

People tried to mock, pull down Ambedkar: PM

NEW DELHI, Mar 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi today lamented that many people mocked Bhimrao Ambedkar and made efforts to ensure that the son of a backward family does not progress but noted that today's 'new India' is altogether different as it belongs to the poor and the backward.

In his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio address, the Prime Minister also hailed the role of leader such as Mahatma Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Ram Manohar Lohia, Charan Singh and Devi Lal for recognising agriculture and the farmer as vital aspects of the nation's economy.

The Prime Minister said, Ambedkar showed us that to

(Contd on page 11 Col 1)

Over 2 lakh yatis visit Vaishno Devi

JAMMU, Mar 25: Over 2 lakh pilgrims paid obeisance at the cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi in the Trikuta hills of Reasi district, officials of the Shri Mata Vaishnodevi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) said.

During Navratra, the Vaishno Devi shrine was decorated with thousands of flowers and fruits and the festival was held amid tight security, they said.

Multi-tier security was put in place at the Katra basecamp, along the track to the cave shrine, for incident-free yatra, they said.

Katra, the base camp of the shrine and Mata Vaishno Devi Ji Bhawan, located between Trikuta hills, witnessed heavy rush of yatis during all eight Navratras.

The Shrine Board had made all arrangements for convenience of the pilgrims.

IMA rejects bill, calls strike from Apr 2

NEW DELHI, Mar 25: Rejecting the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the National Medical Commission bill, the Indian Medical Association, the largest body of private doctors in India, today called for an indefinite strike from April 2.

More than 25,000 doctors from across India today held a 'mahapanchayat' at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in Delhi and opposed the Parliament Panel's recommendations and the bill.

The NMC bill proposes to allow practitioners of alternative medicines - such as Homoeopathy and Ayurveda - to practice modern medicine once they complete a 'bridge' (Contd on page 11 Col 5)

Centre approves Rs 5366 cr for latest weapons MoD to equip Army in J&K with new AKs, LMGs, carbines

Troops to get boost against Pak on LoC

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, Mar 25: The Ministry of Defence headed by Nirmala Sitharaman has decided to equip the troops deployed along Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan and Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China with new and latest technology equipped AK rifles, Light Machine Guns (LMGs), battle carbines and other such new weapons, which will help the troops deployed along Pakistan borders including Jammu and Kashmir to face the threat of infiltration attempts by the militants more effectively and also counter the ceasefire violations by the Pakistan army.

The weapons would cost Rs 5366 crore, official sources told the Excelsior.

"The weapons will be acquired by the Defence Ministry under the Fast Track

Procedure (FTP) and delivered to the Army soldiers expeditiously to meet their requirements as they were in need of latest and modernized weaponry along LoC with Pakistan especially in Jammu and Kashmir, where there was no let up in ceasefire violations by Pakistani troops and abatement of infiltration attempts by the militants," sources said.

They added that the Defence Ministry has initiated the exercise for procurement of the weapons including 72,400 assault rifles, 93,895 battle carbines and 16,479 Light Machine Guns, which will together cost an estimated Rs 5,366 crore.

The weapons will be acquired through selected foreign armament companies, sources said.

Under the Defence Procurement Procedure's strict timelines for the Fast Track Procurement, which caters for

urgent operational requirements, the RFP has to be issued within 10 days of a case being cleared by the Defence Acquisitions Council (DAC) to ensure the actual contract after technical and commercial evaluation is inked within a year.

"Delivery of the weapons could take place between three to 12 months. Entire exercise for acquiring the weapons was likely to be over by the early next year," sources said, adding that soon after taking delivery of the weapons, the Defence Ministry would ask the Army Headquarters to disburse them as per requirement.

Majority chunk of the weapons could be provided to the Army personnel deployed along Line of Control with Pakistan, which generally remains tense due to ceasefire violations by Pakistan army and facilitation of infiltration attempts by the militants, a number of whom were (Contd on page 11 Col 1)

25% jump likely in Jammu airport traffic

MUMBAI, Mar 25:

The Airports Authority of India-run Jammu airport, recently upgraded with enhanced passenger amenities, is expected to log a 25 per cent jump in passenger traffic at 1.5 million this fiscal, driven by new flights and routes.

