

**DENGUE WARNING SIGNS**

Many people with dengue can be cared for at home with adequate rest and hydration. But, if you experience any warning signs, go immediately to the nearest medical center.

**Watch out for dengue warning signs!**

A drop in body temperature accompanied by any of the following symptoms:

- Severe and continuous headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Severe stomach pain
- Redness in eyes
- Stomach pain
- Steady rise in pulse or blood pressure
- Redness in skin

If you have any of these symptoms, go to the nearest medical center IMMEDIATELY.

# JINDRAH IMAGES

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## ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS- 2024

# 483 candidates file nominations for 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 12

As many as 483 candidates have filed their nomination papers across 40 Assembly Constituencies (ACs) of seven districts of Jammu and Kashmir which are going to polling in the third and final phase of J&K Assembly Election 2024.

Thursday was the last day of filing nomination papers for the third phase of Assembly Election scheduled to be held on 01 October, 2024.

A total of 483 candidates have filed 518 nomination papers for the third phase of the forthcoming Assembly Election 2024, a statement from the office of Chief Electoral Officer informed.

A total of 122 candidates have filed their nominations in Jammu district, followed by 111 in Baramulla district, 80 in Kupwara district, 50 in Bandipora district, 47 in Kathua district, 40 in Udhampur district, while 33 candidates have filed nominations in Samba district.

In Jammu division, for the four ACs in Udhampur district, a total of 13 candidates have filed nomination from 59-Udhampur West AC; 11 from 60-Udhampur East AC;



9 from 61-Chenani AC; while 7 candidates have filed nomination from 62-Ramnagar (SC) AC.

For the six ACs in Kathua district, 9 candidates have filed nomination from 63-Bani AC; 5 from 64-Billawar AC; 7 from 65-Basohli AC; 10 from 66-Jasrota AC; 6 from 67-Kathua (SC) AC; while 10 candidates have filed nomination from 68-Hiranagar AC.

In Samba district, 7 candidates have filed nomination from 69-Ramgarh (SC) AC; 15 from 70-Samba AC; while 11 candidates have filed nomination from 71-Vijaypur AC.

For the eleven ACs in Jammu district, a total of 13 candidates have filed nomination from 72-Bishnah (SC) AC; 14 from 73-Suchetgarh (SC) AC; 14 from 74-R.S. Pura - Jammu South AC; 12 from 75-Bahu AC; 10 from

76-Jammu East AC; 8 from 77-Nagrota AC; 13 from 78-Jammu West AC; 17 from 79-Jammu North AC; 6 from 80-Marh (SC) AC; 5 from 81-Akhnoor (SC) AC; while 10 candidates have filed nomination from 82-Chhamb AC.

Similarly, in Kashmir Division, for the six ACs in Kupwara district, a total of 12 candidates have filed nomination from 1-Karnah AC; 13 from 2-Trehgam AC; 9 from 3-Kupwara AC; 13 from 4-Lolab AC; 11 from 5-Handwara AC; while 22 candidates have filed nomination from 6-Langate AC.

For the seven ACs in Baramulla district, 23 candidates have filed nomination from 7-Sopore AC; 14 from 8-Rafiabad AC; 7 from 9-Uri AC; 26 from 10-Baramulla AC; 14 from 11-Gulmarg AC; 13 from 12-Wagoora- Kreeeri AC; while 14 candidates have filed nomination from 13-Pattan AC.

In Bandipora district, 22 candidates have filed nomination from 14-Sonawari AC; 23 from 15-Bandipora AC; while 5 candidates have filed nomination from 16-Gurez (ST) AC.

The notification for the 3rd Phase was issued on

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# Chugh questions Abdullah family role in Shyaama Prasad Mukherjee death

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 12

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh and Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Dhamek a road show followed by a large public rally in Samba in which Chugh, recounted the conspiracies of the Sheikh Abdullah-led government during the Jana Sangh era.

He explained how two constitutions and two symbols were imposed at the time, and how Jana Sangh's founder, Syama Prasad Mookerjee, was arrested during Sheikh Abdullah's regime.

Chugh remarked, "The



false narrative established by Sheikh Abdullah continues even today, with his descendants still demanding the reinstatement of Article 370."

He urged the audience to consider this election carefully, asking, "Should we continue supporting the ideals of Premnath Dogra, or fall for the con-

spiracy led by Sheikh Abdullah, which aims to keep J&K shackled by Articles 370 and 35(A)? Does J&K need to move forward from this?"

He further criticized Farooq Abdullah's push to reinstate Articles 370 and 35A, questioning the need for the return of two flags and suggesting that it would undermine the constitution introduced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He said, "This election is not simply a contest against the NC, Congress, and PDP. It is a battle between those who wish to bring back 370 and those supporting Narendra Modi's development

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# Kashmiris' voice cannot be silenced: Er Rashid; rejects sympathy vote claims

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 12

In his first public address after being released from Tihar Jail, Engineer Rashid, Member of Parliament and Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) president, delivered a powerful speech to a massive gathering in north Kashmir's Baramulla district, asserting that the "voice of Kashmiris cannot be silenced through oppression".

Addressing a huge crowd, Rashid, according to the news agency, said he wants to "make it clear to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi that the people of Kashmir know where their loyalties lie".

"Today, it is evident that Engineer Rashid, along with Hurriyat leaders and the youth



of Kashmir cannot be suppressed by jailing us," he said.

The AIP chief rejected claims that his election success was based on sympathy votes. "The votes were not cast out of pity but were instead a powerful rejection of the Indian government's policies in Kashmir," he said.

Criticising the central government's approach to Kashmir, Er Rashid referred to PM Modi's "Naya Kashmir" narrative as a "drama" and said

it had failed to address the real concerns of the Kashmiri people. "It was not a 'New Kashmir'; it was a Kashmir of oppression, misery and draconian laws like UAPA," he remarked, adding that the people of Kashmir will not compromise their faith or dignity. "Kashmir wants peaceful resolution, not continued oppression," he added.

The Baramulla MP also dismissed allegations made by former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, who had questioned AIP's funding sources. "This gathering is a response to her accusations. AIP is not funded by external forces. Our supporters spend their own money to back our cause," he asserted, as the crowd raised their hands in solidarity. He said Mufti should have

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# Only PDP can fight BJP's onslaught on J&K's identity: Mehbooda Mufti



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEPT 12

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti Thursday said her PDP is the only party that can fight the BJP's onslaught on the identity, resources and jobs of the people of the Union Territory.

She said when her People's Democratic Party (PDP) was in power, it took the people of J-K, especially south

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# ECI officials take stock of preparations for J&K Assembly Elections

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 12

A team of senior officials from the Election Commission of India (ECI) undertook a two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, during which they reviewed the preparedness of the forthcoming Assembly Elections in the Union Territory.

During the two-day visit on 11-12 September, the ECI officials visited Ramban and Anantnag districts, where they held review meetings with the Civil Administration and Police officials of all the 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The ECI officials reviewed and stressed on critical issues highlighted by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar earlier during a review

with Chief Secretary, DGP and head of CAPF for fair and transparent electoral process. Administration was directed to ensure that preventive actions would be free of any partisan bias and only individuals with a proven history of antisocial or criminal behaviour would be targeted.

The administration would avoid undue arrests around polling day. Only individuals with legitimate antisocial or criminal backgrounds would be detained, ensuring that the process remains fair and transparent, the ECI officials said, adding that this move is aimed at eliminating previous concerns of selective or politically motivated actions.

The ECI officials also asserted that no last-minute restrictions would be

imposed on the number of participants allowed in rallies or meetings, and instructed that the administration would grant permissions for political gatherings with due diligence and without any bias or without any undue interference.

The officials were informed that security has to be provided equally to all candidates, without any discrimination or restriction on movement. This will ensure a level playing field for all parties, and will prevent exposing any candidate to heightened vulnerability.

The ECI team also reiterated that the practice of last-minute changes or clubbing of polling stations—often justified on security grounds has been prohibited and the

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# With 7.22 lakh voters, Baramulla set for 2024 assembly polls

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BARAMULLA, SEP 12

Baramulla district is preparing for elections in the third and final phase of the General Elections for the Legislative Assembly, with more than 7.22 lakh registered voters set to cast their ballots on October 1, 2024.

Baramulla district comprises of seven Assembly Constituencies of Sopore, Rafiabad, Uri, Baramulla, Wagoora-Kreeeri, Gulmarg and Pattan with a total of 7,22,923 registered voters, including 3,64,517 male, 3,58,394 female and 12 third gender voters.

To facilitate the voters for

smooth and hassle free electoral participation, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has established 908 polling stations across the district.

In order to boost voter turnout and ensure that every voter can exercise their franchise with ease, specialized polling stations have been established across the district including Pink Polling Stations, Youth Polling Stations, PwD manned Polling Stations, Green Polling Stations, Unique Polling Stations and Model Polling Stations.

Among all the seven Assembly Constituencies of the district, 10- Baramulla Assembly Constituency has the highest

number of 1,26,321 registered electorate, comprising 63,338 males and 62,978 females and 05 transgender voters.

To facilitate a smooth and inclusive voting experience for all registered voters the constituency also houses 158 polling stations, the highest number in the district.

The second highest number of electorate in the district, 08- Rafiabad Assembly Constituency with a voter population of 1,13,011, among which 57,760 are males and 55,250 are females and 01 voter is registered as transgender.

To facilitate the voters to exercise their franchise, 149 polling stations have been

established in this constituency.

The 07- Sopore Assembly Constituency comes next with 1,12,793 total registered voters, of which 55,990 are males and 56,803 are females and notably, no voters are registered under the third gender category in this constituency.

To ensure thorough voter access, 129 polling stations have been established across the constituency to ensure smooth and hassle free voting process.

Similarly, 09-Uri Assembly Constituency has registered 1,04,813 electorate, among which 53,872 are males

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# Dr Jitendra slams opposition for undermining revival of democracy in Kashmir

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEPT 12

On the eve of Kashmir's highly anticipated elections, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh delivered a blistering critique of opposition parties, accusing them of undermining the revival of democracy in Kashmir and trying to thwart the region's hard-won democratic resurgence.

Speaking in a popular election media conclave here, Dr. Jitendra Singh contrasted the current vibrant democratic participation with the period of stagnation and manipulation under previous administrations.



Dr. Jitendra Singh highlighted how the democratic aspirations of Kashmiris, which had lain dormant for 30-40 years, have been reignited following the abrogation of Article 370. He noted the remarkable

70-80% voter turnout in recent Block Development Council (BDC) elections, a significant improvement that matches the national average in Lok Sabha elections. Dr. Jitendra Singh praised PM Modi for open-

ing the gates of democracy in J&K which were dormant for decades.

In a pointed rebuttal to critics, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Earth Sciences, MoS PMO, Department of Atomic Energy and Department of Space, MoS Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh condemned those lamenting Kashmir's state as having no substantive issues left. "The same individuals who once exploited Article 370 for personal gain, elected their own relatives, and

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# India slams Pakistan for peddling false propaganda on J&K

**AGENCIES**  
GENEVA, SEP 12

India on Thursday slammed Pakistan for "misusing" the UN Human Rights Council's platform to promote its "false propaganda" on Jammu and Kashmir, spewing falsehoods on the world stage while at the same time failing to protect the repression of religious, sectarian, and ethnic minorities in its own territory.

Firmly rejecting Pakistan's statement made on Wednesday during the ongoing 57th session of the UN Human Rights Council, India highlighted its notorious neighbour's established history and policy of harbouring, aiding and



actively supporting terrorists.

"In continuing to misuse the Council's time to peddle its false propaganda, Pakistan wants to divert attention from its own abject failures and state policy of repression of religious, sectarian, and ethnic minorities and its inglorious record of hosting and sponsoring terrorism," stated Indian diplomat Muhammed Shabeer

while exercising India's Right of Reply in response to Pakistan's statement.

India mentioned the international community's repeated criticism of Pakistan for its political violence and the systematic repression of minorities, including increasing discrimination and violence against the Ahmadiyya community.

Reiterating that Jammu and Kashmir remains an integral part of India, India emphasised that the region has seen massive progress following several socio-economic development initiatives of the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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## Justice Tashi Rabstan, Justice Rajnesh Oswal visit Pulwama; Inaugurate Special court for NDPS, Security Barrack, Satellite OPD (AYUSH)

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
PULWAMA, SEPTEMBER 12

District Court Complex, Pulwama today witnessed a momentous occasion with the administrative visit of Justice Tashi Rabstan, Chief Justice (Acting) High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, (Patron-in-Chief & Executive Chairman J&K Legal Services Authority) along with Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Judge of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh (Administrative Judge for District Pulwama). The dignitaries were warmly received by Naseer Ahmad Dar, Principal District & Sessions Judge Pulwama; Basharat Qayoom, Deputy Commissioner Pulwama; Manzoor Ahmad Zargar, Special Judge (NDPS), Pulwama; Dr. Noor Mohammad Mir, Additional District & Ses-

sions Judge, Pulwama; P.D. Nitya, SSP Pulwama; Jahangir Ahmad Bakshi, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Pulwama; Zahoor Ahmad Ganie, Secretary, DLSA Pulwama; Majid Farooq, Munsiff Pulwama, Junaid Bhat, President District Bar Association Pulwama and members of bar.

On the occasion, Justice Tashi Rabstan inaugurated the newly created Court of Special Judge (NDPS), Security Barrack constructed for the overall security of the Court Complex, and a Satellite OPD (AYUSH) dispensary. The Chief Justice and Justice Rajnesh Oswal engaged in a fruitful interaction with the Judicial Officers and members of the Bar, focusing on strengthening the legal infrastructure in the district.

In his presidential address, Justice Tashi Rabstan underscored



the paramount need for developing robust judicial infrastructure and ensuring a safe and conducive environment for effective and speedy justice. He expressed his commitment to promoting an inclusive and responsive judicial system that meets the evolving needs of society. Justice Rajnesh Oswal, in his special address, extended heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Justice for his dedicated efforts in enhancing the judicial infrastructure of the district. He assured the members of the Bar of continued support and pledged to address the

remaining issues to further elevate the justice delivery system.

In his welcome address Naseer Ahmad Dar, Principal District & Sessions Judge, Pulwama expressed sincere gratitude to the Chief Justice for exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to the development of judicial infrastructure throughout the UT of J&K and UT of Ladakh in general and district Pulwama in particular. He also expressed gratitude to Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Judge High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh who as the Administrative

Judge for District Pulwama, has been a constant source of support and guidance.

The event was graced by the presence of other dignitaries, including Shahzad Azeem, Registrar General of the High Court of J&K and Ladakh; M.K. Sharma, Principal Secretary to Chief Justice; Amit Kumar Gupta, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority. The vote of thanks was presented by Junaid Bhat President District Bar Association Pulwama and proceedings were moderated by Zahoor Ahmad Ganie Secretary DLSA Pulwama.

This significant visit marks a major step forward in the advancement of judicial infrastructure in Pulwama and reinforces the commitment of the stake holders to ensure accessible, effective, and timely justice for all.

## Nodal Officer Complaints reviews Road Maintenance, Basic Facilities for Polling Day

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 12

Nodal Officer for Complaints, (Additional District Development Commissioner Rajouri), on the direction of District Election Officer (DEO) Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, reviewed preparations for smooth conduct of polling for the upcoming General Elections to the Legislative Assembly, 2024.

The meeting focused on maintenance of roads leading to polling stations and ensuring the availability of basic Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) for voters.

The Nodal Officer emphasized the critical role that infrastructure plays in facilitating voter access to polling stations.

The Executive Engineers (ExEns) from the Public Works Department (PWD), Pradhan



Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), and Border Roads Organisation (BRO) were directed to ensure that all roads leading to polling stations are properly maintained and accessible on polling day.

Special attention was drawn towards the remote and rural areas to ensure that voters in every part of the district can easily reach their polling stations.

The Additional District Development Commissioner instructed all

departments to ensure that the basic AMF, including water supply, electricity, ramps, and proper sanitation, are in place at each polling station.

The meeting was attended by all Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), along with the Executive Engineers of PWD, PMGSY, and BRO, who assured their commitment to completing the necessary road works and providing adequate facilities well ahead of the polling day.

## SVEEP Team Kupwara visits Ring Bala Machil, close to LoC

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 12

With the mission to ensure that every voter in frontier Kupwara district, regardless of their location is well-informed and ready to exercise their democratic rights, the District SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral participation) Team Kupwara today conducted an outreach program at remote village Ring Bala of Machil. The outreach, conducted on the directions of District Election Officer (DEO) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan, focused on engaging various categories of voters, including tribal voters, first-time voters, women and senior citizens to ensure that every eligible voter is informed and motivated to participate in the upcoming elections.



The visit aimed to reach even the remotest and interior most areas of the district reinforcing the administration's commitment to inculcate voter education. The SVEEP team headed by District Nodal Officer SVEEP (Chief Education Officer Kupwara), Ab. Majeed Dar along with Zonal Education Officer Khumeriyal in a significant move interacted with local residents and tribals putting up in Dhoks in order to strengthen democratic participation under SVEEP and addressing the

unique challenges faced by these groups such as geographical isolation and low literacy rates. The SVEEP team discussed the importance of voting and providing guidance on the electoral process. Special emphasis was placed on making informed decisions and understanding the power of each vote.

During the visit, the team also listened to the concerns of the villagers, addressing any challenges they face in accessing polling stations and ensuring their voices are heard.

## Expedite saturation of 4G network in JK: Atal Dulloo

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 12

Flagging the slow pace of progress over saturation of 4G connectivity in Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, today directed the officers to work in a coordinated manner to expedite the pace of work on the project for its timely completion.

He passed these directions during a review meeting at Civil Secretariat here during which several issues hampering the progress were ironed out.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Public Works (R&B) Department, Secretary Revenue Department and other officers. Principal Secretary, Power Development Department, Secretary Rural Development Department, Additional Secretary IT Department, General Manager, BSNL and others attended the meeting through video conferencing.

While chairing the meet-

ing, Chief Secretary directed the service provider to complete the work on all the handed over sites without any further delay.

"There is no scope for any leniency and things should not be kept lingering around without any justifiable reasons. Pendency should be cleared expeditiously by prioritising uncovered areas" he said.

The objective of the project is to provide 4G mobile services in uncovered villages in remote and difficult areas.

Regarding the electricity connection to the towers, he asked the Principal Secretary, PDD to speed up the process of providing electric connection to the towers. He said that a mechanism should be developed so that electricity is provided to the towers as soon as they get completed.

He also directed the authorities to identify alternate land where the earlier proposed site was not found feasible as per the quality

standards.

During the meeting CGM, BSNL gave a power point presentation on 4G saturation project regarding sites and land allotment details, tower erection and highlighted the challenges which impede 4G saturation project. He said that work is in progress at different stages and is being continuously monitored.

He gave out that they have been allotted land at 711 sites and civil work has started on 563 sites (Jammu-279, Kashmir-284) and tower erection has been completed on 355 sites (Jammu-149, Srinagar-206). He also said that 122 4G sites have been made ON-Air and 200 more sites will be made ON-Air by the end of September 2024 as per the target.

Atal Dulloo also reviewed the progress on BharatNet and directed the officials to expedite the initiative.

He stressed on smooth implementation of Bharat Net for providing high

speed broadband connectivity to Gram Panchayats across Jammu and Kashmir. He also called for carrying out a study of all the services to check their utilisation location wise and the uptake by the users.

CGM BSNL gave a presentation about the BharatNet and said that in Jammu and Kashmir a total of 1119 Gram Panchayats have been covered under phase I & II, out of which 427 GPs have been covered on Optical Fiber Cable and 692 covered on VSAT. He said that broadband utilization under BharatNet has shown greater uptake over the past two years with 8502 Fiber to the Home (FTTH) connections provided to the people in rural areas and 427 FTTH to government institutions.

