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**India, China hold
11-hour long talks**

NEW DELHI, Jan 24:

After a gap of over two-and-half months, India and China today held the ninth round of military talks specifically focusing on ways to move forward on the long-negotiated disengagement process in eastern Ladakh as thousands of their troops remained deployed at friction points under freezing conditions.

The Corps Commander-level meeting began at around 10 AM at the Moldo border point on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in

(Contd on page 9 Col 3)

**Injured jawan
dies, 7 bodies
found in PoK**

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 24: An Army



Naik Nishant Sharma (LoC) in Sunderbani sector of Rajouri district, has attained martyrdom while bodies of seven civilians have been recovered in Khui

(Contd on page 9 Col 3)

**Omar takes jibe
at Govt on
internet speed**

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Jan 24: Taking a jibe at the Government over very low internet speed in J&K, former Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) vice president Omar Abdullah today said 'come invest in J&K, we have the slowest internet in the country' makes for a great advertising slogan.

Abdullah was reacting to a report, according to which J&K features at the bottom with lowest internet speed of 0.8 Mbps while Telangana tops that chat

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

**Terror groups in
Pak switch
to new Apps**

SRINAGAR, Jan 24:

Amid a raging debate over privacy offered by messaging platforms like WhatsApp, terrorist groups and their handlers from Pakistan are switching to new applications which include one developed by a Turkish company, officials here said.

The three new applications came to light after evidence was collected following encounters with terrorists or those who surrendered before the Army gave details about their mode of radicalisation by Pakistan-based

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

**73 test +ve in
J&K, 12 in Leh**

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU/SRINAGAR/LEH, Jan 24: Seventy three persons today tested positive for COVID-19 while no casualties were reported in Jammu and Kashmir today. Twelve positive cases were reported in Ladakh.

Thirty one new cases were reported in Jammu region including 29 in Jammu district and one each in Udhampur and Kathua while rest of the districts didn't report any positive case today.

Thirty persons recovered from the virus in the Jammu

(Contd on page 9 Col 5)

WEATHER

JAMMU:
Mainly dry
TEMPERATURE
Max: 20.1 Degree C
Min: 7.0 Degree C
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
RH-I (Morning): 83.0 per cent
RH-II (Evening): 56.0 per cent
Sunset on Monday: 05.58 p.m.
Sunrise on Tuesday: 07.30 a.m.

SRINAGAR:
Mainly dry
TEMPERATURE
Max: 7.7 Degree C
Min: -1.9 Degree C
RELATIVE HUMIDITY
RH-I (Morning): 93.0 per cent
RH-II (Evening): 56.0 per cent

LEH:
TEMPERATURE
Max: +0.8 Degree C
Min: -11.1 Degree C

Will come up with series of steps to promote tourism in J&K
**PSC calls high-level meet of Central
Govt officials in New Delhi on Jan 27**

Panel to visit Jammu, lists several new projects

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, Jan 24: With a view to boost potential and ensure balanced promotion of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir, the Parliamentary Standing Committee (PSC) on Tourism, Culture and Transport headed by TG Venkatesh, a BJP Rajya Sabha member from Andhra Pradesh, has called high-level meeting of the senior officers of Tourism and Culture Ministry of the Central Government on January 27 in the Union capital to draw a roadmap for the projects.

The PSC also proposed to visit Jammu shortly but it has already decided to recommend several new projects and development of the existing ones, official sources told the Excelsior.

The Committee had only yesterday concluded its four day visit to Kashmir during which it toured various tourist spots, inter-acted with stakeholders and met senior political leaders

including former Chief Minister and National Conference president Dr Farooq Abdullah. Union Minister of State in Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Dr Jitendra Singh had also joined the PSC meeting in Srinagar with stakeholders.

"The PSC wants the Central and Union Territory Governments to give further boost to tourism potential in Jammu and Kashmir and take up new projects to attract tourists who are expected to throng the UT after March especially in the summer as Coronavirus pandemic has started easing and vaccination drive is picking up," sources said.

