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Allow use of airspace for Srinagar flights: Omar tells Pak

challenge to our human values and aspiration for peace," Khurshid said.

Governor, N N Vohra, his presidential address at the inaugural session of the 3-day Conference said that India's centuries old relations with the Central Asian countries are deeply embedded in civilizational and cultural commonalities. He emphasized the need for strengthening these relations, keeping in mind the emerging challenges confronting this region, and the world at large, on varied fronts.

The Governor referred to his goodwill mission visits to the Central Asian countries in the early 1990s and the difficult situations which were obtaining in these countries at that time.

Vohra recalled the useful work done by the India International Centre, New Delhi, in the early years after the break up of the former Soviet Russia, to organize an international conference to bring out the history, culture and polity of the Central Asian States and to bring out a volume containing the papers presented by Indian and Central Asian scholars.

The Governor said that religious fundamentalism leads to extremism and violence, resulting in human and economic losses, disrupting educational schedules which adversely affect the education of youth. "Such challenges have to be addressed with mutual cooperation and deeper worldwide understandings", he added.

While addressing the Conference, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah hoped that new Government led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan will open its air space for the international flights originating from Srinagar International Airport.

"One hopes with a new dispensation in Pakistan, one hopes with encouraging voices emerging from new Prime Minister of Pakistan about normalising the relations to some extent between our two countries, perhaps this (use of airspace) is one aspect that can also be normalised," Omar said.

Chief Minister said the flight distance between Srinagar and some of the capital cities of Central Asian republics is shorter than the distance between Srinagar and some larger cities in India. He said if Pakistan allows use of its airspace for international flights originating from Srinagar, the Srinagar airport can become an international airport in true sense.

"Unfortunately, because of the cussed mindset of our neighbour on the western frontier that does not allow a direct flight from Srinagar to overfly their airspace, we have not been able to take advantage of

U'khand Speaker says 10,000 killed, Shinde puts toll at 900

work as the relief material can be supplied only by air, the officials said.

Road network in Uttarakhand has been badly damaged in the floods, with 259 roads damaged in Tehri, 139 in Dehradun, 132 in Uttarkashi, 110 in Chamoli and 71 in Rudrapur district.

Over 200 families living along the banks of Bhagirathi river have been asked to move to safer places following a rise in water level.

The MeT department, however, has sought to allay apprehensions, stating that the water level rise is mainly due to melting of glaciers with the sun showing up and that there is no flood threat.

Uttarakhand MeT department Director Anand Sharma said the snow in upper reaches was melting with the sun coming out, and this was increasing water level in rivers.

"There is nothing to worry about as it will not create any flood situation," he said.

Inclement weather hampered rescue operations and work to clear debris in worst-hit Kedarnath area.

Mass cremation of bodies continued for another day to minimise chances of an epidemic outbreak. The last rites of 34 bodies have been performed and the cremation of 12 more bodies pulled out from the debris is likely to be conducted soon after identification and other formalities have been completed, officials said.

With the threat of an epidemic outbreak looming large due to decaying bodies lying under debris, and some also flowing down the Ganga, teams of doctors have been sent to affected districts to initiate remedial action, the officials said.

A team of experts from Archaeological Survey of India

this connect that was available to us," Omar said.

Chief Minister hoped that the international airport at Srinagar that currently exists only on paper, will become an international airport in operations as well. "And one day, the direct flights to one of these Central Asian countries will originate from Srinagar," he said.

Omar said keeping in view of the geographical position of Jammu and Kashmir India will benefit from using the linkages with Central Asia from here.

"The policy of Ministry of External Affairs of Connect Central Asia will be ideally suited for Jammu and Kashmir because geographically we are the closest, spiritually we have a connect and almost every aspect of life in Kashmir, were you to scratch the surface, you will find a connection between us and Central Asia. Our heritage, language, culture, our architecture and the biggest connect is in our religion. Therefore, it is but natural that there will be an affinity between us and Central Asian republics," Chief Minister said.

Omar said that the neighbourhood of the State has not allowed State to take advantage of the historic association that Kashmir has with Central Asia.

Chief Minister said the disadvantage for India is that there is no direct overland linkage to Central Asian countries and it passes through countries which at the best of the times can give us some amount of difficulty.

"Connecting to Central Asia through Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan is not easy but it is a challenge that we have to face," Omar said.

