

DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Severe and continuous headache
- Diarrhoea
- Profound vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in stool
- Redness on the face

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

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GENERAL ELECTIONS TO J&K LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY-2024

Stage set for Phase I as over 23.27 lakh voters prepare to cast ballots today

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 17

With the stage set for the first phase of the 2024 General Elections to the Legislative Assembly, scheduled for September 18, the fate of 219 candidates will be determined by over 23.27 lakh voters.

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

CEO J&K urges voters to turn out for Phase-I of assembly elections



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 17

Jammu and Kashmir's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), P.K. Pole, on Tuesday appealed

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34 candidates withdraw Nominations, 415 candidates remain in final fray for 40 Assembly Constituencies in Phase 3

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 17

On the last day of the withdrawal of nomination papers for the third and final phase of the forthcoming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Elections 2024 in the 40 Assembly Constituencies, 34 candidates withdrew their Candidature in the Office of respective Returning Officers across seven districts on Tuesday, leaving 415 candidates in the final poll fray.

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, J&K UT informed that out of the total 449 valid nominations, 34 candidates withdrew their Nominations by the last date of withdrawal i.e. Tuesday, 17 September, 2024.

With this, only 415 validly Nominated Candidates now remain in fray for the 40 Assem-

bly Constituencies where polling will be held in the third phase of the J&K Assembly Elections on 01 October, 2024.

Highest 16 candidates withdrew their nomination in Kupwara district, followed by 6 in Baramulla district, 4 each in Jammu district and Bandipora district, 3 in Kathua district, 1 in Udhampur district, while no candidates withdrew their nomination in Samba district.

With this, 109 candidates remain in the final electoral fray in Jammu district, followed by 101 in Baramulla district, 59 in Kupwara district, 42 in Bandipora district, 37 in Udhampur district, 35 in Kathua district, while 32 candidates remain in the final fray in Samba district.

In Jammu division's Udhampur district, 12

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"Not God's decision": Omar Abdullah on Amit Shah's Article 370 remark



JI NEWS SERVICE
BUDGAM, SEP 17

National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said that nothing is possible and the verdict given by the Supreme Court on Article 370 abrogation can be overruled by a large bench in future.

Speaking with reporters, as per the news agency, Omar Abdullah said that nothing is impossible as it was not the decision of God but the people sitting in the Parliament. Earlier, in a rally in Jammu, Amit Shah had said that Article 370 is a history now and will never be part of India's constitution again.

"Three previous decisions taken by the Supreme Court

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Chanapora Assembly Seat: Apni Party's Altaf Bukhari favourite to win

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 17

The stage is set for a thrilling contest in the Chanapora constituency, which will go to polls on September 25 as part of the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly elections.

According to the news agency, the constituency, carved out from Amira Kadal, has seen a decline in voter base from 86,520 in 2014 to 85,431 in 2024. The redrawing of boundaries has shrunk the voter base, making it a tight contest among the

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Nothing objectionable in my remarks on Mehbooba Mufti: Er. Rashid



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 17

Stating that there was nothing objectionable in his remarks on

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Spotlight on 4 key assembly seats as J&K set to witness first phase of polls

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 17

With the upcoming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections heating up, the focus has turned to four high-profile candidates and constituencies that are

expected to shape the electoral landscape.

Out of 24 Assembly seats, voting will be held on 16 seats in the Kashmir Valley and 8 in the Jammu division. Among these, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is fielding candidates on 8 seats

in Kashmir. However, a keenly contested battle is expected between the Congress-National Conference (NC) alliance, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and several other political players.

In addition to

CONTINUED ON ► PAGE 4

Congress, its ecosystem angry with me for participating in Ganesh Puja: PM Modi

JI NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, SEP 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the Congress and its "ecosystem" was angry with him for taking part in Ganesh Puja, claiming that "power-hungry" people who were dividing society were also having problems with this festival.

PM Modi made the comment in an apparent reference to the criticism by the opposition parties for participating in Ganesh Puja rituals at the residence of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, while addressing a rally after launching the Odisha government's flagship programme Subhadra Yojana here.



"Ganesh Utsav is not just a festival of faith for our country. It played a very important role in the freedom movement.

"Even at that time, the British who followed the policy of divide and rule used to hate Ganesh Utsav. Even today, the power-hungry people, who are

busy in dividing society are having problems with Ganesh Puja. You must have seen that the people of Congress and its ecosystem are angry because I participated in Ganesh Puja," Modi said at the rally. He also said that Lord Ganesh was

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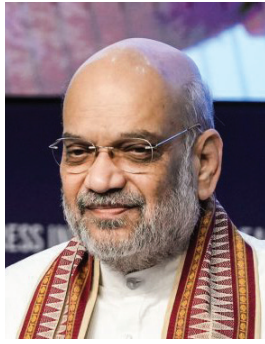
Waqf bill committed to preserving Waqf properties, parliament to pass it in coming days: Shah

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Tuesday said the Waqf (Amendment) Bill was committed to the management and preservation of Waqf properties and would be passed in Parliament in the coming days.

At a press conference held to mark 100 days of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government's third tenure, Shah said the bill would also prevent the misuse of Waqf properties.

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha last month and referred to a Joint Committee of Parliament for further examination after opposition parties raised



strong objections to certain provisions of the draft law.

A government official said the bill was aimed at reducing conflicts and disputes. It also has provisions for setting up of a digital platform for online registration and monitoring of Waqf properties.

Listing out the government's achievements in the first 100 days, an

official said 63,000 tribal villages will be developed with an aim to improve the socio-economic status of five crore tribals.

The official said the National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) Scheme has been extended to include waste pickers along with sanitation workers, promoting their social and economic empowerment.

The official said Unique Disability Identification Cards have been issued to three lakh people with disabilities from Scheduled Tribes, including 1.17 lakh cards for individuals aged 60 years and above.

The PM-SURAJ initiative has also been expanded to grant better access

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CS takes stock of readiness of LA Complexes, renovation of MLA Hostels and availability of staff



JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 17

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today conducted a comprehensive review focusing on several critical issues concerning the upgradation and renovation of Assembly complexes at Jammu and Srinagar, as well as the MLA hostels and availability of staff for smooth functioning of the Assembly once the elections are completed here.

During the meeting, Chief Secretary was briefed on the progress of works going on in these complexes. He emphasized the need to expedite the completion of these projects while ensuring adherence to quality standards.

Dulloo also reviewed key infrastructural components including fire safety measures, public address systems, Wi-Fi connectivity, and the functionality of lifts within the Assembly Secretariat.

In addition to the Assembly complex upgradations, the Chief Secretary assessed the renovation efforts made towards making MLA hostels functional in both the cities. He received updates on the repair status and directed concerned authorities to continue their efforts to meet deadlines.

The meeting also addressed the procurement and purchase of new vehicles. The Secretary of Motor Garages informed that the order for purchasing 21 new vehicles has been placed, providing the model wise description of these vehicles also. Security arrangements for Ministers and availability of bullet proof vehicles were also reviewed.

Furthermore, Dulloo instructed the Commissioner Secretary, GAD to issue necessary orders for posting of requisite staff for the working of the Legislative Assembly besides making arrangements for functioning of ministers at Civil Secretariat complex.

Chief Secretary directed the Resident Commissioner to ensure the timely completion of all repair and renovation works and to maintain the availability of vehicles as soon as the assembly is constituted here in the UT.

The meeting was attended by ACS, Forest and IT Departments; Principal Secretary, Estates; Principal Secretary, Home; Commissioner Secretary, GAD; Resident Commissioner, Delhi; Secretary, Transport; Secretary, PWD; Secretary, Law; Secretary, Legislative Assembly;

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Eid-e-Milad celebrated with fervour

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 17

Eid-e-Milad, the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad, was observed with traditional fervour across the Kashmir valley on Tuesday.

The largest gathering was observed at the revered Hazratbal shrine, on the banks of the Dal Lake, which houses the holy relic of the Prophet Muhammad. Thousands of devotees including men, women, and children participated in night-long prayers "Shab Khawani" during which special prayers were offered.

Emotional scenes were witnessed when the holy relic of the Prophet was



displayed at Hazratbal after prayers.

Similar night-long prayers were also held at various places in the Kashmir valley including Jenab Sahib Saura in downtown Srinagar.

Stringent security arrangements were put in place in and around the Hazratbal shrine. Police

were keeping a close eye on the traffic and parking management.

A large number of People including women and children took out Milad-un-Nabi procession in south Kashmir's Anantnag through various routes chanting religious slogans.

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Job seeker to Russia-Ukraine War survivor, J&K Man thanks PM Modi for safe return

JI NEWS SERVICE
AWANTIPORA, SEPT 17

"Indians go back," ordered a Russian military commander in the eastern Ukrainian city of Luhansk. The import of the diktat sank in slowly for Azad Yousuf Kumar whose search for a brighter future had landed him in the heart of the Russia-Ukraine war.

And then it dawned on him. He could go home.

The youth from Awantipora district in South Kashmir, who toiled hard in the war-torn region and endured a near-death experience after getting shot during front-



line combat training, was ecstatic that he would reunite with his family after almost two years.

Azad recalled that the Russian commander, in broken English, "read out a few names and then told us 'Indians go back'. He knew only that

much English. We could not believe that he was actually talking about our freedom." The Russian officer mentioned a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

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SVEEP: Diverse range of activities organised across Shopian to maximize Voter turnout on Poll Day

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 17

In a continuous and concerted effort for the maximum possible voter attendance in the polling stations on the Polling Day, a diverse range of SVEEP activities were organised across Shopian District.

DEO, ROs, Nodal Officer, SVEEP, and Nodal Officer, Media, in run up to the approaching polling day have intensified its electoral awareness and literacy activities to reach out to all voters of the district for their vote deliverance on September, 18.

These encompassed activities included door to door campaigns, Street Plays, Cycle, Bike, Horse & Umbrella Rallies, Public announcements, distribution of electoral literacy pamphlets, seminars, reels, and posters besides painting competitions,



among others.

Booth Awareness Groups (BAGs) conducted door-to-door campaigns across multiple neighborhoods, delivering oral appeals and distributing pamphlets. They engaged with residents to explain the voter registration process, the importance of voter ID cards, and the

value of every vote.

During the SVEEP activities, special focus was placed on encouraging elderly women, youth and marginalized communities to participate in the elections.

SVEEP teams traversed high altitude and alpine areas and focused on urban areas to tackle

and tide over the urban apathy problem and make outreaches for voter mobilisation.

The district administration has expressed appreciation for all the stakeholders for their efforts in voter awareness programs and hoped that the activities shall bear fruit on the day of Day.

BAG Teams, SVEEP activities boost Voter Education in Border Areas of Hiranagar AC

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 17

To reach every section of the community, the BAG teams today conducted public outreach at various locations across Hiranagar Assembly Constituency, including GHSS Chakra, village squares, and Anganwadi centers.

Engaging with senior citizens, women voters, shoppers, and school students, the BAG teams emphasized the importance of voting and civic responsibility. They also held discussions with field staff from various departments to further enhance their door-to-door campaign, aimed at increasing voter turnout and empowering the community to make informed decisions in elections.

In addition to the BAG activities, GHSS Chakra organized a Systematic Voters' Education and



Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program. This event featured a voter's pledge, rangoli-making, and an election quiz, all designed to foster a culture of civic engagement and encourage informed

participation in the electoral process.

These twin SVEEP events have made significant strides in promoting voter education and awareness in Border areas of Hiranagar.

Cultural programme organised at GHS Chunera under SVEEP

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 17

A Dogri cultural programme was held today at Government High School Chunera in the Basohli Assembly Constituency as part of the Election Commission of India's flagship initiative, the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP).

The event aimed to inspire and engage young voters, particularly first-time voters, encouraging them to participate in large numbers in the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled on October 1, 2024.

The event featured an interactive session with the school Headmaster Narinder Kumar and AC Nodal Officer SVEEP Dr. Roshan Lal. They interacted with the students and faculty members besides ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, prominent panchayat representatives, and Booth Level Officers from nearby polling stations. Dr. Roshan Lal urged voters to come out in large numbers on October 1, 2024, and vote responsibly. He explained the process for new voter registration, correcting details for existing voters, and removing names of shifted or deceased family members from the electoral roll. He also encouraged voters to use the Voters Helpline Number 1950 and the Voter Helpline App to access information about the candidates and the political parties they represent, allowing them to make informed decisions before casting their votes.

The programme emphasized the importance of universal participation in the electoral process, highlighting that each eligible citizen must register as a voter and cast their vote in an informed and ethical manner in every election to fulfill SVEEP's vision of enlightened and widespread electoral participation.

Bandipora Admin conducts Training for Election Officials

J1 NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 17

As part of preparations for the 2024 Assembly Elections, the District Administration Bandipora on Tuesday conducted a training program for presiding officers (POs) and polling Officer-1 (PI) at the Mini Secretariat Bandipora. The training aimed to provide these officials with essential skills and knowledge for the smooth execution of the electoral process was divided into two sessions.

The first session for POs was led by DLMT, Mohammad Iqbal Samoon, and the second session for PIs was led by DLMT, Manzoor Ahmad Bhat.

The training programme covered various election-related topics, including the operation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and



other procedural aspects, to ensure that all poll staff are well-prepared for their roles and can facilitate a fair and efficient voting process on Election Day.

A significant component of the training was the hands-on training for handling Ballot Units, Control Units, and VVPATs. This practical training

allowed officials to familiarize themselves with the equipment, addressing any technical questions and ensuring they are adept at managing these components during the election besides boosting confidence among the officials, ensuring smooth and accurate voting operations.

Arrangements for conduct of Postal Ballot Voting, Home Voting reviewed at Kupwara

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 17

The District Election Officer (DEO) Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan on Monday convened a meeting of concerned Officers to review the arrangements for conduct of Postal Ballot Voting and Home Voting in the district.

It was informed in the meeting that the Postal Ballot voting and Home voting will be conducted with effect from 23rd to 25th September in all Assembly Constituencies of the district. It was given out in the meeting that the teams for home voting have been constituted to facilitate the senior citizens and PWD voters who have opted for home voting.

Reviewing the arrangements for Postal Ballot Voting, the DEO was informed that all neces-



sary measures have been put in place to establish Postal Voting Counters at district and RO level.

The DEO asked the concerned to adopt proper procedures as per guidelines of ECI for establishing Postal Voting Counters and facilitating Home Voting. She also directed the concerned officers for proper training of

the teams constituted for home voting purpose to ensure smooth conduct of the voting.

She urged the concerned to ensure that all necessary arrangements are placed well in advance, including logistical arrangements, staff, security measures and communication strategies. Deployment of vid-

eographers along with the home voting teams was also discussed in the meeting.

The ROs were directed to have a review meeting under the guidance of concerned General Observer for smooth and hassle free postal voting and home voting experience. The DEO emphasized the importance of ensuring that all eligible voters who have opted for home voting are extended the required facilities to cast their votes securely and conveniently.

The DEO also reviewed the arrangements for distribution of EVM/VVPAT in all 6 Assembly Constituencies of the district.

The meeting was attended by DLMT, Sameer Jan; Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Nodal Officers for Postal Ballot and other concerned.

General Observers for Budgam participate in plantation drives at Polling stations

J1 NEWS SERVICE
BUDGAM, SEPTEMBER 17

In order to create awareness on importance of voting and environment friendly electoral process, the District Administration Budgam today organised plantation drives at various polling stations in different Assembly constituencies of the district.

The drives were organised in collaboration with forest and education departments.

The Pir Panjal Forest Division Budgam organized a plantation event at Green Polling Station 96-Pallar Budgam, in collaboration with Boys High School Pallar. Kanhuraj H Bagate, General Observer for 27-Budgam, and ACR Budgam, participated in the event.

The observer also led plantation drives, organised by Social Forestry Division Srinagar at Govt Girls High School Nasrullah Pora and polling station 65-66 Govt High School Gariend Khurd.

General Observer for 28-Berwah, Nitesh Patil visited DCRC Magam and took stock of the election preparations.

He also visited 4-Magam-C 1, 2-Magam-A, 3-Magam-B, 6-Batpora Kanihama-A and 7-Batpora Kanihama-B Polling



stations and conducted the plantation drive there.

In an effort to promote eco-friendly and sustainable elections, General Observer for 30-Charar-i-Sharief, Giriwar Dayal Singh launched plantation drives at 60-Nagam in Charar-i-Sharief.

This initiative, aligned with the Election Commission of India's guidelines, aimed to make polling stations greener and encourage environmentally conscious voting.

Observers emphasized the importance of voting and highlighted the critical role each vote plays in shaping the future and ensuring a representa-

tive government. The programme particularly focused on educating first-time voters about their crucial role in the democratic process and the significance of their participation.

Emphasis was given on various SVEEP interventions aimed at enhancing voter education, promotion of ethical voting practices, and ensuring that no eligible voter is left out.

Notably, the Budgam has 5 assembly segments, Budgam, Beerwah, Khanshab, Charar-i-Sharief and Chadoora which are going to polls on September- 25.

General, Police Observers assess election preparations in Basohli

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 17

General Observer Sunil Kumar Yadav and Police Observer Rohit Malpani today assessed election preparations and security arrangements for Assembly Elections in 65-Basohli Constituency here at a meeting with sector and zonal magistrates in presence of Returning Officer, Anil Kumar Thakur (ADC), ARO Sagar Vishwakarma, SDPO Suresh Sharma.

The General Observer provided detailed information on the election process and responsibilities of designated sector and zonal magistrates. He instructed the officers to visit their respective areas to assess the situation and inspect polling stations to ensure the provision of basic minimum facilities. He emphasized the importance of conducting transparent, fair, and peaceful elections, and urged the officers to perform their duties diligently.

The officers were asked to get thoroughly familiar with the assembly and disassembly of VVPAT and EVM machines, as this is a critical aspect of the election process. He discussed potential issues that may arise for presiding officers and provided solutions to



address them.

Furthermore, he gave instructions regarding violation of the Model Code of Conduct, urging officers to take prompt legal action, including filing FIRs, in cases of violations. The Observer also briefed the officers on the rights of candidates visiting polling stations during voting and clarified that no polling agent is allowed to carry a mobile phone into the polling booth.

The General Observer also responded to the queries raised by the officers.

Police Observer Rohit Malpani instructed the sector police officers to ensure that the police team accompanies the polling party from the distribution of election materials to the day of voting and the return of EVMs to the strong room. He emphasized that every police party must have the contact details of the sector officer, SDPO, and the police control room

to facilitate immediate communication in case of emergencies. He also directed the SDPO to keep a reserve police force on standby for deployment in case of urgent situations.

Before the meeting, the two observers inspected the VST and VVT control room established at DIET and received a detailed briefing from the Returning Officer. Later, they visited the strong room at Model Higher Secondary School, Basohli, to review the security arrangements and issued necessary instructions.

Later, the Observers visited Government Degree College Basohli, where they interacted with master trainers and polling party officials undergoing training, addressing their concerns and clarifying doubts. They also instructed the master trainers to ensure proper training for the polling staff.

