 crore for hospitals to procure general medicines as part of preparations to deal with emergency situations.

At a review meeting, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia directed the heads of government hospitals to share details of beds, ventilators, ICUs, human resources, oxygen plants, and medical logistics with the Health Department by the evening.

"The surge in Covid cases globally is a matter of concern for everyone. Delhi hospitals have been asked to prepare well in advance and stay vigilant" a statement quoted Sisodia as saying.

Real-time data on the availability of beds, oxygen cylinders and ventilators will be available for the public on a Delhi government portal from Tuesday, officials said.

During the second Covid wave last year, Delhi had grappled with oxygen shortage with hospitals sending out SOS messages over depleting supplies on social media.

However, experts say the BF7 sub-strain should not worry India too much as a lot of people have developed immunity against the virus - either through vaccination or previous infection - unlike China where people have low immunity due to tough restrictions. Officials said the mock drill on Tuesday will focus on parameters such as the availability of health facilities in all districts, the capacity of isolation beds, oxygen-supported beds, ICU beds and ventilator-supported beds, and optimal availability of doctors, nurses, paramedics, AYUSH doctors, and other frontline workers, including ASHA and Anganwadi workers.

It will also focus on human resource capacity in terms of healthcare professionals trained in COVID-19 management, healthcare professionals trained in ventilatory management protocol for severe cases and healthcare workers trained in the operation of PSA plants, etc. and the availability of Advanced and Basic Life Support (ALS/BLS) ambulances, testing equipment and reagents and that of essential drugs among others.

Referring to the surge in COVID-19 trajectory in many countries around the world,

the Union Health Ministry on Saturday underlined that it was necessary that in all states and UTs requisite public health measures are put in place to meet any exigencies.

Safety of KPs...

of surrenders by militants. I think the government shall have same policy and encourage local militants to surrender. Alongside, the common people shall not feel harassed and frisked by security forces, it will usher peace and development in Union Territory of Jammu Kashmir," he said.

Azad said that if he gets an opportunity to serve the people once again, he will bring back the golden era of development for Jammu Kashmir:

"When I was the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, we had a record for meeting deadlines for all developmental works. Even most of the projects started during my tenure were completed in a given deadlines after I directed authorities to start work in double shifts," he said, adding "This time most of those projects are benefiting all people." Alongside peace, development of UT is my priority, he said.

Meanwhile, hundreds of workers from South Kashmir joined the political rally of Azad despite harsh cold wave in Kashmir:

The rally was organised by DAP leader Mir Altaf. Among others present in the rally were Peerzada Syed, G.M.Saroori, Mohd Amin Bhatt, Gulzar Wani, Inayat Rathar, Sujada Bashir, Gulzar Khatana, Nisar Ahmed Wani, Ab Gani Bhat, Mohd Amir Dar, Amir Rasool & others.

Kashmiri Pandits Reject J&K Lt Gov's 'No Work, No Pay' Remark It may be noted that migrant Kashmiri Pandit employees have intensified their months-long protest demanding a transfer from the Valley following Lt Governor Manoj Sinha's remarks about stopping their salaries.

The protesters also said it was best for the government to sack them as they would not rejoin their services in the Valley in the absence of proper security after a Lashkar-e-Taiba affiliate published hit lists of Kashmiri Pandit employees.

The migrant Kashmiri Pandit and Jammu-based reserved category employees left the Valley in May following the targeted killings of two colleagues. They are seeking relocation outside Kashmir:

J&K Lt Governor Sinha had asserted that all necessary measures had been taken to ensure the safety of minority community employees, including Kashmiri Pandits, in the Valley and sent out a "loud and clear" message to those demanding a transfer -- no salary for sitting at home.

"We have cleared their (protesting employees') salaries till August 31 but it cannot be done that they will be paid their salaries by sitting at their homes. This is a loud and clear message to them and they should listen and understand it," Sinha told reporters.

In response, the Kashmiri Pandit employees, employed under the Prime Minister's Rehabilitation Package in the Valley, held demonstrations in front of the Press Club here.

Carrying placards depicting the administration's "step-motherly treatment" towards them, they also raised slogans in support of their relocation. "It is an unfortunate statement. It is better for the government to sack us all. We will not go to the Valley to join services. Our lives are more important than jobs," a protester told reporters here.

However, a few days later, indicating a thaw in the government's stance on the relocation of under-threat Kashmiri Pandit employees from the valley, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said it is better to save a human life even if it means closing down a dozen offices.

He also hit out at the opposition parties accusing them of following the policy of appeasement to the extent of being "inhuman." He alleged that these parties not only discriminated between people but also went to the extent of discriminating between the Line of Control and the International Border purely for vote considerations.

