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Amarnath flash flood...

National Disaster Response Force.

He said the rescuers were clearing the debris to look for survivors as the administration was cross-checking the data of pilgrims to get the exact number of casualties. Every pilgrim has been provided with a Radio Frequency Identification card this time because of terror threats.

Among those who escaped the tragedy was Telangana BJP MLA T Raja Singh. The legislator and his family members, who reached Amarnath by a helicopter, decided to ride ponies on their way back as the weather began deteriorating.

"We sensed that the weather suddenly changed for the worse. In that circumstance, the helicopter service would also be cancelled. So we decided to descend the hills riding ponies. I could see the rains on the hills and then several tents got swept away in the floods," Raja Singh told reporters on Friday night.

The annual pilgrimage, which began on June 30, has been suspended following the tragedy and a decision on its resumption will be taken after rescue operations get over, a senior administration official said.

"Most of the pilgrims, who were stranded near the holy cave shrine area due to the flash flood, have been shifted to Panjtarin. The evacuation continued till 3.38 am. No pilgrim is left on the track. About 15,000 people have been safely shifted till now," the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) spokesperson said.

The BSF spokesperson said medical staff of the paramilitary force treated nine patients who were critically injured in the floods. "They have been shifted to the lower-altitude Neelgragh base camp."

A team of BSF personnel has been deployed at the Neelgragh helipad to assist the pilgrims coming from the cave shrine. About 150 pilgrims stayed at the BSF camp set up in Panjtarin on Friday night and 15 patients have been airlifted to Batal on Saturday morning, he said.

The injured were being treated at the Nilkant camp in Sonamarg. An integrated command centre has been set up under the charge of the divisional commissioner of Kashmir while helpline numbers have been established in Anantnag in South Kashmir, Srinagar and in Delhi for families of pilgrims to know about the wellbeing of their kin.

An Army official said an infantry battalion led by a colonel along with Quick Reaction Teams, an additional company from the Rashtriya Rifles Sector and a team from special forces had reached the shrine with specialised rescue equipment to undertake the operation.

"Through the night, the senior Army officers of the infantry battalion and Rashtriya Rifles oversaw and coordinated rescue operations. Medical resources at the cave and at Nilgragh were activated and additional resources deployed," he said.

Nine surveillance detachments with hand-held thermal imagers, night-vision devices and other gadgets were deployed for the search operations, the official said.

"Two advanced light helicopters were moved for casualty evacuation at the holy cave. However, owing to bad weather, night landing at the cave was unsuccessful. Two Through-Wall Radars and two search and rescue dog squads were also moved to the cave," he added.

However, notwithstanding the flash floods and the deaths, the 11th batch of over 6,000 Amarnath pilgrims left Jammu city on Saturday for the twin base camps in Kashmir.

The 43-day Yatra began on June 30 from the twin routes -- the traditional 48-km path from Nunwan in Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag, and the 14-km shorter but steep Batal route in Ganderbal district of central Kashmir.

The pilgrimage to the cave shrine is being held after a gap of three years. In 2019, the pilgrimage was cancelled midway ahead of the Centre abrogating Article 370 provisions of the Constitution. The pilgrimage did not take place in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid pandemic.

Army engages high...

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Giving details of the evacuations, the official said the search, rescue and medical effort continued at daybreak.

At 6.45 am, the first ALH landed at the site to commence evacuation of the injured. A total of 15 bodies and 63 injured yatri have been taken out. Both Army and Civilian helicopters are carrying out relentless sorties to evacuate the injured and the dead," he said.

"A total of 28 patients have been evacuated from the cave to advanced dressing station Nilagrag. After stabilising, 11 have further been moved to SKIMS Srinagar in civil helicopters for treatment," he added.

The bodies have been moved from the cave to Nilagrag while stranded yatri are being escorted by the Indian Army personnel up to Batal, since the track is slushy and slippery.

"Simultaneously search was also commenced at daybreak at Amarnath Nar at Sangam for any possible casualties," the official said.

