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## Two ex-MLCs quit PDP

*Excelsior Correspondent*

SRINAGAR, Mar 21: Senior People's Democratic Party leaders and former legislators Khursheed Aalam and Yasir Reshi today resigned from the basic membership of the party.

**Watch video on www.excelsiornews.com*

Former Member of Legislative Council (MLC), Khurshid Aalam this morning announced his resignation from the PDP stating that the party

*(Contd on page 4 Col 3)*

## India records 43,846 cases

NEW DELHI, Mar 21:

India recorded 43,846 new Coronavirus cases in a day, the highest single-day rise so far this year, taking the nationwide COVID-19 tally to 1,15,99,130, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated today.

Registering an increase for the 11th day in a row, the total active caseload has increased to 3,09,087, which now comprises 2.66 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 95.96 per

*(Contd on page 4 Col 1)*

## Vaccines, not lockdowns are answer: Omar

*Excelsior Correspondent*

SRINAGAR, Mar 21: National Conference leader Omar Abdullah today said one-day shutdowns to contain the spread of Coronavirus is a "meaningless tokenism" which can lead to complacency, and called for allowing more people to take vaccine against COVID-19.

The Madhya Pradesh Government had on March 19 announced Sunday lockdowns

*(Contd on page 4 Col 3)*

## Pak intruder arrested

*Excelsior Correspondent*

JAMMU, Mar 21: The BSF today arrested a Pakistani intruder at forward village of Chak Dulma in Samba sector but nothing significant was recovered from his possession except some cash.

The intruder disclosed his identity as Jayad Mohammad Hashmi, 40, son of Abdullah Hashmi, resident of Kaltarpur, Singh.

He was arrested soon after he entered into the Indian terri-

*(Contd on page 4 Col 2)*

## ACB charge sheets Patwari

*Excelsior Correspondent*

JAMMU, Mar 21: Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) produced charge sheet against Mohd Farooq, the then Patwari Halqa Dudu-Basantgarh and beneficiary Mohd Javed, who are accused of tampering Revenue record.

Charge sheet against Mohd Farooq (now Girdawar), resident of Kadwah, Basantgarh, Udhampur and Mohd Javed of Dudu, Udhampur (beneficiary) was presented before the Court

*(Contd on page 4 Col 3)*

### DPCs, DDCs, BDCs to get grants in April start

# As J&K spends highest Rs 65,000 cr, Centre to release most of budget in FY beginning

### ■ After Parl nod, funds to start pouring-in

**Sanjeev Pargal**

**JAMMU, Mar 21: In view of highest ever spending worth around Rs 65,000 crore during current financial year, the Central Government is likely to release majority part of the budget for 2021-22 to Jammu and Kashmir, which is expected to get the Rajya Sabha nod in next couple of days, from April 1.**

The Finance Department of the Union Territory Government will also place 35 percent of budget at the disposal of District Development Councils (DDCs), District Planning Committees (DPCs), Block Development Councils (BDCs), Head of Departments (HoDs) and others immediately after receiving the Central Government sanction to give pace to development works.

The DPC, DDC and BDCs are likely to be asked to finalize their plan of development works in the month of April itself to avoid any delay in development works.

"There has been highest ever spending of around Rs 65,000 crore in Jammu and Kashmir during current financial year of 2020-21. This was despite COVID pandemic which marred the year bringing works at several projects to halt. The Union Territory had been allotted Rs 1.01 lakh crore worth budget for 2020-21 which, in view of highest spending, has been increased to Rs 1.08 lakh crore," officials told the Excelsior.

**The Centre as well as UT Governments are expecting spending to further go up this fiscal year as the pandemic has subsided and there are good grounds for development. Moreover, the DDCs, BDCs and Panchayats are already in place while the DPCs are expected to be constituted within the next few days after issuance of revised protocol for the DDC chairpersons, vice chairpersons and members.**

The Jammu and Kashmir budget was introduced in the Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on March 17. It was passed by Lok Sabha the next day and is expected to be cleared by the Rajya Sabha in next couple of days.

