

Qazigund-Banihal rail link realises residents' dreams

BANIHAL, June 30: Mohammad Sultan's 30-year-old dream came to fruition, when Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh flagged off the train between this highway town in Jammu region to Qazigund in Kashmir.

80-year-old Sultan, whose wrinkled face bears testimony to his hard life, was among hundreds of eager residents of Banihal who had assembled at the railway station way before the scheduled time for the first passenger train to chug towards Qazigund from here.

"The first time I heard that there is a possibility of a train coming to our town was back in 1983. I thought, if the tracks could be extended from Jammu to Udhampur, why not up to Banihal," Sultan told reporters during his journey to Qazigund.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and host of other dignitaries including Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, inaugurated the 18-km long Banihal-Qazigund rail section last Wednesday. The rail link will provide an all-weather connectivity between Banihal and Qazigund.

The octogenarian said he had lost hope of ever stepping on a train, as the project was getting delayed.

"At my age, hopes are not fulfilled very often. But, I kept hoping that one day I will board a train here," he said.

It was not the first travel to Kashmir for Sultan, but as he puts it, "this is royal-class."

"Whenever we would step out of Banihal, we had to look skyward for impending weather changes. While winters are harsh due to snowfall, summers can get tricky owing to landslides triggered by rains. One was sure of leaving the town but not about the date of return," he said.

Sultan is happy that travel to Kashmir will be a lot safer now than the treacherous bus journey.

Sultan was not alone seeing his dream come true. Fatima Bano, who claimed to be 50-years-old but looked a good 10 years older, boarded the first train just for the fun of it.

"I heard I will be in Anantnag in one hour. Just

wanted to check for myself," Fatima said covering her face from shyness.

Mohammad Akram, who has just stepped out of his teens, has different reason to rejoice the arrival of train services to his town. His girlfriend lives in a village near Qazigund and he can now meet her without bothering about how he will get back home on time.

"I can take the morning train and return the same day in the evening. I don't have to worry about getting stuck on the other side of Pir Panjal mountains," Akram giggled.

The young man feels that the train will also be a boon for couples hailing from Banihal town

and surrounding areas.

"There is hardly any place where one can meet his beloved in this town. Society is still conservative and everyone knows the other. A ride on the train can allow couples to enjoy some moments of seclusion in Kashmir," he said.

Train service is expected to improve the healthcare and education in this town on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

"Hospitals in Kashmir Valley have better facilities and reaching them will be easier now. Even our students can now study in schools and colleges of Kashmir," Bashir Ahmad, a local Congress activist, said. (PTI)



Minister for Health, Shabir Ahmad Khan interacting with pilgrims at Ziarat Sharief at Peer-Ki-Gali on Sunday.

Shabir announces medical aid centre at Peer- Ki- Gali

SRINAGAR, June 30: Keeping in view the increased activities of tourists and locals along the Mughal Road, Minister of State for Health, Mr Shabir Ahmad Khan today announced setting up of a medical aid centre at Peer-Ki-Gali.

In this connection, the Minister issued instructions to the Director Health Services, Kashmir for its operationalization within week's time.

The announcement was made by the Minister during his interaction with the pilgrims at Ziarat Sharief Peer-Ki-Gali. He said the inflow of pilgrims increased at the shrine due to opening of historic Mughal road and setting up of health centre at the shrine was need of the hour to provide health care to the pilgrims and all those using this

road. The Mughal Road is alternate lifeline between Jammu to Kashmir via Poonch, Rajouri.

The Minister said that an ambulance would be also kept available at the health centre to tackle any emergency in the area. He directed concerned authorities to arrange the requisite staff with other necessary medicines and equipment on internal arrangement to make it functional for convenience of the people, adding that the center would also prove beneficial for health care of shepherd families grazing their livestock at the pastures at the vicinity areas of Peer-Ki-Gali.

Mr. Shabir also paid obedience at the holy Shrine of Peer-Ki Gali and prayed for peace and prosperity of the State.

The Health Minister said that Government was endeavouring to explore the vast tourism potential of Mughal road and for the purpose several infrastructural projects are under way with focussed attention to promote eco-tourism in the area.

2 more held for attack on CDPO

RAJOURI, June 30: The police today arrested two more youth for their involvement in attack on CDPO Thanamandi and his brother.

A police spokesman said that two youth have already been arrested by Thanamandi police in this connection. Two more youth namely, Amjad Iqbal Mirza, son of Late Haji Sharief Mirza and Rashid, son of Khadam Hussain, residents of San Samad were nabbed from their respective hideouts by SHO Thanamandi Zakir Shaheen today. These youth had attacked KAS Officer Mehmoood Riyaaz (CDPO) and his brother, Tariq also a Government employee when they were returning to Rajouri from Thanamandi few days back. The police was looking for them since then.

