

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 abdominal pain
- Disorientation
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Severe pain joints or muscles, severe aches or pain

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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4 soldiers injured in Kishtwar encounter ahead of PM Modi's Doda visit

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEP 13

Four soldiers injured after a gunfight erupted between terrorists and security forces in the Kishtwar district of Chenab Valley area where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address an election rally on Saturday.



Moreover, Additional Director General of Police, Jammu Anand Jain said that the "Exchange of fire has taken place between search teams of security forces and hiding terrorists at Pingnal Dugadda forest area, upper reaches of Naidgham village under the jurisdiction of Chhatroo Police Station, Kishtwar district."

According to sources, the encounter began when the Jammu and Kashmir Police, along with the army, launched an anti-militancy operation

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Assembly Elections-2024

Scrutiny of nomination papers completed for Phase 3; Candidature of 449 candidates found valid

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 13

In accordance with the election schedule issued by Election Commission of India (ECI) for the conduct of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Elections 2024, the scrutiny of nomination papers for 40 Assembly Constituencies which are going to polling in third and final phase was held on Friday, in the office of the respective Returning Officers across seven districts of the UT.

During the scrutiny of the 518 nomination papers filed by 486 can-

didates, candidature of 449 candidates was found valid as per the guidelines of the Election Commission of India.

A statement from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer detailed the scrutiny process held today.

Nomination papers of 113 candidates were found valid in Jammu district, followed by 107 in Baramulla district, 75 in Kupwara district, 46 in Bandipora district, 38 in Kathua district, 38 in Udhampur district, while nomination papers of 32 candidates have been

found valid and accordingly accepted in Samba district.

In Jammu division, for the four ACs in Udhampur district, nomination papers of 13 candidates were found valid in 59-Udhampur West AC; 9 in 60-Udhampur East AC; 9 in 61-Chenani AC; while nomination papers of 7 candidates have been accepted in 62-Ramnagar (SC) AC.

In Kathua district, nomination papers of 9 candidates were found valid in 63-Bani AC; 4 in 64-Billawar AC; 5 in 65-Basohli AC; 9 in 66-Jas-

rota AC; 5 in 67-Kathua (SC) AC; while nomination papers of 6 candidates have been accepted in 68-Hiranagar AC.

In Samba district, nomination papers of 7 candidates were found valid in 69-Ramgarh (SC) AC; 14 in 70-Samba AC; while nomination papers of 11 candidates have been accepted in 71-Vijaypur AC.

For the eleven ACs in Jammu district, nomination papers of 11 candidates were found valid in 72-Bishnah (SC) AC; 13 in 73-Suchetgarh (SC) AC; 14 in 74-R.S. Pura -

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PM Modi to address election rally in Doda today

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEP 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday to address an election rally in Doda district of Chenab valley region where party has fielded eight candidates.

This would be Prime Minister's first campaign event in poll bound Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir after the assembly polls were announced.

As per the news agency, PM Modi is scheduled to address a BJP election rally in Doda Sports Stadium, which is considered as center place for Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban districts where voting for eight Assembly seats of Chenab Valley is scheduled on

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LG interacts with Gymnasts & Coaches who attended the National Advanced Rhythmic Gymnastics Training Camp at Srinagar



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 13

Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha today interacted with women Gymnasts from States and UTs, who attended the National Advanced Rhythmic Gymnastics Training Camp at Srinagar. The athletes were accompanied by

Indian and foreign coaches and other team officials.

The 21-day long Training Camp, organized by J&K Sports Council in collaboration with Gymnastics Federation of India and Gymnastics Association of J&K, was conducted under the expert guidance of foreign coach from Azerbaijan, Ms. Dilbar Ibrahimova

and Arjuna Awardee Ms. Krupali Singh.

Interacting with the Gymnasts and Coaches at Raj Bhawan, the Lt Governor highlighted the transformation in sports sector of the UT of J&K.

Modern sports infrastructure, world-class training centres,

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Lt Governor visits Chotay Taray Foundation Centre in Srinagar



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 13

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Friday visited Chotay Taray Foun-

ation Centre at Bemina, Srinagar.

During his visit, the Lt Governor met with the children with

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Will join him in Tihar Jail if he withdraws from election: Omar Abdullah challenges Er Rashid

JI NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, SEP 13

National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Friday issued a challenge to Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) chief Engineer Rashid, promising he will accompany him to Tihar Jail if he withdraws from the election field.

Er Rashid had previously challenged Abdullah to join him in Tihar Jail, with the condition that he would step away from the polls if Abdullah did so.

Talking to reporters, Omar, according to the news agency, said that he is prepared to accom-



pany Sheikh to Tihar Jail if Sheikh withdraws from the electoral contest in favour of the National Conference.

He also raised concerns about the AIP president's silence regarding his posi-

tion on a possible post-poll alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which was brought up during a seminar.

The former chief minister criticised Er Rashid's supporters for believing

that their votes could lead to his release from jail.

"The people of Baramulla were befooled that their votes will help Er Rashid to get released, but the fact is that the court is the only way one can come out of jail," he said.

He urged voters to support NC-Congress alliance candidates to prevent the BJP and its allies from gaining power and to ensure justice and employment for the youth.

"NC and Congress are steadfast in not aligning with the BJP, while other parties seem ready to collaborate with it," he said.

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Triangular contest giving edge to BJP on Baderwah seat

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEP 13

Since the National Conference (NC) and Congress are having a friendly contest, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is slightly having an edge on Baderwah Assembly constituency in a triangular contest in the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

The 2014 winning candidate Daleep Singh Parihar, who has a good reputation among the downtrodden section of society irrespective of their religion, is up against Congress party's Nadeem Sharief Niaz and NC's Sheikh Mebooba Iqbal.

As per the news agency there are 10 candidates

in the fray including the candidates from BJP, Congress, NC, Bahujan Samaj Party, J&K Apni Party, Shiv Sena, J&K All Alliance Democratic Party and four independents.

According to the data issued by Election Commission of India, a total of 124568 electorates are eligible to vote which include 63944 male and 60618 female and six transgender voters.

This constituency will go for polls during the first phase of Assembly elections on September 18 alongside 23 other constituencies of Chenab valley and South Kashmir.

Traditionally, this constituency has remained a stronghold of the Congress

party but NC also had control over it for a longer time in the past.

After 2002 elections, Congress party emerged a major player and even former chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad also got elected to Legislative Assembly from Baderwah constituency after he took over reins of J&K from Mufti Muhammad Sayeed during PDP-Congress coalition government in 2005.

In 2014, things took a turn and the Modi wave swept Chenab valley like other parts of Jammu region and Baderwah was no different when Daleep Singh Parihar emerged as the winner.

At that point of time,

Parihar's win was being attributed to the division of Muslim votes between Congress, NC and PDP while BJP took the maximum of votes of Hindus which helped the saffron party to win.

This time also, NC and Congress—both have fielded their candidates for a friendly fight, but there are chances that BJP may again take advantage of division of votes.

There is another reason which is a major cause of concern among the voters. Congress candidate Nadeem Sharief Niaz hails from Bhalessa area whereas NC candidate Sheikh Mehbooba Iqbal is from Baderwah town.

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Tarun Chugh slams Engineer Rashid for "Divisive Politics," Reaffirms BJP's zero tolerance on Terrorism

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 13

In an effort to shake the political scenario of Jammu and Kashmir, it is no less than a candid statement by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National General Secretary Tarun Chugh, as he has targeted Engineer Rashid with accusations of promoting "divisive politics" and playing a counterproductive role in the region's road to peace and development.

This is yet another rise in temperature for the BJP through political rhetoric ahead of the upcoming



assembly elections in the region.

While talking with media, as per Chugh

explained the BJP's zero tolerance policy against terrorism, stating that his

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party was committed to peace in Jammu and Kashmir. "There will be no tolerance against terrorism.

Our party is committed to the peace, prosperity and progress of Jammu and Kashmir," Chugh ascertained to an audience highlighting no-nonsense policy of BJP.

While Engineer Rashid certainly took the full brunt of the attack by Chugh, the BJP leader did not stop there. Chugh also tore into traditional regional strongmen, including the Abdullas and Muftis who have dominated the political land-

scape in Jammu and Kashmir for many decades.

Chugh's remarks come at a time when the BJP is seriously working to consolidate its presence in J&K, taking on the two dominant political dynasties of the National Conference headed by the Abdullah family and the Peoples Democratic Party led by Mehbooba Mufti.

The two families, especially the Muftis, have been under attack from the BJP leadership for their tie-ups in the past and failure to bring stability in the volatile region.

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Kishtwar voters torn between local and national issues

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 13

Known for its famed saffron fields and hydroelectric power projects, the Kishtwar assembly seat is witnessing a high-stakes triangular contest as the region prepares for the upcoming elections.

The National Conference (NC), People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are all fighting for victory, with voters torn between local and national issues.

As per the news agency, the NC and PDP are focusing on key local concerns,

including the employment of local youth in hydro power projects, unannounced power cuts, and the lack of free electricity in surrounding areas.

Meanwhile, the BJP is banking on national issues such as security and development to attract voters.

Historically, the Kishtwar assembly seat, created in 1962, has been dominated by the National Conference, which has won six times. The Congress has also had a strong presence, securing three consecutive victories, while the BJP has only won once – in 2014, when Sunil Sharma

defeated two-time MLA Sajjad Ahmed Kichloo of the NC by a margin of 4.63 percent votes. This year, the election will be held on September 18 as part of the first phase of voting.

Sajjad Ahmed Kichloo, the joint candidate of the NC and Congress, is once again a key contender, seeking to reclaim his seat. Kichloo, the son of three-time MLA Bashir Ahmed Kichloo, has already served two terms. On the other side, the BJP has placed its hopes on Shagun Parihar, the niece of martyr Anil Parihar, a significant choice

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DEO Poonch inaugurates Inter-District Division-Level Under-19 Girls Football Tournament under SVEEP Initiative

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 13

District Election Officer (DEO) Poonch, Vikas Kundal declared the Inter-District Division Level Under -19 Girls Football Tournament open here on the Sports Stadium, today.

The tournament is being held under the banner of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, aiming to raise voter awareness, especially among first-time women voters, in the lead-up to the upcoming Assembly elections.

The teams from four districts—Kathua, Jammu, Samba, and Poonch participated in the competition. Moolraj Uttam, District Youth and Sports Officer, welcomed the participants and introduced the teams to the audience.



The DEO interacted with the players, urging them to not only participate in the electoral process but also to act as advocates for democracy by encouraging others to vote. The

tournament seeks to cultivate a sense of civic responsibility among the players, especially those voting for the first time, through sports and community engagement.

In his address, DEO Poonch highlighted the significance of the event, both as a showcase of athletic talent and as a platform to encourage greater electoral participation among young women.

"Empowering women through both sports and the electoral process is crucial for a vibrant and healthy democracy. These young athletes are not only demonstrating their skills on the field but also learning about their essential role in shaping the country's future by voting," said DEO Kundal.

In the opening match of the tournament, Kathua's team triumphed over Jammu with a 3-1 victory, setting an exciting tone for the competition ahead.

SVEEP event hosted at GHSS Kashtigarh



J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, SEPTEMBER 13

A SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) activity was successfully organized today at Higher Secondary School (HSS) Kashtigarh under the supervision of Nodal Officer for Assembly Constituency 53 West, Dr. Kailash Kumar. The event

was held in collaboration with Degree College Kashtigarh. The School Principal Koshal Kumar, staff members graced the occasion. Around 200 students and 20 officials participated in the activity, with a total of around 600 students and 50 officials from across Assembly Constituency 53 West, Doda West taking part in today's SVEEP activities.

Postal Ballot Voting held for Polling, Associated Staff in Bhandarwah



J1 NEWS SERVICE
BHADERWAH, SEPTEMBER 13

The process of postal ballot voting for trainee polling parties and associated civilian staff commenced today in Bhandarwah.

Facilitation centres have been set up in the Community Hall and the Returning Officer's (RO) office to ensure smooth voting for those engaged in election duties. These polling parties, who will be stationed at various polling booths during the upcoming J&K Assembly Elections 2024, are casting their votes in advance to fulfill their civic responsibility.

The postal ballot system is being extended to a wide range of individuals involved in election duties, including police personnel, driv-

ers, conductors, cleaners of election vehicles, and videographers. The initiative ensures that all members of the election workforce, including non-government workers, can exercise their right to vote without disrupting their assigned duties on Election Day.

This process, a vital part of ensuring fair and inclusive elections, guarantees that those who facilitate the voting process are also provided the opportunity to vote. The facilitation centres in Bhandarwah are equipped with the necessary infrastructure and support staff to guide voters and ensure efficient handling of the postal ballots. The system is crucial to safeguarding the democratic rights of election personnel.

SVEEP Campaign boosts voter awareness at unique Polling Station in Doda

J1 NEWS SERVICE
DODA, SEPTEMBER 13

To encourage voter participation and awareness, a comprehensive voter awareness campaign was organized today at Polling Station 01 Barath in Assembly Constituency 52, Doda East. The campaign, under the banner of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program, was spearheaded by Assembly Level Nodal Officer for SVEEP Omar Sharief. Polling Station 01 Barath, recognized as a unique polling station in the constituency, became the focal point of this campaign, fostering greater awareness among the local electorate.

The Nodal Officer emphasized the critical role that every vote plays in shaping the future of the constituency and the state. He highlighted the importance of active voter participation to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process. Sharief also provided detailed guidance on the proper usage of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), ensuring that voters are well-prepared and confident when casting their vote on Election Day.

Voter awareness program-Divyangjan Shakti organised for PwDs at Reasi

J1 NEWS SERVICE
REASI, SEPTEMBER 13

A voter awareness camp, part of a series of SVEEP programs, was held here today focusing on electoral education of Divyang persons of the District.

The Participating Divyangjans pledged to cast their vote and become a role model for society. The participants were educated about the "SAKSHAM Portal" launched by the ECI. They were informed about the facilities such as ramps and wheelchair accessibility at polling stations, besides the provision for home voting provided for elderly and specially abled voters by ECI and District Election authority.

The initiatives have been introduced to ensure that every PwD and elderly person can participate in the voting process with ease and dignity, they were told.

SVEEP activity plan, booth level election preparation reviewed in Kishtwar

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 13

District Election Officer (DEO) Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan chaired a meeting with SVEEP Team & Booth Level Officers (BLOs) of the district here today to assess the Booth level election preparedness for the upcoming General Election to the Legislative Assembly 2024. The meeting saw participation of Nodal Officer SVEEP, DFOs, AC Level Nodal Officers and the BLOs across the district's three Assembly Constituencies (ACs), who joined online.

The DEO underscored the pivotal role of BLOs in the election process, emphasizing their responsibility as the ground-level facilitators. He asked BLOs to personally engage with absentee voters of the last election and work closely to facilitate their visit to the polling stations on polling day.

The DEO asked for providing every possible assistance to bring absentee voters, ensuring they can actively participate in this election process. The DEO exhorted upon the BLOs to conduct extensive aware-



ness campaigns along with BAGs polling station-wise and ward-wise to inform the public to exercise their right to vote. He also said that good performers will be rewarded. He further emphasized early distribution of voter slips to avoid inconvenience to voters on the polling day.

DEO encouraged BLOs to intensify and align Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities with ongoing environmental initiatives such as Swachhata and plantation drives to promote both electoral awareness and environmental sustain-

ability.

A detailed discussion ensued on election management, including Assured Minimum Facility (AMF) in Polling Booths, training of BLOs, poll day arrangements, conducting mock polls, hourly reporting on polling day, polling booth beautification for giving a festival touch to elections and facilitation of postal ballot voting, including home voting options. The DEO also reviewed plans for Green SVEEP activities and Booth Awareness Group initiatives, which are designed to further enhance voter engagement.

Home Voting process continues across 07 ACs in Anantnag District



J1 NEWS SERVICE
ANANTNAG, SEPTEMBER 13

Home Voting continued today in seven Assembly Constituencies of the district Anantnag, with home voters who had in prior registered for such voting facility enthusiastically casting their vote through postal ballot.

To facilitate this initiative, dedicated teams have been deployed in all seven

Assembly Constituencies. The teams comprising specially trained officials are visiting the residences of eligible voters to assist them in casting their vote in a secure and confidential manner. This initiative is part of the broader efforts by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to make voting accessible and inclusive for all citizens, irrespective of their physical limitations.

Excise Department conducts raids on Brick Kilns at Nowvothoo-Anantnag



J1 NEWS SERVICE
ANANTNAG, SEPTEMBER 13

On the directions of the Excise Commissioner, Subash Chander Chibber and under the supervision of Dy. Excise Commissioner Executive Kashmir, Tazayun Mukhtar, the Excise Range South Kashmir conducted a series of raids at brick kilns located in Village Nowvothoo of District Anantnag.

During the raid, the team uncovered 20 litres of Lahan adjacent to one of the brick kilns. The said Lahan was kept hidden and was destroyed on spot by the Excise Team.

The illicit substance was immediately destroyed on the spot. The owners of the brick kilns were duly

informed about the severe legal repercussions associated with illicit distillation.

In addition to the enforcement action, the senior citizens of the locality were sensitized regarding the social and health hazards of illicit liquor. They were urged to report if any such illegal activities happen in their area to the officials of the Excise Department promptly.

This operation underscores the commitment of the Excise Department to curb the illegal production and distribution of illicit liquor in the region. Further actions will continue to be taken to ensure compliance with the law and to protect public health and safety.

General Observer for 48-Inderwal oversees Polling Staff Training

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 13

The General Observer for the 48-Inderwal Assembly Constituency, Dr. A Arun Thamburaj participated in a key training session for polling staff, including personnel designated for Women-Centric Polling Stations. The training was held in the DIET Meeting Hall, Kishtwar, in preparation for the upcoming Assembly Elections.

The session was designed to equip polling staff with comprehensive knowledge of electoral procedures, protocols, and responsibilities, ensuring the smooth and transparent conduct of the elections.

Dr. Thamburaj emphasized the critical role polling personnel play in maintaining the integrity of the democratic process, ensuring that elections are free, fair, and transparent.

The training program was also attended by the Returning Officer for the



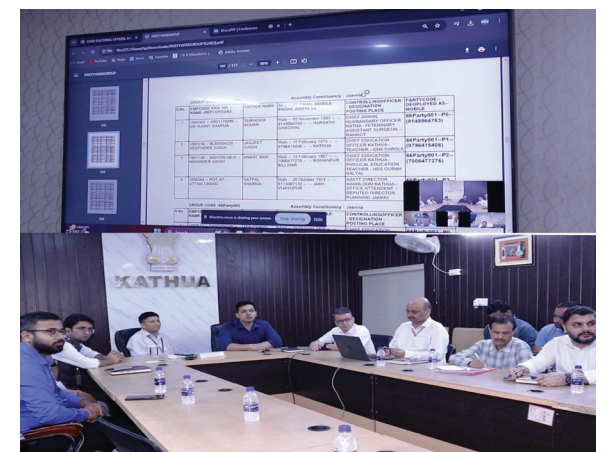
48-Inderwal constituency, Nodal Officer for Training, Riaz Ahmed Butt, and other key officials.

