

4 IAS officers get new Grade

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: The Government today ordered placement of four IAS officers of 2012 batch to the Junior Administrative Grade of IAS (Level 12) with effect from January 1, 2021.

They include Dr Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, Ravinder Kumar, Dr Piyush Singla and Mohammad Aijaz.

An order issued by the General Administration Department (GAD) said the four IAS officers will undergo mandatory Phase-III mid-career training as and when deputed by the Government of India while Ravinder Kumar and Dr Piyush Singla will also pass the departmental examination within one year.

Two officers transferred

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: The Government today ordered transfer and postings of two KAS officers.

Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar, Additional Secretary to the Government, Housing and Urban Development Department, holding additional charge of Managing Director, J&K Housing Board has been transferred and posted as Managing Director, J&K Housing Board.

Ashish Gupta, Joint Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation was transferred and posted as Additional Secretary to the Government, Housing and Urban Development Department.

IT Deptt quizzes Robert Vadra

NEW DELHI, Jan 4:

The Income Tax department today questioned Robert Vadra, son-in-law of Congress President Sonia Gandhi, in connection with its probe against him under the benami assets law, official sources said.

Vadra, 52, said the action was aimed to "digress" from the "real issues" concerning the country like the farmers' agitation.

Sources said Vadra was asked to join the investigation at the tax authority's office in the national capital but as he cited COVID-19 restrictions, a team of officials visited his official premises in Delhi's Sukhdev Vihar area.

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Positivity rate dips to 5.89 pc

NEW DELHI, Jan 4:

Daily new COVID-19 cases in the country remained below 20,000 for the third consecutive day taking the virus caseload to 1,03,40,469, while higher testing has led to further decline in the cumulative positivity rate to 5.89 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated today.

A total of 16,504 people tested positive for Coronavirus infection in a day. The daily new cases had last touched a low on December 29 last year with 16,432 new coronavirus infections being added to the national tally in a day after 187 days.

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5 die of COVID in J&K; 133 test +ve, 419 recover

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU/SRINAGAR/LEH, Jan 4: Five persons died of COVID-19 in the Union Territory including two in Jammu region and three in Kashmir division while 133 persons tested positive for virus and 419 others recovered today.

Both deaths in Jammu were reported from Miran Sahib area of Jammu district. They include an 86-year-old and another 76-year-old man. They died in 166 Military Hospital Jammu.

With two deaths today, Jammu region's Corona toll surpassed 700, over 50 percent of which (357) have been recorded in Jammu district followed by 64 in Doda, 57 Udhampur, 54

MP, Ex MP, Minister, CEC, top leaders reach Delhi

Breakthrough on cards during crucial meet between Shah, Leh leaders today

KDA refuses to join delegation, demands Statehood

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, Jan 4: A breakthrough on Ladakh's demand for Sixth Schedule like status seems to be on the cards as Union Home Minister Amit Shah will meet leaders of the People's Movement for Sixth Schedule comprising leaders of Leh district only at 3 pm tomorrow in New Delhi as the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) refused to join the talks on the ground that their demands were different and they haven't been extended any invitation by the Home Ministry.

"An 11-member delegation of Leh's apex body will meet Shah at 3 pm tomorrow in New Delhi on the invitation of the Ministry of Home Affairs for

discussion on Sixth Schedule like status to Ladakh," official sources told the Excelsior and said they are quite confident of a breakthrough on the issues of Ladakh.

The delegation comprised 11 members including Thupstan Chhewang, former two-time Lok Sabha member from Ladakh, Tashi Gyalson, Chief Executive Councilor (CEC) Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Lok Sabha member from Ladakh, LBA Youth Wing president Konchok Isheya, Anjuman Moin-ul president Dr Abdul Qayum, Anjuman Inamiya president Ashraf Ali, Christian community leader Dechen Chamba, Ladakh Gonpa Association president Shatup Chamba, former Rajya Sabha member Thiksay Khanpo Rinpoche, ex-Minister Chering Dorje Lakrook and student leader Jigmet Paljor.

Though the Kargil Democratic Alliance leaders didn't get direct invite from the Union Home Ministry, they were requested by Leh apex

body leader Thupstan Chhewang to join their delegation. Chhewang had received the Union Home Minister's call for talks and asked to bring a large delegation to New Delhi on January 5.

KDA co-chairman Qamar Ali Akhooon told the Excelsior that they didn't join the delegation as their agenda is entirely different from that of Leh's apex body.

The KDA which comprised various political parties, social, religious, youth and student organizations of Kargil, has decided to demand separate State for Ladakh and restoration of special status which Ladakh enjoyed when it was part of Jammu and Kashmir, Akhooon said.