Jammu Smart City organises bicycle rally to promote voter awareness

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 17

Scores of enthusiastic cyclists participated in a bicycle rally organized by Jammu Smart City here today to promote voter awareness ahead of the upcoming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections. The event, aimed at encouraging citizens to exercise their right to vote, began at Valmiki Chowk, passed through Green Belt Park, and culminated back at Valmiki Chowk.

The rally attracted a large number of participants, including officials, athletes, and local residents, all united in their commitment to strengthening democracy.

The rally was flagged off by Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Sachin Kumar Vaishya, as the chief guest of the event.

CEO Jammu Smart City, Dr. Devansh Yadav, said "We are working hand in hand with the district administration to promote voter awareness and participation through various initiatives. This bicycle rally is just one of many steps we are taking to ensure that citizens are not only registered to vote but are also motivated to go out and vote."

He also congratulated the Cycling Association of Jammu and Kashmir members for their excellent support in organizing this rally and hoped to see more such initiatives in the future.

Ravinder Singh President CAJK, Rajeev Sharma Member J&K Sports Council, Deepak Handa Senior Vice President J&K Private School Association also participated in the bicycle rally.

Polling parties along-with poll material dispatched to polling stations in Anantnag



JI NEWS SERVICE
ANANTNAG, SEPTEMBER 17

The distribution of election related materials and induction of polling teams across all 07 Assembly Constituencies (ACs) was completed today in Anantnag. Under the overall guidance of District Election Officer (DEO) Anantnag, SF. Hamid, the entire process has been conducted smoothly and in strict

Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) devices, ballot papers, indelible ink, and other necessary stationery items, were distributed to the polling teams in a seamless and organized manner.

Adequate security arrangements have been made to ensure smooth and secure voting. Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and local police have been deployed to maintain law and order, safeguard polling stations, and assist polling teams.

adherence to the Election Commission of India's (ECI) guidelines.

A total of 837 polling teams, comprising Presiding Officers, Polling Officers, and security personnel, have been deployed to their respective polling stations across all 07 Assembly Constituencies.

Essential polling materials, including Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable

SVEEP: Mega Event held to boost Voter Awareness at HSS Bomai, 08-Rafiabad AC

JI NEWS SERVICE
BARAMULLA, SEPTEMBER 17

In a bid to enhance voter awareness and engagement, a mega SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) event was held today at Higher Secondary School (HSS) Bomai in the 08-Rafiabad Assembly Constituency.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, and local community members.

The primary objective of the event was to encourage voters to exercise their right in the upcoming elections on 1st October 2024. Participants actively pledged to vote, reflecting a strong commitment to the democratic process.

The event featured a



lively rally and captivating cultural performances that underscored the importance of voting. Additionally, as part of the Green Election initiative, a plantation drive was conducted to promote environmental sustainability and enhance the community's green spaces.

District Nodal Officer for SVEEP emphasized the significance of the event. He said the District Election Office Baramulla is actively organizing such

events across the district to engage voters, especially new ones, and reinforce democratic values while promoting a sustainable future.

This event highlighted the significance of every vote and the collective responsibility to support a robust democratic process. The active involvement of the community signals a growing dedication to informed and responsible voting in the upcoming elections.

DEO Flags off Polling Parties, EVMs to 534 polling stations across 3 ACs of Doda District



JI NEWS SERVICE
DODA, SEPTEMBER 17

District Election Officer Harvinder Singh on Tuesday flagged off polling parties and Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to 534 polling stations across 3 Assembly Constituencies of District Doda - which is going to polls tomorrow.

The polling teams were dispatched early this morning here from the District Treasury Office and Govt. Degree College to their respective poll-

ing stations across the district. RO AC-51 Bhaderwah, Sunil Kumar; RO AC 52 Doda Sunil Bhutyal; RO AC 53-Doda west were also present.

More than 3,000 employees have been deployed to ensure the smooth conduct of the election. The teams are expected to reach their respective polling stations by 5:00 PM today. The district, home to over 3 lakh registered voters, has made comprehensive arrangements to facili-

tate the voting process. To ensure the security and integrity of EVMs, 12 intermediate strong rooms have been established in the district.

District Election Officer Harvinder Singh emphasized the administration's commitment to ensure a fair and transparent election process. He highlighted the comprehensive measures taken to ensure that voting is conducted peacefully and smoothly, reflecting the spirit of democracy in Doda.

377 polling parties dispatched in GPS-Fitted Vehicles for Polling in 3 ACs of Kishtwar

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 17

As many as 377 poll parties were dispatched today from District headquarter to 3 Assembly Constituencies of district Kishtwar, which are slated to go to polls like other 21 ACs of UT of Jammu & Kashmir tomorrow, in the first phase of the General Election to Assembly Elections 2024. The whole exercise was executed under the overall supervision of District Election Officer, Rajesh Kumar Shavan and under the close coordination of respective Returning officers Idrees Lone of 48-Inderwal, Pawan Kotwal of 49-Kishtwar and Dr Amit Kumar of 50-Paddar Nagseni besides officers of Police and CAPF.

SSP Abdul Qayoom, in presence of ROs, flagged off the fleet of respective destinations amid adequate security measures.



Kishtwar district boasts 429 polling stations, underscoring the scale of logistical coordination required for successful elections.

Earlier, 52 advance polling parties were dispatched to the far off/Shadow areas of Marwah, Warwan, Dachhan, Machail and Bonjwah where the polling parties had to trek a considerable distance to reach the polling station.

The dispatch operation saw the mobilization of GPS-fitted vehicles to ensure the prompt and secure transportation of polling personnel to their

designated stations. With the collaborative efforts of the electoral administration and law enforcement agencies, every precaution has been taken to facilitate a fair and transparent voting process.

The adequate breakfast and lunch facility for the dispatched parties was ensured at district headquarter and the lodging and meal arrangements of the polling personnel at the respective polling stations have also been taken care of in collaboration with the Nodal officer logistics across the district, informed the official.

SVEEP: Activities to raise awareness on importance of vote held at various Schools in Kupwara

JI NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 17

In compliance with the directions of the District Election Officer, Kupwara, a series of activities under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) were today held across various schools in Kupwara.

These activities were part of the ongoing efforts to promote voter awareness ahead of key electoral events in the region.

The SVEEP activities were conducted at BHSS Haril, Boys High School Trehgam, Boys High School Diver and Boys High School Awoora. The events witnessed active engagement from students, teachers, and members of the local community, highlighting the importance of education and participation in the democratic process.

The District Nodal Officer for SVEEP, while addressing participants at the events, underscored the need for first-time voters to come forward



and take part in the electoral process. The officer reaffirmed that the SVEEP campaign remains committed to reaching out to all segments of society, ensuring that voters, especially the younger generation, are empowered to make informed choices in the upcoming elections.

The programmes held at various schools were designed to be both educational and engaging, featuring a variety of activities that emphasized civic responsibility. Among the notable activities were cultural performances that depicted the democratic process and its sig-

nificance in a vibrant and diverse country like India. Through skits, music, and art, students creatively showcased the importance of voting and how it shapes governance.

Furthermore, plantation drives were organized as part of the programme's broader theme of community responsibility. At Boys High School Trehgam, Higher Secondary School Haril, High School Diver, and High School Awoora, saplings were planted with the message of sustainability and growth, symbolizing how voter participation can lead to a flourishing democracy.

District Election Office Srinagar readies well-skilled teams for Home-Voting, PVCs



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 17

In view of the scheduled Home-Voting and Polling at the Postal Voting Centres (PVCs) in Srinagar between 19-21 September, a final orientation was delivered to the Poll Personnel of Home-Voting and PVCs on Tuesday at the Meeting Hall of DC Office Srinagar.

Under the directions of the District Election Officer (DEO), Srinagar Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat, 17 Facilitation Centres have been established in the District Srinagar for Postal

Ballot Voting. A well-skilled teams have been created and deployed in eight Assembly Constituencies in the District.

During the session, Coordinator Trainings, Dr. Manzoor Reshi delivered a detailed presentation and a live demonstration for the Home-Voting and Facilitation Centres' poll personnel and outlined the step-wise procedures for home-voting and postal ballot voting during the process of Elections.

With an exhaustive presentation, Dr. Reshi ensured that the poll per-

sonnel have a clear understanding of the Election laws, rules and regulations which, as the Election Staff for home-voting and PVCs, they have to follow in the election process.

The special instructions were conveyed to the participants for strictly following the poll guidelines for free and fair Assembly Elections in Srinagar.

Besides, they were also oriented towards the proper management and the adherence to the Model Code of Conduct enforced by the Election Commission of India.

SVEEP: YSS Ganderbal organizes Cycle Race in Zone Tullamulla to promote Voter awareness



JI NEWS SERVICE
GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 17

In an effort to enhance voter education and promote active participation in the electoral process, the Department of Youth Services and Sports (YSS) Ganderbal organized a cycle race today in Zone Tullamulla.

The event, conducted under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, aimed to raise awareness about the significance of voting and encourage responsible civic engagement, particularly among the youth.

The cycle race, which saw a vibrant turnout of participants from various schools and localities, was designed to inspire individuals to take an active role in the democratic process by educating them on the power and importance of their vote.

The event was not only a demonstration of physical fitness but also a platform to deliver a crucial message about electoral participation.

The event concluded with encouraging participants to spread the message of voter awareness among their peers and families.

General Observer holds meeting with contesting candidates, election agents



JI NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 17

General Observer Dorje Chhering Negi today chaired a meeting with contesting candidates/ election agents at the VC Room of the DC office complex Kathua.

The meeting was held as per the Election Commission of India's (ECI) guidelines to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections in the district.

Also present at the meeting were Returning Officer, 67-Kathua (SC) Assembly Constituency, Vishav Partap Singh, ARO Vikram Kumar, and Tehsildar Aana Jamwal.

General Observer Dorje Chhering Negi emphasized the importance of strictly adhering to the guidelines and code

of conduct issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI). He urged all political parties to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations throughout the election process, ensuring smooth and fair elections. The General Observer also assured that the ECI is committed to maintaining neutrality and transparency at every stage of the electoral process. He encouraged party representatives to report any concerns or violations immediately, so appropriate action can be taken.

The General Observer concluded the meeting with a reiteration of the ECI's commitment to upholding the integrity of the electoral process and ensuring a level playing field for all political parties.

Travelling Show series "Lok-Tantra Ka Asli Mantra" enthralls audience in Sunderbani

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 17

In a remarkable demonstration of enthusiasm and community spirit, a travelling show series titled "LOK-TANTRA Ka Asli MANTRA" began here today at Boys Higher Secondary School, Sunderbani.

The theatre presentation, part of the SVEEP (Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation) campaign, aims to raise awareness about the importance of voting and promote the values of a free and fair electoral process.

The event is being organized under the guidance of District Election Officer (DEO) Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma and supervision of District Nodal Officer SVEEP, Bishamber Dass

(CEO Rajouri). The initiative is part of the ongoing efforts to engage students and the community in the democratic process.

The play "LOK-TANTRA Ka Asli MANTRA," written by Padmashree Balwant Thakur and directed by Neeraj Kant, was performed by the renowned cultural organization NATRANG. The engaging performance captivated the audience while educating them on the power of their vote.

Prominent attendees included Nodal Officer SVEEP AC-83 Kalakote Sunderbani, Babu Singh, Principal of BHSS Sunderbani, Sanjeev Suri, Dr. Dushyant Pradeep, Muddasir Mughal, Inder Paul along with staff members and students, all of whom actively participated in the program.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

Stage set for Phase I...

The first phase of the Legislative Assembly Elections 2024 will cover 24 Assembly Constituencies (ACs) across seven districts of Jammu & Kashmir.

These include Anantnag, Pulwama, Shopian, and Kulgam in the Kashmir Division, Doda, Ramban, and Kishtwar in the Jammu Division.

In the Kashmir Division, 16 ACs are up for election: Pampore, Tral, Pulwama, Rajpora, Zainapora, Shopian, DH Pora, Kulgam, Devsar, Dooru, Kokernag (ST), Anantnag West, Anantnag, Srigufwara-Bijbehara, Shangus-Anantnag East, and Pahalgam. Meanwhile, in the Jammu Division, 8 ACs—Inderwal, Kishtwar, Padder-Nagseni, Bhadarwah, Doda, Doda West, Ramban, and Banihal—will also go to the polls.

According to the latest electoral rolls, 23,27,580 lakh voters are eligible to cast their ballots in this phase, comprising 11,76,462 lakh male voters, 11,51,058 lakh female voters, and 60 third-gender voters.

Underlining the significance of the role to be played by the youth of Jammu and Kashmir in strengthening the democracy, as many as 5.66 lakh youths are eligible to votes in phase-1 of the Assembly Election.

Youth voters are a significant demographic, with 5.66 lakh eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 29, including 1,23,960 lakh voters aged 18 to 19. Among these, 10,261 are male and 9,329 are female are first-time voters.

This phase will also see participation from 28,309 Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and 15,774 voters above the age of 85.

With this, 64 candidates are fray in Anantnag district, followed by 45 in Pulwama district, 27 in Doda district, 25 in Kulgam district, 22 in Kishtwar district, 21 in Shopian district, while 15 are contesting in Ramban district.

In Kishtwar district, 9 candidates are fray in 48-Inderwal AC; 7 candidates in 49-Kishtwar AC; while 6 are contesting in 50-Padder-Nagseni AC.

In Doda district, 10 candidates are in fray 51-Bhadarwah AC; 9 candidates in 52-Doda AC; and 8 candidates are contesting in 53-Doda West AC.

In Ramban district, 8 candidates are contesting in 54-Ramban AC; while 7 candidates will contest in 55-Banihal AC.

Similarly, in Pulwama district, 14 candidates are fray in 32-Pampore AC; 9 candidates in 33-Tral AC; 12 candidates in 34-Pulwama AC; and 10 candidates are contesting in 35-Rajpora AC.

In Shopian district, 10 candidates are fray in 36-Zainapora AC and 11 candidates are contesting in 37-Shopian AC.

In Kulgam district, 6 candidates are fray in 38-DH Pora AC; 10 candidates in 39-Kulgam AC; and 9 candidates are contesting in 40-Devsar AC.

Finally, in Anantnag district, 10 candidates are fray in 41-Dooru AC; 10 candidates in 42-Kokernag (ST) AC; 9 candidates in 43-Anantnag West AC; 13 candidates in 44-Anantnag AC; 3 candidates in 45-Srigufwara-Bijbehara AC; 13 candidates in 46-Shangus-Anantnag East AC; and 6 candidates are contesting in 47-Pahalgam AC.

The Doda district has recorded a total of 3,10,613 registered voters, including 1,60,057 males, 1,50,521 females, and 8 transgender across three Assembly constituencies. A total of 534 polling stations are spread across these constituencies, ensuring that every registered voter has the opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

The Anantnag district comprises of seven Assembly Constituencies with 6,67,843 electorates which includes 3,36,200 males, 3,31,639 females, and 4 transgender voters. A comprehensive network of 844 polling stations has been established across the district.

The Ramban District has registered a total of 2,24,214 voters across its two Assembly constituencies, includes 1,16,019 male voters, 1,08,193 female voters, and 1 transgender voter. A total of 365 polling stations are spread across the two Assembly constituencies, ensuring that every registered voter has the opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

Shopian District is divided into two Assembly constituencies, with a total of 2,09,062 registered voters, includes 1,04,894 males, 1,04,161 females, and 7 transgender voters. To facilitate the voting process, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has established 251 polling stations across both constituencies.

The Pulwama district has registered a total of 4,07,637 voters, including 2,02,475 males, 2,05,141 females, and 21 transgender across its four Assembly constituencies. ECI has established 481 polling stations throughout the district.

The Kulgam district comprises three Assembly constituencies, with 3,28,782 registered voters, including 1,64,852 male, 1,63,917 female and 13 transgender voters. A comprehensive network of 372 polling stations has been established by the ECI for free, fair and transparent elections.

The Kishtwar district, with three Assembly Segments, a total of 1,79,374 electors, including 91,935 male and 87,435 female, and 4 transgender voters are poised to exercise their right to franchise. To facilitate the voting process, the ECI has established 429 polling stations across the District.

To facilitate the voters for smooth and hassle free electoral participation, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has established 3276 polling stations with 100% webcasting across 24 Assembly Constituencies. These include 302 Urban Polling Stations and 2974 Rural Polling Stations.

To enhance voter participation, there will be 24 polling booths managed by women, known as Pink Polling Stations, 24 polling stations manned by specially abled persons and 24 polling stations manned by youths. Also, there will be 24 green polling stations in order to spread message about environmental concern and 17 Unique Polling stations.

The voting will take place from 7.00 am to 6.00 pm.

CEO J&K urges voters...

to the public to actively participate in the first phase of the upcoming assembly elections scheduled for September 18.

The elections will cover four constituencies in the first phase, including Doda, Ramban, Anantnag, Pulwama, Shopian, and Pahalgam.

As per news agency, in his message, Pole emphasized the importance of voter turnout across 24 assembly constituencies in seven districts. "I request all voters to cast their vote tomorrow, September 18, at the designated polling stations in your villages and neighbourhoods," Pole said. Polling will take place from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

To ensure smooth voting, special provisions have been made. "Adequate facilities have been provided at each polling station, and separate queues have been arranged for senior citizens," added Pole. Voters have been provided with voter information slips at their homes. However, if any voter has not received the slip, they are still encouraged to head to their polling station with a valid identity card.

Pole outlined acceptable forms of ID for voters, including Aadhaar cards, bank passbooks with photographs, post office passbooks, or MGNREGA work cards—(KNO)

34 candidates withdraw...

candidates remain in the final electoral fray for election in 59-Udhampur West AC; 9 in 60-Udhampur East AC; 9 in 61-Chenani AC; while 7 candidates remain in the fray in 62-Ramnagar (SC) AC.

In Kathua district, 8 candidates remain in the final electoral fray for election in 63-Bani AC; 4 in 64-Billawar AC; 4 in 65-Basohli AC; 8 in 66-Jasrota AC; 5 in 67-Kathua (SC) AC; while 6 candidates remain in the fray in 68-Hiranagar AC.

In Samba district, 7 candidates remain in the final electoral fray for election in 69-Ramgarh (SC) AC; 14 in 70-Samba AC; while 11 candidates remain in the fray in 71-Vijaypur AC.

In Jammu district, 9 candidates remain in the final electoral fray for election in 72-Bishnah (SC) AC; 11 in 73-Suchetgarh (SC) AC; 14 in 74-R.S. Pura - 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-Akhnour (SC) AC; while 8 candidates remain in the fray in 82-Chhamb AC.

Similarly in Kashmir Division's Kupwara district, 8 candidates remain in the final electoral fray for election in 1-Karnah AC; 10 in 2-Trehgam AC; 8 in 3-Kupwara AC; 11 in 4-Lolab AC; 7 in 5-Handwara AC; while 15 candidates remain in the fray in 6-Langate AC.

In Baramulla district, 20 candidates remain in the final electoral fray for election in 7-Sopore AC; 12 in 8-Rafiabad AC; 6 in 9-Uri AC; 25 in 10-Baramulla AC; 13 in 11-Gulmarg AC; 12 in 12-Wagoora- Kreeeri AC; while 13 candidates remain in the fray in 13-Pattan AC.

