

From page 1

J&K cases cross 1000; 28-year-old youth among 5 die in Jammu, one in Kashmir

The Excelsior that 164 BSF jawans have tested positive for Coronavirus and said the number of positive jawans could go up further as many samples were still pending for testing.

"The BSF jawans who have tested positive have been asked to isolate themselves while their contact tracing is on," he added.

In view of number of COVID cases in Jammu University, District Magistrate Jammu Anshul Garg has declared area in and around University of Jammu falling under the jurisdiction of Gandhi Nagar police station as micro-containment zone.

Twelve workers and staff members of Kiru dam project in Kishtwar district have tested positive for the virus, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Kishtwar Dr Ravinder Manhas said. All of them have been isolated and their contacts are being tested for virus.

Among 299 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in Jammu region today, Jammu district accounted for maximum 183 followed by 58 Reasi, 20 Kathua, 17 Udhampur, 11 Samba, four Ramban and two each in Rajouri, Doda and Poonch districts.

As against 299 positive cases, 102 persons recovered from the virus, 55 of them in Jammu district, 20 Kathua, 15 Udhampur, eight Ramban, three Poonch and one in Rajouri district.

Jammu region's active case-load today crossed 2000.

The region has a total of 54915 Corona cases. Of them, 2101 are active positive while 52062 have recovered from the virus and there have been 752 casualties.

Meanwhile, Kashmir today reported 706 cases of COVID-19 while two persons died in the Valley.

In view of the continuous spike in COVID-19 cases, the SKIMS administration today announced cancellation of all the sanctioned leave with immediate effect.

"All the sanctioned leave of the staff of SKIMS and its Medical College Bemina (except leave on extra ordinary grounds) are hereby cancelled with immediate effect in view of the surge of COVID-19 Pandemic cases," read an order by

Director SKIMS Dr. A G Ahanger. "Accordingly, the employees are advised to resume duties immediately for maintenance of essential services. No fresh case of earned/casual leave shall be entertained," it further added.

Authorities today closed a private coaching educational institute in Srinagar after three of its students were tested COVID-19 positive.

The Srinagar DDMA has ordered suspension of class work at Allen Coaching institute after three students tested positive for COVID-19. It has been closed for 3 days and during this period they have been asked to provide online lessons to the students.

A student from Nishat studying at the institute had tested positive yesterday along with his family. The close contacts of the positive student were tested at the coaching institute today as Medical teams conducted mass testing for proper isolation and quarantine.

In the meantime, the district administration Srinagar today declared two more localities as micro containment zones.

In a tweet, Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Aijaz Asad, said that Hamdania Colony Rawalpura and Chinkral Mohalla Habbakadal have been declared as micro containment zones.

"2 more localities declared as Micro containment zones in Srinagar. Hamdania Colony Rawalpura, Chinkral Mohalla Habbakadal," the DC Srinagar tweeted.

Those who tested positive include 492 from Srinagar, 93 Baramulla, 25 Budgam, 31 Pulwama, 14 Kupwara, 32 Anantnag, 5 Bandipora, 3 Ganderbal, 8 Kulgam and 3 from Shopian.

The number of cases in Kashmir division have reached 82,560 including 76,629 recoveries and 1,277 deaths.

The active cases in Jammu and Kashmir are 6,755 including 4,654 from Kashmir division.

With 359 more recoveries, the tally of total recoveries in Jammu and Kashmir has reached 128,691 which is 93.61 per cent of the total cases.

JMC incurring revenue loss of Rs 1.25 lakh per day by holding up advertisement rights

took around two months in opening the financial bids only after Excelsior carried an exclusive story informing how the Municipal Corporation was losing lakhs of rupees as revenue while on the other hand, some private players in connivance with corrupt JMC officials were illegally putting up advertisement hoardings on public places.

However, the story did not end here as even after the financial bids were opened on March 19, the sole advertisement rights were not allotted till date to the highest bidder M/s Bright Neon Signs Pvt Ltd, which has quoted the rate of Rs 4.60 crores for the first year and 10 percent increase every year i.e. JMC will get a revenue of Rs 28.08 crores in five years.

