

Gaikwad: Last year itself, Dhoni had hinted about captaincy

P12

Series of activities held under SVEEP at Kothibagh and SP HSS

P3



# Next Five Years Bring New Energy To India-Bhutan Relations: PM Modi

HT News Network

**NEW DELHI, MAR 22:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that the coming five years will bring new energy to the India-Bhutan relationship. "To fulfil your goals, India stands with you for BB—Brand Bhutan and Bhutan Believe," Prime Minister Modi said while addressing the gathering at Tendrelthang Festival Ground in Bhutan. Prime Minister Modi is on a two-day state visit to Bhutan. "I assure you that the upcoming 5 years will give new energy to our relations. We will work to create avenues in the con-



nectivity, infrastructure, trade, and energy sectors," PM Modi said.

Calling the "Bharat-Bhutan partnership" not limited to land and water, the Prime Minister said, "Bhutan is now a partner of Bharat in its space missions. Scientists of Bhutan have launched satellites in collaboration with ISRO," adding that we celebrate each other's achievements."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, Today, India is the world's fifth-largest economy, growing at the fastest pace. To take today's achievements forward, we have resolved to

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

## Kashmir Plains Lashed By Rains, Snowfall At Gulmarg



HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** Kashmir plains were lashed by rains while the ski resort of Gulmarg received a fresh snowfall during the past 24 hours, officials said.

The Meteorological Department said that Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district received 1.5cm of fresh snowfall much to the delight of the tourists staying there.

Srinagar and other parts of Kashmir

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

### NEWS BRIEF

#### Absconders Arrested In Awantipora: Police

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** Jammu and Kashmir Police in Awantipora on Friday said to have arrested absconders who were evading their arrest for a long time.

"Two warrants under section 512 Crpc issued by Hon'ble Court of Principal District and Sessions Judge Pulwama and Hon'ble Munsif Court Pulwama pending with police Station Awantipora against 02 accused persons namely Tariq Ah Lone son of Late Ab Khaliq Lone resident of Karphali Mohalla Shaheedgunj A/P Khanyar and Gulzar Ahmad Chechoo son of Gh Rasool resident of Aabi Nowpora Dalgate, were executed," a police spokesman said in a statement issued to the

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### 2 fire-fighters injured as many shops gutted in Sgr blaze

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** At least two shops were damaged in a fire incident at Bohri Kadal of Srinagar on Friday, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that following the reporting of the fire incident at Bohri Kadal Srinagar, involving three single-storey shops, the men and machinery from the Fire and Emergency Services Department were pressed to douse the flames.

The official said that during the rescue operation, two fire-fighters also received burn injuries, who were later taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

#### Ajatshatru Lauds Indian Govt's Decision To Abrogate Art 370 In J&K At Geneva Convention

**GENEVA, MAR 22:** M.K Ajatshatru Singh, senior BJP leader and former minister, commended the Government of India's bold decision to abrogate Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. This historic move corrected the long-standing injustice endured by the people of the region over the past seven decades.

Speaking in his address at UN, the senior BJP leader said "Since the constitutional reforms in 2019, there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents in the region. From 2004 to

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### J&K's 3 Vital Roads In JK Claim Nearly 2,000 Lives In Five Years

HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** In Jammu and Kashmir, three vital roads have claimed nearly 2,000 lives in the past five years.

The National Highway and the roads leading in Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal ranges have claimed at least 1986 lives in road accidents from 2019 to 2023.

According to the official figures available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in Chenab Valley at least 113 persons lost their lives in accidents in 2019. In 2020, the road accidents in the region claimed 64 lives followed by 91 deaths in 2021, at least 81 in 2022 and 114 persons lost their lives in 2023.

The official figures reveal that from the National Highway, at least 211 persons were killed in 2019 in roads accidents followed by 178 in 2020, at least 271 in 2021, over 261 in 2022 and 234 in 2023.

Likewise, from the Pir Panjal range, at least 109 persons were killed in road accidents in the

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### Experts Highlight Urgency Of Water Conservation On World Water Day

Calls For Collective Action, Sustainable Practices To Address Rising Global Water Crisis

HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** On World Water Day, experts stressed the urgent need for concerted efforts at every level to conserve water for future generations, as the global water crisis continues to escalate.

They said that with the increasing global population, the demand for water is rising at an alarming rate, exacerbating existing challenges such as water scarcity, pollution and inadequate infrastructure.



Speaking with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Er Firdous Ahmad, an executive officer in the Jal Shakti Department, said this year's theme "water for peace" underscores the critical importance of cherishing, preserving and responsibly utilising water resources to avoid future scarcity and distress.

"It is imperative that initiatives, ranging from the local community level to the state and international

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### Secretary Health JK UT Mandates Implementation Of QR Code System At Hospital Payment Counters

HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** In an innovative move aimed at enhancing efficiency and transparency in healthcare services, Secretary of Health and Medical Education Jammu and Kashmir Dr. Syed Abid Rasheed Shah, has issued orders for the implementation of QR code systems



at payment counters in hospitals across the region.

The initiative, spearheaded by the Secretary, aims to streamline the payment process for patients and their families while also combating corruption and ensuring accountability in the healthcare sector.

News agency KNS reported

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### Amid Election Season, Flight Fares Skyward In JK, Passengers Fume

HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** Air travelers traveling to Jammu and Kashmir are facing the harsh reality of soaring flight fares. With increased demand amidst the election environment and the approaching festival of Holi, airline companies have substantially raised their ticket prices, leaving passengers grappling with

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### Visit Udhampur To See Real Development: Dr. Jitendra Singh Challenges Critics

HT News Network

**JAMMU, MAR 22:** Dr. Jitendra Singh, BJP's nominee for the Udhampur parliamentary seat, kicked off his election campaign by addressing a public gathering at Ramlila Maidan in Kathua. Asserting the strides made in development, Singh urged skeptics to visit the Udhampur

TURN ON.....PAGE 02



#### Jammu AIIMS To Launch Countrywide Tele Consultation Services For Doctors From Mar 27

HT News Network

**JAMMU, MAR 22:** In a significant stride towards enhancing healthcare accessibility and collaboration, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Vijaypur, Jammu is set to commence its Tele-Consultation services from March 27.



An official communique issued here on Friday said that this groundbreaking initiative aims to facilitate doctor-to-doctor teleconsultations, empowering doctors not only from Jammu and Kashmir but also from other states.

"It will enable them to

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### Jammu's Bhandarwah Campus Holds A Workshop On 'Drone Technology'

HT News Network

**JAMMU, MAR 22:** The Department of Computer Science and IT, Bhandarwah Campus, University of Jammu, in collaboration with iHUB DivyaSampark IIT Roorkee (A Joint venture of IIT Roorkee and DST Government of India) and technically supported by the "Jammu and Kashmir ACM Professional Chapter," On Friday launched a two-day workshop on "Drone Technology and its applications."

The workshop was attended by nearly 200 participants from various educational institutions, departments of Bhandarwah Campus,

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### Anger Over Axing Of Poplar Trees At Srinagar Historic College



HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** A beautiful avenue of trees has been chopped

down at Srinagar's Amar Singh College, which has sparked anger among the residents.

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

#### BJP Initiates Process Of Deploying 'Vistarak' For The Upcoming Elections In J&K

HT News Network

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** The BJP on Thursday initiated the process of deploying 'vistarak' for the upcoming elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

A 'vistarak' is a full-time party functionary entrusted with the job of gathering independent ground-level feedback from parliamentary constituencies upto booth level.

The General Secretary (Organization) of the BJP in Jammu & Kashmir, Ashok Koul, flagged off the Vistaraks during a function held in Srinagar, a party spokesman said.

During his address, Koul emphasized the significance of these Vistaraks, highlighting their responsibilities

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

**Next Five.....**

have 25 years of Amritkaal." "Soon we are going to become the world's third-largest economy. Bhutan will be a strong partner in this journey of ours," he further added.

Saying the aspirations and goals of the youth of India and Bhutan are the same, PM Modi said, "India has set a goal of becoming a developed country by 2047, while Bhutan has set a goal of becoming a high-income country by 2034."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also conferred with Bhutan's highest civilian award, the 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo,' making him the first foreign Head of Government to receive this prestigious recognition.

The award was given in acknowledgement of "his outstanding contribution to the growth of India-Bhutan relations and for his distinguished service to the Bhutanese nation and people."

Expressing gratitude to the Prime Minister for the award, PM Modi said, "Today is a very big day in my life as an Indian. This honour is not my achievement; it is the honour of India and 140 crore Indians." (UNI)

**Kashmir Plains.....**

valley were lashed by light to moderate rains resulting in drop in the temperature.

The MeT office said Srinagar received 9.7mm of rainfall, Qazigund 3.4mm, Pahalgam 16.0mm, Kupwara 9.2mm, Kokernag 2.9mm and Gulmarg 18.4mm of rainfall during the past 24 hours till 0830hours Friday.

The sky is overcast and there is a forecast of rain or snow today in Kashmir valley and likely improvement in weather thereafter till March 26.

From March 27, there is a possibility of intermittent light rain and snow for the next four days.

Meanwhile, the night temperatures in most weather stations across Kashmir dropped but settled above the freezing point. The day temperature also dropped by several degrees and Srinagar recorded at 16.2°C against the 22.8°C the previous day.

The summer capital Srinagar recorded 7.2°C against the 9.9°C on the previous night. It was 2.2°C above normal on Friday.

Qazigund had a low of 7.0°C against the 6.0°C recorded on the previous night while at picnic spot of Kokernag in south Kashmir it was recorded at 5.6°C against the 8.2°C recorded a day ago.

The night temperature at Gulmarg in north Kashmir's Baramulla district slipped to -0.5°C against the 3.2°C the previous night and it was still 1.1°C above normal for the famous ski resort.

Pahalgam recorded 3.7°C against 3.0°C the previous night and it was 3.3°C above normal for the tourist resort in south Kashmir's Anantnag district.

Kupwara settled at 6.6°C against the 7.3°C recorded the previous night. It was 3.4°C above normal for the frontier Kashmir's of north Kashmir on Friday, the MeT office said. (UNI)

**J&K's 3 Vital.....**

year 2019, at least 56 died in 2020, 65 were killed in 2021, 74 in 2022 and 64 in 2023.

On the roads of Chenab Valley, National Highway and Pir Panjal, a total number of 433 persons were killed in road accidents in 2019.

Similarly, in 2020 at least 298 persons were killed in road accidents in these areas.

The official figures also reveal that in 2021 at least 427 persons were killed in road accidents followed by 416 in 2022 and 412 in 2023.

**Experts Highlight.....**

levels, prioritise water conservation, preservation and equitable access, transcending borders," he stressed.

Dr Mukhtar, another officer from the Jal Shakti Department, echoed similar concerns, saying there has been an alarming depletion of pure water bodies due to ongoing human intervention.

He warned that unless immediate action is taken, there may not be enough water available for current and future generations. "Despite the availability of water, pollution levels are rising, threatening the safety of all water sources," he added.

Dr Mukhtar said it is crucial to act now before the situation spirals out of control and becomes irreversible.

Experts underscored the importance of promoting water conservation, investing in water infrastructure and adopting efficient water management practices to mitigate the impacts of the water crisis. They said there is a need for collaborative efforts to safeguard this invaluable resource and ensure access to clean water for everyone.

"Only through collective action and unwavering commitment can we address the global water crisis and work towards a more sustainable and water-secure world," they said.

According to the United Nations, approximately 2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water, while 4.2 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation services.

**Secretary Health.....**

that all healthcare institutions under the jurisdiction of the Health and Medical Education Department have been directed to ensure the availability of QR code payment facilities.

The directive, issued by the Health and

Medical Education Department, mandates that all Head of Departments (HODs)/Institutions ensure the following directions within 10 days.

The directions include the establishment of QR Code facility at all health institutions, compatibility with popular mobile payment platforms. Training of staff members to assist users in the payment process and establishing a feedback mechanism for further improvement in the payment process.

Dr. Javed Iqbal, JKAS, Deputy Secretary of the Health and Medical Education Department, has been appointed as the Nodal Officer responsible for overseeing the implementation of these directives.

This initiative aims to modernize payment facilities within healthcare institutions, providing patients and attendants with a seamless and hassle-free payment experience.

By integrating QR code technology, the Health Department seeks to improve efficiency and transparency in healthcare transactions, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of healthcare services in the region.

Speaking about the decision, Secretary Abid emphasized the need for modernization and innovation in healthcare administration.

He stated, "By introducing QR code technology at payment counters, we are taking a significant step towards digitization and transparency in our healthcare system. This initiative will not only simplify the payment process for patients but also enable real-time tracking of transactions, reducing the scope for malpractices."

The QR code system will allow patients to make payments securely and conveniently using their smartphones. Upon reaching the payment counter, patients will simply scan the QR code displayed using a mobile payment app linked to their bank account.

This eliminates the need for cash transactions, reducing the risk of theft and ensuring greater financial security for both patients and hospital staff.

Moreover, the implementation of QR codes will enable the authorities to monitor and analyze payment data in real-time, facilitating better financial management and resource allocation within the healthcare system. One of the top officials of the health department emphasized that this initiative aligns with the government's broader vision of leveraging technology to improve service delivery and governance across sectors.

He added, "Incorporating QR code systems at hospital payment counters is just the beginning. We are committed to exploring further innovative solutions to enhance the quality and accessibility of healthcare services for the people of Jammu & Kashmir."

He added that Syed Abid's directive to implement QR code systems at hospital payment counters reflects a forward-thinking approach to healthcare management.

**Amid Election.....**

exorbitant costs. As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) the impact of this fare surge is particularly felt in routes connecting major cities like Jammu to Srinagar and Delhi. Previously affordable fares have now doubled, with travelers shelling out up to Rs 6,000 for a journey from Jammu to Srinagar, and up to Rs 8,000 for flights to Delhi.

Despite the outcry over escalating fares, authorities have yet to take concrete measures to curb this trend, leaving passengers at the mercy of price hikes. At Jammu airport, which operates 32 flights daily to five different cities, the majority of flights cater to popular routes such as Srinagar and Delhi.

During the period from March 22 to April 10, the average fare for flights from Jammu to Delhi ranges from Rs 5,800 to Rs 7,500. However, with the onset of Holi, these prices skyrocket to between Rs 7,000 and Rs 10,000, placing additional strain on travelers' budgets. Similarly, flights from Jammu to Ahmedabad are now priced between Rs 6,000 and Rs 8,000, while those to Indore range from Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000.

Comparing prices with February reveals a staggering increase of three to four thousand rupees, highlighting the significant impact of festival-related fare hikes on travelers. "With such sharp increases, the burden falls disproportionately on passengers, underscoring the need for regulatory intervention to ensure fair pricing practices in the aviation sector," an aggrieved traveller from Srinagar told KNO.

**Visit Udhampur.....**

constituency to witness progress firsthand. As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) accompanied by Water Resources Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Singh emphasized that detractors who claim development has not occurred fail to recognize the tangible advancements taking place. He cited examples such as improved access to education, illustrated by the enrollment of local children in medical colleges and enhanced connectivity via expressways linking to Delhi.

He highlighted his role in facilitating the installation of Maharaja Gulab Singh's statue at Lakhampur, contrasting it with the previous administration's perceived subservience to Kashmir-centric policies.

Singh also criticized the Congress party for allegedly neglecting the interests of the

region, particularly regarding the revocation of the Dogra Certificate and disparities in youth reservations. He underscored the Modi government's commitment to rectifying such injustices, pointing to recent initiatives aimed at ensuring equitable treatment for the youth of Kathua, Doda, and Udhampur.

**Jammu AIIMS.....**

seek expert opinions from consultants of numerous departments (Speciality and Super-speciality) of AIIMS Jammu," the handout read.

It further said that the doctors will be using the e-Sanjevani platform to get expert opinion from renowned medical Professionals of AIIMS Jammu, receiving vital insights and guidance on challenging medical issues.

"This collaborative approach will foster knowledge exchange and will ensure that patients receive the highest quality of care, regardless of their geographical location," it stated.

Prof (Dr) Shakti Kumar Gupta, Executive Director and CEO of AIIMS, Vijaypur, Jammu, emphasized the Institution's commitment to serve the mankind as a referral hospital and extending its expertise beyond its premises.

He stated, "AIIMS Jammu, a referral hospital, aspires to fulfil its duty to provide services to regional doctors. With the introduction of Tele-Consultation services through the e-Sanjevani portal, the Institute aims to bridge the gap between healthcare providers and ensure timely access to specialized care."

"It will add value to patients' lives by saving them time and money by eliminating the need to travel to hospitals and instead of travelling they could easily consult at their regional health clinics," said Dr Gupta.