Rajeev Charak said that the Chaari Mubarak Yatra has been going since 2003 and thousands of yatries of district Ramban and Doda accompany the Chaari from Senabathi to Sarvadhara.

Rajeev Charak said that this Yatra is one of the greatest Yatra's of district Doda and Ramban and urged the Government to announce district holiday on this date.

Ravinder Raina in his address appealed to all concerned departments to ensure fool-proof security and facilities for the yatra.

Among others who spoke were Baldev Raj Nagotra, Sourabh Sethi, Ishant Gupta and Hardesh Kumar Khokher.



Lalla - The Yogini being released on Sunday.

Prof Kaul's book 'Lalla-The Yogini' released

JAMMU, June 30: With determination to promotion of recent and ancient Kashmiri art, Science and history the invaluable and priceless find out contemplation entitled "Lalla -The Yogini" written and compiled by Prof ML Koul was released here today.

The book was released by M M Khajuria former Director General Police of the State at a function organized by Prakash led by BL Saraf a reckoning cultural initiative by Panun Kashmir.

Among the prominent who were present on the dais were Dr MK Teng, thinker and chairman of the Advisory Committee of PK Dr K L Chowdhary eminent Physician, writer and social activist, MK Santoshi well known Hindi writer and poet, Prof T K Zadoo, Prof R L Shant, Prof ML Koul and Dr Ajay Chungoo, chairman PK.

The function was conducted by Upender Ambaradar, general secretary of Prakash.

The speakers said the book Lalla the Yogini is a pioneering work on Lalla Ded, the saint

poetess of Kashmir. It has decisively placed the poetess in her cultural and spiritual context as a practiser of the spiritual tenants of Kashmir Shaivism.

It is pertinent to mention here that Lalleshwari lived through the time when the Muslim rule was firmly established in Kashmir. She was a devout Shaivite, a Yogini committed to her faith and she was a poet who after the manner of general populace in Kashmir was sunk in her own feelings and experiences, mostly spiritual, which by and large did not reflect the stressful conditions of her natives. Lalla Ded Vaakhs are deeply soaked in a Shiva-consciousness.

The speakers said for the first time the entire repertoire of the Vakhs/verses of Lal Ded have been put to a content analysis and a decisive linkage has been established with the tradition and practice of the spiritual tenants of Kashmir Shaivism.

The book goes a long way in depicting the continuity of the spiritual lore, experience and mystical poetry of Kashmir represented most authentically by Lal Ded with that of India.

Bring all religious properties under Shrine Bill: KHMC

JAMMU, June 30: The Executive Committee of the Kashmiri Hindu Minority Conference (KHMC) in a meeting held here today under the presidency of Prof G K Muju has expressed its satisfaction that the J&K Government is quite serious to get the long awaited Bill to provide for the better management, protection, administration and governance of Kashmiri Hindus temples, shrines and religious places in the State and the matters concerned therewith and incidental thereto with the introduction of a Bill in the State Assembly in this regard in the last session.

The KHMC while expressing its gratitude to the Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Mir Saifullah, Chairman Select Committee, expressed the hope that he without any further delay will call a meeting of the Committee at Srinagar and discussed the matter.

The K H M C has reiterated some of its suggestions hereunder and demand that all temples, shrines, trusts asthans, cremation grounds and other religious

IAR, AVM demand abolition of reservation

JAMMU, June 30: India Against Reservation (IAR) and Aarakash Virodhi Manch (AVM) today demanded total abolition of reservation based on caste, creed, sex and religion.

Addressing a joint meeting of IAR and AVM, held here today, Ram Pal Seth President AVM said that only the poor and the needy irrespective of their caste and religion be brought under special support measures for raising their economic standard.

Seth demanded implementation of Supreme Court's judgements given in the petitions of Indira Sawhney and M Nagraj . Alleging that the reservation in promotion is banned as it is illegal and unconstitutional, he also demanded that recommendations given by the parliamentary committee be implemented in letter and spirit which suggested non inclusion of creamy layer for

reservation.

Yash Paul Senson, secretary, AVM sought to attract the attention of the participants towards the statements of various political leaders of different parties in which they demanded that the benefits of reservation much reach to the poor and needy.

He demanded that the formation of Govt Panel for reservation policy must consider genuine demands made by various social and political organizations, constitution of a committee by the Government to review the status of reservation quota policy and its implementation in J&K in the backdrop of various Supreme Court judgements and existing provision of law.

Om Parkash Shrikul of Dehati Brahmin Sabha Jammu maintained that reservation sows the hate seed in the mind of people as it is a big hindrance in the development of the country.

Sham inaugurates tube well, school building

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 30: Minister for PHE, Irrigation and Flood Control, Sham Lal Sharma, on Sunday inaugurated tube well constructed under National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) at Muthi Maira near Jourian and a double storey high school building raised under RMSA at Kot Ghari.

