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New benchmark created...

nearly 500 percent increase in just one year. The Lt Governor noted that remarkable digital journey of J&K and the resultant transformation from a laggard status in e-governance to a leading position in such a short span of time is unprecedented. This has brought about a paradigm shift resulting in increased transparency, accountability and efficiency at all levels, he said.

As a result of purposeful and focused action, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed an exceptional increase in volume and uptake of e-services which has transformed the government-citizen interface as never before. There has been a palpable reduction in corruption and increase in citizen satisfaction which is being regularly monitored through a citizen feedback mechanism.

It is the adoption of a robust model of e-Governance - not just automation but citizen-centric approach by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir which has resulted in an exponential rise in the number of online services and availability of services 24 x 7 x 365. Integration with systems like Digilocker, Aadhaar, e-payment/SMS Gateways has enhanced the ease of living and convenience of citizens obviating the need to visit government offices.

The seriousness of the Government's resolve can be gauged from the fact that the Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA), 2011 has been amended to bring online services under its ambit. Around 300 services have been brought under the auto-escalation mechanism for ensuring time-bound delivery of services and penalties for delays in service delivery.

Taking a leap forward in mobile governance, the recently launched mobile application 'Mobile Dost' provides all online services through mobile phones and has a bilingual interface. Moving towards digital inclusion another landmark initiative is the launch of 'Digi-Dost' - a mechanism for doorstep delivery of citizen-centric services by leveraging the ubiquitous presence of Common Services Centres (CSC).

The Lieutenant Governor commended the efforts of all departments of the J&K Government for developing, designing and deploying online services and particularly the IT Department, J&K eGA and NIC for spearheading the Digital J&K mission. He stressed upon the need to ensure proper assessment of citizen feedback and to continually monitor the quality of services.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, exhorted the officials to identify the areas where online services should be developed for citizens for bringing about social transformation and transparency. He further directed that an intensive IEC campaign be launched to inform the public about the digital initiatives and for greater uptake of the online services.

LG greets people...

compassion, affection and mutual trust between sisters and brothers. May the spirit of this festival strengthen the familial bond, unity, harmony and brotherhood in the society and usher in peace, prosperity and happiness for all," the Lt Governor said.

Narcotic smuggler found...

operation was launched by local Police and Army unit in the area. The search operation led to the discovery of the lifeless body of Mukhtar Ahmad Shah, aged 42 and son of Lt. Syed Akbar Shah, hailing from Panjtaran Karnah. The deceased's body was found in the village of Pingla Haridal. The Police promptly transferred the body to SDH Tangdhar for necessary medico-legal procedures. Subsequent to the post-mortem examination, the body was handed over to the family for final rites. A case has been registered under appropriate sections, and a thorough investigation has been initiated.

From the preliminary investigations, it appears that the deceased has been killed by some rival narcotics smuggling gang members or the rival terror operatives.

Notably, Mukhtar Ahmad Shah was a high-profile narcotics smuggler and a person of deep connections among narcotics smugglers in the region. He had been found involved in two cases of narcotics and weapons smuggling in the recent past and had confessed to orchestrating the transportation of substantial quantities of narcotics and weaponry across the border. His association with his brother, Sadiq Shah, a prominent figure as both a launching commander and a supplier of narcotics and weapons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK), underscores the depth of his involvement in these illicit activities. Sadiq Shah is himself chargesheeted in narco-terror cases and happens to be a top terrorist commander based in POJK. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the Shah family has been entangled in various legal cases relating to narcotics and weapons smuggling. At least six other members of the Mukhtar Ahmad Shah's family are currently facing charges in connection to these criminal activities.

Art 370: SC...

Kashmir Reorganisation Bill in 2019 saying J&K's statehood will be restored in due course of time.

As the hearing on the hugely contentious issue continued for the 12th day, the apex court wanted to know from the government's law officers was the abrogation of Article 370 "really a logical step" to achieve J-K's complete integration with India.

"The wide chasm between absolute autonomy, as it existed on January 26, 1950, and complete integration, as it was brought on August 5, 2019... that chasm has been substantially bridged by what was happening in between. So, really, in the sense it was not a complete migration from absolute autonomy to absolute integration.

"It is obvious that a substantial degree of integration has already taken place in the last 69 years. Therefore, what was done in 2019 was it really a logical step forward to achieve that integration?" the bench asked Attorney General R Venkataramani.