He also informed that 660 GPs which were having power related issues has been resolved by the Power Development Department in consultation with BSNL and Rural Development Department.

## SVEEP Awareness Program conducted across 04 Assembly Constituencies in Pulwama

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
PULWAMA, SEPTEMBER 12

In an effort to promote voter participation in the upcoming Assembly elections, a Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) awareness program was organized across all four assembly constituencies of Pulwama district.

The initiative saw active participation from senior citizens, young voters, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and local residents.

The awareness programmes aimed to ensure that no voter is left out, reinforcing the importance of every individual's role in the democratic process. The campaign focused on educating the public about their voting rights, the election process and the significance of casting their vote to shape the future of their community.

## DEO Rajouri reviews measures for strengthening MCC enforcement



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 12

In a significant step towards ensuring the smooth conduct of the upcoming Assembly Elections 2024, District Election Officer (DEO), Abhishek Sharma, chaired a meeting with Tehsildars and Naib Tehsildars, here today to review the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and election preparedness in the district.

During the meeting, the DEO emphasized the critical role of Tehsildars and Naib Tehsildars in enforcing the MCC and ensuring fair, transparent and peaceful elections. He directed the officers to remain vigilant

and ensure that the MCC is strictly adhered to by all political parties and candidates, preventing any violations that could disrupt the electoral process. He urged the officers to take prompt and decisive action in cases of any breach.

The DEO also highlighted the importance of the proper functioning of the Static Surveillance Teams (SST) and Flying Squad Teams (FST), tasked with monitoring the movement of cash, liquor, and other items intended to unduly influence voters. The officers were instructed to ensure round-the-clock monitoring and report any suspicious activities immediately to the district control room.

Further, the DEO laid

stress on maintaining law and order across the district during the election period. He called for close coordination with law enforcement agencies to prevent any incidents of violence or disruption and to create an atmosphere conducive to peaceful voting.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Rajouri, Rajiv Sharma, who was also present in the meeting, assured full support from the district administration in implementing the directions. He reiterated the need for active collaboration among different departments and officials to ensure the successful execution of election duties.

Tehsildars and Naib Tehsildars shared their field-level updates and discussed critical issues regarding enforcement of the MCC.

The DEO assured them of full support and provided solutions to address any logistical or operational issues.

The meeting concluded with the DEO urging all officers to work with dedication and responsibility in the weeks leading up to the elections, ensuring that Rajouri district witnesses free, fair, and peaceful elections.

## General Observer inspects polling stations in Assar Sub-Division



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
DODA, SEPTEMBER 12

In line with the preparations for the upcoming Assembly Elections 2024, General Observer for Assembly Constituencies AC-52 Doda and AC-53 Doda West, Aditya Negi conducted an extensive inspection of polling stations in Assar Sub-Division today.

The visit was aimed at ensuring the smooth conduct of the electoral process and verifying the preparedness of polling stations to meet all required standards for the upcoming elections.

Aditya Negi meticu-

lously assessed the arrangements at each polling station, including accessibility, security measures, and the overall infrastructure. He emphasized the need for a seamless voting experience for all voters, particularly the elderly and differently-abled and directed the concerned officials to ensure that all polling stations are fully equipped with essential facilities.

Later, Aditya Negi also took part in a plantation drive organized at the polling stations in Assar.

Saplings were planted at several polling locations to promote envi-

ronmental sustainability and add a green touch to the electoral process. This initiative aligns with the broader goal of fostering a more eco-friendly environment and raising awareness about the importance of greenery in public spaces.

Aditya Negi commended the efforts of the Administration and encouraged officials to continue working diligently to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections. He also interacted with polling staff and urged them to adhere strictly to the guidelines provided by the Election Commission of India.

## Election Expenditure Observer visits State Taxes Department Bandipora



J1 NEWS SERVICE  
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 12

In preparation for the upcoming legislative assembly elections, the Election Expenditure Observer for Bandipora District, Sudeep Dabas today visited the State Taxes Department Bandipora to review and oversee the processes in place to monitor election expenditure.

During the visit, Sudeep Dabas held a meeting with key officials to assess the department's preparedness in ensuring compliance with the expenditure guidelines set by the Election Commission of India. The Observer emphasized the importance of trans-

parency, accountability, and strict adherence to the expenditure limits by all political parties and candidates.

The State Taxes Officer Mehraj Wani presented strategies for monitoring financial transactions, checking of E-way bills and enforcement. He informed that special teams have been formed to conduct surprise checks, scrutinize returns, and verify the accuracy of submitted statements.

Debas expressed satisfaction with the department's preparedness and highlighted the importance of collaboration between various enforcement agencies to ensure free and fair elections.



## Mega SVEEP campaign to promote Voters' Awareness held at Dooru, Verinag



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
ANANTNAG, SEPTEMBER 12

A mega Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) campaign was organized on Thursday in Dooru area of Anantnag district, with the primary goal of fostering voter awareness and promoting participation in the ongoing Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Elections 2024.

The event held under the overall guidance of Chief Electoral Officer, J&K and attended by Akther Hussain Qazi, Nodal officer of SVEEP, J&K; Sapna Kotwal, Nodal Officer for Media, J&K among others, was organized by K.K Badyal, District Nodal Officer SVEEP for Anantnag and Naseer-ul-Haq, Nodal Officer SVEEP for 41-AC Dooru.

The main event was held in the premises of Government Higher Secondary School, Dooru wherein the students

from the nearby schools and colleges participated in various cultural and sports events. Principal Tariq Ahmed Sheikh along with the staff members were also present at the event.

On the occasion, various activities were conducted to engage the public and raise awareness about the importance of voting. The event featured interactive sessions, cultural performances, Nukkad Natak, formation of human chain, games including tug of war and rallies, all aimed at motivating citizens to participate in the democratic process commencing on 18 September, 2024 across J&K.

Addressing the gathering, Akther Hussain Qazi, Nodal officer of SVEEP, J&K and Sapna Kotwal Nodal Officer for Media, J&K emphasized on the significance of each vote in shaping the future, encouraging citizens to

make informed decisions. Special emphasis was also laid on voter education, informed and ethical voting, stressing the role and responsibility of every voter.

The event also highlighted the importance of involving first-time voters, women, and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the electoral process, ensuring inclusive and broader participation.

The event culminated with a vibrant mega rally that further energized the public to vote in large numbers in the upcoming elections.

A similar SVEEP campaign was also organized at Verinag, a famous tourist destination in Anantnag district. The event also saw active participation from Booth Awareness Group (BAG) members and Block Level Officers (BLOs), emphasizing the collective responsibility in voter education and outreach.

## Mega SVEEP event organised at Tethar, Banihal

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 12

As part of the ongoing voter awareness drive, the District Election Office Ramban, under the leadership of District Election Officer Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, organized a mega SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) event at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS), Tethar, in the 55-Banihal Assembly Constituency.

The event witnessed a massive turnout of over 1,000 participants, including students, teachers, members of the civil society, and women voters. District Project Officer ICDS Ramban, Jahangir Hashmi presided over the event, which featured vibrant cultural performances, sports activities, speeches, and skits focused on encouraging electoral participation. A special emphasis was placed on mobilizing women voters for the upcoming Assembly Election.

In his address, Jahangir Hashmi highlighted the objective of the SVEEP initiative, which is to systematically educate voters and enhance their electoral participation. He emphasized the



crucial role every vote plays in shaping a stronger democracy. Hashmi urged everyone, especially women, to exercise their right to vote in the upcoming assembly election on September 18, stating that the power of the vote lies in its ability to bring about meaningful change.

The event was further uplifted by a captivating performance from Jeevan Pahari, a renowned Dogri singer from District Ramban, whose melodious songs added to the festive atmosphere of the occasion.

Other prominent speakers included District Nodal Officer SVEEP (CEO), Ramban, Bikram Singh; Nodal Officer SVEEP 55-AC Banihal; Nodal Officer Women Awareness 55-Banihal; Principal of GHSS Tethar;

and Nodal Officer SVEEP 54-AC Ramban. Each speaker emphasized the significance of active voter participation, particularly in the upcoming Assembly Election, as a means of strengthening democratic values. The speakers also stressed the need for women voters to come forward in large numbers to cast their votes.

Meanwhile as part of the SVEEP campaign, artists from the Sangam Theater Group Reasi, who are empanelled with the SVEEP initiative, also performed a "Nukkad Natak" (street play) at a marketplace in Gool, 55-AC Banihal. The play was witnessed by a large gathering and successfully raised awareness about the importance of voter participation in the upcoming Assembly Election 2024.

## Home Voting begins for Elderly, PwDs in Doda



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, SEPTEMBER 12

The home voting for the General Assembly Elections 2024 commenced across the district in three constituencies—AC 51 Bharderwah, AC 52 Doda, and AC 53 Doda West. The home voting facility will be available for two days.

This initiative, introduced by the Election Commission of India (ECI), allowed elderly citizens and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) to cast their votes from home, ensuring their active participation in the democratic process.

The polling teams were dispatched early in the morning to certified

areas, covering all identified locations where elderly and disabled voters reside. The response was overwhelming, with a large turnout of voters above the age of 85 and those with benchmark disabilities, reflecting their eagerness to strengthen democracy.

District Election Officer Harvinder Singh said that adequate arrangements were made for the smooth conduct of home voting. "The initiative is a significant step towards inclusivity, as it provides an optional home voting facility to voters over 85 years and PwDs, further enhancing the reach and accessibility of the electoral process," he said.

## Rajouri ignites voter enthusiasm with dynamic SVEEP activities across constituencies

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 12

In a powerful display of civic engagement, Rajouri has embarked on an ambitious voter awareness campaign under the leadership of District Election Officer Abhishek Sharma and District Nodal Officer (SVEEP) Bishamber Dass. The campaign, part of a broader initiative to prepare for the upcoming J&K Legislative Assembly elections, has seen a series of innovative and community-focused activities across various constituencies.

In Assembly Constituency 86-Budhal, a pivotal voter awareness lecture was delivered by Arif Wiqar of the SVEEP Cell at Government High School Keri themed "Importance of a Vote in a Democracy."

The highly impactful speech captivated the students and emphasized the critical role of each voter in shaping the nation's future. The event was further enriched by the insights of Headmaster Mohd Shabir Lone, who urged students to advocate for voter participation among their eligible relatives.

Adding a unique twist, the SVEEP Cell organized a friendly cricket match at GDC Budhal, using the sport as a platform to engage players and spectators on the importance of voting. Prof. Nodal Officer SVEEP Tahir Nadeem, encouraged all attendees to vote for the progress and development of the nation.

Parallel to these events, awareness activities were conducted at polling stations No. 113 Panjnara Keri, No. 60 Targain B, and No. 34 Kandi B. The SVEEP Cell also prepared for the Mega Plantation Drive scheduled on 14th and 15th of September



2024. The SVEEP team also held a creative demonstration of a dummy EVM made from thermocol by local students.

The SVEEP team of Assembly Constituency 87-Thannamandi innovatively engaged local police officers in an awareness campaign, underscoring the importance of voting even amid their demanding duties. The campaign also included a painting competition at GHSS Panjigrian, promoting creativity alongside civic participation.

Similarly, Nodal Officer Rakesh Kumar Sharma led an engaging program at local Government High School in Assembly Constituency 85-Androlla, which included a pledge ceremony, signature campaign and door-to-door outreach. The event, attended by about 110 students and 60 locals, aimed to boost voter enthusiasm and participation. A simultaneous plantation drive at Boys Model HSS Rajouri

highlighted the community's commitment to environmental and electoral responsibility.

Assembly Constituency 83-Kalakote-Sunderbani hosted a vibrant poster campaign at GHSS Sunderbani, where Principal R.C. Sharma and Nodal Officer Babu Singh motivated students to spread the SVEEP message among young voters. The event saw active participation from staff, students and the SVEEP team.

Finally, Assembly Constituency 84-Nowshera held a drawing and painting competition at GMHSS Lamberi, further engaging the youth in the electoral process under the guidance of Nodal Officer Sh. JP Singh.

These dynamic activities reflect Rajouri's commitment to fostering an informed and engaged electorate, ensuring a vibrant democratic process for the forthcoming elections.

## Nukkad Natak under SVEEP held at Poonch

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 12

Students of Government Girls Higher Secondary School Poonch presented a thought-provoking Nukkad Natak at Pritam Park, Poonch, today, highlighting the significance of voting and the impact it has on the country's future.

The event was held under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative.

The Nukkad Natak, titled "Voting: The Power of Democracy", conveyed the message that every vote matters and encouraged the audience to exercise their franchise. The students' energetic performance was well-received by the audience.

District Nodal Officer



SVEEP, Lal Hussain was the chief guest on the occasion. He applauded the students for their outstanding performance.

One of the student performers, Rifat Jahangir, said, "We are proud to be a part of this initiative. Through this Nukkad Natak, we want to convey the message that voting is our right and our responsibility. We hope to inspire more people to come out and vote."

The event was attended by locals, students and teachers. The Nukkad Natak was followed by a voter pledge, where attendees were encouraged to cast their votes on 25th of September.

The school Principal, Anjum Shaheen, ZEO Kanuyian Anwar Hussain, ZEPO Poonch Vijay Kumar, Ravinder Singh and other members of the SVEEP team were also present on the occasion.

## Jharokha Yatra marches through Samba to promote voter awareness



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 12

In a vibrant display of civic responsibility and cultural pride, a Jharokha Yatra was organized today from Main Bazaar Samba to the historic Samba Fort to raise awareness about the upcoming Voting Day on 1st October 2024.

The unique event, aimed at sensitizing the urban population, attracted a large gathering from the bustling marketplace, ensuring maximum outreach.

The event was led by District Election Officer (DEO) Rajesh Sharma along with SSP Vinay Kumar and Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Jagdish Singh.

Organized by District SVEEP Nodal Officers Kewal Krishan and Ekshu Sharma, along with AC Nodal Officer Sheetal, the event featured a combination of cultural performances, informative sessions, and interactive activities to inspire greater civic engagement among voters in the region.

The Yatra was made even more memorable by the participation of the JK Police Band, which played rhythmic tunes that energized the crowd. Participants from various student groups, including NCC and NSS cadets, marched with enthusiasm, contributing to the spirit of the event.

One of the highlights was the involvement of

young girls dressed in traditional attire, who serenaded the audience with folk songs that carried a powerful message of responsibility and the importance of voting. Their heartfelt performance served as an encouragement for citizens to actively engage in the democratic process.

This collaborative effort, involving local authorities and cultural groups, is part of a broader voter education campaign aimed at ensuring high voter turnout on Election Day. As the 1st of October approaches, the Samba District continues to prioritize civic engagement through such creative and engaging initiatives.

## General, Police Observers review arrangements at Counting Center and Strong Room in Udhampur



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 12

General Observer for the Legislative Assembly Elections, S.A. Raman, along with Police Observer Ravi Ranjan Kumar today conducted an extensive inspection of the Counting Center and Strong Room located at GDC Boys and Government College for Women Udhampur.

The inspection was aimed at ensuring the smooth and secure conduct of the upcoming General Assembly Elections 2024 in Udhampur District.

Accompanied by District Election Officer Saloni Rai, along with senior civil and police officials, the observers

focused on evaluating the overall preparedness and security arrangements at both the Counting Center and the Strong Room.

The visit was specifically organized to assess security protocols, logistic arrangements, and the infrastructure in place to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process.

Special attention was given to strengthening security measures to mitigate potential risks and to ensure the transparency of the vote counting process.

The team was briefed by DEO Udhampur on the existing security strategies and other arrangements made in accordance with the Election Commission of India's guidelines.

## Expenditure Observer Shopian visits VSTs sites & police nakas

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 12

The Expenditure Observer for district Shopian, Nalapatla Ashok Babu today visited Dachipora and Heerpura villages of the Shopian to check the working of Police nakas and Video Surveillance Teams (VSTs).

The visit was part of the preparations for the elections scheduled for 18 September 2024 in the district to check preparations of police nakas for tackling any illegal activity and to effectively book expenditures of contesting candidates.

Expenditure Observer interacted with Police

officials and officials of Video Surveillance Teams (SST) and directed them to strictly adhere to the Election Commission's guidelines, emphasizing the need to curb illegal expenditures and activities.

The Observer instructed the teams to maintain strict monitoring at all entry points of the district, ensuring that no illegal activities compromise the electoral process.

The VST team was asked to view the campaigning activities of all contesting candidates in the area and book the expenditure as per the ground truth.



## Voter awareness camp for Divyangjans, Senior citizens held at Panchayat Nagulta

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 12

A voter awareness camp for Persons with Disabilities was organized today by the Department of Social Welfare here at Panchayat Nagulta

Hosted on the directions of District Election Officer, Saloni Rai and under the guidance of District Social Welfare Officer, Kanika Gupta- the Nodal Officer, the camp was part of a series of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation programs focusing on Divyangjans and senior citizens.



During the event, Sarbpriya, a craft teacher, along with a team from the Social Welfare Department conducted a door-to-door awareness campaign. They educated the public about the SAKSHAM Portal, launched by the Election Commission of India and various facilities provided by authorities, such as wheelchair accessibility at polling

stations, ramps, and the provision for home voting. These initiatives ensure that every voter, whether a PwD or elderly, can participate in the voting process with ease and dignity. The team emphasized the importance of voting and encouraged the public to exercise their right to vote, urging them to motivate their family and friends to do the same.

## General, Police Observers review election preparations in Samba

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 12

As part of the preparations for the upcoming Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly Elections 2024, General Observers Vishwashree Boga and C.G. Rajini Kaanthan, along with Police Observer Ajay Singh on Thursday visited the District Election Office Samba to review the district's election preparedness.

During their visit, the District Election Officer (DEO) Rajesh Sharma and SSP Vinay Kumar briefed the observers on various election-related arrangements, including security



measures, polling station readiness, and other logistic plans.

The Observers also interacted with the Nodal Officers present at the meeting, discussing their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the smooth conduct of the elections.

In addition to the briefing, the Observers inspected the Strong Room located within the Complex, where election materials will be securely

stored. They reviewed the security arrangements and expressed satisfaction with the preparations, urging continued vigilance and strict adherence to protocols to ensure a seamless election process.

This visit was a crucial part of the pre-election review to ensure all necessary measures are in place for conducting free, fair and transparent elections in the district.

## Second Randomisation of polling staff held in Reasi

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
REASI, SEPTEMBER 12



In preparations for the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly-2024, the second Randomization of Polling Staff to be deployed at 436 Polling Stations across 3 Assembly Constituencies of Reasi District was held today in the presence of General Observer for AC-57 Reasi and AC-58 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Avi Prasad; General Observer for AC-56 Gulabgarh(ST) Saroj Kumar Sethi and DEO Vishesh Mahajan.

The personnel selected during the first randomization were assigned to different Assembly Constituencies. A database of 2140 employees was randomized and they were

allotted different constituencies in the District. The Randomization process was conducted through dedicated Software as per the prescribed guidelines of the Election Commission of India ensuring fairness and impartiality in the selection of Polling Staff. This second randomization involved a computerized process that ensures polling officials are placed randomly, reinforcing the credibility of the electoral process and preventing any bias.

Nodal officer Human Resource (ADDC) Sukhdev Samyal; Dy. DEO Reasi Rakesh Kumar; RO-57 Anshumali Sharama; Nodal Officer IT/ETPBS Asheesh and others were present during the Randomization process.

## Postal Ballot voting held in Ramban District

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 12

The postal ballot voting was held here today as per the protocol prescribed by the Election Commission of India.

