

'Angkor Vat temple in Cambodia shows our culture even travelled abroad'

## Dogras, Sikhs only communities that fought outside to extend Indian borders: Karan

Sanjeev K. Sharma

JAMMU, Feb 25: It was only Sikhs and Dogras (a community living in Jammu region and in most parts of Himachal Pradesh) who fought outside India and extended territories of the country. Rajputs fought bravely inside India and Maharana Pratap is a big name in this regard while Chatrapati Shivaji led Marathas who displayed extraordinary valour in battlefields but all these battles took place inside India.

This was stated by Dr. Karan Singh, son of the last Hindu monarch, Maharaja Hari Singh, of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir State.

He also said that Sher-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh had even conquered the foreign lands till Kabul with active support of Dogras in such adventures.

"Today also the brave Dogra community is serving with valour in Indian defence forces and there are 'Veer Gathas' (legends of bravery) highlighting boldness of Dogras," the royal scion of J&K stated adding: "It doesn't matter that Dogras are 50 or 80 lakh in number because the Parsis being even lesser than us have given personalities like General Manikshaw to India and our General Zorawar Singh is also known across the world. So it is not the number of members in a community that matters but deeds do matter."

He further said that people from across India proudly claim that Ladakh belong to the country but they don't know how it happened.

"Like Ladakh, Gilgit (now under illegal occupation of Pakistan) was also not part of India but it was Dogra forces which invaded and won these territories and General Zorawar Singh had a big role in that. We have laid our lives, rendered supreme sacrifices and thousands of our people have shed their blood to make these territories part of India," Karan Singh, who also remained Sadar-e-Riyasat of erstwhile J&K State, said.

He mentioned how the Dogra rule was established in the State of Jammu and Kashmir when Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab accomplished coronation ceremony of one of his loyal generals—Maharaja Gulab Singh on the bank of Chenab river in Akhnoor near Jai



Former Sadar-e-Riyasat of erstwhile J&K State, Dr Karan Singh addressing a gathering at Jammu on Saturday.

Pota Ghat and applied Tilak over his forehead upside down to which Purohitis (Hindu clerics) objected and Ranjit Singh satisfied them by saying that he did so because he wanted that roots of Gulab Singh's family may reach depth.

"See how his (Maharaja Ranjit Singh's) blessing is still working even today as we exist while his own family now cease to exist," Karan Singh said.

Earlier, he lauded architecture of south Indian temples and said

\* Watch video on [www.excelstionews.com](http://www.excelstionews.com)

that the big temple of Angkor Vat in Cambodia clearly shows that our culture was not confined to India but it travelled abroad also.

Karan Singh informed that apart from Jammu region, Dogra region also includes at least half of Himachal Pradesh with areas like Kangra, Chamba, Bilaspur and other places wherever Dogri language is spoken.

Dr. Karan Singh, who is also former Governor and founder of Amar Mahal Museum & Library, was addressing a gathering after inaugurating a three day 'The Tawi Festival' in Jammu on Saturday.

He said: "My daughter Dr. Jyotsna Singh has arranged everything to make the festival a platform for sharing cultural knowledge and information besides providing a bunch of cultural programmes for entertainment."

Elaborate arrangements have been made by Dr. Jyotsna Singh to hold musical programmes besides ensuring to make the people aware about the Dogra cuisines and traditional Dogra dresses that form an essential part of Dogra culture.

## Heavy traffic jam on NH in Ramban

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 25: Heavy traffic jam was witnessed today on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in Ramban district.

According to the reports, as soon as the Highway was opened for traffic after Friday closure on account of maintenance, the vehicular traffic came



Heavy traffic jam at Ramban on Jammu Srinagar national highway on Saturday. (UNI)

to a standstill with vehicles plying on highway at snail's pace. Moreover, the intermittent incidents of shooting stones in

Mehtar-Cafeteria stretch also contributed to the traffic jam. The 20 kilometer stretch between Chanderkote and Digdol was the most affected with traffic jam due to single lane.

