

Guv unwell

Excelsior Correspondent
 JAMMU, Dec 5: Governor Satya Pal Malik could not attend SKIMS Soura annual day function in Srinagar this morning as he was unwell.

Infact, the Governor was already scheduled to go to New Delhi after attending function at SKIMS in Srinagar for medical consultations but had to pre-ponne his departure because of medical reasons, an official handout said.

Meanwhile, Union Minister of State in PMO, Dr Jitendra (Contd on page 9 Col 1)

7959 in fray for last two phases

Excelsior Correspondent
 JAMMU, Dec 5: As many as 7959 candidates will try their luck in last two phases of Panchayat elections, which will be held on December 8 and 11. The polling will conclude in entire Jammu region in eight phase of elections on December 8 and voting in ninth and final phase will be confined to Kashmir region only. Voting was already over in Ladakh region.

According to Chief Electoral Officer, Shaleen Kabra, for penultimate Phase-VIII, 1333 (Contd on page 9 Col 3)

Infiltrators create trouble: Rawat

NEW DELHI, Dec 5: Army chief Gen Bipin Rawat today exhorted girl students from Jammu and Kashmir to work hard and compete for Army's 'Super 30' coaching programme and build their career through good education.

He was interacting with 18 girl students from various schools in the Valley, at the South Block here. "There is no other place like Kashmir when it comes to scenic beauty and a sublime environment. But, terrorism has vitiated the atmosphere (Contd on page 9 Col 3)

2 suspended for roofless polling stn

Excelsior Correspondent
 RAJOURI, Dec 5: Amidst allegations of alleged 'misleading reports' carried out by the media over roofless polling station in Khawas area of Budhal on Tuesday, Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, who is also District Election Officer, today placed two employees of the Rural Development Department under suspension and also withheld the salary of Block Development Officer (Contd on page 9 Col 5)

Kesar, Mushtaq get Sahitya Akademi Award

Excelsior Correspondent
 JAMMU, Dec 5: Prominent Dogri writer Inderjeet Kesar and Kashmiri broadcaster (Contd on page 9 Col 1)



Inderjeet Kesar Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq
 Mushtaq Ahmad Mushtaq have bagged this year's Sahitya Akademi Award for their Novel (Contd on page 9 Col 1)

Formal orders expected shortly to concede long pending demand

Governor's Admn contemplating to accord divisional status to Ladakh

Developmental activities to get required boost in Leh, Kargil

Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, Dec 5: Paying much-needed attention towards the sufferings of the people of cold desert region, the Governor's Administration is contemplating to accord divisional status to Ladakh and formal orders in this regard are likely to be issued shortly. With this, not only the routine issues of Leh and Kargil will get resolved in hassle free manner but the developmental activities will also get required boost.

Official sources told EXCELSIOR that the Governor Satya Pal Malik has held detailed deliberations with his Advisors and Chief Secretary on the persistent demand of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils of Leh and Kargil seeking divisional status for the region.

"A consensus has almost emerged that time has come

for conceding the long pending demand so as to overcome growing disenchantment among the people of Ladakh", they further said while giving sufficient hints about issuance of formal order in this regard in next few days.

***Watch video on www.excelsionews.com**

The demand of divisional status to the Ladakh is being raised by the elected representatives of the people from Leh and Kargil districts during the past several years in order to redress the administration related grievances in a time bound manner. However, the demand was not seriously considered at any forum as a result of which disenchantment was growing among the people of both the districts.

This demand gained momentum recently particularly after the Member of Parliament from the region Thupstan Chhewang tendered his resignation and

attributed his decision to non-serious approach of the State and Central Governments towards the issues facing the populace of cold desert region.

Few days back, the General House of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh unanimously passed a resolution demanding divisional status to Ladakh region besides raising other burning issues. During the past two days, a high-level delegation from Leh led by Chief Executive Councillor Jamyang Tsering Namgial called on Governor Satya Pal Malik, Advisors Vijay Kumar and Kewal Sharma and Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam separately and vociferously raised the demand of granting divisional status to Ladakh.