In Bandipora district, 18 candidates remain in the final electoral fray for election in 14-Sonawari AC; 19 in 15-Bandipora AC; while 5 candidates remain in the fray in 16-Gurez (ST) AC.

It is worth mentioning here that a total of 486 candidates had filed their nomination papers before the respective Returning Officers in 40 Assembly Constituencies till the last date of filing the Nominations on 12 September, 2024.

Out of these, the nomination papers of 449 candidates were found valid during Scrutiny held on 13 September, 2024. And now with the withdrawal of 34 candidates, 415 candidates now remain in the final electoral fray for phase 3.

With this a total of 873 candidates will be in the final fray in the Assembly Elections for 90 ACs, including 219 candidates for 24 ACs in first phase, 239 candidates for 26 ACs in second phase and 415 candidates for 40 ACs in the third phase.

"Not God's decision"...

have been changed by three-judge bench and it also can be changed by the seven-judge bench in future," Omar said.

He added that the Home Minister should focus on the situation in Jammu where terrorism is on rise. "You can blame us for the reasons where we are responsible, but the Centre is directly ruling J&K for the last ten years, now who is responsible for the situation in Jammu," he said.

Chanapora Assembly...

main parties.

Main contesting parties

The main political parties contesting in the redrawn Chanapora constituency are the Apni Party, People's Democratic Party (PDP), NC-Congress Alliance, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and Awami National Conference (ANC).

Constituency demographic profile

Before the delimitation exercise, the constituency had a voter base of 86,520, with 44,647 males and 41,873 females. Now, with the redrawn boundaries and a new name, the constituency has a total of 85,431 voters, of which 42,556 are male and 42,874 are female voters.

The new constituency has as many as 91 polling stations, most of them in urban areas.

Poll date

Assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir are poised to be held in three phases. The first phase will be conducted by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on September 18, the second on September 25, and the final phase on October 1. The Chanapora Assembly seat will go to polls in the second phase.

Result date

After the conclusion of all three phases, the results for all 90 constituencies, including Chanapora, will be declared on October 8.

Assembly election 2024 candidates

As per the pre-poll alliance agreement for seat sharing, the National Conference and Congress have decided to field Mushtaq Guroo.

The Apni Party has fielded its president Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari, who is considered a favourite candidate.

The PDP has fielded Mohammad Iqbal Trambo. Trambo, who has been with the party for a few years, has yet to make a significant impression on Kashmir's political landscape.

The BJP has fielded Hilal Ahmad Wani from the constituency.

Jibran Dar and Sheeban Ashai, who contested in the recently concluded parliamentary polls, are among the independents vying for the legislative membership seat in the Chanapora constituency.

In 2014, Altaf Bukhari, who was in the PDP, won the seat by defeating NC's Nasir Aslam Wani. Bukhari polled 11,726 votes, while Wani secured 6,385 votes.

The BJP had fielded Dr Hina Shafi Bhat from the constituency, but she managed to secure only 1,359 votes.

A total of 14 nominations were filed from the constituency, of which the security deposits of 12 candidates were forfeited.

2014 voter turnout

In 2014, the total number of votes polled in the election (EVM + Postal) was 21,488. The voter turnout in the then Batamalo constituency was 24.84 percent.

Political significance

Political experts say that the Chanapora constituency in the 2024 Jammu & Kashmir assembly elections presents a compelling contest.

They consider Bukhari the frontrunner for the seat, saying that he won the seat in 2014 when it was part of the Amira

Kadal constituency. He has strong local recognition and political experience on his side.

According to analysts, Bukhari's leadership of the Apni Party and his past role as a PDP leader give him significant leverage, and the shrinking electorate and redefined boundaries have only slightly impacted the voter base, which remains largely urban and politically aware.

They, however, said the role of independent candidates like Jibran Dar and Sheeban Ashai should not be underestimated. Their participation, along with other smaller players, has the potential to split votes, especially among those dissatisfied with major party candidates.

Although independents lack the same political machinery as the larger parties, their presence could introduce unpredictability to the election, making them key figures to watch in the upcoming polls—(KNO)

Nothing objectionable in...

Peoples Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti, Awami Ittehad Party (AIP) president Er. Rashid on Tuesday said that he will file a case against Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone over his claims that he (Rashid) was not in jail for the past two months.

Rashid, who arrived in his home district Kupwara for the first time today after being released from Tihar jail, addressed a rally in Kupwara town which was attended by his supporters.

Talking to reporters after addressing the rally, Rashid said that there was nothing objectionable in his utterances on PDP president Mehbooba Mufti.

He said that he will file a case against Peoples Conference president Sajad Gani Lone over his claims that he was not in jail for the past two months.

"I will file a complaint against him over his claims that I was not in jail for the past two months," Rashid said.

Lone on Monday asked Rashid to tell people where he was for the past two months.

"He was not in jail for the past two months... He should tell people where he was," Lone had said.

He had further said whenever the Centre wants to hold talks with someone who is in jail, that person is taken ill and hospitalised—(KNO)

Spotlight on 4 key...

these prominent parties, independent candidates and the participation of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders—despite the group being banned—have added further intrigue to the election.

According to the news agency, as the first phase approaches, the spotlight is on four candidates who have drawn considerable attention.

Iltija Mufti (Bijbehara Constituency)

In Bijbehara, a triangular contest has emerged between Iltija Mufti of the PDP, Sofi Yusuf of the BJP, and NC's Bashir Ahmad Shah Veeri. Iltija, daughter of PDP President Mehbooba Mufti and granddaughter of the late Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, is contesting from her family's stronghold. This seat holds historical significance, having produced two Chief Ministers, both from the Mufti family. Iltija is making her political debut from Bijbehara, a seat held by the PDP for the last 25 years.

With some areas of Pahalgam now merged into Bijbehara following delimitation, the electoral dynamic has shifted slightly. However, the Mufti family's legacy, which has dominated the seat since 1996, continues to make this constituency a PDP stronghold.

Political History of Bijbehara:

Bijbehara has held Assembly elections and by-elections 9 times since 1967.

The PDP won six of these elections.

The NC won the seat in 1977, 1983, and 1987, with the latter being a narrow victory over the PDP by just 100 votes.

The Mufti family has held the seat continuously since 1996.

Shagun Parihar (Kishtwar Constituency)

Kishtwar is witnessing a tough triangular fight between the BJP, PDP, and NC. The BJP's candidate, Shagun Parihar, brings a deeply personal connection to the election. In 2018, her father, Ajit Parihar, and her uncle, Anil Parihar, were assassinated by militants. Shagun, who is pursuing a doctorate in electronics, has focused her campaign on peace, security, employment, and women's empowerment. She faces off against NC-Congress joint candidate Sajjad Ahmed Kichloo, a two-time MLA, and PDP's Firdous Talk.

Political History of Kishtwar:

Kishtwar became an Assembly seat in 1962.

The NC has won six times, in 1962, 1977, 1987, 1996, 2002, and 2008.

Congress led the seat in 1967, 1972, and 1983.

The BJP won Kishtwar for the first time in 2014.

Ghulam Ahmed Mir (Dooru Constituency)

Dooru, located in the Anantnag district, is witnessing a fierce multi-party contest. Former Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief Ghulam Ahmed Mir is facing strong opposition from PDP's Ashraf Malik and Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party's Bashir Ahmed Wani.

Political History of Duru:

Ghulam Ahmed Mir served as the constituency's MLA twice, in 2002 and 2008.

The PDP won the seat in 2014 when Syed Farooq Ahmed Andrabi defeated Mir by just 161 votes.

Mohammad Khalil Band (Pulwama Constituency)

Pulwama is set for a highly anticipated showdown between PDP's Waheed Ur Rehman Parra and former PDP member Mohammad Khalil Band, who is now representing the NC. Band, a founding member of the PDP, has won the Pulwama seat three times in 2002, 2008, and 2014. His defection from the PDP in 2019 adds to the complexity of the contest. Waheed Parra, a young leader recently released from jail, is expected to make this race even more competitive.

Political History of Pulwama:

The PDP held the seat from 2002 to 2014.

Mohammad Khalil Band was MLA from Pulwama for three terms.

This time, the PDP has fielded the young leader Waheed Ur Rehman Parra—(KNO)

Congress, its ecosystem...

"put behind bars" in Congress-ruled Karnataka by these people.

Modi was apparently referring to a viral photo of Ganesh idol in a police van in the southern state.

"The whole country is disturbed because of the picture," he said adding, "We cannot let these hateful elements move forward".

When the Britishers tried to divide the country based on caste and religion, Lokmanya Tilak had organised Ganesh Utshav and awakened the soul of the country, he said.

"Ganesh Utshav teaches us how to remain united and rise above caste and religion...even today, all sections of people in our society participate in Ganesh Utsav without any discrimination. The entire society stands united during the festival," he said.

Waqf bill committed to...

to subsidized loans for livelihood activities for Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, and sanitation workers. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools have led to enrollment of over 1.23 lakh students in 405 schools.

The government has also established 40 new schools and created smart classrooms in 110 schools for tribal students. (AGENCIES)

Eid-e-Milad celebrated...

Even though the Milad-un-Nabi is being celebrated on Tuesday, the J&K government did not shift the official holiday.

Hurriyat Conference chairman and Kashmir's Chief cleric Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Monday criticised the administration for "not shifting" the Milad-un-Nabi holiday from September 16 to September 17.

"As Eid-e-Milad is on Tuesday, the state holiday should have been given on that day. This action shows the callous attitude of the authorities towards the Muslim community. It has hurt the religious sentiments of Muslims in Kashmir," Mirwaiz said in a statement on Monday, adding that he is "surprised at the Jammu and Kashmir administration's decision regarding the official holiday."

Job seeker to...

suggesting that it had affected the status of their travel. "He said something like, 'President Putin met Mr Modi and now your contract is getting cancelled'," Azad said.

Expressing his deep appreciation for the prime minister, he said, "I think it was PM Modi's Russia visit that helped me reach home safely. During this period, my wife had already given birth to our son." More than two years ago, Azad came across the YouTube channel "Baba Vlogs", reportedly run by Mumbai resident Faisal Khan, that promised jobs in Russia as security helpers, with initial salaries ranging from Rs 40,000 to Rs 50,000 and potentially increasing to Rs 1 lakh.

Convinced by the success stories showcased, he applied for the position, paying a hefty sum of Rs 1.3 lakh as travel and processing fees. He left his Poshwan village on December 14, 2022, for Mumbai, where he met a job seeker from Gujarat.

The duo were then sent to Chennai. On December 19, they arrived at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport when the reality of their situation shocked them to the core. They were handed over to the Russian military.

"It sent shivers down my spine. They made us sign a contract in Russian, and all we could do was plead for help," Azad recounted.

They were soon transported to the Russian-Ukrainian border for frontline combat training. Azad's harrowing experience included a gruelling journey in a cargo aircraft and army trucks to Luhansk. Along with six other Indian recruits, they faced unimaginable hardships.

"We couldn't speak the language and had no one to turn to for help," he said, recalling their desperate pleas for assistance.

Just days into their training, Azad was shot in the foot and spent 18 days in the hospital. "It was like an apocalypse. I didn't know how to use a gun and that caused my injury." During this period, he witnessed the death of some fellow Indian recruits, including his close friend from Gujarat.

"While being taken to hospital after getting shot, my eyes were closing. But the doctor accompanying me would slap me and tell me not to shut my eyes. I had lost a lot of blood." "Suddenly, he started talking about India, Rabindranath Tagore, Indira Gandhi and Mahatma Gandhi to keep me awake. I told him that I didn't want to die. Thankfully, I was saved," Azad said.

Now, reunited with his family, Azad looks to rebuild his life and provide a better future for his son while sharing his cautionary tale to warn others against the perils of seeking job opportunities abroad.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his informal talks with Vladimir Putin over dinner at the Russian leader's dacha or country home in July, had raised the issue of early discharge of Indian nationals who were misled into the service of the Russian Army.

Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra later said the Russian side promised early discharge of all Indian nationals from the service of the Russian Army.

In June, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the issue of Indian nationals serving with the Russian Army remains a matter of "utmost concern" and demanded action from Moscow over it.

On June 11, India said two Indian nationals, who were recruited by the Russian Army, had recently been killed in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which took the number of such deaths to four.

Following the deaths of two Indians, the MEA demanded a "verified stop" to further recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army.

In a strongly-worded statement, it said India demanded that there be a "verified stop to any further recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army and that such activities would not be in "consonance with our partnership." In March this year, 30-year-old Hyderabad resident Mohammed Asfan succumbed to injuries sustained while serving with Russian troops on the frontlines with Ukraine.

In February, Hemal Ashwinbhai Mangua, a 23-year-old resident of Surat in Gujarat, died in a Ukrainian air strike while serving as a "security helper" in the Donetsk region. (Agencies)

CS takes stock of...

Director Estates, Jammu/Kashmir besides Engineers of the executing agencies.

Interactive Session under SVEEP held at GHS Onagam Bandipora

JI NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 17

In an effort to boost voter engagement for the upcoming Assembly Elections 2024, an interactive session was today held at Government High School Onagam, Bandipora. The event, as part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, was led by RO 15 - Bandipora, Shabir Ahmad Wani, along with Nodal Officer for Manpower and Trainings, Dr. G. M. Pujoo.

The interactive session targeted young voters, female voters, civil society members, and students, emphasizing the importance of participating in elections. The programme aimed to mobilize



the community towards a more robust democratic process. Speaking on the occasion, RO 15 - Bandipora underscored the crucial role of voter participation and highlighted the ongoing voter sanitization programmes, encouraging widespread involvement to strengthen democracy.

Students were highlighted as key influencers in spreading the message about the power of voting to enhance voter turnout for the Assembly Elections 2024, ensuring a more representative and vibrant democratic process.

Election teams reach all 372 Polling Stations across Kulgam

JI NEWS SERVICE
KULGAM, SEPTEMBER 17

With a focus on ensuring the smooth conduct of the Assembly Elections 2024 in district, polling parties were today successfully deployed to all 372 polling stations of all the three Assembly Constituencies viz. 38-D.H.Pora, 39-Kulgam and 40-Devsar of District Kulgam.

Under the supervision of the District Election Officer (DEO), Athar Aamir Khan, the process of dispatching of Poll Parties from three Dispatch cum Receipt Centres (DCRCs) established at Degree College D.H.Pora for 38-D.H.Pora Assembly Constituency, GDC Kilam for 40-Devsar and GDC Kulgam for 39-Kulgam Assembly Constituency



was conducted smoothly. The district has 372 polling stations and comprehensive arrangements were made for departure of polling parties, encompassing vehicles, seating arrangements, refreshments and security measures.

Meanwhile, the District Election Officer, accompanied by SSP Sahil Sarangal conducted a visit to these

centers. They interacted with polling parties, urging them to adhere to Election Commission guidelines diligently and execute their assigned tasks with dedication and integrity.

The deployment of polling parties marks a crucial step in the electoral process, ensuring that democratic exercise proceeds smoothly and efficiently.

DEO Kupwara takes tour of various polling stations in Ramhal and Tarathpora tehsils



JI NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 17

The District Election Officer (DEO), Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan today took a detailed tour of various polling stations of Ramhal and Tarathpora tehsils to inspect the availability Assured Minimum Facili-

ties (AMF). During the visit, the DEO inspected Polling stations of Achmarg, Hafrada, Lilum, Vilgam and several others. She also interacted with the BLOs and got feedback about the polling preparations. The DEO was accompanied by various Officers and officials.

Allotment of Election Symbols for 70-Samba Assembly Constituency finalized



JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 17

In preparation for the upcoming elections, the Returning Officer for the 70-Samba Assembly Constituency, Kusum Chib, today finalized the allotment of election symbols to the candidates.

The event took place in the meeting hall of district Administrative Complex, Nandani Hills, in the presence of C.G. Rajini Kaanthan, General Observer for the Assembly Constituencies 70-Samba and 71-Vijaypur.

A total of 14 candidates, representing different political parties, were issued their respective

election symbols. The allotment process, a critical step in the democratic process, ensures that each candidate is provided with a distinct symbol that will appear on ballot papers and voting machines, enabling voters to easily identify their preferred candidates in the election.

The Returning Officer reiterated the importance of this transparent and impartial process, which ensures fairness in the electoral contest.

The allotment of symbols was carried out in accordance with the guidelines of the Election Commission of India (ECI) and under the supervision

of the General Observer to guarantee a smooth and unbiased procedure.

General Observer C.G. Rajini Kaanthan addressed the candidates, urging them to strictly adhere to the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) established by the ECI. He emphasized the significance of conducting free, fair, and transparent elections, which are essential for maintaining the integrity of democracy.

Kaanthan reminded all parties that following the MCC guidelines is crucial for ensuring a peaceful and orderly electoral process, promoting a fair environment for all participants.

Expenditure Observer for Bandipora conducts first Inspection of Election Expenditure Registers

JI NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 17

Election Expenditure Observer for Bandipora District, Sudeep Dabas today conducted first inspection of Election Expenditure Registers of candidates for 14-Sonawari and 15-Bandipora Assembly Constituencies at Mini Secretariat, Bandipora. The inspection was aimed to confirm that all election expenditures remain within the prescribed limits.

The Expenditure Observer examined the records submitted by candidates to ensure compliance with the guidelines established by the Election Commission of India.

While inspecting the election expenditure registers of candidates, Sudeep



Dabas emphasised adherence to the ECI guidelines and stressed the importance of maintaining accurate expenditure records besides urged the candidates to strictly follow the standards set by the Election Commission of India to uphold the integrity of the election.

The observer asked the

ROs to issue notices to the candidates of their respective constituencies, who fail to produce election expenditure register.

Among others, Nodal officer Election Expenditure Monitoring, Sheikh Aabid, representatives of Contesting candidates and other concerned were present on the occasion.

Members of JKRLM Women SHGs rally across Reasi appealing people to vote



JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI, SEPTEMBER 17

Mega voter Awareness rallies were today taken out across District Reasi by the members of women Self Help Groups (SHGs) in collaboration with District Election Office as part of the "Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation" (SVEEP) initiative. The events witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than 5000 women of Self Help Groups.

The aim was to reach the voters to maximize voter turnout in the upcoming Assembly Elec-

tions 2024. Women from SHGs also carried their handmade products like bamboo and grass baskets inscribed with slogans "my vote my pride written." SVEEP team, led by Nodal Officer Sachin Sharma, imparted comprehensive insights into the electoral process, encouraging all women to participate in the democratic process and cast their votes on 25 September 2024.

The SVEEP Team laid emphasis on various measures taken by the District Election Office to make voting accessible to women, avail-

ability of home voting for specially-abled and senior citizens aged 85 yrs and above, ensuring inclusivity in the voting process. Additionally, detailed information was also provided regarding the Saksham-ECI app for PwDs. The program culminated with massive rallies across different locations of Reasi promoting active voter participation for a higher voter turnout in the elections. District Programme Manager, Jugal Magotra, SHG members, First time girl voters and Officials of the Social Welfare Department were present.

