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Nation saddened by insult to tricolor: Modi

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said today that the country was saddened by the "insult" to the tricolour on Republic Day, referring to the religious flag incident at Red Fort during the farmers' tractor parade.

In his monthly Mann ki (Contd on page 11 Col 5)

FM to present budget today

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tomorrow will deliver her promised budget like no other that is expected to provide relief to the pandemic-hit common man as well as focus more on driving the economic recovery through higher spending on healthcare, infrastructure and defence amid rising tensions with neighbours.

As India emerges from the COVID-19 crisis, the ninth budget under the Modi Government, including an interim one, is widely expected to (Contd on page 11 Col 7)

57 test +ve in J&K, one in Leh

JAMMU/SRINAGAR/LEH, Jan 31: Fifty seven persons tested positive for COVID-19 including 43 in Kashmir and 14 in Jammu while 70 others recovered from the virus today in J&K.

Of 14 new Corona cases in Jammu region, seven were reported from Jammu district, three Doda, two Udhampur and one each in Kishtwar and Ramban districts. Rest five districts didn't report any cases today.

Of 36 persons, who recovered (Contd on page 11 Col 5)

Arms haul in Rajouri

RAJOURI, Jan 31: A joint operation by Army and JKP led to swift and timely recovery of large cache of weapons and ammunition from dense forest area of Gadyog in Khawas area of Rajouri district today.

SSP Rajouri Chandan Kohli (Contd on page 11 Col 1)

told the Excelsior that the desperate plan of militant organisations to revive terrorism in Rajouri and Reasi districts suffered a major setback when Army and J&K Police jointly (Contd on page 11 Col 3)

Avian Flu confirmed in crow in Poonch

JAMMU, Jan 31: After Avian Influenza was detected yesterday in Udhampur, it was confirmed today in a wild crow in Poonch district.

*Watch video on [www.excelsiornews.com](#)

Deputy Director (Poultry and Research) of the Animal Husbandry Department, Jammu, DD Dogra, said a wild dead crow was tested positive for H5N8 from Mandi area of (Contd on page 11 Col 1)

13,052 new cases, 127 deaths

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: With 13,052 new coronavirus cases, India's COVID-19 tally has climbed to 1,07,46,183, while the number of people who have recuperated from the disease has surged to 1,04,23,125, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated today.

The national recovery rate has climbed to 96.99 per cent. The death toll increased to 1,54,274 with 127 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed. The number of people who (Contd on page 11 Col 5)

|| Ceiling on Mata Vaishno Devi yatris raised to 25,000 ||

Govt allows cinemas, restaurants to operate with full capacity in J&K

*Edu Institutions to re-open, DCs to undertake random sampling

Sanjeev Pargal
JAMMU, Jan 31: The Jammu and Kashmir Government today increased ceiling on number of daily pilgrims to holy cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi Ji from 15,000 per day to 25,000, operation of cinemas/ theatres/multiplexes and restaurants to full capacity, swimming pools for all, all types of exhibition halls and educational institutions as per the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) already issued by the Departments of School Education, Higher Education and Skill Development of the UT Government.

The guidelines on COVID containment/instructions, which will come into effect from February 1 and remain in force till further orders, were issued by Simrandeep Singh, Member-Secretary, State Executive Committee (SEC).

With re-opening of educational institutions, the

Government has advised the Deputy Commissioners to undertake random sampling in different schools in order to keep a constant check on any upward spike in the infections. "Ceiling on the number of

however, confident that it will increase in the next few days after harsh period of winter is over. In another significant decision, cinemas/theatres/multiplexes have been permitted to

crowding. There should also be sufficient time intervals between screenings to ensure row-wise staggered entry and exit of the audience. Cinemas will follow staggered show timings for multiple screens to avoid crowding. The show commencement time, intermission and end at any screen should not overlap with the start, interval or end of a show at any other screen at a multiplex," the SOP said.

