

Comm Secy reviews preparations for Ladakh Winter Conclave

Excelsior Correspondent

Leh, Feb 16: A meeting was convened by Commissioner Secretary, Tourism, Rigzin Samphel to review the preparation of Winter Conclave with the stakeholders, at the Secretariat.

The meeting was attended by all the stakeholders.

The meeting has finalised the date for Ladakh Winter Conclave for February 21, 22 and 23. The event will also showcase the potential for winter tourism in Ladakh, sports, cultural and culinary experiences being curated for this conclave.

Ladakh Winter Conclave would be celebrated in both the districts of Leh and Kargil. It was decided in the meeting that it would be celebrated both online and offline amidst Covid 19 scenario.

Talking about the theme of this year, Commissioner Secretary informed that there are three themes including Adventure, Culture and Heritage and post COVID revival of Tourism as well as branding.

It was informed in the meeting that the guest will arrive on February 20 and later on the

same day at 4 pm opening ceremony would take place. Parallel three discussions at different hotels would take place.

The highlight of the winter conclave would be heritage walk, cultural procession, mountaineering, biking, bouldering, climbing, Rafting, panel discussions, visit to Central Asian



Commissioner Secretary Tourism Rigzin Samphel chairing a meeting at Leh.

museum, stok guru tsechu and exhibition Polo match at Ranbirpur.

Director Tourism, Kunzes Angmo asked the AD Tourism, Kargil, Aga Syed Towha to send the programme schedule soon.

Committees were constituted including organising committee, venue management committee, protocols, accommodation, cultural committee, media and press committee, publicity, promotion and beautification committee, medical committee, logistic arrangement committees, and winter sports committee for conduct of Winter Conclave.

Work on Qazigund tunnel resumes

Excelsior Correspondent

RAMBAN, Feb 16: The work on the double tube 8.5 kilometer Animal-Qazigund tunnel resumed late evening today after remaining suspended for a day.

Hundreds of labourers went on a sudden strike today, affecting the ongoing work on the double-tube Banihal-Qazigund tunnel along the 270-km Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, officials said.

The tunnel is nearing completion and is expected to be opened for public use by March-end.

"Local labourers stayed away from work and also did not allow any type of work by skilled and unskilled non-local workers since morning", officials said.

They added that the labourers were agitating over wages that are pending since August last year, although officials of the private construction company have claimed that the firm has already paid the money to the contractor concerned and there is no pendency of wages towards the labour force.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate

Banihal, Zaheer Abbas and Station House Officer (SHO) Banihal Nayeem-UI-Haq met the protesting labourers, but they refused to resume work till the payment was made to them, the officials said.

They said after hectic efforts, the issue was resolved in the evening and work was restored at the prestigious project.

The work on the Rs 2,100-crore project was started in June 2011 by the Navayuga Engineering Company. Once completed, the tunnel would reduce the distance between Banihal in Jammu province and Qazigund in south Kashmir to 16 kilometer from the present 35 km and bypass the Jawahar Tunnel and the Shaitan Nalla, which are prone to heavy snow-fall and slippery conditions during winters.

The work on the project was delayed for several reasons in the last 10 years and many deadlines were missed due to the unexpected land condition inside the tunnel, alleged financial crisis in the construction company and certain issues related to local landlords and company workers.

Woman killed in accident

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 16: A woman was killed in accident in village Chak Suba area of tehsil Bishnah here today.

As per police sources, a motorcycle bearing registration number JK02AN-4072 was hit by a dumper bearing registration number JK21D-0670 in village Chak Suba area of Bishnah, resulting into on the spot death of a lady.

The deceased has been identified as Radha, wife of Ranka, a resident of Village Majua Laxmi Tehsil Bishnah District Jammu. She was riding on the motorcy-

cle with her husband when the accident took place.

After conducting autopsy, the body of the deceased lady was handed over to legal heirs for last rites.

However, acting swiftly, a team from Police Station Bishnah led by Incharge SHO Inspector Anil Choudhary seized the dumper and detained its owner.

A case under FIR Number 25/2021 under Sections 279 and 304-A IPC has been registered at Police Station Bishnah and hunt has been also launched to nab the driver of the dumper, who escaped from the spot.

KKHMS delegation calls on Simrandeep, highlights demands

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 16: A delegation of Kashmiri migrants led by its chairman Kashmiri Khatri Hindu Maha Sabha, (KKHMS) Ramesh Chander Mahajan met Simrandeep Singh Special Secretary to Government (DDMRR) Department of Disaster Management Relief, Rehabilitation & Reconstruction at Civil Secretariat, here today and apprised him about long pending problems of the Kashmiri migrants who are reeling under pathetic condition. The delegation also handover the memorandum highlighting their demands to him.

