

**DENGUE WARNING SIGNS**

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Severe and continuous headache
- Joint and muscle pain
- Present vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Severe pain in eyes, ears, nose or throat
- Redness

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

# JINDRAH IMAGES

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## Boycott a history, Ballot future: J&K's 1st Phase Elections woos voters in bulk

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 18

Jammu and Kashmir wednesday witnessed a historic event as the ballot attracted voters in bulk including those who had never voted so far.

Today was the first election in a decade and first after revocation of Article 370 and first also in J&K as a UT. Nevertheless, there was huge participation in all 24 Assembly segments

Once marred by boycotts and the looming threat of terrorism, Kashmir was seen celebrating



its democratic rights with a renewed sense of hope after 10 years. As per the news agency, voting took place for 24 assembly seats across

seven districts in Jammu and Kashmir, including areas that were once reluctant to participate in the electoral process.

This time, however, districts such as Shopian, Tral, and Pulwama—often in the shadow of insurgency—saw an enthusiastic voter turnout. What makes this election particularly notable is not just the ten-year gap, but also the transformation of the electoral landscape post-Article 370- change that has injected fresh optimism into the region.

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## 59 per cent voting recorded in phase-first: J&K CEO Pole



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 18

Jammu and Kashmir's Chief Electoral Officer P K Pole Wednesday said that the first phase of Assembly elections recorded 59 per cent polling with

a possibility of fractional increase to the figure.

"Total poll percentage for the first phase of Assembly polls was 59 per cent with a fractional increase very much possible. This time, we

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## LG Congratulates Voters on record turnout in Phase-I

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 18

The Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha has extended hearty congratulations to the voters of first phase of Assembly Election for the record turnout. In a social media post, the Lieutenant Governor said, their enthusiastic participation is a testament to the strength of Indian democracy and people's faith in

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## PM Modi arriving today to address mega poll rally in Srinagar; venue decked up

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive in Srinagar today Thursday) to address a mega election rally at the decked up Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium, Sonwar, Srinagar.

Roads leading to the rally venue have also been decorated with lights and BJP flags. For the smooth rally, all security arrangements have been put in place. "We have made elaborate security arrangements for the VVIP visit," Inspector General of



Police (IGP) Kashmir V K Birdhi said. "Elections and VVIP visits are connected. All measures are in place."

This will be the first election rally by the PM in Srinagar as part of

the election campaign. On September 14, he addressed a mega rally in Doda district of Jammu. BJP has already mobilized its workers across Kashmir to participate in the rally.

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## Make frequent inspections to ensure protection of consumer interests: Atal Dooloo

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, SEP 18

Chief Secretary, Atal Dooloo, today chaired the first meeting of the UT level Committee for Standardization & Quality Control of the local chapter of Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) tasked to maintain the highest standards for goods and services that are critical for establishing a robust "Quality Ecosystem" throughout the country.

The Dy Director General, BIS (North); Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce; Commissioner Secretary,



FCS&CA; Deputy Commissioner, Food Safety Organization; GM, NHPC; Representatives from R&B, SIDCO, SICOP, Kashmir/Jammu Chamber of Commerce & Industries, Consumer Protection (an NGO) and other concerned officers attended the meeting.

While speaking in this meeting, the Chief Secre-

tary impressed upon the concerned organisation to make frequent inspections of all business establishments dealing with such products and services coming under the ambit of the law of Standardization.

He stressed upon the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Department (FCS&CA) to work for establishment of district

level cells as is the nationwide practice to protect the consumer rights.

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Dooloo also urged them to generate awareness among the masses about the same so that they too are familiar with the national standards recommended by this organisation regarding the goods and services availed by the people.

Dooloo further emphasized upon the importance of ensuring adherence to national standards to boost economic growth, improve public services, and protect consumers here across J&K.

## Govt orders transfer of 2 IAS officers in J&K

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 18

The Jammu and Kashmir administration on Wednesday ordered transfer of two senior IAS officers, with Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary transferred and posted as Administrative Secretary, Planning, Development and Monitoring Department.

According to an order, a copy of which lies with news agency, Dr. Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, Administrative Secretary, Department of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj, is transferred and posted as Administrative Secretary, Planning, Development and Monitoring Department "Mohammad Aijaz, Administrative Secretary, Planning, Development and Monitoring Department, holding additional charge of the posts of Administrative Secretary, Civil Aviation Department and Civil Aviation Commissioner, Public Grievances and Chief Executive Officer, J&K Economic Reconstruction Agency, is transferred and posted as Administrative Secretary, Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj," the order reads.

It added that he may continue to hold the charge of the posts of Administrative Secretary, Civil Aviation Department, Public Grievances, Civil Aviation Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Economic Reconstruction Agency, till further orders.

## ECI establishes 107 Special Polling Stations to attract voters, enhance electoral participation

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, SEP 18

With an aim to attract maximum number of voters and make electoral process pleasant and enriching, Election Commission of India (ECI) had established 107 Special Polling Stations of different categories for voters in seven districts, across 24 Assembly Constituencies which went for polling today in the first phase of General Elections to Legislative Assembly 2024.

These innovative polling stations namely women managed, youth managed, PwD managed, Green Polling Stations, Model Polling Stations and Unique Polling Stations were designed to cater specifically to women, youth, Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), promote eco-friendly practices, ensure inclusive and accessible elections and to cater voters of different kinds in the region. The polling stations were established under

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## LG won't have powers to frame laws on his own after October 8: Claims Omar in Ganderbal

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, SEP 18

Stating that J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha won't have powers to frame laws on his own after October 8, National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah Wednesday said there will be an elected government and the Assembly will be more powerful than LG.

Talking to reporters in Ganderbal, Omar, as per news agency, said there is no law that can prevent anyone from contesting polls. "Jamaat-e-Islami candidates are fighting



polls as independents as their party is banned. We should have complained against them as they are cutting votes on ground, but it is sad to see LG sahib

claiming that they should not have been allowed to contest elections," Omar said in reply to a query. He said that after

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## No large queues at Mehbooba Mufti's home turf

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 18

While the first phase of assembly polls in Jammu & Kashmir began this morning, large queues were "missing" at the home polling station of former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti in the Srigufwara-Bijbehara segment.

According to the news agency, large queues were witnessed at almost all polling stations across



the 24 assembly constituencies since morning.

However, the situation was quite different at Mehbooba Mufti's

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## BJP-PDP workers clash in Kishtwar over's alleged checking of voter ID's of 'Bhurka clad' women

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, SEP 18

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and People Democratic Party (PDP) candidates in Kishtwar today barbed accused on each other after, Shagun Parihar, the BJP candidate from Kishtwar assembly segment was allegedly surfaced in controversy for allegedly asking for voter ID cards at a polling booth.

As per detail available with the news agency, a brief clash surfaced at Bagwan Mohalla polling station over checking voter ID cards of Burka

Clad women by a BJP candidate. The BJP candidate was hacked by workers from the PDP along with its contesting Candidate from Kishtwar Firdous Tak.

Security forces were kept on standby near the polling station as police and election authorities worked to defuse the situation. Additional paramilitary forces attempted to remove the PDP workers and their candidate from the scene.

Voting at the Bagwan Mohalla polling station was temporarily halted amid the escalating tensions between BJP and

PDP supporters. However, the situation was brought under control after the Deputy Commissioner of Kishtwar, Rajesh Shavan, arrived at the site, and polling resumed.

"The (PDP) candidate came here and said this girl is playing the victim card and trying to get sympathy. I felt bad. I said why would I play the victim card and said you have made me a victim. They tried to push me. PDP and National Conference workers entered the place where voting was taking place..", Parihar said.

In response to the incident, the BJP announced

plans to file a complaint with the Election Commission of India (ECI) regarding the heckling of their candidate. BJP General Secretary Sunil Sharma confirmed that the party's Jammu and Kashmir unit would be writing to the ECI soon, seeking action against PDP candidate Firdous Tak for the incident involving Shagun Parihar.

Meanwhile, PDP candidate Firdous Tak accused BJP for playing victim card and said that he registered separate FIRs on cops and candidate over assault and

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## BJP suspends Pawan Khajuria, two other rebel leaders

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, SEP 18

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday expelled three senior leaders for contesting assembly elections against the party's official candidates in Jammu and Kashmir, a party spokesman said.

As per news agency, J&K BJP vice president Pawan Khajuria along with senior party leaders, Balwan Singh and Narinder Singh Bhau, were suspended from the membership of the party on the recommendation of a disciplinary committee headed by Sunil Sethi, the spokesman said.



Khajuria and Singh had entered the election fray as an independent and a candidate of National Panthers Party (NPP), respectively from Udhampur East assembly segment where BJP has fielded former MLA R S Pathania.

Bhau is fighting as an independent from Chhamb constituency of Jammu against party candidate and former MLA Rajeev Kumar. Senior Congress

leader and former deputy chief minister Tara Chand is also trying his luck from the seat.

The BJP spokesman said party's working president Sat Paul Sharma ordered the suspension of the three leaders from the membership of the party for an "act of indiscipline" in contesting elections against the official candidates of the party.

The BJP has faced rebellion in nearly a dozen assembly constituencies with several of its prominent leaders announcing resignation and some jumping into the fray as independents to fight the elections.



## Cricket match promotes Voter Awareness under SVEEP initiative at Ganderbal

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 18

A thrilling cricket match between District Administration XI and District Youth Services and Sports (YSS) XI was organized under the banner of the SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) initiative at the Government College of Physical Education, Gadoora, Ganderbal.

The event was hosted by the Department of Youth Services and Sports, District Ganderbal, in collaboration with the District Election Office Ganderbal to spread awareness about the importance of electoral participation.

District Administration XI, after winning the toss, opted to bat first in the 18-over game. The team managed to put up a score of 80 runs, with Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Mohammad Altaf, delivering a standout performance, scoring 25 runs off just 10 balls. In response,



YSS Ganderbal XI chased down the target comfortably in 10 overs, winning the match by 5 wickets.

The match was graced by the District Election Officer Ganderbal, Shyambir, who acknowledged the efforts of the organizers and praised the teams for their participation in such a meaningful event.

The initiative was aimed at promoting voter education and encouraging citizens to participate actively in the democratic process, especially with the upcom-

ing Assembly Elections. During the presentation ceremony, Deputy District Election Officer Ganderbal, Abid Iqbal Malik, highlighted the significance of the SVEEP initiative, which focuses on increasing voter awareness and participation by engaging the public through various activities and events.

He urged the local population to exercise their right to vote in the forthcoming elections. Assistant Commissioner Revenue also spoke about

the importance of voter participation and commended the organizers for the successful execution of the event.

The SVEEP initiative, a flagship program of the Election Commission of India, seeks to engage citizens, particularly first-time voters, through sports, cultural events, and community outreach programs to ensure that every eligible voter understands the importance of their vote in shaping the democratic process.

## SVEEP cultural extravaganza inspires voter participation at Joggers Park Poonch

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 18

In a vibrant celebration of democracy, the District Election Office Poonch organized a cultural event, here today under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative. The cultural extravaganza was held on sprawling Joggers Park, alongside the scenic Pulast River. The event aimed to promote voter awareness and participation, skillfully blending art with civic responsibility. The audience, comprising evening walkers and locals, enjoyed an array of cultural dances, patriotic musical performances and thought-provoking street plays (Nukkad Natak), all centered around encouraging voter turnout for the upcoming elections.

Chief Education Officer Poonch, Lal Hussain (Nodal Officer for SVEEP) was the Chief Guest. He highlighted the significance of such initiatives in promoting active electoral



participation. "The SVEEP program seeks to educate and motivate citizens to exercise their right to vote. Through this cultural event, we aim to engage the public creatively and encourage them to cast their votes on September 25th," he stated.

Lal Hussain added, "This event reflects our commitment to an inclusive democracy, ensuring every eligible voter understands their role in the electoral process." Pamphlets reminding citizens of the

election date were distributed, with many first-time voters in attendance.

The event attracted hundreds of locals, who declared it a resounding success and a meaningful reminder that "Every Vote Matters." Senior officials from Election Authorities of Poonch, including Anjum SAhaheen, Principals HSS Girls, ZEO Kanuyian Anwar Hussain, ZEPO Poonch Vijay Kumar and other senior district administration officers attended the event.

## General Observer reviews Election Preparations for Channapora-AC

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 18

In a crucial step towards ensuring the smooth conduct of the upcoming J&K Legislative Assembly elections, Rajan Vishal, the General Observer for the 23-Channapora Assembly Constituency (AC), conducted a detailed review meeting, here.

The meeting was held at the office of the Returning Officer, 23-Channapora Assembly Constituency, and was attended by key officials including Suhail-Ul-Islam, Returning Officer; Kifayat Ali, Assistant Returning Officer, and all Assembly Constituency-level nodal officers.

The primary objective of the meeting was to assess and streamline various aspects of election preparedness to ensure a fair, transparent and efficient electoral process.

The discussion encompassed several critical areas including Electoral Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) Distribution, Accessible Voting Facilities (AMF), Booth Level Awareness Groups, Special Polling Stations, Appointment of Micro Observers, Flying Squads (FSTs) and Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs), Training of Polling Staff, Model Code of Conduct (MCC) Implementation and Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) Commissioning.

The General Observer stressed the importance of thorough preparation and inter-agency coordination to address any potential challenges proactively. He underscored the commitment to delivering a free and fair election, with a focus on voter satisfaction and electoral integrity.

The RO and his team assured that all necessary measures are being implemented diligently and that any issues identified will be promptly addressed.

The review meeting reflected a shared commitment to upholding the democratic process and ensuring a smooth election experience for all voters in the 23-Channapora Assembly Constituency.

## Polling staff imparted training across all 5 Assembly Constituencies of District Rajouri

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 18

In preparation for the upcoming General Elections to the Legislative Assembly, UT of J&K, comprehensive training programs were successfully conducted for polling staff across all five Assembly Constituencies (ACs) of Rajouri district, today.

The training sessions were held at different venues, including Government Degree College (GDC) Kalakote for AC-83 Kalakote-Sunderbani, GDC Nowshera for AC-84 Nowshera, Post Graduate College Rajouri for AC-85 Rajouri (ST), Dak Bungalow Koteranka for AC-86 Budhal (ST) and PG College Rajouri for AC-87 Thanamandi (ST).

Held under the supervision of District Election Officer, Abhishek Sharma, the training programs focused on equipping polling personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge for the efficient management of the elec-



tion process.

The training sessions were addressed by senior officials, including the General Observers and Returning Officers (ROs) of the respective constituencies. They interacted with the trainees to ensure that all polling personnel understood their roles and responsibilities thoroughly.

At AC-84 Nowshera, training was facilitated by the District Election Officer Rajouri, General Observer, and RO Nowshera, while the General Observer and RO Kala-

kote addressed trainees at GDC Kalakote for AC-83 Kalakote-Sunderbani. Similarly, at PG College Rajouri, the General Observer and RO Rajouri conducted the training for AC-85 Rajouri (ST). The training for AC-86 Budhal (ST) was held at Dak Bungalow Koteranka, and for AC-87 Thanamandi (ST) at PG College Rajouri, where the General Observer and RO Thanamandi engaged with the polling staff.

The training programs were coordinated by Dr. Naseem Ahmed, Associate Professor and Nodal Offi-

cer for Election Training, and facilitated by dedicated teams of District Level Master Trainers (DLMTs) and Assembly Level Master Trainers (ALMTs). The teams provided detailed presentations and hands-on practice sessions, particularly focused on the operation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs).

Polling officers, designated as PO, P1, P2 and P3 were briefed on the election process and their critical roles in ensuring the smooth conduct of elections. They were also trained on maintaining the secrecy, transparency, and integrity of the electoral process, which is essential to uphold public trust.

Training Teams and Participation included DLMTs/ALMTs of all five assembly constituencies

The comprehensive training programs ensure that all personnel are well-prepared to conduct the elections smoothly and efficiently.

## EVM demonstration, voter awareness program held at GHSS Mahanpur under SVEEP

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 18

In anticipation of the upcoming Assembly elections in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) Demonstration and Voter Awareness Program was organized today at Government Higher Secondary School, Mahanpur.

The program, part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, was conducted under the supervision of Returning Officer Basohli, Anil Kumar Thakur.

The event featured a variety of activities aimed at fostering electoral awareness, including a first-hand experience with the EVM, a Nukkad Natak, speeches on voter education by students of Classes II and 12, and a cultural program centered on the theme Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy. The highlight of the program was the hands-on experience provided to first-



time voters, future voters, community members, as well as ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, and Booth Level Officers from nearby polling stations. Attendees learned about the basic functioning of the EVM, including its key components—the Control Unit (CU), VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail), and Ballot Unit (BU). They were also informed about the various forms of identification that can be used on Election Day and the roles of different polling officers responsible for conducting the election.

The program also facilitated interactions with AC Nodal Officer SVEEP 65-Basohli, Dr. Roshan Lal, and the School Principal Tilak Raj, who engaged with the audience to further promote voter education. Zonal Magistrate Rohit Billowari, Sector Officer Sanjeev Singh Andotra, and BLO Supervisor Rajesh Dogra were present, adding their insights to the program. The event concluded with a joint pledge-taking ceremony, where all attendees committed to participating in the electoral process with responsibility and dedication.

## General Observer for Ganderbal holds meeting with political parties

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 18

As Ganderbal gears up for the Assembly Elections 2024, the General Observer for District Ganderbal, R. Lakshmanan today convened a meeting with contesting candidates and election agents at the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat.

This meeting, organized in strict accordance with the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines, marked a crucial stage in the election process, focusing on maintaining the integrity and neutrality of the democratic exercise.

The District Election Officer, Shyambir, along with key district officials including the Additional District Development Commissioner, Mushtaq Ahmad Simnani; ASP Ganderbal, Aijaz Ahmad; DyDEO, Abid Iqbal Malik; DTO, Dr. Sareer Ahmad; CEO and other key officials were present to ensure the successful coordination



and communication of the election norms.

The General Observer emphasized the critical importance of following the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and ECI guidelines at every step of the election process. He made it clear that adherence to the code was not merely a formality but a commitment to the democratic principles that the election process upholds.

Every political party present was urged to maintain transparency and ethical conduct during their campaigns.

On the occasion, political parties also raised their concerns and gained clarity on the electoral guide-

lines. The General Observer ensured that the election process would remain neutral, urging party representatives to report any violations or discrepancies they may encounter.

The meeting concluded with a reiteration of the ECI's commitment to ensuring free and fair elections, providing all political parties with the reassurance that their participation would be treated with impartiality.

As the election date draws nearer, Ganderbal stands poised for a smooth, transparent electoral process, where every vote counts, and every voice matters.