As many as 1,595 essential services voters and polling staff casted their vote in Assembly Constituency 54-Ramban and Assembly Constituency 55-Banihal. The voting process was held under comprehensive security arrangements and strict adherence to Election Commission of India (ECI) protocol. District Election Officer Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, personally supervised the voting to ensure free, fair and transparent Assembly Elections 2024. According to Returning Officer AC-54 Ramban, S. Harpal Singh, a total of 673 voters exercised their right to vote through postal ballots in Ramban. Returning Officer AC-55



Banihal, Rizwan Asgar reported that 922 voters in Banihal successfully cast their ballots at two facilitation centres: the District Administrative Complex Maitra Ramban and Government Higher Secondary School Boys

Banihal. The process was meticulously executed under the Election Commission of India's Postal Ballot initiative, ensuring essential service personnel, who may be on duty on Election Day, could securely vote in advance.

## Vibrant Rally to emphasize paramount importance of environmental protection held at Srinagar

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 12

The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Srinagar, in collaboration with local NGO conducted a vibrant rally today from Primary Health Centre, Habbak Srinagar, to emphasize the paramount importance of environmental protection.

The rally was held under the guidance of Jaffer Hussain Beg, Chairman DLSA Srinagar (PDJ, Srinagar), and under the supervision of Nusrat Ali Hakak, Secretary Civil Judge, DLSA Srinagar.

The rally, flagged-off by the Secretary DLSA Srinagar, the chief guest for the event, witnessed enthusiastic participation from students of Crescent Public School and Bilaliya Public School.

The objective of the rally was to raise awareness among students and

the broader community about the critical environmental issues facing our planet, such as pollution and deforestation. The aim was to empower young minds to become responsible citizens and advocate for a sustainable future.

Speaking at the event, the Secretary DLSA said, "we are committed to nurturing environmentally conscious citizens and this rally is a testament to our unwavering dedication to empowering the future generation to actively participate in safeguarding our environment."

The rally served as a vibrant platform for raising awareness about the critical importance of environmental protection. It fostered a sense of responsibility among students and highlighted the need for collective action to address environmental challenges. The rally

culminated with a successful cleanliness drive at Duck Park, Srinagar, where students actively participated and engaged themselves in the cleanliness drive, showcasing their commitment to preserving the environment. This initiative highlights the vital role of education and community action in fostering environmental stewardship among the younger generation. Among others, the event was attended by Shabbir Khan, Principal of Crescent Public School; Nisar Ahmed, Principal Bilaliya Public School; Dr. Touseef Ahmed, Chairman NGO; officials, Deputy Legal Aid Defence Counsel, from DLSA Srinagar, school staff, members, volunteers of NGO, Para Legal Volunteers of DLSA Srinagar coming together to send a powerful message about the urgency of environmental protection.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

### 483 candidates...

5 September, 2024 and the last date for filing the nominations was today, i.e. 12 September, 2024 till 3:00 pm.

The nomination papers will be scrutinized by the respective Returning Officers on 13 September, 2024, while the candidates can withdraw their nomination paper by or before 17 September, 2024 upto 3:00 pm in the office of Returning Officer. Thereafter, validly nominated candidates will be in the electoral fray.

The polling day for these 40 Assembly constituencies in 3rd Phase is scheduled for October 01, 2024, and the voting will be conducted from 07:00 AM to 06:00 PM.

### ECI officials take...

voters need to be assured that polling station locations would not be altered at the eleventh hour, to avoid any last minute confusion amongst voters about their polling stations.

Reiterating the commission's commitment to establish a solid foundation for Assembly Elections, the ECI officials took stock of the J&K Election Department's efforts towards enhancing participation of voters and candidate, campaigning and election festivities.

The ECI team reinforced the other directions of the Commission given from time to time in the past.

Concluding their visit on Thursday, the ECI team expressed satisfaction with the preparedness for the upcoming elections and exhorted the officers to continue their efforts to ensure a historic voter turnout in the polls.

### Chugh questions...

agenda for J&K."

Chugh concluded by urging the people of Samba to vote for the BJP and ensure the victory of their candidate, Surjit Singh Salathia.

### Kashmiris' voice...

apologised to the people, as it was the PDP that facilitated the BJP's entry into Kashmir.

In a direct message to Home Minister Amit Shah, Er Rashid refuted claims that the situation in Kashmir had improved. "Kashmiris are not stone-pelters by choice, but we will not be silenced by any tactic," he warned, urging the government to engage in meaningful dialogue with the people of Kashmir.

He cautioned that if the Government of India continues to ignore the "genuine aspirations" of Kashmiris, there will be "serious repercussions".

The AIP chief said he will not bow to the policies "imposed" on the region, adding that responding to the remarks made by Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti would be a "disservice to the sacrifices of the people".

"AIP's cause is far removed from the pursuit of power and that engaging in such political discourse would

undermine the people's struggles," he said. KNO

### Only PDP can fight BJP's...

Kashmir, out of the difficult times when the area faced the worst impact of POTA and Special Task Force. "For us, the challenge is the work done by the party in our previous tenure, for the development of J-K, especially south Kashmir. Can we do better than that? That is our challenge," she told reporters in Anantnag district of south Kashmir.

"The PDP represents the sentiments of the people of J-K, talks about them. The PDP is the only party which can fight the BJP's onslaught on our identity, lands and jobs," she said.

To a question about the release of MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, from Tihar jail on an interim bail, she said, "We hope the rest of our youth, poor people who are in jails, are also released."

Asked about Union Home Minister Amit Shah's promise of providing five lakh jobs if the party is elected to power in J-K, Mufti said there was no comparison to the lies peddled by the BJP.

"They had said they will provide two crore jobs every year, but they have not even provided one crore jobs in the last 10 years. They do not have any compunction about telling lies," she added. (Agencies)

### With 7.22 lakh voters...

and 50,941 are females and no third gender voter are registered in this constituency.

A total of 147 polling stations have been set up in the constituency by ECI.

Likewise, 13- Pattan Assembly Constituency has 1,03,161 electorate among which 51,251 are males and 51,908 are females while 02 are third gender voters. To facilitate the voters of this constituency, 119 polling stations have been set up.

11-Gulmarg Constituency has a total of 90,376 voters, of which 45,524 are males and 44,851 are females besides 01 third gender voters are also registered here.

In order to ensure participatory voting process, 108 polling stations have been established in the constituency.

Similarly, 12-Wagoora-Kreeri Assembly Constituency has registered 72,448 electorate, among which 36,782 are males, 35,663 are females and 03 transgender voters. KNO

### Dr Jitendra slams...

secured merely 10-12% of the vote, are now decrying its abrogation. Their era is over," he declared.

Dr. Jitendra Singh also referenced historical manipulations of electoral laws, criticising the Congress party for extending Assembly terms from 5 to 6 years in 1970 and then reversing the decision under Morarji Desai,

a move that was never undone in Kashmir. This, he argued, underscores the previous administration's disregard for true democratic principles.

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Dr. Jitendra Singh contrasted the current administration's efforts with the previous regime's failures. "Under Modi, Kashmir has seen a genuine transformation. The Modi government has opened the gates to a vibrant democracy, breaking free from the abuses of Article 370 by the NC and PDP. The previous administration, led by Manmohan Singh, was more concerned with hosting Iftar parties than addressing real issues."

Dr. Jitendra Singh accused the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) of perpetuating a cycle of political opportunism and disenfranchisement. "NC and PDP abused Article 370 to further their own agendas and vested interest. Islamabad gave directions and curfew was issued in Srinagar, those days are gone now common people have empowered under PM Modi. For opposition their primary concern was maintaining their power, not fostering genuine democratic engagement," he said.

Highlighting the Modi government's commitment to transparency and inclusivity, Dr. Singh praised the Prime Minister for ensuring that governance benefits, including "Pucca" houses, are extended to all Kashmiris, irrespective of party affiliation, caste, creed, or religion. "This stands in stark contrast to the selective and divisive approach of the previous administration," he noted.

In a strong defence of the BJP's principles, Dr. Singh affirmed the party's decision to exit its alliance with the PDP on ideological grounds. "We stand by our consistency and conviction. Our manifesto, championed by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, promised to abrogate Article 370, and we fulfilled that promise," he asserted.

Dr. Jitendra Singh's comments underscore the BJP's dedication to restoring democratic values in Kashmir and challenge the opposition's credibility and commitment to meaningful democratic reform.

### India slams Pakistan...

"We understand it is difficult for Pakistan to witness the all-round progress of Jammu and Kashmir," the Indian diplomat said.

India also advised Pakistan to focus on rebuilding its "shattered economy" instead of spreading misinformation.

Additionally, India also rejected "factually incorrect" the references made to its internal matters by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at Islamabad's behest, expressing regret that some OIC member countries have allowed such misuse of the platform by Pakistan - a "serial violator of human rights" and an "unrepentant promoter of cross-border terrorism" - despite their close ties with India. (AGENCIES)

## General Observer evaluates Polling Stations in Tehsil Bhomag



JJ NEWS SERVICE  
REASI, SEPTEMBER 12

Avi Prasad, General Observer for Assembly Constituencies 57-Reasi and 58-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, undertook a visit today to inspect various polling stations in Tehsil Bhomag as part of the preparations for the upcoming assembly elections. The stations reviewed included PS 01 at Government Middle School Sermeghan, PS 08 at Government High School Sersundwan, and PS 02 at Government Middle School Bakal.

During the visit, Prasad examined the latest electoral rolls and

evaluated the distribution status of voter slips by Booth Level Officers (BLOs). The Tehsildar Bhomag provided an update on election readiness, particularly regarding the ongoing voter slip distribution. Additionally, Mr. Prasad engaged with local community members, including ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, chowkidars, and lambardars, to address their concerns and facilitate a smooth electoral process.

This visit highlights the Election Commission of India's dedication to ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections in the region.

## DEO Bandipora leads Plantation Drive at Polling Station Nathpora

JJ NEWS SERVICE  
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 12

To promote voter awareness and environmental sustainability, the District Election Officer (DEO) Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri on Thursday led a plantation drive at Polling Station 59, Nathpora.

This initiative is part of the district's ongoing SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) activities, aimed at engaging the public in the electoral process and contributing to the environment. The DEO was accompanied by Padmashree Faisal Ali Dar, the Brand Ambassador for SVEEP activities, Chief Planning Officer, Chief Education Officer, ARTO, Deputy CEO, and other con-

cerned officials. On the occasion, DEO highlighted the importance of integrating environmental consciousness with electoral awareness. He emphasized that such initiatives help to promote a sense of responsibility among citizens both towards the democratic process and the environment.

He said planting trees at polling stations is a symbol of our commitment to nurture democracy and the environment. Qadri also emphasized the critical role of Booth Level Officers (BLOs) in the election process and acknowledged their efforts in ensuring smooth electoral operations and urged them to remain dedicated in the lead-up to the assembly elections.



## SVEEP: Voter awareness programmes organized at Machil

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 12

Under the Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) campaign, various voter awareness programmes (VAPs) were organized today at remote Machil area of Kupwara to encourage electoral participation and ensure an informed, inclusive and ethical voting process.

Mega Voter Awareness Programmes (VAPs) were organized at Govt. High School Machil and Govt. Boys High School Chountiwari Machil. District Nodal Officer SVEEP (Chief Education Officer) Kupwara, Ab. Majeed Dar while presiding over the awareness programmes urged the participants to take an active role in the democratic process of voting.

On the occasion, the District Nodal Officer said that more than 2500 saplings were planted in the district contributing to a greater and healthier planet for all generations.

Earlier, National Anthem singing and voter Pledge Ceremony was organized.



A plantation initiative was organized on the occasion which is a pivotal component of the SVEEP program. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of various stakeholders, students and locals of the area.

CEO Kupwara solicited the cooperation of the community in safeguarding and nurturing the planted saplings, emphasizing the collective responsibility towards environmental conservation.

The plantation drive underscores the District Administration's commitment to environmental sustainability and civic engagement, marking a significant step towards a

greener and more participatory future.

Later, Voter Awareness Rallies were organized under SVEEP at Machil and Chuntiwari.

Hundreds of students, locals of the area, AWWs and Ashas participated in the voter awareness rallies.

The objective of the awareness rallies was to encourage the general public and first time voters to vote in upcoming assembly elections in large numbers, motivate the young voters to participate in the electoral process without any hesitation and ensure maximum voter turnout to help in strengthening the core values of the democracy.

## Mega Event at River Front Rajbagh, Srinagar ignites Voter Awareness through SVEEP

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 12

The banks of River Jhelum reverberated with the vibrant voices of democracy and voter awareness today as a grand mega event was held at River Front Rajbagh "River Of Democracy" under the aegis of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative.

The event, which drew an enthusiastic crowd from all walks of life, featured a mesmerizing array of cultural and musical performances, as well as thought-provoking skits and dramas. Artists, performers, and cultural groups from various colleges and higher secondary schools of district Srinagar took to the stage to convey the message of the importance of voter participation in strengthening our democratic fabric.

Akhlesh Kumar Mishra, General Observer who was chief guest on the occasion emphasized the vital role of youth in promoting voter awareness. He urged students and first-time voters to become agents of change by educating others about the importance of exercising their fundamental right to vote.



The other dignitaries present on the occasion were ADDC, Ghulam Hassan; Deputy District Election Officer, Imtiyaz Ahmad; District Nodal Officer Special SVEEP, Tahir Ahmad Magray; District Nodal Officer SVEEP Srinagar, Shabina Keysar and Anjum Raja.

The event featured interactive displays and workshops showcasing innovative voter education initiatives. Reading Room, Food Tech Stall, Legal Aid Stall and Canvas Painting by University of Kashmir also featured in the event. The National Institute of Technology enlightened the audience regarding the process of voting through their Mock Polling Station. Various sports events were organized by District Youth Services and Sports to raise

awareness among the public regarding voting.

The District Election Office Mascot, Hangul, played an engaging role in connecting with the younger audience and encouraging responsible voting practices.

The grand mega event culminated in a mass pledge by the attendees to become responsible voters and to spread the message of voter awareness throughout their communities.

Organizers expressed their gratitude to all the participants, performers, and volunteers who made this event a resounding success. The event provided an unforgettable platform to ignite voter awareness and inspire citizens to participate actively in the upcoming Assembly election.

## World Suicide Prevention Day observed at ANMT Doda

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
DODA, SEPTEMBER 12

An awareness event with an interactive session was conducted in the conference hall of ANMT School Doda to observe the World Suicide Prevention Day.

The event was organized by the District Health Society and graced by Chief Medical Officer, Dr Om Kumar and attended by Principal ANMT Anusuya Bhan, Mohammad Shafi Attu, Mohd Faheem Butt, Sanjeev Rana, staff of CMO/Dy. CMO Office besides students of ANMT Doda.

The programme, themed "Changing the narrative start the conversation" was aimed to raise awareness and educate students on the importance of mental health and suicide prevention.

The CMO, while interacting with the students, emphasized stress management and had an interactive session on the subject. The target audience was the students of the ANMT School Doda. The students discussed the issues troubling them. The interactive session encouraged students to share their thoughts and concerns, providing a safe space for discussion.

There was a unanimous opinion that the stakeholders should follow National Suicide Prevention Strategy in letter and spirit which is based on WHO recommended model.

The event marked a significant step towards promoting mental health awareness and encouraging youngsters to prioritize their well-being.

## Justice Tashi Rabstan inaugurated Legal Literacy Club at Solace International School Pulwama



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
PULWAMA, SEPTEMBER 12

Continuing its efforts to promote legal awareness and education among students, the Jammu and Kashmir Legal Services Authority (JKLSA) has been establishing Legal Literacy Clubs across the region. In its latest initiative, Justice Tashi Rabstan, Chief Justice (A), High Court of J&K and Ladakh and Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority today inaugurated a Legal Literacy Club at Solace International School, Bunura, Pulwama.

This effort, which was undertaken in presence of Justice Rajnesh Oswal, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, Administrative Judge for District Pulwama marks a significant milestone in fostering a culture of legal consciousness among young minds, equipping students with knowledge about their legal rights and responsibilities from an early age.

Upon their arrival, dignitaries were warmly received by Naseer Ahmad Dar, Principal District & Sessions Judge Pulwama; P.D. Nitya, SSP Pulwama; Mohammad Ashraf, ADC Pulwama, Jahangir Ahmad Bakshi, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Pulwama; Zahoor Ahmad Ganaie, Secretary, DLSA Pulwama; Mir Waseem Haneef, Chairman and Rifath Waseem, Principal, Solace International

School, Bunura, Pulwama other teaching and administrative staff and students.

The Chief Justice was accompanied by Shahzad Azeem, Registrar General, M. K. Sharma, Principal Secretary and Amit Kumar Gupta, Member Secretary, J&K Legal Services Authority. A traditional welcome was accorded to the Chief Justice and the dignitaries.

Subsequent to the inauguration of Legal Literacy Club, the Chief Justice and Justice Oswal interacted with Sobiya Nazir, the Teacher-in-Charge, as well as students who volunteered to be the members of the Club. They encouraged the students to become ambassadors of Legal Services Institutions in spreading legal awareness, not only among their peers but also within the wider community, so that the motto of the Legal Services Authority, "Access to Justice for All," reaches every legal aid seeker.

Chief Justice Tashi emphasized the importance of Legal Literacy Clubs in empowering students with knowledge about the welfare schemes, scholarship schemes of the Government besides their legal rights and responsibilities. He highlighted that these clubs play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of legal awareness among the younger generation, which is crucial for the

development of a just and fair society. "Legal literacy is the foundation of a well-informed citizenry and it is essential for the protection of rights and the promotion of justice," he remarked.

Justice Oswal underscored the indispensable role of women in the nation's progress, emphasizing that empowering the young woman with legal knowledge is a key driver of social change, as they are likely to influence their families and communities positively.

Rifath Waseem, Principal, Solace International School extended heartfelt thanks to the esteemed dignitaries and encouraged the pressing need for legal literacy in the school. She stressed that the establishment of Legal Literacy Club is a significant milestone in the school's efforts to integrate legal education into the broader educational curriculum, ensuring that students are not only academically proficient but also legally informed.

This initiative like establishment of Legal Literacy Clubs underscore the commitment of the Legal Service Institutions in UT of J&K to empower the younger generation with legal knowledge, fostering a future of informed and responsible citizens promoting legal awareness and strengthening the legal framework for the benefit of all citizens.

## Vibrant Voter Engagement activities held in Tehsil office Nagri

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 12

In a vibrant celebration of democracy, a series of impactful activities were conducted at the Tehsil Office Complex, Nagri Parole under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program.

The events, forming part of the ongoing voter engagement initiatives within AC 67-Kathua (SC), were spearheaded by local Tehsildar Aana Jamwal and her team.

The activities aimed to inspire and motivate eligible voters to participate in the upcoming elections on 1st October 2024.

The highlight of the day was the powerful performance of a Nukkad Natak by students from Government Higher Secondary School, Nagri Parole. The play conveyed the critical importance of voting in a democracy, with the young performers emphasizing the role of voters in strengthening the democratic process.



The event continued with a spirited rally featuring students from participating schools. Marching through the streets of Nagri, the students proudly carried banners and chanted slogans, urging residents to exercise their right to vote on 1st October. The rally traversed busy areas, attracting widespread attention and reminding citizens of the importance of their participation in the electoral process.

Following the inspiring performance, a solemn voter pledge was taken by all attendees, including the general public, staff from the Tehsil Office, and students and faculty from local schools such as Government High School (GHS) Parole, Holy Family Convent School, Middle School (MS) Boys Parole, and HSS Nagri Parole. This collective pledge highlighted their dedication to ensuring a robust voter turnout and a stronger democratic process.

## General Observer visits Kupwara, inspects District Election Control Room, MCMC, ROs office

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 12

General Observer for 2-Trehgam and 3-Kupwara Assembly constituencies, P. Hemalatha visited Kupwara on Thursday and reviewed the preparations made for upcoming assembly elections in Kupwara district.

