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## J&K Assembly Polls: PM among star campaigners in Phase-3

AGENCIES  
JAMMU, SEPT 10 (UND)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is among the star campaigners in for the Phase 3 Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections.

The Phase-3 polls are scheduled to be held on October 1.

As per the list, the star campaigners are Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP National president Jagat

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## People in jails used to split votes in Kashmir, alleges PDP chief



Ji NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEP 10

Former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday raised serious concerns about the alleged selective treatment of those in jails during

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

# Development of any country is impossible without cyber security: Amit Shah

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10 (UND)

Stating that development of any country is impossible without cyber security, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that the government has actively pursued goal of a cyber-secured Bharat and implemented an effective cyber security strategy to guard the citizens from the reach of cyber criminals.

Addressing the first Foundation Day programme of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) at Vigyan Bhavan here, Shah said that technology proves to be a blessing for human life and today it is being used extensively in all new initiatives. The increasing use of technology is also creating many threats and that is why cyber security is no longer limited to the digital world but has also become an important aspect of the national security.

The Home Minister said that platforms like I4C can make a huge contribution



in dealing with such threats and also called upon I4C to continue awareness, coordination and joint efforts with the concerned stakeholders.

He said that in a vast country like India, having a separate Cyber Suspect Registry for each state would not serve any purpose because states have their own boundaries but cyber criminals have no boundaries. It was the need of the hour to create a Suspect Registry at the national level and connect states with it to

create a common platform to fight cyber crime.

Shah also dedicated the Cyber Fraud Mitigation Centre (CFMC) to the nation, launched the Samanvay platform (Joint Cyber Crime Investigation Facility System), inaugurated the 'Cyber Commandos' program and Suspect Registry. He also unveiled the new logo, vision and mission of I4C.

The Minister said that CFMC has also been inaugurated with the idea of bringing

banks, financial institutions, telecom companies, Internet Service Providers and police on a single platform and this will become a major platform for prevention of cyber crime in the coming days.

He said that 'duty to share' instead of 'need to know' is the need of the hour and for this nothing can be more effective than the Samanvay platform.

Shah said that the number of internet users in the country was 25 crores on 31 March 2014, which is 95 crores on 31 March 2024. Due to the increase in downloading speed and reduction in cost, data consumption has also increased a lot. Earlier the average usage was 0.26 GB which has increased by almost 78 times to 20.27 GB today. Due to the Digital India initiative, many facilities have become online in the country.

The Home Minister said that I4C has done a great job in its journey of nine years and in the short span of

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## BJP launches 'Har Ghar BJP' Campaign to Strengthen Grassroots Outreach Ahead of J&K Assembly Elections



Ji NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPT 10

Tarun Chugh, who is also the Prabhari for J&K and Ladakh, outlined the objectives of the "Har Ghar BJP" Campaign. The initiative aims to bolster the BJP's grassroots presence in preparation for the upcoming Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Starting from September 10, this campaign focuses on connecting with the public to raise awareness about the party's programs and achievements.

Tarun Chugh, BJP Nation-

al General Secretary and G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister & J&K Assembly election Incharge, launched "Har Ghar BJP" Campaign in Jammu & Kashmir.

Tarun Chugh started the 'Har Ghar BJP' campaign on September 10 from the Jammu West assembly constituency in Jammu, along with Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy, where BJP candidate Arvind Gupta is contesting. J&K BJP Working President Sat Sharma also participated in the Har Ghar Bhajpa campaign in Ward no 41. The

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## CS Dulloo pitches for promotion of off-beat tourist destinations with World Bank

Ji NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEP 10

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today held an interactive session with the team of World Bank to have detailed deliberations over the development and promotion of several off-beat tourism destinations across the UT here.

The session besides the team members from the World Bank (WB) was attended by Commissioner Secretary, Tourism; Director Tourism, Jammu/Kashmir; Director, Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir; MD, JKTCDC and other officers.

Chief Secretary took this occasion to highlight various initiatives taken by the administration. He remarked that this region has its unique strengths and challenges to deal with. He maintained that



the three core areas where J&K wants to march ahead are Horticulture, Hospitality and Handicrafts for which it is well-known all over the world.

Dulloo urged the WB team to extend their assistance and expertise to help J&K devise a robust tourism promotion plans for several off-beat tourism destinations in both the divisions here. He pitched for framing of roadmap for all these places keeping in view the ecology and environment

and hence a sustainable development plan for all these new tourism destinations.

In her presentation Commissioner Secretary, Tourism, Yasha Mudgal gave out the detailed overview of the tourism scenario of J&K. She also justified the need for development of these additional tourist spots to relieve pressure on the traditional ones which are being explored beyond their carrying capacity.

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## Assembly elections: Candidates intensify road shows, door-to-door campaigns

Ji NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEP 10

The political arena of Kashmir has turned upbeat with heavy campaigning ahead of the first assembly election in almost a decade.

Candidates are leaving no stone unturned in this crucial electoral opportunity as they try to reach out to the people through road shows and extensive door-to-door campaigns.

According to the details obtained by the news agency, the door-to-door campaigns have been quite striking, as candidates try to reach the constituents directly in their neighbourhood areas, in different parts of Srinagar city and other places. Almost all political parties in

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## Delhi court grants interim bail to Er Rashid: 'Power of Vote', Says AIP

Ji NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEP 10

Much to the relief of Awami Itehad Party (AIP) ahead of crucial Assembly polls in J&K, Delhi Patiala House Court Tuesday granted an interim bail to jailed Member Parliament Er Sheikh Abdur Rashid popularly known as Er Rashid.

The Court also allowed Er Rashid to carry out campaigning in J&K. The 'freedom of North Kashmir MP' is, however, short-lived' as his bail ends on October 2 after which he will have to be lodged again in Tihar jail, New Delhi.

Talking to news agency, AIP's chief spokesman Inamun Nabi said that the party chief has been grant-



despite being in jail for the last five years, after defeating National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah and Peoples Conference chief Sajad Lone in Lok Sabha polls held in April-May. The voter turnout in the polls was over 58 per cent.

The AIP spokesman said that now that Er Rashid is allowed to carry out campaigning for his party, candidates will get a huge push as the party chief is known as a "crowd puller" for being articulate and clear in his speeches. "His release, though for 40 days, will make a big difference in the party. Our candidates are happy over the Delhi court's verdict."

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## Assembly Polls 2024

### General Zorawar Singh's 6th generation in electoral fray

Ji NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEP 10

Reasi assembly segment in Jammu division is witnessing the sixth generation of a family in the electoral fray in the 2024 assembly polls, slated to go to the polls in the first phase on September 18.

Diksha Kaluria (27), a youngest candidate, is the six generation of General Zorawar Singh. She has been contesting the polls for the first time.

Kaluria has entered the battlefield to continue the legacy of General Zorawar Singh. The four generations in between General Zorawar Singh and Diksha Kaluria include Inder Singh, Chat-

ter Singh, Jameet Singh and Davinder Singh.

She has been associated with General Zorawar Singh Memorial Educational and Charitable Trust (ZSMECT).

Speaking to the news agency, Kaluria said that she is the youngest among all the candidates who are contesting elections from Reasi.

"As a social activist, I have worked in the district. During Covid-19, we provided free of cost education to over 300 students in Vijaypur and Derababar villages of the area besides that we have been providing fees, free uniforms and other things to the needy students," she said.

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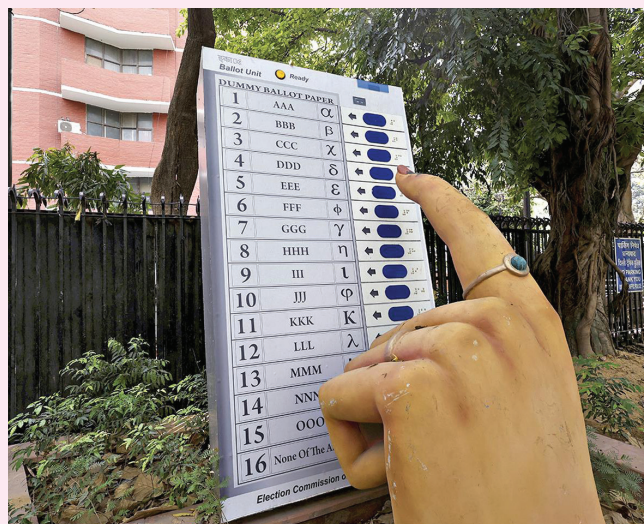
## J&K ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

### 2350 permission given to political parties, candidates

Ji NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEP 10

Upholding the Democratic Principles of Free, Fair and Transparent Elections for the forthcoming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Election, 73.94% permission requests from the political parties and contesting candidates have been accepted since the electoral process commenced in the Union Territory, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, J&K said on Tuesday.

A total of 3178 cases of permission requests were received for General Elections to Legislative Assembly in Jammu and Kashmir by various competent authorities, an official statement said, adding that out of these, 2350 permission requests which were completed in all



respects were accepted by the Competent Authorities.

Further, 336 requests which were lacking in fulfillment of requisite formalities were rejected, while 241 requests are still under

process at the level of various competent authorities to issue the permissions.

"As many as 158 requests are still pending at various levels for want of NOCs etc, while 93 requests were cancelled on the basis of insufficient/incomplete formalities submitted by the applicants in spite of ample time given to them to submit the same," it said.

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## Haji 2025: Application deadline extended to September 23

Ji NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEP 10

Following public demand, the Haj Committee of India (HCoI) on Tuesday extended the deadline for submitting online applications for Hajj 2025 until September 23, 2024.

This extension was announced through a circular issued by the HCoI, a copy of which lies with the news agency.

The circular states that applications for Hajj 2025 were initially invited from August 13, 2024, to September 9, 2024, at 11:59 PM. "Considering popular demand, the Competent Authority in the Ministry of Minority Affairs is pleased to extend the last date for submission of Hajj Application Forms (HAF) to September 23, 2024, 11:59 PM," it reads.

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## Multiple Voter Awareness activities held at GHS Jankhar under SVEEP

JI NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 10

As part of District SVEEP plan, a series of voter awareness activities were organized at GHS Jankhar in 65-Basohli AC, as part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, a flagship program of the Election Commission of India.

The event attracted a large number of students, faculty members, BLO Supervisors, Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, community members, and BLOs from nearby polling booths. The primary objective of these activities was to engage and motivate young voters, particularly first-time voters, to actively participate in the upcoming elections on 1st October 2024. The campaign promoted the idea of 'Be A Proud Voter' encouraging all eligible



voters to use their right to vote and contribute to the formation of a popular government.

Attendees had the opportunity to interact with key figures involved in the SVEEP program, including the Nodal Officer SVEEP for 65-Basohli, Dr. Roshan Lal, Dr. Pratihbha Ankur, Ashwani Kumar of SVEEP Cell. They urged participants to use social media platforms to promote SVEEP activities and ensure that no eligible voter is left behind in this crucial democratic exercise. The event also emphasized the significance of each vote,

with speakers stressing that even a single vote can influence the outcome of an election.

The event was attended by Sector Officer Balwant Raj along with the staff and students from Govt. Middle School Band.

The program, guided by Returning Officer (RO) 65-Basohli, Anil Kumar Thakur was anchored by Incharge Head of the School Maan Singh.

The event concluded with a joint pledge-taking ceremony, where all attendees committed to vote fearlessly and without bias in the upcoming elections.

## Election Observers brief candidates, political representatives about ECI guidelines



JI NEWS SERVICE  
REASI, SEPTEMBER 10

As mandated under the guidelines of the Election Commission of India (ECI), General Observers for AC-56 Gulabgarh (ST) Saroj Kumar Sethi and for AC-57 Reasi and AC-58 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Avi Prasad along with Police Observer Pradeep Kumar Yadav held a meeting with contesting candidates and representatives of different political parties to inform them about guidelines, do's, and don'ts of the election process.

District Election Officer (DEO) Vishesh Mahajan, welcomed all observers and representatives of political parties and contesting candidates.

General Observer Avi

Prasad informed about various aspects of elections like adherence to model code of conduct (MCC), permissions, Postal ballots, intermediate strong rooms and importance of 12 identity proof documents for voting on the day of poll.

Police Observer Pradeep Kumar Yadav ensured that the observers shall be available 24/7 for any grievances by representatives. General Observer for 56-AC Gulabgarh Saroj Sethi emphasised on free, fair and peaceful elections and the role of political parties in ensuring that. Observers told the members of political parties to feel free to come up to them with any apprehension about any person and assured the

same will be dealt with strictly.

The representatives of contesting candidates used the opportunity to clarify their doubts and also discussed a few issues which according to them were of great importance. The Representatives were briefed about C-Vigil app for reporting violations regarding MCC and expenditure and the use of Suvidha app designed for seeking timely permissions.

Observers asked election authorities to provide handbooks to all candidates, both hard and soft copies, and asked political party representatives and candidates to acknowledge receipt of notices communicated to them. Observers highlighted the critical role of political parties for ensuring good and enhanced voter engagement and turnout.

Representatives of various political parties: SSP Gaurav Sikarwar, ADDC Sukhdev Samyal, ADC Kulbushan Khajuria, RO-57 Anshumali Sharma, RO-58 Piyush and others were present.

## DEO Udhampur reviews preparedness for upcoming Assembly Elections

JI NEWS SERVICE  
UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 10

District Election Officer Udhampur, Saloni Rai held a comprehensive meeting with all nodal officers to assess the preparedness for the upcoming General Assembly Elections 2024 in the district at Conference Hall DC Office Complex Udhampur.

During the meeting, a detailed discussion was conducted on multiple key aspects including Assured Minimum Facilities at all polling stations, Conducting plantation drives at green and other polling stations, downloading Green SVEEP App, enhancing SVEEP activities, home voting procedures, voter slip distribution and cleanliness drives.

The DEO directed the nodal officers to conduct extensive plantation drives across all polling stations,



ensuring that 100% of the stations are covered by September 2024. She also emphasized the need to accelerate SVEEP activities throughout the district to increase voter turnout.

The concerned officers were instructed to guide Booth Level Officers in conducting Green SVEEP drives in their respective areas. The DEO urged the officers to set a target of planting over 100 plants at polling stations identified as green polling stations. She emphasized that the meeting aimed to ensure all necessary

preparations are in place and any shortcomings are addressed promptly to ensure a smooth and successful electoral process.

The DEO called for enhanced SVEEP activities to effectively engage and educate voters with a particular focus on maximizing voter turnout. She also instructed the officers to ensure that AMFs are available at all polling stations and to vigilantly implement the Model Code of Conduct, ensuring strict compliance with its provisions to prevent any violations.

## Expenditure Observers conduct Second Inspection of Election Expenditure Registers in Anantnag



JI NEWS SERVICE  
ANANTNAG, SEPTEMBER 10

The Election Expenditure Observers for Anantnag district, Tamil Selvam and Vinay Kumar Arya conducted the second review of the expenditure registers for all contesting candidates in the ongoing General Assembly elections at Dak Bunglow Khanabal.

The review meeting was held in the presence of election officials and representatives of contest-

ing candidates, ensuring transparency and adherence to election expenditure norms.

This review is part of the district's ongoing efforts to ensure accountability in the electoral process. A team of senior officials, including the Nodal Officer of the Expenditure Monitoring Cell, examined the records submitted by candidates to ensure compliance with the guidelines established by the Election Commission of India (ECI). The primary focus

financial regulations laid out by the ECI. Contesting candidates were reminded that compliance with these norms is essential as per Election Commission norms.

The District Administration remains committed to conducting a free, fair, and transparent election process. Polling for the Assembly Constituencies in District Anantnag is scheduled for 18th September as part of the first phase of polling in Jammu and Kashmir.

## Special Street play, community engagement event held at Govindsar to inspire voters

JI NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 10

As part of ongoing efforts to engage every voter, a series of impactful activities were held at the Govindsar polling station, Main Market Railway Station Govindsar in AC 67-Kathua (SC). This location had recorded low voter turnout in the recent Lok Sabha elections, prompting renewed efforts to raise awareness and drive voter participation.

One of the key highlights of the event was a powerful Nukkak Natak (street play) performed by the students of Government Higher Secondary School Keerian. The play emphasized the crucial role voters play in strengthening democracy and urged citizens to exercise their right to vote in the upcoming elections on 1st October 2024.

On the direction of the School Principal, Sanjeev Kumar Vaid, the play resonated strongly with the audience, leaving a lasting impact. The students also attended and contributed



to the event's overall success.

Following the performance, participants took a voter pledge, reaffirming their commitment to encouraging maximum voter turnout and reinforcing the democratic process.

The event was organized by the team from the BDO Office Kathua under the supervision of Block Development Officer, Kathua Sakriti Koul held in presence of AC SVEEP Nodal Officer 67-Kathua (SC) Jatinder Sethi.

list to avoid any doubt in making entries in the registers. They were also asked to submit their expenditure registers during the election process for periodic inspection of expenditure.

Meanwhile, participants were imparted the procedure of filling the Part A, B & C of expenditure registers, maintaining daily vouchers, online receipts and making day to day entries in registers.

## Postal Ballot Voting held in Kishtwar



JI NEWS SERVICE  
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 10

Postal Ballot Voting for voters of District Kishtwar engaged in the election process was conducted today, in strict adherence to the protocols and guidelines of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The event, overseen by District Election Officer Rajesh Kumar Shavan, saw the active participation of Deputy District Election Officer/Returning Officer for AC-48 Inderwal, Idrees Lone, Returning Officer for AC-49 Kishtwar/ADC, Pawan Kotwal, Returning Officer for AC-50 Nagseni Paddar/SDM Dr. Amit Kumar, Assistant Returning Officers, Security Officers and other key officials.

On the first day of voting, a significant turnout was observed across the constituencies. In 50-Paddar Nagseni Assembly Constituency, 442 out of 794 eligible voters exercised their right to vote.

In 49-Kishtwar Assembly Constituency, 878 out of 1,809 voters cast their ballots, while in 48-Inderwal Assembly Constituency, 621 out of 989 eligible voters participated in the electoral process.

The Postal Ballot voting process was carried out under stringent security measures to maintain the safety and integrity of the voting process. Three facilitation centers were established for the employee voters of all three Assembly Constituencies in the district.

Postal Ballot voting for civil and police employees of the district engaged in the election will continue tomorrow, 11th September.

By adhering to the guidelines of the Election Commission of India, the district election authorities remain committed to ensuring fairness and efficiency in the elections, making sure that every voter's experience is smooth and equitable.

## SVEEP: Inter-School District Level Thang-Ta culminates at Qamaria HSS Saloor



JI NEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 10

The Inter School District level Thang-Ta competition, organized under the SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) initiative, concluded successfully today at Qamaria Higher Secondary School Saloor.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from Girls students across the district, showcasing their skills in the traditional martial art of Thang-Ta.

In a parallel event, Zone Hariganiwan conducted a Tug of War competition under the banner

of SVEEP- 2024.

The initiative aims to engage youth in sports while promoting awareness about the electoral process, highlighting the importance of active participation in democracy.

The event was marked by high energy and sportsmanship as students from various schools competed in a spirited manner.

Both events are part of the broader SVEEP initiative by the Department of Youth Services and Sports, Ganderbal, aimed at fostering youth engagement through sports while simultaneously raising awareness about voter education.

## GHSS Hatli hosts SVEEP event to promote electoral participation

JI NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 10

Government Higher Secondary School, Hatli organized an impactful awareness programme under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, here today.

The aim was to educate the public on the importance of voting and encourage greater electoral participation ahead of upcoming elections.

The programme was presided over by the Principal, Dev Raj in presence of AC Nodal Officer Mangal Singh (Principal of GHSS Girls Kathua), saw a strong turnout of over 400

participants, including students, teachers, Booth Level Officers (BLOs), ANMs, ASHA workers, patwaris, chowkidars, lambardars and other community members.