To discuss the opinion, the Parliamentary Standing Committee has gathered about tourism potential after its four-day visit to Kashmir, the Committee chairman, has called a meeting of senior officers of Tourism and Culture Ministry in New Delhi on January 27 during which it will take up the steps required

to further promote tourism in both divisions of Jammu and Kashmir, both in long-term and short-term measures.

The Committee will also submit its detailed report to the Parliament.

Sources said the Parliamentary Standing Committee, which comprises members of almost all political parties and is an independent Parliamentary Panel and not a Government body, will also visit Jammu shortly to take stock of tourism potential, new projects and measures needed to further attract the tourists. It was expected to explore new spots of tourism in the region.

"A Museum at Katra, Light & Sound System at birth place of Maharaja Pratap Singh, new projects at Mansar and Surinsar and exploring tourism potential in Doda, Kathua, Poonch and Rajouri are also on agenda of the Parliamentary Standing Committee," sources said.

Sources said the Parliamentary Standing

Committee in its meeting with senior officers of the Tourism and Culture Ministry in New Delhi is likely to come up with various suggestions which it gathered from stakeholders during its four-day visit to Kashmir to implement them on ground to attract more tourists to Jammu and Kashmir.

Tourists had eluded Jammu and Kashmir last year mainly because of COVID and prior to that due to August 5, 2019 decisions of the Central Government regarding withdrawal of special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcation of erstwhile State into two Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.

Sources expressed confidence that pilgrim tourism in Jammu and Kashmir this year will pick-up from March. Last year, just 17 lakh pilgrims had visited holy cave shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi Ji because of COVID curbs as compared to 80-90 lakh in the previous years or even one crore earlier.

(Contd on page 9 Col 1)

CS reviews arrangements

Govt gears up to receive 6 lakh Amarnath yatis this year

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 24: Chief Secretary, B V R Subrahmanyam today chaired 10th meeting of the High-Level Committee (HLC) of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) to review the preparations being made for a safe and hassle-free Shri Amarnathji Yatra 2021.

He reviewed in detail the facilities for safe, smooth, and secure movement of pilgrims particularly along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and Baltal and Chandanwari yatra tracks up to the holy cave.

The Chief Secretary also reviewed the status of track upgradation works on Baltal & Chandanwari routes, improvements at the access control gates, establishment of temporary camps, shelter sheds,

health/medical camps and Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs) at various locations, provisions of drinking water supply, lighting, LPG, ration,



Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam reviewing Shri Amarnathji yatra arrangements on Sunday.

medicine and mobile connectivity besides establishment of Joint Control Rooms as per NDMA suggestion.

He enjoined upon the admin-

istration to undertake preparations for an expected footfall of 6 lakh yatis this year. To further ensure secure passage of pilgrims, directions were issued to



Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam reviewing Shri Amarnathji yatra arrangements on Sunday.

appropriately widen walking tracks, install railings and construct retaining walls with special focus on laying down prefabricated cement tiles on tracks

from Baltal.



Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam reviewing Shri Amarnathji yatra arrangements on Sunday.

He directed the Divisional Commissioners of Jammu and Kashmir to closely monitor the arrangements being put in

Health Deptt fails to clear Rs 18 cr bills to Mediciti

**DHSK seeks report on servicing after
complaints of poor services**

Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR, Jan 24: The Health services in Jammu and Kashmir have suffered for the last over a year due to lack of coordination between Health Department and Mediciti Healthcare Services Pvt Limited which has a five years contract for servicing bio medical equipment in Government hospitals in J&K.

The company has sent a bill of over Rs 18 crore for servicing the bio-medical equipment at various Government hospitals in Jammu and Kashmir and the Health Department has failed to clear the bills but has given an on account amount of around Rs

4 crore to the company. The bills, as per the health officials, are being delayed as the company has failed to provide up to the mark services.