Addressing the participants, he reiterated the importance of vigilance, proper conduct, and adherence to electoral guidelines during the election process.

The General Observer commended the efforts of the district administration in organizing the training and stressed that all necessary measures should

be in place to facilitate efficient and transparent elections. Special emphasis was laid on the role of polling staff in managing Women-Centric Polling Stations, ensuring that these stations are inclusive and accessible to all voters. The session marks a significant step in the preparations for the upcoming Assembly Elections, with all stakeholders working collaboratively to ensure that the democratic process is upheld in Kishtwar.

Second randomization of Polling Staff held at Kathua



J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 13

The second randomization of polling staff for the upcoming Assembly elections was held today in the Video Conferencing Room of the District Election Officer (DEO) Kathua.

The process was overseen by DEO Dr. Rakesh Minhas (DC), along with the General Observers Dorje Chhering Negi and Aisha Masrat Khanam, besides Returning Officers from all six Assembly Constituencies.

Key officials, including Nodal Officer for the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) Ranjit Singh (ADC), Nodal Officer for Training Ranjit Thakur (CPO), and Nodal Officer for IT & Use of Technology, Vevek Sharma (DIO NIC), Dy.

DEO Nagesh Singh, were also present to ensure smooth and transparent proceedings.

The randomization process, carried out in line with Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines, utilized the dedicated software provided by the ECI.

Through this software, polling staff were assigned to various Assembly Constituencies (ACs) with a 20% additional allocation to account for any contingencies that may arise during the election process.

The DEO emphasized the importance of ensuring fairness and transparency in the randomization process, which plays a key role in maintaining the integrity of the electoral process.

DC Poonch reviews preparations for Eid-Milad-Un-Nabi (SAW)

J1 NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 13

Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Vikas Kundal convened a meeting here today to assess the preparations for Eid Milad-un-Nabi (S.A.W). The discussions centred on ensuring essential services and smooth management of the religious Day.

DC Kundal directed the concerned departments to ensure the seamless availability of essential services, particularly during the festival. The Food, Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs, and Legal Metrology depart-

ments were instructed to conduct regular market inspections to ensure the availability of quality food items at reasonable prices. Additionally, food safety protocols were discussed to ensure public health. Special focus was placed on maintaining cleanliness and sanitation, particularly in and around religious Places and market areas.

The meeting was attended by SSP Poonch, ADC, ACR, and officials from Traffic Police, Transport, Power, Health, PHE, Food and Civil Supplies, Food and Civil Supplies, and other concerned departments.

General Observer for Srinagar Rajan Vishal visits MCMC, reviews working, functioning

JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 13

General Observer for Srinagar, Rajan Vishal today visited Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) and Media Centre Srinagar, operating from DC office Complex, here and over-saw their functioning.

The General Observer stressed that Social media is the new and never ending domain, and the need is to lay equal focus on it and not miss any issue that may have serious consequences. He also emphasized to remain on-board across all social media platforms for wider monitoring.

During the visit, the Observer checked the duty roster, weekly google sheet submitted for suspected and confirmed cases of paid news and daily reports of vari-



ous forms of media.

The Nodal Officer MCMC briefed the Observer regarding the overall functioning of the Committee. He informed that separate teams are on the job to monitor all forms of media to flag the paid news, advertisements, misinformation and disinformation.

He also apprised about mechanism put in place for hassle free pre-certification of political advertisements across various media platforms, including print, TV, radio, etc.

In addition to monitoring advertisements, he informed that real-time election-related information to the public, media

and other stakeholders is being provided round the clock to ensure that all developments during the election process are effectively communicated.

The General Observer was accompanied by ADC Srinagar, Khalid Hussain and other Officers and officials.

Training Session for Micro Observers held at Reasi in presence of General Observers

JINNEWS SERVICE
REASI, SEPTEMBER 13

In preparation for the upcoming J&K Assembly Elections 2024, the District Election Office Reasi conducted a full-day training program for Micro Observers today.

The session was attended by General Observer for AC-56 Gulbargarh (ST), Saroj Kumar Sethi, IAS and General Observer for AC-57 Reasi and AC-58 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Avi Prasad, IAS along with Nodal Officer Human Resource Sukhdev Sambyal and Nodal Officer Training Mohd Anwar Bandy.

The Observers emphasized the importance of these training programs in preparing poll staff for their responsibilities throughout the election process. The aim of the training was to equip Micro Observers with the essential skills and knowl-



edge required to ensure a free, fair, and efficient electoral process within the Constituency.

During the sessions, experts provided both theoretical and practical insights into the roles and duties of Micro Observers. The Observers highlighted that such training is cru-

cial for familiarizing poll staff with their responsibilities during the pre-election, Election Day, and post-election phases.

Speaking about the training, the Observers said that the training programmes are pivotal to sensitize poll staff with their roles and responsi-

bilities during pre-election, Election Day and post-election phases. Other present were Nodal Officer Human resource Sukhdev Singh Samyal, Nodal officer training Mohd Anwar Bandy, SDM Dharmari Tariq Aziz, District Master training and others.

SVEEP aligns with green initiative to promote voter awareness in Rajouri

JINNEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 13

A series of impactful Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) events were aligned with Green Initiative to promote voter awareness across five Assembly Constituencies of Rajouri District.

In AC-87 Thanamandi, the SVEEP team, led by Dr. Ather Aziz Raina, organized a Green Initiative at Yaseen English Public School Thanamandi, which included a plantation drive and a voter awareness campaign. The event, graced by Election Observer, Tikam Chand Bohra, featured a lecture by Mohammad Ayaz Raina (District SVEEP Team Member) on the importance of voter participation. A voter pledge was taken by attendees, reaffirming their commitment to the electoral process.

A grand rally, coordinated by Nodal Officer, J.P. Singh and supervised



by Returning Officer, Babu Ram Tandon was taken out in AC-84 Nowshera. Commencing from Government Girls Higher Secondary School, rally engaged over 1,500 students drawn from Government Degree College Nowshera, Boys HSS Nowshera, GBHSS Nowshera, TMP HSS Nowshera, New National Higher Secondary School Nowshera, Ambica High School Nowshera & Mother's Shadow High School, Nowshera. The Mega Rally was flagged-off by RO AC-84 Nowshera (ADC) in

presence of District Nodal Officer SVEEP Bishamber Dass (CEO Rajouri)

& other dignitaries. The event aimed to boost civic engagement and readiness for the Assembly Elections on 25th September 2024, with notable participation from Vinod Sharma Ji, PwD icon District Rajouri.

In AC-83 Kalakote-Sunderbani, a voter awareness program at Harsh Niketan HSS focused on electoral literacy. The program, supervised by Babu Singh, Nodal Officer SVEEP, featured motivational speeches and poetry by Muddasir Mughal.

The event was well-received by staff and students, culminating in a voter pledge and calls for

increased electoral participation.

AC-85 Rajouri hosted a macro awareness program in Sawani village, which included motivational lectures, a plantation drive, and a large rally with 350 participants. The event successfully engaged local residents and highlighted the importance of voter participation.

In AC-86 Budhal, Nodal Officer Prof. Tahir Nadeem addressed low polling rates at Rajnagar polling station by interacting with BAG members and planting a sapling to signify a commitment to democratic values.

Jammu District fully prepared for smooth conduct of Assembly Election: DEO

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 13

District Election Officer Sachin Kumar Vaishya today said that Jammu District is well prepared for smooth conduct of polling scheduled on October 1, 2024- the third and last phase of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Elections.

He was giving an overview of the overall preparedness and arrangements for elections at a meeting attended by General Observers, D. Amoy Kumar, Gopala Krishan K., Abhinav Chandra, Monica Malik, D. Sajith Babu, Priyanka Das, along with Expenditure Observers Amaresh Kumar Tiwari, B.K. Vishnu Priya and Gayatri M, and Police Observer Manav Verma.

Nodal Officers responsible for various aspects of the elections were also



present at the meeting.

During the discussions, the Observers stressed on strict enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct and laid emphasis on ensuring that any violations are promptly dealt with to maintain the sanctity of the electoral process.

The Observers particularly highlighted the use of the eVigil app as a tool to empower both officials and citizens to report MCC violations in real-time. They also directed the officers to ensure that all necessary emergency contact numbers, including those of the DEO office

and BLOs, are prominently displayed and accessible to the public.

The DEO, along with the Observers, further discussed key aspects such as the role of polling parties, the need for compliance with photography and videography norms and measures to ensure free, fair and transparent polling. Logistics, security arrangements and potential poll day challenges were also reviewed in detail.

All participating officers were briefed on their respective duties and responsibilities for the polling phase.

Among the Nodal Officers present at the meeting were Additional District Development Commissioner Sher Singh, Additional Deputy Commissioners Anshu Jamwal and Shishir Gupta, Director IT/DIO NIC Jammu Sanjeev Kapoor and Assistant Commissioner Development Dr. Vikas Sharma, among others.

The meeting concluded with a call for coordinated efforts to ensure the seamless conduct of elections across the district, with a strong focus on maintaining law and order and safeguarding the democratic process.

Enthusiastic voter participation marks 2nd Day of Home Voting in Doda



JINNEWS SERVICE
DODA, SEPTEMBER 13

The second day of home voting for the three Assembly Constituencies in Doda District-AC 51 Bhaderwah, AC 52 Doda, and AC 53 Doda West, witnessed enthusiastic participation from the electorates.

In a remarkable display of civic engagement, voters eligible for home voting availed the opportunity to cast their ballots with great zeal.

The Election Commission of India initiative to ensure ease and accessibility for voters, particularly the elderly, differently-abled, and those unable to visit polling stations, was well-received and resulted in significant voter turnout across the district. District Election Officer Harvinder Singh, expressed satisfaction over the smooth conduct of the process, praising the coordination between the polling staff and security personnel,

which contributed to the successful execution of the day's proceedings.

The efforts to uphold the highest standards of safety, transparency, and efficiency were evident throughout the process.

The home voting initiative in Doda District, aimed at promoting inclusivity and ensuring that no voter is left behind, continues to gain momentum as the Assembly Elections-2024 progress.

SVEEP Program meets Green Election initiative in District Kishtwar

JINNEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 13

In a significant convergence of environmental and electoral awareness efforts, the SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) program joined hands with the Green Election initiative in Kishtwar District in view of forthcoming Assembly Election.

A major event was organized at the SDM Office in Marwah, witnessing participation of SDM Dr. Mohd Ashraf, BDO Shashank Singh and other key officials. Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) were among the active participants, showcasing the community's engagement in the campaign.

As part of the Election Commission's ongoing initiative to plant trees at each polling station, a plantation drive was conducted at UPS Boys Nawapachi and the SDM office, emphasizing the connection between voter education and environmental conservation.

Similarly, Plantation drives were conducted at Polling stations including

43- Bachhan, 66-Mullar in AC 48-Indrawal.

In the AC 49-Kishtwar Assembly Constituency, a large-scale awareness program was held at Dadpeth, followed by a plantation drive. Various polling stations across the constituency also saw active participation in these eco-conscious activities.

The 50-Nagseni Paddar Assembly Constituency also witnessed similar SVEEP campaign activities, further strengthening the district's commitment to combining voter awareness with environmental sustainability.

It is noteworthy that the Election Commission of India (ECI) aims to plant over one lakh trees during the J&K Assembly Elections 2024 under its 'Green Election' initiative.

In collaboration with the J&K Forest Department, the Chief Electoral office, under the close supervision of District Election Officers, are organizing plantation drives at polling stations. Over 100 trees each will be planted at identified "Green Polling Stations", while 10-15 trees will be planted at other PSS. The target completion date is September 15, 2024.

Expenditure Observer Shopian visits VSTs sites, asks for booking expenditure accurately as per Ground Truthing



JINNEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 13

The Expenditure Observer (EO) for Shopian, Nelapata Ashok Babu today visited Paderpora and Amerbugh villages of the district to inspect the working of Video Surveillance Teams (VSTs) deployed for keeping track on expenditure monitoring of contesting candidates. The visit was part of the preparations for the Assembly elections, scheduled on 18 September, 2024 in the district.

Expenditure Observer

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

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.

Four Video Surveillance Teams are deployed in both ACs of the district, who visit campaigning sites of contesting candidates and capture entire

events through videography, before its submission with the Video Viewing team who in coordination with the Accounting team book the actual expenditures of contesting candidates in their expenditure registers as per the ground truthing reported through videography.

The teams work under Expenditure Monitoring Nodal Officer, mandated to ensure the proper expenditure monitoring for the conduct of fair and transparent elections.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

PM Modi to address...

September 18.

During the 2014 Assembly elections, PM Modi addressed the BJP poll rally in Kishtwar district and party won four out of six segments but this time after delimitations number of seats rose to eight.

Party sources said the people of Doda had since then been demanding that they want to see and hear the PM.

"The choice of Doda as the venue for tomorrow's election rally was made by the PM himself," party sources said.

BJP sources said the visit by the Prime Minister will definitely boost the electoral prospects of party candidates in the UT.

A high alert has already been sounded in the entire Chenab Valley region with the security forces and the police maintaining their ubiquitous presence to secure the VVIP and the large number of people who turn out to hear him.

The BJP has already said that its star campaigner, the Prime Minister, will visit J&K for electioneering in every phase of the Assembly elections.

The party is contesting all 43 Assembly seats in the Jammu division. In the last J&K assembly, BJP had 25 MLAs.

PM Modi is also expected to visit the Valley on September 19 when he will address another BJP election rally in Srinagar city.

Voting in the three phases of J&K polls is being held on September 18, September 25 and October 01. The counting of votes will take place on October 8.

J&K is seeing an Assembly election after 10 years and its first after the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A.

In 2014 the state had a PDP-BJP coalition led by Mehbooba Mufti. The coalition fell in June 2018 when the BJP pulled out of the coalition. J&K was placed under the Governor's rule. The then state governor, Satya Pal Malik later dissolved the Assembly. On August 5, 2019 Article 370 was abrogated and the state bifurcated into two UTs of J&K and Ladakh.

Army Commander Northern reviews security

Lt Gen MV Suchindra Kumar, Army Commander Northern Command, accompanied by GOC White Knight Corps, visited Dharmund and the CIF Delta to assess the prevailing security situation. During the visit, he was briefed on the current modalities and the operational preparedness of the forces stationed there.

According to an official post by the Northern Command on social media, Lt Gen Kumar praised the efforts of the troops, emphasizing the need to uphold high morale and professionalism to tackle future challenges effectively. KNO

Tarun Chugh slams...

The Abdullahs and Muftis have retarded this state's progress for decades. And now we have Engineer Rashid, who is no different. His politics has only worked to divide the people, which has led to unrest," Chugh asserted with confidence.

During his address, he termed Rashid's politics part of an extended web of what he called "the divisive forces" that have been doing harm to the region.

Engineer Rashid is a highly popular independent politician, chief of Jammu and Kashmir Awami Ittehad Party (AIP), who seldom misses a headline for his diatribes or heavy-worded attacks on both regional and national leaderships.

A populist appeal attributed to Rashid has been very vocal about Kashmiri identity, self-determination, and the right to self-rule, which frequently clashes with the BJP ideology of national integration.

With his vocal stance on contentious issues like Article 370 and criticism of the BJP's role in Jammu and Kashmir, Rashid has grown into a major adversary of the party's agenda. But the direct attack by Chugh heralds a new phase in the BJP's electoral strategy-by marking Rashid as a key player whose influence they seek to undermine.

Chugh accused Rashid of milking the vulnerabilities of the region to political advantage, saying his leadership has "fueled division and resentment" among the people. "Engineer Rashid must answer for the instability he has contributed to. He pretends to stand for the people, but his actions only deepen the divides in the society," said Chugh, highlighting Rashid as a source of instability versus the BJP's promise of development and national unity.

Chugh further extended his attack to national figures like Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, too, which also falls in line with the larger political discourse of the BJP. Chugh said the policies framed by them did not succeed in solving major problems in Jammu and Kashmir and thus engaged the region in a continuous bag of troubled times".

"Even the legacies of Gandhi and Nehru have contributed to this ongoing turmoil. The mistakes of the past should not be repeated. We are determined to correct these historical errors and bring Jammu and Kashmir into a new era of peace and prosperity," said Chugh.

Chugh's speech is part of the larger effort by the BJP to redefine its political footprint in Jammu and Kashmir-a region where it has traditionally found it difficult to get a foothold. The voiding of Article 370 in 2019 marked a turning point that finally allowed the BJP to project itself as the party of strong leadership and decisive action.

Under Modi, the BJP has focussed on showcasing Jammu and Kashmir as a transforming region. Economic development, investment in infrastructure, and also a crackdown on terrorism have become central to the party's messaging.

People of Jammu and Kashmir deserve better than politics of division. The BJP will usher in peace and development in each and every part of this region. We will not allow divisive leaders like Engineer Rashid to come in the way of progress," Chugh concluded, appealing to the voters to vote for BJP in the coming elections.

The political sparring between the BJP and regional leaders like Engineer Rashid is likely to get shriller in the run-up to assembly elections. The latter, who often projected himself as an outsider willing to take on the

political establishment, is most likely to respond with sharp counter-arguments in the coming days.

For now, Chugh's impassive speech suggests the BJP will leave no stone unturned in its pursuit of conquering the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir, marking the beginning of a high-pitched electoral season.

The question is whether the electorate in Jammu and Kashmir will buy into this messaging of national integration and progress being sold by the BJP or will stick with regional leaders championing Kashmiri identity and self-governance. And only time will tell which narrative resonates more as the political battle heats up.

Triangular contest...

People of both the areas hardly vote for a candidate from another region whereas a BJP candidate has footings in both the areas and will get the votes from either side, which will also benefit him.

The Ghulam Nabi Azad led Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) candidate Muhammad Aslam Goni withdrew his nomination form on August 30, which will somehow stop the further division of votes, especially from Baderwah. KNO

4 soldiers injured...

based on specific intelligence inputs. Terrorists, who were hiding in the area, opened fire on the search party, prompting retaliation from security forces.

Reports suggest that at least four Jaish-e-Muhammad terrorists are trapped in the Chatroo area of Kishtwar where the encounter is currently going on and search operation has been intensified to nearby areas of the encounter area. The Jammu and Kashmir Police, along with the army, surrounded the area to neutralise the terrorists. KNO

Will join him in Tihar...