The Tele-Consultation schedule, featuring specialty-wise consultations, will be available on the AIIMS Jammu website - <https://www.aiimsjammu.edu.in>. Regional doctors are encouraged to visit the e-Sanjevani portal for detailed information and to schedule tele-consultation appointments.

"This initiative marks a significant step forward in promoting collaborative healthcare practices and leveraging technology to overcome geographical barriers in medical care delivery," the CEO said. (UNI)

**Jammu's.....**

officials and jawans from the Indian Army, and the teaching and non-teaching staff.

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Jammu, Prof. Umesh Rai, commended the Baderwah Campus for organizing this workshop on such a crucial topic. His message echoed the importance of fostering knowledge and expertise in drone technology.

Harvinder Singh, Deputy Commissioner Doda was the chief guest on the occasion and he extended congratulations to the Baderwah Campus for orchestrating such an event on a topic of paramount importance.

He elaborated on the myriad benefits that drone technology offers in the contemporary era, emphasizing its significance in various sectors.

The Rector of Baderwah Campus and Patron of the workshop Prof. J. P. Singh Joorel in his message conveyed his appreciation to the Department of Computer Science and IT for spearheading this workshop.

He underscored the workshop's role in equipping participants with valuable insights into drone technology.

"This workshop promises to be an enriching experience, providing participants with valuable insights and practical knowledge in the field of drone technology," he added

Sunil Kesar, Superintendent of Police (SP) Operation Doda, emphasized the pivotal role drones play in current circumstances and highlighted their significance in ensuring safety and security.

Dr. Jatinder Manhas, the Convenor of the workshop, provided a detailed outline of the workshop's agenda through an insightful presentation. He emphasized that the workshop covers a diverse range of topics, including Introduction to Drone Technology, Drone Hardware and Software, Safety and Regulations, Hands-on Drone Flying Sessions, Applications in Agriculture, Aerial Photography and Videography, Search and Rescue Operations, Infrastructure Inspection, Environmental Monitoring, and Future Trends and Career Opportunities.

He highlighted the workshop's significance as a pioneering initiative in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. (UNI)

**Anger Over.....**

The trees which were synonymous with its identity had stood for decades, were cut for a "major makeover" of the College.

"The person who has taken this decision is extremely ill suited to be involved even remotely with an educational institution. What an absolutely sad sad spectacle. Tragic!," former Mayor of Srinagar Junaid Mattu wrote on X.

Amar Singh College, the second oldest college in Kashmir established in 1913 is known for its charming beauty and heritage. In 1970's Bollywood film "Kasme Vaadey" starring Amitabh Bachan and Rakhee was shot in the college.

The canopy of tall green trees at the entrance to the College also used to guide a visitor to the heritage building.

"Chopping down the iconic trees at Amar Singh College, Srinagar is not just stupid, it's a disgrace. While the world plants trees, we destroy our heritage? Those responsible must be held accountable," the Chief spokesman of National Conference Tanvir Sadiq said.

A former student termed the axing as "butchering the aesthetics of College."

"The so-called 'development administration' has cold-heartedly butchered the aesthetics of Amar Singh College, my beloved alma mater, by mercilessly axing the picturesque poplar tree tunnel. My heart sinks seeing images of what was once a serene haven where I cherished my college days, now ruthlessly stripped of its greenery. The shameless destruction of our beautiful landscapes is unforgivable; spare these green treasures," Junaid Dar wrote in a post on social media.

"Show some compassion, preserve these green tunnels and patches of nature that hold our memories. Remember, development shouldn't come at the cost of erasing the essence of our past," he added.

However, the college authorities defended axing saying they had "aged and posed a threat."

"There have been some accidents as well. The trees are being replaced by conifers which are being planted in a massive way. Our aim is to beautify the college.... We are also coming up with a state-of-the-art fountain," said a college official. (UNI)

**BJP Initiates.....**

which encompass engaging with local leaders, assessing organizational structures, verifying voter lists, and actively participating in election campaigns until the vote counting day.

Koul reiterated the party's reliance on these full-time workers to address organizational challenges, identify areas requiring attention, and bolster the party's presence at the grassroots level. He commended their unwavering commitment, particularly in remote regions, towards advancing the party's objectives on the ground. (UNI)

**Absconders.....**

news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Both the accused persons who were involved in case FIR Nos 142/1989 and 130/1996 of Police Station Awantipora and were evading their arrest from last 34 years and 27 years respectively, were arrested by a special Police team, police said.

Subsequently, the arrested accused persons were produced before the respective Court of Law. Similarly, a special team of Police Station Tral under the supervision of SDPO Tral Suhail

Ahmed Rishi also executed a warrant under section 512 CrPC, issued by Court of JMJC Court Tral against an accused namely Abdul Samad Malla @Samad Inqelabi son of Late Ab Rehman Malla resident of Gunistan Sumbal who was evading his arrest from last 07 years and was involved in case FIR No. 49/2017 of Police Station Tral, the statement reads.

The accused person was arrested from Gunistan Sumbal area. Subsequently, the arrested accused was produced before the Court of Law. Our consistent actions against anti-social elements should reassure the community members that we are making every effort to keep our society free of crime. Police has resolved to act as per law against those who indulge in criminal activities, police said.

**Ajatshatru Lauds.....**

2014, Jammu and Kashmir experienced a total of 7,217 terrorist incidents. However, thanks to the reforms, terror incidents have decreased by over 70%. This improvement underscores the effectiveness of the government's actions in restoring peace and stability to the region."

"Moreover, on the socio-economic front, the reduction of poverty in Jammu and Kashmir from 40.45% in 2005-2006 to a mere 2.81% in 2022-2023 is a testament to the optimal utilization of development funds. The recent interim budget for 2024 allocated a substantial \$14 billion for Jammu and Kashmir, further demonstrating the government's commitment to the region's prosperity," he added.

M.K Ajatshatru Singh said over the past nine years, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a remarkable revolution in infrastructure development, including the establishment of new medical colleges, tunnels, railway lines, and civic infrastructure. These advancements have been achieved while preserving the rich cultural heritage of the region, he added.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that not all parts of Jammu and Kashmir have benefited equally. Recent protests in regions under Pakistani occupation highlight the growing awareness of economic disparities compared to those under Indian administration. As the son of Dr. Karan Singh, the titular king of undivided Jammu and Kashmir and Grandson of Maharaja Hari Singh ji, he expressed deep concern for the plight of those living under Pakistani occupation.

The former minister appealed to the United Nations to take concrete steps in accordance with Security Council resolutions to ameliorate the situation faced by the people of Jammu and Kashmir under Pakistani occupation. It is imperative that the international community addresses their grievances and ensures their fundamental rights are upheld, he concluded.

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# Udhampur-Doda LS Seat Braces For Direct Battle Between BJP And Congress

## Two Rajputs Try To Get Third Term As MP

**JAMMU, MAR 22:** Since the Congress party has been able to get a best possible candidate by roping in Choudhary Lal Singh against BJP's Dr. Jitendra Singh, a fierce battle is expected between these two Rajputs from Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha constituency.

With Lal Singh's entry, it will not be a cake walk for Jitendra Singh from this seat which he enjoyed during 2019 general elections.

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Dr. Jitendra Singh is a two-time and incumbent MP from this seat and was a giant killer in 2014 elections when he had defeated Congress stalwart Ghulam Nabi Azad with a margin of around 60000 votes. With this achievement, he was

able to get a place in council of ministers of Narendra Modi government in first term and continued to enjoy the same treatment after winning the seat during 2019 elections.

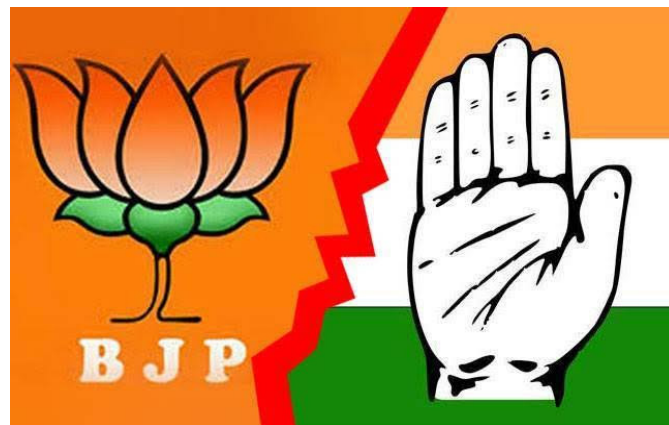
Originally hailing from Malohri area of district Doda, Jitendra Singh's political journey took a jump after 2008 Amarnath land row when he emerged as a strong face of the agitation and played the most important role of making people aware about the purpose of agitation. Being a strong communicator, Jitendra Singh never looked back and enjoyed great support from party leaders, both at the centre and in the state.

Currently he is relying on the work done by the Modi government in his constituency and is

hoping that people will keep faith in him and leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

On the other hand, Choudhary Lal Singh, a former Congressman who had left the party in 2014 after Ghulam Nabi Azad was preferred over him to contest the Lok Sabha elections, had joined BJP in August 2014 and had contested successfully the Assembly elections in the same year. He is a two-time MP from Udhampur-Doda seat, which he won in 2004, by defeating BJP stalwart Chaman Lal Gupta, and in 2009. He has served as minister for health and minister for forests in Jammu and Kashmir in the past and people loved his style of work.

After distancing himself from BJP when he went against



the party in demanding CBI inquiry into Rasana rape and murder case of a nomad girl, Choudhary Lal Singh formed his own party Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan and contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections

but faced huge defeat. He was nowhere close to BJP candidate Dr. Jitendra Singh and Congress candidate Vikramaditya Singh. He was able to get only 19049 votes whereas Jitendra Singh had got over seven lakh votes.

But this time, with the efforts of Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) President Vikar Rasool Wani and others, he has joined back the grand-old party and is contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

With Lal Singh's entry as Congress party candidate, the battle on this high profile seat is expected to be a fierce one.

There are other aspects as well in this contest as Ghulam Nabi Azad, who formed his own party Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) after leaving Congress party, had fielded three-time MLA Ghulam Muhammad Saroori from this seat. Saroori being a native from Kishtwar district, enjoys a good image within his community and being a former Congressman, whatever votes he will be

able to fetch will make a dent to Congress party. His party has already announced that they are fighting against INDIA alliance.

After delimitation Reasi district is no more part of this constituency and votes have also decreased this time. During the 2019 elections, the total number of votes of this constituency was over 16.65 lakh whereas this time votes stand at 1622599. The constituency is spread in five districts, Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Udhampur and Kathua, with its headquarters at Kathua. The total number of votes in Kishtwar district is 175844, Doda district has 304866, Ramban has 219106, Udhampur has 419789 and Kathua has 502994. (Data courtesy: Chief Electoral Officer J&K).

## Tourist Service Providers In Pahalgam To Have Uniforms

**PAHALGAM, MAR 22:** In a significant move, authorities in Pahalgam have directed all tourist service providers, including taxi stands, hotels, restaurants, and guest houses, to implement uniforms and nameplates for their staff members who directly interact with tourists. This directive is the first-of-its-kind in the area.

According to an advisory issued by the Chief Executive Officer of Pahalgam, taxi operators are specifically instructed to wear green uniforms and keep jute bags in their taxis for collecting unwanted items.

"Professionalism stands as the cornerstone of success and sustainability in tourist trade. It transcends mere transactions and encompasses a commitment to excellence, integrity, and customer satisfaction. Professionalism in the tourist trade entails not only meeting but exceeding the expectations of visitors at every touchpoint, be it accommodation, dining, transportation, or recreational activities," reads the advisory, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO).

Stakeholders in the tourist trade are expected to uphold certain standards of professionalism to ensure visitor satisfaction and safety. Staff members interacting with tourists are expected to present themselves professionally and adhere to prescribed uniforms or dress codes where applicable, and demonstrate courtesy, politeness and respect at all times.



As a result of a unanimous decision made in a meeting of tourist trade stakeholders, all tourist service providers in Pahalgam, including taxi stands, hotels, restaurants, and guest houses, will adopt uniforms and nameplates for their staff members who directly interact with tourists and the general public. This collective decision reflects a commitment to professionalism, efficiency, and ensuring a seamless experience for tourists and visitors, it mentions.

According to the advisory, the distinctive green uniform with nameplates will facilitate easy identification of staff members. All stakeholders are advised to strictly adhere to this uniform policy and ensure its effective implementation within their respective associations. Uniformity in attire will not only enhance the professional image of their businesses but also instill a sense of trust and reliability among visitors, it reads.

The initiative aims to make Pahalgam a premier tourist destination known for its professionalism and hospitality. Chief Executive Officer of Pahalgam, Tariq Hussain Naik, said that the objective behind this move is to instill professional ethics in tourism.

He said the standardized attire will not only enhance aesthetics but also help visitors easily identify staff members, which will create a sense of security and trust.

"Uniforms instill pride and professionalism among stakeholders, and positively reflect on the destination's reputation," Naik said, adding that enforcing proper uniforms at tourist destinations is crucial for enhancing visitor experiences and maintaining industry standards in a competitive global market.

## 2nd Friday of Ramadan: Devotees in large number offer prayers at Jamia Masjid

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** On the second Friday of the holy month—Ramadhan, a large number of devotees thronged the historic Jamia Masjid here in Old City area of Nowhatta, participating in the congregational prayers led by the head cleric Mirwaiz Molvi Umar Farooq.

The air resonated with prayers and spiritual fervor as worshippers gathered to offer Friday prayers, marking a significant moment in the month of fasting.

According to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Jamia Masjid witnessed a significant turnout of devotees, reflecting the deep-rooted religious sentiments of the community.

Despite a wet spell and overnight rain, the devotion of the worshippers remained unwavering as they came together to seek blessings and spiritual guidance during this holy month.

Expressing joy and gratitude,

worshippers told KNO, the atmosphere here is truly uplifting and serene. "It's a blessing to be able to gather with fellow believers and pray together," said Umer, one of the devotees.

He added, offering prayers in Ramadan at Jamia Masjid is a cherished moment for Kashmiris, as the serenity of this sacred place during Friday prayers fills our hearts with peace and gratitude.

Tahir, another local from Nowhatta, added, I feel a sense of peace and tranquility every time I step into Jamia Masjid during Ramadan. It's a time when our community comes together, united in prayer and reflection.

Moreover, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the spiritual leader and preacher, delivered sermons, captivating the hearts of the listeners with his words of wisdom and guidance.

Meanwhile, as per a statement issued to KNO, Mirwaiz-e-Kashmir Dr. Moulvi Muhammad Umar



Farooq conveyed to Muslims the significance of Ramadan as a pivotal period for fostering piety, self-discipline, and moral excellence.

He encouraged the faithful to view Ramadan as a divine gift,

urging them to deepen their connection with Allah throughout this hallowed time.

Delivering a sermon at the historic Central Jama Masjid Srinagar, on the occasion of the 11th Ramadan and the month's second

Friday, Mirwaiz addressed a large assembly of worshippers who braved inclement weather to attend. He described Ramadan as a period showered with blessings and divine mercy, encouraging all to embrace the month's spiritual benefits through faith and devotion.

Highlighting the essence of fasting beyond mere physical abstention, Mirwaiz underscored the importance of eschewing sins and embodying righteousness as dictated by the Qur'an and Hadith.

He stressed the holistic observance of Allah's commands and avoidance of prohibitions, which transforms individuals into devout, mindful, and grateful believers, enriched with faith and trust.

Furthermore, Mirwaiz advocated for the support of the underprivileged during Ramadan, emphasizing that aiding those in need amplifies the virtues of this sacred month.

## Lok Sabha Elections-2024: First Randomisation of EVMs successfully conducted in Srinagar

**SRINAGAR, MAR 22:** In connection with forthcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024, the first randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) scheduled by the Election Commission of India (ECI) for all the eight Assembly Constituencies of Srinagar District was conducted here on Friday at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex.

The randomization process was held under the supervision of District Election Officer (DEO), Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat in presence of the various representatives of Registered Recognized Political Parties, Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), Deputy DEO and other Officers of District Election Authority.

During the process randomisation of Ballot Units, Control Units and VVPATs for 08 Assembly Constituencies of Srinagar District was carried out. Each AC was allocated with required number of EVMs along with 40% Extra (as reserve) for use during the upcoming Polls.

The District has a total of 929 Polling Stations and the Assembly segment wise allocation of EVMs for conduct of Lok Sabha Elections includes 163 EVMs for 19-Hazratbal, 176 for 20-Khanyar, 179 for 21-Habakadal, 191 for 22-Lalchowk.

Similarly, 127 EVMs for 23-Chanapora, 200 for 24-Zadibal, 104 for 25-Eidgah and 158 EVMs for 26-Central Shalteng Assembly segments.