Chief Minister said the developments in Afghanistan are being closely monitored in India in view of the withdrawal of the US and international troops from there. "In the days and months ahead, we will be looking very closely at the developments in Afghanistan. There are any number of people in my State who are saber rattling about the future of the move towards normalisation in Jammu and Kashmir in light of the 2014 withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan."

"What effect that will have is now compounded by the dialogue that is sought to be started between the Taliban and the international community. One hopes international community learns from its mistakes and stops using other countries as an extended playground for their sphere of influence," Omar said.

The Union Minister said that a stable Afghanistan and Iran are critical to India's energy security as these two countries can provide greater access to Central Asian region which has abundance of hydrocarbon wealth.

"We are looking at re-

will visit the Kedarnath temple in Uttarakhand to assess the quantum of damage caused by the flood fury as also the restoration work required for the shrine.

The team of five experts from Dehradun and Delhi will discuss all aspects of the restoration work of the revered temple which bore the brunt of floods and landslides triggered by the deluge in the hill state on June 16.

Shinde said as of today, about 1.05 lakh people have been evacuated from the affected areas of Uttarakhand. "But still there are several places where there are people (stranded)."

The Home Minister said the military would carry out combing operations to evacuate remaining stranded people.

There has been partial scaling down of IAF operations with the majority of stranded people having been evacuated to safer places, a senior official said.

Admitting extensive damage to hydel power projects built in the Ganga and its tributaries flowing in affected areas, the Chief Secretary said the 4 mw Kaliganga-1 project commissioned a few months ago had been totally washed away by the floods causing a loss of about Rs 40 crore.

Though the extent of damage caused by the calamity is still being assessed by different departments, according to preliminary estimates of the PWD and the department of hydro electricity the losses must run into over Rs 700-800 crore.

Estimates from various other departments including agriculture are still awaited, he said.

The Chief Secretary parried a question on conflicting toll figures being given by the Chief Minister and Assembly Speaker

energising the national North-South Corridor to connect India with Central Asia and Russia through Iran, we are looking at trans-Afghan routes using Iranian port of Chahabar particularly to get access to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. We are looking at a rail link from Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan into Iran", Khurshid said.

The Union Minister said: "Of course, it does make Iran very critical. On the other hand, it makes Afghanistan very critical. Therefore, we hope that within our philosophical approach of being friends, we get Afghanistan back to a stable situation. Afghanistan will then become a bridge for us to Central Asia and Iran as well."

Khurshid said if India has to grow, it needs to look at alternative sources of energy which are clean as well as allow greater self-reliance. He said increasing the number of nuclear power plants can be one of the options but "whether we will be able to increase that is something that is still in the air. People have different view on nuclear power plants."

Khurshid said the Government is working on several things, including a liberalised visa regime with Central Asian countries, to enable more convenient and liberal access to people on both sides to travel.

Professor Talat Ahmad, Vice Chancellor, Kashmir University, in his welcome address, urged Salman Khurshid, for providing opportunities to the scholars of the CCAS for undergoing internship in the Ministry of External Affairs. He thanked the Governor and the Chief Minister for their valuable support in the growth of the University.

Dr. Rashpal Malhotra, Executive Vice Chairman, CRRID, dwelt on the activities of the organization and the aims and objects of organizing this Conference. He read out a message of the Prime Minister sent for this International Conference.

Dr S S Gill, Director General, CRRID, gave details of the establishment, evolution, history, growth and activities of the CRRID. He said that jointly organizing of this Conference by the CRRID and the Kashmir University is an indicator of long-term and sustained cooperation between the CRRID and the varsity.

Professor Aijaz Bandy, Director, CCAS, spoke about the work done by the CCAS over the past 35 years of its establishment and the publications brought out by it.

Among those present on the occasion were delegates of the Conference from within and outside the country, Deans, Heads of Departments, Faculty members, scholars and students.

Govind Singh Kunjwal saying a clearer picture would emerge after confusion over the number of people missing is cleared.

Though the official figure for the number of people missing as of now continues to be 3000, some cases of duplication have been reported, he said.

"However, the matter is being sorted out and we may be able to give you an exact figure of the number of people killed or missing in a couple of days," he said.

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In order to help the State Government meet the challenge of reconstructing damaged villages, the Rural Development Ministry has offered 14,000 additional houses apart from the state's usual quota to be built under the Indira Avas Yojana in affected areas of the state, Kumar said.