The airport has already invested Rs 90 crore in upgrades and plans to invest another Rs 70 crore in runway expansion and other related work, Jammu airport director D K Gautam said.

"We've added new flights and routes this fiscal, which include flights to Lucknow, Srinagar, Bengaluru, Amritsar, Hyderabad and Jaipur. These new services are expected to push up our traffic growth by 25 per cent as we are expecting to fly 1.5 million passengers in FY18," Gautam said.

The airport had flown 1.16 million passengers in FY17, he said, adding the airport now handles 48 aircraft movements - 24 departures and as many arrivals - daily.

Gautam said the airport will be commissioning three aerobridges and an additional taxiing (Contd on page 11 Col 5)



A black crow sitting on a tree branch at Pubwama. —Excelsior/Younis Khalif

State level committee fails to meet even once Much-needed estimation of ground water resources remains confined to official files

J&K lacks data of climate change impact on water cycle

Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, Mar 25: At a time when climate change is leaving adverse impact on hydrological cycle in Jammu and Kashmir, the much-needed estimation of ground water resources has remained confined to the official files due to absolute non-seriousness on the part of all the concerned authorities. This is notwithstanding the fact that dependence on ground water to meet the drinking water requirement of the people is increasing with every passing year.

"It is an established fact that climate change is influencing the hydrological cycle and exacerbating the requirement of water in different parts of the State", official sources told EXCELSIOR, adding "the continuous disturbance of the hydrological cycle due to variability in the climatic conditions will further enhance the current stress on water resources from surging population and urbanization".

They further said, "increase in ambient temperature and changes in rainfall pattern will

further influence the hydrological cycle to a large extent and adversely affect the ground water reserves", adding "it is therefore imperative that effective plan be strategized to ensure proper management of water resources in the State".

However, no major exercise has so far been conducted in Jammu and Kashmir to analyze the adverse impact of climate change on hydrological cycle despite the fact that such a step is of immense importance to take remedial measures in time, sources said while disclosing that at present J&K doesn't have any concrete data vis-a-vis impact of climate change on the water resources.

Earlier this year, some sort of seriousness was shown by the Department of PHE, Irrigation and Flood Control towards this vital issue and accordingly on its request vide communication No. PW/HyD/P&S/81-2017-18 dated January 2, 2018 the Government vide Order No.236-GAD of 2018 constituted a State-level committee for estimation of ground water resources across the State.

The committee headed by Administrative Secretary, Public Health Engineering and I&FC Department and comprising of Chief Engineers of PHE Jammu/Kashmir, Chief Engineer, Irrigation and Flood Control Jammu/Kashmir, Director Rural Sanitation J&K, Director Agriculture Jammu/Kashmir, Director Industries Jammu/Kashmir and Regional Director Central Ground Water Board Jammu was asked to estimate annual replenishable ground water resources of the State in accordance with the ground water resources estimation methodology.

The committee was further directed to estimate the status of utilization of the annual replenishable ground water resources and submit its report to the Government as early as possible for necessary corrective measures.

"What to talk of conducting estimation of ground water resources, the committee has failed to meet even once till date thereby establishing that the seriousness towards the (Contd on page 11 Col 3)

Govt set to give massive plan hike to distts for 2018-19

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 25: In a major decision to boost developmental works in Jammu and Kashmir, the Planning Department (PDMD) has initiated the process of calling immediate meetings of the District Development Boards (DDBs), much earlier than the previous years, to finish the exercise by the end of April to keep maximum part of the financial year for development.

The PD&MD, which is headed by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, is reported to have decided to hike annual plan of all 20 districts for the upcoming financial year of 2018-19.

