

# Roadshows by top J&K officials in major cities to woo investors

NAVEED IQBAL  
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 14

THE JAMMU and Kashmir administration will send its top bureaucrats for roadshows to major cities in the country to attract investors for a Global Investor Summit to be held in April this year.

In an order issued Friday, the state government accorded sanction to send 54 bureaucrats to Bengaluru, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai and Ahmedabad starting February 17 till March 3.

The officers, including deputy commissioners and administrative secretaries of the Union Territory, are expected to hold "roadshows" and interact with potential investors "as part of the pre-event activities for the Jammu and Kashmir Global Investors Summit 2020".

Bipul Pathak, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant General G C Murmu, Rohit Kansal,

spokesperson of the administration and Principal Secretary, Planning, Development and Monitoring, Shahid Choudhary, Deputy Commissioner, Srinagar, and Sushma Chauhan, Deputy Commissioner, Jammu, are among the 10 members of the bureaucrats travelling to Bengaluru on February 17.

On the same day, six other senior officials, including Commissioner/secretary to the government, School Education, Hriday Kumar, and Deputy Commissioners of Udhampur and Baramulla will travel to Kolkata for the roadshow.

On February 21, 10 bureaucrats, including finance commissioner Arun Kumar Mehta, Doda Deputy Commissioner D Sagar Dattatry will hold roadshows and meetings in Mumbai.

The investor summit was initially scheduled to be held from October 12-14 in Srinagar and Jammu. But it was rescheduled, citing preparedness and security

concerns on the part of the investors.

Nine state officials, including financial commissioner, health and medical education, Atal Dulloo, Commissioner secretary, industries and commerce, Manoj Kumar Dwivedi, and DCs of Srinagar and Pulwama will visit Hyderabad. Nine officials will visit Chennai on March 5 and 10 bureaucrats, including DCs of Pulwama, Shopian, Bandipore and Reasi, will visit Ahmedabad on March 9 to attract potential investors.

The Union Territory administration is looking to attract investment of over Rs 10,000 crore in various sectors, including IT, food processing, bio technology, auto and textile industries, among others.

Meanwhile, J&K Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam on Friday chaired the second apex committee meeting to review preparations for the upcoming J&K Global Investors Summit

2020 to be held in the capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu.

"International road shows are also being planned to attract foreign investment. Besides, miniconferences will be held at Srinagar and Jammu in March. Signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with interested investors will also form a part of the road shows and the main summit," the government said in a statement.

The UT administration has stated that the summit will not only help present business-friendly policies of the administration; identify business opportunities in J&K to participating trade and industry organisations but also "harmonise J&K's intrinsic strength and aspirations of development and employment opportunities".

The Chief Secretary asked all administrative secretaries concerned to redouble their efforts for preparing investment-friendly sectoral policies within the next week.

## One killed, 3 hurt in cross-border shelling by Pak

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 14

A CIVILIAN was killed and three others were injured in Shahpur on Friday afternoon when Pakistan resorted to unprovoked mortar shelling and small arms fire at various places along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district.

Identifying the deceased as 55-year-old Baddar Din, a resident of Shahpur, police said that the deceased and several other villagers were on their way to a mosque to offer Friday prayers when Pakistani troops started firing mortar shells. Nearly half a dozen shells fell in close vicinity of the mosque, killing Din and injuring three others.

However, there was no damage to the mosque, police said, adding that the injured were evacuated to a local hospital. The shelling, which started around 12.30 pm continued for nearly four hours and Indian troops retaliated, the Army said.



Former Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah's sister Sara Abdullah Pilot leaves the Supreme Court after appearing in a hearing on his detention, in New Delhi Friday. Praveen Khanna

## SC notice to J&K on plea challenging Omar's detention

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

THE SUPREME Court on Friday sought a reply from the Jammu and Kashmir administration on a plea by Sara Abdullah Pilot, sister of former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, challenging his detention under the Public Safety Act, 1978 (PSA).

Issuing a notice, a bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Indira Banerjee adjourned the hearing till March 2.

Appearing for the petitioner, senior advocate Kapil Sibal said Abdullah had been in detention since August 4, 2019. He added that Sara's plea was a Habeas Corpus petition and urged the court to take it up urgently. But the bench said "it cannot be heard overnight".

The petition had come up before a three-judge bench on February 12. One of the judges - Justice M Shantanagoudar - recused himself from hearing it, following which, it was listed on Friday before the bench headed by Justice Mishra.

Sara, in her plea, contended that Omar's detention under PSA was "ex-facie mala fide, for entirely political considerations" and urged the Court to quash the same.

The petition said: "It is rare that those who have served the nation as members of Parliament, Chief Ministers of a state, ministers in the Union and have always stood by the national aspirations of India are now perceived as a threat to the state."

The grounds on which the detention has been ordered are "false and illusory to the extent of being non-existent and are not grounds within the contemplation" of the PSA, it added.