Mangal Singh emphasized the crucial role every citizen plays in strengthening democracy through active involvement in the electoral process. He stressed the importance of casting votes responsibly and making informed decisions to shape the future of the nation.



## DEO Kishtwar reviews election preparedness in Marwah, Warwan area

JINews SERVICE  
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 10

District Election Officer (DEO), Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan visited the remote areas of Sub Division Marwah today to assess the logistics and security arrangements for the smooth, free, and transparent conduct of the upcoming Assembly Election. The tour of DEO was aimed to oversee all the election related arrangements made so far by field agencies.

The officer reviewed lodging and boarding arrangements for polling staff in the sub-division. He also evaluated the welfare logistics for advance polling parties, including polling personnel, Police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), who will remain in the area for over



a week due to the remote location and logistical challenges.

In terms of security and logistics, he directed the officers to address any gaps well in advance, emphasizing the need for flawless execution to ensure a free and fair election process.

Accompanied by SSP Kishtwar Abdul Qayoom, ACD Kishtwar/Nodal Officer Logistics, the DEO inspected intermediate strong rooms and some polling stations in Marwah and Warwan. They reviewed the security measures and

staff to cast hassle free votes.

Taking a serious note of the fake news on what-App, he directed the SDM to take stringent action and strictly enforce the MCC.

Later, the visiting officers attended the SVEEP Programme held at High Schools in Chanjer (Marwah) and Afti (Warwan). A SVEEP rally was also flagged off by DEO in presence of SSP at Afti. The DEO appealed to the voters to participate actively in the upcoming Assembly Election, emphasizing the importance of their involvement in the democratic process. He further said that a friendly environment as festivity should prevail in the areas and everyone should feel pride in the electoral participation.

## Staff imparted training regarding Postal Ballot Voting at Bhandarwah



JINews SERVICE  
BHADERWAH, SEPTEMBER 10

As part of the preparation for the upcoming J&K Assembly Elections 2024, the polling staff designated for Postal Ballot Voting was today imparted training here today. The training, conducted by the Assembly Level Master Trainers (ALMTs), started on September 6 and is now in its second phase, aimed at preparing polling staff for the elections.

The Returning Officer for AC-51 Bhandarwah, Sunil Kumar, supervised the ongoing Assembly Election Training Program.

In his address to the polling staff and accompanying civilian personnel, Sunil Kumar informed them that they will cast their votes via postal ballots from September 13 to 15. Two facilitation centres have been set up for this purpose at the Community Hall Bhandarwah and the office of the Returning

Officer (ADC Bhandarwah). This provision falls under Section 60 of the Representation of the People's Act, 1951, which allows voters on election duties, including Absent Voters of Essential Services (AVES), to vote via postal ballots.

The Returning Officer has issued notices to all eligible polling parties and AVES, including police personnel and non-government workers such as drivers, videographers, conductors, and vehicle cleaners, informing them of their postal voting options. These voters must submit Form 12 by or before September 11 at 3:00 PM to enroll for postal ballot voting.

Key officials such as ARO Kamalpreet Singh, Assembly Nodal Officer Dr. Nazir Ahmed, Coordinator Arif Rana, and ALMTs were present at the training centre to oversee the process and ensure the smooth functioning of election-related preparations.

## General Observer Nowshera, Sunderbani-Kalakote ACs interacts with representatives of political parties, candidates



JINews SERVICE  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 10

General Observer for Nowshera and Sunderbani-Kalakote Assembly Constituencies, Mani Ram Sharma today interacted with representatives of the Political parties and candidates in fray for two constituencies of Rajouri District. The Expenditure Observer was also present in the meeting.

On the occasion, Mani Ram briefed the participants regarding Model Code of Conduct and assured level playing field for all the candidates during the electioneering.

He sensitized them regarding the ethical usage of language during campaigning, responsible usage of Social Media, maintaining communal

harmony and compliance to MCC.

He stressed on them to stay informed about the uniform selling for different expenditures for electioneering by the candidate and maintenance of expenditure registers.

The participants were also informed regarding different activities to be conducted to ensure free, fair and transparent elections including Randomisation of EVMS, Commissioning of EVM; VVPATS, appointment of Booth agents by candidates or Political parties and other important aspects of election.

Regarding permission for rallies or programs, the participants were told that the same shall be given on a first come first serve basis.

## General Observer concludes inspection of polling stations in Doda town



JINews SERVICE  
DODA, SEPTEMBER 10

Aditya Negi, the General Observer for Assembled Constituencies (AC) 52-Doda and AC 53-Doda West conducted a thorough inspection of several polling stations in Doda town, which concluded today. The inspection covered key locations including Government Middle School Sah Mohalla, GMS Balwan Mohalla, GMS Nagri, and various other polling stations within Tehsil Doda.

Aditya Negi assessed the preparedness of the polling stations to ensure a smooth electoral process. He interacted with election officials and

volunteers to review the arrangements for voter facilitation, security measures, and compliance with electoral guidelines.

Aditya Negi emphasized the importance of transparency and efficiency in the electoral process, stating, "It is our duty to ensure that every eligible voter can exercise their right to vote without any hindrance. Our team is committed to upholding the integrity of the election process."

The inspections are part of ongoing efforts by the Election Commission to ensure that all polling stations are adequately equipped and prepared for the upcoming elections.

## DEO Samba media on ECI's election coverage guidelines

JINews SERVICE  
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 10

A press meet was held today in the Deputy Commissioner's Office Complex and chaired by District Election Officer (DEO) Rajesh Sharma. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Samba, Vinay Kumar also attended the meet. Media representatives from across the district, besides District Information Officer (DIO) Pranav Manhas and SVEEP Nodal Officer Ekshu Sharma were present at the meeting.

The DEO stressed the indispensable role of the media as the fourth pillar of democracy and a key factor for free, fair, and transparent elections. He reiterated the importance of responsible journalism, urging the media to follow the "General Guidelines for Media during Elections" to ensure balanced, apolitical, and fact-based reporting. The DEO and SSP Vinay Kumar also discussed the need for maintaining law and order during the elections and requested the media's support in fostering an environment of peace and



impartiality.

A brief interaction session followed, where the media personnel had the opportunity to raise various issues related to election coverage and media conduct. Topics such as access to election-related information, ensuring timely dissemination of updates, and challenges faced by media houses during the election period were discussed. The DEO assured the media of full cooperation and support from the administration

to address these concerns and facilitate smooth coordination. The DEO further encouraged media participation in the upcoming Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) events, emphasizing their role in raising voter awareness and encouraging higher voter turnout.

DEO also appreciate the media's commitment to upholding democratic principles and their valuable contribution to the electoral process.

## Supplementary first Randomisation of Supplementary Ballot Units for 19-Habba Kadal AC conducted in Srinagar

JINews SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 10

In connection with General Elections to Legislative Assembly-2024, a Supplementary first Randomisation of Supplementary Ballot Units for 19-Habba Kadal Assembly Constituency of Srinagar District was today conducted in accordance with the guidelines Election Commission of India (ECI) here at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The Supplementary Randomization process was held under the supervision of District Election Officer (DEO), Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat in presence of representatives of the Political parties and Contesting Candidates.

The process of Supplementary

Randomisation of Ballot Units was carried out through a dedicated Software and additional required number of Ballot Units were allocated for use during the upcoming Polls, as the number of Contesting Candidates in 19-Habba Kadal Assembly segment are more than 16 Candidates.

On the occasion, 180 supplementary Ballot Units were selected randomly from the pool of available ballot units.

Prior to the supplementary Randomisation process, the DEO Srinagar briefed the representatives of the Political parties and Contesting Candidates about the Supplementary first Randomisation of Ballot Units ensuring their confidence in the upright-

ness of the process and encouraging that all requisite measures have been enacted to uphold the sanctity of the polls in free, fair and transparent manner as per the guidelines of Election Commission of India.

All the representatives of contesting candidates/political parties expressed their satisfaction over the entire randomisation process.

The entire process was video recorded as per ECI guidelines.

Returning Officer 21-Habba Kadal, Ghulam Jeevani Zargar, Deputy District Election Officer Srinagar, Mir Imtiaz ul Aziz, Nodal Officer ETPBS, Syed Mujaddid and other concerned Officials of District Election Authority Srinagar were also present on the occasion.

## Assembly Elections-2024

## ECI conducts virtual conference to review SVEEP activities, AMFs for electorate in J&K

JINews SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 10

In order to review the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities organised for the awareness of the voters and the Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs) to be provided to the electorate ahead of the much awaited Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Elections 2024, the officers of Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday conducted a virtual conference of District Nodal Officers at district level across the union territory.

The meeting was chaired by Santosh Kumar, Secretary SVEEP in presence of Love Kush Yadav, Under Secretary SVEEP and R.K Singh and Aradhana, Senior Consultants SVEEP.

The conference primarily focused on key thematic issues like smooth, efficient and voter friendly services, integration of IT Applications for voter awareness, extensive voter outreach program, Media and Communication strategy, EVM

and VVPAT storage related infrastructure, training and capacity building.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Pandurang K Pole, accompanied by Akther Hussain Qazi, Nodal officer of SVEEP J&K; Sapna Kotwal, Nodal Officer for Media J&K; Namisha Abrol, IT Expert and others attended the conference. Meanwhile, the respective designated District Nodal Officers for SVEEP also joined the conference through virtual mode at their respective district headquarters.

While taking stock of the activities initiated under SVEEP for voters' awareness and participation in the upcoming Assembly Elections, the ECI Officials directed the Nodal Officers to focus on technology driven awareness for targeted intervention to enhance the voter turnout in the upcoming Assembly Elections.

ECI officials directed the officers to impart awareness regarding the use of the mobile voter friendly applications including cVIGIL, Know Your Can-

didate, Suvidha, Voter Helpline App, among others to ensure that the voting experience for the electors all across the J&K UT is easy and smooth.

During the conference, the focus was also laid on establishing 'Theme Based Polling Stations' in addition to the Model Polling Stations to attract youth and first time voters. The ECI officials also suggested the officers of Srinagar district to organize an election based Quiz Competition at the famous Lal Chowk which will attract the attention of youth towards the electoral process.

Moreover, the directions were also given to document the similar activities in video format which can be showcased at various platforms including social media and web to attract the voters.

With a focus to enhance women participation in the electoral exercise, the ECI officials directed the Nodal Officers to take sufficient steps in this regard and to ensure an increased voter turnout.

## GCW Gandhinagar organises dance competition themed "Dance for Democracy - Every Step Counts"

JINews SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 10

Government College for Women Gandhinagar today organised a dance competition on the theme "Dance for Democracy- Every Step Counts". The event was organised as a part of the ongoing SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) activities under the Electoral Literacy Club, aiming to promote voter awareness and participation, especially among youth. As many as 15 students participated actively in this event conveying a message of democracy and civic responsibility through their performances. In group dance category Muskan Gupta, Arya Sharma, Mehak Gupta and Bhoomi Sharma secured first position while Arya and Mehak bagged second position and in solo category, Nabhya and Suhana Sharma secured first and second position respectively. The event was judged by Prof. Archana Bakshi, Head, Department of English and Dr. Rippy Bawa, Assistant Professor of English who lauded the creativity and effort of the students in using dance to express important democratic values.

## District SVEEP Team organizes activities across Ramban, main event held at Sanasar

JINews SERVICE  
RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 10

The District Administration Ramban, under the guidance of District Election Officer Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, organized a series of activities today across the district as part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative. The primary event was held at Government Model Higher Secondary School, Sanasar, in Assembly Constituency-54 Ramban. The SVEEP team, led by Nodal Officer Kewal Krishen Sharma and Nodal Officer for Women Awareness Shalini Chandel, focused on educating students about the importance of voting and ensuring 100% participation of eligible family members and neighbors in the upcoming September 18 elections. Students were also introduced to the c-Vigil mobile application, which enables citizens to report electoral malpractices.

## Assembly Elections-2024 DEO Shopian holds meeting with civil society members & religious heads

JINews SERVICE  
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 10

In an endeavour to reach out to the maximum number of electorate of the district, a meeting was convened today at Government Degree College, Shopian by the District Election Officer, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar. Heads of religious institutions and other civil society members attended the meeting.

Speaking on the occasion, DEO highlighted the significant influence and mass appeal the religious heads and civil society members have on the society and were requested to engage people on the electoral process.

All stakeholders

including this gathering have a vital responsibility, said DEO while asking them to give a helping hand to the district administration in further motivating the people to participate in the upcoming Assembly Elections, due on 18th September, 2024.

DEO on the occasion apprised that the Election Commission of India aims to spread voter awareness and facilitate voter education to increase the voter turnout. ADDC, Dr. Nasir Ahmed Lone; ADC, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; Principal GDC, Prof. Shafiq Ahmed; RO, Zainapora, Nisar Ahmad and RO, Shopian, Shakoor Ahmad were also present on the occasion.



## Poster-Making event on event organized by GGM Science College, Jammu

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 10

The National Service Scheme (NSS) units in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Science (EVS) at GGM Science College, Jammu, held a vibrant poster-making event on the theme "Environmental Pollution and Cleanliness." With over 50 students participating, the event became a platform for the students to express their concerns about environmental issues through artistic creativity.

The event was inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Romesh Kumar Gupta, Principal of GGM Science College, who commended the collaborative efforts of the NSS unit and the Department of Environmental Science. In his opening remarks, Dr. Gupta highlighted the crucial role students play



in environmental conservation, urging them to lead by example and raise awareness about cleanliness and pollution control.

The organizing team was led by Dr. Rahul Kait and Dr. Neha Sharma, NSS Program Officers (POS), whose dedication ensured the event's success. Dr. Arti Sharma, Head of the EVS Department, played a significant role in guiding the participants, emphasizing the importance of education in creating environmentally conscious citizens. She motivated the students to take practical steps toward solving the challenges of

pollution and promoting cleanliness, both locally and globally.

Esteemed faculty members, including Dr. Pankaj Mansotra and Dr. Ashaq Hussain, were also present, sharing their expertise on environmental protection and engaging with the students. Their involvement added depth to the discussions, encouraging students to think innovatively about addressing pollution and cleanliness issues. The students' posters reflected a wide array of environmental concerns, from air and water pollution to waste management and sustainable

practices. The posters not only captivated visually but also conveyed strong messages that urged the community to take immediate action. The best posters, selected for their creativity and relevance, were honored with certificates of appreciation. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Rahul Kait, who expressed his gratitude to the college's leadership, faculty, and students for their active involvement. He reaffirmed the NSS unit and Department of EVS's commitment to continuing initiatives that promote environmental awareness and societal change. This poster-making event is part of GGM Science College's broader efforts to engage students in meaningful, socially responsible activities aimed at creating a cleaner and sustainable future.

## JMC Commissioner visits dengue affected hotspot areas leads Fogging Operations to Combat Dengue Outbreak

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 10

In a bid to intensify efforts to control the spread of dengue fever in Jammu, Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation, Dr. Devansh Yadav (IAS), conducted an extensive tour of various wards under the jurisdiction of Jammu Municipal Corporation here today.

During the tour, the Commissioner visited wards number 63, 64, 65, 66, and 67, where the health and malaria team of JMC is actively engaged in fogging exercises to eradicate mosquito breeding sites and the main objective of the initiative is to prevent further cases of dengue fever by eliminating the mosquito population.

Emphasizing the importance of collective efforts in combating this public health concern, the Com-



missioner urged upon the residents to take proactive measures by disposing of collected water in and around their homes and dwelling units. Disposing of collected water in and around their homes would significantly contribute to preventing mosquito breeding, he said and added that working together, we can successfully mitigate the spread of dengue fever and maintain a healthy environment. Dr. Yadav directed the

fogging team to expedite their operations, ensuring comprehensive coverage of all wards under jurisdiction of JMC as soon as possible, saying that the concerted effort would effectively control the dengue menace and safeguard public health.

Interacting with the locals during the tour, the Commissioner informed that JMC has initiated a range of measures aimed at providing better civic facilities, including

improved sanitation, waste management, and water supply systems. He also highlighted the commitment of JMC for upgrading infrastructure, such as roads, drainage, and public transportation, to make the city more liveable and sustainable.

Later, the Commissioner also visited Ward No. 52 to get a firsthand appraisal of the grievances and difficulties faced by the locals. Issuing on-the-spot directions to the concerned officers, the Commissioner instructed them to prioritize addressing the people's grievances.

Among others, Joint Commissioner, works, Firdous Ahmad Qazi, Deputy Commissioner (South) Lal Chand, Health Officer, Dr. Vinod Sharma, besides other senior officers of JMC accompanied the Commissioner during the tour.

## MDB Group honours Channel Partners with Helicopter Ride, Kanwar Grewal's Musical Evening

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 10

The MDB Group, renowned for setting benchmarks in luxury real estate across Tricity, Patiala, Sangrur, and Dinda, has once again demonstrated its commitment to excellence with a spectacular event that raised the bar in channel partner appreciation and luxury experiences. Held on 28

and 29 August 2024, the event underscored MDB Group's dedication to valuing its channel partners through unique and unforgettable moments.

MDB Group's owners, Mr. Surinder Bansal and Mr. Pankaj Bansal, offered their esteemed channel partners an exclusive helicopter ride from The Elysium to GD Villa. This first-of-its-kind initiative not only showcased the

Bansals' deep appreciation for their partners but also set the stage for a day filled with grand celebrations, an intimate connection to heritage, and a renewed vision of luxury.

Upon landing, Mr. Surinder Bansal and Mrs. Sofia Bansal, accompanied by their channel partners, received a warm welcome in their ancestral village, reflecting MDB Group's unique philosophy of



merging tradition with modern luxury. The day was a celebration of the group's belief that luxury is not just a word—it is a feeling, deeply rooted in experiences that connect

and elevate. The event was marked by vibrant activities, joyous laughter, and an electrifying performance by renowned Punjabi singer Kanwar Grewal, turning the eve-

ning into a cultural festivity that resonated with all present.

Beyond entertainment, the celebration was a testament to how MDB Group honours and uplifts those who play a crucial role in its success. By creating such memorable experiences, MDB not only sets itself apart as a brand of luxury but also as a company that truly values its relationships, making

every partner feel essential to the group's continuing journey.

"Our channel partners are the backbone of our success, and this event is a small gesture of our gratitude. We believe in creating not just business relationships but lasting bonds built on trust, respect, and shared success," said Mr. Surinder Bansal. "Luxury is not just a word; it's a feeling. If one

does not feel it, the word has no meaning," added Mr. Pankaj Bansal talking about the beliefs of MDB group.

Through initiatives like these, MDB Group continues to redefine industry standards by placing its partners at the core of its growth story, solidifying its legacy as a brand that seamlessly blends luxury, trust, and community spirit.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

### Development of...

one year after becoming an official part of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The biggest achievement of 14C is the 1930 national helpline number and it is the responsibility of all state governments and stakeholders to popularise it.

So far 14C has issued more than 600 advisories, blocked a wide range of websites, social media pages, mobile apps and accounts operated by cyber criminals, he added.

Shah said that keeping in mind the complaints of cyber crime, seven joint cyber coordination teams have been formed at Mewat, Jamtara, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Visakhapatnam and Guwahati and they have yielded very good results.

Present on the occasion were Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director IB, Special Secretary (Internal Security), Chief Secretaries and Director Generals of Police and senior police officers of States and Union Territories and others.

### BJP launches 'Har Ghar...

campaign witnessed a large number of supporters participating with great enthusiasm.

Chugh briefed the purpose of the campaign and said "This extensive outreach effort seeks to inform citizens about the various schemes and policies introduced by the Narendra Modi-led government, which have contributed to peace and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir. Through this campaign, the party also intends to educate voters on key developmental plans and the future roadmap for the region, as detailed in the party's manifesto, the 'Sankalp Patra.'