Further, it added, to minimize physical contact, customers are encouraged to use Cinema Apps/QR codes, etc as much as possible to order their snacks. Apart from this, other measures to maintain COVID protocols include mandatory masks, six-feet distance (outside the auditorium, in common areas and in waiting areas) and self-monitoring one's health. The Jammu and Kashmir (Contd on page 11 Col 7)

pilgrims permitted to visit Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji shrine in Trikuta Hills of Katra has been revised to 25,000 per day," the Government order said. Hitherto, it was 15,000 per day. The yatra has started picking up from 2000 per day in first half of December to around 10,000-15,000 per day on an average presently. Authorities were,

function in Jammu and Kashmir as per revised SOP of Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. In the revised SOP, cinemas/theatres/multiplexes have been allowed to function with full capacity. "After the show is over, exits should be done in a staggered, row-wise manner to avoid

within the prescribed time-frame while as down the line in the hierarchy there is no compliance to the law at all", official sources told EXCELSIOR.

"No doubt, heads of certain departments issue instructions whenever the last date (January 31) for submission of annual property returns approaches every year but still the compliance remains dismal mainly because the Government only warns of strict action under the rules and pays scant attention towards implementation aspect", sources informed.

They disclosed that till date no action has been taken against any Government servant for non-adherence to the law

Even mechanism not put in place for detailed scrutiny

Majority of Govt servants in J&K UT not submitting mandatory property returns

Mohinder Verma
JAMMU, Jan 31: Majority of the Government servants are not submitting mandatory property returns annually in blatant violation of the Jammu and Kashmir Public Men and Public Servants Declaration of Assets and Other Provisions Act, which has been retained in the Union Territory by the Ministry of Home Affairs. However, the Government has never imposed any penalty although there is an explicit provision in this regard in the law.

As per the provisions of Jammu and Kashmir Public Men and Public Servants Declaration of Assets and Other Provisions Act, 1983, amended thereafter

from time to time, every Government servant has to submit to the Prescribed Authority, a return of all the assets possessed by him/her and his/her family members within three months after he/she becomes a Government servant.

Thereafter, they are required to submit annual returns of the assets held by them and their family members in the month of January every year and shall state the reasons for increase, if any, in the assets and source thereof.

"However, only certain sections of the Government servants like IAS and KAS officers are submitting annual property returns although not

although the Act clearly states: "If any Government servant without any reasonable cause which he/she shall be required to show, fails to submit the returns annually, he/she shall be guilty of committing criminal misconduct as specified in the clauses of the Prevention of Corruption Act and shall be punishable under the Act".

The Act further states that the property returns shall be put to detailed scrutiny and then shall be kept under the custody of the Prescribed Authority which shall maintain it in such manner as may be prescribed. However, no proper mechanism has been put in place by the (Contd on page 11 Col 5)

3 militant associates arrested

Police foils bid to revive militancy, target DDC members

Fayaz Bukhari
SRINAGAR, Jan 31: Police today foiled an attempt to target the newly elected District Development Council (DDC) members and revive militancy in district Budgam with the arrest of three militant associates of Lashkar-e-Toiba in Central Kashmir's Budgam district.

Acting on a specific input, Budgam Police, 53 RR of Army and CRPF arrested three militants from Budgam during searches. Those arrested have been identified as two former militants Mohammad Yousuf Dar alias Janbaz Kashmiri son of

Ghulam Rasool Dar, Abdul Majeed Mir alias Majid son of Assadullah Mir, both residents of Chedwara Beerwah and Reyaz Ahmad Basmati son of Mohammad Maqbool Basmati, resident of Safa Kadal in Srinagar.

Police said that these militant associates were affiliated with LeT and were also working for other militant outfits like Tehreekul Mujahideen. Police said that two hand grenades, 25 AK-47 rounds, 4 detonators, mobile phones used to contact Pakistani handlers, threat posters and other incriminating material have been recovered from their possession. They have been

booked in case (FIR No. 11/2021 under relevant Sections ULA (P) and I.A Act) in Police Station Beerwah. Police said that these militant associates were operating in Budgam and Srinagar districts with the aim to target newly elected DDC members and disrupt elections.