## General, Police Observers review implementation of MCC in Bandipora

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 18

Nelson Eyon Bage, the General Observer for the 14-Sonawari and 15-Bandipora Assembly Constituencies, along with Police Observer, Adarsh Sidhu on Wednesday convened a meeting with candidates and representatives from various political parties at Mini Secretariat Bandipora to discuss the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India in preparation for the upcoming Assembly Elections 2024. The meeting was aimed to ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed about the MCC and its significance in maintaining a fair electoral process. Nodal Officer MCC briefed the chair regarding the measures implemented for the effective enforcement of the MCC in the district.

He outlined the various procedures and



guidelines established by the Election Commission of India (ECI) concerning campaigning, permissions, and other election related activities aimed to ensure that all participants were well-informed and prepared to adhere to the regulations during the

electoral process.

On the occasion Observers emphasized the importance of adherence to the MCC to foster a transparent and equitable electoral environment besides encouraging all political parties to collaborate and uphold the

integrity of the electoral process.

Among others, Nodal Officer MCC Zaffar Husson Shawal, Returning Officer for 15-Bandipora Shabir Ahmad Wani, along with other officials involved in the election process were present on the occasion.

## GCW Parade hosts awareness event to mark World Ozone Day

J1 NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 18

World Ozone day was celebrated today at Govt. College for Women, Parade by the Department of Environmental Science in collaboration with Science Club.

Principal Dr. Ravender Kumar Tickoo graced the occasion with his presence. Dr. Harmanmeet Kour HOD Department of Environmental Science in her welcome address stressed on the need to promote green measures in our institutions so that we can contribute in Ozone layer healing. Dr. Anuradha from Pollution Control Committee, J&K was the resource person who made a thoughtful presentation regarding different measures which each one of us can take up to ensure protection of the protective ozone shield surrounding planet Earth. She emphasized on the importance of planting trees, conserving energy and e-waste management.



### Scrutiny of Election expenditure by Contesting Candidates conducted at Rajouri

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 18

The second round of Scrutiny of Election spending by the Contesting candidates for the 85-Rajouri, 86-Budhal and 87-Thana-mandi Assembly Constituencies was today conducted by respective Expenditure Observers here at separate meetings held in Dak Bungalow Rajouri.

Expenditure Observer for Rajouri, Nowshera and Kalakote Sanjay Kumar conducted the second inspection of the contesting candidates for 85-Rajouri. The scrutiny of account records of AC-83 Nowshera and AC 84 Kalakote was held the other day. The inspection aimed to scrutinize the financial records and expenditure details of the candidates contesting for the Assembly Elections



2024.

Kumar reviewed the financial documentation provided by the candidates to verify adherence to the expenditure limits set by the Election Commission. The scrutiny also focused on ensuring the accuracy and transparency of the records submitted by the candidates.

Meanwhile, Expenditure Observer for Budhal and Thanamandi Sid-

harth Kumar carried out the second review of the records of contesting candidates for the respective ACs. The Expenditure Observer examined the financial documents submitted by the candidates to ensure compliance with the expenditure limits set by the Election Commission. The focus was on verifying the accuracy and transparency of the records.

### Home Voting begins across 3 Assembly Constituencies of Poonch

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 18

Home voting for the Assembly elections commenced today in all three assembly constituencies of Poonch district amid stringent security measures. Polling parties, accompanied by substantial security personnel, began visiting the homes of elderly and disabled voters, marking a significant step towards inclusive electoral participation.

The process, continuing until September 20, 2024, involves 426 staff members, including polling personnel, micro-observers, and reserves. They cover 176 clusters across Surankote, Haveli, and Mendhar constituencies.

The district identified 2,106 eligible home voters: 625 in Surankote, 717 in Haveli, and 764 in Mendhar, comprising individuals aged 85 and above and persons with disabilities. Security forces ensure safety for polling staff and voters. Each polling team is accompanied by armed personnel, with additional patrols in sensitive areas.

District Election Officer (DEO) Vikas Kundal emphasized the district's commitment to inclusivity and security: "We aim for 100% voter participation from home voters, ensuring every eligible individual can vote safely and securely."

Shivram, 98, from Mangnar village, shared: "I had almost lost hope of

voting. But seeing polling staff at my home, I felt on top of the world!" He applauded the Election Commission of India's efforts.

Sakina Bi, a disabled resident of Kanuyian village, expressed satisfaction after casting her vote: "I never thought I'd participate due to physical limitations. But today, I feel empowered. The polling staff was helpful; the process was smooth and dignified."

Home voting occurs under election observers' and senior officials' watchful eyes. Micro-observers ensure transparency and integrity. The administration maintains high security and electoral integrity standards.

### General, Expenditure Observers for AC-Handwara hold meeting with different stakeholders



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 18

General Observer, Pankaj Kumar Pandey and Expenditure observer, Sunil Agawane today chaired a meeting with representatives of contesting candidates of 5-Handwara and 6-Langate Assembly constituencies at Meeting hall of Dak Bungalow Handwara.

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 the Returning Officer AC 5-Handwara, Aziz Ahmad Rather, Returning Officer 6-Langate, Dr. Mudasir and Nodal Officer 5-Handwara, Syed

Basharat Rasool. On the occasion, the General Observer emphasized the concerned for 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.

Expenditure observer also emphasized and highlighted the rules and regulations of expenditure procedure by the candidates in the elections and to maintain the records in accordance with the guidelines of ECI.

Earlier, the General Observer and Expenditure Observer chaired a separate meeting of Nodal Officer MCMC, Nodal Officer MCC, Nodal Officer Expenditure during which a threadbare discussion was held and various measures were reviewed.

### Poll Day: AMFs at Polling stations of Shopian kept in place for inclusive and participatory elections

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 18

The Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs) set up by District Administration Shopian at all polling stations across the district ensured the voting process smooth and accessible for all sections of society to facilitate inclusive and participatory voting during the poll day, today.

Special attention was given to PwD and elderly voters. Polling stations had ramps set up and wheelchairs were provided ensuring that specially-abled individuals could cast their votes without any hindrance.

Queue management and the oversight of AMF facilities were diligently handled by Help Desk staff including BLOs, ASHAs, AWWs, Panchayat Secretaries, and GRS and other frontline staff

They were instrumental in assisting voters, especially specially-abled and old, managing queues, and ensuring that all necessary facilities, such as water, sanitation, and clean toilets, were maintained throughout the



polling process.

These dedicated teams also played a key role in the boarding and lodging of polling parties and addressing the welfare needs of polling personnel.

The effective management of queues and facilities aimed to enhance voter comfort and streamline the voting process, particularly for the elderly and specially-abled voters for realising the goal of broad and inclusive participation.

Additionally, special

sanitation drives along with Plantation drives were conducted at all Polling stations, exhibiting the district's commitment to hygiene & environmental sustainability.

10 Special and unique polling stations were also set up, 5 in each Constituency which were managed by PwD, women, youth etc. These extensive arrangements underscore the District Administration's commitment to making elections in Shopian inclusive, safe, and accessible for everyone.

### Voter Awareness Programme held at GDC Dudu Basantgarh

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 18

A captivating Awareness programme under SVEEP was organised today at Government Degree College Dudu Basantgarh, AC 62-Ramnagar, under the guidance of District Election Officer Saloni Rai and supervision of Returning Officer Ramnagar, Rafiq Ahmad Jaral.

The event saw the active participation of around 200 people from different sections of the society including young voters. The event was further enriched by motivational speeches delivered by Rakesh Kumar, Nodal Officer SVEEP, AC 62-Ramnagar, Subash Brahmanu, Dogri Artist and SVEEP Icon and Arvind Brahmanu.

They captivated the new voters through engaging cultural performances,



powerful speeches- delivering the message on the importance of exercising their right to vote.

In his address, Rakesh Kumar, Nodal Officer SVEEP, laid emphasis on the importance of voting and urged upon students to spread the message of ethical voting in the society.

The event culminated in front of the college gate with the voters holding

banners and chanting Slogans for stronger democracy.

Similar event was also organised at Government Middle School Gandh Dogri where cultural performances, skits, speeches highlighted the significance of making informed voting decisions. Both the events were organized by the SVEEP team Ramnagar.

### General Observer AC Basohli briefs contesting candidates, Political representatives about ECI guidelines



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 18

General Observer for 65-Basohli AC, Sunil Kumar Yadav today convened a meeting with contesting candidates and representatives of various political parties here at DIET Basohli.

In presence of Returning Officer AC-65 Basohli, Anil Kumar Thakur, Zonal Officer Bharat Gupta, the General Observer explained crucial procedures regarding the electoral process to the representatives. He urged them to cooperate in ensuring a transparent, fair, and

peaceful election.

The Observer also discussed the Election Commission guidelines and explained the Worry List process, instructing all political parties to submit their lists to the Returning Officer for further action.

He further informed that voter slips will be provided to all eligible voters and each voter must bring a valid identification document to the polling station.

Additionally, the Observer shared detailed information about alternative identification documents that can be used on Election Day.

### GDC Ramgarh hosts interactive cum awareness session

**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 18

Government Degree College, Ramgarh organized an interactive cum awareness session on the theme "Changing the narrative on Suicide" to commemorate World Suicide Prevention Day. The event aimed to educate and empower students and faculty about the critical issues surrounding mental health and suicide prevention. The programme was held under the leadership of Prof. (Dr.) Geetanjali Andotra, Principal of the college. She welcomed all attendees and emphasized the importance of open conversations about mental health issues.

The resource person for the session, Dr. Shabila Wani, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at GDC Samba, delivered an informative lecture addressing the various factors that can lead to suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

### SVEEP: Bike Rally held for enhancing voter mobilization at Ganderbal



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
GANDERBAL, SEPTEMBER 18

In an effort to increase voter awareness and boost mobilisation ahead of the upcoming polling day, the District Election Office Ganderbal organized a grand bike rally today under the SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) initiative.

The rally was flagged-off by the District Election Officer, Shyambir, in the presence of the District Nodal Officer for SVEEP at Degree College Ganderbal.

The event saw enthusiastic participation from

local residents and staff members, all carrying banners and chanting slogans aimed at raising awareness about voter participation. The participants highlighted the importance of casting votes and registering for the upcoming election.

Throughout the rally, announcements were made stressing the significance of voting and encouraging citizens to exercise their democratic rights on polling day.

This initiative is part of the district's ongoing efforts to ensure higher voter turnout and foster a stronger democratic process.

### Green SVEEP: Plantation Drive held at GHS Bhallar



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 18

As part of the ongoing SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) campaign, a plantation drive themed Green SVEEP was conducted today at Government High School Bhallar, Kathua. The initiative, aimed at raising awareness about electoral participation while promoting environmental sustainability, saw the planting of twenty tree saplings on the school premises.

The event was held under the guidance of Returning Officer - AC 66-Jasrota, Akhil Sadotra (ACD), along with Principal Government Girls Higher Secondary School

Kathua, Mangal Singh who also serves as the Nodal Officer for AC 66-Jasrota.

This unique initiative blends environmental stewardship with voter education, encouraging citizens to take responsibility for both their environment and their democratic duties. The plantation drive not only contributed to the beautification of the school but also symbolized the growth and nurturing of a vibrant democracy through active electoral participation. The event was well-attended by local students, teachers, and community members, all of whom showed great enthusiasm in participating in the dual-purpose campaign.

### Observers conduct thorough inspections to ensure smooth voting process in Ramban



**JI NEWS SERVICE**  
RAMBAN, SEPTEMBER 18

On polling day, General Observer Himanshu Kumar Rai, Police Observer Kunal Aggarwal and Expenditure Observer Sulekh Chand Jain carried out extensive inspections across various polling stations in Ramban district. Their mission was to ensure a seamless and transparent voting process in the Assembly Constituencies-55-Banihal and 54-Ramban.

The Observers meticulously monitored voting procedures and evaluated the Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) provided under the supervision of District Election Officer

(DEO), Baseer-Ul-Haq Choudhary. Special attention was given to enhancing voter accessibility, particularly for elderly voters and Persons with Disabilities (PwD), ensuring they faced no barriers during the voting process.

Key polling stations inspected during their visit included Pink Booth at Maitra, Government Model Higher Secondary School (GMHHS) Ramban, GHS Kanga, PS Sharor, Middle School Dharmkund, GUPS Saikund and GMS Sharakundi Dhalwa.

The Observers assessed the overall arrangements and reviewed security measures to ensure a peaceful and orderly election environment.



## CUJ hosts Menstrual Health & Hygiene Management Workshop

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 18

Central University of Jammu hosted a significant workshop on Menstrual Health & Hygiene Management for its Female Safai Mitra and Female security staff as a part of as part of the Swachhata Hi Seva 2024 (SHS 2024), Swabhav Swachhata, Sanskaar Swachhata campaign. This initiative, aimed at fostering awareness around menstrual hygiene, was designed to encourage participants to overcome societal taboos and myths surrounding menstruation while promoting healthy practices.

Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof. Sanjeev Jain applauded the initiative, highlighting its critical role and promoting health awareness. "Edu-



ating our community about menstrual hygiene is essential for fostering a culture of understanding and support. This program not only informs but also helps in breaking down societal taboos," he stated. Prof. Yashwant Singh, Registrar, also conveyed his heartfelt

congratulations.

The workshop was coordinated by Dr. Nancy Mengi, Head of Social Work Department, Dr. Neeta Rani (Department of National Security Studies), Prof. Richa Kothari (Nodal Officer, SHS 2024, Department of Environmental Sciences)

and Mr. Fateh Lal Bheel (Department of Social Work), with active contributions from student coordinators Ms. Shivani Bhagat and Ms. Kiran Jain of the Department of Social Work. Ms. Kiran Jain initiated the session with an educational introduction on Physiology of

Menstruation, Pain Management methods, menstrual hygiene, advice on use medication in delay in Periods, participants to avoid reliance on medication, suggesting using hot water bags and practicing yoga, healthier food as compared to medication.

A central topic was the correct use and disposal of menstrual Absorbents/Products. Prof. Richa Kothari and Dr. Neeta Rani provided practical advice on the use of sanitary napkins and reusable cloth pads, advocating for thorough cleaning and proper disposal methods to ensure safe menstrual health and hygiene management. Ms. Kiran Jain and Shivani Bhagat also shared their personal experiences to highlight the importance of educating both boys and girls about menstrua-

tion. This open dialogue is essential to breaking the stigma and encouraging support. The workshop debunked many menstrual myths, such as restrictions on entering kitchens or prayer rooms, and emphasized that menstruation is a natural process. The coordinators emphasized the importance of staying active during menstruation, as it can reduce discomfort. The program concluded with a call to action for attendees to apply the lessons learned and share them within their communities to further promote menstrual hygiene management. The event was well-received, marking a positive step toward a healthier and more informed approach to menstrual health at Central University of Jammu.

## GMC Jammu's Dr. Sanjay Kumar Bhasin elected unopposed to Association of Surgeons of India's Governing Council

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 18

It is matter of honour & pride for GMC Jammu that senior Professor of Surgery in GMC Jammu Dr. Sanjay Kumar Bhasin have been elected as Governing Council Member of the Association of Surgeons of India (ASI) unopposed. Association of Surgeons of India is first largest surgical academic body of Asia-Pacific & second largest of the world with more than 40000 surgeons as its members from across India and world. Seventy members Governing Council is the highest decision making body of Surgeons with representatives from all the states of the country.

Dr. Bhasin joined ASI as Full Life Member in 2002; is Founder Member of the J&K State Chapter of the ASI (JAKASI) and has served as active member of JAKASI at various positions like, Executive Member, Joint Secretary, Honorary Secretary (2017-2020) and Chairman/President JAKASI (2022-2024). He remained active organizer of various surgical events of the association at National & state level since last more than a decade including JAKSI-CON-2014, 2015, 2018, and 2024. In addition he successfully organized prestigious Regional Refresher Course for surgeons at GMC Jammu in August 2023 that is National



event of the ASI. He has been bestowed upon with many prestigious orations by surgical bodies including Dr. P.K.Sen Sarma (Endowment Lecture) during ASICON-2020 and Chairman's Orations in the near past. He has published more than three dozen papers in National & International journals and have presented more than hundred Guest Lectures during State and National Conferences. Dr. Bhasin is an outstanding academician, surgeons and administrator with vast teaching and training experience. His join the biggest association as Governing Council member shall not only boost morale of JK Surgeons but shall give an opportunity to him to put up various issues of surgical fraternity of J&K at national level and shall help bridging gap between Surgeons of J&K and other parts of the country.

## Central Sanskrit University, Jammu kick starts Hindi Fortnight Program

J NEWS SERVICE  
JAMMU, SEPT 18

Central Sanskrit University, Shri Ranbir Campus, Kot Balwal, Jammu kick started Annual Hindi Fortnight program which will be celebrated till 30 September by the Raj Bhasha Prakosht of the University. On this occasion, renowned Dogri and Hindi writer Dr. Nirmal Vinod was present as the chief guest. In his address he compared the modern Sanskrit of today's India to Hindi. He further elaborated that all the values of Sanskrit are in Hindi

which has reached the common people today and stressed upon the need to adopt Hindi in daily practice. Saraswat guest of the program, Prof. Satish Kumar Kapoor said in his address that Hindi has an integral relationship with Sanskrit. Languages have never remain in any bondage, they are always integrated in feelings. On this occasion, in his presidential address, Highlighting the importance of Hindi at the national and international level, Prof. Shridhar Mishra, Director of the Campus appealed to all the members of the



university to do more and more official work work in Hindi.

Hindi Palhwara is cel-

ebrated every year in third and fourth week of the month of September programs and this year

also it will be held in the campus from 14th to 30th September. Students and office employees of the

campus will also participate in these programs. All competitions will start at 3 pm every day. In this sequence, there will be Hindi essay writing, Hindi comment drafting, Hindi poetry recitation and impromptu speech. Dr. Rishiraj, coordinator of the Official Language Cell, welcomed the guests in the program. Formal vote of thanks was given by Hindi teacher Dr. Rekha Mishra. The program was conducted by Dr. Pawan Kumar Singh. All teaching, non-teaching staff and students of the campus were present on this occasion.

## FROM THE FRONT PAGE...

### Boycott a history...

The first phase of the election held on Tuesday concluded with an overall polling turnout of 58.85%. A comparative analysis of voter turnout reveals the changing political dynamics of Jammu and Kashmir. For instance, Anantnag saw a rise from 39.7% in 2014 to 54.17% in 2024, while districts like Pulwama, often hit hardest by conflict, experienced an increase from 38.1% in 2014 to 43.87% this year.

Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha expressed his gratitude to voters for participating in what he called a "historic voter turnout." He highlighted the significance of the elections as a testament to the strength of Indian democracy, noting the region's transformation from fear and conflict to one where voters proudly exercise their democratic rights. In his tweet, Sinha said, "Record polling in the peaceful, free & fair election attests to the strength of Indian democracy & people's faith in democratic values." He also praised the efforts of security forces, the Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP), and election officials, while commending first-time voters, particularly women, for coming out in large numbers.

