



**NORTH**

**UP: 4 held for fishing at Hastinapur Sanctuary**

**Muzaffarnagar:** Four men have been arrested for allegedly fishing in the protected area of Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary here, an official said on Wednesday. A raid was conducted in Bhopa area on Tuesday evening and the accused — Israil, Sani, Gazamfar Ali and Ramzan — were caught fishing in the Ganga Canal, Circle Officer Ram Mohan Sharma said. Over 1 quintal of fishes, two fishing nets and a motorcycle were seized, the officer said. The Hastinapur Sanctuary is a protected area in the Gangetic plains spread across UP's Meerut, Muzzafarnagar, Ghaziabad, Bijnor and Amroha districts. **PTI**



CPI general secretary D Raja, AITUC secretary Amarjeet Kaur and CPI leader Kanhaiya Kumar at the party's 80th foundation day celebrations in Patna on Wednesday. *ANI*

**EAST**

**Two killed, four injured in knife attack at meeting in Odisha**

**Malkangiri:** Two people were killed and four others critically injured when a man attacked them with a knife during a meeting at a village in Odisha's Malkangiri district, police said. The incident at MPV-33 village took place during a meeting called to resolve a dispute over the accused's alleged involvement in an extra-marital affair, a police officer said. Forty five-year-old Bidhan Mirdha was infuriated by remarks made against him and took out a knife and attacked the people in the meeting, Malkangiri SP Risikesh D Khilari said. The accused also sustained injuries after he was thrashed by villagers following the attack, he added. **PTI**

**WEST**

**Goa put on alert as heavy rain predicted on Thursday**

**Panaji:** The IMD Goa Observatory has issued a red alert for the coastal state with a forecast of heavy rainfall on Thursday. In a press statement issued on Wednesday, IMD Goa director Dr Krishnamurthy Padgalwar said, "In the next 24 hours, the system might soon turn into a depression..." A red alert denotes a possibility of heavy or extremely heavy rain for that region. **PTI**

**SOUTH**

**MP booked for obstructing cops from discharging duty**

**Hyderabad:** Congress MP A Revanth Reddy has been booked for allegedly obstructing policemen from doing their duty, police said Wednesday. On October 21, Reddy was among several leaders and workers of the Congress taken into preventive custody as they attempted to lay siege to CM K Chandrasekhar Rao's residence. They were seeking immediate resolution to the indefinite strike by the State Regional Transport Corporation employees. A Sub-Inspector of police lodged a complaint saying the MP and his followers "pushed aside" policemen when they tried to catch him. Reddy allegedly manhandled an ACP when police tried to stop him. **PTI**

# Al Qaeda's Kashmir affiliate wiped out, says J&K DGP

Zakir Musa successor who led Ansar in Valley among 3 killed in gunfight: DGP

**BASHAARAT MASOOD**  
SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 23

STATING THAT Hameed Lelhari, who led Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (AGH), an Al Qaeda "affiliate" in Kashmir, was among three militants killed in a gunfight in south Kashmir on Tuesday, Jammu and Kashmir's Director General of Police (DGP) Dilbagh Singh on Wednesday said that the AGH has now been wiped out from the Valley.

Lelhari, according to the DGP, had taken over from Ansar founder Zakir Musa after the latter was killed in May this year.

Lelhari and his associates Naveed Ahmed Tak and Junaid Rashid were killed in a gunfight in Rajpora village of Tral, in Awantipora, on Tuesday evening, the police said.

Addressing the media in Srinagar, DGP Singh pointed out that Lelhari was made leader of AGH after Zakir Musa was killed on May 24. "At that time, this group (AGH) had been wiped out, but after he (Lelhari) motivated them, two people joined the militant ranks — Naveed and Junaid. The three militants worked in coordination with Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), which is forging ties with Lashkar-e-Toiba (and) Hizb-ul-



Zakir Musa successor killed: DGP Dilbagh Singh. *Shuaib Masoodi*

Mujahideen...in attempt to increase violence on the directions of Pakistani agencies."

A resident of Lelhar village in Pulwama, Lelhari had joined the militant ranks in 2016, according to the police. Before joining AGH, he was associated with JeM. DGP Singh said Lelhari was involved in several attacks on security forces and the killing of a civilian in south Kashmir.

After the trio was killed on Tuesday, DGP Singh said that the police initially got information that a local man was identified and the two others were Pakistani or foreign terrorists. "But late night, the two others

were identified. All three were local militants, all of them associated with AGH," he said.