They were in touch with handlers in Pakistan including Sheikh, Usman, Tariq, Hafitullah and others. These militant associates in garb of securing admissions in Pakistani educational institutions and were managing contacts with Pakistan based militant handlers in order to recruit militants and revive militancy in (Contd on page 11 Col 3)

'Resolution of Kashmir issue imperative for peace'

BJP turned J&K into pieces, put our land & jobs on sale: Mehbooba

Govind Sharma
JAMMU, Jan 31: Former Chief Minister and president of People's Democratic Party Mehbooba Mufti today said that Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and the Government led by it in the Centre have turned

the beautiful State of Jammu and Kashmir into pieces and put the land and jobs on sale for outsiders.

"Dogra ruler Maharaj Gulab Singh had created the beautiful state of J&K comprising Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh regions with people of different

religions but the BJP Government in the Centre disintegrated the State into Union Territories of Ladakh and J&K, and put our land and jobs on sale for outsiders by bringing Domicile Law and other laws," Mufti said, adding, our youth are not getting jobs but the outsiders are getting reservation in jobs. She was speaking to the media on the sidelines of a function in Poonch district, on the second day of her three-day visit to border districts of Rajouri and Poonch.

The former CM said "our country doesn't have cordial relations with any neighbor whether it is Pakistan or China. When our relations turned bad with Pakistan, people living in villages along the International Border and Line of Control in J&K got into trouble and they have to face shelling and firing from Pakistan troops. As our relations with China deteriorated, our 20-22 Army jawans were martyred on China border in Ladakh".

Mufti said BJP wants to win every election but has no agenda to fight the elections except their trusted and old formula of making the Hindu (Contd on page 11 Col 1)

excelsior correspondent

SRINAGAR, Jan 31: Kashmir that is reeling under extreme cold weather conditions witnessed the coldest night of the season after 30 years with temperatures plummeting to minus 8.8 degree Celsius and maximum day temperature settling at 0.6 degree Celsius which was the coldest day of the season.

The Mercury tumbled across Kashmir last night with Srinagar recording minus 8.8 degree Celsius, the lowest temperature of the season so far and the coldest January night in the last 30 years. A Meteorological depart-

Sr. bureaucrats may join talks

LG in New Delhi on 4-day visit; budget, security to be discussed

Excelsior Correspondent
JAMMU, Jan 31: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha is in New Delhi on four-day visit during which he is scheduled to meet senior functionaries of the Central Government to brief them on security and financial aspects of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Sinha is scheduled to stay in the Union capital till Wednesday. Official sources told the Excelsior that since budget of Jammu and Kashmir has to be tabled in the Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during ongoing budget session, Lieutenant Governor could have discussions on the budget and expectations of the Union Territory.

"Senior bureaucrats from Jammu and Kashmir are also reportedly accompanying Sinha to New Delhi for discussions on budget and security situation with the Central Ministers and other functionaries," sources said. Budget session of the Parliament had started on January 29 with Address of President Ram Nath Kovind to join sitting of the two Houses while Nirmala

Sitharaman will present Union budget at 11 am tomorrow. As Jammu and Kashmir doesn't have the Legislature in absence of elections to the Assembly, it's budget has to be tabled and passed in the Parliament.

Apart from budget-related discussions, the Lieutenant Governor could also meet some Central Ministers to discuss security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, both in the hinterland as well as the Line of Control (LoC) where Pakistan army has been regularly resorting to ceasefire violations.

The Jammu and Kashmir Government has reportedly projected budget for next financial year of 2021-22 to the tune of around Rs 1.25 lakh crore, which will be higher than current fiscal year, according to sources. Top officials of the Finance Department of the J&K Government have already held meetings with Government Departments to ascertain their requirements before giving final touch to the annual budget, sources said.

It has to be given final touch. Describing Rs 1.25 lakh crore worth budget for Jammu and Kashmir as "quite significant", sources said it will lead to massive infrastructure development with new projects coming up.

The Finance Department officials have also held various meetings with the officials of the Union Finance Ministry to project their detailed requirements. And, response of the Finance Ministry has been quite good, sources said. Jammu and Kashmir's annual budget has seen steep hike during past three years. In 2019-20, J&K had 88,911 crore worth budget which went up to Rs one lakh crore for 2020-21 and is now expected to touch Rs 1.25 lakh crore in the financial year of 2021-22.

