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JAMMU, MONDAY, MAY 8, 2023

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## Militant with IED held in Pulwama

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, May 7: Security forces today averted a major tragedy by apprehending a militant associate along with 5-6 kilogramme of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Pulwama district of South Kashmir.

\* Pic on page 4

Video on

www.excelsiornews.com

A Police spokesman said that security forces arrested a militant associate along with an IED weighing 5-6kg in South

(Contd on page 4 Col 5)

## Rajouri martyr

### cremated in Kangra

DHARAMSALA/  
PALAMPUR, May 7:

The mortal remains of Naik Arvind Kumar, who attained martyrdom in an anti-terror operation in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri, were consigned to flames with full State honours in his native village in Himachal Pradesh's Kangra district today.

Kumar was among the five soldiers who lost their lives in an explosion triggered by terrorists on Friday in the thickly forested Kandi area in Rajouri where an operation is underway to flush out the ultras.

(Contd on page 4 Col 3)

## J&K reports 13

### Corona cases

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, May 7: Jammu and Kashmir today reported 13 new COVID-19 positive cases, 4 from Jammu division and 9 from Kashmir valley.

As per the reports, maximum number of 4 COVID cases was reported from Ganderbal district, followed by 3 each from Jammu and Pulwama, and 1 case each from Baramulla, Kupwara and Ramban districts.

A total of 1,638 COVID tests were conducted in the Union Territory in last 24 hours. The number of active COVID cases in the UT as on date is

(Contd on page 4 Col 5)

## Blast in Amritsar

AMRITSAR, May 7:

A blast at Heritage Street in Amritsar was reported on Saturday midnight, police said today.

Punjab Police in a tweet said that news related to blasts in Amritsar was going viral on social media, the situation was under control.

Police said that the investigation was on to establish the facts of the incident and there was no need to panic.

Police also urged the citizens to maintain peace & harmony advising all to fact check before sharing.

Sources said that forensic teams have reached the spot.

(Contd on page 4 Col 2)

## Gunman among

### 9 dead in Texas

### Mall shooting

HOUSTON, May 7:

A gunman opened fire at a crowded mall in the US state of Texas, killing at least eight people before being shot dead by a police officer, officials have said, in the latest in a relentless series of gun violence across the country.

The gunfire erupted around 3:30 pm on Saturday at the Allen Premium Outlets as throngs of shoppers filled the outdoor mall, which is about 25 miles north of Dallas and has more than 120 stores.

(Contd on page 4 Col 3)

### WEATHER

JAMMU:  
Partly cloudy  
**TEMPERATURE**  
Max: 31.8 Degree C  
Min: 16.1 Degree C

**RELATIVE HUMIDITY**  
RH-I (Morning): 62.0 per cent  
RH-II (Evening): 41.0 per cent  
Sunset on Monday: 07:17 p.m.  
Sunrise on Tuesday: 05:39 a.m.

SRINAGAR:  
Generally cloudy  
**TEMPERATURE**  
Max: 20.9 Degree C  
Min: 6.5 Degree C

**RELATIVE HUMIDITY**  
RH-I (Morning): 78.0 per cent  
RH-II (Evening): 58.0 per cent

LEH:  
**TEMPERATURE**  
Max: 17.0 Degree C  
Min: 1.5 Degree C

## Foreign terrorists backed by four locals involved in attacks

# 3 militants from Jammu operating from Pak coordinating terror strikes in Rajouri-Poonch

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, May 7: At least four local militants may be supporting two groups of foreign terrorists in identifying routes, targets, facilitating their movement and assisting them in shelter and food while three militants—one each from Reasi, Poonch and Doda are believed to be coordinating with Pakistani commanders of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in carrying out terror strikes in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch.

Inputs developed by the investigating agencies revealed that there could be two groups of three foreign terrorists each and supported by two local militants each active in the forest areas of Rajouri and Poonch districts, who are operating with "strong local support" including group of six to eight hardcore Over Ground Workers (OGWs).

The Army has now further involved para commandos in the operations while helicopters and drones are also being used where

ever required to trace the militants and eliminate them.

As per the sources, Reyaz Ahmad alias Qasim of Mahore tehsil in Reasi district, Mohammad Amin alias Khubaib alias Haroon of Thathri in Doda and Rafiq Nal alias Sultan of Mendhar in Poonch district are actively coordinating with Pakistani commanders of LeT and JeM outfits for carrying out terror strikes in Rajouri and Poonch as all of them are well versed with topography of the twin border districts and have strong contacts with local OGWs who might be getting funds through hawala channels from across.