It demanded enhancement of monthly cash relief with free medical aid, immediate issuance of Ayushman Bharat (SEHAT) Golden Cards, release of monthly pension in favour of old age, disabled, handicapped and widows who had applied for social welfare schemes etc and immediate disbursement of long pending mediclaim bills from the office of RRMCC.

The delegation also stressed on provisions of one job to one family member of each migrants family in PM recruitment process, absorbance of

pending waiting and court cases list candidate and starting of recruitment drive in police force, creation of additional 35000 posts in various departments, release of pending list and sanctioning of loan scheme under PM Economic and Central Skill Development Programme with compensation of 25 lakh to over aged youths.

It said consolidation of all details of migrants properties for assessment of losses since 1990 and release of pending 50% compensation and ex-gratia etc due to disaster of left behind properties from Relief Department and Empowering the competent authorities for eviction of illegal occupants and restoration of all properties.

It demanded time bound promotion to PM package employees, immediate allotment of transit accommodation to all employees with basic amenities and life security. Migrant Jobs must be considered freely as transferable within Union Territory of J&K

Besides, installation of bore wells for pure drinking water supply, provide basic facilities in the UT and district hospitals and online digital service in post office at Jagti camp etc.

4 detected with SA variant of COVID-19 in India

NEW DELHI, Feb 16:

Four people were detected with the South Africa variant of SARS-CoV-2 in India in January, while one tested positive for the Brazil variant in the first week of February, the Centre said today.

In India, the South Africa strain has been detected in four returnees -- one from Angola, one from Tanzania and two from South Africa in January, ICMR Director General Balram Bhargava said.

All travellers and contacts have been tested and quarantined.

"The ICMR-NIV is attempting to isolate and culture the SA variant strain from the samples of these four individual returnees," he said.

One Brazil returnee has tested positive for the Brazil variant of SARS-CoV-2 in the first week of February. The traveller and contacts have been tested and quarantined.

"The virus strain has been successfully isolated and cul-

tured at ICMR-NIV, Pune," Bhargava said, adding experiments to assess vaccine effectiveness are underway.

Meanwhile, the number of people who have tested positive for the UK variant of SARS-CoV-2 in the country has climbed to 187. There has been no mortality.

"We have been able to culture and isolate this strain and test the efficacy of the vaccine," he said.

A very close watch is being kept on these variants, he stressed.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan said as of February 16 till 1 pm, 87,40,595 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the country out of which a total of 62,82,646 healthcare workers have been vaccinated.

First dose has been given to 61,11,968 (60.5 per cent healthcare workers) and second dose have been given to 1,70,678 healthcare workers which is 37.5 per cent of eligible vaccinations, he said. (PTI)



Activists of Billawar Zila Andolan at meeting on Tuesday.

'Billawar Zila Andolan' activists to give momentum to agitation

Excelsior Correspondent

BILLAWAR, Feb 16: The activists of 'Billawar Zila Andolan' held meeting in Tehsil office complex here today and resolved to give further momentum to the agitation.

Former Sarpanch of Bhaddu, Sudesh Sapolia presided, whereas, convener of Zila Andolan, Hari Chand Jalmeria (Adv) was chief guest at the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, Jalmeria gave resume of the over two decades struggle of the Billawar Zila Andolan for creation of Billawar district. He apprised the participants that the activists of the Andolan have held meetings in different parts of Billawar, Basohli, Bani, Ramkote, Lohai-Malhar, Mahanpur tehsils during this period of two decades for creating awareness regarding the demand of Billawar district. There has been great response of the people in support of this genuine demand. He said there was need to give momentum to the struggle.

Jalmeria further explained that present Kathua district headquarter is at South East corner touching Punjab and

Pakistan borders and people residing in six (6) hilly tehsils have to travel to district head-quarter walking and travelling about 100-150 kilometers. Districts were created at smaller distances in Kashmir and other areas but demand of Billawar district was ignored. District headquarter at such a long distance denies people of access to administration for seeking redressal their democratic demands. The conditions of most of the roads in these areas are in very bad shape and many areas have still no access to roads. The tourism, agricultural, horticultural and hydroelectric potential of this hilly belt remain ignored, added Jalmeria.

He appealed the present administration headed by LG to consider and concede the demand of Billawar district.

Sudesh Sapolia called upon the people to get prepared for big struggle for creating Billawar District which is rightful demand of the area. Many Sarpanchs of the area attended the meeting. The meeting also decided to hold conventions in different Blocks of the area in the coming days.