Regarding current financial year of 2020-21, sources said because of the financial discipline maintained by the Finance Department in Jammu and Kashmir, there has been no financial crunch. There has been full cooperation of the Union Home and Finance Ministries to Jammu and Kashmir Government in implementation of the budget proposals, the sources said.

Bird flu spreads in Kashmir as sample testing gets delayed

Irfan Tramboo
SRINAGAR, Jan 31: While at least 6 districts in J&K have confirmed Bird flu cases, the confirmation of the suspected samples that are sent to high-end testing laboratories in Bhopal and Jalandhar takes at least a week and in some cases more than that in the absence of such laboratories in J&K.

The samples that are collected from the affected areas or during random sampling in Kashmir are first sent to the Institute of Animal Health & Biological Products, Zakura Srinagar, which carries out preliminary testing. It is from the Zakura lab that the suspected samples are further sent either to Bhopal or Jalandhar for confirmation.

A case in point being the samples collected from Hardshiva in Baramulla's Sopore. The suspected sample that tested positive for the Avian Flu, it has been learned, was sent for testing to Institute of Animal Health & Biological Products, Zakura Srinagar on January 11 which then further sent it to Bhopal for further confirmation. The reports of the suspected sample came positive only on January 29, indicating a gap of at least 18 days and also pointing towards a possible passage provided to the flu to spread in the absence of containment measures during that period.

It was only after the confirmation came in from Bhopal Lab that the administration swung into the action and declared the area of Hardshiva

as 'Alert Zone' on January 29. Later random sampling within the 1 km radius of what has been termed as the 'epicentre' was carried out along with other surveillance measures. It can be noted here that India has only two high-end dedicated labs: ICAR-National Institute of High-Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal and Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RDDI), Jalandhar. These are the two labs that are catering to the entire country.

Further, the confirmation from the labs on the suspected samples, it has been learned, is then sent directly to the Government which then writes about the same to the Chief Secretary of the Union Territory, and reaches the concerned (Contd on page 11 Col 1)

'People to reap benefits of Central Laws now'

J&K deprived of good governance, work culture for decades: Dr Jitendra

Avtar Bhat
JAMMU, Jan 31: Union Minister of State in PMO with independent charge of North Eastern States, Dr Jitendra Singh today expressed his dismay that the model of good governance and work culture was not adopted by J&K for

*Watch video on [www.excelsiornews.com](#)

decades together which led to a lot of mess in the erstwhile State. Addressing the 42nd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) J&K Branch in his capacity as



Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh addressing the AGM of IIPA in Jammu on Sunday. -Excelsior/Rakesh

implementation of Central laws over a long period of time which like other parts of the country were meant for the welfare and benefit of the people of J&K and Ladakh also.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that Jammu & Kashmir needs to catch up good governance practices with improvised work culture. Maintaining that under the new arrangement a sea change has taken place in UTs of J&K and Ladakh, he expressed (Contd on page 11 Col 3)

Cold intensifies, min temps to improve this week

Srinagar coldest in 30 years at -8.8, day temp plummets to 0.6

Excelsior Correspondent
SRINAGAR, Jan 31: Kashmir that is reeling under extreme cold weather conditions witnessed the coldest night of the season after 30 years with temperatures plummeting to minus 8.8 degree Celsius and maximum day temperature settling at 0.6 degree Celsius which was the coldest day of the season.

The Mercury tumbled across Kashmir last night with Srinagar recording minus 8.8 degree Celsius, the lowest temperature of the season so far and the coldest January night in the last 30 years. A Meteorological depart-

ment official said that at minus 8.8 degree Celsius, the mercury in Srinagar was more than eight degrees below normal for this



People warm themselves on a cold winter day in Srinagar. -Excelsior/Shakeel

time of the season. The previous night, Srinagar recorded minus 7.2 degree Celsius. The minimum temperatures have consistently remained far below normal this season. On January 14, Srinagar recorded minus 8.4 degree Celsius. On 20 January 1991, Srinagar witnessed a low of minus 11.8 degree Celsius while the lowest ever temperature was recorded on 31st January 1893 when the mercury plummeted to minus 14.4 degrees Celsius. In between, the official said, the mercury dropped to minus 9.0 degree Celsius on 11th January 1986.

(Contd on page 11 Col 7)