

Good Morning Kashmir

15th Year Of Publication




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Bihar Diwas Celebrated In Raj Bhawan



JAMMU: Jammu Kashmir Raj Bhawan hosted Bihar Diwas celebration Friday. Senior officials, Students and the residents of Bihar living in J&K UT were the special invitees on the occasion. While addressing the guests, the Lieutenant Governor Shri Manoj Sinha extended his greetings and best wishes to the people of Bihar on the **•P-06**

DIPR Gets Creative To Boost Voter Turnout



JAMMU: The District Information Centre Kathua, a unit of Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) has taken a creative approach to boost voter participation in the upcoming elections. In a bid to engage citizens and make the message of voting more relatable, the department has infused humour into its SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral **•P-06**

Rains Lash Plains Gulmarg Among Upper Reaches Receive Fresh



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Rains lashed plains while upper reaches including Gulmarg received fresh snowfall, officials said on Friday. The 36-hour wet spell under the influence of Western Disturbance ended this afternoon. However under its influence, several higher reaches of north Kashmir recorded fresh snowfall while rains lashed plains of Kashmir during the period. Ahmad said. On March 27, he said that the weather would remain partly to generally cloudy with light rain and snow at few places, adding that from March 28 to 31, partly to generally cloudy weather is expected with intermittent light rain and snow at many places. The Met department has also issued an advisory, advising the farmers to resume farm operations after 23rd March—(KNO)

THE 36-HOUR wet spell under the influence of Western Disturbance ended this afternoon.

The weather is expected to remain dry during the next few days. Upto March 26 from today, there is a possibility of generally dry weather conditions with brief cloudiness as well, Director Meteorological department, Dr Mukhtar

India To Become Third-Largest Economy In Three Years: Anurag Thakur

CHENNAI: Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Friday said that India will become the third-largest economy in the world in the next three years. Speaking at the Viksit Bharat Ambassador (VBA) meet-up programme here, the Union Minister said that in a span of 10 years, since Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government came to power at the Centre in 2014, the Indian economy has turned from fragile five to top five. The Union Minister said that during the regime of the previous UPA government, there were a lot of corruption cases but since 2014, it was a clean government that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been leading. He also said that during the UPA rule, the Indian economy was among the five fragile economies of the world and in the bracket of South Africa, Brazil, Indonesia and Turkey even when an economist (an oblique reference to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh) was heading the country. He, however, said that the former Prime Minister was under remote control, indirectly referring to Congress leader Sonia Gandhi. He said that the country had then high inflation rates, debt rates, policy paralysis and this was mainly due to misgovernance. The Union Minister said that the GDP rate has now gone up from 4.5 per cent to 8.5 per cent which was the highest in the world and at the same time, inflation has come down to 6.7 per cent now. The FDI has increased from \$35 billion to \$85 billion and exports have increased from \$300 billion to \$770 billion. Anurag Thakur also said that the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Loan Yojana was one of the major driving forces that boosted the economy, adding 65 per cent of the beneficiaries from the scheme were women. He said that during earlier days, 430 million people were not associated with the banking system. In two years, PM Modi's government opened 43 crore bank accounts for the **•P-06**



THE UNION MINISTER SAID THAT DURING THE ERSTWHILE Congress rule, as pilferage was huge, the money was not reaching the beneficiaries. "However, PM Modi used technology, Department of Telecom and linked Aadhaar and Jan Dhan accounts and money was reaching the beneficiaries 100 per cent," he said.

CS Reviews Functioning Of FCS&CA Deptt



GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Friday had a detailed review of working of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) department here. Apart from Commissioner Secretary, FCS&CA, Zubair Ahmad, the meeting was attended by Director Food Supplies Jammu/Kashmir and other concerned officers of the department. During the meeting, the Chief Secretary held a detailed review of various aspects of functioning of the department having the mandate of distribution of food grains and other essential supplies. Dulloo also took note of saturation of aadhar seeding of ration cards **•P-06**

World Water Day Experts Call For Urgent Measures To Save Water

JAHANGEER GANAIE

SRINAGAR: On World Water Day, experts stressed the urgent need for concerted efforts at every level to conserve water for future generations, as the global water crisis continues to escalate. They said that with the increasing global population, the demand for water is rising at an alarming rate, exacerbating existing challenges such as water scarcity, pollution and inadequate infrastructure. Er Firdous Ahmad, an executive officer in the Jal Shakti Department, said this year's theme "water for peace" underscores the critical importance of cherishing, preserving and responsibly utilising water resources to avoid future scarcity and distress. "It is imperative that initiatives, ranging from the local community level to the state and international levels, prioritise water conservation, preservation and equitable access, transcending borders," he stressed. Dr Mukhtar, another officer from the Jal Shakti Department, echoed similar concerns, saying there has been an alarming depletion of pure water bodies due to ongoing human intervention. He warned that unless immediate action is taken, there may not be enough water available for current and future generations. "Despite the availability of water, pollution levels are rising, threatening the safety of all water sources," he added. Dr Mukhtar said it is crucial to act now before the situation spirals out of control and becomes irreversible. Experts underscored the importance of promoting water conservation, investing in water infrastructure and adopting efficient water management **•P-06**

