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Modi chairs meeting...

military offensive and India's efforts to evacuate its citizens through land check-posts with five neighbouring countries, sources said.

They said the foreign secretary informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs that in the next two days the government is planning to operate 13 evacuation flights to the neighbouring nations of the war-torn country and the number of daily flights would be increased to nine.

During the briefing, Shringla also said that Russian-speaking officers had been sent to the border check-posts and Indian embassies in Ukraine's five neighbouring countries -- Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Moldova -- to boost evacuation efforts.

Asserting that India has managed to accelerate its efforts to get its nationals out of Ukraine in the last 24 hours, the MEA said a total of 1,396 Indians were brought back home in six flights as part of the evacuation mission.

MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi also said the total number of Indians who have left Ukraine since India issued the first advisory earlier this month is around 8,000.

India is also sending humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, the ministry said.

Calling Modi's decision to send four ministers a "visionary step", Singh told reporters "I am leaving for Poland today and will coordinate with both Ukraine and Poland to facilitate the evacuation of Indian citizens stranded in Ukraine." The other three ministers are likely to leave on Tuesday.

After Singh's travel announcement, Poland's Ambassador to India Adam Burakowski held a closed-door meeting with the Union minister.

Describing his meeting with Singh as "very good", the ambassador said his country is allowing entry to people of all nationalities who are leaving war-hit Ukraine by road and food and shelter will be provided to them.

Amid reports claiming that Indians were facing difficulties on the Poland-Ukraine border, the ambassador said those who are trying to cross to Poland from Ukraine must refer to the social media handles of the Indian embassy in Warsaw and the Twitter handle of Operation Ganga.

"I would like to request all Indian nationals who are trying to cross to Poland from Ukraine that they must refer to the social media of the Indian Embassy in Warsaw and Twitter account of Operation Ganga," Burakowski told PTI.

Modi had chaired a meeting on the Ukraine crisis on Sunday too.

It was decided at the meeting to further enhance cooperation with the neighbouring countries of Ukraine to expedite the evacuation of Indian students, sources had said.

According to sources, India has agreed to send humanitarian assistance including medical supplies to Ukraine at the request of the government there.

Ukraine slows Russian...

chief said 102 civilians have been killed and hundreds wounded warning that figure was likely a vast undercount and Ukraine's president said at least 16 children were among the dead.

More than 500,000 people have fled the country since the invasion, another UN official said Monday among the millions who have left their homes.

Russia's Central Bank scrambled to shore up the tanking ruble Monday and the US and European countries upped weapons shipments to Ukraine.

While they hope to curb Putin's aggression after he unleashed Europe's biggest conflict since World War II, the measures also risked pushing an increasingly cornered Putin closer to the edge.

I sit and pray for these negotiations to end successfully, so that they reach an agreement to end the slaughter, and so there is no more war," said Alexandra Mikhalova, weeping as she clutched her cat in a makeshift shelter in the strategic southeastern Ukrainian city of Mariupol.

Around her, parents sought to console children and keep them warm.

In Kyiv, long lines formed outside supermarkets on Monday as residents were allowed out of bomb shelters and homes for the first time since a curfew imposed Saturday.

The relative lull in warfare Monday morning in Ukraine was unlikely to last.

Neighboring Belarus could send troops to help Russia as soon as Monday, according to a senior American intelligence official with direct knowledge of current US intelligence assessments.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

US officials say they believe the invasion has been more difficult, and slower, than the Kremlin envisioned, though that could change as Moscow adapts.

The British Defense Ministry said Monday that the bulk of Putin's forces are about 30 kilometers (20 miles) north of Kyiv, their advance having been slowed by Ukrainian forces.

Western nations ramped up the pressure with a freeze on Russia's hard currency reserves, threatening to bring Russia's economy to its knees.

Russians withdrew savings and sought to shed rubles for dollars and euros, while Russian businesses scrambled to protect their finances.

In addition to sanctions, the US and Germany announced they will send Stinger missiles to Ukraine among other military supplies.

The European Union, founded to ensure peace on the continent after World War II, is supplying lethal aid for the first time, including anti-tank weapons and ammunition.

At least one Western country is studying a request from Ukraine to provide fighter jets, a European official said.

She spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss information not yet public.

EU defense ministers were to meet Monday to discuss how to get the pledged weaponry into Ukraine.

Germany's defense minister said without elaborating that her country has channels and possibilities to do that, and a trainload of Czech equipment arrived Sunday. Blocking off those shipments will clearly be a key Russian priority.

It remains to be seen how much the weaponry will help Ukraine fend off Russia's vastly greater arsenal.

The increasingly erratic Putin made a clear link between ever-tightening sanctions and his decision Sunday to raise Russia's nuclear posture.

He also pointed at aggressive statements by NATO as a reason for his move, a reference to his long-running stance that the US-led alliance is an existential threat to Russia.

US and British officials played down Putin's nuclear threat, and its practical meaning was not immediately clear.

Russia and the United States typically have land- and submarine-based nuclear forces that are prepared for combat at all times, but nuclear-capable bombers and other aircraft are not.