Qasim, Khubaib and Nai are presently operating from Pakistan and figured in the list of "most wanted terrorists" in Jammu and Kashmir as well as Central Government's Intelligence agencies. The trio could be instrumental in creating "local support base" for the foreign terrorists in Rajouri and Poonch using their past connections in the two districts. While

## \*Para commandos, choppers, drones being used to clear forests

Qasim and Nai belonged to Rajouri and Poonch, Khubaib had operated in the region before fleeing to Pakistan.

However, there are different versions about involvement of local militants as presently no major local names have surfaced in Rajouri and Poonch districts who have joined militancy. There is also a possibility that the militants from South Kashmir, which shares boundaries with Pir Panjal range, might be assisting the foreign terrorists as they two are well aware about topography of the area.

"Troops are engaged in clearing the forests with the help of paramilitary forces and local police. Para commandos are actively involved in the operations now. Helicopters and drones are also being used and will continue to be in use till the militants are neutralized," the

officials said. They added that without active local support the foreign terrorists or even Kashmiri militants can't operate in Rajouri and Poonch districts. Therefore, simultaneously, the security forces are trying to nail down the OGWs who are assisting the foreign terrorists in topography, identifying targets, facilitating their movement and providing them food and shelter.

"The foreign terrorists might be staying in cave hideouts and not in houses of the people to avoid detection. However, they continue to get food from the locals on which they are surviving," sources said, adding the OGWs and the militants are not using mobile telephones for interaction which is one of the reasons that their movement is not being spotted.

Meanwhile, since the killing of one Pakistani terrorist in

(Contd on page 4 Col 1)

## 'Carrying forward vision of Maharaja Hari Singh'

# J&K Bank to pay dividend to shareholders, extend benefit of record profit: MD & CEO

Nishikant Khajuria

JAMMU, May 7: Following achievement of highest ever annual profit of Rs 1197 crores, the Jammu and Kashmir Bank is going to pay dividend to its shareholders at 50 percent of the face value of the Bank share.

This was announced by MD and CEO of the Bank, Baldev Prakash, while interacting with media persons, here today, during his maiden press meet since he resumed responsibility of the bank.

"With a view to extend benefits of such record breaking numbers, Bank's Board of Director has recommended divi-

dend at 50 percent of the face value of shares for all the Bank investors," he said.

Notably, the J&K Bank is paying dividend to its shareholders after seven long years.



J&K Bank MD & CEO Baldev Prakash talking to media persons at Jammu on Sunday. -Excelsior/Rakesh

The bank had paid the last dividend to its shareholders for the financial year 2016.

Explaining the ever improving balance sheet of the J&K Bank, which recently declared

annual result with highest ever annual profit of Rs 1197 crore, decade high CRAR of 15.39 percent and eight-year lowest GNPA at 6 percent, MD & CEO Baldev Prakash gave all credit of these transformational results to his team across verticals who planned, executed and achieved these numbers.

"We have met market expectations and honoured the trust reposed in us by all our stakeholders," he said and added that multiple reasons, particularly recovery of NPAs besides flat expenditure of the bank played major role in the achievement of highest ever profit.

Elaborating further, the MD

(Contd on page 4 Col 5)

## Calls for resumption of dialogue with Pak

# Time to have an elected Govt in J&K, says Farooq

SRINAGAR, May 7:

Veteran politician and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah today wondered why there was a delay in holding Assembly elections in the Union Territory and said it was time to have an elected Government.

In an interview to PTI Video, Abdullah, the 85-year-old Lok Sabha MP from Srinagar, said that when BJP leaders announce publicly that they will win 50 seats in elections, what prevents them from holding the democratic exercise.

Abdullah, who talked about a range of issues, again advocated for early resumption of dialogue with Pakistan for ensuring

lasting peace in the subcontinent.

The National Conference president also spoke about the country's decline on various fronts such as human rights issue, growing religious intolerance and corruption, saying "all these things don't augur well for this great nation".

On the delay in conducting Assembly elections, Abdullah said as far as the Government goes, it has been saying all the time that conditions are alright here.

"If the conditions are alright then what prevents them from holding elections. After all, we are living in a democratic country, and for so many years we haven't had an elected Government. We have a

Lieutenant Governor with Advisors and he can't meet the problems of people, it has become a bureaucratic Government."

"It is time for an elected Government," he said.

