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APSPA can be...

an important role in the Modi-led government and is honoured and respected by the prime minister. "The Modi government ensured all round development of J&K where over 45,000 people lost their lives due to terrorism... There is a boom in tourism as a record number of over two crore holiday-makers visited the valley last year, while witnessing massive investment," he said.

Thakur also termed as "condemnable and unfortunate" the alleged demeaning remarks of Congress leaders Supriya Shrinате and H S Ahir and claimed that the opposition party is "anti-women".

"They ruled the country for over 60 years but did nothing for the women. Under Modi, the incumbent government to honour women provided four crore concrete houses, 12 crore toilets, 13 crore house taps, 60 crore health cards, free ration to 80 crore population and LPG cylinders to 10 crore women. We also ensured 33 per cent reservation to women by bringing a bill in the parliament," he said.

On holding of assembly elections in J-K, he said the deadline is already set and "I am sure the elections will take place with ECI team taking a fresh review (of the situation after completion of Lok Sabha polls)", he said.

Blast in Poonch...

panic among locals.

"We have received information of a suspected small intensity explosion-like sound from an area near Poonch hospital. Necessary investigation into the matter has been sent into motion to ascertain the exact nature of the blast," a police spokesman said.

He said the blast was apparently caused by a handmade crude substance.

Officials said two suspected persons were detained for questioning in connection with the explosion.

8 more candidates...

Congress, Sachin Gupta from Inqalab Vikas Dal (I.V.D), Manoj Kumar from Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal, Balwan Singh from J&K National Panthers Party and Dr Pankaj Sharma as Independent, filed their nomination papers in the office of Returning Officer.

With the filing of nomination papers by these eight candidates, the total tally of candidates who have filed their candidature for 4-Udhampur PC goes to fifteen.

The scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held on March 28, 2024 at 01:00 PM. The candidate can withdraw their nomination before 03:00 PM on March 30,2024 in the office of Returning Officer. The constituency is scheduled for Elections in the first phase of General Elections to be held on April 19.

Normalcy in ties...

significantly following the deadly clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in more than four decades.

HC refuses to...

as such, the respondent No.1 cannot continue with the investigation in the FIR on the basis of same set of allegations; that the contents of FIR do not disclose the commission of any of the offences as alleged qua the petitioner-company, as such, the FIR could not have been registered against the petitioner, more particularly when the petitioner-company has suffered a heavy loss to the tune of Rs.2.31 crores (approximately) in the contract which was subsequently cancelled by the Government;

That the FIR was registered by the CBI on April 19, 2022 and notices dated December 14, 2022 and June 15, 2023 were served upon the petitioner-company for submitting some documents. Though the petitioner-company provided all the requisite documents yet again notice dated January 16, 2024 was served upon the petitioner asking for similar set of documents and along with personal details which have been duly replied and almost all the available documents have been provided to the respondents.

