



Crackdown Against Corrupt to Continue: PM Modi

HT News Network

RUDRAPUR, APR 02: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asserted that the action against the corrupt will go on and he cannot be deterred by threats and abuses. Beginning his Lok Sabha campaign in Uttarakhand from Rudrapur in Udham Singh Nagar district, he also said that more development work has been done in Uttarakhand over the last 10 years than in the 50-60 years before that.

"Don't you think the corrupt should go to jail. The corrupt are threatening and abusing me. But they can't deter me.



Action against each one of the corrupt will continue," Modi said.

The prime minister's remarks come amid opposition

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Lt Governor Chairs High Level Meeting To Review Preparedness For Upcoming Festivals

HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 02: Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha chaired a high-level meeting today to review the preparedness of concerned departments and agencies for upcoming Eid, Navratras and Baisakhi festivals.

TURN ON.....PAGE 02



Gulmarg Gondola Sets New Record: Over A Million Tourists Enjoy Ride; Rs 110 Cr Revenue In FY24

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 02: In a historic achievement, the Gulmarg Gondola, one of Asia's highest aerial ropeways, witnessed over a million tourists and locals enjoying rides

during the financial year 2023-24, contributing to the J&K Cable Car Corporation's revenue of more than Rs 108 crore for the year.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), officials attribute this

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Ghulam Nabi Azad to Contest from Anantnag-Rajouri LS

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 02: In a significant development ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir, Dem-



ocratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) President Ghulam Nabi Azad has thrown his hat into the ring for the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat. The announcement was made by DPAP Treasurer Taj Mohiuddin during a press briefing held in Srinagar on Tuesday.

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

NEWS BRIEF

Security Forces Arrest 3 Terrorist Associates In Sopore

SRINAGAR, APR 2: Security forces have arrested three terrorist associates and recovered arms and incriminating materials from their possession in Sopore town of Jammu Kashmir's Baramulla district, police said on Tuesday.

Police along with Army's 22RR and 179Bn of CRPF at a joint checkpoint established at Fruit Mandi crossing noticed three suspicious persons attempting to flee from the spot, but the alert joint party apprehended them tactfully.

They have been identified as Faisal Ahmad Kachroo, a resident of Baba Yousuf Sopore, Aquib Mehraj Kana of

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Seven Anti-Social Elements Arrested In Kashmir: Police

SRINAGAR, APR 02: Police on Tuesday arrested seven alleged anti-social elements who were evading their arrest for several years in Kashmir valley.

Police said, two absconders identified as Nazir Ahmad Mir a resident of Miskeenbagh Khanyar presently staying at Ladoo Pampore and Ali Mohammad Kawa of Kawapora Sumbal presently residing at Hamdaniya Colony Bemina Srinagar were arrested from Tangmarg and Kunzar.

"Both were involved in several cases and evaded their arrest from past decades, arrested by a special police team of Tangmarg and Knzar", police said.

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Man-Eater Leopard Shot Dead In Budgam

SRINAGAR, APR 02: A leopard, believed to be responsible for the deaths of two young girls and injuring a boy, was fatally shot this morning in Khan Sahib, Budgam, officials said.

The suspected leopard was neutralized by police in the Khan Sahib area. It attacked two minor girls in Samsun and Hariwani in March, as well as injuring a boy.

In response to the recent incident, Deputy Commissioner Akhsay Labroo authorized shoot-on-sight orders for the leopard.

After extensive efforts over several days, authorities successfully eliminated the suspected leopard today, bringing relief to the local community.

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Drone Delivery Cases:

Three OGWs arrested, seven identified in Rajouri, Poonch area: DGP Swain

HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 2: Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police, R R Swain on Tuesday said that three persons have been arrested and seven others are identified in drone delivery cases.

The DGP said action has been initiated against them as per the law in the 48 hours long operation



in the bordering Rajouri and Poonch districts of the Union Territory.

"In a major security development, it becomes important to bring to public domain those involved in transporting, hiding and delivering the arms, ammunition, cash, and narcotics smuggled through drone from Pakistan,"

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

J&K Police: Nearly 550 New Female Constables To Be Deployed In Jammu Zone

HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 2: Out of the newly recruited 915 woman constables in two police battalions in Jammu and Kashmir Police, as many as 550 will be deployed in ten districts across the Jammu Zone. A senior police official said that Jammu

and Kashmir Police has recruited 915 new women constables following the formation of two dedicated women battalions to augment security measures and address gender-based violence.

The women constables, he said, will play a crucial role in various law

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Udhampur Among India's Top 3 Districts In Rural Road Construction: Jitendra

HT News Network

JAMMU, APR 2: Union Minister and BJP Candidate for Udhampur, Doda, Kathua constituency Dr Jitendra Singh on Tuesday said that Udhampur has emerged among India's top



three districts in rural road construction under Central PMGSY scheme and this has been possible only because of the prioritisation given by the government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

ED Sgr Seizes Assets Worth Rs. 1.56 Cr In PMLA Case

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 02: Enforcement Directorate (ED) Srinagar has taken a significant action in a case involving a Junior Engineer of the Roads and Buildings (R&B) Department in Jammu & Kashmir.

"Under the Prevention of



Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, ED officials provisionally attached movable and immovable assets totaling Rs. 1.56 Crore belonging to Niamat Ali Bhat. The attached properties include land measuring 01 Kanal and 03 Marlas situated in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, along with a two-storey residential house constructed on the land. Additionally, a vehicle owned by Niamat Ali Bhat has also been seized," the ED said.

"This action comes in connection to an investigation into alleged financial irregularities

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

J&K High Court Seeks Report On Implementation Of Right To Education Act

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 02: The High Court of Jammu & Kashmir has directed authorities to provide detailed updates on the progress made in formulating the necessary rules to implement the provisions of the Right to Education Act.

A division bench presided over by Chief Justice N Kotiswar Singh and Justice Mohd Yousuf Wani was hearing of a Public Interest Litigation filed by the Young Lawyers Forum (Kashmir) aimed at enforcing section 12 of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act).



The court, having previously sought a status report on the implementation status of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, received a response

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

Tulip Garden Attracts Over One Lakh Tourists In 11 Days

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 02: Over the past 11 days, Asia's second-largest Tulip Garden, in Srinagar, witnessed a rush of more than one lakh tourists, including both domestic and foreign visitors.

The Tulip Garden was opened to the general public on March 23 this year, and it witnessed a significant influx of tourists during the first week.

According to details available with

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

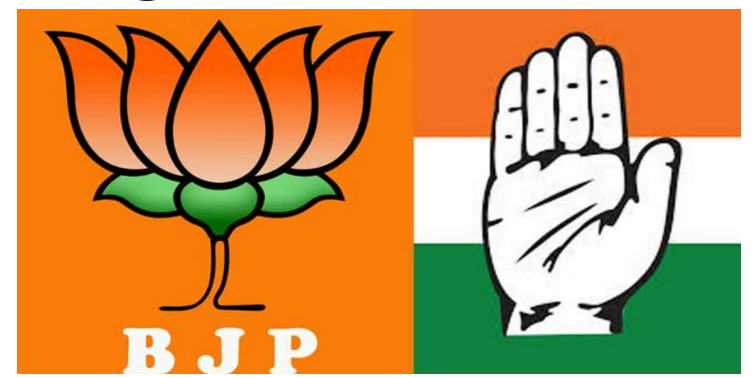
Udhampur Lok Sabha Elections:

History Repeats Itself as Regional Parties Fail to Break Congress-BJP Dominance

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APR 02: In the latest episode of Udhampur Lok Sabha Elections, the stage was set for a potential upset as dozens of small parties, including prominent regional ones like Shiromani Akali Dal and Jharkhand Party, boarded the election boats. However, history proved relentless as none managed to cross the established dominance of Congress and BJP.

As per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), despite spirited attempts by regional par-



ties from states like Punjab and Jharkhand, the Udhampur parlia-

mentary constituency, spanning

TURN ON.....PAGE 02

CONTINUE FROM FRONT PAGE.....

Action Against.....

onslaught against the ruling party in the wake of arrest of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and JMM leader Hemant Soren.

Asking people to further strengthen him, Modi said he has guaranteed making India the third biggest economy in the world in the third term.

Modi's guarantee means fulfilment of the guarantee, he said.

"Development happens when the intentions are right. Right intentions lead to good results," the prime minister added. (Agencies)

Lt Governor.....

The meeting was attended by Sh Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary; Sh RR Swain, DGP; Sh Vijay Kumar, ADGP, Armed, Law & Order; Sh Anand Jain, ADGP Jammu; Administrative Secretaries; Divisional Commissioners; Deputy Commissioners and senior officers of Civil and Police administration.

The Lt Governor directed the DCs and SSPs to visit the prominent holy places and take every possible measure to ensure smooth conduct of the festivals. All the arrangements must be put in place as per the ECI guidelines, he said.

The Lt Governor directed for adequate security arrangements, Traffic & Crowd management; identification of parking spots; availability of essential items on notified rates, constitution of teams for regular market inspection, un-interrupted water and power supply, medical facilities, fire and emergency services and arrangements for sanitation and cleanliness.

Over A Million.....

surge in visitors to the Gulmarg Gondola as a catalyst for tourism, breathing new life into the valley's tourism sector. The cable car has become a symbol of adventure and beauty, attracting travellers from far and wide to experience its breathtaking views and thrilling rides.

Gulmarg Gondola soars to new heights! For the first time ever more than 1 million tourists took the Gulmarg Gondola Cable Car Ride in FY 2023-24. Revenue crosses more than 110 Crores. J&K Tourism sees unprecedented growth which continues to surpass all previous figures," J&K Tourism Department shared on a social media site X.

Tourism officials highlighted the integral role of the Gulmarg Gondola in enhancing the tourist experience. They said visitors often express that their trip to Gulmarg would feel incomplete without experiencing the iconic cable car ride.

Notably, the Gulmarg Cable Car comprises two phases; one from Gulmarg resort to Kongdori valley and the second from Kongdori to Apharwath Peak. The first phase reaches an altitude of 8,694 feet, while the second ascends to the towering Apharwath peak at 13,058 feet. With 108 cabins and 18 towers, the Gulmarg Gondola provides a safe and exhilarating experience for all visitors.

However, last year (2022-2023), the number of tourists who had a Gondola ride was 8.5 lakh, while in 2021-2022, 6 lakh tourists took the ride. The demand is 7000-8000 per day, but as per capacity, the Gondola can only ferry 3400-3500 tourists daily.

The inception of the Gulmarg Gondola project dates back to 1988, and despite facing challenges, the first phase was completed in 1998, opening its doors to the public. Since then, it has remained a cornerstone of Kashmir's tourism industry, captivating the hearts of millions of visitors with its charm and beauty.

The ascent of the Gulmarg Gondola reflects not only its increasing popularity but also the enduring allure of Jammu and Kashmir's breathtaking landscapes. As tourism continues to flourish, the skies are truly the limit for this Himalayan gem.

Ghulam Nabi.....

Azad, who parted ways with the Congress in 2022 to form his own political outfit in Jammu and Kashmir, is set to spearhead his party's campaign in the region. Apart from Azad, DPAP has also nominated GM Saruri as its candidate for the Udhampur-Doda seat, marking the party's foray into the electoral arena with two contenders.

Hailing from Doda, Jammu, Azad embarked on his political journey as the Secretary of the Block Congress Committee in 1973. With his nomination, he brings a wealth of experience, having previously served as a Member of Parliament and held various prominent positions in the government.

The National Conference (NC) has also revealed its candidate for the Anantnag-Rajouri seat, nominating Mian Altaf, a seasoned Gujjar-Pahari leader and five-time MLA, for the upcoming elections. This announcement comes on the heels of the NC's decision to replace sitting MP Hasnain Masoodi with Altaf.

Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) are yet to unveil their candidates for the coveted seat. Speculations abound regarding the BJP's potential choice of a Muslim candidate, while the PDP, a member of the India alliance alongside the NC, remains tight-lipped about its electoral strategy.

The Anantnag-Rajouri parliamentary seat, formed post-delineation, encompasses Rajouri and Poonch and is slated for voting in the third phase on May 7. As the election fervor picks up, political parties are gearing up for an

intense battle, with nominations set to commence on April 12 and conclude on April 19.

While the NC has declared its intention to contest three Lok Sabha seats in the Kashmir Valley, including Anantnag-Rajouri, the PDP is expected to field candidates for two of the three seats. However, formal announcements from both parties are pending, along with the BJP's candidate revelation.

The Anantnag seat has historically been a key battleground, witnessing significant electoral contests. Former MP Mehbooba Mufti's victory in 2014 and subsequent resignation in 2016 triggered prolonged vacancy, with elections delayed for security reasons. In 2019, Hasnain Masoodi clinched victory amidst subdued voter turnout, marking a turning point in the political landscape of the region.

Three OGWs.....

Swain told reporters at a press conference here.

The J&K Police chief stated that in the last 48 hours, searches were conducted at 10 places, and seven people were identified after their involvement in drone delivery cases was confirmed in the Rajouri and Poonch districts.

"Three persons have been arrested who were found involved in receiving and distributing the material transported from drones sent by the Pakistani handlers," said Swain.

He was flanked by ADGP CID Nitish Kumar, ADGP Law and Order Vijay Kumar, and ADGP Jammu Zone, Anand Jain.

He stated that the seven OGWs are also identified for being involved in picking up the drone-dropped materials and further distributing to disrupt peace in the region ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

The DGP identified those arrested as Gulshan Naz, a resident of Kotranka (already arrested under the UAPA), Imtiaz Ahmed, a resident of Kotranka, and Abid Shah, a resident of Budhal, Rajouri.

Asserting that the police have sufficient evidence for their involvement in the case, he said, "The arrested persons were operating in the region on the directions of the mastermind identified as Mohammad Qasim, alias Suleman as Salman, resident of Mahore, Reasi, currently based in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK), a commander of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) outfit."

The Jammu and Kashmir government has already announced a reward of Rs 10 lakh for information leading to Qasim's arrest.

Qasim was involved in the IED blast in pilgrim's bus in Katra and the Narwal blast, he said, adding that the LeT commander has also been actively brainwashing vulnerable youth using social media platforms and attempting to lure them into joining militancy.

"Police have evidence against the arrested persons, who were in touch with their Pakistani handlers as they were circulating the items drone dropped from Pakistan to the people providing logistic support to terrorists, OGWs and the families of those already in jail."

"Many youngsters have prevented themselves from falling into the trap laid by Qasim but we want parents and teachers to make them aware that if anybody falls into the trap they will ultimately be arrested."

Swain also added that the surveillance is being maintained on social media handles, especially the usage of VPN and other such networks to connect with the anti-national elements. (UNI)

J&K Police.....

enforcement activities, including anti-terrorism operations, across the region.

"Out of a total 915 woman recruits, 550 will be deployed in various districts of the Jammu Zone and 365 in districts across the Kashmir Zone under Mahila Battalions," he said.

The official added that the women constables, after the passing-out parade, will report to their respective zones, where they will be deployed based on operational requirements.

Notably, in June 2018, the Union Home Ministry approved the establishment of the women battalions, with one battalion designated for the Jammu and Kashmir regions.

The Jammu and Kashmir government proposed the establishment of these battalions to the Union Home Ministry to address the shortage of female personnel at various levels.

The proposal was nodded during a meeting of the State Administrative Council (SAC) chaired by the then Governor, Satyapal Malik, in 2019. (UNI)

Udhampur.....

the last 10 years. Dr Singh accused the Congress led governments in the past, including the UPA government from 2004 to 2014, of following a policy of regional discrimination as a result of which the upper hilly remote areas and far flung peripheral panchayats of district Udhampur remained unconnected by road because these did not receive the kind of attention deserved.

As a result of this, he said, the people of this far flung region had to suffer the agony and hardship of carrying their patients and the elderly members of the family physically for movement from one place to the other or in a 'palki'.

This, in turn, also led to increase in morbidity as well as mortality because of lack of health-care facilities and lack of accessibility to health centres, he added.

Addressing a series of public meetings dur-

ing his election tour of the upper reaches of district Udhampur including the areas like Basantgarh, Lati, Gordy, Landar, etc., Dr Singh said, Udhampur because of its typical topography with a large part of the district located on difficult terrains this road construction work should have been undertaken several decades ago but as a deliberate design it was not done in spite of the fact that the PMGSY scheme for the rural road construction was also introduced by NDA-1 under PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee but not carried forward with the same spirit by the successive governments till Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over in 2014 and Udhampur was given the top priority.