Taking excuse of a pending litigation with M/s Neon Signs Pvt Ltd, which had sole advertising rights of JMC last year also, the Municipal authorities did not allot it the fresh rights and forwarded the matter to its Law Officer for the legal opinion.

Since M/s Bright Neon Signs Pvt Ltd was allowed for participation in the bidding process on permission of the arbitration court,

sources said that the Law Officer, in his report submitted to the Municipal Corporation more than a week ago, found nothing objectionable in allotment of sole advertisement rights to the said firm.

However, for allegedly further delaying the matter notwithstanding the Law Officer's clarifications, the JMC authorities on last Thursday constituted a committee of officers to recommend further action regarding allotment of advertisement rights to the firm.

As per the order, the committee, comprising Assistant Commissioner (Rev), JMC, Chief Accounts Officer, JMC and Sr Law Officer, JMC shall recommend further course of action regarding allotment of sole advertisement rights through hoarding and pole kiosks in Ward number 1 to 75 within Jammu Municipal Corporation with regard to pending litigation with M/s Bright Neon Signs Pvt Ltd.

Sources alleged that formation of the committee is another move to further holdup legal allotment of advertisement rights and thus giving more time to those exploiting the situation for wrongful gains by illegally putting up hoardings in Jammu city while on the other hand, JMC is incurring revenue loss of more than Rs 1.25 lakh per day because of the deliberate delay.

Dr Jitendra accuses successive J&K, Central Govts of stalling Shahpur Kandi Project

Kandi Dam and dispute over the project between two riparian States of J&K and Punjab"

Dr Jitendra Singh said that the PM who is well versed with J&K, its history and geography as well as varied culture took no time in getting the issue resolved and in 2019 before Lok Sabha elections when he came to Jammu he announced that this game changing project will be taken up in hand soon.

The Minister said that Prime Minister called Chief Secretaries of both the States of Punjab and J&K and framed the terms and conditions of agreement. The Punjab Government showed no reluctance in signing it but the then CM of J&K Mehbooba Mufti again dodged the people and she showed reluctance in signing the agreement on the project due to her ulterior motives. "It was only after the State was put under the Governor's rule and issue was taken by me with then Governor Satyapal Malik it took him (Malik) only four minutes in signing the agreement which was delayed for 45 long years", he added.

Dr Jitendra Singh said the project will be completed within two years at an estimated cost of Rs 2700 crores. The pending portion of Ravi canal whose foundation was made by the Minister today will be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 10 crore and it will be completed within a year, he added.

Dr Jitendra Singh, while taking a dig at Opposition parties said now they are trying to take advantage of the project which they failed to get constructed for 45 long years. Terming Shahpur Kandi a historic project, he said the Kandi belt of Kathua and Samba comprising 76 villages will be benefited by it and Kandi will no longer be called Kandi afterwards.

This multi pronged project besides irrigating 32000 Hectares of land will produce 206 mw of power and also provide drinking water supply to a vast section of people.

The Minister said besides this, the project will also help in employment generation and boost the tourism as it will be one of the best tourist spots also.

Dr Jitendra Singh was accompanied by Advisor to Lt Governor, Rajiv Bhatnagar, DDC chairman Kathua, Mahan Singh, DDC Vice Chairman, Kathua Raghunandan Singh Babloo, president MC Kathua, Naresh Sharma, Chief Engineer, Shahpur Kandi Dam Project, S K Saluja, District Development Commissioner, Kathua, Rahul Yadav, SSP Kathua, Romesh Kotwal, former Minister, Rajiv Jasrotia, ex-MLA Kuldeep Kumar, Councilor and senior BJP leader, Prem Nath Dogra and other party leaders.

Earlier addressing District Development Coordination & Monitoring Committee (DISHA) meeting at Kathua, Dr Jitendra Singh stressed for timely completion of projects of people's importance. He emphasized on elected PRI's to work in tandem with administration to achieve desired development results.