Full Cabinet for 2 DDBs, rest only by Ministers

Official sources told the Excelsior that PDMD has asked all 20 District Development Commissioners (DDCs), 10 each in Jammu and Kashmir regions, to fix their DDB meetings beginning March end and conclude them by the middle or latest by the end of April to identify works to be undertaken during the upcoming financial year.

"We have asked the DDCs to line up the DDB meetings in consultations with the chairpersons of the Boards immediately so that the entire exercise is completed within a month and rest of the 11 months are utilized for execution of developmental works identified in the meetings," they said.

According to sources, almost full Cabinet was likely to attend the DDB meetings of Jammu and Srinagar, the twin rotational capital cities of the State while rest of the DDB meetings would be chaired by their respective chairpersons, who had been nominated only few days back by the PD&MD. Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti is head of the DDB Srinagar while Deputy Chief Minister Dr Nirmal Singh will head two DDBs of

Jammu and Samba.

The decision to advance the DDB meetings this year followed early release of 50 per cent budgetary allocations to all Government Departments by the Finance Department followed by the PD&MD, which was aimed at setting the tempo of development in motion at the earliest for full utilization of working season especially in the areas, which remain snow bound during the winter.

The Government finalizes annual plans of 20 districts only- 10 each in Jammu and Kashmir divisions while two districts in Ladakh region-Leh and Kargil have Autonomous Hill Development Councils. (Contd on page 11 Col 5)

8 confessional statements in charge sheet

'Charlie, Romeo, Potter' hold key in Kashmir terror funding case

NEW DELHI, Mar 25:

Confessional statements by 'Charlie', 'Romeo', 'Alpha' and five others are expected to be key evidence in the charge sheet filed in a court by the

National Investigation Agency against 12 people, including Lashkar-e-Toiba chief Hafiz Saeed, for funding anti-national activities in the Kashmir valley.

The NIA, while submitting the charge sheet in the case on January 18 this year, appended the eight confessional statements and code named those who have given the statements as 'Charlie', 'Romeo', 'Alpha', 'Potter', 'Pie', 'Harry', 'Gama' and an unidentified person.

The NIA officials feel that the confessional statements will hold the key in nailing the culprits in the case.

The probe agency, which registered a case against sepa-

ratists in the Kashmir valley on May 30 last year, managed to secure confessional statements on the flow of money, especially from Pakistan, from eight people accused in the case related to the funding of terror activities in Kashmir.

A confessional statement is recorded before a judicial magistrate. The accused confirms in it that he or she is giving a statement without any pressure from the probe agency.

The entire process was video-graphed and no investigation officer was present in the court premises during the proceedings when the accused gave their statements before a magistrate (Contd on page 11 Col 3)

Militant killed, another slips out

Massive operation in Kupwara forests

Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR, Mar 25: A militant of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) was killed while another slipped out of cordon in Central Kashmir district of Budgam during the night while massive operation launched against militants in Kupwara forests continued.

Security forces last night received information about presence of militants of LeT in Khan Mohalla Arizal and a joint team of Budgam Police, 53 RR of Army and CRPF cordoned off the area. Militants hiding inside tried to flee from the cordon leading to a gun battle in which

one militant was killed while another managed to escape. A girl Humaira daughter of Mohammad Maqbool Khan was also injured in the gunfight.

The killed militant has been identified as Shafat Hussain Wani son of Mohammad Akbar Wani, a resident of Wagoora, Kreeri in North Kashmir's Baramulla district. One AK-47, 2 grenades, 4 magazines, AK rounds and one cell phone were recovered from the encounter site.

Shafat, had done BA Bed but joined militancy last year. He was running a grocery shop in his native village before he joined militancy. He was also working as teacher in a private educational institute before joining militant ranks.

As large number of people attended the funeral of the militant, police and CRPF were heavily deployed in Wagoora

area as a precautionary measure to maintain law and order problem.

Meanwhile, authorities suspended internet services in parts of Baramulla soon after news of Shafat's killing spread.

A police spokesman said here that on specific input regarding presence of militants Budgam police, 53 RR of Army and CRPF launched a cordon and search operation in Khan Mohalla, Arizal in Beerwah area.