General observer was accompanied by District Election Officer (DEO) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan and Nodal Officer MCMC, Gulzar Ahmed Bhat.

During her visit to the District Election Control Room, set-up at the District Information office, Kupwara, the General Observer reviewed the performance and took first hand appraisal of Encore, C-vigil and other facilities.

The General Observer also visited MCMC Kup-



wara and reviewed its functioning. She checked scanning of social media, pre-certification of political advertisements, and coverage by District media centre to election related activities in the district.

She also visited the ROs Offices 3- Kupwara and 2-Trehgam. Returning

Officer, 2-Trehgam, Muzafar Ahmed Sheikh briefed the General Observer about the functioning of the RO's Office and other election related arrangements. General observer reviewed the status of nominations received and interacted with staff.

## General Observer reviews Elections preparations in Gurez-AC



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 12

The General Observer for 16- Gurez Assembly Constituency of Bandipora District, Ramnivas Yadav today convened a meeting at Dak Bungalow Gurez to review election preparations in Gurez AC.

During the meeting, the General Observer took a detailed review of the preparations for the upcoming assembly elections. He assessed the readiness of all involved stakeholders and confirmed that all protocols are in place.

During the meeting, General Observer was briefed by Returning Officer 16-Gurez on various

aspects of the election process, including setup of polling stations, training of election staff and implementation of security measures.

The Observer emphasized the importance of transparency, efficiency, and security in maintaining the integrity of the election. The meeting concluded with a positive assessment of the preparedness efforts and a commitment from all involved to uphold the highest standards of electoral conduct. General observer expressed confidence in the readiness of the electoral process and reiterated the importance of a smooth, transparent and fair election.

## General Observer visits Polling Stations in Tral Assembly Constituency

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
PULWAMA, SEPTEMBER 12

Continuing his field visits General Observer, Brajesh Narain Singh today visited polling stations across the Tral constituency, assessing assured Minimum Facilities and interacting with field functionaries and Voters.

During his extensive visit, Singh interacted with the public at each polling station, inspecting key facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, lighting and seating arrangements. His proactive approach aimed at providing voters with a smooth and comfortable voting experience.

The public response was overwhelmingly positive, with the Observer's outreach instilling confidence in the electoral process. His commitment to transparency and fairness has significantly bolstered public trust in the democratic institutions serving the region, reaffirming the credibility and inclusivity of the electoral system.



## EDITORIAL

## Congress faces revolt in Chhamb?

In a development that underscores the disarray within the Congress party, Satish Sharma's decision to contest as an Independent candidate from Chhamb assembly segment has highlighted a significant rift that goes beyond mere political strategy. Sharma's rebellion, following the party's preference for Tara Chand for the Chhamb constituency, brings to light deeper issues of loyalty, legacy, and leadership that are troubling for the party's future prospects. The saga began when the Congress party, in a surprising move, allocated the Chhamb seat to Tara Chand despite his controversial political history. Chand, a former Deputy Chief Minister, had previously left the Congress for Ghulam Nabi Azad's Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) before rejoining under political duress. This wavering allegiance should have raised red flags about his commitment to the party's cause. Nevertheless, the Congress leadership chose to prioritize him over Satish Sharma, whose family has a deep-rooted connection with the Chhamb constituency. Satish Sharma's claim to the Chhamb seat is not without merit. The constituency, once reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs), was recently opened up to the general category following delimitation. The Sharma family, particularly Satish's late father Madan Lal Sharma, has a long-standing relationship with this seat, having secured victories in 1983 and 1987. Satish's political engagement and local support, combined with the recent change in reservation status, make his claim a legitimate one. His decision to contest independently underscores his frustration with the party's internal politics and its failure to honor established political legacies. The Congress party's approach to candidate selection has evidently been marred by internal conflicts and a lack of strategic clarity. The refusal to allocate the Chhamb seat to Satish Sharma and the subsequent omission of both Chhamb and Akhnoor seats from the second list of candidates reflects a troubling indecision. Tara Chand's adance to contest from Chhamb, despite being offered the Akhnoor seat, highlights a clash of interests that the Congress leadership failed to resolve satisfactorily. Moreover, the party's recent alliance with the National Conference (NC) has added another layer of complexity. The allocation of Kathua and Bani seats in this alliance has been criticized for its illogical and confusing criteria. The decision to give Kathua, a seat with a significant Congress voter base, to NC, while placing the Bani seat with a Congress candidate backed by NC support, reflects a disjointed strategy that may undermine Congress's own interests. The current predicament reveals a broader issue within the Congress party: a disconnect between party decisions and the political realities on the ground. By sidelining dedicated party workers like Satish Sharma in favor of individuals with questionable loyalty, the Congress risks alienating its grassroots supporters and eroding its historical legacy. For a party that once stood as a beacon of democratic values and legacy, the Congress must reevaluate its strategies and align its actions with the core values of loyalty and commitment. The internal discord over candidate selection not only threatens to divide party ranks but also jeopardizes its electoral prospects. If the Congress leadership fails to address these issues with urgency and clarity, it may find itself grappling with greater challenges in the upcoming elections. The Congress party's handling of the Chhamb and Akhnoor seat allocation exemplifies a broader issue of political mismanagement. As Satish Sharma takes his fight to the electorate as an Independent candidate, it serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of ignoring party loyalty and legacy in favor of short-term political expediency.

## Swachha Bharat Mission impacts child survival

VINOD K PAUL

Sanitation is a fundamental public health intervention. Sanitation reduces the risk of water-borne diseases such as diarrhea, cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, worm infestations, malabsorption, and as also, malnutrition. A World Health Organization (WHO) study in 2012 estimated that for every US\$ invested in sanitation, there was a return of US\$ 5.5 in lower health costs, more productivity and fewer premature deaths.

Sanitation in India has a deep-rooted history, tracing back to the Indus valley civilization where scientific methods for toilet construction and waste management were practiced. Our scriptures say, i.e. in a pure body, lies a pure mind, and in a pure mind lies true knowledge.

Despite this rich legacy, India's journey towards comprehensive sanitation coverage has been fraught with challenges. By the time of the 1981 census, a mere 1% of rural households had access to toilets. This paved the way for the launch of sanitation programmes by government of India - the Central Rural Sanitation Programme, the Total Sanitation Campaign, and the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan. These initiatives pushed the rural sanitation

coverage to 39%.

India accounted for almost 60% of the world's open defecation load with over 50 crore people practicing open defecation. Our women were caught between attending to basic needs in darkness, and maintaining their dignity and safety.

It was in this backdrop that the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in 2014 with the goal to make rural India Open Defecation Free (ODF) in five years. Bharat achieved this milestone on 2nd October 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In five momentous years, the rural sanitation coverage rose to 100%.

Under the mission, more than 11.7 crore toilets have been constructed since 2014 with a public investment of over 1.4 lakh crore. This was not merely an asset creation exercise; it was a nationwide movement that galvanized over a billion people, blending infrastructure development with robust behavioral change revolution. The hall mark was people's movement ('jan andolan') and perhaps the world's biggest behavior change exercise. Children, women, men, community leaders, civil society and government machinery worked in unison. Messages on sanitation reached people

through every channel. Celebrities joined the chorus. Village-level volunteers ('swachhagrahis') became the champions of change on the ground. Prime Minister led and inspired the nation through his speeches, meetings, Mann-ki-Baat conversations and role model acts of cleaning places and premises.

Following the success of the SBM Phase I, Phase II was launched. This phase aims to sustain the ODF achievements while addressing the broader aspects of solid and liquid waste management, visual cleanliness, and overall rural sanitation. By 2024-25, the goal is to transform all villages into ODF Plus Model, characterized by sustainable practices and enhanced cleanliness. The mission's next goal is Sampurna Swachhata—complete cleanliness—that will require continued dedication from every citizen, community, and institution in India.

A recent study published in the top international journal 'Nature' underscores the profound impact of SBM on public health, particularly in reducing infant mortality rates. The study, titled, 'Toilet construction under Swachh Bharat Mission and infant mortality', analyzed data from 35 Indian states and 640 districts over a

10 year time frame (2011-20) on trends in infant mortality rate (IMR) and under-5 mortality rates (U5MR). The authors document a strong association between increasing toilet access and declining child mortality. Results from the study imply that for every 10 percentage point increase in district level access to toilets following SBM corresponded to a reduction in district level IMR by 0.9 points and U5MR by 1.1 points on the average. There is further evidence of a threshold effect wherein the district level toilet coverage of 30% (and above) corresponded to a reduction of 5.3 points in the IMR and 6.8 points in the U5MR per thousand live births. The authors estimate that toilet access at-scale due to SBM contributed toward averting 60,000 - 70,000 infant deaths annually.

However, it must be pointed out that this is not the only impact study which sheds light on the transformative role played by SBM. According to WHO (2018), SBM averted over 300,000 diarrheal deaths between 2014 and 2019. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (2017) reported that there were 37% lower cases of wasting among children in ODF areas compared to non-ODF villages, validating how sanitation, positively impacts child-

hood nutrition. The incidence of diarrhea in children was lower by almost one third in the ODF villages. In a study in 2017, UNICEF estimated that 93% of women felt safer after having a toilet at home, reflecting the role of SBM in enhancing the safety and dignity of women. Additionally, economic analyses in the study showed that each household in ODF villages saved approximately INR 50,000 annually on reduced healthcare costs plus economic value of saved lives and time savings.

Given the link between sanitation and health, public health gains from SBM are inevitable. What we have from the recent study is a robust quantification of child survival improvements attributable to toilet access. Sanitation transformation on a national scale will surely have impact in reducing water-borne infections among adults as well, as also possibly on reducing the burden of antimicrobial resistance. Sustained effects on childhood stunting and development are also assumed. ICMR and academia should undertake objective studies on these dimensions of SBM.

The Swachh Bharat Mission is an exemplar of what can be achieved through dedication, collaboration, planning, brilliant execu-

tion, and relentless jan andolan. The 4P mantra of SBM—political will, public finance, partnerships, and public participation—along with persuasion, has been instrumental in the program's success and outreach. This 'strategy package' is a template for other social transformation missions in the country and beyond.

As we strive toward a Viksit Bharat @ 2047, we need to emerge as global leaders in sanitation and cleanliness. The commitment to sustaining behavioral change, ensuring continued use of the constructed toilets and integrating advanced waste management solutions should remain unwavering. Cleanliness must become a shared value, one that is owned and practiced by us all. The mission celebrates its 10th anniversary next month on the Gandhi Jayanti. A decade of SBM has yielded unprecedented gains - clean environment, women's dignity and safety, ease of living, household savings and a culture of hygiene aligned with our tradition. Now we also see a robust evidence of SBM on improving public health and in saving lives.

Success of this noble mission is indeed a matter of pride for every Indian.

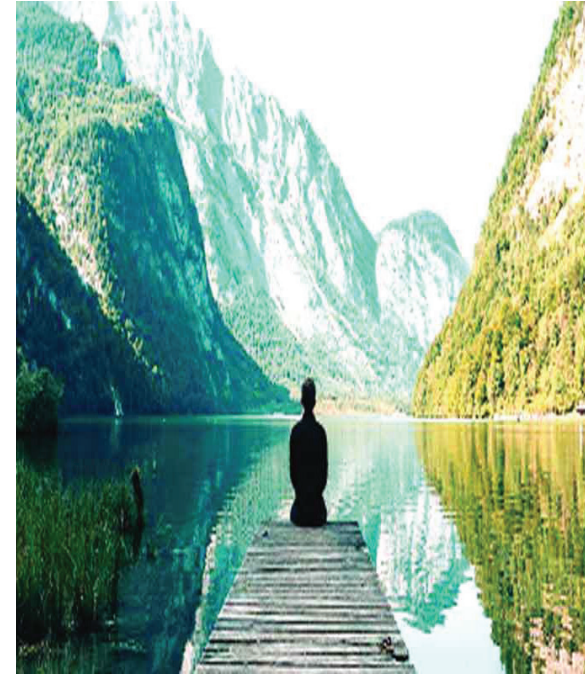
**Dr Vinod Paul is a Member of NITI Aayog. Views are personal.**

## GOD HAS THE SOLUTION

AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

A famous oncologist was being interviewed on television. He was asked by a reporter about the causes of cancer. The doctor replied, "It is overstress mainly." Every time this matter came up, the oncologist emphasized the overstress reason. And we know what overstress is. It is mostly caused by cyclic thinking. We get into some problem and the keep on thinking about it. Surely, worry results. The solution has to come from other sources. Aren't we extremely limited in what we know? But we refuse to accept this fact. I will recite three examples of when I found answers provided by God when I was in trouble, and only God could help. Beginning with my nature to fear excessively, I was suffering. One day I prayed sincerely for relief. Suddenly, a thought came that the Bhagavad-Geeta may have a solution.

Didn't Gandhiji turn to this book of eternal wisdom whenever he was faced with some problem? I looked for a knowledgeable person, and located one who was well-versed in the Geeta. I explained my problem. He referred me to verse #2.40, which is, "Neither there is a waste of effort here nor there is opposite effect. Even a little of this Karma-yoga protects one from great fear." This is what I was looking for. The next question was about karma yoga. What does this imply? He explained that all activities about God come under it. He cited examples of praying, having darshan, doing namaskar to God, chanting God's names or some mantra like Ohm and thanking God for favours done. They seemed simple enough and I got started. A connection was made with God. Sure enough, God got interested in me. I began to get intuitions. For example, I had been suffering



from headaches mainly in the forehead part for quite some time. I prayed for help. I got a feeling that I should go to Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place, New Delhi. I did and prayed there sincerely for guidance and help. While returning, I felt that God

was asking me to bring Him to my forehead. I was very excited and checked with my spiritual guide.

He confirmed that this is a bona fide process, as the 'ajna (agya) chakra' is located there. I began doing it and astonishingly I was beginning to get some

relief. After practice for a few days, the persistent headache was gone. Since then I have been fortunate to not be so troubled by it. I recounted my experience to my spiritual guide. He told me that God is very pleased with me and giving guidance. Another headache appeared, which was only on the right side. I tried everything but there was no relief. Somehow, I had an inkling to look up various choices in Crocin. There was one with caffeine. My sixth sense, which is the same as God's guidance was to take it. Sure enough, there was relief. What happened? I had to know. I had stopped drinking green tea just before getting this strange headache. This tea had caffeine. Now I knew what the connection was. Only God could have known it, and He did. I was suffering headaches due to caffeine withdrawal. Another trouble arose due to the use of a nasal spray.

One spray and I began

to feel uneasiness. When I got ready to use it another time, as prescribed, I was feeling quite troubled. Surely, I looked up its composition; it had steroids. God had prevented more damage from happening to me. All we have to do is to take His shelter and remain in it. The question is: why don't we? It is a very slow process. One must have good Sankars to get started on this journey. Otherwise, one will not get started. Fortunately, I was blessed to have them. Lord Krishna has promised it, "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My grace." (18.58) This culminates in liberation from the painful cycle of birth and death when God releases us from all sins. (18.66) However, this will take several births after we get started. (6.45) I am counting upon it.

**(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views expressed are personal)**

## The making of Kerala's catastrophe

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

SK Pottekkat, who could be rated as India's best travelogue writer has elaborated on his 1955 visit to Finland. "The country's area is 1,30,119 sq miles out of which 71 per cent is forests. Finland's main source of income is the pine trees grown in its forests. But to get permission from the government to cut down a single pine tree, one has to furnish proof that he has planted six pine saplings," writes Pottekkat in his memoirs.

He was a delegate to the World Peace Council meeting held in Helsinki, the capital city. In 2024, despite a massive industrialisation drive, the country has the tenth highest percentage of forest cover in the world. Pottekkat hailed from Kozhikode, the neighbouring district of Wayanad.

Once the region was full of evergreen forests filled with exotic trees, plants and

flowers. Folklore is that the tribal youth who led a team of Englishmen to Wayanad was shot dead by the visitors to ensure that no more outsiders entered the fertile landscape.

But Wayanad has become a teardrop since 30 July 2024 as landslides and flash floods struck the district in quick succession swallowing hundreds of people and their houses. Pinarayi Vijayan, the chief minister, has asked the Centre to release Rs 2,000 crore as the first instalment towards the rescue, rehabilitation and reconstruction mission to be undertaken by the Government of Kerala.

He also blamed the Centre for its failure to provide the exact date, time and place of the natural disaster and has vowed to establish the State's early warning system for floods, landslides and heavy rainfalls. Vijayan will outline the best of the entrepreneurs in the skill of mobilization of resources for the Chief Minister's Disaster

Relief Fund.

All media briefings by Vijayan end with him announcing the details of persons who have contributed to the CMDRF in the aftermath of landslides and deluge that devastated Wayanad. But what stands out is the generous offer made by High Range Rural Development Society, a non-governmental organisation, which came forward to build houses for all those who lost their dwelling places in the flash floods. According to the Kerala Government's estimate, 500 homes were washed away by the gushing waters. The HRDS told the Government that it would rebuild/construct 500 safe and secured houses each of 700 sq ft and costing Rs 10 lakh free of cost.

The NGO also told the government that it would help the landslide victims to set up group farming so that they could earn a reasonably fair monthly income. All the 500 houses to be construct-

ed by the HRDS will feature self-contained guest rooms which could be rented out as part of the homestay programme. But Vijayan and his comrades are cold to the offer. The Centre has asked Vijayan to submit details of the losses suffered in nature's fury and how the State would go ahead with the rehabilitation and reconstruction. Though the disaster struck nearly a month ago, the Government has yet to come out with the details of the losses.

In the aftermath of the 2018 floods, Vijayan had demanded Rs 40,000 crore as flood relief which included Rs 20,000 crore to rebuild the roads washed away in the deluge.

But senior officials who took stock of the situation once the flood water receded had told that roads could be rebuilt with Rs5,800 crore. As part of mitigating future floods, Vijayan accompanied by an entourage of relatives (including

his five-year-old grandson) and senior bureaucrats undertook a junket to the Netherlands.

But there is no end in sight for the floods in Kerala.

There is no need to search for the reason behind the landslides and floods in Wayanad and other places in the State. Prof Madhav Gadgil, a noted environmentalist who headed the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) had told the State Governments not to disturb the ecology and environment beyond the current level.

The team of experts had found to their horror that quarrying and sand mining of unprecedented level were taking place with official connivance across the length and breadth of Western Ghats and this included Wayanad. In 1986, this writer shot a television documentary on the Wayanad district for Doordarshan.

There were no resorts or star hotels those days any-

where in the district. The District Collector Raveendran Thampi had been sanctioned one room as his camp office in the low power transmitter station of the Doordarshan at Kalpetta. Immediately after nature's fury in July 2024, Prof Gadgil said that the disaster was a man-made one and was waiting to happen at any time. "Wayanad has no more space for resorts, quarries and sand mining," said Prof Gadgil immediately after the landslide and flash floods.

But what the chief minister said in his briefing was shocking. "The Gadgil committee report is a big joke and one need not take it seriously," said Vijayan. The committee of experts led by Prof Gadgil toured the entire Western Ghats region and they were shocked by the kind of quarrying, mining and deforestation that was happening in the region. Prof Gadgil had described the Western Ghats region as

the Water Tower of peninsular India.

Vested interests including religious groups are exploiting Wayanad to the hilt and this made the committee ask the authorities to stop herewith the constitution of special economic zones and reschedule reservoir operations to downstream flows. More than what the Gadgil Committee had said in its report, what Prof T P Kunhikannan, a CPI(M) activist, had said about the report is significant. A thorough study by Kunhikannan has proved that Prof Gadgil's suggestions should be accepted in toto by the authorities concerned. "The Church is campaigning against Gadgil Committee findings to save its commercial interests. There is nothing anti-people or anti-minorities in the report," said Prof Kunhikannan in his studies "Gadgil Report and Kerala's Development".

