

From page 1

### Committee formed to dispel apprehensions over Vaishno Devi ropeway project: LG

after the construction of the ropeway. We want to dispel those apprehensions and want them to be on board," the LG said.

Katra town, the base camp for pilgrims visiting the shrine, witnessed massive protest against the construction of the proposed ropeway on February 28, a week after Sinha announced that the project is in the final phase of tendering and will be undertaken with utmost sensitivity to safeguard the interests of the local businessmen.

SMVDSB has recently approved a Rs 250-crore passenger ropeway project between Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chat along the 12-km track to facilitate elderly persons, medically unfit and disabled people who are not able to offer their prayers at the shrine.

"It (ropeway project) is still in the pre-consultation phase. We have framed a committee comprising Divisional Commissioner (Jammu), CEO shrine Board and other officials who will hold talks with the people and note their suggestions," Sinha, who paid his obeisance at the shrine and also participated in a special prayer, said.

"I am sure the issue will be resolved to the best satisfaction of the people who will be benefited (from the project)," he said.

People with disabilities and other health issues across the country wish to visit the shrine but are not able to pay their obeisance, he said, suggesting that the facility was meant to facilitate such devotees.

"Once the issue is resolved, we will come out with the construction and inauguration date of the service as well," he said.

Lauding the shrine board for completing the five-storey Durga Bhawan in 18 months braving challenging weather conditions and topography, the LG said the administration is duty-bound to ensure better facilities for the pilgrims.

"The Dugra Bhawan can accommodate 3000 pilgrims per day and it will provide ease and comfort to the seekers besides, ensuring effective crowd management," he said, adding the work is

### Amritpal on run, 78 supporters held

escaped their dragnet when his cavalcade was intercepted in Jalandhar district, even as authorities stepped up security at several places and suspended internet services in the State till Sunday noon.

The police said it has launched a "massive State-wide cordon and search operations (CASO)" in the state against elements of 'Waris Punjab De' (WPD), headed by Singh, against whom several criminal cases had been registered.

During the operation, a total of 78 persons have been arrested so far, while, several others have been detained for questioning, it said.

Amritpal Singh and others are on the run and a massive manhunt has been launched to nab them, a police spokesperson said.

Some supporters of 'Waris Punjab De' chief shared some videos on social media claiming that policemen were chasing them. A video also showed Amritpal sitting in a vehicle and one of his aides could be heard saying policemen were after "Bhai saab" (Amritpal).

During the state-wide operation, nine weapons, including one .315 bore rifle, seven rifles of 12 bore, one revolver and 373 live cartridges of different caliber have been recovered so far, the police said.

The police spokesperson informed that the WPD elements are involved in four criminal cases relating to spreading disharmony among classes, attempt to murder, attack on

### Will submit report to EC on J&K polls immediately when sought: Shah

is no stone pelting. People of Kashmir feel that law and order and internal security situation are now better," Shah said.

He added that investments are coming to Jammu and Kashmir and 1.8 crore tourists visited the Union Territory in a year which is a record. Every kind of violence is down by 70 percent, he asserted.

Maintaining that India's boundaries are most safe today since independence, he said earlier there was no Defence Policy in the country.

"Defence Policy was just one chapter of External Affairs Policy. Today, our Defence Policy is quite clear. We want friendship and no fight with neighbours. But, at the same time, we won't tolerate any kind of interference with our boundaries," the Home Minister said.

Earlier, Shah said, there were regular infiltrations and incidents (on the borders). But after surgical and air strikes, none can dare to come close to the Indian boundaries. A message has gone across the world that after United States and Israel, India is third country, whose boundaries can't be touched, he added.

Replying to a question on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and hoisting of tricolor at Lal Chowk, the Home Minister said he doesn't expect a word of thanks from Rahul but he should remember that Murlu Manohar Joshi and Narendra Modi had to be taken in helicopter under Army cordon to hoist tricolor at Srinagar during their (Congress) rule.

However, he added, Rahul has himself stated that he went to Lal Chowk to hoist tricolor without any security.