Thanking Prime Minister Modi for having given due attention to this region Dr Jitendra Singh said, today the people in the far flung areas have not only received the benefit of connectivity but this has in turn also boosted their morale and awakened their aspirations to engage in trade and business.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, significantly the lavender cultivation which for the first time in the country began from the small town of Bhandarwah in the same constituency has now been undertaken also in these areas of Udhampur district particularly Ladi and Basantgarh. This is going to be an important source of lucrative livelihood for the local youth, he said and added that the earlier governments led by Congress and its allies made false promises to the youth of giving government jobs to each individual, which he said could not have been possible. Though lavender and other means of livelihood were available in this region, but the Congress governments did not bother to explore the national resources available, he alleged.

Dr Singh said, with 'Kaladhi' being recognised under the category of 'One District One Product' for Udhampur, this area in the upper hills of the district is particularly known for this recipe and will also in the years to come provide an avenue of food industry and food StartUps.

Dr Singh said, that in the last ten years under Prime Minister Modi, Udhampur has emerged on the national map for more than one reason including the purple revolution and in the next five years it is bound to get established as an important junction and destination of North India when it also becomes the nodal point of connecting railway with the Kashmir valley and also becomes an important junction of the transport connectivity in the region. (UNI)

ED Sgr Seizes.....

and money laundering activities involving Hakeem Imtiaz. The ED probe uncovered suspicious transactions and assets linked to Imtiaz, prompting authorities to widen the scope of their investigation.

The ED further said "Niamat Ali Bhat's involvement in the case is under scrutiny, with authorities suspecting his association with Imtiaz in illicit financial activities. The provisional attachment of Bhat's assets serves as a significant development in the ongoing investigation, signalling a crackdown on those involved in money laundering and corruption".

The ED has been actively pursuing cases of money laundering and financial fraud across the country, aiming to curb illicit financial activities and hold offenders accountable.

The seizure of assets in different cases underscores the agency's commitment to combating economic crimes and ensuring transparency in financial transactions.

Further developments in the case are awaited as investigations continue to unfold.

J&K High Court.....

from the respondents indicating that they were in the process of formulating rules under the RTE Act.

The court emphasised the crucial importance of being apprised of the current status of the ongoing work or process initiated towards formulating the necessary rules for the effective implementation of the RTE Act.

It underscored the gravity of the situation, expressing concerns that the absence of formulated rules for the implementation of the RTE Act might potentially undermine the constitutional obligation of the State.

It stressed the imperative for the State to ensure the proper implementation of the Act to uphold the fundamental right to education for all children.

Considering the significance of ensuring the effective implementation of the RTE Act, the court deemed any further delay in the process as unacceptable.

Consequently, the court scheduled the matter for further hearing on May 15, granting the state sufficient time to furnish the necessary updates on the progress made in implementing the RTE Act.

It also directed the authorities to submit a comprehensive list of government-aided schools in Jammu & Kashmir that are presently imparting free education in accordance with the RTE Act.

23 Cases.....

network across the district, especially in Sumbal, Ajas, Bandipora main, and other areas.

"All police officers in the district are under clear-cut directions from SSP Bandipora, Lakshay Vinod Sharma, who has emphasized strict action against drug peddlers to dismantle the drug peddling network in the district," they said.

Meanwhile, locals have praised the Bandipora Police, applauding their dedication and

proactive approach in combating drug-related crimes.

Tulip Garden.....

the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the garden, managed by Khan Mudasi, witnessed an unprecedented response from visitors within the first five days of its opening, with 105,861 tourists having visited since March 23.

He said this year saw a mix of both domestic and foreign tourists, with a significant increase compared to last year. While only around 1,500 foreign tourists visited last year, a total of 415 foreigners and 5,112 locals have visited the garden so far this year.

The officers informed that the number of local visitors has crossed the 100,334 mark, making the total count of visitors to the Tulip Garden this year reach 105,861.

Moreover, 100,334 tourists from various parts of the country have visited the garden within the past 11 days.

To enhance the visitor experience and reduce long queues, the garden management has introduced online ticket processing, which has been well-received by tourists.

To encourage educational visits, a special 20% discount on tickets has been extended to students until April 10, as announced by the contract overseeing the garden.

Visitors have hailed the government's efforts in ensuring a smooth and enjoyable experience, expressing satisfaction with the arrangements made.

Despite challenges such as pre-booked accommodations affecting travel to Kashmir, officials anticipate that the garden will surpass last year's record of 366,000 visitors. With tourist numbers at an all-time high, a further increase in visitors is expected after Eid, they said.

History Repeats.....

six districts of Jammu and Kashmir, has remained impervious to their influence. Over the course of 14 Lok Sabha elections since 1967, the electorate has consistently favored candidates from Congress and BJP, relegating regional contenders to the sidelines.

From its inception, Udhampur constituency has steadfastly resisted representation by regional parties. In a historical reflection, the early years saw Congress asserting its stronghold, only to be later supplanted by BJP's ascendancy. While some regional parties managed to secure second or third positions, none could establish a substantial foothold.

The trajectory of the constituency's political landscape witnessed Congress's dominance for six consecutive terms until BJP emerged victorious in 1996. Since then, BJP has maintained its grip on the seat, with Dr. Jitendra Singh, also a minister in the central government, clinching successive wins in 2014 and 2019, defeating stalwarts from Congress.

Regional parties, despite sporadic

attempts, have failed to resonate with the electorate. Shiromani Akali Dal's candidate could muster only 1.3 percent of the vote share, while Jharkhand Party's attempt yielded a meager 0.1 percent.

In the annals of Udhampur's electoral history, Congress has clinched victory eight times, closely followed by BJP's six triumphs, solidifying the duopoly of the two major players. Meanwhile, regional contenders such as National Conference, PDP, and Panthers Party have been relegated to secondary positions, unable to break the entrenched dominance of Congress and BJP. Despite the influx of small parties vying for attention, the electorate's loyalty remains steadfast, reaffirming the entrenched political dynamics of the region.

Security Forces.....

Sangrama Sopore, and Adil Akber Gajore of Kushal Matoo Sopore.

"During their search, a pistol, mobile phones, and other incriminating materials were recovered from their possession", police said and added, "The trio failed to justify the contents of their phones, which contained incriminating evidence".

A case under relevant sections of law has been registered at Police Station Sopore and an investigation has been initiated, police added. (UNI)

Seven Anti-Social.....

The warrant under section 512 CrPC was issued by the Court of Sub Judge Judicial Magistrate 1st Class (JMJC) Tangmarg, pending with Police Station Tangmarg & Kunzer against the both accused persons. The accused were produced before the Court of Law.

A Police Party of Boniyar arrested three absconders identified as Khursheed Ahmad Bhat and Farooq Ahmad Bhat both residents of Heewan Sheeri while Abdul Majeed Khawaja resident of Bimyar Boniyar was nabbed in another case respectively.

Police in Shopian arrested two more absconders identified as Mohammad Yusuf Chohan resident of Reshnagri Arda and Tariq Ahmed Malik of Balpora who were involved in several cases.

Warrant of arrest was issued by the respective Court of Chief Judicial Magistrates and Judicial Magistrate 1st Class Shopian, Tangmarg and Boniyar against the accused persons.

"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 have resolved to act as per law against those who indulge in criminal activities", police added. (UNI)

Man-Eater Leopard.....

Meanwhile, the Wildlife department confirmed that that man eater leopard has been naturalised in Harivan Nallah in budgam.

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Div Com Takes Meeting On Comprehensive Drainage System Of City

SRINAGAR, APR 02: The Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Vijay Kumar Bidhuri today convened a meeting for the completion of the Comprehensive Drainage System of Greater Srinagar under JnNURM.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Dr Bilal Mohi-ud-din Bhat; CE, R&B; CE, UEED; Officer of NBCC, PHE and I&FC.

The meeting discussed the completion of the pending work on the Comprehensive Sewage Drainage System which shall cover a vast area of the



city and end their vows of about forty percent of the population.

The meeting deliberated for

completion of Trunk Sewer Line which stands 99% completed, 60 MLD Sewer Treatment Plant, 60 MLD Infall Pumping Station,



House Connections and power connections to the sewage treatment plants. Div Com emphasized on

providing power connectivity to treatment plants to make 70% of Drainage System operational.

Congress A Spent Force Now, Can Do No Good To People: Priya Sethi

10 years of Modi's regime exemplify a transformative period marked by bold reforms & decisive action

KAUTHA, APR 2: Congress has lost steam as it is being considered as a spent force which can do no good to people except making big castles in air about uplifting the masses. The Congress has nothing to show to people for their welfare except hollow slogans.

This was stated by Priya Sethi BJP National Executive Member and former minister while addressing a campaign rally in Marheen area of Kathua. She is campaigning in favour of Dr. Jitendra Singh, Party's candidate for Doda Udhampur Kathua Lok Sabha Seat.

The senior BJP leader stated that the bold step of BJP Government-led by PM Narendra Modi of declar-



ing Article 370 null and void has helped J&K to come out of the quagmire as earlier the common was confronting vicious cycle of violence and bloodshed. She said that after the end of Article 370, women, refugees of 1947, Valmiki Samaj, Paharis, and other groups got their rights and were living dignified life.

The senior BJP functionary said that prior to 2014, the Congress and its ilk, which were in power, had pushed the people of the erstwhile state against wall as corruption and nepotism were at peak as scams after scams had looted state exchequer and poor were forced to become even poorer. She categorically said that now when Narendra Modi is in command, corrupt are feeling scared, administration is streamlined, country is heading towards becoming third largest economy and India's defence system is becoming robust. She said that Dr Jitendra Singh is an apt candidate who ensured that all central schemes are implemented in his constituency in particular without any pilferage.

The former minister highlighted that ten years of Modi's regime exemplify a transformative period marked by bold reforms and decisive action. Under Modi's leadership, she emphasized, India has witnessed significant strides in various sectors, including economic growth, infrastructure development, and national security. Sethi credited the Modi government's proactive approach with instilling confidence among investors, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and creating millions of jobs for the youth.

Seeking votes for Dr Jitendra Singh, she said that the vote to Dr Jitendra will be the vote for Modi and the same will help BJP to get thumping margin as it is likely that this time her party gets lion's share of more than 400 seats. She said that people should gauge the intend of BJP by analyzing its ten years' tenure. Programme organised by Mandal president Sharda Devi.

Among others present included Anita gandotra, Sushma Sharma, Pinki Devi, Neelam Salaria, Raspal Verma, Janak Bharti, Lajwanti, Sonu Devi, Rajat, Vicky Sharma, Variender Sharma, Rekhi Kumar.

Congress Candidate Raman Bhalla Files Nomination For Jammu Lok Sabha

Constituency will go to the polls in the second phase on April 26

JAMMU, APR 02: Amid support of thousands of Congress workers, Congress candidate Raman Bhalla, filed his nomination for Jammu-Reasi Lok Sabha.

Accompanied by scores of jubilant supporters, Bhalla reached the office of Returning Officer, Sachin Kumar Vaishya and filed his papers in presence of National Conference patron and member of INDI Bloc, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, All India Congress Committee in charge J&K Affairs Bharat Singh Solanki, JK Congress President Vikar Rasool Wani alongwith several senior leaders of JKPC.

As per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), in the morning Congress supporters started assembling near Maharaja Hari Singh Park and then took the shape of procession towards Shaheedi Chowk to DC office. Later, on way back, while addressing a large gathering at Shaheedi Chowk, Solanki appealed to the people to vote for change and uproot the dictatorial regime of BJP. The people's participation in large numbers shows the mood of the people and claimed that both Lok Sabha seats of Jammu and Udhampur will be pocketed by the congress party with thumping majority. The people have made up their mind to bring about change at the Centre and the Modi Government will go after elections and INDIA block will form the Government.

Congress candidate Raman Bhalla thanked the people for the huge participation in the rally today from all parts and appealed to throw the arrogant regime out of power for the



large interest of poor and common man.

"People of Jammu have suffered a lot and will teach BJP PMP and its leaders a lesson through ballot, in this election. He said that congress will come back to solve the problems of common man who are under huge economic distress and facing a lot of hardships due to tax terrorism and price rise, record unemployment and lopsided development" he said.

Earlier, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Jugal Kishore Sharma filed his nomination papers. Sharma is seeking re-election from this constituency for the third consecutive term. He was elected to the Lok Sabha from this constituency in 2014 and 2019. The constituency goes to vote on April 26 in the second phase.

Jugal is in the fray to reclaim this seat, straight for the third time. In 2019, he had defeated the Congress candidate Raman Bhalla with a margin of 3,02,875 votes as NC and PDP had not fielded their candidates. In 2014, Jugal had won this seat again defeating Congress candidate Madan

Lal Sharma, with a victory margin of 2.57 lakh votes.

Congress has also repeated its nominee i.e., former minister Raman Bhalla, who is a common candidate of I.N.D.I. Alliance of which both National Conference (NC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) are constituents. He will file his nomination paper on April 2.

Following delimitation, Jammu parliamentary constituency comprises 18 assembly constituencies which include 11 from Jammu; three from Samba and Reasi district each and one Rajouri's Kalakote assembly constituency. Total electors are 17.66 lakh.

As per the notification, nomination papers can be filed by candidates or their proposers not later than April 4, 2024. Scrutiny of the nomination papers will take place on April 6, 2024 at 11 am at Deputy Commissioner's Office Jammu. The candidates have the option to withdraw their candidature on April 8, 2024 until 3 pm. The polling on April 26 will be conducted from 7 am to 6 pm.

PDP May Refrain From Fielding Candidates Against NC: Omar Abdullah

SRINAGAR, APR 2: Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said the National Conference and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) are part of the INDIA alliance and PDP might refrain from fielding candidates against his party in Kashmir.

"We were together on the stage during the recent INDIA alliance meet (in New Delhi) and nobody has broken the alliance", NC Vice President Omar Abdullah told media persons in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on Tuesday.

He said Mehbooba Mufti hasn't shown any inclination to contest against the NC.

Omar pointed to a recent rally in Delhi where PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti reaffirmed PDP's allegiance to the INDIA alliance.

Asked if PDP announces its candidate in the three seats of Kashmir and that would divide the votes which will benefit BJP Omar said that media would like to see such a situation.

"Why are you trying to have our fight with PDP? Does PDP anywhere say that they are going to contest the elections", he questioned.

The cracks between the two INDIA alliance partners are visible after NC on Monday fielded veteran Gujjar leader Main Altaf for the all-important South Kashmir seat. The announcement in all likelihood has ended chances of a patch up for seat sharing with INDIA partner PDP.

When asked if the NC was contesting all three seats in Kashmir due to pressure from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids, Omar said that the decision was taken based on having won the previous elections.

"No decision of seat sharing has been changed. For DDC polls, we took the 2014 Assembly election results, and wherever PDP had won, they contested the DDC polls and wherever NC had won, we got the opportunity. PC (Peoples Conference) was also with us then and they chose their candidate where they had won. We used the same formula here as well. Where does the ED come in this?" he asked.

Omar asked the media persons why they didn't expose the emerging new alliances in Kashmir like "A team, B team and C team" of the BJP instead.

Regarding announcing the candidature of Mian Altaf from the Anantnag-Rajouri parliamentary constituency who was an "outsider", Omar said Mian Altaf belongs to Kashmir.

"He belongs to Rajouri-Poonch as he belongs to other parts of the Kashmir valley. If the Prime Minister belonging to Gujarat is contesting elections from Uttar Pradesh, why does the media channels not have any objection with that", he questioned and added "even candidates from south India being given tickets from north India to Rajya Sabha".

Regarding the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest, Omar said "not only the people, the powerful countries of the world have taken notice how the ruling dispensation is targeting the selected opposition leaders ahead of the Parliament Elections in India".

Kejriwal is the second Chief Minister who has been arrested recently, he said adding arresting a Chief Minister and using the agencies for it, is a "very dangerous situation for the democracy of the country".

"The country will have to suffer the consequences of such a policy for a long time", he declared.