The top court also questioned the Centre about the validity of its decision to divide the erstwhile state into two Union Territories, saying the petitioners who have challenged its decision contended it was beyond the powers of Parliament.

Mehta said Jammu and Kashmir was divided into two Union Territories looking at its peculiar situation and the fact that being a border state the matter also involved national security.

The CJJ while referring to creation of Chandigarh as UT said, "So, you make them as Union Territories, but at a later point of time when the situation stabilises, the union territories are made into a state. We understand that these are matters of national security and the preservation of the nation itself is the overriding concern. Equally, restoration of democracy is also important."

"Can the Union not have control over a stipulated period to bring stability? Whether it is a state or UT, if all of us survive, then the nation survives. Of course, if the nation survives, then only we survive, else everything is gone. Then should we not give that much leeway to Parliament that for some period a State is made into a UT and then, after a period, it becomes a state," he said.

The bench also questioned the attorney general as to how proviso 3 to Article 370 can be given a go-by while abrogating the provision.

Article 370 (3) says, "Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may, by public notification, declare that this article shall cease to be operative or shall be operative only with such exceptions and modifications and from such date as he may specify: Provided that the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State referred to in clause (2) shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification."

The CJJ contended that Article 370 says the recommendation of the constituent assembly shall be "necessary" and "before" the President issues a notification, and so it cannot be a post facto recommendation.

"There has to be a recommendation of constituent assembly and, secondly, it has to be before the president decides to abrogate the provision. Therefore, to say this recommendation is just an opinion and not binding is not correct," the bench said.

Venkataramani submitted it is just a recommendation and a recommendatory role was assigned to the constituent assembly of Jammu and Kashmir to ensure that the integration process was completed.

"So what is the sequitur (a logical conclusion)? Are you contending that this is purely recommendatory and therefore absence of recommendation (of the constituent assembly) does not make a difference? Is this your contention?" the CJJ asked.

Mehta, intervened and said, "A President of India being bound by a body solely outside the Constitution of India (the J-K constituent assembly) may not perhaps be the correct interpretation of our Constitution. That is, if it says yes, the President can do it, and if it says no, the President cannot do it. The Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir is outside and beyond our Constitution of India".

However, the bench disagreed with Mehta's contention and said from the plain reading of Article 370, it appears that the Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was given overriding powers in respect of the state government, as the matters were to be placed before the CA for approval, if concurrence or consultation had been obtained before it came into existence.

Justice Khanna said, "When Article 370 itself refers to constituent assembly, you cannot say that it is outside the Constitution of India. It is within the constitutional framework because it refers to it. Yes, your argument about what will happen once constituent assembly does not exist, is something which we will have to examine with

regard to the procedure you have adopted."

The hearing remained inconclusive and will resume on Thursday.

Several petitions challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which split the erstwhile state into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh - were referred to a Constitution bench in 2019.

Subsidised meal initiative...

"Currently, we are serving a rice-based thali, which includes rice, vegetables, dal and halwa, but soon chapatis will be added to the menu," a member of the NGO said.

Dr Bhupinder Kumar, Commissioner-Secretary, Health Department, who inaugurated the affordable meal facility, appreciated the step taken by Sewa Bharti, saying, "Apna Bojanalya initiative at GMC exemplifies the true spirit of service and compassion. This initiative serves as a beacon of light, reminding us all of the impact that small gestures can have on the lives of those in need".

Families of patients who came to visit them thronged the eating point in large numbers and lauded the initiative - a first of its kind in Jammu.

Abid Ali, a patient's attendant who arrived here from Rajouri, bought the thali and lauded Sewa Bharti's efforts, saying, "It is great service that they are rendering to the underprivileged people."

Echoing Ali's thoughts, Anil Kumar of Doda said, "We have to spend a good amount of money on feeding ourselves during the treatment of patients. Therefore, such facilities should be extended to all hospitals in all the districts of Jammu and Kashmir," Kumar said.

Pradeep Kapoor, a member of the food point's supervising team, said that the facility will be extended to the rest of the hospitals in Jammu and next in line is the Sri Maharaja Gulab Singh (SMGS) hospital here.

"Healthcare institutions hold a special place in our society, providing comfort and healing to the needy. However, the financial burdens that often accompany medical emergencies can be overwhelming, particularly for economically disadvantaged families", Kapoor added.

