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DENGUE WARNING SIGNS

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

Watch out for dengue warning signs!

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

- Severe and continuous abdominal pain
- Diarrhoea
- Persistent vomiting
- A sharp rise in temperature
- Disorientation
- Bleeding from gums or nose, blood in vomit, urine or stool
- Redness on the skin

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

JINDRAH IMAGES

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NC-Congress following Pak roadmap in J&K, Article 370 won't come back: Modi

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU (KATRA), SEP 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday said remarks of Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif's assertions suggest the National Conference and Congress were following Pakistan's agenda in J&K. He, however, said no power on earth can bring Article 370 and Article 35 A back as long as BJP is in power.

"Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif claimed that Pakistan was on the same page on Article 370 and Article 35 A as to what NC-Congress alliance is advocating. This shows that NC-Congress are trying to implement Pakistan's agenda in J&K," Prime Minister Modi said addressing a massive election rally at Katra, Jammu, as per news agency. "Article 370 and Article 35 A have gone forever and have no power and bring it back as long as BJP is in power."

This was the second rally in a day by PM Modi. Earlier, he addressed a massive rally in Srinagar. About the Statehood, PM Modi said that BJP was committed to return the Statehood to J&K as promised on the floor of the House already. He said while Congress

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J&K needs freedom from 'political fiefdom' of Abdullahs, Mufits, Gandhis: PM Modi in Srinagar

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19

Praising people of J&K for coming out in large numbers to cast votes in the first phase of Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Thursday said that his ultimate mission is to give UT a complete freedom from the political fiefdom of three families—Abdullahs, Mufits and Gandhis.

PM Modi stated this in a jam-packed rally at Sher-e-



Kashmir Cricket Stadium Sonwar in Srinagar, as per news agency. He started

his speech in Kashmiri: "Myanin Saarni Keashren bayan, te benin chu mayne

tarfe namaskaar (Namaskaar to all my Kashmiri brothers and sisters).

As the crowd yelled Modi, Modi, the Prime Minister thundered from the stage: "This is Naya Kashmir. Our endeavour is J&K's progress and development. I can see today, my brothers and sisters shouting Khushamdeed PM (welcome PM). I am thankful to you all from the core of my heart," he said.

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CONSTITUENCY PROFILE JAMMU NORTH-79 AC

BJP's Sham Lal Sharma to lock horns with NC's Ajay Sadhotra

Sharma coined Hindu CM term for J&K, Sadhotra, NC's old guard

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEP 19

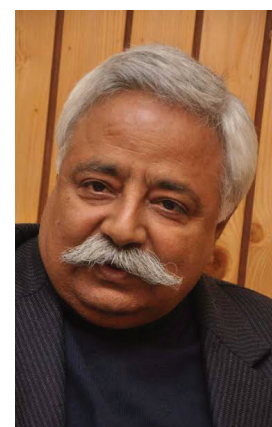
As the first phase of Assembly elections is over and the focus has shifted to two other phases, one of the most high profile seats of Jammu district, Jammu North, is going to witness clash between two leaders who have to shift to this seat because their original seats have become reserve for Schedule Caste (ST) community.

The two Brahmins, Sham Lal Sharma, representing Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and Ajay Sadhotra, the old guard of National Conference (NC), will be head to head.

As per the news agency, Jammu North Assembly Constituency has 111228 votes including 56952 male, 54274 female and two transgender voters eligible to vote in the third phase of Assembly elections on October 1.

After the final date of withdrawal of nomination papers, a total of 17 candidates are in the fray for Jammu North

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2ND PHASE

Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Congress's Rahul to address people in Jammu



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19

Ahead of the 2nd and 3rd phase of Assembly Elections in Jammu and Kashmir, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh are visiting Jammu region once again on September 21 to garner support for the party candidates. Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi is also all set to visit Jammu's surankote on September 23.

As per the reports received by the news agency, the Home Minister Amit Shah will arrive in Jammu between September 20 and 21 and is scheduled to address a public rally in Surankote.

Also, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will

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BJP has nothing to showcase except targeting three political families in J&K: Omar

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19

National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah on Thursday said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) does not have anything to showcase except targeting the three political families in Jammu and Kashmir.

Omar made these remarks in reply to a question that Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his election rally in Srinagar today said that the National Conference, Peoples Democratic Party and Congress "destroyed" Jammu

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Home Voting: PwD, octogenarians cast ballots

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19

As the second phase of the Assembly election draws closer, the Election Commission of India's (ECI's) home voting facility has gained momentum in Srinagar district, with voters aged above 85 years and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) availing the option to exercise their vote.

As per the details available with the news agency, the home voting facility has been utilized by many individuals today.

Among them, Mohammad Aslam Bhat, a Chanapora resident in Srinagar's 23rd Assembly Constituency, availed the facility.

Aslam, after casting

his ballot, said, "This has made it easier for me to discharge my duty without any hassle. I thank the authorities for making a difference for persons like me who find it tough to reach polling stations," he said.

He expressed his happiness after casting his vote, and commended the step taken by the ECI. He also mentioned that he had cast his vote in a similar manner during the Parliamentary elections, and was pleased to contribute towards building a new society.

Meanwhile, authorities have extended this facility to voters in Dal Lake-type localities, where election officials went around

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PAK DEFENCE MINISTER'S STATEMENT ROW BJP will explore means to act against Cong, NC for act of treason, sedition: Dr Jitendra

JI NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEP 19

Union Minister, Dr Jitendra Singh on Thursday said that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is exploring means to take legal action against Congress and National Conference (NC) for treason and sedition.

Addressing a press conference, Dr Jitendra Singh as per the news agency said that there is a nexus between Pakistan and the so called mainstream parties of J&K namely NC, PDP and Congress, which draw inspiration from Islamabad (Pakistan) and has been exposed after the statement of Pak Defence Minister, Khawaja Asif



over its partnership with Kashmir based parties to restore Article 370.

Dr Singh said, "Defence Minister of Pakistan, Khawaja Asif had stated that Pakistan is in league with Congress and its allies (NC and PDP), and adding that this promotes separatism or soft separatism and also talking of back Article 370

in Jammu and Kashmir, indicates the deep conspiracy."

He further said that Congress and its allies need to apologise and explain nation about their intentions.

"I think Congress and its allies, National Conference and PDP need to

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First Muslim IAS officer of Kashmir passes away

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19 (UNI)

Kashmir's first Muslim to crack prestigious Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Mohammad Shafi Pandit, 80, died on Thursday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised Shafi Pandit and expressed his sympathies to the bereaved family.

"I have received the information that one of the first IAS officers from Kashmir and a source of pride for the region, passed away last night. Even after his retirement, he continued to work for the welfare of society. In this time of sorrow, our thoughts and prayers

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LG, CS condole demise

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha Thursday expressed grief over the demise of former IAS officer, Mohammad Shafi Pandit.

The text of the Lieutenant Governor's message is as follows: "Saddened by the demise of Shri Mohammad Shafi Pandit ji. He had an illustrious career as a bureaucrat and served with distinction. He will be remembered for his significant contributions to public service and civil society. My thoughts and

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CS reviews progress of afforestation carried under different campaigns



JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Thursday chaired a meeting of the Forest Department to assess the efforts made in treating the degraded areas through plantation or other conservation mea-

asures. The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary (ACS), Forests; Pr Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF); Addl PCCFs; Director Social Forestry; Director Remote Sensing and other concerned officers of

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INTERVIEW

Tihar no more a jail, but training centre to divide people: Congress's G A Mir

'Jamaat-e-Islami's participation in polls not self-motivated; alliance eyeing 65 seats; Er Rashid's release is surrender; people's overwhelming participation in polls their anger of 5 years; resolution in assembly would be first step towards statehood'

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEP 19

All India Congress Committee (AICC) General Secretary and former Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) Chief, Ghulam Ahmad Mir termed the Tihar Jail as a training centre, alleging it is no longer just a jail but a place where people are trained to divide others on the ground.

In an exclusive interaction with the news agency, he also said that Jamaat-e-

Islami's decision to participate in the elections is not self-motivated.

Mir, who is the joint candidate of the National Conference and Congress from the Dooru assembly segment, added that the decisions made against the aspirations of the people over the last ten years, especially in the last five years, have created silence all around, while the government has been calling it normalcy. "The large number of people turning up at the polling booths



is anger against the government decisions. It is a beautiful way of showing anger, which otherwise would have been

expressed through guns and stones," he said.

Asked about Jamaat-e-Islami's decision to participate in the elec-

tions, the AICC General Secretary said if it were their own decision, they would not have stayed away from the polls for three decades. "But, since it has been exposed that the government has been experimenting with different parties like A, B, C, D, and now E and F as well, it seems that the decision of JeI is not self-motivated, but rather there seems to be either support or pressure from the government or a compulsion. JeI's participation in the polls

doesn't look natural," he said.

However, he added that Congress has always welcomed people who want to come forward through constitutional or democratic processes. "Choosing the path of rebellion is not the solution. Those with an understanding of it had earlier joined the mainstream, but those with less understanding are now participating in the democratic process, which they should

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Inter-college mega SVEEP event held at GCOE to promote voter awareness

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

Govt. College of Education (GCOE)/IASE M.A Road today organized an Inter-college Mega SVEEP Event at the Auditorium of college here with an aim of increasing voter awareness and encouraging electoral participation among the youth of Srinagar. The event was inaugurated by Nodal Principal of Kashmir Division Colleges, Prof. Seema Naz.

Students and faculty members from various city colleges actively participated in this event.

In her inaugural speech, Prof. Seema Naz stressed on the importance of voting, describing it as the fundamental and basic pillar of democracy. She emphasized that young voters have the power to shape the future of the country through their par-



ticipation in the electoral process.

The program featured a variety of engaging activities. A musical performance by Amar Singh College students, captivated the audience with songs promoting voter awareness, including the notable track "Mai Bharat Hoon".

A skit by Govt. College of Education students emphasizing that voting is the key to democracy, surpassing wealth and power and Poetry recitation by Hardip Singh from

AAAM Degree College, who shared meaningful poetry and Kashmiri songs focused on the power of voting, enthralled the audience.

A skit titled "Chunav Patshala" by GCW Nowakadal students, illustrated the entire election process, from voter registration to casting a vote and voter awareness song performed by Mohammad Shafi, a B.Ed student, who composed the piece to inspire students about the importance of voting, also inspired the gathering.

A musical jugalbandi by S.P. College students to creatively promote the significance of voting also captivated the mood of audience.

A painting competition was also held, with students from various city colleges expressing their views on democracy through artwork.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr. Nazir Ahmad Bhat, Dean of Students, who expressed his gratitude to Prof. (Dr.) Seema Naz, faculty members, students, and all stakeholders for their efforts in making the event a success.

This Mega SVEEP Event effectively energized the youth, reminding them of their responsibility to vote and contribute to the democratic process. It was a vital initiative aimed at increasing voter participation in the elections.

Awareness programme under SVEEP initiative held at HS Kehnusa Bandipora

J1 NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 19

SVEEP cell Bandipora on Thursday organised an awareness programme at High School Kehnusa here under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative.

The programme was aimed to increase voter turnout in the upcoming assembly elections and encourage greater participation of voters across various areas.

The event witnessed active participation from Booth Level Awareness Groups (BAGS), Aanganwari workers, AASHA workers, and several allied departments.

The programme presided over by Chief Education Officer Bandipora, Kishore Kumar was also attended by Nodal Officer Manpower and Trainings,



Dr. G.M. Pujoo; SVEEP Nodal Officer 15- Bandipora AC, Ab Rashid Lone and SVEEP Coordinator, Arnullah Habib.

During his address, CEO emphasized on the criti-

cal role that Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and other allied departments play in motivating voters and ensuring maximum voter participation. He urged all stakeholders to put their

best efforts into encouraging eligible citizens to vote.

Nodal Officer Manpower and Trainings, called on village-level committees to actively engage in spreading voter awareness within their communities, stressing the importance of grassroots efforts in driving electoral participation.

SVEEP Nodal Officer 15- Bandipora AC also addressed the gathering, reiterating the need for coordinated efforts between different departments to achieve the goal of higher voter turnout in the assembly elections.

SVEEP Coordinator, Arnullah Habib, concluded the session, emphasizing on the importance of democracy and the role of an informed electorate in upholding democratic values. He encouraged all participants to strengthen efforts towards voter education and participation.

SVEEP Awareness program organised for special children at Roop Nagar

J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 19

District Social Welfare Department today hosted sports events at Louis Braille School for sightless girls Roopnagar to spread voter awareness among the specially abled students and encourage them to exercise their right to vote in the J&K Assembly Elections-2024.

Around 300 people, including school students, government functionaries and civil society members participated in the program. District Social Welfare Officer Mamta Rajput and her team informed the students regarding the special facilities available for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) at polling booths and the use of SAKSHAM App launched by ECI. The awareness program was held under the SVEEP initiative.

The students were



engaged by hosting different indoor and outdoor sports events including badminton, judo, chess, Carrom board and tug of war in which around 60 specially abled children participated.

The event also featured solo singing, group singing and poetry competition with the electoral Education theme.

The young voters were educated regarding Saksham App and various facilities being provided by the election commission at the polling booths for persons with disabilities including ramps, wheel-chairs etc.

The participants,

through the medium of the event, urged all the PwD voters of district Jammu to participate in the election process by casting their valuable vote at the nearest polling booth on 1st of October the third phase of Assembly Election-2024.

Akhter Hussain Qazi, Nodal Officer SVEEP J&K, Sapna Kotwal, Nodal Officer Media were the chief guests on the occasion.

District Mission Coordinator, Mission Shakti Shagun Manchanda, Tehsil Social Welfare Officers, staff of Social Welfare Department, Mission Vatsalya were present on the occasion.

Assembly Elections-2024: Bani hosts mega SVEEP rally to highlight power of voting

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 19

In a significant initiative to raise public awareness about the importance of voting in a democratic setup, a mega rally was organized today in the Sarthali locality of 63-Bani here under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program. The rally held under the guidance of RO 63-Bani, Giasul Haq (SDM), witnessed enthusiastic participation from students of BA 3rd and 5th semesters, who held placards and banners emphasizing the power of voting. Their messages, displayed in Hindi, English, and Urdu, included slogans such as "My Vote, My Right," "Voting is Power," "The Power of Vote," and "The Ballot is Always Stronger than the Bullet." The event was led by the AC SVEEP



Nodal Officer 63-Bani Constituency, Prof. Naseeb Kr Bhagat, accompanied by faculty members Dr. Nisha Devi and Prof. Vishab Thappa. Students voiced their support for democracy with resounding slogans, further highlighting the crucial role of voting in empowering citizens.

The rally, which commenced from the college premises and concluded at the college gate after covering the Sarthali locality, was a resounding success in spreading the mes-

sage of voter participation. Prof. Bhagat expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the students and staff for their active involvement and commitment to raising awareness ahead of the upcoming voting day on 1st October 2024.

This SVEEP activity marks another step towards ensuring that every eligible citizen understands their role and responsibility in shaping the future of the country through the power of their vote.

Interactive session under SVEEP initiative held at Panchayat-B Onagam Bandipora



J1 NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 19

In an effort to boost voter turnout in the upcoming assembly elections, District Election Authority Bandipora today organised an interactive session under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative at Panchayat-B Onagam here.

The session brought together Booth Level Awareness Groups (BAGS), Aanganwari workers, AASHA workers, and other concerned.

The interactive session was attended by Nodal Officer Man Power and Trainings Dr. G.M. Pujoo; SVEEP Nodal officer for Bandipora AC, Ab Rashid Lone; Member Secretary BAGS, Javaid Jawad, and

SVEEP coordinator Arnullah Habib. Speaking on the occasion Dr. G.M. Pujoo emphasized the importance of informed voting and responsible citizenship, urging participants to actively engage in the electoral process while SVEEP Nodal Officer, Ab Rashid Lone highlighted the significance of voter education and awareness in ensuring a robust democracy.

Member Secretary BAGS, in his address stressed on the role of BAGS in promoting electoral literacy and encouraging voter participation. Furthermore SVEEP Coordinator encouraged the audience to spread awareness about the importance of voting, especially among young and first-time voters.

Kupwara completes 2nd EVM Randomization in presence of Election Observers

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KUPWARA, SEPTEMBER 19

Second Randomization of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for all the six assembly Constituencies (ACs) of Kupwara district was held today in presence of General Election Observers, candidates and representatives of different political parties.

Under the Second phase of Randomization, the EVMs were allocated to all the polling stations of six assembly constituencies through a dedicated online Software JKEDIS as per the prescribed guidelines of Election Commission of India (ECI) under the supervision of General Observer Trehgam, Kupwara P. Hema Latha; General Observer Handwara, Pankaj K. Panday; General Observer, Karnah, Prakash Bindu; General Observer, Lolab, Tshewang Gyachho Bhutia and District Election Officer (DEO), Kupwara, Ms. Ayushi Sudan.

The second randomization allocated EVMs including Ballot Units, Control Units and VVPATs to polling stations of all six assembly constituencies including Karnah, Trehgam, Kupwara, Lolab,



Handwara and Langate assembly constituencies.

Following the randomization, an interaction was also held among the General Observers, Returning Officers and the candidates and representatives of political parties to clear all doubts and queries related to the election process.

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.

DEO said that home voting is being conducted on September 23, 24 and 25 to facilitate Voters above 85 years of age and

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with 40 per cent benchmark disability criteria. She said that teams for the home voting have been constituted to facilitate the senior citizens and PWD voters.

DEO further said that on the same dates, September 23, 24 and 25 Postal ballot voting will also be held where service voters, employees on election duties, and employees carrying out essential service duties can use their right to franchise.

ROs, Dy. District Election Officer Kupwara, District Informatics officer, (NIC), candidates, their agents and others concerned were present in the meeting.

DEO briefs media on Election preparations in District Rajouri

J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 19

District Election Officer Rajouri, Abhishhek Sharma today addressed the media to provide an update on the district's preparedness for the upcoming Assembly Elections. He outlined key measures taken to ensure smooth conduct of the elections across the five Assembly constituencies, including three reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST).

DEO Sharma highlighted that a total of 745 polling stations have been established in the district. This is a notable increase from the 680 polling stations set up for the Lok Sabha elections. "With 65 new polling stations created over the past two months, all have been equipped with Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF)" he added.

To ensure effective voter outreach, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are conducting regular visits to respective panchayats, and sector officers are overseeing their jurisdictions. As of today, over 4,44,000 voter information slips have been successfully distributed.

In a bid to encourage voter participation, Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation



(SVEEP) activities have been organized throughout the district. These activities have included a grand Mushaira, balloon rallies, and plantation drives. DEO Sharma also interacted with Electoral Literacy Clubs and first-time voters during field visits to further enhance voter education.

A significant step toward inclusive voting was marked with the initiation of home voting today, enabling voters with specific needs to cast their votes from home.

Polling parties have undergone comprehensive training, while 25 Model Polling Stations have been set up across the five Assembly constituencies to enhance the voting experience.

Advertisements are being pre-certified, and the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) is vigilantly monitoring both print and electronic media. Flying Squads (FST) and Static Surveillance Teams (SST) are actively work-

ing across the district to enforce election guidelines.

Special arrangements have been made for the 51 polling stations located near the Line of Control (LoC), with functional bunkers and alternative provisions in place in case of any cross-border shelling.

SSP Rajouri, Randeep Kumar, also briefed the media on the robust security arrangements in place. Area domination exercises have been conducted, and inter-district and intra-district checkpoints (Nakas) have been established. Search operations are ongoing in forest areas, and additional security personnel have been deployed to maintain peace and ensure free and fair elections.

SSP Kumar further stated that important contact numbers have been shared in the public domain for emergency situations, ensuring the public can quickly report any issues that may arise during the election period.