All the process was video recorded as per the laid guidelines of the Election Commission of India

Prior to the randomisation process, the DEO Srinagar briefed the representatives of the Political parties



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.

The DEO said that the EVM randomization facilitated by dedicated software is to ensure transparent, free and fair elections devoid of

human interference.

He further elaborated that following the randomization, EVMs will be securely transferred to designated Strong Rooms of the respective constituencies under rigorous security and surveillance.

The representatives of political parties including CPIM, Bharatiya Janata party, Indian National Congress, Peoples Democratic party and J&K National Conference attended the first phase of the randomization process.

## Lal Singh accuses Union Government of neglecting Dogra rights

Will file nomination as Congress Candidate on March 27

**JAMMU, MAR 22:** Chaudhary Lal Singh, who recently returned to the Congress fold after a decade, made scathing remarks against the Union government, alleging neglect of Dogra rights during his visit to Kathua and Hiranagar. Singh, warmly welcomed by supporters upon his return, criticized the government for overlooking the interests of the Dogra community.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) Singh highlighted concerns over the lack of local employment opportunities in highway construction projects and the alleged seizure of lands belonging to the indigenous populace. He condemned the policy of offering 100 percent subsidies to external industrialists, labeling it as unjust to the Dogras.

Emphasizing his commitment to the Dogra cause, Singh declared his intent to continue the battle on their behalf, vowing to address past injustices. He rallied support for the Congress party, asserting its strengthening prospects and promising to amplify the voices of the Dogras both nationally and internationally.

In Hiranagar, Singh reiterated his dedication to fighting for the common people and denounced the BJP's alleged attempts to silence him for speaking truth. He expressed confidence in the electorate's ability to discern truth from falsehood.

Singh announced his intention to file nomination papers on March 27 in order to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.



# NIT Srinagar hosts interactive session with IIT Delhi faculty member for Mechanical Engineering Students

■ Farooq Rather

Srinagar, Mar 22: The Department of Mechanical Engineering at National Institute of Technology (NIT) Srinagar on Friday organized an interaction session for its students with Prof. Naresh Varma Datla faculty at (Department of Mechanical Engineering at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

The event was coordinated by Dr. Ved Prakash Sharma. It was aimed to provide a platform for students to

explore MTech, PhD opportunities, and research work at IIT Delhi.

The interaction program was aimed to introduce students to the diverse research activities and opportunities available at the Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Delhi.

The session witnessed active participation from students who enthusiastically posed questions regarding PhD and MTech programs, application procedures, and internship opportunities at IIT Delhi.

Prof. Adnan Qayoum, HOD, Mechanical Engineering extended



gratitude to Prof. Datla for this interaction Program and also appreciated his dedication to fostering academic exchange and collaboration between the two institutions.

In his talk, Prof. Datla patiently addressed each query, providing guidance and valuable advice to aspiring researchers. It served as a catalyst for fostering meaningful collaborations between NIT Srinagar and IIT Delhi, paving the way for future endeavors in academia and research.

The Department of Mechanical Engineering at NIT Srinagar extends

its sincere gratitude to Prof. Naresh Varma Datla for his invaluable contribution to the success of the interaction program. Such initiatives play a pivotal role in nurturing talent, fostering innovation, and promoting academic excellence. In his talk, Prof. Datla patiently addressed each query, providing guidance and valuable advice to aspiring researchers. It served as a catalyst for fostering meaningful collaborations between NIT Srinagar and IIT Delhi, paving the way for future endeavors in academia and research.

## ازنیابت پھلگام

درخواست منجانب سائل سجاد احمد وانی ولد بشیر احمد وانی ساکنہ لردو پہلگام، برآمد حصول RBA سرٹیفکیٹ

### اشتہار بمراد آگاہی

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان میں درخواست سال دفتر ذمہ دار میں زیر کار وانی ہے اس نسبت پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ منظور مطلوبہ نقوالات ریکارڈ طلب کے گ بس سے عیالی ہوتا ہے سال موضع سائل لردو پہلگام میں رہائش پذیر ہے۔ بذیل افراد منتقل ہے

- 1.. بشیر احمد وانی ولد 55 سال، زمینداری مہاند آمدنی 60002..
- 2.. رفیقہ بانو زوجہ بشیر احمد وانی 48 سال گھریلو کام
- 3... یاروشیر پسر 27 سال سال ٹیلر آمدنی 7000
- 4.. مینوشیر دختر 24 سال //
- 5... سجاد احمد پسر 26 سال // فوٹو گرافر
- 6... جمیل اختر چاچی 45 سال //

اس کے علاوہ کوئی بھی افراد میں بتلایا گیا ہے سال کی سال آمدنی 105600 تک ہے سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث ابرہہ کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو عور یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا اعتراض یا اعتراض ساتھ دن کے اندر نامدر پیش کریں معاد کرنے کے بعد کوئی عور یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا

نائب تحصیلدار پہلگام

## ازنیابت پھلگام

درخواست منجانب سائل سیرت منظور دختر منظور احمد وانی ساکنہ بنگلوٹ پہلگام، برآمد حصول RBA سرٹیفکیٹ

### اشتہار بمراد آگاہی

معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان میں درخواست سال دفتر ذمہ دار میں زیر کار وانی ہے اس نسبت پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ منظور مطلوبہ نقوالات ریکارڈ طلب کے گ بس سے عیالی ہوتا ہے سال موضع سائل بنگلوٹ پہلگام میں رہائش پذیر ہے۔ بذیل افراد منتقل ہے

- 1.. محمد رمضان وانی ولد عبداللہ وانی 73 سال مزدوری
- 2.. منظور احمد وانی ولد محمد رمضان وانی 43 سال دکانداری
- 3... تیسلمہ زوجہ منظور احمد 40 سال گھریلو کام
- 4... سیرت منظور دختر منظور احمد 15 سال زیر تعلیم
- 5... مصیب پسر 12 سال //

اس کے علاوہ کوئی بھی افراد میں بتلایا گیا ہے سال کے کمرہ کی سال آمدنی 197000 دھانی گئی ہے سرٹیفکیٹ زیر بحث ابرہہ کرنے میں اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو عور یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ اپنا اعتراض یا اعتراض ساتھ دن کے اندر نامدر پیش کریں معاد کرنے کے بعد کوئی عور یا اعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا

نائب تحصیلدار

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR BIRTHS & DEATHS BLOCK WAGOORA  
Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This office is in receipt of representation from HAFSA ALTAF CHAROO W/o SUHAIL BASHIR R/O KREERI Tehsil KREERI District Baramulla for issuance of Birth Certificate in favour of MY DAUGHTER namely HANEEFA TRUMBOO D/O SUHAIL BASHIR R/O KREERI D.O.B as per documents is 10/05/2014 bearing registration no 577/15-A/PSK/16 & date of issue 09/11/2016 & date of registration 08/12/2016 event shown to be occurred at home. In this connection if anyone have any objection in the registration of birth certificate shall present his/her claim to this office or Tehsildar Kreeri/Wagoora/BDO office Wagoora within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained

REGISTRATION BIRTH & DEATH  
(BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICE WAGOORA)

## Lok Sabha Elections-2024: Training imparted to Youth, NCC, NSS volunteers at Shopian

■ HT News Network

SHOPIAN, MARCH 22: The Office of the District Election Officer, under the leadership of District Election Officer, Shopian, Faz Lul Haseeb organized a comprehensive training session for the Volunteers of NCC, NSS and youth groups in the Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex, here today. The primary focus was to acquaint the Volunteers with detailed knowledge on essential election procedures. Speaking on the occasion, DEO said that the Volunteers shall be tasked with assisting specially-abled persons, senior citizens and other special voters so that they can exercise their franchise with ease and comfort. To make their access easy into polling stations, volunteers shall be handy in assistance of these voters, said DEO. Trainers, while imparting training to these Volunteers, made them aware about guidelines and norms of election process and their role in assistance.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
OFFICE OF THE TEHSILDAR KREERI  
(Executive Magistrate 1st Class)  
Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer Wagoora)/ chokedar has submitted case file pertaining to Birth of INAM -UL-HAQ NAJAR D/O MOHAMMAD ASHRAF NAJAR R/O BANDI PAYEEN Tehsil wagoora Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of Birth, as 07/03/2022 and event has been shown to be occurred at SDH kreeri for issuance of delay order. In this connection if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of birth certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE  
1ST CLASS KREERI

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR BIRTHS & DEATHS BLOCK WAGOORA  
Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/Death certificate.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This office is in receipt of representation from HANIYAH TRUMBOO D/O SUHAIL BASHIR R/O, KREERI Tehsil KREERI with DOB 05/04/2019 District Baramulla her fathers name on Birth Certificate wrongly written as SUHAIL AHMAD TRUMBOO and mothers name as HAFSA ALTAF while his correct fathers name is SUHAIL BASHIR & Mathers name HAFSA ALTAF CHAROO which needs to be corrected. In this connection if anyone have any objection in the registration of birth certificate shall present his/her claim to this office or Tehsildar Kreeri/Wagoora/BDO office Wagoora within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

REGISTRATION BIRTH & DEATH  
(BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICE WAGOORA)

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INTERVIEW WILL TAKE PLACE AT OUR BOTH OFFICES

## Lok Sabha Elections-2024: First Phase of EVM randomization conducted at Kupwara

■ HT News Network

KUPWARA, MARCH 22: The first phase of randomization was conducted for allocation of Ballot Units (BUs), Control Units (CUs) and VVPATs for all the six assembly segments of the Kupwara district for the upcoming parliamentary elections 2024 on Friday. The process was overseen by District Election Officer (DEO), Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan in presence of AROs, Dy. DEO Kupwara and Political party representatives.

The first randomization was aimed to allocate Bal-



lot Units, Control Units, and VVPATs, for all the six assembly constituencies of the district as there are a total of 611 polling centers in the district for upcoming Lok Sabha Elections. Randomization was shared with AROs and political parties. The District Election Officer, on the occasion, emphasized that the objective of randomization is to ensure transparent

and impartial elections, devoid of human interference, facilitated by dedicated software.

Prior to the randomization, political representatives were briefed about the process, regarding the implementation of necessary measures to uphold the integrity of the electoral process.

Second phase of randomization will entail further randomization for the allocation of EVMs to individual polling stations. This meticulous approach underscores the commitment to conducting free and fair elections in the district.

## Lok Sabha Elections 2024 DEO Shopian holds interaction with representatives of Political Parties

■ HT News Network

SHOPIAN, MARCH 22: The District Election Officer (DEO) Shopian, Faz Lul Haseeb chaired a meeting with the representatives of various Political Parties of Shopian district at Mini-Secretariat, here.

At the outset, threadbare discussion was held on Model Code of Conduct, Election Expenditure Monitoring, Advertisement certification, Campaigning, Electronic Media usage and other matters, and parties were asked to adhere to the



poll related guidelines.

The representatives were also apprised of poll day related standard operating procedures to be observed by polling parties as well as the contesting candidates.

Speaking on the occa-

sion, DEO apprised representatives that no one should make use of private property for campaigning without the consent of the owner, nor any rally or meeting be held without permission. Advertisements in elec-

tronic media and print media shall be telecasted/broadcast only after the prior permission of District MCMC, said DEO.

The DEO also exhorted upon that no official vehicle shall be used during the election campaign. He stressed for adopting the Election Commission of India's guidelines in letter and spirit.

The Dy. DEO, Shopian, Jahangir Ahmed, DIO, Showkat Hussain, representatives of political parties and officers and officials of Election Department Shopian were present.

## Environmental Crisis Grips Langate, Water Sources Turned into Dumping Grounds

■ DR. AB QAYOUM

Langate, Mar 22: In a distressing turn of events, the natural water sources in Langate Tehsil of north Kashmir's Kupwara district are rapidly deteriorating, transforming into dumping grounds for waste and debris. Despite widespread concern among the local populace, authorities have shown a disheartening lack of action in addressing this pressing issue. Locals told HEADLINESTODAY, that once revered for their abundance of springs and flowing streams, the water bodies of Langate are now struggling to survive amidst rampant pollution and neglect. "Streams like Nallah Mawar and Nallah Pharou, which were once lifelines for the community, are now choked with garbage and illegal sand extraction." Communities across Langate, including Khan Tulwari Kharou, Gund Kharrou, Kultoora and Guloor, are witnessing the tragic demise of their water sources as household waste continues to be indiscriminately dumped into the once-clear streams.



Plastic pollution and rotting organic matter further exacerbate the environmental degradation, posing serious health risks to residents. Despite promises from local authorities and government departments, tangible efforts to address the crisis remain elusive. Centuries-old springs, such as in Patpora Langate and Guloor, have dried up completely, leaving residents with a dire shortage of potable water. The plight of Langate is not an isolated incident, neighbor-

ing villages and towns, including Handwara, are also grappling with similar challenges. Streams and water channels in areas like Chogal, Gund Chogal, Kultoora Rajwar suffer from neglect and indifference from the authorities, compounding the environmental crisis. The well-being of the community and the preservation of the local ecosystem depend on urgent intervention from concerned authorities. (HT)

Water Bodies Are Not A Dustbin. Don't Load Them With Garbage  
Courtesy: Municipal Committee Langate

## Two-day workshop on 'Drone Technology and its applications' commences at Baderwah Campus of Jammu University

HT News Network

BHADERWAH, MARCH 22: The two-day workshop on "Drone Technology and its applications" commenced today at Baderwah Campus of Jammu University here.

The workshop attracted nearly 200 participants from various educational institutions, departments of Baderwah Campus, officials and jawans from the Indian Army and teaching and non-teaching staff.

The Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu, Prof. Umesh Rai, commended the Baderwah Campus for organizing the workshop. Chief guest on the occa-



sion, Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh extended his best wishes to Baderwah Campus for organising event on a topic of paramount importance. He elaborated on the myriad benefits that drone

technology offers in the contemporary era, emphasizing its significance in various sectors.

The Rector of Baderwah Campus and Patron of the workshop Prof. J. P. Singh Joorel conveyed his appre-

ciation to the Department of Computer Science & IT for spearheading this workshop. He underscored the workshop's role in equipping participants with valuable insights into drone technology. "This workshop promises to be an enriching experience, providing participants with valuable insights and practical knowledge in the field of drone technology", he said.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Operation Doda, Sunil Kesar, graced the occasion as the Guest of honour. He delivered a comprehensive discourse on the importance of drone technology, particularly in addressing security concerns.

## Lok Sabha Election 2024 Rangoli Competition as part of SVEEP campaign organised in Kishtwar

HT News Network

KISHTWAR, MARCH 22: Under the overall supervision of District Election Officer Kishtwar, Dr. Devansh Yadav, dedicated efforts are underway to diligently execute the Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Campaign in the district.

This campaign aims to raise awareness about voting rights and ethical voting practices across the Kishtwar district in preparation for the upcoming Lok Sabha Election 2024 for the parliamentary Constituency Udhampur scheduled for April 19th.

As part of the SVEEP initiatives, the SVEEP Cell of the District Election Office Kishtwar orchestrated a vibrant Rangoli Competition event in spirit



with the 'Holi Ka Tyohar, Chunavi Bahar' today. This event played a pivotal role in engaging the community and fostering awareness for maximum participation in the democratic process, particularly within Kishtwar District.

The District Nodal officer for SVEEP activities/ACR Kishtwar, Idrees Lone collaborated extensively with educational institutions and various organizations to educate the populace

about the significance of their role as voters in a democracy.

Today's event was meticulously coordinated by District Nodal Officer SVEEP in conjunction with District Information Officer Kishtwar, Dr. Kuldeep Kumar. A total of 10 teams comprising 50 participants, including Anganwari Workers of ICDS, students and faculty members from different schools, GDCKishtwar, Government Polytechnic College Kishtwar, ITI Kishtwar and local artists enthusiastically participated in the Rangoli competition. Participants showcased their creativity and talent in promoting ethical voting practices.

District Election Officer Kishtwar, commended the students for their enthusiastic participation and lauded their creativity and talent displayed during the competition.

## Lok Sabha Elections 2024 Awareness programme on SVEEP held across Samba

HT News Network



SAMBA, MARCH 22: As per the directions of Chief Electoral Officer J&K and District Election Office Samba, a day long awareness campaign was held in the district for the awareness of voters under SVEEP 4 programme, an initiative of ECI for stronger democracy with greater participation of the electors.

Various ELCs, VAFs, Anganwadi Workers, officials from Revenue, Rural Development and Education department were mobilised along with local BLOs to sensitise all sections of society.

DNO SVEEP made a synchronous strategy along with AROs of all three ACs which resulted in mass mobilisation and identification of target areas where voter turnout was comparatively less. Special focus was made for the youth, women, old age voters and tribals.