Dr Ashutosh Gupta, Principal of GMC Jammu, said, "Sewa Bharti's 'Apna Bhojanalya' initiative aims to ease the burden of food expenses for patients' caretakers, ensuring they have access to affordable and nourishing meals while they focus on the well-being of their loved ones. The GMC management is fully supportive of this endeavour's success".

LPG cylinder price...

to cut prices will greatly help women. "Every sister of mine should remain happy and healthy, that is my wish from the God," he said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Cooking gas prices have shot up in the last couple of years and have become a major election issue.

The Congress party used the high LPG prices, which had burnt a hole in the budgets of households already reeling under high inflation, effectively in the recently concluded assembly elections in Karnataka. It has promised to give LPG at Rs 500 per cylinder if voted to power in Madhya Pradesh, where elections are due in November-December. The Congress is also providing the LPG at the same price in Rajasthan, where elections are due in November-December.

Thakur however refused to link the decision with elections saying it was a gift from the Modi government to women on the occasion of Onam and Raksha Bandhan.

While he did not say how the price cut would be financed, it is presumed that state-owned fuel retailers will from Wednesday reduce the prices and will get compensated for the same by the government later.

It is not known how much the decision would cost the exchequer but Thakur said the Rs 200 per cylinder subsidy provided to Ujjwala consumers would cost Rs 7,680 crore in the current financial year ending March 31, 2024 (April 2023 to March 2024).

While Ujjwala beneficiaries are only 9.6 crore, there are some 33 crore domestic cooking gas users in the country.

The government in June 2020 stopped giving LPG subsidies. Cooking gas across the country was priced at market rate, which rose to Rs 1,103 in the national capital.

The only subsidy that was available was for poor women who got free connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. The government gave Rs 200 per cylinder subsidy for up to 12 refills in a year. This subsidy was transferred into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries, who bought LPG at market price from the dealer.

The move to cut prices by Rs 200 would bring back the subsidy regime unless the government were to ask the oil companies to absorb the cut and not compensate them.

The government in October 2022 provided a one-time grant of Rs 22,000 crore to oil companies to cover for the losses they had incurred on selling LPG at below cost in the previous two years.

"In a move that will bring respite to households across the nation, the Government has announced a substantial reduction in the price of cooking gas. Effective August 30, 2023, the price of a 14.2 Kg LPG cylinder will be reduced by Rs 200 in all markets across the country.

India lodges protest...

and that assigning "invented" names does not alter this reality.

It was the third batch of standardised geographical names for Arunachal Pradesh issued by China's civil affairs ministry.

The first batch of the standardised names of six places in Arunachal Pradesh was released in 2017 while the second batch of 15 places was issued in 2021.

The ties between India and China came under severe strain following the eastern Ladakh border row that began in May 2020.

"The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the LAC were key for the normalisation of overall ties.

Srinagar court grants...

in the court by Mohammad Abdullah Pandit and Kaif Alam.

Patel made headlines when he was arrested in Jammu and Kashmir for posing as a top official in the PMO in March after videos showing him moving around under security cover went viral.

Patel was arrested by J-K Police from a five-star hotel in Srinagar for allegedly posing as an "additional secretary" in the central government. He enjoyed enjoying security cover besides other hospitality during his stints in the Valley.

He was on his third visit to Kashmir when he was nabbed by security officials on March 3. Patel had claimed to have been given a mandate by the government to identify buyers for apple orchards in south Kashmir.

High Court upholds...

with intention to raise residential construction applied before the BOCA for grant of necessary sanction and accordingly, sanction was duly granted in her favour to raise residential construction vide sanction order No.62/BS/2016 dated May 3, 2016. The counsel submitted that while raising the construction, Nageen Ara committed major violation of permissible coverage area, height and setbacks. He further submitted that the impugned order suffers from serious infirmities and the core issue of the controversy has not been dealt with by the Tribunal. All the violations are major violations in terms of Master Plan.

Senior Advocate R K Jain, counsel for the respondent Nageen Ara argued that the High Court is only to correct the persons or the court exercising judicial or quasi judicial functions, when they assume jurisdiction which they otherwise do not possess or when they refuse to exercise jurisdiction, when it is vested in them by law or when in the exercise of their jurisdiction, they violate the principles of natural justice as such, writ petition against the order passed by the learned Appellate Tribunal is not maintainable.