It is stated that after being successful in the tendering process, the petitioner was appointed as Insurance Broker to design and implement the Group Mediclaim Healthcare Insurance Policy for all the State Government employees including the employees of PSUs/Autonomous Bodies/Local Bodies/Universities, pensioners etc. and their dependant family members for a period of three years. An agreement was entered into between petitioner-company and the Government on November 27, 2017. A tender was floated by the Finance Department through petitioner-company for appointment of insurance company for its Group Mediclaim Healthcare Insurance Policy but due to poor response, no one could be selected and fresh tenders were floated by the Finance Department for the aforesaid purpose on June 1, 2018. It is further stated that seven bids were received from the tenderers out of which Reliance General Insurance Company Limited (for short "RGICL") was declared as lowest bidder as its bid was 40% less than the other bidders and finally was recommended for issuance of Letter of Award. A tripartite agreement dated October 15, 2018 was executed between petitioner-company, Government of J&K and RGICL. It is pleaded by the petitioner that the petitioner-company has not received any amount from the J&K Government but has received remuneration from RGICL only for a brief period of three months as brokerage charges in terms of the agreement. The aforesaid agreement was terminated abruptly vide notice dated November 30, 2018 by the Finance Department of the J&K Government without assigning any justification and thereafter an investigation was carried out by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (for short "the ACB") in respect of alleged malpractices in awarding the aforesaid contract to RGICL but after thorough investigation, the ACB concluded that no irregularity was found in the matter. Further, the communication was made to RGICL for recovery of balance amount as per the relevant clause of the contract. In the reports of the ACB dated 27.11.2019 and 08.02.2022 submitted to the Government it was specifically stated that no irregularity has been found during the course of verification by ACB. Thereafter, Deputy Secretary to Government of J&K, vide communication dated 23.03.2022 referred the matter to the CBI along with its report and in pursuance to the aforesaid reference, FIR bearing No.RC1232022A0004 dated 19.04.2022 was registered at Srinagar by the respondents No.1 and 2. It is further averred that the allegations made in the FIR by the CBI are based on the written communication alleging the connivance and conspiracy between unknown public officials of the Government of J&K, petitioner-company and M/S RGICL to allegedly commit the offences of conspiracy and criminal misconduct to cause pecuniary advantage to themselves and wrongful loss to the state exchequer during the period 2017-18. It is urged that the petitioner-company and its officials fully participated and cooperated during the course of aforesaid investigation and when the petitioner appeared before the respondents, the respondent No.2 conducted thorough investigation and put several questions to the petitioner's Director - Harshit Jain, which were duly replied by him.

The respondents No.1 and 2 have filed the response stating therein that a Regular Case No.RC1232022A0004 was registered by CBI, ACB, Srinagar, on April 19, 2022 against the petitioner, RGICL and other unknown public servants and private persons under Section 120-B r/w Section 420 of J&K Penal Code (Ranbir Penal Code) and under Section 5(2) r/w Section 5(1)(d) of the J&K PC Act, on the basis of written complaint dated March 23, 2022 submitted by the Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of J&K, General Administration Department. It is further stated that unknown officials/officers of the Government of J&K in conspiracy with M/S Trinity Reinsurance Brokers Limited and M/S RGICL committed criminal misconduct by hiring M/S Trinity Reinsurance Brokers Limited as consultant/intermediary to guide the department in tendering process. M/S RGICL was selected as Insurer for Group Mediclaim Insurance of employees and pensioners of J&K Govt. in the year 2018 by violating the Financial Rules and an amount of Rs.61,43,78,800/ was released in favour of M/S RGICL before signing of agreement. M/S RGICL was allowed to misappropriate the funds of J&K Government by allowing insurance policy to continue for one quarter, wherein the notice for foreclosure of the contract with effect from December 31, 2018 was served upon M/S RGICL on November 30, 2018. It is further averred that after registration of FIR, investigation is being carried out and during investigation, Harshit Jain, Director and Principal Officer of the petitioner-Company was requested to produce the documents including communications with insurance companies, TPAs and Government of J&K, eligibility of M/S Trinity Reinsurance Brokers Limited, documents regarding expenses incurred, payments received etc. and to give his statement regarding allegations of malpractices. He attended the CBI, ACB, Srinagar, office on July 20 and 21, 2022 and produced photocopies of the documents. On July 21, 2022, his statement was recorded but before completion of his statement, he requested to defer the statement due to ill health and as he wanted to refer to his office records before making further statement and accordingly Harshit Jain was directed to attend the CBI, ACB, Srinagar office after one week along with all original/certified documents and he was relieved from CBI office. Thereafter, despite telephonic calls and notices issued to Harshit Jain, he did not participate in the investigation and levelled false allegations of harassment without any basis, with ulterior motive to stall the smooth investigation of the case. M/S RGICL has paid any amount of Rs.4,36,07,033/ to the petitioner as brokerage out of the premium received from the Government. The Government of J&K had deducted the premium amount from the salaries of lacs of Government employees and received premium

amount from the pensioners as well. The petitioner and RGICL are duty bound to cooperate during the investigation. It is also stated that the ACB, J&K, has not investigated the matter, rather has only conducted limited preliminary enquiry/verification and at present, the CBI is conducting thorough investigation of the allegations made in the FIR. During search of the premises of the petitioner, certain incriminating documents were seized and the said documents are being examined.