For this election, a total of 219 candidates competed across 16 assembly constituencies in Kashmir division and eight constituencies in Jammu division. Over 23.27 lakh voters were eligible to cast their votes, with 3,276 polling stations set up to ensure a smooth voting process. The districts where voting took place included Anantnag, Pulwama, Shopian, and Kulgam in the Kashmir division, and Doda, Ramban, and Kishtwar in the Jammu division.

Demographics played a crucial role in this election, with a significant proportion of young voters between the ages of 18 to 29 years, including 1.23 lakh first-time voters. Notably, the election also saw the inclusion of 60 third-gender voters and 28,309 persons with disabilities (PWD), indicating the region's efforts toward an inclusive democracy.

In terms of voter turnout by district, Anantnag, a critical region in Kashmir, registered 54.17% turnout, while Doda in Jammu, known for its high voter engagement, saw 63.33%. Despite a marginal dip in areas like Kishtwar and Ramban, with 77.23% and 67.71% turnout respectively, the overall sentiment remained one of participation and engagement. Other key districts like Kulgam and Shopian also witnessed respectable turnouts of 59.62% and 54.64%.

Polling was held in assembly constituencies such as Pampore, Tral, Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam, and several others across both divisions. Each of these constituencies saw candidates from various political backgrounds compete for seats, reflecting the diversity of political thought and the multi-faceted nature of Jammu and Kashmir's electoral landscape.

For many, this election was not just about voting, but about reclaiming a sense of agency and participation in the democratic process. For years, the region struggled with the fear of terrorism and the weight of political instability, but today's election signals a shift towards normalcy and a brighter, more democratic future.

With approximately 59% turnout in the first phase, the region has made a powerful statement about its faith in democracy. Voters from all walks of life, including the elderly and first-time voters, stood in long queues, undeterred by past fears or political uncertainties. The

image of these voters, from districts like Doda and Anantnag, casting their ballots serves as a symbolic rebuke to the adversaries of peace and democracy, and a firm reaffirmation of Jammu and Kashmir's place within the democratic framework of India.

### 59 per cent voting...

worked out district wise figures as earlier one Assembly constituency was spread in two districts. Post delimitation exercise no Assembly constituency is spread in two districts," Pole said.

He said the polling percentage has come from the 3276 polling booths and 23 special polling booths—19 in Jammu and four in Delhi for the migrant voters.

He said the Election department of J&K has worked out percentage figures from districts. "I am glad to share that the South Kashmir districts have witnessed huge voter turnout. The areas in South Kashmir would otherwise witness a low percentage of even single digits. Since Lok Sabha polls were held in April-May, the voting percentage from South Kashmir districts increased significantly," the J&K CEO said. "I am sure that in the next two phases, the voting percentage will be much higher than today."

Sharing the district-wise percentage, Pole said Anantnag district recorded 54.17 per cent voting, Kulgam 61.7, Pulwama 46.03 and Shopian 53.64. "In Jammu, Doda district recorded 69.33 per cent voting, Kishtwar 77.23 and Ramban 67.71 per cent voting," he said.

He said in Kashmir, Kulgam recorded the highest voter turn and in Jammu, Kishtwar district topped the list. "Today's voting percentage is higher than previous elections held in 2009, 2014 and 2024 (Lok Sabha polls) and 2008, 2014, 2024 (Assembly polls)," Pole said.

Doling out the Assembly constituency-wise poll percentage figures, Pole said In Kashmir, Shopian recorded 54.72 per cent voting, Zainapora 52.64 per cent, D.H.Pora 68 per cent, Devsar 57.33 per cent, Kulgam 62.70 per cent, Anantnag 41.58 per cent, Anantnag West 45.93 per cent, Dooru 57.90 per cent, Kokernag 58 per cent, Pahalgam 67.86 per cent, Shangus-Anantnag East 52.94 per cent, Pampore 44.78 per cent, Pulwama 50.42 per cent Rajpora 48.07 per cent and Tral 43.21 per cent.

"In Jammu, Bhaderwah recorded 65.27 per cent voting, Doda 70.21 per cent, Doda West 74.14 per cent, Inderwal 80.06 per cent, Kishtwar 75.04 and Padder Nagseni 76.80 percentage," Pole said

To a query whether any untoward incident was reported anywhere in J&K, Pole said no incident was reported to an extent where re-poll should be done. "Minor incidents were reported in Kishtwar where the Deputy Commissioner took the cognisance and the issue was resolved," he said. "Central forces and police acted swiftly as well."

He credited the highest voter turnout to the peaceful environment, vigorous campaigning by candidates and massive awareness campaign launched by the Election department of J&K. "Election department held a series of awareness campaigns across J&K which will continue for the phase-two and phase-three as well," the CEO J&K said.

### LG Congratulates...

democratic values.

The Lieutenant Governor posted on X:

"Congratulations J&K for a historic voter turnout! I would like to thank all voters, who exercised their franchise in 1st Phase. Record polling in the peaceful, free & fair election attests to the strength of Indian democracy & people's faith in democratic values.

I must congratulate all my sisters & first-time voters for participating in large numbers to celebrate festival of democracy. Heartfelt gratitude to outstanding security forces, JKP & Election Officials. Approx 59% polling in first phase shows Jamhooriyat is flourishing in J&K. Long queues of voters in Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban, Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag demolished the motivated propaganda of the adversaries. People have also rebuffed the agenda of divisive elements and reaffirmed their faith in democracy."

### PM Modi arriving...

game changer, rather a milestone event for the people of J&K." Chugh said that the main venue is decked up and Srinagar has been decorated to welcome PM Modi.

"PM Modi has worked hard for the welfare of J&K. Be it road infrastructure, employment, rail infrastructure, water, electricity and LPG Gas. Now, every elderly woman in the house will get Rs 18000," he said. Chugh said that he has chaired a meeting of BJP workers and people in large numbers are all set to come and listen to PM Modi's speech. "PM Modi has a great vision and mission for J&K. Today, it is the direct outcome of his efforts that the polling booths that would boycott in the past are witnessing serpentine queues. This shows how people are expressing their faith in democracy," Chugh said.

He said after 1987 poll rigging, people had lost faith in the ballot. "After much hard work by PM Modi, the faith has returned and people are choosing ballot over bullet," he said. "The enthusiasm we saw today among the voters is because of the hard work Modiji did for J&K since 2014. The credit for this huge transition goes to none other than PM Modi," said Chugh.

### Make frequent inspections...

During the meeting, discussions focused on strengthening the implementation of standards across various sectors in Jammu and Kashmir to promote safety, quality, and consumer protection. The committee reviewed ongoing initiatives and identified new opportunities for the integration of Indian Standards in government policies, infrastructure, and industries within the Union Territory.

Deputy Director General (North), BIS, Sneha Lata presented an overview of BIS activities and key agenda points.

She provided key insights into BIS's role in supporting the state's efforts and reiterated BIS's commitment to facilitating capacity-building initiatives, especially in sectors critical to the UT's consumer rights protection.

The State Level Committee for Standardization plays a pivotal role in promoting and implementing standardization across the UT by coordinating with various stakeholders, ensuring the holistic growth of industries and sectors besides ensuring quality control of critical goods & services across the country.

### ECI establishes...

specific themes in all seven districts of Anantnag Doda, Kishtwar, Kulgam, Pulwama, Ramban and Shopian.

The newly established polling stations aim to revolutionize the electoral process by ensuring accessibility and representation for all segments of society. With a special focus on women, youth, and PWD, these stations have been equipped with amenities tailored to meet their unique needs, fostering an environment for active participation in the democratic process.

Furthermore, the ECI's commitment towards environmental sustainability is showcased through the implementation of green practices at these polling stations, meticulously designed to minimize environmental impact and promote a greener future.

Speaking on this unique initiative, Chief Electoral Officer, J&K, Pandurang K Pole, said that establishment of these unique polling stations underscores our unwavering dedication towards fostering inclusivity and sustainability in the electoral process. He added that the ECI believes that every citizen should have equal access to exercise their democratic right, and these polling stations represent a significant step towards achieving that goal—(KNO)

### LG won't have powers...

October 8, LG won't be having powers to frame laws on his own as a new Assembly, which will be more powerful than him, will be in place.

About Er Rashid claiming that he would support like-minded people, Omar said North Kashmir Member Parliament in an interview to ABP channel has admitted that he will support BJP if the party needs MLAs to form the government. "Er Rashid has claimed that his doors are open for BJP. Now people have to decide and vote cautiously," Omar said. "For Er Rashid BJP seems to be like minded as well. I have failed to understand his politics so far."

Earlier, addressing a gathering at Ganderbal, Omar urged the voters to stay cautious and ensure forces trying to divide the NC vote are kept at bay. He also lashed out at PDP stating the PDP is yet to tell people for what it got vote in 2014 and what it did later. "I believe, if tomorrow BJP would need PDP's support, this party won't shy away from sitting in the lap of saffron party again," Omar said.

### No large queues...

home polling station, where no such queues were seen until 11:00 am.

As per official details, by 10:30 am, a total of 77 votes had been cast out of 362 registered voters, which included 171 male and 191 female voters.

Voters were seen arriving one by one to cast their ballots.

### BJP-PDP workers...

Kishtwar - the victim card. With regard to the incident have filed complaints against SP Iftikar for assault and PSO of a BJP leader for attempt to murder. A separate complaint has been filed against the BJP candidate as well," Firdous Tak in post on X said.



## Hindi fortnight inaugurated at Jammu Central University of Jammu

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, SEPT 18

A grand inauguration ceremony for Hindi Fortnight was organized under the joint aegis of the Hindi Cell and the Department of Hindi and other Indian Languages at Central University of Jammu. The event was presided over by the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, CUJ Prof. Sanjeev Jain. The chief guest for the occasion was Padma Shri Prof. Harmohinder Singh Bedi, alongside Prof. Yashwant Singh, Registrar Central University of Jammu, Prof. Vandana Sharma Dean of the Faculty of Languages, Prof. Bharat Bhushan Head of the Hindi and other Indian Languages Department, and Assistant Director of the Hindi Cell, Dr. Priyanjan.

The program commenced with a Saraswati Vandana performed by research scholars, followed by the lighting of



the lamp and a grand welcome for the dignitaries on stage.

In his address, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sanjeev Jain extended his best wishes for Hindi Fortnight to all students and staff, stating that the development of Hindi cannot be achieved merely by celebrating Hindi Day or Fortnight; rather, it must be embraced with sincerity and willingness. He shared his experience from his visit to Japan, where information is always presented in the Japanese language, highlighting their love for their language. He emphasized

that we too must show loyalty and love for our Indian languages. He expressed happiness that despite being in the 'G' region like Jammu, 75% of the university's work is conducted in Hindi, and he aims to reach 100% soon. He suggested organizing regular training programs in Hindi for all university students and staff and also advocated for the promotion of the local language, Dogri.

Chief Guest Padma Shri Prof. Harmohinder Singh Bedi remarked that the entire world is becoming aware of Hindi today.

Hindi is the largest language in the Asian continent and embodies Indian culture and thought. He emphasized the growing recognition of Hindi as a global language, stressing that it is our moral responsibility as Indians to understand the importance of Hindi, as India cannot be fully prosperous without it. He noted that our new education policy has been prepared with this in mind, and Hindi is currently exemplary for everyone. Prof. Yashwant Singh, Registrar, CUJ presented an account of the works being carried out

in Hindi at the university and credited the achievements to Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sanjeev Jain. Prof. Vandana Sharma stated in her speech that Hindi is a language that unites the world, and we must willingly accept it. Department Head Prof. Bharat Bhushan introduced and welcomed all the guests, while Assistant Director of the Hindi Cell, Dr. Priyanjan, expressed gratitude. The entire program was conducted by Dr. Vandana Sharma, Assistant Professor in Hindi.

During the event, Dr. Vandana Verma, Principal of GDC Vijaypur, Dr. Shalu Samy, Principal of GDC Bishnah, and Dr. Sujata Salathia, Principal of GDC Ghagwal, were honored with mementos. The Hindi journal of Central University of Jammu, "Uttar Vahini," was also launched during the program. The inauguration ceremony concluded with the national anthem.

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## SVEEP: Special Interactive Session for BLOs, Anganwadi Workers & Supervisors held at Sumbal



**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 18

SVEEP Cell Bandipora on Wednesday organised a special interactive session at Dak Bungalow, Sumbal, for Booth Level Officers (BLOs), Anganwadi workers, and supervisors of Assembly Constituency, 14-Sonawari under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative.

The session focused on enhancing voter turnout and addressing challenges faced by poll-day workers.

The event was presided over by Nodal Officer ManPower and Training, Dr. G.M. Pujoo besides Dr. Aashiq, Nodal Officer SVEEP for 14-Sonawari, and Coordinator SVEEP were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Pujoo highlighted the importance of voter participation. He said increasing voter turnout is a vital step in strengthening the founda-

tion of our democracy besides emphasising that each vote matters, and it is crucial to make every citizen aware of their right and responsibility.

Addressing the participants, Dr. Aashiq, highlighted the role of BLOs, AASHA workers, and other staff on poll day and said their role is instrumental in ensuring the smooth conduct of elections.

Coordinator SVEEP urged the Booth Level Awareness Groups (BAGs) to take proactive steps in educating the masses.

He stressed BAGs to double their efforts in spreading awareness regarding the importance of voting. The session served as an important platform for discussing and addressing election-related challenges, besides also laid emphasis on ensuring the smooth execution of the electoral process and increasing voter engagement in the upcoming elections.

## KU celebrates as 14 professors recognised among world's top scientists

**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SRINAGAR, SEP 18

The University of Kashmir (KU) Wednesday announced that fourteen (14) of its professors have been included in the prestigious list of the world's top 2 percent most widely cited scientists for 2024, the data released by the Stanford University reveals.

This remarkable achievement underscores the university's commitment to academic excellence and research impact across various disciplines.

The university community collectively congratulated these exceptional scholars, whose contributions significantly impact their fields and inspire future generations of researchers.

"This achievement not only highlights the individual brilliance of our professors but also reinforces Kashmir University's position as a leading institution in the realm of higher education and research," an official spokesperson said in a statement issued here.

The scientists who have achieved this prestigious recognition include - Prof Farooq A Masoodi (Food Technology); Prof Shakeel A Romshoo (Earth Sciences); Prof Ghulam Jeelani (Earth Sciences); Prof Manzoor A Shah (Botany); Prof Aziz-ul-Azeem (Mathematics); Prof Imtiyaz Ahmad (Zoology); Prof Firdous Ahmad Khan-day (Biotechnology); Dr Manzoor A Mir (Bio-resources); Dr Shabir A Parah (Electronics); Dr Farooq Ahmad Khanday (Electronics); Dr Adil Gani (Food Technology); Dr Idrees Ahmad (Food Technology); Dr Faheem A Sheikh (Nanotechnology) and Dr Mudasir Ahmad (Food Technology). This year's report, which updates a list first released in 2019, includes bibliometric data on over 1,80,000 researchers worldwide, emphasising the outstanding contributions of these scholars in their respective fields.

"The list of top scientists is released every year created by Stanford experts on the basis of standardised citation indicators like information on citations, h-index, co-authorship, and a composite indicator," the statement read. In her congratulatory message, KU Vice Chancellor, Prof Nilofer Khan, acknowledged the relentless pursuit of knowledge and innovation by the distinguished faculty.

"Their contributions not only elevate our university's standing but also enrich the global academic community," she reiterated. The Vice Chancellor's commitment to research and innovation has played a pivotal role in encouraging an environment where scientists thrive and achieve global recognition.

KU Dean Research, Prof M Sultan Bhat, said that varsity's professors have consistently demonstrated excellence in research. "Their inclusion in this prestigious list is a reflection of their hard-work and dedication. We are immensely proud of their achievements," Prof Sultan maintained.

## Dr Subhash Chander advocates for representation of POJK displaced people at Bhour Camp rally



**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
BHOOR CAMP, SEPT 18

Dr. Subhash Chander of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC) and a prominent activist for the rights of the displaced people from Pakistan-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK), delivered an impassioned speech at a massive public rally organized by Congress leader Sh. Amrit Bali in Bhour Camp. The event witnessed the presence of Star Campaigner and Senior Congress leader Sh. Sachin Pilot, who was



there to support the NC-Congress alliance candidate, Sh. Raman Bhalla, for the R.S. Pura South constituency.

Dr. Subhash Chander highlighted the long-standing need for adequate political representation for POJK displaced people in the legislative bodies of Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing the gathering, which included people from diverse sections of society, Dr. Chander said, "The people displaced from POJK have faced decades of challenges, and their issues have

often been neglected. It is essential to ensure their representation in legislative bodies so that their unique needs and concerns can be addressed effectively." Dr. Chander appealed to the people present, especially the POJK displaced community, to vote enthusiastically for the alliance candidate, Sh. Raman Bhalla. He expressed confidence that Sh. Bhalla's victory would further the cause of the marginalized and ensure better representation for all, including the displaced communities.

## General Observer for URI-AC chairs meeting with Political Parties/ Contesting Candidates



**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
BARAMULLA, SEPTEMBER 18

As part of the preparations for the upcoming Assembly Elections in the 09-Uri Assembly Constituency, General Observer, Kuldeep Narayan chaired a meeting at TRC Salamabad Uri today with representatives of political parties and contesting candidates.

Returning Officer 09-Uri Assembly Constituency, Javed Ahmad Rather, Assistant Returning Officer and other election officials were present in the meeting. The meeting was marked by active participation from political parties, who reaffirmed their commitment to conducting peaceful and fair campaigns. The representatives assured the election authorities of their cooperation in following the Election Commission's guidelines and

ensuring that their campaigns uphold the spirit of democratic values.

They also welcomed the transparency and coordination offered by the election officials, fostering a positive environment ahead of the elections.

Later, General Observer, accompanied by Returning Officer visited several polling stations across the 09-Uri Assembly Constituency. The inspection was conducted to ensure that Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF), such as ramps for accessibility, drinking water, proper lighting, and sanitation, were in place at each polling station.

The General Observer expressed satisfaction with the arrangements and directed authorities to address any minor issues to ensure that all polling stations are fully prepared for election day.

## General Observer visits various polling stations of Zainapora AC, oversees polling process



**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 18

General Observer for Zainapora AC, Jeevan Babu K today visited various polling stations to assess and observe polling process in the Zainapora Assembly Constituency.

Throughout the day, the Observer was on field and visited Pahnro, Turkawangam, Molu- Chitragam, Melhora, Wachi, Imamsahib, Dassu, Narwave, Kachdora, Dangam,

Kaprin Sugan and other polling stations.

During the visit, the Observer ensured that the poll process in AC is conducted efficiently in compliance with regulations of ECI with emphasis on smooth and fair conduct of elections.

The Observer oversaw that the polling stations are well equipped to handle the voting process and all assured facilities are accessible to all voters across the AC.