Senior Advocate R K Jain further submitted that the order passed by the learned Appellate Tribunal neither suffers from any jurisdictional error nor outcome of patent illegality causing any grave miscarriage of justice to the petitioner. More so, when the appellate authority has passed detailed order in accordance with law on the basis of material facts brought on record before the Appellate Forum. It is also submitted that the appellant has invoked the extra ordinary jurisdiction of this Court to challenge the order passed by the Appellate Tribunal, after more than one year which is an afterthought attempt on the part of the petitioner to drag the respondent in frivolous litigation. Thus the writ petition filed by the petitioner on the face of it, is hit by delay and lashes and liable to be dismissed.

The court observed that the J&K Special Tribunal has taken note of all the aspects of the matter and directed compounding of the violations. The court has also perused all the notices issued by the petitioner under section 7(1) and 7(3) of the J&K Control of Building Operation Act, 1988.

The record reveals that the respondent is owner of the plot of land measuring 5400 sft and she had applied for permission of construction of residential construction which was granted by the authorities on May 13,2016 to cover 1768 sft at ground floor and 1485 sft at first floor but she has exceeded in the covering area. It is not disputed that there is no change of land use as the permission was granted for res-

idential construction. It is not disputed that constructions has been made after proper permission but the respondent has exceeded in the covering area. It appears that notices were issued only after two floor building was completed. The petitioner should have issued the notices at the time any violation on part of the respondent was found. It appears that the petitioner has not mentioned the violations alleged to have been made by the respondent, in the notices issued by the petitioner, the court observed.

It appears that though there is violation of permission granted by the petitioner herein with respect to the covering area, but the same cannot be termed as gross violation which cannot be compounded, the court further observed, adding the present writ petition raises disputed questions of fact which cannot be gone into while exercising the writ jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution.

The High Court, when exercising jurisdiction to issue a writ of certiorari does not act either as a Court of Appeal or that of Revision and it has no power to correct either findings of fact or even errors of law except where the error of law is patent on the face of the record. The sole function of the Court is to correct the persons or Tribunals or Tribunals exercising judicial or quasi-judicial functions when they assume jurisdiction which they do not possess, or when they refuse to exercise jurisdiction which is vested in them by law, or when in the exercise of their jurisdiction they violate principles of natural justice.

The court ordered, "In light of the legal position and the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case, no case of interference by this court has been made out in this case. Therefore, "I do not find any legal infirmity in the impugned order dated Nov 10,2017 passed by J&K Special Tribunal, Jammu, which is well reasoned and has been called in question in the instant petition. The challenge thrown by the petitioner to the same under Article 226 of Constitution of India, is devoid of any merit and hence rejected for the reasons stated hereinabove. Resultantly, the order dated November 10, 2017 passed by J&K Special Tribunal Jammu is upheld." The writ petition is dismissed along with all connected applications, the High Court ordered.

Chandrayaan-3 rover...

characteristic set of wavelengths of light when it's in a plasma state, the elemental composition of the material is determined," it said.

Preliminary analyses have unveiled the presence of Aluminum (Al), Sulphur (S), Calcium (Ca), Iron (Fe), Chromium (Cr), and Titanium (Ti) on the lunar surface. Further measurements have revealed the presence of manganese (Mn), silicon (Si), and oxygen (O), it said.

"Thorough investigation regarding the presence of Hydrogen is underway," ISRO said.

LIBS instrument is developed at the Laboratory for Electro-Optics Systems at Peenya Industrial Estate, Bengaluru where the first India satellite was fabricated in 1975.

IAS Officer Ashok...

Minister for Housing and Urban Development/Chairman, Jammu Development Authority was forced to write a UO Note to the Chief Secretary bringing out the poor performance of Parmar as Vice Chairman. The Minister had mentioned that the officer's handling of the JDA had resulted in frequent hartals and strikes by the employees of the JDA forcing the government to intervene on number of occasions. He had also observed that the officer had been issuing orders without seeking approval of the authority competent to do so. He had requested the Chief Secretary for the transfer of Parmar from JDA and further conveyed that the displeasure be recorded in the personal records of Parmar.

There were numerous complaints by his subordinates and JAKEDA Non Gazetted Employees Union during his tenure as Administrative Secretary, Science and Technology Department in 2007 for using foul language and behavioural problem.