Emphasizing the role of panchs, sarpanchs and locals in revival and maintenance of traditional water reservoirs, the

addressed a public meeting at Kot Ghari and asked the teaching fraternity to impart quality education to the students so that



Minister for PHE, Sham Lal Sharma and MP Madan Lal Sharma inaugurating school building on Sunday.

The tube well has been constructed at a cost of Rs. 43.00 lakh while Rs. 49.17 lakh have been incurred on the construction of High School Building. The total estimated cost of Water Supply Scheme (WSS) which also include other civil, mechanical and other allied works is Rs. 69.50 works. The double storey newly constructed High School Building with 5417.00 Sft area have 8 classrooms, 1 office room, art, craft and culture room, science laboratory, library, computer room and toilet block etc.

Member Parliament, Madan Lal Sharma and OBC Vice Chairman, Kuldeep Raj Verma were present on the occasion.

After inaugurating the tube well, Sham said that with the commissioning of this WSS 5000 souls of Muthi Maira and adjoining villages would get drinking water facility. He asked the PHE authority to lay water supply pipes and construct a water tank near the tube well.

Minister said that these have served as perennial source of water in kandi areas since centuries. He said Government is paying focused attention on augmentation of drinking water as well as irrigation facilities to the people. He directed the concerned officers to take up augmentation of existing dug well and tube well in the area.

Responding to demands of people at Muthi Maira, the Minister assured that all their genuine demands would be redressed in a time bound manner. He also assured that steps will be initiated to blackout link roads and Akhnoor-Jourian double lane road at the earliest.

Later, the Minister

they would become good citizens and serve the country in a better manner. He stressed upon the teaching community to inculcate moral values among the students besides enabling them excel in academics.

Ch. Lal Singh and Kuldeep Raj Verma also spoke on the occasion.

Among others, Chief Engineer PHE, K. K. Gupta, Chief Engineer Irrigation and Flood Control, Varinder Badyal, SE Hydraulic, Rajiv Malhotra, SDM, Akhnoor, all sectoral officers besides Sarpanchs, Panches and Baldev Raj Sharma were also present on the occasion.

Lal Singh inaugurates J&K branch of HMAI

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 30: Member Parliament Choudhary Lal Singh today inaugurated the J&K branch of Homoeopathic Medical Association of India (HMAI) here today.

Choudhary Lal Singh

various hospitals and dispensaries, qualified homoeopathic doctors and homoeopathic pharmacists in AYUSH units of State, proper medicines in every unit and equal share in AYUSH funds for creating infrastructure and development in J&K, creation of posts of



MP Lal Singh inaugurating HMAI branch at Jammu on Sunday.

flanked by Kanta Andotra, Ex-MLA, Basohli, inaugurated the branch of HMAI during annual meeting of the national executive committee members of HMAI.

During the meeting, the members of HMAI apprised MP about evidence based cases and results in many chronic cases, which were declared incurable in other systems of medicines.

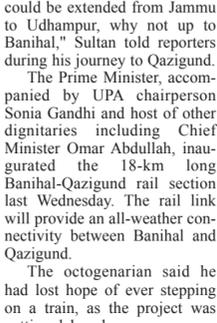
The meeting was attended by Dr Shayamal Mukharje, secretary general, HMAI, Dr Bhaskar Bhatt, deputy president, Dr SP Singh, Dr BK Kundu, Dr YK Goswami, Dr ML Bera, Dr S Saha, Dr BJ Banarjee, Dr Ranjan Tuli, Dr Satish Kumar, Dr Ravi Kumar, Dr Rajinder Kumar, Dr Ram Lal Sharma and senior Homoeopaths of J&K.

Homoeopaths of J&K demanded opening Regional Homoeopathic Hospital at Jammu and Srinagar, opening of Government Homoeopathic Medical Colleges, appointment of Homoeopathic Doctors in

Asstt Director and District Homoeopathic Medical Officer, appointment of qualified Homoeopathic Doctor as Registrar of Homoeopathy, clearance of pending registrations of part A and B Doctors and conducting of awareness camps and medical education programmes.

During the meeting, Dr BR Dubb has been appointed as president, HMAI J&K, Dr Shanu Koul as vice president, Dr Satish Attri as general secretary, Dr Rajaneev and Dr Meenakshi Chib as joint secretaries, Dr Rajan Dutta as a convener, Dr Bhaskar Raina as finance secretary, Dr Ajay Singh as president, HMAI Jammu unit, Dr Satpal Dogra as general secretary, Dr Sanjay Bhagat as president Reasi unit and Dr Rakesh Kumar as general secretary.