Second round of EVM randomisation conducted in Jammu



J1 NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 19

The second randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines was successfully conducted today here at the district headquarters Jammu. The process was held in the presence of representatives from the political parties, ensuring transparency and fairness in the lead-up to the forthcoming Assembly elections.

District Election Officer, Sachin Kumar Vaishya oversaw the randomization in presence of General Observers, D. Amoy Kumar, Gopala Krishan K., Abhinav Chandra, Monica Malik, D. Sajith Babu and Priyanka Das. The procedure was executed under the technical supervision of Director IT (DIO NIC

Jammu) and Nodal Officer ETPBS, Sanjeev Kapoor.

A total of 2406 Ballot Units, 2242 Control Units, and 2242 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) were randomised which included 164 supplementary Ballot Units as well.

This randomisation covered all 1497 polling stations spread across the 11 Assembly constituencies of the district: 72-Bishnah, 73-Suchetgarh, 74-RS Pura Jammu South, 75-Bahu, 76-Jammu East, 77-Nagrota, 78-Jammu West, 79-Jammu North, 80-Marh, 81-Akhnour and 82-Chhamb.

Returning Officers and Nodal Officers were also present at the occasion. The entire process was conducted as per ECI guidelines.

General Observer reviews election preparations for Channapora Assembly Constituency

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

In preparation for the upcoming Assembly Elections, Dr. Rajan Vishal, General Observer for the 23-Channapora Assembly Constituency, held a review meeting at the office of the Returning Officer, located at Srinagar Municipal Corporation.

This meeting was held as part of efforts to ensure a smooth and transparent electoral process in the constituency, with a focus on ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and efficiency. The meeting was attended by Suhail-ul-Islam, Returning Officer for 23-Channapora Assembly Constituency, Kifayat Ali, Assistant Returning Officer, and various constituency-level nodal officers. Together, they discussed several critical areas of election preparedness, aiming to address potential challenges and streamline operations ahead of the elections.

Among the primary topics of discussion was the distribution of Electoral Photo Identity Cards



(EPIC) to ensure all eligible voters receive their cards on time.

The team also evaluated the Accessible Voting Facilities (AMF) set up at polling stations, making sure they meet the needs of voters with disabilities.

The performance of Booth Level Awareness Groups, responsible for educating and assisting voters, was reviewed for its impact on voter turnout and understanding of the process.

The meeting also covered the establishment of special polling stations, which are being planned to enhance voter access, especially for those with specific needs. Another key point was the finalization of Micro Observer appointments, whose role will be to monitor polling stations for compliance with election protocols and transparency.

The operational strategies of Flying Squads (FSTs) and Static Surveillance Teams (SSTs), critical to maintaining election

integrity, were thoroughly assessed. Additionally, the training of polling staff was a priority, ensuring they are well-versed in all election procedures and protocols. Compliance with the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) was also discussed, with a strong emphasis on maintaining ethical standards during the election process. The team is also putting in place a robust Complaint Redressal Mechanism to handle voter complaints efficiently and ensure their concerns are promptly addressed. The functionality and readiness of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were also verified to ensure smooth and accurate vote recording.

Dr. Rajan Vishal stressed the importance of thorough preparation and close coordination between all agencies involved to proactively address any challenges that may arise.

He underscored the commitment to delivering a fair and free election with a focus on voter satisfaction and the integrity of the electoral process.

Home Voting via POSTAL BALLOT commences in Srinagar District

JI NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

Home voting via POSTAL BALLOT, for the Assembly election has officially begun today across all eight constituencies of District Srinagar, utilizing postal ballots to facilitate the voting process. This initiative is specifically aimed at enhancing electoral participation among voters aged 85 and older, as well as persons with 40% bench mark disability. The Home Voting process will continue for three days, until September 21, 2024. Dedicated staff members, including polling personnel, micro-observers, and reserves, are deployed across various clusters in the constituencies. The district administration has identified a substantial number of eligible home voters (AVSC & AVPD).



District Election Officer (DEO) Dr. Bilal Mohi-ud-Din reaffirmed the district administration's commitment to inclusivity, free, fair and transparent elections stating, "We aim for 100% voter participation ensuring that every eligible individual exercise their franchise. This process is conducted

under the supervision of election observers from ECI and senior officials, with micro-observers in place to guarantee transparency and integrity. The administration remains steadfast in maintaining high standards of security and electoral integrity throughout this important initiative.

Samba conducts 2nd round of EVM Randomization for Assembly Elections-2024

JI NEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 19

The second phase of randomization for Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for the upcoming Assembly Elections-2024 was successfully carried out on Thursday here in the Video Conference room of the DC Office Complex, Nandan Hills.

The process was conducted under the supervision of the General Observer for Ramgarh, Vishwashree Boga, and the General Observer for Samba and Vijaypur, C.G. Rajini Kaanthan. District Election Officer (DEO) Rajesh Sharma led the event.

Key electoral officials were present, including ADC Jagdish Singh, Deputy Election Officer, and Returning Officers (ROs) for the 69-Ramgarh, 70-Samba, and 71-Vijaypur



assembly segments—Sunaina Saini, Kusum Chib, and Umesh Sharma, DIO NIC, Manish Sharma. Other nodal officers, senior officials, and representatives from different political parties also attended the randomization process, reinforcing the transparency of the proceedings.

DEO Rajesh Sharma provided a detailed briefing on the importance of the randomization process, stressing its critical role in ensuring fairness and integrity in the electoral system. He highlighted that the

random assignment of EVMs helps prevent bias and ensures impartial distribution across polling stations.

The randomization was carried out using specialized software designed to allocate Ballot Units, Control Units, and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units for the three key assembly segments—69-Ramgarh, 70-Samba, and 71-Vijaypur.

The list of randomized EVMs was handed over to political party representatives to further ensure transparency.

DEO Bandipora presides over training program for Home voting poll staff

JI NEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 19

The District Administration Bandipora on Thursday successfully conducted a comprehensive training programme for poll staff designated for home voting and PVC for the assembly elections 2024.

The training session was presided over by District Election Officer (DEO), Manzoor Ahmad Qadri, and was attended by RO 15-Bandipora AC, Shabir Ahmad Wani, Nodal Officer for Postal Ballot/Home Voting, Mehraj Wani, DIO Bandipora Adil Manzoor Wani, ARO Owais Ahmad Malik, Home voting and PVC poll staff and other concerned officials.

Addressing the participants, DEO, M.A. Qadri emphasised the essential role of the poll staff in facilitating a smooth electoral process.

He urged all staff to adopt a proactive and unbiased approach, ensuring that every eligible voter has the opportunity to exercise their right to vote and participate in the democratic process.

DEO reiterated that the integrity of the electoral process relies on the dedication and professionalism of the poll staff and stressed the importance of transparency and accountability, encouraging staff to maintain high ethical standards throughout the voting process.

Nodal Officer Postal Ballot/Home Voting Mehraj Wani provided detailed training to participants regarding home voting procedures, necessary documentation, PVC and best practices for a seamless voting experience.

DIO, Aadil Manzoor Wani also addressed the participants, outlining the protocols and guidelines set by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to promote fair and accessible electoral processes for all voters.

General Observer evaluates Election preparations in Tehsil Pouni

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI, SEPTEMBER 19

General Observer for the Reasi and SMVD Assembly constituencies Avi Prasad undertook a detailed tour of Tehsil Pouni to assess the election preparedness in the region. His visit began at the Tehsil Office in Pouni, where he engaged with Tehsildar Pouni Sahil Randhawa, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the electoral arrangements in place.

As part of his visit, Mr. Prasad inspected several polling stations, including Polling Station No. 102 and Polling Station No. 103 at GHHS Barak. There, he reviewed the updated voter lists and evaluated the progress made towards distribution of voter slips by the Booth Level Officers (BLOs). In addition, he carefully examined the provision of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs) at each station, ensuring that voters would have access to all necessary amenities on the polling day.



Extending the appraisal to critical areas, Mr. Prasad also visited two high-sensitivity polling stations—Polling Station No. 141 at GMS Gunn and Polling Station No. 142 at GHS Nagar, both in Tehsil Reasi. The focus was to evaluate the security arrangements, ensuring that the necessary measures were in place for a

peaceful and orderly election process.

Additionally, Mr. Prasad evaluated the working of the Static Surveillance Team (SST) stationed at the Domail-Pouni Naka. The inspection ensured that CCTV cameras were installed and operational to effectively monitor and check the movement of vehicles, a crucial measure for maintaining election security.

DEO Poonch conducts surprise inspections at Nakas to ensure election integrity

JI NEWS SERVICE
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 19

With the Assembly Elections approaching, District Election Officer (DEO) Poonch, Vikas Kundal, visited Surankote and Mendhar to oversee the preparations for the upcoming Assembly polls. The DEO reviewed arrangements related to the election and enforcement of MCC. Chairing meetings in Mendhar and Surankote, the DEO took stock of key aspects of the election preparations. He also conducted a series of surprise inspections across the Poonch district to ensure electoral integrity, focusing on the effectiveness of Static Surveillance Teams at key Check Posts and Nakas, which are essential for enforcing the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and preventing illegal activities that could influence voters.



Furthermore, he instructed the ROs to finalize all preparations and reviewed the ongoing thematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) teams, urging them to expedite their awareness campaigns across the district. The initiative is crucial for maximizing voter participation ahead of the Assembly elections, scheduled on September 25. The DEO also engaged with the Returning Officers (ROs) of Surankote and Mendhar, who updated him on their preparations, ensuring that all necessary arrangements are in place for a smooth electoral process.

Additionally, DEO Kundal met with the Sys-

tematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) teams, urging them to expedite their awareness campaigns across the district. The initiative is crucial for maximizing voter participation ahead of the Assembly elections, scheduled on September 25. The DEO also engaged with the Returning Officers (ROs) of Surankote and Mendhar, who updated him on their preparations, ensuring that all necessary arrangements are in place for a smooth electoral process.

General Observers attend Polling Staff Training, Inspects election arrangements in Reasi

JI NEWS SERVICE
REASI, SEPTEMBER 19

In preparation for the upcoming Assembly Elections in Jammu and Kashmir, General Observer for the AC 57-Reasi and AC58-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Avi Prasad and Observer for AC-56 Gulabgarh (ST) Saroj Kumar Sethi attended a training session of polling staff here today in the auditorium of the Deputy Commissioner's office complex.

The Observers engaged with the polling staff, discussing the do's and don'ts for the upcoming poll day, ensuring clarity on procedures, rules, and the critical responsibilities each polling official must uphold to conduct free, fair, and transparent elections. They emphasised the importance of meticulous adherence to the Election Commission of India (ECI) guidelines to ensure smooth voting operations and a seamless experience for the voters.

Following the training session, Avi Prasad and Saroj Sethi conducted an on-site inspection of the Voter Facilitation Centre, which has been specially set up for employees working in essential services. The purpose of the inspection was to ensure that the voting process for these employees is being conducted efficiently and in full compliance with the ECI norms to facilitate hassle-free voting for essential



service employees who are unable to cast their vote at the regular polling stations due to their critical duties.

General Observers also inspected the Strong room set up for the receipt and safekeeping of postal ballots, which are being utilized by those eligible voters who cannot vote. Strong room is under supervision of District Treasury Officer Mr. Qamar Rehman. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Prasad remarked, "It is vital that every member

DC Shopian inspects Dachno-Heerpura bridge collapse site

JI NEWS SERVICE
SHOPIAN, SEPTEMBER 19

Deputy Commissioner Shopian, Mohammad Shahid Saleem Dar today visited the spot of bridge collapse at Heerpura village, connecting with Dachnoo village across the Rambaira river.

The DC was accompanied by concerned officers and officials of the departments.

The DC assessed the current position and issued directions to R&B department for immediate restoration of traffic.

The R&B was directed for immediate clearance of stuck vehicles and construction of diversion for traffic restoration as an immediate and temporary measure.

Deputy Commissioner also took up the matter of construction of bailey bridge with Chief Engineer R&B Kashmir, who has sent a team of officials for assessment and corresponding construction of bridge immediately. Police has already registered an FIR and investigation is taken up.

SVEEP: Democratic Gala events held across multiple locations in Ramnagar

JI NEWS SERVICE
RAMNAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

As the process for Legislative Assembly Election has taken off in J&K, the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) activities have been intensified across AC-62 Ramnagar.

The schedule has been doubled, aiming to raise awareness and encourage maximum voter turnout for the upcoming election. Various programs were held at four distinct locations within the constituency: University Campus Dalsar Ramnagar, Chanutta, Chigla Blota, and Sia Mehri. At the University Campus Dalsar Ramnagar, around 200 students and local voters gathered to learn more about the electoral process. Newly registered voters were particularly enthusiastic about casting their maiden vote. SVEEP Nodal Officer Rakesh Kumar shared key insights into the election procedures and emphasized the pivotal role SVEEP plays in empowering the electorate. "Encouraging young voters is crucial for the future of democracy," he remarked, underlining how initiatives like these foster an informed voting base. A mega awareness program was held at Government Higher Secondary School Chanutta, where Block Development Officer Dirsha Kumari graced the event as the Chief Guest.

The event aimed to boost voter engagement and turnout, drawing around 400 attendees, including grassroots-level officials such as BLOs, Anganwadi workers, Asha workers, and village guards—all part of the Booth Awareness Group (BAG) with an intensive approach. The BAG has been working diligently to educate voters. BDO Dirsha Kumari delivered an inspiring speech on the democratic process and voter participation, applauding the students for their active involvement and remarkable performances.

NC-Congress following...

left no stone unturned to defame Maharaja Hari Singh, BJP in respect to Maharaja, announced holiday on Maharaja's birth day. "NC-Congress has always treated Reasi-Kathua step motherly. "You expressed faith in me and I gave you the world's highest ever rail bridge over Chenab which is several feet higher than the Eiffel tower of Paris," Modi said.

He said that it was the BJP government that started the Vandhaya Bharat Express train from Delhi to Katra. "More facilities are added to the railway stations of Katra and Reasi," Modi said.

Modi said Pakal Dul, Rattley, Kiru and Kawar power projects are under construction. "These projects will provide livelihood to Jammu youth besides electricity," he said, adding that a new Medical College has come up in Udhampur and district hospital has also been completed in Reasi district.

He said railway connectivity in J&K is luring more than 2 Crore tourists visited the UT. "Over 95 lakh devotees alone visited Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine," he said, adding that in the coming years, a record number of tourists are set to visit the region that will boost the livelihood of people.

Training his guns at three families again—Abdullahs, Muftis and Gandhi's, PM Modi said that these families always gave a step motherly treatment to Reasi and Kathua. "These parties even allowed our water to go across the border. They couldn't construct a dam at Shahpur Kandi. It is the BJP that constructed the dam to provide water supply to hundreds of farmers, who are earning their livelihood," he said.

Congress believes in Naxal thinking and imported thinking. "You need to be cautious. It was under this Naxal thinking, Congress attacked Dogra creed in Jammu. Congress family is the one who promoted corruption across the country," he said. "Look at the height, Congress attacks on Dogra heritage on Dogra soil." He said Congress sells "nafrat ka samaan on mohabat ki dukaan". "It is the Congress who did injustice with Jammu," Modi said, and asked the people to vote against three families on September 25 in large numbers. KNO

J&K needs freedom...

Modi said in J&K, there is a festival of democracy underway. "Yesterday, seven districts witnessed the first phase of elections, first time, polls were held without the shadow of terrorism," he said.

"It was really a proud moment that such a huge number of people came out to vote yesterday. Kishtwar witnessed 80 per cent polling, Doda over 71 per cent, Ramban 70 per cent and Kulgam over 62 per cent. This percentage has broken the previous record. J&K people have written a new chapter in the history," Modi said.

He said that today the world is watching how J&K people are strengthening Indian democracy. "For this, I congratulate the people of J&K," he said. About Statehood, Modi said BJP has promised the restoration of statehood to J&K and it will be done by BJP only.

Continuing his tirade against the three families, Abdullahs, Muftis and Gandhis, ever since, he stated that these three families were responsible for running J&K. "Since then, from Delhi to J&K, these parties have been feeling unnerved," Modi said. "These three families have caused fear and uncertainty to people of J&K. But time has changed, we will not allow people to fall prey to the traps of these families."

Modi said that his mission was to defeat terrorism and not to allow J&K fall prey to the family rule again. "These parties are responsible for depriving youth from going to school. These parties, NC, PDP and Congress are responsible for torching the schools. They destroyed the future of youth," he said.

PM Modi said his mission is to provide ample opportunities to the youth of J&K so that they choose their future very much within their own place.

He said since 1980, these three families were treating J&K as their own "political fiefdom" as they were never interested in holding Panchayat, Block Development Council and District Development Council (DDC) polls. "They knew if they held these polls, new faces would emerge and they would challenge these parties," Modi said.

He said Kashmir is a sacred place that was destroyed for 35 long years by the three parties. "This place has Hazratbal, Charar-e-Shareef, Khawaja Naqshband shrine, Shankar Acharya and Mata Zeethsha devi temple. But the three parties brought dark days to J&K," Modi said.

He said that there was a time when Lal Chowk would shut before the sun set. "Going to Lal Chowk was like inviting death till the recent past. But the market remains open till late night now. Eid and Diwali are celebrated together with harmony. Electric buses are plying and everyone is earning the livelihood with honour," Modi said, asking people "who did this all?"

Modi said the three parties even didn't spare Kashmiri Pandits and forced them to flee. "Sikhs too faced the wrath. They created hatred. BJP is uniting people once again by reducing Dil aur Dili ki doori," he said.

Modi said in the past 35 years, 3000 days witnessed hartals and bandhs. "This means, Kashmir remained shut for eight years out of 35 years. But in the last five years, there was not even a shutdown for eight hours," he said. He said the Government of India is mulling free power through PM Surya Ghar Yojna that promises a subsidy of Rs 80000 per family. At the end of his 40-minute speech, Modi sought votes for Sofi Yousuf, Er Aijaz Hussain and Arif Raja. "Come out in large numbers and break all recordings on September 25," Modi urged people. KNO

BJP's Sham Lal Sharma...

Assembly constituency which include Sham Lal Sharma, Ajay Sadhotra and other 15 candidates. Both Sham Lal Sharma and Ajay Sadhotra have been former ministers and have represented Akhnoor and Marh constituencies, respectively.

After delimitation of Assembly constituencies, Akhnoor and Marh constituencies have been reserved for ST population and both these leaders have been given mandate by their respective parties to contest from Jammu North.

After switching over to BJP from Congress party, this is the first election for Sham Lal Sharma on BJP ticket and getting mandate from Jammu North, which earlier

used to be called as Raipur-Domana, is considered a safe seat for him because of his stature and the work done by him in the past. It has also remained a stronghold of BJP in the past and Sharma's stature and party support makes him the stronger candidate. One more thing which gives Sharma advantage is that he lives in the same constituency and is available to people all the time at his residence at Purkhoo-Mishriwala.

Sham Lal Sharma is also the one who coined the term Hindu Chief Minister for Jammu and Kashmir while he was in Congress party which gave people of Jammu a hope that this thing will happen here someday.

Despite being loyal to his party National Conference, this will be a new experience for Sadhotra to contest from Jammu North, from where he has never contested any election. He has his base in Marh area but as he can't contest from there, the party gave him the mandate from Jammu North. The only advantage Sadhotra is having is that he is the NC-Congress alliance candidate from this seat and Congress party is fully supporting him for this time.

The other 15 candidates are either weak or are new to this seat and in front of the two bigwigs their chances of winning or making a mark are bleak. KNO

Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh...

address the rally in Sundarbani, RS Pora and Poonch. Former BJP President and Union Minister J.P Nadda will hold a road show in Jammu east.

On the other hand, Congress leader and party's star campaigner Rahul Gandhi will arrive in Jammu on September 23 and will address people in Surankote area.