"We hope the Supreme Court and the Election Commission of India will never take such steps for granted rather will take appropriate measures to stop it", Omar said. (UNI)

‘MAJORITY OF KASHMIRIS UNAWARE OF NEURODEVELOPMENTAL CONDITIONS’

SRINAGAR, APR 02: The majority of the population in Kashmir remains unaware of neurodevelopmental conditions, with those with autism often encountering discrimination, stigma and a lack of support, according to psychologists.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder characterised by neurological differences.

Speaking with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Zoya Shafat Mir, a clinical psychologist and founder of Psychlite, a psychology clinic, explained that ASD impacts various aspects of a person's life, with manifestations varying in degree and presentation across individuals.

She said common signs of autism include deficits in language and social communication, sensory sensitivities, restricted and repetitive behaviours, as well as intense interests.

"However, not all these symptoms are necessarily present in

each case. For some, their condition may be very apparent, while for others, there may be no noticeable signs that set them apart from the neurotypical majority," she said, adding, "Each child with autism is unique, with different sensory needs, interests, preferences, and communication patterns. Some are completely non-verbal, while others cannot stop talking. Some refuse to eat food items that are not crunchy, while others cannot tolerate the sound of a lawnmower. Some will ask you questions about tigers all day, while others can name every distinct part of a car." To ensure correct diagnosis and individualised help, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach towards treatment, it is crucial to understand autism as a spectrum, Zoya said.

She said there has been a shift in the perception of autism over the years. "It has evolved from a focus solely on deficits and challenges towards a more holistic understanding. Recognition of



the strengths and talents possessed by individuals with autism is growing," she said, citing examples of exceptional qualities such as photographic memory, excellent pattern recognition, and strong logical thinking.

Zoya added, "As awareness and research have progressed, so has our understanding of autism. We are starting to recognize the strengths and talents of individuals with autism. Recognising and nurturing these strengths has empowered individuals with autism to thrive in environments

where their unique abilities are valued and celebrated. However, this shift in perspective is yet to occur in Kashmir, where a significant portion of the population remains unaware of neurodevelopmental conditions."

"Our society's narrow perspective fails to acknowledge the diverse range of experiences and capabilities within the autism spectrum, hindering the full integration and acceptance of individuals with autism in all aspects of society," she observed.

Professor (Dr) Yasir H Rather,

a renowned psychiatrist, talked about the transformative power of autism acceptance in the lives of patients. "Autism acceptance is more than just understanding; it's about embracing the uniqueness of each person, celebrating their strengths, and supporting their challenges," he said.

Syeda Zehra, a Behavior Therapist at Psychlite, highlighted the importance of patience, understanding and creating a structured and supportive environment for children with autism to thrive.

"Creating a structured and supportive environment helps them feel secure and ready to learn," she said, adding, "Witnessing their growth and development is incredibly rewarding, fueling my passion for making a difference."

Overall, the experts stressed the need to challenge stereotypes, foster understanding and provide support to ensure that those with autism have the opportunity to thrive and contribute meaningfully to society.

DEO Kupwara holds meeting with AROs, District Officers, Principals, Reviews preparedness for Lok Sabha elections, SVEEP activities

HT News Network

Kupwara, APRIL 02, District Election Officer (DEO), Kupwara, Ms. Ayushi Sudan (IAS) Tuesday chaired a general election meeting of Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), District Officers, Election Nodal Officers, Principals of Degree Colleges and Higher Secondary Schools here at Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex to review the progress of preparations with regard to conduct of upcoming Lok Sabha Elections-2024 in the District.

Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program in the district. DEO directed Nodal Officer SVEEP/CEO Kupwara to activate and up-scale BAGs (Booth Awareness Groups) and SVEEP activities besides making them sustained and regular activities so that voter awareness, education and participation in the electoral process is further promoted in the district. She directed Nodal Officer SVEEP to take the Information & PR department on board for the wide publicity of the activities.

DEO also enjoined upon the HOIs and District Officers to organize SVEEP sessions in their respective Educational institutions and



Offices. The DEO directed the concerned Officers to work with utmost coordination to complete all assigned tasks related to the conduct of the Lok Sabha elections-2024. She stressed that assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) should be ensured as per norms of ECI.

She directed HOIs to cross check the AMFs at respective Polling stations established in their respective polling stations besides concerned AROs will oversee the inspection of AMFs in Polling stations.

She further directed the concerned to ensure readiness of all arrangements for polling parties, and security staff.

The DEO also enjoined upon the concerned

to take up all necessary arrangements for facilitating voting by Postal Ballots by various categories of Voters including service voters, personnel on Poll Duty, Employees of Essential service Departments, migrant electors, absent electors, etc so that they cast their vote in upcoming Lok Sabha Election without any difficulty. The DEO directed the concerned to establish Postal ballot facilitation centres for every assembly segment.

The DEO asked the concerned Nodal officers to expedite the process of imparting Election related Trainings to the Poll Staff and ensure no additional assignments are allocated to Polling staff.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR BIRTHS & DEATHS BLOCK WAWOORA

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This office is in receipt of representation from MOHAMMAD MUDASIR R/O DOONIWARI LOLAB Tehsil LALPORA District KUPWARA for issuance of Birth Certificate in favour of my Son namely ARHAAN MUDASIR S/O MOHAMMAD MUDASIR KHAN MUGHAL R/O DOONIWARI LOLAB D.O.B as per documents is 12/06/2020 & In this connection if anyone have any objection in event has been to be occurred at home registration of birth certificate shall present his/her claim to this office or Tehsildar LALPORA // BDO office Wawoora within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertained.

EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE (BLOCK DEVELOPMENT OFFICE WAWOORA)

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE NAIB TEHSILDAR TILGAM PATTAN (EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE 1ST CLASS) TILGAM PATTAN

Subject: Issuance of Registration Orders in respect of delayed Birth/ Death certificate.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Registrar Births and Deaths (Block Development Officer KHAIPORA / chokedar) has submitted case file pertaining to DEATH of MOHAMMAD JAMAAL CHOPAN F/O NAZIR AHMAD CHOPAN R/O CHANDERSEER Tehsil PATTAN Distt. Baramulla having verified the date of DAETH as 17/07/2007 and event has been shown to be occurred at home for issuance of delay order. In this connection, if anyone have any objection to the issuance of delay order of DEATH certificate shall present his/her claim this office within 07 days, after that no objection shall be entertaine

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معاملہ مندرجہ عنوان الصدمہ ایک درخواست نسبت اجراء DOD سدا کھی محمد جمال چوپان جس میں سال اظہار کرتا ہے اسکے والد کی وفات 17/07/2007 میں ہوئی ہے اس نسبت اگر کسی شخص یا اشخاص کو تاریخ اجراء IDOD ابراہونے میں کوئی عذر یا اعتراض ہے تو سات یوم دفتر ہزار میں پیش کرے سدا کر کے کے بعد کوئی عذر قابل قبول نہ ہوگا

ایگزیکٹو مجسٹریٹ درجہ اول تله گام پٹن

اطلاع عام

بگلی بل زیر نمبر 0209020004310 جو کٹی محمد حجام ولد علی محمد حجام کے نام بد درج ہے اب عبد السلام حجام ولد علی محمد حجام درج کرنی مطلوب ہے اگر اس بارے میں کسی شکوکہ یا اعتراض ہو تو وہ سات دن کے اندر اندر pdd سب ڈویژن تنظیم مقام میں پیش کرے بعد از معاد کوئی اعتراض قبول نہیں ہوگا

المشتر

عبدل سلام حجام ولد علی محمد حجام ساکن بنہ پورا لیور تحصیل سسر

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is inform all Public That my Daughter Mehnoor Fatima is going to correct name as Syed Mehnoor Fatima D/O Syed Fazl-I-Rahman .

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ADC Handwara Holds Crucial Meeting with Private School Principals to Enhance Accountability and Professionalism

DR.AB QAYOUM

Handwara, April, 02: In a proactive move to address the concerns and streamline operations within the private educational sector, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Handwara, Aziz Ahmad Rather, convened an interactive meeting with principals of private schools in the Sub-Division Handwara. The meeting, which saw the participation of all heads of private educational institutions, underscored the paramount importance of strict adherence to government guidelines by private school principals. ADC Handwara emphasized the need for a conducive environment characterized by accountability and responsibility. Principals were sternly reminded that any lapses or griev-



ances would not be overlooked, emphasizing the seriousness with which the administration views compliance with regulations. Additionally, they were directed to exhibit professionalism and sensitivity in their interactions with parents, recognizing the pivotal role parents play in the edu-

cational journey of students. The meeting served as a platform to address various issues concerning private schools, highlighting the commitment of the administration to ensure quality education and effective governance within the sector.



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Lok Sabha Elections 2024

Series of awareness programmes under SVEEP held across Ramban

HT News Network

RAMBAN, APRIL 02: A series of awareness programmes were held today under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program (SVEEP) in various institutions and other areas of district Ramban on the directions of District Election Officer (DEO), Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary.

Resource Persons and members of district SVEEP Cell dispersed across key locations and institutions. They hosted awareness activities at Government Degree College Ramban, Government Higher Secondary School, Ramban,



Bus Stand Ramban and other adjoining areas.

Through comprehensive presentations, they elucidated the imperativeness of inclusive voter participation in safeguarding democratic principles and fortifying the electoral framework.

The awareness pro-

grammes were conducted under the supervision of District Nodal Officer SVEEP, Mohammad Ashfaq Kanji.

The campaign emphasized the pivotal role of strong civic engagement in shaping the democratic landscape. The vibrant participation of youth, along-

side members of the public and election personnel, underscored the collective commitment to fostering an informed electorate.

In a proactive move towards enhancing female voter turnout and participation, Nodal Officer, Women Awareness and Welfare (AC-54), CDPO Ramban, Ravinder Kour sensitized the female voters and encouraged new women voters, emphasizing their crucial role in the electoral process.

Speaking on the occasion, Nodal officer said that such initiatives play a pivotal role in strengthening the democratic fabric of our nation and fostering a culture of active citizenship.

DEO Ramban visits Banihal, assesses readiness for elections

HT News Network

RAMBAN, APRIL 02: District Election Officer Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary, along with Senior Superintendent of Police, Anuj Kumar, today visited Banihal (AC-55) to assess readiness for the upcoming General Election, scheduled for April 19, 2024 in the District.

The DEO was accompanied by ADC Ramban, Varunjeet Singh Charak; SDM Banihal Rizwan Asgar and DIO DIPR Ramban Mohammad Ashraf Wani besides other civil and police officers.

During the visit, the DEO diligently examined the security of EVM strong room, strategically located at Government Higher Sec-



ondary School Banihal, emphasizing the paramount importance of robust security arrangements.

Following the inspection of the strong room and other facilities, necessary directives were issued to security agencies to guarantee fool proof security measures. The DEO also

plans, dispatch, and reception arrangements for polling parties, and other supplementary measures crucial for the seamless execution of electoral duties. In his interactions, the DEO stressed the importance of timely execution of all election-related tasks to uphold the integrity and transparency of the electoral process, reaffirming the commitment to conduct free and fair elections. Additionally, ARO AC-55 Banihal SDM, Rizwan Asgar, provided a comprehensive overview of the administrative arrangements implemented to ensure the smooth conduct of Lok Sabha Election, 2024 in AC Banihal, constituting an integral part of Parliamentary Constituency 04-Udhampur.

Lok Sabha Elections 2024

Artists present Nukkad Natak under SVEEP campaign at Samba

HT News Network

SAMBA, APRIL 02: A spirited Nukkad Natak performance took centre stage today at main Chowk, Samba to promote voters participation in upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024. Organized under the ongoing Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) awareness campaign in the district, the event unfolded under the guidance of District Election Officer (DEO), Abhishek Sharma. The initiative operated seamlessly under the close supervision of District Nodal Officer SVEEP, Muhammad Sayeed. A group of local artists led by Ravi Dutta presented theme-based Nukkad Natak on SVEEP. The aim was to enhance understanding of voting-related processes and promote electoral literacy, especially among first-time voters, preparing them for upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024. The DEO emphasised that the initiative resonates with the overarching commitment of the District Administration Samba to ensure inclusive governance and participatory democracy. By leveraging innovative approaches to civic education and community engagement, such endeavours aim to empower citizens with knowledge, thereby fostering a culture of responsible citizenship and democratic stewardship.

He added that as the countdown to Lok Sabha Elections 2024 gains momentum, initiatives like the Nukkad Natak performance stand as a beacon of inspiration, rallying communities towards informed and ethical electoral practices. The District Administration Samba remains steadfast in its resolve to uphold integrity.

Lok Sabha Elections 2024

CEO visits Rajouri; Reviews preparations for Parliamentary Polls

HT News Network

RAJOURI, APRIL 02: Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Jammu and Kashmir, Pandurang K. Pole, today visited the border district Rajouri to oversee preparations being put in place for the upcoming Parliamentary Polls.

The CEO also assessed the status of District Election team while chairing a review meeting with all the concerned officers. He reviewed arrangements related to the conduct of Lok Sabha Elections 2024 in the district.

During the meeting, the CEO took stock of key aspects of the election preparations.

District Election Officer Rajouri, Om Prakash Bhat, provided a detailed

PowerPoint Presentation, elaborating the electoral landscape of the district. With 680 polling stations and a total of 4,84,725 voters, the electoral framework of the district was underlined, emphasizing a gender ratio of 918. Notably, the status of additions and deletions in the electoral roll over the past two years was also elucidated.

The meeting also reviewed the status of all AMFs on the essential facilities ensured at all the polling stations.

The DEO highlighted the completion of physical verification of polling stations, ensuring their readiness for the upcoming elections. It was reaffirmed that adequate resources, including Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit

Trail (VVPAT) machines, manpower besides infrastructure, are in place to facilitate smooth conduct of elections. Additionally, establishment of training centers, dispatch/receipt centers and strong rooms was also discussed to ensure operational efficiency of the district team.

Under the SVEEP initiative, robust voter awareness campaigns are being held to bolster voter turnout and inclusivity. The district SVEEP cell is actively engaged in organizing a myriad of awareness programs to ensure that every eligible voter is empowered to exercise their franchise. The vulnerability mapping revealed that there are 379 vulnerable polling stations in the district, underscoring the need for heightened vigilance and security mea-

asures to safeguard the electoral process. Additionally, the status of cash seizure by Special Surveillance Teams (SST) and Flying Surveillance Teams (FST) was briefed, which was Rs. 1,254,000.

The Chief Electoral Officer engaged with the AROs and Nodal Officers and sought details of the activities being carried out in the district. Subsequently, the AROs and Nodal Officers provided detailed briefings on the ongoing activities.

All Assistant Returning Officers (AROs) were directed to ensure cleanliness of polling stations within their respective jurisdictions besides ensuring proper accessibility of polling stations, for providing conducive environment for voters to exercise their demo-

Lok Sabha Elections 2024

Over 16.23 lakh voters to decide fate of 12 candidates in Udhampur Parliamentary Constituency

HT News Network

KATHUA, APRIL 02: The fate of 12 candidates will be decided by over 16.23 lakh voters of Udhampur Lok Sabha seat in the first phase of General Elections to be held on April 19.

The Udhampur parliamentary constituency is spread over five districts including Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Udhampur and Kathua.

According to the figures provided by the office of the Returning Officer 4-Udhampur Parliamentary Constituency, there are 16,23,195 registered voters in Udhampur Lok Sabha seat including 8,45,283 male, 7,77,899 female and 13 transgender electors.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has set up 2637 polling stations across the constituency, of which 2,457 are situated in rural areas and 180 in urban areas, ensuring accessibility and convenience for voters from all corners of the constituency.

Of notable mention is the inclusion of 23,637 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) within the electoral roll, encompassing 14,362 males and 9,275 females.

The young voters, aged 18-19 years, stands at 45,825 male voters, 38,641 female voters and 2 transgender, totaling 84,468 potential first-time voters.

The constituency boasts a considerable elderly population, with 12,020 male voters and 13,612 female voters aged 80 above, totaling 25,632 seasoned voters contributing to the electoral discourse.

GDC Sumbal celebrates World Autism Day

HT News Network

BANDIPORA, APRIL 02: The Department of Education, Government Degree College (GDC) Sumbal on Tuesday commemorated World Autism Day.

The programme was organized under the patronage of Prof. (Dr.) Shabeena Iqbal Shawl. This significant event aimed to raise awareness about autism and promote a better understanding of this developmental disorder. On the occasion, Professor Manzoor Ahmad Parey, Head, Dept. of Education delivered a thought-provoking lecture on the theme of World Autism Day.