Delegation of Residency Bazar Shopkeepers meets Corporator

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 16: A delegation of Residency Bazar Shopkeepers Association met Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) Councillor, Ritu Choudhary with their demands for the betterment of Ward 7.

The delegation raised issues like street lights, sanitation and vehicle parking problem in the area.

The Councillor ensured the delegation that she will do her level best in solving the issues brought to her notice and further added that soon more street lights will be installed in the Ward and as far as sanitation is concerned, she appealed the

shopkeepers to cooperate sanitation workers of JMC by not throwing garbage on roads or in drains but instead hand it over to the sanitation workers at the time of garbage collection.

Choudhary assured the delegation that she will request the Mayor JMC to provide dustbin to every shopkeeper of the Bazar as many shopkeepers have not been provided the same.

Kunal Chadha, Association president; Naresh Vaid, vice president; Harmeet Singh, secretary; Rahil Paul, chief coordinator; Tajinder Singh, general secretary; Sanjeev Godotra, cashier; Raj Kumar Sandi and others were present in the delegation.

COVID-19 vaccine effective with dose-II after 12 weeks: DAK

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Feb 16: Doctors Association Kashmir (DAK) today said COVID-19 vaccine is more effective when the second dose is given 12 weeks after the first shot.

In a statement issued here, DAK President Dr Nisar ul Hassan said that the longer interval between the doses give more protection.

"There is evidence that a longer interval between the first and second dose of Oxford vaccine provides a stronger immune response," he said.

He said that a study published in Lancet has revealed that the vaccine efficacy was 82.4 per cent among those who received the second dose after 12 weeks, whereas the efficacy was only 54.9 per cent among those with an interval of fewer than 6 weeks.

"The first dose was 76 per cent effective from day 22 to 90

days post-vaccination and the protection did not wane during this initial three month period," he said.

He said that delaying the second dose would allow more people to get the first dose sooner and would save more lives. "If enough people get vaccinated quickly, we will achieve the herd immunity sooner that would bring an end to the ongoing public health crisis."

"While the longer interval between the doses is beneficial in terms of building a broader and long-lasting immune response, India continues to administer the second dose of Oxford vaccine - Covishield at 4-week interval," he said.

"The study also showed that a single dose of the vaccine significantly reduced the transmission of the virus with a 67 per cent reduction in positive swabs among those vaccinated," Dr Nisar said.

Pathankot-Udhampur DMU to resume from Feb 22

JAMMU, Feb 16:

The Udhampur-Pathankot Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) train, which was suspended in April last year due to Corona pandemic, will be resumed by the Indian Railways from February 22.

A Railway official here said that the special DMU number 04611 will depart from Pathankot Railway Station at 0440 hours for Udhampur railway station on February 22 and will arrive at the destination at 0915 hours.

"The DMU will depart from Udhampur Railway Station at 1555 hours on the same day and will leave for Pathankot via Jammu," he expressed, adding that the DMU will arrive at Pathankot railway station in 2005 hours.

He further added that the train will stop at Ramnagar, Manwal, Sangad, Jammu, Bari Brahmana, Vijaypur, Samba, Ghalwal, Kathua, Madhopur railway stations en route Pathankot.

"Similarly, DMU service is also being restored from Banihal to Baramulla from February 22 and the train will leave at 1125

hours and return to Baramulla Railway Station at 1500 hours," he said adding that From Baramulla, on the same day, the second DMU will run at 0900 hours and reach Banihal Railway Station at 1220 hours. (UNI)

2 bunkers removed from Srinagar

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Feb 16: Two security bunkers were removed from Srinagar city today as they were leading to traffic congestion.

The bunkers were removed to ease out the traffic congestion in Srinagar areas including Moulana Azad Road, Rajabagh and other areas. "We decided to remove some makeshift bunkers that were erected for frisking and other security related issues," an official said.

These bunkers were removed from Bagat and Jehahir Chow in Srinagar as they were creating hurdles in the smooth traffic movement.

For the last two years, large numbers of bunkers came up in Srinagar and they have led to traffic congestion.

Randhawa kick-starts construction work

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 16: Former Member Legislative Council (MLC), Ch. Vikram Randhawa, today kick-started laying of the slab for the roof of a Kitchen House at Shiv Mandir, Ward No-



Former MLC and senior BJP leader, kick-starting construction of kitchen at Shiv Mandir, Trikuta Nagar on Tuesday.

53 Trikuta Nagar.

Speaking on the occasion, Randhawa expressed his satisfaction over the construction of the kitchen house for which he had released funds to the tune of Rs 5 lakh out of his Constituency Development Fund (CDF) during his tenure as MLC.