## DEO Udhampur reviews Postal Ballot service for employees deployed for election duty



**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
UDHAMPUR, SEPTEMBER 18

District Election Officer Udhampur Saloni Rai chaired a crucial meeting to take department-wise review of the number of forms received for availing the service of postal ballots by employee voters deployed for election duty. The meeting witnessed the active participation of Returning Officers, the District Level Nodal Officer and

other officers. The meeting focused on ensuring that all eligible out of station voters, including polling personnel, police, and other staff deployed on election duties, are facilitated effectively in exercising their voting rights through postal ballots. The DEO Udhampur instructed all officers to ensure timely processing of the forms and to adhere to the guidelines laid down by the Election Commission of India.

## Expenditure Observer visits Polling Stations across 36 Zainapora and 37 Shopian Assembly segments



**JINNEWS SERVICE**  
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 18

Expenditure Observer, Nelapatla Ashok Babu, today visited various polling stations across 36 Zainapora and 37 Shopian Assembly segments to assess the availability of logistics and facilities for the Voters.

During the visit, the Observer took a comprehensive stock of the overall poll process and the preparedness of polling so as to ensure free

and fair polling across the District.

The polling stations inspected included pink blue, green, model and PWD polling stations. The Expenditure Observer underscored the necessity for polling staff to adhere to established protocols specific to each polling station. Accompanying the Expenditure Observer were Nodal Officer, Muzaffar Ahmad Rather, Headquarters AEO and liaison officers.



## EDITORIAL

## The dilemma of electing candidates with shady pasts

In a democratic society, the principle of universal suffrage embodies the belief that every individual should have the opportunity to participate in the political process. However, the increasing trend of candidates with criminal backgrounds contesting elections raises profound ethical questions about the integrity of our democracy. Recent statistics from the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections reveal a disconcerting reality: over 20% of candidates in Phase-II have declared criminal cases against them, including serious offenses such as attempted murder and crimes against women. This alarming trend cannot be ignored. The participation of candidates with shady pasts undermines the very foundation of democratic governance, which relies on transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. How can we expect individuals with proven criminal records to ensure a secure and fair environment for the electorate? Their presence in the electoral arena not only taints the political discourse but also erodes public trust in the system. The statistics from Jammu and Kashmir are particularly troubling. Out of 238 candidates analyzed, 49 have declared criminal cases, and 37 face serious charges. This includes three candidates with attempts to murder and several linked to crimes against women. Furthermore, the designation of "red alert constituencies"—areas where three or more candidates have criminal cases—sheds light on the prevalence of this issue. Eight out of 26 constituencies falling into this category is a glaring warning sign that demands urgent attention. Moreover, the role of money in politics further complicates the landscape. The fact that 55% of candidates are multi-millionaires, with average assets exceeding Rs 5.80 crores, raises concerns about the influence of wealth on electoral outcomes. When financial power becomes a primary vehicle for political success, it invites corruption and perpetuates inequality. This reality is compounded by the dismal representation of women; only six female candidates emerged from a pool of 238, starkly contradicting political parties' claims of empowering women. The situation begs the question: How can we safeguard the integrity of our democratic process? One critical step is the establishment of stricter eligibility criteria for candidates, including a thorough vetting process that disqualifies those with serious criminal backgrounds from running for office. This would not only discourage individuals with dubious pasts from seeking election but would also reaffirm our commitment to a political system that prioritizes integrity and accountability. Furthermore, there should be comprehensive reforms to address the influence of money in politics. This includes enforcing stricter regulations on campaign financing and enhancing transparency around the financial backgrounds of candidates. The public deserves to know who is funding their representatives and what interests they might serve. While democracy celebrates the right to voice and choice, we must draw the line when it comes to electing individuals with criminal backgrounds. The people of Jammu and Kashmir—and indeed all constituencies across India—deserve representatives who are not only capable but also embody the values of justice and integrity. It is time to initiate a meaningful debate on this pressing issue, ensuring that our democratic institutions remain strong, transparent, and truly representative of the will of the people. Only then can we hope for a future that reflects the aspirations and values of a just society.

## Karnataka's dilemma: Conservation vs development

BKSINGH

The buffer Zones are contemplated to secure the core area of streams, water bodies and biodiversity sites and definitions in each case are supported by respective statutes, government guidelines and Court orders. The flow of water in stormwater drains and urban lakes needs to be regulated at the time of cloud bursts in the city causing flooding. Karnataka State Board for Prevention and Control of Water Pollution was amended in December 2021 to locate red industries beyond 500 meters from the centre of the stream and also at the same distance from the outer boundary of the lake. 75 meter buffer Zone is fixed for orange industries and 30 meters for non-polluting green establishments. Zonal regulation of Bangalore Development Authority also prohibits any development within 30 meters from the outer boundary of the lake and similarly primary, secondary and tertiary drains have a buffer zone of 50, 25 and 15 meters from the centre on either side. Karnataka government is contemplating utilising barren buffer Zone areas for development and this would not go

well with the environment conservation ethos and would have wide ranging repercussions like destroying the natural drainage pattern of the landscape and would bring misery to the people at the time of flash floods. It is recommended to evict encroachments from buffer areas and plant up with native tree species.

To protect the integrity of the forests and to minimize the interference of communities around, rule 41 of Karnataka Forest Rules, 1969 specifies a buffer Zone of 100 meters from the periphery of Reserved Forests. The rule in effect prohibits the grant of any revenue land within 100 meters from the fringes of the forests without express approval from the Forest Department. Legislatures in 1969 knew that if revenue land abetting forests is granted to any individual or used for community projects, the forests would be subjected to anthropogenic pressure and would be encroached and degraded. Today we find that the provision has not been implemented in true spirit and there has been large-scale unauthorised occupation of forest lands after plundering the tree growth. Revenue lands are also lost in the

process. If the provision is not properly regulated, even the deemed forests will be plundered and tree growth and lands will be lost. Forests are the mothers of rivers. The origin and catchments of many rivers are notified by Tiger Reserves (TRs). The original TRs that have been carved out of forests, Sanctuaries and National Parks are its core areas.

By an amendment in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in 2006, it was mandated to include areas surrounding the core, as buffer areas. In respect of several TRs, buffer areas have already been notified, but many more are still pending. The buffer areas of the TRs include forest areas, sometimes even part of the Sanctuaries and National Parks interspersed with villages and agricultural lands. With the apprehension that the area commands a higher degree of protection and it may be difficult to divert any portion of it for public projects later, many state Governments are holding back the notification.

Buffer for Nagarhole TR in Kodagu district of Karnataka has not been notified even after 18 years of amendment. Cores and buffers of TRs comprise luxuriant forests and are an

important source of water, air, carbon sequestration, and controlling disease-spreading viruses necessary for the survival of humans and all other forms of life on earth. Taking a cue from the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Supreme Court of India earlier laid down an 'Eco Sensitive Zone' (ESZ) of 10 km from the periphery of National Parks and Sanctuaries, which are not TRs. It led to a huge public outcry and that resulted in several state Governments moving the Court for modification. Finally, the Court has relented and prescribed a minimum width of 1 km. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has categorized industries into three groups. The group of polluting industries like mining, quarrying, etc has been prohibited in ESZ, while some businesses like resorts, tree felling etc are to be regulated and eco-friendly activities like agriculture and horticulture development are to be permitted. Mining and quarrying lobby located on the fringes of National Parks and Sanctuaries, who aspire to expand the activities, prevail on public representatives and government to lower the width of the strip and postpone ESZ notification. Many ESZ

proposals are caught in the crossfire and are held back either by respective state governments or central governments, making the conservation of biodiversity and protection of soil and water more difficult. This makes National Parks and Sanctuaries insecure. Anshi National Park and Dandeli Sanctuary of Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka have ESZ strip of zero meter width along some portion of the boundary. The origin of river Kali, on which we are dependent for power, is kept out of ESZ and made insecure. To make way for the Saravathi pump storage project near Jog Falls, the width of the ESZ strip around Saravathi Sanctuary is reduced from the proposed 2 km to 1 km. Energy experts have questioned the viability of such projects, where excess power generated during the night time is utilized to pump the same water to the upper reservoir, which in turn can again be utilized for power generation by allowing it to flow down to the lower reservoir under gravity. We have also to sacrifice 200 ha of virgin forests of the Western Ghats in this case. This author had an opportunity to visit a similar project site "Purulia Pump storage project" in West Bengal in 1993 while

working in the Government of India. Against the recommendation, the project was approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

We destroyed 200 ha of wonderful Sal forests and today the project is a failure. Sal forests are the source of artisan wells and we lost them. The tragedy in Wayanad in the wee hours of 30th July 2024 is also attributed to the diversion of wooded areas for tea plantations and mining causing a major shift in land use pattern and exposing the earth rich in clayey soil to absorb water during incessant rains, swell sufficiently to become unstable and prone for landslides. Expert Committees headed by Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan have recommended Western Ghats areas be notified as Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESA) so that environmentally hazardous activities like deforestation and diverting lands for mining, industries etc are prohibited.

Both the states of Karnataka and Kerala have not come on board to notify section of Western Ghats areas in the state as ESA.

(The writer is retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forest Force, Karnataka; views are personal)

## India needs an urgent debate on economic rights

SHASHI SINGH  
RAJESH RANJAN.

While India's economy ranks fifth in the world based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a stark reality lies behind this growth: extreme levels of inequality. While a microscopic minority has burgeoned, the vast majority has been impoverished. On one hand, billionaires display obscene wealth, spending thousands of crores on extravagant weddings. On the other hand, a staggering 24 crore people in the country suffer from undernourishment.

According to the SOFI-2023 report, India ranks 111 in the Global Hunger Index. Another report by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister reveals that more than 90% of the population earns less than Rs 25,000 a month. In terms of job creation, the picture is bleak: the share of educated youths among all unemployed people has increased from 54.2% in 2000 to 65.7% in 2022. What is more worrying is that there has been no

significant growth in real wages in India since 2014, according to the celebrated developmental economist Jean Dreze.

Under such circumstances, it is crucial to institute certain fundamental, universal economic rights to ensure the well-being of people. Indian Marxian economist and political commentator Prabhat Patnaik and developmental economist Jayati Ghosh propose the institution of five such rights that can be safely established: the right to affordable food; the right to employment or a living wage in the absence of employment; the right to free, universal, and quality healthcare; the right to free and quality education; and the right to old-age pension and disability benefits.

In the constitutions of most democratic nations, a set of fundamental political rights is generally recognised and enshrined. However, this is not extended to include a set of fundamental economic rights. If anything, propositions to institute fundamental economic rights are met with

widespread resistance and scepticism from all quarters. It is due to these reservations aired at economic rights that our constitution, too, institutes a set of political and social rights but relegates economic rights to an ancillary position—the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constituent Assembly witnessed an interesting debate on the inclusion of economic rights as justiciable rights. Promata Ranjan Thakur, a prominent member of the Constituent Assembly from Bengal, remarked in the Assembly, "Sir, this is a list of fundamental rights which are only justiciable. I do not understand why economic fundamental rights should not be included in these justiciable rights. Economic rights are essential while framing a country's constitution, and they must also be made justiciable."

There are mainly two kinds of reservations against economic rights—liberal and Marxist. The liberal argument holds that since the fulfilment of economic rights is contingent on the capacity of

the economic system, the State will not be in a position to guarantee economic rights. Prabhat Patnaik and Jayati Ghosh, however, argue that this argument is deeply flawed since it entails privileging a particular economic system—capitalism—over the demands of democracy. For them, true democracy means that citizens should have basic economic security, which the State is obligated to ensure, not as a privilege or charitable handout, but by the sheer virtue of their being citizens. The Marxist perspective, on the other hand, is sceptical of human rights in general. For them, there is a fundamental 'epistemic' contradiction between Marxism and the concept of 'human rights'. The source of this scepticism can be traced to Karl Marx's early essay On the Jewish Question, where he argues that 'the rights of man... are nothing but the rights of egotistic man, of man separated from other men and from the community.' However, Patnaik and Ghosh draw our attention to the fact that Marx him-

self had been of the opinion that there could be no political activity whatsoever without the freedom of expression and association. Thus, the reservations against fundamental economic rights are premised on wrong assumptions. In a democratic setup, it is crucial to emphasise the obligation of the State to provide economic security to the masses. Belgian-born Indian welfare economist, social scientist, and activist, Jean Dreze, says in an interview with journalist Shobha Warrier that 'democracy can't flourish until and unless our economy is democratised'. Wealth tax and inheritance tax can be two ways for the effective realisation of the five rights mentioned above. They are necessary for mobilising financial resources. Prabhat Patnaik argues a mere 2% tax on the wealth of the top 1% could generate a substantial Rs 6.6 lakh crore annually. This wealth tax should be complemented by a comprehensive inheritance tax. Contrary to popular belief, an inheritance tax is entirely consistent with

capitalist ideology, which posits that individuals accumulate wealth due to their exceptional talent and effort. If so, there is no justification for their children to inherit that wealth without displaying similar talents and abilities. Cass R Sunstein, an American scholar, argues in the context of the American Constitution that "Constitutional change is often a product not of constitutional amendment but of interpretation, leading to new understandings of old provisions. Even if the eighteenth century constitution did not contain social and economic rights, the American constitution might well have been interpreted to do so." It is equally true for the Indian Constitution. Being a dynamic document, the Constitution entrusts a responsibility to the State for the well-being of citizens.

(Shashi Singh is an independent researcher, and Rajesh Ranjan is a lawyer and researcher, who writes on public engagement of the constitution, law, and society)

## As India faces an alarming rise in spinal cord injuries, the call for a comprehensive support system has never been more urgent

VIKAS TANDON

As India faces the staggering reality of thousands of fatalities and with 15 lakh people living with spinal cord injuries (SCIs), the call for a robust support system is now more critical than ever. On the occasion of SCI Day (September 5), the healthcare experts and leaders geared up to strongly advocate for a holistic and inclusive solution that includes surgical interventions and comprehensive rehabilitation programs.

According to the WHO reports every year, between 250,000 and 500,000 people suffer a spinal cord injury (SCI). The majority of SCIs are due to preventable causes such as Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs), Falls or Violence. As many as 1.2 lakh

die and another 12 lakhs are seriously injured in road accidents in India.

India has 15 lakh people with SCIs and nearly 20,000 people are added each year. SCI is devastating, with morbidity not only limited to physical aspects but emotional, social, and vocational life areas too. Violence stands as one of the top three causes of SCIs in India, according to a recent study by the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC). Analyzing data from 2012 to 2022, the study revealed that road RTAs accounted for 44% of SCIs, followed closely by falls from heights at 38.3%.

Violent incidents, including stabbings and shootings, also significantly contributed, highlighting the diverse factors leading to these life-altering injuries. The study encom-

passed 1,537 SCI patients admitted between 2012 and 2022, maintaining consistency with earlier findings from 2002 to 2010, which reported RTAs at 45% and falls at 39.64%. In the last 10 years, the Centre treated nearly 200 SCI patients who were victims of violence.

This year's theme of SCI Day is "End Violence - Protect Spinal Cord." It is very crucial to intensify awareness and preventive and curative efforts. Spinal cord injuries are not just physical afflictions; they profoundly alter every aspect of life, including emotional well-being, social interactions, and vocational capabilities. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive, multifaceted approach that includes policy recognition, accessibility, enhanced safety measures,

and robust treatment and rehabilitation services.

Rehabilitation is vital for improving the functional abilities of persons with SCIs. This multifaceted process includes physiotherapy, occupational therapy, peer counselling, plastic surgery, psychological mentorship, nursing care, assistive technology, urological care, and vocational support—often essential following surgical stabilization of the spinal column. Rehabilitation, which is critical in teaching patients to adapt to their new normal post-injury, remains inadequately covered under existing government schemes and insurance plans.

Unfortunately, rehabilitation costs are rarely covered by government schemes like CGHS, DGEHS, and ECHS, nor by many insurance com-

panies, posing significant financial challenges for SCI patients. The Delhi High Court's 2023 directive to include disabled persons in insurance schemes is a significant step toward equality, especially for SCI patients facing ongoing medical expenses.

The 2016 Disabilities Act expanded recognized disabilities but excludes spinal cord injury (SCI) as a separate category. Including SCI would grant patients access to key benefits like reservations and vocational support. Despite progress in accessibility under the Accessible India Campaign, universal access and vocational opportunities for SCI patients remain incomplete. On the treatment and care part, all solutions under one roof are needed with highly experienced, internationally trained, and dedicated spine sur-

geons. The Centre has also established India's first dedicated neuro-urology department to take care of SCI patients who suffer considerably after spine surgery and are neglected. Institutions like ISIC provide essential surgical, rehabilitation, and vocational training, but gaps remain in broader societal support, particularly in accessibility and long-term healthcare affordability.

It should be a mission to create holistic and inclusive solutions for those battling spinal cord injuries, aiming to build a society that truly values diversity and inclusivity. There is a need to provide more facilities and services for all SCI patients, including those who are victims of violence.

(The writer is chief of Spinal Services, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, New Delhi; views are personal)



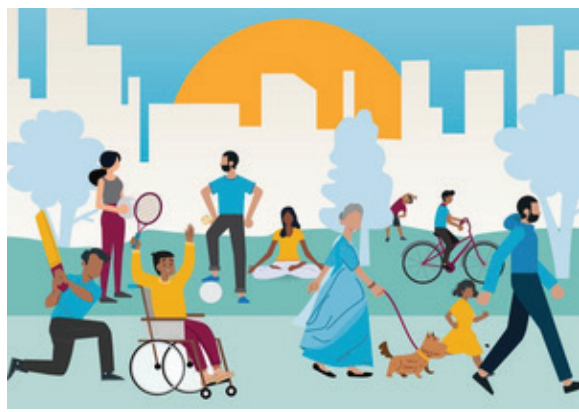
# Promote healthy diets, physical activity to tackle rising obesity, diabetes: WHO

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday called on countries to strengthen policies to promote healthy diets and physical activity to combat the rising levels of overweight, obesity, and non-communicable diseases like diabetes and cancers -- a leading cause of death.

"The burden of overweight, obesity, and associated metabolic disorders has been steadily rising, affecting both children and adults," said Saima Wazed, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia.

She noted that these have spiked cases of "non-communicable diseases



such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer" and these are now "responsible for nearly two-thirds of all deaths in the Region".

Besides adults, about 50 lakh children under the age of five are overweight,

and 373 lakh children between the ages of 5 to 19 are affected in the Region.

The Region is also experiencing a rapid demographic transition with rapid urbanisation, and economic growth further driving unhealthy diets,

reduced physical activity, and more sedentary lifestyles. Nearly 74 per cent of adolescents and 50 per cent of adults are not physically active enough.

Obesity and NCDs are major challenges to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It seeks to reduce premature mortality from NCDs by one-third by 2030 through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

"Healthy diets and regular physical activity are fundamental to achieving this target," said the Regional Director.