The focal point of the event was to enhance the participants' knowledge and understanding of autism.

He meticulously explained the complexities related to autism by highlighting its various aspects, including behavioural patterns, challenges faced by individuals with autism, and potential ways to support and accommodate them in society. Prof. Parey commenced the session with an overview of autism, its prevalence, and its impact on individuals and their families.

Congress's second fiddle politics in J&K compromised regional aspirations: Rana

HT News Network

JAMMU: Senior BJP leader Mr Devender Singh Rana today lashed out at the Congress for playing second fiddle politics in Jammu and Kashmir to remain glued to power, as a result the regional aspirations received a big jolt. "By aligning with the regional political players in turns to remain relevant in the J&K politics and to share the loaves of the power, the Congress kept looking to the other side for decades, even as the regions and sub-regions were discriminated against—be it development or share in the jobs", Mr Devender Rana said while addressing meetings in Panchayat Showa, Gharota Upper A, Gharota Upper B, Malpur and Gharota Lower in Amb-Gharota Mandal along with DDC Chairman, Mr. Bharat Bhushan, District President Jammu North Mr Omi Khajuria and Former MLA Mr. Shiv Dev Singh. The Congress's second fiddle politics in pursuit of power and personal agendas took precedence over the welfare of the people. This phenomenon, characterized by opportunistic alliances and compromises, led to a situation for decades where the interests of the people.

Lok Sabha Elections 2024

Distt Admin Samba organises training program for election staff

HT News Network

SAMBA, APRIL 02: District Administration Samba today organised the second leg of training program for Election Staff in conference Hall DC Office, here under the supervision of District Election Officer, Abhishek Sharma. Around 450 officials were imparted training, held in three sessions. The programme aimed to enhance the preparedness for upcoming Lok Sabha Elections, ensuring fair, transparent and smooth conduct of elections.



The training session featured demonstrations by master trainers on the proper sealing, installation, and functioning of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Form 12, 12A and 12D were distributed for postal ballots to

officials attending training. The polling personnel were sensitized about their crucial roles and duties during the electoral process besides following the guidelines of ECI to ensure the integrity of electoral process.

RDD Secretary reviews progress on flagship schemes

HT News Network

SRINAGAR, APRIL 02: Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and Panchayati Raj, Dr Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, reviewed progress on UT Capex, CSS and KPIs achieved in the financial year 2023-24 with the Assistant Commissioners Development (ACDs), Assistant Commissioners Panchayat (ACPs) and Block Development Officers (BDOs) of Kashmir division at SKICC. The Administrative Secretary had a detailed review of flagship schemes being implemented by Rural Development Department. He held detailed deliberations with the ACDs and

ACPs for achieving the targets. Dr Shahid underscored the importance of convergence within the department to ensure effective utilization of resources and progress at the district level. He emphasized collaboration among different departments and stakeholders to achieve the goals.

He stressed the need for training programs for panchayat members and officials, as well as Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for social auditing to promote transparency.

Recognizing the importance of interpersonal communication in driving progress, Dr. Shahid highlighted the need for suggestions from field officers.

BJP District President Javid Qureshi Commends Workers' Dedication at Langate Meet

DR. AB QAYOOM

Langate, April, 02: In a significant display of solidarity and dedication, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) District President, Javid Qureshi, orchestrated a pivotal workers' meet at the Historical Public Park Langate. Attended by approximately 200 to 250 committed party members, including sector in-charges and booth presidents of Langate constituency, the gathering underscored the party's grassroots mobilization efforts. During the event, District President Javid Qureshi distributed booth-level materials to every responsible worker, emphasizing their crucial role in the party's outreach and organizational strength. Addressing the assembly, Qureshi underscored the accountability of



the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the tragic innocent killings in Kashmir. He stressed the impera-

tive of unity and accountability, reaffirming BJP's unwavering commitment to peace and prosperity in the region. Qureshi also

expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his remarkable achievements in advancing peace and progress in Kashmir. He asserted the party's readiness for the upcoming 2024 Parliament elections, particularly from North Kashmir, showcasing BJP's preparedness and determination to serve the people effectively. Among the distinguished attendees were Jameel Ah Rather, Javid Ah, Mohd Shafi, Gulzar Ah, along with the Women's Wing General Secretary, and other esteemed party representatives. The event signifies a significant stride in strengthening BJP's resolve and mobilization efforts at the grassroots level, echoing the party's unwavering commitment to the welfare and progress of the people of Kashmir.

EDITORIAL

Vanishing Water Bodies -
The Silent Crisis

In the cacophony of debates surrounding the Kashmir issue, there's a silent crisis unfolding that demands urgent attention: the disappearance of water bodies. Over the past century, nearly half of the water bodies in and around Srinagar have vanished, casualties of rampant urbanization and mismanagement.

The lush valleys and serene lakes of Kashmir have long been symbols of natural beauty and tranquility. However, beneath this picturesque facade lies a stark reality: unchecked urbanization is devouring these invaluable resources at an alarming rate. Rivers, lakes, and wetlands are being encroached upon, drained, or filled in to make way for infrastructure and development projects.

More than 9,119 hectares of open water surface and wetland have disappeared between 1911 and 2014, while only 6,873 hectares were preserved.

The consequences of this environmental degradation are far-reaching. The loss of water bodies not only disrupts the delicate ecological balance but also threatens the livelihoods of those dependent on them. Fishermen, farmers, and communities that rely on these water sources for irrigation and drinking water face an uncertain future.

Moreover, the disappearance of water bodies exacerbates existing challenges such as flooding and water scarcity. Wetlands act as natural sponges, absorbing excess rainfall and reducing the risk of floods. Their destruction leaves communities vulnerable to the ravages of climate change, with implications for public health, agriculture, and infrastructure.

Addressing this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach that combines sustainable urban planning, conservation efforts, and community engagement. Government authorities must enforce strict regulations to prevent further encroachment on water bodies and prioritize their preservation in development initiatives. Investment in wastewater treatment and pollution control measures is essential to safeguard the quality of remaining water sources.

Furthermore, raising awareness and involving local communities in conservation efforts are critical steps towards long-term sustainability. Recognizing the intrinsic value of Kashmir's water bodies beyond mere economic interests is essential for fostering a culture of stewardship and environmental responsibility.

In the grand narrative of the Kashmir issue, the plight of its vanishing water bodies often goes unnoticed. Yet, it is a crisis that cannot be ignored. Failure to act now risks irreparable damage to Kashmir's natural heritage and the well-being of its people. It's time to give voice to this silent crisis and take meaningful action to preserve the precious water resources of the region.

Empowering Women in Jammu & Kashmir:

A Transformative Journey

RM Bhat

Recognizing Women's Crucial Role in Development, Peace and Stability

As India strides towards progress and development, acknowledging the vital role women play becomes imperative. In the intricate tapestry of Kashmir, the empowerment of women emerges as a pivotal force for positive change. Women constitute 47% of the total population in J&K. This significant portion of the population must contribute to development, becoming professionals in various fields and contributing significantly to the nation-building process.

The Effect of Conflict

The journey of women in regions like Jammu and Kashmir has been marred by the long-standing conflict, significantly affecting their lives. Kashmiri society has traditionally placed women in important roles in the societal hierarchy. The advent of fundamentalism, militancy and terrorism brought about severe challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Women faced discrimination, violence, and harassment, creating a dire situation.

Kashmir has a history of protest politics, wherein women have been prominently involved. Over time, women in Kashmir have been misled and subjected to mistreatment on the streets. Certain opportunistic factions manipulated them into taking to the roads and staging sit-ins as part of a calculated strategy. Despite their genuine intention to promote stability and advocate for it within their communities, they have been led astray to support secessionist ideologies. According to Swati Parashar, women have played a pivotal role as a support network for militants. She asserts that they provided care and protection to militants, conveying messages and transporting arms. Despite a society traditionally characterized by Sufi values, younger women, influenced by fundamentalists, romanticized the rebellious "angry young man" in pseudo-military attire. The acceptance of armed masculinity became ingrained in a society historically associated with peaceful Sufi principles (Source: "Gender, Jihad, and Jingoism," Swati Parashar, 2011, p.438).

Despite these challenges, the resilience and courage of women in Jammu and Kashmir have been remarkable, with a notable increase in women's participation in various fields.



A Shift Towards Peace and Stability

Post the decline of terrorism and abrogation of Article 370, the region has witnessed a significant shift. The focus on peace and stability, coupled with various initiatives, has fostered an environment conducive to the resurgence of women to their rightful place. The government, under the leadership of Manoj Sinha, the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, has taken deliberate and positive steps to address the issues faced by women.

In the complex terrain of Jammu & Kashmir, the government has implemented measures to improve the security situation for women, strengthening law-and-order machinery and increasing police patrolling in vulnerable areas. Skill development training and initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship have been rolled out, aiming to bridge the gender gap and create a more inclusive society.

Gender Sensitization Initiatives

The government's commitment to gender sensitization and awareness is evident through initiatives led by the LG. Sensitizing young boys and men on gender equality and women's rights is a crucial step towards creating a more inclusive and safe society. The impact of these initiatives on women's empowerment in Jammu and Kashmir has been substantial.

Education: A Cornerstone for Empowerment

In the field of education, several initiatives have been introduced to improve women's opportunities and accessibility. The partnership among the Indian Army, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), and the National Integrity Educational Development Organisation (NIEDO) in the "Super 50" program, catering to both engineering and medical aspirants, has produced impressive outcomes. The recently announced results for NEET UG 2023 showcased an outstanding performance by girl students. Among the 157 participants in the NEET examination, 128 students, comprising 74 girls and 54 boys, successfully qualified for this national-level pre-medical entrance test. Commending HPCL and the Indian Army for this achievement, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri expressed his appreciation in a tweet.

Beyond Academia: Skill development

The empowerment of women in Jammu and Kashmir extends beyond academic achievements. The "Mission Youth" initiative, encompassing livelihood generation, education, recreational and social engagement, counselling, and rehabilitation, has witnessed significant participation. More than 74,771 youths have joined Youth Clubs across 20 districts, provid-

ing them with opportunities to make meaningful contributions to society.

The "J&K Rural Livelihoods Mission" has not only created entrepreneurs but has also contributed to the economic independence of women, providing them with a sustainable source of income. Training in skills such as hand-crafts, tailoring, and food processing, coupled with seed capital and marketing support, has empowered over 2,000 women entrepreneurs in the region.

Noteworthy Appointments: Fostering Gender Equality

Noteworthy instances in the landscape of gender inclusivity include the appointment of a woman Vice Chancellor at Kashmir University, a woman Secretary in the Sports Council, the election of a woman Chairperson in JK Haj Committee, and other significant positions. Such appointments mark a pivotal stride towards fostering gender equality and inclusiveness in the region.

A Vision for an Inclusive Future

While these achievements signify progress, it is important to acknowledge that challenges persist. Limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, coupled with gender-based violence and abuse, continue to be issues that need concerted efforts. The journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment is ongoing, requiring sustained and expanded initiatives.

A society that values and respects its women is a society that thrives and prospers, and the transformative initiatives in Jammu and Kashmir are steering the region towards such an inclusive future. Kashmir is at the cusp of transitioning from a terrorism-troubled society to a vibrant and flourishing one. Empowerment of women is integral to the region's progress and development. The multifaceted initiatives, spanning education, entrepreneurship, and social engagement, reflect a holistic approach towards creating an environment where women can thrive and contribute positively. The government's commitment, coupled with collaborative efforts from the civil society, army, and corporate social responsibility, has yielded tangible results. This also helps in maintaining peace and stability in the region at this critical juncture. As the region navigates its developmental trajectory, sustaining and expanding these efforts is crucial to ensuring that women in Kashmir have equal access to opportunities.

Overcoming Challenges: Common Obstacles Faced by Students Studying Abroad and How to Tackle Them



Jaswinder Pal Sharma

Studying abroad is an enriching experience that offers students the opportunity to broaden their horizons, immerse themselves in new cultures, and gain valuable skills.

However, along with the excitement and adventure, studying abroad can also present various challenges. From language barriers to homesickness, navigating unfamiliar environments to academic adjustments, students often encounter obstacles that require resilience and adaptation.

In this article, we'll explore some common challenges faced by students studying abroad and provide practical strategies for overcoming them.

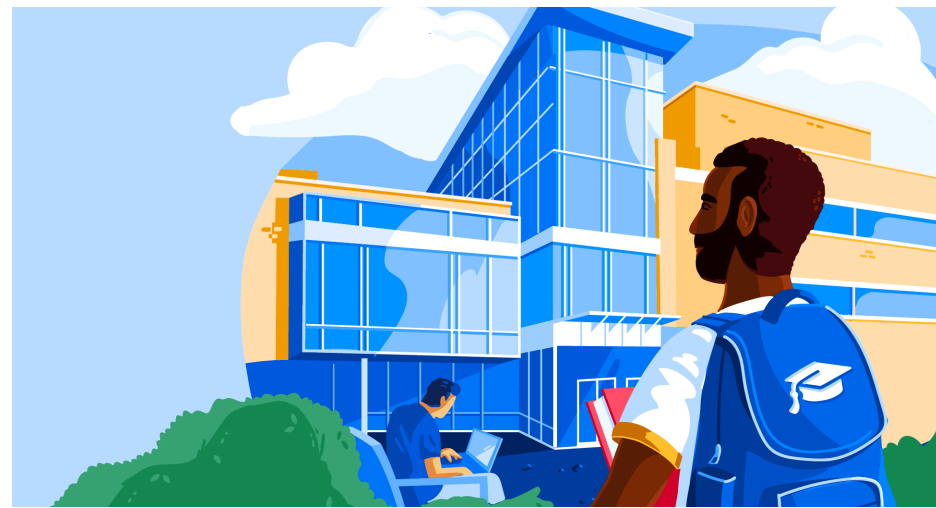
1. Language Barriers:

One of the most significant challenges for students studying abroad is language barriers. Whether it's struggling to communicate with locals, comprehend lectures

in a different language, or complete assignments in a foreign tongue, language proficiency can be a daunting obstacle. To tackle this challenge, students can: Take language courses: Many universities offer language courses specifically designed for international students. Taking these classes can improve language skills and build confidence. Practice regularly: Immersing oneself in the local language through daily interactions, such as conversations with native speakers, reading newspapers, or watching TV shows, can accelerate language learning. Utilize language apps and resources: Apps like Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, or language exchange platforms can supplement formal language classes and provide additional practice opportunities.

2. Cultural Adjustment:

Adapting to a new cultural environment can be overwhelming for students studying abroad. Differences in social norms, customs, and communication styles may lead to culture shock and feelings of isolation. To navigate cultural adjustment, students can: Keep an open mind: Embrace cultural differences with curiosity and respect. Be willing to learn about and appreciate the customs and traditions of the host country. Seek support: Connect with other international students, join cultural clubs or organizations, and participate in cultural exchange events to build a sense of community and belonging. Explore the host country: Immerse yourself in local activities, festivals, and cuisine to better understand



the culture and foster cultural competence.

3. Homesickness:

Being away from home and loved ones can trigger feelings of homesickness and loneliness among students studying abroad. To cope with homesickness, students can: Stay connected: Maintain regular communication with friends and family through video calls, messages, and social media platforms. Create a support network: Build relationships with fellow students, roommates, or local residents who can offer companionship and emotional support. Stay busy: Engage in activities and hobbies that bring joy and fulfillment, such as exploring the host city, joining clubs or sports teams, or volunteering in the community.

4. Academic Challenges:

Adapting to a new academic environment, different teaching styles, and rigorous coursework can be challenging for students studying abroad. To excel academically, students can: Communicate with professors: Seek clarification on assignments, expectations, and course materials to ensure a clear understanding of academic requirements. Develop time management skills: Create a study schedule, prioritize tasks, and allocate sufficient time for studying, attending classes, and participating in extracurricular activities. Utilize academic resources: Take advantage of tutoring services, writing centers, and academic workshops offered by the university to enhance learning and

improve academic performance.

5. Financial Concerns:

Managing finances while studying abroad can be a source of stress for many students.

To alleviate financial concerns, students can:

Create a budget: Track expenses, prioritize spending, and identify areas where costs can be reduced to ensure financial stability throughout the study abroad experience.