Chugh also mentioned he will lead the campaign in Kishtwar and the Padder-Nagseni segment.

G Kishen Reddy, speaking on the occasion, said that through this intensive door-to-door campaign, the BJP aims to solidify its presence and connect directly with voters across the region, highlighting its achievements and future plans. He said that while the BJP is the first choice of people to form the government in Jammu & Kashmir, the purpose is to aware the people of the vision of the BJP for the better socio-economic development of the region. He also said that the growth, development, and peace in the region will be achieved as outlined in the 'Sankalp Patra,' and that the BJP is committed to fulfilling its poll promises for the people of J&K.

### J&K Assembly Polls...

Prakash Nadda, Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Manohar Lal Khattar, G. Kishan Reddy, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Jai Ram Thakur, Dr. Jitendra Singh, Ravinder Raina, Sat Paul Sharma, Yogi Adityanath, Bhajan Lal Sharma, Pushkar Singh Dhami, Mohan Yadav, Ram Madhav, Tarun Chugh, Ashish Sood, Jugal Kishore Sharma, Ghulam Ali Khatana, Dr. Nirmal Singh, Kavinder Gupta, Shamsher Singh Manhas, Anurag Thakur, Smriti Irani, General V K Singh (Retd), Ashok Kaul, Sukhmandan Choudhary, Bharat Bhushan, Col. Mahan Singh, Keshav Dutt, Chander Mohan Gupta, Raghunandan Singh, Balwan Singh, Sanjeeta Dogra, Arun Prabhat Singh, Neelam Langeh, Ranjodh Singh Nalawa, and Sarbjit Singh Johal.

### People in jails...

the current political climate in Kashmir.

She claimed that some prisoners are being used to influence the vote while others are denied basic rights such as meeting their families.

Speaking to reporters after addressing party workers in Chandgam, Pulwama, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, according to the news agency, said, "While many families are not allowed to visit their loved ones in jail, some people are allowed to run election campaigns from behind bars and are even given security protection."

Mufti alleged that one of her party members was attacked by workers loyal to a jailed person, yet the Election Commission of India (ECI) issued a notice to the PDP candidate instead of taking action against the attacker. "This clearly indicates a biased approach," she said.

Criticising the political environment in Jammu & Kashmir, Mehbooba said the PDP has always been focused on the region's development. "Our party has focused on infrastructure projects such as roads, universities, colleges and AIIMS, as well as job creation initiatives," she said.

The former CM added, "The success of PDP has made other parties nervous, pushing them to seek public apologies and acknowledge their shortcomings. People will vote for PDP as they know the party had taken big developmental projects in a short span of time and provided employment opportunities to thousands of people."

### CS Dulloo pitches...

She gave an overview of current trends of tourist visits and future projections thereof.

She then went on to enumerate the potential destinations across J&K that can be taken up for sustainable development in association with World Bank. She also threw light on the areas of development at these new places besides apprising the WB team about gap analysis done by the Department and inherent strengths of these locations in terms of attracting the tourists.

The vision for sustainable tourism was shared with the team for their suggestions. The selection criteria of these destinations was too revealed along with their phasing, process of their development, methodology, project timelines along with the kind of support needed from Ministry of Tourism and World Bank together.

Later a presentation was made by Director, Handicrafts & Handloom Kashmir, Mehmood Shah to support the Handicrafts sector here in the UT.

He highlighted the need for having a world class consultancy for formulating a strategy to optimally tap its potential here. Besides, the team was appraised about the requirement of developing an e-commerce platform where genuine handicrafts could be marketed exclusively.

The other proposals that came up for discussion in this regard included development of handicrafts-clusters, branding, marketing of handicraft products, establishing common facility centres (CFCs) and enhancing the capacity of artisans in addition to strengthening the training institutions meant for transferring skills of these art forms from old to younger generations.

### Assembly elections: Candidates...

Jammu & Kashmir have been conducting road shows and campaigns for the last few weeks to attract more voters.

This personal touch has gained momentum. "It is refreshing to see candidates coming to our doorstep and listening to our issues firsthand. However, only time will tell how true their promises will be," said a local in Srinagar.

Farida Begum, another local said the door-to-door efforts make all the difference. "We are in a position to discuss what we need and expect from those who wish to represent us," she said.

Meanwhile, according to data obtained by KNO, a total of 794 candidates filed their nominations. Of them, 459 nominations have been accepted, 98 rejected and 52 withdrawn. Presently, 458 candidates are contesting the elections.

### Delhi court grants interim...

Asked when Er Rashid is expected to reach home, Inam said that formalities are being completed and the party chief is likely to reach home Wednesday evening. Er Rashid was arrested for his alleged involvement in terror funding by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The north Kashmir MP will oversee his party's larger participation in Assembly elections that are being held after a decade in J&K.

Meanwhile, National Conference vice president Omar while reacting to Er Rashid's bail, said the bail granted to North Kashmir MP was not going to benefit those who voted for him in Parliamentary polls. "His bail is aimed at fetching votes in Assembly polls," Omar said. However, one thing is sure that the campaigning by Er Rashid for AIP candidates will make the contest tough for those in fray from north Kashmir.

### General Zorawar Singh's...

About her decision of joining politics, she said that whenever they visit any leader or official for work, they get only assurances while most people don't let women go ahead in any field, thus she took the step to share her bit in bringing a positive change.

She said that Reasi district has great tourism potential and that it needs to bring on a tourism map that will help in the development of the district besides that it will open employment opportunities for the youth.

She said that there are resources like lithium that needs to be properly handled for the development of district and employment opportunities for youth.

"Power is generated from our district but most of the people working in these power projects are non-locals and there is need to work upon it so that only locals can be engaged there besides that there are toll plaza issues and better education issues that need to be looked into," Diksha said.

### 2350 permission given...

Rally, 88 for displaying banner and flags, 73 for displaying Poster, Hoarding and Unipole, 79 for Vehicle Permit, 32 for Vehicle Permit (Intra District), and 426 for vehicle with loudspeaker permit.

Additionally, 21 permissions were given for One vehicle for complete assembly area for the candidate, 11 seeking One vehicle for complete assembly area for the candidate election agent, and 6 seeking One vehicle per

assembly segment for the party/party worker.

Also, 15 applications seeking Vehicle for star campaigners and party office bearers were accepted, along with 10 Vehicle Permission for transport of campaigning/publicity material by recognized political party and 40 Vehicle Permission for within AC.

Further, Chief Electoral Officer, J&K, Pandurang K Pole has urged upon the candidates and political parties participating in the Assembly Elections to utilize the 'Suvidha' application and platform, designed to streamline the application process for various permissions required during election campaigns.

The portal serves as a one-stop solution, empowering the candidates and political parties to apply for and obtain permissions efficiently and conveniently. With a user-friendly interface and robust features, the App simplifies the process, ensuring that all necessary permissions are acquired in a timely manner, thereby enabling seamless campaign activities.

For further information, the candidates and political parties can visit the portal at <https://suvidha.eci.gov.in>, the statement said.

### Hajj 2025: Application...

Eligible applicants must possess a machine-readable Indian International Passport issued on or before September 23, 2024, and valid until January 15, 2026. Applications can be submitted online via the HCoI website, [hajjcommittee.gov.in](http://hajjcommittee.gov.in), or through the "Haj Suvidha" mobile app, available for both iPhone and Android devices.

The circular also advises applicants to carefully review the Hajj 2025 guidelines before submitting their applications.

In 2024, a total of 7,008 pilgrims from Jammu and Kashmir embarked on the holy journey. Unfortunately, 11 pilgrims from the region tragically passed away due to heatstroke during the pilgrimage, according to officials.

While some pilgrims expressed concerns over the arrangements, labelling them as "poor", Hajj officials defended the arrangements, saying that facilities were better compared to the previous year, with accommodation within 400 meters of Masjid Nabvi (SAW) in Madinah and an improvement in hotel quality. They said the scorching heat on Arafat day and traffic congestion in the Mashair region posed challenges during Hajj 2024.

The HCoI has also released a draft of the Hajj 2025 guidelines, including a key modification extending the age limit for companions.

Under the revised policy, companions in the age bracket of 60 to 65 are now eligible to apply for Hajj 2025, provided they are a spouse, sibling, or child of a pilgrim aged 65 or above.

All other companions must still fall within the age group of 18 to 60 years, according to the specified date set by the HCoI. Previously, the policy required companions and "Mehram" (for female pilgrims) accompanying pilgrims aged 65 or above between 18 and 60 years.

The policy also allows repeaters to be companions for lady pilgrims aged 65 or above, including Ladies Without Mehram (LWM), subject to payment of additional charges. Companions for LWM pilgrims must be female and between the ages of 45 to 60 years.

The policy maintains the allocation of Hajj seats, with 70% reserved for the HCoI and 30% allocated to Hajj Group Organisers (HGOs).



## Assembly Election-2024

# Election Observers review election preparations in Rajouri

JNEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 10

To ensure smooth and transparent conduct of the upcoming Assembly Elections 2024 in Rajouri district, a high-level review meeting was jointly chaired today by the General Observer for Nowshera & Kalakote-Sunderbani, Mani Ram Sharma; General Observer for Thanamandi, Tikam Chand Bohra; General Observer for Rajouri & Budhal, Anurag Jayanti; Police Observer, Dr. Vishnu Kant; and Expenditure Observer for Budhal and Thanamandi, Sidharth Kumar.

The meeting focused on evaluating and fine-tuning the district's election preparedness, with a strong emphasis on compliance with the Model Code of

Conduct (MCC) and ensuring that all logistical and infrastructural arrangements are in place for the smooth conduct of the polls.

At the outset, the District Election Officer (DEO) Abhishek Sharma, presented a comprehensive overview of the preparations underway across the district. The DEO highlighted the various initiatives being taken to facilitate PWD (Persons with Disabilities) voters, elderly voters, and service voters. He outlined the steps being taken to ensure the timely distribution of Elector Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) through the postal department and explained the efforts to decentralize training centers for polling staff to make the process more accessible.

In addition, the DEO discussed the arrangements for the District Control Room (DCRC), intermediate strong rooms, and counting centers. He emphasized that special attention has been given to EVM (Electronic Voting Machine) awareness campaigns, aimed at educating the public and ensuring that they are familiar with the voting process.

The Observers lauded the efforts of the district administration but stressed the need to ensure that no violations of the MCC occur during the election period.

The Observers instructed officials to intensify efforts on vulnerability mapping to identify sensitive areas and ensure appropriate security measures are in place to prevent any disturbances during the polls.

Special attention was directed towards preparing detailed route charts for home voting, particularly for the elderly and PWD voters, ensuring their convenience and safety during the election process.

In areas with difficult terrain, particularly those requiring access via forest routes, the Observers stressed the need for meticulous planning to ensure polling materials and personnel can reach polling stations without any obstacles.

Directions were issued to improve access to polling stations and ensure that Static Surveillance Team (SST) Nakas are established at key locations. The Observers emphasized the need for increased vigilance and seizure efforts to curb any illegal activities, includ-

ing the transportation of unauthorized materials.

The Observers highlighted the importance of improving approach roads to polling stations and ensuring that any ongoing construction work is completed before the elections. They further insisted that all polling stations be equipped with essential facilities, such as water, electricity, ramps, and toilets.

Written notices are to be issued promptly to all candidates regarding the allotment of election symbols. Additionally, the Observers directed officials to ensure that mock polls are conducted efficiently, as per the Election Commission's guidelines, to instill confidence in the voting system.

The meeting was attended by Nodal Officers respon-

sible for various key election functions, including MCC enforcement, law and order, manpower management, training, media, welfare, complaints, Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF), transport, expenditure management, special area management, material management, ballot paper handling, model polling stations, IT systems, and permissions

The meeting concluded with the Observers reiterating the importance of strict compliance with all election-related guidelines and deadlines. They emphasized the need for close coordination between the district administration, Nodal Officers, and security agencies to ensure that the elections are conducted in a free, fair and peaceful manner.

## LEAD Group's TECHBOOK set to disrupt student learning in India

By 2028, the company expects India's top 5000 schools to upgrade to TECHBOOKS



JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU SEPT 10

India's largest School Edtech company, LEAD Group, today announced the launch of TECHBOOK, an intelligent book designed to transform traditional textbook-driven learning.

The TECHBOOK brings three cutting-edge technologies and NCF aligned curriculum to address key learning challenges among school students today.

LEAD Group co-founder and CEO Sumeet Mehta said, "For centuries, the textbook, a primary tool of education in classrooms has remained unchanged, while AI and AR/VR have moved the world to personalised, multi-modal and gamified experiences across industries. We have brought something from the future, for the future of our nation. The TECHBOOK is a revolutionary outcome of years of research in technology, pedagogy and curriculum, and will forever change how students learn. By 2028, we expect India's top 5000 schools to upgrade to TECHBOOKS, making personalised and interactive learning the norm in classrooms across the country."

The TECHBOOK addresses the limitations of traditional textbooks and by introducing a personalised and interactive learning experience. In classrooms with varying learning levels, the TECHBOOK enables personalised instruction for each student. It integrates three powerful features:

**Augmented Reality:** Traditional 2D textbooks limit students' ability to grasp complex concepts that are inherently 3D in nature. The TECHBOOK brings subjects such as Science and Mathematics to life with ARI (Augmented Reality Instructor), enabling students to interact with topics in 3D.

**Personalised Reading Fluency:** For language learning, TECHBOOK's IRA (Independent Reading Assistant) acts as a personal tutor, reading books aloud to students, while also listening to a student's reading and providing real-time feedback

on their reading fluency and pronunciation.

**Personalised Practice:** With PIE (Personalised Interactive Exercises), students get limitless exercises that are adaptive in nature. So students can master subjects at their own pace, making learning fun and continuous.

Sumeet explained further, "In the first year, TECHBOOKS will be 'invite-only' for the top 400 innovator schools in the country. We want to set a new standard of learning and show to the world that India is ahead in terms of incorporating AI and technology in schools in a manner that is student-centred and assists teachers."

LEAD Group co-founder and co-CEO Smita Deorah commented, "By combining the tactile experience of a textbook with the power of technology and deeply researched educational content, we are ensuring that every student has access to high-quality, personalised learning that truly enhances their academic journey. With the TECHBOOK, we are creating an environment where education is not just about memorisation, but also about exploration, creativity, and mastery."

Mehta added, "Education is the foundation of our nation's progress, and schools are at the heart of this transformation. With the TECHBOOK, we're introducing a new category of learning solutions that will redefine personalised learning in classrooms; and how school students engage with textbooks. This is the future of learning."

Over the past year, LEAD Group has expanded its capabilities to serve the entire spectrum of schools in India, from high-fee schools to affordable schools. The Group is focused on scaling its offerings to support schools nationwide in delivering high-quality education and achieving academic excellence. The Group is also looking to fast-track its vision of providing high-quality, School Edtech solutions to more than 60,000 schools across the country by 2028.

# Kuldeep Gupta calls on Lieutenant Governor submits memorandum

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 10

Mr. Kuldeep Kumar Gupta Secretary Vansh Sabre Sports Foundation along with Mr. S. S. Gill Technical Director called on Lieutenant Governor Sh. Manoj Sinha here today. Mr. Gupta discussed the burning issue of appointment orders of outstanding sports persons to be appointed under S.O-12 which is pending before government for issuance of their appointment orders who have represented the Country in International Level as well as World University Games and also brought Medals in National as well as International Level in Olympic Games/Para-Olympic/World Cup/Asian Games/Commonwealth Games/SAF Games/International Cricket Matches/World University Games and other sports disciplines in National Level i.e. Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Cricket, Football, Hockey,

Swimming, Table Tennis, Kabaddi, Fencing, Volleyball, Tennis, Weight Lifting, Wrestling (International Style), Boxing, Cycling, Gymnastics, Judo, Shooting, Archery, Equestrian Sports, Handball, Rowing, Roller/Ice Skating, Skiing, Squash, Billiards & Snooker, Chess, Golf, Karate, Kayaking & Canoeing, Polo, Taekwondo, Power-Lifting (Composite Events), Yachting, Kho-Kho, Softball, Wushu, sports for physically challenged, Baseball, Netball, Pencak Silat, Triathlon and Ice-Hockey etc.

In this regard a Memorandum was also submitted to the Lieutenant Governor Sh. Manoj Sinha and Mr. Gupta urged for swift action to ensure justice to the outstanding sports persons as the resentment among the outstanding sports persons who with their dedication and despite hardships with their performance in the games brought laurels for the Country as well as Jammu & Kashmir and



are icons in their field of sports.

Mr. Kuldeep Kumar Gupta commended the efforts of Lieutenant Governor Sh. Manoj Sinha who is also a President of Jammu & Kashmir Sports Council & has taken commendable initiatives to introduce sports policy for the outstanding sports person in Jammu & Kashmir which was pending for the last few years as it was a major demand of the outstanding sportspersons

as well as the association of different disciplines. In this regard government has issued S.O-12 for direct appointment of outstanding sportspersons under their Quota i.e. 5 Gazetted officers and 25 Non-Gazetted officers in a calendar year but the appointment orders are still pending for the last nine years.

Mr. Kuldeep Kumar Gupta also appreciated the great efforts made by Sh. Sanjeev Verma Commissioner Secretary GAD

being the Member of Committee as Administrative Secretary, General Administrative Department (GAD) and other member i.e. Administrative Secretary Home department, Youth Services & Sports Department, Administrative Secretary, General Administrative department, Director Youth Services & Sports department and Secretary J&K Sports Council who are also the Hon'ble members of the committee & worked tirelessly for the future of sportspersons and scrutinized each National & International outstanding sportspersons and prepared the list of eligible outstanding sportspersons to be appointed under S.O-12 for direct recruitment.

Mr. Gupta apprised the Lieutenant Governor Sh. Manoj Sinha about the hardships being faced by the National/International Sports persons due to long pending issue of appointment in Gazetted as well as

Non-Gazetted jobs in government departments for the last few years.

Mr. Gupta also discussed for opening of Dispensary and providing the services of one Physician and Nurse in Sports hub at M.A. Stadium, Jammu & Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar as it is a serious problem is being faced by the players coming to play sports at M. A. Stadium, Jammu & Bakshi Stadium, Srinagar.

Mr. Gupta told Boys & girls come to M. A. Stadium in Jammu & Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar and during the practice session if any player gets injured there is no option to take first aid and the player has to be shifted to Govt. Hospital for first aid also. A timely first aid can be a life saver or can save the career of a player if immediate first aid is to be provided to them so with this facility of dispensary if any player gets injured then immediate first aid can be provided to them.

## Jammu to get dedicated SSB coaching and personality development centre

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 10

Today large number of youth from Jammu and Kashmir are desirous of joining the armed forces as officers. These youth are extremely motivated and capable. However, quality coaching and guidance is not available within the state due to which these students have no option but to head for Chandigarh and Delhi for preparation. This process is costly as well as time consuming. Moreover, such coaching centers are not tailor made for the students of Jammu and Kashmir and the results are not optimal.

On popular demand, we are decided to establish Dogra SSB Coaching and Personality Development Center at Jammu to fill this void and provide the youth of Jammu and Kashmir with best possible coaching and guidance. We have more than 30 years of experience in this field have developed a unique method of training which is time tested and effective.

Mr DN Dogra, the Director of this coaching center is a senior psychologist of repute and a well-known in the circles of SSB Coaching. Mr DN Dogra has dedicated over 60 years of his life to the service of the nation—30 years as a senior psychologist at various Services Selection Boards (SSBs) and another 30 years as the driving



force behind Dogra SSB Coaching and Personality Development Centre. A qualified psychologist and a renowned educationalist, Mr. Dogra has been instrumental in shaping the careers of thousands of aspirants.