The Directorate of Health Services Kashmir held a meeting yesterday asking the Chief Medical Officers and Medical Superintendents of various hospitals to prepare a detailed report about equipment that was made functional by the service provider and that they failed to do.

The officials of the Health Services during the meeting told the Director that services provided by the Mediciti were not up to the mark and large number of machines including those of

emergency use are lying defunct for the last many months now.

An official said that a hospital in Srinagar has stopped surgeries as surgical cauterly is lying defunct for many months now and since last week another cauterly is defunct and despite service requests nothing was done by the service provider. Same is the case with emergency hospital in Qazigund, Anantnag where highway accident cases also report and surgical cauterly is defunct.

An official at one of the healthcare facilities in Srinagar said that their urine analyser is defunct for the last 4 months, centrifuge for 6 months and bio-

chemistry and Huma Star 200 analyser for 2 months. "We have given service requests many times but to no avail", he said.

The official said that it took over six months to repair X-ray machine of District TB hospital Kathua. "Similar is the case of USG machine and CR system at DH Bandipora", he said.

Dr Bilquees, Nodal Officer JLNM hospital, told Excelsior that they were facing problems in servicing prior to declaration of JLNM as COVID-19 hospital as servicing was taking a lot of time and some machines were not repaired at all. "The company is not able to repair the emergency machines like ventilators,

(Contd on page 9 Col 1)

Weather improves, air traffic resumes in Kashmir

NH restored, 2 found dead in stranded vehicle

Gopal Sharma

SRINAGAR/ JAMMU, Jan 24: Barring Gulmarg and Pahalgam, the minimum temperature improved across Kashmir today with the mercury settling above normal for this time of the year for the second night in a row in Srinagar, air traffic resumed at Srinagar and the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was restored in the afternoon.

Official sources said that air-traffic resumed at Srinagar Airport with morning flights getting delayed. However, traffic was normal in the afternoon. The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was restored this afternoon while two persons hailing from Kupwara in Kashmir were found dead in a

stranded vehicle near Banihal during the day.

SSP National Highway, M L Kaith told the Excelsior that traffic on highway was restored at around 1 pm after snow from Shaitani Nallah to Jawahar Tunnel and Lower Munda was cleared today. The multiple landslides between Nashri and

*Watch video on www.excelsionews.com

Banihal were also cleared before noon.

Kaith said about 1237 vehicles including 387 heavy carrying essentials and 850 LMVs crossed Jawahar Tunnel towards Kashmir this evening. He said the road was very slippery in Jawahar Tunnel area and the movement was very slow during

late this evening.

The movement of passenger vehicles was restricted tonight in Jawahar Tunnel area. He further said that in Udhampur Bypass, Dhar Road, Tikri-Falata, Manwal and Majalta areas of Jammu region over 1250 vehicles were stranded for the last two days. At first stranded vehicles will be cleared, he added.

District administration Ramban has issued advisory for highway commuters and asked them to confirm the status of the road from Traffic Police Control Rooms before starting the journey from Srinagar or Jammu side.

Official sources said that Shabir Ahmad Mir (32), son of Abdul Rashid Mir and Majid Ahmed Mir (35), son of Gulzar Ahmed Mir, both residents of

Kralpora in Kupwara district, were on way to Srinagar in Tata Mobile vehicle No. JK09B/7358 but left stranded after snowfall around Jawahar Tunnel due to closure of the highway early Saturday. Their vehicle along with nearly other 250 vehicles had been stranded near Nowgam village.

They said the duo was found unconscious inside their vehicle this morning and rushed to Banihal hospital, where both of them were declared as brought dead. It was not immediately clear whether they died of severe cold or asphyxia. The police later said that a Kangri and some charcoal was also found in the vehicle. They said things will be clear after post-mortem of the bodies.