Chinar Corps Commander Lt Gen ADS Aujla and Major General Sanjiv Singh Slaria, GOC of counter insurgency Kilo Force visited the Holy Cave early on Saturday to review the rescue and medical efforts being undertaken by the Indian Army. The GOC Chinar Corps also interacted with the yatri and locals and assured of all possible help from the Army.

Police arrests Hybrid...

During checking, one hybrid terrorist identified as Mohd Iqbal Bhat, son of Gulzar Ahmad Bhat, resident of Tilgam Payeen, linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT was arrested. On his personal search, arms and ammunition including 01 Pistol, 01 Pistol magazine, 7 Pistol rounds was recovered from his possession.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the accused was involved in providing logistics support for terror activities and was in touch with Pakistani terrorist Saifullah and Abu Zarar. The capture of the hybrid terrorist has evaded major terror plots and busted the module responsible for various recent attacks on PRI members and non-locals. Moreover, the arrested terrorist was also actively involved in providing chemicals and other materials for carrying out an IED attack on National Highway between Narbal and Renji. Interrogation of the arrested terrorist is likely to give further inputs for future counter terrorism operations.

In this connection, a case under relevant sections of law was registered and investigation has been initiated.

Magisterial probe ordered....

Massaratul Islam, officials said.

The Sub Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Ramsoo Vikar Ahmad Giri has been made as enquiry officer to conduct probe into the circumstances leading to the death of newly-born baby on Friday morning, they said.

Following death of the baby, people had also carried out protests on the Jammu-Srinagar highway on Friday, due to which the traffic was also effected for some time near Makarkoot in Ramsoo.

Muzaffar Ahmad Sheikh, father of the deceased newborn baby, said his wife Naeema Begum delivered a baby on Friday morning and due to the some health issue of baby, "we decided to shift her to Banhal hospital for treatment."

He said the private vehicle carrying the baby was allegedly not allowed to come on the highway near Makarkoot by police officials posted there for the yatra duty.

He said the baby died in the vehicle and was declared dead by doctors at nearby hospital in Ramsoo.

LG urges Yatris...

ongoing rescue efforts at the holy cave. GoC said all the agencies involved in the rescue and relief operation are working in excellent coordination and they are well equipped to clear the debris.

The Lt Governor said the effort should be made to clear the debris within shortest period of time. DGP while briefing the Lt Governor about the injured devotees said, majority of the injured have already been discharged and few others being treated at base hospital and Srinagar likely to be discharged within 24 hours.

The Lt Governor said, teams from Army, CAPFs, NDRF and SDRF are on the ground and doing commendable job.

He also directed the senior officials, Deputy Commissioners and Camp directors to ensure best possible facilities are provided to the pilgrims staying at camps.

Earlier, Lt Governor had visited SKIMS to enquire about the health of injured pilgrims and subsequently went to PCR Srinagar where he was briefed about the status of sending the mortal remains of deceased pilgrims to their respective hometowns.

R K Goyal, Additional Chief Secretary Home Department; RR Swain, Special DG CID; Vijay Kumar; IGP Kashmir; AOC Air force, besides Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir and senior officials attended the meeting at Raj Bhawan.

Visits SKIMS, enquires

hometowns. Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to Lt Governor; Mohd Ajiaz,

Deputy Commissioner Srinagar and other senior officers of Civil and Police Administration accompanied the Lt Governor.

Cloudburst triggers flash...

floods, they said. No casualty has been reported in the incident, an officer said. Some vehicles were stuck in mudslides and the highway was blocked for some time, but it has now been restored for traffic movement, the officials said.

Kathua police seized...

illegal extraction/transporting of construction material from the area.

All the vehicles were seized and immediately handed over to the officials of Geological and Mining department Kathua for further legal proceedings.

As per data available with the STATE TIMES, during last 4 months more than 30 vehicles and mining machines have been seized by Kathua police while from January 22 to July 22, a total of 71 vehicles and machines have been seized by Kathua police.