"Soon after the budget is passed by the Parliament, the Central Government will release majority part of the budget to Jammu and Kashmir Government. The in-time receipt of the budget will facilitate the UT Government to further release budget to newly elected bodies, HoDs and all other Sectors for timely expenditure on development works including ongoing projects and new works to be taken in hands for next financial year," the officials said.

While 25 percent expenditure is incurred in every quarter, the Finance Department is likely to release over 35 percent budget for the concerned quarters immediately after receiving approval from the Government of India to ensure that development works don't suffer.

"There is not going to be any dearth of funds during upcoming financial year of 2021-22 from April 1 as budget of Jammu and Kashmir has been further increased by Rs 7000 crores for next fiscal as compared to current financial year," the officials said.

**The Centrally Sponsored Schemes for Jammu and Kashmir are now being funded at 90:10 in most of the cases. Only few schemes are in the ratio of 80:10, they added.**

The District Planning Committees, District Development Councils, Block Development Councils and Panchayats besides the Urban Local Bodies are likely to get the budget at the very beginning of the financial year to set pace for development works.

This is for the first time that the District Planning Committees and District Development Committees will finalize plan of the districts following elections held to the DDCs, which form third tier of the Panchayati Raj System in Jammu and Kashmir.

The DPCs, DDCs and BDCs

*(Contd on page 4 Col 1)*

*Almond garden known as Badamwari opens for public in Srinagar. — Excelsior/Shakeel*

# Keep political agenda aside, address economic crisis in J&K: Patil asks Centre

### *Party to give chance to young faces: Mir

*Excelsior Correspondent*

**SRINAGAR, Mar 21: Reviewing current situation and organizational affairs and activities in Kupwara and Baramulla districts today, AICC leader Incharge J&K affairs of the party, Rajni Patil has blamed Centre Government for ignoring the aspirations of the people, advising it to take effective measures to address the genuine needs and other developmental issues concerning people.**

Patil also urged the BJP Govt to keep its political agenda aside, take effective measure to address economic crisis, unemployment and other developmental issues in J&K.

AICC leader and JKPCC president GA Mir accompanied by PCC vice president Haji Abdul Rashid Dar, Bashir Ahmad Magrey, Gulzar Ahmad Wani, Surinder Singh Channi and other party leaders were addressing largely attended public gathering in border area Putu Shahi, Lolab of Kupwara district and also addressed workers convention of Baramulla district at Dak Bunglow.

*AICC leader Rajni Patil addressing a meeting in Lolab on Sunday.*

Addressing impressive public meeting in Lolab today, Patil expressed dismay over the current situation in J&K, maintaining that there is confusion to be seen on the ground due to the policies adopted by the Centre towards J&K.

"People are feeling disappointed with the BJP Govt's indifferent attitude towards their problems and other developmental issues, the promises and tall claims made by the BJP leaders and Ministers from time to time with regard to development of J&K especially after August 5, 2019 have fallen flat, which is indicative of BJP's dual faced politics based on lies and deceit," she said.

**Patil asked BJP led Centre Govt to be sincere towards J&K people and take effective measures to address their concerns without indulging in any kind of discrimination, as people of Jammu and Kashmir have suffered enormously since 1989 in one way or the other, besides the people living in borders are still witnessing**

*(Contd on page 4 Col 1)*

### *CJ takes serious note, issues directions to Registrars, POs

# COVID-19 guidelines not being strictly adhered to in majority of J&K courts

### ■ *Increased footfall enhancing risk of spreading infection*

**Mohinder Verma**

**JAMMU, Mar 21: Shocking it may sound but it is a fact that COVID-19 guidelines are not being strictly adhered to in majority of the courts in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and considerable footfall may lead to spread of infection at an alarming rate.**

This has been noticed by none else than the Chief Justice of the Common High Court of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh, who has taken serious note of the prevailing situation.

Keeping in view the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the Government of India and Government of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir relating to relaxation in restrictions regarding containment of COVID-19 and also considerable decline in daily number of infection cases, the High Court vide order dated February 3, 2021 permitted physical hearing of cases in all the courts and Tribunals in both the UTs with effect from February 8, 2021.