Flight Fares Skyward In J&K, Passengers Fume

ALIASAD

SRINAGAR: Air travelers traveling to Jammu and Kashmir are facing the harsh reality of soaring flight fares. With increased demand amidst the election environment and the approaching festival of Holi, airline companies have substantially raised their ticket prices, leaving passengers grappling with exorbitant costs. The impact of this fare surge is particularly felt in routes connecting major cities like Jammu to Srinagar and Delhi. Previously affordable fares have now doubled, with travelers shelling out up to Rs 6,000 for a journey from Jammu to Srinagar, and up to Rs 8,000 for flights to Delhi. Despite the outcry over escalating fares, authorities have yet to take concrete measures to curb this trend, leaving passengers at the mercy of price hikes. At Jammu airport, which operates 32 flights daily to five different cities, the majority of flights cater to popular routes such as Srinagar and Delhi. During the period from March 22 to April 10, the average fare for flights from Jammu to Delhi ranges from Rs 5,800 to Rs 7,500. However, with the onset of Holi, these prices skyrocket to between Rs 7,000 and **•P-06**

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

RIYAZ BHAT

SRINAGAR: In Jammu and Kashmir, three vital roads have claimed nearly 2,000 lives in the past five years. The National Highway and the roads leading in Chenab Valley and Pir Panjal ranges have claimed at least 1986 lives in road accidents from 2019 to 2023. According to the official figures available, in Chenab Valley at least 113 persons lost their lives in accidents in 2019. In 2020, the road accidents in the region claimed 64 lives followed by 91 deaths in 2021, at least 81 in 2022 and 114 persons lost their lives in 2023. The official figures reveal that from the National Highway, at least 211 persons were killed in 2019 in roads accidents followed by 178 in 2020, at least 271 in 2021, over 261 in 2022 and 234 in 2023. Likewise, from the Pir Panjal range, at least 109 persons were killed in road accidents in the year 2019, at least 56 died in 2020, 65 were killed in 2021, 74 in 2022 and 64 in 2023. On the roads of Chenab Valley, National Highway and Pir Panjal, a total number of 433 persons were killed in road accidents in 2019. Similarly, in 2020 at least 298 persons were killed in road accidents in these areas. The official figures also reveal that in 2021 at least 427 persons were killed in road accidents followed by 416 in 2022 and 412 in 2023. According to the government report, there is a huge rise in road accidents in India and claim at least 19 lives per hour. According to data, challenging road conditions between Jammu to Srinagar and Jammu to Doda-Kishtwar are contributing factors to numerous accidents. Experts stress the need for public education, road improvements and stringent law enforcement to curb accidents. "Accidents happen because of distracted driving, speeding, poor road maintenance and potholes. Vehicle problems, breaking traffic rules and lack of experience also contribute to fatalities," they said, adding that road safety measures and awareness campaigns are of utmost importance to protect people's lives and reduce the tragic toll of road accidents. A senior traffic police official informed **•P-06**

Court Sends Kejriwal To ED Custody Till March 28



AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: The Rouse Avenue Court on Friday sent Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to ED custody till March 28. The agency had sought 10 days of remand. The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) arrested Kejriwal on Thursday in connection with the alleged Delhi Liquor scam case. The AAP Chief was produced before the court of Special Judge Kaveri Baweja. Senior Advocates Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Vikram Chaudhary, and Ramesh Gupta along with Advocates Rajat Bhargava, Mudit Jain and Mohd Irshad appeared for the Delhi CM Kejriwal. ASG SV Raju and Special Counsel Zoheb Hossain appeared for the probe agency. In its arguments before the Court, ED alleged that **•P-06**

INOX CINEMA SHIVPORA SRINAGAR

MOVIES Schedule
Saturday 23 March

 MADGAON EXPRESS (HINDI) 12:00PM, 03:10PM, 07:10PM (U/A)	 YODHA (HINDI) 11:15AM, 04:15PM (U/A)	 SHAITAAN (HINDI ATMOS) 02:10PM, 07:20PM (U/A)
 JATT NUU CHUDAIL TAKRI (PUNJABI) 01:05PM (U)	 DUNE PART TWO (ENGLISH) WITH ENG SUBTITLES 06:20PM (U/A)	 KUNG FU PANDA 4 (ENG WITH ENG SUBTITLE) 05:05PM (U)

Secy Health mandates implementation of QR Code system at Payment Counters

ISHTIYAQ KAR

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

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

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

The directive, issued by the Health and Medical Education Department, mandates that all Head of Departments (HODs)/Institutions ensure the following directions within 10 days.