The top echelons of the Church read pastoral let-

ters asking the laity to stage demonstrations across the country against the report as it was anti-minority," said Kunhikannan. No purpose will be served by subjecting the Wayanad disaster to another academic analysis. The Church sabotaged the Gadgil committee report by terming it as anti-development, anti-farmers and anti-people.

Through a series of pastoral letters (which were read out during Sunday Mass), the clergy unleashed a blitzkrieg against the WGEEP report. The then union government appointed another committee headed by G Kasturirangan, former ISRO chairman, to "examine" the feasibility of Gadgil's findings. Kasturirangan did his masters proud by diluting the WGEEP report and that was the death warrant of Wayanad.

**(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)**



## Experts hail govt's move to provide health coverage to all senior citizens above 70

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Experts on Thursday welcomed the government's move to provide health coverage to all senior citizens aged 70 and above under flagship scheme.

The health coverage for all senior citizens was approved by the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday.

Older adults, irrespective of income, will get health coverage under the flagship scheme Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AA) - free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh. The scheme will cover about 6 crore senior citizens in the country.



"We are witnessing a historic shift in how the country approaches elder care, a segment with a high disease burden and in urgent need of social protection," said Abhay Soi, President, NATHEALTH, while welcoming the

move. He said the move will "strengthen India's position as a leader in inclusive healthcare".

"The benefit package needs to be tailored to the population segment so that it encompasses

the entire continuum of care, and NATHEALTH is ready to support the government with the rollout," Soi added.

According to a cabinet communique, senior citizens aged 70 years and above, belonging to families already covered under the scheme, will get an additional top-up cover up to Rs 5 lakh per year for themselves (which they do not have to share with the other members of the family who are below the age of 70 years).

All other senior citizens of the age 70 years and above will get a cover up to Rs 5 lakh per year on a family basis.

The eligible senior citizens will also be issued a

new distinct card under the scheme.

"Excellent move by the Govt of India to provide health coverage for all people aged 70 and above irrespective of income," Dr. Sudhir Kumar, from Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, posted on social media platform X.

He also called out to provide health coverage to citizens of other age categories. "There are about 9 crore people in the age group of 60 to 70 years. Hopefully, they can be included in this scheme before 2029; and hopefully, by 2034, every Indian citizen would be provided health coverage," the top neurologist said.

## Cardiac, antimalarial therapies drive Indian pharma market growth in August: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Driven by cardiac, anti-malarial, and gastrointestinal therapies the Indian pharmaceutical market has seen more than 6 per cent growth in the month of August, according to a report.

The report by market research firm Pharmarack showed that the pharma market growth surged as these therapies registered nearly double-digit value growth.

While cardiac and anti-malarial therapies saw the highest growth (9.7 per cent), it was followed by gastrointestinal therapies which registered 8.7 per cent growth.

Sheetal Sapale, vice-president (commercial) at Pharmarack attributed the



market growth for August month to new introductions and price growth.

Growth in the moving annual turnover (MAT, which is the previous 12 months' turnover) for the pharma market between August 2023 and July 2024 stood at 7.7 per cent, leading to a total turnover of over Rs 2.04 trillion in IPM. However, volumes in the domestic market went down by 0.2 per cent.

Further, the report also showed robust volume growth in MAT of leading therapy areas such as anti-infectives, cardiac, and gastrointestinal. Together these therapies account for 38 per cent of the Indian pharma market.

While anti-infectives grew the highest at 10.7 per cent, cardiac therapies had a growth of 9.5 per cent, and gastrointestinal grew at 9.1 per cent.

## Too much screen time can affect kids' language skills

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Children whose families use screens a lot tend to have weaker vocabulary skills, and video games have the biggest negative effect on kids' brain development, according to a study on Thursday.

Scientists from Estonia surveyed the parents of more than 400 children about their screen use, their children's screen use, and their children's language skills.

The findings, published in the *Frontiers in Developmental Psychology*, found that parents who use screens a lot also have children who use screens a lot and that children's higher screen time is associated with poorer



language skills.

"The research shows that during the first years of life, the most influential factor is everyday dyadic face-to-face parent-child verbal interaction," said lead author Dr Tiia Tulviste of the University of Tartu, Estonia.

In the survey of 421 children aged between two and a half and four years old, the team asked

parents to estimate how long each family member would spend using different screen devices daily. The parents were also asked to fill out a questionnaire evaluating their children's language ability.

The researchers sorted both children and adults into three screen use groups -- high, low, and moderate.

They found that parents

who used screens a lot had children who also used screens a lot.

Analysing the language development of these children, the team found that children who used screens less scored higher for both grammar and vocabulary. No form of screen use had a positive effect on children's language skills.

Tulviste noted that reading ebooks and playing educational games may offer language learning opportunities, especially for older children.

But, using screens for video games had a notable negative effect on children's language skills, regardless of whether parents or children were gaming, the researcher said.

## Chennai doctors perform rare hernia surgery on a month-old premature infant

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, SEP 12

A team of doctors here successfully performed a complex, emergency surgery to save the life of a critically premature baby boy with Amyand's hernia -- a rare condition where the appendix is located in the groin.

"It is only the fourth case of its kind in medical history in the world," said SRM Global Hospitals in a statement on Thursday.

The boy, born at just 28 weeks to Manju, a housewife, and Moorthy who works as a daily wage laborer, underwent surgery on the 23rd day after



his birth while under general anesthesia.

"The newborn had been in the Neonatal ICU since birth. The baby developed obstructed right inguinoscrotal swelling on the 23rd day. We had to do emergency surgery, as the condition was life-threatening," said Dr. Saravana

Balaji, from the hospital.

Balaji explained that although neonatal hernias are relatively common in preterm babies, Amyand's hernia is exceptionally rare -- affecting only about 0.42 per cent of these infants.

"Even rarer is the perforated appendix, occur-

ring in just 0.1 per cent of Amyand's hernia cases. To date, only three such cases have been reported globally. Our prompt intervention was crucial in addressing this complex and rare condition," he added.

The doctor noted that it was a highly challenging surgery as the boy, like any other premature baby, had an immature airway that made anesthesia more difficult and required precise management.

In addition, the low birth weight of the infant necessitated specialised postoperative care in the NICU to ensure proper recovery and support.

## S. KOREA VOWS STERN ACTION AGAINST BLACKLISTING OF EMERGENCY ROOM DOCTORS

AGENCIES  
SEOUL, SEP 12

South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo on Thursday strongly denounced a "blacklist" of emergency room doctors drawn up to name and shame those not participating in the walkout by junior doctors, vowing to take stern action against those responsible.

The list contains personal information and malicious comments about emergency room physicians who chose to treat patients rather than join their colleagues staying away from the job since February in protest of the government's medical school admissions



quota hike, Yonhap news agency reported.

"The blacklist is a mockery and insult to the medical staff who take care of patients and a cowardly act that effectively strips individuals of their free will," Han said during a central disaster response meeting.

"It is a very serious

criminal act. The government will not tolerate it," he added.

Over 30 people have been referred to the prosecution for their involvement in the blacklisting of doctors working in emergency rooms, according to the health ministry.

"Law enforcement authorities should sternly

and swiftly investigate the case," Han said. "I also ask the medical community to actively engage in efforts to correct the inappropriate behaviors of some doctors."

Han reiterated the appeal for the medical community to join a consultative body with the government, ruling and opposition parties, and doctors' groups to discuss the medical school admissions quota and other medical reform measures.

"If the medical community presents a scientific, reasonable plan on the medical school quota and policy plans, the government is ready to discuss it with an open-minded atti-

tude," Han said.

A majority of trainee doctors have left their workplaces since February in protest of the government's plan to drastically increase the medical school admissions quota beginning next year.

The prolonged strike has raised concerns about potential disruptions in medical services during the upcoming five-day Chuseok holiday, which begins Saturday.

To address concerns, the government has designated September 11-25 as a special period and set up an emergency task force to manage the situation of emergency medical centers across the country.

## NHA inks pact with IIT Kanpur for AI in healthcare

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEPT 12

The National Health Authority (NHA) and IIT Kanpur have signed a pact for development of digital public goods for Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare, thereby unlocking the immense potential of this digital tool for improving health outcomes.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Health Secretary Apurva Chandra called it "very important MoU under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission that will provide an open public benchmarking platform for comparing and validating AI models".

Under this Memorandum of Understanding

(MoU), a federated learning platform across a variety of machine learning model pipelines, a quality-preserving database, an open benchmarking platform for comparing and validating AI models and a consent management system for research under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) would be developed by IIT Kanpur.

The platform will subsequently be operated and governed by the NHA, thereby unlocking the immense potential of AI for improving health outcomes, the Union Health Ministry said in a statement.

Highlighting its importance, Chandra stated that

"use of data for improving health outcomes is the envisaged goal of this partnership".

"It will use the data available under the ABDM to create a public benchmark for AI models for quantifying and diagnosing diseases against which other AI models can be benchmarked," he added.

Chandra said "one of the biggest issues related to AI models in the healthcare sector is the availability and efficacy of disease diagnosis data which will be tackled by this collaboration".

"In a clinical setting, the availability of reliable data will lead to better outcomes and result in better diagnosis," he added.

## At least 88 cases of monkeypox recorded among refugees in Africa: UNHCR

AGENCIES  
GENEVA, SEP 12

At least 88 cases of monkeypox have been recorded among refugees in Africa, including 68 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said.

"At least 88 mpox cases have been reported among refugees in Africa, with 68 of them among refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the country that has recorded the highest number of cases globally. Cases have also been reported among refugees in the Republic of the Congo and Rwanda," the agency said on Wednesday.



UNHCR also called on the international community to allocate \$21.4 million to prevent and combat the disease among 9.9 million displaced people in 35 African countries.

Mpox, also known as monkeypox, is a rare infectious disease that is also transmitted between people. It is usually a mild

disease that most people recover from within a few weeks, but some may have complications. The initial symptoms of mpox include fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, enlarged lymph nodes, chills and fatigue. A rash may develop, often starting on the face and then spreading to other parts of the body.

## IIL signs MoA with ICMR for Clinical Development of Zika vaccine

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, SEP 12

Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL), the Hyderabad based Indian vaccine manufacturer, on Thursday said it has signed MoA with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for clinical development of India's first codon de-optimized live attenuated Zika vaccine.

IIL partnered with Griffith University, Australia to develop the codon de-optimized live attenuated Zika vaccine that has completed extensive pre-clinical evaluations and received permission from Indian regulatory authority to produce GMP grade materials for clinical developmental work.

As per the MoA, ICMR will fund the Phase I clinical



trial costs including the costs relating to the conduct, investigations and monitoring of clinical trial, the vaccine maker said in a release.

The trial will be conducted at the ICMR network sites in India.

Zika disease, a viral infection, is mostly a mosquito-borne disease transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes.

It can also be transmit-

develop Guillain-Barré syndrome which is a neurological disorder.

In India, Zika cases have been reported from several states. According to Ministry of Health, as on 22 July 2024, there are 537 Zika cases have been registered.

Currently there is no vaccine available for its prevention.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr K Anand Kumar, Managing Director, Indian Immunologicals Limited said, "It is a great moment for IIL to collaborate with ICMR to develop Zika vaccine. IIL has been the single largest contributor to India achieving self-sufficiency in the field of vaccines. Our foresight on the development of novel vaccine platforms including codon de-optimized

viral vaccines is beginning to bear fruit. It is essential to safeguard our people from emerging diseases by developing safe and effective vaccines that are affordable".

Dr. Rajiv Bahl, DG-ICMR said "ICMR's Phase I trial network, launched last year, facilitates first-in-human safety studies for innovative and affordable Frontier MedTech, including small molecules, biologics, and vaccines. With four Phase-I sites--ACTREC Mumbai, KEM Hospital Mumbai, SRM Chennai, and PGIMER Chandigarh--fully operational, Indian innovators no longer need to go abroad for Phase-I trials.

This is a significant step towards achieving Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat.



# 100 days agenda of PM Modi has failed: Kharge AAP leader Loveleen Tuteja joins Haryana Congress ahead of polls

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's much hyped 100 days agenda has failed but the country faced the consequences of his 'inaction' in just 95 days.

Taking to his social media handle X, Kharge said, "Even before the elections, you had loudly trumpeted the 100 days agenda. It's been 95 days, your coalition government is faltering".

Through his post, he also criticised the government on the Union budget, rise in terrorist attacks



in Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur issue and other issues in point by point manner.

"Your government has brought an anti-people budget to break the back of the poor and middle class. There were ter-

rorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, especially in Jammu; many brave soldiers of the army had to sacrifice their lives," the Congress President said.

He said that Manipur has been burning for the

last 16 months, but the Prime Minister is not even bother to look into the situation.

Kharge said, "BJP cannot escape from the role of SEBI chairperson and other financial transactions that have come to light in Modi-Adani mega scam".

The Congress President said that be it NEET or massive unemployment, the Modi government has only betrayed the youth.

"Whether it was the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in Maharashtra, or the roof of airports, the new Parliament or the temple of God in Ayodhya, highways, bridges, roads, tunnels, whatever was

claimed to be built, flaws were found in all of them," Kharge said.

He alleged that under the current regime, "railway security has crippled, cities are facing flood-like conditions and states have not been given adequate flood relief".

The leader of the opposition in Rajya Sabha said, "Due to the public and INDIA bloc, you had to hand over the Waqf Bill to JPC, and had to support the Constitution on Lateral Entry".

"Nobody knows what the agenda of 100 days was. But in 95 days the country is facing the consequences of your actions!

AGENCIES  
CHANDIGARH, SEP 12

Ahead of Assembly elections, Haryana Congress got a shot in the arm on Thursday as AAP state Joint Secretary and vocal leader Loveleen Tuteja and his supporters joined the party in the presence of former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Tuteja was an aspirant from Rohtak, but AAP fielded Bijendra Hooda. Rohtak is dominated by Punjabis and Tuteja too belongs to that community. His entry into political circles is being seen as a

boost to the party's winning prospects.

Tuteja has been staging protests against the government. He was placed under house arrest on several occasions to prevent him from holding protests during the Chief Minister's visits to Rohtak.

Tuteja told the media that he was in politics to flag issues like shortage of drinking water, sewer overflow and inaccuracies in the government's e-initiatives like property IDs and Parivar Pehchan Patra, causing inconvenience to people.

"Since the Congress

has also been raising the same issues, I have joined the party, keeping in view public interest. The Congress has given the guarantee to redress all public grievances upon coming to power, so I will work to ensure the victory of MLA Bharat Bhushan Batra from Rohtak," he said.

He said that Bhupinder Hooda had worked to ensure the overall development of all regions when he led the Congress government. "Since public issues are on Hooda's priority list, it is my duty to support him in public interest," he added.

## Ganesh procession violence: Union Minister Kumaraswamy to visit K'taka on Sep 13

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Reacting to the incident of violence during the Ganesh idol immersion procession in Karnataka's Mandya district, Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, H.D. Kumaraswamy, said on Thursday that he will visit the spot on Friday and also urged the Congress-led state government not to arrest innocent people.

Speaking to media persons in New Delhi, Union Minister Kumaraswamy said, "The Congress government had rendered the police officers inactive and the incident of violence is a direct consequence of it. Murders and robberies are taking place rampantly in the state."

"It is your (Congress) administrative fault and

the blame is pinned on me," he added.

"During my tenure as Chief Minister of Karnataka, why were there no communal clashes then? It is before the people that after you (Congress) came to power, what programmes have you taken up for the protection of society? Where should businessmen who suffered crores of losses go now? Do you have minimum common sense?" he asked the Congress government.

"The Congress leaders are lecturing me after the violence. The person who worked with me is also issuing statements against me. I have been in the position of CM twice. How did I manage the state? Why were there no incidents of communal clashes then? The

days are not too far when the Congress is going to suffer," he said, hitting out at the Congress government.

"There is no time for the Congress leaders to digest the discussion going on regarding the cases of corruption against them. They should stop arresting innocent people. In the pretext of the incident of violence, they are dragging everyone to the police station and arresting them. Statements are made about the arrest of 50 persons and more are likely to be arrested. The real culprit would have gone away by now. If the police arrest those who provide bread for the family here, where should the families go? What would be their plight?" Kumaraswamy asked.

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

BJP Rajya Sabha member Dinesh Sharma on Thursday slammed Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge for his claim that 'no development took place in the last 10 years', calling the statement 'baseless'.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar on Wednesday, Kharge launched a scathing attack on PM Narendra Modi, saying whatever building or developmental initiatives that were launched by the Prime Minister have either collapsed or are leaking.

"The BJP has done nothing in the last 10 years... Bridges that were inaugurated have collapsed. Ram



Mandir was inaugurated, its roof is leaking now. Not only that, wherever there is a flood, there is no money for flood relief. This is the situation of the country," the Congress President said.

Responding to Kharge's remarks, Dinesh Sharma

told IANS, "I feel Kharge Ji must be shedding tears seeing how much work Modi ji has done. He sometimes makes baseless remarks."

The BJP Rajya Sabha members also accused Kharge of daydreaming about BJP leaders being

jailed and he becoming the Prime Minister.

"He daydreams that PM Modi's tenure is over, and he will become the next Prime Minister after BJP leaders are jailed. But when Hitler could not survive, neither did the dictatorial Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi, how can his dream become true? In a democratic country, people won't let such dreams turn true," Sharma said.

Responding to Kharge's claim that BJP leaders would have been imprisoned had Congress won 20 more seats, Sharma said the Congress chief should focus on answering for his doings in Karnataka.

"You are just a Congress leader, yet you are a billionaire... Explain that

first," he said. In addition to countering Kharge's claims, the BJP MP also highlighted the Modi government's expansion of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which will now benefit senior citizens aged 70 years and above.

"The Modi government understands its social responsibilities well, unlike the Congress which did not create any schemes for the elderly, leaving them destitute. PM Modi has finalised such programmes... Even in the new pension scheme, the elderly will benefit greatly. In housing schemes, such people have been given priority, especially women, who are also getting safety," Sharma said.

## Tejashwi Yadav hits out at Nitish govt over 'failure' to curb crime

AGENCIES  
PATNA, SEP 12

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav on Thursday slammed the Nitish Kumar government over the "failure" to contain the "rising" crime incidents in Bihar.

Tejashwi, the leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, accused the government of not doing enough to tackle the crime incidents.

He alleged that the current administration not only failed to curb crime but was also allowing corrupt practices within the police force.

"Nitish Kumar's police were not working to prevent crime. The police were busy extorting money from the people in the name of liquor ban,"



Tejashwi, the former deputy chief minister, claimed.

"In places from where murder cases were being reported, neither action was being taken against police officers, nor they were transferred.

They were being posted in crime-prone areas for extended periods in exchange for monetary benefits," he claimed.

The RJD, targeting

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, posted on X: "Are you enjoying this Jungle Raj in Bihar? Come to Bihar again at the time of elections and say that I am the son of Bihar."

"The state has witnessed a rise in crime cases, courtesy PM Modi, Chirag Paswan, Jitan Ram Manjhi, Nitish Kumar, Upendra Kushwaha, Vijay Sinha and Pashupati Paras," the RJD posted.

Meanwhile, Tejashwi is holding 'Abhar Yatra' to strengthen his political base and garner support for the Bihar Assembly elections next year.

He started his yatra from Samastipur and reached Darbhanga. Tejashwi's yatra has entered the third day on Thursday.

Tejashwi was focussing on key constituencies to build a rapport with local party workers and gather feedback from grassroots activists.

Every day, Tejashwi shares crime incidents in the state to target the Nitish government.

