

# Randhawa meets Principal Secretary; raises issues for rural, border areas on PDD matters

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Former Legislator and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Vikram Randhawa on Tuesday met H. Rajesh Prasad, Principal Secretary of the Power Development Department (PDD), to address critical concerns affecting residents in rural and border areas related to electricity billing and infrastructure.

Randhawa highlighted that residents from these areas, including farmers, have been facing a significant increase in their electricity bills compared to previous years.

Many are being told to install electric meters or pay bills based on a flat-rate tariff, which they find unaffordable. The challenge is compounded by the fact that smart meters, scheduled for



Former Legislator Vikram Randhawa meeting with H. Rajesh Prasad, Principal Secretary PDD.

installation in a later phase, are not yet available, leading to inaccurate billing under the flat-rate

system. Randhawa requested that flat-rate billing be suspended until metering is fully implemented.

He also advocated for the complete waiver of electricity bills for those living within five kilometers of the border, who are frequently at risk and have historically been underserved. Additionally, he called for differentiated power tariff slabs for urban and rural areas, with a special Below Poverty Line (BPL) slab for consumers using up to 200 units.

Randhawa further proposed annual or bi-annual billing for pump-set consumers to alleviate their financial burden, given their limited use of electricity during certain months. He urged the Principal Secretary to defer smart

metering work until after the assembly elections in J&K and to address employee concerns within the PDD, particularly regarding the allocation of staff to less challenging roles.

He also called for the relocation of electric networks in border fields to improve safety and requested the recruitment of new linemen staff to replace those retiring. To support farmers, he proposed the provision of solar panels and solar pump-sets, along with an amnesty scheme for those with outstanding arrears.

Randhawa's detailed requests aim to address the pressing issues faced by rural and border communities, seeking fair treatment and improved infrastructure to enhance their quality of life.

# R G Fitness Gym & Spa inaugurated Stay away from drug abuse, play role in nation building: Zorawar

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Zorawar Singh Jamwal, Chairman of Team Jammu and BJP leader, inaugurated the R G Fitness Gym and Spa in Rehari Colony on Tuesday, urging the youth to avoid drug abuse and engage in sports for nation building. The gym, owned by Er. Revant Gupta, a certified fitness trainer, features state-of-the-art equipment and amenities, offering a comprehensive fitness experience.

Accompanied by notable figures including South Asia medalist Vimal Jit and J&K North India gold medalist Anu Bali, Jamwal praised Gupta's commitment to pro-



Chairman Team Jammu, Zorawar Singh Jamwal after inaugurating R G Fitness Gym and Spa.

moting fitness and combating drug abuse. He supported the gym's mission and its motto, 'Hum Fit, India Fit,' while calling on the J&K administration to develop more sports infrastructure and address the drug crisis.

Er. Gupta highlighted the

gym's diverse programs-yoga, aerobics, strength training, and more-emphasizing a holistic approach to wellness. With an expanded 5000 sq.ft area, the facility offers personalized training with professional trainers to meet individual needs.

# Dr Rohit Gupta visits DH Samba



Apni Party's Provincial Secretary, Dr Rohit Gupta during visit to District Hospital Samba.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SAMBA: Apni Party's Provincial Secretary, and Incharge Membership

Drive, Dr Rohit Gupta on Tuesday visited District Hospital (DH) Samba and interacted with the people

availing treatment and facilities provided in the hospital.

During his visit to the Ayush staff, which is providing specialized treatment to the patients, he lauded the efforts put forth by the staff posted there.

He also appreciated the department of Ayush for providing free treatment to the needy patients.

He requested Medical Superintendent Dr Mohender to provide more space so that all other branches of Ayush can function in the hospital.

# PM Modi's vision inspires BJP Youth, says Kavinder Youth of J&K embrace BJP's Vision, proudly hold Party Flag: Rekha

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In a significant development for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Jammu and Kashmir, Kulbushan Attri and his supporters officially joined the party in Ward No 20 of Bahu Constituency Jammu South. The joining ceremony was marked by the presence of former Deputy Chief Minister of J&K, Kavinder Gupta, and BJP District President Jammu South, Rekha Mahajan. Kavinder Gupta, along with Rekha Mahajan, welcomed Attri into the party fold. Gupta praised Attri's commitment to public service and



Senior BJP leader Kavinder Gupta with newly joined members and others.

highlighted the BJP's dedication to Jammu and Kashmir's growth. He lauded the Modi government's public-friendly policies and welfare schemes, noting that these initiatives have benefitted people at the

grassroots level and elevated India's global stature. Rekha Mahajan noted that the BJP's transformative, nationalistic programs are attracting individuals from diverse backgrounds. She emphasized that the party

stands for inclusiveness and advancement, and expressed delight in seeing the youth of J&K proudly supporting the party. The inclusion of Kulbushan Attri and his supporters is seen as a significant

boost to the BJP's strength in Ward No 20. New members voiced their commitment to the BJP's nation-building efforts, acknowledging the party's nationalistic approach and the progress under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. They expressed their enthusiasm for contributing to the country's development.