He took a comprehensive review of physical and financial achievements of Centrally Sponsored Schemes PMGSY, DDUGJY, NRLM, PMUJ, PMKSY, PMUJ, BADP SAUBHAGYA, IWMP, MGNREGA, ICDS, BBBP, PM-KISAN, KCC Swachh Bharat Mission, languish projects, 14th FC, JJM, SBM-G etc. The MP also reviewed the achievements of various schemes implemented by the PWD, PDD, Jal Shakti Department, Agriculture,

District Development Commissioner Kathua, Rahul Yadav gave a Power Point presentation on the achievements and progress under different Centrally Sponsored Schemes and status of various development projects being executed by different departments and other agencies in the district.

Courts in J&K, Ladakh outperform during COVID times

14875 cases were disposed of (88.25%). However, in the year 2019, the disposal percentage declined to 57.19% as against 17874 cases instituted in the year, 10223 were disposed of by the High Court.

In the year 2020 despite challenging circumstances, the Case Clearance Rate of the High Court increased to 231.79% as against 6900 cases instituted in the year a total of 15994 cases were disposed of.

As far as District and Subordinate Courts are concerned, a total of 148040 cases were instituted in the year 2018 against which 146194 cases were disposed of (98.75%). In the year 2019, a total of 91034 cases were instituted and 81520 were disposed of (89.54%) while as in the year 2020, against 89106 cases instituted a total of 62465 cases were disposed of (70.10%).

The data clearly establishes that no stone was left unturned by the High Court and Subordinate Judiciary to provide justice to the litigants even during the challenges posed by COVID-19.

The Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances,

Won't hesitate in banning rallies: EC

However, instances of election meetings/campaigns have come to the notice of the commission, where norms of social distancing, wearing of masks have been flouted in disregard to the commission's guidelines."

The letter pointed out instances of star campaigners and political leaders or candidates not observing COVID-19 protocols, "including non-wearing of masks themselves at stage or while cam-

paigning". "By doing so, the political parties and candidates are exposing themselves as well as the public attending such election meetings to the grave danger of the infection," the letter said.

In cases of breach, the Election Commission (EC) said it will "not hesitate in banning public meetings, rallies of defaulting candidates, star campaigners or political leaders without any further reference" (PTI)

Horticulture, Education, Social Welfare, Labor Department, Urban Development Department and others.

The Union Minister called upon the concerned officers to ensure 100% coverage of beneficiaries under IAY and Ayushman-Schat. He further asked PRIs to ensure all deserving people entail the benefit of these schemes.

Regarding pending forest clearance of several roads and other projects, the Minister directed the concerned officers to personally pursue the progress for ensuring time bound completion of the projects.

Dr Jitendra Singh directed the Deputy Commissioner to take up those roads left out in earlier plan of CRF and PMGSY.

Referring to the key development works of the district, he said the work on double lanning of Dayalchack -Challain has been started by the concerned agency. He said survey process for vital road link from Lakhampur-Basohli-Chattargallan-Doda road has been started.

Dr Jitendra Singh directed Deputy Commissioner to clear the bottlenecks for the land identification for proposed Arun Jaitley Memorial Stadium in Hiranagar.

Responding to the demand of amenities at Atal Setu, Dr Singh assured that more infrastructure like food point and other amenities will be developed near Atal Setu to facilitate tourist coming in large numbers to see scenic Ranjit Sagar Dam lake and Cable Stay Bridge.

Earlier, Dr Singh e-inaugurated 10 completed projects under PMGSY sector which include 4.7 km Rehla to Trimbla, 2.3 km Chilk to Nouni, 4.5 km Dewal to Tadi, 4km Lakhri to Kunoo, 6.9 km Korihthal roads. Other projects inaugurated by the Union Minister including 2 vented causeway and 3 motorable steel bridges under PMGSY, 5 Water Supply Schemes of Jal Shakti (PHE) and a Hybrid Solar Panel Project of Chief Education Officer, Kathua.

DDC Chairperson, Mahan Singh said Kathua district has huge potential of tourism and further termed the proposed Lakhampur-Chattargallan road link connecting Doda as big game changer for the district. He also highlighted the demand of early completion of Lakhampur-Mahanpur-Basohli road link and Dayalchack Challain road, pending payments compensation for families affected by the construction of Ditch cum Bandh at Hiranagar besides the provision of Mini Secretariat building and construction of Chack dams in border sub division Hiranagar.