Major General Sanjeev Dogra (Retd) is the Chief Instructor of the Center. Major General Sanjeev Dogra's military career spans over 35 years, during which he has held several key positions in the Indian Army. His leadership and strategic acumen were honed in some of the most challenging environments. Maj Gen Sanjeev Dogra is a qualified Interviewing Officer. He has mastered the art of instruction while serving at various prestigious military training institutions to include the Officers Training Academy (OTA) in Chennai, National Defence Academy Khadakwasla and Officer's Training Academy Gaya.

SSB Course. 15 days course to train students to face the Services Selection Board (SSB) UPSC Courses. Separate 45 days and 30 days comprehensive courses to prepare students to

undertake UPSC Written exam for NDA, CDS, AFCAT and INA.

Personality Development Course. This is a tailor-made 15 days course for individuals from all walks of life who are desirous of improving their personality to be socially more adaptable and to excel in all professions.

Our Unique Method. At Dogra SSB Coaching and Personality Development Centre, we believe that the path to success is not just about mastering academic content—it's about developing a strong, well rounded personality that can withstand the rigors of life. Our unique training methodology is what sets us apart and ensures that our students are not just prepared to pass exams, but to excel in every aspect of their lives.

Holistic Leadership Development. We go beyond traditional coaching by focusing on leadership qualities that are essential in the armed forces. Our training emphasizes the development of the core aspects of leadership.

## Tumultuous Welcome To Pathania in Udhampur

JNEWS SERVICE  
UDHAMPUR, SEPT 10

In a vibrant, adrenaline pushing display of support, Ranbir Singh Pathania, BJP candidate from Udhampur East embarked on a nearly 50-kilometer roadshow today, marked by over seventy enthusiastic welcomes from local residents. This event, aptly named the 'Jan Ashirvaad Rally,' showcased the community's overwhelming affection and blessings for Pathania as he journeyed from his home in Dehma to filing of nomination papers at DC office, Udhampur.

The rally culminated in a large gathering at the Celebration Banquet, Batal Balian attended by notable figures including Mr Ashish Sood, Seh Prabhari, J & K, Dr. Nirmal Singh, Chairman of the Campaign Committee, Pawan Gupta, and Arun Gupta, District President. Whereas Dr Nirmal Singh & Ashish Sood made fervent appeals to vote for BJP in coming elections. Mr Pawan Gupta have a thought provoking address on nuances of Do Vidhan, Do Pardhan, Do Nishan. Mr Arun Gupta concluded the proceedings.

Chander Mohan Gupta, Juhu Manhas, Vice Chairperson, DDC Udhampur, Puran Chand, DDC Udhampur-I, Pinky Devi, DDC, Rakesh Bodhi, DDC, Sanjit Sharma, Kewal Parihar. Sewa Singh Mankotia, Vinod Manhotra. And Arti



Sharma, Sunita Rathore, Mamta Rani, Romesh Gupta, Vikram Singh, Himmat Singh, Uttam Singh, Lalita Sharma, Nisha Mahajan, Chain Dehati, Deep Singh, Virender Singh, Ashok Singh, Surinder Singh, Raman Khajuria, Shokat Ali, Girdhari Padha, Bishan Das, Charan Das, (All Sarpanches) Subash Sharma, Capt Gopal Singh Mankotia, Mohan Lal Sharma, Shokat Ali, Mohd Tahir, BDC Chairman, Rakesh Sharma (Mandal Pardhans) also addressed the mammoth gathering..

The event was further graced by the presence of many prominent local personalities, who lent their support to Pathania's campaign. Addressing the crowd, Mr. Pathania outlined his vision for transforming Udhampur East into a model constituency. He emphasized several key initiatives, including: Establishing a new Tehsil in Tikri, Upgrading the Primary Health Centre in Tikri to a Hospital, start of work on direct bridge to Majalta, improving the Manwal-

Pinger road and Chountra Mata road, Developing the Dhar road from the Udhampur DC office to Challan as a National Highway, Upgrading the Samba to Battal highway

Pathania also highlighted plans to develop Udhampur East into a tourist hub by enhancing infrastructure, creating new employment opportunities, and addressing local issues related to water and electricity.

The community expressed their unwavering faith in Pathania, recalling his previous tenure as MLA of Ramnagar, during which he made significant contributions to the region's development. His efforts were recognized when he was awarded the title of Best MLA by the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

As he moves forward with his campaign, Ranbir Singh Pathania remains committed to serving the people of Udhampur East and fulfilling their aspirations for progress and development.

## RBI to conduct Nationwide Quiz for Undergraduate Students

JNEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 11

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched RBI90Quiz for college students at the undergraduate level. The quiz is a nationwide competition being held as part of the events to commemorate 90 years of RBI's functioning and is open to all undergraduate students pursuing bachelor's degree in any stream of study from recognized colleges in India.

RBI90Quiz is general knowledge based and will feature a multi-level competition, commencing with an online phase, followed by state and zonal level rounds and culminating in a national final.



## EDITORIAL

## Congress in a tight spot?

The Congress party's recent omission of former Deputy Chief Minister Tara Chand's name from its second list of candidates for the critical October 1 elections has ignited a storm of speculation and intrigue. This development not only exposes the party's internal conflicts but also raises questions about its strategic coherence and electoral acumen, particularly in the Chhamb and Akhnoor constituencies. Tara Chand, a veteran leader with a storied history in the Chhamb constituency, won three consecutive elections from this seat between 1996 and 2008. His exclusion from the list signifies more than just a personal setback; it is indicative of deeper fissures within the party. Chand's insistence on contesting from Chhamb, despite being offered a ticket for the Akhnoor seat, underscores the intense internal power struggle and the challenge of reconciling long-standing loyalties with emerging political dynamics. The crux of the conflict lies in the reservation changes that have reshuffled the electoral landscape. Chhamb, once reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC), has recently been de-reserved, opening it up to general category candidates. Satish Sharma, son of the late two-time Lok Sabha member Madan Lal Sharma, is vigorously pursuing the Chhamb seat. Sharma's bid is not just a personal ambition but a continuation of his father's legacy. His active engagement in the Akhnoor segment since his father's passing adds another layer to the complexity of the Congress's candidate selection. The party's predicament is further compounded by Sharma's concerns. He has made it clear that ignoring his candidacy for Chhamb could jeopardize the party's prospects not just in that constituency but also in Akhnoor. Sharma's warning is not without merit; his established local support base and familial connection to the seat could be pivotal in securing electoral success for the party. The situation is emblematic of broader strategic missteps. The proposal to offer Tara Chand the Akhnoor seat seems fraught with uncertainty. Chand's reluctance to shift from Chhamb reflects his deep-rooted commitment to his traditional base, yet it also highlights a potential disconnect between the party's strategic needs and Chand's personal political trajectory. Adding another layer of complexity is the Congress-National Conference (NC) alliance. The seat distribution under this alliance has raised eyebrows. The Kathua seat, reserved for SCs, has been allocated to the NC despite a substantial Congress voter base, while Congress has been given the Bani seat, where the NC enjoys strong support. Critics argue that the seat distribution appears illogical and could undermine the alliance's overall effectiveness. The pre-poll agreement between Congress and NC, which sees the National Conference contesting 51 of the 90 seats and Congress fielding candidates in 32, along with friendly contests and allocations to CPI (M) and the Panthers Party, adds to the confusion. The convoluted nature of these arrangements may further alienate voters and dilute the impact of the alliance. The Congress party stands at a crossroads, grappling with internal dissent and strategic dilemmas. The exclusion of Tara Chand and the intricate dynamics of the Chhamb and Akhnoor constituencies are symptomatic of a larger challenge facing the party: aligning personal loyalties with electoral strategy while navigating complex alliance politics. As the elections approach, the party's ability to resolve these issues will be critical in determining its fortunes. The stakes are high, and how Congress manages this internal strife will likely influence its prospects at the polls.

## Transforming India's Food Security with Irradiation Technology

CHIRAG PASWAN  
UNION MINISTER, MINISTRY OF  
FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES

The importance of food extends far beyond basic sustenance. It plays a central role in our festivals, social gatherings, and rituals, reflecting our cultural identity and social dynamics. Economically, the food industry drives growth, creates jobs, and fosters rural and agricultural development. It significantly contributes to the national economy through both domestic consumption and exports. As India moves towards the vision of Vikas Bharat in the 78th year of its independence, advancing food safety and security is crucial. This entails ensuring that food reaching consumers is safe from contaminants and minimizing food loss and waste to guarantee that sufficient, nutritious food is available to all.

Addressing food loss and waste, especially of perishable items like fruits and vegetables, is crucial for enhancing food security and sustainability. It also helps ensure remunerative prices for our farmers.

Additionally, as the trade of agricultural and processed food products grows, effective food safety management becomes increasingly important. Many developed economies have very stringent

food safety regulations and practices to ensure safety of food imports. Food safety incidents can have serious economic repercussions, including public health risks, reduced consumer confidence, and disruptions in food supply and price stability. Therefore, safeguarding food safety is essential not only for protecting public health but also for supporting economic development, promoting international trade and maintaining market access.

To address the issues of food safety and security and in line with India's commitment to meeting its Sustainable Development Goals targets, the Union Budget for 2024-25 has allocated funds for setting up 50 multi-product food irradiation units in the MSME sector. It reflects our dedication to food safety and security as food irradiation technology extends the shelf life and safety of agricultural products, ensuring they reach consumers in optimal condition while reducing food losses along the production and supply chain.

Food irradiation involves exposing food, whether packaged or in bulk, to ionizing radiation in a carefully controlled environment. This method effectively reduces the risk of foodborne illnesses by eliminating harmful microorganisms. It also prevents food spoilage

by slowing down the decay process and destroying organisms that cause spoilage, while minimizing food loss by delaying premature ripening, germination, or sprouting. It also reduces the need for chemical preservatives in extending the shelf life of food products, thereby, contributing to a more sustainable food supply chain. Irradiation processing typically requires just one exposure treatment to achieve the desired effects, which streamlines the process, simplifies food safety practices, and contributes to cost savings in the food supply chain.

While the concept of using radiation for food preservation is not new—traditional methods like drying fruits, vegetables, shrubs, meat, fish etc. under the sun have been used for preservation since centuries—modern interest in food irradiation technology surged after the Codex Alimentarius Commission, part of the Joint Food Standard Programme of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, established global standards.

Food Irradiation, much like cooking, is a safe and effective method for ensuring food safety across all aspects. It has gained widespread adoption, especially in countries with advanced food safety standards such as

the United States, the European Union, Japan, Australia, and Canada, where it is extensively used for both domestic and export markets. A notable example of its impact is the 2012 agreement that allowed Indian mangoes to be exported to the United States after a 20-year ban. This breakthrough was achieved by India agreeing to irradiate its mangoes before export to eliminate or significantly reduce the threat of pests, thereby, protecting US domestic agriculture.

India has also made significant progress, establishing 34 irradiation processing facilities nationwide. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has played a crucial role in developing this infrastructure, with 16 of these facilities receiving MoFPI support. While this progress is commendable, expanding the number and distribution of facilities will further enhance our ability to meet the growing demands of our vibrant agrifood market.

However, widespread commissioning of food irradiation facilities is constrained by high capital costs. Establishing an irradiation facility with a 1 MCi Cobalt 60 source requires an investment of approximately Rs. 25 to 30 crores, excluding land and additional infrastructure costs. Its commissioning process involves several critical

stages, including proposal scrutiny, approval, site clearance, plant construction, source installation, safety assessments & guidance, supervision, commissioning, and ongoing maintenance including occasional replacement of radiation sources. Key organizations such as Bhabha Atomic Research Centre and the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board oversee this process.

Despite the initial high capital costs involved with these facilities, there are substantial opportunities for investors. The growing demand for safe, long-lasting food products in both domestic and international markets presents a lucrative investment opportunity. The ability to enhance food safety and extend shelf life make food irradiation facilities as crucial players in reducing food waste and meeting stringent export standards. With the Indian food processing sector expected to reach USD 535 billion by 2025-26 and an ever-increasing share of processed food exports, irradiation facilities represent a promising investment opportunity.

To support infrastructure development aimed at reducing food wastage, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) also offers financial assistance of up to Rs. 10 crore per project

for setting up food irradiation units. This support, provided as grants or subsidies, is designed to treat perishable produce, including fruits and vegetables, and enhance their hygiene and shelf life. Following the announcement in the Union Budget 2024-25, MoFPI has invited Expressions of Interest from entrepreneurs for setting up multiproduct food irradiation units under the Integrated Cold Chain & Value Addition Infrastructure (Cold Chain scheme).

Given the critical role that food irradiation plays in enhancing food safety and extending the shelf life of perishable produce, there is a pressing need to expand our infrastructure to meet the growing demands of the Indian food supply chain and agrifood export sector. We urge investors and entrepreneurs to seize this opportunity to establish additional irradiation facilities, utilizing the financial support provided by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. Investing in irradiation facilities will enhance food safety, minimize waste, and improve food security across India, while also ensuring better prices for our farmers. Join us in transforming India's food industry—your investment will drive the future of sustainable agriculture and contribute to a thriving economy.

## The onion price and poll dynamics

SHIVAJI SARKAR

Kya pyaj rulayega - Would the onion bring tears? - is the common refrain in poll-bound states of Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Maharashtra. and many a time it has hit not only the common man but even the political masters.

The rise in Indian onion prices is feared to spurt international prices and food bills. Could the prices come down to wipe off tears? Maybe not. Its support prices have increased manifold. The Centre is procuring onion at a price 74 per cent higher than last year in Maharashtra, the highest onion-growing state.

Last year, onion was procured at Rs 16.93 per kg. This year it is being procured at Rs 29.5 per kg through direct benefit transfer (DBT) to eliminate middlemen. The centre is not taking any chances. It is selling through NAFED outlets, mobile vans and others at Rs 35. For how long it could be sustained?

Even at Rs 16.93 per kg procurement, national prices rarely came down below Rs 30 a kg. Onion prices hover around Rs 60 and 70 a kg.

The overall national prices are unlikely to come down as the Maharashtra government is investing Rs 1500 crore to buy onion from the state to keep its farmers and traders happy to secure a political future. The government imposed a ban on onion exports in December 2023 to curb rising retail onion prices, ahead of the Lok Sabha election. It led to a fall in onion prices by approximately 40 per cent from Rs. 42.2 a kg in December 2023 to Rs. 24.5 kg in March 2024.

On 23rd March 2024, the ban was extended indefinitely Lok Sabha election. Prices lowered.

The declining onion prices continued to create uproar among the farmers and traders. The government lifted the ban with the third phase of polling on May 4 to six countries - Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bhutan, Bahrain, Mauritius, and Sri

Lanka. Historically, high onion prices have led to discontent among consumers, whereas lower onion prices have upset a large voting bloc of farmers, making the onion market a crucial topic for the government, especially around elections.

India is one of the largest producers and consumers of onions and fluctuations in onion prices have large-scale socio-economic impacts on the domestic and international markets.

In 2023-24 yield came down by 15 percent to around 25.47 million tonnes (MT), compared to the previous year's production of about 30.21 MT, according to an official release. The production may further fall this year. Traders fear that despite the lifting of the ban with 40 per cent export duties Indian onion remains highly-priced at \$ 770 per MT (Rs 64 a kg). The Egyptian onion is sold at \$ 387 per MT, almost half of the Indian price making it uncompetitive. Countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and China compete with India in the Asian onion export

market.

The onion has been a political game-changer since the 1980 general elections when rising onion prices contributed to the return of Indira Gandhi to power wiping out the Janata Party.

Again because of high onion prices in 1998, the BJP lost to the Congress despite having changed its chief minister a few months before. In the 2024 Lok Sabha 2024 elections, the BJP has significant losses in Maharashtra's onion-growing belt. Except for one seat, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has been completely trounced in this crucial agricultural region. Out of the 13 Lok Sabha constituencies where the majority of onion farmers are concentrated, 12 have been won by the opposing INDIA bloc. This is a stark contrast to the 2019 parliamentary elections, where NDA - comprising BJP and formerly united Shiv Sena - won 11 out of these 13 seats, with BJP alone securing seven. Since the extension of the export ban, there

has been simmering anger among onion cultivators of Nasik, which has the largest Asian onion market at Lasangaon. The export ban led to significant financial losses for farmers, who struggled to recover their cultivation costs as wholesale prices nosedived. Other major constituencies with significant onion grower populations, such as Dhule, Ahmednagar, Nandurbar, Baramati, Beed, Latur, Maval, Shirur, Solapur, Shirdi and Osmanabad, also saw NDA's influence wane. The government has also decided to fill in the state emergency reserves with 500,000 tonnes of onions for the 2024-25 period.

This initiative aims to mitigate future price volatility and protect farmers from sudden market fluctuations. It is also planning to increase 27 per cent onion acreage during the kharif season for onion in addition to the rabi crop. According to food analyst Mintec Analytics of the UK, the BJP has historically invested more in manufacturing and infrastructural development

than in agricultural growth.

Agricultural exports reached \$ 48.9 billion in 2023-24, a decline of 8 per cent from \$ 53.2 billion in FY 2022-23. The export value in FY 2023-24 is significantly short of the ambitious target of \$ 60 billion set by the BJP government.

Also, the agri-exports during the last 10 years grew by 1.9 per cent since 2014 against the annual average growth rate of 20 during 2004-14. The onion is a staple vegetable for the poor, indispensable to many Indian cuisines and recipes, from spicy curries to tangy relishes. "In Maharashtra, if there are no vegetables or you can't afford to buy vegetables, people eat 'kanda bhakari' (onion with bread)," says a food historian Dr Mohseena Mukadam.

It is more than butter for politicians, whose success depends on how they can handle the onion. The cheers and tears of impending state elections are closely linked with onion.

(The author is a senior journalist; views expressed are personal)

## Ravenshaw University renaming: A step toward decolonising India's education system

PADMALOCHAN DASH

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's proposal to rename Ravenshaw University in Odisha has sparked a much broader discussion about India's education system. Though the suggestion might seem symbolic on the surface, it indicates a larger governmental intent: reclaiming India's educational heritage and aligning it with Bharat's civilisational knowledge. The renaming is part of a wider effort to challenge the enduring influence of British-established institutions and the colonial educational framework that has shaped the country for over a century.

The proposal is not without complexity. While a name change may grab headlines, the true challenge lies in the comprehensive realignment of India's education system—a goal that can only be achieved through the

implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The success of this shift hinges on integrating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) into modern educational practices, ensuring that India's rich intellectual heritage takes its rightful place at the core of the system.

Colonial Legacy in India's Education: India's education system continues to carry the imprint of its colonial past. British institutions like Ravenshaw University were not designed to foster intellectual growth or cultural preservation but to serve the Empire's administrative needs. The British created educational institutions to produce clerks and bureaucrats who could operate within the colonial system. Unfortunately, this utilitarian approach to education persisted even after India gained independence. The leaders of the newly formed nation failed to envision an alternative

model that could replace the colonial framework with a system aligned with India's civilisational goals.

As a result, the Indian education system has remained tethered to its colonial roots, prioritizing skills for a global market over intellectual, spiritual, or scientific growth. This narrow focus undermines India's holistic knowledge traditions, reducing them to exercises in skill development rather than the broader pursuit of knowledge and self-reliance. The debate over renaming Ravenshaw University, therefore, becomes symbolic of a larger struggle: breaking free from the colonial mindset that continues to shape India's educational and intellectual landscape.

The British Model: A Tool for Control: The British education system in India was never intended to develop the intellect or spirit of the Indian people. Instead, it was designed to

produce a workforce literate in English and skilled enough to support the colonial administration. Lord Macaulay's infamous education reforms focused on turning India's vast and diverse traditional knowledge systems into utilitarian skills that could be exploited for colonial profit. As a result, India's once-thriving intellectual and cultural traditions were marginalized, forced into obscurity to serve the needs of the British Empire.