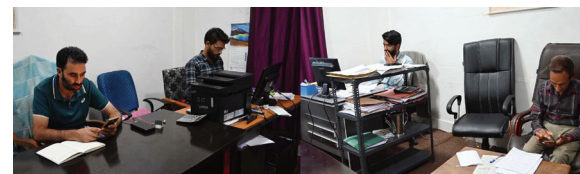
Media Centre in Shopian gears up for smooth Information flow

JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 17

The District Information Centre (DIC) Shopian has set up a dedicated Media Centre to manage information dissemination and media interactions during the pre-polling, polling and counting days for the upcoming Assembly Elections.

The Media Centre will ensure smooth communication and maintain a positive narrative around the election activities through various social media platforms.

The Media Centre successfully facilitated the smooth distribution of the media passes and coordinated interaction between the media and



DEO, ensuring effective communication.

On polling day, videographers/photographers will be deputed in both the Assembly Constituencies to comprehensively cover election activities, especially on Special Polling Stations.

The Media Centre will also focus on promoting peaceful voting with an emphasis on publicising diverse participation, particularly from women, specially-abled persons, and first-time voters.

Throughout the polling day, the Media Centre will provide timely polling updates to the media and general public every two hours, utilizing social media channels to ensure widespread reach.

To keep the public and media informed, LED screens will be installed to display news and updates on counting trends. Additionally, Public Address System (PAS) announcements will be made at regular intervals to share updates on the counting process.

DEO Ramban flags off Polling Parties; Observers monitor Material Distribution

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 17

District Election Officer (DEO) Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, flagged off polling parties today, sending them to their designated polling stations in preparation for the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections 2024. The elections are set to take place tomorrow, September 18, 2024 from 7 AM to 6 PM

Senior officials, includ-

ing Senior Superintendent of Police Kulvir Singh, PO ICDS Jahangir Hashmi, Deputy DEO Abdul Jabbar, and RO AC-54 Ramban S. Harpal Singh, were present during the flag-off. The district administration has meticulously arranged transportation, accommodation, and essential services across both assembly segments, AC-54 Ramban and AC-55 Banihal, ensuring that all 365 polling stations are equipped with Assured

Minimum Facilities (AMF) for voter convenience. The DEO confirmed that polling parties, fully equipped with EVMs, election materials, and security personnel, were dispatched from two locations- 171 teams from the District Administrative Complex, Maitra (AC-54 Ramban), and 194 from Government Higher Secondary School Boys Banihal (AC-55 Banihal). Over 2.24 lakh registered voters are expected to cast their vote in the district.

Samba National Lok Adalat disposes of 752 cases

JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 17

As per the directions of Executive Chairman J&K Legal Services Authority, National Lok Adalat was today organised at District Court Complex, Samba.

National Lok Adalat was inaugurated by R. N. Wattal, Pr. District & Sessions Judge (also Chairman District Legal Services Authority, Samba).

Three benches were constituted for settling the cases referred (Pre and Post Litigation), Bench No.1 comprised of R. N. Wattal, Pr. District & Sessions Judge (also Chairman District Legal Services Authority, Samba), Arvind Sharma, Additional District & Sessions Judge, Samba, Sandeep Singh Sen, Secretary DLSA and S.K. Khanmotra, Senior Advocate; Bench No.2 consisted of Umesh Sharma, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Himani Parihar, Munsiff (JMJC) and Renu Bala, Senior Advocate; Bench No.3 comprised of Ananta Raina, Addi-

tional Special Mobile Magistrate, Samba, Urvasi Raina, Additional Munsiff, Samba and Ganesh Sharma, Senior Advocate.

The matters placed before the Benches included Civil, Criminal Compoundable, Cheque Bounce, Bank Recovery matters, MACT, Matrimonial, Pre-litigation matters, D.V. Act, Negotiable Instrument Act, 125 Cr.Pc., and Petty Offence(s) including traffic challans. Besides, Two more Benches were constituted for settling Revenue Cases, Cases under Food Safety and Standard Act, 2006, all cases of petty loans pending in all revenue Courts including the Courts of Tehsildar of District Samba, all Petty Public Utility Services related Cases, all Compensation Cases pending in the Courts of Assistant Labour Commissioner Samba.

A total 991 cases were taken up for amicable settlement out of which 752 cases were settled and an amount of over Rs 2.28 crore was realized as settlement amount.

General Observer inspects various polling stations of Kupwara & Trehgam constituencies



JI NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 17

P Hemalatha, General Observer for Assembly Constituencies of 2-Trehgam and 3-Kupwara today visited various polling stations in Kupwara and Trehgam constituencies to inspect the arrangements for smooth conduct of the polling. During the visit,

the General Observer inspected Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs) put in place in the polling stations. She also interacted with the concerned BLOs and got feedback about the polling preparedness. Later, the General Observer paid an inspection to the Strong Room and Counting Hall at GDC Kupwara.

EDITORIAL

The battle for Chhamb!

The Chhamb constituency in Jammu, once a Congress bastion, is now a crucible of political contestation.

Former Deputy Chief Minister Tara Chand, who has represented this seat twice before, is facing perhaps his most challenging electoral battle yet. This election is marked not only by the traditional high stakes of local politics but also by internal dissension within his own party and his main rival, the BJP. The historical context of Chhamb adds layers of complexity to the current electoral landscape. Since its inception in 1962, the Congress party has dominated this constituency, winning seven out of the nine elections. Tara Chand himself has a distinguished track record, having served as the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader, Deputy Chief Minister, and Speaker of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly under the governments of Mufti Sayeed and Omar Abdullah. His past victories in 2002 and 2008 are a testament to his longstanding influence in the region. However, the current scenario is far from straightforward. This election is a four-cornered contest featuring BJP's Rajeev Sharma, rebel Congress candidate Satish Sharma, BJP's rebel Narendra Singh, and Tara Chand. Each candidate brings their own set of strengths and challenges, making the race particularly competitive. Tara Chand's confidence in his campaign strategy is evident. Driving through Chhamb in an Audi, engaging in extensive door-to-door outreach, and emphasizing his development track record, he remains optimistic. Yet, the rebel candidates pose a significant challenge. Satish Sharma, who resigned from Congress after being denied a ticket, is running as an independent. His entry into the race is particularly noteworthy given his familial ties to the region and his grassroots work. Sharma's argument for a ticket based on winnability rather than party loyalty resonates with a segment of the electorate that values local experience and dedication. On the BJP side, Rajeev Sharma faces a tough battle as well. Initially fielded to replace an MLA whose segment was reserved for Scheduled Castes, Sharma's nomination has not been smooth. Local BJP leaders and workers have expressed dissatisfaction, leading to the emergence of Narendra Singh as a rebel candidate. This internal strife within the BJP could potentially split the vote and affect Sharma's chances. Amid these dynamics, the BJP's strategy of leveraging Prime Minister Narendra Modi's developmental achievements is being tested. Despite the party's national prominence, the local internal disputes and dissatisfaction with Sharma's candidacy could undermine its electoral prospects. In addition to the major contenders, other candidates from the BSP and the Panthers Party are also in the fray, further complicating the electoral dynamics. With a total of 105,672 voters, including a substantial number of women, the election promises to be fiercely contested. As the September 25 election date approaches, Chhamb is set for an intense and potentially transformative contest. The convergence of past legacies, current dissensions, and pressing local issues ensures that this election will be one of the most watched and closely analyzed in recent memory.

Empowering India's traditional artisans: A holistic approach through PM Vishwakarma scheme



SUSHRI SHOBHA KARANDLAJE

India has been a nation of various forms of traditional arts and crafts. These arts and crafts are not only a part of our glorious heritage, but they also contribute immensely in creating engagement and employment for a number of persons. The artisans and craftspeople engaged in these trades like pottery, boat making, shoe making, etc. touch the lives of the people around them and their contribution is pivotal in the economy of the rural India. Most of these artisans and craftspeople have been a part of informal economy and work with their hands and tools.

In this background, PM Vishwakarma, was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister on Vishwakarma Jayanti on 17.09.2023 by

the Government of India for transforming the lives of these artisans and craftspeople, known as Vishwakarmas through a number of positive interventions.

PM Vishwakarma Scheme is a holistic scheme that provides an end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople. Under the Scheme, the traditional trades covered are Carpenter (Suthar/Badhai), Boat Maker, Armourer, Blacksmith (Lohar), Hammer and Tool Kit Maker, Locksmith, Goldsmith (Sonar), Potter (Kumhaar), Sculptor (Moor-tikar, stone carver), Stone-breaker, Cobbler (Charmakar)/ Shoemsmith/ Footwear artisan, Mason (Rajmistri), Basket/Mat/ Broom Maker/ Coir Weaver, Doll & Toy Maker (Traditional), Barber (Naai), Garland Maker (Malakaar), Washerman (Dhobi), Tailor (Darzi), and Fishing Net Maker.

The Scheme is based on the "Whole of Government" approach. This Scheme is being co-implemented by three Ministries of Government of India namely, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Department of

Financial Services. There is continuous coordination and constructive collaboration among these Ministries and the State Governments, which makes it as one of the most unique schemes ever launched and implemented in the country. The State Governments play a very important role in the three-tier verification process of the beneficiaries of the Scheme.

The response to the Scheme has been extremely positive. When the Scheme was launched in 2023, it was expected that a number of 30 lakh beneficiaries would onboard in a time period of five years. It is heartening to see that within 11 months, 2.36 crore enrolments have already taken place and out of these, 17.16 lakh beneficiaries have successfully registered, after the three-stage verification process.

Karnataka is home to a number of Vishwakarmas having their own unique creativity and potential. They are engaged in various art forms like stone carving, wood work, sandalwood carving, metalwork like Bidriwork, Dolls and Toys making, etc. There has been a very positive response in the State of

Karnataka for PM Vishwakarma Scheme. As on date, 28.99 lakh enrolments have taken place in Karnataka. Out of these 3.93 lakh beneficiaries have successfully registered. Around 2 lakh beneficiaries have completed their skill training and more than 35,000 beneficiaries have been sanctioned a loan of up to Rs. 1 lakh. Cumulatively, an amount of Rs. 305.08 crore has been sanctioned as loan to these beneficiaries.

The Scheme emphasises on giving 'Samman' to the Vishwakarmas engaged in these trades, upgrading their 'Samarthya' and bringing 'Samridhi' to them. 'Samman' is accorded to the beneficiaries by awarding them a PM Vishwakarma Certificate and ID card once they are registered.

For building their 'Samarthya', the Scheme envisages Skill Upgradation of the artisans and craftspeople. High quality training of 6 days is imparted to the beneficiaries by master trainers of respective trades. The beneficiaries are provided a stipend of Rs. 500 per day as wage compensation, besides a travel allowance of Rs.

1,000. Moreover, board and lodging facilities for the beneficiaries during the training are fully funded by the Government and provided free of cost. Another aspect of 'Samarthya' is ensured through the provision of toolkit incentive of up to Rs. 15,000 to enable the artisans and craftspeople to use modern and latest tools in their respective trades. The Ministry of MSME has collaborated with Department of Posts, which through its network spread across the country, will ensure that the toolkits are handed over to the beneficiaries at their doorstep.

'Samridhi' of the beneficiaries is envisaged by providing for access to affordable credit and access to wider markets. The Scheme provides for collateral-free loans of up to Rs. 3 lakh in two tranches of Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 2 lakh, at a concessional interest rate fixed at 5%. No guarantee fee is charged to the beneficiaries. In addition, the Scheme incentives beneficiaries to adopt digital transactions and a cash-back is given every time a digital transaction is made. Every month, Re. 1 per digital transaction, up to a

maximum of 100 transactions, is credited to the beneficiary's account for each digital payout or receipt. Marketing strategy to promote the products and services of these artisans in both domestic and international markets is a part of the Scheme. This includes quality certification, branding, advertising, publicity, and other marketing activities aimed at enhancing their connection to value chains. Onboarding on e-commerce platforms like GeM, ONDC, etc. and quality certifications are encouraged under the marketing component of the Scheme.

The Scheme is set to become instrumental in creating a new India by equipping traditional artisans and craftspeople to establish their own enterprises. It is a commendable effort by the Government to support those who preserve India's rich cultural heritage and the nation is on path to witness rise of Vishwakarmas in our economic landscape.

(The author is Minister of State for Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Ministry of Labour & Employment)

Debunking conspiracy theories with AI

SANTHOSH MATHEW

As the digital age unfolds, one thing is clear: conspiracy theories have never been easier to spread, nor harder to debunk. In 2024, as humanity embraces cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, it's a strange paradox that ancient prophecies and far-fetched theories still hold a powerful grip on the collective imagination. From claims that the Moon landing was faked to the spread of false narratives about the COVID-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories shape our perception of world events, offering an alluring—if misleading—explanation for the chaotic times we live in.

Our fascination with the unknown has deep historical roots. Figures like the 16th-century mystic Nostradamus and the blind Bulgarian prophet Baba Vanga have captivated millions with their supposed ability to foresee global disasters, political upheavals, and even pandemics. For centuries, people have tried to align Nostradamus'

cryptic quatrains with real-world events, from the rise of Hitler to the assassination of JFK. Similarly, Baba Vanga's alleged predictions of 9/11, Brexit, and natural disasters have only fueled modern fears of impending doom. Yet, despite the scepticism that surrounds their claims, these figures remain symbols of the human desire to make sense of a world that often seems beyond our control. In today's world, conspiracy theories have evolved. No longer confined to whispered conversations in dimly lit rooms, they now dominate social media platforms and news outlets.

The Flat Earth Society, which defies centuries of scientific evidence to insist that the Earth is flat, finds new believers daily. The widely debunked theory that NASA staged the 1969 Moon landing still draws attention, as do theories that connect Nostradamus' prophecies to modern political figures like Donald Trump. While such theories may seem harmless or even entertaining to some, the consequences are often real

and dangerous. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, was a breeding ground for conspiracy theories. False claims that the virus was engineered as a bioweapon, or that 5G technology spread the disease, circulated rapidly. These beliefs not only stoked fear but also fueled vaccine resistance, leading to a slower public health response. As artificial intelligence continues to revolutionize our world, it's also becoming a powerful tool for both the spread of and the fight against conspiracy theories. AI itself has become a subject of suspicion, with some fearing it as a means of mass surveillance or control.

But AI is also being deployed to combat misinformation. Researchers have recently begun experimenting with AI chatbots, like GPT-4, to engage with conspiracy theorists directly. In a controlled study, participants were invited to express their beliefs in specific conspiracy theories.

The AI then engaged them in a three-round dialogue, offering counter-arguments and evidence

to debunk their claims. Remarkably, these conversations led to a 20% reduction in participants' belief in their chosen conspiracy theory, and the effect lasted for at least two months.

While these results are promising, they only scratch the surface of a much larger issue. Conspiracy theories persist because they provide simple, emotionally charged explanations for complex global events. In times of uncertainty, people naturally seek out answers that make sense of their fears. Whether it's the belief that the U.S. government orchestrated the 9/11 attacks or that NASA faked the Moon landing to win the space race, these theories offer a false sense of order in a disorderly world. Social media algorithms amplify these ideas, often pushing the most extreme narratives into the spotlight, further fueling distrust and division.

Even AI, with its potential to debunk misinformation, cannot overcome the deep-seated fear and scepticism that drive people to embrace conspiracy theo-

ries in the first place. The rise of AI has sparked its own set of conspiracies, with some claiming that it's part of a grand plot for world domination or that it's being used to control the masses. As much as AI can engage and educate, its ability to change hearts and minds is limited when faced with the sheer emotional power of fear and distrust. And it's not just AI or social media that keeps conspiracy theories alive. Historical events like the 9/11 attacks, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the AIDS epidemic have all been used to fuel false narratives. One long-standing theory claims that HIV was a man-made biological weapon designed to target specific populations, particularly African Americans and Latinos. Despite decades of scientific research disproving such claims, these ideas continue to find an audience among those who mistrust government and scientific authorities. At the heart of every conspiracy theory lies a fundamental distrust of authority. As

Roman historian Tacitus once observed, when governments or those in power lose the trust of the people, manipulation and suspicion take root.

And in today's hyper-connected world, these suspicions spread with unprecedented speed. Yet, there is hope. While AI alone cannot solve the problem of misinformation, it can be a valuable tool in the broader effort to rebuild trust and foster dialogue. The challenge is not just to debunk falsehoods but to address the deeper emotional and psychological needs that drive people to believe in them in the first place. It requires a concerted effort from governments, media, educators, and individuals to promote transparency, critical thinking, and open communication. As the world becomes more connected, the stakes grow higher. Misinformation, once confined to fringe groups, now has the power to shape global events.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

A cup of garam chai: The essence of India

RACHNA LAKHPATI

In India, tea transcends mere consumption; it embodies a lifestyle. Whether in the bustling streets of Mumbai or the serene backwaters of Kerala, the clinking of tea cups resonates, marking the essence of every region in the country. Whether it is scorching summers or bone-chilling winters, tea is a remedy that brings Indians together to start the day, refuel, or simply enjoy a moment of solace.

This particular beverage serves as a connection across various regions and cultures, firmly establishing itself as a fundamental element in the majority of Indian households. The humble beverage, often referred to as "chai," unites people in a truly unparalleled way. In moments of family togetherness, during brief pauses between meetings, or while enjoying time

with friends, tea remains a steadfast presence.

The allure of tea is found in its ability to offer a blend that caters to each person's unique preferences and methods of preparation and enjoyment. For some, it is the timeless combination of milk and water; others enjoy it as a brew crafted entirely from milk. Next come the imaginative elements: cardamom for an aromatic boost, ginger to add a warm, spicy flair, or masala for its rich, intricate taste.

The possibilities are limitless, reflecting the boundless diversity that India embodies. But what unites us all is the essence of tea. It's not just about the flavours, but the moments it creates. Picture a rainy monsoon day, the air fresh and invigorating, with a warm cup of tea cradled in your hand. You take a sip, relishing the warmth, as you nibble



on fresh theplas or crispy pakoras. Perhaps it's one of those crisp early winter mornings when you are cocooned in your blanket, your chai infused with ginger to stir your senses as you savour that buttery paratha.

These experiences are not just about satisfying a craving but about creating memories and connections, one cup at a time. Tea

doesn't just complement Indian food—it enhances it. Whether it's dunking biscuits into a hot cup of chai, enjoying a slice of cake alongside tea, or savouring it with savoury snacks like samosas, this beverage possesses an enchanting quality that enhances any meal. Tea is often the centrepiece of these culinary experiences. There's an unsaid

rule in many households: the tea must always be hot, plentiful, and perfectly brewed. Once the kettle is on, everything else fades into the background. The allure of tea resides in its egalitarian nature. From the opulent palace kitchens to the humble street-side vendor offering steaming cups of chai in traditional clay cups known as kulaks, tea is

savoured across all levels of society. It represents a delightful indulgence, a tiny joy amidst the chaos of everyday life.

For countless individuals, the day remains uninitiated until that initial sip of tea is savoured. In a nation as vast and varied as India, finding something that brings us all together is uncommon; however, it is precisely this connection that tea fosters through collective rituals and appreciation. The next time you enjoy your tea, keep in mind: that it's more than just a beverage. It embodies the essence of tradition and ritual, a vibrant celebration of all that distinguishes India. Served with hot parathas or a delectable slice of cake, tea weaves through the vibrant cultural fabric of the nation, connecting us, sip by sip.