Research scholarships and grants: Explore scholarship opportunities, grants, and financial aid programs available for international students to help offset the cost of tuition, housing, and living expenses.

Seek part-time employment: Consider part-time work or internships to supplement income and gain valuable work experience while studying abroad. In conclusion, studying abroad presents students with a multitude of challenges, ranging from language barriers to homesickness, cultural adjustment, academic pressures, and financial concerns.

However, with resilience, determination, and the right strategies, these obstacles can be overcome. By embracing new experiences, seeking support, and actively engaging in the host culture, students can transform challenges into opportunities for personal growth, cultural enrichment, and academic success.

SS Master, Gsss Hakuwala Sri Muktsar Sahib, 79860-27454

Mental Health Crisis Among NEET Aspirants: A Call for Compassion and Support



■ Md. Basit

The recent surge in suicides among NEET aspirants has undoubtedly ignited a nationwide alarm, shedding light on the profound and longstanding issues embedded within our education system. Despite the remarkable strides made since India's independence, particularly in sectors like education with the establishment of esteemed institutions like the IITs and IIMs, we find ourselves grappling with formidable challenges, especially in the realm of medical education. The allure of a career in medicine, with its promise of financial stability and social prestige, has precipitated a cutthroat competition among aspirants, epitomized by the daunting NEET entrance exam. The harsh reality remains that out of the approximately 20,00,000 students who appeared for NEET UG in 2023, only a meager 90,000 seats are available for MBBS across India, spanning private, semi-government, and government colleges. This glaring mismatch between demand and availability has created an atmosphere rife with pressure and stress for students.

The repercussions of this intense pressure are starkly evident in the distressing rise in suicide cases among NEET aspirants. According to the latest NCRB reports, 13,044 students took their lives in 2022, a trend that demands immediate and urgent attention. Kota, a city renowned for its coaching institutes, experienced an alarming 60% surge in suicidal cases post-pandemic, serving as a stark reminder of the gravity of the situation. The underlying causes of this epidemic of stress and despair among NEET aspirants are complex and multifaceted. Firstly, the lack of personalized interaction in coaching institutes leaves students feeling isolated and unable to address their personal struggles or seek emotional support. Moreover, the weight

of parental expectations, coupled with financial burdens, exacerbates the psychological toll on students. The relentless cycle of mock tests and academic pressures only serves to compound their stress, often driving some towards unhealthy coping mechanisms like drug addiction.

Efforts have been made by the government and district administration to alleviate the crisis. Initiatives such as the HOPE helpline and the "manodarpan" platform aim to provide much-needed psychological support to students, teachers, and parents. Coaching institutes and hostel owners have also implemented measures such as regular motivational sessions and enhanced safety precautions to address the mental well-being of students. However, the true perpetrators behind this epidemic extend beyond mere administrative measures. Fueled by parental expectations and societal norms, a culture of relentless competition and societal pressure perpetuates a toxic environment for aspiring students. Parents, in their relentless pursuit of their children's success, often overlook their individual interests and well-being, inadvertently contributing to their distress.

To combat this crisis, a concerted and collective effort is imperative. Parents must prioritize their children's mental health and aspirations over societal expectations, fostering an environment of understanding and support. Education institutions should prioritize students' well-being alongside academic excellence, providing avenues for emotional expression and support. Society at large must recognize the unique challenges faced by students and offer empathy and encouragement rather than judgment. Ultimately, the path forward lies in fostering a culture of compassion, understanding, and support within our education system and society at large. By acknowledging the individual needs and aspirations of each student, we can cultivate an environment where every aspiring doctor or engineer can thrive, liberated from the suffocating shadow of despair. As the Quran aptly reminds us, "Undoubtedly, along with hardship, there is ease" - a message of hope that resonates profoundly in these trying times.

In delving deeper into this crisis, it becomes apparent that the challenges faced by NEET aspirants extend far beyond the realm of academic competition. These young minds, grappling with the weight of societal expectations and



familial pressures, find themselves navigating treacherous waters as they strive for success in the fiercely competitive world of medical education.

The allure of a career in medicine, with its promise of financial stability and social prestige, has drawn countless aspirants into its fold, fueling an intense and cutthroat competition epitomized by the rigorous NEET entrance exam. Yet, beneath the veneer of opportunity lies a harsh reality: the demand for medical seats far outweighs the available supply. With only a fraction of applicants

securing coveted spots in MBBS programs across the country, the road to a medical career is fraught with uncertainty and despair for many. This stark reality has manifested in a troubling trend of suicides among NEET aspirants, casting a shadow over the hopes and dreams of countless young individuals. The latest NCRB reports paint a grim picture, revealing that thousands of students have succumbed to the immense pressure and stress associated with the pursuit of a medical education. In Kota, a city renowned for its coaching

institutes, the situation has reached a critical point, with a staggering 60% surge in suicidal cases observed in the wake of the pandemic. At the heart of this crisis lies a complex web of factors contributing to the mental anguish and despair experienced by NEET aspirants. The impersonal nature of coaching institutes, where students often feel isolated and unsupported, exacerbates feelings of loneliness and helplessness. Coupled with the weight of parental expectations and financial burdens, many students find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of stress and anxiety, with no respite in sight. While efforts have been made by the government and district administration to address the crisis, the root causes of this epidemic run deep. A culture of relentless competition and societal pressure, fueled by parental expectations and societal norms, perpetuates a toxic environment for aspiring students. Parents, driven by a desire for their children's success, often fail to recognize the toll that their expectations and demands take on their children's mental health, inadvertently contributing to their distress.

To truly combat this crisis, a holistic and collaborative approach is needed. Parents must prioritize their children's well-being over societal expectations, fostering an environment of understanding and support. Educational institutions must recognize the importance of mental health and well-being, providing students with the resources and support they need to thrive. Society at large must acknowledge the unique challenges faced by NEET aspirants and offer empathy and encouragement in place of judgment and criticism. Ultimately, the path forward lies in fostering a culture of compassion, understanding, and support within our education system and society at large. By prioritizing the mental health and well-being of our youth, we can create a future where every aspiring doctor or engineer could thrive and succeed, free from the burden of despair and hopelessness. As the Quran reminds us, "Undoubtedly, along with hardship, there is ease" - a message of hope that serves as a guiding light in these dark and challenging times.

About the Author
Md. Basit Sha is the NEET aspirant and has completed his senior Secondary education at AMU.

Student And Education -The Relationship In Dwindle



■ By Mool Raj

Education, the needful and necessary process of learning, nurturing, supplying and receiving systematic knowledge of things which one needs to sustain and survive in this universe of deep conscience, Education, the prerequisite tool enlightening the process for success, growth and ascendancy with prosperity. Education, A reform in taking and racking up the challenges, the winds and hardships that life throws upon us with the solutions.

Veteran Poet Dr. Iqbal poets exalts Education as precursor to Success, fame and achievements

Coming upon Schooling, Now-a-days is an arduous and tiring job for the hapless child who always and ever gets crushed under the roots of stress, failed hope as by the mismanagement.

Few years or a decade ago, the schools were a center of joy, hope and happiness. It was an activity of ecstasy-free from back breaking burdens. The Education system was a couple of books and little home work. Students were a good time to play and cheer happily. There was no competition at all and students were careless both about careers and their course. Still they moved and we got the great personalities like Albert Einstein, Isaac Newton, Stephen

Hawking. Some socio-political giants like Ali Mohammed Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Sir Mohammad Iqbal (R.A.) and others.

Our Jammu and Kashmir in much of turmoil and conflict had given eminent religious souls to world in form of Sheikh-ul-Alam, LalDed, BulBul Shah Kashmiri, Mufti Molvi Ameen shopyani and many others, courtesy to Education.

Things have changed now. Children are loaded with responsibilities and put to forceful activity from day ist. They are deprived of their babyhood and minor age.

At much small age of 2 or 3 years old they are put in schools. At the age of 6 or 7, they are demanded to study up-to 3 hours at home. Such tiny school students are forced to understand complex grammatical rules, solve mathematical problems, computer science and tough general knowledge with the broad social science concepts. I was astonished to see a 2nd class student with the concept of photosynthesis. Because of this excessive non-sense home work, they are deprived of their babyhood, playing and cheering and much needed essential Sleep requirements. They are mostly fed on junk foods and unhealthy food items, which retards them both mentally and physically. A delicate child can't hold the burden, he is laden with. Preferably the child cum student himself defines to be a ladder. How much toll could they weigh on shoulders, please go through their delicacy and happy hood. Generation gap and similar situations have arisen by this now. The system has become like, every school wanted to show ascendancy of the positions bagged.

I have now been in service of Higher School Education for ten year now and both an sensible witness and social human, I experienced that majority, even greater

majority of Students have now started ignoring and bunking classes because of this unpleasant new education system. A roll of 250 to 300 student classroom is marking with daily 7 to 8 students. Despite counseling of experts and mentors, the curse on our little student generation is their heavy school bags with much of overweight books that is a definite cruelty causing them severe health problems day by day. Weight of school bags is increasing and not decreasing at any rate, our school children have turned slaves of educational system where commission of booksellers and teachers making their bags heavier and heavier.

There is no scope of creativity, imagination, ingenuity, inspiration and critical analysis. These children got no time to think except rote learning and homework. The system emboldens and promotes them with memorization and rote learning concept. The little children didn't get any time to ponder freely or think openly. This is an open oppression on them. We have kept them on method of cramming and memorizing selection of books is totally a hallucination and horror. Many companies are producing stuff in name of books and their is no to ask them the level against the children, Schools and teachers get their commissions

to choose the book publishing companies. It is a large misconception we are doing for our younger generation. In fact it has become a disastrous disease among people that much difficult books mean informative and higher standard of learning. Alas!!

It is a delusion that burdensome and difficult books are prescribed. Children's of today are more sensitive than those a few decades before (unconscious children). The extra burden and deprivation of liberty builds pressure on them. Then the children feel their life in despondency, desolation, loneliness, failure and deprivation. Then what we can get are suicidal cases and drug addicts cum chain and there should be no doubt but we should be ready and obvious for such disaster.



Parents and guardians are aware of this kind of bad Education system, but feel helpless and they have ceded to it. No parent feels a need to go against the school system as political potential of schools will send his/her ward back to home with called off admission, with the school's fame unharmed. The alternative of Government schools is not a good approach as they are completely at lack of proper facilitated functionality. It is a desperate situation for everyone for every member of the society. We

are not establishing a good and adequate system for our next generations which they shall have to face individually and unintentionally.

One more nightmare is we have put our children on continuous coaching system. It is a chief troublesome now a days in our society. It becomes important for a student to attend the coaching classes even at the rate of her or his school. It has turned a fashion for Kashmiri students to attend tuition classes than Schools. By this A student loses his or her much precious time, playing time and school life thus fails to overlook the challenges of life as all-round development is possible only in school life. Also tuition concept has made Student's mind such that he or she feels it unable to clear their examinations without coaching classes.

Luckily, we are not incapable, the things are in our hands, they have not yet uncontrolled. We can change the situation provided we are willing to take an interest in it, in the overall development of children. We need to think sincerely about this for our coming up future. Stress upon them for grades for social status is a kind of suppression on them, which need to be think of. All these developments should be thoroughly applied like a necessity.

At last, I want to allure the civil society members, Teachers, Parents and councilors to fathom and assess the situation and emerge out of this state and special efforts should be made for them at this depressing and discouraging state. They are requested to come forward in order to address this problem very strongly before we may go deep into the sea and lost our future generation too.

The author is a columnist and freelance writer

India Will Get Permanent UN Security Council Seat, But: S Jaishankar

HT News Network

Rajkot, Gujarat: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar today said India will definitely get permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council as there is a feeling in the world that it should get the position, but the country will have to work harder this time for it. He was speaking during an interaction with intellectuals in Gujarat's Rajkot city and was asked by the audience on India's chances of becoming the permanent member of the world body.

The United Nations was formed around 80 years ago, five nations - China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States - decided among themselves to become permanent members of its security council, Mr Jaishankar said.

At that time, there were a total of around 50 independent countries in the world, which has over time increased to around 193, he said. "But these five nations have kept their control, and it is strange that you have to ask them to give us their consent for a change. A few agree, a few others put forward their position with honesty, while



others do something from behind," he said. This has been going on for several years, the minister said.

"But now, there is a feeling across the world that this should change, and India should get a permanent seat. I see this feeling increasing every year," he said.

"We will definitely get it. But nothing big is ever achieved without hard work," Mr Jaishankar said.

"We will have to work hard, and this time we will have to work even harder," he added.

The Union minister said India, Japan, Germany and Egypt have put forward a proposal together before the UN and he believes this will take the matter a bit forward.

"But we must build pressure, and when this pressure increases... There is a feeling in the world that the UN has weakened. There was a deadlock in the UN on the Ukraine war and no consensus was reached in the UN regarding Gaza. I think as this feeling increases, our chances of getting a permanent seat will increase," he said.

When asked about baby girl Ariha Shah, who was taken away from her Indian parents by authorities in Germany and sent to foster care, Mr Jaishankar said he was personally aware of the matter and monitoring it. "The girl has been given to the child services. We are dissatisfied with this. We do not

want the child to be raised as per the German culture. Her parents have moved the court and the matter is being heard," the minister said. "At my level I have raised the issue with my counterpart. Our effort is to find some solutions," he added. In his address at the event, Mr Jaishankar said India has proved in the last 10 years that democracy can deliver.

The world is amazed at India moving towards 7 per cent growth despite the COVID-19 pandemic hampering growth, he said.

"The world believes that India as the fastest growing large economy can become the engine of global growth," he said. The world understands that India has technological talent, he added.

World agencies such as the UN understand India's achievements in social sectors like access to water, electricity, roads, health, schooling, etc, the external affairs minister further said.

"We should understand that being the fifth largest economy, on the way to becoming the third largest and with the biggest population, the world believes us to be talented people and expects us to contribute to resolve challenges," he added.

Probe Agency's Liquor Policy Kickback Charge In Court, "Lies", Says AAP

HT News Network

New Delhi: The Aam Aadmi Party has spent 45 crore on the election in Goa and there is enough evidence that party chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was involved in money laundering, the Enforcement Directorate told the Delhi High Court today, hours after the Supreme Court remarked on its failure to produce evidence of a money trail and gave bail to senior party leader Sanjay Singh. AAP rubbed in the top court's comments, calling the agency's allegation a "lie". "The ED just lies. The Supreme Court said no money trail was found, and no money was found. The ED could not provide a shred of evidence in the Supreme Court. It is working at the behest of BJP, which wants to topple Delhi government at any cost," read a rough translation of AAP's statement in Hindi.

This is the first time the Central investigation agency made its allegations on Goa official, including it in its response to Mr Kejriwal's challenge to his arrest.

Along with challenging his arrest in the case, Mr Kejriwal has also demanded release as interim relief. The matter would be heard by the court tomorrow.

Calling AAP the "major beneficiary of the proceeds of crime generated in the Delhi Liquor Scam", the ED claimed. "Part of the proceeds of crime to the tune of cash of 45 crore approx. has been utilised in the election campaign of AAP in Goa



Assembly elections 2022".

The agency also questioned Mr Kejriwal's objections, arguing that he has waived his right to question his detention today, and cannot now be allowed to argue that it is illegal. Moreover, proper procedures under Section 16 of PMLA and Article 22 of the Constitution were strictly followed during his arrest, the agency has claimed.

The section empowers the ED to arrest anyone on basis of material in their possession that indicate s/he has committed an offence punishable under law. The agency is allowed to record its reasons for such belief in writing, with the grounds of arrest to be communicated to the accused "as soon as may be".

In his plea, Mr Kejriwal has said that he was arrested by ED despite the fact that they do not have any material in possession that may lead to a belief of his guilt. The provisions of PMLA are being used to persecute and destroy the fabric of the democratic and federal structures, he said.