Last month, a high-level delegation from Kargil led by Chief Executive Councillor Feroz

Khan met Governor and Advisors pleading for granting divisional status to Ladakh region in order to bring an end to the administration related issues of both the districts.

Both the Hill Councils have explicitly conveyed to the Governor, Advisors and Chief Secretary that unless divisional status is accorded to Ladakh their basic problems are not going to be addressed timely, sources said.

Following accord of divisional status, there will be separate

Divisional Commissioner for Ladakh region besides separate Directorates and heads of around 40 departments and people of Leh and Kargil will not face the hassle of travelling to Srinagar for getting routine issues resolved, sources said.

Moreover, implementation of developmental schemes and programmes would get required (Contd on page 9 Col 1)

Burglars decamp with ATM

Excelsior Correspondent

KATHUA, Dec 5: A group of unidentified burglars late last night decamped with an ATM of State Bank of India along with cash.

According to reports, the burglars decamped with an ATM of SBI Bank Branch Chann Rorian near Hiranagar and looted Rs 3.5 lakh which it contained.

■ Pic on page 9

The reports said that the local people in the morning were astonished to see that the ATM machine was missing and they informed the police which reached to spot for investigation.

"A complaint was lodged about the loot and Rs 3.68 lakhs is missing from the machine," Sridhar Patil, the SSP Kathua (Contd on page 9 Col 7)

2 jawans injured on LoC

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Dec 5: Two soldiers were injured today after India and Pakistan troops exchanged fire and shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) in Uri area of North Kashmir's Baramulla district.

The Indo-Pak armies exchanged fire along the LoC at Kamalkote area of Uri sector this morning which continued for about 15 minutes.

Two soldiers Sepoy Dubey Vishvanath and Naik M Vilan of 8 Rashtriya Rifles (RR) were injured and taken to a nearby health facility for treatment. Dubey was later shifted to Army's 92 base hospital Badamibagh for treatment.

Army said that there was an unprovoked ceasefire violation by Pakistan in Uri sector this morning. "Two soldiers were (Contd on page 9 Col 3)

Indo-Pak leadership will resolve Kashmir: Farooq

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Dec 5: Former Chief Minister and president of the National Conference, Dr Farooq Abdullah, today said he is confident that India and Pakistan leadership will resolve Kashmir and peace will return.

Speaking at a function marking 36th annual day of SKIMS at SKICC in Srinagar today, Abdullah said that time has come for the resolution of Kashmir issue. "I see a change between the Indian and Pakistani leaderships. I am quite confident that time has come, that is why probably God has kept me alive, to see solution emerging to this problem of our State and I hope we

'Move to take over JK Bank was in pipeline for long'

have peace which we all want," he said.

The NC president said that he wanted to walk freely without



any security in the Valley. "I want to walk freely without any security. My daughters, my friends, my colleagues and people in this State could work

without any tragedy. I hope it will happen and I hope you all will pray for this that we have that situation," he said.

Dr Abdullah said that only democratically elected Governments will advance the cause of development and work for the socio-economic emancipation of the underprivileged. "I look forward to elections for the State Assembly at an earliest. Only a popular Government can mitigate the mounting woes of the people. And it is the duty of people to elect honest people to the Legislature," he said. (Contd on page 9 Col 5)

Karan Singh writes to Guv on Mubarak Mandi condition

Calls for preserving Dogra heritage

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Dec 5: Former Sadar-i-Riyasat, Dr Karan Singh has urged Governor Satya Pal Malik to call all files connected with Mubarak Mandi and see what can be done to preserve this important part of rich Dogra heritage, which, he said, is crumbling before our eyes.

Describing condition of the Mubarak Mandi complex as "deteriorating", Dr Karan Singh asserted that more buildings are

on the verge of collapse. Dr Karan Singh, a former Union Minister and Congress leader, has voiced his concerns over condition of Mubarak Mandi complex in a letter written to the Governor today.

Dr Karan Singh said only last week yet another portion of the historic Mubarak Mandi complex has collapsed.