After a BJP leader was gunned down in Patna on Monday, Tejashwi strongly criticised the Nitish government over "poor" law and order in the state.

## RG Kar protests: Mamata govt sends fresh invite for talks to protesting doctors

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, SEP 12

West Bengal Chief Secretary Manoj Pant sent a fresh communication to the protesting junior doctors giving a fresh deadline to send a delegation to the state secretariat Nabanna by 5 p.m. on Thursday.

However, in the fresh communication the Chief Secretary has overruled two important conditions of the junior doctors to attend the meeting, the first relating to a 30-member delegation and the second was the demand for a live telecast of the proposed meeting.

"The meeting shall be attended by a delegate team of only 15 persons to ensure a smooth discussion. The meeting shall not be live telecasted.

However, the same can be recorded to maintain transparency," read the letter from the Chief Secretary, a copy of which is available with IANS.

In the latter, the Chief Secretary has made it clear that as demanded by the protesting junior doctors the Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee "will be happy" to meet them.

The communication was forwarded from the office of the Chief Secretary sharp at 2.05 p.m. on Thursday. The protesting junior doctors, under the banner of West Bengal Junior Doctor's Forum (WBJDF), are on the third day of their sit-in demonstration in front of the state health department headquarters at Salt Lake which started Tuesday afternoon. They have

received the communication and were discussing the next course of action in the matter.

Meanwhile, the Joint Platform of Doctors (JPD), an association of senior doctors in West Bengal, has expressed full solidarity with the stand taken by the junior doctors and has even threatened to join the cease-work protest if the state government initiates any action or proceedings against their junior counterparts.

A team of representatives from JPD reached the spot of a sit-in protest by WBJDF at Salt Lake in the afternoon and made a clear announcement on this count. The senior doctors also backed the demand of the junior doctors for a live telecast of the meeting for the sake

of transparency. On Wednesday afternoon, the protesting junior doctors rejected the earlier communication from the Chief Secretary for a discussion and had set four conditions on this count. The protesters' conditions for discussion were -- a delegation of 30 representatives, a meeting in the presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a live telecast of the meeting for transparency among all parties and a meeting based on the five-point agenda outlined since the beginning.

One of the major demands in the five-point agenda already outlined includes the suspension of the State Health Secretary, State Director of Health Services and Director of Medical Education.

## NGOs raise toxic air issue at Kelambakkam with TN Pollution Control Board

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, SEP 12

Tamil Nadu-based Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have raised the issue of air pollution at Kelambakkam in Chengalpattu district, after several residents complained of health issues due to the textile factories functioning in the area using cancer causing chemicals.

Social activist and Director, Centre for Policy and Development Studies, a think tank based out of Chennai, C Rajeev told IANS, "The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board should immediately act on this issue as several residents including senior citi-

zens have raised the issue of health hazards and it's been found that a few textile factories functioning in the area are the root cause of this."

He said that Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) were being released by these factories in large numbers, especially in the evening. Anna Mary of Society for Environmental Studies, an environmental study group based out of Chennai said that they have taken up the issue and urged the authorities, including the Chengalpattu District Collector, to take immediate action against this health hazard.

She said that the organisation will take up the

issue with the TNPCB Chairperson M Jayanthi and Thiruporur MLA, SS Balaji.

She said that the environmental group has undertaken studies with pediatricians of the area and found that there was an increase in lung infections in children there.

Studies have revealed that the air quality was within acceptable limits during the day but the quality deteriorated in the evening and at night.

The studies have also identified the presence of VOCs to the tune of 121 micrograms/m3 and traces of formaldehyde, both of which are harmful to health.

## JD-U leader slams Congress chief Kharge over criticism of NDA government

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

JD-U leader Neeraj Kumar on Thursday responded sharply to Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's recent remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Amid campaigning for the coming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, Kharge targeted PM Modi, saying that while the BJP gives many speeches, there is a significant gap between their words and actions. The BJP has failed to fulfil even a single promise in the past 10 years, he added.

In response to these comments, Neeraj Kumar, speaking to IANS, accused the Congress of using "exceptions to present their narrative."

The JD-U leader highlighted that the development of national highways, particularly in Bihar, is a testament to progress.

Praising Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first Prime Minister, during whose tenure the Rajendra Setu bridge came up in 1959, he said that it was well after his time that it was being reconstructed.

He questioned what the issues were, point-

ing out that the Gandhi Setu bridge was built a long time ago and that its ongoing maintenance had no problems.

The JD-U leader also cited the Marine Drive in Patna, which he compared favourably to Mumbai's Marine Drive, suggesting that Congress leaders also enjoy it.

He emphasised that accusations should be based on facts, and if Congress is making allegations out of political jealousy, the public would view them as envious rather than as a viable alternative political force.

## Never witnessed riots during festivals earlier: Khera slams BJP for K'taka clash

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Congress National Spokesperson Pawan Khera on Thursday condemned the BJP over the communal clash in Karnataka during the Ganapati procession and said that the mentality of the ruling party was to create dispute in society and the country.

On Wednesday, two groups clashed in Karnataka's Mandya district after stones were allegedly pelted at a Ganpati idol immersion procession in Nagamangala town. Some

shops and vehicles were set afire following the incident.

"I haven't witnessed communal clashes during festivals since my childhood. However, in the last ten years, the BJP has tried to incite disputes or violence during Hanuman Jayanti, Rama Navami, and Muharram," he told IANS.

Pawan Khera also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his visit to Chief Justice of India (CJI), DY Chandrachud's residence and said he has a habit of going without being invited.



# India and Philippines strengthen defence ties during Defence Secretary Aramane's Manila visit

AGENCIES  
MANILA, SEP 12

Philippines Defence Secretary Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr. highlighted the need to create a "great net" that fosters regional stability and security during his meeting with visiting Indian Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane, the country's Department of National Defense (DND) stated on Thursday.

The meeting held on Wednesday marked another step towards deepening defence cooperation between the Philippines and India, the Department mentioned.

"Secretary of National Defense (SND) Teodoro emphasised the importance of strengthening the partnership between the two countries, particularly in upholding the rule

of law in the region. The Defense Chief also underscored the Philippines' commitment to a Self-Reliant Defence Posture, with a particular focus on supply chain resilience as a critical component of the country's defence strategy. He also welcomed further opportunities for military-to-military engagements and collaborations," it stated.

Appreciating the visit of the Indian delegation to the Philippines, which he said underscored the mutual commitment of both countries to deepen relations, Teodoro stressed the necessity of engaging in dialogue with "like-minded nations" to build a framework for cooperation built on universally accepted principles of international law.

The Philippines Defence



Secretary is scheduled to meet Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) to be held in November in Lao People's Democratic Republic which would further reinforce the bilateral defence relationship between the two nations.

Secretary Aramane, while commending the

Philippines for its strong

adherence to the rule of law and expressing the desire to enhance defence ties through the sharing of experiences and technologies, also extended an invitation to Teodoro to visit India for ministerial-level talks, highlighting that 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two

countries. On Wednesday, Aramane co-chaired the fifth meeting of India-Philippines Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) in Manila along with his counterpart Irineo Cruz Espino, the Senior Undersecretary at the Ministry of National Defence of Philippines.

"The Defence Secretary appreciated the Self Reliance Defence Posture Act of the Philippines govern-

ment.

The Defence Secretary invited the Philippines to partner with the Indian defence industry in co-development and co-production of equipment. The Philippines also invited investments in long-term equity partnership towards promoting assured supply chains. It acknowledged and appreciated India's functioning and proven template of defence industry indigenisation.

"Both sides affirmed the commitment to support each other to achieve the goal of self-reliance in defence production. They appreciated the operationalisation of White Shipping Information Exchange and opening of defence wing at Embassy of India, Manila in near future," the Ministry of Defence said in a state-

ment. He highlighted that India has also laid out a similar vision for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. Under this vision, the Indian defence industry is continuously enhancing its manufacturing capabilities and is exporting equipment to the world," the Ministry of Defence said in a state-

## US decries North Korea missile launches, stresses 'ironclad' commitment to South Korea

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, SEP 12

The US on Thursday condemned North Korea's launch of ballistic missiles, reaffirming its "ironclad" security commitment to South Korea.

Pyeongongyang launched multiple short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea on Thursday in a resumption of its missile provocations following a hiatus of more than 70 days, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"The United States condemns the DPRK's September 11 ballistic missile launch," a State Department spokesperson said in response to a question from Yonhap News Agency.

DPRK is the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea.

"These launches, like all the DPRK's other ballistic missile launches in recent years, violate multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions. They pose a threat to regional and international peace and security, and undermine the global nonproliferation regime," the official added.

The spokesperson reiterated Washington's defence commitment to regional allies.

"We continue to consult closely with our allies and partners about how best to deter DPRK aggression and coordinate international responses to the DPRK's violations of multiple UN Security Council resolutions," the official said. "Our commitment to the defence of the Republic of Korea and Japan is ironclad."

## Japan ruling party kicks off leadership race with nine hopefuls

AGENCIES  
TOKYO, SEP 12

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Thursday officially began its leadership race as the two-week campaign started, with a record nine candidates competing to become the new party chief and the country's next Prime Minister.

The contest for the position of LDP president, which carries a three-year term until 2027, kicked off amid declining trust for the party in the wake of its slush fund scandal, with party reform being a key issue in the upcoming election, Xinhua news agency reported quoting local media reports.

The candidacies were filed at LDP headquarters on Thursday morning, with the official start of the election announced by party lawmaker Ichiro Aisawa in his capacity as chairman of the LDP's election administration committee.

As both houses of parliament are controlled by the LDP and its coalition partner, the Komeito party, the winner is certain to become prime minister early next month

when the Diet, Japan's parliament, reconvenes.

Upon current Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's decision last month to not seek reelection as the LDP president, the election has become the most crowded race in the party's history and one of the most unpredictable, according to local media reports.

As the 15-day campaign began on Thursday, the nine presidential candidates would set out on a nationwide campaign, engaging in debates, delivering stump speeches, and lobbying local LDP chapters.

Voting and ballot counting are slated to take place on September 27, when the candidates will compete for a total of 734 votes, of which 367 are cast by LDP lawmakers and 367 by general party members.

A winner must obtain more than half of the votes to be elected as the new party chief, however, if no one wins a majority in the first round, a run-off vote between the top two candidates will be held on the same day when the 47 prefectural chapters get one vote each and the 367 lawmakers vote a second

time.

Among the veteran candidates and public favourites is former Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba, 67, making his fifth and final bid to become LDP chief over his 38-year political career.

Another hopeful vying for the LDP presidency is 43-year-old Shinjiro Koizumi, a former environment minister and son of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

Two female contenders are Economic Security Minister Sanae Takaichi, 63, and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, 71.

Other candidates include former Economic Security Minister Takayuki Kobayashi, 49; Digital Minister Taro Kono, 61; Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi, 63; LDP Secretary-General Toshimitsu Motegi, 68; and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato, 68. According to an opinion poll conducted by the Japanese newspaper Nihon Keizai Shimbun in late August, Koizumi has emerged as the most popular candidate with 23 per cent support. Ishiba was second at 18 per cent and Takaichi third with 11 per cent.

Yunus said reforming the police administra-

## Bangladesh's interim govt unveils plan to reform key sectors

AGENCIES  
DHAKA, SEP 12

Bangladeshi interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has taken action to protect the rule of law and bolster the crisis-ridden economy since he took office.

As part of his bids to reform Bangladesh, Yunus on Wednesday announced that the government has decided to form six commissions to reform the judiciary, election system, administration, police, anti-corruption commission, and the constitution, Xinhua news agency reported. He made the announcement in a television speech to the nation on Wednesday night, marking the first month of the interim government's formation since August 8 after then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India on August 5.

According to Yunus, these commissions are expected to start their work on October 1 and finish within the next three months.

Yunus said reforming the police administra-

tion, public administration, judiciary, and anti-corruption commission, along with the election commission, is essential for holding the next election in a free and fair manner.

"I believe these reforms will also contribute to establishing a people-owned, accountable, and welfare-oriented state system," said Yunus.

He called upon people from all walks of life to bring about reforms in their respective spheres.

"This is a responsibility for all of us. Bring reform in your own world. A nation's reform cannot only be the government's reform," the chief adviser added.

Yunus said that based on the commissions' reports, the interim government will organise discussions with major political parties in the next phase. A comprehensive consultation with representatives from student bodies, civil society, political parties, and the government will be held for three to seven days at the final stage.

## Grim recall of 9/11 tragedy draws Harris, Trump together briefly

AGENCIES  
NEW YORK, SEPT 12

The 23rd anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack brought together US Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump in a moment of civility on Wednesday barely 10 hours after they had exchanged insults during their fiery debate presidential debate.

At the commemoration at Ground Zero here, the Vice President, who are locked in a tight race for the White House, shook hands with President Joe Biden and the Republican vice presidential candidate J.D. Vance looking on.

That was the second handshake and personal encounter, after having first met face-to-face at the debate in Philadelphia, and this time Trump smiled and gently patted Harris' hand with his left hand.

In a grim recall of the terrorist attack that had united a stunned citizenry on 9/11/2001, the four stood together as the ceremony began honouring the 2,977 victims with a pledge to never forget.



On that day, al-Qaida terrorists had driven two hijacked aircraft into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre, a symbol of America's prowess in commerce, and another into the Pentagon, the citadel of US military might.

Relatives of the victims took turns reading the names of their loved ones in New York's annual rite after a silver bell tolled.

Passengers on another hijacked plane resisted the terrorists and crashed the jet in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Biden and Harris traveled to the memorial there honouring the 97 passengers who died there.

Trump and Vance visited the site after the Democrats had left.

When Biden visited a

fire station at Shanksville, a supporter of the former president handed him a red "Trump 2024" hat.

Sportingly, Biden took it and wore the hat of his nemesis, who had harsh words for him the previous night.

Deputy White House Press Secretary Andrew Bates posted on X, "At the Shanksville Fire Station, @ POTUS [president of the US] spoke about the country's bipartisan unity after 9/11 and said we needed to get back to that".

Biden said in a message, "On this day 23 years ago, terrorists believed they could break our will and bring us to our knees. They were wrong. They will always be wrong. In the darkest of hours, we found light".

## Iranian President Pezeshkian visits Iraq on inaugural foreign trip

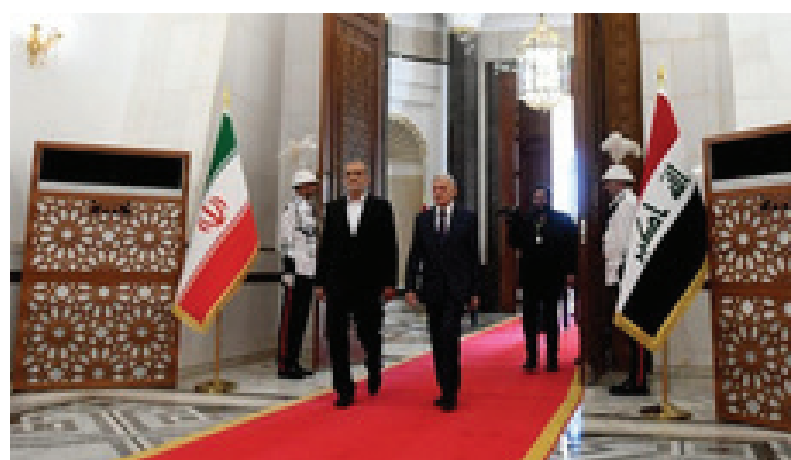
AGENCIES  
BAGHDAD, SEP 12

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has arrived in Baghdad for his first official foreign visit since taking office in July.

During his visit, Pezeshkian on Wednesday met with Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid, who expressed his country's intent to enhance bilateral cooperation on counterterrorism, border security, and efforts to ease regional tensions, according to a statement from the Iraqi Presidency.

Pezeshkian responded by affirming Iran's readiness to strengthen bilateral ties and improve coordination on mutual interests, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the statement.

The Iranian President also held discussions with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani, during which 14 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) were signed. These agreements cover various sectors, including the economy, training, youth and sports, cultural and educational exchanges, media, communications, free zones, agriculture, natural resources, social security, and chambers of commerce,



according to al-Sudani's media office on the social media platform X.

Before the signing ceremony, al-Sudani and Pezeshkian discussed bilateral cooperation on border security and other issues, the statement noted.

Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of the deep bilateral relationship and its impact on regional stability. Both leaders condemned Israel's "ongoing aggression" in the Gaza Strip, warned of potential threats to regional security and stability, and called for efforts to halt what they described as Israeli "genocide" against Palestinians.

Following the signing ceremony, al-Sudani and Pezeshkian held a joint press conference, where al-Sudani stated that the MoUs would "form a roadmap" for bolstering bilateral cooperation.

Pezeshkian affirmed Iran's desire for "a strong, stable, secure, independent, and peaceful Iraq" and expressed confidence in building robust relations between the two nations.

The Iranian President's visit also includes trips to the provinces of Basra, Karbala, and Najaf, as well as Erbil, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

## Seized document reveals Hamas' heavy losses in Gaza: Israel

AGENCIES  
JERUSALEM, SEP 12

Israel has revealed a document, which it says was written by a senior Hamas commander, detailing severe losses suffered by the militant group during Israel's offensive in Gaza.

The Israeli military says the letter, attributed to Hamas' Khan Younis Brigade commander Rafa Salama, claims that about 80 per cent of the group's fighters have been killed, injured, or fled, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Israeli military's Intelligence Directorate says Salama, who was killed in an airstrike in July, addressed the letter to Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and his brother Muhammad, a top Hamas military commander.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said on Wednesday that the document was among the materials seized by Israeli troops in Gaza.

According to Gallant,



it outlines extensive damage to Hamas, including the destruction of 70 per cent of its weapons, loss of 90-95 per cent of its rockets, and death of half its fighters, with more wounded or having fled.

"They are left with about 20 per cent (of the fighters)," Gallant said, quoting the letter.

The document reportedly requests help from the Sinwar brothers,

which Gallant said reflects growing distress within Hamas after a monthslong Israeli bombardment.

Israel has been conducting large-scale military operations in Gaza since October 7, 2023, when Hamas attacked southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people. Around 41,000 Palestinians have been killed in the ensuing conflict, according to the health authorities in Gaza.

## Biden nominates Lt Gen Xavier Brunson as new US Forces Korea commander

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON, SEP 12

US President Joe Biden has nominated Lt Gen Xavier Brunson, the commander of I Corps, to lead the South Korea-US Combined Forces Command (CFC), the Pentagon has said, a nomination ahead of the November 5 presidential election.

If confirmed, Brunson would replace Gen Paul LaCamera who has led CFC, United Nations Command (UNC) and US Forces Korea (USFK) since July 2021. His Senate confirmation hearing is slated for Tuesday next week, Yonhap news agency reported. The nomination came as Seoul and Washington have been stepping up cooperation to sharpen deterrence against evolving North Korean nuclear and missile threats, with Pyongyang shutting dialogue and deepening its military cooperation with Moscow.



# Maha govt to collaborate with WEF for MMR's development as global economy hub

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, SEP 12

The Maharashtra government, which is chasing its ambitious target of a one trillion economy dollar, on Thursday will release a report penned by NITI Aayog on the development of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) as a global economic hub with a 300 billion dollar economy from the present 140 billion dollars. This will be followed by the signing of a memorandum of collaboration between the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Chief Minister and MMRDA Chairman Eknath Shinde will chair the event and Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar will also attend the event. Prof Klaus Schwab, WEF founder and executive



chairman, is the guest of honour at the function.

The state government's move comes days after the formation of a 22-member steering committee chaired by the Chief Secretary comprising bureaucrats, district collectors, municipal commissioners and CEOs of its undertakings to monitor the speedy implementation of NITI Aayog's recommendation, step up focus on attracting and retaining the foreign direct investment and

promoting startup and employment generation in the MMR.