(The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)

Patient safety transcends responsibilities of healthcare providers: JP Nadda

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

Patient safety must be a global objective and it transcends the responsibilities of healthcare providers, said Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare JP Nadda on World Patient Safety Day on Tuesday.

He was speaking at the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH) Patient Safety Conference (NPSC 2024) organised by the Quality Council of India (QCI), an autonomous body set up by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

"Patient Safety transcends the responsibilities of healthcare providers; it should be a global objective. Our systems must be



designed with the utmost priority for patient safety," said Nadda, addressing the gathering via a video message.

The event, aimed at advancing patient safety and healthcare quality, also launched key initiatives like E-Mitra Chatbot

-- a 24/7 AI-powered tool on WhatsApp and the NABH website to streamline accreditation processes; Mitra physical centres to tailor support for small hospitals in Tier 2, Tier 3 cities, and rural areas to promote NABH standards and entry-level certifications.

The NABH also introduced e-skilling modules to help in Interactive training for healthcare management.

"The NABH Patient Safety Conference (NPSC 2024) aligns with the vision of 'One Earth, One Health,' championed by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The initiatives like the E-Mitra Chatbot, Mitra physical centres, and e-skilling modules, etc, introduced at the con-

ference today will make Indian healthcare more efficient, transparent, and patient-centric," said Jaxay Shah, QCI Chairperson.

"These efforts will play a pivotal role in further strengthening patient safety and elevating the quality of care, especially at the grassroots level in tier 2 and tier 3 cities and villages. Together, we are ensuring that quality healthcare becomes a reality for all, one hospital at a time," he added.

The World Patient Safety Day is observed annually on September 17. The theme for 2024 is focused on improving diagnosis for patient safety, using the slogan "Get it right, make it safe!" It highlights that correct and timely diagnosis is critical in improving patient safety.

Study shows how Long Covid is debilitating children's health

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

While Covid-19 did not cause much harm to children, yet those affected are likely to suffer from Long Covid which is affecting their daily life with dizziness, fatigue, and brain fog, according to a study.

The study from the Kennedy Krieger Institute, in the US, showed that the majority of children with Long Covid are likely to experience orthostatic intolerance (OI) -- a condition that causes the body to struggle with regulating blood pressure and heart rate when standing up.

As a result, children often feel dizzy, lightheaded, fatigued, and may experience "brain fog" or cognitive difficulties.

The team examined

nearly 100 children and found that dizziness (67 per cent), fatigue (25 per cent), and body pain (23 per cent) were the common symptoms, which used to worsen while standing but improved when lying down.

These symptoms can make it difficult to perform everyday activities like exercising, attending school, and socialising, severely impacting their quality of life.

Further, the research reveals that OI is prevalent among children dealing with the long-term effects of SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for Covid-19. The team found 71 per cent of the patients studied at the Institute experienced at least one orthostatic condition.

The findings explain

the relevance of screening paediatric long Covid patients for OI, as many have symptoms that could be missed without proper testing, said Dr. Laura Malone, Director of the Pediatric Post-Covid-19 Rehabilitation Clinic at Kennedy Krieger.

"Research proves this condition is common," she said, urging for "early diagnosis and treatment" which will help the children to recover and return to their normal routines.

While calling for a multi-faceted approach to treatment, the researchers stressed the need to increase salt and fluid intake, exercise training, and physical therapy among children, in addition to medications that manage heart rate and blood pressure.

IIT Kanpur launches project for UP Digital Health Stack

AGENCIES
KANPUR, SEP 17

The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) and ICICI Foundation for Inclusive Growth on Tuesday announced a partnership to work on the Uttar Pradesh Digital Health Stack project to strengthen healthcare in the state.

The Stack will be available for use in the public healthcare system, starting with Uttar Pradesh.

As per the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), ICICI Foundation will support this initiative with significant fund requirements over multiple years.

The Stack combines technology, medical research, and innovation to bring a paradigm transformation in the space of public healthcare.



The project aims to develop MedTech devices, improve point-of-care (POC) services, and strengthen the public healthcare capacity.

Further, it will also help in the detection of chronic diseases through Artificial Intelligence-integrated devices.

The project will be housed in the IIT Kanpur campus.

"With the core exper-

tise in Artificial Intelligence and Machine learning and thriving MedTech ecosystem, the IIT Kanpur is well poised to provide necessary technological support to the mission of developing the Digital Health Stack. We are grateful to ICICI Foundation for their generous contribution towards this initiative and look forward to a successful endeavour," said Prof Manindra Agrawal,

Director of IIT Kanpur.

"ICICI Foundation has been working for capacity building in the healthcare space. In line with this, we are pleased to collaborate with IIT Kanpur for creating Digital Health Stack that will contribute towards digitising and enhancing the public healthcare system," added Sanjay Datta, President, ICICI Foundation.

IIT Kanpur, had, in February signed an MoU with the UP government to collaborate in the research and development efforts of UP Digital Health Stack under the National Health Stack programme of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

As per the MoU, IIT Kanpur will create, validate, and maintain several vital digital health services for the state of UP.

IIM Lucknow study finds factors that influence menstrual cup adoption in Indian women

AGENCIES
LUCKNOW, SEP 17

Price sensitivity, quality, and environmental awareness play a significant role in shaping women's attitudes toward menstrual cup adoption in India, according to a study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow, on Tuesday.

The study, published in the esteemed Journal of Social Marketing, investigates the various factors influencing women's intentions to adopt menstrual cups. Focusing on how perceived values -- functional, emotional, conditional, epistemic, and environmental -- impact adoption deci-



sions, the team surveyed 304 women.

The findings reveal that emotional values had the most significant influence, "suggesting that respondents believe that they are making personal contributions towards sustainability and society by adopting menstrual cups".

This was followed by environmental factors. Previous studies showed that the environmental

being is a central theme", said the team.

In addition, factors such as the desire for knowledge, price sensitivity, and quality considerations also greatly influence adoption intentions.

"Adopting menstrual cups in India can revolutionise feminine hygiene by promoting health, comfort, and environmental sustainability, reducing waste and infection risks for millions of women. It is a vital step toward empowering women with safer, eco-friendly choices," said Prof. Priyanka Sharma, from IIM Lucknow

"Prioritising menstrual health is key to fostering well-being and dignity for women across the nation," she added.

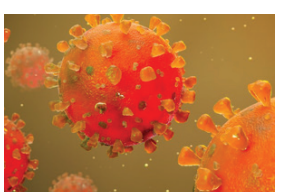
Know all about new XEC Covid variant identified in 15 countries

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

Covid seems to be rising again with a new and more contagious variant -- XEC -- spreading rapidly across 15 countries. First detected in Germany in June, XEC is a combination of the KS.1.1 and KP.3.3 variants. According to reports, it has already overtaken the previously dominant FLiRT strain of the deadly virus.

The strain, belonging to the Omicron variant, is currently spreading "quite rapidly" across Europe, North America and Asia.

About 550 samples have now been reported, from 27 countries, including Poland, Norway, Luxembourg, Ukraine, Portugal, the US and China have now reported samples.



"At this juncture, the XEC variant appears to be the most likely one to get legs next," Eric Topol, Director of the Scripps Research Translational Institute in California, US, said in a recent post on X.

As per experts, XEC comes with some new mutations that might help it spread this autumn. However, vaccines may help prevent severe cases.

In a post on X, a Melbourne-based data expert Mike Honey stated that XEC strain is "a likely next challenger to the currently

dominant variants".

Honey noted that XEC has already charged ahead of other variants like the FLiRT, FLUQU and DEFLUQE strains.

The strain reportedly causes symptoms that are similar to those experienced with common illnesses such as influenza and colds. While most people will get better within a few weeks, for some it may take longer to recover and some may even require hospitalisation. According to the UK NHS, the variant causes flu-like symptoms which includes a high temperature or shivering (chills), a new, continuous cough, a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, shortness of breath, fatigue, body ache, loss of appetite, among others.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

Even as injectable weight loss drugs have become a popular option for people struggling with obesity, 1 in 4 or 25 per cent consider using them without consulting their doctor, exposing themselves to several health risks, finds a study on Tuesday.

Cost and lack of insurance coverage are some reasons for seeking prescription alternatives, said the team from The Ohio State University, US, who surveyed 1,006 adults in America.

"Some people are skipping the doctor's office and reaching out to potentially unreliable sources such as unlicensed online pharmacies or telehealth

1 IN 4 ADULTS CONSIDER WEIGHT LOSS DRUG USE WITHOUT PRESCRIPTION: STUDY



sites, which could expose patients to risks," the team said.

Cost (18 per cent) is the major reason identified in the survey, followed by not being covered by insurance (15 per cent), inability to get a prescription from their doctor (9 per cent), and lack of

availability through a pharmacy (6 per cent).

"It's really important for those who want to lose weight to first discuss options with their doctor. It is not one size fits all, and every medication can have risks and side effects," said Shengyi Mao, an Ohio State inter-

nal medicine physician. Mao said doctors will "go through a patient's medical history" and prescribe medications by assessing "their particular risks and benefits".

Recently developed weight loss drugs called GLP1-RA (with brand names Ozempic and Wegovy) help in weight loss because they can curb appetite and slow emptying of the stomach.

The medication which comes with Semaglutide salt has been approved by the US FDA for reducing cardiovascular risk in adults who are overweight or obese and have established cardiovascular disease.

But the regulator also issued two warnings about compounded

Semaglutide including reports of dosing errors resulting in hospitalisation and ineffective ingredients.

Compounded drugs are custom-made alternatives to brand names and made in state-licensed pharmacies instead of by drug manufacturers when a drug is in short supply.

Mao said "Obesity is a serious and complex chronic disease" and should be addressed by a "comprehensive weight management programme".

"These weight loss drugs may be effective for some people but they can cause serious side effects and the weight may return after they stop taking them."

Arsenic exposure can result in diabetes, warns study

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, SEP 17

A team of researchers on Monday said that exposure to arsenic and other toxic metals may accelerate the progression toward diabetes. In a study of over 500 Mexican Americans living in southern Texas in the US, researchers from University of Illinois Chicago found that high levels of toxic metals in urine predicted faster increases in blood sugar over subsequent years.

The study, published in Diabetes Care, highlights an underappreciated risk

factor for diabetes.

Environmental exposures have largely been neglected as drivers of the diabetes epidemic.

"These data support using environmental policy as a new tool to mitigate the devastating burden of diabetes on individuals and society at large," said Margaret Weiss, first author of the study.

Based on these results, individuals with the highest levels of arsenic in their urine were projected to qualify as prediabetic 23 months earlier and diabetic 65 months earlier



than those with the lowest exposure to the toxic metal.

The study emphasised that this risk factor can be addressed by reducing exposure to contaminated food, water and other products.

On average, blood sugar levels increased in all participants. But in those who initially exhibited higher urinary levels of arsenic, selenium, copper, molyb-

denum, nickel or tin, blood sugar increased at a faster rate over the three years.

This acceleration puts those who started with normal blood sugar levels at risk of developing prediabetes and diabetes earlier than others in their population.

In clinical medicine, time really matters. The earlier you develop diabetes, the worse the complications are. The longer you have diabetes, the worse the complications are. It underscores the need to engage these folks sooner in the clinic," said

Dr Robert Sargis, associate professor in the College of Medicine.

How arsenic and other metals increase the risk of diabetes isn't completely understood.

Other metals, namely cobalt and zinc, were associated in the study with lower blood sugar in subsequent years, suggesting a potentially protective effect of some elements.

However, the alarming results with arsenic and other toxic metals suggest they are environmental risk factors that could be new targets to prevent the disease.

Philippines: Mpox cases climb to 18, detects 3 new

AGENCIES
MANILA, SEP 17

The Philippines' Department of Health has detected three more mpox cases, which have brought the number of confirmed cases around the country to 18 so far this year, Health Secretary Teodoro Herbosa said Monday.

Herbosa said five of the 18 patients have recovered, and no patient has died from the infectious viral disease.

Herbosa said the three



newly detected mpox cases were all male and were from Metro Manila and the adjoining region.

"The good thing is that all 18 patients have not

infected anyone. They have no epidemiological link, meaning that the patients did not transmit the virus during their isolation," Herbosa said at a press conference.

PM Modi interacts with beneficiaries of PMAY-U in Bhubaneswar

AGENCIES
BHUBANESWAR, SEP 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday interacted with the beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U) in the Sabar Sahi slum area of the state capital.

The PM arrived here, the last leg of his three-state tour, and was accorded a grand welcome at the airport. Earlier, PM Modi had informed on his official 'X' handle about his visit to Odisha to launch the SUBHADRA yojana, the flagship social welfare scheme of the BJP government in Odisha.

"Leaving for Bhubaneswar. It is very special to be among the wonderful people of Odisha to launch SUBHADRA, an



important scheme of the Odisha Government. This scheme will boost women's empowerment and ensure financial independence for our Nari Shakti. Several other works will also be launched in the programme," wrote PM.

After he arrived at the Bhubaneswar airport, PM Modi went to the Sabar Sahi slum in the Gadaka-

na area in a carcade under tight security to attend a special programme there. Hundreds of people, especially women, greeted PM Modi standing on both sides of the road from the Bhubaneswar Airport to Gadakana. The supporters also extended birthday wishes to PM Modi on his 74th birthday.

PM Modi was welcomed

by the residents of the slum area with traditional Anga Bastra and sandalwood paste. He relished the sweet delicacy 'kheer' at one of the beneficiary's residences and offered Puja to Lord Jagannath in Gadakana.

The PM interacted with the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban (PMAY-U), a flagship scheme implemented by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), for around 30 minutes at the Sabar Sahi slum in Gadakana. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and the state Housing & Urban Development Department Minister, Krushna Chandra Mahapatra were present during the interaction of PM Modi with beneficia-

ries.

The PM later went to Janata Maidan where he also launched the 'Subhadra Yojana', the much-awaited social welfare programme of the ruling BJP government in Odisha, in a mega programme on Tuesday. Besides, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for various Railway projects worth Rs 2,871 crore. The PM will also lay the foundation stone of National Highway projects worth more than Rs 1,000 crore.

Notably, the eligible women beneficiaries between the age group of 21 and 60 years will receive Rs 50,000 each in the next five years under the BJP government's flagship programme 'Subhadra Yojana'.

SC declines to stay Allahabad HC order upholding maintainability of civil suits in Krishna Janmabhoomi dispute

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

The Supreme Court on Tuesday declined to pass any interim order staying the operation of the Allahabad High Court order upholding the maintainability of civil suits filed by Hindu worshippers in Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah Masjid dispute.

However, a bench, headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna, issued notice and agreed to examine the special leave petition filed by the Management Committee of the Shahi Masjid Idgah against the dismissal of their application filed under Order VII Rule 11 of the CPC (Code of Civil Procedure).

The Bench, also comprising Justice Sanjay



Kumar, said that the present plea will be taken up for hearing in the week commencing November 4, along with a pending clutch of petitions pertaining to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah Masjid dispute.

Further, it asked the petitioner, the mosque management committee, to examine the preliminary objection on

maintainability since the impugned judgment being passed by the single-judge bench would be appealable before a division bench of the high court.

The apex court clarified that the filing of the special leave petition before the apex court will not preclude the Allahabad High Court from hearing the suits filed by Hindu worshippers.

CBI files status report before SC in RG Kar hospital medic rape-murder case

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

The Central Bureau of Investigation, which is probing the alleged rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata, on Tuesday filed the status report in the Supreme Court.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud, Justice J B Pardiwal and Justice Manoj Mishra said that it has seen the line of investigation being carried out by the CBI and is convinced that it is attempting to unearth the absolute truth.

The Apex Court had taken suo moto cognizance of the matter of the gruesome incident and also upheld the Calcutta High Court's order which had handed over the probe to the CBI.

The Supreme Court had formed a high power

committee to look into the safety and security and other medical staff across all hospitals in India.

The Top Court had directed that the committee's suggestions should be implemented Pan-India basis.

Today during the hearing, CBI filed a fresh Status report of its investigation.

The court observed that the CBI report says that the SHO has been arrested and several pieces of important evidence has emerged about destruction of the crime scene. The bench said that the CBI has responded to the manner in which post mortem of the victim was done and addressed the doubts expressed on non-filing of the form needed for the post mortem.

The bench also observed that the CBI has also looked into the role of not only those arrested but those who are com-

PLICIT to the case.

On September 12, after a letter of the victim's father expressing several concerns, the SC asked the CBI to look into the leads given by him on the crime and investigate them. CBI said it has taken care of some of the concerns and would examine all of the concerns and take suitable action.

"Several important evidence has been obtained on the basis of the letter written by victim's father to the CBI, which raised several issues who was handicapped by the delay of 5 days in commencing investigation, the Supreme court said that the agency must look into all aspects.

When a counsel pointed out the shoddy manner in which the body was sent for post-mortem and samples seized, the CJI said, "What the CBI has revealed is worse and disturbing. We are ourselves disturbed by it."

Govt in mind of voters will come to power in Maharashtra: Ajit Pawar

AGENCIES
PUNE, SEP 17

Amid claims and counterclaims made by the Mahayuti and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) over the new government, Deputy Chief Minister and NCP National President, Ajit Pawar, on Tuesday said that the government which is there in the minds of the voters will come to power in Maharashtra after the Assembly elections.

Instead of stating clearly that the Mahayuti government would come back to power, Ajit Pawar has left it to the will of the voters who will play a crucial role in the formation of a new government.

After performing puja at Pune's prestigious Dagdusheth Ganapati temple on the occasion of Anant Chaturdashi, Ajit Pawar categorically said, "The government which is there in the minds of the voters will come to power in Maharashtra. We (the Mahayuti) are trying our way, the Opposition is



making efforts their way."

The Deputy CM however, strongly indicated that the Mahayuti comprising the BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP is approaching the voters on the development plank and listed out a slew of welfare and development schemes and initiatives launched by the government in the run up to the Assembly election, which is likely to take place in the second week of November.

He also did not forget to point out that the Mahayuti government was successful in bringing several schemes and

efforts to bring a large amount of funds from the Government of India to spur the state's development," said Ajit Pawar.

"In the very first Cabinet, the BJP-led NDA government approved the Rs 76,000 crore Vadhan Port in the state.

The Hubballi-Pune Vande Bharat train was launched on Monday. Several works of National Highways and the Coastal Road are in progress. The Central government is helping the state government all the way.

"Onion export ban has been lifted. Soybean, cotton, sugarcane, milk producing farmers are being helped. The state government appealed to the Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah to provide a subsidy for milk powder. Two of our demands have been so far accepted and Home Minister Shah has promised that other demands will also be soon approved in the Cabinet," said Ajit Pawar.

"It is the demand of the farmers and the grand coalition government that the Centre should resolve the remaining issues as soon as possible," he said. Meanwhile, Ajit Pawar strongly condemned Shiv Sena MLA Sanjay Gaikwad's statement about giving a cash reward of Rs 11 lakh to anyone who chops off the Leader of Opposition (LoP) and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's tongue over the latter's statement on reservation.

