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Youth, women to...

including former deputy chief minister Tara Chand and several other former ministers, told reporters here.

The veteran politician clarified that Azad, the middle name of his party, does not symbolise him but it is meant to convey that the new party will be completely independent.

"Democratic is for democracy and Azad for independence...The party will be democratic and not an autocratic one, the power will not remain in one hand and the provisions of the party's constitution will be based on total democracy, he said.

Azad, who parted ways with the Congress on August 26, said the DAP will have "no competition" with any other political party and it will focus on "strengthening" peace and normalcy in J and K.

Extending his good wishes to Hindus on the commencement of Navratri festival, Azad said he had initially planned to float his party on September 23 but later it was decided the launch should be done on the first day of the Navratri to make a new beginning.

Referring to the party's flag, he said the mustard colour symbolises creativity and diversity, white stands for peace as we believe in Gandhian philosophy which will be our priority and our principle. The dark blue has a vast meaning covering different aspects like freedom of speech, thinking, intuition, imagination and inspiration, he said.

Responding to a question about Article 370 that was scrapped by the Centre in August 2019, he said his party will not make its restoration an election issue in J and K.

Issues relating to roads, water supply and price rise are meant for elections. "I won't stop anybody from making anything an election issue. I have a lot of things. Why should I make it an election issue?" he said.

Replies to a question about Kashmiri-centric parties, particularly the PDP, criticising his remarks on Article 370 of the Constitution, Azad said, "You just check Parliament records of who has spoken or who has not (on Article 370). Get the records of Parliament on any one's name. But my take is simply that I don't use such issues for elections."

Azad asserted he has never said restoration of Article 370 was not possible.

"I never said this cannot happen. I said that I cannot convince Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. If anyone can persuade Modi ji and Union Home Minister Amit Shah ji, they should do it. It will be a welcome step. I do not have any such influence on Modi ji," Azad said.

He said only Parliament can restore Article 370 but "we need a majority".

By abrogating Article 370, the Centre had revoked the special status of J and K. The Supreme Court has agreed to list after Dussehra vacation the pleas challenging the Centre's decision.

Azad said it was a welcome step that the apex court will be hearing the case from October 10.

Referring to the choice of the name for his new party, he said he had received over 1,500 suggestions from his well-wishers across the country.

It was difficult because there are a large number of recognized political parties in the country. J and K has a lot of diversity with two big regions and a number of sub-regions having different languages and cultures. So we have to find such a name which everyone can understand easily, he added.

He said his political journey started with the Gandhi family but his ideal remained Mahatma Gandhi since his student days.

It was (Mahatma) Gandhi who saw a ray of light from Kashmir during partition when there were massacres everywhere even in Jammu but not a single Hindu was slumped in Kashmir. Today BJP also acknowledges Gandhi who has become a common factor - left, right and centre.

Azad tactfully avoided a question on the developments in Rajasthan Congress and said there is no need to take the name of the village which you had left.

"There is no need to take the name of the village which you have left. Let them see and bear. We have suffered a lot, let others go through it now," Azad told reporters here on being asked about the Rajasthan development during the launch of his new party.

Jammu Admn appeals...

their address in these years and have updated their Aadhaar Cards, however, there are some who haven't done it yet; hence, we appeal to all such residents to provide their documents for their respective Aadhaar card which is being used at various platforms and it is very important to keep it updated."

The Deputy Commissioner further informed that the citizens can upload their documents online on the MyAadhaar portal or can submit their documents at Aadhaar enrolment centres in their respective areas.

Meanwhile, she convened a meeting with the concerned agencies and directed them to start an Aadhar up-dation drive in the district.

Pertinent to mention that the Central Government has selected 40 districts on a pilot basis for document updation in Aadhaar Cards and Jammu is one of them.

J&K emerges best...

the prestigious award to State Health Agency during a two day Arogya Manthan held in New Delhi to commemorate completion of four years of implementation of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and one year of completion of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).

All the states and Union Territories participated in the Manthan.

During the event, the State Health Agencies exhibited the best practices adopted in their respective states and UTs towards making these schemes a great success.

Secretary Health & Medical Education (H&ME), J&K, Dr Bhupinder Kumar, who represented J&K State Health Agency, showcased the best practices adopted in the UT resulting successful implementation of AB-PMJAY.