## SMVD Gurukul holds 32nd Governing Council Meeting

HT News Network



Katra, March 22: The 32nd meeting of the Governing Council of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Gurukul, Charan Paduka was held here today at its academic premises at Charan Paduka, Katra. The meeting presided by Mahamandleshwar Shri Swami Vishveshvaranand Giriji Maharaj, Member of the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board and Chairman of the Governing Council for the Gurukul, was attended by Anshul Garg, Chief Executive Officer of the Shrine Board; Alok Kumar Maurya, Additional CEO; Padma Shri Prof. Vishwamurti Shastri, Pawan Kumar, Controller of Examination, CSU; Satish Kumar Sharma, Joint CEO, SMVDSB and Administrator of Gurukul; Mahesh Sharma, FA/Chief Accounts

Officer; Gopal Dass Sharma, Head Pujari, Bhawan; Dr Dhananjay Mishra, Principal; and Dr. Devendra Rijal, Vice Principal of the Gurukul. The Chairman and other Members of the Governing Council while expressing satisfaction regarding over-the-year growth of the institution and its functioning emphasized the need for making continuing endeavors to develop it as a centre of excellence. The Chairman desired that a 15 years road-

map be devised for future growth of Gurukul both physically and academically for comprehensive learning experiences and academic excellence. He exhorted that up-gradation of Gurukul to post graduation level be also explored aiming to further empower students with advanced knowledge and skills to excel in their chosen fields. He said that the up-gradation will not only enhance the academic reputation of SMVD Gurukul but posi-

tively contribute to the educational landscape in the region.

The Chairman while reviewing outstanding achievements of the students of SMVD Gurukul in academics and co-curricular activities underscored that the students must prepare for annual activities diligently in advance, aligning with the curriculum not only to attain optimal outcomes but also for their holistic development.

The meeting also noted participation of faculty and students at different Platforms, including in-house events & those at State, Zonal as well as at National Level. The Governing Council, while approving the annual budget of Gurukul for financial year 2024-25 also concurred with the projected need for expansion of residential and academic blocks of SMVD.

## Lok Sabha Elections 2024 First randomization of EVMs held at Jammu

HT News Network



JAMMU, MARCH 22: In view of upcoming parliamentary elections, the first randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) was conducted today at the District Headquarters here for 11 Assembly Constituencies of Jammu district. The process was carried out in the presence of representatives of various political parties.

District Election Officer, Sachin Kumar Vaishya, oversaw the proceedings, while the execution of the randomisation was handled by District Informatics Officer, Sanjeev Kapoor. The event was marked by the presence of representatives from political parties, who observed the process alongside Assistant Returning Officers. Deputy District Election Officer Rameshwar Kumar was also present at the occasion. For the poll date, April 26, Jammu has reserved an extra 40% of Ballot Units and 39% of VVPATs as a precaution. With 1488 polling stations ready, the district is well-prepared for a seamless vote.

## Bihar Diwas celebrated in Raj Bhawan

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 22: Jammu Kashmir Raj Bhawan hosted Bihar Diwas celebration today. Senior officials, Students and the residents of Bihar living in J&K UT were the special invitees on the occasion.

While addressing the guests, the Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of Bihar on the auspicious day.

He said since ancient times, Bihar was known as the centre of spirituality, education and made significant contribution to all aspects of vibrant art and culture of the country.

The Lt Governor also paid homage to the great personalities of Bihar and remembered their valuable contribution to India's freedom movement and the building of modern India.

## Lok Sabha Elections 2024 First Phase of EVMs Randomization conducted at Bandipora

HT News Network

BANDIPORA, MARCH 22: The first phase of randomization of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for the upcoming Parliamentary Elections 2024 was conducted on Friday at VC Room, Mini-Secretariat, Bandipora.

The randomization was conducted under the supervision of District Election Officer (DEO) Bandipora, Shakeel ul Rehman in presence of Deputy District Election Officer Mohammad Rafeeq Bhat, Nodal Officer EVM Management Mumtaz Pir, ARO 15- Bandipora, ARO 14- Sonawari, while as ARO 16- Gurez joined the process through virtual mode and besides other senior officers and representatives from various political parties were also present. On the occasion, DEO briefed the participants regarding the process of randomization, ensuring the fairness and integrity of the electoral process. The DEO said that randomization helps to prevent any potential bias or manipulation in the assignment of EVMs, thus ensuring that each polling station receives its machines impartially. The randomization was carried out using dedicated software designed for this purpose to allocate Ballot Units, Control Units, and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units for three assembly segments including 14- Sonawari, 15- Bandipora and 16- Gurez.

## Lok Sabha Elections 2024 First level EVM randomization successfully held in Samba

HT News Network



SAMBA, MARCH 22: Samba district has achieved a significant milestone in its electoral preparations with the successful completion of the first level of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) randomization for the upcoming Parliamentary Elections 2024 under the supervision of Returning Officer, Abhishek Sharma.

The event, held in the presence of senior offi-

cial and representatives from various political parties, focused on allocating 493 Ballot Units, 493 Control Units and 511 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units for all three assembly segments viz; 69-Ramgarh,

70-Samba, and 71-Vijaypur. He emphasized on the primary objective of the randomization process to ensure transparent, free and fair elections, devoid of any human intervention by utilizing dedicated software specifically

designed for this purpose, the randomization was conducted meticulously. Before the commencement of the randomization, the Returning Officer briefed political representatives about the process, reassuring them of the comprehensive arrangements in place to guarantee fair polls. The subsequent phases of randomization will determine the specific allocation of EVMs to polling stations in the upcoming stages of preparation.

## RTO Jammu conducts safety audit of school buses

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 22: Motor Vehicles Department Jammu on the directions of Secretary Transport J&K, Niraj Kumar conducted safety audit of school buses at K.C Public School here. The surprise inspection for safety audit of school buses was conducted by team of Regional Transport Office Jammu at K.C Public School. The team was constituted by Regional Transport Officer Jammu, Pan-kaj Bhagotra; comprising of ARTO HQ, Rehana Tabassam along with M.V. Is Vikas Srivats; Surinder Kumar and Jagandeep Singh and M.V.T.A Taranjot Singh who con-

ducted safety audit of more than 35 vehicles inside the premises of school which included thorough inspections of each bus, checking for compliance with safety regulations such as seat belts, emergency exits, first aid kits, and overall maintenance of the vehicle. Also, more than 10 vehicles were inspected on road and at trial ground Nagrota. The team conveyed to the school authorities about the deficiencies with regard to fitness of vehicles, other documents besides mandatory parameters pertaining to safety of school children in each vehicle and directed to rectify the deficiencies immediately and submit the compliance report within 10 days.

## Bhaderwah Campus Organises Two-Days Workshop on "Drone Technology"

Amir Iqbal Khan

Bhaderwah March 22 : Under the aegis of the Department of Computer Science & IT, Bhaderwah Campus, University of Jammu today organised two days workshop on Drone Technology in collaboration with iHUB Divya Sampark IIT Roorkee (A Joint venture of IIT Roorkee and DST Government of India). The workshop is technically supported by the "Jammu and Kashmir ACM Professional Chapter". The workshop was attended by nearly 200 participants from various educational institutions, departments of Bhaderwah Campus, officials and jawans from the Indian Army and the teaching and non-teaching staff. Deputy Commissioner Doda Harvinder Singh (IAS) was the Chief Guest on this occasion while Mr. Sunil Kesar (JKPS), Superintendent of Police (SP) Operation Doda, graced the occasion as the Guest of Honor. Deputy Commissioner Doda, on this occasion



lauded the campus authorities for choosing such an event on a topic of paramount importance. He also explained the myriad benefits that drone technology offers in the contemporary era, emphasizing its significance in various sectors. Sunil Kesar (SP- Opr) delivered a comprehensive discourse on the importance of drone technology, particularly in addressing security concerns. He emphasized

the pivotal role drones play in current circumstances and highlighted their significance in ensuring safety and security. The Rector of Bhaderwah Campus and Patron of the workshop Prof. J. P. Singh Joorel while speaking in the event appreciated the Department of Computer Science & IT for spearheading this workshop. He underscored the workshop's role in equipping participants with valuable insights into drone technology. Dr. Jatinder Manhas, the Convenor of the workshop, provided a detailed outline of the workshop's agenda through an insightful presentation. He emphasized that the workshop covers a diverse range of topics, including Introduction to Drone Technology, Drone Hardware and Software, Safety and Regulations, Hands-on Drone Flying Sessions, Applications in Agriculture, Aerial Photography and Videography, Search and Rescue Operations, Infrastructure Inspection, Environmental Monitoring, and Future Trends and Career Opportunities. He highlighted the workshop's significance as a pioneering initiative in the Union Territory of J&K.

EDITORIAL

## Upholding Democratic Values

The recent call by the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) for a half-day general strike on March 20 in support of education reformist Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike demands attention. Wangchuk, a prominent figure advocating for statehood and constitutional safeguards under the sixth schedule for Ladakh, has captured the aspirations of many in the region. The KDA's decision to stand in solidarity reflects the deep-seated concerns and grievances of the people, echoing their quest for representation and autonomy.

Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike, ongoing since March 6 in Leh, highlights the urgency and significance of the issues facing Ladakh. His call for statehood and constitutional safeguards under the sixth schedule resonates with the collective sentiment of the people, who seek greater political empowerment and protection of their distinct identity and culture. The KDA's endorsement of his cause amplifies the voices of the marginalized and disenfranchised, underscoring the importance of grassroots movements in shaping democratic discourse.

However, while the KDA's show of support for Wangchuk is laudable, it also raises questions about its potential impact on the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. The decision to observe a half-day general strike on March 20 may disrupt normalcy and daily activities, potentially affecting voter turnout and participation. As citizens exercise their democratic right to vote, any disruption in civic life could hinder the electoral process, diminishing the representation of Ladakh's diverse populace.

Furthermore, the KDA's alignment with Wangchuk's hunger strike underscores the broader struggle for political representation and recognition in Ladakh. The demand for statehood and constitutional safeguards reflects longstanding grievances stemming from the region's geopolitical status and historical marginalization. By mobilizing support for Wangchuk's cause, the KDA seeks to galvanize public opinion and pressure policymakers to address these fundamental concerns.

Lastly, the KDA's solidarity with Sonam Wangchuk embodies the spirit of democratic activism and civic engagement.

However, as Ladakh prepares for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, it is imperative to ensure that such demonstrations of solidarity do not impede the electoral process. Balancing the pursuit of political rights with the need for smooth electoral functioning is crucial in upholding democratic values and ensuring inclusive representation for all citizens of Ladakh.



By Mool Raj

In a world often marred by division, conflict, and adversity, acts of kindness shine as beacons of hope, illuminating the darkness and inspiring positive change. From small gestures of compassion to grand acts of generosity, kindness has the power to transform lives, uplift spirits, and foster a sense of belonging and connection within communities.

At its essence, kindness embodies the fundamental values of empathy, compassion, and altruism. It transcends barriers of race, religion, and nationality, bridging the gap between strangers and forging bonds of solidarity and understanding. Whether it's lending a helping hand to a neighbor in need, offering words of encouragement to a friend in distress, or volunteering time and resources to support a worthy cause, acts of kindness create a ripple effect of positivity that reverberates far beyond their initial impact.

The beauty of kindness lies in its simplicity and accessibility. It does not require wealth, status, or privilege; rather, it emanates from the depths of the human heart, driven by a genuine desire to alleviate suffering and spread joy. In a world besieged by cynicism and distrust, acts of kindness serve as powerful reminders of our shared humanity and the inherent goodness that resides within each of us.

Moreover, research has shown that kindness is not only beneficial for the recipient but also for the giver. Numerous studies have demonstrated the profound psychological and physiological benefits of practicing kindness, including reduced stress levels, enhanced emotional well-being, and improved overall health. Acts of kindness trigger the release of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and oxytocin, commonly referred to as the "happiness hormones," which promote feelings of happiness, contentment, and fulfillment.



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Furthermore, kindness has the remarkable ability to create a ripple effect, inspiring others to pay it forward and perpetuate a cycle of generosity

and goodwill. Like a stone cast into a still pond, a single act of kindness has the potential to touch countless lives, spreading warmth and compassion

throughout entire communities. As Mahatma Gandhi famously said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world." By embodying the values of kindness and compassion in our daily lives, we can sow the seeds of positive change and contribute to the creation of a more harmonious and compassionate society.

In today's fast-paced and interconnected world, it is all too easy to become consumed by the pursuit of material wealth and personal success, overlooking the simple joys of human connection and altruism. However, amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life, acts of kindness serve as gentle reminders of what truly matters – our relationships, our communities, and our capacity to make a difference in the lives of others.

As we navigate through the challenges and uncertainties of the modern world, let us not underestimate the power of kindness to heal wounds, mend broken hearts, and sow the seeds of hope and resilience. Let us cultivate a culture of kindness, where compassion and empathy serve as guiding principles in our interactions with one another. Together, we can create a world where kindness reigns supreme, transforming lives and communities one small act at a time.

The author is a columnist and freelance writer

## World Water Day 2024

And its importance



Sahil Manzoor

Earth covers a total of 71 percent of the water. 97 percent of the water is present in the oceans, and only 3 percent of the water is fresh. Water in oceans is salty and has no use for drinking or agricultural purposes. The chemical structure of water is v-shaped, and the chemical formula is H<sub>2</sub>O. Means two molecules of hydrogen, and one molecule is oxygen. Water is the most abundant component on earth and can be found in solid, liquid, and gaseous states. The world has been observing World Water Days since 1993. The theme for World Water Day 2024 is "Leveraging Water for Peace." Collaborating to solve water-related issues creates positive outcomes and builds resilience for shared challenges.

Water quenches our thirst, keeps us hydrated, keeps us neat

and clean, and has great and immense benefits. Water can also be found in seas, oceans, rivers, ponds, canals, etc. We know it very well. When there is no water, no life on this earth.

Human beings are living on a very unique planet known as Earth. The earth is one of the unique planets among the other planets in our solar system. Earth, neither small nor big, among other planets in the solar system. Today's field of science and technology is very advanced and progressing very rapidly with the involvement of the great and intelligent minds of humans. Every day we are experiencing various objects around us. Some of our friends wonder, some are getting excited, some are enjoying them, and only a few are curious to know them merely and eagerly.

Throughout the world, every country facilitates and equips its learners with highly modified, advanced, and latest technologies, securing their internal as well as external interests to tackle the new challenges coming ahead. Seminars, various television programs, rallies, and awareness programs are being held to aware people about current issues around the world. Today's world is facing immense challenges like environmental degradation, ozone depletion, and water scarcity, which are



concerning issues for today's generation. Water scarcity is primarily caused by inefficient water resource management. The government and other accountable authorities should prioritize water related resources.

Water is necessary for all living beings. Every cell, tissue, and organ

needs water to help with temperature regulation, keeping hydrated, and maintaining bodily functions. Water acts as a lubricant and cushions in our joints. Water is very important for overall health. So all of us should drink plenty of water. Water keeps our hearts healthy. Heart is working continu-

ally to pump 2,000 gallons of blood throughout our body in a day. By drinking water and keeping hydrated, it helps our heart do its job easily.

Water has no colour, taste, or smell and is transparent in nature. Drinking water keeps us hydrated while also protecting us from a

variety of other chronic diseases. Water helps to clear our bowel-related problems like constipation, stomach aches, and many more health-related problems. Water can neither be created nor destroyed, but it can be changed from one form to another by heating and cooling it. Water maintains the water cycle, which plays a vital role in the weather. There are infinite functions water plays in our body; besides, it provides essential nutrients to plants, from very small to very large. The world is deeply concerned about water-related issues. There are approximately billions of people in the world who face water scarcity.

Every year on March 22nd, we observe world water day, which has been celebrated since 1993. On this day, the whole world is being aware of its importance. How to get rid of its scarcity, how to save fresh water from dirt and how to save different sources of water. The sources of water on this planet include glaciers, rain, rivers, lakes, and many more other sources, which are very necessary for the existence of this blue planet. Earth is also known as the blue planet because it looks blue from the sky. Save water, safe life.

Raiyar- Ich, sahilmanzoor0401@gmail.com

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# Tagore as Gurudev

The Oxford English dictionary defines 'Guru' as a "Hindu spiritual teacher. Also, each of the ten first leaders of the Sikh religion. The word comes from Sanskrit meaning 'weighty', 'grave', hence 'elder, teacher'. It must be the third sentence of this definition that must have irked Rabindranath Tagore.

■ Sanjukta Dasgupta

The Oxford English dictionary defines 'Guru' as a "Hindu spiritual teacher. Also, each of the ten first leaders of the Sikh religion. The word comes from Sanskrit meaning 'weighty', 'grave', hence 'elder, teacher'. It must be the third sentence of this definition that must have irked Rabindranath Tagore.