Later, Dr B R Dubb said that HMAI will be organizing 18th All India Scientific Seminar in December, in which about 1500 National and Foreign delegates are expected to participate.



State president BJYM Ravinder Raina flagging off Charri Mubarak on Sunday.

Mata Chamunda Devi Charri Yatra flagged off

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 30: Eleventh Mata Chamunda Devi Chaari Mubarak Yatra was flagged off, here today.

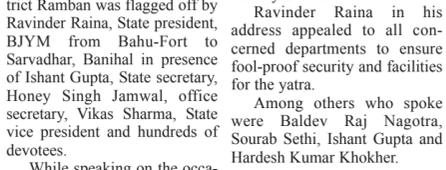
The Charri Mubarak Yatra, which was led by Rajeev Charak, Patron-in-Chief of Shri Mata Chamunda Mandir Development Committee, Sarvadhara, tehsil Banihal, district Ramban was flagged off by Ravinder Raina, State president, BJYM from Bahu-Fort to Sarvadhara, Banihal in presence of Ishant Gupta, State secretary, Honey Singh Jamwal, office secretary, Vikas Sharma, State vice president and hundreds of devotees.

While speaking on the occa-

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Raj Kumar Dogra releasing brochure on 'Special Meditation Kriya for Students' at Jammu on Sunday.

Brochure on 'Special Meditation Kriya for students' released

JAMMU, June 30: The benefits of meditation and spiritual music therapy are not confined to a particular age or gender and it is a natural way of enhancing memory and intelligence of an individual.

It was claimed by Meditation and Spiritual Music Therapy Guru, Raj Kumar Dogra, after releasing a Brochure on "Special Meditation Kriya for students".

He said that the kriya curbs suicidal tendencies among the students who are frustrated for not achieving the desired goals in education as well as career, removes eye disorders among students and

ensures sufficient supply of oxygen and blood to the brain.

It also eliminates bad habits like drinking, smoking, drug addiction etc by producing positive energy and attitude, if practiced regularly, he added.

He announced that regular classes and workshops for students will be organized in the coming days so that they are relieved of stress, strain caused by busy schedules of studies, he added.

Among others present were Pinky Dogra, Meenakashi, Sanjiv Magota, Rajan Kumar, Nishant Kumar, students and prominent social figures.

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Prosecution failure leads to acquittal of narco smuggler

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 30: Principal Sessions Judge Kathua, M K Hanjura has acquitted Sewa Ram alias Surti Kumar, son of Parkash Chand of Gurdaspur, who was facing trial in NDPS case for the last six years.

According to the police case, on November 2, 2007, the accused was arrested by Lakhnampur Police along with 2000 intoxicant capsules.

After hearing Public Prosecutor Ravi Kumar Gupta for

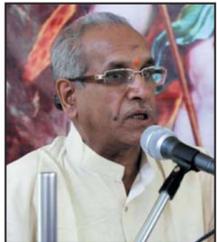
the State whereas Advocate Ganga Ram Sharma appearing for the accused, Principal Sessions Judge observed, "the prosecution has not presented its case in a proper manner. The link evidence in the case is missing. The prosecution has failed to connect the accused with the crime he has been charged with".

"Viewed in the total context, the accused straightaway merits acquittal", the Court said. Accordingly, the accused was acquitted of the charges levelled against him.

VHP warns against revocation of AFSPA

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 30: Outright rejecting the revocation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from J&K, VHP today cautioned that any step in



VHP leader Champat Rai talking to reporters at Jammu on Sunday.

out to Swami Amarnath pilgrims on the first day of yatra by the administration, the VHP leader demanded opening of more current registration counters in Valley and Jammu to deal with unregistered pilgrims.

Mr Rai also urged the Government to take extra measures in ensuring security of pilgrims. Besides, he suggested that all preemptive measures be taken to deal with any natural calamity.

Strongly advocating for revocation of Article 370 giving extra Constitutional status to the State, Mr Rai said that this Article has become useless and instead of solving the problems of people in the State it has led to their backwardness. Except few dynasties in the State who exploit the people on the name of Article 370 for their vested political interest, it has failed to do any good to people, he added.

He made it clear that the Article 370 was a temporary provision in the Constitution which was to be revoked after passage of the time and by now this Article should have gone as complete merger of J&K with rest of the country was in the best interests of the people of the State, he added.

The VHP leader also gave account of the 10 day long Varg held by the organization at Ved Mandir here from June 21 to June 30. He said 191 representatives from five States took part in the Varg which culminated today. During the Varg the role of VHP and its functioning was discussed, he added.

He said AFSPA can't be revoked in view of the increasing militant attacks and infiltration from across the border and demanded that the Valley be handed over to Army to weed out subversive elements completely.

Expressing his serious concern over the treatment meted

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94191-07045 | 089685-76999 | 84920-07045