He assured that after being elected a representative, he has always been engaged in working for the welfare of the society. He also said that service to mankind is service to God. He said that the Modi Government is committed to the overall development of the people with a special focus on infrastructure development and social welfare.

He highlighted various schemes of the Modi Government for infrastructure

development, such as "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas aur Sabka Vishwas". He said, India is supporting other developing countries in meeting their sustainable development goals and the country is playing a salient role in achieving agenda 2030, commemoration UN's 75th anniversary. PM said Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas (together for everyone's growth with everyone trust) motto resonates with the core SDG principle of leaving no one behind, be it access to nutri-

tion, health education, electricity or housing, he added. "We are making great progress through our inclusive programmes, which will change the landscape in the country and help make India a developed nation", he said.

The members of the Mandir Committee expressed their gratitude to Ch. Vikram Randhawa for contributing to this noble cause and showered their blessings for his good health and bright future ahead.

Those present on the occasion included Mandal president and Councillor Neeraj Puri, Councillor Jyoti Devi, Kapil Khurana, Sham Lal, Vishal Gupta, Ashok Khajuria, Rajesh Gupta, Raman Sharma and many others.

Online Workshop-cum-Webinar for management students held

Excelsior Correspondent

BHADERWAH, Feb 16: Bhaderwah Campus University of Jammu organized an important 'Online Workshop-cum-Webinar' for the management students and faculty members of Jammu and Kashmir.

Raju Moza, Founder R M Holdings, is associated with Academics as well as Industry interacted and guided the participating audience. Moza is a reputed speaker with top business credentials having more than fifteen years of Industrial experience.

Prof Rahul Gupta, Rector Bhaderwah Campus and Patron of Online Workshop delivered the presidential address. He highlighted the importance of such

events to create a conducive ecosystem for the growth of new ventures and startups.

Raju Moza famous influencer and a successful entrepreneur also guided about the key skills to succeed in the dynamic business world in the current economy especially after the pandemic. He talked about the possible ways to increase employment, manufacturing, and production in Jammu and Kashmir, and how technological advancements can improve our production system.

Addressing on the topic 'Skills to Succeed in Dynamic Business World: Getting Ready for A New Normal post COVID era, Dr Sunil Bharadwaj, Head of Department, The Business School, Bhaderwah Campus and Convener of the Workshop opined initiation of more discussions in the areas of employment, accessibility, teaching capacity and authenticity is the need of the hour. He also talked about Stress Management which is critical for reviving the growth in the economy after the COVID-19 crisis.

Dr Rohit Bhagat, faculty TBS Bhaderwah Campus and Co-Convener of the workshop discussed post COVID stress and its side effects on the human body and suggested solutions.

Dr Atif Javed Qazi Lecturer TBS Bhaderwah Campus delivered the vote of thanks.

Dr Umesh Choudhary, Mohammad Avais, Zaffer Hussain, Aishiya Gupta, Amit, Meenakshi and Soniya also enlightened and discussed various necessary credentials to establish a new startup.

Dr Umesh Choudhary and Mr. Mohammad Avais along with other faculty members TBS Bhaderwah Campus also attended the workshop.

Hundreds of students, scholars, staff members and other participants from across the Union Territory from different universities and colleges got benefitted.

EPFO to declare interest on Mar 4

NEW DELHI, Feb 16:

Retirement fund body EPFO is likely to announce the rate of interest on provident fund deposits for financial year 2020-21, on March 4, when its Central Board of Trustees will meet at Srinagar.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is likely to take up the proposal to announce rate of interest for 2020-21 at its Central Board of Trustees (CBT) meeting scheduled on March 4, source said.

K E Raghunathan, an EPFO trustee said yesterday that he received the intimation that the next CBT meeting is scheduled to be held on March 4, at Srinagar and that the agenda papers are likely to be sent soon.

He said that there is no mention about discussion on interest rate for 2020-21 in the intimation mail.

Speculation is rife that the EPFO may lower interest on

provident fund deposits for this fiscal (2020-21), from 8.5 per cent it provided for 2019-20, in view of more withdrawals and lesser contribution by members during this fiscal mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year, in March, EPFO had lowered interest rate on provident fund deposits to a seven-year low of 8.5 per cent for 2019-20, from 8.65 per cent in 2018-19.

The EPF (employees provident fund) interest rate provided for 2019-20 was the lowest since 2012-13, when it was 8.5 per cent.

The EPFO had provided 8.65 per cent interest rate to its subscribers for 2016-17, and 8.55 per cent in 2017-18. The rate of interest was slightly higher at 8.8 per cent in 2015-16.