This was the situation when only light motor vehicles were released on the Highway from both sides and heavy vehicles. However, traffic police personnel were on the job to clear the traffic jam and ensure free flow of traffic on the highway.

## CS for developing Amrit Sarovar in each panchayat

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 25: Chief Secretary, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta today reiterated that J&K is well on the path of developing an Amrit Sarovar in each Panchayat. He made out that these Water bodies are going to be the hub of activities in these panchayats besides being a vital asset to protect the fragile environment.

He maintained that 'Jan Bhagidari' should be made the hallmark of this Mission with people's participation at all levels. He also maintained that the works should be carried out with cooperation of general public. He asked them to involve fully the PRI and locals in this development activity in consonance with the major aims of this flagship scheme.



Dr. Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, addressing a meeting.

Dr. Mehta emphasised on participation of freedom fighters, Padma Awardees etc in the initiation and inauguration of these public projects. He observed that activities like flag hoisting on important dates like 26th January and 15th August and other social, educational, recreational and environmental activities would be carried out round the year on these water bodies. He urged them to take benefit of all the Central flagship schemes like MGNREGA,

PMKVY, XV Finance Commission Grants or similar schemes from the State/ Central government either individually or in combination for this purpose.

He also asked for developing these water bodies on modern lines besides plantation of trees and initiation of other recreational facilities around them. He highlighted that as per the Central Government guidelines the excavated soil/silt should be readily made available for infrastructure projects in the vicinity of the demarcated AmritSarovar sites.

The Chief Secretary also encouraged the public and CSR Bodies to contribute to the endeavour of rejuvenation of AmritSarovars across the UT. He made out that the Mission is boosting the rural livelihood as certain completed Sarovars have the potential to be used for purpose of different activities such as irrigation, fisheries etc.

It was highlighted that the Amrit Sarovar is to be generally constructed on at least 1 acre of land with a water holding capacity of about 10,000 cubic meters. The Mission aims at developing and rejuvenating 75 water bodies in each district of the country as a part of celebration of Azadika Amrit Mahotsav.

It is noteworthy to mention here that J&K was the first among States/UTs in the country which completed construction of 75 Amrit Sarovars in each district. Further the UT has completed 2423 Amrit Sarovars all across the districts of the UT and is 2nd in the country only after the bigger state of UP in completion of Amrit Sarovars. It has also identified 4042 sites for development and already taken in hand work on 2674 sites all over J&K.

## CAT directs Govt to treat services of IRP officials under OPS

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Feb 25: The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has directed the Government to treat the services of Indian Reserve Police (IRP) officials for Old Pension Scheme (OPS) under the relevant Pension Rules which were in force in 2009 and pass necessary orders within three months in this regard.

About 82 officials of the IRP who were selected and appointed by the Selection Board after due process of selection for the post of constables in the Police Department approached the CAT that though their recruitment process took place in 2009 and selected and appointed by or before December 31, 2009 but the authorities issued their formal joining appointment order after 31.12.2009 causing them great prejudice as it made them ineligible for the OPS.

The advertisement notice was issued on 7.2.2009 by the Director General of Police J&K. The process in this regard was initiated and Selection Board was constituted, which submitted its recommendations 26.09.2009, the competent authority accorded approval for selection of the candidates along with applicants. They were directed to report to the Dy Inspector General of Police IRP Kashmir Range at Armed Police Complex Zewan Srinagar, for document verification.

Subsequently, the applicants reported before DIG IRP and the appointment orders issued to them, joined the department immediately and since then they

have been discharging their duties. They are now being governed by SRO 400 dated 24.12.2009 (new pension scheme) which is not applicable to them. Their counsel Lone Altaf submitted before the bench of Chhabilendra Roul and Harvinder Kaur Oberio that though the applicants are similarly situated to others who are governed by the un-amended pension rules as the process of selection was one and such other candidates were also selected through the same appointment process.