"Apart from the obvious fact that disagreement with the policies of the Central government is a lawful right of a citizen in a democracy (especially to a member of the opposition), it is submitted that all such observations were not supported by any material whether in the form of social media posts or otherwise," the petition said adding that at no point of time in his "prolific political career", has Omar resorted to or indulged in conduct unbecoming of a "conscientious public figure".

She added that "a reference to all the public statements and messages posted by her brother during the period up to his first detention would reveal that he has kept calling for peace and co-operation - messages which in Gandhi's India cannot remotely affect public order".

## LANDFILL EXPANSION SC expresses concern about flamingos, asks HC to seek expert view

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

EXPRESSING CONCERN over the fate of the flamingo population in Thane Creek Sanctuary if a solid waste landfill comes up in its proximity, the Supreme Court on Friday asked the Bombay High Court to obtain the report of an expert body before it decides a pending petition which has challenged expansion of the landfill project.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde and also comprising Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant asked the high court to dispose of the matter preferably within three months, and added, "We also consider it appropriate if the High Court obtain the report of an expert body like Bombay Natural History Society and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute before taking a final decision."

"Trying to strike a balance between the need for a waste treatment plant and environmental questions, the CJ said, "We are equally concerned about the flamingos. They will disappear from there. Once they go away, they will never return. No one has control over nature."

The court was hearing an appeal by NGO Vanasakthi against an interim order of the high court, lifting the stay on enforcement of environmental clearance for expansion of the Kanjurmarg landfill.

Appearing for the appellant, Senior Advocate Anita Shetty said the land that was being sought for expanding the project fell in the Coastal Regulation Zone of the Thane Creek which was host to thousands of flamingos and that it would affect them.

Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi sought to oppose this and said the facility had been in operation since 2009 and no bird had been affected so far.

## Business bodies in Valley urge banks not to 'harass' them over loans

ADIL AKHZER  
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 14

AS MANY as 21 business bodies of the Valley, including the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), issued a statement on Friday, urging banks not to "harass" them to recover loan repayments. The statement also says that business community in Kashmir is "devastated and exhausted" and its "survival is under threat".

KCCI's senior vice-president Naasir Hamid Khan said banks have started publishing details of businessmen in the newspapers after their loans are turning into NPAs and this has put the businessmen under stress.

"J&K Bank is publishing the possession notice in the newspapers and then it is followed by intimidation and coercion from the recovery teams. The bank is not ready for settlement and through newspapers we have asked banks to stop harassment. At present situation, where businessmen need support, they are resorting to such activities which are very abnormal," he said. "Such activities from banks are creating panic among the businessmen."

"We don't deserve to be named and shamed for owing banks the money they invested with us...we and our family don't deserve to be harassed, persecuted and troubled in the name of asset possession. Dear banks, be humble and compassionate while making recoveries," the statement from 21 business bodies which was published in local dailies said.

The business outfits have urged the banks to stop calling them "defaulters". "After 2019, business community is completely devastated and exhausted, our survival is under threat...the statement reads.

The statement said the government has not done anything for them. "At times, different governments have promised measures...but until this day we have not seen a ray of hope which would have been made this community to sleep at ease..." it said.



Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Stadium in Motera, Ahmedabad is decked up to welcome US President Donald Trump, who will arrive here on February 24. The stadium is set to host an event along the lines of 'Howdy Modi'. Javed Raja

## Ahead of Trump visit, 4 Senators raise Kashmir, CAA issues in letter to Pompeo

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 14

AHEAD OF President Donald Trump's maiden visit to India, four influential US Senators, who described themselves as "long-time friends of India", have sought an assessment of the human rights situation in Kashmir and religious freedom in the country, saying hundreds of Kashmiris remain in "preventive detention".

The bipartisan group of Senators, in their letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo dated February 12, said that India has now imposed the longest-ever internet shutdown by a democracy, disrupting access to medical care, business and education for seven million people.

The government abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019 that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and imposed curbs including on movement of people

as well as on mobile telephone and Internet connectivity. The crackdown drew international criticism with several countries expressing concerns over the situation in Kashmir.

India has categorically told the international community that its move to scrap Article 370 was an internal matter. According to officials, Internet is being restored in the Valley in a phased manner after reviewing the security situation.

The US lawmakers, describing themselves as "longtime friends of India", wrote in the letter that "more than six months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government unilaterally revoked the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, the government continues to block most Internet in the region". "Hundreds of Kashmiris remain in 'preventive detention', including key political figures," they said.

Signatories to the letter are Chris Van Hollen, Todd Young, Richard J Durbin and Lindsey O

Graham.

"In addition, the Indian government has taken other troubling steps that threaten the rights of certain religious minorities and the secular character of the state. This includes the passage of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act which is being challenged in India's Supreme Court," the Senators wrote.