Abdullah said he had raised this issue with the opposition parties and they have done what best they could. "Finally, it rests with the Election Commission. We made a representation and opposition parties have also pressed for holding elections.... It is now up to them to decide."

"I can't understand if they want to hold Panchayat elections and hold other elections in J and K, why not the general elections to the Assembly. What prevents

(Contd on page 4 Col 1)

## DPAP to ensure equal development in all regions

# No politics over terrorism: Azad

Gopal Sharma

JAMMU, May 7: Former J&K Chief Minister and Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), chairman Ghulam Nabi Azad today said that there should be no politics over terrorism and terror in any part of the world is not in the interest of public.

Azad credited the BJP-led Central Government for bringing peace to the region, but said several things like the abrogation of Article 370 and reconstituting Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories (UTs) should not have been done. He was talking to newsmen on the sidelines of a joining function here today.

"Terrorism in any part of the world, including Jammu and Kashmir, is not in the interest of the public. It is the public which

suffers huge losses and is forced into poverty and illiteracy. Before terrorism, the Jammu



DPAP leader also reiterated his demand for holding of early Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier, addressing a gathering during a function, Azad said if his party is elected to power, he will ensure equitable and balanced development in all the regions. He regretted that the remote and rural areas were being ignored in all respects by the UT administration.

"Tourism has revived over the past two years as peace is

beneficial to everyone. There should be no politics over terrorism," he observed.

The DPAP leader credited the Centre for ending the culture of strikes and stone-pelting in Kashmir.

Responding to a question on growing terror incidents in Rajouri and Poonch districts where 26 security personnel and nine civilians were killed in eight terror attacks since October 2021, Azad said it is a cause of concern for the entire country, and the people of this region.

"Three major incidents took place this year in the Rajouri-Poonch belt, consuming innocent lives. Such incidents should not have happened," Azad said, adding that people should join hands with security agencies to root out terrorism from the region.

DPAP leader also reiterated his demand for holding of early Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, addressing a gathering during a function, Azad said if his party is elected to power, he will ensure equitable and balanced development in all the regions. He regretted that the remote and rural areas were being ignored in all respects by the UT administration.

Azad said he never discriminated between the regions and treated them equal in all manners. However, he lamented over the growing incidents of violence and said that terrorism is in nobody's interest while referring to the recent encounter of Rajouri in which five Army jawans attained martyrdom. Azad, however, said that he is still critical to the move of

(Contd on page 4 Col 3)

# Entrepreneurs in Handwara's IE facing difficulties due to lack of facilities

Suhail Bhat

SRINAGAR, May 7: The Industrial Estate in the Chotipora area of north Kashmir's Handwara district lacks basic facilities, which is leading to disheartenment among the entrepreneurs who are running nearly 70 manufacturing units in the Estate.

The entrepreneurs are dismayed by the fact that the Government is discouraging them by not providing the necessary facilities, while also urging the youth to not run for jobs and become job seekers. They lamented that due to continuous rainfall over the last few days in Kashmir, severe waterlogging has occurred in the Estate, causing significant losses to the unit holders.

holders. "Despite the issue of defunct drainage systems being brought to the attention of the officials, no action has been taken to resolve it," the president of the Industrial Estate, Farooq Ahmad Shah, told the Excelsior. He added that despite spending nearly Rs 2 crore on constructing various facilities in the estate, they have yet to yield any significant results. "Although approximately 50 lakhs were spent on installing floodlights here, they are currently not functioning," he said.

He said that even though the Government has provided enough funds for the facilities, they are still missing. "An Overhead Water Tank (OHT) has been constructed at a cost

of 20 lakh rupees, but the taps are dry," he said.

The entrepreneurs said that the non-serious attitude of the officials in implementing the official directives has disappointed them. They said DC Kupwara visited the Estate some days ago and instructed all departments to look into this matter, and although the unit holders are thankful to him, they feel that the departments have failed to redress their problems. "We are facing acute portable water supply and electricity problems and have suffered losses worth lakhs of rupees due to the damages caused by water-logging," another unit holder said.

The unit holders requested (Contd on page 4 Col 1)



A parrot rests on almond flowers at Badamwari Garden in Srinagar.