"During search, terrorists tried to flee and came out of house and fired indiscriminately on security forces. In retaliation one terrorist has been neutralized and arms and ammunition have been recovered", he said.

"In the incident one lady received injury in thigh while the hiding terrorist was trying to escape firing indiscriminately. She has been promptly evacuat-

ed to hospital by the police for medical treatment and her condition is now reported to be stable. No collateral damage has occurred during operation. Legal proceedings have been initiated by police and investigation taken up", the spokesman added.

Police identified the killed militant as Shafat Hussain Wani son of Mohd Akbar Wani resident of Wagoora Baramulla. "He was affiliated with the outlawed terror organisation LeT since April 2017. Earlier at the encounter site incriminating materials including but not limited to arms and ammunition, mobile phones, cash worth Rs 30000 have been recovered", the spokesman added.

And in the meantime, security forces launched operation in Halmatpora forests of North (Contd on page 11 Col 5)

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WEATHER
JAMMU:
Mainly dry
TEMPERATURE
Max: 30.7 Degree C
Min: 14.4 Degree C
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
RH-I (Morning): 57.0 per cent
RH-II (Evening): 48.0 per cent
Sunset on Monday: 06:47 p.m.
Sunrise on Tuesday: 06:37 a.m.
SRINAGAR:
Mainly dry
TEMPERATURE
Max: 23.6 Degree C
Min: 4.7 Degree C
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
RH-I (Morning): 57.0 per cent
RH-II (Evening): 15.0 per cent
LEH:
TEMPERATURE
Max: 12.9 Degree C
Min: 2.1 Degree C

Impressive 'Shoba Yatra' taken out on occasion of Ramnavmi

Avtar Bhat

JAMMU, Mar 25: Like other parts of the country, the festival of Ramnavmi - the birthday of Lord Rama was celebrated with religious fervour and gaiety across Jammu region today.

*Watch video on www.excelsiornews.com

To mark the celebrations, an impressive 'Shoba Yatra' was taken out in City of Temples today which started from historic Raghunath temple in the heart of the City where from the Swari of Lord Rama, Laxman and Sita was taken out in the traditional chariot which was fully decorated.



Devotees all set to take out 'Shoba Yatra' from Raghunath Temple on Sunday. —Excelsior/Rakesh

various aspects of Lord Rama's role of Hanuman, Laxman and Sita formed the part of Shoba Yatra which were taken out on

decorated tractor trolleys and other four wheelers. This year's yatra was unique in various aspects.

The main attractions of it were motor cycle riders by Team Jammu, five feet high-burning Agarbatti to spread the fragrance all around, brass band & horse riders preceding the Rath. All the participants were attired in traditional Dogri dresses. Another attraction was that the management of almost all the temples including the temples and shrines managed by the Dharmarth Trust, participated in this magnificent yatra.

Jhankies led by the Royal Rath after passing through various bazars of Jammu city, viz Residency Road, Rajinder Bazar, Kanak Mandi, City Chowk, Puranmandi, Link Road, Jain Bazar, Chowk (Contd on page 11 Col 7)

Govt may relax restrictions for foreigners to visit forbidden areas in J&K

NEW DELHI, Mar 25:

Foreign tourists, except those from Pakistan and China, may soon be allowed to visit some of the most pristine locations of the country, kept out of bound so far for them without a special permit.

The Union Home Ministry is examining whether to relax the six-decade-old Restricted Area Permit regime, under which foreigners must obtain a special permission to visit Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and parts of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir among others.

"Discussions are on with the State Governments to relax the

Restricted Area Permit provisions for some areas for foreign tourists," Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijju said.

Rijju said the Ministry of Home Affairs will coordinate with other agencies and the State Governments to identify the possible locations for which the Protected Area Permit and the Restricted Area Permit provisions may be relaxed.

An MHA official said the citizens from Pakistan and China, however, are unlikely to be given these relaxations.

The move is being initiated to promote tourism, create job opportunities for the locals and (Contd on page 11 Col 3)