"This huge palace complex was handed over to the State Government by Maharaja Hari Singh during his own rulership. For some years, it was used as a Secretariat but after 1947, it gradually fell into misuse and because of lack of maintenance, parts of the complex started collapsing," Dr Singh said in his letter to the Governor, a copy of which has been released to the media.

Noting that some years back, the INTACH was commissioned to renovate these buildings, he regretted that for some reasons, the process was discontinued.

"An organization called the Mubarak Mandi Heritage Society was formed and the Archaeological Survey of India was also involved but despite these measures, the situation continued to deteriorate and more buildings are on the verge of collapse," Dr Karan Singh wrote.

He said one building has been restored, which was supposed to have become the 'Jammu Museum' but it still remain vacant and its condition has also started deteriorating.

"I would urge you to kindly call for all the files connected (Contd on page 9 Col 3)



An artist performing Kathak dance in Ujjain on Wednesday. (UNI)

Will strike even inside enemy territory

Govt to set up special 'Surgical Strike Force' for swift ops

Sanjeev Pargal

Commandos will be drawn from all 3 Forces

JAMMU, Dec 5: The Government is contemplating to set up 250-member strong special 'Surgical Strike Force' to carry out operations deep inside Pakistan's territory to target launching pads of the militants across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir and neutralize infiltration attempts well before the militants cross the LoC and for conducting "certain extraordinary operations" whenever required.

"All members of the 'Surgical Strike Force' will be well trained commandos of three armed forces including Army, Indian Air Force (IAF) and Navy," official sources told the Excelsior and said the 'Special Force' could come up at the very earliest especially in view of surge in sniper attacks by Pakistan army on the Indian soldiers in which number of soldiers have either attained martyrdom or were injured.

The 'Surgical Strike Force', according to sources, will conduct Intelligence based opera-

tions to thwart enemy's plans like BAT (Border Action Team) strikes, sniper attacks, infiltration attempts by the trained militants and other such nefarious activities on the LoC under exceptional circumstances only by the Pakistan army and its supported trained militants.

All day-to-day operations and activities on the LoC will continue to be undertaken by the troops deployed there, sources said.

The 'Surgical Strike Force' will have some members, who will act as 'Policy Planning Group' while others will execute the operation, sources said, adding that raising of such a Force had become necessary in view of increase activities of the militants close to LoC on Pakistan side amid reports that the militants could make infiltration attempts even during the winter by trekking the mountains and making routes through

the passes.

"The Special Strike Force' will be fully capable of conducting surprise precision strikes deep inside enemy territory, hitting the targets, inflicting maximum damage in the shortest possible time and leave the battle area swiftly, which will be similar to the operation carried out by the country's Special Forces on seven terrorist launch pads across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir on September 30, 2016 in the aftermath of terror attack on Uri Army camp.

In the surgical strikes, Indian Army had successfully targeted the militant camps and Pakistan army installations, which had been sheltering the militants before their infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir and eliminated more than 50 militants and destroyed several camps before returning successfully.

Sources said the Government was of the view (Contd on page 9 Col 5)

Despite Cabinet decision, SRO for ACP scheme yet to be issued

Fayaz Bukhari

Enggs face career stagnation

SRINAGAR, Dec 5: Government has failed to implement Assured Career Progression (ACP) Scheme for the Gazetted Service Engineers and thousands of them working in various departments in the State are facing career stagnation for decades.

Around 5000 Gazetted Service Engineers working in various departments of the State are facing career stagnation as government has failed to implement ACP scheme for them.

Chief Engineers of Public Works Department (PWD), Abdul Wahid and Road and Building Department (R&B), Sami Arif are still Assistant Executive Engineers and they

are yet to be regularized as Executive Engineers, Superintending Engineers and Chief Engineers.

Such is the stagnation that Saif Ullah Bhat of Baniidpora district qualified PSC in 1994 and was appointed as Assistant Engineer in the State Government. He retired in 2017 as AEE after serving for 23 years but earned only one incharge promotion. His only promotion is yet to be regularized even after retirement.