-Excelsior/Shakeel

## Alternate exit track at Mata Vaishnodevi Shrine under consideration

# Sky Walk, remodeled Parvati Bhawan to be ready before next Navratras

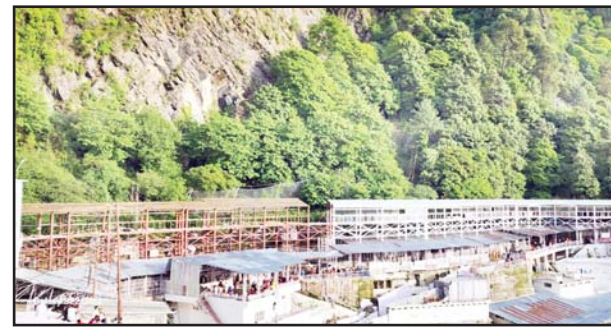
\*186 more CCTV cameras to be installed shortly

Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, May 7: Sky Walk and remodeled Parvati Bhawan at the shrine of Shri Mata Vaishnodevi will be ready before next Navratras to overcome the problem of the multi-directional flow of yatra and to curtail the crisscross movement of pilgrims for lockers and bathing spaces. Moreover, installation of 186 more CCTV cameras will begin shortly for more effective and real time monitoring of pilgrimage.

As per the Master Plan prepared by School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi, work is apace on construction of Sky Walk at Bhawan of Shri Mata Vaishnodevi having a total length of 200 meter with width of 2.5 meter and work will be completed before next Navratras in the month of October this year.

Being constructed as a pedestrian flyover with an average elevation of 20 feet above track level, the Sky Walk will



A view of under construction Sky Walk in Bhawan area of Shri Mata Vaishnodevi Shrine.

have waiting halls with chairs for senior citizens, specially-abled persons and ladies waiting in queue. Moreover, there will be two rescue areas.

The work is being executed by Central Public Works Department (CPWD) at a total cost of Rs 16 crore and with the throwing open of Sky Walk, Shri Mata Vaishnodevi Shrine Board will be able to overcome the problem of multi-directional flow of yatra, said an official document, the copy of which is available with EXCELSIOR.

As per the document, to curtail the crisscross movement of yatries for lockers and bathing spaces in Bhawan area, retrofitting/remodeling of the Parvati Bhawan has been taken up by the Shrine Board and work will be completed before next Navratras. The facilities like lockers, washrooms and toilets in one building will facilitate all pilgrims arriving via Himkoti Route and will channelize the yatra towards Sky Walk.

The retrofitting/remodeling will comprise of 1915 lockers, (Contd on page 4 Col 3)

## Avalanche warning issued by Admn in Baramulla Rains, hailstorm in Kashmir; snowfall in Gulmarg

Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR, May 7: Heavy rains lashed Kashmir today while there were hailstorms in parts of the Valley leading to damage to the crops as hills including Gulmarg received snowfall today while administration has issued avalanche warning for the hills.

Parts of Kashmir were lashed by heavy rains while there was hailstorm in Handwara and Kupwara areas, leading to damage to the crops. The hills including ski resort of Gulmarg also had fresh snowfall.

The Meteorological Department forecast fairly wide-spread to widespread light to

moderate rain over Jammu and Kashmir during the next 24 hours. Amid mainly clear to partly cloudy weather at most places today, the Met Office forecast of rain coupled with thunderstorm and lightning at most places of Kashmir.

"Hailstorm with gusty winds at a few places is also expected," the Met Office said.

It said there could be rain or thunderstorm at many places of J&K with hailstorm and gusty wind at one or two places on May 8 and weather will mainly remain dry from May 9-12.

The Met has also advised farmers to postpone spraying of orchards and harvesting of crops

till May 8. Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority (JKDMA) today issued an avalanche warning over Baramulla district for next 24 hours.

The DMA said that a 'low' danger level avalanche is likely to occur above 3000 metres above sea level over Baramulla district.

People living in these areas are advised to take precautions and avoid venturing in the avalanche prone areas till further orders.

Weather turned cold as both minimum and maximum temperature dropped to 3-5 degree

(Contd on page 4 Col 5)

## Grenades, bullets seized in Poonch

Excelsior Correspondent

POONCH, May 7: Police today recovered four hand grenades, 90 AK bullets and other ammunition from a hide-out and the houses of arrested militant associates at Mendhar in Poonch district.

The OGWs already arrested by police have been identified as Mushtaq Ahmed and Nisar Ahmed in a case under FIR number 42/2022 of Police Station Gursai, registered after April 20 Army vehicle ambush attack in Bhatta Dhurian in which five Army personnel lost their lives and another got injured.

The official said that an operation was launched by police after sustained and professional questioning of the accused person on the

(Contd on page 4 Col 5)