A senior minister from the MahaYuti government said, "The MMRDA's association with WEF will be crucial for achieving the objective of MMR's development as a global economic hub considering its strategic location. Historically, MR grew at 6.1 per cent (FY 2012-2020, real) against Maharashtra at 5.8 per cent and India at 6.6 per cent CAGR. At pres-

ent, MMR is a 140 billion dollar economy across five districts and covers nine municipal corporations with 25.8 million population and 10 million jobs. NITI Aayog in its report has clearly indicated that MMR can grow into a 300 billion dollar economy by 2030 and a 1.5 trillion dollar economy by 2047. This will be quite helpful for Maharashtra to become a 1 trillion dollar economy."

NITI Aayog said that MMR is on a positive growth trajectory on the back of 50 billion dollars plus ongoing infrastructure investments, including 337 km metro rail, Vadhvan port, Navi Mumbai International Airport, Alibaug-Virar Multi-Modal Corridor, Versova Virar Sea Link, high-speed rail connecting Mumbai-Ahmedabad among others.

The Aayog has strongly

recommended the unlocking and development of a 250-hectare land of the Mumbai Port Authority for job creation through services, housing and tourism/culture.

It has emphasised the need to facilitate the redevelopment of 2.2 lakh slum holders (10 lakh people) on the Government of India land (port, defence and railway lands) in line with the Prime Minister's Housing for All Scheme and push the development of MMR as a global aviation hub and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions) destination rivalling Dubai and Singapore.

Moreover, NITI Aayog has suggested a significant increase in Ease of doing business with the Ministry of Environment and Forest and Airport Authority of India approvals to make MMR an attractive investment destination.

# GCCs projected to create up to 28 lakh jobs in India by 2030

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 11

Touted as the 'GCC Capital of the World,' India has the largest base of 17 per cent of global technology capability centres, currently employing over 1.9 million (19 lakh) people, according to a new report.

By 2030, the GCC market in India is estimated to grow to \$99-105 billion, with the number of GCCs reaching 2,100-2,200 and headcount rising to 2.5-2.8 million (25 lakh-28 lakh).

Over the past five years, Global Roles in India have expanded significantly, with more than 6,500 such positions now established. Interestingly, this includes more than 1,100 women leaders holding global roles.

Nearly a quarter of global engineering roles are now based in India, with industries like aero-

space, defence and semiconductor focusing on next-generation technologies, according to the latest Nasscom-Zinnov report.

Additionally, semiconductor firms and tech multinationals are increasingly establishing product teams in India, fostering innovation.

In the last five years, more than 400 new GCCs and 1,100 new centers have been established in the country, bringing the total number of GCCs to over 1,700.

GCCs in India generated \$64.6 billion in export revenue in FY24 and average GCC talent expanded by 24 per cent since FY19 and is estimated at 1130+ employees in FY24.

Over 90 per cent of the GCCs operate as multi-functional centres, supporting technology, operations, and product engineering.

According to Sindhu

Gangadharan, Chairperson, Nasscom, GCCs have rapidly evolved from being operational hubs to becoming true engines of innovation and strategic growth.

India's GCCs are also driving high-value charters, where we are witnessing a shift towards portfolio and transformation hubs, with increasing product ownership from India, added Pari Nataraajan, CEO, Zinnov.

While the initial wave of GCC growth was driven by large enterprises, more mid-market enterprises and unicorns are also setting up GCCs in India. Around 40 global unicorns have an India GCC presence as of 2024, the report mentioned.

More than 220 GCC units are located in emerging locations and Ahmedabad, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Coimbatore are leading the pack, the report mentioned.

# VC firm Accel to invest up to \$1 million in pre-seed startups in AI, Bharat

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, SEP 12

Leading global venture capital firm Accel on Thursday announced the launch of Accel Atoms 4.0, the fourth edition of its pre-seed scaling programme. Selected startups will receive up to \$1 million in funding through equity or convertible note, and access perks worth more than \$5 million from Accel's network partners.

Building on the success of three previous editions, the programme is designed to make a founders' journey as frictionless as possible.

Accel Atoms 4.0 is inviting applications from two categories of pre-seed startups - those building for 'Bharat' and AI (artificial intelligence). The VC firm defines 'Bharat' as the middle-income households spread across Tier 2, Tier 3 and rural India.

"The Bharat opportunity is immense and we see multiple multi-billion-dollar startups emerging from this opportunity. The top 20 per cent of the rural



population has a higher MPCE (monthly per capita expenditure) than 50 per cent of the urban population. This highlights substantial purchasing power that is often overlooked," said Anand Daniel, Partner at Accel.

"Innovative founders will leverage the infrastructural advancements in these regions to create scalable, economically feasible solutions tailored to Bharat's evolving needs. With Accel Atoms 4.0, we are excited to give founders the guidance, network of support, and capital to succeed at delivering solu-

tions to the underserved audience in Bharat," he added.

Startups at the pre-seed stage, including idea-stage and pre-product companies, are eligible to apply. Founders in Accel Atoms 4.0 will also have access to its global community of over 200 founders, mentors, and potential customers.

Prayank Swaroop, Partner at Accel, said they want to give Indian-origin founders globally the best foundations for success.

"Accel has invested in over 27 early-stage AI companies by Indian-

origin founders in the last two years. The Accel Atoms 4.0 AI cohort will have personalised 1-on-1 mentorship from global AI leaders of the Indian diaspora, and Accel's network of AI founders and senior level operators. We are setting the stage to support Indian founders to build AI from India, for India and for the world," Swaroop explained.

For the AI cohort, Accel is looking for startups by visionary Indian-origin founders based anywhere in the world building companies that are using AI innovatively for business applications or building development tools for the AI ecosystem. For the Bharat cohort, Accel is looking to back founders building for Bharat across sectors.

Applications for Accel Atoms 4.0 will open on September 16, 2024 which can be accessed at <https://atoms.accel.com>.

Since its inception in 2021, Accel Atoms has supported 32 startups, which have collectively raised over \$200 million so far.

Speaking to IANS, Manocha, who addressed the gathering at the inauguration ceremony of the three-day 'Semicon India 2024' here in the presence of PM Modi and top leadership, noted that India is on the right path to becoming a global leader in the semiconductor industry.

"PM Modi clearly understands that semiconductors are the foundation for every device, and he saw how the chip helped develop the COVID vaccine faster. Similarly, once we begin to manufacture chips in the country, it will help several sectors such as defence, automotive, mobile devices and practically every industry," said Manocha on the second

day of the mega event. According to him, the Prime Minister always wanted to see India become the top semiconductor nation. "He was very clear about the importance of semiconductors and its strategic need for the country. And he has been very consistent since I met him. Yesterday, when I met him for the third time, PM Modi said he wanted to go even more aggressive in taking this journey further," Manocha told IANS.

On Wednesday, PM Modi said this is the right time and place to be in India when it comes to semiconductor manufacturing, as the country provides an integrated ecosystem for the global

# PM Modi wants to go more aggressive on making India a global chip hub: SEMI's Ajit Manocha

AGENCIES  
GREATER NOIDA, SEP 12

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is crystal clear about his vision for semiconductors and their usefulness for humanity and he wants to become "even more aggressive" in taking this journey further, Ajit Manocha, President and CEO of global industry association SEMI, said on Thursday.

Speaking to IANS, Manocha, who addressed the gathering at the inauguration ceremony of the three-day 'Semicon India 2024' here in the presence of PM Modi and top leadership, noted that India is on the right path to becoming a global leader in the semiconductor industry.

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On Wednesday, PM Modi said this is the right time and place to be in India when it comes to semiconductor manufacturing, as the country provides an integrated ecosystem for the global

players, along with ease of doing business and a large talent pool.

Manocha said that a lot of work has to happen on the chip manufacturing front in India and the vision and policy are clear.

"The foreign companies and other partners are starting to see India as a potential partner for the electronics and semiconductor supply chains. We have more than 100 CEOs and CXOs from all over the industry and ecosystem companies here. They all gave a word of confidence in working with India to make sure that the country becomes the next powerhouse of semiconductors industry in Asia," Manocha emphasised.

# Global open source community must for building safe, responsible AI: Industry

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

As companies the world over focus on building artificial general intelligence (AGI), the real adoption will only happen when it is acceptable by all stakeholders - explainable, stable and reliable, tech community leaders said on Thursday.

India is the founding member of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), having joined the multi-stakeholder initiative in June 2020.

A groundbreaking initiative is set to expedite the AGI landscape with the launch of a new collaborative group aimed at building a safe super intelligence (SSI).

This is an invite-only group designed to bring together a diverse community of academicians, developers, startups, enterprises and venture capitalists (VCs) to ideate, break, build, and nurture the future of safe AGI globally.

# Meta Verified, customised messages arrive on WhatsApp for businesses in India

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, SEP 12

Meta on Thursday announced several features and updates on WhatsApp for millions of small businesses across the country that will help them grow ahead of the upcoming festive season.

At its first 'WhatsApp Business Summit' in the country, the company said that 'Meta Verified' feature is now available to all eligible small businesses in India using the WhatsApp Business app.

With this feature, businesses that choose to subscribe and demonstrate their authenticity will receive a verified badge, impersonation protection, account support, and premium features that help amplify their brand online and make it more efficient to chat with customers.

The same badge will appear on their WhatsApp Channels and Business



pages, making it easy to share on social media and websites.

"The ubiquity and ease of WhatsApp places it at the centre of India's transformation, helping businesses fuel compelling ideas and new models of growth," said Sandhya Devanathan, VP, Meta in India. The company is rolling out the ability for small businesses using the WhatsApp Business app to send customised messages to their customers - like appointment reminders, birthday greetings or even updates on a holiday sale all in a faster and more

efficient way.

"This new feature, available for a fee, gives businesses the ability to send personal messages with a customer's name and customisable call-to-action buttons and will also enable them to schedule the day and time the messages are sent," the company informed.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the social media company will soon launch 'WhatsApp Business Yatra' in India, where it will go to tier 2 and 3 cities to provide on-ground, in-person training to small businesses.

# GCCs to account for 40 pc of Grade A office space demand in India: Report

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, SEP 12

Global capability centres (GCCs) are likely to account for almost 40 per cent of the demand for Grade A office space in the next few years in India, a report showed on Thursday.

The overall office market has gradually matured from a "Supply-led" market to a more "Occupier-driven" market and is likely at a turning point to see heightened growth and scaling up over the next few years, according to Colliers-RICS report. Engineering and manufacturing and BFSI occupiers are projected to cumulatively account for 40 per cent of demand during 2025-27, leasing about 11-12 million square feet of office space each on an annual basis, up from 8-9 million square feet each in the past three years.

On the other hand, space uptake by technology firms will eventually stabilize at around 15 million square feet as they continue to

embrace hybrid and distributed working models.

Additionally, flex space occupiers are likely to expand into newer geographies, accounting for 15-20 per cent of total office leasing in the next two-three years.

Arpit Mehrotra, Managing Director, Office services, India, Colliers, said that as GCCs reposition themselves as knowledge and innovation centres, they are likely to account for almost 40 per cent of the Grade A office space demand in next few years.

At the same time, demand from domestic-origin occupiers will remain robust, with about 30 per cent of the domestic-origin demand likely to come from flex operators. Post-pandemic, average deal size across sectors have rationalized and was at around 43,000 square feet in 2023, a 11 per cent dip compared to 2019 levels. At the same time, number of deals rose by 44 per cent during the same period.

# Amazon India creates over 1.1 lakh seasonal job opportunities in India

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Amazon India on Thursday announced it has created more than 110,000 seasonal job opportunities across its operations network ahead of the upcoming festive season.

The e-commerce major has hired thousands of women associates as well as close to 1900 persons with disabilities (PWD) into its existing network. The company said it has already onboarded a majority of these new hires. "It is encouraging to see the company hiring a significant number of women and persons with disabilities for these roles while prioritizing the well-being of its associates through initiatives focused on their safety, healthcare, and educational support," said Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of Labour and Employment. The opportunities include direct and indirect jobs in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, and



Chennai, among others.

Abhinav Singh, VP-Operations, Amazon India, said that a number of these associates continue to work with Amazon even after the festive season and many others return year after year to work with Amazon.

According to Dr Mandaviya, Amazon's commitment to create over 1 lakh seasonal employment opportunities across India is a commendable step towards bolstering the nation's workforce during the festive period.

As part of its commitment to support the well-being of associates, Amazon India has imple-

mented a range of initiatives focused on associate wellbeing including the recently launched Project Ashray, which offers dedicated resting points for delivery associates across Delhi NCR, Mumbai, and Bengaluru.

The global e-commerce major recently said it is on track to enable Indian businesses surpass \$13 billion in cumulative e-commerce exports from India by the end of year. As part of its 'Amazon Global Selling' programme launched in 2015, 1.5 lakh exporters have cumulatively sold over 40 crore 'Made in India' products to customers across the world.



## Asian Hockey Champions Trophy: Harmanpreet scores brace as India beat Korea 3-1

AGENCIES  
MOQI (CHINA), SEP 12

Defending Champions India remained unbeaten in the Hero Asian Champions Trophy as they registered their fourth consecutive victory with a 3-1 win against Korea here at the Moqi Hockey Training Base on Thursday.

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh (9', 43') scored a brace in India's win while Arajjeet Singh Hundal (8') gave an early lead in the team's win.

Having already booked a place in the semifinals, India looked to continue their winning ways against Korea in their penultimate league-stage match. The defending champions showcased this intent very early in the match with a stupendous 8th minute goal by Arajjeet Singh Hundal. It was a fierce cross pass by Vivek Sagar Prasad that was picked up well by Hundal from the top of the circle to scoop it in. In the following



minute, Skipper Harmanpreet Singh scored from a PC to extend India's lead to 2-0. This was Harmanpreet's 200th international goal.

Korea, who registered a fantastic 3-2 win against hosts China to climb up to second spot in the points table, were not going to let India have it easy. After shaking off the nerves in

the first quarter, Korea bounced back with tactical defense, curbing Indian attackers from keeping the ball possession. In the last seven minutes of the second quarter, they punished India with interjections and counter attacks, eventually setting up a PC in the 30th minute of the match. Jihun Yang, who had scored a goal in their

win against China yesterday, came up with a fine PC execution to narrow India's lead to 2-1.

The third quarter saw both India and Korea trade equal number of PCs with each earning four. However, only India could successfully put one in the net, with Harmanpreet coming up with a powerful dragflick

to fetch his team a strong 3-1 lead. India played this quarter patiently, and constructed a compact attack to stay ahead of a tactful Korea. Meanwhile, Krishan Pathak held sway at the goalpost to keep Korea from scoring.

The final quarter saw India do well as they dominated with ball possession, and resorted to half-press that led to potential counter attacks. Though Korea made ambitious attempts to score, Suraj Karkera did well in the goalpost to ensure India don't concede a goal. India will take on arch-nemesis Pakistan in their next encounter.

Hero of the Match, Suraj Karkera of India said, "Korea is no easy team to beat but our mantra today was to defend well. In terms of pressure, there is none as Coach has given us freedom to play our game. We have trained with Sreejesh over the years and though it is a big shoes to fill in, we try to do our best."

## Short eager to cement his spot in Australia's T20I team after strong show vs England

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 12

Australia's top-order batter Matthew Short said he is eager to cement his spot as an opener in the T20I side after playing a strong knock of 41 off 26 balls in a match-winning 86-run opening stand alongside Travis Head in the series opener against England at Southampton. Short, 28, slammed four fours and two sixes in his blistering knock to give Australia an early advantage, which was enough for them to get a 28-run win over England, and take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

"I only found out last night. Obviously, with Davey Warner out, you sort of know that the spot's opened up. But then Jake Fraser-McGurk has been playing the last few games in Scotland, so you never know where you sit. But I'm glad I sort of took that opportunity and played my role to help the team with a win."

"It's a personal sort of



goal of mine. I've been in and out of the side recently over the last 12-18 months. Now Dave is out, I'm really trying to take this opportunity and cement my spot in this side," said Short to reporters. Short has been in exceptional form in the shortest format, securing back-to-back MVP awards in the Big Bash League (BBL) while turning out for the Adelaide Strikers and accumulating over 450 runs in each of the last three seasons.

plan from the coaching staff. Just go out there with freedom and take the positive options. Trav (Travis Head) and I sort of go into the games with that mindset," he added.

The competition for Australia's T20I opening slots has been so intense that domestic T20 openers like Marcus Stoinis and Matthew Wade have become finishers, while young and highly-regarded Jake Fraser-McGurk is still a work in progress to take that role.

## Hong Kong Open: Denmark's Axelsen beats local hero Ng Ka Lang

AGENCIES  
HONG KONG, SEP 11

Denmark's Viktor Axelsen defeated local hero Ng Ka Lang in straight sets at the badminton Hong Kong Open on Wednesday to win his first match after retaining the Olympic champion in Paris.

The second-seeded Dane eased past the 2016 champion Ng of Hong Kong, China, 21-11, 21-12 to reach the second round at the 420,000-US-dollar tournament, reports Xinhua.

Axelsen will take on Su Li Yang of Chinese Taipei, who defeated Kiran George of India 21-16, 21-16.

The 2019 winner Lee Cheuk Yu, also representing Hong Kong, China, beat Lu Guangzu of China 21-18, 21-19, taking a revenge on his defeat 11 days ago in the semifinals of the Korea Open where



Lu went on to win the tournament's title.

With China's world No. 1 and top seed Shi Yuqi pulling out citing injury

worries, Lu had been seen as the most competitive contender for China in the singles event prior to his exit.

## Asian Hockey Champions Trophy: Malaysia beat Japan 5-4, go up to No. 4 in table

AGENCIES  
MOQI (CHINA), SEP 12

Malaysia edge past Japan with a 5-4 win in the ongoing Hero Asian Champions Trophy here in the Moqi Hockey Training Base on Thursday.

Goals by Syed Cholan (12', 40'), Norsyafiq Sumantri (21'), Syarman Mat (47') and Kamal Abu Azrai (48') helped Malaysia win the match and climb up to No.4 in the points table.

Placed in the bottom of the pool table after losing 1-8 to India on Wednesday, Malaysia needed a win today to stay in contention for a semifinal spot.

They began the match with positive intent, pushing for early chances in the Japanese circle. Only seconds into the game, Malaysian attacker took an ambitious shot on goal



but could not breach the Japanese goalie Takumi Kitagawa. A few seconds later, they were given a PC which was overturned by the video umpire after a good referral by the Japanese team.

Malaysia were finally able to beat the Japanese defence in the 12th minute when they won a PC and Syed Cholan was on target to fetch his team an important 1-0 lead.

They extended the lead to 2-0 in the 21st minute when Norsyafiq Sumantri struck a splendid field goal. Japan responded swiftly, as they made a solid comeback in the game with two back-to-back goals in the 24th and 28th minute through PC specialist Ken Nagayoshi.

Even though Japan, who recently won the Sultan of Azlan Shah Cup, made a slow start to the game,

they returned from the 10-minute half-time break to score another goal in the 36th minute. This was an important field goal by Tsubasa Tanaka as it helped them take a 3-2 lead over Malaysia.

Though this goal posed a setback for Malaysia, they were undeterred and continued to create forays in the attacking circle. As many as five circle entries and an equal number of shots on goal were created in the third quarter by Malaysia and found success with Syed Cholan scoring from a PC.

The equaliser boosted Malaysia's game, as they came back into the fourth quarter with two back-to-back goals in the 47th and 48th minute through Syarman Mat and Kamal Abu Azrai.