**It was mentioned in the guidelines of the High Court that entry of litigants and public into the court premises from the very outer gate shall continue to be prohibited and if any litigant on any reasonable ground is compelled to argue his case personally, he shall be allowed entry into the court premises subject to the condition that he makes an application at least two days prior to the date of hearing through e-mail to the Registrar Judicial/Presiding Officer of the court disclosing such compelling reasons.**

On satisfaction the Registrar Judicial or Presiding Officer (PO) concerned will grant permission and the copy of the order shall be sent to the incharge security at the main gate of the court premises for necessary action.

Thereafter, with a view to ensure recording of evidence the entry of witnesses and accused persons was also permitted vide High Court order dated February 10, 2021 subject to the strict compliance of latest SOPs pertaining to the containment of COVID-19 infection.

**However, Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal has observed that guidelines/directions are not being strictly adhered to resulting in considerable increase in footfall in the court premises thereby enhancing the risk of spread of COVID-19 infection particularly when such infection cases are increasing at an alarming rate.**

Keeping in view recent surge in COVID-19 infection cases, the Chief Justice has reiterated guidelines/direction and directed the Registrars Judicial of both wings of the High Court and Presiding Officers (POs) of all courts in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh to strictly implement the guidelines/direction.

"The reiteration of directions assumes importance especially in the light of the fact that surge is being witnessed in the COVID-19 cases across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh during the past one month", sources said.

**The COVID-19 guidelines**

*(Contd on page 4 Col 1)*

# One dies of COVID, 158 test +ve, 58 recover in J&K

*Excelsior Correspondent*

**JAMMU/SRINAGAR/ LEH, Mar 21: One person died of COVID-19 and 158 tested positive in Jammu and Kashmir while 58 others recovered from the virus.**

Twenty seven persons tested positive for the virus in Jammu region, 22 of them in Jammu district, three Samba and two in Doda district. No fresh cases were recorded in seven other districts.

Eleven persons recovered from the virus in Jammu region, all in Jammu district.

Jammu region now has 52375 Corona cases. Among them, 279 are active positives while 51364 have recovered from the virus and there have been 732 casualties.

Among the casualties, the highest 379 have been recorded in Jammu district followed by 64 in Doda, 57 Udhampur, 55 Rajouri, 53 Kathua, 41 Samba, 24 Poonch, 22 Kishtwar, 21 Ramban and 16 in Reasi districts.

**Meanwhile, the spike in COVID-19 cases in Kashmir continued as 131 today tested positive while one person died.**

One person died of COVID-19 in Kashmir today taking the death toll in J&K to 1981.

Those who tested positive for corona in Kashmir include 88 from Srinagar, 19 Baramulla, 14 Budgam, four Pulwama, 3 Anantnag and one from Bandipora, Ganderbal and Shopian.

With fresh cases Srinagar has now 28040 positive cases with 658 active, 26917 recovered, 465 deaths; Baramulla has 8495 positive cases with 121 active, 8196 recovered, 178 deaths; Budgam reported 8042 positive cases with 92 active positive cases, 7830 recovered, 120 deaths; Pulwama has 5927 positive cases with 35 active, 5800 recovered and 92 deaths; Kupwara has 5735 positive cases with 18 active, 5620 recoveries, 97 deaths; Anantnag district has 5109 positive cases with 18 active, 4997 recovered, 94 deaths; Bandipora has 4734 positive cases, with 12 active and 4660 recoveries and 62 deaths; Ganderbal has 4694 positive cases with 13 active, 4634 recoveries and 47deaths; Kulgam has 2759 positive cases with 16 active, 2689 recoveries

*(Contd on page 4 Col 1)*

### Snow clearance work on Mughal Road in progress

# J&K witnesses rain, cloudy sky with wind-storms; temp further drops

**Gopal Sharma**

**JAMMU, Mar 21: Many parts of J&K witnessed rain since last night, registering drop in temperature today while MeT office has predicted rain and cloudy weather for the next two more days.**

Official sources said that Ramban, Udhampur and Doda districts also witnessed light rain during the day today but the traffic on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and Batote-Kishtwar road kept plying. The authorities have also intensified the snow clearance work on Muhgal Road connecting Poonch- Rajouri with Shopian in Kashmir.