"I always say that no one, including me, should make insane statements. Everyone should follow the tradition of cultured Maharashtra, taught by Yashwantrao Chavan. Don't make statements that there will increase the gap between castes and communities. Such statements lead to accusations and disputes among political parties. The atmosphere becomes murky. New questions arise. I am against those who do wrong. I condemn it," said Ajit Pawar.

SC flags glorification and grandstanding over bulldozer action, pauses demolitions across country

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

The Supreme Court on Tuesday flagged "glorification" and "grandstanding" over bulldozer action in the country, and said if necessary, it will involve the Election Commission of India in the issue as it paused all demolition actions across the country, except with its permission, till the next date of hearing.

Passing the order, a bench, headed by Justice B.R. Gavai said that unauthorised structures may be

demolished following the due procedure but under no circumstances, property be demolished for "extraneous reasons".

The Bench, also comprising Justice K.V. Viswanathan, clarified that its order will not protect any unauthorised construction on public roads, streets, footpaths, railway lines, or public places.

Posting the batch of petitions alleging demolitions carried out without notice for the next hearing on October 1, it said that it would lay down directives within the framework of

municipal law guaranteeing legal remedies.

The apex court said that neither the unauthorised occupants nor the authorities should be allowed to take any advantage of 'lacunas' in municipal laws.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said that a "narrative" has been built and demolitions were carried out after notices were served in respect of structures built in violation of municipal law.

"There cannot be a stay against illegal demolition. I have filed an affidavit that



there cannot be any demolition except in accordance with applicable law and not on the ground that the person is guilty of any

offence," he submitted.

"Let them (PIL litigants) bring one incident where the law was not complied with. Affected parties don't

approach because they knew they had received notices and their construction was illegal," he added.

In an earlier hearing held on September 2, the top court mulled the formation of pan-India guidelines against the demolition of property of individuals accused of committing criminal offences. It had stressed that even unauthorised construction has to be demolished in "accordance with law" and state authorities cannot resort to the demolition of the property of the accused as a punishment.

The SC remarked that not only the house of an accused, but the house of a convict cannot meet such a fate, while clarifying the apex court's intention to not protect unauthorised structures. Posting the matter for hearing after two weeks, it had asked parties to place on record their suggestions for framing of guidelines.

The apex court was hearing a plea filed by Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind, claiming that several houses of persons were demolished in Delhi's Jahangirpuri immediately

after the riots in April 2022 on the allegation that they had instigated riots. Several applications against bulldozer actions across various states were also filed in the same pending matter. The petition contended that authorities cannot resort to bulldozer action as a form of punishment and such demolitions violated the right to a home, a facet of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Further, it prayed for direction to order the reconstruction of the houses demolished.

Government making all efforts to ensure employment to all in Bihar: Nitish

AGENCIES
PATNA, SEP 17

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday declared that his government was making all efforts to ensure employment to all in the state itself, a major step to check migration in search of livelihood.

Kumar while greeting people on the occasion of "Vishwakarma Puja", said that Bihar was setting milestones of development one after the other successively. The contribution of labourers in the development of Bihar had been



vital without any parallel, he noted.

"Our government has launched several schemes to provide coverage of social security to a large number of labourers working in unorganised sector", the Chief Minister said adding that the

state government was also making all efforts to ensure that labourers could get employment in Bihar itself, not need to migrate in search of their livelihood. He exuded his confidence that Bihar would continue to move on the fast track of development at an acceler-

ated pace with the support and sustained contribution of labourers.

"I salute all labourers and other workforce on the auspicious occasion of Vishwakarma Puja", Kumar said in a message released from the CM secretariat.

He worshipped the God Vishwakarma on the occasion and did other religious rituals before the idol of Vishwakarma was installed at CM's residence.

Reports of worship of God Vishwakarma was also received from all parts of Bihar.

Smriti Irani talks about importance of gender parity with World Bank leaders

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON DC, SEP 17

Former Union Minister Smriti Irani, addressing the leaders of the World Bank, talked about the importance of expanding gender equity in India and throughout the Global South.

"In order to expand our global competitiveness, leaders of government and commerce throughout the Global South must ensure that gender equity policies are fully implemented," Smriti Irani said at a gath-

ering in Washington on Monday.

"Education, healthcare, childcare, and housing policies disproportionately impact women - especially in developing and growing economies like ours. It is critical that we get the policy right so that women and girls can help lead government and industry while also fulfilling their personal potential," she added.

She also spotlighted India's rapid strides in the segment in the last decade and underlined the need for focused poli-

cymaking.

While addressing the World Bank leaders, she also spoke about gender parity in the Global South and the importance of engaging both political and corporate leadership in bringing a change to this effect. She specifically mentioned India's work to advance education policy, expand programmes investing in women-led enterprises and shift cultural mindsets towards women as issues core to gender equity.

"Our region of the

world is growing in terms of population, economic output, and global influence, so it is incumbent upon us - as leaders - to have the foresight, will, and commitment to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to meet her or his potential," said the BJP leader.

Smriti Irani will continue to meet with government and business leaders in Washington, DC, over the next several days to discuss her priorities for gender equity, said a Press statement.

PM Modi to speak at UN Summit of the Future on Sep 23, but not at annual high-level meeting

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS, SEPT 17

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address the Summit of the Future on September 23, but not the annual high-level meeting of the General Assembly, according to the latest schedules from the UN.

Earlier, PM Modi was listed earlier as a speaker at the September 26 session of the Assembly high-level meeting, but it would appear he will not remain all through the high-level meeting that follows the Summit of the Future and runs from September 24 to 30. External Affairs Minister (EAM), S. Jaishankar, is now listed as India's speaker at the Assembly high-level meeting and will address it on September 28.

After attending the Quad Summit with US President Joe Biden at his home state of Delaware on Saturday, Prime Minister Modi is scheduled

to speak on Sunday at the "Modi and US, Progress Together" diaspora rally in the New York suburb Uniondale.

More than 25,000 people have applied for tickets to the diaspora event, according to the organisers.

Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to meet with several business leaders and world leaders after the rally.

As the leader voicing the aspirations of the Global South with an assertive diplomacy, many leaders from around the world seek meetings with him.

The Quad meeting that he will attend along with Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese would be a farewell meeting for Biden, who is not running for a second term, and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who is leaving his post.

The four nations work jointly to ensure a peaceful Indo-Pacific region and help in the developmental



efforts of the area.

Although the group formally known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue does not seek to be a military alliance, at their Saturday meeting the leaders are to announce plans for joint patrols by their Coast Guards to monitor the region where China has taken aggressive actions, according to diplomatic sources quoted by Japan's news agency Kyodo.

The Summit of the

Future, according to the UN, aims to bring world leaders to chart the course of the world organisation to "accelerate efforts to meet our existing international commitments and take concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities".

The leaders are expected to adopt the Pact of the Future, a visionary document that will include a Global Digital Compact that deals with both dan-

gers and opportunities of technology.

Prime Minister Modi will be at the diaspora rally when the Summit of the Future begins on Sunday and he is listed as the 35th of the 72 speakers at the September 23 morning session which starts at 9 a.m. local time.

If all the speakers before him stick to their allotted time -- an unlikely prospect -- his turn would be around noon (9:30 p.m. in India).

The annual high-level meeting where world leaders survey the global scene and speak of their nations' programmes and outlook starts on September 24 with a speech by Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva who will be followed by Biden under a UN tradition.

EAM Jaishankar is listed for the afternoon session on September 28 and he should take the podium at about 4:30 p.m. (2 a.m. in India).

He is expected to hold

bilateral meetings with many leaders and participate in meetings of various groups.

Two important leaders, Presidents Xi Jinping of China and Vladimir Putin of Russia, will be missing at both meetings.

China's Vice-President Han Zheng and Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov are on the roster for both meetings.

Like PM Modi, many leaders of major countries will speak at only one of the two summits.

Biden and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who will speak at the high-level meeting, will not be at the Summit of the Future, where Secretary of State Antony Blinken is listed for the US and Foreign Secretary David Lammy for Britain.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation is also listed on the roster of speakers, along with several international and regional organisations, at the Summit of the Future.

India, US hold 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue, discuss strategic and defence matters

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

Indian and the US officials held the US-India 2+2 Intersessional Dialogue and discussions covered bilateral strategic and defence priorities as well as regional and global issues, an official statement said.

The officials of the Ministry of External Affairs and Defence and the US State and Defence Departments attended the 2+2 Intersessional on Monday.

In a post on X, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) official spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "India and the US held the 2+2 Intersessional on Monday with officials from India's Ministry of External Affairs and Defence, and the US State and Defence Departments. Key discussions covered bilateral strategic and defence priorities, alongside regional and global issues."

Earlier on September 13, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman held a meeting with a delegation

from the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) here in the national capital.

The delegation was headed by Deputy Chief Executive Officer Nisha Biswal. The delegation included US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti and Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch.

According to the Ministry of Finance, discussions were centred on strengthening economic cooperation between India and the US, with a particular focus on investment opportunities in India.

"Union Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman interacted with a delegation from the US International Development Finance Corporation @DFCgov with Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Ms. @NishaBiswal; US DFC @DFCgov shared that India offers good opportunities and is one of their key geographies for #investment," Ministry of Finance said in a post on X.

'Heinous Act': India raises vandalism of Swaminarayan Temple in New York with US

AGENCIES
NEW YORK, SEP 17

The Indian Consulate in New York has condemned the vandalism of the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple, saying it has raised the matter with the US law enforcement authorities for prompt action against perpetrators of the "heinous act".

"The vandalism of the BAPS Swaminarayan Temple in Melville, New York, is unacceptable," the Indian Consulate said on Monday in a post on X.

It added that the Consulate "is in touch with the community and has raised the matter with the US law enforcement authorities for prompt action against the perpetrators of this heinous act".

Melville is located in Suffolk County on Long Island and is about 28 km from the 16000-seater



Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to address a mega community event on September 22.

According to footage shared online, expletives have been sprayed on the road and the signage outside the temple. The temple is expected to hold a prayer meeting later on Monday noon following the incident.

The Hindu Ameri-

can Foundation said on Monday in a post on X that the Justice Department and Department of Homeland Security "must investigate" the attack on the temple "after recent threats to Hindu institutions as a large Indian community gathering is planned in nearby Nassau County this weekend".

"It is hard to comprehend the absolute cowardice of those who would attack a Hindu temple to

air hatred for an elected leader.

This attack, following recent threats at Hindu and Indian institutions, must be seen in the context of that threat scenario," executive director of the Hindu American Foundation Suhag Shukla said in a post on X.

It also mentioned that Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun had recently shared a video threatening Hindu and Indian institutions.

It said that the vandalism incident in New York is similar to attacks on temples that happened in California and Canada.

"Gurbatwant Pannun, of 'Sikhs for Justice,' recently posted a video threatening Hindu and Indian institutions, including HAF, as the community event approaches. The vandalism is similar to that seen in attacks on temples in

New York, California and Canada & called out by @CongressmanRaja @RoKhanna @ShriThanedar @Pramilajayapal @BeraForCongress @shuvmajumdar and other political leaders," Hindu American Foundation posted on X.

Earlier in July, the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir was vandalised in Canada's Edmonton.

Canadian MP Chandra Arya voiced deep concern over the escalating incidents of hate-fuelled violence directed at Hindu-Canadian communities.

In a post on X, Chandra Arya said, "The Hindu temple BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Edmonton is vandalised again. During the last few years, Hindu temples in the Greater Toronto Area, British Columbia, and other places in Canada are being vandalised with hateful graffiti."

AGENCIES
PARIS, SEP 17

The National Assembly of France, the parliament's lower house, will consider a resolution on the impeachment of President Emmanuel Macron, put forward by the left-wing La France Insoumise group on Tuesday.

The party came forward with this initiative after the French leader ruled out the participation of the left in the government being formed, despite the victory of their coalition in the parliamentary elections. The proposal was put forward in accordance with Article 68 of the French constitution, which provides for the possibility of removing the president from power in the event of his violation of his duties. The resolution was supported by 81 parliamentarians from the left-wing New Popular

Front bloc, including 72 lawmakers from La France Insoumise, as well as the Greens and a number of other parliament members from the Left Democrats and Republicans group.

The Bureau, the highest collegial body of the lower house of parliament, where 12 of the 22 members currently represent the left parties, must decide on the admissibility of the resolution. At the same time, the Socialist Party refused to support the initiative of the party founded by Jean-Luc Melenchon. Former President and current National Assembly member Francois Hollande and the leader of the Greens Marine Tondelier publicly spoke out against it.

If this stage is passed, the text of the resolution must then be approved by the legislative commission of 73 lawmakers, where

the left hold only 24 seats, after which two-thirds of the National Assembly (385 parliamentarians) must vote for it within two weeks. The last two stages must also be passed in the upper house of parliament, the Senate, where the left do not have a majority. However, if the text is approved by the Senate (232 votes), both chambers will meet in a joint session, and the resolution must be supported by 617 of the 925 parliamentarians of both chambers. In this case, the president's resignation is immediate.

In 2016, the Bureau of the National Assembly declared a similar resolution on the impeachment of Francois Hollande unacceptable.

In the snap parliamentary elections in July, the left-wing bloc won the majority of votes, receiving 182 seats out of 577.

'Highly Inflammatory Language': Trump blames Biden and Harris' rhetoric' for assassination plot

AGENCIES
WASHINGTON, SEP 17

Launching a fiery attack against Democrats, former US President Donald Trump has said that President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris' "rhetoric" is responsible for the second assassination attempt against him since July, media reported.

Trump said on Monday that the suspected gunman "acted" on the "highly inflammatory language" of Democrats, CNN reported.

The Republican nominee's sharp remarks came a day after he escaped an attack at International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida.

During an interview with Fox News, the former President said that the suspect "believed the rhetoric of Biden and Harris, and he acted on it".

Trump added, "Their rhetoric is causing me to be shot at, when I am the one who is going to save the country, and they are the ones that are destroying the country -- both from the inside and out."

The former President



pointed to comments made by Biden and Harris that Trump is a threat to democracy, according to Fox News Digital, and said, "These are people that want to destroy our country."

He said that Biden and Harris, "They are the real threat." "They use highly inflammatory language," Trump said.

"I can use it too -- far better than they can -- but I don't," he added.

Harris, her running mate and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, and Biden all quickly expressed relief that a person suspected of planning to target Trump at one of his Florida golf courses was spotted

before he could get off a shot and that the former President was safe.

Harris said she was briefed on the incident and wrote on social media: "I am glad he is safe. Violence has no place in America."

Biden and Harris have both argued Trump presents a clear threat to US democracy.

When Biden began his 2024 campaign which he has since suspended, he pointed to the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol that Trump incited and argued Trump was "willing to sacrifice our democracy, put himself in power".

Harris has argued Trump is a "threat to our

democracy and fundamental freedoms".

The suspected gunman, Ryan Wesley Routh, possessed an AK-47-style rifle pointing through the chain-link fence out towards the green, a go-pro camera, and two backpacks. Routh escaped from the spot but was pulled over and arrested on I-95, according to Fox News report.

Following the shooting incident near his Florida Golf Course on Sunday, former US President Trump said that he is absolutely "safe and well". He was playing golf at West Palm Beach's Trump International Golf Club.

In a fundraising email, Trump wrote, "There were gunshots in my vicinity, but before rumours start spiralling out of control, I wanted you to hear this first: I AM SAFE AND WELL!"

"Nothing will slow me down. I will NEVER SURRENDER! I will always love you for supporting me," he said in the email. Trump is "safe following gunshots in his vicinity," the Trump Campaign said in a statement on Sunday, according to CNN.

NE NIGERIA FLOOD AFFECTS OVER 400,000 PEOPLE: UN

AGENCIES
UNITED NATIONS, SEP 17

Priority needs for the more than 400,000 victims of northeast Nigeria flooding are food assistance, potable water, hygiene, sanitation and shelter, UN humanitarianists said on Monday.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said a joint mission of the heads of UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Nigeria Red Cross Society visited Maiduguri over the weekend and met with affected people and government officials.

Many people they met needed aid before the floods, having been displaced multiple times by conflict and insecurity.

Maiduguri is the capital and largest city in Borno State.

The office said there is an urgent need for protection activities to reduce the risk of gender-based violence and to protect unaccompanied children.

OCHA said local authorities reported that



300,000 temporarily displaced people have been registered since the Sept. 9 collapse of the Alau Dam. Access remains restricted as two significant bridges in Maiduguri, among other critical infrastructure, have partially collapsed.

"In support of government efforts, the United Nations and humanitarian partners are responding by providing hot meals, facilitating food air drops in hard-to-reach areas cut off by flood waters, and trucking water," the office

said.

"We are also providing water and sanitation hygiene services, as well as water purification tablets to stem outbreaks of diseases.

This in addition to supplying hygiene and dignity kits for women and girls, as well as emergency health and shelter services."

The world body is also involved in joint assessments with the government to continue to adapt the response as needed.

OCHA said the UN

humanitarian coordinator in Nigeria, Mohamed Malick Fall, announced a 6-million-U.S.-dollar allocation from the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund and that it is also working closely with donors to secure additional funds.

"More resources and funding are needed, not only during this emergency lifesaving phase, but also in the recovery period, when people who have lost everything will need sustained support to get back on their feet," the office said.

INDIA, US HAIL COLLABORATION TO DRIVE CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 17

India and the US are making significant progress to drive energy innovation, strengthen energy security and accelerate clean energy transitions, including through more focused efforts on clean energy manufacturing and building resilient, responsible, stable, secure and diversified supply chains, it was announced on Tuesday.

According to the India and US Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP) ministerial meeting, convened by US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm and Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in Washington, DC, energy trade is playing a key role in supporting the national priorities of both the countries.

Both the sides reviewed



the initiatives undertaken across the technical pillars under the SCEP, including power and energy efficiency, responsible oil and gas, renewable energy, emerging fuels and technologies and sustainable growth.

The ministers recognised the progress the two countries have made to accelerate development and deployment of emerging clean energy technologies, advancing renewable energy deployment and

reliable grid integration, promote energy efficiency, and advance decarbonization of high-emitting sectors like industry, buildings, and transport.

They welcomed the formal launch of the Renewable Energy Technology Action Platform (RETAP) in August last year, aimed at developing actionable roadmaps for hydrogen, long duration energy storage, offshore wind, and geothermal,

through R&D, pilots and demonstration, and incubation-investment-industry networks.

The two nations also welcomed collaboration on the new National Centre for Hydrogen Safety in India and partnership on the second 'International Conference on Green Hydrogen' held this month.

Both the countries stressed the importance of supporting large-scale grid integration of renewable energy while enabling flexible and reliable grid operations through energy storage.

The two countries highlighted the importance of modernising the power distribution sector to supply 24/7 reliable power to consumers, welcomed support for India's smart metering deployment, as well as expanded efforts on inverter-based resources, power market reforms,

system inertia estimation, and cybersecurity.

The ministers also commended the Indian Railways (IR) efforts to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 and welcomed collaboration to support India's first round-the-clock renewable energy procurement of over 1.5 GW and development an energy efficiency policy and action plan for all railway facilities.

The ministers welcomed new collaboration on electrification of medium and heavy-duty vehicles, applauding implementation of the PM eBus Sewa scheme for deploying 10,000 e-buses across India.