To be 'weighty, grave', 'elder' and 'teacher' were signifiers that were antithetical to the spontaneous sparkle of his empathetic temperament. The Guru on a pedestal was anathema to Tagore; lifelong he had tried to reach out to all and sundry through the stream of his writings in multiple genres, poems, songs, fiction, plays, essays among others.

So Tagore was neither being unduly modest nor deceptive when he stated in a letter written in 1931, "The position of a Guru, is not mine, not mine..." Also in the widely celebrated long essay Religion Of Man Tagore wrote, "I am neither a scholar nor a philosopher". Recently when Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan ~ the heritage abode of peace ~ was going through unprecedented anarchy, all Tagore aficionados were not just shocked but felt gored and scarred. However, human civilization has repeatedly proved that truth temporarily defeated is greater than evil triumphant.

As an Old English poem stated reassuringly ~ 'that passed away so may this'. Though the exit of the former Vice Chancellor did not take place at lightning speed, the exit is now a reality and it is now time to repair and rebuild all the tangibles and intangibles that had been fractured and destroyed during the stormy session of bizarre unreason. During this period of turmoil, the poet's contribution in setting up Visva Bharati University as its founder, administrator, financier seemed to be a matter of inconsequence.

Tagore was both the chancellor and vice chancellor of his beloved Visva Bharati, though he was never known to have used such designations. Though widely addressed as Gurudev both in Bengal and elsewhere, Tagore was always sceptical about being regarded as gurudev, an appellation that could be synonymous with teacher, professor, Principal, Director or Chancellor.

In his outstanding short narrative Tota Kahini (The Parrot's Tale) Tagore unequivocally underscored that the pedagogue's dense and abstract discourse had the potential of killing the intellectual curiosity in young impressionable minds. He had emphatically stated that he had always run away from rote learning and cut and dried pedagogy and therefore addressing him as Gurudev seemed to him both absurd and inappropriate in terms of the image he endeavoured to create for himself. In fact, Gurus implying pompous pedagogues have been the butt of ridicule in many of his writings.

In a letter addressed to Ajit Kumar Chakravorty, published in Pravasi 1931, Tagore had categorically rejected the adulations showered on him as a prophet, sage and spiritual mystic. He emphasized in no uncertain terms that he was a poet and it was as a poet that he wished to be assessed. Tagore wrote in his letter, "The upward limit to a poet's claim can be in embraces ~ pranam (worshipful adulation) however ostracizes the poet; I have no doubts that I am nothing but a poet."

I want to be there in your heart's domain... do not install me in the wrong seat... I am a friend of all of you, I'll give some, I'll take some too... The position of a Guru, is not mine, not mine, not mine. I haven't learnt anything, nor can I teach others". Poet and scholar Sankha Ghosh cited several such assertions by Tagore in his Letters (Chithi Patra) where the poet stated categorically, "I am not a guru, I am a poet" (23 April 1926). In a more explanatory mode the poet wrote in a letter on 17 April 1926, "I am neither a guru nor a political leader ~ I am a poet, I create in various modes and rhythms ~ these are my creative toys, this is my job."

If people derive pleasure from these creations, I feel fulfilled. That's my dharma, my commitment, and I take total responsibility about maintaining my dharma. Those who have expected political wisdom and labour related skills from me, they have made a mistake, yet in their disappointment they have widened me of betrayal of trust." In three other letters cited by Sankha Ghosh the poet reiterates the same desire to distance himself from the expectation that he should play the role of Gurudev.

In a humorous tone Tagore writes on 30 April 1931, "I have always kept a wide distance from gurus, escaping from institutions is my habit ~ ultimately I myself will posture as a guru moshai, there cannot be anything more ridiculous." On 17 November 1932, the poet wrote, "I am certain that the designation of guru is not for me. I can feel, I can express that is my swadharma, my commitment to my selfhood."

I have spoken in your letter and it has seemed like an instruction. Expressing is part of my nature, but preaching is not." (ibid 156). Earlier, in 1921 in several letters Tagore had struggled with his aversion to being described as a mystic sage, a guru. So in a letter written on 24 February 1921, he remarked, "Why should I be anything else but a poet? Was I not born a music-maker?" There is a sense of despair in the letter written two days later on 26 February 1921: "Pushing the wheelbarrows of propaganda from continent to continent ~ is this going to be the climax of a poet's life? It seems to me like an evil dream from which I occasionally wake up in the dead of night..."

In a more analytical mode, almost identifying a split-image of himself, Tagore writes in a letter dated 7 July 1921, "In this modern age of the philosophy of relativity I suppose I cannot claim for myself the quality of absolute poeedom. It is evident that the poet in me changes its features and spontaneously assumes the character of the preacher with the change of its position." Tagore's emphatic desire to distance himself from the elevated position of a spiritual messiah when particularly the West looked upon him as an inspirational guru is indeed significant. In fact, even the rest of India other than Bengal regarded him as a cultural prophet. That gained further encouragement from his being hailed as Gurudev by both Gandhi and Nehru, the two icons of political activism in colonial India. His sartorial choice of a free flowing robe also contributed to the image of a religious preacher.

This was often compared to the sartorial style of a Rabbi that perhaps in a way did not make him seem very alienated and ethnic to Western eyes. In fact, on many occasions he had been compared to a Christ-figure, understandably much older but having a similar

physical image. Essentially however, Tagore was a poet-philosopher, a litterateur and songster, in other words he had the disposition of the artist, for whom fixity of location and fixed ideas could only lead to a feeling of being entrapped and suffocated.

It is his effusive bohemian spirit not unlike the bauls of rural Bengal, the wandering minstrels who played and performed with words and music, that exuded a homegrown philosophy of love, patience and tolerance towards the world and all its creatures. It is an undeniable fact that Tagore primarily desired to remain a poet in the hearts and memories of the people. This has been reiterated by him on many occasions. In an interesting if not ironic episode, on 19 March 1923, Tagore was given a huge reception in Karachi where the assembled crowds cheered him chanting, "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai".

Hailing Mahatma Gandhi as Tagore's inspiration or mistaking him to be Gandhi himself or his alter ego may not have pleased the sensitive poet, according to Tagore's biographer Prasantakumar Paul. Tagore delivered a very long speech in that function wherein he pointedly stressed that he was a poet and wanted to reach out to the people as a friend.

He said, "As a poet I claim comradeship. I feel this is not my seat. I wish to be on the same level with you. When you ask me to come before you, you should share with me and do not banish me to a higher platform. I have come to you as your comrade. I wish I could sing to you in the language of your own or that which is my own. This is the barrier between you and me and it hurts me". However, it was the inimitable Nirad C Chaudhuri who in his chapter on Tagore, included in his book Thy Hand, Great Anarch!, summed up to a certain extent the difference between Tagore as a cult figure worshipped in blind faith as a Gurudev and a 'hagiographical legend in Bengal', instead of focusing on a complete, critical assessment of Tagore's contribution to literature and culture and as a thinker and public intellectual.

The writer is Professor and former Dean, Faculty of Arts, Calcutta University

# UTOPIA REBORN

"PROGRESS IS REALIZATION OF UTOPIA", SO BELIEVED OSCAR WILDE. UTOPIA IS NO FLIGHT OF INFANCY; IT IS THE ROADMAP OF THE FUTURE AND THE LIFE BLOOD OF SOCIETAL CHANGE.

■ Ash Narain Roy

"Progress is realization of utopia", so believed Oscar Wilde. Utopia is no flight of infancy; it is the roadmap of the future and the lifeblood of societal change. Modern ideas like shared living, equality, justice and a yearning for a better society have influenced both philosophers and political leaders. Utopia may be universal but in the contemporary world, Latin America is considered to be a fertile ground for utopian projects, movements and experiments. For many, utopia is a process of making a better tomorrow.

Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes writes, "we have clung to utopia because we were founded as a utopia." Memory of a good society "lies in our origins and also at the end of the road, as a fulfilment of our hopes." Hundreds of social, political and ideational experiments are currently under way in Latin America. Political leaders never fight shy of experimenting with both progressive and regressive development strategies, even untested new policy measures. Civil societies and ordinary citizens are experimenting with alternative forms of governance creating both public and institutional spaces for democratising and deepening democracy.

There may be failures and frustrations but that has not stopped them from imagining alternative utopias. Latin America is building what Zapatistas of Mexico would say, "un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos" (a world where many worlds fit in). Latin American thought leaders have made seminal contributions in the fields of inquiry like resistance and liberation movements, race, pedagogy, coloniality and indigenous epistemologies. To a great extent, the political space that the new left in Latin America has created is largely the product of utopian visions and its new imaginations.

The new left in its various avatars has drawn inspiration from the core premise of Marx, "things don't have to be the way they are." Globally, the left is facing a dilemma that American cultural critic Greil Marcus sums up beautifully: "your own history was lying in pieces on the



ground, and you had the choice of picking up the pieces or passing them by." Only the Latin American left seems to have picked up the pieces and the result is there for all to see. The origin of the Latin American left is distinctly Latin American.

One has seen the demise of the 'Bourbon' left and the 'doctrinaire' left and the 'infantile' left too has been buried. It is not easy to define the new left. The left is a combination of small parties and groups, trade unions, social movements and indigenous organisations. Its emphasis is inclusion and reform, not revolution. The centrality of democracy is another feature. It is democracy deepening, not mere democracy's expansion.

F L Schuster and Armando Bartra therefore suggest that we speak of 'lefts' in the plural. New terms have emerged such as 'liberal left', 'interventionist left'

and 'extractivist left.' The new left has different historical trajectories and ideological nuances than the conventional left. The multiplicity of social bases and political agendas are specific to individual countries. Hence, while the new left is radically different from the traditional left, ideological diversities and historical trajectories of the new left themselves are different.

Just as Hugo Chavez was no Fidel Castro, Chile's Gabriel Boric is no Lula. In pure academic terms, describing recent and current Latin American leaders and parties as "leftist" doesn't pass a rigorous analysis. The worldviews and policies of left leaders are so different from one another. Years before getting elected president of Colombia, Gustavo Petro praised Hugo Chavez as a "great Latin American leader". However, while campaigning for

president, Petro dismissed Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro as a "very conservative member of the most regressive factions in global politics." Lula too has been critical of Maduro saying he supports free elections in Venezuela so that it can see "the alteration of power." President of Chile Gabriel Boric too has been critical of Maduro's leadership. He said that the "policy of exclusion doesn't offer authentic or lasting results." Mexico's Zapatista movement is the most iconic antiglobalisation guerrilla movement.

It acquired global attention as it swept the battle for public opinion. The Zapatista movement became the lighthouse that illuminated the left. The Zapatistas have a lot to offer to the left. They don't reject democracy but they define it in the indigenous cosmological term. They have offered a decolonial definition, "we are

all equals because we are all different." In their limited areas of influence in Chiapas, they have practiced the 'socialisation of power' by extending it to all spheres of social existence like schools, hospitals, communities and other enterprises."

Today many of the old ideas have lost their marbles. In the present age, the magic of ideas is fizzling out. The left needs better stories. The age of theory is coming to its end. Both liberalism and socialism are going through a phase of decline and exhaustion. The post-fascist universe is expanding. There is a social meltdown. The new left in Latin America knows that 'how to do nothing' is not an option. The left's appeal has grown thanks to the support it has garnered from social movements, political-cultural struggles and their fight against social stigmas.

The Zapatista revolution has been a movement of movements. In their own small way, they have proved that other models are possible. As Peter Rosset, Maria Elena Martinez-Torres and Luis Hernandez-Navarro contend, "the Zapatistas gave the new movements new forms, methods and ideologies with roots in the history of subaltern indigenous communities." The left needs new stories to tell and new cards to play. It must give voice to stories that have been silenced. Democracy is broken today.

The traditional leftist thinking that the working class was the agent of change and that the intellectuals were the radical agency of change has no traction. Where is the working class today, much less their faith in the revolutionary mission? The proletariat is now the new precariat. The universities no longer prepare students for citizenship.

There was once romance with revolution. Today, 'Love is a Revolution' as the title of Renee Watson's book suggests. It will be naive, if not foolish, to expect that the students of elite universities will transform into a new working class as the University of California, Berkeley, once actually believed.

The writer is Director, Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi

# Arvind Kejriwal Liquor Case "Kingpin", Claims Probe Agency. Court Order Soon

HT News Network

New Delhi: Responding to Rahul Gandhi's reference to electoral bonds as 'hafta vasooli', Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that the Congress leader needs to clarify where he obtained 1,600 crore from.

"Gandhi also received 1,600 crore. He should clarify where he got that 'hafta vasooli' from. We assert that it's a transparent donation, but if he labels it as vasooli, he should provide details," Mr Shah said in a video posted on his X account.

When asked if the BJP would disclose their donor list like other parties, Mr Shah responded, "I assure you, once the details are out, the INDIA alliance will find it hard to face the public."

"Electoral bonds were introduced to end the domination of black money in Indian politics, they were brought to eradicate black money. Now the scheme has been scrapped and I fear the return of black money," Mr Shah said.

He further stated that there should be reforms regarding the electoral bonds, rather than scrapping it.



"I believe that rather than scrapping it, there should be reforms, but it does not hold any significance, as the top court has given its verdict and I respect that," he added.

"But my personal opinion is that bonds had almost ended black money in politics. This is why the entire INDIA bloc, led by Rahul Gandhi, was against the bonds and they wanted the old system of cut money to rule over politics once again," the senior BJP leader stated.

The Electoral Bond Scheme was a way for political parties in India

to get money without revealing the donor's identity. But, the Supreme Court, in a ruling in February, struck down the scheme and ordered the State Bank of India (SBI) to stop issuing electoral bonds immediately. In compliance with a directive from the Supreme Court, the Election Commission of India (ECI) recently uploaded data on electoral bonds on its official website. The SBI had supplied the information, which includes details about these electoral bonds. Responding to Rahul Gandhi's reference to electoral bonds as 'hafta

vasooli', Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that the Congress leader needs to clarify where he obtained 1,600 crore from.

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# Electoral Bonds: Infra Firm, Mining, Telecom Giant Are BJP's Largest Donors

HT News Network

New Delhi: The Bharatiya Janata Party was the largest beneficiary of electoral bonds between April 2019 and January 2024 - companies donated 5,594 crore in that period - the Election Commission of India said this week. The BJP pocketed over three times the amount (Rs 1,592 crore) the Trinamool took home and more than four times the amount donated to its arch-rivals Congress (Rs 1,351 crore).

Fourth on the list was former Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's Bharat Rashtira Samithi, which was dumped out of power by the Congress in November; the BRS got 1,191 crore.

Odisha's Biju Janata Dal, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam from Tamil Nadu, and the YSR Congress Party and Telugu Desam Party from Andhra Pradesh are next on the list; the BJD got 775 crore and the DMK got 632 crore, while the TDP raked in 211 crore and the YSRCP 128 crore. Exactly how much each party received through the contentious electoral bonds - in a landmark verdict last month the Supreme Court called the scheme "unconstitutional" - has come to light after the State Bank of India released the alphanumeric codes that match donors to parties. The SBI - hauled up by the court for first appearing to delay release of electoral bonds data and then neglecting to provide matching codes - submitted the data to the Election Commission on Thurs-



day. Under the rules, the SBI was the only bank allowed to issue electoral bonds; this, of course, was only till the top court ordered the scheme be scrapped and the public sector bank to stop selling bonds.

Earlier the SBI had released two lists - one of donors and the other of receiving political parties - but without the codes it was not possible to see which donor had given how much to which party.

What was apparent then was that companies like Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Ltd., Qwik Supply Chain Pvt. Ltd., Vedanta, and the Bharti Group were among the top corporate donors.

With the codes, it is now clear the BJP received 584 crore from Megha Engineering & Infrastructure Ltd., and 375 crore from Qwik Supply Chain. Vedanta donated 226 crore and Airtel 183 crore. Other major donors included real estate giants DLF, which gave 133 crore.

The party second on the list of beneficiaries - Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool - received 542 crore from Future Gaming & Hotel Services Pvt. Ltd.

# BJP Names Candidates For 14 More Lok Sabha Seats In Tamil Nadu

HT News Network

New Delhi: The BJP today named its Lok Sabha poll candidates for 14 seats in Tamil Nadu and the lone seat of Puducherry.

It has fielded A Namassivayam, a minister in the Puducherry government, from the union territory.

The party had named its candidates for nine Lok Sabha seats on Thursday.

Among the allies, the party has allotted 10 seats to Dr Ramadoss-headed Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) while a few seats have been given to some smaller partners.