Justice Ragnesh Oswal after hearing both the sides observed that the first contention raised by the petitioner is that there are no allegations against the petitioner in FIR in respect of the commission of any offence whatsoever. This is an undisputed fact that the premium paid to the RGICL was, in fact, deducted from the salaries of the Government employees and an amount of Rs.61.44 crores was paid to M/S RGICL as first instalment of premium and out of that premium, an amount of Rs.4,36,07,033/ has been admittedly received by M/S Trinity Reinsurance Brokers Limited, the petitioner herein, as brokerage. The FIR was registered by the respondent No.1 pursuant to the communication dated 23.03.2022 and the office memoranda dated 10.02.2022 of the Finance Department, Codes Division, Government of J&K, Civil Secretariat, Jammu, forms part of the said communication. The perusal of the communication dated 10.02.2022 reveals certain allegations in respect of award of contract to RGICL without e-tendering process and that changes were made in the agreement with the petitioner after the agreement was signed, have been levelled. It is settled law that FIR is not an encyclopaedia and the purpose of registration of FIR is to only set the criminal law into motion so as to come to final conclusion as to whether an offence has been committed or not and if during the course of investigation, the investigating agency comes to the conclusion that the offence is not proved, then the closure report can be filed by it. So far as the present case is concerned, there are allegations levelled against the petitioner and other government officials as well as against RGICL which are required to be probed in detail and at this stage when investigation has not reached at the final stage and the investigating agency is still in the process of gathering evidence, the FIR cannot be quashed. The facts are still hazy and not clear as such the contention raised by the petitioner-company is mis-conceived.

The second contention raised by the petitioner is that once the ACB had enquired in detail the similar allegations, the impugned FIR could not have been registered by the respondent No.1 at the instance of respondent No.3. The perusal of the communication dated 23.03.2022 addressed by respondent No.2 to respondent No.1 reveals that the respondent No.1 was requested to investigate the matter only after the report submitted by the ACB was considered and the learned Senior AAG appearing for respondent No.3 is right in his submission that in order to get fair, independent and transparent investigation, it was thought proper by the respondent No.3 to get the matter regarding allotment of contract investigated independently as huge public money was involved. This Court has examined the record produced by the CBI and has found that the CBI is not only investigating the allotment of contract to M/S RGICL but also the engagement of petitioner-company as insurance broker. This Court would not like to comment in respect of the mode and manner in which the petitioner was engaged as insurance broker at this stage because the matter is still being investigated by the respondent No.1. This aspect of the case was never enquired into by the ACB, J&K. Therefore, the contention of the petitioner in this regard too is not sufficient for quashing of the impugned FIR, Court observed that

The third contention raised by the learned senior counsel, though not pleaded in the petition, is that there is delay of four years in registration of FIR. Simply on the ground that the FIR has been registered after a huge delay, the same cannot be quashed as earlier the matter was being enquired into by the ACB which submitted its reports on November 27, 2019 and February 8, 2022. After considering the report submitted by the ACB, the matter was referred to the respondent No.1 for investigation by the respondent No.3 vide communication dated March 23, 2022. Therefore, it cannot be said that there is a huge and unexplained delay on the part of respondents in registration of FIR. This contention of the petitioner too is rejected, Court said.

The last ground, though not pleaded in the petition but urged by senior counsel during the course of arguments, that the CBI has no jurisdiction to investigate the cases pertaining to the erstwhile State of J&K is also misconceived in view of judgments passed by the Coordinate Bench of this Court in cases titled "Kumar Avinav vs. Union of India", 2023(1) Crimes J&K 455 and "Major. General V.K Sharma & Anr. vs. C.B.I" CRMC No. 248/2016 decided on February 7, 2024, Court said.