Vice Chairperson, DDC Raghunandan Singh in his address impressed upon the elected members of PRI's to work in close coordination with district administration for better planning and execution of the development works.

The meeting among others was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Kathua, Rahul Yadav, president MC, Naresh Sharma, MC Lakhampur Ravinder Sharma, MC Nagri Parole Anil Singh, MC Hiranagar Adv Vijay Kumar Sharma, MC Basohli Suresh Sapolia, MC Billawar Uma Kant Basotra, BDC Chairpersons, DDC members and nominated members of DISHA Committee besides district officers of different departments.

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Law and Justice of the Rajya Sabha in its 105th report had directed that the Registry of different courts should be requested to collate and maintain the Case Clearance Rate of the courts in order to assess the performance in dispensation of justice.

It had further directed that the Case Clearance Rate data should be periodically collected and integrated with the National Judicial Data Grid as it will help in maintaining transparency and ensuring judicial accountability.

Accordingly, the National Court Management Systems Committee of the Supreme Court had prepared the formula to be used for preparation of Case Clearance Rate. Thereafter, the Joint Secretary in the Department of Justice of Union Ministry had dashed communication to all States and UTs seeking data regarding Case Clearance Rate.

Though the resurfacing of COVID-19 cases in J&K and Ladakh Union Territories has again compelled the stopping of physical hearing of cases yet in order to ensure that litigants don't face difficulties in getting justice virtual mode is being effectively used by the High Court and Subordinate Courts for disposal of cases.

EC suspends offline activities, postpones exams

According to a notification in this regard, examinations of BA LLB (5yrs) 3rd Semester (scheduled on April 11), M Com 3rd Semester, BE 7th Semester, LLB (3yrs) 5th Semester (scheduled on April 12), UG 3rd Semester, BA LLB (5yrs) 3rd/7th Semester and BE 7th Semester (scheduled on April 15) are postponed.

However, the examinations for the BDS First Professional and MBBS Pre-Final Professional, commencing with effect from April 15, 2021 onwards, shall be conducted, but at the Examination Halls of Government Medical College Jammu instead of the already notified venues. The timing of the examinations shall remain the same.

Even as all the offline activities like classes, research work and offices in the university campus shall remain suspended, however, as an interim safety measure, classes of all the semesters, including research work shall be held online till further orders. The official work shall also be

Funds under 10% EWS quota lapsed twice by GMC Jammu, mandatory infra work yet to start

ately released the funds to the then Principal GMC, Jammu on 07-02-2020, with the directions that infrastructure as per the approved proposal and purchase of necessary machinery and equipment be immediately started following all the codal formalities," sources said.

They said this was the period when Corona started last year and due to lockdown no work could be started due to nearly three to four months. The then administration of GMC kept dealing with COVID management as priority and the money lapsed in the last financial year, they added.

Sources said this year also, the Health and Medical Education Department released the funds to the tune of Rs 32.4 crore to the Principal GMC Jammu for raising required infrastructure development works under EWS quota with the direction to start immediately the important infrastructure related works like construction of 2 additional lecture halls, one examination hall, one auditorium and cafeteria including parking, store lifts and ramps at CD Hospital, construction of additional floor of Central Library at GMC Jammu, and construction of boys hostel, girls hostel and proposed Nursing Hostel at GMC Jammu.

"However, the Incumbent Principal GMC Jammu accord-

Aim to bridge rural-urban gap, easy credit for business ventures: LG

opportunities", he added.

A target has been set to develop and train 5000 young professionals this year, and equip them with the requisite skill sets of Financial Services Sector, the Lt Governor maintained.

Termining Skill Development as a guiding force for empowering youth and providing them opportunities to become self-dependent, Sinha observed that J&K Government has been continuous working on policy and interventions to bridge the skill gaps and create a conducive environment with collaborative efforts to generate employment opportunities in various sectors, he said.

Mentioning a recent report of Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, the Lt Governor said J&K has less unemployment rate than States & UTs like Delhi, Goa, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan. He added that the unemployment rate in the UT has gone down to 9% from 16.1% in September 2020 and gave its credit to the people, especially the youth of J&K.

J&K has vast natural resources and immense potential. The UT Government is making every possible effort to ensure optimum utilization of resources and funds to create a business friendly environment, he added.

