

GOVERNOR CALLS FOR CALM AND ASKS PEOPLE NOT TO BELIEVE RUMOURS

SECURITY FORCES ARE BEING INDUCTED ROUTINELY FOR ELECTIONS

JAMMU, FEBRUARY 24:, Governor Shri Satya Pal Malik called a informal meeting of the State Administrative Council to review the current situation in the State, particularly in the context of the terror attack in Pulwama last week and the subsequent developments. The meeting was attended by Advisors, Shri Vijay Kumar, Shri K K Sharma and Shri K Skandan, besides Shri B V R Subrahmanyam, Chief Secretary; Shri Umang Narula, Principal Secretary to Governor; Shri R.K. Goyal, Principal Secretary, Information Department; Shri Shaleen Kabra, Principal Secretary, Home; and Shri Rohit Kansal, Principal Secretary, Planning and Monitoring Department.

2. In the meeting, the Governor was briefed about the current security situation in Jammu city after the lifting of the curfew a few days ago and also the restoration of normalcy in the place. He was also informed of the situation in the Kashmir Valley and the gradual induction of additional Central Forces for election purposes.

3. The Governor was informed that General Elections are imminent and the requirement of additional Security Forces is large. During the Panchayat Elections, over 400 additional companies of Central Police Forces were provided to conduct the Urban Local Body and Panchayat Elections over a total of 13 phases. In the presence of these forces and as a result of their efforts, the elections were conducted peacefully, without any incident.

4. However, there were many attempts during these elections to frighten people from participating in the political process. Death threats were given by terrorist organisations to anyone planning to contest the election. Candidates were asked to go with their coffins to file nominations and that they should be prepared for their dead bodies to leave polling booths. Voters were also threatened with severe consequences if they came to vote.

5. After the Pulwama incident, the security concerns in this regard are much higher with the possibility of terrorist organisations increasing their activities against candidates and voters on a much larger scale.

6. In this context, a much larger number of additional Police Forces are needed for conducting General Elections. Normally, forces are inducted a month before elections so that they settle down and familiarise with the ground situation. It is in this context that 100 companies of Central Forces are being inducted into the State at the moment. This is less than the actual additional forces required and more would be inducted in the coming weeks.

7. The Governor appealed to the people that the induction of forces be seen only in the context of conducting elections and should not be attributed to any other cause. The Governor appealed to the people not to believe in rumours of any extreme nature which are circulating widely in some quarters and to remain calm. These rumours are unnecessarily creating an atmosphere of fear in the minds of people, leading to stress and disruption to normal life. Rumours about curfews and other actions should not be believed. There is some security related action being taken by the forces, but this is purely related to the Pulwama attack which is unprecedented one. The response of security forces is guided solely by the need to counter both the impact and any further action that may be taken by terrorist groups who are still out to disrupt our country and its democratic processes.

8. The SAC was also informed that the supply situation of petroleum and other products in the Kashmir Valley is critically low. The availability of petrol in the Kashmir Valley is adequate to meet the needs for just one day and that of diesel for four days. There is no stock of LPG in the Kashmir Valley. This is a result of the earlier blockage of the National Highway for seven days and the ongoing blockage for the past four days, leading to disruption of supplies from Jammu to Srinagar. The government is taking measures to enhance the supplies to the Kashmir region. However, as a precautionary measure, the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir has rationed petrol and diesel supply, so as to conserve whatever is available for emergency purposes. Steps are being taken to increase

the availability of stocks in the Kashmir Valley. People of the state should not read anything more into this but see it only as an administrative measure in a shortage situation. On the medicine front also, the instructions to hospitals to increase availability of medicines is also to be seen in the context of shortage of supplies as a result of the prolonged disruption in transport.

9. On the issue of safety and security of Kashmiris residing outside the state, the Governor clarified that the Honorable Prime Minister has given clear directions to the country yesterday. The PM's statement that there is no fight against Kashmiris but that it is a fight for Kashmir is a clear signal that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are not only the integral part of India but it is the responsibility of the country to take care of their safety wherever they may be. Over 22,000 Kashmiri students are studying outside the state and the number of students who have actually been injured or hurt in incidents is not even in single digits. The state's system of Liaison Officers in nine major cities has worked effectively so that there is no panic anywhere and students continue their studies safely. The work of LOs, helplines in State and other measures have ensured that the vast majority of students continue their studies uninterrupted. Media has played up a few scattered incidents more than what has actually happened which has been a major cause of fear and anxiety among parents whose children are studying outside the state. The exaggerated reporting has led to unnecessary excessive reactions in the Kashmir Valley. It is necessary for everyone to avoid fear mongering and not to worsen matters. The Principal Secretary, Planning and Monitoring along with Principal Resident Commissioner and the Commissioner/Secretary, Higher Education will be briefing the media separately on students related issues later in the evening. After the Prime Minister's statement, a state of calm should prevail and that is the request to all concerned.

10. The Governor thanked the excellent cooperation rendered by the administration and police of other states for taking steps and going out of the way to provide security to students who were afraid of any untoward incident. The Governor also complimented

the work done by our Liaison Officers in handling the worries of students round the clock.

11. The Governor also wanted to re-assure all government employees and their families who stay in Jammu that their safety and security is of primary importance to the Government and from day one, measures were taken to ensure their safety. The situation in Jammu city is normal and government employees should feel safe as they go about their normal work.

12. In conclusion, the Governor once again appealed to the people of the state to stay calm and not believe any rumours floating around in any form of media. The Government is concerned about people's welfare and will ensure that they are safe and can carry out their normal activities.