Union Minister's "No Vacancy" Jibe After Atishi Claims BJP Approached Her

HT News Network

New Delhi: The Bharatiya Janata Party "does not have any vacancy", Union Minister Hardeep Puri said Tuesday evening, hours after Aam Aadmi Party leader Atishi claimed she had been approached with an offer to jump ship and "save my political career". "...they threatened that if I don't switch (then) the Enforcement Directorate will arrest me", the senior AAP leader said this morning. Mr Puri hit back with a reference to the alleged liquor policy scam that has shaken the AAP and the opposition INDIA bloc ahead of the Lok Sabha election. "At a time when the entire AAP is embroiled in the liquor scam, we will not create trouble for ourselves by accepting her in our party," he said. "We do not have any vacancy for a political activist like Atishi..." Mr Puri said. The Urban Development Minister's firm rejection came after Atishi said she had been tapped to swap the AAP for the BJP. She said she was told the saffron party had "made up its mind on crushing



everyone (in the Aam Aadmi Party)".

"First, they put everyone in AAP's leadership in jail... Satyendra Jain, Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh, and now Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. BJP's plan is to arrest four more AAP leaders in the next two months. They will arrest me, Saurabh Bharadwaj, Durgesh Pathak and Raghav Chadha," she said.

Tension between the AAP and the BJP has ramped up over the past few months, and particularly after central probe agencies began investigating the alleged Delhi liquor excise policy scam.

Can Opposition Alliance Be Called INDIA? Court Gives Last Chance For Reply

HT News Network

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday granted last opportunity to the Centre and Opposition parties to file their responses on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) for directions to prohibit the use of the acronym INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) by opposition political alliances.

The Delhi High Court refused to prepone hearing in the PIL against the opposition political parties using the acronym INDIA while hearing the petitioner's application seeking an early hearing of the matter in view of the general election schedule notified by ECI.

The first phase of voting for the 2024 general elections is on April 19. The bench of Justice Manmohand and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora gave the one last opportunity to file the replies, saying "it would try to hear and dispose of the matter on April 10". Recently, the Election Commission of India (ECI), in its reply to the Delhi High Court, said that it can't regulate political alliances while responding to a plea



against the use of the INDIA acronym for the alliance of opposition parties." The answering respondent (ECI) is constituted under Article 324 of the Constitution of India for superintendence, direction and control of the conduct of all elections to Parliament, state legislatures and the offices of President and Vice President," the ECI stated. The authority of the answering respondent is to be exercised in accordance with the law passed by Parliament, albeit the answering respondent has the authority to

regulate matters concerning elections in the absence of any contrary law in force, the poll panel said. "The answering respondent has been vested with the authority to register associations of bodies or individuals of a political party in terms of Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951 (the "RP Act")," it added. Political alliances are not recognised as regulated entities under the Representation of People's Act or the Constitution. Earlier, the Delhi High Court had sought a response from the Centre, the ECI and several opposition political parties on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) for direction to opposition political parties against the use of the acronym INDIA for their political alliance. Petitioner Girish Upadhy, through Advocate Vaibhav Singh, stated that several political parties are using the national flag as the logo of their alliance, which is a further strategic move to attract and gain sympathy and votes from innocent citizens and as a tool to give a nudge or a spark that may lead to political hatred.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh Gets Bail After 6 Months In Jail In Liquor Policy Case

HT News Network

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh and posed tough questions to the Enforcement Directorate - which had arrested Mr Singh - including asking why he had been jailed for over six months without a trial or recovery of alleged bribe of 2 crore.

"Nothing has been recovered... there is no trace (of money allegedly received by the AAP as bribes for allotting liquor licences to the 'South Group')..." the court told the agency, which claims the party received 600 crore in bribes.

The court then directed Additional Solicitor General SV Raju to confer with the ED and decide if custody of Mr Singh is warranted at this stage. Mr Singh was released after the Enforcement Directorate said it did not want custody.

"I am making this statement (not opposing bail) without going into the merits of the case and keeping all the rights and contentions open," Mr Raju said.

The court earlier observed Dinesh Arora, an accused who turned



approver, or government witness, did not implicate Mr Singh in his initial statements. Mr Singh was arrested on the basis of statements by Mr Arora, who got bail in August.

Sanjay Singh has been in Delhi's Tihar jail since his arrest in October in the alleged liquor policy scam, which has roiled the opposition party - and seen the arrests of Mr Sisodia and his former boss, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal - weeks before the election.

Mr Singh was arrested on money laundering charges linked to the alleged scam.

His earlier bail pleas - including in the Delhi High Court - were turned down; in February, in fact, the High Court said "no ground" for relief had been made.

The ED then had

opposed the bail plea, alleging Mr Singh was involved in acquiring, possessing, concealing, dissipating and using proceeds of the crime generated from the alleged liquor scam.

That relief was finally granted this afternoon, after a bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Justice Dipankar Datta, and Justice Prasanna B Varale said Mr Singh could be released during pendency of the trial.

The court said the terms and conditions of the release are to be fixed by the trial court. What is significant, though, is that Mr Singh can participate in political activities, meaning he can campaign for the AAP, which faces a potential shortage of big-name leaders in the run-up to the polls.

DMK Spreading False Propaganda For 50 Years, Says Nirmala Sitharaman

HT News Network

Chennai: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday accused the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu of spreading a false campaign on the Katchatheevu islet ceded to Sri Lanka by India in 1974, and for making "irresponsible" statements on the issue.

Late M Karunanidhi, who was DMK president and Tamil Nadu chief minister at the time, was aware of the then ruling Congress's move but did not object, she said. The Congress, which failed to come to power in Tamil Nadu after 1967, owes an explanation to the nation for the loss of the territory which former prime minister Indira Gandhi described as a 'tiny mass of rock', she said.

Mrs Sitharaman claimed that former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had described Katchatheevu as a "nuisance". "Let them set right the lies they have been saying for half a century," Sitharaman said, while speaking to reporters after an interaction at the Viksit Bharat Ambassador campus dialogue programme here.

Ahead of polling in Tamil Nadu on April 19 for the Lok Sabha elections, the Katchatheevu issue has put on centre stage in the state, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently attacked the Congress and the DMK over the ceding of the tiny island 50 years ago.

Both the Congress and its ally DMK have hit back at the BJP for raking up the five-decade-old bilateral agreement between India and Sri Lanka ahead of polls. Accusing the DMK of supporting the UPA government's "anti-people initiatives", the minister said the DMK "merely" wrote 21 letters to Prime Min-



ister Narendra Modi seeking the retrieval of Katchatheevu, while all along the Dravidian party has refrained from uttering anything against the Congress government, which was also responsible for banning 'Jallikattu'.

The then chief minister Karunanidhi did not object at all even though the then foreign secretary explained it in detail in 1974. "But the DMK is spreading a false campaign that the islet had been ceded without their knowledge. We have documentary evidence to prove them wrong," she claimed.

On the opposition charge as to why the BJP-led government at the Centre had not acted on the matter during a decade of its rule, she responded saying the government prevented a fisherman from getting hanged in Sri Lanka and brought him home safely. In addition, steps have been taken to secure the release of fishermen from time to time, she added.

Denying that the BJP was making Katchatheevu an election issue, Sitharaman said, "There's no auspicious time to talk about it. This is an issue concerning the nation's security and sovereignty. It is our right." The issue also concerns the lives of Indian fishermen and cannot be seen in isolation, she added.

"Indira Gandhi, AB Vajpayee Lost Polls, So Can Nitin Gadkari," Says His Congress Rival In Nagpur

HT News Network



Nagpur, Maharashtra: Pitted against Union minister Nitin Gadkari, former Nagpur mayor and Congress candidate Vikas Thakre is banking on his strong local connect with the voters and on the past precedents of political heavyweights biting the dust in polls. The 57-year-old leader, who began his political innings as a corporator from the region that is home to the RSS headquarters, is brimming with confidence as opposition parties have closed ranks against the BJP, and suggests that his rival Nitin Gadkari has only catered to development projects benefiting the well-off sections of the society. "Only time will tell whether I have put my hand in the lion's den or whether the lion will strike," Mr Thakre, who represents Nagpur (West) seat in the state assembly, told Press Trust of India in an interview. He also dismissed the portrayal of Mr Gadkari, who is winning accolades for a turn-around in the country's highway infrastructure, as a powerful candidate and pointed out that even leaders such as Indira Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee have tasted electoral defeats. "In a democracy, the voters are all powerful and not any particular candidate. They decide who succeeds and who bites the dust. There have been instances where stalwarts such as - Indira ji, Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji have lost the elections," Mr Thakre said to a question on overcoming the challenge posed by Mr Gadkari, who is seeking a third term in office.

5 Killed In Strikes By Israel's F-35 Jets On Iran Consulate In Syria

HT News Network

Tehran: Israeli strikes on the Iranian consulate in the Syrian capital on Monday killed at least five people including a senior commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iranian state media reported. "At least five people were killed in the attack which was carried out by F-35 fighter jets," Hossein Akbari, Iran's ambassador to Damascus, said in front of the levelled building in an interview broadcast on state TV. He did not give the source of his information about the aircraft. A part of Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital was flattened on Monday by what was described as an Israeli air strike, a startling apparent escalation of conflict in the Middle East that would pit Israel against Iran and its allies.

The Israeli air strikes destroyed the Iranian embassy's consular annex, killing and wounding everyone inside, Damascus said as Iranian state TV reported a Revolutionary



Guards commander among the dead. Monday's attack was the first time the vast embassy compound itself had been hit, and comes amid soaring tensions over Tel Aviv's war in Gaza and intensifying violence between Israel and Iran's allies. UK-based war monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

said eight people, including several Guards members, were killed when "Israeli missiles... destroyed the building of an annex to the Iranian embassy". Revolutionary Guard commander among eight killed in strike; Tehran says it reserves the right to respond. Iran's ambassador to Syria, Hossein Akbari, giving a lower death toll, told

Iranian state TV that "at least five people were killed in the attack which was carried out by F-35 fighter jets". AFP reporters saw the annex building had caved in, and emergency services were rushing to search for victims under the rubble as sirens wailed in the upscale Damascus district of Mazzeh. Reuters reporters at the scene saw smoke rising from rubble of a building that had been flattened, and emergency vehicles parked outside.

An Iranian flag hung from a pole in front of the debris. The Syrian interior and foreign ministers were both spotted at the scene. Security forces shielded the site where earth-moving equipment was brought in to clear the debris and remove charred vehicles from the road outside, watched by a crowd of onlookers.

Syria's defence ministry said "the attack destroyed the entire building, killing and injuring everyone inside, and work is underway to recover the bodies and rescue the wounded from under the rubble".

12-year-old opens fire in Finnish school, injuring three: police

HT News Network

A 12-year-old opened fire on Tuesday at a school outside the Finnish capital Helsinki injuring three other children, police said, adding that the attacker was in custody.

The school in Vantaa has around 800 pupils and 90 staff. Children in grades one to nine, or aged seven to 15, attend the school. "There are people injured in the shooting incident", police said shortly after 10am (7am GMT). Police were alerted to the scene at 9:08am and later specified that the suspect and the injured were all 12 years old.

The city of Vantaa's crisis group was activated following the shooting, local media reported. Images from the scene showed a large number of police at the school. Police officers talk to family members of pupils at the Viertola comprehensive school in Vantaa, Finland on April 2. — Reuters

In an update around 11:30am, police said the suspect, who was carrying a gun at the time, had been arrested in an area of Helsinki in a "calm manner". Parents of pupils attending the school told the media that the shooting had occurred in a classroom.

Police urged the public to stay away from the area and remain indoors. "Do not open the door to strangers," they said in a statement.

Finnish Interior Minister Mari Rantanen said in a post on X that the day had started in a "shocking way". "I can only imagine the pain and worry that many families are experiencing at the moment," she said.

Israel leaves Gaza's largest hospital in ruins

HT News Network

GAZASTRIP: Charred buildings and a rubble strewn expanse littered with bodies were all that was left of the Al-Shifa hospital complex on Monday, after Israeli forces ended a two-week offensive at what used to be Gaza's largest medical facility.

The health ministry in Gaza said that after heavy Israeli air strikes and tank fire, "the scale of the destruction inside the complex and the buildings around it is very large". "Dozens of bodies, some of them decomposed, have been recovered from, in and around the Al-Shifa medical complex," it said, adding that the hospital was now "completely out of service".

Hundreds of people, including some who had been sheltering in the hospital prior to the Israeli incursion, rushed back to check damage and hunt for belongings.

Several doctors and civilians at the damaged complex told AFP that at least 20 bodies had been found, some of which appeared to have been driven over by military vehicles. Several were found close to the west entrance to the complex, which the Israeli army used during its departure from the hospital grounds on Monday. "The tanks went over them. Destruction. Children. Innocents. Unarmed civilians. They (soldiers) went over them," one witness said, asking not to be named. A correspondent saw one badly decomposed body bearing tyre marks. Following the Israeli withdrawal, the scene inside Al-Shifa hospital was one of devastation, with windows blown out, concrete walls blackened and volunteers carrying away shrouded corpses across the sandy wasteland. The Gaza media office said Israeli forces killed 400 Palestinians around Al-Shifa, including a woman doctor and her son, also a doctor, and put the medical facility out of function. There was no immediate Israeli response. "The occupation destroyed and burnt all buildings inside Al-Shifa Medical Complex. They bulldozed the courtyards, burying dozens of bodies of martyrs in the rubble, turning the place into a mass graveyard," said Ismail Al-Thawabta, director of the media office. A spokesperson for Gaza's Civil Emergency Service said Israeli forces had executed two people whose bodies were found at the complex in handcuffs, and used bulldozers to dig up the grounds of the complex and exhume corpses.

Over 800 scammers arrested in China-Myanmar joint operation

HT News Network

YANGON: More than 800 people suspected of being cross-border scammers were arrested in a joint police operation by Myanmar and China, Beijing's embassy in Yangon said on Monday.

Scam compounds have flourished in Myanmar, staffed by citizens from China and other countries who are often forced to work swindling their compatriots in an industry analysts say is worth billions.

Beijing — a major ally and arms supplier of Myanmar's isolated junta — has repeatedly asked the military to crack down on such operations.

Chinese law enforcement provided input to their Myanmar counterparts, who launched raids around Muse city, a major trade hub in northern Shan state, the embassy said on its WeChat channel.

Myanmar police arrested 807 people "who committed cross-border crimes" and seized computers, mobile phones and "fraud scripts", it said in a statement.

Among those arrested were 352 Chinese citizens, who were transferred to China on Sunday, the statement said. The remainder were Myanmar nationals, it added.

The junta has not commented on the raids. Last year, the United Nations human rights office said at least 120,000 people were being held in scam compounds in Myanmar.

Many were housed in the town of Laukkai in north-eastern Shan state, which has since been captured by an alliance of ethnic minority armed groups. The alliance said it would wipe out the scam compounds.

Taiwan leader embarks on 'peace journey' to China

HT News Network

TAIPEI: Taiwan's former president Ma Ying-jeou headed to China on Monday for what he called a "journey of peace" aimed at cooling cross-strait tensions.

Speaking to reporters at the airport before his departure, Ma described his trip to China as 'a journey of peace and a journey of friendship'.

China claims democratic Taiwan as part of its territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring the self-ruled island under its control.

Ma of the Beijing-friendly Kuomintang party oversaw an improvement in cross-strait ties during his 2008-16 stint in office, culminating in a summit between him and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Singapore in 2015.

But Tsai Ing-wen, who succeeded him in 2016, rejected Beijing's claim to the island. Tensions have further risen since January this year when Tsai's deputy Lai Ching-te — whom Beijing regards as a "dangerous separatist" — was elected to succeed her.

At the airport, Ma told reporter he hoped



"when the situation across the Taiwan Strait is tense, we can convey the sentiments of the Taiwanese people that they love peace, hope for cross-strait exchanges and hope to avoid war."

Ma added that he aimed to promote youth exchanges and to "reduce hostility and accumulate goodwill".

Last year, Ma made the first visit to China by a current or former Taiwanese leader in more than seven decades in a bid to improve the "cross-strait atmosphere".

On Monday, he said that trip "proved that this method is feasible and we can resolve cross-strait confrontation through building friendship between young people on both sides".

Iran president says Israel's Syria attack 'will not go unanswered'

HT News Network

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi on Tuesday condemned a deadly air strike blamed on Israel against his country's consular annex in Damascus, saying the "cowardly crime will not go unanswered".

"After repeated defeats and failures against the faith and will of the Resistance Front fighters, the Zionist regime has put blind assassinations on its agenda in the struggle to save itself," Raisi said on his office's website.

"Day by day, we have witnessed the strengthening of the Resistance Front and the disgust and hatred of free nations towards the illegitimate nature of (Israel). This cowardly crime will not go unanswered."

he air strike on the Iranian embassy's five-storey annex killed seven members of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, which runs Iran's overseas military operations.