Paving way for a strong Women Entrepreneur Ecosystem in J&K, the UT Government has already announced a new scheme -Tejaswini under Mission Youth, through which financial assistance of Rs 5 lakhs to the girls between the age group of 18-35 years is provided to start their business, Sinha maintained.

"During the Back to Village programme, we had set a target of around 9000 youth to be identified for financial support for starting their enterprise. The expected target has been exceeded and 18,500 youth have been extended the financial support and now they are providing jobs to others as well", he observed.

J&K has a vast pool of talent with majority of its population below 35 years of age. Efforts are afoot to create jobs for the big segment of the population in different sectors. The Government under Mission Youth is aiming to engage 80% youth in livelihood generation by 2025, said the Lt Governor.

"Today's programme is a significant step towards filling the gap between market demand and supply. We are adopting the best global practices of youth empowerment and encouraging sustainable livelihood, besides spreading

carried on through home and online mode, wherever feasible, read an order in this regard, issued by JU Registrar.

The Dhanvantri Library, auditoriums, University Guest House, cafeteria etc shall also remain closed till further orders.

Though all the examinations have been postponed till April 15, wherever the postponement of M Phil/Ph D Viva Voce examinations is unavoidable, same may be conducted online.

All the students/scholars currently residing in the hostels shall be accordingly assisted in vacating the hostel rooms in liaison with the concerned UT authorities after following the Government guidelines.

However, essential services employees, like University Centre, Sanitation, Arboriculture and Landscaping Unit, University Works department, Security etc shall continue to perform their duties and the university shall facilitate their entry in the campus.

ed sanction to the release of funds in the favour of Chief Engineer PWR(R&B) Department, Jammu for its further placement at the disposal of Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B), Tawi Bridge cum Medical College Jammu Division, very late on March 23, 2021, just seven days before closure of financial year 2020-21," sources regretted.

They said in her order dated 23-03-2021, Principal GMC Jammu asked the executive agency to furnish Funds Utilization Certificate positively before 31-03-2021 for onward submission to Government of India, which was impossible and thus, the funds lapsed.

Sources said that due to COVID pandemic last year, no inspection team from NMC came to GMC Jammu but it is expected that any time, team from NMC can visit to monitor the requisite infrastructure and in light of non-start of work for two consecutive years, the team can cancel the EWS quota for GMC Jammu for ever.

When contacted, Principal GMC Jammu Dr Shashi Sudhan Sharma said that her office received the funds from the administrative department just a week before she sanctioned the funds in the favour of Chief Engineer PW(R&B) Department, Jammu. She said as of now their priority is COVID management as the 2nd wave of pandemic could be more dangerous.

He also praised the women entrepreneurs who have received capital assistance from the bank and have provided jobs to about 100 employees.

Citing India Investment report 2020, the Lt Governor said that the mutual funds investment is not limited only to big cities. Technology and financial literacy have brought it to tier 2 and tier 3 cities. The report also says that J&K and Bihar are leading in equity allocation.

In terms of employment generation in Banking, Financial Services and Insurance sector had around 40 lakh workforce in 2018-2019 which is going to increase to 85 lakh in 2022, according to an estimate. The financial sector has huge potential and youth of J&K must take benefit of this opportunity, he added.

The Lt Governor called upon all the young stakeholders to embark on the journey of development of Jammu and Kashmir. Administration is putting dedicated and honest efforts to transform J&K into a model of development, he said.

Junaid Mattu, Mayor, Srinagar Municipal Corporation, also spoke on the occasion and hailed youth-oriented programmes of the Government. He hoped that such financial literacy programmes would make the youth job providers rather than job seekers.

Zafar Sareshwala, Head, Taleem-o-Tarbiyat in his address, elaborated on the objectives of the conference. He said the initiative is aimed at encouraging different communities, to equip themselves with knowledge and skills through education and financial literacy.

Earlier, Chairman Quality Council of India, Adil Zainulbhai expressed his views on the theme of the conference and shared his ideas with the participants through virtual mode.