The ministry has also offered to construct 500km stretch of additional roads under the PMGSY scheme, the official said, adding a formal announcement in this regard is likely to be made by Union Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh here tomorrow. (PTI)

India, China focus on BDCA

Menon and Yang also discussed the maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas including possible additional confidence building measures, ways and means of strengthening existing mechanisms for consultation and coordination on border affairs and methodology to enhance the efficiency of communications between the two sides, the statement said.

A Chinese statement said Border disputes between China and India will be resolved through peaceful negotiations, with agreement to seek a fair and rational solution acceptable to both sides.

"The two sides agree to give full play to the (existing) mechanisms on border-related issues and maintain peace and tranquillity in border areas before issues are resolved," a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said.

The two officials also reviewed the status of bilateral relations in the wake of the recent landmark visit to India of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang. They discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest, it said.

The two sides believe that the development of the China-India relationship is in the interests of the two nations, the region and the world at large, it said.

They also pledged to sustain high-level interactions, enhance mutual trust, boost practical cooperation, step up cultural and people-to-people exchanges and further advance bilateral ties, it said.

The talks reportedly focussed on the draft of the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement, (BDCA) on which both sides already exchanged views.

The BDCA is aimed at creating a new architecture of confidence building measures along the Line of Actual Control, (LAC), especially in the back drop of the Depsang Valley incident in April this year in which a batch of Chinese troops pitched tents about 19 kms inside the Indian side.

The BDCA, in which India would like to incorporate provisions to avert incidents like the Depsang face-off, was expected to take shape before the visit of Defence Minister, AK Antony to India scheduled for July 4 to 7.

In his briefing to the media after the first round of talks yesterday, Menon said BDCA's aim is to set up mechanisms which will provide for consultations for communication so that the two sides can improve management of border.

About the Depsang incident Menon said "we were able to successfully handle that, to deal with that and restored status quo as it had been before tents were pitched".

The successful handling of that led to the visit of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's high profile visit to India.

Stating that BDCA would be discussed further during the visit of Antony here, Menon said "slowly we are strengthening this edifice of both the dialogue mechanisms and the edifice of consultations and the mechanisms we have in place".

On the border dispute resolution, Menon had said right at beginning SRs agreed on three stage process. Principles part was done by 2005.

"We have been discussing framework in various ways, this is most complex" as it will actually translate into the settlement, he said.

The SRs who were originally given the task of boundary settlement also now deal with maintaining peace and tranquillity along the LAC. Over time they started discussing the political relationship in particular on various issues.

In his opening remarks at the talks today, Yang said the relations are guided by the "extraordinary political wisdom" of Indian and Chinese leaders.

"This is one of the most noticeable developments in the international landscape in the 21st century and also there is a good foundation for cooperation between emerging

nence to them as well as the administration.

He further reiterated that the yatris, in their own best interests should cooperate with the administration and should not reach the Base Camps without first obtaining registration.

In addition they should reach the base camps only a day before they are scheduled to undertake the yatra. If any yatri reaches without registration or ahead of their darshan date he or she should obtain current registration from the counters established at Jammu and Srinagar, he added.

Meanwhile over 2,000 pilgrims left the Jammu base camp for their onward journey to the cave shrine of Amarnath in South Kashmir amid tight security arrangements.

The third batch of pilgrims, consisting of 2,370 devotees, left from Bhagwati Nagar base camp in Jammu at around 4:55 am, police said, adding that the convoy included 74 vehicles.

The batch comprised of 1,773 men, 356 women, and 47 children, apart from 194 Sadhus.

So far, 7,806 pilgrims have left the Jammu base camp for their onward journey to the holy cave in the Himalayan range after 55 day long yatra started from here on June 27.

It may be recalled that 7, 983 pilgrims performed darshan at holy cave yesterday. With this, the total pilgrims performing darshan in first two days has reached 19,513.

NBW against 7 in drugs scam

Aggarwal, Proprietor M/s Suraj Enterprises seeking exemption from appearance in the court on medical ground. However, the court rejected the application as the medical record revealed that the accused remained admitted in the hospital up to June 24, 2013 only.

Special Judge Anticorruption also sent the accused namely Ashok Kumar Raina, Amardeep Raina and Akhil Gadoo, who were present in custody, to the judicial custody till July 11, 2013.

It is worthwhile to mention here that Crime Branch has also produced the offences against Dr Madhu Khullar, Lotika Khajuria, Reva Gupta and Joginder Kumar. However, challan against them will be produced after obtaining necessary sanction from the Government.

economies", he said.