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Mallikarjun Kharge's Son-In-Law On Congress' 3rd Lok Sabha List

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Mallikarjun Kharge's Son-In-Law On Congress' 3rd Lok Sabha List Freezing Congress Accounts Violation of Model Code: Sachin Pilot



Freezing Congress Accounts Violation of Model Code: Sachin Pilot

The BJP had on Thursday fielded its Tamil Nadu president K Annamalai from Coimbatore and Union Minister L Murugan from Nilgiris.

It nominated former Telangana governor Tamilisai Soundararajan from Chennai South seat and ex-union minister Pon Radhakrishnan from Kanniyakumari, which he represented in 2014.

# India, Bhutan Ink Strategic Pacts, Establishment Of Rail Links Soon

HT News Network

Thimphu: India and Bhutan today exchanged several strategic MoUs and signed agreements in the fields of energy, trade, digital connectivity, space and agriculture, and finalised the MoU on the establishment of rail links between the two nations. The MoUs were exchanged in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay during the ongoing two-day State visit of PM Modi. Prime Minister Modi met his Bhutanese counterpart in Thimphu "over a working lunch hosted in his honour". He thanked Prime Minister Tobgay for the "exceptional public welcome accorded to him, with people greeting him all along the journey from Paro to Thimphu," India's Ministry of External Affairs said here in a statement. The two leaders held discussions on various aspects of the multi-faceted bilateral relations and "forged an understanding to further enhance cooperation in sectors such



as renewable energy, agriculture, youth exchange, environment and forestry, and tourism," it said. India and Bhutan enjoy long-standing and exceptional ties characterised by utmost trust, goodwill, and mutual understanding at all levels, the MEA said. "Ahead of the meeting, Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister of Bhutan witnessed exchange of several MoUs/Agreements on energy, trade, digital connectivity, space, agriculture, and youth connect among others," the statement said. In addition, both

sides have also "agreed on and initialled the text of the MoU" on the establishment of rail links between India and Bhutan, India's Ministry of External Affairs here said. The MoU provides for the establishment of two proposed rail links between India and Bhutan, including the Kokrajhar-Gelephu rail link and Banarhat-Samtse rail link and their implementation modalities, it said.

MoU on general supply of Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants (POL) and related products from India to Bhutan provides for a list of petroleum, oil, lubricants related items.

India would facilitate its supply to Bhutan through agreed entry/exit points, the statement said. Agreement for recognition of official control exercised by Bhutan Food and Drug Authority (BFDA) by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) will facilitate the trade between India and Bhutan by promoting ease of doing business and reducing compliance costs on both sides.

# BJP Thanks Naveen Patnaik For Support At Centre, But No Tie-up In Odisha

HT News Network

New Delhi: The BJP decided not to tie up with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's Biju Janata Dal (BJD) in Odisha for the Lok Sabha election after the Centre found many schemes of the Modi government have not been reaching the common people, state BJP chief Manmohan Samal said in a post on the microblogging platform X today.

The BJP's decision came after a big meeting in Delhi, where Odisha BJP leaders convinced central leaders that an alliance with Mr Patnaik's party would be against the BJP's interest.

Welcoming the move, BJP leader Aparajita Sarangi posted on X, "Excellent, immensely grateful." The BJP going solo in BJD-ruled Odisha was expected, as



the party had already indicated it wouldn't contest the national election together with Mr Patnaik's party, though there had been speculation about a tie-up for a while in recent weeks.

The only difference now is that the BJP has announced the reason for not joining hands with the BJD. For the past 10 years, BJD of Odisha under the leadership of Naveen Patnaik has been supporting the Narendra Modi government in the Centre in many matters of national importance. For this, we express our gratitude to him (Mr

Patnaik)," the Odisha BJP chief said.

"But today many welfare schemes of the Modi government are not reaching the ground in Odisha, due to which the people of the state are not getting their benefits. We have concerns on many issues related to Odisha identity, Odisha pride, and interest of the people of Odisha," Mr Samal said in the post on X in Hindi. "To fulfil the hopes, wishes and aspirations of 4.5 crore people of Odisha, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to make a developed India and developed Odisha, the BJP will win all the 21 Lok Sabha and 147 assembly seats. We will contest both Lok Sabha and assembly elections alone," the state BJP chief said in the post.

# Probe Agency Must Furnish Grounds Of Arrest To Accused In Writing: Supreme

HT News Network

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has dismissed the Centre's petition seeking review of its verdict which said the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is required to furnish the grounds of arrest to an accused in writing "without exception", saying there was no error in its judgement warranting reconsideration.

A bench of Justices AS Bopanna and Sanjay Kumar considered the review petition in chambers and passed the order. "We have carefully gone through the review petitions and the connected papers. We do not find any error, much less apparent, in the order impugned, warranting its reconsideration. The review petitions are dismissed accordingly. Pending application, if any, stands disposed of," the bench said.

In its order passed on March 20, the bench also dismissed the Centre's application for an open court hearing.

The Centre had sought a review of the October 3 order of the top court by which it had set aside the orders of the Punjab and Haryana High Court as well as the arrest memos, while directing the release of Basant Bansal and Pankaj Bansal, directors of Gurugram-based realty group M3M, in a money laundering case. The top court had come down heavily on the ED and said it is not expected to be "vindictive" in its conduct and must act with utmost probity and fairness.

It had said being a premier investigating agency charged with the onerous responsibility of curbing the debilitating economic offence of money laundering in the country, every action of the ED in the course of such exercise is expected to be "transparent, above board and



conforming to pristine standards of fair play in action".

"The ED, mantled with far-reaching powers under the stringent Act of 2002, is not expected to be vindictive in its conduct and must be seen to be acting with utmost probity and with the highest degree of dispassion and fairness," the top court had said.

It had said the failure of the accused to respond to the questions put to them by the ED would not be sufficient in itself for the investigating officer to opine that they were liable to be arrested.

"Mere non-cooperation of a witness in response to the summons issued under Section 50 of the (PMLA) Act of 2002 would not be enough to render him/her liable to be arrested under Section 19," the top court had said.

Arvind Kejriwal Withdraws Petition From Top Court, Will Go To Lower Court  
Arvind Kejriwal Withdraws Petition From Top Court, Will Go To Lower Court Justice Kumar, who had penned the verdict on behalf of the bench, also questioned the manner of arrest of the Bansals in the case and said the chronology of events "speaks volumes and reflects rather poorly, if not negatively, on the ED's style of functioning".

# UP Court Schedules Hearing In Defamation Case Against Rahul Gandhi To April 2

HT News Network

Sultanpur: A special court here on Friday postponed the hearing on a defamation case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to April 2 due a strike by lawyers.

The defamation complaint against Rahul Gandhi was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra for his alleged objectionable remarks against Home Minister Amit Shah.

The plaintiff's advocate, Santosh Pandey, said the hearing in the case was scheduled for Friday, but it was deferred to April 2 as lawyers abstained from court proceedings due to a strike over their various demands.

The case was filed in August 2018. Last December, the court issued a warrant against Rahul Gandhi.

Subsequently, Rahul Gandhi halted his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Amethi on February 20 last and reached the court and was granted bail.

# BJP Names Candidates For 14 More Lok Sabha Seats In Tamil Nadu

HT News Network

New Delhi: The BJP today named its Lok Sabha poll candidates for 14 seats in Tamil Nadu and the lone seat of Puducherry. It has fielded A Namassivayam, a minister in the Puducherry government, from the union territory.

The party had named its candidates for nine Lok Sabha seats on Thursday. Among the allies, the party has allotted 10 seats to Dr Ramadoss-headed Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) while a few seats have been given to some smaller partners. The BJP had on Thursday fielded its Tamil Nadu president K Annamalai from Coimbatore and Union Minister L Murugan from Nilgiris.

It nominated former Telangana governor Tamilisai Soundararajan from Chennai South seat and ex-union minister Pon Radhakrishnan from Kanniyakumari, which he represented in 2014.



# Blinken In Israel Ahead Of UN Vote On Gaza Ceasefire Plan

■ HT News Network

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in Israel Friday for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, ahead of a UN Security Council vote on a US draft resolution noting the need for an "immediate" ceasefire that would allow in more aid.

Washington announced it would submit for a vote on Friday its draft on the necessity of an "immediate ceasefire as part of a hostage deal", after repeatedly using its veto power to block earlier ceasefire resolutions.

Shortly after arriving in Tel Aviv, following talks in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Blinken began talks with Netanyahu. Pressure on the Israeli leader from Washington and other allies has intensified over Israel's war against Hamas militants in Gaza.

Israel said on Friday it was continuing military operations for a fifth day in and around Al-Shifa hospital, the largest medical facility in a besieged territory where most hospitals are no longer functioning, according to the United Nations.

The United States, which provides Israel with billions of dollars in military assistance, has become increas-



ingly vocal about the impact of the nearly six-month war on civilians in Gaza.

Israel has vowed to send troops into Gaza's southernmost point, Rafah, against Hamas militants there.

With most of Gaza's population sheltering in the area along the Egyptian border, the prospect has provoked widespread international alarm.

During his tour, Blinken said a ground offensive in Rafah would be "a mistake".

"There is no place for the civilians amassed in Rafah to get out of harm's way," he said in Cairo. "There is a better way to deal with the ongoing threat posed by Hamas."

The European Union's 27 leaders on Thursday also urged against a Rafah ground operation, saying it "would worsen the already catastrophic humanitarian situation".

The head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, David Barnea, was set to meet CIA chief William Burns, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani and Egypt's intelligence chief Abbas Kamel for further truce talks in Qatar's capital Doha.

The effort hinges on the release of hostages held by Hamas militants in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody and the delivery of more aid to Gaza, where 2.4 million people are living under imminent threat of famine. Blinken said in Cairo on Thursday that "gaps are narrowing" and Washington was "continuing to push for an agreement in Doha".

"It's difficult to get there, but I believe it is still possible," Blinken said on his sixth trip to the region since the war began with Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel.

A Hamas official said Israel's response to the group's latest proposal had been "largely negative".

## Global sea levels jumped due to El Nino: Nasa

■ HT News Network

WASHINGTON: Global average sea levels rose by about 0.3 inches (one-third of an inch) from 2022 to 2023 — nearly four times the increase of the previous year — Nasa said on Thursday, attributing the "significant jump" to a strong El Nino and a warming climate.

The Nasa-led analysis is based on more than 30 years of satellite observations, with the initial satellite launching in 1992 and the latest in 2020.

Overall, sea levels have risen by around four inches since 1993. The rate of increase has also accelerated, more than doubling from 0.07 inches per year in 1993, to the current rate of 0.17 inches per year.

"Current rates of acceleration mean that we are on track to add another 20 centimetres (eight inches) of global mean sea level by 2050," said Nadya Vinogradova Shiffer, director for the Nasa sea level change team and the ocean physics programme in Washington. That would be double the amount of change in the next three decades compared to the previous century, she said, creating a future where flooding is far more frequent and catastrophic than today.

The immediate cause of the spike is the El Nino weather effect, which replaced the La Nina from 2021 to 2022, when the sea level rose around 0.08 inches.

El Nino involves warmer-than-average ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific.

## Pakistan seeks global support for nuclear energy projects

■ HT News Network

BRUSSELS: Highlighting the importance of nuclear energy in combating climate change, Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday called for the international financial institutions and banks to support nuclear energy projects in developing countries to enable them to meet their energy needs and achieve zero emissions goals. Mr Dar stated this during his meeting with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi on the sidelines of the first Nuclear Energy Summit held in Brussels. The minister appreciated the IAEA's role in enhancing peaceful uses of nuclear technology.

He said Pakistan desired to enhance the share of nuclear energy in the energy mix and underscored the importance of IAEA's technical cooperation work.

FM Dar attends first Nuclear Energy Summit in Brussels. Mr Grossi appreciated Pakistan's collaboration with the agency, adding that in Asia Pakistan is playing a key role in sharing its experience and expertise with developing countries. He said he would soon engage with global financial institutions to resolve the matter. Meanwhile, in a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Dar said energy security stands high on global priorities — for both developing and the developed world. "We need clean and cost-effective energy. With immense power density, negligible carbon footprints and no Greenhouse emissions, nuclear energy offers a viable solution for the future," the statement quoted the minister as saying. "We endorsed nuclear energy as one of the low-emission technologies in the recent COP-28," he pointed out.

## US Weapons Not Used To Violate Humanitarian Laws In Gaza, Assures Israel

■ HT News Network

Washington: Israel has submitted written assurances as required by the U.S. State Department stating its use of American-supplied weapons are not being used to violate humanitarian laws in Gaza, a U.S. official said on Wednesday.

Israel had until a Sunday deadline to submit written assurances. The State Department will assess by early May whether Israel's assurances are credible and report to the U.S. Congress.

The Israeli military has been fighting Hamas militants in Gaza since Hamas killed 1,200 people in southern Israel on Oct. 7. Palestinian authorities estimate more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in the conflict. President Joe Biden had last month issued a new U.S. national security memorandum that reminds countries receiving U.S. weapons to stick to international law.

## "Incredibly Undemocratic Process": US On Russia Election Won By Putin

■ HT News Network

Washington: The United States on Monday denounced Russia's election as "undemocratic" and said it will not congratulate President Vladimir Putin, who was declared winner by a sweeping margin.

Asked about Putin's reelection, State Department spokesman Vedant Patel responded sarcastically, "I was on the edge of my seat. It was such a nail-biter."

"This was an incredibly undemocratic process," Patel told reporters. Asked if the United States was withholding recognition of the result, as urged by some dissidents, Patel said, "I think it is safe to say that there certainly won't be congratulatory calls coming from the United States of America." He is likely to remain the president of Russia, but that does not excuse him of his autocracy," Patel said.

## China Tries To Block NGO Tribute To Dead Dissident At UN

■ HT News Network

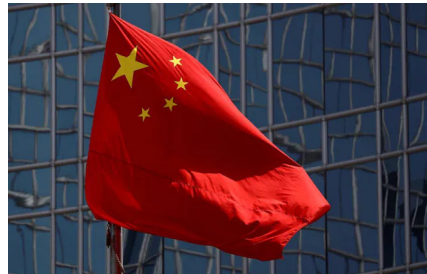
Geneva: China tried Friday to block a statement before the UN Human Rights Council about a dissident who was detained and died after trying to travel to the council a decade ago.

Beijing used procedural moves to object to a statement presented on behalf of dozens of rights groups paying tribute to Cao Shunli, who was detained as she attempted to travel to Geneva ahead of a UN review of China's rights record.

After being held for several months without charge, she fell gravely ill and died on March 14, 2014. "Cao's courage inspires defenders globally, so let her legacy and name resonate in this room until there is accountability for all victims of reprisals," said a Chinese human rights defender whose identity was not given.

Speaking on behalf of 37 non-governmental organisations -- including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Service for Human Rights -- she included a short silence, which she said was in honour of Cao.

She also urged the diplomats in the room to "mirror the courage of all human



rights defenders and victims of reprisals and always stand in solidarity with them".

China's representative, Han Xincheng then demanded the floor, complaining that the NGO speaker was using her time "to observe silence and provoke confrontation", and asked the council president halt her intervention.

He was backed by the representatives of Cuba, Venezuela and Russia.

North Korea's representative, deputy ambassador Pang Kwang Hyok, also chimed in, asking that the council president "ensure that the speaker strictly observe the rules of procedure, by respecting dignified sovereign states and polite manner".

The European Union, along with the United States, Canada and Britain defended the NGOs' right to speak.

## Over 70 Rohingya presumed dead in boat tragedy off Indonesia's Aceh coast

■ HT News Network

More than 70 Rohingya are "presumed dead or missing" after a boat they were on capsized off the coast of Indonesia's Aceh province, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said on Friday. The UNHCR said in a joint statement with the International Organisation for Migration that if the death toll was confirmed, it would be the biggest loss of life so far this year.

The alert was raised on Wednesday when Indonesian fishermen rescued six of the migrants. A fishing community in Aceh said they had been standing on the hull of the boat after it capsized due to high tides.

For years, Rohingya have left Buddhist-majority Myanmar where they are generally regarded as foreign interlopers from South Asia, denied citizenship and subjected to abuse.

More than 2,300 Rohingya arrived in Indonesia last year, UNHCR data showed, surpassing the number of arrivals in the previous four years combined.

The 2023 toll of at least 569 Rohingya dead or missing while trying to flee Myanmar or Bangladesh was the highest since



2014, the UNHCR said in January.

Babar Baloch, a UNHCR Asia spokesperson, told Reuters that there had been 151 people on this latest boat, some 75 of whom have been evacuated by local authorities, while the rest were "presumed dead or missing". Faisal Rahman, UNHCR's protection associate in Aceh, told Reuters that the surviving Rohingya were in good condition and were staying at a Red Cross building in West Aceh. The immigration agency in Aceh did not respond to a request for comment. Faisal Rahman, UNHCR's protection associate in Aceh, told Reuters that the surviving Rohingya were in good condition and were staying at a Red Cross building in West Aceh.