"This was not possible during your time but is possible in our time because of Narendra Modi," the Home Minister said.

Shah said when their Government took over, there were three hotspots including Kashmir, Northeast and Left wing extremism which had become threat to internal security for last three to four decades and there was no solution in sight.

However, after nine year of Narendra Modi Government there has been 70 percent decline in every kind of violence.

Meanwhile, the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh remained "very fragile" and is "quite dangerous" in military assessment because of close deployments of troops of both sides in some pockets though substantial progress has been made in the disengagement process in many areas, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said today.

Jaishankar also said that he and former Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had reached an in-principle agreement in September 2020 on how to resolve the issue and that it is for China to deliver on what was agreed to.

In an interactive session at the India Today conclave, the External Affairs Minister also made it clear that the relationship between the two countries can not return to normal until "these problems" are sorted out.

"This is a very, I would say, challenging and abnormal phase in our ties with China. Why I say that is because from 1988 when Rajiv Gandhi went there till 2020 the understanding was that peace and tranquility on the border would be maintained," Jaishankar said.

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### SIA raids 8 locations in crowd funding by Sarjan Barkati

"With the seizures of electronic gadgets, incriminating material and other corroborative evidence during these searches, SIA is hopeful that the searches would enable it to extract some vital evidence as to who all have contributed to the Sarjan Barkati fund, what was the source of such money, how much of it was from legitimate income and how much from unaccountable sources, whether such sources had anything to do with militant and Hurriyat finances," he said.

Preliminary investigations have shown Sarjan Barkati has diverted a substantial part of the funds for his personal benefit and purchased a piece of land worth Rs 45 lakhs in Anantnag town in the name of his wife which he sold for Rs 27 lakhs, making a profit of Rs 27 lakhs and has also built a palatial house using public money. He has also purchased 5 kanals of land to establish a Madrassa which as per credible information is meant for making money and provide platform to anti national elements and also aimed to be a breeding ground for luring youth towards militancy," he said.

"A large chunk of such ill-gotten money has been deposited in several FDRs in the name of his family members. Not only has the accused breached the public trust with emotional blackmail by building a personal fortune on the crowd funds donated to him by public for the daily sustenance, he as well camouflaged money coming from suspects sources under the garb of crowd funding for furtherance of secessionist-militant campaign," read the statement.

### Cop arrested by CBI dies during questioning

red handed by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) today and arrested for accepting bribe of Rs 3000 from a complainant died during questioning under mysterious circumstances later.

According to reports, the cop who was working in Women Police Station Kathua was arrested by a team of CBI sleuths on the basis of a complaint from a person for demanding a bribe of Rs 3000. During his questioning by the team of CBI sleuths at Women Police Station, Kathua, he felt some sort uneasiness and was shifted in the Women Cell jeep to Medical College Kathua for examination and check up but his condition deteriorated there and later he breathed his last.

When contacted, SSP Kathua, Shivdeep Singh said that trap was laid by CBI and they had nothing to do in the investigation and police has no role to play in the matter.

However, no one from CBI was available for comment nor any official handout was issued by the agency after the death of the cop.

A handout issued by CBI earlier after his arrest said that the cop was arrested in connection with demand of bribe of Rs. 5,000 from a complainant.

FIR RC0042023A0005 was registered under Section 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act,

police personnel and creating obstructions in the lawful discharge of duties of public servants.

An FIR dated February 24 stands registered against WPD elements for the attack on Ajnala Police Station, he added. Last month, Amritpal and his supporters, some of them brandishing swords and guns, broke through barricades and barged into the Ajnala Police Station on the outskirts of the Amritsar city, and clashed with police for the release of one of Amritpal's aide.

After the incident, in which six policemen including a Superintendent of Police rank officer had suffered injuries, the AAP Government in the State had faced severe flak and was accused of kowtowing to extremists.

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Amritpal Singh, who had even issued a veiled threat to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has been trying to destabilise the situation in Punjab by indoctrinating and attracting Sikh youths into the fold of his outfit 'Waris Punjab De', sources said.

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