Singh said Junaid's brother was also a militant, and he had been killed earlier. "We also feel the pain that these people have taken to the wrong path," he said. "Even today, we want young men on the wrong path to shun weapons and take the right path." Weapons, he added, lead to death.

The DGP also said that as against apprehension that a large number of young people would take up guns in the Valley "after August 5" — when the Union government announced repeal of special status to J&K

and bifurcation of the state into two UTs — "we are happy to say that the number of boys (joining militant ranks) is less than what was before this (August 5)". Militancy, he said, can be checked only when the local youth shun the path of violence and choose peace.

DGP Singh also said that a "sizeable" number of militants have infiltrated into the Valley, although he declined to give any numbers. "Decrease in militant activities has worried Pakistan, that's why they are making every effort to push militants (into the Valley). Some militants have infiltrated, and a large number of their attempts have been foiled. I can't give you the exact number of militants who have come in after August 5 but their number is sizeable — that much I can say," Singh said.

Singh said: "Their sightings have taken place at a number of places in north Kashmir and south Kashmir, and going by that we feel that the number is sizeable. But again, I would say that the number is not that big that we should be very worried about it. As it happens always, they (Pakistan) send some number, we deplete some number. Therefore that process is on (and) we would bring the number (of militants) down."

## J&K admin starts winding up state panels

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 23

A WEEK before the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, the administration on Wednesday ordered the winding up of the various state commissions.

The general administration department on Wednesday issued orders sanctioning the winding-up of the State Human Rights Commission, the State Information Commission, the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, the State Electricity Regulatory Commission, the State Commission for Protection of Women & Child Rights, the State Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the State Accountability Commission. These commissions will cease to operate with effect from October 31, the day the state's bifurcation comes into effect.

The order said the Chairpersons/President and Members of Commissions shall cease to hold office from the said date, adding that all the staff posted in these Commissions, drawn from various departments, shall report to the administrative departments concerned from October 30, 2019.

The government has also said that the vehicles allotted to or purchased for these Commissions are to be handed over to the State Motor Garages Department while the buildings housing these commissions would be handed over to the Estates department.

## PLAN To MAP DISTRIBUTION AND CHALLENGES To SURVIVAL

# Rules firmed up to count snow leopards in upper Himalayas

**ESHA ROY**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 23

INDIA AND other countries must strive to double the population of snow leopards in the coming decade, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar said on Wednesday while launching the first national protocol to assess the population of the endangered species in the country.

"We must start thinking about capacity building, livelihood, green economy and green pathways even in snow leopard areas of the Himalayan range and cross-country cooperation," Javadekar said at the inaugural session of the fourth steering committee meeting of the Global Snow Leopard

and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme.

In India, the snow leopard inhabits upper Himalayan and trans-Himalayan ranges at an altitude range between 3,000 and 5,400 metres and spanning 1 lakh sq km across five states: Jammu and Kashmir (including Ladakh), Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. This area contributes to about 5 per cent of the global snow leopard range. Besides India, snow leopards are found in 11 other countries.

GSLEP is a high-level inter-governmental alliance of these 12 countries. Governments of these countries have jointly initiated an effort to conduct Population Assessment of World's Snow Leopards, or PAWS.



Union Minister Prakash Javadekar at the inaugural session of the 4th steering committee meeting of the GSLEP Programme in New Delhi on Wednesday. *ANI*

As part of this agreement, Javadekar on Wednesday launched the 'Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India'

## US CONGRESS HEARING

# 2 civil society members back India on J&K move, 3 oppose

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 23

ADAY after the US administration said there is a "humanitarian crisis" in J&K, civil society groups testifying before a US Congress committee gave a mixed picture of the ground situation. While three speakers criticised the government on the human rights situation in Kashmir, two others defended New Delhi's moves.

These people were heard during the second part of the first US Congressional hearing on the government's decision to remove J&K's special status under Article 370.

The hearing on "Human Rights in South Asia: Views from the State Department and the Region", lasting two-and-a-half-hours, was chaired by US Congressman Brad Sherman, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asia.

Nitasha Kaul, associate professor in Politics and International Relations at University of Westminster, said that denial of democratic rights in Kashmir affects not only the residents but also those living outside - in India and overseas. She said, "To be clear, arbitrary arrests, shrinking of space for peaceful expression of views, and restrictions on freedom of assembly and other democratic rights have long been a feature of life in Kashmir. What is new is the acute and extreme nature of the restrictions, contempt for all democratic norms, and putting an end to all possibility for dialogue with Kashmiris, who seek justice, dignity, freedom, and self-determination. Given there is no longer any space for peaceful expression of dissent anywhere in Kashmir, what are Kashmiris being pushed toward? While selling its actions in Kashmir as aimed for development, Indian state has flouted every single principle of democracy."