"We had no direct invitation from the Home Ministry. Moreover, our demands are different from that of Leh. So, we decided not to join delegation of Leh's apex body," he added.

Sources said the Kargil Democratic Alliance discussed invite of the apex body of Leh and decided not to join it.

(Contd on page 9 Col 3)

MoU signed between NBCC, JK IT IDC Jammu, Srinagar to have IT Towers worth Rs 50 cr each

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: In yet another intervention to bring reforms in the Information Technology sector in J&K; a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between NBCC and JK IT Infrastructure Development Company for establishing IT Towers in both the Capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar, in presence of Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor.

These IT Towers would be established at a cost of Rs 50 crore each.

Speaking on the occasion, Sinha observed that the development of IT infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir would go a

long way in creating a conducive environment for Startups, economic growth and creation of employment opportunities.

"Growth of the Information Technology sector is absolutely imperative for economic growth

resources to give a fillip to the Information Technology sector and last year alone, Rs.156 crore was provided to make substantial investment for effective penetration of digital technology in the entire Jammu and Kashmir", Sinha maintained.

He said that many of our youngsters, who are working in cities like Bangalore and Gurugram may also like to return and contribute to our efforts of promoting innovation entrepreneurship culture. The UT Government is working with a vision to promote the latest scientific and technology driven innovations to make J&K self-reliant, he added.

"Now, this infrastructure is

(Contd on page 9 Col 1)

NH closed on Day 2, avalanche warning issued; air traffic badly affected

No electricity in many snow bound areas across J&K

Fayaz Bukhari/
Gopal Sharma

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, Jan 4: The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway remained closed for the second consecutive day today even though

*Watch video on
www.excelsiornews.com

some stranded vehicles were cleared at Jawahar Tunnel with little improvement in weather, while flight operation at Jammu and Srinagar Airports also remained affected badly.

Due to closure of National Highway for the second day in view of heavy snowfall, over



People cover themselves under umbrellas as Srinagar experiences fresh snowfall on Monday. (UNI) Another pic on page 9.

5000 vehicles have been stranded in Qazigund, Khanabal area

in Kashmir besides Banihal, (Contd on page 9 Col 5)

7 JKP officers get MHA's award

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has announced Asadharan Aasuchana Kushalata Padak-2020 for seven officers of J&K Police for displaying exceptional courage and



Chandan Kohli, SSP; Tahir Ashraf, SP; Amit Verma, ASP; Ajay Sharma, DySP

for recognizing the services of the officers. He has said that such recognitions boost the morale of J&K Police officers, officials and plays a significant role in encouraging the force to work with more dedication and devotion.

The officers who have been awarded are SSP Rajouri Chandan Kohli, SP Operations

Govt-farmers' talks inconclusive

NEW DELHI, Jan 4:

The seventh round of talks between protesting unions and three Central Ministers ended inconclusively today as the farmer leaders insisted on the repeal of the three contentious farm laws right from the beginning, even as the Government listed various benefits from the Acts.

The next meeting will take place on January 8, farmer leaders said.

The two sides took a long break after just about one hour of discussions, during which representatives of protesting farmers had their own food, arranged from langar (community kitchen), as they have been doing for the last few times.

However, unlike the last round of talks on December 30, the Ministers did not join the union leaders for the langar food and were seen having their own discussion separately during the break, which lasted for almost two hours.

The two sides got together again to resume their discussions at around 5.15 pm, but no headway could be made as the talks remained focussed on the farmers' demand for the repeal of the Acts.

Farmer leaders said the (Contd on page 9 Col 5)

Bird flu cases in 4 States

SHIMLA/THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Jan 4:

Himachal Pradesh today became the fourth State to report cases of bird flu after Rajasthan, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh, with officials confirming that migratory birds found dead at Pong Dam Lake in Kangra district have tested positive for the dreaded avian influenza.

In Rajasthan, deaths of more than 170 new birds were reported from some districts today, taking the total fatalities in recent days to over 425. "Bird flu has been confirmed only in Jhalawar (district). Report of other deaths is yet to come," according to the State Animal husbandry department.

As some parts of Kerala too reported the influenza outbreak, authorities have ordered culling of ducks, hens and other domestic

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Pigeons taking corn seeds at Srinagar on Monday. (UNI)

LG administers oath to Justice Mithal as new CJ of J&K, Ladakh High Court

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha today administered the oath of office to Justice Pankaj Mithal as the new Chief Justice of the Common High Court for the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh at a swearing-in ceremony held at Convention Centre.

The Lieutenant Governor *Watch video on
www.excelsiornews.com

congratulated Justice Mithal for his new appointment.