In his remarks, Menon said thanks to decisions of the leaders of the two countries India China relations have been on a path of steady growth and development, and today have acquired a significance that is not only bilateral but regional and global.

"There is no question that our discussions yesterday have been productive, constructive and forward-looking and I am looking forward to continuing those discussions today on the various issues", he said.

"I would like to say that India and China are re-emerging countries, not just emerging countries. But it is true that the changes, that through the efforts of our peoples and our leadership we have made in the last few decades, these are truly historic changes", he said.

Menon was assisted in the talks by the Indian Ambassador to China, S Jaishankar and Joint Secretary, East Asia of the External Affairs Ministry, Gutam Bambawale. Yesterday, Menon called on Premier Li and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

In his talks with Menon, Li said "China and India, as strategic partners and friends, have enough wisdom to resolve their differences. Both sides should view the border issue from an overall and strategic perspective".

Li called on the two sides to strengthen communication in a bid to narrow their differences on the border issue and work together to safeguard peace and stability in the border area.

"I hope the representatives of the two sides could coordinate more effectively and contribute more progress in the negotiations," State run Xinhua quoted Li as saying.

He also called China-India relationship as one of the most important and vigorous bilateral relationships in the world and noting that the two nations are now facing significant opportunities for developing ties.

"China and India both need a peaceful and stable environment for national development," Li said, stressing that bilateral cooperation should be pushed forward, not simply maintained. (PTI)

Warm send off accorded on attaining superannuation

Excelsior Correspondent

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The farewell function was presided over by DGP Ashok Prasad and attended by Additional DGPs P L Gupta, Mrs D R Doley and Dilbag Singh as also other senior officers.

On the occasion DGP Prasad lauded the contribution of superannuating officers and praised them for their dedication and

Ex-MLA projects public issues

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VIJAYPUR, June 29: Former Minister and senior Congress leader Manjit Singh today appealed people to strengthen the hands of the Congress party in Jammu and Kashmir for the overall development of the State.

Speaking in a public meeting at Swanka Morh in Vijaypur, Mr Singh said that it is the Congress which will be able to redress all the problems and concerns of the people including settlement of the refugees, ex-servicemen and other such issues of public concern.

He said that the people in Vijaypur block including Ramgarh particularly facing problems of drinking water and power supply which needs to be looked into immediately especially in wake of scorching summer season. He appealed the administration and concerned departments to ensure proper supply of drinking water and electricity in Vijaypur where unscheduled cuts are prevalent.

Despite lapse of 5 yrs, no headway in setting up of steel plant by SAIL

from outside the State but the exercise could not be taken to logical conclusion as the State Government wrote to the steel giant that if it wants to set up the plant in joint venture it should consider the Public Sector Undertakings of Jammu and Kashmir particularly SICOP.

"However, during the past few months the SAIL has not conveyed its decision on this request of the State", sources said, adding "the prevailing circumstances don't indicate that there would be any significant headway in setting up of first-ever steel plant in the near future".

Sources stressed that State Government should not allow the issue to be delayed by the SAIL any more and the issue should be taken up at the highest level so that the exercise, which was initiated five years back, could be taken to logical conclusion in near future.

J&K tax base may touch Rs 7000 cr this year

was aware that the target was unlikely to be met, it hoped the PDD to touch Rs 2000 crores worth revenue to reduce the deficit between power purchase bill and revenue realized to some extent.

Sources admitted that a lot remained to be done as far as the power losses were concerned and said it could take some measures to increase the revenue.

Noisy scenes in DDB Kupwara meeting

Superintendent of Police Kupwara, Abdul Jabbar, alleging that police is demanding Rs 50, 000 for the release of one Shabir Ahmad. He asked the SP to release him immediately and threatened him of shifting him from the district.

It may be mentioned here that Shabir has been arrested by Kupwara police and a case (FIR No. 21/2013) is registered against in timber smuggling.

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Secretary, Indian Red Cross Society, Jammu, Anil K Padha and Medical Superintendent, Government Hospital Gandhi Nagar, also provided assistance in organizing the camp.

Other members of JCI Jammu Chapter present on the occasion were Shivalika Gupta, Neelam Verma, Nitin Panchanda, Ajay Gupta, Surjit Singh, Sunil Sharma, Vivek, Pawan Sharma, Puja Panchanda, Deepak Kaul, Sudesh K Verma, Vijay Choudhary, Rohit Badial and Dhiraj.

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