The event was attended by several notable BJP members, including Mandal President 'Trikutia Nagar Neeraj Puri, State Executive Member Rikki Gupta, and Mandal General Secretary Raehit Khosla, among others.

# Abrogation of Article 370 brings era of development and peace in J&K: Ritika Trehan

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Spokesperson of BJP Mahila Morcha J&KUT, Ritika Trehan, along with Mahila Morcha activists, marked the 5th anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 with a celebratory event in Jammu.

The occasion highlighted the significant changes brought about by the 2019 decision to revoke Article 370, which had granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking at the event, Ritika Trehan praised the abrogation as a decisive move that ended decades of dynastic rule, stone-pelting, and gun culture in the region. "On this day, Jammu and Kashmir fully merged with the Union of India, and that is a cause for celebration," she said. Ritika criticized opposition



Chief Spokesperson BJP Mahila Morcha J&KUT, Ritika Trehan and others celebrating 5th anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370.

leaders for spreading misinformation, emphasizing that the common people and the poor are more focused on development rather than dynastic politics.

Ritika highlighted the transformation in Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation, noting that the region, once plagued by frequent shutdowns and strikes, now enjoys relative peace. She pointed out that separatism and stone-pelting have ceased, interna-

tional events have been hosted, and tourist arrivals have reached record numbers.

She also lauded the inclusion of previously marginalized communities such as West Pakistani refugees, Gurkhas, and Valmiki Samaj members, who gained citizenship and rights after the abrogation. "For decades, these communities lived like second-class citizens, but now they enjoy full rights, including

voting, land ownership, and access to higher education," Ritika said.

# Life saving jacket regulations for Shikara rides in Srinagar not enforced, poses risk to tourists: Balvinder

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Renowned RTI activist Balvinder Singh has expressed deep concerns about the inadequate enforcement of life jacket regulations for Shikara rides on Srinagar's Dal and Nigeen Lakes. Despite directives from the J&K Tourism Department, implementation of these safety measures remains insufficient, potentially endangering tourists. In response to safety concerns, the J&K Tourism Department issued Government Order No. 70-JK(TSM) of 2023 on May 29, 2023, mandating the use of life jackets on Shikara boats. This order reinforced a previous mandate from Government Order No. 58-JK(TSM) of 2021, which required Shikara



Renowned RTI activist Balvinder Singh and tourists at Dal Lake.

operators to have adequate life-saving jackets on their boats. Failure to comply could lead to the cancellation of their registration under the J&K Tourist Trade Act, 1978.

However, Singh's recent visit to the valley revealed a troubling lack of compliance.

"I was surprised to find that only a few Shikaras had life

jackets, and even those were often packed away rather than readily available for use," Singh noted. This lack of adherence to safety protocols leaves tourists exposed, especially during adverse weather conditions.

Singh compared this situation to Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh, where life jackets are strictly enforced before

boarding. Despite Dal Lake's comparable depth ranging from 4.7 feet to 20 feet, similar safety measures are not rigorously applied. Singh also referenced a tragic boat capsizing incident in the Jhelum River that resulted in six deaths, including four children. In response, the

Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir had issued an advisory for mandatory life jackets. Yet, more than three months later, enforcement remains lacking.

Singh is calling for an amendment to the existing order to require every passenger to wear a life-saving jacket before boarding any boat, not just in Dal and Nigeen Lakes but across all Kashmir water bodies. "It is imperative to implement these regulations effectively to safeguard lives," Singh emphasized. His efforts aim to stress the critical need for rigorous enforcement of safety measures to ensure the well-being of visitors to Srinagar's scenic water bodies.

# DB seeks personal appearance of CS, 3 other Secys in contempt case

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: A Division Bench of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court Comprising Justice Atul Sreedharan and Justice Javid Iqbal Wani while criticizing the J&K Government, summoned the Chief Secretary, Finance Secretary, Secretary GAD and Secretary PWD R&B for their failure to comply with a court order issued over a year ago.

The court described the justice dispensation system in the Union Territory as a "cruel joke" and expressed its shock at the "couldn't careless" attitude of the executive.

The order, passed by Division Bench, arose from a petition challenging the government's decision to place Chief Engineers at par with Superintending Engineers in terms of pay scale. The court had earlier directed the authorities to rectify the anomaly within three months. DB observed that however, despite the clear order, the government not only failed to comply but also delayed filing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court against the High Court's judgment. The court observed that the SLP was filed only after ten months and even then, seven defects pointed out by the Supreme Court reg-

istry remain uncorrected. Adding to this what infuriated the court was that the Chief Secretary failed to appear before the court as directed, citing a meeting. This prompted the court to question the credibility of both the Law Secretary, who claimed the Chief Secretary was busy in a meeting, and the Advocate General, who earlier informed the court that the Chief Secretary was keen to join the proceedings but faced connectivity issues, DB said.