Over 23 lakh voters will decide the fate of 219 candidates, including 90 Independents, who are running for 24 assembly segments in the first phase.

The other two phases are scheduled to be held on September 25 and October 1, while the counting of the votes will take place on October 8.

Senior leadership of both the BJP and Congress has been making a beeline in Jammu and Kashmir in view of the crucial polls that are being held in the erstwhile state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday visited Srinagar and Katra and addressed people, promising massive development and end to dynastic politics. KNO

BJP has nothing...

and Kashmir.

"What can we expect from the BJP?... BJP does not have anything to showcase from the past 5 years", he told media persons in Budgam district.

The NC Vice President is contesting the assembly election from Budgam and Ganderbal in central Kashmir districts where voting will take place in the second phase on September 25.

"I do not know what Modi said today in Srinagar but I can say with a guarantee that he must have spoken on the three families", the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister said. "But he didn't have spoken on how the last 5-6 years have been wasted in J&K and the terrorism again visible in Jammu division besides the anger of people".

He said the people of south Kashmir voted yesterday during the first phase of the assembly election in favour of the National Conference and nobody could ignore.

In reply to another question Omar said that "when was the last time the Prime Minister gave an answer to a question in the Parliament? I have never heard Modi replying to any question in the parliament".

"We are the people who give answers to all the questions after winning the elections, we do not hide anywhere", the NC Vice President asserted.

When asked that Pakistan's foreign Minister Khawaja Ashif had said that they are on the same page of NC, PDP and Congress, the former CM said "who is Khawaja Asif..What Pakistan has to take with us. We are not part of Pakistan. Let them take care of their own country and let us take care of our own".

Omar said that "Pakistan does not need to interfere or make comments in our elections and I don't think it is an appropriate thing..Let them safeguard their own democracy and we are participating in our own democratic process".

Home Voting: Pwd...

in Shikaras to bring polling to voters' homes on the water, allowing them to cast ballots without any difficulty.

Home voting also continued today in the 24th Zadibal Assembly Constituency of Srinagar, where elderly women were seen casting their vote. Specially abled individuals, as well as those unable to reach polling stations, were also seen voting.

Moreover, voters aged 85 and above, along with Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in Srinagar, cast their vote by availing ECI's optional home voting facilities.

Photos and videos surfaced on social media platforms, showing elderly people thanking the authorities for giving them a chance to vote. KNO

BJP will explore means...

be made accountable and they not only owes an public explanation to the public of this country, but BJP also find out means to acting against them under the rule of law, as this amounts to treason and sedition," he said.

He further added that BJP has been consistently saying that NC, Cong and PDP work on the directions of Pakistan and after such a statement, the party's stand is vindicated.

"Our stand has now been vindicated after Pakistan's Defence Minister's statement," he said, adding, "if we see the chronology of events, we find that boycott calls in previous elections used to come from Pakistan and these parties used to form government with just 5% to 8% turnout".

The boycott calls during elections and victory of NC, Cong and PDP leaders with mere 8% voting also clearly indicates that the boycott calls were also a part of deep rotted nexus between Pakistan and these so called mainstream parties, he said.

He said that NC is responsible for militancy and unrest in Kashmir. "NC-Cong rigged 87 elections after which unrest and militancy started in Kashmir," he said, adding, "NC leaders including Farooq Abdullah used

to go to Pak and meet Amanullah and other leaders to devise strategy for taking forward the Azadi movement".

He said that these parties again want to push J&K back into the era of unrest and militancy but BJP will not let this to happen. NC, Cong, PDP owe an explanation to the nation, he said. KNO

First Muslim IAS...

are with his family," Modi said during a rally in Srinagar.

Family sources said Pandit, a 1969 batch IAS officer and a former chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Public Services Commission (JKPSC), was admitted to a hospital in Delhi about a month ago.

"My beloved uncle, Former JKPSC Chairman and Additional Chief Secretary of J&K, Muhammad Shafi Pandit Sahab, passed away a short while back in Delhi after a very brief spell of illness," the former Srinagar Mayor Junaid Mattu said in a post on X.

Pandit was the first Kashmir Muslim to crack an IAS in 1969 and stood fifth in the all-India rankings. During his first visit to the state after qualifying for the civil services, the then-Chief Minister personally welcomed him at the Airport. After his retirement, Pandit devoted himself to various social causes.

The former IAS officer's death has been widely mourned.

Congress Member of Parliament and General Secretary in-charge of Communications Jairam Ramesh said Pandit was soft-spoken and extremely gentle.

"My good friend of many years. Mohammed Shafi Pandit, has just passed away. He was a 1969-batch IAS officer who occupied important positions with distinction, both in J&K and at the Centre. After retirement, he devoted himself to various public causes and emerged as a leading voice of civil society. Soft-spoken and extremely gentle by nature, he epitomised the glorious composite heritage of J&K and was a role model for youth from the Valley to join the civil services," Ramesh said in a post on X.

Dean & Professor, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Amitabh Mattoo said Pandit was a distinguished civil servant.

"Deeply saddened to hear of the passing away of Jenab Shafi Pandit Sahib, a distinguished civil servant, a dear neighbour and fine gentleman - a true Khandani! RIP!," he said on X.

"A person of unparalleled qualities with strong convictions least bothered about cultivating an image usually sought after by careerists in different walks of life," Latief U Zaman Deva, a retired IAS officer and former Chairperson of the JKPSA said.

Former Minister Haseeb Drabu said Pandit was a role model. "A role model in his youth, an icon in his middle age and a guide as a senior citizen, M S Pandit, IAS, influenced many generations of Kashmiris, including mine. Proud of his personal lineage and professional legacy, he was the leading light of our clan. RIP." He posted on X.

District Magistrate & District Development Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan Pandit said Pandit inspired so many of them to join civil services.

"I have been in constant touch with him for almost past 9 years now and have always found him to be a humble and an extremely generous human being," he posted on X.

LG, CS condole...

prayers are with his family and admirers in this hour of grief".

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today condoled the demise of Mohammad Shafi Pandit, a 1969 batch IAS Officer who breathed his last today.

In his condolence message, Dulloo remembered Pandit as a very passionate officer who has been there to extend his advice and guidance whenever he was accessed for the same. He termed him a problem solver who had optimum solution for every problem at hand.

He called him a very compassionate officer who was precursor in starting government sponsored coaching classes for civil service aspirants. He made out that he chiselled the career of many youngsters by encouraging them to join the civil services and would be remembered by them for his mentorship for all times to come.

Dulloo further remembered that he met him a couple of times and raised different issues of public importance. He called him a philanthropist par excellence who had changed the lives of many for better.

Later the gathering observed 2 minutes silence and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

MS Pandit, an IAS officer of 1969 batch was among the pioneers of erstwhile J&K Cadre. He was a veteran bureaucrat who held various important positions in the State as well as Centre including the Additional Chief Secretary, Finance and later the Chairman J&K Public Service Commission (JKPSC) towards the end of his career.

All senior officers participated in this condolence meeting and prayed for the peace of the departed soul. They also showed their sympathy for the family and also prayed for their patience to bear this irreparable loss. KNO

CS reviews progress...

the Department.

During this meeting, the Chief Secretary stressed on closing the gap between the degraded forests found in the UT and year-wise area denominated for treatment in the respective working plans.

He urged them to take the proactive measures to protect the forests by completing the installation of Boundary Pillars (BPs) in all the vulnerable areas besides carrying out their geo-tagging as well.

He took this occasion to enquire about the stock position of planting material in the nurseries of the Department. He emphasised on making available the requisite stock for all the afforestation campaigns especially the 'J&K Green Drive', 'Ek Ped Shahidon Ke Naam' and 'Ek Ped Maa ke Naam' in the length and breadth of the UT.

The ACS Forests, Dheeraj Gupta, while speaking in this meeting threw light on different steps taken by the Department to make these campaigns successful. He apprised the meeting about the plan of the Department to install BPs around the forests to demarcate them.

He also gave out that against the given target of 672

events and 40,786 saplings under 'Ek Ped Shahidon Ke Naam', the Department carried out this campaign quite exhaustively in all the areas to surpass targets and planted 67,840 saplings in more than 1800 events organised across the districts of the UT.

In his presentation the PCCF (HoFF), BK Singh informed the meeting that the Department has set an aspirational target of planting 150 lakhs of sapling under Ek Ped Maa ke Naam and Ek Ped Shahidon Ke Naam collectively. It has also a target of planting 100 lakhs more saplings under other afforestation campaigns including Capex and CAMPA.

The meeting was further apprised that till date the Department has achieved the plantation target of about 38 lakhs under 'Ek Ped Maake Naam' campaign and around 28 lakh plantations under other schemes like CAMPA and Capex here.

Regarding the plantation stock in nurseries, it was added that in 290 nurseries maintained by the Department, there is a planting stock of 290.19 lakh saplings out of which 114.98 lakh are ready for plantation.

Moreover it was revealed that an area of 2150 sq km of degraded forests has been prioritized for treatment using remote sensing out of which an area of 552sq km has been treated during the last 5 years.

About the survey and demarcation works the meeting was informed that in 2135 forests, 2,99,020 BPs had been installed out of which 2,18,744 had been re-surveyed and 1,12,218 had been renovated as well.

About the quality of works it was added that third party evaluation of works is done by the Department. It was revealed that CAMPA works of FY 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 evaluated by AFC India and reports received. Field evaluation on 851 plantation sites and 89 infrastructure works done by this organisation.

Overall survival is 62.70% (65.40% for Kashmir region and 60.0% for Jammu region). Details including Coordinates/polygons of works on e-green watch portal and website of the Forest Department are in the public domain for evaluation and awareness of general public—(KNO)

Tihar no more a...

have done earlier," he said.

In response to a query about Awami Ittehad Party's (AIP) Chief, Engineer Rashid's release, he said, "Everything is organised, and there is no doubt about it. Such happenings have been going on for the last ten years. Who is to be tortured by the ED, NIA, and other agencies, and who is to be used, is being decided accordingly."

Mir added, "Er Rashid is a political victim under political vendetta. He first became a victim by getting arrested earlier, and later, after his release, it is a surrender with connections from behind the scenes. The timing of his release is questionable. Nobody would have raised any questions if he had been released a year ago. He was released just a few days ahead of the polls, which shows it is organised. If it is a politically motivated decision, the people will respond accordingly."

Furthermore, Mir termed New Delhi's Tihar Jail as a training centre, alleging that it is the place where individuals are trained to divide people. "It is not a jail anymore; the people in Tihar are being trained to abuse the government in order to gain support and divide the people," he said, adding that the BJP has been trying hard to divide the votes to ensure a hung house for their own safety, thereby joining hands with A, B, C teams and also sponsored individuals. "Such decisions could have serious repercussions in Jammu and Kashmir as the BJP has been dividing people on every front," he said.

Regarding the pre-poll alliance, Mir said the decision was made for the well-being of the people and Jammu & Kashmir, adding that they did not consider numbers but took the decision for the well-being of the people, which includes the restoration of statehood.

Asked about the expectations in the assembly polls, the Congress leader said he is aiming for 65 seats in this election as the votes are transferring on the ground. "Unlike in 2014, when the BJP had prior support from the PDP, no major party in Kashmir is ready to go with the BJP to form the next government. However, there are five small parties that may win up to five seats and join the BJP, but that is not going to help the BJP in forming the next government," he said, adding that the people are aware and would not cast their votes in favour of BJP-associated parties.

Reacting to the statements of alliance leaders, Mir said it would not have any impact on the coalition at all. "The pact is so strong that the parties did not consider numbers. We had earlier planned to share 30 seats each for the NC and Congress and have a friendly contest on 30 seats, but thankfully, it was reduced to five seats only, where both parties have strong candidates, and the BJP was nowhere in sight," he added.

Asked about the NC's decision to pass a resolution in the assembly after forming the government, he said it has already been decided. "We are already aiming for a respectable mandate. Our priority will be to discuss the decision taken on August 5, 2019, as the decisions were made in the absence of the assembly. It will be discussed in the assembly, where we can raise the voice that the decisions were taken undemocratically and unconstitutionally. This is the point from where the process for the restoration of statehood will start. All of the Congress party's top leaders have made it clear that statehood would be restored at the earliest. If PM Modi does not do it, then Congress's first action will be the restoration of statehood after forming the government," he said.

Reacting to the statements of BJP leaders, where they mentioned that Congress cannot give statehood to J&K, the former JKPC chief said, "The BJP isn't even able to give statehood, as the new government that took over earlier this year is on crutches, while the INDIA alliance is much more powerful. However, there has been a commitment from the PM that after delimitation, elections and the restoration of statehood will be completed, and if he fails to do so, then the people will understand that the government has failed to fulfil its commitments."

AICC General Secretary, while responding to a query about the possibilities of joining hands with the PDP to form the government, said that they do not expect a fractured mandate this time, but if the need arises, the decision will be taken accordingly. "We were planning to fight against the BJP together with like-minded parties, but some people could not make it happen and are now fighting independently," he said.

SVEEP awareness programme conducted at GHSS Gund Hassi Bhat

JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

A SVEEP programme was organised at Hokersar in which various institutions along with students, teachers and locals participated. The event aimed to promote voter awareness and participation, skillfully blending art with civic responsibility.

Nodal Officer SVEEP & CEO Srinagar, Shabeena Kaiser was the Chief Guest. She highlighted the significance of such initiatives in promoting active electoral participation.

Dy CEO Srinagar, Dr Anjum Raja; ZEO Bata-



maloo Akhter participated and illuminated the programme.

Wildlife Warden Wetland Mohammad Altaf Dantoo and Sheikh Naseer Range Officer lakes provided full support for the programme.

In the conclusion, Dr Mohammad Jaffar Nodal Officer 26-Shalteng constituency thanked all the participants, students especially dedicated staff members of GHSS Gund Hassi Bhat.

In the speech nodal officer requested participants and youngsters to cast the vote, vote is your right, vote is your power.

maloo Nighat Ara; Principal HSS Zainakote, Ali Mohammad and Princi-

pal Mujgund Mohammad Yousuf and Headmistress HS Lawaypora Shab-

Aijaz Asad assumes charge as Secretary RDD; holds interactive session with staff



JINNEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

Mohammad Aijaz Asad today assumed the charge as Secretary, Rural Development Department and Panchayati Raj (RDD&PR) and had an exclusive interactive session with the officers and officials at Civil Secretariat Srinagar.

Dr Shahid Choudhary, the outgoing Secretary, praised the hard work and dedication of the officers and exuded confidence that the department will serve the best services under the new leadership.

In his remarks, Aijaz Asad appreciated the initiatives launched towards furtehr streamlining of the department under the guidance of Dr Shahid. "The innovative measures in place are commendable, and it is a tremendous opportunity to work in the rural sector of J&K," he maintained. He urged upon the team to redouble their efforts towards achieving the key targets

for greater good of the public.

Asad also took stock of the progress achieved by the department under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP), Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) and Himayat. He emphasized that the RDD primarily serves the rural population and should prioritize projects that benefit the public.

Secretary in RDD, Rachna Sharma, Director General Rural Sanitation, Anoo Malhotra, Managing Director JKRLM, Shubra Sharma, Director RDD Kashmir, Shabir Hussain Bhat, Director RDD Jammu Mumtaz Ali, Director Panchayati Raj Sham Lal, and Director Finance Umar Khan, among others were present on the occasion.

Poonch District completes final training for Polling Staff



JINNEWS SERVICE
POONCH, SEPTEMBER 19

The final training sessions for polling personnel were held today across Poonch district, marking a critical step in preparations for the Assembly elections. These sessions were held simultaneously in Poonch and Mendhar, ensuring that all personnel assigned to the district's 483 polling stations are well-prepared for their duties.

During the sessions at Government Degree College, Poonch, and in Mendhar, the staff was extensively trained on the operation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) systems. The training also covered election protocols, roles, and responsibilities, with a hands-on approach to resolving any technical challenges that might arise on Election Day.

Participating in a Train-

ing Session at Mendhar, District Election Officer (DEO) Vikas Kundal emphasized the importance of the training. He said "The effective management of elections rests on the shoulders of our polling personnel. Ensuring fairness, transparency, and the smooth functioning of the process is paramount to upholding democratic values."

The training was conducted by expert District and Assembly Level Master Trainers, who provided detailed insights into procedures, fostering confidence among the polling staff to handle any situation that may arise during the elections.

With the final round of training complete, polling personnel across the district are now fully prepared for the Assembly Elections scheduled for September 25th, ensuring that every vote is accurately recorded and accounted for.

General, Police Observer for Sonawari AC briefs contesting candidates, Political representatives about ECI guidelines

JINNEWS SERVICE
BANDIPORA, SEPTEMBER 19

General Observer for 14-Sonawari Assembly Constituency of Bandipora District, Nelson Eyon Bage and Police Observer, Adarsh Sidhu today convened a meeting at Dak Banglow Sumbal here with contesting candidates and representatives from various political parties of Sonawari AC.

The meeting focused on the implementation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) ahead of the assembly elections.

Speaking on the occasion, the Observers emphasized on the importance of integrity in the electoral process and reiterated the significance of maintaining a conducive environment for voters. They also highlighted procedures regarding the electoral process to the participants and urged them to cooperate in ensuring a transparent, fair and peaceful election

besides emphasized on adherence to guidelines set by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

On the occasion, ADC/ Nodal Officer MCC, Zaffar Husson Shawal, briefed the meeting regarding measures being taken for enforcement of MCC in the constituency.

Returning Officer (RO), 14- Sonawari, Murtaza Ahmad Sheikh also provided insights into the steps being implemented



to facilitate a smooth and peaceful polling process.

Following the meeting, the observers visited the DCRC and strong room where Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and sensitive election materials are securely stored to ensure that all aspects of the electoral process are fully prepared and safeguarded, further underscoring their commitment to maintaining integrity of the elections.

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DEO, SSP inaugurate SVEEP awareness activities in Samba



JINNEWS SERVICE
SAMBA, SEPTEMBER 29

As part of the ongoing voter awareness efforts under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program, the District Election Office today organized multiple activities aimed at increasing voter participation in the upcoming elections.

District Election Officer (DEO), Rajesh Sharma, and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Vinay Sharma, jointly inaugurated an inter-state badminton competition at the Indoor Badminton Stadium. The event marked the beginning of the tournament and also served as a platform for promoting voter awareness. Addressing the participants, DEO Rajesh Sharma highlighted the significant role of sports in promoting democratic values and urged everyone present to cast their vote on Election Day.

Another key highlight of the day was the human formation by students of Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Ghagwal, who creatively depicted the Date of Poll. This visually impactful event was designed to remind the public of the upcoming election and the importance of exercising their

democratic rights.

The District Administration continues its commitment to raising voter awareness through a vari-

ety of SVEEP activities, ensuring a free, fair, and transparent election process with maximum participation.

General Observers hold meeting with contesting candidates at Sopore

JINNEWS SERVICE
SOPORE, SEPTEMBER 19

Ahead of the phase-3 of the assembly elections, general observers for assembly constituencies Sopore, Rafiaband, Wag-oor-Kreeri, and Pattan, Killu Siva Kumar Naidu and Ujjwal Kumar held a meeting with the contesting candidates, political parties and other stakeholders at Dak Bunglow Sopore.

During the meeting, the observers held an interactive session with the attending contesting candidates and representatives of political parties, addressing their queries and complaints towards ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the electoral process and fostering transparency in the upcoming assembly elections.



Meanwhile, the observers thoroughly informed the participants about the key elements of the Model Code of Conduct, Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) systems, the process of randomization for EVMs, and detailed guidelines on expenditure limits and the importance of maintaining meticulous expenditure accounts.