He also highlighted the progress achieved, so far, by J&K in beneficiary identification and feedback mechanism under Ayushman Bharat.

Dr Bhupinder Kumar, Chief Executive Officer, State Health Agency J&K, Ayushi Sudan and State Nodal Officer J&K, Sanam Mansoor received the award from Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Mansukh Mandaviya at Vigyan Bhawan.

Pertinently, J&K has been recognized for its best practices in booklet on best practices and innovations which was launched by CEO, NHA, Dr R S Sharma at the event.

Union Health Minister, while addressing the valedictory function, appreciated the J&K administration for generation of golden cards.

Notably, J&K has covered 90 per cent of the beneficiary families in terms of golden card generation, so far. The innovative practices adopted by the UT government

All stranded Jammu-bound trucks to be cleared by tonight, around 4,000 trucks on-way

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: The Divisional Commissioner (Div Com) Kashmir, Pandurang K Pole on Monday informed that 46000 trucks and trailers have moved from Qazigund towards Jammu in which 29000 are Apple trucks in alternate day convoys from Sep 01 to Sep 25. While 3995 Apple trucks moved towards Jammu yesterday, only.

Div Com asserted that normally apple production in Kashmir is 17 metric tons but due to abundant rainfall, there has been a bumper crop and it will cross 21 metric ton this time.

Pole said that the claim made by certain Fruit growers association on the halting of fruit trucks is half truth and added that natural reasons are hindering traffic.

He said that we have difficulties in the movement of traffic on the highway due to rains and resultant

shooting stones but it is beyond human control.

He appealed to them to use alternate Mughal road to lessen the burden on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway.

It was informed that almost 1500 trucks got stuck in between Ramban and Ramsoo as traffic could not move ahead of Ramban with flow because of intermittent shooting stones at Mehar causing regular stoppages.

Moreover, Div Com informed that today at 12 noon Chief Secretary had taken a review meeting which was attended by DGP and all officers of traffic departments.

He informed that administration is making all efforts while he also appeals to use Mughal road, at least for empty vehicles.

At present around 4000 trucks loaded with fresh, perishable, Petroleum products and other requirements of the valley are stranded in the Jammu

region, he stated. It is further informed that the trucks are being cleared now and Passenger vehicles could only be released from Jammu and Srinagar. The congestion due to halted trucks has been cleared at the earliest.

It is pertinent to mention that the capacity of NH for one way HMV movement is just about 3000 to 3500 if there is no disruption in traffic due to landslides, shooting stones and breakdown of loaded trucks.

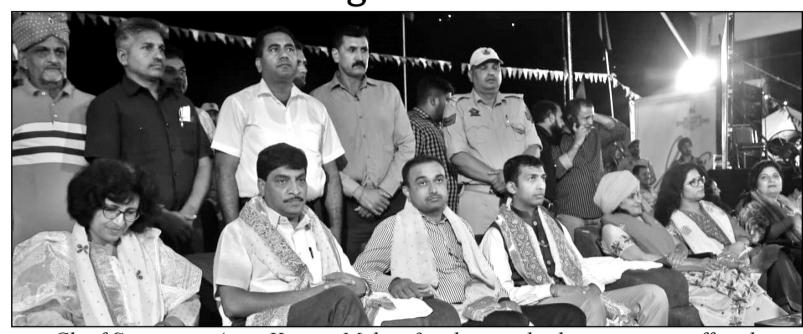
Anything above the capacity disturbs the whole cycle of up and down release of traffic and this may result in piling up of traffic on NH.

Meanwhile, it was also informed that that production of fresh fruit during 2022-23 is estimated to be 2123047 MTs as compared to 1981610 MTs in 2021-22 while the production of dry fruit during 2022-23 is estimated at 206118 MTs as compared to 192497 MTs last year.

in generation of golden cards has resulted in better utilization of services by the beneficiaries. The State Health Agency has rolled out an ambitious door-to-door exercise to achieve 100 percent saturation under the Ayushman Bharat PMJAY SEHAT scheme.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT has crossed a major milestone of providing 5 lakh free treatments to the citizens of J&K recently.

Mehta inaugurates Navratri...