The CAT while allowing the pleas said that there is no dispute that the recruitment notice was issued in February 2009, applicants applied in pursuance to the same, further the selection process was conducted and concluded in the same year as result was declared in 2009 itself. What remained was verification process prior to formal appointment. Those who could get their appointment offer prior to 31.12.2009 are under the OPS and applicants who could not get the offer prior to the cut off of 31.12.2009 have been placed in New Pension Scheme (NPS) as per SRO 400.

The reply filed in opposition to the pleas of these candidates by the authorities have stated that they issued enrolment orders to the present applicants on comple-

## MeT forecasts rains, snow in Kashmir

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Feb 25: The weatherman today forecast scattered to fairly widespread light rain and snow in Kashmir for two days.

A Meteorological Department official said that scattered light rain and snow was expected for subsequent two days. In the meantime, Srinagar recorded a low of 1.6°C, the same as on the previous night and it was above normal by 0.1°C for the city.

Qazigund recorded a low of 0.2°C, also the same on the previous night and it was 0.2°C below normal for the town.

Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 3.2°C against minus 3.8°C on the previous night and it was 0.3°C above normal for the tourist resort.

Kokernag recorded a low of 2.5°C against 2.0°C on the previous night and it was 2.4°C above normal for the place.

Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 1.0°C against minus 3.4°C on the previous night and it was 4.8°C above normal for the skiing resort.

In Kupwara town, the mercury settled at minus 0.3°C against 0.2°C on the previous night and it was 0.3°C above normal for the town. Leh and Kargil recorded a low of minus 9.0°C and 12.4°C respectively.

While Chillai-Kalan, the 40-day long harsh winter period that started on December 21 and a 20-day-long period called 'Chillai-Khurd' that followed it have ended, Kashmir is under grip of 10-day-long period 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold) which ends next week.

## 2-day 'Asikni Bhaderkashi Utsav' concludes in Bhaderwah

Excelsior Correspondent

DODA, Feb 25: Two-day long 'Asikni Bhaderkashi Utsav' which impressively showcased the potential of district Doda in general and Bhaderwah area in particular in the tourism sector, concluded today.

The successful culmination of the event has brought the Bhaderwah as all weather and round the year tourist destination.

\* Watch video on [www.excelstionews.com](http://www.excelstionews.com)

on tourism map. The Utsav witnessed footfall of thousands of people from all over the country, along with some foreign tourists.

First of its kind traditional fashion show, Snow Wrestling (Kusti), Snow Cricket, Snow Football and Local Lathbazi showed the enthusiasm of the people who visited Jai Valley in these two days. Mesmerizing performance of renowned Kabul Bukhari, local artists, Band of Bhaderwah and others spellbound the audience.

Rafting at Shibnot, Paragliding at Lake View Resort Gatha, Hot air balloon at Jai Valley, Snow Scooters, Snow Cycling, Snow Sledging, Snow Skiing and Snow Trekking made the day of the tourists. The events have been instrumental in highlighting the local culture and tradition also. Various prizes were distributed amongst the winners, who took part in various competi-



Lt Governor chairing a meeting on Saturday.

## Conduct causative analysis of road accidents for multi-pronged strategy: LG

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 25: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha today chaired a high-level meeting to review the road safety measures in J&K, at the Civil Secretariat.

The meeting was attended by Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to Lt Governor; Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary; RK Goyal, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department; Dilbag Singh, DGP; H. Rajesh Prasad, Principal Secretary, H&UDD; Shaileendra Kumar, Principal Secretary, Public Works (R&B) Department; Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, besides senior officers from Traffic Police and UT administration in person and through virtual mode.

During the meeting, the Lt Governor took an appraisal of the implementation of directions issued with regard to improving the Road Safety in the UT and steps taken since the previous meeting.

G. Prasanna Ramaswamy, Administrative Secretary, Transport Department presented the detailed Action-taken report on the status of major infrastructure projects (IDTR Kot Bhalwal & ICC, Samba); enforcement activities by Traffic & Motor Vehicle Department; working of District Road Safety Councils, action taken by road owning agencies for improving the safety of the roads, Installation of CCTVs along roads by NHAI and Police; status of Intelligent Traffic Management System in JMC and SMC, streamlining of Integrated Road Accident Database (IRDA).