Killu Siva Kumar Naidu informed the participants about various ECI apps designed to enhance the

electoral process, including the c-VIGIL app for reporting MCC violations, the EMS app for EVM randomization, the Suvudha app for candidate permissions and status monitoring, and the Saksham app for ensuring equal access for Persons with Disabilities.

Furthermore, Ujjwal Kumar shared vital information about the upcoming second randomization of EVMs, scheduled for September 19, 2024, in Baramulla and strongly urged all contesting candi-

dates and agents of political parties to attend the crucial process.

Additionally, both the observers emphasized the need for contesting candidates to thoroughly train their election agents, counting agents, and polling agents on ECI guidelines and advised them to go through the "Handbook for Candidates" issued by the Election Commission of India, which outlines essential guidelines and instructions for political parties and candidates.

Power shutdown

JINNEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 19

Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, Jammu has informed that the power supply to Canal Head, Talab Tillo, Kabir Colony, Bohri, Bharat Nagar, PHE, Top Paloura, Best Price and adjoining areas will remain affected on September 20 from 6 am to 8 am.

Similarly, the power supply to Canal Head will remain affected on September 21 from 6 am to 8 am.

Likewise, the power supply to 132/33KV BHEP Chanderkote, JKSPDC, Chanderkote will remain affected on September 22 from 8 am to 1 pm.

VP calls on media to move away from individual-centric approach, focus on institutions

JINNEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPT 20

The Vice-President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar today cautioned against associating with those who harbour sinister designs against India, highlighting the existential challenges posed by forces inimical to the nation. "We cannot fraternize with those whose positioning is established as being inimical to Bharat. They are perniciously aspiring to offer existential challenges to Bharat."

Expressing concern about how certain individuals, both within and outside the country, seek to undermine India's institutions and national growth. Shri Dhankhar remarked, "Can we have accolades for one who is maligning in and outside the country? Our sacred institutions are being run down, affecting our growth. Can we overlook it? I, for one, will never do injustice to young boys and girls". Addressing the gathering at the inaugural session of Sansad TV@3 Conclave at Parliament House today, Shri Dhankhar highlighted the critical role of the media in addressing in shaping national discourse, stressing upon the need to move away from an individual-centric approach in journalism and focusing on institutions and national growth. "We have to address issues not with individuals on the radar. How can we have an individual-centric approach? Our sacred institutions must not be maligning," he said.

Format C-2

(For political party to publish in website, newspaper TV)

Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party.

(As per the judgment dated 25th September 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) no. 536 OF 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & ors v/s Union of India & Anr)

Name of political party: **J&K NATIONAL PANTHERS PARTY (BHIM)**

Name of election **ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2024**

Name of State/UT **JAMMU & KASHMIR**

Sl. No.	Name of constituency	Name of candidate	(A) Pending criminal cases	(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences
			Name of courts case no. And status of the case(s)	Sections of the acts concerned and brief description of offence(s) Name of court ad order date(s) of order(s) Description of offences and punishment imposed Maximum punishment imposed
1	76- JAMMU EAST	RAJESH GONDHI	JM1C (ELECTRICITY CITY MAGISTRATE) JAMMU 22003/2016 DT. 31.10.2016- PENDING	380/411/201 RPC N.A. N.A.
			FIR NO. 67/2008 U/S 457, 380, 411 RPC	N.A. N.A. N.A.

Format C-1

(for candidate to publish in newspaper, TV)

Declaration about criminal cases.

(As per the judgment dated 25th September 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) no. 536 OF 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & ors v/s Union of India & Anr)

Name and address of candidate **RAJESH GONDHI R/O 220 LOWER MASTGARH JAMMU**

Name of political party: **J&K NATIONAL PANTHERS PARTY (BHIM)**

Name of election **ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS**

Name of constituency **76- JAMMU EAST**

I, **RAJESH GONDHI** (name of candidate), a candidate for the abovementioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:-

(A) Pending criminal Cases				
Sl. No.	Name of court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence (s)
1.	JM1C (ELECTRICITY MAGISTRATE) JAMMU.	22003/2016 DT. 31.10.2016	PENDING	380/411/201 RPC
2.	NA	NA	NA	FIR NO. 67/2008 U/S 457, 380, 411 RPC

(B) Details about cases conviction for criminal offences			
Sl. No.	Name of court & order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum punishment imposed
N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

EDITORIAL

Rise of Independents in J&K polls

As Jammu and Kashmir reaches the midpoint of its assembly elections, a fascinating dynamic is emerging within the political landscape. The rise of independent candidates is significantly disrupting traditional party strongholds. With 44 percent of the candidates running as independents in the first two phases of polls, their impact goes beyond mere numbers; they are reshaping electoral strategies and posing new challenges to established political players. In a region where party allegiance has historically dominated, the emergence of independents—some as rebels from mainstream parties and others contesting solely on their own merit—has introduced a new variable into the electoral calculus. Their candidacies are not mere anomalies; they represent a discontent with the status quo, resonating with voters seeking alternatives to the traditional party narratives. Take, for instance, the Chhamb assembly segment, a battleground featuring Congress stalwart Tara Chand and BJP's Rajiv Sharma. The candidacies of rebel candidates like Satish Sharma, son of two-time Lok Sabha member Madan Lal Sharma, and Narendra Singh Bhau, a dissident from the BJP, have stirred the political pot significantly. Their presence complicates the already intense competition, adding layers of uncertainty for both official party candidates, who must now contend with familiar faces turned rivals. Similar stories play out across various constituencies. In Udampur East, Pawan Khajuria's campaign as a rebel BJP candidate is turning the race into a duel, diminishing the National Conference's influence in the area. Meanwhile, in Ramban, Suraj Singh Parihar's challenge to the official BJP candidate Rakesh Thakur exemplifies the internal strife within the party ranks that can no longer be ignored. Moreover, the narrative shifts when we consider figures like Ghulam Mohammad Saroori and Jugal Kishore Sharma, who, despite their ties to established parties, have opted to run as independents. Their candidacies underscore a broader trend: voters are increasingly drawn to personalities and localized issues rather than traditional party loyalties. Omar Abdullah, the National Conference vice-president, has raised concerns about the BJP allegedly striking deals with certain independents to bolster its position in the region. His criticisms point to a potential alliance that could complicate the electoral landscape further, particularly as he faces seven independents in his own constituency of Ganderbal. The stakes are high, and Abdullah's public skepticism of rival parties' maneuvers adds to the charged atmosphere. This burgeoning independent movement poses significant questions for the future of political representation in Jammu and Kashmir. It suggests a populace eager for change, frustrated with conventional party politics, and willing to explore new options. As these independent candidates mobilize support, mainstream parties must grapple with the reality that their traditional bases are no longer as secure as they once believed. In this election cycle, the rise of independents not only reflects a shifting political tide but also highlights a desire for accountability and authenticity in representation. As voters evaluate their options, the outcomes in this assembly election could signal a pivotal moment in the region's political history. The question now is whether the mainstream parties will adapt to this new landscape or continue to cling to their traditional strongholds, potentially at their own peril. The coming weeks will reveal whether the independents are mere disruptors or if they represent a deeper, more enduring shift in Jammu and Kashmir's political identity.

J&K Votes: A resilient call for change amidst political shifts

DIPAK KURMI

The first phase of assembly elections has been marked by a considerable voter turnout, with the highest participation in the Kishtwar district, which recorded an astonishing 77%. This level of engagement in an otherwise politically volatile region signifies the electorate's deep-seated desire for change. Chief Election Officer PK Pole confirmed that the polling was conducted peacefully across 24 out of the 90 assembly constituencies, a significant achievement in itself considering the historical context of the region. This high voter turnout also signals that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are eager to take part in the governance process, reclaiming their role in shaping the political landscape of their region. In the past, elections in Jammu and Kashmir have often been marred by fears of violence, unrest, and boycotts, but this time around, the peaceful nature of the election and the extensive voter participation represent a triumph of democracy. The enthusiasm among voters, especially the youth, reflects a growing sense of ownership and optimism that their involvement in the electoral process will bring about tangible change.

The Role of Multiple Players in the Election: What makes this election particularly noteworthy is the sheer number of political players on the ground, which has led to a dynamic and unpredictable electoral landscape. While the mainstream political parties of Kash-

mir—the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP)—continue to contest against each other to maintain their political space, this competition no longer defines the entire political arena. The emergence of new political entities and independent candidates has added fresh energy to the elections.

Before the elections, a tacit alliance between the National Conference and the Congress Party in terms of seat sharing indicated a possible realignment of political forces. At the same time, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has carefully played its cards by keeping its options open for future alliances. During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP refrained from fielding candidates in Kashmir, a move interpreted by many as an attempt to leave the door open for possible cooperation with other regional forces in the assembly elections.

Moreover, the participation of Jamaat-e-Islami and Engineer Rashid's party, who fielded independent candidates, has sparked speculation that these new players could emerge as potential game changers in the political scenario. These independent candidates have not only captured public attention but have also been effective in challenging the traditional dominance of the NC and PDP. Their accusations against the mainstream political parties for allegedly bringing Kashmir to the brink of political instability, and in turn being accused of acting as proxies for the ruling dispensation in New Delhi, have added a layer

of complexity to the election narrative.

The prime minister's accusations against the political families of Kashmir and the Congress Party for destabilizing the region have further intensified the political polarisation. However, amid these competing narratives, the electorate remains focused on issues that matter to them, such as governance, development, and the resolution of long-standing socio-political challenges.

Voter Sentiment Among Kashmiri Pandits: The internally displaced Kashmiri Pandits, often referred to as "Migrants" in administrative terms, have also played a notable role in this election. Despite casting their votes from exile in the Jagti camp and other areas in Jammu, the Kashmiri Pandit community continues to grapple with a paradox. On the one hand, they have actively participated in the electoral process, indicating their enduring faith in democracy. On the other hand, many Pandits feel that casting their votes over the past 35 years has not resolved their issues of genocidal attrition, displacement, or led to any concrete steps towards their return and rehabilitation.

Panun Kashmir, a prominent organization of Pandit community, has issued a boycott call, urging the government to address their demands comprehensively. Although many Pandits have participated in the voting process, they have expressed frustration over the lack of meaningful policies aimed at their resettlement. This sense of disenfranchisement

among the Pandit community serves as a poignant reminder that while democracy provides a platform for expression, electoral participation alone is not enough to address the deep-rooted issues faced by displaced communities.

A Shift in the Separatist Strategy: One of the key reasons for the high voter turnout in this election has been the absence of a boycott call from separatist groups. This marks a significant departure from the norm established since the beginning of the separatist struggle in 1989. Over the years, separatist factions have championed the boycott of elections as a means of opposing the political status quo in Kashmir. However, this strategy has witnessed diminishing returns, with rural areas generally experiencing higher voter turnout than urban regions, where boycott trends have historically been stronger.

The lack of a formal boycott call this time around has allowed a larger section of the electorate to participate in the elections without fear of reprisal or social pressure. This development highlights the shifting dynamics of political opposition in the region, where the traditional separatist approach may no longer hold the same sway over the electorate as it once did.

The Role of Youth in the Elections: One of the most promising aspects of this election has been the enthusiastic participation of young voters. Having grown up amidst political turbulence, Jammu and Kashmir's youth are now eager to contribute to the region's governance

and development. Their involvement in the electoral process is not just a reflection of their aspirations for a better future but also a sign of their desire for stability, peace, and progress.

The youth in Jammu and Kashmir are demanding better education, employment opportunities, and infrastructural development. Their active participation in the elections is a clear indication that they see democracy as a viable means to achieve these goals. This election, therefore, serves as a platform for the youth to voice their concerns and make their preferences known, ensuring that their needs and aspirations are considered by the newly elected government.

Security Measures and the Election Process: The peaceful conduct of the first phase of polling is a testament to the effectiveness of the security measures put in place by the Election Commission and law enforcement agencies. In a region that has long been plagued by fears of violence and unrest during elections, the relatively calm atmosphere during this phase has encouraged more people to come out and vote without fear.

This phase of the election, therefore, represents not only a success for the democratic process but also for the state machinery in ensuring free and fair elections. The security apparatus has played a crucial role in facilitating voter participation, thereby contributing to the overall credibility of the electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Road Ahead - Second Phase and Beyond:

As the first phase of polling draws to a close, all eyes are now on the second phase of the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The significant voter turnout in the first phase has set the stage for what promises to be a closely watched and potentially transformative election for the region.

The large-scale participation of voters in the first phase reflects the public's faith in the democratic process, despite the many challenges they face. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have shown that they are committed to upholding democratic values and are determined to play an active role in shaping their future.

This election is not just about electing representatives to the assembly; it is about reaffirming the spirit of democracy in a region that has long been at the center of political turbulence. By casting their votes in such large numbers, the people of Jammu and Kashmir are sending a powerful message: they believe in the democratic process, and they are ready to take charge of their destiny.

As the region moves forward with the next phases of polling, it is clear that Jammu and Kashmir is celebrating democracy in all its diversity and complexity. The election results may be unpredictable, but one thing is certain—the people of Jammu and Kashmir are marching ahead towards new horizons, determined to achieve progress and stability for themselves and future generations.

(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Embracing Divine Shelter

AAJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

What a wonderful prospect! Yes, it is possible, if we take shelter of God and remain in it. Because God is everything. (Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Geeta 7.19) For that, we have to be engaged in activities according to the instructions of God. And we will benefit in many ways. How else can one remain motivated to pursue the spiritual path? In this process, God is pleased but does not benefit personally in any way, because God is 'purna' (complete in all respects).

I will cite three exam-

ples and a few reasons to substantiate this. But I will begin with some of the benefits of taking shelter from God and remaining there. God's instructions promote 'dharma' (highest moral and religious principles). Because dharma is the bedrock upon which the Creation is based. God even incarnates when there is a decline in dharma. (4.7) Those, who follow dharma in their behavior are rewarded by God's Divine Authority.

This is done according to the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is: "What we sow we reap." If one pleases God by spiritual practices additionally, God gets

personally involved in the life of His devotee. His very first act is to begin guiding. I am experiencing it. It is simple. I face a challenge /problem. I pray for guidance and help. God gives me intuitions. As the connection with God becomes stronger, God begins helping too. This is a quantum jump because God is omnipotent. Problems get solved and life can go on smoothly. (18.58) Sometimes, we face non-cooperation from others; God even changes the hearts of people. Further progress on the spiritual path helps us to qualify for becoming 'nimitta' (instruments) of God, as Arjuna did in the

Mahabharata. (11.33) God, as Karta, begins to micro-manage the lives of His dear devotees. Reformations begin; because we must help ourselves. And credit for success must also come to us; God does not need it.

Only rarely did God intervene directly, as Lord Krishna did to protect Draupadi from getting humiliated; no one had come forward. Similarly, Lord Krishna had to protect His devotee and friend (4.3) Arjuna after he was about to enter the fire for not being able to kill Jayadratha before sunset, as vowed him.

Lord Krishna brought

the sun back and Arjuna was able to kill Jayadratha before the sunset. In these two instances, though the Lord got credit, He did not gain anything. Draupadi and Arjuna gained. God has a plan for whoever takes His shelter. How did the Lord help Goswami Tulsi-das? His wife opened his eyes when she told him, "You will attain success in life if you become devoted to Shri Rama instead of to me." Because Tulsi-dasji was at the threshold of becoming great by writing epics like Ramacharitmanasa. The conclusion is: get linked with God urgently.

There is so much to gain from God, who has

plenty to give. Isn't God the owner of everything? God is self-sufficient. He creates without any help from anyone. God never gets attached to anyone. If He did, God would become dependent on others to do what He must to keep the Creation going.

I am gaining everything desirable. I could not have imagined what God can and does for me. The quality of my life is steadily improving. Please get started on the spiritual journey; you will never look back.

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

India's untapped ocean energy: A blueprint for powering the future

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

The 8000 km long Indian coastline has the potential to generate 9.2 lakh Trillion Wats hour per annum (TWh/annum) electricity, which is a manifold of what is generated as of date. This is at a time when India is struggling to meet its requirement of 4.5 Lakh MW power utilizing all sources of energy production.

According to Ocean Energy Atlas prepared by Hyderabad-based Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), a premier research and development organization under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea are the nation's Akshayapatra of energy. "The Exclusive Economic Zone lying within the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal has oceanic energy potential

of 9.2 lakh TWh/annum.

This is the first time in the history of India the oceanic energy potential has been assessed and an atlas of this kind has been prepared." Dr T M Balakrishnan Nair, Group Director and lead scientist, INCOIS, told The Pioneer. A bouquet of offshore renewable, offshore solar, offshore wind, wave, tidal, ocean thermal energy conversion, and salinity gradient represent the hitherto untapped potential of renewables. India's Ocean Energy Atlas has been released following the International Renewable Energy Agency's finding that the G-20 countries collectively account for 81 per cent of total renewable energy and about 100 per cent of ocean energy.

India's offshore wind energy remains untapped even as countries like Denmark, Britain and

China have made giant strides in this sector. Dr Nair says there is wide scope to set up renewable energy power stations to tap salinity gradients. Dr T. Srinivasa Kumar, director, of INCOIS, said that the atlas would serve as a key resource for guiding policy and investment decisions in the energy sector.

An important element in this form of energy generation is that there would not be any kind of apprehension in the minds of the people about land acquisition, pollution and discharge of effluents. "This is the cleanest form of energy and many public and private sector enterprises have shown their interest in setting up renewable energy units," said M Ravichandran, secretary, ministry of earth sciences, Govt of India.

INCOIS is playing a major role in the coun-

try's blue economy sector by providing information to fishers about potential fishing zones and sharp weather forecasts. Dr Srinivasa Kumar and his team have developed a state-of-the-art tsunami warning system with which they alert countries along the rim of the Indian Ocean. Since its inception in 1999, INCOIS has been contributing to India's blue economy through its flagship programs like Potential Fishing Zones (PFZ), Ocean State Forecasts (OSF) and Tsunami Early Warning Services (TEW). INCOIS has also been the national and regional warehouse for oceanographic data spanning in-situ platforms, satellite sensors, and model-simulated products.

Taking advantage of the availability of such long-term scientific datasets, INCOIS has taken up the challenge of esti-

mating the ocean energy potential from the Indian EEZ and prepared an Atlas for the first time in the country. The satellite data collected through hi-tech sensors about the regions where there are good catches are disseminated to fishers and this has made the job of fishermen quite easy. All they have to do is rush to the areas identified as fishing zones by the INCOIS scientists. The Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas prepared by Team INCOIS is the first of its kind in the world.

Ocean energy assumes significance as scientific reports are galore about the fluctuations in solar power generation capabilities because of climate change. G M Pillai, director general, of the World Institute of Sustainable Energy (WISE), Pune, says that as of this date, solar power output is not encouraging because of

changes in rain patterns. "The Rajasthan deserts could have been the powerhouse of states like Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat but the solar power potential has come down and the deserts are becoming evergreen garden," said Pillai. The thorium-based nuclear reactor is yet to take off and the picture from nuclear power reactors is dismal. There was a time when former directors of the Indira Gandhi Center for Atomic Research (IGCAR) at Kalpakkam had claimed that India was the world leader in Fast Breeder Reactor technology, it all ended up as chest beating. The only hope is integrated ocean energy. India has a vast coastline of nearly 8000 km and this could offer a permanent solution to our energy needs.

(The views expressed are personal)

Fatigue, insomnia early signs to watch out for burnout at workplace: Experts

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

Fatigue, sleeplessness, and frequent illness are the early signs that one should watch out for burnout and exhaustion due to workplace stress, and must take help, said experts on Thursday, amid reports of a young CA in Pune who succumbed to death due to work pressure.

Anna Sebastian Perayil (26), lost her life due to a "backbreaking workload" and "work stress" at Ernst & Young (EY), claimed her mother Anita Augustine in a heart-wrenching letter to Chairman Rajiv Memani.