It had given 8.75 per cent rate of interest in 2013-14 as well as 2014-15, higher than 8.5 per cent for 2012-13. (PTI)



Principal of GCW Gandhi Nagar and others at inaugural of Mathematical fest on Tuesday.

'Math-O-Mania' begins at GCW Gandhi Nagar

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 16: Govt PG College for Women, Gandhi Nagar Jammu, in collaboration with J&K Science Technology and Innovation Council (Department of Science & Technology), inaugurated Math-O-Mania, a five day mathematical fest.

Dr Sangita Nagari, Principal GCW Gandhi Nagar, Jammu declared the event open and motivated the students and participants to cultivate interest and passion towards the subject.

Dr Renu Anand, HoD Mathematics and convener of the event, introduced the aims and objectives of the event.

The first event of the fest was a one-day student conference on the theme: 'Mathematics is a door and key to Sciences.' The resource persons for the event were Dr Shally Gupta (HoD Mathematics, MAM PG College), Dr Neetu Singh (HoD Mathematics, GDC Nagrota) and Dr Yash Paul (Associate Professor Deptt of Chemistry, GCW Gandhi Nagar). The resource persons addressed the young minds and infused them with great enthusiasm regarding the subject.

asm regarding the subject. Around 60 participants gave their presentations in an articulate manner with precision and displayed wholesome understanding of the theme. The contest involved Power Point presentations followed by oral presentations on the topics.

The first prize in the event was bagged by Pooja Chargotra. Sakshi Choudhary stood second while Shalini Rasgotra was awarded with 3rd prize. Consolation prizes were awarded to Vatsala, Ananya Jain and Archana.

An experienced panel of reputed educationists judged the competition. Dr Nidhi Suri, Organizing Secretary presented a report of the contest and delivered a formal vote of thanks.

The programme was conducted at EDUSAT hub under the technical supervision of Er Harmeet Singh. The organizing committee included Dr Anshu Sharma (Co-ordinator), Dr Neelima G, Prof Rajinder Kumar, Dr Varun Sharma, and Dr Rinku. Ivanka Raman, President and Shalini Rasgotra, Head Girl were the compemers of the event.

JMC Councillor starts tile work

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 16: Councillor of Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) for Ward 40, Neelam Nargotra here today started tile

ed cost of Rs. 3.20 lakh and the funds were allotted to the Councillor for various developmental works in the Ward.

Speaking on the occasion Neelam Nargotra claimed that



JMC Councillor, Neelam Nargotra starting tile work at Vasant Vihar, Talab Tillo on Tuesday.

work at Vasant Vihar in Talab Tillo area.

BJP district general secretary, Rajesh Gupta and Talab Tillo Mandal president, Keshav Chopra were also present on the occasion.

A handout stated that the tile work will be done under the supervision of JMC at an estimated

people of the Ward are cooperating a lot for the development and cleanliness in the area.

Keshav Chopra said that BJP's slogan of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' means development of every area and the same is seen on ground.

He lauded the efforts of Neelam Nargotra for providing best possible infrastructure to the residents of the Ward.

BJP District Social Media Incharge, Arun Dubey; Praveen Ghai, Paramjeet, Rajesh Saini, Sahil Koul, Jaipal Sharma along with locals of Vasant Vihar were also present on the occasion.

Power shut down

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 16: Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCJL Jammu has informed that to carry out work of conductor stringing, the power supply to Kaleeth, Khour town, Gigrall Kharah, Dhangar, Chack Malal, Aizal Mallal and adjoining areas being fed from 33KV Khour-Kaleeth line will remain affected on February 17 from 9 am to 3 pm.

Similarly, for HT cable Laying, the power supply to Rangpur Maulana, Khana Chak and adjoining areas being fed from 33KV Badyal Barhmana to Rangpur Maulana line emanating from 33/11KV Receiving Station Miran Sahib will remain affected on February 17 from 9 am to 2 pm.

Car catches fire at Jatwal, inmates safe

Excelsior Correspondent

SAMBA, Feb 16: A car accidentally caught fire at Jammu - Pathankot National Highway near Jatwal village of Samba district today.

According to the Police a Figo car bearing registration number DL4AF-5840 reached Jatwal village near Petrol Pump and suddenly caught fire due to technical fault. Locals rushed to the spot and people in the car evacuated safely. After they called the Fire Brigade, the car was totally burnt in ashes when the Fire Brigade reached the spot.

In the meanwhile owner of the car driver Sajad Ahmed, S/o Azaz Ahmed Lone of Srinagar his two children, his wife and driver of the car were evacuated safely by locals. The car was on way to Amritsar from Srinagar. In this regard Police has registered a case.