Omar reiterated that the National Conference is committed to addressing all critical issues, including Article 370 and employment, and remains resolute in its opposition to BJP policies.

"The party is fighting to exclude BJP from power and to reverse the changes made on August 5, 2019," he said.

Er Rashid, who was recently released on bail by a Delhi court to campaign in Jammu & Kashmir, reacted to Abdullah's remarks by questioning the credibility of the challenge.

Speaking to reporters in Anantnag, the AIP chief said that Abdullah lost the Lok Sabha election by over 2 lakh votes. "What challenge will he (Omar) give me as he lost the Lok Sabha election by over 2 lakh votes," he said.

The Member of Parliament (MP) from Baramulla dismissed accusations of separatism, saying, "If speaking truth is separatism then I'm proud to be a separatist. By calling us separatist voters, Delhi must think if voters are separatists then no one is with India in Kashmir," he said. KNO

LG interacts with Gymnasts...

coaching, mentoring and other necessary facilities have helped J&K make a mark on the national and global sporting stage. The increased participation of youth, especially the girls in sports and their achievement is heartening, he said.

The Lt Governor appreciated the J&K Sports Council and other stakeholders for their efforts to nurture the young talent of Jammu Kashmir. He also extended his felicitations and best wishes to the young gymnasts and coaches for their future games.

On the occasion, Gymnastics Coach from Azerbaijan and Gymnasts also shared the experience of their visit to Jammu Kashmir.

Sh Sudhir Mital, President, Gymnastics Federation of India; Sh Sarmad Hafeez, Secretary, Youth Services & Sports Department; Ms Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council; Er. Kiran Wattal, President, Gymnastics Association of J&K and office-bearers of Sports Council and Gymnastics Association were present.

Lt Governor visits Chotay...

special needs. The Lt Governor toured the facility and interacted with office bearers of the foundation. He appreciated the members associated with the Chotay Taray Foundation for their endeavours for the education, speech therapy, development and welfare of the children with special needs.

Arjumand Makhdoomi, Founder President and other members of the Foundation were present on the occasion. KNO

Kishtwar voters torn...

aimed at appealing to voters through the lens of security and development. The PDP has fielded Firdous Tak in this tightly contested race.

Kishtwar is not just a political battleground; it also reflects the region's struggle for development. Despite housing four major hydroelectric projects - Rattle, Kiru, Kawad, and Pakka Dool - local residents continue to face unannounced power cuts and limited employment opportunities. The electricity produced in Kishtwar is sold to other states, yet the people living near these projects receive no free electricity and inadequate compensation for land acquired for the projects. While local engineers have found jobs, their salaries and benefits remain far below those of engineers from other states, fuelling resentment.

The once-thriving saffron cultivation in Kishtwar has also seen a decline, with production dwindling in recent years. Locals are calling for renewed attention to the industry, which has been a hallmark of the region.

Meanwhile, the Chaugan ground, which has hosted many significant political events over the years, is now in dire need of conservation. Locals argue that the ground should be developed with facilities like an open-air gym to encourage community use. Traffic

NILM NGO Hosts Drug Abuse Awareness Program at Aroma Foundation Public School

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPT 13

The National Incredible Literacy Mission (NILM) J&K successfully conducted a pivotal Drug Abuse Awareness Program at Aroma Foundation Public School, Lower Roopnagar, Jammu. This significant initiative aimed to educate and empower students about the dangers of drug abuse and the importance of making informed, healthy choices.

The program featured a series of engaging presentations, interactive sessions, and discussions led by experts in the field of drug prevention and counseling. The goal was to provide students with essential knowledge and practical tools to recognize, avoid, and address drug abuse issues.

R S Thakur Project Director of NILM J&K, inaugurated the program



with a compelling speech highlighting the critical need for awareness and prevention. "Educating our youth about the risks associated with drug abuse is crucial for fostering a healthier, more resilient generation. We hope this program will empower students to make positive decisions and seek help if needed," said R S Thakur. Aroma Foundation Public School provided a supportive environment for the event, with the school's Principal, Rajni Sharma, emphasizing the importance of such programs in fostering a safe

and informed school community. School's Vice Principal Kamal Sharma stated "We are grateful to NILM J&K for bringing this vital program to our school. It's essential for our students to be aware of the realities of drug abuse and to have access to the right information and support," School Staff who actively participated in the event included Lovleen Koul, Palvi Mathur, Ojesvi Tickoo, Neena Hans, Shweta Sharma, Sonali Sambyal, Manisha Khattar, Radhika and Shashi Kholi. The student who participated in the event includ-

ed Hardik, Darpan, Ojesvi, Ridhanshi, Manvi, Vansh, Anazyza, Ridhima, Priya, vansi, Amulya, Yuvraj, Adish, Hansuja, Advik and Omansh.

The Project Director National Incredible Literacy Mission J&K extends its sincere appreciation to Aroma Foundation Public School, the participating students, the guest speakers for their valuable contributions to this awareness initiative. The program marks a significant step in NILM's ongoing efforts to promote health, safety, and well-being among young people.

Indian Army sets up Led Assembly Workshop cum Factory to Provide Job Opportunities to Youth of Rajouri



JINNEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, SEPT 13

Creating sustainable job avenues and promoting green energy, the Indian Army inaugurated the LED Assembly Workshop cum Factory at Rajouri on 13 September 2024, as part of Youth Skill Development Project under Op Sadhbhavna. This joint venture by Indian Army and Career Trust Park (NGO) aims to provide meaningful employment opportunities to more than 75 candidates by providing basic infrastructure and imparting neces-

sary training to assemble and package various LED based lights such as Bulbs, street lights, emergency lights, flood lights etc. The Project entails total 500 hours of skill development training to each candidate spread over 90 days. Upon successful completion of the training, each candidate will be given certification recognised all over India for future prospects. This initiative by the Indian Army will propel the youth of Rajouri towards constructive endeavours thereby promoting peace, stability & prosperity in the region.

congestion in the main market is another pressing issue, with residents calling for the construction of a circular road to alleviate the jams.

As election day approaches, Kishtwar's voters are grappling with a mixture of hope and frustration. Development, security, employment, and infrastructure improvements remain the key issues on their minds. With three major parties competing for the seat, the outcome of this election will shape the future of this pivotal constituency.

2014 Assembly Election Results for Kishtwar:

-BJP (Sunil Sharma): 45.37% vote share
-NC (Sajjad Ahmed Kichloo): 40.76% vote share. KNO

Scrutiny of nomination...

Jammu South AC; 12 in 75-Bahu AC; 9 in 76-Jammu East AC; 8 in 77-Nagrota AC; 12 in 78-Jammu West AC; 17 in 79-Jammu North AC; 6 in 80-Marh (SC) AC; 3 in 81-Akhnoor (SC) AC; while nomination papers of 8 candidates have been accepted in 82-Chhamb AC.

Similarly, in Kashmir Division, for the six ACs in Kupwara district, nomination papers of 11 candidates were found valid in 1-Karnah AC; 13 in 2-Trehgam AC; 9 in 3-Kupwara AC; 13 in 4-Lolab AC; 8 in 5-Handwara AC; while nomination papers of 21 candidates have been accepted in 6-Langate AC.

In Baramulla district, nomination papers of 22 candidates were found valid in 7-Sopore AC; 12 in 8-Rafabad AC; 7 in 9-Uri AC; 25 in 10-Baramulla AC; 14 in 11-Gulmarg AC; 13 in 12-Wagoora- Kreeri AC; while nomination papers of 14 candidates have been accepted in 13-Pattan AC.

In Bandipora district, nomination papers of 20 candidates were found valid in 14-Sonawari AC; 21 in 15-Bandipora AC; while nomination papers of 5 candidates have been accepted in 16-Gurez (ST) AC.

As per the Election notification, the candidates can withdraw their nominations in the office of the respective Returning Officers, before the scheduled withdrawal date.

The polling day for these 40 Assembly constituencies in Phase-III is scheduled for October 1, 2024, and the voting will be conducted from 07:00 AM to 06:00 PM.

UNNAT distributes sports material to students of GGMS Bharda Kalan

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPT 13

NGO UNNAT today distributed sports material and stationary items to students of Govt Girls Middle School, Bharda Kalan, Akhnoor Jammu in which School Head Master Sh Harbans Lal was Chief Guest and Sh Sudarshan Abrol, NGO President presided over the function. The programme was organised by General Secretary, Neena Abrol of UNNAT.

On this occasion, Neena Abrol said that NGO have been rendering help in many ways to poor children to boost them financially and morally. Further she said that sports activities have a bigger role to divert the attention of youth and growing children from the malice

of drug addiction. This is a small initiative towards this end, she said, reiterating that our NGO will continue such efforts for the help of poor children and hold several programmes in other schools located in areas where people are living below poverty line, she added.

She said that besides these acts of philanthropy, our NGO UNNAT has been holding seminars, workshops and other different awareness programmes for the benefit of the public and students.

On this occasion, School Head Master Sh Harbans Lal appreciated the organisers and office bearers of NGO for distributing sports material and stationary items to school children and expressed deep gratitude for helping needy students.

General Observer visits Bani to review Election preparations

JINNEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 13

General Observer for 63-Bani Assembly Constituency and 64-Billawar Assembly Constituencies Aisha Masrat Khanam, visited Bani today to oversee the scrutiny process and election preparedness for the Assembly Election.

The Observer reviewed the routine operations of the election staff in the RO office. She also visited the venue where polling staff for the upcoming elections. The General Observer also inspected the strong room for the 63-Bani Assembly Constituency to assess the security measures in place for

safeguarding the election materials. She emphasized the importance of stringent security protocols and directed the RO to further strengthen the arrangements.

Before concluding her visit, she instructed the RO to launch an extensive voter awareness campaign under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative to ensure maximum voter participation.

Returning Officer, 63-Bani Assembly Constituency Giasul Haq, and Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) Predhyum Attri were present during the visit.

SVEEP: Slogan writing competition held at GHS Palli

JINNEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 13

To raise voter awareness ahead of the upcoming elections, a vibrant slogan writing competition was organized at Government High School Palli under the guidance of Returning Officer (RO) Akhil Sadotra, who is also the ACD Kathua.

The event, spearheaded by Assembly Constituency Nodal Officer for SVEEP, Mangal Singh, saw enthusiastic participation from students who crafted creative and impactful slogans

promoting the importance of voting. The activity highlighted the critical role of voter education in fostering a more informed and engaged electorate.

AC Nodal Officer commended the efforts of the students and emphasized the importance of such activities in spreading awareness across the constituency. He reiterated the need for every eligible voter to participate in the democratic process to ensure a strong and vibrant democracy.

Massive rally amid Drum Beating, Slogans energise Voter awareness in Border areas of Hiranagar

JI NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 13

The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) campaign in AC 68 Hiranagar took a dynamic turn today as students, Women participants, BAG members, and farmers joined a massive rally to spread voter awareness in the villages of Londi and Panjgrain.

A spree of events was hosted under the supervision of AC Nodal Officer Priya Lakshmi (CDPO Hiranagar).

The rally, highlighted by drum beats and enthusiastic slogans, aimed to educate the community about the upcoming elections and encourage voter participation.

Participants engaged with passersby in Matadors, vehicles, and those working in nearby shops and fields, urging them to exercise their voting rights on polling day. The rally was a resounding success, securing promises from the public to visit the polling stations and cast their votes.

At Government High School (GHS) Sherpur, a Nukkad Natak was pre-



sented to emphasize the importance of voting. Anganwadi workers also performed a skit, driving home the message of not missing the opportunity to vote.

In addition, a voter pledge and painting competition were organized at GHS Mela and GHS Chadwal to deepen the commitment to democratic traditions. SVEEP activities were held at a micro-level in polling stations across Londi, Marheen A, and Chann Khtrian, rein-

forcing the significance of every vote.

As part of the women voters' empowerment initiative, an awareness campaign was also conducted at Banna Chak and Panjgrain, focusing on active participation of women in the electoral process.

The day's activities marked a significant step in ensuring maximum voter turnout in the upcoming elections, promoting a culture of active civic participation across the constituency.

District Ramban hosts over 500 Voter awareness events under SVEEP

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 13

As the Assembly Elections draw closer, District Ramban is ensuring widespread voter participation. Under the guidance of District Election Officer (DEO) Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, the District Election Office is organizing numerous Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation activities daily to engage and educate the electorate about the importance of casting their vote and to boost turnout on Polling Day.

District Election Officer Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary has assured comprehensive security measures and strict implementation of electoral protocols, as mandated by the Election Commission of India. "We are committed to ensuring that every eligible voter can cast his vote in



a safe, secure, and transparent environment. All logistical arrangements, including Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) in polling stations and adequate deployment of security forces have been meticulously planned to maintain order during the elections," said the DEO.

One of the core strategies employed by the Election Office is a comprehensive voter awareness campaign under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Partici-

pation (SVEEP) program.

More than 500 events, including cultural, sports, awareness activities, rallies, quiz competitions, debates, painting contests, symposiums, and plantation drives were organized, engaging the community at the District, Sub-division, Tehsil, Block, and Institutional levels. The campaign focuses on educating voters, particularly women, first-time voters, and young people, about the critical role their vote plays in

the democratic process. Hoardings have been placed at strategic locations to spread awareness, ensuring that the message reaches to every soul in the district. A key highlight of the campaign is the creative engagement through street plays (Nukad Natak), performed by the Sangam Theater Group Reasi. These performances, held in marketplaces, have drawn large crowds and effectively communicated the significance of electoral participation in a dynamic, relatable manner. Additionally, the SVEEP team, led by District Nodal Officer Bikram Singh, has been conducting awareness drives in historically low-turnout

areas. Recently, programs were held at Government Degree Colleges and Higher Secondary Schools to educate young voters about the electoral process and encourage their active participation.

Special attention has also been given to empowering women voters. Targeted campaigns, led by Nodal Officers for Women Awareness, are ensuring that female voters are informed and motivated to exercise their right to vote.

Senior officers from the district administration, including Additional District Development Commissioner, Roshan Lal; Program Officer ICDS, Jahangir Hahami and Additional Deputy Commissioner, Varunjeet Singh Charak, have actively participated in these SVEEP programs, further emphasizing the importance of voter turnout.

SVEEP: Balloons released to boost Voter Awareness in Bandipora



JI NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 13

In a vibrant display of civic engagement, a balloon release ceremony was held today at the mini secretariat Bandipora as part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme.

The initiative aims to raise voter awareness and encourage electoral participation among the public.

District Election Officer (DEO) Manzoor Ahmad Qadri led the ceremony. He was accompanied by Deputy DEO, Mohammad Rafeeq Bhat and the officials of SVEEP Cell Bandi-

pora. The event featured balloons adorned with various voter awareness messages, symbolizing the significance of each vote in shaping the democratic process. The colorful balloons were released into the sky to draw public attention and serve as a visual reminder of the upcoming elections besides emphasising the importance of every citizen's vote.

The event underscores the commitment of the election authorities to raise awareness about the importance of voting and encourage active electoral participation among residents.

General Observer visits Karnah, reviews election preparations



JI NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 13

General Observer for Assembly Constituency I-Karnah, Parkash Bindu today visited Karnah constituency and reviewed the preparations made for upcoming assembly elections in the border Assembly Constituency.

General Observer was accompanied by RO

Karnah, M Zaffar Lone and ARO, M Amin Bhat.

During the visit, the General Observer reviewed the performance of the Election Control Room and took first hand appraisal of Encore, C-vigil and other facilities. He also visited the Media centre/MCMC established in Mini Secretariat Tangdar and reviewed its functioning.

DEO Poonch reviews expenditure monitoring ahead of Assembly Elections



JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 13

District Election Officer (DEO) Poonch, Vikas Kundal, convened a crucial review meeting to assess expenditure monitoring strategies ahead of the Assembly Elections in Poonch. The meeting was attended by the Deputy DEO, Assistant Expenditure Observers, Flying Squad Teams, and other key election officials responsible for maintaining transparency and legality during the election process.

DEO Vikas Kundal emphasized the importance of vigilant expenditure monitoring to safeguard the integrity of the elections, stressing that adherence to expenditure norms is essential for free and fair elections. He directed officials to maintain strict surveillance on political party spending and take prompt action

on any violations. The meeting discussed various aspects of election expenditure, including cash use, social media campaigns, and distribution of promotional materials. DEO Poonch also reviewed the operational preparedness of the Flying Squad Teams and Static Surveillance Teams tasked with ensuring compliance.

Special emphasis was placed on the role of Video Viewing Teams and Assembly Level Expenditure Monitoring Teams in maintaining a daily flow of reports. Each of the three constituencies in Poonch - Haveli, Surankote, and Mendhar - has its own Constituency Level Expenditure Monitoring Team, actively tracking candidates' expenses. The Assembly Level Teams provided a detailed briefing on the expenditures observed so far.

Observers for Samba available for Public hearing

JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 13

In view of the General Elections to J&K Legislative Assembly 2024, the Election Commission of India has appointed observers for 3 Assembly Constituencies of District Samba.

Vishwashree Boga-IAS (Contact No 9469782001 and Office at Office of Executive Officer, Urban Local Body, Ramgarh) has been appointed General Observer for Ramgarh Constituency, while Rajini Kaanthan-IAS (with Contact No 9469762001 and Office at BDO Office, Samba & Vijaypur) has been designated as General Observer for Vijaypur and Samba Constituencies. Besides, Ajay Singh-IPS with Contact No 9828231314 and Office at Dak Bungalow, Samba) has been appointed as Police Observer and Karthick Manickam M-IRS (Contact No 9469492001 and Office at District Treasury Office, Samba) as Election Expenditure Observer for all three constituencies (Ramgarh, Vijaypur, and Samba).

The public of these constituencies can directly contact the respective observers on their provided mobile numbers in case of any queries, complaints, or grievances.

Election Expenditure Observers sensitize Contesting Candidates on election related expenditure

JI NEWS SERVICE
BUDGAM, SEPTEMBER 13

The Election Expenditure Observers for Budgam District, Ravinder Kumar and Avinash Kaur Kalsi today chaired a meeting with contesting candidates and their representatives at Conference Hall, Budgam.

At the outset, the Observers sensitized the candidates regarding maintenance of expenditure registry, opening and maintaining separate bank accounts, inspections of registries and candidates' facilitation.

The meeting was attended by contesting candidates and their representatives from Budgam, Beerwah, Kahnsahib, Charar-i-Sharief and Chadoora assembly segments of the district.

Sensitizing the participants regarding expenditure limits, the observers maintained that the shadow registry of all contesting candidates are



being maintained by the expenditure monitoring teams in all constituencies.

They also took assembly wise review of arrangements for the ensuing assembly elections in the district.

