

500 pilgrims rescued by ITBP jawans as rains lash holy cave area

5000 perform darshan

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, July 26: About 500 yatis were rescued as flash floods hit Lower Cave area of Shri Amarnath Ji this afternoon after heavy rains lashed the yatra area.



Yatis being shifted to safer areas as heavy rains lash holy Cave area on Tuesday.

According to sources about 500 pilgrims were at the Lower cave when heavy rains lashed the area and alert jawans of ITBP and J&K Police swung into action and rescued them to safer places. However no loss of life or property was reported and yatra also proceeded smoothly during the day with over 5000 pilgrims performing darshan at cave shrine by this evening.

According to officials heavy rains lashed the cave shrine area during this afternoon and about the 500 yatis camping at Lower Cave area were rescued by the jawans of ITBP and JK Police who were on duty in the area to safer places and no loss of life or property has been reported.

Officials said that the yatra plied smoothly and 5038 pilgrims drawn from different parts of country performed darshan of naturally formed Ice Lingam in holy cave by this evening.

With this the total pilgrims per-

Yesterday evening 2,57,921 pilgrims had performed darshan of naturally formed Ice Lingam in the holy cave of Shri Amarnath Ji.

Meanwhile, one pilgrim identified as Chandershekhar G Patil, 48, was brought dead to Base Camp Hospital, Panjtarni. He was a patient of hypertension and diabetes. Though earlier doctors tried a lot but the patient could not be revived. His body is at Base Hospital Panjtarni, officials added.

A fresh batch of 2189 pilgrims left for twin base camps of Baltal in Ganderbal district of Central Kashmir and Nunwan, Pahalgam in Anantnag district of South Kashmir in a cavalcade of 72 vehicles early this morning under tight security arrangements.

Out of them 1374 pilgrims preferred the traditional and longest 48 kilometre Nunwan-Chandanwari track, while 815 pilgrims preferred the shortest 14 kilometre Baltal track. These pilgrims will leave for holy cave from their respective base camps early tomorrow morning.

More over hundreds of yatis camping at Nunwan Base Camp, Chandanwari, Sheshnag, Panjtarni camps and Baltal Base camp also started their onwards sojourn this morning.

The 43 day long yatra will culminate on Swan Purnima coinciding with Raksha Bandhan festival falling on August 11 when holy mace of Lord Shiva from Dashnami Akhara Srinagar will reach the cave shrine.

Strengthening bottom-up model is key towards making NC stronger: Omar

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, July 26: The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah on Tuesday exhorted party functionaries to work in tandem towards making the party



Omar Abdullah meeting with NC leaders & workers at the party headquarters in Srinagar on Tuesday.

stronger at grassroots level in order to take on the imminent challenges to the people of J&K.

This he said while addressing a delegation of workers and functionaries from Kupwara here at the party headquarters Nawa-e-Subha, Srinagar.

Interacting with the party functionaries, Omar said political parties cannot rely on their opinions in policy framing at any level in the party. "The top down modus operandi in policy framing has no place in NC and for that matter in any democratic setup. Our workers are our eyes and ears. For NC

to deepen its roots ever more than before, it is imperative for our zonal, district functionaries to value workers," he said and added that strengthening of the bottom-up model holds the key towards making the party stronger to take on the challenges in the future.

He said, go beyond development. "We are struggling for the restoration of our infringed democratic and constitutional rights. There can be no trade-off between development and our honour. Both have to go hand in hand.

Extolling the workers, Omar asked them to continue to shoulder people's worries. He assured them that the party leadership will raise the issues concerning people, particularly unemployed youth, aggrieved farmers, tribals, and other backward classes at all forums.

The visiting delegation comprised the party's district, block and DDC members. The delegation was led by District Vice President Kupwara Muhammad Ramzan.

Among others, Additional General Secretary Dr Sheikh Mustafa Kamal, MP Muhammad Akbar Lone, Party's Chief Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq, and Deputy Political Secretary to VP Mudassar Shahmiri were also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, NC functionaries including General Secretary Ali Muhammad Sagar, Provincial President Nasir Aslam Wani, Shameema Firdous, Ali Muhammad Dar, Imran Nabi Dar, Shokat Mir, Peer Afaq Ahmed, Ghulam Mohi Ud Din Mir, Ahsan Pardesi, Syed Tauqeer, Salman Ali Sagar, Shabir Kullay, Er. Sabiya Qadri also met Omar Abdullah.

Today's challenges, Omar fur-



DG CISF Sheel Vardhan Singh calling on LG in Srinagar. DG CISF, Norwegian Ambassador, Chandhok call on LG

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, July 26: Sheel Vardhan Singh, Director General, Central Industrial Security Force, today called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at Raj Bhavan here.