With repeated wind -storms since early morning, some brought some relief in plain areas of Jammu region from the Jammu, Samba and Udhampur areas continued to remain in the grip of cloudy weather. It dust -storm only after some drizzle in the afternoon.

While there was light rainfall in various parts of J&K at different intervals today, others received drizzling. Many parts of Kashmir valley also experienced light rain. There was no Sunshine today and dark clouds continued to hover over the sky showing some decline in temperature. So much so that even Sun didn't appear today even for a while in some areas.

*Jammu City witnesses rain on Sunday evening. Another pic on page 4. — Excelsior/Rakesh*

**Reports reaching here revealed that power supply and water supply were snapped in various parts of the region due to repeated dust storms causing some loss to the power infrastructure. Even in Udhampur and Reasi areas, the power supply was not available for hours together due to fault in the power lines.**

Meanwhile, the MeT depart-

*(Contd on page 4 Col 3)*

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## WEATHER

**JAMMU:**
Possibility of light rain / thundershowers
**TEMPERATURE**
Max: 23.7 Degree C
Min: 16.8 Degree C
**RELATIVE HUMIDITY**
RH-I (Morning): 67.0 per cent
RH-II (Evening): 49.0 per cent
Sunset on Monday: 06.44 p.m.
Sunrise on Tuesday: 06.32 a.m.

**SRINAGAR:**
Possibility of light rain/ thundershowers
**TEMPERATURE**
Max: 15.6 Degree C
Min: 7.4 Degree C
**RELATIVE HUMIDITY**
RH-I (Morning): 72.0 per cent
RH-II (Evening): 67.0 per cent

**LEH:**
**TEMPERATURE**
Max: 14.8 Degree C
Min: -3.1 Degree C

# Pesticide labs await administrative approval in Kashmir

**Suhail Bhat**

**SRINAGAR, Mar 21: The establishment of two state-of-the-art pesticide testing labs in North and South Kashmir that were announced last year to curb the menace of spurious chemicals is awaiting administrative approval.**

The absence of the labs is causing an undue delay in reports as authorities depend on laboratories outside the Valley. The growers claimed that the reports of samples come after spraying season leaving the crop vulnerable to several diseases.

"The reports should be available before the spraying season so that the farmers opt for the best quality pesticides and save their crop," an apple grower said, the reports arrive towards the end of the season after damages are done.

The Government announced the setting up of the labs following a clamor from the farmers last year. The growers claimed substandard pesticides failed to stop the spread of scab infection, affecting 40% of their crop last year. "The pesticide dealers took full advantage of lockdown last year and sold substandard pesticides that were ineffective in controlling the diseases," an apple grower said.

**They said the scrupulous persons are selling spurious pesticides and fertilizers to the growers. "Pesticides and fertilizers of hundreds of companies bearing different names and price tags have become available in the Valley. They are selling the worst chemicals and no one is stopping them," Younis Ahmed, grower said, adding substandard pesticides are destroying the crops.**

They said that the pesticides and fungicides should be checked before entering Kashmir. "The product should be checked before they are available in the market," Basit Ahmad, an apple grower said, adding that the disease affected nearly 60% of the crop last year, causing a huge loss.

Kashmir is the biggest apple-producing region of India. It produces 23 to 24 lakh metric tonnes of apples every year. It is followed by Himachal Pradesh, which produces about 8 lakh metric tonnes of apple, while Uttarakhand is at the third position with about 4 lakh metric tonnes of apple production.

**Director Horticulture, Aijaz Ahmad, told Excelsior that they have sent a detailed project report for the setting up of labs to the Government "We are awaiting approval. Once approval is granted, the work will start," he said.**

He added that they have already identified land for the projects. "We even have a building in North Kashmir which can be used for the purpose," he said.

He, however, suggested since the bulk of pesticides in Kashmir is used by the horticulture industry, the department should be made licensing authority.