A tiny sliver of hope emerged as talks began between Ukrainian and Russian officials Monday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's office said it would demand an immediate cease-fire.

While Ukraine sent its defense minister and other top officials, the Russian delegation is led by Putin's adviser on culture, an unlikely envoy for ending the war and a sign of how Moscow views the talks.

It wasn't immediately clear what Putin was seeking in the talks or from the war itself.

Western officials believe Putin wants to overthrow Ukraine's government and replace it with a regime of his own, reviving Moscow's Cold War-era influence.

His comments Sunday raised fears that the invasion of Ukraine could lead to nuclear war, whether by design or mistake.

In New York, the 193-member UN General Assembly scheduled an emergency

Chief Secretary calls for reinventing Forest Department

J&K Bank gives warm send-off to its President

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: As part of the Government's outreach programme to generate livelihood for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the J&K Forest Department on Monday organized a one-day consultation meeting-cum-discussion on 'Forests for Livelihood'. The event was inaugurated by the Chief Secretary, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta in presence of Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner/Secretary Forest Ecology and Environment Department.

The event was kicked off by an exhibition of forest-derived handicrafts, forest produce, and display technologies for processing of forest produce by various institutes of repute, followed by two technical sessions and a panel discussion.

For the preservation of green cover, the Chief Secretary urged the Social

Forestry Department to take the mission of 'Har Gaon Haryali', green villages, a step further to 'Har Ghar Haryali', green homes, in an attempt to encourage households to plant trees. He also suggested launching a movement on the lines of 'Har Nagar Ek Upvan, a green space for every town'.

He also encouraged the members of SHGs, NGOs as well as the Forest Officers to actively work towards finding innovative solutions to engage a greater number of people in livelihood generation activities and conservation of forest resources.

He informed that there are 572 unique medicinal plants in J&K and called for formulating a detailed plan for each one of the plants. He directed the Commissioner Secretary and the PCCF Dr Mohit Gera to spearhead the work in

this regard and prepare a detailed plan for the cultivation, promotion, and marketing of these plants.

He called for making use of technology and afforestation activities to stabilize unstable mountain slopes and prevent landslides to prevent routine loss to the environment.

To address immediate environmental concerns, the Chief Secretary called upon the stakeholders to look for ingenious and innovative solutions instead of cost-extensive engineering solutions alone for ecological projects.

Similarly, wetlands were also told to be cleaned and rejuvenated. Healthy wetlands can generate a number of livelihood avenues, underlined the Chief Secretary.

Coming hard on encroachment of forest lands, the Chief Secretary said, that

such activities would not be tolerated and all the guilty would be evicted by law. Forests are for the people and not for individual encroachers.

On the occasion, Dr. Mehta also released a brochure on "Pine Needles to Bio-Briquettes" compiled by the Forest Department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner, Forests Department, Sanjeev Verma informed that the creation of livelihoods is being enhanced through various ways of afforestation, sustainable utilization of NTFP in convergence with the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. He also informed about the benefits of sustainable management of Forests towards meeting the SDGs, India's Nationally Determined Contribution, and Biodiversity Conservation.

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: J&K Bank gave a warm send-off to Ashraf Ali Malik, who superannuated on Monday as the Bank's President and Chief Vigilance Officer, after serving the institution for over thirty-three years.

The Bank's MD & CEO, Baldev Prakash presided over the farewell function that was attended by Executive President Sunil Gupta, Presidents Rajni Saraf, Chetan Paljore, Narjay Gupta, Peer Masood Ahmad and Syed Rais Maqbool, Vice-presidents and other senior officers of the Bank at the bank's Corporate Headquarters. Rising through the ranks to one of the topmost management positions in the Bank, he had a wide-ranging experience in the banking law and practice and was currently heading the Bank's Law Department besides holding the charge of Chief Vigilance Officer. Lauding his role as one of the top management executives of the bank, the MD & CEO said, "With just over two

months of interaction with the top management here, I could see Mr. Ashraf Ali has played a significant role in devising various policies of the Bank besides providing the robust and requisite legal framework for the Bank's operations. He has been very articulate in the domain of his expertise."

"On behalf of the Bank, I wish him a healthy and happy life post-superannuation", he added.

Ashraf Ali expressed his gratitude to the Bank's leadership and his fellow colleagues on the occasion and said, "I am highly thankful to the Bank's leadership for their guidance and support through-out my career in this great institution. I will always cherish the affection that I have received from my fellow colleagues at different positions and places throughout my journey."

"Even after retiring from the active services of the Bank, I will continue to extend my advice and guidance whenever required by the Bank", he added.

Court extends 5...

SP Headquarters Ranjeet Gupta while SDPO East DySP Syed Zafar, SHO Channi Himmat, Inspector Deepak Katao, Chief Prosecuting Officer, Pooja Nijan, a sub inspector and a head constable are the members.

Now the police remand of these four accused have been further extended for 5 days.

"The record seized during raids on February 20 in the residences of former revenue officials is being scrutinised by the SIT members and special expert committees," sources added.