Perayil worked for four months at the accounting firm, and yet "nobody from the office was present even for her funeral".

Perayil is not alone. Earlier this year, Satish Nandgaonkar, a Mumbai-based

senior journalist working for Hindustan Times, died after a cardiac arrest outside the daily's office after reportedly being "humiliated" at the workplace hours before the episode.

In another tragic case, 25-year-old Saurabh Kumar Laddha, working at McKinsey and Company reportedly ended his life by jumping from the ninth floor of his building in Mumbai, after being unable to handle the work pressure.

The list can go on with many more names.

Dr. Suchismitha Rajamanya, Lead Consultant & HOD - Internal Medicine, Aster Whitefield Hospital, Bengaluru, told IANS that almost every week, "approximately 6 to 10 patients come seeking help, reporting stress and exhaustion".

"Burnout and exhaustion can display noticeable



signs, and physically these signs could be chronic fatigue, insomnia as well as frequent illnesses," Rajamanya said.

The expert explained that stress can also manifest as hopelessness, annoyance, emotional draining, decreased motivation in the upkeep of appearance, absenteeism, diminishing work perfor-

mance, and unwillingness to engage in work tasks. Individuals may also struggle with concentration and memory problems.

"The key here is to prevent oneself from 'getting to that point' and therefore recognise the need for help when a person does," Rajamanya said.

A recent report by Great Place To Work India, a

workplace assessment and recognition organisation, showed that one in every four of all employees finds it difficult to speak about mental health issues like stress, burnout, anxiety, or depression at the workplace. Burnout emerged as a significant concern with 56 per cent of employees being affected.

Studies have also shown the negative health impacts of workplace stress.

A recent study, published in the Journal of the American Heart Association, showed high job strain and effort-reward imbalance may significantly increase the risk of developing atrial fibrillation (AFib) -- an irregular heart rhythm condition.

Divya Mohindroo, Counselling Psychologist and Founder Embrace Imperfections told IANS that it is important to

"think more practically rather than emotionally, and to strike a balance between their emotions and practical life"

She also suggested simple daily steps that one can take to minimise the impact of stress in their life.

"Keep yourself well hydrated throughout the day to help you release toxins, eat nutritious food, and indulge in 45 minutes of exercise where you sweat out your sorrows while releasing happy and feel-good hormones. The most important thing is to maintain a healthy good sleep cycle," Mohindroo said.

The experts also suggested stress management techniques such as meditation or deep breathing; and to reach out to family, friends, or support groups, and a psychotherapist or a counsellor.

Kerala: 38-yr-old man becomes 1st confirmed case of Mpox

AGENCIES
MALAPPURAM, SEP 18

A 38-year-old male resident of Othai near Edvanna who had returned from Dubai in United Arab Emirates (UAE) and has been undergoing treatment at Manjeri Medical College Hospital since September 16 with suspected symptoms of monkeypox (Mpox), tested positive for the disease on Wednesday, becoming the first case in the state, confirmed Kerala Health Minister Veena George.

This is the second case of Mpox in India, after a 26-year-old youth from Haryana, who has been undergoing medical treatment at LNJP hospital in New Delhi since September 12.

Minister George said the government has set up isolation wards in select District hospital, Medical college hospitals and taluk hospitals for the treatment of suspected Mpox patients and appointed nodal officers to monitor the situa-

tion in all the 14 districts of the state from Wednesday as part of precautionary measures and cautious approach towards Mpox to avoid further spread of virus.

She has urged those returning to Kerala from abroad with symptoms of Mpox to contact the hospital immediately to avoid any spread of virus in the State. The 38-year-old man arrived at Edavanna last week and sought consultation with the local dermatologist for rashes, like chicken pox, on his hands. He also had a mild fever on September 16.

The doctors at Manjeri Medical College Hospital suspected it to be the case of infectious disease from his case study and symptoms and sent the fluid samples to Kozhikode Medical College Hospital lab for testing. The lab report confirmed the Mpox on Wednesday, however, the health condition of the patient was stable, sources said.

Centre to probe death of young EY employee after mother complains of work pressure

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

The Union Labour Ministry on Thursday said it will officially probe the death of a 26-year-old woman working at audit firm Ernst and Young (EY) in Pune after her mother blamed the company for overwork.

Anna Sebastian Perayil, 26, passed away on July 21 after being burdened with a "backbreaking workload" and "work stress", claimed her mother Anita Augustine in a heart-wrenching letter to Chairman Rajiv Memani. Anna worked for four months at the accounting firm.

"Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Anna Sebastian Perayil. A thorough investigation into the allegations of an unsafe and exploitative work environment is underway," Union Minister of State for Labour

and Employment Shobha Karandlaje said in a post on X.

"We are committed to ensuring justice and the Labour Ministry has officially taken up the complaint," she added.

The MoS said this in response to a post by BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar, who described Anna's death as "very sad but also disturbing at many levels".

"I request Govt of India @mansukhmandviya @ShobhaBJP to investigate these allegations made by the mother of unsafe and exploitative work environment that claimed the life of a young, full of future Anna Sebastian Perayil," he said.

Augustine in her letter to the Chairman said EY's work culture "seems to glorify overwork while neglecting the very human being behind the role". She claimed that Anna

would return to her room "utterly exhausted" but would again be "bombarded" with work messages.

The mother said that while Anna was "a fighter to the core", "the overwhelming pressure proved too much even for her".

Facing severe backlash on social media, EY India, in a statement said that the company was deeply saddened by Anna's death and was taking the family's correspondence with the "utmost seriousness and humility".

"We place the highest importance on the well-being of all employees and will continue to find ways to improve and provide a healthy workplace for our 1,00,000 people across EY member firms in India," the company added.

Meanwhile, Sibi Joseph, father of the young Anna, said they have no plans to take legal action against the company.

Lancet study finds air pollution top risk factor for brain stroke akin to smoking

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

For the first time, a study on Thursday showed that ambient particulate matter air pollution is a top risk factor for subarachnoid haemorrhage -- a type of brain stroke -- at par with smoking.

The study, led by an international team of researchers from India, the US, New Zealand, Brazil, and UAE showed that air pollution contributed to 14 per cent of the death and disability caused by this serious stroke subtype, on par with smoking.

The study showed that coupled with air pollution, high temperatures as well as metabolic disorders, fuelled a significant rise in global cases and deaths due to stroke in the last three decades.

The number of people worldwide having a new



stroke rose to 11.9 million in 2021 -- up by 70 per cent since 1990. Stroke-related deaths rose to 7.3 million -- up by 44 per cent since 1990.

The study identified 23 modifiable risk factors responsible for 84 per cent of the stroke burden in 2021.

In 2021, the five leading global risk factors for stroke were high systolic blood pressure, particulate matter air pollution, smoking, high LDL chole-

sterol, and household air pollution, with considerable variation by age, sex, and location.

It also showed substantial progress made in reducing the global stroke burden by reducing particulate matter air pollution (20 per cent), and smoking (13 per cent).

"With 84 per cent of the stroke burden linked to 23 modifiable risk factors there are tremendous opportunities to alter the trajectory of stroke risk for

the next generation. Given that ambient air pollution is reciprocally linked with ambient temperature and climate change, the importance of urgent climate actions and measures to reduce air pollution cannot be overestimated," said co-author Dr Catherine O. Johnson, Lead Research Scientist at the University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME).

While stroke is now the third leading cause of death worldwide (after ischaemic heart disease and Covid-19), the condition is highly preventable and treatable.

The researchers called for identifying sustainable ways to work with communities to take action to prevent and control modifiable risk factors such as high blood sugar and a diet high in sugar-sweetened drinks. There is a critical

need for interventions focused on obesity and metabolic syndromes, Johnson said.

They also called for measures such as clean air zones and public smoking bans, which have been successful.

The findings based on the Global Burden of Disease, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study (GBD) showed that more than three-quarters of those affected by strokes live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The study also found that worldwide, the overall amount of disability, illness, and early death -- a measurement known as disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) -- lost to stroke increased by 32 per cent between 1990 and 2021, rising from around 121.4 million years of healthy life lost in 1990 to 160.5 million years in 2021.

Apollo hosp launches Pink Book to strengthen safety framework

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, SEP 19

Apollo Hospitals, a pioneer in setting new standards for clinical care and patient safety, on Thursday launched The Pink Book -- a comprehensive framework designed to enhance safety protocols across healthcare systems.

This initiative marks a significant step in Apollo's ongoing commitment to elevating patient care and safety, which has been the cornerstone of its mission for over 41 years.

The Pink Book serves as a comprehensive guide to ensuring safety across hospital environments. It lays out protocols

designed to protect staff, patients, and visitors, emphasizing the critical importance of safety culture in healthcare, according to a press release.

Speaking at the launch, Ms Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals, highlighted the growing need for a robust safety framework in healthcare.

She said "at Apollo Hospitals, our commitment to patient safety has been unwavering for over four decades. With the Pink Book, we aim to not only strengthen safety protocols within Apollo, but also provide a roadmap for the entire healthcare ecosystem."

"This book encapsu-

lates the wealth of knowledge we've gathered in our journey and is designed to benefit everyone in the healthcare industry. This is more than

a safety guideline; this is our commitment to equity and enhancing the healthcare workspace. We believe this initiative will further reinforce the trust in our patients place in us, as we continue to set new standards for care and safety", she said.

The book further emphasizes the importance of comprehensive safety measures in healthcare, particularly for women, outlining strict government regulations and the need for hospitals to adhere to safety poli-

cies, including zero-tolerance against harassment.

It highlights the necessity of fostering a positive safety culture through leadership commitment, training, and open communication.

Key recommendations include identifying and managing risky patients, enhancing security with panic buttons and surveillance, ensuring well-lit ergonomic workspaces and providing support for night-duty staff. Additionally, it advocates for self-defense training, mental health support, compliance with legal provisions, and creating platforms for reporting safety concerns in line with the POSH Act.

Varicose veins linked to serious health risks, new treatments enhance safety, effectiveness

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEPT 19

Often dismissed as merely a cosmetic nuisance, Varicose veins, the enlarged and twisted veins typically found in the legs, can pose significant health risks and should not be underestimated, health experts have warned. For individuals with varicose veins face up to a five-fold increased risk of developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a potentially life-threatening condition.

Varicose veins are also linked to peripheral arterial disease and other vascular disorders, caution health experts. In a study published online in Cureus, Chukwuyem Ekhat, Neuro-Oncology from New

York Institute of Technology, College of Osteopathic Medicine, Old Westbury, USA said while some individuals remain asymptomatic, others experience discomfort such as pain, itching, and throbbing.

"If left untreated, chronic venous insufficiency can progress to more severe stages, leading to complications like edema, skin changes, ulcers, and bleeding.

Recent advancements in treatment have enhanced safety, effectiveness, and long-term success, said co-author Sophia B Bellegarde, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, American University of Antigua, Coolidge, ATG.

Dr. Vimal Bhandari, former head of the

National Organ Transplant and Tissue Organisation (NOTTO) and Professor of Surgery at ESI Hospital and Medical College, explained,

"The condition arises when the valves within veins fail to function properly, leading to blood pooling and causing the veins to become twisted and enlarged. This malfunction is not only a cosmetic issue but a precursor to serious complications if left untreated."

He advised seeking medical attention if varicose veins cause discomfort, swelling, or affect daily activities. Symptoms such as persistent pain, swelling, skin ulcers, sudden vein enlargement, or changes in skin color or

texture should prompt a consultation with a healthcare provider. Early intervention can prevent complications such as venous ulcers, redness, eczema, and, in severe cases, ruptured veins.

Diagnosis of varicose veins and related complications often involves a Doppler ultrasound, which helps detect issues like DVT. Treatments include modern techniques such as radiofrequency ablation, which burns the affected veins to close them off and improve blood flow, said Dr Achintya Sharma, Senior Consultant and Incharge of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery at Max Hospital and Tirath Ram Shah Hospital.

ROBOTIC SURGERY IN GYNAECOLOGY REVOLUTIONIZING WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE WITH AFFORDABLE, MINIMALLY INVASIVE TREATMENTS AT APOLLO HOSPITAL

AGENCIES
BOKARO, SEPT 19

Apollo Multispecialty Hospitals, Kolkata, held a press conference at Hans Regency, Bokaro, to highlight its groundbreaking achievements in treating complex gynecological cancer cases.

Renowned for its advanced oncology department, the hospital has built a reputation for providing high-success treatments at economical costs, with minimal pain, offering new hope to cancer patients, especially from the Jharkhand region.

The event showcased

Apollo's pioneering use of robotic surgery, a cutting-edge technique that allows for highly precise, minimally invasive procedures, leading to faster recovery times. Dr. Monika Meena, an expert in Robotic Gynaecology and Gynae Onco Surgery, led the discussion,

stressing the importance of early diagnosis and timely intervention in managing gynecological diseases and cancers.

Dr. Meena highlighted the need for awareness around early symptoms like painful urination, abnormal vaginal bleeding, or

unusual discharge, which could be signs of serious conditions such as cervical or endometrial cancer. "Early diagnosis and intervention are key for women facing gynecological cancers," she emphasized. "Robotic surgery not only improves surgical accuracy

but also reduces recovery time significantly, allowing patients to return to their normal lives much faster."

The hospital's commitment to accessible healthcare in Jharkhand was also a central point of the discussion. Apollo's focus

on early detection and the integration of advanced robotic surgery have made treatments more effective and affordable, reducing the need for long hospital stays.

Many patients can be discharged within two days, enabling a quicker

return to daily routines. Apollo Multispecialty Hospitals continues to redefine cancer care, ensuring that women from Jharkhand and neighboring areas have access to world-class medical treatment at an affordable cost, closer to home.

PM Modi to take part in 'National PM Vishwakarma Programme' in Maharashtra's Wardha on Sep 20

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, SEP 19

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Wardha in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region on Friday (September 20) where he will participate in the 'National PM Vishwakarma Programme'. The event, marking one year of progress made under the scheme (Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma), will witness PM Modi issuing certificates and releasing loans to the beneficiaries.

Symbolising the tangible support extended to artisans under this Scheme, PM Modi will also distribute credit under the

PM Vishwakarma to 18 beneficiaries in 18 trades.

As a tribute to their legacy and enduring contribution to society, the Prime Minister will release a commemorative stamp dedicated to marking one year of progress under PM Vishwakarma which aims at improving the quality as well as the reach of products and services of artisans and craftspeople and to ensure that 'Vishwakarmas' are integrated into the domestic and global value chains, an official said on Thursday.

The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation of PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Park at Amra-



vati. The 1,000-acre park is being developed by Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) as the State Implementation Agency.

The Central government had approved set-

ting up of 7 PM MITRA Parks for the Textile industry. PM MITRA Parks are a major step forward in realising the vision of making India a global hub for textile manufacturing and exports. According to

officials, the facilities will help in creating world-class industrial infrastructure and attract large scale investment including foreign direct investment (FDI) and encourage innovation and job creation within the sector.

The Prime Minister will also launch the Maharashtra government's 'Acharya Chanakya Skill Development Centre' scheme.

Skill development training centres will be established in renowned colleges across the state to provide training to youth aged 15 to 45, enabling them to become self-reliant and access various employment opportunities. Around 1,50,000

youths across the state will receive free skill development training each year.

Further, PM Modi will also launch 'Punyashlok Ahilyadevi Holkar Women Startup Scheme'. Under the scheme, early-stage support will be given to women-led startups in Maharashtra.

Financial assistance up to Rs 25 lakh will be provided and 25 per cent of the total provisions under this scheme will be reserved for women from backward classes and economically weaker sections as specified by the government.

It will help women-led startups become self-reliant and independent.

Facilities, arrangements withdrawn at junior doctors' protest venue in Kolkata

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, SEP 19

The agency which had supplied various items to facilitate West Bengal Junior Doctors' Forum (WBJDF) in their sit-in protest in front of the health department headquarters, began taking back their items on Thursday.

When the protesting doctors questioned the employees for removing items like tarpaulins, camcots and pedestal fans, they replied that they had been instructed by their authorities to do so since the equipment needed to be supplied at a different function.

The protesting junior

doctors apprehend that there could be some pressure on them to do that. However, they admitted that they were not aware of the actual reason behind the decision of the company. The protesting junior doctors claimed that the development comes as a surprise since no instruction has been given to that company to remove such items. The crucial meeting between the WBJDF delegation and Chief Secretary Manoj Pant, which started on Wednesday afternoon and continued till after midnight, failed as the state government refused to make a formal record of the minutes signed by both parties.

Now, parts of BMW to be manufactured in Punjab: CM Mann

AGENCIES
CHANDIGARH, SEP 19

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday assured cooperation to Modern Automotives Ltd for their plans to expand their project in the state and manufacture a pivotal part of automotive giant BMW.

A delegation of Modern Automotives Ltd, comprising Aditya Goyal, Suhail Goyal and Manish Bagga, called on the Chief Minister here. Now parts of BMW will be manufactured in the state, a statement by the state government said.

During the meeting, he was informed that Modern Automotives has become the first Indian company to receive approval for deliveries



of differential pinion shafts to German luxury vehicles manufacturer BMW AG Munich. They said the order has been confirmed for 2.5 million units valued at Rs 150 crore, adding that models with investment worth hundreds of crores for development and testing.

The models would be executed on the same premises by adding additional lines bringing in more revenue, employ-

ment and investment. Assuring full support and cooperation to the company for their future endeavours, the Chief Minister accepted the invitation of delegation to lay the foundation stone of the plant next month.

He said it is a matter of pride and satisfaction that the parts of leading automotive giant BMW will now be produced in the state.

CM Mann said that this move would give impetus to the state's industrial growth, besides highlighting it on the international map.

The Chief Minister reiterated that the state has an industry-friendly government with a real single-window system for the well-being of investors.

He said that Punjab is a land of opportunities and the leading companies from across the world are making a beeline to invest in the state.

CM Mann said that Punjab has complete communal harmony, and industrial peace coupled with a congenial atmosphere for industrial growth, which are giving impetus to its overall development, prosperity and progress.

Jitan Ram Manjhi and his son studied in RSS school: Tejashwi Yadav

AGENCIES
PATNA, SEP 19

Bihar Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Tejashwi Yadav on Thursday criticised Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi for his remarks on the Nawada incident while accusing him and his son, Santosh Kumar Suman, of being aligned with the ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

"Jitan Ram Manjhi is influenced by the RSS and BJP. He is making statements which align with their agenda rather than focusing on facts. Manjhi and his son are alumni of schools run by RSS," the LoP said.

Earlier, the Union Minister said people from the Yadav community instigated members of the Paswan community to torch more



than 25 houses in Mahadali Tola in Nawada district on Wednesday evening.

The Union Minister said that the district police arrested 12 individuals from the Yadav caste, who had targeted the Mahadali community.

"The Yadavs, eyeing this land, manipulated Paswan community members into acting against the Mahadalis, aiming to displace them from the land they had been living on for years," the Union Minister

claimed.

Tejashwi Yadav questioned why Manjhi, as a Union minister and a part of the ruling NDA both at the Centre and in Bihar, has not taken more concrete action regarding the incident.

"Was Manjhi engaged directly with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar or presented a memorandum about the incident," he asked.

He also pointed out that Manjhi has the power and access to demand action but has instead he is making inflammatory statements without proper information.

Tejashwi Yadav also condemned Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for its failure in handling the Nawada incident, calling it 'extremely painful'.

He stressed that those

responsible for the crime must face legal action and urged the state government to take swift and decisive action against the culprits.

Lalu Prasad Yadav, the national president of the RJD, also targeted Nitish Kumar, accusing him of failing to control crime and maintain law and order in Bihar.

He said that the Nawada incident highlights the government's inability to prevent violence and unrest, reinforcing his long-standing critique that Nitish Kumar's governance has been ineffective, especially in terms of security and justice for vulnerable communities.