However, more than knowledge and behaviour change, "environments

that support and encourage healthier choices" are needed, she noted.

Wazed also called for strong regulatory frameworks and policies to create healthier food environments at home, school, retail, and digital spaces. Fiscal policies should also incentivise healthy diets, she said.

Wazed noted that several countries in the Region have already made significant progress by introducing food labelling regulations, banning trans fats in food, and implementing taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages. But to drive progress towards healthier communities further action is necessary, she said.

# AP doctors perform brain surgery as patient watches Jr. NTR's film

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

In a medical marvel, doctors at a government hospital in Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada performed a complex brain surgery -- awake craniotomy -- while the patient watches a film by Jr. NTR.

Awake Craniotomy is a method where the patient remains conscious during the procedure.

The 55-year-old patient A. Ananthalakshmi underwent surgery for a brain tumour at Kakinada's Government General Hospital (GGH). She had been suffering from symptoms like numbness in her limbs and persistent headaches and was later diagnosed with a 3.3 x 2.7 cm tumour on the left side of her brain.

Due to high treatment costs at private hospitals, she chose the government hospital for the operation.

To keep Ananthalakshmi calm and focused during the surgery, the doctors screened scenes from Jr NTR's Adhurs, her favourite film. The doctors successfully removed the tumour in a procedure, which lasted a two-and-a-half-hour operation. The doctors anticipate that the patient will be discharged within five days.

Awake craniotomy, also called awake brain surgery, was initially used for the surgical treatment of epilepsy and is now most commonly performed for the resection of tumours.

When the patient remains awake, it allows the neurosurgeon to max-

imise tumour resection while preserving neurological function.

A week ago, a similar surgery was performed by doctors at Kalyan Singh Cancer Institute in Uttar Pradesh to remove a tumour.

Throughout the innovative surgery, the 56-year-old patient remained fully awake and engaged with his mobile phone. This helped reduce the risk of nerve damage.

Earlier this year in January, a five-year-old girl underwent awake surgery at AIIMS Delhi to remove a deadly tumour from her brain. During the complex surgery, the girl spoke with the doctors and also recognised a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

# Add meat, milk proteins in your diet to ward off gut tumours

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

Eating meat and milk proteins act as antigens that prevent tumours from growing in human guts, specifically the small intestines, finds a study on Wednesday.

Experiments conducted by researchers led by the RIKEN Center for Integrative Medical Sciences (IMS) in Japan revealed how these proteins trigger the intestinal immune system, allowing it to effectively stop the birth of new tumours.

"Small intestinal tumours are much rarer than those in the colon, but the risk is higher in cases of familial adenomatous polyposis, and therefore the clinical use of elemental diets to treat inflammatory bowel disease or other gastrointestinal conditions in these patients should be considered very carefully," said Hiroshi Ohno at RIKEN IMS. Familial adenoma-

tous polyposis is a hereditary syndrome that predisposes you to develop Colon cancer.

The food antigens -- along with the many others found in plants and beans -- are generally considered foreign objects that need to be checked out by the immune system, according to the team.

They have previously reported that food antigens activate immune cells in the small intestines, and when activated by gut bacteria these cells are known to suppress tumours in the gut. In the new study, published in the scientific journal *Frontiers in Immunology*, the researchers explored in mice studies whether food antigens suppress tumours in the small intestines.

In the first experiment mice fed with normal food or antigen-free food showed that normal food led to fewer tumours in the small intestines, but the same amount in the large intestines.

# Indian pharma sector set for 8-10pc revenue growth this fiscal: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

After achieving about 10 per cent growth last year, the Indian pharmaceuticals sector is again set to log a revenue growth of 8-10 per cent this fiscal, according to a report on Wednesday.

The report by rating agency Crisil suggested that the growth is supported by healthy exports to regulated markets, recovery in exports to semi-regulated markets, and steady domestic demand.

The resultant improvement in operating leverage along with easing pricing pressure in the US generics market will improve operating margins by 70-80 basis points (bps) to about 22.5 per cent this fiscal. This will be on the back of an increase in margins by 100bps last fiscal.

Continued strong annual cash generation and low financial leverage, will support 'stable' credit profiles of players even as companies continue



to pursue acquisitions in targeted therapeutic areas.

According to a CRISIL study of 190 drug makers, the sector accounts for about half of the Rs 4.1 lakh crore market last fiscal.

The pharmaceutical sector revenue pie is split almost equally between domestic sales and exports. Domestic formulation revenue comes equally from chronic and acute therapeutic segments.

As for exports, formulations, and bulk drugs contribute about 80 per cent and about 20 per cent, respectively. For formulations, 58 per cent of exports are for the regulated markets and 42 per cent of exports for the semi-regulated markets.

"Formulation exports are expected to grow 12-14 per cent in rupee terms this fiscal. The regulated markets of the US and Europe will witness a growth of 13-15 per cent,

strengthening of local currencies against the dollar, and easing economic crises in select African and Latin American countries," Dani added.

Further, the report showed that the domestic revenue is likely to see growth of 7-9 per cent this fiscal, primarily price-driven, with volume growth to be backed by new product launches.

Price growth will be led by the non-NLEM (National List of Essential Medicines) portfolio, as price growth for the NLEM portfolio shall remain muted, due to minimal change in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) last fiscal.

CRISIL expects the chronic segment to be the key revenue contributor amid increasing lifestyle-related diseases and continued emphasis on health awareness since the pandemic.

Steady growth in revenues, healthy operating profits, and a stable working capital cycle at about 50 days will keep cash

flows strong. The financial risk profile of the CRISIL-rated players remains comfortable, with debt to earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation ratio at 0.9 times and interest coverage at over 12 times in fiscal 2025.

"With strong cash flows and healthy balance sheets, players are increasingly focusing on inorganic growth opportunities in the API and the formulation space, to either diversify the product portfolios by acquiring the brands/businesses and/or to consolidate market share in the targeted therapeutic areas," said Aditya Jhaver, Director, Crisil Ratings.

"While these acquisitions involve sizeable debt funding and a temporary moderation in the financial risk profile, overall credit profile continues to drive comfort from the improvement in the business risk profile, with immediate contribution accruing from acquired entities," Jhaver added.

# 1st phase of clinical human trial over: Nainital professor claims headway in Parkinson's disease treatment

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

A renowned chemist and professor from Nainital has claimed making major headway in finding a cure and treatment for Parkinson's disease.

He said that the 'drug in making' has completed its phase of clinical human trials and soon second phase will be undertaken.

Clinical trials in animals yielded positive and promising results, Professor Rawat told IANS.

Parkinson's disease is a nervous disorder that severely impairs the patient and incapacitates them over a period of time.

According to renowned

chemist and Vice-Chancellor of Nainital's Kumaun University, Professor Diwan Singh Rawat, the human trials have shown promising results. The drug is expected to enter its final phase of clinical trials next year, and soon after, it will be available in the market.

Parkinson's disease affects over 10 million people globally. Symptoms include tremors, slowed movements, and difficulty in walking, with some patients even experiencing severe depression. The disease is primarily caused by the death of neurons in the midbrain, which leads to a significant reduction in

dopamine levels - a chemical crucial for coordinating movement. Current treatments only manage the symptoms to some extent but fail to stop the progression of the disease, leaving patients to suffer for life.

Professor Rawat explained that certain proteins play a critical role in the survival of dopamine neurons. The new compound developed through their research activates an important neuro-enzyme that prevents the death of these dopamine-producing neurons. Tests on animals revealed that the compound has no significant side effects and can



halt the death of neurons. "We started this research in 2012, in col-

laboration with an American professor," Professor Rawat stated. "As chem-

ists, we design molecules, but developing a drug is a challenging task that can take up to 16-18 years."

Their research was conducted in collaboration with a hospital in Houston, where it was proven that the compound has a curative effect on animals without causing side effects. In 2021, they successfully transferred the technology for further development.

"Last year, three American pharmaceutical companies joined the project to turn this molecule into a marketable drug. As drug development is an expensive process, the Michael J. Fox Foundation funded the trials," Rawat added.

Human clinical trials began in October last year after receiving regulatory approvals. Bloomberg also reported on the initial findings, which confirmed that the drug's toxicity is within acceptable limits. From next year, the treatment will be administered to Parkinson's patients who have volunteered for the study, and the drug's effectiveness in improving their condition will be closely monitored.

"Based on the data and the mechanism of action, we are hopeful that this molecule will soon become a marketable drug. This could be one of the most significant breakthroughs

in Parkinson's treatment, as no cure exists for this disease. We have cleared critical phases, and there will be no competition in the market."

Discussing the challenges faced during the patenting and technology transfer process before 2020, Professor Rawat noted that while the journey was difficult, his team is now well-prepared to bring the drug to market.

Regarding the drug's cost, he mentioned that developing an average drug costs around \$450 million, but efforts are being made to ensure the treatment remains affordable.

# Shimla observes Nutrition Month with focus on anemia & women empowerment

AGENCIES  
SHIMLA, SEP 18

In observance of National Nutrition Month, the Women and Child Development Department of Shimla district organised a significant event at Block Chaupal.

District Program Officer Mamta Paul attended the gathering, underscoring the importance of the seventh National Nutrition Month, celebrated annually from September 1 to September 30.

This year's theme, "Anaemia, Growth Monitoring, Supplemental Nutrition, and Education—Using Technology for Better Administra-

tion," focusses on enhancing nutrition through convergence across various departments.

Paul emphasised that the central government's guidelines have been shared with all concerned departments to address key nutritional issues. As part of the initiative, a "Swachhta Pakhwada" campaign commenced with participants taking a cleanliness pledge.

Paul also highlighted a 100-day campaign under 'Mission Shakti', aimed at empowering women and disseminating information on schemes related to women and child welfare.

A series of activities will be organised across Dis-

trict Shimla at different levels, including district, block, panchayat, and Anganwadi centers. Paul shared that the 'Poshan Abhiyan (Nutrition Campaign) is being taken to every village and household in Shimla. "The aim is to combat malnutrition and build a healthy, strong, and literate India," she said. To further the cause, community-based activities are being held on the 1st and 15th of each month in all 2,154 Anganwadi centres of Shimla.

These include growth monitoring of children, cultural exchanges, 'sanskar samarohs' (values celebrations), and other community programs, all of which

play a crucial role in children's holistic development. Special attention is being given to blood tests to monitor anemia among women and adolescent girls.

Paul appealed to the public to actively participate in this campaign and turn it into a mass movement.

Students of Government Secondary School, Block Chaupal, and representatives from the Health Department, including Dr. Richa, along with 100 Anganwadi workers, participated in the event. A nutrition pledge was administered to all attendees.

The event saw various

activities that captured the attention of the participants, including a "Nutrition Walk" by young children, a nutrition exhibition, a short drama on 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child), and a drawing competition.

Local and traditional cuisines were also showcased.

Paul reminded everyone that the 'Poshan Abhiyan' began in 2018 to eliminate malnutrition in India. As part of this ongoing effort, she urged everyone to protect the environment, linking the cause of nutrition with the cleanliness of the environment for a healthier life.

# Chikungunya, dengue infections rising in Pakistan

AGENCIES  
ISLAMABAD, SEP 18

Mosquito-borne illnesses such as chikungunya and dengue fever have increased at health facilities in recent weeks, according to specialists, and these instances are expected to climb much more with the arrival of winter, a media report said.

Officials at the Dr. Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK) told Dawn that the number of patients reporting at the health facility's emergency and

outpatient departments (OPDs) had increased, with the majority being suspected cases of chikungunya, followed by dengue, malaria, and viral fever.

According to reports, experts have underlined the importance of vector management methods to reduce mosquito breeding grounds and other disease-causing insects.

"We are getting a combination of these patients, though the number of patients presenting with signs and symptoms of chikungunya is slightly

higher," said Dr Imran Sarwar G. Sheikh, the in-charge of the emergency department at the CHK.

He stated that the hospital's emergency room receives around 50 chikungunya and dengue patients every day.

Instances of chikungunya were previously documented at both government and private clinics, but their numbers have increased in recent weeks, possibly due to stagnant water in regions following the rains, Dawn quoted Dr Imran Sheikh.



## Cabinet approves Chandrayaan-4, first module of Bharatiya Antariksh Station by 2028

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

Expanding the Chandrayaan series, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the fourth mission to the Moon and also gave a green signal for the building of the first unit of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) by 2028.

The Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved Chandrayaan-4 to develop and demonstrate technologies to help astronauts return to Earth after successfully landing on the Moon.

The mission also aims to collect Moon samples, bring them back safely and analyse them on Earth.

The "Chandrayaan-4 mission will achieve the foundational technologies capabilities eventually for an Indian landing on the Moon (planned by year



2040) and return safely back to Earth," according to a Cabinet Communique.

"Major technologies that are required for docking/undocking, landing, safe return to Earth and also accomplish lunar sample collection and analysis would be demonstrated," it added.

Chandrayaan-3 successfully demonstrated the safe and soft landing of Lander on the tricky lunar surface. It established vital technol-

ogies and demonstrated capabilities that only a few other nations possess.

The ability to collect lunar samples and return them safely back to Earth remains the next challenge.

The Chandrayaan-4 mission is "planned for Rs 2,104.06 crore", and the development of the spacecraft and its launch will be handled by ISRO.

The Cabinet said the "cost includes spacecraft development and realisation, two launch vehicle missions of LVM3, external deep space network support and conducting special tests for design validation, finally leading to the mission of landing on the Moon's surface and safe return to Earth along with the collected lunar sample."

The mission is expected to be "completed within 36 months of approval", the Cabinet said.

Meanwhile, expanding the vision for the Indian space programme, the government had envisaged an Indian Space Station by 2035 and an Indian land on the lunar surface by 2040.

Towards this goal, the Cabinet on Wednesday approved the development of the first module of BAS-1.

The Cabinet also

revised the Gaganyaan Programme to include the scope of development and precursor missions for BAS, and factored an additional uncrewed mission.

"With a net additional funding of Rs 11,170 crore in the already approved programme, the total funding for Gaganyaan Programme with the revised scope has been enhanced to Rs 20,193 crore," the Cabinet said.

"The target is to develop and demonstrate critical technologies for long duration human space missions," it said.

Under the programme eight missions are envisaged -- four under the ongoing Gaganyaan Programme by 2026, and development of BAS-1, and another four missions for demonstration and validation of various technologies by December 2028.

Three candidates fielded by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Sohna and Pataudi Assembly constituencies in Gurugram district have never attended college, according to the affidavits they submitted at the time of nomination.

Also, two Congress party candidates from Sohna and Badshahpur have also not attended college, as per their affidavits.

A total of 47 candidates are in the fray for four Assembly seats in the upcoming Assembly elections in Gurugram as 15 nominations were withdrawn on Monday.

BJP candidates Mukesh Sharma from the Gurgaon seat is 12th pass, Tejpal Tanwar from the Sohna seat in his affidavit that his highest educational qualification is class 10 from a

govt school in Badshapur and Bimla Chaudhary from Pataudi Assembly constituency is also Metric pass from open school.

The three candidates have never attended college.

Likewise, Congress candidate Vardhan Yadav from Badshahpur seat has 12th pass from DPS School and Rohtash Khatna has only passed Class 9, which

he completed in 1973-74 at a govt school in Rithoj village.

Residents have expressed concern over the candidates' educational qualifications.

"Education is important in life no doubt. BJP and Congress have fielded candidates who have never been to college and studied only up to school level which is quite shocking.

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## Gurugram polls: Three BJP & two Congress candidates never attended college

AGENCIES  
GURUGRAM, SEP 18



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## 'One Nation, One Election' crucial for India's growth and stability: Shiv Sena

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, SEP 18

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena has hailed the Union Cabinet's decision to approve the Ramnath Kovind Committee's recommendations on the 'One Nation, One Election' initiative.

The Shiv Sena Parliamentary Party Leader Shrikant Shinde said that this significant policy shift is seen as a watershed moment in India's electoral reform journey, promising more streamlined governance and political continuity.

"The Cabinet decision marks the dawn of a new era for our democracy. Simultaneous elections across the nation will not

only drastically reduce administrative and financial burdens but will also ensure that governments can focus on long-term governance instead of being repeatedly disrupted by election cycles.

It's a crucial reform that aligns with India's vision of progress and stability," added Shinde.

He further emphasised that this initiative will foster national unity by synchronising the election process, reducing political polarisation, and allowing governments to remain focused on development agendas without the frequent interruptions caused by staggered elections.

"The initiative is also expected to bring down

enormous election-related costs and avoid the policy paralysis that occurs when various elections overlap.

By holding simultaneous elections, the nation can focus on its long-term goals of economic and social development, ensuring that governance remains effective throughout elected terms," he said.

Shinde further said, "This is a forward-thinking reform, a game-changer for our democratic structure, ensuring that governance is not compromised by the demands of frequent elections. It enhances the quality of decision-making and provides much-needed political stability."

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan, with a total outlay of Rs 79,156 crore, that will empower more than five crore tribal people.

The scheme will cover around 63,000 tribal-majority villages in Aspirational Districts announced in the Budget 2024-25. It will cover 549 districts and 2,740 blocks spread in tribal-majority villages across 30 states and UTs, a Cabinet communique said.

The total outlay will have a Central component at Rs 56,333 crore and states share at Rs 22,823

crore for improving the socio-economic condition of tribal communities, by adopting saturation coverage for tribal families in tribal-majority villages and aspirational districts, according to the Cabinet decision.

The tribal villages covered under the Abhiyan would be mapped on the PM Gati Shakti Portal with the gaps identified by the concerned department for its scheme-specific requirements.

The country has a Scheduled Tribes (ST) population of 10.45 crore, as per the 2011 census, and there are more than 705 tribal communities, spread across the country, living in remote and hard-

to-reach areas.

According to the government, the Abhiyan envisions saturation of critical gaps in social infrastructure, health, education, and livelihood, through different government schemes by convergence and outreach and ensuring holistic and sustainable development of tribal areas and communities based on the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PMJANMAN).

As part of the scheme, one of the major aims in the next five years is to provide pucca houses for eligible households with other entitlements. Eligible ST households will have access to pucca

housing under the PMAY (Gramin) with the availability of tapped water (Jal Jeevan Mission) and electricity supply (RDSS). Eligible ST households shall also have access to Ayushman Bharat Card (PMJAY), according to the government.

In order to improve village infrastructure, the scheme will ensure all-weather road connectivity to ST majority villages (PMGSY), provide access to mobile connectivity (Bharat Net) and internet infrastructure for improving health, nutrition, and education (NHM, Samagra Shiksha and Poshan). As part of skill development, the mission will provide access to training (Skill

India Mission/JSS) and ensure that ST boys/girls get access to long-term skill courses after Class 10/12 every year.

