

In 13 days, J&K Bank registers over 20,000 pilgrims for Shri Amarnath Yatra

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Indicative of growing response to Shri Amarnathji Yatra - 2022, J&K Bank has registered 20,599 devotees from across the country in just 13 working days since registrations opened on 11th April. The Yatra to Himalayan cave of Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine is scheduled to take place for 43 days, from 30th June to 11th August, 2022.

Commenting on the response, MD & CEO, Baldev Prakash said, "Since Yatra is resuming

two years after the advent of Covid19, we expect good spike this year in the number of pilgrims visiting Shri Amarnathji Cave. And I am happy to see that we are facilitating their easy and smooth registration through dedicated counters set up for their assistance at our designated business units across the country."

While wishing good health and smooth pilgrimage to all the devotees embarking on the holy Yatra this year, he added, "Besides, we have put in place two Special Counters, Four ATMs and

Two Micro-ATMs along the Yatra-route to provide basic banking facilities to the pilgrims during the Yatra."

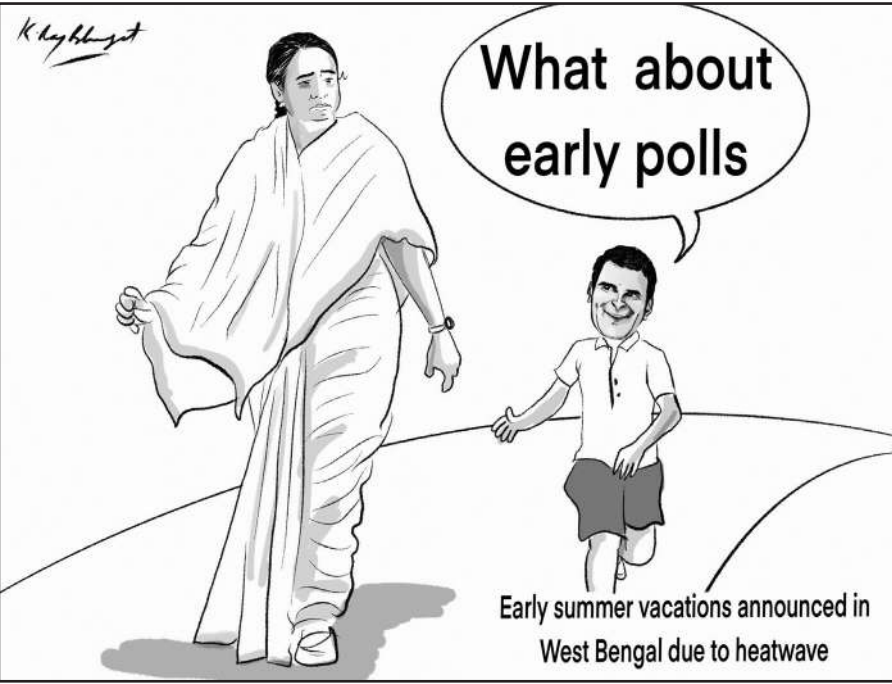
"It is very heartening to see devotees getting themselves registered in large numbers for this year's Shri Amarnathji Yatra", said President Syed Rais Maqbool on the occasion, adding, "With public convenience at the heart of our services, I request devotees planning to undertake the Yatra this year to get themselves registered comfortably from any of our 90 des-

ignated business units after completion of the requisite documentation. The registration will remain open till 3rd August, 2022."

Notably, after registering at the Bank's Vaashi business unit in Mumbai, a lady pilgrim from Kamotha village said, "We are a group of 15 people who had come for Yatra registration here at J&K Bank Vaashi branch. We are very thankful to the Bank and its staff because the arrangements and assistance are so good that in future also we would like to get ourselves regis-

tered from J&K Bank branch only."

Meanwhile, the devotees are required to submit Application form along with four passport sized photographs and prescribed Compulsory Health Certificate, issued by the Authorized Doctor/Medical Institution. Every Yatra Permit costs Rs 120 and bears different colours for each day and route. As per the quota allotted by Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB), the Bank is supposed to register over 162000 pilgrims.



Terminated NHM workers stage protest in Jammu, several detained

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Several workers engaged under the National Health Mission (NHM) were detained here on Wednesday after they staged a protest against their termination and demanded the continuation of their services, officials said.