There is no check from the department which leads to total chaos and theft of building material in J&K. A senior BJP leader and former MLC Vikram Randhawa, in a press conference, had exposed the nexus of mining mafia in J&K. However, after an action against him from BJP headquarters, Randhawa, President of Jammu Crusher Owners Association, stopped exposing the mining mafia.

A senior police officer said, "Why not legal action be taken against those officials of mining department who are deployed to check the transportation of mining material?" Huge quantity of mining material is being sold at skyrocketing prices without any check from the administration, the officer added.

LG Sinha, Chugh...

In his message, Dr Jitendra Singh said "Warm greetings and good wishes to all Muslim brothers and sisters in J&K and the country on the occasion of Eid-ul-Zuha."

"The festival of Eid-ul-Zuha epitomises trust, compassion, sacrifice and forgiveness. Let us on this day recall the selfless sacrifice made by Hazrat Ibrahim and engage in the service of humanity. Let us strive to lessen the pain of the suffering and needy. May this festival strengthen our efforts to enhance universal brotherhood, peace and harmony in society," he added.

ADGP Jammu Zone, Mukesh Singh wished all ranks of police and their families a joyful Eid. He expressed his hope that the festival will bring joy and happiness among the people of the Jammu province including policemen and their families.

He also directed senior officers to ensure enhanced security, law and order arrangements which should be put in place well in advance at all the places where devotees are going to offer prayers.

In his message ADGP Jammu Zone prayed for peace and prosperity in Jammu Region. "Let all of us work for a crime and violence free UT of J&K," Singh said.

Over 6,000 pilgrims...

from Nunwan in Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag, and the 14-km shorter but steep Batal route in Ganderbal district of central Kashmir:

However, the pilgrimage has been suspended after the flash flood near the cave shrine on Friday evening swept away scores of people, swamping tents and community kitchens with mud and rocks hurtling down a hillside.

A decision on the resumption of the pilgrimage will be taken after rescue operations get over, a senior administration official said.

A total of 6,048 pilgrims left the Bhagwati Yatri Niwas in Jammu city in a convoy of 279 vehicles amid heavy CRPF security, officials said.

They said 1,404 pilgrims, heading for Batal, were the first to leave the Bhagwati Yatri Niwas in 115 vehicles around 3.30 am followed by the second convoy of 164 vehicles carrying 4,014 pilgrims for Pahalgam.

With this, 69,535 pilgrims have left the Bhagwati Yatri Niwas in Jammu city for the Valley since June 29, the day the first batch of pilgrims was flagged off by Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha.

Till Saturday, over one lakh pilgrims have offered their prayers at the cave shrine, the officials said. The yatra is scheduled to end on August 11 on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan.

Govt moots regulation...

and Siddha drugs and cosmetics.

The draft bill has been put up in the Union health ministry's website and suggestions, comments and objections from the public and stakeholders have been sought within 45 days from the date of issue of the notice (July 8).

The work of review and updating of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 was vigorously taken up from 2016.

In light of recommendations of the central government and the felt need to have comprehensive legislation, a committee was constituted for framing the New Drugs, Cosmetics and Medical Devices Bill.

"As per recommendations of the committee, the Ministry of Health proposes a draft New Drugs, Medical Devices and Cosmetics Bill, 2022 in order to keep pace with changing needs, times, and technology," the ministry said.

The draft bill introduces various new definitions or provisions like bioequivalence study, bioavailability study, clinical trial, clinical investigation, controlling authority, manufacturer, medical device, new drugs, over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, adulterated cosmetics, etc. for more clarity and smooth functioning and implementation, an official said.

It proposes for the constitution of a separate Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) and Medical Devices Technical Advisory Board (MDTAB), comprising experts from various associations to advise the central government in technical matters.

The penalties for offences related to import of drugs and cosmetics have been enhanced appropriately, the official said.

The proposed bill provides for regulation of clinical trial of new drugs, investigational new drugs, ethics committee, etc.

"However, in the interest of public health or extreme urgency of drugs, the central government is empowered to make provisions for Central Licensing Authority to waive the requirement of conducting clinical trial for manufacture or import of a new drugs or investigational new drugs in the country," the draft read.