## Australia, Britain vow AUKUS nuclear-powered subs will be built

■ HT News Network

Australia and Britain said on Friday that a landmark deal to develop AUKUS nuclear-powered submarines would go ahead, despite mounting fears about costs, capabilities and the possible return of Donald Trump.

Under the fledgling AUKUS deal, the two countries along with the United States have pledged to beef up their military muscle in a bid to counter China's rise.

Defence chiefs this week unveiled ambitious plans to supply Australia with a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, a key pillar of the agreement.

"The three governments involved



here are working at pace to make this happen," Australian defence minister Richard Marles told reporters on Friday.

"This is going to happen and we need it to happen," he added.

Barely two years old, there are

already signs that AUKUS and its central project could be under threat.

Some fear Trump could jettison the pact if he wins this year's presidential election, returning to his "America first" style of foreign policy.

UK foreign secretary David Cameron suggested that "brilliant" AUKUS and other alliances like Nato — which he dubbed "the most successful defence alliance in history" — needed to be fighting fit come US election time.

"I think whoever is president, the best thing we can do is to get those alliances, to get those projects into the best possible shape so whoever is the new president can see that they're working," Cameron said.

## 3 Killed, 5 Injured In Russian Missile Strike In Ukraine's Kharkiv: Report

■ HT News Network

A Russian missile on Wednesday hit an industrial area in Ukraine's northern city of Kharkiv killing three people and injuring at least five others, and causing a major fire in a printing house, local authorities said. Kharkiv region, which borders Russia to the north and lies close to the front line, has suffered regular attacks during Russia's two-year-old invasion. "According to preliminary data, it was a cruise missile. A serious fire continues at the site, as a printing house is located there," Oleh Synehubov, the regional governor, told national TV. A furniture and paint products factory also came under the attack, Serhiy Bolvinov, the head of the investigative department of the regional police, added. Rescuers rushed to the site to fight flames covering an area of more than 2,000 square meters, the emergency service said. They continued working through the rubble, as up to ten people may stay trapped, according to the governor. Rescuers rushed to the site to fight flames covering an area of more than 2,000 square meters, the emergency service said.

## Israeli raid kills four Palestinians in West Bank

■ HT News Network

TULKAREM: As the US top diplomat on Thursday called for an "immediate ceasefire" in war-torn Gaza, an Israeli air strike and gunfire have killed four Palestinians at the Nur Shams refugee camp in the occupied West Bank.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said on social media platform X that its "ambulance teams have just transported an 18-year-old man who was killed by the Israeli occupation forces in Nur Shams camp", bringing the death toll in the raid to four people. Two were killed by an air strike and two by live bullets, it said.

The Israeli army said "an aircraft struck two terrorists who posed an immediate threat to the forces", and troops "eliminated two militants" in an exchange of fire during the operation.

One of the fatalities was identified by his family as Nidal Abu Abeid, a vegetable seller at the northern West



Bank camp, near the Palestinian town of Tulkarem.

His uncle, Ziad Ali Abu Abeid, 52, told AFP at the morgue that Nidal "wanted to build a future". "He wanted to make a living for himself," the uncle said. "The (Israeli) occupation came and killed all the ambition he had, like for any other person in the camp."

Including the latest deaths, at least eight Palestinians

were killed in less than 24 hours in the West Bank, authorities and medics said. Three Palestinians, including an Islamic Jihad commander, were killed on Wednesday in an Israeli strike on a car in Jenin, a stronghold of Palestinian armed factions in the northern West Bank.

One Palestinian was killed by gunfire in the Al-Amari refugee camp near Ramallah.

At least 444 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces or settlers across the West Bank since October 7, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

"Immediate ceasefire" Secretary of State Antony Blinken stressed the need for an "immediate ceasefire" and a deal to free hostages in war-torn Gaza as he visited Egypt for talks with Arab envoys.

Blinken, on his latest Middle East crisis tour, was trying to shore up support for a truce as the Israel-Hamas war ground on and experts issued a further warning about the risk of famine in Gaza.

# Lok Sabha Elections 2024

## First Phase of EVM Randomisation held at Baramulla

HT News Network

BARAMULLA, MARCH 22: The first phase of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) randomisation for the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 was today held in Baramulla, under the guidance and overall supervision of District Election Officer (DEO), Baramulla, Minga Sherpa.

ARO Sopore, Shabir Ahmad Raina, Deputy Election Officer Baramulla, ARO Baramulla, ARO Rafiabad, ARO Pattan, ARO Gulmarg, and Nodal Officer EVM Management, as well as other officials from the District Elec-

tions office and representatives from political parties were present on the occasion.

During the first phase, EVMs, ballot units, control units and VVPATs were impartially allocated through the randomization process, thereby laying the groundwork for a credible electoral framework.

Following the completion of the randomization process, the report of randomisation for all 7 Assembly Constituencies was handed over to all political party representatives for their review and satisfaction.

Post- Randomisation, the EVMs will be securely transferred to dedi-



cated strong rooms in their respective constituencies, adhering to stringent security protocols.

The DEO reiterated the commitment to upholding integrity, transparency, and utilizing dedicated software to minimize human intervention throughout the randomization process.

Prior to the Randomization process, Political representatives were comprehensively briefed about the procedures, instilling confidence in the integrity of the electoral process and affirming their commitment to maintaining the sanctity of the polls.

Subsequent phases of randomiza-

tion will continue to ensure the equitable allocation of EVMs to polling stations while upholding the highest standards of security and transparency. During the first phase, EVMs, ballot units, control units and VVPATs were impartially allocated through the randomization process, thereby laying the groundwork for a credible electoral framework.

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## Current high interest rates right time to invest in pension product

HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 22, KNT: Several market experts are of the view that interest rates in India will decline over the next few months from the current levels of approx. 7% giving customers an opportunity to now lock-in their investment in an annuity product at the current interest rate. The ICICI Pru Guaranteed Pension Plan Flexi stands out among annuity products as it helps customers build a retirement fund by making systematic investments. This ensures a sure and stable income after retirement, which is particularly beneficial in a market like India where interest rates are predicted to decline.

Pension or annuity products which are only offered by life insurance companies provide a guaranteed regular lifelong income. The rate of interest is locked-in at the time of purchase.

Retirees prefer a steady income not affected by interest rate movements, annuity or pension products are the best option, which offer regular income enabling them to be financially independent. Since the interest rate is expected to fall going forward, customers buying an annuity product will be able to lock-in their investment at the current interest rate. (KNT)

## 2 fire-fighters injured as many shops gutted in Sgr blaze

HT News Network

Srinagar, Mar 22 (KNO): At least two shops were damaged in a fire incident at Bohri Kadal of Srinagar on Friday, officials said.

An official told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that following the reporting of the fire incident at Bohri Kadal Srinagar, involving three single-storey shops, the men and machinery from the Fire and Emergency Services Department were pressed to douse the flames.

The official said that during the rescue operation, two fire-fighters also received burn injuries, who were later taken to a nearby hospital for treatment—(KNO)ees from various government departments, actively participated in the training to enhance their understanding and proficiency with the process of elections.

Similar training program was conducted in Banihal, focusing on the demonstration of VVPATs and control units. The official said that during the rescue operation, two fire-fighters also received burn injuries, who were later taken to a nearby hospital for treatment—(KNO)ees from various government departments, actively participated in the training to enhance their understanding and proficiency with the process of elections.

## Lok Sabha Elections 2024: First Phase of EVM randomization successfully conducted at Ganderbal

HT News Network

GANDERBAL, MARCH 22: The first phase of Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) randomization for Lok Sabha Elections 2024 today took place at the Conference Hall of Mini Secretariat Ganderbal.

The randomisation was held in presence of Assistant Commissioner Revenue Ganderbal/Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) Ganderbal, MA Altaf, and Sub-Divisional Magistrate Kangon/ARO Kangon, Nuzhat Qureshi; besides representatives of recognized National and local political parties, this crucial phase focused on the fair allocation of ballot units, control units, and VVPATs for two assembly segments within the district.

Transparency and impartiality were the cornerstones of this process, as emphasized by the AROs. With the aid of dedicated software, the ran-



domization ensured that the elections would proceed without any human intervention, instilling confidence in the integrity of the democratic process. Following the randomization, all EVMs were securely transferred to designated strong rooms in their respective constituencies, under strict security measures.

Prior to the commencement of the randomization, political representatives were provided with compre-

hensive briefings on the procedure, ensuring their understanding and trust in the sanctity of the electoral process. Their presence underscored the collective commitment to upholding democratic values and ensuring free and fair elections.

Subsequent phases of randomization will be conducted to allocate EVMs to polling stations, further strengthening the foundation of the democratic process.

## Div Com attends opening ceremony of National Aerobic Gymnastics Championship at Jammu

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 22: Divisional Commissioner, Ramesh Kumar today attended the opening ceremony of National Aerobic Gymnastics Championship 2023-24 as Chief Guest at Gymnastics Academy, MA Stadium here.

The three day national Championship is being organized by Gymnastics Association of J&K in collaboration with J&K Sports Council under the aegis of Gymnastics Federation of India.

The Divisional Commissioner on the occasion interacted with the participating gymnasts from 20 states and UTs and gave best wishes to them for the championships.



Div Com said that sports has a significant role in our lives as it promotes fraternity, team work, cooperation, coordination and sportsmanship spirit. He added that it is essential for the overall development of the children, who can later choose sports as a career. The Div Com highlight-

ed that Sports keeps youngsters away from engaging in harmful activities and excessive screen time. He added that massive number of sports persons are participating in sports activities yearly.

He further remarked that better facilities and unprecedented sports cul-

ture has led to emergence of new sports icons from Jammu Kashmir in number of sports disciplines. Ace para archer Sheetal Devi of J&K is an international icon of sportsman spirit and resilience, the Div Com said.

On the occasion, Gymnasts from Manipur, Jammu Kashmir and Maharashtra displayed their amazing aerobic performances before the start of the championships.

Commissioner JMC, Rahul Yadav; Vice Present Gymnastics Federation of India, Kiran Wattal; Chief Sports Officer, JK Sports Council, Officials from Gymnastic Association of J&K, Gymnasts, Players, managers, coaches and parents of participants were also present on the occasion.

## Illegal extraction and transportation of minerals Police arrests 01 person, seizes 01 vehicle in Kulgam

Farooq Rafter

Kulgam March 22: Acting tough against the elements involved in illegal extraction and transportation of minerals, Police in Kulgam have arrested a person and seized his vehicle for their involvement in the commission of crime.

A Police party of Police Post Mirbazar at a checkpoint established at Mirbazar intercepted a vehicle (Dumper) bearing registration number JK13G-4107 loaded with illegally extracted minerals. The accused driver identified as Yaser Hameed Dar son of Abdul Hameed Dar resident of Sather Sangam, Anantnag was arrested and the vehicle used in the commission of crime has also been seized.

Accordingly, a case vide FIR No. 80/2024 under relevant sections of law stands registered at Police Station Qazigund and investigation has been set into motion.

Persons found indulging in illegal mining activities shall be dealt as per law. Community members are requested to share information regarding the crimes in their neighbourhood with their concerned police units.

## Aryans Celebrates Bihar Diwas

HT News Network

Srinagar, March 22nd A seminar on higher education in India for students from Bihar: Opportunities & Challenges was organized on the occasion. The speaker for the seminar was Mr. Awais Amber, Educationist & Social Worker from Bihar & interacted with Aryans students. Highlights of the day were Bihar food festival & everyone enjoyed the vibrant cultural performances by Aryans students of Engineering, Law, Pharmacy, Nursing, Paramedical, Physiotherapy etc.

Awais Amber appreciated the efforts of Dr. Anshu Kataria, Chairman, Aryans Group in the field of education & congratulated all Aryans Bihar students. He added that for a student it is more important to choose a course of study than a particular institute. Some colleges charge a hefty amount of money as fee but high fee does not guarantee quality education but Aryans Group is providing quality education for all needy and deserving students on affordable fee structure.

Every year on March 22, Bihar Day celebrates the state of Bihar's formation. The first Bihar Diwas event was organized in 2010 to commemorate the 111th anniversary of the state.

## DJMC IUST organized program on 'Careers in Media'

HT News Network

Awantipora, March 22: The Department of Journalism & Mass Communication (DJMC), Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST) organised a special guest lecture on "Careers for Media Students in the Government Sector: Indian Information Service (IIS)" today as part of University Industry Connect initiative. Mr. Ishfaq Ahmad Shah (IIS), News Editor at Akash Vani, Srinagar was the keynote speaker. The session was organised in collaboration with the Industry Connect vertical under the aegis of Office of the Dean Outreach IUST.

Mr. Shah, shared valuable insights and provided students with a comprehensive overview of the IIS exams, recounting his journey in the prestigious service. He encouraged students to pursue IIS and highlighted the significance of the Indian Information Service in shaping the nation's media landscape.

Earlier, Dr. Mujeeb Liyakat, Head of DJMC, delivered the welcome address and underscored the vast array of career opportunities available to mass communication students. Dr. Monisa Qadiri, Departmental Coordinator of Industry Connect and Sr. Assistant Professor, DJMC, conducted the proceedings. Also present on this occasion were Dr. Aamir Hussain, IUST Industry Connect Coordinator, Dr. Heeba Din and Dr. Arif Nadaf Faculty members DJMC and Zahoor Ahmad Technical Assistant. Dr. Monisa Qadiri, Departmental Coordinator of Industry Connect and Sr. Assistant Professor, DJMC, conducted the proceedings. Also present on this occasion were Dr. Aamir Hussain, IUST Industry Connect Coordinator, Dr. Heeba Din and Dr. Arif Nadaf Faculty members DJMC and Zahoor Ahmad Technical Assistant.

## Retired WAKF Employees in Lurch: Request LG Sinha and CS Atal Dulloo to Intervene

"We Pray That Our Children Will Not Go Hungry Again on This Eid-Ul-Fitr"

Abbar Mattoo

The employees of the Jammu and Kashmir WAKF Board, who retired between the years 2022 and 2023, have implored Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha and the chief secretary of Jammu and Kashmir, Shri Atal Dulloo to intervene and fulfill their long pending demand of the denied pension by J&K WAKF Board.

"The top office bearers of WAKF board communicated to the employees in the first week of January this year that the pension has been released for those employees who have been deprived of it for the last two years. However, it has been two months since then, and we continue to suffer without our only source of income. We have given our lives to the WAKF board, and at this juncture, we have been left to the mercy of our fate," one of the retired employees of the WAKF board said. Another employee of the WAKF board said that they have been demanding their rights for the last two years and when the communication of the release of pension reached them, they were all in the celebration that finally the WAKF board has decided to honor their service and their rights. "However, it has been more than two months since and the WAKF board has not honored its duty."



Considered, the second richest institution in the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir following the government, the employees of the WAKF Board who retired between the years 2022 and 2023 expressed dismay that the board continues to deny their long pending retirement pension, a sole source of sustenance for them in their old age. They said that in the first place, their pension should have been released two years ago, and then when the board officials finally communicated and promised that the pension would be released in the first week of January this year, they sat again on the file for more than two months and continued to deny the retired WAKF employees their right. "Many of us are on medicines, and many of us have large families to support and daughters to marry off, the WAKF Board must have thought

about it. Right now, there are nearly 230 pensioners on the WAKF Board. All the retired employees on WAKF Board are getting pensions, some of them are those who have even retired after the enactment of the J&K Reorganization Act. Out of the 39 employees who retired after the abrogation of 370, nearly 11 (eleven) are getting pension. The rest have been left out and subjected to stepmotherly treatment," another employee said. "When the Re-organization act was brought into effect in the jurisdiction of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, by virtue of abrogation of Article-370, the Central Wakf Act, 1995 was also extended to Jammu and Kashmir. However, according to the Central Wakf Act, it remains at the discretion of the members and chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir WAKF Board to provide whatever privileges that the board deems fit to its employees. Unfortunately, the J&K WAKF Board has shown an apathetic approach towards the employees who retired between the years 2022 and 2023," an employee of the WAKF Board who had retired in 2023 said. "According to the J&K Reorganization Act, 2019, the WAKF Board of Jammu and Kashmir must not disenfranchise its employees who have served the board throughout their lifetimes. The board can choose to deal with new employees who are recruited after 2019 on its own terms."

# Behavioural change important towards judicious use of water: Div Com

## Institution of Engineers (India) Jammu observes World Water Day

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 22: Divisional Commissioner Jammu, Ramesh Kumar today attended an event on the occasion of World Water Day with theme "Water for Peace".