Even decades after independence, the colonial model remains entrenched. India's education system continues to prioritize skill development over fostering creativity, innovation, and intellectual growth. While skill development is undoubtedly important, the singular focus on it raises concerns about the broader vision and purpose of India's educational objectives.

Moving Beyond Skill-

Building: To truly break free from its colonial past, India must shift its focus from mere skill-building to fostering holistic individual growth. Education should nurture creativity, intellectual curiosity, and the inherent potential of every individual, paving the way for self-reliance. A system that prioritizes intellectual vibrancy over skill production will help India reclaim its rightful place as a leader in global thought and innovation.

The British colonial mindset has left a lasting impact on Indian society, one that is deeply embedded in the psyche of its educational institutions. The British aimed not only to advance their economic interests but to reshape the very thought processes of the Indian population. Their goal was to replace India's ancient knowledge systems with Western paradigms, thus weakening the cultural and intellectual foundation of the nation.

In this context, renaming institutions like Ravenshaw University becomes a step toward decolonizing the Indian mind.

A Forgotten Imperative: Decolonizing Indian Minds

The question arises: has India taken sufficient steps to decolonize its education system? The colonial indoctrination of Indian minds has lasted for generations, and its effects are still visible today. If India is serious about reclaiming its intellectual sovereignty, what concrete steps are being taken to dismantle the remnants of this colonial education system?

The ultimate goal should be to create an educational framework that aligns with India's civilisational values and promotes intellectual independence.

(The author is an ICSSR-Post Doctoral Fellow, School of National Security Studies, Central University of Gujarat. The views expressed are personal)



## Study claims 'Siddha' drugs combination can reduce anaemia in girls

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

A combination of Siddha drug treatment can help reduce anaemia among adolescent girls, claimed a study on Tuesday.

The study showed that Siddha drug combination "Annapeticenturam, Bavana katukkay, Matu ai ma appaku and Nellikay lekiyam (ABMN) can improve the level of haemoglobin as well as Packed cell volume (PCV), Mean Corpuscular volume (MCV) and Mean Corpuscular Haemoglobin (MCH) in the anaemic adolescent girls".

The ABMN medication "significantly lowered the clinical features of anaemia like fatigue, hair loss, headache, loss of interest and menstrual irregularities and significantly improved the level of haemoglobin and PCV, MCV, and MCH in all anaemic girls," showed the study published in the reputed Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge (IJTK).



ational Knowledge (IJTK).

"Siddha medicine plays a notable role in Public Health Initiatives of Ayush.

The awareness created among adolescent girls, dietary advice and preventive care provided to them and the treatment through Siddha drugs pro-

vided therapeutic benefits to the anaemic patients," said Dr. R. Meenakumari, Director, National Institute of Siddha, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Ayush.

The study included 2,648 girls, of which 2,300 completed the standard 45-day programme.

Reportedly, before the start of the programme, researchers dewormed the participants with Cun aivarral cura am, and then a 45-day treatment of ABMN was given to all participants under observation.

The team checked for the presence of clinical

features like breathlessness, fatigue, giddiness, headache, anorexia, and pallor before and after completion of the programme, along with haemoglobin evaluation and biochemical estimations.

Following the WHO guidelines, the cut-off point for anaemia was set as 11.9 mg/dl, haemoglobin level below 8.0 mg/dl considered as severe, between 8.0 to 10.9 mg/dl as moderate and mild between 11.0 to 11.9 mg/dl.

Further, the team conducted a laboratory investigation for haemoglobin, PCV, MCV, MCH, red blood corpuscles (RBC), platelets, total White blood corpuscles (WBC), neutrophils, lymphocytes and eosinophils in a randomly selected subset of 283 girls.

"Siddha drugs for anaemia can contribute to public health by providing cost-effective and accessible treatment in various settings," Meenakumari said.

## More young people die by suicide in India, say experts

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

More young people die by suicide in India than in other countries, said experts on World Suicide Prevention Day on Tuesday.

World Suicide Prevention Day is observed every year on September 10 to raise awareness and fight stigma. The theme this year is "Changing the narrative on suicide".

It has been estimated that suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among the late adolescent age groups (15-19 years) in India. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), more than 40 per cent of all cases of suicides are among young adults below the age of 30.

"In India, the magnitude of the young people dying by suicide is unfortunately very high. The number of young people who died by suicide in India is almost double in comparison to the global average. Approx-

imately 160 young persons die by suicide daily in India," Prof Nand Kumar, from the Department of Psychiatry at AIIMS told IANS.

"Some of the common reasons that precipitate the idea of suicide to death by suicide are; stressful family environments; unstable emotional health; substance use, failed relationship; poor bonding between the friends, and loneliness," he added.

The NCRB data showed that 1.71 lakh people died by suicide in 2022.

"Suicide, a leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 39, is one of the most pressing public health crises we face globally and in our country," Dr. Shyam Bhat, Psychiatrist and Chairperson, LiveLoveLaugh, told IANS.

Dr. Jyoti Kapoor, Founder-Director and Senior Psychiatrist, Manasthali said that the government has launched initiatives like the National Mental Health Programme and the Kiran Helpline to address the

mental health crisis and prevent suicide.

"However, greater awareness, access to care, and addressing underlying socioeconomic issues are essential to reducing suicide rates. We also need to change the narrative of suicide to have open, compassionate conversations that break the stigma surrounding mental health struggles," she told IANS.

The experts stressed the need for collective participation of society to prevent suicides and to help those struggling with emotional challenges to easy access to support, free from stigma and shame.

Kumar said the effective suicide prevention strategy must include steps focusing on factors beyond the screening for the person at risk of suicide.

"The policy needs to emphasise various interventions to enhance the social and emotional connectivity, physical and emotional activity, and mindfulness," he added.

## Revenues from online gaming surged 412 pc at Rs 6,909 crore: FM Sitharaman

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

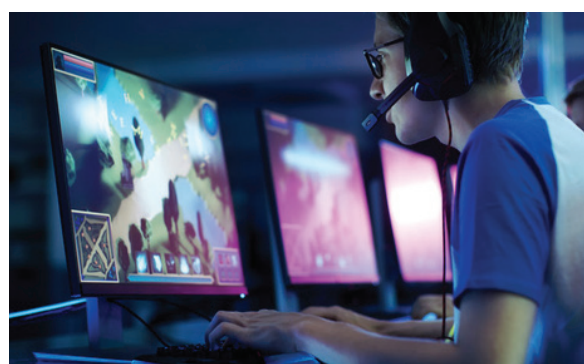
Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday informed that revenue from online gaming has increased 412 per cent, reaching Rs 6,909 crore in six months, from the increased levy on the sector.

Addressing a press conference after the 54th GST Council meeting, the Finance Minister said revenues of casinos have "jumped by 30 per cent".

"For casinos, revenue increased 30 per cent to Rs 214 crore over the six months," she said.

In July last year, online games, both skill-based and chance-based, were placed in the 28 per cent GST slab in the 50th GST meeting. The measure came into effect on October 1, 2023.

Earlier, skill-based games were taxed at 18 per



cent. This is in addition to the tax on winnings from different gaming tournaments.

As per the income tax law, these winnings are treated as winnings from online games and taxed at 30 per cent under the head 'Income from other Sources'.

The GoM on GST rate rationalisation will hold a meeting on September 23, informed FM Sitharaman.

The GoM on health insurance premium GST is likely to come with a

status report by the end of October and the decision is likely in the November GST Council meeting.

The GST Council has also agreed to form a GoM on compensation cess and slashed tax on cancer drugs from 12 per cent to 5 per cent.

"GST rates on cancer drugs are also being brought down. It's being reduced from 12 per cent to 5 per cent in order to further reduce the cost of cancer treatment," said the Finance Minister.

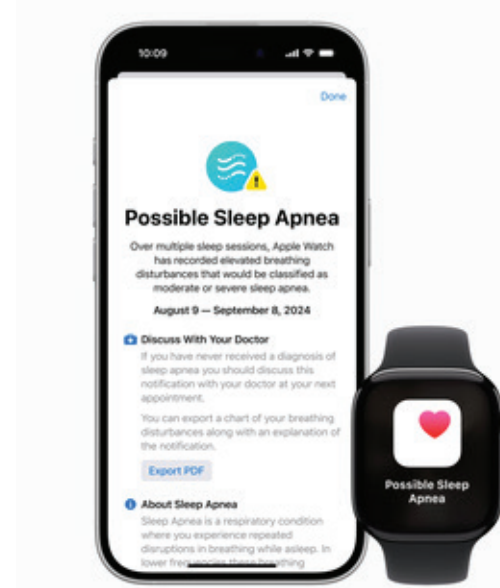
## Sleep apnoea tool arrives on Apple Watch, hearing health on AirPods Pro 2

AGENCIES  
CUPERTINO (CALIFORNIA), SEP 10

The new iPhone maker has added groundbreaking health features to its newly launched Apple Watch which will deliver sleep apnoea notifications, while its AirPods Pro 2 will feature the world's first all-in-one hearing health experience.

Apple Watch Series 10 and AirPods Pro 2 were launched globally at Apple's "Its Glowtime" event on Monday at Apple Park, California.

"With Apple Watch, we continue to offer our users the ability to uncover important health conditions with new sleep apnoea notifications. And on AirPods Pro, powerful features put users' hearing health front and centre, bringing new ways to help test for and receive assistance for hearing loss," said Sumbul Desai, MD, Apple's vice president of



Health, in a statement.

The sleep apnoea detection feature is a first for the Apple Watch, beginning with the Series 10 model. It will be supported on Apple Watch Series 9, Apple Watch Series 10, and

sleep apnoea tests. The innovative breathing disturbances metric will track users' sleep, analyse sleep patterns and notify them in the event of an apnoea -- a serious sleep disorder where breathing repeatedly stops and starts.

The breathing disturbances metric uses the accelerometer to detect small movements at the wrist associated with interruptions to normal respiratory patterns during sleep, and then notify users if it shows consistent signs of moderate to severe sleep apnoea.

Apple noted that the sleep apnoea feature will roll out in 150 countries once it receives approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the next few months.

Other standard health features like the Afib alerts, cardio fitness, and the ECG app, from the previous Apple Watch models are also present in the latest model.

The newly launched smartwatch is slimmer than its predecessor and features a larger display.

Further, Apple's AirPods Pro comes with active Loud Sound Reduction -- a clinically validated hearing test feature -- and an over-the-counter hearing aid feature.

The first-of-its-kind software-based hearing aid feature helps make access to hearing assistance easier than ever at an approachable price point.

The hearing test and hearing aid features are expected to receive marketing authorisation from global health authorities soon and will be available this year in more than 100 countries and regions.

Since launching the Health app in 2014, Apple has introduced meaningful features that focus on 18 areas of health and fitness across Apple Watch, AirPods, iPhone, and iPad.

## GST reduction on cancer drugs to make life-saving meds more affordable: Experts

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Welcoming the GST Council's reduction in tax rates on essential cancer drugs, experts on Tuesday said that it is a crucial step and will make life-saving medicines more affordable and accessible to patients.

In a significant development for cancer patients across India, the GST Council at its 54th meeting held in New Delhi, on Monday evening decided

to slash the GST rate from 12 per cent to 5 per cent on key cancer medications, including Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib, and Durvalumab.

"This move marks a crucial step in making life-saving treatments more affordable for patients battling cancer," Dr Pritam Kataria, Consultant, Medical Oncology, Sir H.N. Reliance Foundation Hospital, told IANS.

"With the incidence of cancers rising significant-

ly this is a welcome move and further will increase the confidence of patients in the treatment system," he added.

Cancer treatment can get expensive due to the long duration of treatment and the high cost of drugs, especially in cases where the drug needs to be imported as in the case of immunotherapy or targeted therapy.

"The slash in GST will allow more patients in India to receive the stan-



dard care. With the new treatment coming in reducing the side effects of therapy and improved responses this will improve the outcome in the patient," Kataria said.

The three drugs -- Trastuzumab deruxtecan are used for breast cancer, Osimertinib for lung cancer drug for EGFR mutation, and Durvalumab for lung and biliary tract cancers. Deruxtecan drug can be used in all cancers with Her2 positive gene.

The government had also exempted customs duty on these three cancer drugs in the Union Budget 2024-25.

"We welcome the GST Council's decision to lower the GST on cancer drugs to 5 per cent. With the increasing burden of chronic diseases in India, this is a move toward making life-saving drugs accessible and improving health outcomes," said Sudarshan Jain, Secretary General, of the Indian

Pharmaceutical Alliance.

"This much-needed GST cut can also improve access to advanced cancer treatments, reduce the financial burden on patients and their families, and potentially improve treatment outcomes by allowing more patients to benefit from these drugs," Dr. Ashish Gupta, Medical Oncologist and Chief of Medical Oncology at Unique Hospital Cancer Centre in New Delhi told IANS.

## GST cut on health insurance premium deferred, cancer drugs to become cheaper

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 9

The GST Council, headed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, on Monday announced setting up a Group of Ministers (GoM) on slashing the tax rate on life and health insurance, as well as reducing the GST on cancer drugs and 'namkeens' (selected snacks).

The GoM on life and health insurance will be headed by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, who is cur-

rently heading the panel on GST rate rationalisation.

The 54th GST Council meeting reached a "broad consensus" to bring relief to individuals and senior citizens with a decision on the GST applied to health insurance premiums.

The current GST rate on health and life insurance policies stands at 18 per cent.

Meanwhile, the GST Council announced to reduce the GST rate on cancer drugs to 5 per cent

from 12 per cent and on namkeens to 12 per cent from 18 per cent.

The members also agreed to form a GoM on compensation cess.

"The GST Council has agreed to form a GoM which will now take it up to study and decide on how to move forward on compensation of cess which will cease after March 2026," said FM Sitharaman.

The total cess collection projected until March 2026 stands at Rs 8.66 lakh

crore.

After settling the loan payments, a projected surplus of around Rs 40,000 crore is expected.

Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra said that the GST compensation cess may be discontinued post-debt repayments.

At a press conference after the meeting, Malhotra also said import of services by foreign airline companies will be exempt from GST.

Universities and research centres estab-

lished by central or state government laws, or those granted income tax exemptions, will now be exempt from paying GST on research funding, said FM Sitharaman.

The GST panel also decided to introduce business-to-customer (B2C) GST invoicing. This new system for GST invoice management will take effect from October 1.

It was also announced to surge GST on car seats from 18 per cent to 28 per cent.

## 30 Mpox cases reported in India: Health Ministry

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Union Health Ministry on Tuesday said that 30 Mpox cases have been reported in India since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the surge of Mpox (Monkeypox) cases in several parts of Africa a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

As per WHO, 121 countries have reported a total of 1,03,048 Mpox cases

and 229 deaths globally between January 2022 - July 31, 2024. As of 1st September, 15 African countries have reported 3,900 confirmed cases of the disease, the Ministry said.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and Nigeria are the three countries with the highest number of cases this year, it added.

Severe cases of Mpox are more common in children and depend on factors such as virus expo-

sure, patient health, and complications. It spreads through prolonged close contact with an infected person or direct contact with body fluids, lesion material, or contaminated items like clothing or linens.

This zoonotic viral disease can be prevented by avoiding contact with materials such as bedding and clothing that have been in contact with infected individuals and isolating infected patients from others.



# CONG IS A WHOLE SET OF POLITICAL IDEAS: RAHUL

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, SEP 10

Former Congress president and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said that the grand old party is not just a political party but a "whole set of political ideas" and, compared to other political parties, it has the ability to reinvent itself.

Interacting with the students of Georgetown University here, Gandhi said, "There is a design element in the Congress Party that has been in place since Mahatma Gandhi's time, and it has certain qualities as a political organization that are very powerful. I was watching the elections, and there was a point when we sat



down with the treasurer, who said, 'Look, your bank accounts are frozen. How are you supposed to fight an election if your bank accounts are frozen? We really didn't have an answer then.'

Adding that, despite the financial constraint, Congress fought the election

and 'essentially destroyed the idea of Modi'.

"You can see this because, when you watch the Prime Minister in Parliament now, he's psychologically trapped. He cannot come to terms with it; he cannot understand how this has happened," the Raebareilly MP said.

The former Congress president said, "For me, and for the Congress Party, watching this is quite amazing. It's not just a political party but a whole set of political ideas. Looking back, there's a reason it survives - it's in the basic architecture of the party. Sometimes the party strays from that architecture, so I differentiate between the Congress idea, its philosophy, its value system, and the party organization. They do not 100 percent overlap, but when they come close, they become very powerful."

Rahul Gandhi is on a three-day visit to the US. During his visit, he interacted with the students, academics, and experts from various fields.

# 'Minorities thriving in India', Iqbal Lalpura slams Rahul Gandhi for remarks on Sikhs

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Iqbal Singh Lalpura, Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), on Tuesday criticised Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi for his controversial remarks on Sikhs' religious freedom in India, accusing the Congress MP of having "old mentality".

Interacting with the Indian community in Virginia during his ongoing US trip, Rahul Gandhi said, "First of all, you have to understand what the fight is about. The fight is not about politics. The fight is about whether a Sikh will be allowed to wear his turban in India. Or he as a Sikh will be able to go to the gurdwara. That's



what the fight is about, and not just for him, for all religions."

Dismissing the LoP's concerns, Lalpura told IANS, "He has an old mentality, which is why he makes such statements. Since 1947, the promises made by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to protect the Sikh community were not fully fulfilled, and many agitations took place because on this issue."

The NCM Chairman also emphasised that since the BJP came to power (in 2014), Prime Minister Narendra Modi has undertaken "at least 30 significant measures for the Sikh community, which were previously unthinkable".

Addressing the Congress leader's mention of the turban, Lalpura said, "Rahul Gandhi should know that among the only three Field Marshals in India's history, two were

from minority communities - Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw and Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh."

"Minorities in India are not only protected but are thriving. Many from minority backgrounds, including Sikhs, have held the highest offices, including the President of India. We don't just ensure their equality, but also focus on their progress," Lalpura said.

He also criticised Rahul Gandhi for "thinking like his ancestors", accusing the Congress of betraying the Sikh community.

"The victims of the 1984 Sikh massacre began receiving justice only after PM Modi took office. Many high-profile Congress leaders involved in the killings are now facing justice, with some already in jail."

# K'taka BJP demands Parameshwara's resignation for failing to secure party HQs in B'luru

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, SEP 10

Karnataka BJP on Tuesday asked the state Home Minister G. Parameshwara to resign as he has allegedly failed to provide security to the party headquarters in Bengaluru, which has been a potential target of the terrorists.

"BJP's state office has been a potential target of terrorists which was revealed during an NIA investigation as a bomb explosion was planned at the BJP headquarters. However, the blast was carried out at the Rameshwaram Cafe. This is the biggest failure of the intelligence and Home Minister G. Parameshwara. He has failed to provide enough security to our headquarters. He should tender his resignation," said BJP



leader Bhaskar Rao while addressing a press conference in Bengaluru.

He said that this information has also been submitted to the court while slamming Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister Parameshwara for the intelligence failure.

"Either the Home Minister or the Chief Minister should. The Home Minister is completely incapable of handling the security

situation of the state," the BJP leader claimed.

He alleged that the Bengaluru City Intelligence Unit, the City Anti-Terrorism Squad, and the Internal Security Departments established - at the cost of crores of rupees - have completely failed to safeguard the state.

He said that despite being in power for 16 months, the state government has not fulfilled any

of the needs of the security departments, adding, that as a result, the NIA is not only gathering information in Karnataka but also conducting raids, arrests, investigating and filing charge sheets.

