

J&K to get 2 new border battalions

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Describing the border residents of Jammu and Kashmir as “a strategic asset,” Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday announced the raising of two exclusive border battalions of the State police.

He also said five battalions of the Indian Reserve Police and two women’s battalions of the State police would be raised with 60% reservation for border residents.

“Pakistan has been shelling the International Border (IB) heavily [in recent times]. I have assessed the situation and ordered border-specific measures to improve the preparedness. The border residents are our strategic assets. I was happy to see their confidence,” said Mr. Singh.

The Minister also announced an enhanced compensation package for the border residents. He concluded his two-day visit to the State, by visiting Kupwara in the Kashmir Valley in the morning and the border areas in Jammu later in the day.

Mr. Singh was accompanied by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti and Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office Jitendra Singh to Kupwara, officials said.

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During his survey of the border hamlet of R.S. Pura which has borne the brunt of Pakistani shelling, the Home Minister said five bullet-proof mobile ambulances will be made available and 14,460 bunkers, including 1,431 community bunkers and 13,029 individual bunkers, will be constructed at a cost of ₹415 crore in border areas and along the Line of Control (LoC).

Announcing a new compensation policy for border residents, Mr. Singh said any civilian casualty will get ₹5 lakh up from the present ₹1 lakh and “the fixed deposit caveat has been removed”. Similarly, farmers will get

₹50,000 per head of cattle killed in Pakistan shelling, up from ₹30,000.

The new package will cover the death of all cattle killed in shelling and not be restricted to only three animals as at present.

The Minister also announced a hike of 30% in the monthly compensation for Kashmiri Pandits and ₹5.5 lakh financial assistance to refugees from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, West Pakistan and Chamb. “We have decided to set up an advisory board of migrants. It will have representatives of all the displaced communities,” said Mr. Singh.