This helped them take the lead to a formidable

5-3. Though Japan struck one in the 51st minute through Kazumasa Matsumoto, Malaysia held on to the game with strong defence in the dying minutes of the match. This win by Malaysia puts Japan on the bottom of the table while Malaysia have moved up to No.4 in the pool standings.

Hero of the Match, Aiman Rozemi of Malaysia said, "It was very important for us to win this match and keep our chances for making the semifinal."

After yesterday's match against India where we lost 1-8, we just decided that we need to play as a team and cover for any mistakes made by our teammates and play positively. I am happy this worked and also happy on winning the Hero of the match award."

## Ronaldo criticises Man Utd's direction under Erik ten Hag, calls for complete rebuild

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 11

Cristiano Ronaldo has spoken out about Manchester United's current struggles, criticising manager Erik ten Hag and calling for a complete overhaul of the club's structure in order to return to winning ways.

Ronaldo, who now plays for Saudi Arabian side Al-Nassr, took aim at the Dutch manager's recent comments, suggesting that Manchester United cannot compete for the Premier League or Champions

League titles.

Speaking on the Rio Ferdinand Presents podcast, the Portuguese star, who had two spells at Old Trafford, expressed his disappointment with the club's trajectory and questioned Ten Hag's mentality.

"As Manchester United coach, you cannot say that you're not going to fight to win the league or Champions League," Ronaldo said. "Mentally, you can say maybe we don't have that potential, but I cannot say that. We're going

to try, you have to try."

United finished a disappointing eighth in the Premier League last season, their lowest position in the club's history, and have lost two of their opening three games this campaign, leaving Ten Hag under immense pressure.

Ronaldo, a club legend with 145 goals in 346 appearances, believes the situation at Old Trafford is more deeply rooted, going as far as to suggest that Manchester United has stagnated since the retirement of legendary manager Sir

Alex Ferguson in 2013.

Reflecting on his own experience at the club, Ronaldo lamented the lack of progress. "There has been no evolution since Sir Alex left," he said. Despite being one of the biggest clubs in the world, Ronaldo insists that without structural change, United cannot compete with football's elite. "They need to rebuild everything. The club needs time because it's still one of the best clubs in the world, but they need to change."

However, the 38-year-old

remains optimistic about the future, especially with recent moves by Sir Jim Ratcliffe, co-owner of the club, to restore United to its former glories. Ratcliffe's Ineos team recently purchased a 25% stake in the club and took control of football operations. "I believe the future will be bright, but they don't just depend on talent. They have to rebuild from the bottom. If not, they cannot compete. It will be impossible."

One glimmer of hope, according to Ronaldo, is the addition of his former team-

mate, Ruud van Nistelrooy, to Ten Hag's backroom staff. Ronaldo praised the move, suggesting that van Nistelrooy's experience and deep understanding of the club could help improve its fortunes. "If Ten Hag listens to Ruud, maybe he can help himself. The people who understand football are the people who were there in the dressing room. They know how to deal with the players."

Ronaldo called for the club to lean on figures from United's past who have a deep knowledge of its traditions and

values. "You cannot rebuild a club without knowledge - not guys who work in the office. The people who understand football are the people who were there. They know how to deal with the players."

Despite leaving United in December 2022 after a controversial interview with Piers Morgan where he felt "betrayed" by the club, Ronaldo maintains a strong affection for the Red Devils. "What I wish for Manchester United is what I wish for myself - to be the best team they can be."

## Essex's championship hope dashed after 12-Point deduction over bat controversy

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 11

Essex's hopes of clinching this year's County Championship title have been dealt a severe blow after the club was docked 12 points by the Cricket Discipline Commission (CDC). The sanction comes following an investigation into the use of an oversized bat by Essex player Feroz Khushi during the opening match of the season in April.

The punishment, which has been looming over Essex for much of the season, was confirmed in a ruling by the

CDC. In response, the club issued a statement accepting the decision, but there is notable discontent within the Essex camp.

In their official statement, Essex expressed regret over the outcome but stressed their commitment to upholding the integrity of the game and adhering to regulations in the future. The club also raised concerns about the inconsistencies in the regulatory process, particularly regarding the bat gauges used during the investigation, and will be writing to the CDC, Cricket Regulator, and the England and Wales

Cricket Board (ECB) to seek further clarification.

"Essex CCC regrets the outcome and, although disappointed with the appeal decision and subsequent sanctions, accepts the charges of the CDC panel," the club said. "The club remains fully committed to upholding the integrity of the game and ensuring strict compliance with all relevant regulations moving forward."

The controversy arose during Essex's second innings of their season opener against Nottinghamshire on April 6. Khushi, who had scored 21 runs at the time, was found to

be using a bat that failed to fit within the umpires' measurement gauge. Umpires Tom Lungley and Steve O'Shaughnessy halted play to assess the bat, which became stuck in the gauge. Despite the issue, Essex went on to secure a commanding 254-run victory in the match.

However, the CDC's decision to deduct 12 points from the 20 Essex had earned from that win has effectively ended their hopes of overtaking Surrey in the title race. With two rounds left in the season, including a potentially decisive final-round clash with Surrey

at Chelmsford, Essex now trails the leaders by 56 points—making a comeback nearly impossible.

Essex initially lodged an appeal after the Cricket Regulator raised the charge. The CDC's 31-page judgement acknowledged that some of the gauges used to assess Khushi's bat "did not comply precisely with the specifications." Despite this, Khushi was reprimanded for using a bat that did not conform to the regulations, although he insisted he had trusted his bat manufacturer to ensure compliance with the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) rules.

## Zim Afro T10: Durban Wolves and Jo'burg Bangla Tigers to kick off season 2

AGENCIES  
HARARE, SEP 11

Durban Wolves will take on the Jo'Burg Bangla Tigers in the opening match of the second season of Zim Afro T10, which will begin at the Harare Sports Club on September 21 with the grand finale on September 29.

Season 2 of the Zim Afro T10 will see the teams battle it out over the course of 9 days for the top prize. Each day will comprise three games, with the first scheduled for 3pm local time and 6:30pm IST.

The second game of the day will be at 5:15pm local time and 8:45pm IST, while the third game of the day will see the players take the field at 7:30pm local time and 11pm IST.

The opening game of the tournament will see the Durban Wolves take on the Jo'Burg Bangla Tigers, after which, Cape Town Samp Army and the Harare Bolts will take centre stage. The final game of the day will pit the two remaining franchises, Bulawayo Brave Jaguars and the NYS Lagos.

The second match-day

will see the Durban Wolves take on the Harare Bolts in the first game, after which NYS Lagos and Jo'Burg Bangla Tigers will play the second game.

The final game of the day pitted the Bulawayo Brave Jaguars against Cape Town Samp Army.

Day 3 will kick off with Harare Bolts playing Jo'Burg Bangla Tigers, followed by the Bulawayo Brave Jaguars taking on Durban Wolves.

The final game of the day will see Cape Town Samp Army play NYS Lagos.



## Border District Poonch Organises Bike Rally under SVEEP

JI NEWS SERVICE  
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 12

To encourage first-time voters to exercise their franchise, General Election Observer Solai Bharathi Dasan and District Election Officer Vikas Kundal flagged off bike rally from Dak Bungalow, Poonch, to village Kanuyian, here today. The rally, organized under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, saw hundreds of enthusiastic first-time voters participating with zeal. The Observers and DEO led from the front riding alongside the participants.

The rally traversed various roads and streets of Poonch town, culminating at village Kanuyian, with bikers holding placards and banners motivating fellow first-time voters to register and vote in the upcoming assembly elections. The event aimed to create awareness about



the importance of voting and the role of youth in shaping the country's future.

District Election Officer, Vikas Kundal emphasized the importance of the initiative, stating, "This rally is part of our SVEEP initiative to educate and raise awareness among the public. Our goal is to ensure that every eligible citizen understands the

power of their vote. It's inspiring to see such a large turnout of first-time voters participating with enthusiasm."

Atul Kumar Sharma, a first-time voter, shared his excitement: "As a young citizen, I feel it's my responsibility to contribute to the country's growth and development. Voting gives me a sense of empowerment, and

I'm eager to have my say in shaping India's future. I'm proud to be casting my vote for the first time, and I urge all my fellow first-time voters to register and vote. Let's make our voices heard and create a positive change!"

The rally was organized in collaboration with local youth groups and educational institutions. The SVEEP initiative, launched by the Election Commission of India, aims to educate and encourage voters, especially first-time voters, to participate in the electoral process. The bike rally is one of many initiatives undertaken by the District Election Office, Poonch, to promote voter awareness and participation. The rally was also attended by Tahir Mustafa Malik (ADC Poonch), Qadir ul Rehman (RO Haveli Constituency), Lal Hussain (CEO Poonch and Nodal Officer SVEEP) and other senior officers of the district.

## General Observer, DEO Rajouri inspect Polling Stations near LOC

JI NEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 12

In preparation for the upcoming General Election to the Legislative Assembly 2024, General Observer for Rajouri & Budhal Constituency, Anurag Jayanti, along with District Election Officer (DEO) Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, conducted an inspection of polling stations near the Line of Control (LOC) in the Doongi Block, here today.

The visit aimed to assess the readiness of polling stations and ensure that all necessary facilities are in place for smooth voting.

During the visit, the officials inspected key polling stations at Government High School (GHS) Challas and Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Doongi to verify the availability of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) such as electricity, drink-



ing water, ramps for accessibility, and sanitation. These facilities are crucial to providing a comfortable voting experience, particularly for senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

A key aspect of the visit was the discussion on the implementation of home voting for voters who are elderly, disabled, or unable to visit the polling stations. The General Observer and DEO emphasized the need for thorough planning to ensure that home voting is conducted efficiently and in line with the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines.

The General Observer and DEO also interacted

with locals near the polling stations and encouraged them to actively participate in the democratic process. He emphasized the significance of every vote in shaping the future of the constituency and urged citizens to turn out in large numbers on polling day. In addition, the officials directed all polling staff to strictly adhere to the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India. The DEO Rajouri reiterated the commitment of the district administration to ensure a free, fair, and transparent election. He also instructed the officials to ensure that all logistics, including security arrangements, are robust and in place.

ECI appoints  
General  
Observers  
for Assembly  
Constituency  
04-Lolab

JI NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, SEPT 12

In view of the General Elections to Legislative Assembly-2024, the Election Commission of India has appointed Tshewang Gyachho Bhutia (IAS) as General Observer for 04-Lolab Assembly Constituency of District Kupwara.

In event of any queries, complaints & Grievances, the general public of 04-Lolab AC may contact the General Observer directly on his local mobile number 8899374725 between 10:00 am to 5:00 pm.

## Baramulla Set for 2024 Assembly Elections: 7.22 lakh voters to elect their representatives

JI NEWS SERVICE  
BARAMULLA, SEPTEMBER 12

Baramulla district is preparing for elections in the third and final phase of the General Elections for the Legislative Assembly, with more than 7.22 lakh registered voters set to cast their ballots on October 1, 2024. Baramulla district comprises of seven Assembly Constituencies of Sopore, Rafiabad, Uri, Baramulla, Wagoora-Kreeri, Gulmarg and Pattan with a total of 7,22,923 registered voters, including 3,64,517 male, 3,58,394 female and 12 third gender voters.

To facilitate the voters for smooth and hassle free electoral participation, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has established 908 polling stations across the district.

In order to boost voter turnout and ensure that every voter can exercise their franchise with ease,

specialized polling stations have been established across the district including Pink Polling Stations, Youth Polling Stations, PwD manned Polling Stations, Green Polling Stations, Unique Polling Stations and Model Polling Stations.

Among all the seven Assembly Constituencies of the district, 10- Baramulla Assembly Constituency has the highest number of 1,26,321 registered electorate, comprising 63,338 males and 62,978 females and 05 transgender voters.

To facilitate a smooth and inclusive voting experience for all registered voters the constituency also houses 158 polling stations, the highest number in the district.

The second highest number of electorate in the district, 08- Rafiabad Assembly Constituency with a voter population of 1,13,011, among which

57,760 are males and 55,250 are females and 01 voter is registered as transgender.

To facilitate the voters to exercise their franchise, 149 polling stations have been established in this constituency.

The 07- Sopore Assembly Constituency comes next with 1,12,793 total registered voters, of which 55,990 are males and 56,803 are females and notably, no voters are registered under the third gender category in this constituency.

To ensure thorough voter access, 129 polling stations have been established across the constituency to ensure smooth and hassle free voting process.

Similarly, 09-Uri Assembly Constituency has registered 1,04,813 electorate, among which 53,872 are males and 50,941 are females and no third gender voter are registered

in this constituency.

A total of 147 polling stations have been set up in the constituency by ECI.

Likewise, 13- Pattan Assembly Constituency has 1,03,161 electorate among which 51,251 are males and 51,908 are females while 02 are third gender voters. To facilitate the voters of this constituency, 119 polling stations have been set up.

11-Gulmarg Constituency has a total of 90,376 voters, of which 45,524 are males and 44,851 are females besides 01 third gender voters are also registered here.

In order to ensure participatory voting process, 108 polling stations have been established in the constituency.

Similarly, 12-Wagoora-Kreeri Assembly Constituency has registered 72,448 electorate, among which 36,782 are males, 35,663 are females and 03 transgender voters.

## SVEEP drive heightens voter engagement across Kishtwar

JI NEWS SERVICE  
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 12

In the lead-up to the Assembly Elections, the District Election Office Kishtwar, under the leadership of District Election Officer Rajesh Kumar Shavan, has intensified voter awareness campaign through the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) drive.

The key objective is to achieve maximum voter participation, especially targeting absentee voters, who may have been unable to vote in previous elections.

To this end, the District SVEEP Office is coordinating closely with Assembly Constituency (AC) level SVEEP Nodal Officers and a variety of local stakeholders to mobilize, educate, and engage voters across the district.

Across all Assembly constituencies, the

SVEEP campaign is organizing a variety of activities, including rallies, debates, speeches, signature campaigns, painting competitions, and slogan writing events. These initiatives are taking place in schools, public spaces, and polling booths under the supervision of AC Nodal Officers. Students, teachers, lecturers, Booth Level Officers (BLOs), Bharat Scouts & Guides (BAGs), voters, and prominent citizens are being involved in these programs to create widespread awareness about the importance of voting.

In AC 48-Inderwal, the remote area of Marwah has become a focal point for electoral awareness efforts. A range of events were held, where teachers, students, and community leaders, including the Zonal Education Officer (ZEO) Marwah and the Zonal Information Communication Coor-

ordinator (ZICC) Marwah, delivered speeches highlighting the significance of exercising the right to vote as a foundation of democracy. A unique feature of these activities was the erection of a "Democracy Signature Wall" at Marwah, where local voters left their signatures as a symbol of their commitment to participating in the upcoming elections.

The outreach extended to even the most remote areas, such as the Unique 01-Sukhnai, Polling Station in AC 48-Inderwal, one of the farthest polling stations in the district, where a similar program took place to ensure that no voter is left behind.

Several educational institutions hosted debates and symposiums, including a well-attended event at GHS Galigarh in AC 49-Kishtwar. A mega rally was taken out from GHSS Sar-

thal, where participants, accompanied by drumbeats and band masters, marched through different localities to encourage voter turnout. Poster-making competition, slogan writing activities, and speeches added to the vibrancy of the event, which saw participation from locals and prominent community figures alike. The AC 50-Nagseni Paddar witnessed an energetic SVEEP campaign, with a mega rally organized in Padyarna village of Nagseni by the SVEEP Nodal Officer and his team. An enthusiastic participation of Voters of all age groups marked the great success of the rally in the area.

The rally aimed to inform and motivate voters about the importance of participating in the upcoming elections, further contributing to the district-wide goal of maximum electoral participation.

## SVEEP: Mass Awareness program to emphasise 'Every Single Vote Counts' organized at Zadibal-AC

JI NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 12

In order to raise awareness among general public regarding the importance of voter participation in the ensuing General Elections to Legislative Assembly-2024, a mass awareness program as part of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) campaign was today organized at 24-Zadibal Assembly Constituency (AC) here, reinforcing the message that 'Every Single Vote Counts.'

The program organized by the Returning Officer (RO) of the 24-Zadibal AC aimed to engage citizens and encourage them to actively participate in the upcoming election process. A key highlight of the event was the call for universal voter participation, emphasizing that democracy thrives when everyone casts their vote.

In his address during the program, the Returning Officer stressed the power of a single vote and how it can influence the outcome of an election. He said the foundation of democracy is built upon



the participation of each and every eligible voter. "Your vote is your voice, and it has the potential to shape the future of this constituency and the state. Every vote matters, and no one should feel that their vote is insignificant," said the Returning Officer.

To reach out to the broader public, the program witnessed participation from various community stakeholders, including students, local residents, teachers, and public officials. The aim was to foster a deeper understanding of the elec-

toral process and ensure that people from all walks of life feel motivated to participate.

In a unique approach to raise awareness, the program was followed by a plantation drive and a walkathon organized by students of Islamia College of Science and Commerce and Shaheen Public School. This besides engaging the youth in understanding the election process also tied the initiative to environmental consciousness, symbolizing the nurturing of both democracy and nature. The students played a

key role in organizing the walkathon, with banners and slogans promoting voter awareness and the importance of democracy. By engaging students, the initiative highlighted the need to involve first-time voters and youth in the electoral process.

Speaking at the event, one of the student leaders from Islamia College noted, "As the future leaders of this country, it is our responsibility to take part in elections. Our participation today will shape the society we live in tomorrow. Every vote we cast is a step toward

strengthening democracy."

As part of the awareness campaign, the plantation drive and walkathon underscored the interconnection between civic responsibility and environmental stewardship. Hundreds of students participated, planting saplings around the school premises and surrounding areas. The initiative was lauded as a step toward promoting the values of sustainability, which go hand in hand with responsible citizenship. The Returning Officer expressed gratitude to Principal, Islamia College of Science and Commerce, Superintendent of Police, North / Hazratbal Srinagar, Divisional Forest Officer, Urban Forestry Srinagar, Deputy Director, Floriculture Kashmir, Chief Education Officer, Srinagar, Nodal Officer, SVEEP 24 - Zadibal AC, SDPO Khanyar/ Zadibal, Horticulture Officer, Srinagar, Principal, Shaheen Public School, Gasiyar and other stakeholders for their indispensable support and cooperation to make this event a grand success.

## District Election Office leads awareness activity under SVEEP at Budhwani Talab-Samba



JI NEWS SERVICE  
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 12

To promote voter awareness and encourage greater electoral participation, District Election Officer (DEO) Rajesh Sharma, along with SSP Vijay Kumar, led a comprehensive awareness activity today under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program here at Budhwani Talab.

Anganwadi workers and other community representatives played a crucial role in the event, actively engaging with the public to spread the message of voter empowerment and democratic participation.

The event began with a symbolic ceremony

in which flowers were placed in traditional leaf bowls and immersed in the Talab (pond) by the participants. The act represented the community's commitment to democratic values and the importance of voter engagement. The event saw the participation of several key officials, including Nodal Officer MCC, Gurpreet Singh, DIO, Pranav Manhas, other officers, Anganwadi workers, and members of the local community. Speaking at the event, the DEO emphasized the critical role of voter participation in strengthening democracy. He highlighted the ongoing efforts of the district administration to make the electoral process more accessible, particularly

for first-time voters and marginalized sections of society. SSP Vijay Kumar stressed the need for security and integrity in the electoral process and ensuring a smooth, transparent voting experience for all.

A series of awareness activities were also conducted to educate the public about voting right, the electoral process, and the importance of having their names registered on the voters' list. The SVEEP campaign in Samba aims to significantly boost voter turnout in the district.

Nodal Officer SVEEP, Ekshu Sharma, who organized the event, spoke about the role of the SVEEP campaign in raising awareness across the district.