Rao recalled that during the BJP government led by Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar, a separate division was formed to detect terrorist activities. However, he claimed that the current government is not allowing that division to function properly due to fear of extortion cases coming to light.

"The corruption and money influence have caused the Police Department to function ineffectively. This inactivity of the department has put the safety of the state's citizens at risk," he said.

He also expressed dis-

pleasure over the government's complete failure to provide the necessary infrastructure for law and order.

"In the past 16 months, not a single Sub-Inspector or Constable has been added to the Bengaluru city police force and no basic infrastructure has been provided," he said.

He said that the government has completely failed in controlling terrorism and narcotics, adding, that the Home Minister Parameshwara should have been more proactive.

Questioning the police operations, he asked, "Why do the police officers go to the special wing CCB after paying in crores? We earlier had discussed that if the CCB is to be shut down, the crime rate within Bengaluru city might decrease."

# SC Collegium recommends appointment of five permanent judges in Madras HC

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 10

The Supreme Court Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, on Tuesday recommended the appointment of five additional judges of the Madras High Court as permanent judges.

In April this year, the Collegium of the Madras High Court unanimously forwarded its recommendation for appointing Justices Lekshmana Chandra Victoria Gowri, Pillaipakkam Bahukutumbi Balaji, Kandhasami Kulandaivelu Ramakrishnan, Ramachandran Kalaimathi, and K Govindarajan Thilakavadi as permanent judges.

The SC Collegium said that it consulted a judge of the apex court, who is conversant with the affairs of the Madras High Court, in terms of the Memorandum of Procedure.



dum of Procedure.

"Our sole consultee-colleague is of the opinion that all the five Additional Judges are eminently suitable for being appointed as permanent ones," it said.

It further said: "A Committee of two Judges of the Supreme Court constituted by the Chief Justice of India in terms of the Resolution dated 26 October 2017 of the Supreme Court Collegium has assessed

the judgments of the above-named Additional Judges."

The SC Collegium stated that it has scrutinised and evaluated the material placed on record, including the opinion of the sole consultee-judge and the reports of the Judgment Assessment Committee, to assess the merit and suitability of these additional judges for appointment as permanent judges in the Madras High Court.

# Ajit Pawar denies reports of demanding CM's post, friendly fight on 25 seats from HM Shah

AGENCIES  
PUNE, SEP 10

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Tuesday denied media reports of demands set forth by him during a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday.

According to the reports, the NCP National President demanded implementation of the Bihar pattern in Maharashtra and making him chief minister after the Assembly elections slated for the second week of November. Ajit Pawar also clarified

that he never proposed to HM Shah a friendly fight on 25 seats.

"There is no truth in reports of a demand for the CM's post or friendly fight on 25 seats. During my meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday, I discussed a whole range of issues including problems faced by the cotton, soybean and onion growers.

"I made a strong appeal not to ban onion exports. If the farmers are getting more price from the sale of onions, they should get it. Although the Centre has increased the Fair and

Remunerative Price (FRP), there has been no rise so far in Minimum Support Price (MSP). I strongly urged him to increase the MSP," he said.

To a question on media reports about the BJP staking claim on over 150 seats, Ajit Pawar said, "The seat sharing formula in the Mahayuti has not yet been finalised. After we fix it we will let you know the details."

The junior Pawar's denial came a day after HM Shah had a marathon meeting with nine senior BJP leaders on Sunday night where they made a



strong case for the party to contest at least 160 seats and continue playing the 'Big Brother's' role.

The party leaders also

argued that after the BJP emerges as the single-largest party, it will be the natural claimant for the CM's post.

Besides, some of the leaders also appealed to HM Shah to leave seats for Shiv Sena and the NCP based on their strengths and winnability.

Further, Ajit Pawar said that the party has yet to take a decision on nominating its candidates for the three seats from its quota as the Governor's nominees to the Maharashtra Legislative Council.

He scoffed at media reports about the names of former MP Anand Paranjape, state women's commission chairperson Rupali Chakankar and

party leader Siddharth Kamble as the party's choice for their nomination from the Governor's quota.

"I learnt these names from media reports. No names have been finalised yet," he said.

Ajit Pawar broke his silence over the objections raised by Shiv Sena ministers during the last Cabinet meeting for omitting Chief Minister Shinde's name from the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Scheme and Dy CM Pawar taking credit for it.

"The Ladki Bahin scheme has been intro-

duced by the Mahayuti government. Constituent parties in the Grand Alliance are trying to frame and promote these schemes in their own ways," he clarified.

To a question on the possibility of a third front contesting the Assembly election in the state, Ajit Pawar said, "There is talk of a third front. The possibility of a fourth front cannot be ruled out as everyone wants to be an MLA. People of all ages want to become MLAs. Finally, the Constitution has given everyone the right to fight elections."

# People wish to see me as Haryana CM, reiterates Rao Inderjit Singh

AGENCIES  
GURUGRAM, SEP 10

Ahead of the upcoming Haryana Assembly elections, Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh reiterated on Tuesday that people wished to see him as the Chief Minister of the state.

Addressing a public rally for BJP candidate Mukesh Sharma, the union minister said that people want to see him as the Chief Minister of Haryana.

"Those who want to loot Gurgaon will have to face BJP candidate Mukesh Sharma alias Mukesh Pehalwan," he said while campaigning for the party's candidate.

"There is no division in the party. The party does not give tickets on the advice of one person. Before allocating tickets, the party conducts surveys. Ten surveys were conducted and Mukesh topped all," he asserted.



The union minister said this election was not just to re-elect the BJP to power, but also for resolving the issues afflicting the city.

He also promised to strengthen the local bodies and to ensure work from the administrative body.

Sharma filed his nomination papers for the upcoming election from Gurgaon on Tuesday and was accompanied by the Union Minister.

After the nomination process, a large public meeting was held here in the Gurgaon constituency. In his speech, Mukesh urged

the people to ensure his victory in the Gurgaon constituency for city's betterment.

He vowed to fulfil people's dreams and ensure their voices reach Chandigarh, promising to work tirelessly for their progress.

BJP's Rao Narbir Singh filed nomination papers from the Badshahpur Assembly constituency.

The BJP has nominated former MLA Bimla Chaudhary from the Pataudi constituency, replacing sitting MLA Satya Prakash Jrawata.

The party also fielded a sitting minister Kunwar Sanjay Singh from the Nuh seat.

The party nominated former MLA Tejpal Tanwar from the Sohna seat.

Talking to media persons before Laxman Singh Yadav filed his nomination from Rewari on Monday, Inderjit Rao Singh said that people want to see him as the chief minister of Haryana.

# Telangana CM seeks Finance Commission's help to manage huge debt burden

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, SEP 10

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Tuesday urged the 16th Finance Commission to help the state in managing its loans and interest payments.

Speaking at the Finance Commission's meeting with the state government, he demanded options to restructure debt or additional assistance.

He also demanded on behalf of all the states that the allocation of Central funds to states be enhanced from 41 per cent to 50 per cent.

Revanth Reddy told the

panel that Telangana has a heavy burden of debt, which stands at over Rs 6.85 lakh crore, as of the end of the last financial year. This includes both budgeted and off-budget borrowings.

He said large loans borrowed in the last 10 years created a situation where a significant part of the state's revenues is used to repay debt. "If we don't manage our loans and interest payments, it will slow down our progress. We seek your support in helping us address this problem. Give us options to either restructure debt or kindly offer us additional assistance," he said.

The Chief Minister stated that Telangana, the youngest state of India, is an economically growing and rapidly transforming state, making a significant contribution to the country's growth.

"Despite strong advantages, and a good economy, we are facing huge challenges," he said while mentioning the huge debt burden.

He also demanded an increase in Central allocation to states. "I also strongly place my demand and speak for all states on this. Increase allocation of Central funds to states from 41 per cent to 50 per cent," he said.



# Denouncing discord at UNSC hampering peacekeeping, India presses for reforms

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, SEP 10

Denouncing the political discord in the Security Council affecting peacekeeping operations, India has called for making its permanent membership more representative, especially with Africa's participation.

Making his first address to the Security Council on Monday, newly-appointed India's Permanent Representative to the UN Parvathaneni Harish said, "The lack of political unity in the Security Council, often witnessed in recent years, has negatively impacted UN peacekeeping. The Security Council needs to be more representative of today's realities - particularly in the permanent category."

Because more than half of the Security Council's work is focused on Africa, "India has been consistently calling for greater representation of Africa" as demanded by the con-



continent's nations.

In their Sirte Declaration, named for the Libyan city where it was made, and the Ezulwini Consensus reached at the valley in Eswatini, the African nations demanded two permanent seats and three more elected seats at the Security Council.

Participating in the debate on strengthening peacekeeping operations, Harish said the Council should also consider authorising African Union-led peace support operations.

Harish noted that India is the largest contributor to peacekeeping, having deployed more than a quarter million troops in more than 50 missions over the last seven decades.

He said that "it is important for major troop-contributing countries to be actively involved in the decision-making process" to deal with the challenges that arise from the "lack of clarity in the mandates" from the Council.

Harish drew the Council's attention to the

increasing risks peacekeepers face from "asymmetric threats, ranging from landmines to IEDs (improvised explosive devices)". He said peacekeepers should be equipped adequately to deal with the threats.

"Technology and innovation are critical to enhance efficiency", he said.

The General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution proposed by India to create a "Memorial Wall for Fallen United Nations Peacekeepers".

"It is now time to move forward with the establishment of the memorial honouring the more than 4,000 Peacekeepers who have made the supreme sacrifice," he said, noting that 182 Indian peacekeepers have died "upholding the cause of international peace and security".

Earlier, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the under-secretary-general for Peace Operations, also referred to the geopolitical dissensions at

the Council eroding support for peacekeeping.

"As geopolitical tensions have mounted, including here in this Council, and amid shifting global and regional dynamics, peacekeeping operations are increasingly unable to rely on member states to act in a strong, unified manner to support peacekeeping efforts or the political processes they are mandated to support," he said.

"Peacekeeping missions are increasingly confronting drivers of conflict that have no borders, such as transnational organised crime, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the impact of climate change," he said outlining the rising challenges.

Non-state actors - terrorist and rebel groups - "engaged in these illicit activities are also weaponizing cheap technologies such as improvised explosive devices and drones and are propagating disinformation and hate speech", Lacroix warned.

# Rajasthan CM invites South Korean investors to invest in state's tourism sector

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, SEP 9

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Monday invited South Korean investors to invest in the tourism sector of the state ahead of the 'Rising Rajasthan' Global Investment Summit to be held in Jaipur from December 9-11.

During his speech at an investors' meet on tourism sector held in Seoul under the 'Rising Rajasthan' Global Investment Summit, CM Sharma said, "As a representative of Rajasthan, I invite you to invest in Rajasthan, a state with historical heritage and culture. Rajasthan is a rapidly emerging centre for industrial progress which is eager to welcome entrepreneurs from all over the world. With excellent infrastructure, connectivity and facilities, Rajasthan is fully prepared to make your investments successful."

"Millions of tourists from all over the world

come to see the culture, historical sites and architecture of Rajasthan. With a worldwide recognition for tourism, Rajasthan is also rapidly establishing its identity as an entrepreneurial state. For this, we want to establish relationships with South Korean entrepreneurs, which will promote tourism as well as strengthen cultural and economic ties between the two great countries," he added.

Speaking on festivals of the two countries, the Chief Minister said, "Rajasthan's vibrant festivals and celebrations like Deepawali, Holi, Teej, Maru Mahotsav, Pushkar Mela reflect our rich cultural heritage. Similarly, Korea's festivals are also full of colour, music, dance, and traditions, which attract tourists from all over the world. The art and craft of both the countries is a bridge that connects us deeply."

"By investing in the tourism sector of Rajasthan, you can enter a

market that gives equal importance to both tradition and innovation and attracts tourists from all over the world."

CM Sharma also promised those present at the event of the state government's support at every step.

"Our investment model focuses on establishing a balance between economic development and ecological conservation, so that our natural and cultural heritage can also be preserved. I invite all of you to explore the immense potential of Rajasthan's tourism sector."

"Our government stands ready to support you at every step of your investment journey. Together, we can build a brighter future for Rajasthan and further strengthen the friendship between our two great countries."

The Chief Minister is in Seoul leading a delegation to invite investors to invest in Rajasthan under the 'Rising Rajasthan' Investment Summit.

# India committed to revitalisation of UN, new Ambassador Harish assures Guterres

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, SEP 10

Assuring Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of India's commitment to revitalising the global organisation, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish presented his credentials to take over as the Permanent Representative.

Ambassador Harish hit the ground running, making the case before the Security Council soon after the ceremony on Monday for major troop-contributing countries to be actively involved in the decision-making process of peacekeeping operations.

Earlier, prepping for the assignment ahead which takes off with the summit starting on September 22 with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation, he had made a round of consultations with several diplomats on cooperating on issues that India shared with their countries.

In posts on X after presenting his credentials, Harish wrote that he and Guterres "agreed on the need to strengthen and reform multilateralism in



both its political and economic dimensions to deal with contemporary challenges and harness new opportunities".

He added that he assured him of India's commitment under PM Modi's "leadership to reform multilateralism and revitalisation of the UN".

Harish met with Philémon Yang, who will become the president of the General Assembly this month.

He assured the former prime minister of Cameroon of India's support in his new role.

Coming from his latest assignment as the ambassador to Germany, Harish brings 34 years of diplo-

matic experience having represented India from Southeast Asia through the Middle East and Europe to the US.

He has special expertise in the issue currently consuming the UN, Gaza, as he served as India's representative to the Palestine Authority based in Gaza City and had also been deputed to work for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine.

His assignments included ambassador to Vietnam and postings in Houston, Riyadh, and Cairo, where he studied Arabic.

Harish started at the UN on Thursday with a floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at his statue on the UN campus.

He followed that with meetings with General Assembly President Dennis Francis and Amandeep Singh Gill, the secretary-general's envoy on technology.

Francis posted on X that he was "grateful for India's continued support throughout my presidency".

The next day, India's mission said he discussed "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" with Yamazaki Kazuyuki, the permanent representative of Japan, a member of G4, the group that advocates for expanding the Security Council's permanent membership.

He met Sergio Franca, the permanent representative of another G4 member, Brazil, who took over the presidency of the G20 group from India last year.

Osama Abdelkhalik, the permanent representative of Egypt which has a role in the Gaza peace process, also had a meeting with Harish and they "agreed to work closely in the UN", according to an Indian Mission post on X.

# Geopolitical tensions, digital revolution, climate change reshape development: WTO

AGENCIES  
GENEVA, SEP 10

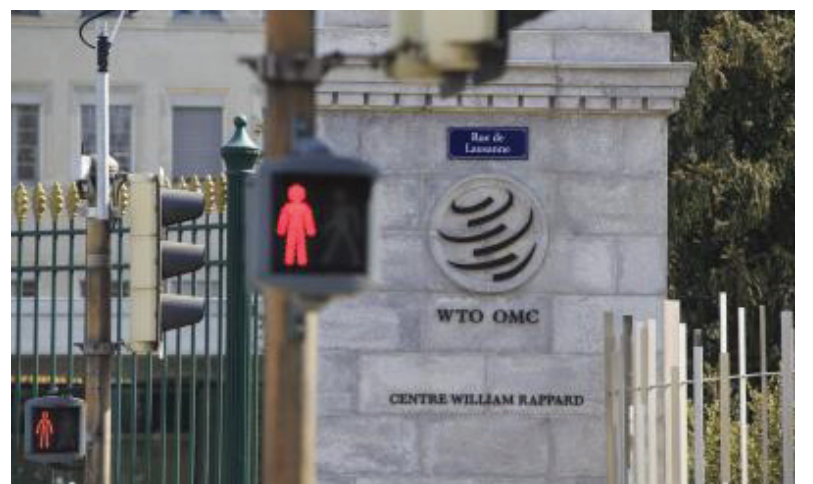
Emerging global trends such as geopolitical tensions, digital revolution and climate change are reshaping the landscape of trade-led development, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has said in a flagship report.

In the 2024 edition of the "World Trade Report" released on Monday, the WTO estimated that global factors such as geopolitical tensions, regional conflicts and trade sanctions have impacted the stable foundation of world economic growth in the past 30 years, potentially leading to trade fragmentation.

On the other hand, the increased capital and skill intensity of modern manufacturing has reduced the scope for manufacturing-led growth in low-income economies. Meanwhile, climate change poses even greater challenges, particularly for these nations.

However, the report also emphasised new opportunities brought by these global trends. For instance, developing economies can lower trade costs through digitalisation, pivot toward service-led growth, or seize the demand for renewable resources in the global green transformation to achieve development.

The report presented strong evidence that trade has played a crucial role in narrowing income disparities among economies since the



WTO was established 30 years ago, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Perhaps the biggest takeaway from the report is its reaffirmation of trade's transformative role in reducing poverty and creating shared prosperity," WTO Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said in her foreword to the report.

"But the second biggest takeaway is that there is much more we can do to make trade and the WTO work better for economies and people left behind during the past 30 years of globalisation," she added.

The report noted that between 1996 and 2021, a high trade share of GDP was strongly linked to faster growth in low- and middle-income economies, helping them narrow the gap in GDP per capita with high-income economies.

The WTO highlighted the need for supportive domestic policies such as vocational training, unemployment benefits, education for a more skilled and mobile workforce, and competition policy to ensure consumers benefit from lower prices, as well as reliable infrastructure, and well-functioning financial markets.

It urged the reduction of trade costs, the bridging of the digital divide, and updates to the WTO rulebook to account for the increasing significance of trade in services, and digital and green sectors.

The report also calls for better coordination among international organizations, since this could help leverage synergies between trade policies and complementary policies, and boost inclusiveness across and within economies.

# SSE, EET Hydrogen partner on green hydrogen production facility in UK

AGENCIES  
STANLOW (UK), SEP 10

Two leading energy companies have united to develop a new green hydrogen production facility in the North West of England.

SSE and EET Hydrogen have begun development work on the innovative project at the Stanlow Manufacturing Complex in Ellesmere Port in Cheshire. Known as Gowy Green Hydrogen, it takes its name from the Gowy River and the nearby Gowy Meadows Nature Reserve. The initial expected 40MWe facility will deliver hydrogen to industrial offtakers in the region to support them to decarbonise their operations, helping secure and create jobs in the region.

The UK has a strong focus on delivering low-carbon hydrogen with a target to deliver 10GW by



2030. Low-carbon hydrogen is integral to delivering a clean power system and to enabling hard-to-abate industries to decarbonise.

Gowy Green Hydrogen could be operational as early as 2028, with feasibility studies completed and design and site investigation works underway.

A planning application is expected to move forward in 2025 ahead of any final investment decision being made by the two parties. Joe Seifert, CEO of EET Hydrogen, said, "Our mission is to be the leading low-carbon hydrogen busi-

ness in the UK and Gowy Green is a great addition to our existing flagship HPP1 and HPP2 projects. We are delighted to be partnered with SSE as the North West continues to lead in decarbonising industry and power through low-carbon hydrogen."

Hannah Bronwin, Director of Business Development for SSE Thermal, said, "Scaling up green hydrogen production will be essential when it comes to decarbonising hard-to-abate industries and solving the clean power puzzle."

# Yemen's Houthi rebels claim downing another US MQ-9 Reaper

AGENCIES  
SANNA, SEP 10

Houthi military spokesperson Yayha Saree said on Tuesday that Yemen's air defence systems have shot down another American MQ-9 Reaper over Saada province.

"The US drone was shot down when it was spying and taking hostile measures over Saada in northwest Yemen", Saree was quoted as saying by Iran's state-run IRNA news agency.

Saree went on to say that the US drone was the second the Yemeni forces have downed during the past 72 hours.