In the letter, the Senators requested Pompeo for a State Department assessment of a number of issues in India, including the number of individuals detained by the government for political purposes and their treatment; current restrictions on communications in Jammu and Kashmir; current accessibility of Jammu and Kashmir; and restrictions on religious freedoms in Jammu and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the EU spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Virginie Battu-Henriksson said that the EU Ambassador to India along

with some Ambassadors of EU Member States accepted the invitation extended by the Government of India to visit Srinagar and Jammu, on February 12-13. The programme of the visit organised by the Government of India included meetings with civil and military authorities, some political representatives, as well as selected representatives of civil society and the business community.

"The visit confirmed that the Government of India has taken positive steps to restore normalcy. Some restrictions remain, notably on Internet access and mobile services, and some political leaders are still in detention. While we recognise the serious security concerns, it is important that the remaining restrictions be lifted swiftly. The visit presented a welcome opportunity to see the situation on the ground and to interact with local interlocutors. We look forward to continuing the dialogue with India on the situation in the region."

## 4 youths held for kidnapping, killing class 12 student: Police

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, FEBRUARY 14

THE KANNAUJ police Friday arrested four youths, aged between 19 and 21, for allegedly kidnapping and killing a student of class XII in Tirwa police station area. They murdered the victim, Abhishek Rajput, and buried the body in a forest area on February 4 and had made a phone call to the father on February 10 and demanded Rs 8 lakh, police said.

Police identified the arrested accused as Shyam Sunder, Ramji Rajput, Shivam Rajput and Ashish Verma. They claimed to have recovered a cellphone and knife used in the crime, apart from a country-made pistol and three cell-phones from the possession of

the accused.

All four were produced before a local court Friday that sent them to jail, said the Station House Officer of Tirwa police station, Tribhuvan Prasad Verma.

The police exhumed the body and sent it for autopsy. The report is awaited. Police claimed that the victim's family members identified the body based on clothes and shoes.

A search was on for three other accused identified as Dhruv, Roshan and Lalli, the officer added. The prime accused, Shivam Rajput, is a neighbour of the victim while the other accused live in other parts of the district.

The victim, Abhishek, was a resident of Anpurna Nagar area in Kannauj. His father Gopal Rajput is a medical practitioner.

## In a first, Madhya Pradesh radio-tags rescued pangolins

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
BHOPAL, FEBRUARY 14

ON THE eve of the ninth World Pangolin Day, the Madhya Pradesh forest department announced the first-ever successful radio-tagging of the Indian pangolin. Two rescued animals were radio-tagged and released in the Satpura tiger reserve six months ago.

"This is the first case of successful rehabilitation of the species where the released individuals are monitored in the wild using telemetry," said S K Singh, chief conservator of forests and field director of Satpura Tiger Reserve.

The exercise was part of a joint project initiated by the Madhya Pradesh forest department and NGO Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) to un-

derstand the ecology of the Indian Pangolin and develop an effective conservation plan. The fieldwork is supported by the YES Bank under its CSR initiative.

Pangolins are the most trafficked wildlife species in the world. Commonly known as scaly anteaters, the toothless animal evolved an armour of scales and this unique protection mechanism has now become the main cause of its disappearance. The projected population declines range from 50 per cent to 80 per cent across the genus.

World Pangolin Day, celebrated on the third Saturday in February, is an international attempt to raise awareness about pangolins and bring together various stakeholders to help protect this unique animal from extinction.

Out of the eight species of Pangolin, the Indian Pangolin



The Pangolin research team with the world's first radio-tagged Indian Pangolin. Courtesy: MPPD/WCT

and the Chinese Pangolin are found in India. The Chinese pangolin is found in North-East India while the Indian Pangolin is distributed across India, except the

extreme arid zones, Himalayas and the North-East. Despite protective measures, pangolins in India are widely traded both domestically and internationally.

"The Special Task Force (STF) of the MP forest department has been actively working to curb wildlife poaching in the state. In recent years, we have successfully busted pangolin smuggling syndicates which involved poachers and smugglers form more than nine states," said Rajesh Shrivastav, chief wildlife warden of Madhya Pradesh.

"In anti-poaching operations where pangolin scales are recovered, those animals are already dead. Where live animals are involved, globally there is about 50 per cent death rate among released pangolins. This new initiative is to ensure better survival rates and thus have a positive impact on the population of this endangered species," said Aditya Joshi, a wildlife biologist with the WCT who is overseeing this project.

"Very little is known about

the ecology of pangolins. The project will provide first-hand data about their ecology. Right now we are also learning many things about them but it will be too early to say anything until the data is analysed," said Prashant Deshmukh of WCT.

The research team reaches the location once the animals move away to study the habitat and whether and how much time they spent burrowing or foraging. "Once we have the spatial and temporal data, we will be able to protect the animal better by coming out with a conservation strategy," he said.

Ritesh Sirothia of the STF said the wing has arrested 164 persons involved in pangolin smuggling from 12 states. Two accused are foreigners, one each from Lhasa and Myanmar. The accused include poachers, traders and traffickers.