The former Finance Minister in his last year's budget speech assured ACP for the Engineers but so far nothing has been done. "It is a matter of shame that a bright young professional joining as Junior Engineer often

retires as an Assistant Engineer or a Chief Engineer retires only in the sustantive grade of AEE. Such prolonged stagnation in one post or little or no career elevation has discouraged our professionals, be they doctors or engineers or teachers. It has also set in an all-round social discontentment", read the budget speech.

"To start addressing these concerns, I here worked out an Assured Career Progression Scheme for all the gazette cadre of engineering departments on the analogy of MACP in the Government of India. This shall be notified shortly", the speech read.

The Cabinet memo was (Contd on page 9 Col 1)

Illegal constructions ravage saffron land, authorities unmoved

Suhail Bhat



Construction in saffron land continues in South Kashmir's Pampore town. —Excelsior/Younis Khaliq

SRINAGAR, Dec 5: The authorities are acting mute spectators to the vandalisation of the saffron fields in South Kashmir's Pampore area as the Valley has lost over 2200 hectares of land due to the establishment of residential and commercial establishments during last two decades.

Despite the laws like Saffron Act 2007, the land grabbers and mafias have raised illegal constructions on the unique land. The saffron growers, however, blamed the Government for failing to stop the conversion of saffron land. "For last two decades people were given free hand to construct houses and other commercial structure. Land mafias have constructed colonies on the

land. The worst part is that authorities let it happen", Tasaduq Rashid, a local from Frestabal area of Pampore said, adding "if construction continued with the same pace for next two-three years, no land would

be left for cultivation". Prior to 2007, when Government was yet to introduce its ambitious Saffron Mission, 5100 hectares of land was under Saffron cultivation (Contd on page 9 Col 5)

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WEATHER

JAMMU: Partly cloudy
TEMPERATURE
 Max: 21.1 Degree C
 Min: 9.0 Degree C

RELATIVE HUMIDITY
 RH-I (Morning): 87.0 per cent
 RH-II (Evening): 79.0 per cent
 Sunset on Thursday: 05.26 p.m.
 Sunrise on Friday: 07.20 a.m.

SRINAGAR: Possibility of light rain/snow
TEMPERATURE
 Max: 7.9 Degree C
 Min: -3.0 Degree C

RELATIVE HUMIDITY
 RH-I (Morning): 89.0 per cent
 RH-II (Evening): 86.0 per cent

LEH:
TEMPERATURE
 Max: 7.3 Degree C
 Min: -11.4 Degree C

Process picked pace after Guv Rule Railway Station Oil Depot to be shifted soon to Bajalta

Sanjeev K. Sharma

JAMMU, Dec 5: The existing petroleum oil depot near Railway Station here will no more pose a threat for its being in the residential area as soon it will be shifted from there and the process for that is underway.

"The authorities concerned are already working in the direction of shifting the depot to Bajalta and the process for that attained a pace after the State came under Governor's Rule," sources said adding that recently the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Jammu under Section 9 of Land Acquisition Act has got a notice published in print media in this

regard. Sources further informed that earlier in November 2016, the then DC Jammu had issued a notice under Section 4 of Land Acquisition Act inviting objections and since then the process is underway.

Experts opined that there are a number of reasons behind shifting of the present depot.

"The present depot was made in the year 1981 or before and at that time the demand of the oil was limited in the State. Now as the population in J&K State has increased manifold, the need for oil too has increased to a large extent and so a much bigger depot is required now to meet the increased oil needs in

the State," the experts said. They also said that the existing space is not enough to accommodate a bigger depot as is required at present and this has also necessitated the shifting.

"Next, the petroleum oil depot should be out from the city and residential areas. As the Jammu city has expanded to a large extent and there is a thick residential area near the present depot so this has too necessitated the shifting," the experts further said.

They maintained that as the Jammu Railway Station is planning its expansion, the Government too has ordered the (Contd on page 9 Col 3)