With these observations Court did not find any reason to show indulgence for the purpose of quashing the impugned FIR. However, the present petition is disposed of by directing the respondents No.1 and 2 to conclude the investigation of the case as expeditiously as possible and the petitioner-company is directed to participate in the investigation so as to enable the respondent No.1 to conclude the investigation expeditiously.

ACB registers case...

Thanamandi, without initiation of any tendering process issued another supply order vide No. MC/T/2019/108A dated 16-05-2019 to said M/S Gouri Sales Agencies for purchase of 150 LED street lights of 45 watt, 150 LED bulbs of 40 watts etc. on the rates already approved by Municipal Committee Thanamandi for the year 2018-19. However, no such LED street lights & LED bulbs etc. so purchased through the said supply order, were found received in Municipal Committee Thanamandi. In this regard, no record has been found in respect of receipt/issuance of such lights and bulbs. But bills against such purchases stand endorsed by Riyaz Ahmed, then Storekeeper of Municipal Committee Thanamandi. It also surfaced that Shakeel Ahmed Mir then President, Mushtaq Ahmed then Executive Officer, Riyaz Ahmed then Storekeeper and other officers/officials of Municipal Committee Thanamandi, by abuse of their official positions and in lieu of criminal conspiracy hatched among themselves as well as Proprietor of M/S Gouri Sales Agencies (supplier firm), released full payment of amount against LED Street lights and LED bulbs purported to be purchased/supplied vide tender notice No. MC/T/19/193-97 dated 06-03-2019 and supply order No. MC/T/2019/108A dated 16-05-2019.

By acting in this manner; the above named public servants and others misappropriated/embezzled Govt. money just to confer undue pecuniary benefits to them as well as supplier with corresponding loss to Govt. exchequer on account of LED street lights purchased on exorbitant rates as well as loss on account of non-existent LED street lights and LED Bulbs which came upto ₹5,96,870/- (approx).

The aforementioned facts constitute commission of offences punishable under section 5(1)(c)(d) r/w 5(2) J&K Prevention of Corruption Act, Svt. 2006 & section 120-B RPC against 1) Shakeel Ahmed Mir, then President, Municipal Committee Thanamandi Rajouri son of Abdul Aziz Mir resident of Ward No. 07 Thanamandi Rajouri; Mushtaq Ahmed, then Executive Officer, Municipal Committee Thanamandi Rajouri (now EO MC Doda) son of Lal Hussain, resident of Fatehpur Tehsil & District Rajouri; Riyaz Ahmed, then I/C Sanitary Inspector (Storekeeper) Municipal Committee Thanamandi Rajouri, now posted as Supervisor in MC Doda, son of Amroo, resident of Ward No. 07 Rajouri, other officers/officials of Municipal Committee Thanamandi as well as Proprietor of M/s Gouri Sales Agencies and others. Anti-Corruption Bureau after registration of case under relevant sections of law, also conducted searches with the help of local police/ magistrates/ independent witnesses at residences of above named accused public servants situated in District Rajouri. Further investigation in the case is going on.

Sadanand Vasant Date...

and fanned out across Mumbai.

By the time, Date and his team reached CST, Kasab and Ismail, both members of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, had left and occupied the roof of the Cama hospital nearby. The team followed them there.

The police team was operating blind. They knew that two people were up there but did not have any information about the arms and ammunition in the possession of the terrorists. Nonetheless, the Date-led team decided to take on the two.

In retaliation to the gunshots, the terrorists lobbed hand grenades at the approaching police team and Date was hit by splinters in his hands and legs.

Undeterred by the injury, Date continued to fire at the two terrorists besides informing other senior officers about their location.

After holding them for an hour, Date fell unconscious after losing a lot of blood.

The team's swift response and decisive actions were instrumental in managing the crisis at the hospital for the patients, including scores of women and children.