Lalu Prasad Yadav also criticised Jitan Ram Manjhi for misleading the people over the Nawada incident.

Committed to fulfil all election promises: Rajasthan CM

AGENCIES
JAIPUR, SEP 19

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Thursday said that his government stands committed to fulfilling all promises made in the manifesto during the Assembly polls.

"I want to assure you that our government will fulfil each and every promise which was made to the people of Rajasthan through the Sankalp Patra released during the election," said the Chief Minister while addressing the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign in Chittaurgarh.

He said that the leaders in the former government remained confined to hotels and are now commenting against us if 'we are travelling to foreign countries to serve the people'.

"There are some lead-



ers who preferred to stay in hotels during lockdown - undergoing political barricading - and now they are criticising that the Chief Minister and the ministers are touring foreign countries," said the Chief Minister while responding to the comment made by the Congress about government's foreign tours.

"You spent time in hotels. But now, our ministers are travelling to each dhani, village and the entire state. One of our ministers is in one district and the other minister is going to another district. They are

not staying in hotels like you," the Chief Minister said.

The Chief Minister - who was in Chittorgarh - also visited Angad Bavji located in Nardiyadi and planted a sapling starting the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign.

"Planting trees is a virtuous act. Many trees live for a very long time. If one generation has planted a tree, then who knows how many generations will enjoy it," the Chief Minister said.

During the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign Chittorgarh MP C.P. Joshi said that this campaign will continue. "Dense plantations will be done in the Panchayati Raj area or forest land where there is a water facility. At least five bighas of land have been taken from the Angad Bavji committee, where a cowshed will be started," he said.

Yadavs instigated Paswan community to torch houses in Nawada: Jitan Ram Manjhi

AGENCIES
PATNA, SEP 19

Politics over the torching of 100 houses belonging to the Mahadali community in Bihar's Nawada escalated after former Bihar Chief Minister, Jitan Ram Manjhi on Thursday alleged the involvement of members of the Yadav and Paswan communities in the arson.

"People from the Yadav community instigated members of the Paswan community to carry out the incident," Union MSME Minister Manjhi said in his video statement.

"The district police arrested 12 individuals from the Yadav caste, who had targeted the Mahadali community. The Yadavs, eyeing the land, manipulated the Paswan community members into

acting against the Mahadalis, aiming to displace them from the land they had been living on for a decade," Manjhi said.

This statement has stirred controversy in Bihar's political circles, as it touches on sensitive caste dynamics that have historically played a significant role in the state's politics.

By bringing caste into the equation, Manjhi has introduced a divisive element, that will provoke reactions from various political and social groups, especially the Opposition parties, including the RJD, which is traditionally associated with the Yadav community.

Given the complex caste-based political fabric of Bihar, these remarks have the potential to



inflare tensions, not just around the specific incident but also in the broader political landscape.

The incident in Nawada has ignited a fierce political battle in Bihar, with several prominent leaders weighing in, further intensifying the situation.

RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav slammed Union Minister Manjhi for blaming the Yadav community for the arson.

The former Bihar Chief Minister accused Manjhi of misleading the public and

emphasised that the issue lies in the failure of law and order in Bihar, calling the Nawada incident "absolutely wrong."

Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav strongly criticised the Nitish Kumar-led "double engine government."

He accused the government of being indifferent and neglecting the needs of Dalits and the poor.

Tejashwi also highlighted the growing atrocities against Dalits, stressing that these actions would not be tolerated.

Chirag Paswan, one of the key political figures in Bihar and a Union Minister, also condemned the incident.

Despite being part of the ruling alliance, Paswan demanded swift action by Chief Minister

Nitish Kumar, urging him to ensure that the accused were arrested and brought to justice.

His call for strong action reflects his concern about the seriousness of the incident.

Akhilesh Prasad Singh, the President of Bihar Congress, launched a strong attack on Nitish Kumar's government, calling the incident "inhuman."

Singh announced that the Congress would send a team to Nawada to support the affected people and demanded severe punishment for those responsible.

This incident has become a flashpoint for Bihar's political leaders, with Opposition parties slamming the state's governance under Nitish Kumar and the NDA.

Several reforms to transform food processing sector launched in last 10 years: PM Modi

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

India launched several reforms to transform the food processing sector in the last decade, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday.

In his virtual address at the World Food India Programme held in the national capital, the PM noted that his government is "creating a strong ecosystem of modern infrastructure, robust supply chains

and employment generation across the country" to boost the food sector.

"During the last 10 years, we have introduced wide-ranging reforms to transform the food processing sector," he said.

This includes "multi-dimensional initiatives such as 100 per cent FDI in food processing, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana, formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises, Production Linked Incentive scheme

for food processing industries".

The Prime Minister also lauded the farmers and called them the "backbone of the Indian food ecosystem".

He said the farmers have "ensured the creation of nutritious and delicious traditions of culinary excellence. We are supporting their hard work with innovative policies and focused implementation".

PM Modi said that he aims for "India to set global

benchmarks for innovation, sustainability and safety in the food sector".

This can be achieved via "progressive agricultural practices, strong administrative frameworks, and cutting-edge technologies". He also envisions empowering small enterprises.

"We want our MSMEs to flourish and become an integral part of the global value chain and at the same time, encourage women to become micro entrepreneurs," the PM said.

Bengal CM asks protesting doctors to rejoin work amid looming health crisis

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, SEP 19

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday called upon the junior doctors to end their protest against the rape and murder of their colleague in R. G. Kar Medical College & Hospital in Kolkata and return to work amid the looming health crisis in the state in the wake of the post-flood situation.

The Chief Minister appealed to the protesting doctors while reviewing the flood situation in Udaynarayanpur block in



Kolkata.

"As the flood waters recede, there are chances of snake-bites and spread of diarrhoea. The situation will call for the open-

ing of temporary medical camps. We are trying our best. But I hope that good sense will prevail on the junior doctors and they will return to work. It is

not the time for politics. It is the time to save the lives of people," the Chief Minister said.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister claimed that West Bengal always becomes the victim of water released from elsewhere.

"North Bengal is affected due to the release of water from Bhutan. Malda district is affected because of the water released from Bihar. Finally, the entire south Bengal is affected due to Damodar Valley Corporation releasing water from two dams," the Chief Minister said.

FATF praises NIA and ED's ability to conduct complex financial investigations, identify money trails

AGENCIES
PARIS, SEP 19

The global Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Thursday praised the Indian authorities for having demonstrated a "good understanding" of both current and emerging Terror Financing (TF) threats and risks in different theatres of risk in the country, conducting investigations in line with the risks identified.

"Case studies provided reflect India's ability, in particular the National Investigative Agency (NIA) and ED, to conduct complex financial investigation and identify money trails to support the investigation and prosecution of terrorist activity and TF," the independent inter-governmental body said on Thursday while releasing its Mutual Evaluation Report.

The FATF develops and

promotes policies to protect the global financial system against money laundering, terrorist financing and the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The FATF recommendations are recognised as the global Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter-Terrorist Financing (CTF) standard.

The Mutual Evaluation Report gave a thumbs-up to India for achieving a "high-level of technical compliance" across its recommendations and taking "significant steps" to implement measures to tackle illicit finance.

"A joint FATF-APG-EAG assessment of the country's measures to tackle illicit finance concludes that India has implemented an Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing (AML/CTF) framework that is achieving good results,



including on risk understanding, access to beneficial ownership information and depriving criminals of their assets. Authorities make good use of financial intelligence and co-operate effectively, both domestically and internationally," it stated.

The report summarises the AML/CFT measures in place in India and analyses the level of compliance with the 40 FATF recommendations and the level of effectiveness of India's AML/CFT system. It also provides recommendations on how the system could be strengthened.

The FATF admitted that

India faces serious terrorism and terrorist financing threats, "including related to ISIL or Al Qaeda" acknowledging that terrorist financing risks are generally closely linked with terrorism risks, with flows of funds or provision of other assets constrained to within India or surrounding countries.

"India faces a disparate range of terrorism threats, categorised into six different theatres. These can be summarised as theatres associated with ISIL or AQ linked extremist groups active in and around Jammu and Kashmir, whether

directly or via proxies or affiliates, as well as other separatist movements in the region; other ISIL and AQ cells, their affiliates, or radicalised individuals in India; regional insurgencies in the Northeast and North of India; and left-wing extremist groups seeking to overthrow the government," the report detailed.

The most significant terrorism threats, it mentioned, appears to relate to ISIL or AQ linked groups active in and around Jammu and Kashmir.

At the same time, the FATF mentioned that India has taken significant steps in financial inclusion by more than doubling the proportion of the population with bank accounts, encouraging greater reliance on digital payment systems, and making use of simplified due diligence for small accounts.

The report mentioned

that it is critical that India continues to improve its system as its economy and financial system continue to grow, in particular ensuring that money laundering and terrorist financing trials are completed and offenders are subject to appropriate sanctions.

"India's main money laundering risks originate from illegal activities within the country, these risks relate primarily to fraud, including cyber-enabled fraud, corruption and drug trafficking. India pursues money laundering related to fraud and forgery in line with predicate crime risks to a large extent, but less so with some other offences such as human trafficking and drug trafficking. The country needs to address the backlog of money laundering cases pending conclusion of court processes," the report stated.

Explosion of communication devices in Lebanon unacceptable: UN human rights chief

AGENCIES
GENEVA, SEP 19

The widespread and simultaneous explosions of communication devices across Lebanon are shocking, with an unacceptable impact on civilians.

"The protection of civilians must be the paramount priority. De-escalation is today more crucial than ever," said the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk in a statement on Wednesday.

He also urged countries with influence in the region to take immediate action to prevent the conflict from escalating further, Xinhua news agency reported.

Lebanese Health Minister Firas Abiad reported on Wednesday that 12 people, including two children, were killed and approximately 2,800 others injured across Lebanon when their pagers detonated simultaneously on

Tuesday. In addition, the Lebanese Health Ministry confirmed that on Wednesday, explosions of wireless communication devices claimed nine more lives and left over 300 people injured across the country.

Turk stated that targeting thousands of individuals simultaneously, whether civilians or armed group members, without knowing who possessed the targeted devices, their locations, or their surroundings at the time of the attack, constitutes a violation of international human rights law and, where applicable, international humanitarian law.

He further emphasised the need for an independent, thorough, and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding these mass explosions, asserting that those responsible for ordering and executing the attacks must be held accountable.

AUSTRALIAN POPULATION PASSES 27 MILLION

AGENCIES
CANBERRA, SEP 19

Australia's population has officially surpassed 27 million people, with migration primarily driving growth.

Official data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on Thursday revealed that the Australian population was 27.12 million at the end of March 2024, Xinhua news agency reported.

The population grew by 615,300 people - or 2.3 per cent - in the 12 months to the end of March.

"Net overseas migration drove 83 per cent of this population growth, while births and deaths, known as natural increase, made up the other 17 per cent," Beidar Cho, head of demography at the ABS, said in a statement.

Net overseas migration, which is calculated by subtracting overseas departures from overseas arrivals, was 509,800 people in the year to March - down from a record high of



559,900 in the 12 months to September 2023.

Natural increase added 105,500 people to Australia's population in the year to March, with 289,700 births and 184,200 deaths registered in that period.

The state New South Wales (NSW) remains the most populous of Australia's eight states and territories, with 8.46 million people - 31.1 per cent of

the national population - at the end of March.

The east coast states of NSW, Victoria and Queensland account for 77.3 per cent of the Australian population.

Western Australia recorded the fastest-growing population, up 3.1 per cent in the 12 months to March, while the island state of Tasmania had the lowest growth at 0.4 per cent.

Man involved in 'Iran-backed assassination plot' against Netanyahu, top officials arrested: Israeli Police

AGENCIES
TEL AVIV, SEP 19

A Jewish-Israeli civilian was arrested last month on suspicion of being recruited by Iranian operatives to assist in an assassination plot targeting senior Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Yoav Galant, and Shin Bet head Ronan Bar, the Israeli authorities announced on Thursday.

The suspect, identified as Moti Maman, 73, from Ashkelon, was charged on Thursday, after which the security forces announced the details.

In a detailed post on X, the Israel Police revealed that the suspect, a businessman with ties to Turkey and Iran, had lived in Turkey for an extended period and maintained business and social relations with Turkish and Iranian individuals.

In April of this year, the businessman was allegedly approached by intermediaries linked to Ira-



nian intelligence through Turkish contacts, Andrey Farouk Aslan and Junayd Aslan. He was introduced to an Iranian businessman named Eddie, who was unable to leave Iran and conducted meetings via intermediaries in Turkey to facilitate further contact.

In May, the Israeli citizen reportedly travelled to Turkey again and was smuggled by car across the Turkish-Iranian border near the city of Van. Once in Iran, he met with Eddie

and an Iranian official named Haja, who was described as connected to Iranian security forces.

During these meetings, the Israeli was allegedly offered several security-related tasks by the Iranian regime, including transferring weapons or funds, photographing strategic locations in Israel, and issuing threats against Israeli citizens, according to the police.

The security forces further revealed that he was also reportedly asked

to assist in "carrying out assassination plots against Netanyahu, Galant, Bar, or other senior officials."

"Also, the Iranian intelligence officials asked to look into the possibility of the assassination of other senior figures, such as former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and other public figures, in their view this as revenge for the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh on Iranian soil in July 2024, which was attributed by the Iranian authorities to the State of

Israel. The Israeli citizen demanded an advance payment of one million dollars before performing any action," the post on X read.

According to Israeli authorities, the suspect demanded an advance payment of \$1 million for his involvement in these activities but did not perform any of the requested tasks.

The plot escalated during further meetings in Iran, where Iranian intelligence officials reiterated their assassination proposals and explored other potential actions, such as "recruiting a Mossad agent to act as a double agent" and locating Russian and American officials for elimination, the Israeli security forces claimed.

Before leaving Iran, the suspect reportedly received 5,000 euros from Eddie and an Iranian intelligence representative for his participation in the meetings. However, the authorities arrested Maman upon his return.

Iran hacked Trump's campaign information, tried to send to Democrats: US Intelligence

AGENCIES
UNIONDALE, SEP 19

In a case of election interference attempt, Iran hacked electronic data from Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump's campaign and sent it to people associated with President Joe Biden, US intelligence agencies said.

Reacting to the report, Trump said on Wednesday, "This is election interference" by a foreign country.

Speaking at a rally in this New York suburb, he asserted that Iran had carried out the hack to help the Kamala Harris campaign.

Officials from the Office of the Director of National

Intelligence, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency said in a joint statement.

They said that since June excerpts of "stolen, non-public material" material from Trump's campaign were sent to people associated with the campaign of Biden before he withdrew

from the race, and to news media.

They said that the "malicious cyber activity" was part of Iran's attempt to "stoke discord and undermine confidence in our electoral process".

According to them, the Biden campaign did not respond to the overtures and a Harris spokesperson said that some indi-

viduals were targeted on their emails but they were seen as "spam or phishing attempts".

"We condemn in the strongest terms any effort by foreign actors to interfere in US elections including this unwelcome and unacceptable malicious activity," the spokesperson said.

The Washington Post

reported in August that they had received such material and that the FBI was investigating it.

The Trump campaign acknowledged at that time that it had been hacked and the Republican candidate immediately blamed Iran.

According to reports, Iranian hackers gained access to the email account

of a Trump adviser, Roger Stone, and through it infiltrated other accounts.

Trump said that during his last election run, Democrats had screamed interference by Russia and claimed the laptop belonging to Biden's son Hunter with incriminating information was a Moscow plant.

But after inquiries cost-

ing millions of dollars, they could not prove that there was any Russian collusion and the laptop was proved to be genuine, he said.

Iran has a special animus towards Trump because he withdrew the US from an international agreement with Iran to curtail its nuclear arms activity in return for loosening sanctions.

Over 100 terrorists killed, significant enemy equipment destroyed: Nigerian Army

AGENCIES
NIAMEY, SEP 19

More than 100 terrorists have been "neutralised" and significant enemy equipment destroyed, thanks to coordination between Nigerian ground and air forces, on Sunday in Niaktiré, near the commune of Makalondi in the Tillabéry region (west), reported the army on Wednesday in a news bulletin.

According to the bulletin, a unit of the Nigerien Defence and Security Forces (FDS) stationed in Niaktiré was targeted in a terrorist attack on Sunday afternoon.

"Horde of criminals, coming in hundreds, launched the assault but faced fierce resistance. Our soldiers, showing remarkable courage, held their position bravely, inflicting heavy losses on



the enemy," the army said.

"In response to the intensity of the attack, two units of special forces were quickly deployed as reinforcements - one from Torodi and the other from Makalondi.

Simultaneously, air assets were mobilised to carry out targeted strikes, annihilating the attackers to their last stronghold," it added.

Furthermore, ground units'

sweeping operations revealed "new enemy bodies as well as dozens of motorcycles, some riddled with bullets and others completely burnt."

Despite this achievement, the FDS mourned the loss of five soldiers, and 27 others were injured, none of whom are in critical condition. They have been evacuated to Niamey for necessary medical care.

The highest authorities of the country have commended the unwavering commitment of the Nigerien armed forces in defending national integrity.

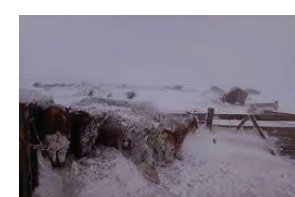
These areas are located in the "three borders" region (Niger-Mali-Burkina Faso), a new hub of insecurity in the extreme southwest of the country, fuelled in recent years by other jihadist groups.

Mongolia experiences sudden drop in temperature, early snowfall

AGENCIES
ULAN BATOR, SEP 19

Parts of Mongolia are facing a sudden drop in temperatures and unseasonably early snowfall this autumn.

As of Thursday morning, provinces including Khuvsgul, Selenge, Bulgan, Orkhon, and Darkhan-Uul in the north, as well as the western provinces of Zavkhan and Khovd, and central provinces Tuv, Arkhangai, and Uvurkhangai, have reported snow accumulation of up to 7 cm, according to the National Agency for



its potential impacts on farming and daily life.

Looking ahead, further snowfall is expected to affect large parts of the country throughout the weekend, along with a continued drop in temperatures. The weather monitoring agency is urging the public, particularly nomadic herders and farmers, to take extra precautions against potential weather-related hazards.

Mongolia's climate is characterised by a strong continental influence, featuring long, frigid winters and short, warm summers.

INDIA SET TO BECOME THIRD-LARGEST ECONOMY BY FY30-31: S&P GLOBAL

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, SEP 19

India is on track to become the third-largest economy by fiscal 2030-31, driven by a robust projected annual growth rate of 6.7 per cent, a report by S&P Global projected on Thursday.



The country has emerged as the fastest-growing large economy at an 8.2 per cent growth rate in FY24, significantly exceeding the government's earlier estimate of 7.3 per cent.

According to the report, Infrastructure development and geopolitical strategies will play an important role in maximising trade benefits.

"India's medium-term prospects are healthy and filled with opportunities in multiple sectors including trade, agricul-

ture, and AI, likely structural reforms and growing energy demands," said Abhishek Tomar, Head-S&P Global India Leadership Council.

India is poised for growth, and with a young and dynamic workforce well-positioned to shape, added Tomar, also Chief Data Officer for S&P Global Market Intelligence.

According to the report, titled "India Forward", continued reforms are crucial to improving business transactions and logistics, boosting private sector investment, and reducing reliance on public capital. The equity markets are expected to stay dynamic and competitive due to strong growth prospects and better regu-

lation. The report also mentioned that foreign inflows into Indian government bonds have surged since the country joined major emerging market indexes, with further growth anticipated.

"To maximise trade benefits, India must develop infrastructure and geopolitical strategies, particularly regarding its extensive coastline. Nearly 90 per cent of India's trade is seaborne, necessitating robust port infrastructure to manage increasing exports and bulk commodity imports," it noted.