Nodal officer Expenditure (DTO) Showkat Ahmad apprised the observers regarding the status of Flying Squad Teams (FSTs), Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs), Media Certification and Monitoring Committees

(MCMC), Training, Model Code of Conduct (MCC) adherence, Expenditure Monitoring, and the functioning of the 24x7 Control Room.

The Expenditure Observers in their addresses to the meeting stressed on ensuring a free and fair election process. They instructed the expenditure monitoring and other teams to remain vigilant regarding any illegal movement of contraband and transactions of any inducements.

Electoral Literacy Club GHS Sialag organises Voter awareness program

JI NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 13

A comprehensive voter awareness event, under the aegis of Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation program, was organized today by the Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) of Government High School Sialag here under the esteemed guidance of Returning Officer (RO) Basohli, Anil Kumar Thakur.

The event featured a variety of activities aimed at engaging the local community. These included a Nukkad Natak, cultural performances, poster-making, and a debate competition centered on the theme "Greater Participation for Stronger Democracy."

Over 150 attendees,

including students, community members, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) from nearby polling stations, took part in the event. Eight speakers delivered insightful speeches on the significance of voting in a democracy like India, stressing that voting is both a constitutional right and a civic duty for all citizens above the age of 18.

Ashwani Kumar, a lecturer and member of SVEEP 65-Basohli, along with Sector Officer Major Singh (BLO Supervisor), interacted with the audience, urging students to act as ambassadors of the Election Commission of India (ECI) by reaching out to every eligible voter.

The attendees were also

encouraged to use online platforms such as the Voter Helpline App, Saksham App, and CVigil App to ensure a free and fair election and to make informed voting choices. The speakers emphasized that every single vote counts and urged the community to ensure maximum participation on polling day.

The event was graced by the presence of Head of the School Neelam Padha, Sarpanch Panchayat Sialag Seema Devi, along with other ward members from the Panchayat. The program concluded with a joint pledge led by Rakesh Kumar Master, reaffirming the collective commitment to participate in the upcoming elections and strengthen democracy.



successfully cast their postal ballots. The voting took place in a secure and organized manner, following

all guidelines and protocol issued by the ECI to ensure transparency and fairness.

EDITORIAL

Empowering India's Youth: The Promise of Mission Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan

India's economic growth story hinges not just on big corporations or government initiatives, but increasingly on the young, dynamic, and entrepreneurial spirit of its youth. The Government of India's launch of the Mission Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan (MYUVA) comes as a timely and vital response to the challenge of unemployment, underemployment, and the growing demand for youth-driven economic empowerment.

This mission, aimed at developing youth entrepreneurship across the country, has the potential to be a transformative force that redefines India's economic landscape. Through its strategic focus on skill development, financial aid, mentorship, and policy support, the mission aims to create a sustainable environment where young people can become not just job seekers, but job creators.

India is home to one of the largest youth populations in the world, with nearly 65% of its population below the age of 35. However, this demographic advantage is under threat due to increasing levels of unemployment. According to recent reports, unemployment among the youth in India reached over 23% in 2022. This highlights the urgent need for holistic policy interventions that go beyond conventional job placements.

Herein lies the significance of Mission Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan. By focusing on entrepreneurship, the government is acknowledging that the Indian economy's capacity to absorb millions of new entrants into the workforce each year is limited. Hence, encouraging self-employment and nurturing entrepreneurial talent could be the game-changer the country needs.

The MYUVA initiative aims to create a vibrant ecosystem where youth entrepreneurs are encouraged and supported through a variety of measures. These include:

Skill Development: MYUVA focuses on equipping the youth with the right entrepreneurial skills. This involves vocational training programs and entrepreneurship development workshops that prepare young people to not only start businesses but also sustain and scale them.

Access to Finance: One of the biggest barriers to entrepreneurship is access to capital. MYUVA aims to bridge this gap by providing youth entrepreneurs with easier access to low-interest loans, financial subsidies, and grants. This ensures that viable business ideas don't get stifled due to lack of financial resources.

Mentorship and Guidance: Seasoned business leaders and successful entrepreneurs play a key role in the program by offering mentorship and guidance to young aspiring entrepreneurs. This mentoring is crucial, as it provides real-world insights into business management, helping the youth to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship.

Market Linkages: MYUVA also places emphasis on connecting young entrepreneurs to market opportunities, both locally and globally. This includes facilitating partnerships between young startups and established industries, creating incubators, and promoting access to new-age technologies such as e-commerce and digital marketing.

Policy Support and Incentives: The initiative comes with government-backed policies and incentives such as tax breaks, ease of doing business, and simplified regulatory frameworks aimed at reducing the bureaucratic hurdles that often discourage young entrepreneurs from entering the market.

While the intentions behind the Mission Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan are commendable, several hurdles remain. First, there is the issue of reaching rural and semi-urban youth who often lack access to the resources and opportunities available in metropolitan areas. Ensuring that the mission's benefits are evenly distributed across the country will require concerted efforts, particularly in terms of infrastructural support and digital literacy.

Moreover, while providing financial aid is crucial, ensuring responsible use of these funds is equally important. The government must establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the performance of beneficiaries and ensure that the allocated resources are leading to real, measurable outcomes.

For MYUVA to truly succeed, it must not only focus on creating entrepreneurs but on creating resilient businesses that can withstand market fluctuations. Emphasizing innovation, sustainability, and adaptability will ensure that the mission's impact is long-lasting. Additionally, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age—through school curricula or youth development programs—will help ingrain a culture of risk-taking and enterprise among future generations.

Collaboration will also be key. Engaging private sector entities, non-governmental organizations, and global partners in this mission will amplify its reach and effectiveness. A public-private partnership model, wherein industries actively participate in skill development programs and offer market linkages, could make MYUVA a more holistic and impactful initiative.

The Mission Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan represents a bold and much-needed step towards unlocking India's entrepreneurial potential. If implemented with precision, accountability, and inclusivity, it can transform India's youth from job seekers into job creators, driving economic growth and social development across the nation. India's future lies in the hands of its youth, and with initiatives like MYUVA, the government is providing the roadmap to harness their boundless energy and creativity.

The mission is a call to action—not just for young aspiring entrepreneurs but for the entire nation to support and nurture a new wave of Indian businesses that will contribute to the economy and provide solutions to the problems of tomorrow.

Is Engineer Rashid's bail BJP's wild card in J&K?

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Both National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah and Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) chairperson Mehbooba Mufti have described the interim bail granted to jailed Baramulla MP Engineer Rashid as a deliberate move by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to weaken J&K's mainstream parties.

Sheikh Abdul Rashid, better known as Engineer Rashid, is a maverick politician who unexpectedly defeated Abdullah and Peoples' Conference chairman Sajjad Lone from the Baramulla constituency in the 2024 general elections.

Remarkably, he won the seat while still incarcerated in Delhi's Tihar Central Jail, charged for terror funding under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Rashid's party, christened the Awami Ittehad Party (AIP), was launched while he was in jail. He applied for interim bail to campaign for his party candidates and was given bail till the last day of polling for J&K assembly elections.

Abdullah quipped, "When (Arvind) Kejriwal was given bail by the court during Lok Sabha, look at the reaction of the BJP leaders who questioned the court order and even

termed it undemocratic. But when Rashid was given bail, the BJP was the first to welcome it." Mufti has described Rashid's party as a "proxy" for the BJP supporting it "fully with funds".

Will the sentiment that Rashid tapped into for his Lok Sabha victory help him in the coming assembly elections? Then his son had gone door-to-door urging voters that every vote cast for his father would save him from the gallows. That win has been seen by some as indicating public sentiment against mainstream political parties.

Buoyed by Rashid's Lok Sabha victory, his brother, Khurshid Ahmad Sheikh, resigned from his job as a government school teacher. He is now the AIP candidate from Langate assembly constituency that has been held by Rashid for two consecutive terms between 2008 and 2019.

"Engineer Rashid's wave is ten times bigger than what it was. The AIP is emerging as an alternative for people," Khurshid claimed. Nevertheless, most of those who have joined the AIP had nothing to do with Rashid in the past. Perhaps they only hope to encash the 'wave'.

The announcement of 34 AIP candidates for the



first two phases of the election, has prompted Mufti to wonder who could be funding the party's election campaign, while the PDP doesn't have the financial resources to field candidates everywhere.

If Rashid is being facilitated by powerful political forces, they would do well to remember that he is an unguided missile that can singe those promoting him. Kashmiris on social media are highly sceptical of Rashid's ability to replicate his Lok Sabha victory in the assembly elections.

Unsure of getting a majority on its own, the BJP is perhaps trying to use smaller parties and independents to enable it to head a coalition government in the union territory. They include the AIP, Altaf Bukhari's Apni Party, the Peoples' Conference, and independents.

Given the BJP's disarray in its traditional political

base of Hindu-dominated Jammu region, its ability to get support from the Kashmir valley is more important than ever. However, it is unlikely to make up potential losses in Jammu with any gains in the Valley, from its candidates or its 'proxies'. What then is its objective of propping up Rashid and other 'proxies'?

A clue may be found in the facilitation of the jailed UAPA-accused separatist cleric Sarjan Barkati to file his candidature against Abdullah in Ganderbal. Abdullah has now filed his nomination from a second constituency, Budgam, to play safe.

Even if some former Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) members, who had boycotted elections earlier, were to score victories, they are unlikely to support a BJP-led coalition. Even Rashid's party may not find it easy to do so.

However, as 'spoilers' they can weaken the NC and the Congress in the Valley. Former members of the JeI who are contesting, are more likely to cut into the votes of the NC-Congress combine.

The BJP is apprehensive of the NC-Congress alliance getting a majority in the elections and would like to prevent that at any cost. This was evident in the pointed attack of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in his rally in Jammu claiming, "NC and Congress want to release stone pelters. They want terrorism to flourish in Rajouri and Poonch".

The facts are contrary to Shah's claims. While earlier militant attacks were largely limited to the Poonch and Rajouri districts of Jammu, this year under the Union government's rule, they spread to newer Jammu districts such as Doda, Kathua, and Reasi. The J&K administration has not been able to curb terrorist violence or their infiltration from Pakistan. So, it is not as if a hard-won peace is threatened by the NC-Congress combine.

The BJP's fear may be that an electoral victory for the alliance will be seen as an unequivocal rejection of its Kashmir policy, and the narrative it has built around it.

Should the alliance

come to power, the pressure on the Narendra Modi government to restore the statehood of J&K will increase. Abdullah has already declared that "in its first order of business after elections, will pass a resolution against the Centre's decision to strip the region of its statehood and special status."

The Centre, despite claiming that it will restore statehood as it was a 'solemn promise', seems unwilling to let go of administrative control any time soon. In early July, it transferred powers to the Lieutenant Governor that should legitimately belong to an elected government. The elected government will now not even be able to deploy civil servants according to its needs.

Moreover, if an elected NC-Congress government indeed comes to fruition, it may demand that the Union government start a dialogue with Pakistan — something that New Delhi is not yet ready for.

In all likelihood, the BJP's electoral strategy in Kashmir is no more than a 'beggar-thy-neighbour' approach. Engineer Rashid, the separatists, and independents in the fray may be playing a supporting role either voluntarily or under pressure.

Bharat Bhushan is a Delhi-based journalist.

Ozone Therapy: A holistic approach to enhancing health and wellness

MILISHAH

We live our healthiest when we can balance the demands life places on us with opportunities that heal our bodies. Ozone therapy is emerging as a key wellness treatment that is a transformative addition to conventional medical practices with a multitude of health benefits. The growing concern over managing lifestyle diseases finds a hopeful answer in ozone therapy with doctors appraised of the latest and most effective practices.

Developed over 100 years ago in Germany, this complementary medical treatment is proving to be a highly effective integrative treatment that is pocket-friendly and safe for several clinical conditions. Ozone therapy, with judicious doses of ozone administered by a doctor, brings powerful antioxidant capabilities to restore tissues and body fluids.

Harnessing Ozone's Power: Ozone therapy involves the administration of ozone gas (O₃), a reactive form of oxygen, into the body to stimulate healing and improve overall health.

Ozone therapy enhances traditional medical treatments, offering a synergistic approach to health and wellness, where pain and the side effects of conventional treatment are alleviated by it. It has shown promise in managing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and autoimmune disorders. For instance, in diabetes management, ozone therapy can improve oxygen utilisation and glucose metabolism, helping stabilise blood sugar levels. In cardiovascular ailments, ozone therapy can enhance blood circulation and reduce oxidative stress, improving heart health.

Pain Alleviation
Ozone therapy's analgesic

and anti-inflammatory properties make it effective in pain management. Conditions like arthritis, fibromyalgia, and musculoskeletal injuries often cause chronic pain that is difficult to manage with traditional methods. Ozone therapy can alleviate pain by reducing inflammation and promoting tissue repair.

For example, in arthritis, ozone therapy helps decrease joint inflammation and improves mobility. Compared to conventional pain management techniques, ozone therapy offers a less invasive option, with fewer side effects.

Detoxifying with Ozone

Ozone therapy supplies the body with potent oxygenation, increasing the life-giving gas' availability for cells, and improving their functioning and energy production. The resulting detoxification eliminates toxins, harmful free radicals and waste

from the minutest units of our bodies. The result: Rejuvenated, healthy and energetic selves. Stress Reduction Ozone therapy can aid in stress reduction by increasing oxygen delivery to tissues, promoting relaxation and a sense of calm. This is particularly beneficial in our fast-paced world where stress is a common issue.

Athletic Performance: Ozone therapy's unique restorative abilities are also extremely relevant to meeting the high performance and health needs of athletes. The increased oxygenation provided by ozone therapy improves endurance, enhances recovery, and boosts overall performance.

Skin Rejuvenation: The skin, the body's largest organ, is happiest when we have healthy cells and tissues. Ozone therapy, in promoting healthy cells, leads to several skin benefits. It is effective in treating skin conditions such as acne, eczema, and fungal

infections due to ozone's antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

Ozone therapy promotes skin healing by increasing oxygen supply to the affected areas. Additionally, it has anti-ageing benefits. By improving blood flow and stimulating collagen production, ozone therapy can enhance skin elasticity and reduce wrinkles, resulting in a more youthful and vibrant appearance.

Multiple Ozone Therapy Applications: Ozone therapy can be administered in various ways, including rectal insufflation, intravenous ozone mixed with saline, and major autohemotherapy. These methods help activate cellular circulation, enhancing overall health. With over 20 different applications, ozone therapy offers versatile treatment options for a wide range of disorders, promoting healing and well-being through improved oxygen utilization and cellular function.

The Science of Ozone Therapy: The scientific reason ozone therapy works is its ability to stimulate the mitochondria, the energy powerhouse of the tiniest units of our bodies - cells. By providing a fresh supply of oxygen, ozone therapy boosts cellular health, bodily functions and energy production. Ozone therapy also helps neutralise free radicals, reducing oxidative stress and preventing cellular damage. Ozone therapy is safe when administered correctly and has been supported by numerous studies demonstrating its efficacy and safety. Ozone therapy's ability to complement and enhance conventional therapies, combined with its wide range of applications, makes the centuries-old treatment a modern-day tool in the quest for holistic health and wellness.

(The writer is trustee of Bisleri Charitable Trust and president Ozone Forum of India; views are personal)

Diplomatic boost to semiconductors

KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Domestic politics may be a key issue for the ruling NDA alliance, however, it has not taken away Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on constantly working on fine-tuning India's foreign policy. PM Modi recently was in Brunei a first for any Indian Prime Minister on a bilateral state visit, to a country located strategically in the South China Sea. Brunei's visit was topped by the PM's visit to Singapore, an important technology ally for India in the region. India and Singapore will be entering into the 60th year of diplomatic relationship next year and both countries have decided to upgrade their existing bilateral partnership to a Comprehensive strategic partnership, which would in turn expand the areas of cooperation.

One of the key focus,

during PM Modi's visit to Singapore was expanding the digital cooperation between the countries. The joint statement released read "Both Prime Ministers welcomed the signing of the MoU on cooperation in the field of Digital Technologies and affirmed common interests in data, AI and cybersecurity. Building on this, both Prime Ministers agreed to deepen collaboration in the digital space, including in facilitating trusted cross-border data flows, cybersecurity, and the interoperability of digital systems." A crucial element of the partnership was a demonstration under the trade trust framework. Singapore is home to many large Tech-headquarters, many of whom have regional headquarters in the island state, with the business geography, spread all across Asia primarily India.



Advance technology manufacturing and semiconductors formed another crucial element of the PM's visit. The statement read "Both Prime Ministers agreed to explore cooperation in the area of critical and emerging technologies. Both Prime Ministers agreed that advanced manufacturing, particularly in developing resilient semiconductor supply chains, can be

a new pillar of bilateral cooperation.

Both Prime Ministers welcomed the signing of the MoU on the India-Singapore Semiconductor Ecosystem Partnership. Immediately after the PM visited Singapore the US government also announced a new partnership with India to explore supply chain opportunities in India. Funded under the International Technology

Security and Innovation (ITSI) Fund, created by the CHIPS Act of 2022 (CHIPS Act) of the US, it allows the department to spend some money on developing a trusted supply chain ecosystem with partners and allies. A US State Department press release read, "The initial phase includes a comprehensive assessment of India's existing semiconductor ecosystem and regulatory framework, as well as workforce and infrastructure needs. The state anticipates that key Indian stakeholders, such as state governments, educational institutions, research centres, and private companies, will participate in this analysis steered by the India Semiconductor Mission. The insights gained from the assessment will serve as the basis for potential future joint initiatives to strengthen and grow this critical sector. The United States and India are key

partners in ensuring the global semiconductor supply chain keeps pace with the global digital transformation currently underway. Manufacturing of essential products ranging from vehicles to medical devices relies on the strength and resilience of the semiconductor supply chain."

This week India also hosted SEMICON a global conference that attracts investments in the Indian semiconductor ecosystem. India is trying to attract investments for a crucial component of most modern equipment and machinery called chips. The recent visits by the PM to Singapore and the Memorandum of Understanding with the US may provide the much-needed kickstart for India's semiconductor ecosystem.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

World Sepsis Day: Timely treatment key to ward life-threatening infection

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Immediate treatment is crucial to warding off sepsis -- a life-threatening emergency caused by a dysregulated host immune response to an infection, said experts on World Sepsis Day on Friday.

World Sepsis Day takes place annually on September 13 and is aimed at raising awareness of the devastating condition that claims millions of lives globally each year.

In 2020 alone, there were 48.9 million sepsis cases globally, leading to 11 million deaths -- representing 20 per cent of all global deaths.

The burden is particularly heavy in low- and middle-income countries, where 85 per cent of sep-



sis-related deaths occur.