They hailed the breadth and depth of the US-India partnership to advance progress toward our common clean energy goals and address today's unprecedented climate challenges.

India becoming a major stakeholder in global supply chain: PM Modi

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 16

India is becoming a major stakeholder in the global supply chain and this growing capacity is the foundation of our economic growth, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

Inaugurating the Tuticorin International Container Terminal in Tamil Nadu virtually, PM Modi said the country is investing over Rs 7,000 crore for the development of an Outer Harbour Container Terminal, and the capacity of the VO Chidambaram Port (formerly Tuticorin Port) continues to grow.

"The VOC Port is ready to write a new chapter in the maritime development of India. With three major ports and 17 non-major ports, Tamil Nadu has become a major hub for maritime trade," the Prime Minister said, call-



ing the new container terminal as the "new star of India's marine infrastructure".

With a deep draft of more than 14 metres and a berth over 300 metres long, this terminal will play a crucial role in enhancing the capacity of the VOC port.

The new terminal is expected to reduce logistics costs at the port and save foreign exchange for the country.

PM Modi emphasised

that one of the terminal's key achievements is its commitment to gender diversity with 40 per cent of its employees being women, symbolising women-led development in the maritime sector.

"India is showing the world the path to sustainable and forward-thinking development," said PM Modi, adding the VOC Port is being recognised as a Green Hydrogen hub and a nodal port for offshore wind energy.

Domestic passenger air traffic sees 4 pc growth in Sep to date, SpiceJet slips further



AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 17

India's domestic passenger air traffic rose 6 per cent (year-on-year) to 13.1 million in August and daily traffic trends for September indicate a moderate growth of 4 per cent YoY to date, a report showed on Tuesday.

SpiceJet hit a new low with its market share shrinking by 80 bps to 2.3 per cent (month-on-month), largely due to financial woes and increased grounding, according to the report by Emkay Global Financial Services.

Indigo continues to dominate the domestic space, boosting its market share by 40 bps to 62.4 per cent in August, the report mentioned.

Tata Group's market share also saw an uptick, at 60 bps MoM to 29.4 per cent, driven by Air India and Vistara gaining 40 bps and 30 bps MoM, respectively, thereby reaching 14.7 per cent and 10.3 per cent market share.

Indigo and Tata group now dominate 92 per cent of the Indian skies.

While AIX Connect shed marginal 10 bps MoM to gain 4.4 per cent market share, Akasa Air recorded

a marginal downtick of 20 bps MoM to 4.5 per cent.

On-time performance (OTP) and cancellations show improvement and passenger load factors (PLFs) declined across key airlines in August with SpiceJet recording a sharp monthly dip of 930 bps.

Cancellations eased up in August with SpiceJet recording the highest cancellation rate of 2.57 per cent, followed by AIX Connect and Indigo at 1.38 per cent and 0.64 per cent, respectively, according to the report.

Vistara recorded the lowest cancellations at 0.17 per cent, while Air India and Akasa Air's cancellation rate stood at 0.21 per cent and 0.19 per cent, respectively.

Domestic ATF prices declined 5 per cent MoM to Rs 93.5 per litre (in Delhi) in September.

According to reports, domestic passenger traffic is set to witness 7-10 per cent growth (year-on-year) in FY25.

Finance Minister to launch New Pension Scheme 'Vatsalya' for children on Sep 18

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 16

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to launch the New Pension Scheme (NPS) 'Vatsalya' in New Delhi on September 18, which will be joined by schoolchildren.

Announced in the Union Budget 2024, the scheme will allow parents to contribute a certain amount on behalf of their children towards NPS to secure their future and help them develop a retirement fund.

As part of the launch in New Delhi, NPS Vatsalya events will be organised simultaneously at nearly 75 locations throughout the country, according to the Ministry of Finance.

Finance Minister will also launch an online platform for subscribing to NPS 'Vatsalya', release of scheme brochure, and distribute PRAN cards to new minor subscribers.

Other locations will join the launch through video



conference and will also distribute PRAN (permanent retirement account number) membership to new minor subscribers in that location.

"NPS 'Vatsalya' will allow parents to save for their children's future by investing in a pension account and ensure long-term wealth with the power of compounding," said the ministry.

NPS 'Vatsalya' offers flexible contributions and investment options, allowing parents to make investment of Rs 1,000 annually in the name of the child,

thus making it accessible to families from all economic backgrounds.

This new initiative is designed to start early in securing financial future of children, marking an important step in India's pension system. The scheme will be run under the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA).

"The launch of NPS Vatsalya highlights the government of India's commitment to promote long-term financial planning and security for all," said the ministry.

State share of national GDP: West Bengal saw steepest decline under Mamata's rule

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 17

Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu -- home to India's three largest industrial clusters in the 1960s -- have seen their fortunes subsequently

diverge when it comes to their share of the national economy since 1960-61, with Mamata Banerjee-led state facing the steepest decline -- especially after she became the Chief Minister in 2011, a new paper by the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) to the Prime Minister showed on Tuesday. While Maharashtra clocked broadly steady performance throughout the 1960-61 to 2023-24 period, West Bengal's share has been in continuous decline while Tamil Nadu, after a mid-way decline, picked up post-1991, according to the EAC-PM paper which looked at the relative performance of states

in terms of their share of the national economy and their per capita GDP as per cent of the national average.

West Bengal, which held the third-largest share of national GDP at 10.5 per cent in 1960-61, now accounts for only 5.6 per cent share in economy since 2023-24. The state had a 6.7 per cent share in the nation's economy in 2010-11 when Mamata Banerjee assumed CM's office.

"It (West Bengal) has seen a consistent decline throughout this period. West Bengal's per capita income was above the national average in 1960-61 at 127.5 per cent, but its growth failed to keep pace with national trends. As a result, its relative per capita income declined to 83.7 per cent in 2023-24, falling below that of even traditionally lagging states like Rajasthan and Odisha," the paper revealed.

Recent Bangladesh crisis won't have significant impact on India Inc: Report

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 17

Recent developments in Bangladesh haven't had a significant impact on India's trade and going forward, the effect will vary based on industry and sector-specific nuances and exposure, a report showed on Tuesday.

A Crisil Ratings report said it does not foresee any near-term impact on the credit quality of India Inc too.

However, a prolonged disruption can affect the revenue profiles and working capital cycles of some export-oriented industries for which, Bangladesh is either a demand centre or a production hub. That, and the movement in the Bangladeshi currency taka, will bear watching, the report

mentioned. India's trade with Bangladesh is relatively low, accounting for 2.5 per cent of its total exports and 0.3 per cent of total imports last fiscal (FY24).

"Sectors such as cotton yarn, power, footwear, soft luggage, fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) may see a small but manageable negative impact, while ship breaking, jute, readymade garments (RMG) should benefit. For most others, the impact will be insignificant," the report findings showed.

Merchandise exports mainly comprise cotton and cotton yarn, petroleum products, electric energy, etc., while imports largely consist of vegetable fat oils, marine products and apparel.

The report said that for cotton yarn players, Bangladesh accounts for 8-10 per cent of sales, so the

revenue profile of major exporters could be affected. "Their ability to compensate sales in other geographies will be an important monitorable," it added.

Companies into footwear, FMCG and soft luggage could also see some impact because of manufacturing facilities located in Bangladesh.

These facilities faced operational challenges during the initial phase of the crisis. However most have since commenced operations, though a full ramp-up and the ability to maintain their supply chain will be critical.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus has decided to form six commissions to reform the judiciary, election system, administration, police, anti-

corruption commission, and the constitution. According to Yunus, these commissions are expected to start their work on October 1 and finish within the next three months to create a democratic framework for the country.

According to the Crisil report, engineering, procurement and construction companies engaged in power and other projects in Bangladesh could see execution delays this fiscal as a sizeable portion of their workforce has been recalled to India for almost a month now. With only a gradual ramp-up in workforce expected, revenue booking could be lower this fiscal compared with earlier expectations. Besides, companies supplying electricity could see delayed payment of dues, the report mentioned.

Southern states account for 30.6 pc of India's GDP, Kerala losing share: EAC-PM paper

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 17

A notable development following the economic liberalisation in 1991 is the emergence of southern states, especially Karnataka and Telangana, as economic powerhouses and overall, the southern states together accounted for 30.6 per cent of India's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023-24, said a paper by the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) to the Prime Minister released on Tuesday.

The EAC-PM paper looked at the relative performance of states in terms of their share of the nation-

al economy and their per capita GDP as per cent of the national average since 1960-61. It revealed that before 1991, southern states did not show expectational performance. However, since the economic liberalisation, the southern states have emerged as the leading performers.

"In 2023-24, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu together accounted for approximately 30 per cent of India's GDP," the paper noted.

Karnataka's share in India's GDP was 5.4 per cent in 1960-61, and it remained almost the same

until 1990-91. However, after the policy shift, the state saw rapid growth, with its GDP share rising to 6.2 per cent by 2000-01 and reaching 8.2 per cent by 2023-24. This growth has positioned Karnataka with the third-largest share of India's GDP.

Undivided Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) now accounts for 9.7 per cent, an increase of 2.1 percentage points since 1990-91 with most of the increase in share accounted for by Telangana. After bifurcation, the share of Andhra Pradesh has remained broadly flat.

MERCEDES-BENZ TO JAGUAR LAND ROVER, INDIA MANUFACTURING IN TOP GEAR

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, SEP 17

As the market for luxury cars and top-notch electric vehicles (EVs) ramp up in India amid friendly government policies and shifting 'generational mindset', more and more global automakers are lining up to manufacture/assemble vehicles in India.

The German luxury car-maker Mercedes-Benz has

just launched the EQS SUV which is assembled locally in India, which is now the second country to assemble the EQS SUV outside of the US. The made-in-India luxury EV is priced at Rs 1.41 crore.

The auto giant has already been making the EQS sedan in India and has sold around 500 units, as per reports.

Mercedes-Benz is reportedly making an

additional investment of Rs 200 crore in 2024 towards manufacturing operations, new product start-ups and digitisation of manufacturing processes in India.

Santosh Iyer, MD and CEO of Mercedes Benz India, said the localisation of the EQS SUV "manifests our local competencies, creates value for Indian customers and supports the government's vision



of 'Make in India.'

In May this year, Tata

Motors-owned Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) said it plans to start assembling the flagship Range Rover model, along with Range Rover Sport, in India for the first time, significantly bringing down the prices.

The company's Pune plant currently assembles the Range Rover Velar, Range Rover Evoque, Jaguar F-PACE, and Discovery Sport models. The India-assembled Range

Rovers will be available for delivery by the end of this month while Range Rover Sport will arrive in the market by August.

According to N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons, the local assembly of the flagship models marks an inflection point for the India subsidiary and shows the confidence the company has in the market.

As per industry data,

the sale of luxury cars from brands like Lamborghini, Ferrari, McLaren and Aston Martin are experiencing strong demand in the Indian market. According to a latest wealth report by Knight Frank, India is likely to see more ultra-wealthy individuals, with those possessing a net worth exceeding \$30 million to reach 19,908 by 2028 -- up from 13,263 in 2023.

IND vs BAN: We're focused on winning series, not looking too far ahead, says Rohit Sharma

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, SEP 17

India Test captain Rohit Sharma said his side is focused on winning the two-match Test series against Bangladesh rather than thinking too much about the World Test Championship final, scheduled to be played at Lord's in June, 2025.

The upcoming series between India and Bangladesh is part of the WTC. The hosts sit at the numero uno spot with 68.52 per cent after winning six of the nine games so far. They finished as runners-up in the last two WTC editions after losing to New Zealand and Australia in the finals, respectively. The home series win will further consolidate their top spot ahead of playing eight Tests combined against New Zealand (home) and Australia (away).

On the other hand, Bangladesh are placed fourth

in the table with 45.83 per cent following three wins in six Tests.

"Every game we play is important. No dress rehearsal here (in the context of the Bangladesh series). Every game becomes important because of what is at stake. WTC. The (standings) table is still quite open. And every game is important," Rohit said in the press conference on Tuesday.

"We have to focus on how we can win this series, and this Test. Rather than looking too far ahead," he added.

Wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul made a comeback to the Test setup after injury ruled him out of the England Test series mid-way. Skipper backed Rahul's inclusion and wants him to play at his potential in the red-ball format.

Rahul has a mediocre Test average of 34.08 compared to 49.15 and 37.75 in



ODI and T20I respectively. "Everyone has an up-and-down career. The kind of quality KL Rahul has, everybody knows. The message to him from our side was we want him to play all the games and bring the best out of him," Rohit said.

"He has done well of late, (he) scored hundred against South Africa. Scored a good knock in Hyderabad, but unfortunately got injured. I hope

he continues from where he left in Hyderabad. I don't see any reason why he can't flourish in Test cricket. Opportunities are there. Important for him to understand how he wants to take his career forward," he added.

Commenting on India's busy Test schedule, Rohit reaffirmed their stand to manage the workload of premier pacers including Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj as they

have impressive young talents to fill up for them.

For the first Test against Bangladesh, India have handed a national call-up to pacer Yash Dayal while Akash Deep retained his spot in the Test side.

"You want the best players to play all the games, but that's not possible. You've to see what's best for the team and manage your bowlers accordingly. We'll monitor that for our bowlers. We've managed to do that in the England series. We got rest for Bumrah and Siraj," Rohit said.

"So, we will keep assessing them. You want everyone to play all the games, but it's not in our hands. We saw exciting prospects in Duleep Trophy. I am not too worried about the kind of bowlers waiting in the wings," he added.

The opening batter heaped praise on the young trioka of batters Yashasvi Jaiswal, Sarfaraz

Khan and Dhruv Jurel, who have started their Test careers on high.

"They've everything that's required to be a top player for India in all three forms.

With time, we've to nurture and groom them well. They're very hungry for success and to play for India," Rohit remarked.

"Jaiswal had a great home series when we played last time. Jurel showed what he's capable of as well, with the bat. Getting the tough runs. Sarfaraz as well, being fearless, not being too worried about what happens outside.

You need all sorts of players who are fearless, cautious and responsible as well. We have that mix of everything and it's a good sign," he added.

The first Test between India and Bangladesh will be played at MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai from Thursday.

AGENCIES
LONDON, SEP 17

Arsenal are unperturbed by Manchester City striker Erling Haaland's outburst in the Premier League season ahead of Sunday's clash at Etihad Stadium.

Haaland has started the season on high with nine goals in four matches including two hat-tricks. The Norwegian striker has netted 99 goals from 103 appearances for City across all competitions.

Arsenal midfielder Jorginho expressed confidence in his team to tackle Haaland's threat after starting their campaign with three wins and a draw. The Gunners are behind City in the standings with just two points separating them. The weekend's clash will give them a chance to topple City from the top spot.

"Erling scoring again... it is starting to make us laugh. We look because

we watch all the games and we love the Premier League. We watch (City) as well, which is normal. It doesn't get to our head. We need to focus on us and that is what we are trying to do," Jorginho said.

The midfielder lauded Arsenal's grit against Tottenham Hotspur to secure 1-0 win despite missing out on key players like captain Martin Odegaard and Declan Rice.

"You learn more about each other... everyone wants to improve and wants the best for the team. When you put the team in first place I think just good things can happen. Keep believing in what you are doing. I think we are on the right way," he said.

In the last season, Arsenal, who finished second, registered a 1-0 home win and a goalless draw in an away meeting against title holders City.

Asian Hockey Champions Trophy: Pakistan take bronze medal with 5-2 win over Korea

AGENCIES
MOQI (CHINA), SEP 17

Pakistan ended their campaign at the Hero Asian Champions Trophy with a 5-2 win against Korea, scoring them the bronze medal here at the Moqi Hockey Training Base in the China Daur Ethnic Park on Tuesday.

It was goals by Sufyan Khan (38', 49'), Hannan Shahid (39', 54') and Rooman (45') who scored in Pakistan's victory while Jungjun Lee (16'), Jihun Yang (40') scored for Korea.

After a poor start, Pakistan, who were handed a disappointing loss in the semifinal by hosts China, made great amends to their game to bounce back in the second half of the match to clinch a thriller.

It was Korea who drew the first blood in the 16th

minute when Jungjun Lee made a spectacular tackle to drive past Pakistan's Hannan Shahid and make space in the top of the circle. He simply lofted the ball into the net, past Pakistan's goalie Ishtiaq Abdullah Khan.

However, they came back from the 10-minute half-time break with determination and grit to bounce back. It was Hero of the Match Sufyan Khan who struck a splendid penalty corner in the 38th minute to equalise. Breathing life back into their attack, Hannan Shahid, who has displayed great form in this tournament, set up a stupendous field goal in the following minute. Making a fine dribble into the 15m mark, Hannan set up Salman Razzaq to score but his deflection was slightly off the mark but Hannan

came up with a fine finish to nudge the ball past Korean goalie Jaehan Kim. Though Korea equalised in the 40th minute through Jihun Yang's penalty corner to keep the match in a 2-2 stalemate, it didn't deter Pakistan's spirit. They scored a field goal in the 45th minute through Rooman to regain the lead. Putting the Korean attack under pressure, Pakistan did well to come up with structured man-to-man marking in the final quarter to ensure they stay in lead.

Meanwhile, a brilliantly earned penalty corner in the 49th minute was perfectly executed by Pakistan's ace dragflicker Sufyan, making it his double in the match and taking his personal tally in the tournament to four goals.

Indian men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and former goalkeeper PR Sreejesh have been nominated for the Player of the Year and Goalkeeper of the Year awards, respectively, as the International Hockey Federation announced the list of 30 players shortlisted for the FIH Hockey Stars Awards.

Sreejesh recently called time on a legendary career with a second straight Olympic bronze medal at the Paris Games, where he stood firm in front of the Indian goalpost.

Skipper Harmanpreet, however, was the top scorer in the Paris Olympics with a total of 10 goals, including two crucial goals in the bronze medal match. He also scored two goals against

Sreejesh, Harmanpreet nominated for FIH Hockey Stars Awards

AGENCIES
LAUSANNE, SEP 17

India's first Olympic victory against them in 52 years. The list of nominees was established by an expert panel including players, coaches and officials selected by each of their Continental Federations.

The expert panel consists of Janne Muller-Wieland (Germany) and Simon Mason (England) from Europe, Tahir Zaman (Pakistan) and Deepika

(India) from Asia, Soledad Iparraguirre (Argentina) and Craig Parnham (USA) from Pan America, Sarah Bennett (Zimbabwe) and Ahmed Youssef (Egypt) from Africa and Amber Church (New Zealand) and Adam Webster (Australia) from Oceania.

The expert panel was provided access to match data from all international matches held in 2024, including Test Matches, the FIH Hockey



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The expert panel was provided access to match data from all international matches held in 2024, including Test Matches, the FIH Hockey

Pro League, FIH Hockey Nations Cups, FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers and the Olympic Games Paris 2024 before establishing the final list of nominees, as per FIH release.

The voting process is open until October 11. National Associations - represented by their respective national teams' captains and coaches -, fans, players, coaches, officials and media can register their vote.

The votes of the expert panel count for 40% of the overall result. Those from National Associations count for a further 20%. The fans and other players (20%) as well as the media (20%) will make up the remaining 40%.