During the year 2015 as Commissioner/Secretary, Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department, Parmar again underperformed and was awarded score of 7.0 by the then Chief Secretary of the erstwhile State.

During his tenure as Joint Secretary (Films) in the Government of India (2020), he was again graded "Average" with a score of 6.29. The Reporting Authority also made a mention of his average delivery despite the efforts of the Reporting Officer to encourage him to take forward various matters relating to film sector. It is worthwhile to note that he was not empanelled as Additional Secretary in the Government of India due to his poor performance.

After spending a long tenure in the Government of India and coming out of ill health, the officer reported back in the Union territory in March, 2022. Keeping in view his health conditions, he was initially given a light assignment of Principal Secretary, Irrigation and Flood Control and later on the entire charge of the Jal Shakti Department was also handed over to him keeping in view his seniority. But his performance even during the first three months was dismal. The number of works allotted and the number of works started were around 15 percent and 5 percent respectively, which reached 96 percent and 83 percent respectively within one year of his exit from the department which clearly shows his lackadaisical approach as Principal Secretary, Jal Shakti Department. The number of works completed, which were nearly around 100, doubled during next one year after his exit. While he failed to complete any scheme, the number of schemes completed reached 172 after one year of his exit showing clearly that there were significant improvements in Jal Jeevan Mission activities.

Jammu and Kashmir has ushered in one of the most transparent system of contracting in which no work can be undertaken without Administrative Approval, Technical Sanction, e-tendering etc. Besides, payment of works can be made only in online mode that too after 100 percent physical verification of works obviating the possibility of any financial irregularity. As such, the allegations of the officers regarding financial irregularities in the JJM are absurd.

There were also multiple complaints against him regarding premature transfers and records obtained indicate that the officer has resorted to 398 number of transfer affected without authorization during the period when the transfer window was closed. For the above reasons, he was then transferred to the ARI and Trainings Department. The transfer of Ashok Parmar has been due to casual approach and inefficiency and has nothing to do with caste, creed, religion etc.

In ARI and Trainings Department, he started unnecessary communications unbecoming of a government servant such as tweeting/re-tweeting many statements against the government policies. He was shifted to the Skill Development Department and then to Bureau of Public Enterprises. However, his behaviour pattern has continued to remain erratic. It is pertinent to mention that on one occasion recently, he publicly shared his inquiry report against one IFS officer before submitting to the Government, which is against the accepted norms of the conduct of inquiry.

His further request for transfer outside J&K was forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, for consideration.

The postings in J&K are made without any reference to caste/religion and J&K has pretty good mixture of officers from different backgrounds at all levels in a secular working environment. Invoking of caste credentials to defend his inefficiency by the officer is actually unfortunate.

Angrez Singh posted...

JKAS, Deputy Secretary in the Lieutenant Governor's Secretariat, has been transferred and posted as Assistant Commissioner (Central) with Divisional Commissioner, Jammu while Ajay Bharti, JKAS, Deputy Director, Estates, Jammu, under orders of transfer as Assistant Commissioner (Central) with Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, in terms of Government Order No. 983-JK(GAD) of 2023 dated August 19, 2023, shall continue at his present place of posting. As per another GAD order, Saurabh Bhagat, IAS AGMU(2002), Commissioner/Secretary, Science and Technology Department, shall hold the charge of the post of Administrative Secretary, Skill Development Department, in addition to his own duties, till further orders.

Bhadarwah Rajma, Ramban...

The Director informed that the process for GI Tagging of these products was initiated by the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Jammu and finally it was granted today.

A geographical indication or Geographical Indication Tags is a trade name or label applied to a particular product that designates a particular geographic region or country of origin. The GI tag's primary feature is its uniqueness, which guards against any form of third-party misuse. The Geographical Indications (GI) is a form of intellectual property right that identifies goods originating from a specific geographical location and having distinct nature, quality and characteristics linked to that location.

Now, only an authorized user has the exclusive rights to use the Geographical Indication in relation to these products," stated the Director Agriculture. He further added "No person can copy it from beyond their geographical areas. This will prevent unauthorized use of these registered Geographical Indication goods by third parties and will boost exports and promote their brands at international level," the official said. GI tagging will also promote economic prosperity of locals in the geographical territory and will act as a tool for social economic growth of the producer.

Pertinently, During one of the visits of PM Modi to Britain in 2015, he had gifted this organic Sulai honey to Queen Elizabeth.