In India, there were an alarming 11.3 million cases and 2.9 million deaths in 2020, underscoring the urgent need for improved prevention, early diagnosis, and effective treatment strategies.

Sepsis can lead to severe outcomes, including organ failure, septic shock, and

high mortality rates. Survivors may face long-term effects like chronic muscle weakness, pain, fatigue, and cognitive issues.

"Sepsis is a life-threatening emergency where the body's response to an infection spirals out of control, leading to self-damage of organs and impaired function,"

Dr. Chinnadurai R, Lead Consultant - Critical Care, Aster RV Hospital, told IANS.

The critical condition often results from bacterial infections like pneumonia, urinary tract infections, abdominal infections, or bloodstream infections. Viruses such as influenza and Covid-19 can also trigger sepsis, while fungal and parasitic infections are less common causes.

"Immediate treatment is crucial and involves early detection, administering broad-spectrum antibiotics within the first hour, providing supportive care (for example, intravenous fluids, oxygen), and controlling the infection source by draining abscesses or removing infected tissue," Chinnadurai said.

Dr. Aakashneel Bhat-tacharya, Consultant, Infectious Diseases, Paras Health Gurugram said: "Preventing sepsis starts with taking precautions such as practicing good hygiene, keeping wounds clean and covered, staying up-to-date on vaccinations, and seeking timely medical care for infections before they escalate".

The experts also called for raising awareness about sepsis through public education, early treatment, training health-care professionals to manage sepsis effectively, and adhering to evidence-based guidelines are key strategies.

With timely recognition and treatment, the rates of hospitalisation and death from sepsis can be significantly reduced.

Focussing on bacteria alone will not help combat deadly antimicrobial resistance: Lancet

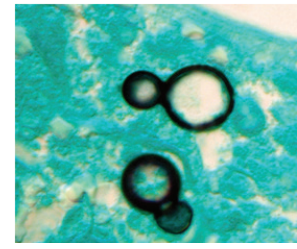
AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Including fungal pathogens is crucial in the fight against deadly antimicrobial resistance, which is rapidly becoming a public health threat worldwide, according to a study published in The Lancet journal on Friday.

The study, led by scientists at the universities of Manchester in the UK, Amsterdam, and the Westerdijk Institute in the Netherlands, showed that most fungal pathogens identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) are either already resistant or rapidly acquiring resistance to antifungal drugs.

These fungal pathogens account for around 3.8 million deaths a year.

The study, which comes ahead of the UN meeting on AMR later this month, calls for including resistance developed in many



fungal pathogens to curb AMR.

The scientists argued that focussing on bacteria alone will not help fully combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR). They called for immediate action, without which resistance to fungal disease will escalate.

Aspergillus, Candida, Nakaseomyces glabratus, and Trichophyton indotinea are the major fungicide resistant infections. These can have devastating health impacts on the elderly and people with weak immune systems.

Dr. Norman van Rhijn from The University of

Manchester said that invasive fungal diseases have been responsible for many drug resistance problems over the past decades.

However, the threat of fungal pathogens and antifungal resistance has largely been "underrecognised" and "left out of the debate" by scientists, governments, clinicians, and pharmaceutical companies. van Rhijn explained that "the close similarities between fungal and human cells make it hard to find treatments that selectively inhibit fungi with minimal toxicity to patients".

The scientists suggested a global consensus on limiting the use of certain classes of antifungal molecules. They also stressed the need for collaborating on solutions and regulations that ensure food security and universal health for animals, plants, and humans.

JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS KILLS 12 IN NEPAL

AGENCIES
KATHMANDU, SEP 13

Twelve people, including children, have died and 59 have been infected with the Japanese encephalitis (JE) virus in Nepal since the monsoon began in June, The Kathmandu Post reported.

Twenty-nine districts, including the Kathmandu Valley, have reported infection with the fatal virus, while eight districts -- Kailali, Kapilvastu, Palpa, Chitwan, Rautahat, Sarlahi, Siraha, and Sunsari -- have recorded infection-related deaths.

"September and October are the peak months for outbreaks of the JE virus," said Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, director of the Family Welfare Division at the Department of Health Services.

"We have already



stepped up surveillance and activated measures to break the transmission cycle of the deadly virus."

Japanese encephalitis is a viral brain infection caused by virus, which is widespread throughout Asia and the Western Pacific.

The World Health Organisation classifies it as a mosquito-borne flavivirus, along with dengue, Zika, yellow fever, and West Nile viruses.

According to the UN health agency, the virus kills one-third of those who become ill and leaves up to half of those who survive with serious life-long disability.

According to health experts, this year's fatality rate from the JE virus has surpassed 20%.

In 2005, over 2,000 individuals in Nepal died from JE infections and a majority of them were youngsters from Tarai districts.

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, SEP 13

Defying rain, West Bengal government's junior doctors continued their demonstration in front of Swastha Bhaban at New Town for the 4th day on Friday, a day after their proposed talks with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee failed to materialise despite the government's three attempts in three days, official sources said.

Outdoor Patient Departments in government hospital remained paralysed on Friday due to doctors' protest, continuing for the past 36th day. The rigid protesters have rejected even the Supreme Court's direction to end their stir in view of the sufferings of patients. The medics are demanding resignation of three top health depart-



ment officials holding then responsible for signing a letter allowing demolition and renovation in the vicinity of crime scene at RG Kar Hospital seminar room where a 31-year-old woman doctor was raped and murdered on August 9. Amid dramtic scene on Thursday evening, about

32 junior doctors returned from the gate of Nabanna, state secretariat, after the government did not concede their demand for live streaming of the talks between them and the Chief Minister.

Banerjee after waiting at the meeting venue for over two hours left the Naban-

na after addressing media persons, offering to resign, and making a fresh appeal to the doctors to resume work as mandated by the Supreme Court.

The apex court directed the protesting medics to resume duty by 5 pm on Tuesday. The top court had also allowed the state

government to take coercive measure.

Banerjee made it clear that she was not a believer to impose Essential Services Maintenance Act or other methods and appealed to the medics to return to work fend the sufferings of poor patients.

She also claimed there were some forces provoking the protesting doctors to defame her "Ma Mati Manus" government and said they were after the chair (seat of power), creating distorted information in the social media.

"In the interest of the people, I am ready to resign. I do not want the post of the Chief Minister. I want justice for Tilottama. And I want common people to get medical treatment," Banerjee said at a media conference on Thursday.

Niti Aayog suggests Public Health Emergency Management Act for future pandemics

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEPT 13

With Covid-19 pandemic exposing significant gaps in global health preparedness, a report by Niti Aayog expert group has underscored the need for responding in the first 100 days of an outbreak and suggested enacting separate legislation to handle public health crises if any in future.

The report, "Future Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Response - A Framework for Action," proposes the creation of a Public Health Emergency Management Act (PHEMA), which would facilitate a holistic

approach to health management, covering prevention, control, and disaster response.

The report which provides a blueprint for the country to prepare for any future public health emergency or pandemic and have a rapid response system comes amid WHO warning to tackle the unknown deadly 'Disease X, which could be 20 times deadlier than COVID-19'.

Led by Dr. Renu Swarup, with members including Dr. Soumya Swaminathan and Dr. Sujeet Singh, the expert group's proposals aim to better equip India and the global community for future pandemics and health emergencies.

"It will allow a holistic approach to health management, covering prevention, control, and disaster response, the report added. "The Act would also provide for the creation of skilled public health cadres at national and state levels," said the report which also outlines recommendations for establishing a dedicated Pandemic Preparedness and Emergency Response (PPER) fund and creating institutionalised and empowered governance mechanisms.

"The report highlights the need for a well-structured scorecard mechanism to regularly monitor progress on key

preparedness targets, especially in light of WHO warnings about potential new zoonotic outbreaks. As countries and international organizations work to enhance their readiness for novel pathogens, the WHO has identified approximately 30 viral and bacterial families with potential epidemic or pandemic risk.

These targets necessitate focused research, development of advanced diagnostic techniques, and effective countermeasures.

The report's recommendations align with global efforts to bolster pandemic preparedness and response capabilities.

WHO prequalifies the first vaccine against mpox

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEPT 12

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced the MVA-BN vaccine as the first vaccine against mpox to be added to its prequalification list.

The prequalification approval is expected to facilitate timely and increased access to this vital product in communities with urgent need, to reduce transmission and help contain the outbreak. WHO's assessment for prequalification is based on information submitted by the manufacturer, Bavarian Nordic A/S, and review by the European Medicines Agency, the regulatory agency of record for this vaccine.

"This first prequalification of a vaccine against mpox is an important step in our fight against the disease, both in the context of the current outbreaks in Africa, and in future," said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We now need urgent scale up in procurement, donations and rollout to ensure equitable access to vaccines where they are needed most, alongside other public health tools, to prevent infections, stop transmission and save lives."

The MVA-BN vaccine can be administered in people over 18-years of age as a 2-dose injection given 4 weeks apart. After prior cold storage, the vaccine can be kept at

2-8°C for up to 8 weeks.

"The WHO prequalification of the MVA-BN vaccine will help accelerate ongoing procurement of the mpox vaccines by governments and international agencies such as Gavi and Unicef to help communities on the frontlines of the ongoing emergency in Africa and beyond," said Dr Yukiko Nakatani, WHO Assistant Director-General for Access to Medicines and Health Products. "The decision can also help national regulatory authorities to fast-track approvals, ultimately increasing access to quality-assured mpox vaccine products."

The WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization reviewed all available evi-

dence and recommended the use of MVA-BN vaccine in the context of an mpox outbreak for persons at high risk of exposure. While MVA-BN is currently not licensed for persons under 18 years of age, this vaccine may be used "off-label" in infants, children and adolescents, and in pregnant and immunocompromised people. This means vaccine use is recommended in outbreak settings where the benefits of vaccination outweigh the potential risks.

WHO also recommends single-dose use in supply-constrained outbreak situations. WHO emphasizes the need to collect further data on vaccine safety and effectiveness in these circumstances.

OZONE THERAPY: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ENHANCING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEPT 13

Ozone therapy's ability to complement and enhance conventional therapies makes this old treatment a modern-day tool

We live our healthiest when we can balance the demands life places on us with opportunities that heal our bodies. Ozone therapy is emerging as a key wellness treatment that is a transformative addition to conventional medical practices with a

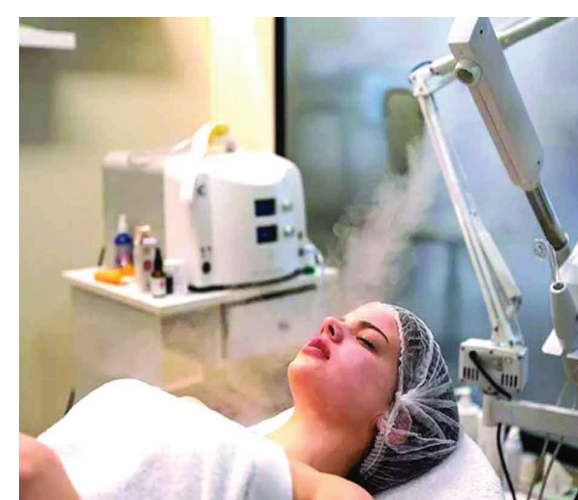
multitude of health benefits. The growing concern over managing lifestyle diseases finds a hopeful answer in ozone therapy with doctors appraised of the latest and most effective practices.

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administered by a doctor, brings powerful antioxidant capabilities to restore tissues and body fluids.

Harnessing Ozone's Power: Ozone therapy involves the administration of ozone gas (O3), a reactive form of oxygen, into the body to stimulate healing and improve overall health.

Ozone therapy enhances traditional medical treatments, offering a synergistic approach to health and wellness, where pain and the side effects of



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Ozone therapy's analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties make it effective in pain management. Conditions like arthritis, fibromyalgia, and musculoskeletal injuries often cause chronic pain that is difficult to manage with traditional methods. Ozone therapy can alleviate pain by reducing inflammation and promoting tissue repair.

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ity. Compared to conventional pain management techniques, ozone therapy offers a less invasive option, with fewer side effects.

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PM Modi to launch Haryana polls campaign from Kurukshetra where Mahabharata was fought

AGENCIES

CHANDIGARH, SEP 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address an election rally on Saturday in support of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates for the Haryana Assembly elections in Kurukshetra -- the land where the epic battle of Mahabharata was fought.

This will be PM Modi's first rally in Haryana.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said that the Prime Minister would arrive at the Theme Park at 2 p.m.

"I urge everyone to attend in large numbers to hear from our leader, who, over the past 10 years, has worked tirelessly to elevate India's status on the global stage



and has shown respect to every section of society. Whether 521 they are farmers, women, youth, or the poor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has honored every individual," the Haryana CM said.

Preparations were in full swing at the venue of

the rally. Several officials have been camping at the site.

The rally assumes political significance as the BJP leaders believe that PM Modi's visit will strengthen the poll prospects of the party candidates not only in Kurukshetra but also

in the nearby districts of Karnal, Ambala, Kaithal and Yamunanagar, who will also share dais with the Prime Minister at the public meeting.

Kurukshetra has religious significance in Hindu mythology and is the land where the epic battle of 'Mahabharata' was fought and the teachings of 'Gita' were given by Lord Krishna to warrior Arjun.

During his visit to Kurukshetra in 2014, PM Modi had expressed the commitment to make every possible effort to recognise Kurukshetra as a significant centre for the teachings of the Gita.

Since 2016, the Haryana government has been organising the Gita Mahotsav at the international level in Kuruk-

shetra, which has gained tremendous success and popularity.

In 2019, the festival expanded its reach beyond the country, and was celebrated in Mauritius and London.

Additionally, it took place in Canada in September 2022.

During his visit to Kurukshetra in February 2019, PM Modi wrote on X: "On the way to Kurukshetra, captured a picture of the sacred Brahma Sarovar. Next time you are travelling to Haryana, do make it a point to see this iconic place and the other tourist places in the state."

Haryana will go to the polls for the 90-member Assembly on October 5. The ballots will be counted on October 8.

Port Blair to be renamed as Sri Vijaya Puram, announces Amit Shah

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday that the name of Port Blair will be changed to Sri Vijaya Puram.

In a post on X, Amit Shah said, "Inspired by the vision of PM Narendra Modi Ji to free the nation from colonial imprints, today we have decided to rename Port Blair as 'Sri Vijaya Puram'. "While the earlier name had a colonial legacy, Sri Vijaya Puram symbolises the victory achieved in our freedom struggle and the A&N Islands' unique role in the same. Andaman & Nicobar Islands have an unparalleled place in our freedom struggle and history. The island territory that once served as the naval base of the Chola



Empire is today poised to be the critical base for our strategic and development aspirations."

He added, "It is also the place that hosted the first unfurling of our Tiranga by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Ji and also the cellular jail in which Veer Savarkar Ji and other freedom fighters struggled for an Independent nation. Now Sri Vijaya Puram will be the capital city of the Union territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands."

Port Blair, which is the largest town in Andaman

district, was named after Archibald Blair, a naval surveyor and lieutenant in the British East India Company.

The Government of Bengal established a penal colony on Chatham Island in 1789 and named it after Blair.

Port Blair's seafront Cellular Jail, completed in 1906, hints at its past as a British penal colony and is now a memorial to Indian Independence activists. Inland, the Samudrika Marine Museum showcases local marine life, while the Anthropological Museum focuses on the islands' indigenous tribes.

Last year on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had changed the names of 21 islands of Andaman and Nicobar.

AAP celebrates as apex court grants bail to Arvind Kejriwal, some INDIA bloc allies welcome decision

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party on Friday reacted joyously to the Supreme Court granting him bail, terming it the "victory of truth" and some other INDIA bloc allies also welcomed the decision, though the Congress was guarded in its response.

Several AAP leaders took to social media to welcome the release of their party leader, who spent almost six months behind bars, save a brief respite when the apex court had granted him bail to campaign in the Lok Sabha elections.

AAP MP Raghav Chadha posted on X: "Welcome back Arvind Kejriwal, we missed you!"

"Truth can be troubled but not defeated! Finally, the Honourable Supreme Court has decided to release Delhi's son Arvind Kejriwal from jail. Thanks to the Honourable Supreme Court!"

He also said that now Kejriwal could engage in the campaign for the October 5 Haryana Assembly elections.

Former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish

Sisodia, who also obtained bail recently from the apex court, commented: "Satyameva Jayate. Prison locks are broken by truth. Today, once again, the truth has won against lies and conspiracies. I pay tribute to Baba Saheb Ambedkar ji, who 75 years ago had empowered the common man against any future dictator."

Delhi Minister Atishi also shared, "Satyamev Jayate. Truth can be troubled, not defeated."

Senior party leader Sanjay Singh posted, "Dictatorship will not work in democracy. Modi's tyrannical rule could not break the spirit of @ArvindKejriwal."

The prison locks were broken and @ArvindKejriwal was released. The mountain of lies is falling; ED, CBI, and BJP's false cases have been exposed. Satyamev Jayate!"

Actor-turned-Trinamool Congress MP Shatrughan Sinha also welcomed bail to Kejriwal.

"Truth has finally Prevailed! Better late than never. Grand Welcome! For our dear friend, leader of the masses, CM, Delhi @ArvindKejriwal as he walks out after the hon'ble SC finally grants him bail.

'Politics' & people need & deserve Kejriwal. Jai Hind!" he said on X.

Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav commented that Kejriwal's bail is a "victory of the Constitution."

He added, "Those who oppose the Constitution misuse it. Justice is always served at the door of the courts. The world has always followed this tradition and will continue to do so."

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha welcomed the Supreme Court's decision: "Satyamev Jayate! We welcome the decision to grant bail to Delhi Chief Minister @ArvindKejriwal. Thank you to the Hon'ble Supreme Court for granting bail to the popular Chief Minister!"

The Trinamool Congress, citing a comment by the Supreme Court bench which granted bail, remarked, "CBI SHOULDNT BE A CAGED PARROT - This is what the Hon'ble SC judge said about the unjustified arrest of @ArvindKejriwal. The indictment of CBI misuse cannot be ignored, especially when the CBI delays justice in other cases and BJP politicizes tragedies".

'Bail, not exoneration': BJP slams AAP for celebrating Kejriwal release, seeks resignation

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 13

The BJP on Friday said that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's bail in the liquor policy was not an exoneration as the Supreme Court had upheld his arrest by the CBI and asked how he would be able to function due to the conditions levied by the apex court for his release.

BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi emphasised that the judiciary is functioning impartially, as he urged Kejriwal to stop casting doubt on the legal system. He also took a swipe at the AAP's claim of "victory of truth," saying, "First they need to decide when the truth wins and when it loses." He further suggested that Kejriwal has often questioned the courts but now must accept the ruling and explain it to the public.

BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, called for Kejriwal's resignation, citing the court's confirmation of his arrest as legal. "Arvind Kejriwal has been in jail for about six months. Now that the court has upheld his arrest, he should resign on



ethical grounds," he said. He added that if Kejriwal cared for the plight of Delhi residents, he would have stepped down earlier.

The party's Delhi unit President Virendra Sachdeva also demanded Kejriwal's resignation,

arguing that the restrictions imposed by the Supreme Court on his official duties - such as not visiting the Chief Minister's Office or signing files unless necessary for seeking clearance/approval by the Lt Governor - render

him unfit to hold office.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia similarly attacked the AAP's celebration of the bail decision. "The BJP has a clear policy of zero tolerance for corruption. Even Mamata Banerjee considered resignation at one point. Corrupt leaders like Kejriwal must also step down," he stated.

He also said that the AAP will need to explain why Kejriwal is not resigning and claimed that people will soon demand that he step down.

"So why do I say the corrupt Chief Minister has become a CM on bail, as he was released after paying a surety of Rs 10 lakh? Now, tell me, should a person holding a constitutional position, who is facing legal charges, be the Chief Minister of Delhi?"

Fellow BJP spokesperson Bansuri Swaraj also criticised the AAP's "celebration of corruption", calling their narrative misleading. She pointed out that the court's decision to grant bail based on a prolonged trial does not absolve Kejriwal of the serious charges in the liquor policy scam. She

noted that this was the fourth time the courts had upheld Kejriwal's arrest, emphasising that these rulings were based on substantial evidence, not flimsy accusations.

Ahead of the October 5 Assembly elections, where the Kejriwal-led party is contesting on its own, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini also attacked the AAP for being "stuck deep in corruption".

He also dismissed the prospect of Kejriwal's bail having an impact on the elections. Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said the Delhi Chief Minister has been granted conditional bail, but has not been acquitted yet.

"Jailed Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal has been granted conditional bail by the judiciary. However, the court has not acquitted him yet.

Earlier, Lalu Prasad Yadav was also granted bail, but later he was convicted. The BJP has full faith in the judiciary." The strong reactions from BJP leaders highlight the party's ongoing efforts to pressure Kejriwal into resigning amid the corruption allegations.

SC seeks NBE's response on plea seeking disclosure of NEET-PG question paper, answer keys

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 13

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to examine a plea challenging the refusal of the National Board of Examinations (NBE) to disclose question papers, answer keys or response sheets of candidates of National Eligibility-cum-Entrance (NEET)-PG 2024 exam. The NEET-PG exam was conducted by the NBE on August 11 and the results were announced on August 23.

Posting the matter for hear-

ing on September 20, a bench headed by CJI DY Chandrachud asked the petitioner side to serve a copy of plea on NBE, apart from serving the standing counsel.

The plea said that there was a clear lack of transparency in the conduct of the examination since none of the documents allowed a student to check his performance, adding that neither the question paper, nor the response sheet filled in by candidates, nor answer key was supplied to the students, and merely a score card has

been provided.

The petition, filed through advocate Parul Shukla, highlighted that unlike previous years where the candidate used to receive their total score along with the number of correctly attempted questions and the number of incorrectly attempted questions, the results released on August 23 did not provide the total score of the candidate.

"The method/manner in which examination under the NEET PG 2024 is conducted by the Respondents (authori-

ties) is manifestly arbitrary and against the principles of transparency and fairness in state action as enshrined under Article 14 of the Constitution of India," it added.

The plea said that NEET-PG had never been held in two shifts before and had always remained a single-shift and single-day examination to ensure a uniform examination standard and fairness of the national exam. It highlighted a "serious patent defect in the conduct of the examination", requiring redressal in order to

achieve a clean, transparent and effective system of examination which gives the best candidates.

It further said, "The NEET-PG being a multidisciplinary exam where one's rank also determines their ability to opt for the course and field of their choice, any slight variation in marks would bar several candidates from specialising in their field of interest."

In August this year, the top court refused to entertain a plea seeking directions to reschedule the NEET-PG 2024

exam. A bench headed by CJI Chandrachud remarked that the examination where two lakh students are going to appear cannot be halted at the instance of four petitioners.

Dismissing the plea, the bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said: "We will not reschedule or pass any orders. There are 2 lakh students and close to 4 lakh parents who would weep if we touch this matter. At the behest of four-five petitioners, we cannot

jeopardise the careers of two lakh students. We will not do it."

The petition had sought the postponement of the exam on the grounds that candidates have been allocated cities which are highly inconvenient for them to reach and the formula for normalisation is unknown to them. It also sought details and disclosure of the formula for the normalisation of the four sets of question papers to eliminate any possibility of arbitrariness in the process.

AIIMS Bhopal use chest wall reconstruction technique to treat child suffering from rib cancer

AGENCIES

BHOPAL, SEP 13

A team of doctors at All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) Bhopal performed a complex and life-saving surgery on an eight-year-old child suffering from rib cancer.

Initially, the doctors applied chemotherapy to kill growing cells, however, the child's condition was worsening and the cancer in the ribs continued to spread. Notably, chemotherapy is most often used to treat cancer, since cancer cells grow and multiply much more quickly

than other cells in the body. Seeing the child's condition worsening, the medical team decided to proceed with the complex surgery. The surgery was performed, however, the next challenge for the medical team was to fill the gap in the ribs.

For that, the medical team developed a new chest wall reconstruction technique. "This unique procedure, which is being applied to pediatric chest wall reconstruction for the first, has been recognised and published in the prestigious journal of the coun-



try. Association of Pediatric Surgeons Dr. Ajai Singh, Executive Director of AIIMS Bhopal said that the child, who had been on a ventilator before surgery due to the severity of the condition, was successfully taken off ventilator support just

12 hours post-surgery. The child was discharged from the hospital six days later.

The complex surgery was conducted successfully, which led to the child returning happily to his home as several multidisciplinary teams of different departments of AIIMS Bhopal worked hours to make it happen.

The Pediatric Surgery Department performed the tumour excision, and the Plastic Surgery Department carried out the chest wall reconstruction using the child's own tissue. Similarly, the Anesthesia Department played a criti-

cal role in ensuring the child's safety throughout the operation.

Dr. Ajai Singh praised the efforts of the team, emphasising that this achievement showcases AIIMS Bhopal's commitment to innovative surgical solutions and highlights the hospital's expertise in handling complex pediatric cases.

"This surgery is a testament to our doctors' dedication to pushing the boundaries of medical innovation. We are proud of this breakthrough and the impact it will have on pediatric surgery worldwide," Dr. Singh said.

UP moving rapidly towards One District, One Medical College: Yogi

AGENCIES

LUCKNOW, SEP 13

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said that eastern UP is now free from encephalitis, with the death toll reduced to zero adding that this achievement has been made possible through unwavering determination and the collective support of everyone involved, something that was once thought impossible.

Addressing the fourth

Foundation Day celebration of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences, the CM recalled that five years ago, the region was plagued by encephalitis, with an annual death toll ranging from 1,200 to 1,500 between July and November and Gorakhpur's BRD Medical College alone accounting for 500 to 700 deaths. He said that this crisis persisted for 40 years, resulting in the deaths of 50,000 children, while previous adminis-

trations failed to address it effectively. "Previous governments were mired in corruption instead of implementing the necessary measures. As an MP, I raised this issue extensively, which eventually led to action," he said.

Yogi acknowledged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role in establishing AIIMS in Gorakhpur to combat encephalitis. "Upon becoming Chief Minister in 2017, I took on the responsibility to address this issue.

Be ready to hear our views on your country, EAM Jaishankar warns foreign diplomats interfering in Indian politics

AGENCIES
GENEVA, SEP 13

Reacting strongly to the recent comments made by some foreign diplomats posted in India, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Friday said that the envoys and their leaders should also be prepared to hear India's viewpoint about their country and the current political scene there.

"I have no problems if people comment about our politics. But then, I think, in fairness, they should also be ready to hear my comments about their politics. So, how to get a more mutually respectful world, more

equal.. Because everybody says that we are equal but they don't actually behave like that. It is a bit like Animal Farm - some are more equal than others," EAM Jaishankar said at an interaction with the Indian community in Geneva.

The minister, who is on the last leg of his three-nation tour, was replying to a question on foreign diplomats in New Delhi frequently expressing their viewpoint about Indian politics.

"Countries often practice abroad what they are sensitive to at home. So, whenever people do any such thing, they must also think about what would happen, if this happened

in their own home. It is something that they should think about," added EAM Jaishankar.

During the event organised by India's Permanent Mission in Geneva, the EAM also highlighted achievements and big initiatives of the Indian government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the last 10 years.

"Our high-speed road corridors in the last 10 years have increased eight times with 28 kms of highways being added every day. From six metros in 2014, we have now 21. The port handling has doubled in this period and we are now building around seven to eight new airports



every year. The infrastructure, something that has held us in the past, is now changing," said Jaishankar.

The EAM then went on to give some more numbers to the audience, giving an indication of the progress being made back

and school enrollments have more girls than boys. Whatever was the baseline of 2014 has actually doubled in the last 10 years. We have today the confidence and experience to do much better," he added.

The minister mentioned that poverty remains a "big challenge" even though 250 million people have come out of poverty since 2014. He also mentioned the setting up of 12 industrial zones across the country which would attract global manufacturing.

"In many cases, we are correcting historical shortcomings. Look at the Western coast of India, there are virtually no deep water ports along the

entire Western coastline. Considering that so much of our shipping goes out to the Gulf and the Western world, it is something which is a prime need and yet was not addressed for so long. Now, we have plans to develop the whole port network," the EAM stated.

All of this, he remarked, requires hard work and doesn't happen in a day.

"There is a big debate in our country about manufacturing. There are people who ask why we are importing so much from China? Part of it is because we neglected manufacturing through the 1960s, 80s, 90s and even in the first decade of

2000. When did we have governments which actually made a major push on manufacturing?"

Yet, people come today and say that we need to find a fix as if this is something that you can do instantaneously.

Some even say that we are incapable and should not even attempt it. Ask yourself, can you actually be a major power without manufacturing? Major power needs technology and nobody can develop technology without manufacturing. So, you have to build human resources, infrastructure, and have those policies because life is not that khatakat, it is hard work," he added.

'Subversive activities': Russia declares six British diplomats persona non grata

AGENCIES
MOSCOW, SEP 13

In a move that will further strain the already fraught Russia-UK relationship, Moscow has revoked the accreditation of six British diplomats after the country's counter-intelligence agency FSB accused them of involvement in espionage and subversive activities.

The FSB, in a statement on Friday, said that it obtained "documents confirming London's coordination of the escalation of the international military-political situation", RT reported.

The UK has also supported "subversive policies" in Russia in an attempt to inflict a



"strategic defeat" on the nation, and these efforts have been spearheaded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Eastern Europe and Central Asia Directorate (EECAD), the agency said, adding that after the Ukraine war broke out conflict, the EECAD "was essentially transformed into a

special service working against Moscow" and its employees are "security threat".

In light of this and other "hostile steps" by the UK, the Russian Foreign Ministry, in cooperation with relevant departments, "has terminated the accreditation of six employees of the political department

of the British Embassy in Moscow, whose actions showed signs of intelligence and subversive work", officials said.

Russia would demand the "early termination of their missions" in the country, they added.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told TASS that they fully support the FSB's assessment, as British diplomats in Russia have been involved in "actions aimed at harming our people."

The British authorities have yet to respond to the allegations.

With relations between Russia and the UK at their nadir since the Ukraine conflict as they expelled each other's diplomats

and imposed sanctions, the action comes amid a new war of words between them.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday warned NATO that it was at risk of entering into war with his country if Europe and the US allowed Ukraine to attack Russian territory with western-made long-range missiles.

UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, who is in Washington for talks with US President Joe Biden, dismissed it, saying Ukraine had the right to defend itself, but noted that he did not seek conflict with Moscow.

However, he said that Russia started the conflict in Ukraine and can end it "straight away".

Top EU diplomat urges Lebanon, Israel to de-escalate border tensions

AGENCIES
BEIRUT, SEP 13

High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell has urged Lebanon and Israel to halt confrontations along their borders and pursue de-escalation.

"We need to de-escalate military tensions, and I use this opportunity to urge all sides to pursue this path," Borrell was quoted as saying in a statement released on Thursday by the Delegation of the EU to Lebanon.

Borrell made the remarks following his meeting in Lebanon with Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the statement.



"I urge all Lebanese leaders to work together in the interest of the Lebanese nation and the state of Lebanon - and no one else," said Borrell.

He also called for the full and symmetrical implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which "should pave the way for a comprehensive settlement, including land border demarcation, allowing the return of people, and reconstruction work in the affected border areas".

Resolution 1701, adopted in 2006, initiated a

ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, and the establishment of a demilitarized zone.

According to the statement, Borrell voiced the EU's support for Lebanon in overcoming its challenges.

Borrell also condemned the killings of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and called for an immediate ceasefire in the besieged Palestinian enclave. "It (the conflict in Gaza) is also a permanent threat to regional stability, particularly for Lebanon," he said.

For his part, Bou Habib said permanent peace in the region requires resolving the Palestinian issue, reiterating "Lebanon's commitment to implementing Resolution 1701."

Bangladesh-India passenger travel drops after dismissal of Hasina

AGENCIES
DHAKA, SEP 13

Air passenger count between Dhaka and major Indian cities such as Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai has seen a drop of approximately 60 per cent to 70 per cent since the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina government last month, according to media reports.

This drop in traveller volume has sparked anxiety among stakeholders about the impact on economic exchanges between Dhaka and New Delhi, the Dhaka Tribune said.

Following the collapse of Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, India briefly discontinued visa services. Although visa services have been largely restored, they are being provided on a restricted basis. An officer from the Indian immigration department in Dhaka said

that the Indian government now only provides visas for medical and student grounds.

Many visa applications have been refused, resulting in fewer travel and business-related travellers. This decline is putting pressure on airlines operating on certain routes, generating financial issues as they struggle to cover operational costs.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), the Bangladesh Railway, and the Ports Authority all report a considerable decrease in passengers using these routes.

Air travel between Dhaka and major Indian cities such as Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai has dropped by 60 per cent to 70 per cent, according to reports.

Airlines are seeing a steep drop in reservations and an increase in cancel-

lations.

An official from Airport Aviation Security (AVSEC) observed that security measures at Bangladesh's international airports have been greatly reinforced. This involves rigorous checks at numerous locations, like boarding card collecting, immigration, and even the boarding gate.

Many people have avoided flights to India due to increased security measures, such as the verification of No Objection Letters (NOCs) and extensive surveillance of corporate and financial sector travellers. This has resulted in a dramatic decrease in passenger numbers, according to the official.

According to Bangladesh airport sources, Biman Bangladesh, US-Bangla, and NovoAir are now flying to several Indian destinations.

Vistara, Air India, and IndiGo operate flights between Bangladesh and India. These airlines provide regular flights between Dhaka, Chittagong, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, and Mumbai.

However, in reaction to a recent dramatic drop in passenger numbers, all of these airlines have begun reducing their flight schedules on these routes.

This drop comes as airlines face lower demand as a result of visa difficulties and political turmoil.

Kamrul Islam, US-Bangla Airlines General Manager (Public Relations), stated that passenger numbers on the Bangladesh-India routes have been declining since July.

Passenger numbers remain insufficient to meet operational costs, placing the airline under financial duress, according to the source.

Look forward to meeting PM Modi, other Quad partners at Summit: Australian PM Albanese

AGENCIES
CANBERRA/NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he is looking forward to meeting with his Quad partners, including PM Narendra Modi, at the 2024 Quad Leaders' Summit, to be held on Sep 21 in Wilmington, Delaware.

The Australian Prime Minister will attend the summit with fellow Quad Leaders, the US President Joseph R. Biden., Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India, and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan, to discuss important challenges facing the Indo-Pacific and strengthening the Quad's cooperation, a statement said.

The Quad is a diplomatic partnership of four countries committed to practical action in the Indo-Pacific to shape the kind of region in which we want to live - an open,



stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific, where sovereignty is respected and competition is managed responsibly.

The Quad is making a positive contribution to the Indo-Pacific by delivering practical outcomes that respond to the region's priorities.

The Quad is building on these efforts, year on year, in areas such as strengthening clean energy supply chains, supporting mari-

time security, helping to train the region's infrastructure practitioners, enhancing regional health security, and building resilience and connectivity through undersea cable cooperation.

At the Summit, the Prime Minister will discuss regional issues and opportunities to further advance the Quad's positive and practical agenda.

This will be the fourth in-person Quad Leaders'

Summit. Leaders look forward to India hosting the 2025 Quad Leaders' Summit.

Prime Minister Albanese said: "I look forward to meeting with my Quad partners to discuss important challenges facing the Indo-Pacific and strengthening the Quad's cooperation."

"Australia is deeply invested in the future prosperity and stability of the Indo-Pacific."

US calls for text-based negotiations for UNSC reform, reaffirms backing for India's permanent seat

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS, SEP 13

While reaffirming support for a permanent seat for India, the US is calling for text-based negotiations for reform of the UN Security Council giving an impetus to the stalled process, according to Permanent Representative Linda Thomas-Greenfield.

"The United States supports engaging in text-based negotiations on Council reform," she said on Thursday. "It's actually a big deal. It means we're ready to work with other countries

to negotiate language, prepare amendments, and ready this resolution for a vote in the General Assembly, and ultimately amend the UN Charter."

She reaffirmed the US position backing permanent Council seats for India, Japan, and Germany.

The Council reform process known as Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) has been effectively blocked by a small group of countries that oppose the adoption of a negotiating text.

Without such a document to create an agenda and the

basis for negotiations, the discussions have been locked in a circular pattern since they began in 2009, going back to the starting point every year.

India and several countries have been pushing for the adoption of the negotiating text and the US adding its weight gives it added impetus.

A senior administration official, who had earlier briefed reporters, said that it was hoped that with Thomas-Greenfield's announcement, "we will help jump-start this process in a number of ways by calling for text-based nego-

tiations at the earliest possible opportunities."

The focus of her speech at the Council on Foreign Relations was on giving two permanent seats to Africa, the continent of 1.5 billion people spread across 55 countries and where about half the Council-mandated peacekeeping operations are located.

"It's what our African partners seek, and we believe, this is what it's what is just," she said.

"There are currently three non-permanent seats on the Security Council allocated to

African countries on a rotating basis, for two years," she said. "The problem is, these elected seats don't enable African countries to deliver the full benefit of their knowledge and voices to the work of the Council."

African nations have demanded two permanent seats on the Council and the addition of two elected seats.

Their demand is now resonating at the UN with added intensity as it looks to the 80th anniversary of its founding next year.