The Lt Governor and the DG CISF held discussion on various matters pertaining to security arrangements at the important installations. Government institutions and industrial establishments.

The Lt Governor lauded the commendable efforts of the CISF personnel in keeping the vital institutions secure while serving the people.

The Lt Governor extended his best wishes to the DG and the CISF personnel for maintaining the high standards of training and professionalism, and discharging their duties of serving the nation.

Meanwhile, Norwegian ambassador to India Hans Jacob Frydenlund called on the Lieutenant Governor.

During the meeting, the Lt Governor and the Norwegian ambassador held discussion pertaining to healthcare facilities of J&K UT.

The meeting also discussed the India-Norway cooperation in Healthcare sector.

The Lt Governor said that the UT administration is putting dedicated efforts on developing the health infrastructure, and registered considerable improvement in various health indicators. He said, our focus is availability, quality and affordability to bridge the health gap of people and to reduce the inequalities in healthcare in rural areas.

The Lt Governor reiterated the commitment of UT administration to meet the Sustainable Development Goals for ensuring

healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.

Veena Chandhok, Chairperson, Devki Arya Putri Pathshala High School, Srinagar also called on the Lieutenant Governor.

Veena Chandhok projected various issues pertaining to the smooth functioning of the Devki Arya Putri Pathshala High School, including restoration of the school building, maintenance and transportation.

She informed that the school is a century old institution providing with the objective of started holistic & value-based education, particularly to the girls belonging to marginalized sections of the society.

The Lt Governor assured Chandhok to address the genuine issues projected during the interaction.

DGP sanctions scholarship

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, July 26: Continuing its efforts to provide financial assistance to the school going wards of deceased police personnel, the Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbag Singh has sanctioned financial assistance in favour of 30 such wards vide an order issued today.

Rupees five thousand each has been sanctioned in favour of thirty wards, pursuing education between primary to graduation. Scholarship has been sanctioned for the academic year 2021-2022 out of the Central Police Welfare Fund. Police headquarters during the current years has sanctioned scholarship in favour of 131 school going wards of deceased police personnel who died while in service due to natural/accidental deaths.

Kejriwal meets traders of Gujarat; promises to end atmosphere of fear, fix GST system

Excelsior Correspondent

NEW DELHI/GUJARAT, July 26: Promising ending the atmosphere of fear, and bringing respect and honour for the business community of Gujarat, AAP National Convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal today appealed the people of the coastal state to give the Party a chance.

"If we don't fulfill our promises, I will not come again to ask you for votes," Kejriwal said while interacting with traders during a meeting held at Town Hall in Rajkot. During the event, the traders interacted with Kejriwal and raised their problems in front of him.

Speaking to the Gujarati traders, Kejriwal talked about the complex taxation policies of the Government. He said, "GST is a very complicated system. I know many small business owners who have had to close their doors as a result of the GST. What is the point of a tax that causes businesses to close? We require such a tax system throughout the country, where people can easily understand taxation. This whole system is very complex and needs to be simplified so that

traders and industrialists can pay taxes comfortably."

He declared that if the AAP Government is formed in the State, the traders in Gujarat will be able to



do business fearlessly. He stated, "By ending the atmosphere of fear, and bringing respect and honour for the community, we will free everyone from corruption and will issue pending refunds of VAT and GST within six months. We did not increase any tax in Delhi in the last five-seven years and stopped Raid Raj, yet we provide electricity, water, education and healthcare free of cost in Delhi. This year's CAG report says that only the Delhi Government is running in profit in the whole country."

Giving five guarantees to Gujarat's traders and industrialists, Kejriwal stated that if the Aam Aadmi Party forms a Government, they will put a stop to the fearful atmosphere. "AAP will allow for

an administration free of corruption. No one else in the country can do it but the AAP. Only we can provide freedom from corruption because we are steadfastly honest people. Now-a-days, people throw a lot of mud at us, but the mud doesn't stick to us. The people of the country are aware that the AAP and its supporters are truthful," he stated.

The Delhi CM stated that many VAT and GST refunds are pending and all refunds will be issued within six months of AAP coming to Government. "Simultaneously, by meeting with traders and speaking with the Central Government about the full GST process, we would strive to make it easy and do whatever we can at our level. We'll fix the entire GST system in the public interest," he added.

Earlier in the day, Arvind Kejriwal visited Somnath to pay obeisance at the Somnath Jyotirlinga Temple and sought the lord's blessings for the country. "Felt great to visit Somnath Temple, I prayed for the happiness and peace of the country and Gujarat and prayed the Lord to make India the number one country in the world," Kejriwal said.