Chief Secretary, Arun Kumar Mehta & other civil administration officials during inauguration of Navratri festival at Katra.

facilitating the tourists with quality services at Katra. He congratulated the local community on the auspicious occasion of Navratri and extended warm greetings for the same.

Anshul Garg while welcoming the guests said "Navratras are the time to welcome new beginnings. This time to celebrate the holy occasion of Navratri Shrine Board has installed welcome gates and selfie point at Katra for the devotees. Also, physically challenged devotees will be provided horses and battery cars free of cost to make it easier for them to visit the Shrine".

Divisional Commissioner, Jammu appreciated the role of Tourism Department, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, District Administration Reasi, Central Bureau of Communication, UT of J&K and Ladakh and all other agencies for putting up facilities for the successful conduct of the festival.

The Navratri festival which was started in 1996, has today metamorphosed into an event of outrageous proportions with thousands of people coming together not only to pay obeisance to Maa Vaishno Devi Ji, but also to be the part of grand celebrations. Bright lights, drape of varied hues, sound of folk and devotional music in the background shall be a common occurrence during these Navratras at Katra/Jammu.

The main highlights of the Nine days event to be organized at Katra from 26th September to 04th October are Ramleela, All India Devotional Song Competition, Bhagwan Katha, Prabhat Pheri, Shoba Yatra, Mata Ki Kahani, Laser Show on theme of Mata Ki Kahani, Hum Bhi Kam Nahi Talent Show, Wrestling Competition, Hassaya Vyang and Kavi Sammelan etc. Besides, cultural program and multimedia exhibition by Central Bureau of Communication, UT of J&K and Ladakh shall be held at Higher Secondary School, Katra were distinguished performance from throughout India shall present their art forms.

Lastly, the vote of thanks was presented by Director Tourism, Jammu extended his gratitude and appreciation to all the stakeholders for their commitment and overwhelming support.

Also, present on the occasion were Ms. Sunaina Sharma Mehta, Joint Director Tourism Jammu, Sh. Abdul Satar, ADC Reasi; Sh. Angriz Singh, SDM Katra; Amit Gupta, SSP Reasi; Amit Bhasin, SP Katra; Abdul Jabbar, Deputy Director Tourism Publicity and Ambika Bali, ADT Katra and many others.

ACB nabs ASI...

accepting bribe of Rs 10,000 from the complainant," said ACB sleuths, adding that the ASI was arrested and taken into custody. The bribe money was also recovered from his possession in presence of independent witnesses.

J&K SI Exam...

results were declared on June 4. The J&K Government had constituted an Inquiry Committee to look into the allegation of irregularities in the examinations.

"It was alleged that the accused entered into conspiracy with officials of J&KSSB, Bengaluru-based private company, beneficiary candidates and others, and caused gross irregularities in conduct of written examination for the posts of Sub-Inspectors," .

Decision on PoK...

similar function at Nadaun in Hamirpur district.

In Kangra, Singh also shed light on the Centre's unwavering resolve to make the country 'Atmanirbhar' and the progress achieved due to the measures taken to realise the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision.

"Earlier, India was known as a defence importer. Today, it is among one of the top 25 defence exporters in the world. From about Rs 900 crore eight years ago, defence exports have crossed Rs 13,000 crore. We are hopeful that the defence exports will touch Rs 35,000 crore by 2025 and the target of Rs 2.7 lakh crore set for 2047 will be met," he said.

While maintaining that India has never attacked any country, nor has it captured an inch of foreign land, he assured the nation that if any attempt is ever made to disturb the harmony in India, a befitting reply will be given.

"India is a peace-loving country, but it should not be mistaken with being coward or afraid of war. At a time when we were dealing with COVID-19, we had to face the tension on the northern border with China. The courage of our soldiers during the Galwan incident proved that no matter how big the power is, India will never bow down, he said.

Singh said that the formation of the post of 'chief of defence staff' and setting up of the department of military affairs are some of the major reforms taken to bolster the national security.

"Doors of National Defence Academy (NDA) have been opened for girls, while women in the Armed Forces are being given permanent commission. We have also allowed deployment of women on warships, he said.

Singh stressed that the government is building a 'New India', which will give a sense of security and trust to all our peace-loving friendly countries and those with evil intentions will get nothing but dust.

On the 2016 surgical strikes and 2019 Balakot air strikes, the defence minister stated that India's new strategy against terrorism has broken the backs of those who try to hurt the unity and integrity of the nation.