The directions include the establishment of QR Code facility at all health institutions, compatibility with popular mobile payment platforms. Training of staff members to assist users in the payment process



and establishing a feedback mechanism for further improvement in the payment process.

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

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

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

of healthcare services in the region.

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

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

The QR code system will allow patients to make payments securely and conveniently using their smartphones. Upon reaching the payment counter, patients

will simply scan the QR code displayed using a mobile payment app linked to their bank account.

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

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

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

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

LS POLLS

DEO Sgr holds meeting with representatives of Political Parties

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The District Election Officer (DEO) Srinagar, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat Friday convened a meeting with the representatives of different Political Parties at Meeting Hall of the DC Office Complex, here.

The DEO discussed various guidelines set by the Election Commission of India for smooth and transparent conduct of the electoral process for forthcoming Lok Sabha elections.

At the outset, the DEO Srinagar briefed the participants about the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct, Media Certification and Monitoring Committee(MCMC) and Expenditure Monitoring mechanism.

He underscored the importance of various activities to be taken by Political parties during the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections-2024 as per the directions of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The DEO urged the Political parties to cooperate with the District Administration to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections in Srinagar District.

He emphasized the need for strict adherence to different ECI guidelines including Model Code of Conduct, Media Certification and Monitoring Com-



mittee (MCMC) and Expenditure Monitoring mechanism by the contesting political parties to uphold democratic values during the election process.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner Sales Taxes Department, Ilyas Ahmad, who is designated Nodal Officer for Model Code of Conduct (MCC), informed the participants about the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) which has been put into place.

Highlighting the Do's and Don'ts of the MCC, he urged them to follow the rules and strict adherence to ethical campaigning practices as per laid guidelines of ECI under Model Code of Conduct.

Similarly, Deputy Director Information, Ahsan-ul-Haq Chisti, who is designated Nodal Officer, Media Certification and Monitoring Committee(MCMC) spoke about various aspects of the Media Cer-

tification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC).

He stressed the Political Party representatives to obtain pre-certification of their Political Advertisements before being telecast/broadcast on TV and Cable networks/ Cable channels, Advertisements to be displayed in the Cinema halls, Radio including FM channels, audio visual displays in public places, Advertisements in Newspapers, use of bulk SMS/recorded voice messages and Advertisements on Social media and Internet websites.

He informed the representatives of political parties that a dedicated MCMC Office has been set up at DEO Srinagar office for facilitation of stakeholders. Besides, the Political parties can approach MCMC through email mcmcsgr@gmail.com.

The District Treasury Officer, Javaid Maqbool Khanday, who is designat-

ed Nodal Officer for Election Expenditure Monitoring, underlined the significance of the financial transparency in Election campaigns.

He urged the political parties that utmost care should be exercised during election expenditure and must be incurred as per ECI norms/ guidelines/ instructions. He also urged the political party representatives to meticulously maintain the accounts and submit daily expenditure reports to the Expenditure observer.

Besides, representative of different Political Parties, the meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ARO/ERO-Zadibal), Dr. Khalid Hussain Malik, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ARO/ERO-Hazratbal), Syed Ahmad Kataria, Deputy District Election Officer, Mir Imtiaz Ul Aziz, Other AROs, and other concerned officers.

LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

First Randomisation of EVMs successfully conducted in Srinagar

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

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

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

The District has a total of 929 Polling Stations and the Assembly segment wise allocation of EVMs



for conduct of Lok Sabha Elections includes 163 EVMs for 19-Hazratbal, 176 for 20-Khanyar, 179 for 21-Habbakadal, 191 for 22-Lalchowk.

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

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

Prior to the randomisation process, the DEO Srinagar briefed the representatives of the Political parties about the First Randomisation process ensuring their confidence in the uprightness of the process and encouraging that all requisite measures have been enacted to uphold the sanctity of

the polls in free, fair and transparent manner as per the guidelines of Election Commission of India.

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

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

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

Rangoli Competition organised in Kishtwar

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

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

As part of the SVEEP initiatives, the SVEEP Cell of the District Election Office Kishtwar orchestrated a vibrant Rangoli Competition event in spirit with the 'Holi Ka Tyohar, Chunavi Bahar' today.

This event played a pivotal role in engaging the community and fostering awareness for maximum participation in the democratic process, particularly within Kishtwar District.

The District Nodal officer for SVEEP activities/ ACR Kishtwar, Idrees Lone collaborated extensively with educational institutions and various organizations to educate the populace about the significance of their role as voters in a democracy.

Today's event was meticulously coordinated by Dis-



trict Nodal Officer SVEEP in conjunction with District Information Officer Kishtwar, Dr. Kuldeep Kumar.