PIL on Islamic Banking Court can't enter into realm of policy decision of Govt: DB

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, July 26: In a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking the introduction of Islamic Banking in Jammu and Kashmir, Division Bench of High Court comprising Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal and Justice Javed Iqbal Wani has held that court cannot enter into the realm of policy decision of the Government.

The PIL filed by an NGO namely J&K Peoples Forum in 2018 is seeking directions upon the Union Finance Ministry for issuing necessary notification for the introduction of Shariah compliant windows (Islamic banking) as recommended by Deepak Mohanty Committee as well as in the light of a report of the inter-departmental group of RBI.

The Forum also seeks direction to RBI for taking immediate steps in the constituent banks including the J&K Bank so as to facilitate Shariah compliant windows. The Forum wants J&K Bank Limited to place before the court entire details of Non Performing Accounts (NPAs) and the steps taken for recovery of the outstanding amount in NPAs, saying the same is public money which cannot be allowed to be misappropriated either by the account holders or by the management of the bank.

After hearing both the sides, the DB observed, "a counter affidavit has been filed on behalf of the Reserve Bank of India and it has been stated that in the year 2013, Ministry of Finance, Government of India had requested the Reserve Bank of India to give its opinion on introduction of Islamic Banking in India".

"An interdepartmental group was constituted under the chairmanship of one Rajesh Verma to examine the feasibility of introducing Islamic Banking in India. The committee vide its report declined to introduce Islamic Banking, however, the Government appointed another committee headed by Deepak

Mohanty in the year 2015 to look into the aspect", the DB observed, adding "the committee in its report submitted to the Reserve Bank of India on 28.12.2015 made certain recommendations permitting interest free banking in certain respects but the report was not accepted by the Government".

"The Government vide its letter dated 21.03.2017 specifically conveyed its decision that Islamic Banking is not feasible and Shariah Banking Window cannot be opened", the DB fur-

ther observed, adding "the decision of the Government is a policy decision which is beyond the purview of judicial review more particularly in a public interest petition".

The DB held that the court cannot enter into the realm of policy decision of the Government. In case petitioner or any person is aggrieved by the policy decision it may take appropriate steps to challenge it before the proper forum, if advised. Accordingly, the PIL was disposed of.

After Khushal Sar, Gilsar, NLCO restores 4 choked springs in Ganderbal

Irfan Tramboo

SRINAGAR, July 26: After restoring the Khushal Sar and Gilsar lakes in Srinagar, the Nigeen Lake Conservation Organization (NLCO) has restored at least 4 springs in the Watlar area of Ganderbal which now stand rejuvenated with the enhanced flow, their water being used for various purposes.

In this regard, the work was started by the NLCO some time ago and as of now, 99% of restoration work on these springs stands completed even as the same has now prompted the district administration in Ganderbal to work towards the rejuvenation and restoration of water bodies in the district.

Manzoor Ahmad Wangnoo, who heads the NLCO, told Excelsior that these springs are all at one particular place at Watlar and stood choked due to which the water flow witnessed hindrances and did not flow efficiently down the stream.

"These springs were in bad condition and the restoration of the same will now ensure improvement in the water flow which will ultimately benefit the agricultural land and the same can be used for drinking water purposes," Wangnoo said.

He said that the springs have been demarcated and the necessary structures have been put in place to ensure the protection of the same. "Water flow stands restored; people are now drinking the water of the springs; using it for irrigation purposes while rest flows down into the river Sindh," he said.

He said in Ganderbal, there is a need for the administration to work for the restoration of the water bodies, as in the district, he said, there are several streams and other water bodies that stand choked due to polythene which has accumulated over the years.

"In Ganderbal, we saw a stream

filled with polythene. We then cleaned it a little bit, in a bid to get the attention of the administration. In this regard, I am going to write to the district administration for necessary action," he said.

The NLCO Chairman said that by such initiatives, they are aiming to instill a sense of responsibility among the people because there are several other such springs that need immediate attention.

"If we talk of Khushal Sar, Gilsar, the springs have disappeared and for that, there is a need for immediately starting a campaign to restore those springs too; there is a need for ensuring that the menace polythene is ended because that's the main culprit," he said.

He said that as the campaign for restoring the springs was started, the people have started to identify such water bodies in their areas and that it seems, people are getting

aware of it. "With this, we are getting messages from the people telling us that they have springs in their areas and I see it has the plus point of what we have done in Watlar," he said.

The areas from where the people have reached out to NLCO include, Rainawari, Sazgaripora and Gilkadal informing them about the presence of springs. "The initiative has kicked up and it will ensure that the residents wake up and start cleaning the water springs in their areas," he said.

In the process of cleaning the water bodies, under Mission Ehsas-3, the NLCO has also engaged the school children, which it said, will effectively ensure the dissemination of the message and will also help in raising awareness regarding the protection of water bodies across Kashmir.

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