Terror activities were carried out from Pakistan under a well-thought-out poli-

RSS mission is to make India attain all-round dev: Mohan Bhagwat

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SHILLONG: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has said that the Sangh's mission is to make India attain all-round development, and it advocates sacrifice for the country by relinquishing individual self ends. Bhagwat made the comments at a public meeting here on the first day of his two-day visit to the hill state on Sunday. "The Sangh's mission to make our society organised so that India attains all-round development. RSS teaches sacrifice for the country by giving up individual self ends," the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief said. He said inherent faith in age-old values based on spirituality is the binding force among people of the country. "Indian and Hindu is a synonymous geo-cultural identity. We are all Hindus," Bhagwat said. He said Indians learnt the tradition of sacrifice from the country's ancient history. "Our ancestors had visited various foreign lands and imparted the same values to Japan, Korea, Indonesia and many other countries," he said. Bhagwat also said India had served humanity by sending vaccines to various countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, and stood beside Sri Lanka during its economic crisis. "When India becomes powerful, every citizen becomes powerful," he said.

J&K reports 8 COVID cases

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir on Monday reported eight fresh Covid cases-seven from the Valley and one from the Jammu Division-thus taking the total number of positive cases to 479084 in the Union Territory. According to the daily Media Bulletin, out of 479084 positive cases, 144 are Active Positive, 474155 have recovered and 4785 have died; 2352 in Jammu division and 2433 in Kashmir division. Providing district-wise breakup for positive cases during the past 24 hours, the Bulletin informed that in Kashmir division, Srinagar district reported seven cases while as no other district reported any fresh case. Similarly, in Jammu division, Reasi district reported one case while as no other district reported any new case.

After the Uri and Pulwama attacks, our government and the Armed Forces, through the 2016 surgical strikes and 2019 Balakot air strikes, displayed to the world India's unwavering commitment to root out terrorism. We showed that our forces have the capability to act on this side and, if needed, on the other side of the border. India's image has been transformed. It is now seriously listened to on international platforms, he said.

The defence minister was of the view that the inspiration taken from the heroes of the Armed Forces is the reason behind India moving swiftly forward on the path of development.

When the dark clouds of war appear and national interests are attacked, it is the soldiers who bear that attack and protect the country. It is the supreme sacrifice of the fallen heroes which keeps the people alive, he stated.

The names of General Sam Manekshaw, General Jagjit Singh Arora, General Jacob, General Sujan Singh Uban and General Officer in Command Air Marshal Latif, who led India to a resounding victory, will never be forgotten. Indian soldiers in the war included Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs and one Jew. It is proof of India's belief towards Sarvadharma Sambhav (respect for all religions). All these brave soldiers belonged to different states with different mother tongues. They were bound by a strong and common thread of Indianness, he said.

Singh termed Himachal Pradesh as a border state strategically important for India and the people residing in the border areas as strategic assets. While emphasising that it is the responsibility of every government to make their lives better, he stated strengthening the border infrastructure as well as the intelligence and communication capability of the country has been accorded top priority by the government, led by Prime Minister Modi.

He pointed out that hundreds of kms of roads, bridges and tunnels have been constructed in the border areas, with Atal tunnel in Himachal Pradesh being one of the mega projects.

Singh paid respects to the families of the war heroes, stating that the country will forever be indebted to the sacrifices made by the valiant soldiers.

He said the Armed Forces will always be a source of inspiration to the people, especially the youth, as they possess the traits of discipline, devotion to duty, patriotism and sacrifice, and are a symbol of national pride and trust.

Background, religion and creed don't matter, what matters is that our beloved tri-colour continues to fly high, he said.

The defence minister paid glowing tributes to the war heroes, including first recipient of Param Vir Chakra Major Sonmath Sharma (1947); Brigadier Sher Jung Thapa, Maha Vir Chakra (1948); Lt Col Dhan Singh Thapa, PVC (1962); Captain Vikram Batra, PVC (1999) and Subedar Major Sanjay Kumar, PFC (1999).

On this occasion, Singh felicitated the families of the brave soldiers of the Armed Forces hailing from Himachal Pradesh, who laid down their lives in the service of the nation.

Jaish terrorist killed...

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