



Maharaja Hari Singh Ji's 131st birth anniversary celebrated across J&K

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JAMMU: The 131st birth anniversary of the last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh Ji was celebrated across Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, with political and social groups holding programmes and paying tributes to the erstwhile ruler.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha paid tributes to the Maharaja and said his ideals of public service, equality and inclusive development should continue to guide society.

"An enlightened statesman and progressive thinker, he introduced far-reaching reforms for the welfare and empowerment of the

LG hails Dogra ruler's reforms, public service

people," Sinha said in a post on X.

The celebrations came amid a controversy over a demand in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly for withdrawal of the public holiday on Maharaja's birth anniversary.

The BJP opposed the demand and asserted that the holiday, declared by the J&K administration in 2022 following a prolonged agitation led by the Yuva Rajput Sabha (YRS), should not be cancelled.

J&K BJP president and MP Sat

Sharma, speaking at a function in Jammu, said the Maharaja held a special place in the history of Jammu and Kashmir and his contribution to the region and its integration with India would be remembered for generations.

"Maharaja Hari Singh gave Jammu and Kashmir a distinct identity and played an important role in its history," Sharma said.

His remarks came a day after NC MLA Abdul Majid Larmi sought restoration of a holiday on the birth anniversary of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and said that, if it was not restored, the holiday marking Maharaja Hari Singh's birth anniversary should be withdrawn. BJP members ► P11

India dismisses OIC Contact Group's communique on J-K

OIC has no locus standi to pronounce on matters that are strictly internal to India



NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday categorically rejected the "unwarranted and factually incorrect" references to India in the joint communique of an OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir, and said the OIC has no locus standi to pronounce on matters that are strictly internal to India.

The entire Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are "integral and inalienable part of India", and "no amount of repetition of politically motivated propaganda can change this reality", the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Pakistan's foreign ministry in a post on X on Wednesday said Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar addressed the ministerial meeting of the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir on the sidelines of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Dar urged OIC member states to maintain a "unified position" on Jammu and Kashmir at the United Nations and other ► P11

ECI: Divergent views part of deliberations; orders backed by law

NEW DELHI: Under fire over red flags raised by two of its Commissioners over the SIR process, the Election Commission on Wednesday asserted that differing views and observations are a normal part of deliberation in any institution and all its orders carry full legal sanction and follow established statutory procedures.

In a statement, the EC also said that not only the three Commissioners, but every officer of the Commission is fully authorised to give his suggestions to the Commission for improving the electoral system.

The EC said any ► P11

Dogra ruler holds special place in history of J-K and its 'integration' with India: BJP

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JAMMU: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Jammu and Kashmir paid glowing tributes to the great Dogra ruler and People's Maharaja, Maharaja Hari Singh Ji, on his 131st birth anniversary, with J&K BJP President and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Sharma (CA) and Leader of Opposition in the J&K Legislative Assembly Sunil Sharma leading the tributes at different locations in Jammu.

At BJP headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Sat Sharma, Sunil Sharma, J&K BJP General Secretaries Baldev Singh Billawaria and Gopal Mahajan, along with senior party leaders and workers, paid respectful tributes to the Maharaja.



Sat Sharma, along with J&K BJP Vice President Rajiv Charak and MLA Vikram

Randhawa, paid floral tributes to Maharaja Hari Singh Ji at Bahu Fort. He also ► P11



BJP appoints Poonia as in-charge for J-K

SRINAGAR: The BJP on Wednesday announced new state in-charges and co-in-charges as part of a nationwide organisational reshuffle, naming senior leader Satish Poonia as the party's in-charge for Jammu and Kashmir and Reena Kashyap of Himachal Pradesh as co-in-charge.

The appointments were announced by BJP president Nitin Nabin. ► P11

Abdullah urges Centre, ECI to take corrective steps on polls

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SRINAGAR: The Central government and the Election Commission need to take corrective steps on electoral roll revision to prevent people from losing faith in elections, which are the foundations of a democracy, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Wednesday.

"Corrective action needs to be taken somewhere. Otherwise, if people lose faith in elections, what remains of a democracy? Elections are the very foundations of a democracy. If people lose faith in elections, why would they even participate in them? I feel the Election Commission and the government of India need to reflect on this," Abdullah told reporters.

The chief minister was asked about a report in The Indian Express, which claimed that questions were repeatedly raised on issues related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls within the three-member ► P11



CM calls for arithmetic programme in schools

SRINAGAR: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today called for taking the ALOHA mental arithmetic programme to government schools in Jammu and Kashmir, ► P11

Gangster nabbed in Delhi after 7 months long hunt

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: A Jammu-based gangster, who had allegedly escaped from an observation home in R S Pura along with two Pakistani nationals in February this year, was arrested in Delhi after a seven-month-long hunt, police said on Wednesday.

His two other associates, both allegedly linked to the Khauf gang, were also arrested during the operation, the police said.