Angana Chatterji, co-chair, Political Conflict, Gender and People's Rights Initiative, research anthropologist at University of California, Berkeley, said: "Kashmiris state that following August 5 they are afraid of their forcible incorporation into the Union of India... Many are apprehensive that inhumane conditions, extreme brutality and the negation of human rights by insti-

tutions of state could foster an armed uprising within Kashmir..."

Ravi Batra, chair, National Advisory Council for South Asian Affairs, told the US Congress: "...The first thing somebody wants before they want human rights, they want to live. I owe India an apology - when she suffered the Mumbai terror attack on November 26, 2008, when Jews and Americans were singled out for death by Pakistan-based terrorists, I joined in, arguing for 'restraint'. I was wrong. Terror needs to be eradicated, so our rights and freedoms mean something."

Aarti Tikoo Singh, senior assistant editor of The Times of India, told the panel that Pakistan-sponsored terrorism has been completely overlooked by the world media over the last 30 years, evoking a sharp reaction from US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, who questioned her objectivity while reporting.

Omar accused Singh of representing the official side of the story and cast aspersions on her journalistic credentials. She did not let Singh speak. Omar said a reporter's job is to find objective truth about what's happening, and report it to the public.

Singh accused Omar of being "unfair" and alleged that the hearing was "prejudiced, biased, a setup against India and in favour of Pakistan". She said: "Throughout these 30 years of conflict, Islamic jihad and terror in Kashmir perpetrated by Pakistan has been completely ignored and overlooked by the world press. There is no human rights activists and no press in the world which feels it is their moral obligation to talk or write about the victims of Pakistani terror in Kashmir."

Francisco Bencosme, Asia-Pacific advocacy manager at Amnesty International, told the US Congress that Amnesty International has documented a clear pattern of authorities using administrative detention on politicians, activists and anyone likely to hold a dissenting opinion before and after August 5. "While the Central Home Ministry claims it has no information on name and locations of detainees, media reports suggest that the number of detentions runs in thousands. The Jammu & Kashmir police recently accepted that about 144 children, as young as nine, have been taken into custody."

## Terror funding: Court takes note of charges against Yasin Malik

**ANAND MOHAN J**  
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 23

A DELHI court on Wednesday took cognizance of a supplementary chargesheet filed by NIA against JKLF chief Yasin Malik and others in a 2017 terror funding case.

Additional Sessions Judge Rakesh Syal took cognizance of the final report, which also names separatist leaders Asiya Andrabi, Shabir Shah and Masarat Alam Bhat as accused.

The NIA had submitted before the court that the High Commission of Pakistan "organises functions & meetings in New Delhi, to which Hurriyat leaders from Kashmir are invited and they are given instructions and funds during these occasions".

The NIA has also claimed that funds are being "raised out of illegal benefits drawn from LoC trade", and that these funds are routed by buyers of those imported goods in New Delhi through hawala channels and shell companies to Kashmir.

mate change.

The Wildlife Institute of India, Nature Conservation Foundation, PAWS Technical support committee of GSLEP, GTI Council, WWF, World Bank Group, Wildlife Conservation Trust and Global Tiger Forum will assist in developing SPAI, it was informed.

According to an Environment and Forest Ministry report released on Wednesday, the snow leopard faces imminent threat as a result of prey depletion in India due to excessive livestock grazing, retribution killing, poaching, illegal trade, unregulated tourism, climate change, infrastructure development in the mountains and poor waste management practices, "leading to increase in free-ranging dog populations."

EXPLAINED

## Why they are hard to track, count

THE ELUSIVE nature of the snow leopard makes it an extremely difficult species to track and count. Recent surveys have shown that they do not live in 25 per cent of the area believed to be a part of their range in Himachal Pradesh. The ministry report states that despite being a leading country in snow leopard science and conservation efforts, India still does not have a "robust and accurate population estimate for the country, much like other range countries".

(SPAI), which will look at both national and state-wise population estimates of these animals, both in and outside protected areas. SPAI will include a distribution map of snow leopards, spatial mapping of threats faced by these

animals in different parts of its range, identification of important population and biodiversity sites, capacity building of young conservationists, and identification of potential refuge for snow leopards in response to pressures like cli-