FIH Player of the Year Award - Nominees:

Women: Gu Bingfeng (CHN), Yibbi Jansen (NED), Nike Lorenz (GER), Stephanie Vanden Borre (BEL),

Xan de Waard (NED) Men: Thierry Brinkman (NED), Joep de Mol (NED), Hannes Müller (GER), Harmanpreet Singh (IND), Zach Wallace (ENG)

FIH Goalkeeper of the Year Award - Nominees:

Women: Cristina Cosentino (ARG), Aisling D'Hooghe (BEL), Nathalie Kubalski (GER), Anne Veenendaal (NED), Ye Jiao (CHN)

Men: Pirmin Blaak (NED), Luis Calzado (ESP), Jean-Paul Danneberg (GER), Tomas Santiago (ARG), PR Sreejesh (IND)

FIH Rising Star of the Year Award - Nominees

Women: Claire Colwill (AUS), Zoe Diaz (ARG), Tan Jinzhuang (CHN), Emily White (BEL), Linnea Weidemann (GER)

Men: Bautista Capurro (ARG), Bruno Font (ESP), Sufyan Khan (PAK), Michel Struthoff (GER), Arno Van Dessel (BEL)

AIFF announces 23-member squad for Men's SAFF U17 Championship

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

India U17 men's team head coach Ishfaq Ahmed on Tuesday named a 23-member squad for the SAFF U17 Championship Bhutan 2024 to be played at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu.

India will face Bangladesh (September 20) and Maldives (Sep 24) in Group A of the SAFF U17 Championship.

The semifinals will be played on September 28, followed by the final on September 30. All matches will be played at the Changlimithang Stadium in Thimphu.

The tournament will be streamed live on the Sportzworkz YouTube Channel.

The India U17 men's team is coming off two



friendly against Indonesia which it played in preparation for the upcoming SAFF Championship. After losing the first game 1-3, India fought back and recorded a 1-0 victory in the second following which the head coach hailed the team's performances and claimed the

signs were promising. "Overall, I am happy. We had a tactical discussion after dissecting the first match, about the things that went wrong, and what we could've done better. We matched them physically. Still, there were a few mistakes but that's normal if we play

against such quality teams. All in all, it was a much-improved performance in the second game. We ended with a fantastic away win. Beating Indonesia at their home is not easy," said Ahmed following the victory.

The Blue Colts will depart for Thimphu from

their base camp in Srinagar on Wednesday. India's 23-member squad for SAFF U17 Championship:

Goalkeepers: Aheibam Suraj Singh, Nandan Roy, Rohit.

Defenders: Brahmacharimayum Sumit Sharma, Chingtham Renin Singh, Jodric Abranches, Karish Soram, Mohammed Kaif, Usham Thougamba Singh, Yaipharemba Chingakham.

Midfielders: Abdul Salha Sheergojri, Ahongshangbam Samson, Banlamkumar Rynjah, Kh Azlaan Khan, Levis Zangminlun, Mahmud Sami, Manbhakumar Malngiang, Md Arbash, Ngamgouhou Mate, Ningthoukhongjam Rishi Singh, Vishal Yadav.

Forwards: Bharat Larenjam, Hemneichung Lunkim.

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 16

The football world is waiting for the ten-week independent commission to make a ruling on Manchester City's 115 charges, a case that began on Monday, but Real Madrid will be 'closely monitoring the situation' as they hope to bring in Rodri to their team next summer.

According to a report by the Independent, Real Madrid are very interested in securing the Spaniard's signature but believe that a move might not be possible due to the high value that City hold at their mid-field general.

Another problem is that Rodri's wages at his current club may be too much for Madrid to bear, howev-

Real Madrid 'closely monitoring' Manchester City's case with Rodri signing in sight: Report

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 16

er, they will be monitoring the case closely because, if found guilty of the charges, Manchester City faces the possibility of being relegated or even expelled from the Premier League. If such a situation arises, the existing player may want to leave the club.

The alleged rule violations include failing to submit accurate financial data for nine respective seasons, withholding information about former manager Roberto

Mancini's compensation during his four seasons at the team from 2009 to 2013, not cooperating with an investigation and handing over documents as required over five seasons from 2018-19 to 2022-23, and failing to disclose compensation information of former players, including Yaya Toure over the course of six seasons, from 2010 to 2015-16.

Madrid is planning to spend big next summer as the team has built a strong financial position in the market. Los Blancos have put heavy faith in youth players over the course of the past five seasons and have not spent huge amounts on stars but the team is now in a position to strengthen an already top-quality team.



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Arjun Tendulkar's 9-fer powers Goa to victory

UNI
BENGALURU, SEP 17

Arjun Tendulkar, a name that has long carried the weight of cricketing expectations, stepped into the spotlight once again with a remarkable performance for Goa. As the son of the legendary Sachin Tendulkar, Arjun has lived much of his cricketing career under immense scrutiny. However, his

recent display in the Dr (Capt) K Thimmappiah Memorial Tournament, also known as the KSCA Invitational, proved that his growing prowess on the field is beginning to carve its own path in the world of cricket.

Arjun's sensational nine-wicket match haul was critical in securing Goa's commanding victory over Karnataka by an innings and 189 runs in this prestigious

pre-season competition for state teams. While his surname may draw attention, it is his increasingly consistent performances that are starting to stand out in India's domestic cricket scene.

Arjun's bowling was nothing short of devastating in the match against Karnataka's KSCA XI, an inexperienced side composed primarily of Under-19 and Under-23 players.

Football Australia appoint Tom Sermanni as interim coach for women's team

AGENCIES
SYDNEY, SEP 17

Football Australia announced the appointment of Tom Sermanni as interim head coach of the national women's team.

Sermanni will begin his duties immediately, working closely with the existing coaching staff and Football Australia's high-performance team to maintain the Matildas' preparation for upcoming fixtures. He will temporarily take a leave of absence from his role as Head of Women's Football at Western Sydney Wanderers FC to fully dedicate his time to the interim head coach position with the CommBank Matildas.

The 70-year-old Sermanni is the longest serving coach of the women's team having previously coached the team from

1994-1997 and 2005-2012, leading them to quarterfinals in the 2007 and 2011 edition of the FIFA Women's World Cup and the 2010 AFC Women's Asian Cup title.

Football Australia CEO James Johnson said, "We are delighted to welcome Tom (Sermanni) back to the CommBank Matildas program. "With over three decades of football experience in Australia and inter-

nationally, his extensive knowledge of the global women's football landscape, the local Australian game and his previous success with the team make him the ideal candidate to guide the CommBank Matildas through this transitional period."

Sermanni's appointment comes as the Matildas prepare for two matches in their upcoming October FIFA Women's

International Window including against Olympic bronze medallists Germany. During this period, his focus will be on getting the squad ready for these fixtures while ensuring their cohesion and competitiveness are maintained.

Upon accepting the interim position, Sermanni stated, "It's an honour to return to the CommBank Matildas, even in this interim capacity.

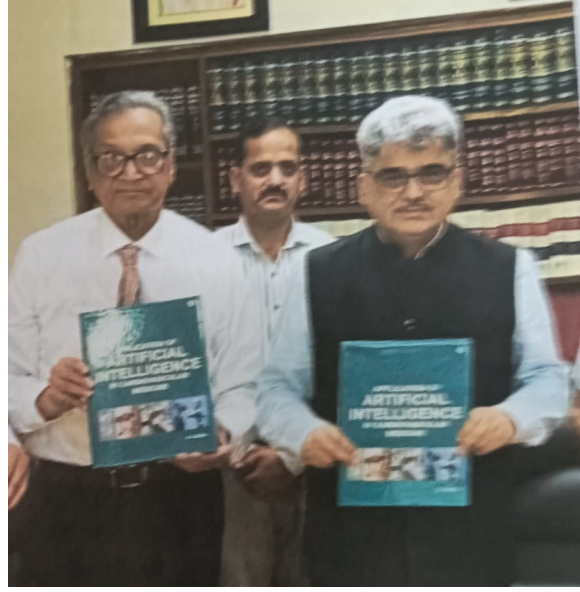
"Application of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare" Book launched by Chief Secretary Atul Dulloo

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPT 18

The book on Application of Artificial intelligence in health care "was released by Honourable ,the chief secretary of JK Govt.(UT) shri Atul Dulloo jee in the presence of learned audience, Shri SP verma, (Padam Shri)Gandhi Global family (J&K),shri ID Soni (Educationist),shri Hemraj phonsa (Engineer) Dr Satpal verma (Chief Animal husbandary officer) Vikram (Engineer) and others

This book "Application of Artificial intelligence"has been written and produced by an eminent and highly educated cardiologist Dr. KCVerma of J&K with over 30yrs of experience in practice of medicine and cardiology. He had so far

published more than 15 books in the field of cardiovascular medicine. His 40 research papers published in reputed Indian medical journals have been very well recognized by the international scientific societies. Appreciating his scientific contributions ,he was awarded fellowship of tropical medicine and hygiene(London) ,Best citizen and Glory of India. and recently PadamBhushan Dr.Nirmala Deshpande Award 2024 for his best professional and academic performance in medical science. Recently introduced Artificial intelligence technology which has been shown to revolutionize the scientific technologies in almost all the scientific fields including



cardiovascular sciences such as Artificial Intelligence in cardiovascular imaging for risk stratification in coronary artery disease (CAD), current and future applications of Arti-

ficial Intelligence in CAD, Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence to improve Peripheral artery disease management, Artificial Intelligence and automation in valvular

heart diseases, Artificial Intelligence in the diagnosis and management of cardiac arrhythmias and Ocular images-based Artificial Intelligence in diagnosis of systemic diseases Including Cardiovascular Ailments. This fully color illustrated educational book comprising of 45 chapters on different aspects of human life. It has been published by NOTION PRESS ,India based in chenni (Bengaluru). with branches in malaysia and Singapore. This manuscript fully illustrated impregnated with Lucid figs and line diagrams, containing 31 chapters spread over more than 400 fully colored and glossy pages This book is further supported with texts of 23 reviews of eminent scientists of the world. whose names

have been mentioned in the appendix of this book •This book has been foreworded by Prof.(Dr) Sanjay Tyagi. Formely Director professor and Head of cardiology Department GB Pant institute of postgraduate medical Education and Research &Maulana Azad medical college University of Delhi. At present Director and chairman of cardiac sciences ,Apollo,hospital and research center ,New Delhi

•This book has been dedicated to Dr Dabbala Rajagopal "Raj" Reddy (born 13 June 1937) is an Indian-born American computer scientist and a winner of the Turing Award. He is one of the early pioneers of artificial intelligence and has served on the faculty of Stanford and Carnegie Mellon for

over 50 years. He was the founding director of the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. He is the first person of Asian origin to receive the Turing Award, in 1994, known as the Nobel Prize of Computer Science, for his work in the field of artificial intelligence. Reddy is the University Professor of Computer Science and Robotics and Moza Bint Nasser Chair at the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University. From 1960, he worked for IBM in Australia. He was an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Stanford University from 1966 to 1969. He joined the Carnegie Mellon faculty as an associate professor of Computer Science in 1969. He became a full professor in 1973 and a university professor, in 1984.

General observer oversees Home voting at Thakrakote block

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI, SEPTEMBER 17

General Observer for AC-58 Reasi and AC-58 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Avi Prasad on Tuesday undertook an official visit to the remote Tehsil and aspirational block of Thakarakote. The significant visit focused on reviewing and assessing the electoral preparedness in anticipation of the forthcoming assembly elections in District Reasi.

Prasad personally oversaw home voting in Thakarakote Panchayat, ensuring that the process adhered to established electoral norms and procedures. The inspection included visits to key polling stations, such as Polling Station No. 92 at Thanpal, Polling Station No. 23 at Panchayat Ghar Thakarakote, and Polling Station No. 26 at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Panassa.

General observer visits Mahore, Dharmari to oversee staff training, review preparations for home voting

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI, SEPTEMBER 17

General Observer for AC-56 Gulabgarh (ST) Saroj Kumar Sethi today visited Mahore to review home voting and training program in Dharmari Area of Reasi. The visit further focused on ensuring adherence to Election Commission of India guidelines in the course of the electoral process.

During the visit, the Observer emphasised on reviewing current training protocols and observing the home voting process to ensure compliance with established standards and best practices. He stressed on identifying the areas for improvement, enhancing voter experience, and reinforcing the effectiveness of election training programs. In addition



to overseeing election preparations, the General Observer also visited some remote areas, located in the Mahore, as part of his efforts to ensure a thorough review of the elec-

toral arrangements in the region. General Observer highlighted that every vote counts and every voter is well-informed is crucial to a transparent and effective electoral system.

CEO reviews election preparedness in Kishtwar

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 17

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) J&K, Pandurang K Pole today visited district Kishtwar to take a final review of the election preparedness in the district in view of the upcoming polling scheduled tomorrow in three assembly constituencies of the district in the phase first of General Election to Legislative Assembly 2024.

District Election Officer (DEO) Kishtwar, Rajesh Kumar Shavan accompanied the CEO at various locations in far off areas like Machail, Marwah and Warwan areas and apprised the CEO about the preparedness finalized in the district to ensure that the elections are conducted with success in the district. The CEO inspected various polling stations and assessed the facilities available there. He also interacted with polling parties/CAPF personnel to see their HR Issues.



The CEO was satisfied with the preparedness made in these polling stations to ensure the transparent, free, fair and smooth conduct of the elections.

In an effort to boost last 48 hour SVEEP campaign in the district, CEO participated in the plantation drive under "Green Election" initiatives launched in the UT of J&K, wherein he emphasized to plant 10-15 plants at every polling stations and 100-200

plants in the premises of the unique polling station to promote the environmental sustainability among the electorates and compensate the environmental burden created in the election process.

The CEO also spoke to the election staff, BLOs, ASHA Workers and appealed them to enhance the electoral participation by extending all facilities to the voters in polling stations.

Polling Parties dispatched for polling stations across Shopian



JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 17

The District Election Officer (DEO) Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar along with Senior Superintendent of Police, Anayati Ali today flagged-off the polling parties for polling stations established across the district.

General Observer for 36- Zainapora AC, Jeevan Babu K and General Observer for 37- Shopian AC, Roohi Khan observed the arrangements and interacted with polling parties to re-orient them on poll duties.

The Observers briefed the polling parties about the important assignments of pre-poll and poll day and were asked to perform the duties with integrity and fairness, upholding the ECI mandates and guidelines. Addressing the polling parties, DEO emphasized the crucial role of each member in ensuring a smooth and transparent electoral process.

Polling parties for all 251 polling stations have been dispatched, with 122 parties assigned to

Shopian AC and 129 to Zainapora AC along with additional reserve parties.

The dispatch was meticulously organized, with eight counters established for each Constituency, manned with trained staff tasked with handing over poll materials and EVMs to the polling teams.

The logistics for the dispatch were handled with precision, including extensive arrangements for transport, security, public address systems, welfare and security measures.

Nodal officers were instrumental in managing the dispatch of EVMs and materials, while enhanced transport arrangements were overseen by the Nodal Officer for Transport, and security measures were reinforced by the SSP Shopian. This comprehensive approach ensures that all polling parties are well-prepared and supported as they head to their respective stations, reflecting the administration's commitment to a well-organized and efficient election process.

General observer takes final review of election preparations in 49-AC Kishtwar, 50-AC Nagseni

JI NEWS SERVICE
KISHTWAR, SEPTEMBER 17

General Observer for Assembly Constituency 49-Kishtwar & Assembly Constituency 50-Paddar Nagseni Ramamoorthy Selvam finalised the preparedness for the smooth conduct of Assembly Elections in the twin ACs here at a meeting attended by Zonal & Sectoral Magistrates, besides Police Officers.

The Polling in the district is going to be held tomorrow on September 18 - the first phase of General Election to Legislative Assembly.

DEO Rajesh Kumar Shavan and SSP Abdul Qayoom, ROs, besides other concerned officers of Civil and police administration were also present on the occasion.

The Observer emphasized the crucial role of the designated magistrates as the vital link between polling parties and the Returning Officer (RO) and DEO.

The Observer outlined their responsibilities, which include overseeing the movement of polling parties from dispatch centres to polling stations, ensuring the safe arrival of polling teams, report-



ing on poll day activities, monitoring mock polls and managing the deployment of reserve EVMs, if needed.

Detailed instructions were given regarding their specific role and responsibilities. Key points covered included poll day protocols, such as mock poll as per guidelines, start of poll and the strict observance of the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines.

The DEO reminded officers to monitor the polling process closely, especially the implementation of multiple checks and balances, such as EVM and VVPAT testing and the reporting of any issues immediately.

Sector Magistrates were tasked with ensuring that no polling party is delayed and that all materials are deposited and accounted for correctly.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Abdul Qayoom besides SSP (Security) Gaurav Sikarwar also addressed the gathering, detailing the deployment of police personnel across zones and sectors. They emphasized the collaboration between civil and police officers to maintain law and order during the elections and underscored the importance of adhering to security protocols to safeguard the electoral process.

DEO, SSP Poonch review election preparations in Surankote and Mendhar

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 17

In preparation for the upcoming Assembly elections, District Election Officer (DEO) Poonch, Vikas Kundal, and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Mumtaz Ahmad conducted detailed inspections of polling stations in the Surankote and Mendhar Assembly constituencies today. The objective was to ensure a smooth and transparent electoral process.

The review focused on three major areas: infrastructure readiness, security arrangements, and the functionality of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs). Both officials emphasized the importance of creating an environment where citizens can vote freely and securely.

"We are committed to ensuring that every voter can participate without any difficulties," said DEO Vikas Kundal, highlighting that all necessary measures are being taken to guarantee an efficient and fair election process. In addition



to inspecting the polling stations, the officials held meetings with senior election officials overseeing the Surankote and Mendhar Assembly constituencies. SSP Mumtaz Ahmad assured that comprehensive security plans are in place. "Our security personnel are fully prepared to maintain peace and ensure that polling stations

remain safe throughout the election," he stated.

The officials also met with election observers to brief them on security measures and other logistical aspects, ensuring coordination among various agencies. The elections for the Poonch, Surankote, and Mendhar Assembly constituencies are scheduled for September 25th.

Kathua Admin clarifies on encroachment concerns over Paddy Procurement Mandi Bajwal

JI NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 17

In response to recent media reports and concerns raised by farmers regarding alleged encroachment on the Paddy Procurement Mandi in Bajwal, the District Administration of Kathua has issued a clarification. A team from the Agriculture Department, led by Chief Agriculture Officer Sanjeev Rai Gupta and Tehsildar Kathua Vikram Kumar visited the site under the direction of Deputy Commissioner Kathua Dr. Rakesh Minhas.

During the visit, the farmers were reassured that the Mandi would not be relocated and instead the administration is soon going to initiate improve-

ment and upgrading of the facility. The upgradation plan would include enhanced facilities and strengthening of the existing structures to better serve the farming community.

The District Administration has emphasized its commitment to supporting the farmers and ensuring their welfare. The public, especially the farmers, were urged to rest assured that no proposal exists to shift the Paddy Procurement Mandi Bajwal, and all efforts are focused on enhancing the infrastructure and services at the current location.

Kathua admin reaffirms its dedication to providing continued support and improved facilities for the farming community.