Presenting the main accused Karanjit Singh alias "Gugga", a resident of Dablehar in R S Pura, before reporters here, Senior Superin-

tendent of Police, Jammu Joginder Singh said his arrest by the special operations group of police followed sustained efforts to trace him across several states over the past seven months.

He said the gangster had been a juvenile when he was arrested in connection with a murder of another gangster Sumit and subsequently lodged in the observation home. He had attained the age of majority by the time of the February 16 incident when he along with two Pakistani inmates escaped.

Singh and Pakistani nationals Mohammad Sana-ullah, 20, and Ahsan ► P11

Air Chief reviews Op 'readiness' in Northern theatre

UDHAMPUR: Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh on Wednesday visited the strategically vital Northern Command theatre to review the prevailing operational environment and preparedness of the armed forces.

During his visit to Headquarters Northern Command, the Air Chief was briefed by Lieutenant General Pratik Sharma, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, on key operational dynamics and ongoing ► P11

Objectionable contents: 4,700+ books withdrawn from colleges

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir government has withdrawn over 4,700 books, including banned ones, containing objectionable content from colleges across the Union Territory after scanning nearly 2.2 million publications.

In a written reply to a question in the assembly by Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) MLA from Langate, Khurshed Ahmad Sheikh, the government said it has examined 21,81,582 books/publications till date.

Out of these, 9,32,941

were examined in Jammu division, while 12,48,641 in Kashmir division, the Higher Education Department said in its reply.

The government said it has withdrawn from circulation 4,767 books including 518 banned publications.

While 293 books have been withdrawn in Jammu region, 4,474 have been withdrawn from the Kashmir valley.

The government has also referred 1,752 books -- 538 in Jammu and 1,214 in Kashmir -- for expert examination to director of colleges.

It said a clear and objec-

tive criteria has been adopted for identifying objectionable material for scrutiny of books available in colleges.

However, it added, that the process of scrutiny of objectionable books/material to be withdrawn is under process in the department.

The government asserted that the reason for such action is that the higher education institutions constitute centres of higher learning, research, academic excellence and are expected to foster an environment that upholds constitutional values, academic freedom, critical thinking, scientific ► P11

Maharaja Gulab Singh Brigade pays tributes to Maharaja Hari Singh Ji



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Maharaja Gulab Singh Brigade paid glowing tributes to the great Dogra ruler and Maharaja of people, Maharaja Hari Singh Ji, on his 131st birth anniversary, in Jammu on Wednesday.

The event was organised under the chairmanship of Sh. Shivang Satya Gupta.

Sh. Shivang Satya Gupta, along with other ► P11

Over 23K promotions of employees cleared in last 12 years: Dr Jitendra

NEW DELHI: More than 23,000 promotions of government employees have been cleared in the last 12 years, Union minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

During a meeting with a delegation of the Central Secretariat Group-C Employees' Association, Singh also said that timely career progression is important for keeping employees motivated and ensuring effective functioning of the administration.

Referring to sustained efforts by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) to address promo-



tion-related issues, Singh, the minister of state for person-

nel, said that more than 23,000 promotions ► P11

Two cops found dead inside car

JAMMU: Two police personnel were found dead inside a car in Ramban district, official sources said.

Head Constable Farid Ahmed and Selection Grade Constable Muhammad Yaqoob, both posted at District Police Lines, Ramban, were found unconscious under suspicious circumstances inside a car parked at Ziarat Morh in the Sana area of Batote late Tuesday evening, the sources said.

Residents transported the duo to District Hospital Ramban, where the doctors declared ► P11

IGP Sujit Kumar reviews security, counter-terror grid in Bandipora

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SRINAGAR: Kashmir Police chief Sujit Kumar on Wednesday reviewed the security situation, counter-terrorism grid, and law and order preparedness in the frontier Bandipora district.

Kumar, the Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, visited District Bandipora and reviewed the security situation, counter-terrorism grid, law and order preparedness, crime scenario and operational readiness of the north Kashmir district, a police spokesperson said.

He said the IGP Kashmir was accompanied by DIG North Kashmir Range, Vinod



Kumar.

SSP Bandipora Ajaz Ahmed Zargar briefed the IGP Kashmir on the overall security scenario, counter-terrorism measures, intelligence inputs, area domina-

tion, security of vulnerable locations, law and order preparedness and crime situation in the district.

During the meeting, Kumar emphasised upon strengthening public-friendly policing, improving crime disposal and enhancing operational preparedness in accordance with field requirements.

The Kashmir police chief called upon all ranks to remain vigilant and ensure a prompt and effective response to emerging security and law and order challenges.

He appreciated the dedication and professionalism of the police ► P11

AB-PMJAY leads globally in hosp admissions: BJP

NEW DELHI: The BJP on Wednesday lauded the eight years of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, saying it has provided free treatment to over 50 crore people and facilitated over 13 crore hospital admissions.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) was launched on September 23, 2018, to provide cashless hospitalisation cover of up to Rs 5 lakh per family annually for secondary and tertiary care. It is the financial protection component of the broader Ayushman ► P11