Among others, the conference was attended by Pandurang K Pole, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir; Vijay Kumar, IGP Kashmir; Rupinder Brar, Additional DG, Union Ministry of Tourism; Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Chief Executive Officer, Mission Youth, besides prominent citizens and students from different parts of the region.

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Shopian encounter: How a mosque was saved and militants killed

Jammu and Kashmir Police were undeterred by the terrorists refusal to surrender and moved closer to the mosque.

Against the established practice of maintaining safe distance from the target area, Army officers took the decision to move towards the mosque. The intention was to engage in pinpoint and not random, distant firing.

"Our main concern was to preserve the sanctity of the masjid while neutralising the terrorists. This exposed our troops to high degree of risk while engaging with the terrorists, who were heavily armed," says Maj Gen Rashim Bali, General Officer in Command of Victor Force that looks after militancy in South and Central Kashmir.

He said the message had to be firm that "picking up weapons against the UT is not an option and would be suitably responded to".

The operation against the men started in the dead of night at 1 am on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday following an intelligence tip-off that five terrorists were hiding inside the mosque.

5 killed in Bengal poll violence

ing TMC and challenger BJP blaming each other for the violence, the worst since the assembly polls got underway.

In a rare order, the Election Commission put in place restrictions, including extending the "silence period" from 48 hours to 72 hours, for the fifth phase of polling after the violence.

Candidates will now not be allowed to canvass door to door 72 hours before the end of the polling hour instead of the usual 48 hours prior to the conclusion of the exercise.

It also barred the entry of politicians in Cooch Behar district for the next 72 hours to prevent any possible law and order flare-up and directed the union home ministry to deploy an additional 71 companies

India, China agree to resolve outstanding issues

disengagement in other areas would pave the way for considering "de-escalation of forces" and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquillity in the region.

The Corps Commander-level talks took place at the Chushul border point on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh. The parleys began at around 10:30 am and ended at 11:30 pm.

Within no time, the area was sealed and many civilians evacuated to safer places, officials said.

While three of the terrorists were killed by dawn, the other two were gunned down at 2 pm on Friday. The Army had deployed drones to keep a close watch on the movements of the terrorists.

Officials said the parents of one of the terrorists, the brother of another and a prominent citizen were sent inside the mosque to ask them to give up arms but to no avail. At one point, a terrorist fired at a citizen who asked them to surrender in order to ensure the mosque is not damaged.

The terrorists, officials said, also attempted to set ablaze a portion of the mosque in their attempt to flee. After the operation, the troops cleared and cleaned the mosque and handed over all the religious books to the local administration to stem rumours about some books being desecrated.

This was the first time that terrorists were cornered inside the mosque in Shopian town. The last big encounter in Shopian was in the late 1990s when four terrorists were killed. (PTI)

Condoling the deaths in Cooch Behar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi requested the Election Commission to take stern action against those responsible for the incident and blamed the ruling TMC for perpetrating violence during the polls.

He also accused Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of instigating people against the central forces, sensing defeat.

"What happened in Cooch Behar is unfortunate and sad. I extend my condolences to the bereaved families and urge the Election Commission to take stern action against those responsible. (PTI)

People familiar with the negotiations said the Indian delegation, led by Commander of the LAC-based 14 Corps Lt Gen PGK Menon, particularly insisted on resolving outstanding issues in Hot Springs, Gogra and Depsang.

"The two sides had a detailed exchange of views for the resolution of the remaining issues related to disengagement along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh," the Army said in a statement. (PTI)

MALLUN SIDE
With profound grief and sorrow, we inform the sad demise of **Sh Hriday Nath Khosa** (Bhai Shaib) husband of Smt. Kishni Khosa (Bhan Ji) originally from Bana Mohalla/ Indra Nagar & presently at 74, Sai Vihar Paloura on 6th April, 2021.
Grief Stricken
Sh. Ashok Razdan & Vijay Razdan (Haswala) (originally from Kanya Kadal Srinagar, Sh Hriday Nath Khosa presently at Talab Tillo (9797555161)
Sh. Ashish Razdan & Prerna Razdan (9469002844)
Smt. Dulari Handoo
Sh. Omkar Nath Bhat & Ratni Bhat
Sh. Mohan Lal Raina & Veena Ji
Smt. Basanti