It also aims to increase the gross enrollment ratio (GER) to the national levels in school and higher education and to make quality education affordable and accessible to ST students (Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan) by setting up tribal hostels in schools at district/block level. In order to ensure enhanced access to quality health facilities to ST households, the mission offers mobile medical units in areas where the sub-centre is more than 10 km in plain areas and 5 km in hilly areas (National Health Mission).

## Rs 79,156 cr Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan approved, to benefit 5 cr tribals

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

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## Indian Army signs MoU with TMR for rescue & survival operations in mountainous terrains

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

Indian Army signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tiranga Mountain Rescue (TMR) on Wednesday at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) at Delhi Cantt for rescue and survival operations in mountainous terrains.

An official of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said that the MoU stipulates that TMR will collaborate with the Indian Army in conducting customised training programs for Army instructors, aimed at improving their ability to mentor troops in avalanche rescue and survival skills.

He said that this initiative builds on the initial agreement made with Northern Command in 2016, which established dedicated avalanche and



rescue support by the TMR. Subsequent agreements with Eastern and Central Commands in 2021 and 2024 further expanded this collaboration.

The latest MoU will further utilise TMR's expertise to boost the Indian Army's capabilities in executing effective rescue operations under demanding conditions.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Gen Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff. General Upendra Dwivedi commended the efforts of TMR and appreciated the collaboration between the Indian Army and TMR. He acknowledged their efforts by awarding Chief of Army Staff Commendation Cards to two team members of

TMR's Rescue Team.

This partnership highlights a commitment to further enhance the readiness of personnel operating in mountainous terrain besides enhancing the standards of training and rescue operations in high-altitude environments, official added.

Maj Gen Manish Luthra, Additional Director Gen-

eral Military Operations (A), signed the MoU on behalf of the Indian Army, while Hemant Sachdev, a dedicated mountaineer and Mt Everest Summiteer, signed it on behalf of the TMR.

Lieutenant General Tarun Kumar Aich, Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) said that the MoU is a mutually advantageous agreement for both organisations.

He said that for the past nine years, TMR has done yeoman service in saving numerous lives by providing unwavering support in training and rescue efforts.

Hemant Sachdev highlighted that 15 Teams of TMR are already deployed in various regions alongside Indian Army. He also mentioned that the rescue teams of TMR have been able to save a large number of precious lives in avalanche-prone areas.

## Alliance leaders including Kamal Haasan to address DMK's public programme on Sep 28

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI, SEP 18

As part of the party's 75th anniversary celebrations, senior leaders of the DMK alliance will address a public meeting on September 28.

Senior leaders of the DMK alliance in Tamil Nadu including Kamal Haasan will participate in the public programme.

Other than Kamal Haasan, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) leader Thol Thirumavalavan, Tamil Nadu Congress President, K. Selvaperrunthugai, CPI-M state secretary, K. Balakrishnan, CPI state secretary R. Mutharasam, Indian Union Muslim League Leader Khader Moideen are likely to address the meeting.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin will preside over the meeting which will be held at the Pachiyappas College in

Kancheepuram.

The powerful Dravidian political party of Tamil Nadu, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) completes 75 years in politics on Wednesday.

On September 17, 1949, a group of young Tamil men, led by C.N. Annadurai, gathered in Robinson Park at Royapuram in Madras to launch the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). The party was formed as a breakaway faction of the Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) floated by the legendary E.V. Ramasami Periyar.

The DMK is now one of the most prominent political powers of Tamil Nadu

and is a powerful constituent of the opposition INDIA bloc at the national level.

In the 2024 general election, the DMK-led INDIA bloc won all 39 seats in Tamil Nadu. The AIADMK which is the principal opposition party of Tamil Nadu has lost all the seats in the 2024 general elections in the state.

C. Rajeev, Director, Centre for Policy and Development Studies told IANS that the DMK needs to showcase to the public that its alliance with coalition partners is intact given the recent outbursts by VCK leader Thol Thirumavalavan and the State Congress office bearers pushing for a coalition government in the state.

He further said that the DMK is planning massive elections and added that the DMK will commence its poll preparations after September 28.

## CM SIDDARAMAIAH IS ANTI-HINDU, KARNATAKA NOT SAFE, ALLEGES BJP MLC

AGENCIES  
BENGALURU, SEP 18

Karnataka BJP MLC N Ravi Kumar on Wednesday alleged that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was "Hindu drohi" (anti-Hindu) and the state was not safe under his government.

Addressing a press conference in BJP headquarters, Ravi Kumar referring to the recent violence and rioting during the Ganesh Visarjan procession in

Nagamangala town of Mandya district, charged that Siddaramaiah was anti-Hindu as under his rule, the revered Ganapati idol was placed in police van.

A fact-finding committee led by BJP leader and former Deputy CM C. N. Ashwathnarayan visited Nagamangala following the incident.

"Another fact-finding committee led by Social Democratic Party of India

(SDPI) President Abdul Majeed, who supports terrorists and opposes Ganapati processions, also went there which might report that Hindus had done an injustice," Ravi Kumar feared.

"Siddaramaiah under your governance, there are people who raise slogans of 'Pakistan Zindabad'; those who hoist the Palestinian flag; those who place Hindu god Ganesh inside police van; under



your regime the Rameshwaram Cafe blast took

place," he said while claiming that the state is not a safe place now.

Ravi Kumar stated that Siddaramaiah has no connection whatsoever with freedom fighter Sangolli Rayanna and does not have the moral right to even mention his name.

"Sangolli Rayanna was a great soldier who fought selflessly for the state without any personal gain. Sangolli Rayanna was a commander for Kittur Rani



Chennamma, fighting for the survival of Karnataka and Kittur.

Unlike CM Siddaramaiah, Sangolli Rayanna did not receive any land grants or properties; he fought without desire for personal benefit, selflessly sacrificing himself for the state's welfare," Ravi Kumar said.

Sangolli Rayanna did not receive plots of land or personal gains, unlike certain politicians today,

he stated.

"Sangolli Rayanna's descendants never petitioned the government for compensation or recognition for their ancestor's sacrifice. Therefore, CM Siddaramaiah does not have the moral right to speak of Sangolli Rayanna," Ravi Kumar stated referring to the alleged role of the CM in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam.



## 3.4 MILLION CHILDREN AT HIGH RISK OF EPIDEMIC DISEASES IN SUDAN: UNICEF

AGENCIES  
KHARTOUM, SEP 18

An estimated 3.4 million children under five are at high risk of deadly epidemic diseases in Sudan, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

With heavy rains and flooding in the country, diseases such as cholera, malaria, dengue fever, measles and rubella "can spread more rapidly and severely worsen the outlook for the children in the affected states and beyond," UNICEF Representative to Sudan Sheldon Yett was quoted as saying in a statement on Tuesday.



The crises stem from significant declines in vaccination rates and the destruction of health, water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure due to the ongoing internal conflict, he said, adding

that the deteriorating nutritional status of many children in Sudan puts them at even greater risk. UNICEF delivered 4,04,000 doses of oral cholera vaccine to Sudan on September 9, Xinhua

news agency reported, citing the statement.

According to UNICEF, the vaccination coverage in Sudan has plummeted to some 50 per cent from 85 per cent before the internal conflict.

More than 70 per cent of hospitals in conflict-affected areas are non-operational, and frontline healthcare workers have not been paid in months, it said.

Since the outbreak of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in April 2023, epidemic diseases such as cholera, malaria, measles, and dengue fever have spread,

leading to hundreds of deaths. The conflict has resulted in at least 16,650 deaths and displaced millions of people.

Sudan's Health Minister Haitham Mohamed Ibrahim officially declared a cholera outbreak in the country on August 17. The ministry attributed the spread of cholera to deteriorating environmental conditions caused by the conflict and the use of unclean water.

Sudan's Health Ministry said on Tuesday that 10,022 cases of cholera, including 328 deaths, had been recorded in the country between July 15 and this Monday.

## Research highlights action to reverse decline in youth mental health in New Zealand

AGENCIES  
WELLINGTON, SEP 18

The mental health of children and young people in New Zealand is deteriorating, with Maori and young people living in poverty experiencing the highest burden, which triggers a call for action to promote resilience, said research released on Wednesday.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for New Zealand adolescents and the country's youth suicide rate is one of the highest in the developed world, the research authors said.

More than one in five 15 to 24-year-olds experienced high levels of psychological distress in

2022 and 2023, according to the research, which outlines how young people can be better equipped to cope with the many pressures on them and the roles that parents, schools, communities, and policymakers have in helping young people flourish, Xinhua news agency reported.

Symptoms of depression among secondary students increased from 13 per cent in 2012 to 23 per cent in 2019, while the proportion of students meeting the criteria for positive well-being decreased from 76 per cent to 69 per cent, the study showed.

There is an urgent need to cultivate resil-

ience in children, starting in early childhood education centres through to high schools, to ensure they can safely navigate adversity, said researchers from the Centre for Informed Futures at the University of Auckland, a think-tank addressing child development.

Researchers Felicia Low and Seungyeon Kim are urging policymakers to back programs that build resilience, including cognitive function, problem-solving strategies, communication, interpersonal and self-regulation skills, adding having stable and supportive relationships with their caregivers and peers is also important.

## Cyprus to support multi-billion euro undersea electric cable linking Asia, Europe

AGENCIES  
NICOSIA, SEP 18

Cyprus will support and participate in the Great Sea Interconnector, a multi-billion euro electric transmission project connecting Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

This announcement was made by Energy, Commerce and Industry Minister George Papanastasiou following a Council of Ministers meeting that approved the regulatory framework for the interconnection between Cyprus and Greece's Crete Island, aimed at ending Cyprus's energy isolation, an energy official said on Tuesday.

The decision follows weeks of extensive consultations involving the governments of Cyprus



and Greece, the European Commission, Greece's Independent Power Transmission Operator, the operator of the project, and the manufacturers of the special deep-sea cable, Xinhua news agency reported.

The interconnector, with an estimated cost of 2.4 billion euros (\$2.7 billion), is slated for comple-

tion by 2030. It will connect the transmission grids of Greece via Crete, Cyprus, and eventually Israel.

Under the agreed terms, Cyprus will contribute 125 million euros (about \$139 million) in five instalments of 25 million euros (about \$28 million) each over the next five years, Papanastasiou said.

The European Commission has termed the project as one of common interest and has earmarked 657 million euros (\$731 million) to subsidise it.

Upon completion, the project will be the world's longest undersea electrical conductor stretching 1,240 km and reaching depths of up to 3,000 metres.

According to French cabling specialist Nexans, which has won a 1.43 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) contract for a section of the project, the interconnector will exchange up to 1,000 MW of electricity between Greece, Cyprus and Israel, with the capability to expand to 2,000 MW, equivalent to the average electricity consumption of 3 million households.

## Cambodia targets 40 per cent of electric cars, 70 per cent of electric motorbikes by 2050: minister

AGENCIES  
PHNOM PENH, SEP 18

Cambodia is committed to achieving 40 per cent of electric cars and 70 per cent of electric motorbikes by 2050 in order to reduce carbon emissions, Minister of Public Works and Transport Peng Ponea said here on Wednesday.

He made the remarks during a dissemination workshop on the National Policy for the Development of Electric Vehicles (EVs) 2024-2030, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The EV sector is one of the high potential sectors, as it has not only enhanced environment and improved public health, but also contributed to the momentum of economic base diversification as well as strength-



ened energy security," he said.

"Using EVs has importantly contributed to reducing the impact of carbon dioxide emitted from petrol-powered vehicles," he added.

Cambodia currently has more than 7 million petrol-driven vehicles, he said, adding that 85 per cent of

them were motorbikes, 10 per cent were cars, and five per cent were buses, lorries, and heavy machinery.

Ponea added that to date, the Southeast Asian country has registered a total of 3,676 EVs, and the kingdom has 21 EV charging stations.

The three most popular

EV brands in Cambodia are China's BYD, Japan's Toyota, and America's Tesla, according to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

According to the National Policy for the Development of EVs, using EVs costs only 9,633 riels (2.34 U.S. dollars) for a distance of 100 kilometres, while using petrol or diesel cars costs up to 35,723 riels (\$8.69).

Udom Pisey, an EV manager at the Car4you Co., Ltd., which imports Letin Mingo EVs from China, said EVs have far fewer moving parts than petrol or diesel vehicles, so maintenance and repair costs are cheaper than internal combustion vehicles.

"Using EVs not only saves money on fuel but also helps reduce air pollution," she told Xinhua.

## WILL MEET FANTASTIC MAN PM MODI DURING HIS US VISIT, SAYS TRUMP

AGENCIES  
NEW YORK, SEP 18

Former President Donald Trump has said he will meet "fantastic man" Prime Minister Narendra Modi next week when he visits the US.

"He happens to be coming to meet me next week, and Modi, he's fantastic. I mean, fantastic, man," Trump said on Tuesday at a town hall meeting in Flint, Michigan.

PM Modi will be in the US from Saturday to Monday, according to the Ministry of External

Affairs.

The Ministry's programme listed only PM Modi's participation in the Quad Summit in Delaware on Saturday, his speech to the Indian diaspora on Long Island on Sunday, and his address to the United Nations Summit of the Future on Monday.

It did not mention meeting with Trump but said, "On the sidelines of the Summit, the Prime Minister would be holding bilateral meetings with several world leaders and discuss issues of mutual interest."

Trump's campaign

calendar shows him in North Carolina on Saturday and in Pennsylvania on Monday evening, with nothing pencilled in for Sunday.

The former president mentioned the meeting with PM Modi while talking about trade imbalances and how he would hike duties on imports from India through a Trump Reciprocal Tax Act.

He called India "a very big abuser" of the tariffs system because of the high duties it imposes on some imports from the US and said New Delhi "is very



tough" in negotiations.

"If anybody charges us 10 cents, if they charge us \$2, if they charge us 100 per cent 250, we charge

them the same," he said.

Listing India among them, he said that countries the US was trading with are "the sharpest

people. They're not a little bit backward... they're at the top of their game, and they use it against us".

He added, "China is the toughest of all, but we were taking care of China with the tariffs, so we're going to do a reciprocal trade." While in office Trump tangled with India over tariffs, putting a spotlight on the duties on Harley-Davidson motorcycles and whiskey.

He hiked duties on steel and aluminium imports and eliminated the Generalised Scheme of Preferences that provided for concessional tariffs for

some Indian exports and New Delhi retaliated by raising duties mostly on agricultural exports like apples and almonds.

Even though they had differences on trade, PM Modi and Trump developed strong personal ties.

With elections about five weeks away and Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris in almost a tie, PM Modi has a tight-rope walk ahead -- not appearing to favour either party but also having to keep his lines of communication open to both.

Before the 2020 elec-

tion that Trump lost, PM Modi appeared alongside him at a community event billed as "Howdy Modi", in Houston in 2019 and, in a play of his own election slogan, cheered him, "Abki baar, Trump sarkar" (This time, Trump's government").

That and a spectacle for Trump with over 1,00,000 people in Ahmedabad in 2020 became an embarrassment when Biden defeated him.

But Biden and PM Modi brushed it aside and further developed ties between their nations.

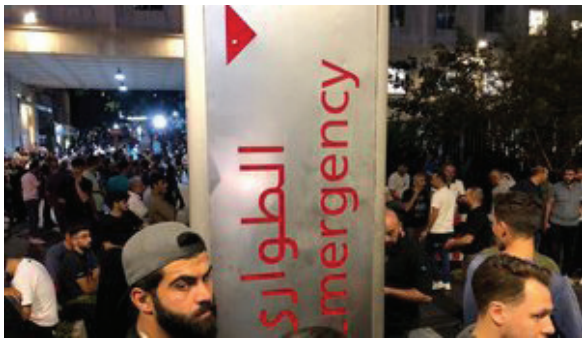
## TAIWAN FIRM DENIES MANUFACTURING PAGERS USED IN LEBANON BLASTS

AGENCIES  
TAIPEI CITY, SEP 18

A Taiwanese company on Wednesday denied manufacturing the pagers involved in detonations across Lebanon, which resulted in the deaths of at least nine people and left nearly 3,000 others, including Hezbollah fighters and medics injured, local media reported.

Taiwan's Gold Apollo Co. said that the pagers used in detonations in Lebanon were not made by it, but by a Hungarian company which has a license to use its brand.

"The product was not ours. It was only that it had our brand on it," Gold Apollo founder and President Hsu Ching-Kuang was quoted as saying by the Taipei Times as he addressed the media at the company's offices in New



Taipei City on Wednesday.

Citing images of the destroyed pagers, which included stickers and designs quite similar to those produced by Gold Apollo, some reports had asserted that Hezbollah had ordered 5,000 pagers from the Taiwan-based company. However, Gold Apollo issued a statement refuting these claims, clarifying that the pagers in question were manufactured by Hungarian company BAC under a brand

trademark agreement.

Gold Apollo emphasised that it only authorised the use of its brand but was not involved in the design or production of the AR-924 pager model linked to the blasts.

"Gold Apollo Co., Ltd. has established a long-term partnership with BAC Consulting KFT. According to the cooperation agreement, we authorise BAC to use our brand trademark for product sales in designated regions, but the

design and manufacturing of the products are solely the responsibility of BAC," the statement read.

"Regarding the AR-924 pager model mentioned in the recent media reports, we clarify that this model is produced and sold by BAC. Our company only provides the brand trademark authorisation and is not involved in the design or manufacturing of this product. Gold Apollo Co., Ltd. always complies with relevant regulations and maintains transparent and compliant partnerships with our collaborators," it added.

Hsu Ching-Kuang mentioned that the company had no knowledge of how the pagers had been rigged to explode.

Expressing the company's embarrassment over the situation, Hsu stated: "We may not be a large

company, but we are a responsible one".

Meanwhile, Hezbollah has announced that it is conducting a "security and scientific investigation" into the cause of the explosions, which were allegedly triggered by explosives planted inside the pagers months earlier.

Gold Apollo, which claims it is also a victim of the incident, said it will cooperate fully in any follow-up investigations.

Taipei Times reported that Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs has confirmed there were no records of direct exports to Lebanon, and it plans to assist the company in its investigation.

The pagers were reportedly powered by ordinary double-A batteries, further deepening the mystery surrounding their explosive nature.

## Thousands of Australian workers join protests against govt takeover of construction union

AGENCIES  
SYDNEY, SEP 18

Thousands of Australian workers on Wednesday walked off job sites to join protests against the federal government's crackdown on a major construction trade union.

Members and supporters of the Construction, Forestry, and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) joined rallies in Sydney and Melbourne to protest against the government's decision to force the construction arm of the union into administration. The government in August placed all branches of the construction arm of the CFMEU into administration in response to allegations of corruption and criminal infiltration.

Workers on Wednesday walked off job sites for the second time to support the CFMEU after similar protests in August.

Speaking to protesters in Melbourne, CFMEU National Secretary Zach Smith said that the government's move would lead to worse wages and conditions for Australian workers, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

"An attack on one union is an attack on all," he said. "Our victory is assured if we stand together and fight together and today we will be sending a very clear message across those corporate board rooms, across the halls of parliament that we're drawing a line in the sand," Xinhua news agency reported

quoting local media.