The police acted against the health workers shortly after they staged a sit-in in front of the statue of Maharaja Hari Singh near Tawi bridge in the heart of the city, the officials said.

They said several workers, both men and women, were detained and whisked away in a police bus.

The health workers have threatened to intensify their agitation in support of the demand for revocation of their termination orders issued early this month.

social groups have extended their support to the health workers and termed their demand as genuine while urging the Lieutenant Governor administration to ensure the continuation of their services in view of their hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The protesters said the administration is exercising a use and throw policy with them.

They said on the intervention of the Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, they were given a six months extension last year with a promise to give them priority in regular services.

The extended period ended on April 7 but no decision has yet been taken by the authorities on the continuation of our services or providing jobs to us through recruitment board, a protester said.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee today came down heavily on the administration for the worst power crisis and warned the Govt. to take immediate steps to improve the situation before it further worsens.

Addressing a joint Press Conference at Party HQ Jammu PCC Working President Raman Bhalla, Chief Spokesperson Ravinder Sharma, Treasurer Rajnisah Sharma, General Secretary Th. Mannohan Singh, Spokesperson Sahil Sharma, the JKPC leaders came down heavily on the Govt for its failure to cope up with the situation of power crisis for the past several days in entire Jammu and Kashmir, while situation is worst in the hot Jammu Region.

Chief Spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said that



JKPCC Working President Raman Bhalla addressing a press conference at Jammu.

this kind of situation is unprecedented and never witnessed in the past, as the Govt. is able to make available of around 50% of the requirement of power as against requirement of 1300 MW only 600 to 700 MW is being available to Jammu region while 1000 to 900 MW against 1700 MW, requirement of power in Kashmir region. It is admitted fact that power consumption is less in Jammu region while it provided

more revenue to the governments. At present Jammu region is facing scorching heat and worst affected due to power short fall while in winter it will be worst for Kashmir. The Govt. has totally failed to improve the situation since it is just beginning of the hot summer in Jammu and power crisis has been the worst and this has badly affected the water supply system especially in rural belt of Jammu region, due prolonged 12 to 14

hours power cuts while in rural areas it is more worst.

They also lashed out at the imposition of water tax in rural areas where there is no regular and proper supply of water during normal times also. While the Govt has also imposed tax on private wells, hand pumps and other individual sources of water developed by the rural population at their own expense of lacs of rupees to meet their family or Mohala requirements of water. The

Govt. is fleeing the people in the name of unreasonable taxes of all sorts. The common power consumers are being served huge inflated bills while the big sharks are not being checked. The people don't get regular power but are getting regular inflated bills, which is most unfortunate.

They demanded total withdrawal of water tax in rural areas besides seeking amnesty, for domestic power consumers and others apart from correcting the faulty power billing system.

The senior Congress leaders also questioned the reports of finalization of delimitation report, without proper deliberations with the stake holders especially political parties over the highly defective and faulty daft report.

The Congress has remained one of the largest political party in Jammu and Kashmir so far but was not

consulted and also other regional opposition parties who had been part of legislature in the past, were never taken on board while an eye wash of public hearing was conducted by the DC. If the faulty report is not revisited and rectified, it will be great injustice to vast majority of people in Jammu region in particular and J&K as a whole. The Congress strongly lodged its protest over the draft report including clubbing of Rajouri-Poonch of Jammu region with Anantnag and Kulgam for Lok Sabha seat. It shall fight against injustice with people and every possible manner, as faulty delimitation means rigging before elections.

They also lashed out the Govt. over the delay in the regularization of daily wagers, need based, adhoc and contractual workers at the earliest, in all departments, in a fair manner.

EPFO settles over 7,000 claims in past 7 days



EPFO official settling claims.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: EPFO Regional Office, Jammu has taken some proactive measures in the recent past to come up to the expectations of the stakeholders. The EPFO is providing social security to all its members despite several hurdles and obstacles coming in the way. There has been a significant improvement in the daily settlement of claims which has increased from around 500 to more than 1000 claims daily. The dedicated team of EPFO RO Jammu, Kashmir and

Ladakh has taken a resolve to extend seamless service to the stakeholders of UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. During the previous 7 days, EPFO, Jammu settled more than seven thousand claims. A small team of volunteers supported in achieving this task by facilitating speedy processing of "joint declaration forms, received in the Office for rectifying basic details and completing missing details of employees (P F subscribers).