Among the dead, were Brigadier Generals Mohammad Reza Zahedi and Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, both senior commanders in the Quds Force, Guards' foreign operations arm.

Zahedi, 63, had held a succession of



commands in the force in a Guards career spanning more than four decades.

Israel declined to comment on the strike.

The UN Security Council was to discuss the deadly strike later on Tuesday at a meeting requested by Syrian ally Russia.

"Iran reserves its legitimate and inherent right under international law and the United Nations Charter to take a decisive response to such reprehensible acts," Iran's mission to the world body said.

It warned the strike could "potentially ignite more conflict involving other nations" and called on the Security Council "to condemn this unjustified criminal act."

Israel Approves Bill To Allow Al Jazeera Broadcast Ban Amid Hamas War

HT News Network

Jerusalem: The Israeli parliament passed a bill Monday giving top ministers the authority to bar from Israel the broadcasts of news channel Al Jazeera — a step Premier Benjamin Netanyahu is poised to take. This law, which passed by 70 votes to 10, carries the authority to ban the broadcast of content from foreign channels but also allows the closing of their offices in Israel.

Netanyahu has vowed to take "immediate action" to shut down Al Jazeera in Israel once the law passes.



Israel had claimed in January that an Al Jazeera staff journalist and a freelancer killed in an air strike in Gaza were "terror operatives". The following month it said another journalist wounded in a separate strike, was a "deputy company commander" with Hamas. Israeli troops have

been fighting against Hamas in Gaza since October. Al Jazeera has fiercely denied the accusations and accused Israel of systematically targeting Al Jazeera employees in the Gaza Strip. The bill permitting officials to stop foreign media deemed to harm national security had already passed its first parliamentary hurdle last month. Netanyahu's Likud party said he asked "to make sure that the law to close Al Jazeera will be approved this evening" in Israel's parliament, the Knesset. Al Jazeera's bureau chief in the Palestinian territory, Wael al-Dahdouh, was also wounded, in an Israeli strike in December that killed the network's cameraman. The war between Israel and Hamas began with the militant group's October 7 attack that resulted in about 1,160 deaths in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

'Havana Syndrome' linked to Russian intelligence unit: report

HT News Network

WASHINGTON: The mysterious so-called Havana Syndrome symptoms experienced by US diplomats in recent years have been linked to a Russian intelligence unit, according to a joint media investigation released on Monday. Havana Syndrome was first reported in 2016 when US diplomats in Cuba's capital reported falling ill and hearing piercing sounds at night, sparking speculation of an attack by a foreign entity using an unspecified sonar weapon. Other symptoms including bloody noses, headaches and vision problems were later reported by embassy staff in China, Europe and the US capital Washington.

The diplomats may have been targeted by Russian sonic weaponry, according to the joint report by The Insider, a Russia-focused investigative media group based in Riga, Latvia, Germany's Der Spiegel and CBS's 60 Minutes.

The year-long investigation "uncovered evidence suggesting that unexplained anomalous health incidents, also known as Havana Syndrome, may have their origin in the use of directed energy weapons wielded by members of (the Russian GRU) Unit 29155," the report said.

"Senseless": India Rejects China's "Invented Names" For Arunachal Pradesh

HT News Network

New Delhi: The Ministry of External Affairs today firmly rejected attempts by China to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh and asserted that assigning "invented names" will not alter the reality that the state "is, has been, and will always be" an integral and inalienable part of India.

The statement was issued by the MEA in response to media queries in the wake of China releasing a fourth list of 30 new

names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh amid Beijing's stepped-up assertions in recent weeks to re-emphasise its claim over the Indian state.

"China has persisted with its senseless attempts to rename places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. We firmly reject such attempts. Assigning invented names will not alter the reality that Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India," MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal was quoted as saying in the statement. On March 28,



India said that Beijing may "repeat its baseless claims" as many times as it wants but that is not going to change New Delhi's position that Arunachal Pradesh "was, is and will always remain" an integral and inalienable part of the country. Mr Jaiswal had said this during his weekly press briefing, in response to a query on China continuing to harp on its claim over Arunachal Pradesh. His comments at the briefing had come days after Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian had reiterated China's claim.

Lok Sabha Elections 2024

Mega SVEEP programme held at Ski-Resort Gulmarg

HT News Network

GULMARG, APRIL 02: With an aim to enhance public participation in the upcoming General Elections to Lok Sabha, 2024, the District Election Officer (DEO) Baramulla, Minga Sherpa today kick started a mega Voter Awareness programme under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative at the International tourist destination Gulmarg.

The DEO kick-started the proceedings of the event at the majestic Afarwat Peak, standing at 14,500 feet

above the sea level, where hundreds of tourists visiting from across India captured memorable selfies at the SVEEP selfie stand set up by the District Administration Baramulla

Minga Sherpa interacted with the tourists and took selfies with them at the SVEEP selfie stand while encouraging them to participate in the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections 2024. As part of the campaign, a vibrant snow bike and ski rally was held which was flagged-off by Minga Sherpa from the Kongdori Ski-Point, to encourage youth especially first time voters to participate in the electoral process. Youth from across the



Baramulla district participated in the rally which culminated near the Gondola Phase-I. At the Kongdori, the DEO visited the state of art Mock Igloo Polling Station constructed by the youth services department with a theme "Vote for democracy" under SVEEP initiative. The election officials demonstrated to the visiting tourists the process of seamless use of the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) at the polling centre, thereby empowering them to effectively participate in the democratic process.

Speaking during the event, Minga Sherpa said that the primary objective behind organizing such events is to

enhance voter awareness and boost the public participation in the electoral process in the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections of 2024.

The DEO further emphasized the importance of every citizen's active involvement in the democratic process, underlining that a well-informed electorate is fundamental to ensuring a vibrant and representative democracy. Nodal Officer SVEEP, Sapna Kotwal emphasized the role of SVEEP in educating people about the electoral process and entrusted the media to give wide publicity to such events for the wholesome voter awareness.

FFRC Initiates Action Against Private School for demanding Illegal Admission Fee

HT News Network

Srinagar: April 02, 2024: Justice Sunil Hali, the Chairperson of the Fee Fixation and Regulation Committee (FFRC), has taken decisive action following allegations against the management of Kashmir Haward School in Srinagar. The school is accused of demanding an admission fee of Rs 85,000, a practice prohibited by law, as highlighted in a video featuring allegations made by a lady named Sana.

Justice Sunil Hali has emphasized that charging admission fees without FFRC approval is strictly prohibited, with violators facing legal consequences. The FFRC's investigation has revealed that the school failed to submit the necessary fee regulation documentation for the academic session 2024-25 by the deadline of December 31, 2023.

To address these allegations and regulatory violations, the Chairman/Principal of Kashmir Haward School has been summoned to appear before the FFRC office in Hyderpora on April 3, 2024. They have been directed to provide all pertinent information for a thorough examination of the matter.

Justice Sunil Hali cautioned the school that non-compliance with this directive could lead to further actions, including an investigative inquiry, fee collection suspension, and potential recommendations for the school's recognition suspension by the government.

The Chairperson has reaffirmed the FFRC's commitment to upholding regulatory standards and ensuring compliance in Private educational institutions to protect the interests of students and families.

Illegal extraction & transportation of minerals Police seizes 02 vehicles, arrests 02 persons in Kulgam

Farooq Rather

Kulgam: April 02: Cracking a whip on illegal extraction and transportation of minerals, police have seized two vehicles and arrested two drivers in Kulgam.

A Police party led by SHO Police Station Devsar during patrolling at general road Peepora, Pahloo crossing seized two vehicles (tractors), besides, arrested two drivers on the spot, involved in illegal extraction and transportation of minerals from Nallah Vaishow. The accused drivers have been identified as Zubair Ahmad Rather son of Hamidullah Rather resident of Sopat, Tengpora and Danish Ahmad Ganie son of Manzoor Ahmad Ganie resident of Bona Devsar. They have been shifted to police station Devsar where they remain in custody.

Lok Sabha Elections-2024 Empowering First Time Female Voters: Mega Awareness Program under SVEEP held at Bandipora

HT News Network

BANDIPORA, APRIL 02: As part of the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative, District Administration Bandipora on Tuesday organized a mega awareness program for first time voters at Mini Secretariat Bandipora.

The program started with an engaging and informative interaction of District Election Officer (DEO) Bandipora, Shakeel ul Rehman with the participants aimed at empowering young women who are preparing to cast their votes for the first time.

While interacting with the first-time female voters, the DEO highlighted the



value of informed decision-making and responsible voting. On the occasion, Kindergartens from various schools joined hands to celebrate and support first-time female voters by presenting them flowers. This heart-warming gesture was aimed to recognize the importance of participation of first-time female voters in the electoral process and to inspire confidence and enthusiasm in exercising their democratic right. Later, an awareness programme was held in conference hall mini secretariat Bandipora which was presided over by Dy DEO Bandipora, Mohammad Rafeeq Bhat and was attended by first time female voters, ASHA Workers and the staff to be deployed for pink polling stations. Addressing the

gathering, the Dy DEO highlighted the role of Booth Level Awareness Groups (BAGs) for ethical voting campaign and in facilitating voters besides emphasizing their role in awareness generation among voters.

The program also witnessed demonstrations and training to female employees for handling EVMs and other polling equipment aimed at ensuring smooth and efficient operations during the polling process.

Among others, the program was attended by Chief Education Officer Bandipora, Dr. G. M. Pujoo; District Level Master Trainer, Mohammad Iqbal Samoon; Coordinator SVEEP activities Arsalan Habib and other concerned.

Lok Sabha Elections 2024 Training programme for MCMC Staff, Media and Reps of Political Parties held at Shopian

HT News Network

SHOPIAN, APRIL 02: In a bid to ensure smooth conduct of upcoming Lok Sabha elections, 2024 in the district, Nodal Officer Training today held a training programme for MCMC Staff, Media persons and representatives of Political parties at Mini Secretariat, Shopian. District Information Officer (DIO) Shopian, Showkat Hussain Ganie who is also Nodal Officer MCMC/Paid News raised awareness among concerned about the process of pre certification of Political advertisements, Paid News and Media monitoring issues. The DIO highlighted the role of Media in order to create an environment for peaceful conduct of elections as well as to use different forms of media to spread voter awareness among the general public.

The aim of the training was to



highlight the guidelines, particularly do's and don'ts prescribed for the elections regarding media coverage and process of pre certification of advertisements of political parties/candidates by District Level MCMC. Master Trainer, Irfan Ahmed

through a power point presentation highlighted important parameters with regard to MCMC for the benefit of political parties and MCMC Staff. Identification of Paid news cases was also emphasized for reporting to concerned for action.

Police arrests 4 gamblers in Kulgam; Stake money seized

Farooq Rather

Kulgam: April 02: Police in Kulgam have arrested 04 gamblers and seized stake money and playing cards from their possession.

Acting on a specific information regarding gambling activities in the orchards of Pombay Kulgam. Accordingly, a police party headed by SHO Police Station DH Pora raided the specific spot and apprehended 04 gamblers & recovered stake money of 7650/- & playing cards from their possession.

They have been identified as Aamir Ahmad Shakhshaz son of Abdul Hamid Shakhshaz resident of Chawalgam, Abdul Rashid Thoker son of Ghulam Ahmad Thoker resident of Pombay, Mohd Ashraf Malik son of Wali Mohd Malik resident of Yaripora & Sharukh Khan son of Fayaz Ahmad Khan resident of Chatabal Kulgam. They have been shifted to PS DH Pora where they remain in custody. Accordingly, a case vide FIR no 32/2024 under relevant sections of law stands registered at Police Station DH Pora and investigation has been initiated.

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

Police distributes study material among downtrodden students in Handwara

Dr Abdul Qayoom

Handwara, April 02: Under the aegis of Civic Action Programme 2023-24, Police in Handwara distributed study material among downtrodden students. The ceremony was attended by SSP Handwara Shri. Dawood Ayoub-JKPS, DySP DAR Handwara Shri AB Majid-JKPS & other officers of Police District Handwara.

On the occasion SSP Handwara interacted with all the downtrodden students and assured them that J&K Police will always play its eminent role in providing every possible support to the needy people. He also asked the beneficiaries not to allow the Poverty to fall prey off ignorance & illiteracy.

Community members have lauded the role of Police for organising such events and hoped that Police will organise such events in future as well

HDFC Bank Launches Project 'HIMALAYA' in Ladakh

HT News Network

Leh, Mar, KNT: HDFC Bank under its CSR arm Parivartan, launched project 'HIMALAYA' in the Leh district of Ladakh. Project 'HIMALAYA' is an acronym for High-Altitude Income Maximization and Adaptive Livelihoods Advancement for Youth. The Bank has partnered with, Partnering Hope Into Action Foundation (PHIA) and, Appropriate Technology India to implement this initiative.

Project 'HIMALAYA' is a Skill Development and Livelihood Enhancement initiative by the Bank and is aimed at supporting communities in the hilly regions, towards generating a climate-resilient livelihood.

Key activities under the project include training locals in agriculture and milk value chain-led skills, formation of farmer producer groups and vegetable value chain producer groups and installation of solar passive greenhouse, vegetable nurseries, and solar street-lights.

Ms. Nusrat Pathan, Head-CSR, HDFC Bank said, "Project HIMALAYA is envisioned to serve the people in the hilly region by creating a climate-resilient livelihood and is aimed towards the socio-economic development of the community. We are happy to partner with PHIA and Appropriate Technology India to implement the initiative in Ladakh and we endeavor to implement this initiative in further high-altitude regions in the entire stretch of the Himalayan belt."

HDFC Bank was among the top CSR spenders in the country for the financial year ending March 2023. Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh Brig. B. D. Mishra (Retd.) inaugurated the project. Other dignitaries present during the launch ceremony included DC Leh Santosh Sukhadeve and Administrative Secretary, Michael M. D'Souza. (KNT)

Lok Sabha Elections 2024

Orientation programme under SVEEP for NSS Volunteers held at Ganderbal

HT News Network

GANDERBAL, APRIL 02: A comprehensive one-day orientation programme for NSS volunteers of District Ganderbal was today held at BHSS Ganderbal.

The event was aimed to equip the volunteers with essential skills and knowledge for their upcoming responsibilities.

The highlight of the programme was the interactive session with the Deputy Commissioner Ganderbal, Shyambir where the volunteers had the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and gain insights into their roles and responsibilities.

Shyambir emphasized the importance of active participation in community service and civic duties.

Furthermore, the Nodal Officer SVEEP Ganderbal provided crucial instructions to the volunteers, urging them to efficiently operate at the help desks during



the forthcoming general Lok Sabha Elections 2024.

The volunteers were tasked with facilitating smooth electoral processes and ensuring voter awareness and engagement.

Dedicated DLMTs (District Level Master Trainers) conducted specialized training sessions, focusing on preparing the volunteers for their pivotal roles at the help desks during the upcoming elections.

The training encompassed various aspects, including voter assistance, electoral procedures and conflict resolution.

This orientation programme underscored the commitment of NSS volunteers towards fostering active citizenship and contributing to the democratic process. Dedicated DLMTs (District Level Master Trainers) conducted specialized training sessions, focusing on preparing the volunteers for their pivotal roles at the help desks during the upcoming elections.

Heavy drinking may significantly raise heart disease risk, especially for females

Coronary heart disease is the third leading cause of death globally, with cisgender women at a higher risk. A recent study shows a woman's risk of developing heart disease may increase depending on the amount of alcohol consumed.

The findings suggest that women who binge drink have a 68% higher risk of developing heart disease compared to a 33% increased risk for men.

According to researchers, coronary heart disease is currently the third leading cause of death Trusted Source in the world and is linked to 17.8 million deaths each year.

A type of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease occurs when cholesterol builds up on the inside of artery walls, forming plaques that make it difficult for blood to flow to the heart.

Cisgender women Trusted Source are at a higher risk for developing coronary heart disease than men due to size and structural differences in the heart and hormonal changes that happen when a woman ages.

Now, researchers from Kaiser Permanente Northern California have found that a woman's chance of developing coronary heart disease can also increase depending on the amount of alcohol consumed.

The study — presented at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Scientific Session April 6–8 — also found men with a high intake of alcohol also had an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease. The research has yet to be published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Does heavy drinking cause heart problems?