Earlier, Registrar General of the High Court Jawad Ahmed read out the warrant of appointment. The proceedings of the oath ceremony were conducted by Nitishwar Kumar, Principal Secretary to the Lt Governor.

Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal has been appointed to head the High Court for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh in view of the retirement of Chief Justice Gita Mittal recently.

Former Chief Justice Gita Mittal, Judges of the High Court of J&K, Judges from Allahabad High Court, Members of Parliament, Advisors to the Lieutenant Governor, Chief Secretary, Administrative Secretaries, senior officers of

judiciary, civil administration, police, family members and friends of Justice Pankaj Mithal were also present on the occasion.



Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha administering oath of office to Justice Pankaj Mithal as new CJ of J&K and Ladakh HC.

-Excelsior/Rakesh

On December 31, 2020, President of India Ram Nath Kovind appointed Justice Pankaj Mithal, first puisne Judge of Allahabad High Court as Chief Justice of Common High Court for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office.

Justice Mithal graduated in Commerce from Allahabad enrolled as an advocate in Bar Council of UP in the year 1985 and subsequently started his practise. He had worked as Standing Counsel, UP Avas Evam Vikas Parishad, Lucknow since 1990 and as Standing Counsel of Dr B R Ambedkar University, Agra. He was elevated as Additional Judge to High Court on July 7, 2006 and took oath as Permanent Judge on July 2, 2008.

SECI terminates process for selection of developers

Uncertainty looms large over execution of 7500 MW solar power projects in Ladakh

Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, Jan 4: Uncertainty is looming large over execution of 7500 Mega Watts (MW) solar power projects in Leh and Kargil districts of Union Territory of Ladakh as two years long efforts to make selection of developers have failed to yield the desirable results and finally the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) Limited has terminated the process.

Official sources told EXCELSIOR that as part of the Government of India's targets of achieving a cumulative capacity of 100 Giga Watts (GW) solar PV installation by the year 2022,

Poor response to tender despite repeated extensions

a scheme was approved for setting up of 23 GW grid-connected solar PV projects in Leh and Kargil districts several years back.

The total capacity was targeted to be implemented in several phases, the first phase being implementation of 2500 MW grid-connected capacity in Kargil district and 5000 MW capacity in Leh district.

On December 31, 2018, the Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited, a Government of India Enterprise under the administrative control of the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, invited

proposals for selection of solar power developers for setting up of 7500 MW grid-connected solar power projects including implementation of power transmission and evacuation infrastructure in Leh and Kargil districts under Global Competitive Bidding.

It was mentioned in the Request for Selection document that Solar Energy Corporation of India will enter into Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with the selected bidder for purchase of solar power for a period of 35 years based on the terms, conditions and provisions of the Request for Selection, sources

informed. In order to ensure good response to the Request for Selection, the Solar Energy Corporation of India further mentioned that tariff to be quoted by the bidder shall be inclusive of all statutory taxes, duties, levies and cess and bidders will be free to avail fiscal incentives like Accelerated Depreciation, Concessional Customs and Excise Duties, Tax Holidays etc as available for such projects.

"Being the first multi-Giga Watt tender issued in the sub-continent and compounded by low response and industry tur-

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

Major infiltration bid foiled by troops

4 Al Badr militants, one Pak army man killed

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: Four militants of Al Badr outfit and a Pakistan army personnel were killed and three others injured as troops foiled an infiltration attempt on the Line of Control (LoC) in forward village of Tarkundi in Manjakote sector of Rajouri district recently.

Delayed reports said the intrusion bid was foiled on December 30 but details about killing of militants and Pakistan army personnel were received last night after bodies were detected lying on the LoC as weather cleared after few days of rains and light snowfall.

Confirming the incident, sources said a group of six

Bodies, arms spotted on LoC

Pakistani militants of Al Badr outfit with active support of Pakistan army tried to infiltrate into the Indian territory breaching LoC. Alert Indian troops challenged the militants and asked them to surrender.

However, the militants opened firing which was supported by the Pakistani troops with shelling and firing. The Indian troops retaliated and exchange of gun battle lasted throughout the night. Initially, it couldn't be ascertained whether the militants have been killed or manage to escape back. However, last night as the weather improved, troops

spotted dead bodies of four militants lying on Pakistan side of the LoC.

Intercepts revealed that a Pakistan army jawan was also killed in the exchange of firing while two militants managed to escape back in injured condition. All four slain militants were believed to be Pakistanis. However, their bodies couldn't be retrieved as they were lying on Pakistan side of the LoC, sources said; adding Pakistan army has also not picked up the bodies so far.

The militants were equipped (Contd on page 9 Col 1)