The country can further look to sustainable technologies, including renewables and low-emission fuels balancing energy security with its energy transition plans. Agriculture will rely on advanced technolo-

gies and new policies to improve infrastructure and productivity.

"The need is to address critical infrastructure issues such as irrigation, storage, and supply distribution to ensure food security and economic stability," said the report.

Leveraging AI can boost economic growth, with opportunities for public-private partnerships to replicate the success of India's digital infrastructure.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said this week that India is becoming a major stakeholder in the global supply chain and this growing capacity is the foundation of its economic growth. PM Modi said over 140 crore citizens are working with the resolve of making India the third-largest economy in the world.

Nasscom to nurture 37 homegrown GenAI startups in 2nd cohort

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, SEP 19

IT industry's apex body Nasscom on Thursday announced the selection of 37 Generative AI (GenAI) startups and 30 per cent of them have women in their founding teams.

The startups, which include Fluid AI, Sivi, DaveAI, OnFinance and others, have been chosen for the second cohort of the Nasscom's 'Generative AI Foundry' programme. The average startup in the cohort is two-year-old and has already raised \$750,000 from institutional investors.

"Homegrown Generative AI startups are revolutionising industries not only in India but for the world, showcasing India's rapidly growing expertise in AI on the global stage," said Ankit Bose, Head of AI, Nasscom.

Chosen from a pool of more than 130 applicants, these startups are pushing the boundaries of GenAI in India.

They offer solutions that generate text, audio, code, video/image, and multimodal output with strong use cases for retail, banking and financial services, healthcare and life sciences, and for various functions of the enterprise.

The 'Generative AI Foundry' programme, launched in October 2023, has been actively supporting 26 startups. The programme has partnered nearly 60 enterprises and investors.

The programme has seen its business grow nearly twice and headcount by 50 per cent, collectively raising \$15 million from institutional investors, and they poised to raise over \$2 million on an average.

With over 40 patents filed and several underway, the startups are generating significant intellectual property from India, said Nasscom.

More than 200 tech startups are actively innovating and offering Generative AI solutions and services to their customers spread across various industry verticals.

As per a recent Nasscom-Zinnov report, 2023 saw over \$500 million in deep tech funding.

However, more concerted efforts to improve collaborative innovation between startups and industry, increasing access to affordable GPUs, the need for patient capital, strong emphasis on applied research, and continuing to building a competent talent pipeline will be the key to augment the growth of the Gen AI startup ecosystem in India, said the industry body.

SC dismisses curative plea by telcos seeking correction in AGR calculation

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

In a big setback for telecom companies, the Supreme Court has dismissed their curative pleas seeking correction of alleged errors in Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) calculation.

After going through the curative petitions and the connected documents, a bench, headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, said that no case was made out for allowing the curative pleas.

"We have gone through the curative petitions and the connected documents. In our opinion, no case is made out within the parameters indicated in the decision of this Court in Rupa Ashok Hurra v Ashok Hurra," said the Bench, also comprising



Justices Sanjiv Khanna and B.R. Gavai.

Declining to list the curative petitions in open court, it plainly dismissed them in chambers, as per the order uploaded on the SC website.

Earlier, the apex court had dismissed applications filed by Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel, and Tata Tele Services Ltd, alleging arithmetical errors in the calculation of AGR dues

payable by them. Citing an earlier order in the matter, it had noted the order clearly pointed out that no re-assessment of AGR-related dues can be done.

The telcos had submitted that arithmetical errors can be rectified and there were cases of duplication of entries.

In September 2020, the top court gave 10 years' time to telcos, who

were struggling to pay Rs 93,520 crore in AGR dues outstanding to the government. The apex court had said that telecom operators shall make the payment of 10 per cent of the total dues as demanded by DoT by March 31, 2021. The rest of the amount was to be paid in yearly installments commencing from April 1, 2021, to March 31, 2031.

The SC had asked various companies, through their Managing Director/Chairman or other authorised officer, to furnish an undertaking within four weeks, to make payment of arrears as per its order. It had also said that in the event of any defaults, interest along with penalty and interest on penalty would automatically become payable without reference to the court.

Apple Intelligence arriving in more languages next year, including in India

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

Tech giant Apple on Wednesday announced that its generative AI offering called 'Apple Intelligence' will be available in more languages next year, including English (India).

Geared up to make its iPhone 16 lineup available to customers on September 20, the company said new additions to Apple Intelligence include English (India), English (Singapore), German, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, Vietnamese, while "others" yet to be announced.

The feature will launch in American English, when it arrives as part of the iOS 18.1 software update.

Apple had announced that localised English support for Australia,



Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and the UK will arrive later in 2024. Apple Intelligence is currently available in the EU via the macOS Sequoia 15.1 developer beta.

Apple Intelligence, the personal intelligence system, will start rolling out next month with iOS 18.1, iPadOS 18.1, and macOS Sequoia 15.1, with more features launching in the coming months.

With systemwide Writing Tools powered by Apple Intelligence, users can rewrite, proofread, and summarise text nearly everywhere they write. In Photos, the Memories feature now enables users to create the movies they want to see by simply typing a description.

Also, natural language can be used to search for specific photos, and search in videos gets more powerful with the ability to find specific moments

in clips. The new Clean Up tool can identify and remove distracting objects in the background of a photo – without accidentally altering the subject.

The Clean Up tool in Photos can identify and remove distracting objects in the background of a photo – without accidentally altering the subject.

In the Notes and Phone apps, users can record, transcribe, and summarise audio. Siri becomes more natural, flexible, and deeply integrated into the system experience, according to the company.

Meanwhile, Apple has released the next version of its operating system, iOS 18, which is a free download and offers iPhone users around the world new ways to personalise their devices.

'Deeply troubled': Adani Group donates Rs 25 crore towards Andhra flood relief efforts

AGENCIES
AHMEDABAD, SEP 19

The Adani Group on Thursday announced it is donating Rs 25 crore towards the relief efforts in Andhra Pradesh, battered by torrential rains and floods.

Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group, said he is "deeply troubled" by the extensive damage caused by the recent torrential rains and flooding in the state.

"The Adani Group stands in solidarity with the people of Andhra Pradesh and humbly extends our support through the Adani Foundation with a contribution of Rs 25 crore to the relief effort," the Group Chairman posted on X.



Heavy rains and floods have claimed many lives and caused extensive

property losses in the affected districts. More than 6.44 lakh

people were affected by the calamity.

In a separate post on X, Karan Adani, Managing Director of Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd, said he is privileged to contribute towards the relief efforts, led by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

"Our hearts are with the people as they rebuild their lives and livelihoods," said Karan Adani. The Adani Group posted that "as we witness the devastation caused by torrential rains in Vijayawada, we firmly stand in solidarity with the people of Andhra Pradesh during these tough times".

"We are deeply moved by their resilience as they display great resolve in assisting affected commu-

nities in this time of crisis," the Group wrote separately on X.

Meanwhile, Naidu has announced compensation for those who suffered losses due to the recent heavy rains and floods. The government will rebuild houses for those who lost their houses and for every damaged house, Rs 25,000 will be paid. The Chief Minister announced that Rs 10,000 will be paid for each flooded house.

Naidu also announced financial assistance for affected Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). SMEs with a turnover of Rs 40,000 to Rs 1.5 crore will be given Rs 1 lakh and for those with a turnover of more than Rs 1.5 crore, Rs 1.5 lakh will be granted.

Tax refund crosses Rs 2 lakh crore mark in FY25

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 18

The income tax department's efficiency has rapidly increased in the last decade as refunds out of direct tax collection crossed the Rs 2 lakh mark in the financial year (FY) 2024-25, according to government data.

According to the data, direct tax collection in the current financial year (From April 1 to September 17) was Rs 9.95 lakh crore, up 16.12 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Tax refunds also jumped during this period and have increased by



56.49 per cent to Rs 2.05 lakh crore compared to last year.

Securities Transaction Tax (STT) collection has increased to Rs 26,154 crore.

Advance tax collection has increased by 22.61 per cent on an annual basis to Rs 4.36 lakh crore. Advance personal income collection has increased by 39.22 per cent. There has been an increase of 18.17 per cent in corporate tax.

During the period, gross direct tax collection including refunds has increased by 21.48 per cent to Rs 12.01 lakh crore.

In the current financial year, the government has set a target of collecting Rs 22.12 lakh crore from direct taxes (personal income tax, corporate tax and other taxes), which is about 13 per cent more compared to the last financial year.

According to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the average processing time of ITR has been reduced from 93 days in 2013 to 10 days now, thereby making refunds faster.

Data centre firm Princeton Digital Group to invest \$1 billion, expand capacity in India

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, SEP 19

Singapore-based data centre operator Princeton Digital Group (PDG) on Thursday announced to invest \$1 billion in India and expand capacity to a total of 230 MW in the country.

This move is part of PDG's new \$5 billion investment programme for AI-ready data centres in Asia, the company said

in a statement.

"India is well positioned to be a global AI leader, and we are determined to play an important role in making that happen. As one of the fastest growing data centre operators, our \$1 billion investment in India is testament to our deep commitment to the country's AI and cloud ecosystems," said Rangu Salgame, Chairman, CEO and Co-founder, PDG.

In addition to expanding its MUI campus in Mumbai, PDG is entering Chennai with CHI, the 72 MW AI-ready campus. The hyperscale data centre facility will be built over 9.3 acres with scalability for future expansion.

"By adding three new buildings in Mumbai and by entering Chennai, we are significantly enhancing our hyperscale AI-ready infrastructure foot-

print in the country," said Salgame.

Both MUI and CHI are state-of-the-art AI-ready campuses, supporting high density deployments and cutting-edge cooling technologies.

"With the advent of AI in India, both locations are well-positioned to become leading AI infrastructure hubs as well," said Vipin Shirsat, Managing Director of PDG India.

India set to play pivotal role in AI use to boost social, economic progress: Centre

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

As the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI (GenAI) surges worldwide, India is set to play a pivotal role in its use to accelerate social and economic progress, the government said on Thursday.

Dr Neeraj Mittal, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications (DoT), said that globally, AI and GenAI are evolving rapidly and the world is witnessing their remarkable potential. "This year, India will

host 'World Telecom Standardization Telecom Assembly (WTSA-2024)' along with India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2024 in New Delhi, where WTSA-2024 will play a critical role in shaping the standardization practices of evolving technologies including AI," said Mittal.

IMC 2024, from October 15-October 18 at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, is expected to have over 50 global and Indian speakers for discussion on multiple facets of AI and GenAI, spanning across 11 diverse discussions.

IMC 2024 and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will also organise a special daylong session on 'AI for Good', where experts and delegates from around the world will deliberate on the subject.

Ramakrishna P, CEO of IMC 2024, said India is at the centre-stage of technology evolution and plays a critical role.

"Our aim is not only to felicitate the varied points of view but also explore to come up with a 'thought paper/report' on the subject. We look forward to

having the greater presence of delegates and visitors this year and support of all our partners," Ramakrishna added.

The event will also highlight topics like quantum technology and circular economy, along with spotlight on 6G, 5G use-case showcase, cloud and edge computing, IoT, semiconductors, cybersecurity, green tech, satcom and electronics manufacturing.

The startup programme 'Aspire' will witness over 140 startups focusing on AI-based applications in different industries.

1st Test: Ashwin credits Jadeja for 195 unbeaten partnership in Chennai heat

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, SEP 19

Ravichandran Ashwin's unbeaten 102 along with Ravindra Jadeja's 86 not out did wonders for India after being put to bat first in the opening Test by Bangladesh at MA Chidambaram Stadium on Thursday. The duo not only turned the tide in their favour but also complemented each other in the middle to build a 195-run unbeaten stand for the seventh wicket to take India to 339/6 at the stumps.

Ashwin-Jadeja's mammoth act survived India from early all-out after Hasan Mahmud's four-fer reduced them to 144/7 in 42.2 overs. India had a worst possible start after the right-arm pacer removed captain Rohit Sharma (6), Shubman Gill (0) and Virat Kohli (6) in quick succession, leaving the hosts tottering at 34/3 in 9.2 overs.

Mahmud exploited the weak spots of India's star batters - Rohit and Virat and left them guessing on in-swing and out-swing



respectively. Gill was unlucky to get an edge on the ball moving to leg-side, grabbed behind the stumps by Litton Das.

Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant tried to rebuild India's innings and added a 62-run stand before Mahmud struck again to remove the comeback wicketkeeper for 39.

Jaiswal, who struck a well-made 56 including nine fours, fell pray to pacer Nahid Rana in the second session. Spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz picked KL Rahul for 16 before Ashwin-Jadeja started their show at the familiar Chepauk surface.

"It's an old Chennai surface with a bit of bounce

and carry. The red soil pitch allows you to play a few shots if you are willing to just get in line and give it a bit of a tonk when there's width," Ashwin told broadcasters after stumps on day 1.

Local man Ashwin credited his partner for boosting his morale in the grueling Chennai heat. "He (Jadeja) was of real help, there was a point in time where I was really sweating and getting a bit tired, Jaddu noticed it quickly and guided me through that phase. Jaddu has been one of our best batters for our team in the last few years. Him being there, pretty solid and he was also very helpful in terms of telling me that we don't have to convert twos into threes which was really helpful for me," Ashwin said.

On hitting his second Test century at Chepauk, Ashwin termed it a "special feeling" and revealed the hard work he had done before the series to hone his batting skills.

"Always a special feeling to play in front of the home crowd. This is a

ground I completely love to play cricket in. It's given me a lot of wonderful memories. The last time I got a hundred, you were the coach Ravi bhai (Ravi Shastri). It does feel special. It helps that I have come back at the back of a T20 tournament (TNPL), worked quite a bit on my batting. Of course, I have always been turning my bat around outside off-stump. Worked on a few things and on a surface like this with a bit of spice, if you're going after the ball, might as well go after it really hard like Rishabh does," Ashwin said.

"It's a typical, old-fashioned Chennai pitch where overspin will fetch a bit of bounce. The wicket will start doing its tricks much later in the game. There's enough in it for the quicks, good carry, good bounce if we present the seam nice and hard. The new ball will do a bit, there'll be some help for the bowlers, we'll have to start afresh tomorrow. There's a bit in the pitch, it's still damp underneath, so hopefully as it dries out, it quickens up," the off-spinner added.

Premier League champs Manchester City arrive in India for Trophy tour



AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

Manchester City, who rewrote the history books by winning the English Premier League four times in a row in 2023-24, have arrived in Indian capital city as part of the club's Champions 4-in-a-row Trophy Tour.

To celebrate this historic achievement, Manchester City have brought the Premier League trophy to New Delhi, alongside the Club World Cup and Community Shield trophies.

The trophies will be accompanied alongside former Manchester City and England winger

Shaun Wright-Phillips across a range of activities for Citizens in India, including a fan event on September 22, where fans are invited to watch Manchester City take on Arsenal FC at Vegas Mall.

Speaking on the visit as a whole, Club Legend Wright-Phillips said, "We're really looking forward to visiting India as part of the Club's Champions 4-in-a-row tour. The club were fortunate enough to visit last year and we're excited to interact with our fan base in India again, as we bring the Premier League, Club World Cup and Community Shield Trophies around

the world."

Commenting on the fixture against Arsenal FC, he added, "Our latest visit also coincides with our important Premier League fixture against Arsenal which fans can watch at a special fan event and screening on the Sunday." After a memorable 2023/24 season, the Citizens are keen to build on that success, with the likes of Kevin de Bruyne and Erling Haaland leading the line. Ahead of the game against Arsenal, the defending champions stand at the top of the Premier League table with 12 points and four wins from as many games.

Roy, Ferguson, Atkinson spearhead star-studded ILT20 season 3 new signings

AGENCIES
DUBAI, SEP 19

The International League T20's season 3 is set to be full of high octane cricket as some of the biggest names in the game have joined the six franchises as new signings. The window to sign new players began in June and concluded on September 15.

The upcoming season will have international T20 stars like Jason Roy (Sharjah Warriorz), Fakhar Zaman (Desert Vipers), Shai Hope (Dubai Capitals), (Lockie Ferguson (Desert Vipers), Roston Chase (Abu Dhabi Knight Riders), Matthew Wade (Sharjah Warriorz), Ibrahim Zadran (Gulf Giants) and Romario Shepherd (MI Emirates) make their ILT20 debuts and dazzle the crowds in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah.

England's star all-rounder Gus Atkinson (Sharjah Warriorz) returns to the competition after appearing for the Vipers in season 1. England pacer Tom Curran will represent season 1 champions Gulf Giants after previously representing the Vipers.

Abu Dhabi Knight Riders, who played the Eliminator in season 2,

are set to enter season 3 with a powerful squad. They have been bolstered by the inclusion of the West Indies duo of Roston Chase (batting all-rounder) and Gudakesh Motie (left-arm spinner). Both Chase and Motie were part of the West Indies team in this year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup and produced some impressive performances for the tournament hosts. ADKR have also signed upcoming Afghanistan spinner Allah Mohammad Ghazanfar, USA all-rounder Hassan Khan (former Pakistan U19 captain) and West Indies medium-pacer Terrance Hinds.

Season 1 finalists Desert Vipers have further strengthened their squad with some exciting signings. Pakistan opener Fakhar had an outstanding ICC Men's ODI World Cup in 2023 and was also part of the national team at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. New Zealand quick Lockie Ferguson will add real firepower to the Vipers' attack in season 3. English trio Dan Lawrence, Max Holden (Dubai Capitals - season 2) and David Payne are the other three Vipers signings for season 3.

Season 2 finalists Dubai Capitals are set to enter season 3 with a formidable squad. West Indies wicketkeeper batter Shai Hope adds depth to the batting reserves. Leg-spinner Jeffrey Vandersay, star Afghanistan all-rounder Gulbadin Naib, West Indies left-arm pacer Obed McCoy, Australia batter Joe Burns (now qualified as an Associate player for Italy), English batter Joe Weatherley, Scotland batter Brandon McMullen, Sri Lanka pacer Garuka Sanketh, English wicketkeeper-batter Adam Rossington, New Zealand fast bowler Scott Kuggeleijn (rehired for season 3) and Afghanistan left-arm spinner Sharafuddin Ashraf are Capitals' other new signings.

The winners of the inaugural season Gulf Giants have added the prolific Afghanistan opener Ibrahim Zadran in their season 3 squad. Ibrahim enjoyed a great run in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, the right-hander tallied 231 runs in eight innings - fifth highest in the tournament. England fast bowler Tymal Mills (Desert Vipers - season 1 and 2), Ireland pacer Mark Adair, Afghanistan spinner Wahidullah Zadran, England top-



order batter Adam Lyth (Desert Vipers - season 1) and Curran are the other new signings for Giants. West Indies left-arm pacer Dominic Drakes has also returned to the squad - Drakes appeared in both seasons for the Giants.

Defending champions MI Emirates have added all-round strength to their impressive squad by signing star West Indies all-rounder Romario Shepherd. England wicketkeeper batter Tom Banton (Gulf Giants season 1, Dubai Capitals season 2), Afghanistan left-arm pacer Fared Ahmad, Thomas Draca - medium-pacer - hailing from Italy and English batter Ben Charlesworth

are the other MI Emirates new signings.

The Sharjah Warriorz, who are yet to play the ILT20 playoffs, have assembled a star-studded squad via new signings for season 3 spearheaded by the English trio of Jason Roy, prolific leg-spinner Adil Rashid (rehired for season 3) and Atkinson. Roy has amassed more than 9000 runs in his glittering T20 career. Australia wicketkeeper-batter Matthew Wade also adds rich experience and pedigree to the side with 5050 T20 runs and 162 dismissals as a wicketkeeper.