The night saw 18 Mumbai Police personnel laying down their lives. Among those killed were senior IPS officers Hemant Karkare and Ashok Kamte besides encounter specialist Vijay Salaskar and assistant sub-inspector Tuka Ram Omble, who was instrumental in arresting Kasab, the Pakistani LeT operative caught alive and hanged in November 2012. Ismail was killed by Omble.

Date, 57, who was Maharashtra ATS chief till Wednesday, also served as DIG in the Central Bureau of Investigation, IG (Ops) in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), and Commissioner of Police for Mira-Bhayandar and Vasai-Virar city (MBVV) near Mumbai.

CS reviews development...

developing of relevant content and other APIs for synchronizing it to make Kisan Khidmat Ghar a viable solution for all Agri related avenues and enterprises.

No interim relief...

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena at an event said the Delhi government will not be run from jail, a statement that came against the backdrop of assertion by AAP leaders that Kejriwal will continue as chief minister even if he is behind bars. Replying to a query at the Times Now Summit, Saxena said, "I can assure the people of Delhi that the government will not be run from jail."

Our preparedness levels...

have our response mechanism firmly in place," General Pande said.

He was asked how well is the Indian Army prepared in the backdrop of the eastern Ladakh border standoff.

"We have talks at two levels. One is at the military level, at the level of our corps commanders, we have had 21 rounds of talks. At the diplomatic level, where we have the mechanism, WMCC (Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs)," he said, adding several rounds of WMCC talks have taken place post the event of mid-2020.

The 28th meeting of WMCC was held on November 30, 2023.

"It is my belief that only through talks you will find resolution of the balance issues that are currently at hand. While these talks are progressing, we are also focusing on capability development along our northern borders, of which technology infusion, modernisation are important," the Army chief said.

General Pande said the Army is also focusing on infrastructure development and "I believe, we are moving in the right direction".

"Our preparedness levels are of a very high order and we are keeping a very close watch on developments and what is happening across the border," he added.

Asked to quantify the threat perception from China, General Pande said from time to time "we keep reviewing threats". So, threat during the winter months may be slightly different from what it may be during the summer months, he added.

"Just as our western adversary, with respect to our northern adversary, I would only say, our preparedness level is of a very high order," the Army chief asserted.

On the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, he underlined the Army formations deployed in the UT, both in hinterland and along the LoC in counter-infiltration grid. "There are attempts at infiltration, which are continuing both in the Valley region as to the south of the Pir Panjal region. But we have a very robust and effective counter-infiltration grid which has proven successful," he said.

Lt Gen Sachdeva...

"The joint training initiative not only underscores the enduring partnership between the Dhruva Command and White Knight Corps with the Jammu & Kashmir Police but also reflects their shared long-term vision of a secure and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir," the GOC White Knight Corps said.

He also commended Director General of Police, R R Swain for his leadership and foresight in taking the initiative of joint training of police at White Knight Corps Battle School. "The initiative of J&K Police to get the newly inducted DSI's and PSIs trained in counter insurgency operations at White Knight Corps Battle School is a hallmark of synergy and increasing jointness between two organisations," the officer said.

Modi gave women...

the marshal race youth of this belt from getting recruited in the forces. Again, it was the government of Congress and its allies which gave 4% reservation to the youth along LoC but denied the same to the youth along the International Border of Hiranagar because it did not find its voteback there. There can be no greater inhuman injustice to the youth , he said.

Dr Singh said, it is the Modi government which has undone all these anomalies and given equal justice to all. Today, roads have been constructed up to the zero line international border and all this has happened only in the last 10 years.