The Yemeni spokesperson also hailed the anti-Israel operation carried out by Maher al-Jazi, the 39-year-old Jordanian citizen who had killed three Israelis at the border crossing between West Bank and Jordan on Sunday.

Saree noted that Yemen will continue its military operations against Israel



until the regime ceases aggression against Gaza and lifts the siege of the Strip.

From the outset of the war in Gaza, the resistance groups in Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, and Yemen have been carrying out anti-Israel operations in support of the Palestinian people and in order to reduce pressure on the

"resistance" in Gaza.

On September 4, the US Central Command said that its naval forces had destroyed a missile system of the Houthi group in Yemen.

"In the past 24 hours, US Central Command (USCENTCOM) forces successfully destroyed an Iranian-backed Houthi missile system in a Houthi-

controlled area of Yemen," it said in a post on social media platform X.

"It was determined this system presented an imminent threat to US and coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region," it said without providing further details.

This was the third Houthi missile system destroyed by the US mili-

tary strikes over the past two days, according to the USCENTCOM.

Meanwhile, residents in the Yemeni central province of Ibb reported on social media platforms that a fighter jet launched an airstrike targeting the Houthi-controlled Al-Hamzah military installation in the province on Tuesday.

The Houthi group, which controls Ibb and several other northern provinces, including the capital, Sanaa, did not comment on the incident.

The Houthis have been launching missile and drone attacks targeting what it called "Israel-linked" ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since November last year to show solidarity with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. In response, the US-British naval coalition stationed in the waters has since January, conducted regular air raids and missile strikes against Houthi targets to deter the group.



## Indian mutual fund industry's net AUM crosses Rs 65 lakh crore, SIPs at fresh high

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, SEP 10

The net assets under management (AUM) of the Indian mutual fund industry surged to cross Rs 65 lakh crore mark for the first time in August, data from the Association of Mutual Funds of India (AMFI) showed on Tuesday.

Equity funds saw Rs 38,239 crore inflows in August, a 3.03 per cent growth from Rs 37,113 crore witnessed in July.

Equity inflows have shown remarkable strength, with the last four months consistently exceeding Rs 34,000 crore.

Pankaj Shrestha, Head- Investment Services, Prabhudas Lilladher, said that thematic and sectoral funds witnessed the high-



est inflows, driven primarily by New Fund Offerings (NFOs).

Notably, this marks the 42nd consecutive month of positive equity inflows. Large-cap funds also attracted significant investments this month, alongside strong inflows across mid-cap and small-cap categories, reflecting robust investor confidence in the broader market.

The net AUM at the end of month stood at Rs 66.70

lakh crore. Inflows into open-ended equity funds have remained in the positive zone for the 42nd month in a row. Overall, open-ended mutual funds saw net inflows of Rs 1,08,240.95 crore.

The systematic investment plans (SIPs) reached fresh highs as monthly contributions via SIPs hit Rs 23,547 crore in August, against Rs 23,332 crore in the previous month.

According to the data,

inflows into small-cap funds increased 52 per cent to Rs 3,209.33 crore and net investments into mid-cap funds increased 86 per cent to Rs 3,054.68 crore. Large-cap category saw net inflows of Rs 2,636.86 crore during August, a surge of 293 per cent. In the fixed-income category, debt mutual funds saw net inflows of Rs 45,169.36 crore during August.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director, Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said that the quantum of net inflows witnessed in August 2024 was the second highest monthly net inflow ever received, second only to the net inflows in June 2024.

"Moreover, this was the 42nd consecutive month

of net inflow in the equity-oriented funds highlighting the ever-increasing appeal of mutual funds among investors. The number of folios also increased by 3.16 per cent from 13.8 crore in July to 14.3 crore in August highlighting the emergence of mutual funds as a preferred investment option among investors," he mentioned.

The launch of new funds continued in August as well. The month witnessed the launch of six new fund offerings which cumulatively garnered Rs 11,067 crore. There is also no stopping the launch of passive strategies. In August, 10 passive funds were launched (5 each from index and other ETF segments). These funds combined garnered Rs 884 crore.

## Tata Electronics, ASMPT Singapore to nurture chip supply chain ecosystem in India

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Tata Electronics on Tuesday signed a pact with ASMPT Singapore, a global supplier of hardware and software solutions for semiconductor and electronics, to collaborate on establishing chip assembly equipment infrastructure and solutions in the country. The move is aimed at accelerating Tata Electronics' readiness for its semiconductor assembly and test facilities in



Vemagal, Karnataka and Jagiroad, Assam. ASMPT will help in workforce training, advancing service engineering infrastructure, automation, spare parts and boosting R&D initiatives in the area of wirebond, flip chip, advanced packaging and integrated system packaging.

"This partnership will

emphasise the development of essential training programmes and advanced research and development, while also nurturing a vibrant ecosystem within the country," said Dr Randhir Thakur, Managing Director and CEO, Tata Electronics.

The partnership will also focus on energy and material efficiency to promote sustainable growth and strengthen the semi-

conductor supply chain ecosystem.

"By leveraging our collective expertise and resources, we are well-positioned to drive significant progress in the semiconductor industry. This collaboration will not only propel technological innovation but also cultivate the talent required for sustained future growth," said Robin Ng, Group CEO, ASMPT.

## Centre simplifies approval norms for telecom licenses, wireless equipment

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

The Centre on Tuesday announced several key changes to simplify approval processes for telecom licenses and wireless equipment, in its bid to further pursue structural reforms and ease of doing business in the telecom sector.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) introduced changes to the approval processes for issuing Experimental Licenses, Demonstration Licenses, and Equipment Type Approvals (ETA). These changes are based on the recommendations of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

"These reforms are aimed at reducing delays and simplifying regulatory requirements, fostering innovation and streamlining operations for businesses and telecom opera-



tors," said the DoT.

For Experimental Licenses cases not requiring inter-ministerial consultation, the license will be deemed issued after 30 days if no decision is conveyed.

In cases requiring inter-ministerial consultation, the DoT will seek comments within seven days of receiving a complete application.

"If no comments are received, a provisional license will be granted

after 60 days, which will be converted to a regular license after 90 days, provided there are no adverse comments," said the Ministry of Communications.

Similarly, for Demonstration Licenses, licenses without inter-ministerial consultation will be deemed granted after 15 days.

For those requiring consultation, licenses will be deemed granted after 45 days once comments are sought from relevant

authorities.

If any unfavourable inter-ministerial comments are received during the approval process, the provisional license will be cancelled, and the experiment must be stopped immediately, said the DoT.

All the applications of Equipment Type Approvals (ETA) for license-exempt wireless devices will now be granted on a self-declaration basis.

According to the government, this process is expected to significantly reduce the time and effort required for approvals, "benefiting companies looking to deploy wireless equipment in the Indian market".

"Additionally, ETA holders are reminded to obtain the necessary clearances, such as a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), before importing equipment into India," said the DoT.

## Maruti Suzuki India gears up to launch its first EV with 500-km range in Jan

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Maruti Suzuki India on Tuesday said the automaker is geared up to launch its first electric vehicle (EV) with a range of 500 km per charge in January next year.

The leading automaker announced this on the sidelines of the annual session of industry body Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) in the national capital.

Hisashi Takeuchi, Managing Director and CEO, Maruti Suzuki India, said that the company will have a high-specification EV with a high-range of the order of 500 km and powered by a 60 Kilowatt-hour battery.

Maruti Suzuki India will also export EVs to markets like Europe and Japan.

The mid-size SUV, likely to be called eVX, is estimated to be priced above Rs 15 lakh, as per reports,



and will take on rivals like Tata Curve.ev and Mahindra & Mahindra's Born EV lineup.

Takeuchi said the automaker will come up with a range of solutions for its EV customers to remove their concerns on owning

an EV. The company will use the strength of its network for after-sale support.

"We are going to provide a complete ecosystem for the customers and solve for range anxiety, lack of EV infrastructure and

residual value of EVs," according to the company.

Last month, Maruti Suzuki India said as India aspires to become "Viksit Bharat" by 2047, it will introduce electric cars in the next few months towards a sustainable mobility future.

R.C. Bhargava, Chairman, Maruti Suzuki India, said the company will be introducing electric cars in the next few months.

"While electric car use increases, customers should be encouraged to buy cars using strong hybrid technology, or CNG or ethanol and biogas. Pure petrol and diesel car use should be minimised," Bhargava noted.

The domestic automotive industry has crossed Rs 20 lakh crore mark in FY24 and has the potential to be worth \$1.6 trillion (about Rs 134 lakh crore) by 2047, driven by electric vehicles (EVs), according to industry leaders.

## Apple set to build on solid growth momentum in India with iPhone 16 series

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Apple revenues in India are likely to grow 18 per cent (year-on-year) in 2024 and the new iPhone 16 series would help the company further solidify its presence in the country, along with boosting its exports figures, industry analysts said on Tuesday.

The tech giant has introduced iPhone 16 series with Apple Intelligence, larger display sizes, camera control, innovative pro-camera features and a big leap in battery life. The Pro version is cheaper than last year and this will further help the company

in the India market, said experts.

"Apple has 6 per cent share by volume and 16 per cent by value in India. The double-digit growth will continue, with revenues expected to cross the \$10 billion mark in 2025 in the country," Counterpoint Research Director Tarun Pathak told IANS.

With the iPhone 16 series, available in India from September 20 with attractive financing options, the analysts expect a healthy mix of upgrades this year for Apple in the country.

However, the bulk of the iPhone growth in India will still come from first-time

iPhone users. Apple continues to enjoy the strong pull and lately expanding its channel presence in the country that helped the brand to grow.

"Apple remains an aspirational brand as it caters to premium segment only and the only hindrance for consumers was affordability. With the availability of many financing schemes in the market, iPhones have become affordable to a larger section of population," Pathak noted.

According to latest consumer research, 6 out of 10 users in premium segment buy smartphones through a financing scheme.

Apple is peaking at a

right time in India, especially when the premiumisation trend is rising with almost 17 per cent of the volumes and 45 per cent of value coming from premium segment alone (Rs 30,000 and above).

"Hence, Apple revenues in India are likely to grow 18 per cent YoY in 2024. While the iPhone remains the major driver, there would be growth in other hardware categories as well," said Pathak.



Buoyed by the 'Make in India' initiative and the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme, iPhone production in India has gone up from less than 1 per cent in 2017 to 10 per cent in 2023 and plans are to scale it up to 25 per cent of global shipments by 2025, according to global investment firm Jefferies.

The company aims to manufacture more than 50 million iPhones in India per year. The iPhone exports from India surged sharply to \$12.1 billion in 2023-24 from \$6.27 billion in 2022-23. Overall, the company's India operations reached 23.5 billion dollars in value in the last

fiscal (FY24).

According to Prabhu Ram, VP-Industry Research Group, CyberMedia Research (CMR), Apple is slated to build on its solid growth momentum in India with the Apple iPhone 16 series, driven primarily by increased 'Make in India' manufacturing, and backed by aggressive marketing.

"Driven by Apple's aspirational appeal, consumers are increasingly prioritising the newest generation of iPhones, bucking the historical trend of purchasing old generation iPhones," he noted.

The iPhone 16 Pro series benefits from more strate-

gic and accessible pricing compared to its previous generation. This is expected to drive upgrades in the Indian market, making it more appealing to a wider range of consumers, said Ram.

Counterpoint Research Vice President, Neil Shah, said that last year, Apple clocked almost 10 million iPhone sales in India, its highest ever in the country. "The momentum is really great with the government's thrust on local manufacturing as the iPhone 16 series will be manufactured in India with simultaneous availability along with global market," Shah told IANS.

## Indian space startup Pixxel bags NASA contract to support Earth science research

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, SEP 10

Indian space startup Pixxel has bagged a NASA contract to support Earth science research using the hyperspectral technology.

The Bengaluru-based company has become part of NASA's \$476-million commercial smallsat data acquisition programme - a first for an Indian startup after the space sector was opened to private companies in 2020. Co-founder and CEO Awais Ahmed called the award a "monumental achievement for

Pixxel".

He said the contract, valid till November 2028, "validates that hyperspectral imaging will be integral to the future of space-based Earth observation and enable us to truly build a health monitor for the planet". As per the contract, Pixxel will provide NASA and its US government and academic partners with hyperspectral Earth observation data. This will help empower the administration's Earth science research and application activities.

Pixxel hyperspectral

can capture data across hundreds of narrow wavelengths. Its datasets can also unravel granular insights on climate change, agriculture, biodiversity, and resource management, among others.

Building on this momentum, Pixxel is also making significant strides toward launching six satellites shortly. Fireflies -- its 5-metre resolution hyperspectral satellites -- will be the highest-resolution hyperspectral satellites ever launched. These satellites will capture data across over 250 spectral bands,

offering more comprehensive coverage with a 40 km swath width and a 24-hour revisit frequency anywhere on the planet.

In addition, Pixxel also plans to expand its constellation to 24 satellites to make hyperspectral data commercially. This will make it more broadly available and accessible to stakeholders across industries and governments.

Pixxel has a constellation of the world's highest-resolution hyperspectral imaging satellites that are designed for 24-hour revisits anywhere on Earth.

## 'Make in India' initiative to help agrochemicals export cross Rs 80,000 cr in 4 years

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Exports by the Indian agrochemical industry have witnessed commendable growth in recent times and are likely to cross Rs 80,000 crore in the next four years, according to a new report.

The 'Make in India' initiative provides a timely framework to transform challenges into opportunities, enabling India to become a global manufac-

turing and export hub for agrochemicals.

The USP of India's agrochemical industry is quality and affordable prices which makes the products first choice of millions of farmers across 130 countries.

According to a report by industry body Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI) and EY, if facilitated a conducive environment, the sector shows the potential of achieving exports of over Rs 80,000 crore in

the next four years.

India's agrochemical exports outweigh the domestic consumption of the same.

According to the ACFI, the government must focus on facilitating a conducive environment which includes streamlining licencing norms and improving infrastructure for storage and sale, incentivise biopesticide production, streamline registration process for new molecules, enter trade agree-

ments with countries with more relaxed MRL norms, introduce PLI-like scheme to attract investment from global players.

India's agrochemical industry plays a pivotal role in its agricultural success, supporting increased crop yields and safeguarding food security.

According to ACFI Director General Kalyan Goswami, as the fourth-largest producer of agrochemicals globally, India faces a paradox.



# SYRIA BEAT INDIA 3-0 TO WIN INTERCONTINENTAL CUP

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, SEP 10

Syria were crowned the Intercontinental Cup 2024 champions after beating India 3-0 at the GMC Balayogi Gachibowli Stadium here on Monday night.

Chief Minister of Telangana A Revanth Reddy presented the winners' trophy to Syria.

Syria captain Mahmoud Al-Mawas was named the Syed Abdul Rahim Player of the Tournament.

India spent the entire game on the chase after Mahmoud Al-Aswad scored the opener in the seventh minute.

The hosts improved significantly in the second half, but a strong performance from Syrian goalkeeper Elias Hadaya prevented any sort of an Indian comeback.

Finally, Daleho Irandust and Pablo Sabbag punished India on the counter and scored two more to seal a solid win for the West Asians.

India head coach Manolo Marquez made seven changes, from the line-up which was held 0-0 by Mauritius. On the other

hand, Jose Lana rotated all 11 players from Syria's 2-0 victory over Mauritius three days ago.

Syria were all over India right from the opening whistle as the hosts looked answerless. The visitors took the lead in the seventh minute with their first inroad into the Indian box.

Daleho Irandust tipped his way into the box before feeding Al-Aswad, whose initial shot was blocked by Anwar Ali, but the rebound deflected off Jeakson Singh Thounaojam and fortunately fell for Al-Aswad again.

The 20-year-old made no mistake and instinctively punted the ball into the roof of the net.

There would be no respite from the relentless Syrian pressure for India, but they found themselves fortunate to have the deficit at one until half-time.

In the 10th minute, Alaa Al-Dali rattled the crossbar from outside the box and two minutes later Gurpreet Singh Sandhu came to India's rescue, making himself big to deny Mohammed Osman after the midfielder latched onto a loose ball bouncing

into the box. Irandust's creativity continued to leave the Indian defenders puzzled, and in the 20th minute, he threaded Al-Dali clean through on goal with just Gurpreet to beat, but a poor finish let the striker down as India breathed another sigh of relief.

India finally had their first shot in the 28th minute but it was far from an accurate attempt. Subhasish Bose looped a cross for Lallianzuala Chhangte, who headed it over the bar.

But India continued to



be a bit disorganised in defence. When Irandust's 35th-minute corner was not cleared in the six-yard box, a combination of Gurpreet's glove and Nikhil Poojary's sweeping clearance bailed India out.

But Mrquez's men showed glimpses of their attacking intent towards the end of the first half, with Sahal Abdul Samad's powerful left-footed half-volley testing Syria's debutant goalkeeper Elias Hadaya for the first time in the match.

Then Sahal delivered a low cross for Chhangte in the middle, who took a first-time shot but it was bravely blocked by a white shirt.

India's start to the second half was refreshing. The Blue Tigers looked more confident on the ball and kept more possession in the Syrian half. Half-time substitutes Asish Rai and Apuia were actively involved in attacks.

Ten minutes in, Sahal made a lung-bursting run through the midfield and fed Chhangte, who looked lively after switching to left flank after the break. He cut outside and stung

the palm of Hadaya with a strong shot.

At the hour-mark, Sahal was the architect again as he did brilliantly near the by-line to squeeze in a cross, which was punched away by Hadaya at the near post. It fell for Chhangte, whose first touch took him wide before the consequent shot was blocked by Moaiad Al-Khouli.

The introduction of Naorem Mahesh Singh also added another dynamic to India's attack. In his first involvement, he whipped a great cross from the left aimed for Nandhakumar Sekar.

He attempted a first-time shot, which was actually going wide before Chhangte tried to slide towards it at the far post, but couldn't prevent it from bouncing out of play.

However, just when India seemed to be getting closer to the equaliser, Syria delivered the killer blow in the 76th minute, taking advantage of the hosts' paucity of men at the back.

Irlandust played a one-two with Pablo Sabbag and entered the box from the right before get-

ting the better of Anwar and squeezing a low shot through the gloves of Gurpreet.

The Indian substitutes kept the fire on in the latter minutes of the game, and were perhaps unlucky not to get a goal back.

In the 87th minute, Edmund Lalrindika, had a go from 25 yards, forcing Hadaya to make his toughest save of the night.

The Syrian custodian was called into action in the very next minute as he solidly kept out a half-volley from Mahesh.

Then it was the crossbar which denied India any sort of a consolation. First, Chhangte's instinctive volley landed on top of the crossbar before Liston Colaco's 35-yard effort slipped through Hadaya's gloves, bounced on the bar, dropped on the goal-line but didn't go past it.

Syria got their third goal with the last kick of the game via another counter-attack as Mahmoud Al-Mawas squared it for Sabbag, who only had to roll it into the empty net.

After the match, Marquez said, "I am angry

with the first half. We were scared and not brave at all. We could've avoided the action which caused the first goal. I am satisfied with the second half. The score isn't a real reflection of the game. We at least deserved to score."

"The players' attitude and positioning was better after the break. We were braver and at least created chances. Syria have very good players. They killed us on the counter. They had many chances throughout the game," he said.

Syria head coach Jose Lana said, "I am very happy with our performance. I'm delighted with how we did in the tournament with a young squad."

India XI: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu (GK, C), Nikhil Poojary (Asish Rai 46'), Rahul Bheke, Anwar Ali, Subhasish Bose, Sahal Abdul Samad (Naorem Mahesh Singh 64'), Suresh Singh Wangjam (Lalengmawia Ralte 46'), Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Manvir Singh (Liston Colaco 77'), Nandhakumar Sekar (Edmund Lalrindika 77').