Other season 3 signings include New Zealand quick Adam Milne, seasoned

wicketkeeper-batter Tim Seifert (New Zealand), Australia left-arm spinner Ashton Agar, Afghanistan all-rounder Karim Janat, West Indies all-rounder Keemo Paul, Sri Lanka duo of Avishka Fernando and Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Australia all-rounder Daniel Sams (rehired for season 3), USA left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh and Malaysian all-rounder Virandeep Singh.

Meanwhile, the teams can add more players or replacements to their squads upon clearance from the ILT20 Technical Committee.

Teams can also add additional UAE players to their squads via a Draft which will take place after the conclusion of the ILT20 Development Tournament next month.

ILT20 season 3 squads: Abu Dhabi Knight Riders

New signings: Allah Mohammad Ghazanfar, Gudakesh Motie, Hassan Khan, Roston Chase and Terrance Hinds.

Retentions: Aditya Shetty, Ali Khan, Alishan Sharafu, Andre Russell, Andries Ghouse, Charith Asalanka, David Willey, Joe Clarke, Laurie Evans, Michael Pepper and Sunil

Narine.

Desert Vipers
New signings: Dan Lawrence, David Payne, Fakhar Zaman, Lockie Ferguson and Max Holden.

Retentions: Adam Hose, Alex Hales, Ali Naseer, Azam Khan, Bas de Leede, Luke Wood, Michael Jones, Mohammad Amir, Nathan Sowter, Sherfane Ruthven, Tanish Suri and Wanindu Hasaranga.

Dubai Capitals
New signings: Adam Rossington, Brandon McMullen, Garuka Sanketh, Gulbadin Naib, Jeffrey Vandersay, Joe Burns, Joe Weatherley, Najibullah Zadran, Obed McCoy, Scott Kuggeleijn, Sharafuddin Ashraf and Shai Hope.

Retentions: Dasun Shanaka, David Warner, Dushmantha Chameera, Haider Ali, Raja Akif, Rovman Powell, Sam Billings, Sikandar Raza, Zahir Khan, Jake Fraser-McGurk and Oliver Stone.

Gulf Giants
New signings: Adam Lyth, Dominic Drakes, Daniel Worrall, Ibrahim Zadran, Mark Adair, Tom Curran, Tymal Mills and Wahidullah Zadran.

Retentions: Aayan Afzal Khan, Blessing Muzarabani, Chris Jordan, Dipendra Singh Airee, Gerhard Eras-

mus, Jamie Overton, James Vince, Jamie Smith, Jordan Cox, Mohammad Zuhaib Zubair, Rehan Ahmed, and Shimron Hetmyer.

MI Emirates
New signings: Romario Shepherd, Tom Banton, Fared Ahmad, Thomas Jack Draca, Ben Charlesworth.

Retentions: Akeal Hosen, Andre Fletcher, Daniel Mousley, Dwayne Bravo, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Jordan Thompson, Kieron Pollard, Kusal Perera, Muhammad Rohid Khan, Muhammad Waseem, Nicholas Pooran, Nosthush Kenjige, Vijayakanth Vijaykanth and Waqar Salamkheil.

Sharjah Warriorz
New signings: Adam Milne, Adil Rashid (played for Warriorz in Season 2 as a Wildcard pick), Ashton Agar, Avishka Fernando, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Daniel Sams, Gus Atkinson, Harmeet Singh, Jason Roy, Karim Janat, Keemo Paul, Matthew Wade, Virandeep Singh and Tim Seifert.

Retentions: Dilshan Madushanka, Johnson Charles, Junaid Siddique, Muhammad Jawadullah, Kusal Mendis, Luke Wells, Peter Hatzoglou and Tom Kohler-Cadmore.

Women's UPL: Nainital SG Pipers beat Mussoorie Thunders to reach final

AGENCIES
DEHRADUN, SEP 19

Nainital SG Pipers showcased their dominance with both bat and ball, to beat Mussoorie Thunders by seven wickets and advanced to the final of the Women's Uttarakhand Premier League, here on Thursday.

With the opening match of the tournament having been washed out by rain, the stakes for Thursday's game were high: the winner would advance directly to the final and Nainital SG Pipers seized the opportunity with both hands.

Chasing 97, the Nainital SG Pipers' openers delivered a composed start for their team. While Manisha Pradhan anchored the



innings while her partner Megha Saini adopted an aggressive approach. The duo put on a 40-run partnership before losing the key wicket of Megha Saini, who scored a brisk 26 off 18 balls.

Despite losing a wicket, the Nainital SG Pipers' chase stayed on course as Manisha and Deepika

Chand took on the responsibility of guiding their team to victory.

Deepika was dismissed after forming a crucial 33-run partnership with Manisha, scoring 23 runs off 26 balls before Nainital SG Pipers chased down the target with three overs to spare. Manisha remained unbeaten on 31 off 37 balls.

Opting to bat first, Mussoorie Thunders suffered early blows, losing their top three batters within the Powerplay. However, wicketkeeper-batter Nandini Kashyap and captain Mansi Joshi stabilised the innings with a vital partnership.

From 14/3, their 61-run partnership lifted the team to 75/3, before Vaishali Tulera removed Nandini to break the stand. She returned to the pavilion with a top score of 45 from 41 balls.

Nandini's dismissal sparked a collapse, with the Mussoorie Thunders losing wickets at regular intervals as Nainital SG Pipers' bowlers, led by their experienced captain Ekta Bisht, kept the pressure.

Sumit Nagal cites injury concerns behind Davis Cup withdrawal

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, SEP 19

Sumit Nagal clarified the controversy surrounding his decision to withdraw from India's Davis Cup tie against Sweden last week, citing "injury concerns".

India suffered a 0-4 defeat in the tie, and Nagal's absence raised questions, particularly after the All India Tennis Association (AITA) claimed that despite his injury, Nagal was set to compete in an upcoming ATP tournament in China.

Nagal clarified his stance, in an Instagram post, "Representing my country is always a privilege and an honour that I hold in the highest regard. One of the highlights of my career was being able to represent India at the Olympics. It was a difficult decision to withdraw from the Davis Cup, as playing



for the national team is a moment I deeply cherish." Nagal also responded to AITA's claims and said he had informed the association well in advance about his inability to participate in the tie.

"However, after consulting the medical team, it became clear that competing while carrying an injury could not only jeopardise my health but also adversely impact the team's chances.

"I believe it is better for the team and country to have someone at 100% rather than risking further injury and potentially disrupting the match. I had informed AITA well in advance about my inability to participate.

"Injury management is a complex science in professional sports. A few days of rest and targeted rehabilitation can make the difference between aggravating an injury and being fit to

play again. I have been working diligently with my tennis and medical team to ensure I am in the best possible condition to return to the court whenever that would be," the post read.

Nagal also touched upon the issue of compensation, after concerns were raised about his absence despite being listed for the tournament in China.

"Regarding compensation, I want to clarify that it is standard practice in professional sports for athletes to be compensated for their participation in events, even when representing their country. This is not about personal gain. My discussions with AITA and the Davis Cup captain are confidential and I would not like to indulge in any speculation about this," the post further read.

Training session for Presiding Officers and Micro-Observers conducted successfully in Lal Chowk AC



J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

In preparation for the upcoming elections scheduled on September 25, 2024, the Returning Officer of the 22-Lal Chowk Assembly Constituency conducted a successful training session with all the Presiding Officers and Micro-Observers.

The session was held to ensure a well-prepared and coordinated team for the smooth conduct of the elections.

Both Presiding Officers and Micro-Observers participated enthusiastically, demonstrating their com-

mitment to maintaining the integrity and efficiency of the electoral process. The training emphasized the critical roles of Presiding Officers and Sectoral/Zonal Magistrates in ensuring law and order on election day and facilitating a fair and transparent polling process.

The joint training highlighted the importance of collaboration between Presiding Officers and Magistrates to ensure seamless coordination, effective management of polling stations, and prompt resolution of any issues that may arise during the elections.

Hiranagar spreads voter awareness through Rangoli Art

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 19

To engage and educate voters about the importance of participating in the electoral process, the roads of AC 68 Hiranagar were transformed into vibrant canvases promoting voter awareness through Rangoli art. The creative medium was employed to capture the attention of voters and encourage them to exercise their democratic rights.

Nine educational institutions, Government Degree College Hiranagar, besides Government Higher Secondary Schools Hiranagar, Chakra, Marheen, Kore Punnu, Sallan, Infant Jesus, Sai International, and GGHS Hiranagar, participated in the unique program. Teams from these institutions created Rangoli designs on the road, conveying messages that emphasized the importance of voting and becoming role models for others. The event was organized in the presence of ARO Hiranagar, Executive Officer MC Hiranagar, ZEO Hiranagar, and the Principal of GHSS

Hiranagar. Their presence further highlighted the importance of this initiative in encouraging voter participation.

In addition to the Rangoli event, AC 68 Hiranagar leveraged social media to broaden voter outreach. WhatsApp groups were used to share audio messages in both Dogri and Hindi, specifically targeting 2,214 farmers in the region, urging them to cast their vote. Similar outreach efforts were carried out with beneficiaries connected to various government programs such as Poshan, RDD, Health, Education, and the Municipal Committee.

In a further creative initiative under the SVEEP program, the Power Development Department (PDD) sent electricity bills stamped with the message "Chunav ka Parv, Desh ka Garv" (Festival of Elections, Pride of the Nation) to 2,000 consumers, reminding them of the importance of voting.

Later, a voter awareness program and a signature campaign were organized at GGHS Hiranagar, further spreading the message of electoral participation.

GHSS Bhaddu hosts SVEEP event to promote voter awareness, participation

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 19

A program focused on the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative was held today at GHSS Bhaddu in Billawar AC.

General Observer for AC-63 Bani and AC-64 Billawar A.M. Khanam, was the chief guest, while Returning Officer 64-Billawar AC Vinay Khosla, (ADC Billawar), graced the event as the guest of honour. Students from three local schools—GHSS Bhaddu, KGVV Bhaddu, and MS Bhaddu actively participated in the event, delivering performances

such as the Saraswati Vandana, a speech on SVEEP, a song promoting voter awareness, a message on environmental responsibility, and a street play (nukkad natak) on voters' awareness.

Both the chief guest and guest of honour praised the efforts of GHSS Bhaddu in organising the event and delivered motivational speeches encouraging active civic participation. The program was conducted under the supervision of Lecturer English Randhir Singh, with guidance from Principal of GHSS Kohag Mohinder Gupta and DDO of GHSS Bhaddu.

SVEEP event promotes voter awareness among students at GHSS Jakhbar

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 19

As part of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, a voter awareness event was organized today at Government Higher Secondary School, Jakhbar falling in Assembly Constituency 67-Kathua (SC).

Hosted by District SVEEP Cell, the event focused to highlight the importance of voting and inspire greater electoral involvement, particularly among the youth and first-time voters.

The event featured a range of activities designed to engage the local community. Special sessions were held to educate students, teachers, and community members about the electoral process, the significance of each vote, and the role of elections in strengthening democracy.



Interactive presentations and discussions provided insights into the importance of ethical voting and how every vote contributes to shaping the future of the nation.

The SVEEP event at Govt HSS Jakhbar successfully fostered a sense of responsibility toward electoral participation. By ensuring that the community, especially its youth, is well-informed

and engaged, the program sets the stage for increased voter turnout in the upcoming elections.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, educators, and local residents, marking it as a pivotal step toward promoting voter education and strengthening democratic participation ensuring that every voice is heard and every vote counts.

Sonamarg abuzz with activities under SVEEP

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SONAMARG, SEPTEMBER 19

Across the picturesque tranquil Sonamarg meadows, known for its stunning snow-capped peaks and serene landscapes, the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative transformed the golden meadows into a stage for a variety of events aimed at encouraging voter participation ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections.

The day was marked by horse rallies, snow bike races, and musical performances, all of which captivated the local population, underscoring the importance of democratic participation.

A horse rally kicked off by the General Election Observer for district Ganderbal, R. Lakshmanan in presence of District Police Officer, Bipin Shankarrao; District Election Officer, Shyambir;



CEO SDA, Dy DEO, RO Kangan Assembly Constituency and other officials, paraded across the scenic backdrop, symbolizing the unity and collective strength required to ensure maximum voter turnout, with message of urging residents to exercise their right to vote.

Amid the physical rush of rallies, the day also resonated with soulful musical performances and skits. Local artists and new voters enthusiastically performing on election-centric themes, including folk, Qawali, Skit etc. That highlighted the significance of democracy,

unity, and the power of every vote with a message that every vote counts, and Sonamarg's residents are ready to play their part in shaping the democratic future.

These multifarious activities, drew in large crowds and allowed participants to engage in a thrilling adventure while aligning themselves with the call for increased electoral participation.

In addition, informative pamphlets, banners, and enthusiastic volunteers were strategically placed to ensure that no potential voter left without understanding their role in the

2nd Randomisation of EVMs conducted in Kathua

J1 NEWS SERVICE
KATHUA, SEPTEMBER 19

In the run up to Legislative Assembly election, the 2nd Randomization of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for all the six Assembly Segments of Kathua was conducted in the conference Hall of DC Office Complex here today in accordance with the guidelines of Election Commission of India (ECI), here.

The 2nd Randomization process was held under the supervision of District Election Officer, Dr Rakesh Minhas (DC), in presence of the General Observers for Kathua District.

General Observer Sunil Kumar Yadav, General Observer Dorje Chhering Negi, General Observer A.M Khanum (virtually) attended the proceedings.

The representatives of Political parties, Contesting Candidates, Returning Officers, Deputy DEO, Nodal Officer EVMs and other Officers of District



Election Authority Kathua were present. The 2nd and final randomisation of Ballot Units, Control Units and VVPATs for Six Assembly Segments of Kathua District namely 63-Bani, 64-Billawar, 65-Basohli, 66-Jasrota, 67-Kathua (SC) and 68-Hiranagar was carried out through a dedicated software-EVM Management System. The reserve EVMs were also allotted to polling stations for use.

Pertinently, District Kathua has a network of 704 Polling Stations established across six ACs.

Earlier, the candidates and representatives were briefed about the EVMs ensuring their confidence in the uprightness of the process and encouraging that all requisite measures have been enacted to uphold the sanctity of the polls in free, fair and transparent manner as per the guidelines of Election Commission of India.

All the representatives of Contesting Candidates/ Political parties expressed their satisfaction over the entire randomisation process.

Enthusiastic Voter response marks first day of Home Voting in Rajouri District

J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 19

The first day of home voting for the Legislative Assembly Elections 2024 being held in all Assembly Constituencies (ACs) of Rajouri district saw an overwhelming response from voters. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has introduced the facility of home voting for elderly citizens and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Voters above 85 years of age and PwDs with 40% or more benchmark disabilities are eligible for this facility. The initiative aims to enhance accessibility and ensure that every voter can participate in the electoral process, irrespective of physical limitations.

The Rajouri District has 1,615 above 85 year voters and 744 registered PwD voters. The enthusiasm of these citizens was clearly evident as they cast their votes from the comfort of their homes on the first day of home voting.

The home voting will continue for two days, ensuring that all eligible voters have sufficient time to exercise their right. Local authorities, in collaboration with election

officials, have made meticulous arrangements to ensure a smooth, secure, and inclusive voting experience.

District Election Officer (DEO) Rajouri, Abhishek Sharma, flagged off home voting teams for Assembly Constituency Rajouri from Government Degree College (GDC) Rajouri. He also interacted with the teams, encouraging them to perform their duties diligently.

Following this, the DEO visited Assembly Constituency Thanamandi to review ongoing election preparations. During his visit, he stopped at GDC Thanamandi, where he took part in a signature campaign and plantation drive. He also interacted with first-time voters, motivating them to actively participate in the Assembly Elections 2024 and exercise their democratic rights.

The home voting initiative underscores the commitment of the Election Commission to an inclusive electoral process, ensuring that every citizen, regardless of age or physical ability, has the opportunity to make their voice heard.

Voter awareness activities intensified across Rajouri

J1 NEWS SERVICE
RAJOURI, SEPTEMBER 19

In anticipation to the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly Election 2024, a district-wide voter awareness campaign was today conducted across Rajouri District under the leadership of District Election Officer Abhishek Sharma and District Nodal Officer (SVEEP) Bishamber Dass (CEO Rajouri). The campaign, which targeted various constituencies, was designed to promote electoral literacy and encourage voter participation.

The unique initiative in AC-83 Kalakote-Sunderbani included a signature campaign themed "Wall of Democracy" at GHS Massiote, where students and faculty committed to support democratic values. SVEEP team members, Muddasir Mughal and Deepak Kumar, delivered awareness lectures to emphasize the importance of voting and electoral literacy.

In AC-84 Nowshera, a meeting was held at GMS Pind Narian, supervised by Nodal Officer SVEEP J.P Singh. The session focused on increasing voter turnout in historically low-performing polling stations. Booth Level Offi-



cers (BLOs) were directed to collaborate with BAG teams to enhance voter participation.

A mega voter awareness event was held at village Sagote in AC-85 Rajouri, attracting over 220 participants, including students, staff and local residents. The event featured an awareness rally, a pledge ceremony and a door-to-door voter outreach campaign. The SVEEP team also launched a balloon campaign at Gujjar Mandi Chowk, where balloons adorned with slogans like "Your Vote, Your Voice" were displayed, engaging passersby and promoting voter participation. The creative campaign was spearheaded by Nodal Officer SVEEP Rakesh Kumar Sharma in partnership with the District SVEEP team members including Mohammad

Ayaz Raina & Aejaz-ul-Haq.

Prof. Tahir Nadeem, Nodal Officer SVEEP 86-Budhal Assembly Constituency, led a voter awareness lecture at Model Academy, Nazamabad, Koteranka. The event featured a pledge by students and staff to uphold democratic principles and vote without bias. A quiz competition on electoral processes was also organized at Government High School, Chambitbar, with teams led by Amjid Ali, Shazaib Altaf, and Bilal Ahmed winning first, second, and third prizes, respectively. Additionally, a voter turnout evaluation was conducted at polling station 108-Gundha, focusing on addressing low voter engagement. Booth Level Awareness Groups (BAGs) were assigned to bolster local voter outreach efforts.

In Thannamandi AC-87, a mega awareness camp was organized at Boys Model GHSS Thannamandi, where SVEEP team members and school staff delivered motivational speeches. Students were encouraged to act as ambassadors for the SVEEP message, spreading voter awareness throughout the community. In Public HSS Darhal various activities under SVEEP were also organised including pledge ceremony, volleyball match, Skit, awareness lecture on electoral process, door to door Campaign

These initiatives, spread across Rajouri District, reflect the district's commitment to raising voter awareness and ensuring a strong and informed electorate for the upcoming Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly Elections 2024.

CS condoles demise of Ex-PSC Chairman, MS Pandit

J1 NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 19

Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo today condoled the demise of Mohammad Shafi Pandit, a 1969 batch IAS Officer who breathed his last today.

In his condolence message, Dulloo remembered Pandit as a very passionate officer who has been there to extend his advice and guidance whenever he was accessed for the same. He termed him a problem solver who had optimum solution for every problem at hand.

He called him a very compassionate officer who was precursor in starting government sponsored coaching classes for civil service aspirants. He made out that he chiselled the career of many youngsters by encouraging them to join the civil services and would be

remembered by them for his mentorship for all times to come.

Dulloo further remembered that he met him a couple of times and raised different issues of public importance. He called him a philanthropist par excellence who had changed the lives of many for better.

Later the gathering observed 2 minutes silence and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

MS Pandit, an IAS officer of 1969 batch was among the pioneers of erstwhile J&K Cadre. He was a veteran bureaucrat who held various important positions in the State as well as Centre including the Additional Chief Secretary, Finance and later the Chairman J&K Public Service Commission (JKPSC) towards the end of his career.