Troy Gray, secretary of the Electrical Trades Union in the Australian state of Victoria, reportedly threatened a three-day strike from next Wednesday if employers don't stop the "attack" on working conditions, according to the Guardian Australia.

Responding to Wednesday's protests, Australia's Employment and Workplace Relations Minister Murray Watt said that the government is not targeting CFMEU members, union members or construction workers at all, the Age reported. "We're doing this to ensure that their union gets back to its job, which is representing the interests of those workers," he told reporters in Canberra.



# Cabinet approves 'Bio-RIDE' scheme to support research and development in biotechnology

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

To support cutting-edge research and development in the field of biotechnology, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the continuation of the two umbrella schemes of Department of Biotechnology (DBT) as one unified scheme.

Called 'Biotechnology Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development (Bio-RIDE)', the proposed outlay for the implementation of the unified scheme is Rs 9,197 crore during the 15th finance Commission period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The scheme has three broad components: biotechnology research and development (R&D), industrial and entrepreneurship development (I&ED) and biomanufacturing and biofoundry.



It will nurture a thriving ecosystem for startups by providing seed funding, incubation support, and mentorship to bio-entrepreneurs.

The scheme will offer grants and incentives for cutting-edge research and development in areas like synthetic biology, biopharmaceuticals, bioenergy, and bioplastics.

"Bio-RIDE will create synergies between academic institutions, research organisations, and industry to accelerate the commercialization of bio-based products and technologies," said the ministry.

The scheme is designed to foster innovation, promote bio-entrepreneurship, and strengthen India's position as a global leader in biomanufacturing and biotechnology.

A significant focus will be placed on promoting environmentally sustainable practices in biomanufacturing, aligned with India's green goals, the ministry noted.

To enable circular-bioeconomy in the country, a component on biomanufacturing and biofoundry is being initiated in alignment with 'Lifestyle for the Environment (LIFE)' launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to propel mitigation of global

climate change by incorporating green and friendly environmental solutions in every aspect of life.

According to the ministry, the new component aspires to nurture the immense potential of 'biomanufacturing' to facilitate development of indigenous innovative solutions to improve healthcare outcomes, enhance agriculture productivity, foster growth of the bioeconomy and scale-up and commercialisation of bio-based products.

Biomanufacturing and bio-foundry are part of the new BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) policy that will drive India's green growth.

The country's bioeconomy rose from \$10 billion in 2014 to over \$130 billion in 2024. It is projected to reach \$300 billion by 2030.

# Hiring for niche qualifications sees growth in India, business sentiment remains positive

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

Hiring for niche qualifications such as chartered accountant (CA) and chartered financial analyst (CFA) continues to see growth in India as companies take a cautious approach to campus hiring, a report showed on Wednesday.

Hiring volume for CAs and CFAs increased by 47 per cent in the fiscal year 2024, followed by interns at 46 per cent and lateral hiring at 40 per cent, while 38 per cent of MBA graduates and 30 per cent of diploma holders, including those who have completed vocational courses saw the least increase compared to the fiscal year 2023, according to the report by Aon, a leading global professional services firm.

Also, there has been an increase in hiring volumes of interns with more than 80 per cent



of organisations offering pre-placement interviews or pre-placement offers to promising candidates upon successful completion of an internship, with the highest prevalence for graduates of master's in technology.

"Business sentiment looks positive for India, with 69 per cent of organisations expecting a high to moderate growth. The sectors driving this growth are financial institutions, life sciences and consumer goods," the report mentioned. Campus hiring is a strategic opportunity for organisations to build a diverse, skilled and future-ready talent pipeline.

"However, the campus hiring market in India is

undergoing a rapid transformation due to the changing expectations of the candidates, the evolving skill requirements of the organisations, and the impact of the global slowdown," said Roopank Chaudhary, partner and Head of Reward Solutions in India for Aon.

Furthermore, there is a direct correlation between company culture and performance and organisations, therefore, must have policies and frameworks in place to align culture with employee expectations to ensure stickiness of the new hires, said Chaudhary.

According to the report, organisations are focusing on performance incentivisation through variable pay, which ranges between 11-13 per cent. MBA graduates are typically seeing a combination of incentives with more than 90 per cent of organisations offering a joining bonus plus variable pay.

# India's mobile phone manufacturing rises to Rs 4.1 lakh crore in value: Report

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

India's mobile phone manufacturing in value has risen to Rs 4.1 lakh crore in the last 10 years due to strategic government policy measures like product-linked initiative (PLI) and phased-manufacturing programme (PMP) schemes, a report showed on Wednesday.

The electronics sector experienced rapid growth and local production nearly doubled from \$48 billion in FY17 to \$101 billion in FY23 and is around \$115 billion in the current fiscal to date -- driven primarily by mobile phones which now constitute more than 43 per cent of total electronics production. As the country becomes the second largest mobile manufacturer in the world, global manufacturing companies like Samsung, Apple and Google are making their latest generation smartphones in India.

The report by Broadband India Forum (BIF), prepared by BIF's Koan Advisory, analysed the journey through an empirical study that investigates issues such as the impact of tariff and customs rates, India's global value chains (GVC) insertion, challenges related to the ease of doing business (EoDB), women workforce participation opportunities and ways of reducing the gender gap and increasing the gender diversity.

TV Ramachandran, President, BIF said that the 'Make in India' initiative has been instrumental in transforming the country into a global hub for mobile device manufacturing.

"Through strategic policies and production linked incentives, the government has attracted major global players and encouraged domestic manufacturers to set up and enhance production facilities within India," he added.

# Telangana to have dedicated parks, special fund for MSMEs

AGENCIES  
HYDERABAD, SEP 18

Dedicated industrial parks for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), improving access to sources of credit, a special fund for technology transfer and modernisation, and enhancing market access are some of the key highlights of the new policy announced by the Telangana government on Wednesday for MSME sector.

The government has earmarked Rs 600 crore over the next five years to support these initiatives for MSMEs.

The policy envisages 40 measures to offer end-to-end support from the startup to the sales phase. The government proposes to establish an MSME wing to provide 24/7 dedicated support to MSMEs while a high-level steering committee under the state leadership will monitor the delivery of commitments and set policy direction.

Chief Minister A.



Revanth Reddy unveiled the MSME policy in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bharti Vikramarka, Industry Minister D. Sridhar Babu, and top officials and representatives from various industry bodies.

The policy is designed to achieve inclusive and diverse employment, equitable growth scale-based graduation, technology degradation, and improved productivity.

The government hopes to develop inclusive businesses that create opportunities for all regardless of identity, integrate technology to usher in the era of 'Industry 4.0', and unlock growth for the MSME ecosystem in the state.

To accelerate the growth of MSMEs, the government has identified six thrust areas for improvement - improving availability, accessibility, and affordability of land; facilitating access to finance; ensuring easy access to raw materials; improving flexibility in labour markets; encouraging adoption of technology; and enhancing access to markets. It is proposed to enhance state infrastructure through dedicated MSME parks and private flatted factories, offer fiscal support especially to SC/ST and women-owned MSMEs by increasing the incentives offered under other industrial policies, improve access to traditional and alter-

native sources of credit, develop best-in-class testing centres and warehousing facilities in the state, expand the pool of skilled workforce, earmark a special fund for technology transfer and modernisation in the MSME sector, enhance market access by incentivising local procurement and increased e-commerce participation and improve ease of doing business in the state.

For each industrial park that the government plans to build, 20 per cent of it will be reserved for MSMEs. The government proposes to develop one industrial park in each district in the next five years.

It will also construct 10 industrial parks between

the Outer Ring Road and the Regional Ring Road. Out of these, five will be MSME parks and in each, 5 per cent of plots will be reserved for women entrepreneurs and 15 per cent of plots will be reserved for SC/ST entrepreneurs.

Out of five MSME parks, one will be exclusively for women-owned MSMEs and one park will be built exclusively for innovative startups.

Since 2014, MSMEs in Telangana have shown a positive trend of formalisation as annual registrations on the TG-iPASS portal have increased by 11-15 per cent annually. MSMEs have seen a rise in average investment from Rs 1 crore in 2018 to Rs 2.15 crore in 2022.

In 2015, the National Sample Survey estimated 26 lakh MSMEs to be operational in Telangana. About 8.9 lakh MSMEs have received Udayam registration since 2020. Around 22,000 approvals for new MSMEs have been issued under the TG-iPASS regulation since 2014. Ser-

vices in Telangana account for nearly 33 lakh jobs.

In food processing, the number of jobs is 10.10 lakh. Mineral bases and wood-based industries employ 4.44 lakh people. The policy paper notes that MSMEs continue to face challenges with formalising and graduating in size over time. As per estimates by NSSO, 65.7 per cent of all MSMEs in the state are yet to be formalised.

The state continues to have a limited number of medium-sized enterprises. Between 2016 and 2023, medium-sized enterprises constituted only 2.9 per cent of all manufacturing MSMEs and 3.5 per cent of all service MSMEs registered on the TG-iPASS portal.

The policy facilitates Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to transition from SHGs to MSMEs by providing end-to-end support structures and seeks to strengthen Telangana's place as a leading exporter in the country with an emphasis on import substitution.

# 4th Global RE-INVEST draws investment pledges worth Rs 32.45 lakh crore: Union Minister Pralhad Joshi

AGENCIES  
GANDHINAGAR, SEP 17

The global Renewable Energy Investors' Meet and Expo (RE-INVEST) drew investment commitments worth Rs 32.45 lakh crore by 2030, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy, Pralhad Joshi, said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference here, the minister informed that developers have committed an additional 570 GW, and manufacturers have committed

additional manufacturing capacities of 340 GW in solar modules, 240 GW in solar cells, 22 GW in wind turbines and 10 GW in electrolyzers.

"This is a big commitment by the states, developers, banks and financial institutions to join hands and work together for a cleaner and sustainable India," he said.

The renewable energy sector made significant strides in the first 100 days of the new government under Prime Minister Nar-

endra Modi. "Now, PM Modi is not only leading our country towards the 500 GW target but also is a beacon of hope for the globe," the minister added.

Minister Joshi also chaired a CEO roundtable, where he emphasised that 500 GW is not just a number and the government is serious about it.

"Therefore, the CEOs must share what the facilitation required from the government."



The CEOs provided inputs for ramping up the manufacturing, creating demand with effective

enforcement of Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO), embedding circularity principles, and enhancing the climate resilience of the projects.

Installed solar PV module manufacturing capacity in India in 2014 was around 2.3 GW and installed solar PV cell manufacturing capacity was around 1.2 GW.

"Installed solar PV Module manufacturing capacity in India, as of now, is around 67 GW and the installed solar PV cell

manufacturing capacity as of now is around 8 GW," the minister informed.

The country aims to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, focusing on renewable energy expansion, and plans to reach 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030.

According to the minister, the country's renewable energy journey is supported by strong policy backing and international partnerships.

PM Modi has said that

India is the only G20 country to have ensured that the pledge towards creating a green planet made at the Paris Climate Change Summit in 2015 was fulfilled even before the deadline.

The country has now updated its targets to reduce emissions intensity of its GDP to 45 per cent by 2030 from the 2005 level, and cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources to 50 per cent by 2030.

# Sensex closes lower, India VIX spikes over 6 pc ahead of Fed decision

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, SEP 18

Indian equity indices closed in the red on Wednesday as investors were cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve monetary policy decision later in the day on Wednesday.

At closing, Sensex was down 131 points or 0.16 per cent at 82,948 and Nifty was down 41 points or 0.16 per cent at 25,377.

Intraday, Sensex and Nifty made a new all-time high of 83,326 and 25,482 respectively. Nifty Bank was

the only major index that closed in the green, up 561 points or 1.08 per cent at 52,750. Selling was seen in the midcap and smallcap stocks. Nifty smallcap 100 index was down 75 points or 0.39 per cent at 19,389 and Nifty midcap 100 index was down 427 points or 0.71 per cent at 59,752.

India VIX was up by 6.20 per cent at 13.37.

Among the sectoral indices, PSU banks, fin service and private banks were major gainers.

IT, auto, pharma, FMCG, metal, energy and infra

were major laggards.

In the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Nestle, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, SBI, L&T, M&M, IndusInd Bank and Axis Bank were the top gainers.

TCS, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, Wipro, Sun Pharma, Tata Motors, Tata Steel and Titan were the top losers.

According to market experts, "The Indian market experienced a minor profit booking with underperformance by midcaps. Mixed signals from global markets emerged ahead of the

anticipated FOMC rate cut decision which is seemingly priced in a 25-bps cut.

"Investors assess the potential for a short-term underperformance of equity given the elevated valuation and correction of metal prices."

"Commodities, including oil prices, are steadily declining, suggesting a potential tempering of economic growth. Investor caution is evident as gold prices rise, likely due to anticipated dollar weakness following the rate cut," they added.

# India achieved 2 out of 3 NDC targets under Paris Agreement: Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 17

India has achieved two out of three quantitative nationally determined contributions (NDCs) targets of the Paris Agreement, nine years ahead of schedule, Union Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav announced on Tuesday.

"It is a matter of great pride that India, under the leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji, has achieved 2 out of 3 quan-

titative NDC targets of the Paris Agreement, 9 years ahead of schedule," he said at his address at the 19th Sustainability Summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here.

India had, in 2015, submitted its first NDC target to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 per cent by 2030 from the 2005 level; and to achieve about 40 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

In December 2023, the

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced it achieved the two targets.

Union Minister Yadav noted that the core idea of sustainability is how to utilise resources and added that energy is the foundation of the development model being followed globally and there is no going back from this path. He pointed out that access to energy is key to achieving a dignified life for all.

The "debate today should not be on emission management but

rather what is the cost of per capita emission; hence Sustainability is a social goal," he said, elaborating that sustainability covers "the three concerns of environment, economy, and equity". He stated that all government policies, schemes, programmes and initiatives have to be formulated taking a balanced approach towards these three.

Further, the Environment Minister said that several waste management regulations have already been shared with the industry through EPR.



## Rohit's leadership and respect make him an exceptional captain, says Gambhir

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

With the India-Bangladesh two-match Test series set to commence on Thursday, Gautam Gambhir, the newly appointed Head Coach of Team India opened up about the bond with captain Rohit Sharma.

For Gambhir, the captain is central to a team's success, and while the coach plays an important role, the ultimate responsibility lies with the leader on the field.

Rohit's leadership qualities, Gambhir believes, have earned him immense respect in the dressing room—an essential trait for any successful leader.

"The team ultimately belongs to the captain because he leads on the field," Gambhir told JioCinema. "Rohit's leadership and respect in the dressing room are crucial. So, he's a great guy and has got a lot of respect in that dressing room and that is the first and foremost quality of a leader. I think my relationship with him when we were playing together was fabulous. Even then he was a great



human being and hopefully, I think it continues that way as well."

While Gambhir acknowledged that there will always be disagreements in strategy or decision-making, he firmly believes that the final call should rest with Rohit. For Gambhir, respect and support for the captain are

non-negotiable. "There will be disagreements, but the final decision rests with the captain," he emphasised.

Gambhir also opened up about his coaching philosophy, his close relationships with senior players, and how his transition from player to mentor and now head

coach has shaped his approach. Having shared the field with many of the team's current senior players, Gambhir's familiarity with their personalities and careers has, in his own words, made his role slightly easier.

"Yes, it does help to an extent," he acknowledged. Gambhir reflected on his past playing days with key figures like Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Ravichandran Ashwin, and Jasprit Bumrah, each of whom he watched grow into pillars of Indian cricket.

For Gambhir, this history fosters a sense of ease and understanding. "Rohit was backed despite not having a stellar start, and now he's a key player. Virat has transformed Indian cricket, along with his fitness culture. Ashwin remains dedicated to being the best spinner in the world, and Bumrah has risen to the top of world bowling. Their experiences will be very useful for the younger generation," Gambhir noted.

Gambhir is well aware of the challenges that come with selecting a playing eleven from a pool of immense talent.

With India's deep bench strength, it's never easy to leave players out of the squad. However, Gambhir believes that the focus should be on selecting the right combination to meet the team's needs rather than framing it as dropping players.

"Selecting just eleven players means others have to wait for their opportunity," he explained. But for Gambhir, the solution lies in clear and straightforward communication with the players. "It's about selecting those who can best serve the team's needs," he said, stressing the importance of the coach, captain, and selectors being on the same page to avoid confusion or mixed messages.

Bayern started brightly, with two early goals disallowed from Jamal Musiala and Serge Gnabry. Kane finally broke the deadlock from the penalty spot in the 20th minute after Ronael Pierre-Gabriel fouled Aleksandar Pavlovic in the box. Bayern thought they had another goal ruled out for offside on the half-hour mark, but after a VAR review, Raphael Guerreiro's goal was allowed.

## Champions League: Bayern crush Dinamo Zagreb in goal fest



AGENCIES  
BERLIN, SEP 18

Harry Kane scored four goals to lead Bayern Munich to a commanding 9-2 win over Dinamo Zagreb in the opening round of the Champions League season.

Bayern started brightly, with two early goals disallowed from Jamal Musiala and Serge Gnabry. Kane finally broke the deadlock from the penalty spot in the 20th minute after Ronael Pierre-Gabriel fouled Aleksandar Pavlovic in the box.

Bayern thought they had another goal ruled out for offside on the half-hour mark, but after a VAR review, Raphael Guerreiro's goal was allowed.

Zagreb struggled to contain Bayern, and Vincent Kompany's side extended their lead before the break when Joshua Kimmich's cross was met by new signing Michael Olise from close range, reports Xinhua.

The hosts seemed content with their three-goal advantage and eased off, allowing Zagreb to stage a comeback. Marko Pjaca's backheel pass found Bruno Petkovic, who made it 3-1. Bayern was caught off guard, and Zagreb took advantage when Takuya Ogiwara nutmegged back-up goalkeeper Sven Ulreich five minutes from time.

Bayern regained control of the match at the hour mark when Kane tapped

in from close range to restore their two-goal lead. Zagreb's resilience was broken as Olise slotted home following Musiala's fine build-up work. Kane added two more penalties to make it 7-2 by the 78th minute.

Bayern wasn't done yet, as Leroy Sane curled the ball into the bottom corner from the edge of the penalty area, and substitute Leon Goretzka headed in Kimmich's corner to complete the 9-2 victory. The result makes Bayern the first team ever to score nine goals in a Champions League match.

"It was an amazing game. We had a really good first half. But we must learn from the start of the second half.

## Jr Women's Hockey League: Jai Bharat, SAI Shakti, M.P Academy win on Day 3

AGENCIES  
GWALIOR, SEP 17

Jai Bharat Hockey Academy, SAI Shakti, Centre of Excellence Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy emerged victorious in their respective games on the third day of the Khelo India Junior Women's Hockey League 2024-2025 (Phase 1) here on Tuesday.