Pramod Lokhande, (DPA) and Rajan T. (DPA), who are handling the task were helped by Kanchan, DEO and Abhotosh, DEO to furnish the maximum number of joint declarations for approval today only. This team spirit and attitude of rising to the occasion was acknowledged by P F Commissioner, Rizwan Uddin, who also appreciated top performers of the day namely- Arun Kumar, SSSA (105 claims), Chiranjee Lal Sharma, SSSA (91 claims), Subhash Chandra, SSSA (more than 90 claims), Dharmendra Kumar, SSSA (75 claims), Sanjeev Kumar, SSSA (65 claims).

Meanwhile, a death claim pertaining to Late Abdul Razaq Khan received in the Office was processed with the relevant documents furnished by claimant Gazala, wife of deceased employee for speedy release of the death benefits to the claimant.

Army brings under control major forest fire in Udhampur

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A major widespread forest fire, which was posing a grave threat to a mountainous hamlet, was brought under control by the timely action of the Army thereby saving a major tragedy in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said.

A fire broke out in the forest area of Charrat panchayat on Tuesday night and was rapidly approaching Bainth village, they said.

On the request of the civil administration, the Udhampur Military Garrison rushed fire tenders and fire-fighters of Defence Fire Services (DFS), along with a quick action team, and brought the blaze under control, a defence spokesman of the Northern Command said.

"The fire is now under control. A close liaison and coordination between the civil administration and the military, complemented by undaunted and valiant efforts of the troops on the ground, averted a major disaster for the villagers," he said.

The Northern Command is always committed to the well-being of awam' (people) of Jammu and Kashmir, the spokesman said.

IGNOU-Education hub for all sections of society

Organises 35th Convocation in Srinagar

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has become a hub of affordable education for all sections of society, especially students hailing from far-flung/ remote areas and weaker sections. The University conducted its 35th Convocation on Wednesday and awarded degrees to students in Srinagar.

IGNOU Regional Centre Srinagar held convocation at Tagore Hall Srinagar to award degrees to around 10,368 students while number of students who were awarded degrees at national level was 2.91 lakh. The Union Minister for Education, Dharmendra Pradhan addressed the function as Chief Guest through online mode while Director National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar Dr Rakesh Sehgal was the Guest of Honour and Director General, J&K Institute of Management, Public Administration and Rural Development

(IMPARD) Saurabh Bhagat attended the function as Chief Speaker and presented degrees/ certificates to students.

The main function of 35th convocation of IGNOU was held in New Delhi along with its 32 regional centres in respective regions. One Niyaz Ahmad Yatoo from Nagam area of district Budgam bagged Gold Medal in Master of Anthropology.

Briefing about IGNOU regional centre Srinagar, Regional Director, Dr Kamlesh Meena said the centre was established in 1999 and since then it had made inroads in Valley in a tremendous manner. The centre started with around four courses at the time of establishment but presently university has 46 learner support centres where it offers admission in 40 programmes through distance mode, he said, adding that IGNOU regional centre Srinagar is planning for academic expansion. "All these initiatives will be effectively adopted to implement New Education

Policy (NEP 2020) and for empowering the higher education institutions like Regional Centre Srinagar in Kashmir Valley," said Regional Director.

Director NIT, Rakesh Sehgal in his address said that IGNOU is playing a vital role to cater the different communities by imparting higher education opportunities through distance mode. "IGNOU is the biggest platform for providing higher education facilities to unreached segments of society, especially economically backward, marginalized and poor groups of society," he said.

Director General of IMPARD J&K, Saurabh Bhagat said that IGNOU is the largest University catering higher education institution across the world with the mandate of democratization of higher education among masses. For those female students of remote areas who do not have any access to regular classes, IGNOU provides them a platform at par with the other institutions, he added.

Jammuites hold massive protests against frequent power cuts, block several roads



Protesting residents blocking Satwari-R S Pura road during protest against PDD.

lyzed their routine life. "The PDD is testing our patience as we have been facing hardships due to a power crisis for the last one week. The children, old and infirm are the worst sufferers, who cannot live without power in this hot weather," they said, adding that despite their repeated pleas, the PDD has failed to resolve the problem.