## Commonwealth Chess C'ships: Shubhi Gupta dominates with girls U-16 gold, U-20 bronze

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 10

Chess prodigy Shubhi Gupta clinched the girls U-16 gold and girls U-20 bronze in the recently concluded Commonwealth Chess Championships 2024 in Kalutara, Sri Lanka.

A Women FIDE Master (WFM) and the reigning U-19 girls' national champion, Shubhi left a lasting impression with her impeccable performance in the U-16 category, securing seven wins and two draws. With an exceptional score of eight points out of a possible nine, she outclassed her competition, finishing ahead of India's Mrittika Mallick (seven points) and Yashvi Jain (6.5 points), who took second and third places, respectively.



Shubhi further showcased her competitive spirit in the Open category, competing against seasoned Grandmasters (GMs), International Masters (IMs) and Women Grandmasters (WGMs). Her determined performance, scoring 4.5 points, led to a third-place finish in the U-20 girls' division, securing her a bronze medal.

Reflecting on her success, Shubhi said, "It was a fantastic experience, playing against some of the top international players. I am happy that I could perform consistently in both U-16 and the Open category."

Winning the Commonwealth U-12 title and the World Cadet Champi-

onship were important milestones in my journey, and this latest success has boosted my confidence further. I am looking forward to playing many more Open tournaments this year and continuing to improve my game."

Shubhi's stellar achievements come with a prize purse of Rs 1,00,000, adding to her growing list of accolades.

The young talent from Ghaziabad was first introduced to chess by her father and has consistently delivered outstanding performances on the national and international stages.

She previously won the U-12 gold at the Commonwealth Youth Chess Championship and captured the World Cadet Championship title in the same age category two years ago.

Luton Town have announced the signing of free agent Victor Moses on a permanent contract. The 33-year-old former Nigeria international has more recently been playing his football in Russia with Spartak Moscow, who he joined in 2021 after a successful loan spell from Chelsea.

"I'm looking forward to it. I had a few offers from Europe, but I said to my agent that I set my mind on staying over here, and here we are. I'm very pleased and honoured to be at this club and I just can't wait to get going," said Moses in a statement.

He stepped up to the Premier League with a move to Wigan Athletic in January 2010, netting nine times in 80 appearances before Chelsea signed him in the summer of 2012.

## Luton Town sign former Chelsea wing-back Victor Moses

AGENCIES  
LUTON, SEP 10

Luton Town have announced the signing of free agent Victor Moses on a permanent contract. The 33-year-old former Nigeria international has more recently been playing his football in Russia with Spartak Moscow, who he joined in 2021 after a successful loan spell from Chelsea.

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He stepped up to the Premier League with a move to Wigan Athletic in January 2010, netting nine times in 80 appearances before Chelsea signed him in the summer of 2012.

Moses was part of the squad that won the Europa League in 2012/13, but spent much of his nine years as a Chelsea player out on loan, playing for European giants Liverpool and Inter Milan, as well as domestically for West Ham and Stoke and in Turkey with Fenerbahce.

In his time at Stamford Bridge, he made 128



appearances for the Blues, scoring 18 goals, and won the Premier League and FA Cup in successive years in 2017 and 2018, before moving permanently to Spartak in 2021, where he also won the Russian Cup.

Luton manager Rob Edwards said: "Victor is one we've been talking to for quite a while. He trained with us last week

and played 60 minutes in a behind closed doors game, and we made a decision because we think he's able to come in and help us. He gives us more strength in depth and versatility, because he's someone who can play both sides or as a number ten.

Including 38 caps for Nigeria and 29 for the England age groups, Victor's career spans almost 550 matches, 84 goals, and boasts appearances in two World Cups, the Africa Cup of Nations, Champions League and Europa League, a tournament in which he played in the 2019/20 final for Inter Milan, losing 3-2 to Sevilla.

"He's someone who we can learn from as well. He's won a Premier League title under Antonio Conte playing in a similar sort of role to what we ask some of our lads to do, so we'll be able to pick his brains," added Rob.

## Raina, Harbhajan, Hafeez, Bravo headline Season 2 of US Masters T10

AGENCIES  
LAUDERHILL (FLORIDA), SEPT 10

The much-awaited second season of the US Masters T10 is coming up soon.

But before that, the franchises have had their say and picked their squads, with the eventual goal of first winning the trophy, and also entertaining the crowds in North America.

Like the inaugural edition, the season promises plenty of riveting contests and of course, the big hits as cricket's fastest and most entertaining format takes centre stage.

The likes of Dwayne Bravo, Suresh Raina, Shoaib Malik, Misbah-ul-Haq, James Neesham, Angelo Perera, and Aaron Finch, among others will battle it out for the top prize.

With 60 spots up for grabs in the tournament, more than 500 cricketers registered for the Player Draft for Season 2 of the US Masters T10.

The California Bolts came into the Player Draft with James Neesham (New Zealand: Icon), Liam Plunkett (England: Platinum

Grade), Colin de Grandhomme (New Zealand: Global Superstar), Shehan Jayasuriya (Sri Lanka), Bipul Sharma (India) and Lahiru Milantha (USA) already signed up.

They went onto add Munaf Patel (India), Martin Gupthil (New Zealand), Manpreet Gony (India), Samiullah Shinwari (Afghanistan), Jon-Russ Jaggesar (West Indies), Devendra Bishoo (West Indies), Chris Benjamin (South Africa), Mayank Tehlan (India), Hussain Talat (Pakistan), Kesrick Williams (West Indies) and Dhammika Prasad (Sri Lanka). The Detroit Falcons roped in Thisara Perera (Sri Lanka: Icon), Abdur Razzak (Pakistan: Platinum Grade), Aaron Finch (Australia: Global Superstar), Dawid Malan (England), Rayad Emrit (West Indies), and Angelo Perera (Sri Lanka) as their direct signings.

At the Player Draft, they signed on Denesh Ramdin (West Indies), Mashrafe Mortaza (Bangladesh), Seekkuge Prasanna (Sri Lanka), Chaturanga De Silva (Sri Lanka), Ariful Haque (Bangladesh),

Lewis McManus (England), Imran Khan (Pakistan), Syed Rasel (Bangladesh), and Enamul Haque Jr (Bangladesh).

The Chicago Players brought in Parthiv Patel (India: Icon), Isuru Udana (Sri Lanka: Platinum Grade), Suresh Raina (India: Global Superstar), Gurkeerat Singh Mann (India), Anureet Singh (India), Kennar Lewis (West Indies) as their pre-draft signings.

The team went ahead and brought in Pawan Negi (India), Kevin O'Brien (Scotland), Ishwar Pandey (India), Jesse Ryder (New Zealand), William Perkins (West Indies), Shubham Ranjane (India), Manoj Tiwary (India), Unmukt Chand (USA), Chris Wood (England), Sean Dickson (South Africa) and Imran Tahir (South Africa).

The Atlanta Riders announced Nurul Hasan Sohan (Bangladesh: Icon), Ravi Bopara (England: Platinum Grade), Shoaib Malik (Pakistan: Global Superstar), Samit Patel (England), Mohammad Irfan (Pakistan), and Hammad Azam (Pakistan) as their direct signings.

At the draft, they picked Ricardo Powell (West Indies), Keven Cooper (West Indies), Kamrul Islam Rabbi (Bangladesh), Arafat Sunny (Bangladesh), Benny Howell (England), Elias Sunny (Bangladesh), Hamilton Masakadza (Zimbabwe), Rajdeep Darbar (India), and Amila Aponso (Sri Lanka).

The Morrisville Unity camp signed on Harbhajan Singh (India: Icon), Chadwick Walton (West Indies:

Platinum Grade), Ashley Nurse (West Indies: Global Superstar), Obus Pienaar (South Africa), Saurabh Tiwary (India), and Shannon Gabriel (West Indies) to begin with.

Then, at the draft they added the likes of Ruman Raees (Pakistan), Anwar Ali (Pakistan), Upul Tharanga (Sri Lanka), Chandrapal Hemraj (West Indies), Mukhtar Ahmed (Pakistan), Jasakran Malhotra (USA), Navin Stewart (West Indies), Carmi Le Roux (South Africa), Yogesh Nagar (India), Jonathan Carter (West Indies) and Rajat Bhatia (India).

Nawab Shaji Ul Mulik, T Ten Global Sports Founder and Chairman, said, "Cricket in the US has been growing rapidly, and we want to be a part of this special journey. The ICC T20 World Cup this year made a significant impact in the region, and we want to build on that momentum and carry it forward. With Season 2 of the US Masters, we aim to provide fans with more memorable contests and help accelerate the growth of cricket in a non-traditional market like the USA."

combined.

"It was a difficult tournament in all aspects. The team is not ready physically. All our players are in pre-season. Physically and technically, Syria were better. Against Mauritius, the game was very equal. At least today, it's true that the second half was okay. We deserved to score a goal. Three-nil isn't a fair reflection at all," said Marquez after the defeat to Syria.

"The second half was the only positive. Against Mauritius, we didn't play a good game, and in the first half of this game, the team was very scared, especially in the first few minutes," he said. Requiring only a draw to win the tournament, Syria were happy to preserve their one-goal advantage and play on the counter. India put all their eggs in one basket and went all out to get the elusive goal. Twice the crossbar came to Syria's rescue, while some brave defending from Syria and Hadaya's strong goalkeeping display prevented the first India goal of the Marquez era. As such, a clinical and quick Syria punished the hosts with two more goals late on, with a com-

bin of Mahmoud Al-Mawas and Pablo Sabbag's fresh legs nailing the third and final goal.

"We knew that Syria's strong point was the counter-attack. We were losing 0-1 at half-time, and we knew that we needed to take the risk. We also knew that they could kill the game like they did in the last 15 minutes. But I think that from half-time till the 30th minute of the second half, the performance was okay. We had some clear chances to equalise in the game," said Marquez.

"Syria were better than us. Most of their players have already started the season with their clubs. They are in their fourth or fifth game in the championship that they are playing. And we are still in pre-season and we need to keep going because this is the only way that I know," he added.

Next on the agenda for Marquez and the Blue Tigers is the tri-nation friendly tournament in Vietnam in October. India will face the hosts on October 9 and Lebanon on October 12, both higher-ranked sides, at the Thien Truong Stadium in the city of Nam Đh n.



## DEO Doda reviews arrangements for upcoming J&K Assembly Elections 2024

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
DODA, SEPTEMBER 10

District Election Officer (DEO) Doda, Harvinder Singh on Tuesday chaired a meeting with Zonal and Sectoral Magistrates to review the preparations for the upcoming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Elections 2024. The meeting focused on ensuring smooth and efficient management of election-related tasks in District Doda.

The session was attended virtually by Returning Officer (RO) for AC-51 Bhaderwah, Sunil Kumar, along with key officials including Chief Planning Officer (CPO) Doda, Manesh Kumar Manhas, and Dr. Akhter Hussain Akhoo, District Nodal Officer for Trainings and Human Resources. The discussion covered the allocation of manpower, the logistical arrangements required for polling,



ing, and the importance of a coordinated effort between different departments.

The DEO stressed the need for meticulous planning and execution, particularly in sensitive areas. He directed the Zonal and Sectoral Magistrates to ensure that all polling stations are equipped with necessary facilities, including accessibility for persons with disabilities. He also emphasized the importance of security arrangements and urged the officials to work closely with law enforce-

ment agencies to maintain order during the election process.

Additionally, the DEO highlighted the significance of voter awareness campaigns and SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) initiatives to maximize voter turnout. He instructed the nodal officers to ensure that training programs for polling staff are conducted efficiently and all officials are well-versed in handling Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and other election-related equipment.

## SVEEP: Series of activities held to educate citizens about the importance of voting at Kupwara



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 10

A series of awareness programmes were held today under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative across Kupwara district to educate citizens about the importance of voting, voter registration processes, and electoral participation.

The programme was organized on the directions of District Election Officer (DEO), Kupwara,

Ayushi Sudan at Boys Higher Secondary School Tekipora, Boys Higher Secondary School Maidanpora, Boys Higher Secondary School Warnow and Girls Higher Secondary School Sogam under the overall guidance of District Nodal Officer SVEEP/CEO Kupwara, Abdul Majeed Dar.

The DEO Kupwara urged the young voters to inspire their families, friends, relatives and neighbors to participate in the upcoming General

Assembly Elections 2024 with enthusiasm. She also emphasized the young voters to play their role as ambassadors of democracy. Meanwhile, plantation drives were also organized by authorities under SVEEP with an aim to combine the environmental efforts with voter awareness campaigns.

The initiative symbolized the dual responsibility of citizens to care for the environment and exercise their right to vote.

## Training of Female Staff for Pink Polling Stations commences in Pulwama



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
PULWAMA, SEPTEMBER 10

In preparation for the upcoming 2024 Legislative Assembly Elections, a comprehensive training program for female staff assigned to Pink Polling Stations in Pulwama District commenced today.

The training aims to ensure smooth, inclusive and efficient election processes at these women-centric polling stations.

The initiative to establish Pink Polling Stations, entirely managed by female staff, reflects the Election Commission's commitment to increasing women's participation in the electoral process, both as voters and facilitators. These specialized polling stations are designed to create a conducive environment for women voters, encouraging greater voter turnout and enhancing gender inclusivity in the electoral process.

During the training,

participants were briefed on various critical aspects of election management, including voter identification, operation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs), polling station arrangements and ensuring a comfortable and secure voting experience for all women voters.

The training of female polling staff will ensure that the management of these stations is efficient and voter-friendly, providing women a comfortable environment to exercise their franchise.

The training session was also attended by key election officials who provided valuable insights and hands-on demonstrations to ensure the readiness of the polling staff. More such sessions will be conducted in the coming days to ensure that all female staff are well-prepared to manage the Pink Polling Stations on Election Day.

## Bandipora Tennis Ball Cricket Championship commences to promote Voter Awareness

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 10

The Bandipora Tennis Ball Cricket Championship commenced today under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme at Hr Secondary School Nadihal.

The event features participation from approximately 25 teams of all categories (Boys and Girls) and aims to combine sports with civic education.

Speaking on the occasion, District Election Officer (DEO) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri said that the championship is a significant part of SVEEP activities, focusing on engaging first-time voters. He stated that the event seeks to inspire and motivate new voters to actively participate in the democratic process, highlighting the importance of their involvement in elections as a celebration of



democracy.

The DEO emphasized that the championship is not only a sports event but also a strategic effort to educate and engage first-time voters. He added that the goal is to make the electoral process more accessible and appealing to young voters by integrating sports with civic education.

Padmashree Faisal Ali Dar, Brand Ambassador SVEEP activities associated with the initiative, stated that the championship is designed to raise awareness about voting

rights among the youth. He noted that players from the tournament will have the opportunity to advance to the UT level.

Dar further emphasized the significance of the event, stating, "by integrating sports with civic engagement, we are creating an environment where young people can learn about their voting rights in a dynamic and enjoyable setting and approach SVEEP activities with a sense of responsibility but also encourages active participation in the democratic process."

## Super Bikers Join SVEEP campaign to promote voter awareness in Udhampur

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 10

The ongoing Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation campaign in Udhampur saw a thrilling addition today with the participation of super bikers.

Led by the District Election Officer Saloni Rai, a team of Officers comprising IAS Probationer Swati Shemaar; ACD Dr Ranjit Singh Kotwal; DFO Udhampur, Nodal Officer SVEEP, Dr Preeti Sharma; DYSSO Romesh Chander Mishra and other officers from the Udhampur administration extended a warm reception to the eminent bikers, who have garnered widespread acclaim for their achievements and contributions to both the motorcycling community and societal causes.

While interacting with the bikers, the DEO emphasized the impor-



tance of spreading awareness about the value of voting. She invited the superbikers to participate in future events, encouraging them to leverage their influence to engage the youth and promote electoral participation. She also guided them on how to further strengthen the SVEEP campaign.

The Bikers included Divya Sandhu, revered as the "Iron Lady" of the motorcycle community, acclaimed for her extraordinary 800,000 kilometers of riding; Jitesh Surana, a biker and founder of Asteride, the world's

sole community platform recognized by DPIIT and Start-up India with extensive global riding experience, exceeding 500,000 kilometers; Nikhil Kohli, the dynamic host of "The Sorted TV" and a fervent motorcycling enthusiast; Harish Kumar, an enterprising Hayabusa rider and entrepreneur and Rahul Sharma, another Hayabusa aficionado with pioneering advancements in the electric vehicle sector through innovative ventures. They also participated in a signature campaign at the DC office premises.

## DEO Srinagar presides over Training cum Interaction session of Political Parties, Contesting Candidates

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 10

The District Election Officer (DEO) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat today presided over a Training cum Interaction session of Political Parties and Candidates regarding permissions and online applications.

On the occasion, the DEO briefed participants regarding proper procedures for obtaining permission for their election related activities through online mode.

DEO emphasized on the Political stakeholders to obtain permission before planning to hold meetings, rallies or congregational programs.

The District Administration Srinagar has nominated Chief Planning Officer as Nodal Officer for Permissions to facilitate Contesting Candidates in obtaining the permission for electioneering.

The Political party representatives were informed that permission to conduct activities for the election campaign



shall be given on the principle of 'First Come First Serve' basis.

Parties and the Candidates were sensitized regarding their responsibilities to comply with ECI guidelines and Model Code of Conduct.

Moreover, participants were informed about ECI applications which can be accessed by them to

apply for permission and other facilities including C-Vigil App, Suvidha Candidate App, etc.

The Suvidha Candidate App helps a Candidate to view the list of permissions required for campaigning, to track the status of their permission application and to download the permission form and submit it online.

## Yoga meets SVEEP: Hiranagar connects wellness with voter awareness



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 10

In a unique initiative to promote active participation in the upcoming Assembly Elections, AC Hiranagar today connected the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program with the practice of yoga. The event, titled Yoga for SVEEP, was held at ITI Hiranagar, with participants from diverse sectors, including young voters, booth-level officers, ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and CRPF personnel.

During the event, the message of 'Yoga karmasu kaushalam - excellence in action is yoga' was

embraced by all, tying this philosophy to the electoral duties encouraged under SVEEP.

Principal ITI Hiranagar and AERO Hiranagar were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, they emphasized the importance of the SVEEP campaign in raising awareness among voters about their rights and responsibilities. AERO Hiranagar specifically addressed the availability of postal ballots, urging citizens to turn out in large numbers and vote responsibly.

The yoga session included a series of breathing exercises and other postures aimed at promoting overall well-being, providing participants with a

moment of reflection and focus as they prepare for their role in the electoral process.

In addition, GHSS Chakra hosted an impressive event for electoral literacy, where students formed a human chain spelling out "SVEEP" and took part in an awareness rally. Other schools across the region also joined in the efforts: GHS Sherpur held a slogan competition and a tattoo-writing activity focused on the right to vote, while GHSS Hiranagar organized an awareness lecture on electoral literacy and featured a "Wall of Democracy," where future voters posted messages.

## Last date for submission of HAFs for (Haj-2025) extended to September-23

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 10

The J&K Haj Committee has extended the last date for submission of online Haj Application Forms (HAFs) for Haj - 2025 up to 23rd September, 2024.

As per an official communication, the J&K Haj Committee has informed that applicants possessing machine readable valid Indian International Passports issued on or before 23rd September, 2024 and valid at least up to 15th

January, 2026 are eligible to apply for Haj - 2025.

Meanwhile, applications can be submitted online only at the website of Haj Committee of India [www.hajcommittee.gov.in](http://www.hajcommittee.gov.in) or Android Mobile App 'HAJ SUVIDHA' available at Google Play-store. Before filing the Haj Application Forms Online, the pilgrims are requested to go through the Haj Policy 2025/ Haj 2025 guidelines available at Haj Committee website [www.hajcommittee.gov.in](http://www.hajcommittee.gov.in).