According to Dr. Jamal Rana, a cardiologist with The Permanente Medical Group, an adjunct investigator in the Division of Research at Kaiser Permanente Northern California, and the lead author of this study, more awareness is needed on how alcohol can affect heart health.

"When we think about protection against heart disease, the first thing most people think of is: don't smoke," Dr. Rana told Medical News Today.

"I think a lot more awareness is needed that alcohol use can be a factor in heart disease risk and that asking about alcohol use should be part of routine health assessments moving forward. At Kaiser Permanente Northern California, alcohol use is considered a vital sign, and we ask about it and record the response at every medical



appointment, the same way we record someone's blood pressure."

Comparing binge drinking to moderate drinking

For this study, Dr. Rana and his team analyzed alcohol use data from more than 430,000 people who received care at Kaiser Permanente Northern California.

Study participants ranged in age from 18 to 65 and had no prior heart disease at the start of the study.

Participants were placed in three alcohol intake levels — low (one to two drinks per week for both men and women), moderate (three to 14 drinks per week for men and three to seven drinks for women), and high (15 or more drinks per week for men and eight or more drinks per week for women).

Additionally, researchers categorized study participants by whether they engaged in binge drinking or not.

Those who participated in binge drinking had five or more drinks per day in the past three months for men and four or more drinks per day in the past three months for women.

Scientists compared the relationship between alcohol intake levels reported by participants to coronary heart disease diagnoses received during the four years after.

Binge drinking significantly raises heart disease risk

Upon analysis, the researchers found that women who did not binge drink but reported high alcohol intake had a 45% increased chance of developing heart disease compared to female participants who reported moderate alcohol intake.

Scientists also discovered that women who fit the binge drinking category increased their heart disease risk by 68%.

"These findings suggest that we need to be educating women about potential heart risks associated with binge drinking," Dr. Rana said.

"Our findings also underscore how important it is for healthcare providers to ask women not only how often they drink but if they binge drink." The study also found that male participants with high alcohol intake had a 15% higher risk of heart disease compared to those reporting moderate alcohol intake.

Males with a high alcohol intake who also met the criteria for binge drinking had a 33% increased risk of heart disease.

The study also found that male participants with high alcohol intake and met the binge drinking category heightened their heart disease risk by 33% compared to those reporting moderate alcohol intake.

Can heart damage from alcohol be reversed?

After reviewing this research, Dr. Jennifer Wong, a board certified cardiologist and medical director of Non-Invasive Cardiology at MemorialCare Heart and Vascular Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, CA, told MNT she felt it was useful information about how alcohol might adversely affect the heart.

"It gives doctors additional evidence to present to patients when encouraging them to decrease their alcohol intake," Dr. Wong explained.

"(For future research) it might be useful to see what the effects of cutting back would be in terms of cardiovascular outcomes, such as heart attack or myocardial infarction and deaths from cardiovascular causes."

MNT also spoke with Monique Richard, a registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of Nutrition-In-Sight, who was not surprised by the study's findings because while a little bit of a good thing can be beneficial, a lot of anything can be harmful.

Should diabetics have an evening snack?

Snacks can bump up our energy in the middle of a busy day and prevent us from overeating at the next regular meal. Typically, about 25 per cent of daily calories come from snacks. Choosing snacks wisely is, therefore, a must for good health as well as diabetes control and weight management.

But first, is snacking important for people with diabetes? If your diabetes is treated with insulin and medication that puts you at risk of hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar), you may need a snack in between meals to help keep your blood glucose in range. These snacks should contain fibre, proteins and good fat. This will help you feel full for longer periods and slow the digestion of carbohydrates, which will help stabilise your



blood sugar levels. A person with diabetes should have snacks within the 15-30 grams of carbohydrate versus the 30-60 grams of carbohydrates recommended for meals. And they should ideally have them before meals, mid-day or early evening. Studies have shown that the

quality of snacking is more important than the quantity or frequency of snacking. Thus choosing high quality snacks over highly processed snacks, which come with high sodium, sugar and trans fats, is preferable. Here are some tips and tricks for people with diabetes to enjoy a snack! Nuts and seeds: Replace the evening biscuits with a fistful of nuts (almonds, walnuts, pistachio), rich in good fats, protein and has high satiety value. Studies have shown that if we substitute carbohydrates with good fats, we reduce blood sugar spikes, blood pressure and promote heart health. Fruits: Fresh fruits are loaded with antioxidants, fibre and satisfy sweet cravings. However, people with diabetes should not overload themselves with fruits as they contain a substantial amount of carbohydrates.

An avocado a day may improve diet quality, researchers suggest

Poor diet quality has been associated with a higher risk of cardiometabolic disease.

A recent study suggests daily avocado consumption may improve overall diet quality, but the effects on cardiometabolic health were unclear.

Experts say a varied and balanced diet is the best way to support long-term health and longevity.

In the United States, many adults have poor diet quality and do not meet key dietary recommendations provided by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans Trusted Source.

With poor diet quality being the leading risk factor for cardiometabolic diseases, this increases the risk for chronic health conditions that are among the leading causes Trusted Source of death.

Finding ways to improve diet quality in the general population is crucial for promoting better health outcomes.

Now, a recent study from Penn State University analyzed the impact of a food-based intervention — daily avocado intake — on diet quality and cardiometabolic risk.

The findings, published in Current Developments in Nutrition, revealed that consuming one avocado daily



for 26 weeks improved adherence to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans among adults with abdominal obesity. However, the changes in diet quality did not directly influence cardiometabolic disease risk factors.

The study received funding from the Avocado Nutrition Center.

In this 26-week, multi-center, randomized controlled trial, researchers studied 1,008 participants aged 25 and older with abdominal obesity and typically low avocado intake.

Participants were divided into two groups. One group was provided with a daily supply of one avocado (approximately 168 grams) and received guidance on how to include it in their daily diet. The other (control) group, was asked to maintain their usual dietary habits, limiting

their avocado consumption to two or fewer per month, and received no dietary counseling.

Diet quality was evaluated through unannounced 24-hour recalls at various intervals during the study, and scored with the Healthy Eating Index-2015 (HEI-2015) Trusted Source to measure adherence to dietary guidelines.

As per the USDA's classification, this clinical trial considered avocado servings — one-half cup chopped or approximately 75 grams — as part of the total vegetable component in the HEI-2015 scores.

The participants' cardiometabolic disease risk factors, including visceral fat volume, liver fat fraction, C-reactive protein, metabolic syndrome criteria, body weight, body mass index (BMI), insulin, VLDL cholesterol, and the total cholesterol to HDL cholesterol ratio, were also monitored to understand the effects of daily avocado consumption on these factors.

During the study, researchers found that individuals who consumed avocados daily showed a "potentially clinically relevant" increase of 4.74 points in their HEI-2015 scores compared to the control group that consumed their regular diet.

Watermelons may improve diet quality and cardiometabolic health

Two studies investigated the effects of watermelon on diet quality and cardiometabolic function.

They found that watermelon consumption is linked to higher nutrient intake and better heart health.

Further research is needed to understand how watermelon affects cardiometabolic health.

Watermelons contain many nutrients, such as potassium, vitamin C, and magnesium. The fruit also has a high bioavailability of antioxidants, including lycopene and l-citrulline.

Studies have shown that watermelon supplements and extracts decrease blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

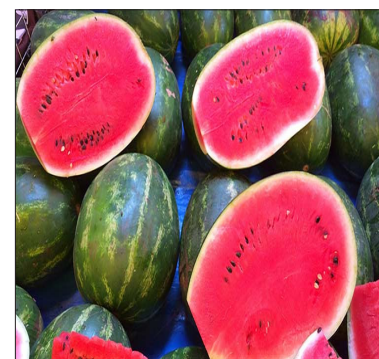
Comparably fewer studies investigate raw watermelon, however, and those that do tend to involve large quantities of over 2 lbs per day.

Nevertheless, these studies also report that consumption of the fruit is linked to lower cholesterol and body weight, as well as a lower risk of prostate Trusted Source, lung, and breast cancer Trusted Source.

Further study of raw watermelon's health effects could improve dietary guidelines and prevention strategies for cardiometabolic health.

Recently, two studies that investigated the health effects of watermelon consumption.

The first study, published in Nutrients, found that children and adults



who consumed watermelon had a higher intake of various nutrients, including dietary fiber, magnesium, and potassium, than non-consumers. They also had a lower intake of added sugars and saturated fatty acids.

The second study, also published in Nutrients, found that drinking watermelon juice for two weeks protects vascular function.

Dr. John A. Galat, cardiac surgeon at Novant Health, Charlotte, North Carolina, who was not involved in the studies, told Medical News Today:

"As the hot summer months approach these two studies, incidentally both funded by the National Watermelon Promotion Board, suggest that the regular enjoyment of watermelon might be good for you! In fact, over indulging likely would not have any adverse effects unlike so many other things that we enjoy."

He noted, however, that based on these two studies alone, he would not necessarily promote watermelon consumption to those who don't already enjoy the fruit.

Watermelon consumers may have a healthier diet

For the first study, researchers analyzed data from 56,133 individuals from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) study.

They collated the data between 2003 and 2018, and included two 24-hour dietary recalls from individuals ages 2–18 years alongside adults.

The average watermelon consumption among adults and children was 125 and 162 grams per day. Around 98% of participants consumed raw watermelon, whereas 2% consumed watermelon juice.

By analyzing the dietary information, the researchers were able to estimate overall nutrient intake among watermelon consumers and non-consumers.

To ensure accuracy in their results, they controlled for factors including physical activity, poverty income ratio (PIR), smoking status and alcohol intake. They also controlled for the consumption of other foods, including total vegetables, non-watermelon fruits, and dairy intake.

In the end, they found that children and adults watermelon consumers had over 5% higher intake of

NEWS

5 'Healthy' Foods That Aren't As Nutritious As You Thought



The market is loaded with food products with big labels saying 'healthy.' If you easily get attracted to those appealing labels, you might be ruining your health unknowingly. You eat food to generate energy and to provide your body with all the essential nutrients. A healthy, nutritious diet helps the body function properly and prevents nutritional deficiencies. However, such foods are usually deprived of essential nutrients or contain one or more unwanted ingredients. If you are not able to spot the difference, we are here to help you out. Here, we have a list of foods that are labelled healthy but are usually nutritionally deprived.

1. Flavoured yogurt

Yogurt is a probiotic that contains protein, calcium and other essential nutrients. Now, the market is flooded with flavoured yogurts that are high in sugar, unwanted calories and preservatives. Therefore, it is wise to stick to plain or fresh yogurt. You can add chopped fresh fruits to plain yogurt for the sweetness.

2. Gluten-free snacks

Gluten is not bad for you unless you are allergic to it. So, foods labelled as gluten-free are not necessarily healthy. Those with gluten intolerance should also avoid highly processed gluten-free products.

3. Diet soda

Weight watchers often stick to diet soda with no sugar and fewer calories. However, drinking diet soda is also linked with many health issues. Those who drink diet soda are at a higher risk of metabolic syndrome than those who don't. Studies have also shown that consumption of artificial sweeteners present in most diet sodas is linked to a higher risk of developing cancer.

4. Veggie chips

Do you choose vegetable chips over traditional potato chips and believe that you are making a healthier choice? The truth is that vegetable chips are also deep-fried or baked. They are also loaded with food colours, artificial flavours and added sugar.

5. Low-fat/fat-free

Foods with low-fat labels aren't healthier. Many unwanted ingredients are added to make up for the flavour loss. Also, fats are essential for your health like other nutrients. Eating nutritious fatty food is good for your overall health.



Frequent Flyer Jordan Cox Ready To Seize His Chance With Essex

SYDNEY: What does it take to build a career in professional cricket's modern, itinerant era? In this fragmenting landscape, the days of biding one's time and awaiting that international call are receding, and in their place a new generation of go-getter cricketer is emerging, with a restless curiosity and an increasingly clear understanding of how to cash in on their athletic prime.

Players such as Jordan Cox, for instance, a 23-year-old whose seemingly inevitable England debut remains, for now, just beyond his reach, but who isn't about to let that circumstantial setback restrict his career progression.

Midway through last summer, Cox secured a high-profile and not-uncontroversial move from Kent to Essex, a club he describes as being "best suited for what I want at this moment in time", which hardly smacks of the fulfilment of a lifelong dream.

And little wonder, given the winter he's just had. With apologies to his new county, and with no sense whatsoever that he'll be stinting on his efforts as Essex's season begins, next week's County Championship opener against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge will be Cox's fifth professional debut of the past five months.

His string of new beginnings began back in November, when Cox stepped out for Bangla Tigers in the Abu Dhabi T10, where his six matches produced 265 runs, two half-centuries and a strike-rate of 232, including a ferocious 90 not out from 36 balls against the eventual finalists, Deccan Gladiators.

By the time that final took place, however, Cox had already swapped continents for what became a four-match stint with Melbourne Renegades in Australia's Big Bash League, which then gave way to a return to the UAE in January to play for Gulf Giants in the IIT20.

And, having previously sampled the SA20 and the Lanka Premier League in the 2022-23 winter, Cox then capped this year's travels by making his first appearances in the Pakistan Super League, with six matches for Islamabad United in February and March prior to his link-up with his newest new squad for Essex's pre-season in Abu Dhabi.

"I left on November 10, and I was back 10 days ago, so I've been aware a fair chunk," Cox says during Essex's pre-season media day in Chelmsford. "I love it. I went to private school, I was a boarder. So my parents were like, 'have fun at school, see you at Easter holidays, see you at Christmas'. So I'd only go home like three times a year, so I'm pretty used to being away from home." That sense of adventure is palpable as Cox lifts the curtain on the touring lifestyle to reveal a glimpse of what this new world is really like. The SA20, he says, is "carnage... the flights are full on... fly, rest day, game, everywhere." The IIT20, by contrast, was just 40-minute bus rides between Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. "It was the first time I've ever unpacked in a franchise environment."

Ben Stokes Opts Out Of England's T20 World Cup Defence

Hero Of 2022 Final Concentrates On Return To Full Test Fitness In Wake Of Knee Surgery

LONDON: Ben Stokes has ruled himself out of the T20 World Cup in June, telling England's management that he does not want to be considered for selection for their title defence in the Caribbean.

Stokes hit the winning run in the 2022 final, grinding out his maiden T20I half-century as England beat Pakistan by five wickets at the MCG. But he has only played two T20 matches since, both at last year's IPL, and said missing the World Cup was "a sacrifice that allows me to be the all-rounder I want to be for the foreseeable future".

Having previously retired from ODI cricket in the summer of 2022, Stokes reversed his decision in order to play in the 50-over World Cup last year. However, that availability required him to delay knee surgery, and he was only able to bowl five overs across England's recent 4-1 Test series defeat to India. He is expecting to play for Durham in the County Championship at some stage in the next few months, after opting out of IPL 2024.

"I'm working hard and focusing on building my bowling fitness back up to fulfil a full role as an all-rounder in all

formats of cricket," Stokes said in a statement released by the ECB on Tuesday. "Opting out of the IPL and the World Cup will hopefully be a sacrifice that allows me to be the all-rounder I want to be for the foreseeable future."

"The recent Test tour of India highlighted how far behind I was from a bowling point of view after my knee surgery and nine months without bowling. I'm looking forward to playing for Durham in the County Championship before the start of our Test summer. I wish Jos [Buttler], Motty [Matthew Mott] and all the team the best of luck in

defending our title."

Stokes was reluctant to commit to the T20 World Cup before his surgery but said last month that he expected to be available for the tournament. Mott, England's white-ball coach, confirmed in December that his return would be "a given" if fit, saying: "[Stokes] gives us that ability to have a seam bowler in your top six that gives you so many options with your team balance."

In Stokes' absence, England will consider using Liam Livingstone in the No. 4 spot that he filled during their 3-2 defeat to West Indies in December -

though Livingstone limped off with an apparent muscle strain while fielding for Punjab Kings on Sunday, and is waiting on scan results to determine its severity. Jamie Overton, the Surrey all-rounder, will also come into contention.

Stokes has only played three T20Is for England outside of World Cups in the last three years and his decision may well have ended a 43-match T20I career which has only rarely seen him at his best. But he could yet come into contention for the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, when he will still only be 34 years old.

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