"This should be addressed amicably and with sensitivity. My personal opinion is that nothing can be more valuable than human life," the minister told reporters in Kathua. "If there is a threat even to one life, it is better to save that life even if it means closing down a dozen offices."

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti Saturday too said instead of giving migrant Kashmiri Pandit employees an ultimatum to join their duty, the Jammu and Kashmir administration should chalk out a middle path taking into consideration the recent targeted killings in the Valley.

Kashmir reels under ...

The minimum temperature on Sunday night rose two to three degrees from the previous night but stayed below the freezing point.

The intense cold conditions led to freezing of water supply lines in many areas as well as the freezing of the interiors of the Dal Lake, they said.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar settled at minus 3.5 degrees Celsius -- up from minus 5.8 degrees Celsius on Saturday night, the officials said.

They said Pahalgam, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a low of minus 5.7 degrees Celsius, up from minus 7 degrees Celsius.

The famous ski-resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district recorded a low of minus 5.0 degrees Celsius.

The minimum temperature in frontier Kupwara district settled at the season's lowest of minus 3.5 degrees Celsius, while Qazigund, the gateway town to the valley, also recorded the season's lowest of minus of 4.2 degrees Celsius, the officials said.

Kokernag recorded a low of minus 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Notorious narco-smuggler nabbed with 270 Gm heroin, over Rs 1 lakh cash

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Continuing its drive against drug trafficking and substance abuse, Janipur Police achieved major success by recovering 270 grams of heroin and cash Rs 109040 and arrested a notorious narco-smuggler.

As per the details, a team of Police Station Janipur led by SHO Police Station Janipur Inspr Vijay Kumar after receiving special inputs on the basis of local intelligence generated by police along with Rajouri police, laid Naka at Lohan Park, Paloura under the jurisdictions of Police Station Janipur.

During Naka, police intercepted a car (JK 11A-4091) and during frisking of driver, police recovered 270 grams of heroin and cash Rs 1,09,040 from his possession. The accused identified as Vanit Syal, son of Om Parkash, resident of Androla, District Rajouri was arrested and FIR No.147/2022 under sections 8/21/22 NDPS Act was registered against him at Police Station Janipur.

The arrest and recovery was made under the close supervision of SSP Jammu Chandan Kohli, SP City North Kulbir Chand Handa and SDPO City west Rahul Nagar.

Four drug peddlers arrested with heroin, Desi pistol

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

BARI BRAHMANA/ RAJOURI: Continuing its drive against the menace of drugs, District Police Samba under the overall supervision of SSP Samba, Dr. Abhishek Mahajan arrested a drug peddler in the jurisdiction of Police Station Bari-Brahmana and recovered approximately 20 gms of Heroin (Chitta) like substance alongwith one desi Pistol from his possession.

As per the details, a party of Police Station Bari Brahmana led by SHO Police Station Bari-Brahmana, Inspr. Sunil Kumar Sharma under the supervision of Mohd Usman, DySP Hqrs Samba (Addl. charge of SDPO Bari-Brahmana) during surprise vehicle checking near Sarore Adda NHW, Bari Brahmana intercepted a person moving under suspicious circumstances. During frisking of the said persons by the police, approximately 20 gms of Heroin (Chitta) like substance along with one desi Pistol recovered from his possession. The accused namely, son of Mohd Sharief, son of Ghulam Hussain, resident of Rajpura, Bhatiare, Jammu was arrested on the spot and FIR No. 239/2022 under sections 8/21/22 NDPS Act, 3/25 Arms Act was registered against him at Police Station Bari-Brahmana.

While in another instance, Rajouri Police also arrested three notorious drug peddlers and recovered 20 gms of heroine from his possession.

During routine checking and frisking at Kallar naka, Rajouri, a team of Police Station Rajouri headed by SHO Rajouri Farced Ahmed under the supervision of DySP Hqrs Rajouri Chanchal Singh stopped one car (JK11 F 5749) which was coming from Jammu towards Rajouri driven by Vishal Sharma, son of Ram Kumar, resident of Rajouri , co-driver Sorab Kumar, son of Rajinder Kumar, resident of Muradpur Rajouri and Sajid Hussain, son of Sarwar Hussain, resident of Balakote ,Mendhar recovered approx 20 grams heroine.

Trio was arrested and FIR No. 655/2022 under sections 8/21/22/25/27(a)/29/NDPS Act was registered against them at Police Station Rajouri. Sr. Superintendent of Police Rajouri Sh Mohd Aslam while sharing the details Conveyed Rajouri Police is committed to eradicate the menace of drug abuse and illicit liquor smuggling from the area and People from all sections of the society should come forward and join hands with Police to strengthen anti-narcotics drive of district police which is necessary to save our future generations.