Jai Bharat Hockey Academy defeated Bhai Behlo Hockey Academy Bhagta 2-1 in the first Pool A match of the day. Manjeet (21', 51') opened the account for Jai Bharat Hockey Academy but Bhai Behlo Hockey Academy Bhagta's Dipika Barla (35') restored parity with her goal.

It was Manjeet's last quarter goal that shifted the match in Jai Bharat Hockey Academy's favour. SAI Shakti beat Har Hockey Academy 4-1 in Pool A. The



goalscorers for SAI Shakti were Sejal (7', 52'), Sukhveer Kaur (24'), and captain Nandini (53'). Meanwhile, Pooja Malik (12') scored the only goal for Har Hockey Academy.

In a Pool B encounter, Centre of Excellence Jharkhand registered a comprehensive 19-0 victory over Citizen Hockey XI. Sweety Dungdung (1', 8', 16', 18', 27') and Leoni Hemrom (2', 21', 46', 48', 49') led the goalscoring efforts for Centre of Excellence Jharkhand with five goals each. They were

joined on the scoresheet by Ankita Minz (13', 17', 23', 32'), Manila Bage (14', 30'), Kaushlya Kumari (26'), Rajni Kerketta (39') and Anupriya Soreng (40').

Madhya Pradesh Hockey Academy defeated Sports Authority of Gujarat Academy Baroda 11-0 in the last Pool B match. The goalscorers for Madhya Pradesh Hockey were Swati (12', 57'), Soniya Kumre (20'), Rubi Rathore (21'), Khushi Kataria (22', 26', 40'), Sheha Patel (29'), and captain Bhumiksha Sahu (30', 34', 36').

## REALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE GROUP THAT WE STAY POSITIVE, SAYS NZ CAPTAIN DEVINE

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

New Zealand captain Sophie Devine said the team was given the message of staying positive in a bid to overcome their recent struggles in T20Is ahead of meeting Australia in the series opener at Mackay on September 19.

New Zealand face an uphill task to avoid slipping into their worst streak of defeats in T20Is. The white ferns have lost 11 of their last 13 matches since December last year, including losing 5-0 to England in July.

"Obviously the results weren't what we wanted, but we certainly took plenty of learnings away from that. We've had a number of camps where we've addressed where we went wrong and where we



need to look moving forward."

"I think it's really important for this group that we stay positive, that we know that we've worked incredibly hard, not just these last couple of months, but leading into that as well. Just because we didn't have the results we wanted from that series, we're still a good cricket team."

"For us it's been a real interesting balance of how we want to approach this

injury the last couple of months. But she's someone that can bring real pace and bounce to the side."

"I think she's someone that attacks the stumps, which we really like in terms of not only here in Australia, but also over in UAE as well. So we're really looking forward to seeing what she can do. She obviously hasn't played too much the last couple of years, so she's a little bit of an unknown to a few players."

"So we'll certainly be looking for her to have an impact, but just to have her in amongst the group, I think she's someone that absolutely loves cricket. It's been great to have Rosemary back," added Sophie.

Another player to watch for from the New Zealand camp is fast-

bowler Molly Penfold, who recently ended up as the leading wicket taker in Queensland's T20 Max competition, by taking 14 wickets for Sandgate-Redcliffe.

"It was fantastic to see Molly given an opportunity at the T20 Max and to perform against a different crop of cricketers.

There were some quality players there and for her to take as many wickets as she did, it would have given her real confidence."

"She's still a very young player, I think it's important to note that she's still very young in her cricketing career, but her ceiling's massive and that's not just because she's six foot tall. She's got some massive potential in terms of her athletic ability and what she can bring with the ball, but also with the bat."

## Formidable India aim to begin home season on a high against confident Bangladesh

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

Amidst a crazy heatwave in Chennai, a formidable Indian side will be aiming to begin its international home season on a high against confident Bangladesh in the Test series opener at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Thursday.

While India are returning to red-ball action after a gap of six months and last defeated England 4-1 in January, Bangladesh come on the back of a remarkable 2-0 series win over Pakistan, their first series victory over the side in Test cricket, in Rawalpindi, indicating that they won't be just mere pushovers this time around.

Bangladesh's recent good form and India's home domination has led to anticipation about how this Test series would pan out, as compared to chatter around its previous editions being of lopsided affairs.



The red-soil pitch will bring good bounce and carry, but with soaring temperatures in Chennai, spinners will come more into picture.

India will be welcoming back Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant and KL Rahul into Test cricket action after varying long periods of absence. Their return means Sarfaraz Khan and Dhruv Jurel will be warming the bench. Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja along with Kuldeep Yadav will be the key in leading India's charge with spin, while their valuable batting runs would also be

an aspect which will be the difference between a good total and a winning score.

For Bangladesh, they come with a dash of belief in their abilities and confidence to continue their good work after the historic triumph in Rawalpindi. With Chennai set to aid spinners, it means either Tajjil Islam or Nayeem Hasan are likely to enter the playing eleven.

With head coach Chandika Hathurusinghe stating Bangladesh have all bases covered, it means they have all the ingredients in their arsenal - crafty spinners, exciting pacers and

gritty batters - to surprise India in Chennai. The task may be improbable, but with nothing to lose, Bangladesh will be buoyed to shine bright under unforgiving Chennai heat, provided India immediately hits the ground running as a dominant force at home.

Squads  
India: Rohit Sharma (c), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul, Sarfaraz Khan, Rishabh Pant (wk), Dhruv Jurel (wk), R Ashwin, R Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Siraj, Akash Deep, Jasprit Bumrah, Yash Dayal.

Bangladesh: Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Zakir Hasan, Shadman Islam, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim (wk), Shakib Al Hasan, Litton Kumer Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Tajjil Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed, Syed Khaled Ahmed, Jaker Ali Anik.

## No doubt Sarfaraz had very good debut, but Rahul consistent in scoring runs, says Parthiv

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

Former India wicketkeeper-batter Parthiv Patel believes KL Rahul's consistent run-scoring secured his selection over Sarfaraz Khan in the playing eleven for the first Test against Bangladesh, starting on September 19 in Chennai. "You have to look at KL Rahul's performance in the last few years. He has been fantastic. He scored 100 in South Africa at Centurion. When he played that only Test match against England in Hyderabad, he scored runs. He has been around scoring runs consistently, had a very good World Cup as well."

"But having said that, Sarfaraz had a very good debut series, no doubt about it. As far as I am concerned, India would definitely start with KL Rahul. I don't see a question there, but it's good to see that India has that kind of competition amongst players for every position,"



said Parthiv to IANS in a select virtual interaction.

Rahul became the designated number five batter since making a fine hundred in challenging conditions against South Africa at the Centurion Park last year.

But after making 86 and 22 against England in Hyderabad in January, Rahul got injured and missed the rest of the series.

In his absence, Sarfaraz came in and smashed 200 runs in three matches, including a fifty on debut

in Rajkot. But with Rahul fit and available after making 37 and 57 in first round of the Duleep Trophy, head coach Gautam Gambhir indicated on Thursday that he walks into the eleven ahead of Sarfaraz, a team dynamic which Parthiv agrees with.

He also talked about what makes fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah currently stand head and shoulders above any other bowler in the world.

"The ability to understand the game and delivering under pressure

- that's something which makes him stand apart from anyone else.

"I've seen him since he's made his first-class debut. He was predominantly just in-swinging bowler. But now you can see how he takes the ball away. He has mastered the yorker length very well, and can disguise it really well with his slower ones. Plus, he wasn't using bouncer as such, but now he's using that also.

"So he has all the variety, and perfection in all of those balls he bowls. For me, using those balls at the right point of time, and delivering under pressure, that makes him stand apart from any bowler in the world," he added.

With Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj being sure starters for the Chennai Test, it means someone like Akash Deep needs to wait for his chance. But Parthiv has been impressed with what he's seen of the Bengal pacer so far.



## Zabarwan Park witnessed a vibrant display of Unity as thousands gathered for Mega Voter Awareness Event under SVEEP

J1NEWS SERVICE  
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 17

Zabarwan Park on Boulevard Road witnessed a vibrant display of unity and civic responsibility as thousands gathered for the second Mega Voter Awareness Event, part of the SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) initiative.

The event was held on the directions of District Election Officer (DEO) Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-Udin Bhat to energize and educate the Electorates on the critical importance of Voting. General Election Observer, Akhlesh Mishra, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion addressed the gathering, stressing the need for a high voter turnout to ensure true representation.

Returning Officer Khanyar Assembly Constituency of Srinagar District,



Ajaz Ahmad administered the SVEEP pledge, urging voters to turn out in large numbers on 25th September and highlighted the role of voting in strengthening democracy.

Nodal Officer SVEEP for Khanyar AC Wahida Sheikh emphasized the importance of active voter engagement in safeguard-

ing democratic values. District Nodal Officer SVEEP, Shabina Kyser also emphasized the importance of active voter engagement in safeguarding democratic values.

The Voter Awareness event began with a spirited Motorcade Rally through Shahr-e-Khaas ares of Srinagar for promoting voter

participation through banners and slogans and culminated at Nehru Park, where participants joined in a symbolic walkathon titled "Run for Democracy." The release of balloons symbolized peace and a collective commitment to the upcoming elections.

A festive atmosphere took over as cultural and sports activities filled the day. Pencak Silat martial arts, field archery, arm wrestling, and other games energized the crowd,

while traditional Kashmiri performances, including ruf folk songs, ladishah, and dramatic skits, entertained and conveyed strong voter awareness messages. A mock election campaign provided a hands-on experience of the voting process, adding a practical touch to the event. Students from various schools participated in the event and presented

various shows and activities including election skit, kite flying etc.

Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and Booth Awareness Groups (BAGs) actively participated, distributing voter registration pamphlets and setting up informational stalls to encourage electoral participation. A kite-flying activity, with messages promoting voting, added a colorful flair to the event.

The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks, reinforcing the ongoing need for voter engagement and the indispensable role of the electorate in the success of democratic processes.

Deputy CEO, Srinagar, Anjum Raja, along with Principals, Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs), Headmasters, Student voters, and a large number of citizens who lent their support to this vital democratic endeavor.

## SVEEP Awareness Camp engages Women voters in remote Panchayat Chaloge

J1NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 18

To promote voter awareness among women, a comprehensive Women Awareness Camp was organized today in Panchayat Chaloge Block Dugan, Bani under the aegis of Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation campaign. The camp, which aimed to educate Anganwadi workers and local women about the importance of voting, was jointly led by AC Nodal Officer Ravinder Kour (Women Awareness) and AC Nodal Officer Aditya Krishna Dogra (Postal Ballot and Home Voting). The camp highlighted different aspects of electoral participation, particularly emphasizing the significance of women exercising their right to vote. The session focused on the voting process, the importance of every



single vote in shaping the future of the region, and the available methods of voting, including postal ballots and home voting, to ensure wider participation.

Nodal Officer Ravinder Kour emphasized the role of women in strengthening democracy, while Nodal Officer Aditya Krishna Dogra provided detailed insights on the procedures for postal ballots and home voting, particularly designed for individuals with mobility issues, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

The camp witnessed active participation from Anganwadi workers and local women, who engaged in discussions about their voting rights and responsibilities. Participants also expressed their enthusiasm to contribute to the upcoming elections by encouraging other women in the community to cast their votes.

This initiative is part of an ongoing series of awareness programs aimed at increasing voter turnout and empowering women in the electoral process in Bani.

## DEA Shopian honours first time voters, first voters of the day in a novel initiative

J1NEWS SERVICE  
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 18

On a momentous day for democracy, the polling process began early morning today across the 36-Zainapora and 37-Shopian Assembly Constituencies, with voters turning out in large numbers to participate in the electoral process.

The District Election Authority (DEA) went above and beyond to make this election a memorable occasion, particularly for first-time voters and voters who reported first in the polling stations.

District Election Officer, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar along with SSP, Anayat Ali honoured some of these voters at the polling stations.

In an inspiring and unique initiative, the District Administration honoured these first-time voters, who symbolize the



new wave of democratic participation in Shopian with certificates of appreciation and a token of love and gratitude.

At every polling station, special certificates of appreciation were distributed to the first time voters, acknowledging their contribution to shaping the future of the district.

The move was met with widespread enthusiasm, as it highlighted the district's commitment to inclusivity in the democratic process.

The atmosphere at

polling stations was one of excitement and pride. The young voters, some accompanied by their families, proudly casted their first votes, marking a significant milestone in their lives.

Many expressed their joy, noting how welcomed and encouraged they felt by the District Administration's efforts.

As polling continues, the District Administration is closely monitoring operations to ensure a peaceful, transparent, and orderly election process at all polling stations.

## Awareness on EVM, Voting Process organised at GLDM Degree College Hiranagar

J1NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 18

To promote voter education and electoral participation, the Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) and NSS unit of Govt. GLDM Degree College, Hiranagar organized a comprehensive Awareness Programme on Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and the Voting Process.

The event aimed to educate students and community members about the importance of voting and familiarize them with the technical aspects of the voting process.

Participants were given a hands-on demonstration of the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) and its key components, including the Control Unit (CU), Ballot Unit (BU), and the VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) system. The program also covered detailed explanations



about the voting procedures, including the roles of polling officers and the identification documents required for voting on Election Day.

The event saw active participation from students, faculty, and local citizens, who engaged in discussions about the significance of every vote in shaping the democratic future of the nation. The

initiative was part of a broader effort to ensure high voter turnout and informed participation in the upcoming elections.

Through this program, the Electoral Literacy Club and NSS unit continue their commitment to fostering a culture of informed and responsible citizenship among the youth and the larger community.

## Second Randomization of polling staff for 06 ACs of Kupwara District held



J1NEWS SERVICE  
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 18

In preparation for the upcoming general assembly elections-2024 in Kupwara district, the second randomisation process of polling parties for all six assembly constituencies of the district was completed on Wednesday.

Under the Second phase of Randomization, the polling parties were allocated to their respective assembly constituencies through a dedicated online Software JKEDIS as per the prescribed guidelines of Election Commission of India (ECI).

The Randomization process was conducted under the supervision of General Observer Trehgam, Kupwara P. Hema Latha; General Observer Handwara, Pankaj K. Panday; General Observ-

er, Karnah, Prakash Bindu; General Observer, Lolab, Tshewang Gyachho Bhutia and District Election Officer (DEO), Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan.

The randomization was done as per the guidelines stipulated by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

It was informed on the occasion that all the prerequisites are being fulfilled as per the ECI mandate for smooth fair and peaceful elections in all six assembly constituencies of the district.

A total of 622 polling booths have been set up in Kupwara district for the upcoming assembly elections which will be held on October 1, under the 3rd phase of elections.

Dy. DEO Kupwara, DIO NIC and others concerned were present on the occasion.

## Ist Randomization of supplementary Ballot Units conducted at Bandipora

J1NEWS SERVICE  
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 18

In connection with General Elections to Legislative Assembly-2024, first Randomization of Supplementary Ballot Units for 14- Sonawari and 15-Bandipora Assembly Constituencies of Bandipora District was conducted today in accordance with the guidelines of Election Commission of India (ECI) at VC Room mini Secretariat Bandipora.

The Supplementary Randomization process was held under the supervision of District Election Officer (DEO), Bandipora, Manzoor Ahmad Qadri in presence of representatives of the Political parties and Contesting Candidates.

The process of Supplementary Randomisation of Ballot Units was carried out through dedicated Software and additional required numbers of Ballot Units were allocated for use during the upcoming Polls, as the number of Contesting Candidates in 14- Sonawari and 15- Bandipora Assembly constituencies are more than 16.

On the occasion, 192 supplementary Ballot Units for 14-Sonawari and



202 supplementary Ballot Units for 15- Bandipora AC were selected randomly from the pool of available ballot units.

Prior to the supplementary Randomisation process, DEO briefed the participants regarding the process of randomization, ensuring the fairness and integrity of the electoral process.

The DEO said that randomization helps to prevent any potential bias or manipulation in the assignment of EVMs, thus ensuring that each polling station receives its machines impartially and in a transparent manner as per the guidelines of Election Commission of

India. The entire process was video recorded as per ECI guidelines and the list of Ballot units post randomisation was handed over to the representatives of political parties and contesting candidates.

Returning Officer 15-Bandipora, Shabir Ahmad Wani; Nodal officer EVM, Irfan Bahadur; Nodal Officer MCMC, Aadil Manzoor Wani; District Informatics Officer and other concerned Officials of District Election Authority were also present on the occasion.

RO 14- Sonawari, Mur-taza Ahmad Sheikh also attended through virtual mode.

## Election Observers review preparations for Assembly Elections in Poonch District

J1NEWS SERVICE  
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 18

General Election observers for Poonch district, Solai Bharathi Dasan, Siddhartha Das, Rohan Kanay and Expenditure Observer Bharat Ramchandra Anshale conducted a comprehensive review of the preparations for the upcoming Assembly Elections in Poonch district today. The high-level meeting, aimed at assessing the district's electoral readiness, brought together key officials and observers, underscoring the commitment to ensuring a smooth and fair voting process in this border district on the 25th of September.

District Election Officer (DEO) Poonch, Vikas Kundal delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation, briefing the observers on various aspects of election preparedness in the district. The presentation covered crucial areas such as the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct, security arrangements, voter awareness initiatives, and logistical preparations for polling day.

The observers, drawing from their experience,



shared valuable suggestions and guidelines to further strengthen the election machinery in Poonch. They stressed the importance of strict adherence to the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines and the need for transparent and impartial conduct of all election-related activities. They emphasized the timely completion of all arrangements and, if necessary, the assurance of alternate arrangements.

Special attention was given to the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities being carried out in the district. The officials discussed strategies to increase voter turnout and ensure informed participation of citizens in the democratic process.

The meeting also

touched upon the preparedness of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) systems, the training of polling staff, and the arrangements at polling stations to facilitate smooth voting.

DEO Vikas Kundal expressed confidence in Poonch district's readiness for the Assembly Elections 2024. He assured the observers that all necessary measures are being taken to uphold the integrity of the electoral process and to encourage maximum voter participation.

The meeting was attended by SSP Poonch Muntaz Ahmad, ADC Poonch Tahir Mustafa Malik, ROs, and Nodal officers from all three assembly constituencies of Poonch district: Surankote, Haveli, and Mendhar.

## Signature Campaign organized at Kathua to promote electoral awareness



J1NEWS SERVICE  
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 18

As part of ongoing efforts to spread voter education, a Signature Campaign was held at the Zonal Education Office Kathua here today under the aegis of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP). The initiative aimed to engage the public and encourage maximum participation in the Assembly Election,

scheduled in the district on October 1, 2024.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from local citizens and passersby, who signed a pledge to promote voter awareness in their communities. By participating, individuals committed to spreading the message about the significance of voting and encouraging others to actively engage in the democratic process.