DB further observed that "both these versions are starkly disparate and in gross contradiction to each other," the court observed, highlighting the lack of seriousness with which the government approached the matter.

DB further noted that the "excessive latitude" shown to the executive in the past had emboldened it to consistently ignore court orders. This, the court said, had led to a backlog of over six thousand contempt petitions, with some cases pending for over a decade.

Expressing its anguish over the situation, the Division Bench remarked, "A contempt case must be concluded ideally in three to five hearings in which the order is complied with, or there is no need to comply with it as the superior Court or the larger bench

has stayed or set aside the principal order itself, or the contemnor is punished in accordance with law."

The Court added, "...This reflects a shocking scenario where the Executive is ignoring the orders passed by this Court consistently with utter disdain, cocky that this Court shall take no measures imperilling their liberty for their disobedience"

Warning that it will no longer tolerate such blatant disregard for its orders and will take "precipitate measures" to ensure compliance the DB said, "It is, however, recording these observations herein so that the UT and the bureaucracy is put on guard that what has been happening till now with the orders of this Court shall no longer be tolerated. Once an order is passed, it shall be complied with in letter and spirit, stayed or set aside by a superior Court or a larger bench or, the contemnor be prepared to face the consequences for contempt of Court".

DB fixed next hearing for August 8, 2024, and directed the personal appearance of all four contemnors, including the Chief Secretary. It warned that non-compliance would lead to coercive measures to secure their presence. (JNF)

# DB directs PDD to pay Rs 20 lakh to youth electrocuted in 2007

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Justice Vinod Chattervedi Koul of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court directed PDD to pay a compensation of Rs 20-lakh to a youth electrocuted due to an exposed wire in 2007, as the incident left the youth 78% disabled.

Justice Vinod Chatterji Koul passed the judgment after noting that no compensation was paid for the incident. High Court also rejected the objections made by Jammu and Kashmir Power Department of delaying the compensation, Bar and Bench reported.

"There is no quarrel about 78 per cent disability of petitioner due to electric shock, when he had been eight years of age on 9th March 2007 ... petitioner has trans-elbow amputation left side with scarring/puckering of over lung skin and

percentage of disability is around 78 per cent from orthopedic side ... petitioner has scars in B/L thighs and deformity disability amounts to 15 per cent. In such circumstances, petitioner cannot be said that he is not entitled to any compensation as has been tried and stated by respondents," the court said.

Then seven-years-old, Abrar Ahmad Tantray had filed the petition in 2018 when he was 21-years of age. He sought compensation for the electrocution he suffered as an 8-year-old boy due to an uncovered electric transformer.

He also sought that he be sympathetically considered by the government for a suitable job as per his qualifications, so that he may not feel dependent and handicapped for life.

Abrar, a boy from south Kashmir's Kulgam was playing with other children

outside his home when he received the electric shock from a snapped 11-KV live wire at Kujjar area of Kulgam. The electrocution resulted in severe burn injuries on the left side of his body and a part of his arm had to be amputated as well. The court was also informed that after the incident, Abrar's case was recommended for the grant of relief and rehabilitation on humanitarian grounds and that a letter was forwarded to the Development Commissioner, Power in October 2007.

The Court, however, found that no compensation had been paid.

Therefore, it ordered the authorities to pay rupees 20 lakh as compensation to the petitioner, along with an interest of 6% per annum from the date of presentation of the petition (2018) till it is paid.

# All Party to protest in Kathua on August 8 for restoration of statehood



All Party members during a meeting.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: In a unified stance, opposition parties in Jammu and Kashmir have announced a Dharma demonstration in Kathua on August 8, demanding the restoration of statehood for the region.

The decision was made during an all-party meeting held in Jammu. The Dharma, organized under the banner of the All Party United Moreha, aims to address two key issues: the demand for the return of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and the current situation in Bangladesh, including attacks on Hindu religious places. The meeting underscored the need for the Modi government to ensure the safety of Indian students and Hindus, including religious sites in Bangladesh. All Party Convenor and Shiv Sena (UBT) State Chief Manish Sahni said the Dharma demonstration will be held outside the DC office in Kathua. Convenor ID Khajuria chaired a preparatory meeting in Kathua where district unit members of the participating parties finalized the arrangements.

Key figures present at the Jammu meeting included Narender Gupta (General Secretary Organiser), Vijay Lochan (NC, Chairman SC Cell), Varinder Singh Sonu (PDP), Vinod Sharma (Congress Vice President), Rakesh Singh (NC), Sunny Kant Chib (HRC), Nirmal Mahana (AAP), Narender Singh (S Akali Dal), Subhash Mehta (CPI-L), Shahi Salim (AIPA), Sohit Sharma, Sanjeev Kohli, and Vikas Bakshi.