While reviewing the enforcement activities being undertaken by the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Department, the Lt Governor directed for taking strict action against the violators who temper with speed limit devices installed in their vehicles.

The Lt Governor also enquired about the completion of works related to identifying black spots along highways and utilisation of the road safety fund.

The chair was informed that

100 unauthorized cuts have been plugged, besides crash barriers along 98.65 Kms and 3104 speed limit signages have also been erected since April 2022.

Appreciating the efforts of all stakeholders for their commendable efforts towards improving road safety in UT, the Lt Governor asked them to develop a robust mechanism to check the health status of drivers.

The Lt Governor further asked the concerned departments to conduct causative analysis of road accidents for multi-pronged road safety strategy. He also issued directions to complete the works of crash barriers installation at the identified spots.

"All stakeholders to work towards the common goal of road safety & reducing road fatalities," the Lt Governor said. Reviewing the process of

installation of CCTVs along roads on National Highways, the Lt Governor asked the concerned agencies to complete the work well within the stipulated timeframe.

He further stressed on addressing the issues of old vehicles, if any, running on roads, checking overloading and unauthorised hoardings.

Directions were also issued for completing Inspection and Certification Centre (ICC), Samba, Institute of Driving, Training and Research (IDTR), Kot Bhalwal, Jammu and Intelligent Traffic Management Systems at JMC & SMC and making them functional at the earliest. The Lt Governor stressed upon active cooperation of all the stakeholders and effective measures for road safety and appropriate interventions to reduce road accidents.



Divisional Commissioner Kashmir during a meeting on Saturday.

## Property tax in J&K comparatively low: Div Com

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Feb 25: Amid uproar over the imposition of property tax in Jammu and Kashmir, the Divisional Commissioner Kashmir, V K Bidhuri, today said that the tax rate in the Union Territory is comparatively low.

Speaking to reporters here, Bidhuri who was accompanied by Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) Commissioner, Athar Aamir Khan, said that the move is aimed at ensuring better facilities for the people of the J&K.

The Divisional Commissioner said J&K is the last among the states and UTs where this tax has been imposed. Bidhuri said property tax is the main source of revenue for urban local bodies and poor are exempted.

"Property tax is the main source of revenue for a municipality. It is a progressive tax and it is not imposed uniformly across the spectrum. Poor people will not have to pay tax like the rich who have more assets," he said. He said the tax is being imposed only in urban areas and not in rural areas.

"Agricultural land is exempted from it. A residential house up to 1000 square feet is exempted. So, one-third of the population in the UT is already exempted. The tax rate is very low as compared to other states/ UTs," he added.

Bidhuri said the tax has to be paid once annually and the money will get deposited in the account of the municipalities. "The collected amount will be used for the people for ensuring better facilities to them," he added.

Bidhuri and Khan along with senior officials from Srinagar Municipal Corporation later held a detailed meeting and discussion with the representatives of various trade federations to discuss the proposed property tax within Srinagar Municipal limits.

The meeting was attended by Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Kashmir Hoteliers Association, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industries, KCIF, KTMF, CCKI, Kashmir Economic Alliance and many other trade federations and civil society bodies.

During the meeting, Div Com and Commissioner SMC gave a detailed presentation to all stakeholders about the property tax. The process and method of property tax calculation was discussed with the members present.

It was impressed that the property tax adopted by J&K is a progressive model. "The tax to be collected will go into the account of the local bodies only and will be used for the development of the respective city only. The Tax rates are among the lowest in the country," they informed.

The members present calculated the model test cases of commercial as well as residential properties.

The tax slabs have been kept in a very progressive manner so that the distributive justice is taken care of.

The members present gave their valuable feedback and sought clarifications on a number issues related to the collection. The officials present replied to the queries raised.

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