Dr Jitendra recalled that only last December, he had laid the foundation of four important road projects and inaugurated nine roads in the Hiranagar sector. The four road projects of more than 25 Kms are at a cost of Rs.2594 Lakh Crore, while the nine roads measuring 73.57 Kms area at a cost 546.8 Lakh Crore. With the construction of these roads, 74 habitations and more than 11,000 people in the border region will be benefited.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Singh informed that 60-65 percent of PMGSY road projects allotted this year to J&K at a cost of over Rs 3,700 cr belong to his Lok Sabha Parliamentary constituency. He said that several far flung areas have been connected with all-weather roads for the benefit of people living in these locations. Work is underway in full swing to complete the remaining projects, he said.

About the proposed Arun Jaitley Sports Stadium, said Dr Jitendra, there is some delay due to transfer of land and other formalities but now BCCI has agreed to take up the project and bring up a stadium of international standards.

Raghunandan Singh Babloo, DDC Vice Chairman, Gopal Mahajan BJP District President, Kuldip Raj former M.L.A, Adv Vijay Sharma former Chairman Municipal Committee, Abhinandan DDC member, senior leaders Prem Nath Dogra, Janak Bharati , among others, spoke on the occasion and hailed Dr Jitendra Singh as "Vikas Purush" who had developed and transformed the entire region under PM Modi.

Climate activist Sonam...

Apex body that comprises social, religious and political organisations, said they are adopting the Gandhian approach in their agitation, which is vital to safeguard the fragile environment of the region and the indigenous character of its population.

"We are followers of (Mahatma) Gandhi's Satyagraha. We are demanding the fulfilment of the promises made to us by this (BJP) government through its manifestos which led its candidates to win parliamentary polls (in 2019) and hill council polls in Leh (2020)," he told a gathering here.

The activist ended his 21-day-long hunger strike in support of the demand for statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution on Tuesday evening.

"The first phase of the hunger strike will be followed by a chain hunger strike by women, youths, religious leaders and elders. On April 7, we will launch a march to Changthang (in the east of Leh along the border with China) like Gandhi's Dandi March under the Civil Disobedience Movement," Wangchuk said.

He said the Leh-based Apex body will lead the march to highlight the ground realities of Ladakh. Wangchuk alleged that nomads were losing prime pasture land to huge industrial plants to the south and Chinese encroachments to the north.

"The Changthang grazers, famous for producing Pashmina wool, are being forced to sell their animals because over 20,000 acres of grazing land was taken by industrialists to set up their plants... we do not want solar energy at the cost of our people's livelihood and dislocation," he claimed.

"They are taking away our land because there are no safeguards available..." Wangchuk alleged.

He said if the government has nothing to hide, "we will be allowed to proceed but if they stop us from undertaking the march, we will launch a 'jail bharo andolan' which will be followed by a non-cooperation movement."

Accusing the B-JP of backtracking from its promises to the people of Ladakh, Wangchuk said the representatives of the Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) were left shocked when the Union home ministry straightway rejected their demands on March 4.

"We are seeking our rights and fulfilment of the promises. Parliamentary polls have been announced and the B-JP is again making various guarantees to the people but who is going to buy these promises this time," he said, expressing hope that the government will reconsider its decision and announce statehood to Ladakh.

Wangchuk added that he was ready to go on a hunger strike once again if the demands of the people of Ladakh were not met as "we are fighting for our future and the children".

He also questioned claims of pumping large amounts of money and demanded an inquiry into where the money is being spent.

The Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), separate groupings of various political, social and religious organisations, are jointly spearheading the agitation to demand statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion in the Sixth Schedule, and have held five rounds of talks with the home ministry.

The Sixth Schedule contains provisions related to the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram through autonomous district councils.

N N Vohra ...

to revoke the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from Jammu and Kashmir. He hoped that the government would follow a similar approach and withdraw the military from other areas in the country where it may have been deployed for long periods to carry out internal security duties.

"The state police must be made to discharge its primary duty of maintaining public order and free the military to return to its essential duties," Vohra said in a statement here.

In an interview on Tuesday, Shah said the government has plans to pull back troops and leave law and order to the Jammu and Kashmir Police alone.

Shah had also said that the Central government will consider revoking AFSPA from Jammu and Kashmir.