"Even during night hours,

there is no power for hours together and people have to spend sleepless nights," they said and warned, "We will be forced to launch a massive agitation against the authorities in case the uninterrupted power supply is not restored at the earliest to our areas."

Similar protests were held against PDD at various places of Jammu district.

Meanwhile, there seems to be no relief in sight for the residents of Kashmir facing electricity outages for the past several days, with the authorities citing the early onset of summer and sub-optimal hydro power generation as reasons for unscheduled power cuts.

People in the valley complain that power supply often get disrupted at the time of sehri

(when pre-dawn meals to begin the day's fast are taken) and iftar (when the fast is broken).

"There has been hardly a day when we have had electricity at the time of sehri or iftar. During the day, the situation gets worse. We have never faced such a situation before," Javid Ahmad, a resident of Ganderbal, said.

Leaders of opposition parties have been blaming the administration for failing to provide relief to the residents.

Former J-K chief minister and National Conference (NC) vice president Omar Abdullah said seeking electricity was the right of the people and that the situation in the Union Territory was contrary to the tall claims of the administration about development. "It is our right to get electricity. They (the administration) made tall claims about development in J-K. Let them show where it is," Omar said here.

Govt employee can't be retired prematurely solely on reason of registration of two FIRs: DB

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A Division Bench of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court comprising Justice Ali Mohammad Magrey and Justice Puneet Gupta while dismissing a LPA filed by Govt, held that that respondent could not be prematurely retired solely by reason of fact of registration of two FIRs, in which petitioner is an accused.

This significant order has been passed in LPA by State of J&K (Now Union Territory) has been filed against judgment and order dated 23.03.2018 passed by a Single Judge whereby the respondent's writ petition, SWP No.1453/2015, challenging his compulsory retirement order from Government service, issued by appellants, has been allowed quashing the order impugned therein with direction to the appellants to reinstate the respondent-writ petitioner and grant him all consequential benefits within the period specified therein.

DB, while upholding the judgment of Writ Court, observed that the fundamental principles are that order is passed on the subjective sat-

isfaction of the government and that the government shall have to consider the entire record of service before taking a decision in the matter. "It hardly needs to be stated that subjective satisfaction is not to be arrived on the basis of imagination, but should be reached at on the basis of material which satisfies a rational mind. The material, as mentioned in the OM No.GAD (Vig)19-Admn/2010 dated 25.10.2010, has to be the entire service record, especially the APRs. The OM also enjoins to take into account other factors mentioned therein like details of any promotions given in favour of employee in the last three to five years; the number and nature of complaints, if any, received; enquiries, if any, conducted by the State Vigilance Organization or by the Department concerned and the outcome thereof; cases, if any registered/investigated by the State Vigilance Organization, nature of the allegation and the outcome of the investigation; adverse reports, if any, received by the CID about the reputation of

the official and the gist of such reports supported by evidence; gist of irregularities committed by the employee, like in the matter of appointments; brief mention about failure, if any, in achieving the targets set out for him by the Government/Department with supportive details; warning and censures issued to the employee. If there are no complaints received, no enquiries conducted, no adverse reports received from the CID about the reputation of the official, no irregularities committed by the employee in the matter of appointments, no failures reported in achieving fixed targets, no warnings and censures earned, then these would constitute factors relevant to be taken into account along with the APRs of the employee while forming the opinion in terms of Article 226(2) of the CSRs. It is to be borne in mind that OM No.GAD (Vig)19-Adm/2010 dated 25.10.2010 was not only meant to screen the undesirable employees, but its express object was also to encourage the honest employees; meaning thereby that the

above factors would and could be used positively or negatively in favour or against an employee. In that sense, these factors in favour of the respondent had to be taken into account by the Screening Committee, but that has not been. This Court has already recorded a finding that the Screening Committee has not taken into account the APRs of the respondents. It is not only the finding of the Court, but is admitted by the appellants without mincing any words. Once the Screening Committee has omitted to take into account the tangible evidence in the shape of APRs, it cannot be expected of them to have taken into account the aforesaid intangible but crucial factors. The Court has no option, therefore, available to it but to come to the conclusion that the report/opinion of the Screening Committee suffers from vice of non-application of mind and is, accordingly, rendered unreasonable and arbitrary. Consequently, the Government order No.857-GAD of 2015 dated 30.06.2015 is equally rendered arbitrary," the Court observed.