"Where a participant during a clinical trial suffers injury or death on account of his participation in such investigation, provision has been made to provide compensation and medical management to such participants," it stated.

Currently all these provisions are there in the Rules but now it has been proposed in the bill, the official said.

But in the existing rules there is no provision to impose penalties such imprisonment on the erring firms or persons for failure to provide compensation to trial participants in the clinical trial for both drugs and medical devices.

The new draft bill mentions, "Where any person permitted under sub-section (1) of section 72 fails to provide the required medical management or compensation under section 73, shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine which shall not be less than twice the amount of compensation."

In the existing Act, medical devices are treated as drugs and there is no separate definition of medical devices.

So in the proposed bill provisions have been made for regulation of medical devices, investigational medical devices, clinical investigation of investigational medical devices, etc in a separate chapter with a view of better understanding of the stakeholders and administration of the law on the subject.

"Separate chapter for medical devices will give distinct treatment to it in line with international practices to boost quality, consumer confidence and expectations of the stakeholders," the official explained.

Further, provisions have been made, inter alia, for risk-based classification of medical devices based on their intended use, risk and vulnerability to the human body.

"Like as for drugs, the proposed bill envisages provisions relating to clinical investigation in respect of investigational medical devices. However, in the interest of public health or extreme urgency of a medical device, the central government is empowered to waive the requirement of conducting clinical investigation for manufacture or import of a new medical device in the country."

"Where a participant during a clinical investigation suffers injury or death on account of his participation in such investigation, provision has been made to provide compensation and medical management to such participant," the draft said.

Under the new bill, permission has to be taken to operate an e-pharmacy.

"No person shall himself or by any other person on his behalf sell, or stock or exhibit or offer for sale, or distribute, any drug by online mode (e-pharmacy) except under and in accordance with a licence or permission issued in such manner as may be prescribed," the draft said.

In the draft bill, provisions have been incorporated to designate or establish medical device testing centres by the central government for testing and evaluation of medical devices for regulators and industry.

Provisions have been made for adjudication of penalty with fine imposed by adjudicating officer authorised by respective governments for certain minor offences. This will ensure lesser scope for litigation and quicker resolution of minor compliance related issues, the official explained.

Every police officer shall be bound to assist a drugs control officer demanding his assistance in the investigation and preventing the escape of any person who is suspected to commit an offence under this Act or in the prevention of any injury attempted by the person to be committed against the drugs control officer, according to the draft bill.

Several Amarnath devotees...

the base camp established outside the holy cave and were waiting for their turn to have darshan at the evening Aarti (prayer) when the cloudburst struck on Friday at around 5.30 pm.

"Only one person managed to have darshan. I couldn't have darshan as we were standing just outside the cave shrine in a tent. When the water came, there was chaos, there was landslide, we came out," Subham Verma from Patna said while recalling the horror that followed the cloudburst last night.

As soon as Verma and his companions came out of the tents, a massive landslide hit the camp site.

"Just two minutes after we crossed, landslides came but we saved ourselves. Whatever losses in terms of our belongings we incurred, we are not pained by it," he said.

Another pilgrim Rajan Soni said the rescuers gave them very little time to evacuate from the camp to safer places.

"Do we watch others or ourselves. We left our belongings there. When we returned, Army personnel told us nothing remains there. The Army told us to evacuate in 20 minutes and go to the safe zone. So, we reached the safe zone," Soni said.

The group is leaving without having darshan but are determined to come back next year. "We are leaving for home, without darshan. But, we will come back, for sure," he said. At least 16 persons have died and scores of others injured while many are missing after the cloudburst which were followed by landslides.

More than 15,000 pilgrims were at different stages of the arduous track to the 3,880 metre high cave shrine from both Pahalgam and Batal routes but were asked to return to the base camp. Massive relief and rescue operations have been launched by the Army, NDRF, ITBP, BSF, CRPF and local police to ensure the safety of the pilgrims.