The UN's structures that

were created in the aftermath of World War II with some changes in 1965 do not reflect today's world where the UN has 193 members, "Thomas-Greenfield said. "The world is asking big questions about the United Nations. Whether this institution is representative and legitimate. Whether it's built to meet the challenges of the day, as well as the challenges of the future."

"And in particular, Member States are looking at the Security Council," she added.

Thomas-Greenfield said that Washington proposes giving a

non-permanent seat to landlocked developing countries.

The US also backs a permanent seat for Latin America and the Caribbean, she said, but did not endorse Brazil, which has also staked a claim.

The official who briefed reporters said that the US opposes giving the new permanent members veto rights.

The group blocking the adoption of a negotiating text is the 12-member Uniting for Consensus (UfC) led by Italy and includes Pakistan which opposes the addition of permanent members.

Non-metro cities leading in orders on e-commerce platforms in India: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Non-metro cities are leading the pack in India when it comes to growth in orders on e-commerce platforms, with at least 60 per cent of online orders coming from tier 2 cities and smaller towns, a report showed on Friday.

Online shopping remains the preferred mode for 75 per cent of consumers.

With robust growth expected in e-commerce this festive season, the report by third-party logistics service provider Delhivery said while metro cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Mumbai, etc experience the highest



orders, the largest growth in orders will come from tier II cities led by Gurgaon (36.8 per cent), Raipur (32.8 per cent), Nagpur (20.9 per cent), Jaipur (20.60 per cent) and others.

About 81 per cent of

consumers use their smartphones or mobile devices to make purchases and recommendations from promotions/influencers are a deciding factor for 84 per cent consumers, mentioned the report.

Interestingly, electron-

ics are gradually replacing dry fruits as the favoured gift during festivals whether for individuals or collective/corporate gifting.

"With high order volume growth, there is also a surge in the rate of returns making a smooth return management experience a key metric for the performance of an online retailer," the report noted.

Nearly four out of 10 cash on delivery (CoD), return to origin (RTO) are from apparels and accessories (39.3 per cent), followed by beauty products and personal care (14.5 per cent).

These categories comprise over half of total CoD RTOs and highlight

the need for a targeted returns reduction strategy for brands in this space, said the report.

According to latest estimates by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), festive sales of over Rs 4 lakh crore is expected due to the extended period of the festival season this year, which began with Raksha Bandhan on August 19 and will extend to November 15 on the day of Tulsi Vivah.

During this festive period, the business community across the country is fully prepared to meet consumer demands, and traders have stocked up adequately on all products.

Global VR headset shipments drop 4 pc in Q2, Meta leads

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Global virtual reality (VR) headset shipments fell 4 per cent in the April-June quarter (Q2), primarily due to a sharp drop in Sony's PlayStation VR2 shipments, a report said on Friday.

The decline was also due to overall weakness in the consumer VR segment due to a lack of application innovations and a sluggish economy, according to Counterpoint's Global XR (AR/VR) Headset Model Tracker. In contrast, demand from the enterprise VR segment remained relatively stable in Q2.

Senior analyst Flora Tang said that despite technological advancements in newly-launched products

from major players, the global VR headset market remains sluggish compared to its peak in 2021 and 2022, "when Meta's Quest 2 series successfully attracted users with innovative gaming, entertainment and MetaVerse experiences during the pandemic."

Social media giant Meta was the undisputed market leader in Q2 with a 37 per cent YoY growth capturing 80 per cent share. Meta's Quest 3 alone accounted for over 70 per cent of the market. Apple's Vision Pro shipments saw a sequential decline in Q2, particularly after accounting for returned units from the US market.

"Following the initial market hype, consumers appear to be waiting for

more content and application options to justify the high price of Apple's MR headset," said the report.

Among the top five market players, Sony and Apple faced challenges in Q2, both experiencing negative growth.

Sony saw a decline of over 90 per cent in Q2 2024 compared to the same period last year, when the PSVR 2 model had just entered its second quarter after launch. Market contribution from smaller companies shrank in Q2 2024.

Companies like Play for Dream Technology (YVRDream) and NOLO showcased their new VR headsets in the first half of 2024, but none of these have been commercialised yet, said the report.

96 pc of Indian midmarket firms prioritising Gen AI, faster than the world

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 13

About 96 per cent of Indian organisations (between 250 and 1,500 employees) are prioritising generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), compared to 91 per cent in the rest of the world, a report showed on Friday.

Adopting GenAI (66 per cent) only trails preparing for cybersecurity threats (67 per cent) as Indian mid-market businesses' strongest organisational priority in 2024, and ahead of making business operations more environmentally sustainable (65 per cent).

Organisations in India place higher priority on

AI to transform business than rest of the world, according to the report by SAP India.

Manish Prasad, President and Managing Director of SAP Indian Subcontinent, said that India's midmarket businesses are the backbone of the nation's economy. "AI is a game-changer for these companies, offering agility, actionable insights, and helping them thrive in a digital economy," he mentioned.

Over half of Indian mid-market businesses surveyed place a high priority on AI to transform privacy and security (55 per cent) and improve decision-making (52 per cent), ahead of business from the rest of the world

(50 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively).

According to the report, Indian mid-market businesses are also putting a high priority on AI to improve training and skills development, customer experience and to optimise supply chains and logistics.

The biggest risk Indian midmarket businesses see when it comes to the use of AI is finding, attracting, and retaining talent with AI skills.

Data is the next biggest risk, with lack of transparency behind AI results, acting upon incorrect information and insufficient data size and quality for AI models among the other risks identified.

India jumps to Tier 1 in Global Cybersecurity Index 2024

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 13

India has jumped to Tier 1 in the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2024, released by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), when it comes to role-modelling as part of the country's cybersecurity commitments and resulting impacts.

The 'GCI 2024' used a new five-tier analysis, a shift that allows a greater focus on each country's advances with cybersecurity commitments.

The report placed 46 countries in Tier 1, the highest of the five tiers, reserved for "role modelling" countries that demonstrate a strong commitment in all five cybersecurity pillars.

India topped the chart



for adopting measures like legal, technical, capacity building and cooperation as areas of relative strength. Organisational measures was a listed as an area of potential growth for the country.

"The Global Cybersecurity Index 2024 shows significant improvements by countries that are implementing essential legal

measures, plans, capacity building initiatives, and cooperation frameworks especially in strengthening incident response capabilities," said Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau.

"ITU's cybersecurity projects and programmes are supporting those national efforts to more

effectively manage cyberthreats," Zavazava added.

Worrisome threats highlighted in the report included ransomware attacks targeting government services and other sectors, cyber breaches affecting core industries, costly system outages, and breaches of privacy for individuals and organisations.

"Building trust in the digital world is paramount," said Doreen Bogdan-Martin, ITU Secretary-General.

"The progress seen in the Global Cybersecurity Index is a sign that we must continue to focus efforts to ensure that everyone, everywhere can safely and securely manage cyberthreats in today's increasingly complex digital landscape."

Most countries are either "establishing" (Tier 3) or "evolving" (Tier 4) in terms of cybersecurity. The 105 countries in these tiers have largely expanded digital services and connectivity but still need to integrate cybersecurity measures.

A "cybercapacity gap" - characterised by limitations in skills, staffing, equipment and funding - was evident in many countries and across all regional groups, according to the report.

Legal measures are the strongest cybersecurity pillar for most countries: 177 countries have at least one regulation on either personal data protection, privacy protection, or breach notification in force or in progress, it added.

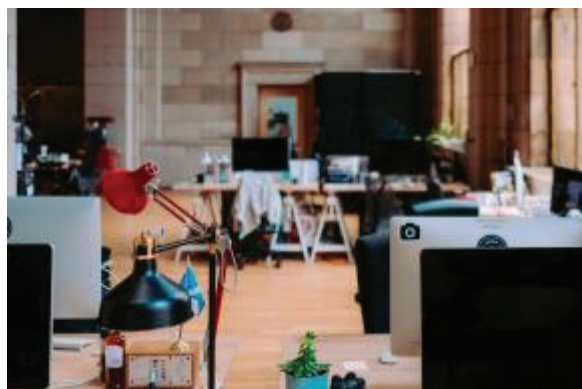
Large office spaces reach 45 pc of overall commercial transactions in India

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, SEP 13

Large office space contributed 45 per cent of the overall commercial transactions across eight leading cities in the country in the January-June period this year, a report showed on Friday.

Transactions for office spaces above 100,000 square feet recorded a substantial YoY growth of 54 per cent in the first half of 2024 - at 15.69 million square feet from 10.18 million square feet in H1 2023, the report by Knight Frank India sated.

Bengaluru's commercial market continued to witness leasing domination in office spaces with 100,000 sq ft. In H1 2024,



large office spaces contributed 53 per cent to Bengaluru's total office transaction volumes, amounting to 4.5 million sq ft.

According to Shishir Baijal, Chairman and Managing Director, Knight Frank, the rise in office space transactions is primarily fuelled by corpora-

tions establishing Global Capability Centres (GCCs) to expand their long-term operations in the market.

"Flexible workspaces remain vital, providing adaptability and cost savings for sectors such as third-party IT services and startups," he mentioned.

Hyderabad and Mumbai

ranked second and third in large office space transactions, with 3.08 mn sq ft and 2.66 mn sq ft, respectively.

Office space leasing in mid segment or spaces between 50,000 sq ft to 100,000 sq ft was recorded at 7.28 mn sq ft - witnessing a growth of 70 per cent YoY.

Mumbai and Delhi-NCR witnessed highest transactions in the mid-office space segment at 1.57 mn sq ft each, followed by Hyderabad at 1.29 mn sq ft.

Office space leasing in small office spaces or spaces below 50,000 sq ft were recorded at 11.7 mn sq ft - witnessing a moderate growth of 0.08 per cent YoY, the report noted.

CMFRI DECODES GENOME SEQUENCE OF ASIAN GREEN MUSSEL

AGENCIES
KOCHI, SEP 13

In a significant breakthrough on bivalve research, the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has unearthed the genome secret of Asian green mussel (*Perma viridis*).

This is the first-ever chromosome-level genome sequencing of a marine invertebrate species from India. Earlier, CMFRI had come out with a similar genome finding for Indian oil sardine. The Asian green mussel, Kallummakaya in local parlance, is an important aquaculture species in the family Mytilidae, contributing substantially to molluscan aquaculture.

CMFRI's research found that the mussel's genome contains 723.49 Mb in size and is anchored into 15 chromosomes. The research was published in the journal Scientific Data by Nature Group.

"The development will be a game-changer in boosting sustainable mussel aquaculture in the country, as this research will help gain insights into its growth, reproduction, and disease resistance," said Dr. Grinson George, Director of CMFRI.

The findings will benefit the aquaculture sector by improving genomic selection and breeding practices, leading to enhanced productivity and resilience in fisheries, he added.

A team of researchers from CMFRI led by Prin-

icipal Scientist Dr Sandhya Sukumaran carried out this study with funding support from the Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi. The team includes Dr A Gopalakrishnan, V G Vysakh, Dr Wilson Sebastian, Dr Lalitha Hari Dhara, Dr Akhilesh Pandey, Dr Abishek Kumar, and Dr J K Jena.

According to scientists, this will help develop new strategies to combat diseases in the mussel.

"Genomic investigations on this species are vital to understand genes, gene combinations, and signalling pathways leading to the parasitic diseases, which constitute a major threat to Asian green mussel aquaculture in India, causing substantial

mortalities in arms," said Dr Sandhya Sukumaran.

The genome assembly of green mussels will emerge as a valuable tool for exploring cancer mechanisms and developing new therapeutic strategies.

"A total of 49654 protein-coding genes were identified, including 634 genes associated with the cancer pathway and 408 genes associated with viral carcinogenesis. This indicates that this species is a novel model organism for cancer research," Sandhya Sukumaran said.

This advancement promises to significantly enhance our understanding of cancer pathways and facilitate the discovery of novel treatments, she added.

India's bioeconomy reaches valuation of USD 151 bn, contributes 4.25 pc to GDP: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEPT 12

India's bioeconomy has experienced significant growth, reaching a valuation of USD 151 billion by the end of 2023, according to a new report, which said that the surge highlights the bioeconomy's critical role in national development, contributing 4.25 per cent to the country's GDP and positioning India among the top five global bioeconomies.

The report, prepared by the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) and the Association of Biotechnology Led Enter-

prises (ABLE), outlines transformative advances across biotechnology, agricultural innovation, healthcare, and biomanufacturing, driving the sector's expansion.

It was released during a session at the Global Bio-India Summit 2024.

The report said that India's bioeconomy has experienced significant growth, reaching a valuation of USD 151 billion by the end of 2023.

"This surge highlights the bioeconomy's critical role in national development, contributing 4.25 per cent to the country's GDP and positioning India among the top five global bioeconomies," it said.

One of the major drivers of this growth has been the BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment) Policy, the report said, noting that the policy focuses on bio-based chemicals, precision biotherapeutics, climate-resilient agriculture, and advanced research in marine and space technologies.

Rajesh S Gokhale, Secretary DBT, Chairman BIRAC & DG-BRAC said the India bioeconomy report 2024, launched at the 4th edition of Global Bio India, marks a pivotal moment in India's journey to becoming a global leader in biotechnology.

NAZARA INVESTS RS 982 CRORE IN POKERBAAZI-OWNER MOONSHINE TECHNOLOGY

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, SEP 13

Gaming and sports media company Nazara Technologies on Friday said it has acquired 47.7 per cent stake in Moonshine Technology, the parent company of PokerBaazi, for Rs 832 crore through a secondary transaction. Additionally, Nazara will infuse Rs 150 crore in primary capital into Moonshine via compulsory convertible preference shares.

"This investment in Moonshine Technology represents a significant step in our journey to



strengthen Nazara's position as India's dominant diversified gaming platform," said Nitish Mittersain, CEO of Nazara Technologies.

PokerBaazi has not only emerged as the undisput-

ed leader in online poker gaming in India but has also set new standards in user engagement, innovation, and overall experience, he added.

PokerBaazi drives over 85 per cent of Moonshine's

net revenue, while its fantasy sports platform, SportsBaazi, contributes 12 per cent. PokerBaazi had 340,000 monthly active users (as of May 2024).

As the Indian gaming sector continues to grow, "we firmly believe that partnering with Nazara Technologies is the right step toward advancing the nation's gaming ecosystem," said Navkiran Singh, CEO and Founder, Baazi Games (Moonshine Technology Pvt Ltd).

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recognition of the gaming sector's role in shaping India's \$1

trillion digital economy, "we are confident that our combined efforts will foster innovation, create new jobs, and further India's place in the global digital economy," Singh added.

In esports, Nazara has India's leading esports platform NODWIN Gaming and Sportskeeda/Pro Football Network in the sports media space.

The company also offers gamified early learning ecosystems like Kiddopia and Animal Jam, a leading IP-based gaming studio 'Fusebox', World Cricket Championship (WCC), and other casual games.

SACA calls for gender equality in cricket ahead of Afghanistan Series

AGENCIES
DURBAN, SEP 12

As the South African men's cricket team readies itself for a historic three-match ODI series against Afghanistan in the UAE, the South African Cricketers' Association (SACA) has taken a bold stand on gender equality in cricket.

This marks the first-ever bilateral series between the two nations and only the third occasion they will meet in the 50-over format. While these matches were not initially part of the 2023-2027 Future Tours Programme (FTP), Cricket South Africa (CSA) added them in an effort to increase competitive opportunities for its national teams.

However, as the games approach, SACA's attention has shifted towards a significant issue: Afghani-



stan remains the only Full Member of the International Cricket Council (ICC) without a women's team.

SACA issued a statement expressing its concerns about the worsening conditions for women in Afghanistan, particularly under the Taliban regime, which has imposed severe restrictions on women's

rights, including participation in sports. Afghanistan's government currently refuses to recognize a women's cricket team, and SACA has called for action.

Andrew Breetzke, CEO of SACA and board member of the World Cricketers' Association, emphasised that every athlete, regardless of gender, has the right to

equal opportunity in sports. "A player's right to pursue sport cannot be limited because of his or her gender. We urge CSA to use this series to highlight that these rights for Afghanistan's women's players must be protected and respected," Breetzke said.

SACA's statement comes amidst the broader context of international discussions about Afghanistan's status in world cricket. The ICC has deliberated on Afghanistan's lack of a women's team, with some countries refusing to play Afghanistan in bilateral series.

Australia, in consultation with its government, has postponed two bilateral series against Afghanistan in recent years. Still, Afghanistan's men's team remains an active part of the international cricket

calendar, continuing to play in ICC tournaments.

While some countries have taken a hardline stance, the ICC is reluctant to ban Afghanistan from international cricket outright, fearing it could endanger lives if the Taliban feels pressured on this issue. In the meantime, there have been discussions about forming a refugee women's cricket team based in Australia, though concrete actions have yet to materialize.

South Africa's white-ball coach, Rob Walter, was asked about the ethical considerations of playing against Afghanistan given the regime's treatment of women. He deferred the question to CSA, explaining that such decisions lie with the governing body, not the players or coaches. "Those decisions are not for me to make," he said.

Kiwi great Craig McMillan keen to see emerging stars shine

AGENCIES
WELLINGTON, SEPT 13

Craig McMillan is a veteran when it comes to ICC events and the former New Zealand all-rounder is keen to pass on all he knows to the White Ferns ahead of next month's ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

When it comes to cricket in New Zealand, there's not too many people more synonymous and as roundly respected as former all-rounder Craig McMillan. McMillan won a debut as a player when a spritely 20-year-old in an ODI against Sri Lanka in Hyderabad in 1997 and went on to become one of New Zealand's biggest stars of his generation.

The talented all-rounder made 260 international appearances for his country, with the bulk of those coming in the ODI arena where he is the ninth most capped Kiwi player in men's 50-over cricket.

It's no surprise that McMillan's affiliation with



ODI cricket took him to three editions of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup (1999, 2003, 2007) and the 48-year-old showed he could have been just as effective at T20I level with a strong showing at the inaugural edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in 2007, an ICC report said.

But with his playing days long over and a new job of nurturing the next generation of international stars in his role as assistant coach of New Zealand's women's team now his focus, McMillan is determined to pass on all his knowledge to the crop of players that will

get the chance to shine at next month's ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

"I was lucky enough to go to four white-ball World Cups as a player and three as batting coach at the Black Caps, so I have a lot of experience in terms of World Cups," McMillan told ICC Digital from Lincoln on New Zealand's south island as the White Ferns prepare for the T20 World Cup.

"They're different beasts, it's a tournament sort of format, so it's different to a normal tour," he said. "I'll certainly be using that knowledge and passing that on to the group where needed."