"As per initial reports, the arrested persons have made several disclosures during questioning and named few property dealers and government officials who were involved in sale and purchase of thousand kanals of encroached/grabbed state land," sources added.

"The property dealers whose names are revealed are on the SIT's radar and their properties and businesses are also under scanner," sources said, adding, "the list of names is ready and the arrests can come anytime soon."

Following the suspicious disappearances of Jamabandis, Lathas and other land records in Jammu South, 21 joint police-revenue teams raided houses and offices of many land grabbers, property leaders and revenue officials in Sunjwan, Chowdhari, Greater Kailash, Sanjay Nagar, Janipur, Gujjar Nagar, Bahu, Sidhra, Trikuta Nagar Extension and Satwari area in Jammu and Sarore in Samba District.

The persons raided upon were allegedly involved in murky land deals, forgery, destruction of revenue records, land grabbing, encroachments over state land; etc, based on the inputs received from various sources.

The raids followed the investigation in FIR 182/21 registered on November 7, 2021 in Police Station Channi Himmat regarding missing of revenue records viz. Lathas, Masavis of village Chowdhari and Sunjwan of Tehsil Bahu.

Div Com, IGP...

made to ensure COVID-appropriate behaviour at the mosque in case the congregational Friday prayers are allowed to resume.

The congregational prayers have not been allowed inside Jamia masjid by authorities for several months now.

Jania Masjid was the only religious place in the Union Territory which was not allowed to open by authorities.

The historic mosque has remained mostly closed for the Friday prayers since August 2019. The eruption of the Covid pandemic also forced the continued closure of the mosque for a long time.

Jammu-Srinagar National...

in view of the closure of the highway," he said, adding over 300 Jammu-bound trucks and some passenger vehicles were left stranded due to the closure of the highway.

The blocking of the highway also forced suspension of traffic on the Jammu-Kishtwar-Doda national highway which passes through Samroli as well, the officials said.

Hundreds of passenger vehicles, which left for Srinagar and Chenab valley region including Doda and Kishtwar this morning, were stopped at several places including Nagrota bypass and Narwal here.

The highway was only cleared for traffic on Sunday after a day-long closure owing to fresh snowfall in Qazigund-Banihal sector and multiple landslides triggered by heavy rains in Ramtan.

The SSP said barring 300 trucks on their way to Jammu, thousands of vehicles had reached their destinations on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the Indian Air Force airlifted a total of 123 passengers stranded at various places in Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh owing to the closure of 434-km Srinagar-Leh National Highway owing to heavy snowfall, an official said.

An AN-32 LAF aircraft, also known as Kargil Courier, transported 44 stranded people from Jammu to Kargil and 15 from Kargil to Jammu, chief coordinator Aamir Ali of the IAF's Courier Service said.

Similarly, 38 passengers stranded in Srinagar were flown to Kargil and 26 from Kargil to Srinagar, Ali said.

The IAF operates C-17, C-130 and AN-32 aircraft regularly to airlift stranded passengers between J&K and Ladakh during the closure of the Srinagar-Leh National Highway owing to snowfall.

Our civilisational history...

Lt Governor said. There has been a remarkable transformation in the ecosystem. Around 60 kanals of lake have been restored. After more than 30 years, Migratory birds have returned to the lakes. Lotus stem cultivation will also be restarted in the lake in the coming days. Post restoration, the Tourism Department has developed a view point at Gilkadal to attract tourists and to make the place a tourist hub. The ultimate vision is to revive the Ancient Water Circuit in Kashmir from Dal to Wular Lake with the objective of converting it into a National Waterway.

"Our civilisational history is rooted in the rivers and lakes. Protection of these environmental resources in J&K UT is integral to our development programmes. The devastation wrought by the encroachment in several lakes and rivers is the major challenge. I urge everyone to preserve the life-sustaining systems. For the sake of future generations, we have to strengthen the ecological integrity," said the Lt Governor.

J&K reports 42...

the highest of 11 cases followed by six each in Srinagar and Baramulla districts, they said.

There are 682 active cases in the Union Territory, while the number of recovered patients is 4,47,567, officials said.

The death toll due to the pandemic stands at 4,748.

Officials said there are 51 confirmed cases of mucormycosis (black fungus) in the Union Territory as no fresh case was reported since Sunday evening, officials said.

Meanwhile, Ladakh has reported 11 fresh COVID-19 cases all in Leh taking the overall caseload in the union territory to 28,003, while the active cases reduced to 166, officials said.

Ladakh has recorded 228 COVID-related deaths 168 in Leh and 60 in Kargil. No fresh death was reported, they said.

Fifty two patients recovered, 44 in Leh and eight in Kargil and were discharged from hospitals. With these, the total number of recoveries went up to 27,609, they said.

A total of 675 sample reports in Ladakh were tested negative, they said.

Of the 166 active cases, 159 cases were reported in Leh and the remaining in Kargil, they said.

PoK resident held...

in Mankote sector, the officials said. They said the intruder was challenged and subsequently taken into custody for questioning to ascertain his motive. Further details are awaited, the officials said.