The event was organized by the Institution of Engineers (India) Jammu Local Chapter and attended by Engineers from various Departments, organizations and senior engineers along with members of the committee of IEI, Jammu local centre.

Speaking on the occasion, the Divisional Commissioner appreciated the IEI, Jammu for organizing the significant event on the occasion of World Water Day where many engineers presented their papers on the theme "Water for Peace".

The Div Com highlighted the significance of saving and conservation of water. He called for the



need of behavioural change towards judicious use of water and taking small steps leading to bigger

impact in saving water like storing rain water, avoiding excess use of water wherever possible.

Emphasizing the importance of water, the Div Com said that shortage of water can threaten the existence of a whole civilization while as saving water can safeguard the existence of living beings.

The Div Com lauded the role of the Institution for its unwavering commitment towards the goal of spreading awareness on water conservation and making all endeavours towards sensitizing the society at large in J&K towards larger goal of sustainable development.

During the seminar, various speakers presented their papers highlighting the need to save water for peaceful co-existence.

Hamesh Manchanda, Chief Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Department, Jammu and Prof. (Dr.) Bhawna Sharma, Chairman, IEI Jammu Centre, Er. Sachin Tickoo, Honorary Secretary, IEI Jammu, Er. Sachin Tickoo, MIE, Honorary Secretary were present.

# DEO flags off SVEEP Van for voter awareness in Udhampur

HT News Network

UDHAMPUR, MARCH 22: In an effort to generate awareness among the public regarding the significance of Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) in the district, the District Election Officer, Udhampur, Saloni Rai today flagged off a voter awareness van from DC Office Complex, Udhampur.

Additional District Development Commissioner Rajinder Singh, Additional Deputy Commissioner Joginder Singh Jasrotia, Deputy District Election Officer Dr. Anirudh Rai, Assistant Commissioner Development Dr. Ranjeet Singh Kotwal, District Panchayat Officer Dr. Preeti Sharma, Nodal Officer SVEEP, Chief Education Officer Geetu Bangotra and other officials/officers were present on the occasion.



While briefing the media, the DEO informed that the initiative aims to educate the public on the significance of systematic voters' education and electoral participation (SVEEP) to foster informed decision-making during elections. She emphasized the critical role of voters in democracy, urging increased turnout for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Highlighting the objectives of SVEEP, the DEO stressed the importance of widespread awareness and urged citizens to exercise their voting rights for a robust democracy. She

called upon individuals to actively engage in spreading awareness within their communities to strengthen democracy and improve socio-economic conditions. She directed officers to ensure comprehensive outreach efforts, targeting every household for information dissemination and voter enrollment.

Emphasizing the importance of Pwd, Women, First time, Old age voters and youth participation, she urged officers to work diligently to enhance voter turnout and ensure error-free electoral rolls for the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections.

# DIPR Kathua gets creative to boost voter turnout

HT News Network

KATHUA, MARCH 22: The District Information Centre Kathua, a unit of Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) has taken a creative approach to boost voter participation in the upcoming elections.

In a bid to engage citizens and make the message of voting more relatable, the department has infused humour into its SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation) campaign.

Drawing inspiration from popular Bollywood dialogues and characters from movies and web series, DIPR Kathua curated a series of hilarious memes and creative content, which are being circulated on various social media platforms. The campaign aims to grab the attention of voters and encourage them to exercise their democratic right.

Speaking about the innovative approach, DIO Kathua Neeraj Bhargav who is also the Nodal Officer for SVEEP, stated, "We understand the importance of voter turnout in ensuring a robust democracy".

## Lok Sabha Elections 2024

### DEO Doda inspects election strong room at GDC

HT News Network



DODA, MARCH 22: District Election Officer Doda, Harvinder Singh today conducted a thorough inspection of election strong room at Government Degree College (GDC) Doda here.

The inspection aimed to ensure all necessary arrangements were in place, including camera surveillance, security deployment, setup of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines.

Accompanied by the ACR Doda and Tehsildar Doda, along with other officials, the DEO visited Tehsil office to evaluate preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The assessment encompassed the installation of CCTV cameras, provision of power supply and other essential facilities required during the electoral process.

## DEO inspects polling stations, strong rooms across Jammu, assesses facilities

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 22: District Election Officer, Jammu, Sachin Kumar Vaishya today conducted an extensive tour of Bishnah, R S Pura and Marh regions, including border areas of Suchetgarh and Chakroi to assess facilities of polling stations.

During the visit, the DEO checked polling stations and strong rooms at Marh, SKUAST and Bishnah, assessing their facilities.

He instructed officers to ensure station cleanliness and readiness before the poll date and emphasised on the importance of arrangements for elderly and specially abled voters.

# Lok Sabha Elections 2024

## Expenditure Observer reviews election preparedness in Ramban

HT News Network

RAMBAN, MARCH 22: Taking concerted steps to ensure the seamless conduct of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, the Expenditure Observer for the 04-Udhampur Parliamentary Constituency, Satyanarayana Raju Bhupathi, led a crucial meeting today in Ramban.

The meeting provided a platform for extensive interaction among the Nodal Officers responsible for overseeing election expenditure monitoring across the district Ramban, an integral part of the 04-Udhampur Parliamentary Constituency.

District Election Officer Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, delivered a comprehensive briefing through PowerPoint presentation to the Expenditure Observer, outlining the preparations made and the teams assembled to monitor compliance with the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and expenditure of the candidates/ parties.

The Expenditure Observer meticulously reviewed the preparations



and the status of teams on an assembly constituency-wise basis. He stressed on the paramount importance of maintaining updated records and adhering strictly to the guidelines outlined by the Election Commission of India for expenditure booking.

Emphasizing the significance of dedication to duty, he highlighted the necessity of seamless coordination among various teams for effective expenditure oversight. He asked the nodal officers to promptly document any instances of MCC violation and inform the election authorities

without delay.

Expressing his satisfaction with the election preparations in Ramban district, the Expenditure Observer commended the concerted efforts of all involved.

The meeting was attended by several key officials, including SSP Ramban Anuj Kumar; ADC Varunjeet Singh Charak; ARO Ramban-AC-54 (ACR) S. Harpal Singh; ARO Banihal-AC-55 (SDM) Rizwan Asgar; Deputy District Election Officer Abdul Jabbar; ACP Ramban Ashfaq Khanji; DTO Ramban Deepak Gupta; Nodal Officers, among others.

# Lok Sabha Elections 2024, Training programme for polling staff commences at Kathua

HT News Network

KATHUA, MARCH 22: The training programme for polling staff to be deployed in all six assembly segments of Kathua district commenced today in various venues across the district. The first day of training was organized at Government Higher Secondary School Bani, Government Degree College in Billawar, GDC Basohli, GDC Hiranagar, and GDCW Kathua. The training aims to prepare staff for deployment in 63- Bani, 64-Billawar, 65-Basohli, 66-Jasrota, 67-Kathua (SC), and 68-Hiranagar assembly segments for the first phase of Lok Sabha Elections-2024 scheduled to be held on 19th April 2024. The



training sessions were conducted by a team comprising

District and Assembly Segment Level Master Trainers. They provided theoretical and practical insights into different stages of the election process, briefing the participants about their roles and responsibilities regarding the conduct of the election. The functioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) was explained thoroughly, followed by a hands-on training session to familiarize the staff with EVM & VVPAT operations. The significance of conducting mock polls was also emphasized, and all necessary procedures pertaining to the polling process were demonstrated. The training was conducted under the supervision of all respective Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) of the concerned assembly segments.

# GCOE commemorates World Water Day

HT News Network

JAMMU, MARCH 22: Government College of Education (GCOE) today commemorated World Water Day by screening an inspiring documentary. The commemoration was jointly organised by National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nature Club of GCOE centered around the renowned water conservationist, Dr. Rajendra Singh. The highlight of the event was the screening of a compelling documentary showcasing the life and work of Dr. Rajendra Singh, often referred to as the 'Water Man of India'.

Through this documentary, attendees gained valuable insights into Dr. Singh's pioneering efforts in water conservation, highlighting his significant contributions to sustainability and environmental stewardship.

The event was graced by the presence of Principal, GCOE, Dr. Jyoti Parihar; Prof. Sarita Dogra NSS Program Officer and Dr. Shalini



Sharma Convener of the Nature Club.

Dr. Shubhra Jamwal, Prof. Kiran Thapa and Prof. Roopa Kumari, actively engaged with students during the screening and subsequent discussions, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and solutions related to water conservation. Dr. Jyoti Parihar, Principal of GCOE, on the occasion expressed delight at the successful event, stating, "World Water Day is a reminder of the vital role water plays in our lives and ecosystems. Through initiatives like these, we aim to inspire our students to become responsible stewards of our precious water resources."

# Social Welfare Deptt B'pora rebuts news item 'Denial of Motorized Tricycle to an Applicant from District Bandipora'

HT News Network

BANDIPORA, MARCH 22: The Social Welfare Department Bandipora has issued clarification regarding news item titled 'Man from Bandipora alleged he was asked for bribe to allot scooter as he is handicapped' carried by Early times on facebook and 'Specially Aabled Man from Bandipora Protests in Srinagar, Alleges Administration Failed to Provide Promised Scooty Despite Formalities' carried by Kashmir News Bureau (KNB) on "X" (Twitter)

In a statement issued, the District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) Ban-

dipora clarified that the applicant is not eligible for Motorized Tricycle as per the scheme guidelines. The applicant's age is above 51 years and as per the scheme guidelines age should be between 18-50 Years. This is out rightly clear from the date of Birth issued by station House Officer, Sumbal vide No.: 280/M, dated: 28-09-2022 and Disability Certificate issued by Medical Board.

As per statement of DSWO Bandipora, it is further clarified that the applicant visited the office of DSWO Bandipora three months ago and has been clearly told that he is not eligible as per the scheme guidelines.

# Gaikwad: Last year itself, Dhoni had hinted about captaincy

Dhoni had told Gaikwad to "be ready, it shouldn't be a surprise to you"

**BENGALURU:** MS Dhoni had given feelers to Rituraj Gaikwad about a possible captaincy switch during IPL 2023 itself. Those feelers came alive on the eve of Chennai Super Kings' IPL 2024 opener against Royal Challengers Bengaluru at MA Chidambaram Stadium on Friday, when Dhoni officially relinquished his captaincy to Gaikwad.

"Last year itself, Mahi bhai had hinted about captaincy at some point of time," Gaikwad told IPLT20.com. "He just hinted that, 'be ready, it shouldn't be a surprise to you'. When we came into the camp, he involved me in some of the match simulation."

Prior to the season, Dhoni

stoked fan-sentiment on social media by hinting about a "new role". At the time, it was believed to be promotional campaign towards a broadcast sponsor. But on Thursday evening, it became evident that may have not been the case entirely.

"I remember him posting about a new role on social media and everybody was pointing towards me and asking me, 'are you the next captain?'. I was like, 'maybe it meant something else for social media'. But back of the mind, it was there. He came and said, 'I've decided this and this', but definitely now that I'm here, I'm looking forward to this."

Gaikwad was first signed

at base price [INR 20 lakh] prior to the 2019 season, where he didn't get a game. In IPL 2020, Gaikwad had a tough initiation as he began with three ducks in a season where he also contracted covid. He returned towards the back end of the season and became the first uncapped Indian to hit three back-to-back half-centuries.

Since then, he's been an integral part of the group. In 2021, he formed a superb opening combination with Faf du Plessis as Super Kings won their fourth title. He ended the tournament with the Orange Cap for most runs [635 in 16 games], with du Plessis second on the list. After that tournament, Gaikwad had glowingly talked about the back-



ing and encouragement he'd received from du Plessis.

"I just met Faf at the [captains] meeting and said, 'who would've thought a few years down the line, you are playing and leading RCB and me shar-

ing the stage with you at the toss,'" Gaikwad said. "A lot to look forward to. It [opening game] is one of the most exciting first-day games to look forward to."

Dhoni had done something

similar in 2022, when he handed the captaincy to Ravindra Jadeja prior to the start of the season. The move backfired, and after Super Kings lost six of their first eight games, Dhoni took over the reins again. Super Kings finished ninth that season.

The question of succession planning at Super Kings has been a hot topic of debate ever since, which even head coach Stephen Fleming touched upon at his pre-match press conference. This time around, he felt, the change will be a lot "smoother."

"It feels great for two reasons," Gaikwad said of his new role. "To be part of this wonderful franchise right from when my IPL journey started and

then to be trusted by MS Dhoni for a leadership role speaks a lot. The challenge lies ahead and I'm looking forward to it.

"I've got to know how the franchise works throughout the year, got to know their mantra, the reasons behind their success, what kind of things the franchise goes through, what Mahi bhai or the support staff do. I wouldn't like to change a single bit of it.

"He's a great backbone to have on the field. I also have Ajju [Ajinkya Rahane] bhai and Jaddu bhai as well, a lot of options to look around. I don't think I'll need to change anything. Just give the kind of freedom the players want and everything will be fine."

## Rob Key: 'Andrew Flintoff would make an excellent England head coach'

**SYDNEY:** Rob Key, England's managing director, believes that Andrew Flintoff has a similar "gift" for man-management to that of Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes, and would make an "excellent" candidate to one day take over as England head coach.

Key, one of Flintoff's closest friends in the game, was instrumental in his return to the public eye after he suffered horrific facial injuries while filming an episode of Top Gear in December 2022.

Flintoff was offered an unpaid role in England's white-ball set-up during last year's series against New Zealand, during which time the extent of his injuries became apparent, and he went on to be a mentor for the England Lions set-up prior to his unveiling as the new head coach of North-

ern Superchargers for this year's Hundred.

Speaking to The Telegraph, Key confirmed that Flintoff has also been added to England's back-room staff for their T20 World Cup campaign in the Caribbean in June - his most significant involvement with the squad yet - as Jos Buttler's men seek to defend the title that they won in Australia two years ago.

"Without question, I think he would be an excellent head coach," Key told the newspaper. "Who knows where he ends up in the future. He will be a worthy candidate going forward. When that time comes and whoever is in this job, and it might be outside of my time, they would be stupid not to look at him."

In his opinion, Flintoff's struggles - both since his accident and in the wake of



his own playing career, which was cut short by a knee injury - have armed him with an "emotional intelligence" that players value when dealing with the pressures of high-level sport.

"Flintoff is a leader like [Ben] Stokes," Key said. "Just having someone who knows what it is like to struggle and come out the

other end is so relatable to those players. When they have had a bad day he can explain it. He is one of those people when he talks to you he is working you out.

"He has high emotional intelligence so he understands when you need a bit of an arm around your shoulder or blunt honesty. Those are the skills that make a great leader. Lead-

ership is about making the people around you feel better and he is someone who is like that. He has a lot to offer."

Flintoff's England role will extend into the four-match T20I series against Pakistan that precedes the T20 World Cup - whereupon the squad's return to St Lucia will revive memories of the infamous Pedalo incident that came to characterise England's ill-starred campaign at the 2007 50-over World Cup.

But even that episode, in Key's opinion, counts as valuable experience as Flintoff moves further into his coaching career, and he hopes that other prominent recent players, such as Moeen Ali and Eoin Morgan, can be similarly fast-tracked back into the professional set-up after their playing days.

## Texas Super Kings snap up Mitchell for MLC 2024, Shepherd goes to MI New York

**NEW DELHI:** On the eve of a potential IPL debut for Chennai Super Kings, New Zealand allrounder Daryl Mitchell was unveiled as Texas Super Kings' new overseas signing for MLC 2024. Mitchell will join his New Zealand and CSK team-mates Mitchell Santner and Devon Conway in the USA.

MI New York, the defending champions, have signed West Indies allrounder Romario Shepherd, who is due to make his IPL debut for Mumbai Indians in IPL 2024, and South Africa fast bowler Anrich Nortje. Shepherd, who has raised his all-round game to a new level after winning CPL 2023 with Guyana Amazon Warriors, will reunite with his first West Indies captain and Mumbai Indians batting coach Kieron Pollard at MI NY. Trent Boult, Tim David and Kagiso Rabada are also part of a powerful overseas core at MI NY.

New Zealand spin-bowling allrounder Michael Bracewell, who has been troubled by injuries over the past year, went to Seattle Orcas and Australia batter Matt Short to San Francisco Unicorns. Bracewell will join his former Wellington Firebirds



team-mate Finn Allen at Unicorns.

In MLC 2023, Orcas didn't have an off-spinner to counter left-handers. They have remedied that by signing Bracewell, who claimed a career-best 8 for 41 in the four-day Plunket Shield earlier this week.

"I'm really excited to be part of the Texas Super Kings and to get to yellow again and be part of the CSK family," Mitchell told Super Kings' social-media channels.

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