Ireland announce limited-overs squad for South Africa series

AGENCIES
DUBLIN, SEPT 13

Ireland have named their white-ball squads for the upcoming series against South Africa in the United Arab Emirates.

Paul Stirling will lead the ODI and T20I squads for the matches against South Africa in UAE.

The series marks Ireland's return to limited-overs cricket after their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 campaign.

In a prominent move, Andrew Balbirnie wasn't picked in the T20I squad, and was confirmed to open the batting in ODIs, an ICC report said.

"One area we will explore on this tour is the top order in our T20 squad," Ireland selector Andrew White said.

"We'll be looking at introducing a new dynam-



ic, with Andrew Balbirnie sitting out the T20Is on this occasion.

There are only two T20Is in the upcoming series, but they will offer important opportunities as we try to increase our levels of performance again," he said.

"Andrew remains very much central to our thoughts and will open the batting in the ODIs," White said.

White reiterated that Ireland are considering

the upcoming series as the start of a new cycle for the team with important ICC events in 2026 (Men's T20 World Cup) and 2027 (Men's Cricket World Cup).

"2026 and 2027 are pivotal years for our white-ball squads - those years being the next T20 and 50-over World Cups respectively," said White. "Given their timeframes, it means we are looking at this upcoming series against South Africa as the start of a new cycle."

ISL: Rivalry resumes between Mohun Bagan and Mumbai City FC

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, SEP 12

The Indian Super League (ISL) is set to ignite once again as the 2024-25 season kicks off with a mouthwatering clash between Mohun Bagan Super Giant and Mumbai City FC. The iconic Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata will be the stage for this eagerly anticipated showdown, with the teams vying not just for early-season bragging rights but potentially laying down a marker for the campaign ahead.

In recent years, this fixture has become synonymous with the peak of Indian footballing rivalry. The last four seasons have seen Mohun Bagan SG and Mumbai City FC exchange blows for the top honors, with each side claiming their share of silverware.

Mumbai City FC dominated the 2020-21 season, securing both the League



Shield and the Cup, leaving Mohun Bagan SG in their wake. The 2022-23 season saw Mumbai City FC clinch the Shield once more, only for the Mariners to upstage them in the ISL Playoffs. Last season continued the trend of competitive duels, with both sides capturing a trophy each.

The 2024-25 season opener promises another chapter in this thrilling rivalry. Mumbai City FC have historically held the upper hand, winning seven out of the ten encounters between the two teams.

the Mariners.

On the flip side, Mohun Bagan SG's Jason Cummings has a remarkable record against Mumbai City FC, scoring in all three of his ISL appearances against them last season. His knack for finding the back of the net will be crucial as the Mariners look to assert their strength early in the season. Dimitri Petratos, who played a pivotal role in last season's Shield decider with two assists, will also be one to watch.

Adding an extra layer of intrigue to this fixture are two former Mumbai City FC stars now donning the Mohun Bagan SG jersey - Apuia and Greg Stewart. Their successful stints with the Islanders have left a void that the new-look Mumbai City FC will need to address. The clash against their old team will be a significant test for them and a chance to showcase their worth in

the Mariners' setup.

The match will also feature a host of India's best footballing talent. Mumbai City FC boasts players like Chhangte, Vikram Partap Singh, Mehtab Singh, Brandon Fernandes, and recently Phurba Lachenpa, while Mohun Bagan SG's lineup includes Sahal Abdul Samad, Anirudh Thapa, Liston Colaco, Subhasish Bose, Apuia, and Vishal Kaith. The presence of these national team regulars will ensure a high-quality spectacle for Indian football fans.

While this fixture won't be for a trophy, the stakes are high. Points secured in this encounter could have significant implications for the League Shield race, given the strength of both teams. A win for either side could set the tone for their season and provide a crucial psychological advantage in what promises to be a fiercely contested campaign.

Paralympians hail PM as Param Mitra, highlight impact of govt initiatives

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was hailed as 'Param Mitra' (true friend) by India's Paralympic medalists during an emotional interaction, where athletes expressed their deep gratitude for his unwavering support and visionary policies.

As the para-athletes shared their inspirational journeys from the Paris Paralympics, PM Modi praised their determination and highlighted the exceptional dedication of their coaches, emphasising the unique challenges faced by the specially-abled.

"For others, PM stands

for Prime Minister, but for us, PM stands for Param Mitra," said silver medalist Yogesh Kathuniya on Friday, capturing the profound bond between the athletes and PM Modi.

Kathuniya attributed his consistency and success to government initiatives like TOPS and Khelo India, saying, "I attribute my consistency to you because of the schemes you have launched. It is because of you that we have been able to win 29 medals."

Prime Minister Modi, in his address, underscored the importance of understanding the life of a para-athlete, praising the coaches who work tirelessly to train them. "Before teaching the specially-abled, the



coaches need to mentally prepare themselves to live that life," PM Modi stated.

"Those who train para-

athletes are extraordinary. The abled only need to be taught techniques, but the specially-abled need to be

taught a way of life as well." His remarks highlighted the unique role of coaches who go beyond teach-

ing techniques to foster resilience and self-belief among para-athletes.

Gold medalist Navdeep shared his personal experience of overcoming nerves during his second Paralympic appearance. "I was very nervous, but all the senior athletes motivated me. I talked to them and gained experience, and by the end, I was absolutely relaxed ahead of my game," Navdeep said, underscoring the importance of peer support within the Indian Paralympic team.

Veteran para-athlete and silver medalist Sharad Kumar reflected on the progress of the para-movement in India, stating, "This is my second medal

in Paralympics. I have been associated with the para-movement ever since its inception. It makes me immensely proud to see the Indian Paralympic contingent.

This team has categorised India as a sporting nation already... We are immensely thankful to you for your motivation before the games and we all look forward to meeting you after them. Nobody has accepted para the way you have."

Gold medalist Sumit Antil, who clinched his second consecutive Paralympic gold, dedicated his victory to PM Modi, recalling a promise made after his win in Tokyo. "After Tokyo, you made

me promise to get two more Golds. This one is for you... On behalf of my whole team, I thank you," Antil said, highlighting the personal connection and the inspiration drawn from the Prime Minister's encouragement.

The interaction was not only a celebration of the athletes' incredible achievements but also a testament to the transformative impact of PM Modi's support for para-sports in India. As the nation continues to shine on the global stage, the relationship between the athletes and their 'Param Mitra' reflects a shared commitment to pushing boundaries and redefining excellence in sport.

Neeraj targets Diamond League glory as Nadeem misses out

AGENCIES
BRUSSELS, SEPT 13

India's Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra will be the main attraction at the Brussels Diamond League Final 2024, while his arch-rival and Paris 2024 Olympic gold medalist, Pakistan's Arshad Nadeem, will be missing from the line-up.

Nadeem, who competed only once in the Diamond League this year, did not qualify for the final, leaving Chopra a clearer path as he aims



to reclaim the title he won in 2022.

Neeraj Chopra, a two-time Olympic medalist, earned his spot in the 2024

Diamond League Final with 14 points across two meets, finishing fourth in the overall standings.

The javelin event,

where Chopra finished second in both the Doha and Lausanne legs, is set for 15 September at 1:52 AM IST. He will face tough competition from Anderson Peters of Grenada, who topped the standings with 29 points, Germany's Julian Webber with 21 points, and Jakub Vadlejch of Czechia, the defending champion.

Joining Chopra is steeplechaser Avinash Sable, who will make his Diamond League Final debut on 14 September at 12:39 AM IST.

Brazilian teenager Estevao relishing steep learning curve

AGENCIES
RIO DE JANEIRO, SEPT 13

Teenage forward Estevao said that his first experience with Brazil's national team had provided an invaluable learning experience, despite the side's stuttering form in South America's World Cup qualifiers.

Estevao played a combined total of 32 minutes in Brazil's 1-0 home victory over Ecuador last Friday and the 1-0 away defeat to Paraguay.

The 17-year-old Palmei-



ras star said it was enough to motivate him to return to the international stage with a greater impact in the near future.

"It was very important for me, I hope to return more often," Estevao told

reporters on Thursday.

"I am very grateful for the opportunity to have been called up to the Brazilian national team for the first time. It was a very good experience for me and I was able to learn from many different people," he said.

Estevao, who has signed a contract to join Chelsea next July, is considered one of Brazil's brightest talents. Since turning professional late last year, he has made 27 first-team appearances for Palmeiras and scored eight

goals. And while he has lofty ambitions in Europe and for Brazil's national team, Estevao is currently focused on helping Palmeiras in their quest for back-to-back Brazilian Serie A titles.

"It is very gratifying for me to represent Palmeiras, the biggest club in Brazil," he said. "Having been with the national team and now coming back is a good feeling. I'm enjoying being with my teammates and my family again, and I'm focused on doing well for the rest of the season."

CEO conducts extensive tour of Udhampur district, reviews election preparedness

J1 NEWS SERVICE
UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 13

Chief Electoral Officer J&K, Pandurang K Pole today undertook an extensive tour of Udhampur district to assess the preparations for upcoming Assembly Elections 2024.

During the tour, the CEO also chaired a review meeting at Conference Hall of DC Office Complex in which District Election Officer Udhampur, Saloni Rai; Nodal Officers and other key officials involved in the election process participated.

During the meeting, the CEO took detailed constituency wise review with regard to enforcement of Model Code of Conduct, Expenditure Monitoring, Security plan, Transport and Communication plan besides functioning of VST and flying squads, training of poll staff, AMF at polling stations, SVEEP activities and other measures undertaken for smooth



and peaceful conduct of the forthcoming general Assembly elections.

He emphasized on the strict enforcement of Election Commission of India's guidelines and urged nodal officers to ensure a fair, transparent and peaceful

election process. The CEO also called for immediate sharing and uploading of any seizure-related information in compliance with ECI norms.

During the meeting, the CEO launched two key SVEEP initiatives;

SVEEP Song and Coffee Table Book, both aimed at promoting greater voter awareness and participation. He stressed on the importance of stringent actions against attempts to influence voters through money or other means,

urging Nodal Officers to remain vigilant. The Chief Electoral Officer commended the district administration's efforts and urged continued vigilance to ensure the integrity of the Assembly Election 2024. He highlighted the need for ongoing commitment and adherence to ECI guidelines throughout the election process. During the meeting, the DEO presented a detailed, constituency-wise PowerPoint presentation outlining the measures taken to ensure a smooth conduct of upcoming general Assembly elections.

Later, the CEO visited Media Centre and District Control Room which have been established to monitor paid news and address

complaints related to MCC violations, particularly those received through the Cvigil app. He directed officials to closely monitor these activities and to ensure that all complaints are redressed promptly.

Meanwhile, the CEO, accompanied by DEO, inspected designated counting centers and strong rooms at Government College for Women where Electronic Voting Machines will be securely stored. As part of the Green SVEEP initiative, the CEO planted a sapling at GCW, symbolizing the commitment to environmental sustainability alongside electoral awareness.

The visit concluded with a vibrant cultural program at the Government Degree College Boys, Udhampur, organized by the District SVEEP Team. The performances were designed to inspire active citizen participation in the democratic process.

Expenditure Observer undertakes surprise inspection in Trehgam-AC



J1 NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 13

Expenditure Observer (EO), Gargi Umrao today undertook surprise inspection of FSTs, SSTs and VSTs of Assembly Constituency 2-Trehgam.

The Excise and Taxation department team was

also present at the Naka's with FST's and police personnel.

The EO impressed upon all the teams to be proactive and vigilant about any unusual activities in the Assembly Constituency so that the elections are conducted in a free and transparent manner.

Voter Awareness takes center stage as SVEEP activities ignite election excitement

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 13

The electoral atmosphere in AC 67-Kathua (SC) is filled with excitement as the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program continues to inspire voter engagement ahead of the upcoming elections. A series of dynamic events have been successfully conducted across various Anganwadi centers in the constituency, aimed at ensuring every eligible voter is actively involved in the democratic process.

One of the key highlights was a collaborative event at HS Logate, where, under the guidance of Anita Pangotra, a teacher, students performed a powerful Nukkad Natak (street play). The play, aimed at raising awareness about the importance of voting, was followed by



a cultural program and impactful messages from students, stressing the role of voting in building a robust democracy. The event concluded with a signature campaign, symbolizing the community's pledge to make AC 67-Kathua a leader in voter turnout.

Participants, including

public representatives, local citizens, school staff, and students, solemnly took a voter pledge, reaffirming their commitment to ensuring the highest possible voter turnout in the forthcoming elections on October 1, 2024. This pledge emphasized the critical role of active voter participation in shaping

the future of both the constituency and the nation.

Nodal Officer for SVEEP, AC 67-Kathua (SC), Jatinder Sethi, (Principal, GHSS Nagri Parole), along with prominent community leaders such as Bholi Singh, Raja Ram Singh, and Vivek Dubey, were present to motivate the public. They emphasized the importance of every vote in strengthening the democratic fabric of the constituency.

These events are part of the broader District SVEEP plan, meticulously developed by the District Election Office under the supervision of the Returning Officer for AC 67-Kathua (SC), Vishav Partap Singh (ACR). The plan is designed to foster voter awareness and maximize participation in the electoral process through a strategic and well-coordinated approach.

SVEEP: Grand Event at Pratap Park Lal Chowk ignites Voter Awareness

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 13

The famous Pratap Park in Lal Chowk area of Srinagar reverberated with the vibrant voices of democracy and voter awareness today as a grand SVEEP event was held here under the aegis of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative. The event drew an enthusiastic crowd from all walks of life, featuring 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.

Nodal Officer Media for ECI, Apurva Kumar who was the chief guest, 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 Special Secretary to Govt. Akhter Qazi; UT Nodal officer SVEEP, Sapna Kotwal; District Nodal Officer Special SVEEP, Tahir

audience regarding the process of voting through their Mock Polling Station.

Various sports events were organised 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 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 the 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.

Women-Centric Polling Stations add exemplary inclusivity to Assembly Election in Kishtwar

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 13

In India, democracy is a celebration of collective voice, where every vote counts, and every citizen plays a pivotal role in shaping the future. At the heart of this process lies the indispensable contribution of women, whose participation is a key to the democratic ethos.

Recognizing the significance of this, the District Administration Kishtwar on the directions of CEO J&K has taken concrete steps to ensure that women's involvement in the electoral process is enhanced, dignified, and empowered.

This journey towards electoral inclusivity began during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, with the establishment of women-centric polling stations across the district's three Assembly constituencies: 48-Inderal, 49-Kishtwar, and 50-Paddar Nagseni.

As Kishtwar gears up for the ongoing 2024 Assembly Elections, this progressive initiative has continued, with three polling stations in each Assembly Constituency fully managed by women. This includes

not only polling staff but also female polling agents, police officers, and personnel from the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for women voters.

To foster women's participation and make the election process more accessible and comfortable for female voters, women-centric polling stations have been established at three constituencies.

These stations are strategically chosen to be easily accessible to women and have all the necessary amenities to facilitate a smooth voting experience.

In the 48-Inderal Assembly Constituency, the designated women-centric polling station is located at 86-MS Mughal Maidan. Similarly, in the 49-Kishtwar Constituency, the polling station at 93-Islamia Faridia Higher Secondary School has been designated as women-centric, while 07-Sangrambhaata serves this purpose in the 50-Paddar Nagseni Assembly Constituency.

The women-centric polling station at Islamia Faridia Higher Secondary School is particularly notable for

having 944 female voters out of the total 945 registered voters.

This overwhelmingly female electorate highlights the crucial role that women play in shaping the political landscape of Kishtwar.

To ensure the smooth functioning of these women-centric polling stations, the District Election Officer Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan has taken proactive measures. From appointing dedicated Women Nodal Officers to deploying women-centric security personnel, the administration has left no stone unturned in its commitment to ensuring a safe, inclusive, and empowering voting environment for women. The nodal officer overseeing these polling stations, Chandan Manhas has been diligently working to ensure that all facilities and arrangements are in place. The provision of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs), including Creche facility, separate waiting areas, drinking water, toilets, and seating arrangements, is designed to make the voting process as convenient as possible for women voters.

Additionally, the presence of female police officers and CAPF staff enhance

security and builds trust among female voters, encouraging them to come out in large numbers to exercise their democratic right.

The establishment of these women-centric polling stations is not just about making elections more accessible; it is a significant step toward the larger goal of democratic empowerment. By providing a dedicated space where women can vote without hesitation, the administration is sending a powerful message, that the participation of women in the electoral process is essential to the health and vibrancy of our democracy.

The establishment of women-centric polling stations in the 48-Inderal, 49-Kishtwar, and 50-Paddar Nagseni Assembly Constituencies is a significant step toward ensuring that women's voices are heard in Kishtwar's democratic process. As women continue to turn out in large numbers to vote, it is clear that initiatives like these are not only empowering women but also strengthening the democratic fabric of the district and a great encouragement to the women section of society.

Sustainable development of tourist destinations our priority: Chief Secretary

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 13

Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo today held a wrap-up meeting with the World Bank team to discuss the way forward for development of new Tourist destinations in J&K and for promotion of Handicrafts sector here.

The World Bank Team while concluding their 4-day visit put forth various suggestions regarding the interventions required for the new projects. World Bank Team gave an account of their observations after having visited several Tourist places and Handicrafts units during their brief stay in Kashmir.

It was agreed that the World Bank shall primarily provide its support as a Knowledge Partner for development of new Tourist Destinations and promotion of Handicrafts Sector. The need for project funding was also discussed and the demand for extension in the World Bank funded Jhelum Tawi Flood Recovery Project (JTFRP) by one more year was also put forth to the visiting World Bank Team.

Chief Secretary in his remarks stated that



the Government's focus would be to ensure sustainable development of all Tourist Destinations so as to boost the Tourism sector's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

He said that while Tourism has potential to contribute immensely to the J&K economy, the Government shall also devise a strategy to conserve the ecology of tourist places by ensuring planned development in sync with the natural surroundings. He said that Tourism Development Authorities would need to be strengthened so that these drive development of Tourist locations.

Chief Secretary thanked the World Bank Team for their visit to provide tech-

nical advice for development of new Tourist destinations and promotion of handicrafts for which World Bank would play significant role as a Knowledge Partner.

The World Bank team while summing up the visit gave details of their visit reiterating its strong commitment to sustainability and to support the J&K Government in their new projects aimed at better management of Tourist locations.

The team emphasized to have overall strategic vision for development of tourism and to develop clean-green brand were also discussed. The meeting was attended by senior officials of the World Bank, Ministry of Tourism Government of India; Principal Secretary, Finance; Commissioner Secretary, Tourism; Director Tourism, Kashmir/Jammu; MD, JKTDC; Director, Handicrafts & Handloom, Kashmir and other senior officers.