(Contd on page 9 Col 7)

Pathankot attackers may have used same tunnel
**NIA likely to step-in, PP
visits tunnel site on IB**

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 24: January 2, 2016 sensational terror attack by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militants at Pathankot air base in which seven security personnel were martyred and five attackers were killed in three-day long operation, appeared to have its linkages in the terror tunnel detected yesterday by the BSF in Pansar area of Hiranagar sector in Kathua district as Qasim Jan, the mastermind of Pathankot and other terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir has been spotted at Shakargarh, just opposite the tunnel.

Further, investigations into Pathankot air base terror attack had taken agencies to infiltration route in Hiranagar sector, sources told the Excelsior.

"Not only Pathankot, but many more terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir including two at Nagrota and one at Jhajjar Kotli in Jammu district on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, could also be linked to the tunnel, which had been dug around eight years back and there were reports that it might

have been used by many militants for infiltration into the Indian territory," sources said.

Since most of these terror attacks are being investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), sources didn't rule out the possibility of NIA stepping into investigations in construction of the tunnels along International Border in Samba and Kathua districts. Four tunnels have been unearthed by the BSF on the International Border in past six months and two during last 10 days following massive anti-tunneling exercise undertaken by it.

The Punjab Police has also visited site of the tunnel detected yesterday as it had initially investigated Pathankot air base terror attack before the investigations were handed over to the NIA by the Union Home Ministry.

Sources said just three kilometers away from Pansar Border Out Post where the tunnel was found yesterday, is a known terror launch pad - Masroor Barha Khan - in Shakargarh district of Pakistan's Punjab province.

There are intelligence inputs that 2016 Pathankot airbase attack mastermind, Qasim Jan, is camping there. Jan, who is Jaish-e-Mohammad's operational commander was also involved in launching a group of fidayeen (suicide squad) who targeted Army installation in Nagrota few years back.

For the last few months, Jan along with another Jaish launching commander, Baba, who is camping in Shakargarh has made several attempts to infiltrate militants into Indian side to keep the pot of terrorism boiling.

Shakargarh, the area across the fence, is home to a terror training facility. On several occasions in the past, militants have been launched from this area to carry out attacks. Mastermind of Pulwama bombing Umar Farooq - nephew of Jaish chief, Masood Azhar - also stayed in one of the launch pads in Shakargarh area, before crossing over to the Indian side from Samba sector, sources said.

Failing to penetrate militants from the Line of Control (LoC), Pakistan often tries to exploit this particular stretch of border between

(Contd on page 9 Col 1)

Strengthening of internal vigilance in Deptts, Corporations

**J&K yet to start acting on
explicit guidelines of CVC**

Mohinder Verma

ACB website doesn't have details of DVOs

JAMMU, Jan 24: The Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has yet not started acting on the explicit guidelines/rules of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) regarding strengthening of internal vigilance in the Departments and Corporations. Moreover, neither the vital information about the Departmental Vigilance Officers (DVOs) is available in the public domain nor any proper format devised to review their performance despite the fact that they are considered as extended hands of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in fight against

the menace of corruption. Official sources told EXCELSIOR that following repeal of Jammu and Kashmir State Vigilance Commission Act, 2011 by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs vide Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Adaptation of State Laws) Order dated March 31, 2020 it became amply clear that Jammu and Kashmir Anti-Corruption Bureau will function strictly as per the guidelines of the Central Vigilance Commission on the lines of other Union Territories in the country.

However, the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory has yet not started acting on the guide-

lines of the Central Vigilance Commission, an apex body created to address the menace of corruption, with regard to strengthening of internal vigilance in the Government Departments and Corporations, sources said.

The CVC guidelines/rules clearly state that Chief Vigilance Officers or Departmental Vigilance Officers shall be appointed in each and every department and organization to assist the Head of the Department/organization in all vigilance matters. "In cases where the scale of operation of a particu-

(Contd on page 9 Col 3)

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