A total of 10 teams comprising 50 participants, including Anganwari Workers of ICDS, students and faculty members from different schools, GDC Kishtwar, Government Polytechnic College Kishtwar, ITI Kishtwar and local artists enthusiastically participated in the Rangoli competition.

Participants showcased their creativity and talent in promoting ethical voting practices.

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

"Rangoli serves a purpose beyond mere decoration, it embodies imagination and innovative ideas," remarked the District Election Officer. Empha-

sizing the broader goal of education, he highlighted the importance of Voting in democratic setup.

The DEO also encouraged students participation in activities aimed at raising awareness of voting rights.

Team A of GDC Kishtwar clinched the first position and was awarded Rs. 10000, Team 'B' of GDC Kishtwar secured second position receiving Rs. 5000 while local artists Ninu Kumari and Priyanka claimed Rs. 3000 by securing third spot.

The successful execution of the Rangoli Competition underscores the effectiveness of community engagement initiatives in promoting voter awareness and ethical electoral practices. Such endeavours serve as a testament to the commitment of all stakeholders towards fostering a vibrant and participatory democracy within Kishtwar district.

Two-day workshop on 'Drone Technology' commences at JU

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

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

The Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu, Prof. Umesh Rai, commended the Baderwah Campus for organizing the workshop.

Chief guest on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Doda, Harvinder Singh extended his best wishes to Baderwah Campus for organising event on a topic of paramount importance. He elaborated on the myriad benefits that drone technology offers in the contemporary era, emphasizing its significance in various sectors.

The Rector of Baderwah Campus and Patron of the workshop Prof. J. P. Singh Joorel conveyed his appreciation to the Department of Computer Science & IT for spearheading this workshop. He underscored the workshop's role in equipping participants with valuable insights into drone technology. "This workshop promises to be

an enriching experience, providing participants with valuable insights and practical knowledge in the field of drone technology", he said.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Operation Doda, Sunil Kesar, , graced the occasion as the Guest of honour. He delivered a comprehensive discourse on the importance of drone technology, particularly in addressing security concerns. He emphasized the pivotal role drones play in current circumstances and highlighted their significance in ensuring safety and security.

Dr. Jatinder Manhas, the Convenor of the workshop, provided a detailed outline of the workshop's agenda through an insightful presentation. He emphasized that the workshop covers a diverse range of topics, including introduction to Drone Technology, drone hardware and software, safety and regulations, hands-on drone flying sessions, applications in agriculture, aerial photography and videography, search and rescue operations, infrastructure inspection, environmental monitoring, and future trends and career opportunities. He highlighted the workshop's significance as a pioneering initiative in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

LOK SABHA ELECTION

Three more candidates file nomination for Udhampur seat

GMK NEWS NETWORK

KATHUA: Three more candidates Friday filed their nomination papers from the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency for the first phase of Parliamentary elections scheduled to be held in Jammu and Kashmir on April 19.

With the filing of nomination papers by three candidates today, the total number of candidates who have filed their candidature for 4-Udhampur PC goes to five.

The last day for filing of nomination papers is March 27, 2024 upto 03:00 PM.

Awareness programme on SVEEP held across Samba

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

Various ELCs, VAFs, Anganwadi Workers, officials from Revenue, Rural Development and Education department were mobilised along with local BLOs to sensitise all sec-

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

Such activities will continue on a day to day basis till the poll day so that maximum participation is ensured and electors are facilitated and encouraged for strengthening the democratic process.

First randomization of EVMs held in Jammu

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: In view of upcoming parliamentary elections, the first randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) was conducted Friday at the District Headquarters here for 11 Assembly Constituencies of Jammu district.

The process was carried out in the presence of representatives of various political parties.

District Election Officer, Sachin Kumar Vaishya, oversaw the proceedings, while the execution of the randomisation was handled by District Informatics Officer, Sanjeev Kapoor.

The event was marked by the presence of representatives from political parties, who observed the process alongside Assistant Returning Off-



cers. Deputy District Election Officer Rameshwar Kumar was also present at the occasion.

For the poll date, April 26, Jammu has reserved an extra 40% of Ballot Units and 39% of VVPATs as a precaution. With 1488 polling stations ready, the district is well-prepared for a seamless vote.

LS Polls

First-level EVM randomization successfully held in Samba

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

The event, held in the presence of senior officials and representatives from various political parties, focused on allocating 493 Ballot Units, 493 Control Units and 511 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units for all three assembly segments viz; 69-Ramgarh, 70-Samba, and 71-Vijaypur.

He emphasized on the primary objective of the randomization process to ensure transparent, free and fair elections, devoid of any human intervention by utilizing dedicated software specifically designed for this purpose, the randomization was conducted meticulously.

Before the commencement of the randomization, the Returning Officer briefed political representatives about the process, reassuring them of the comprehensive arrangements in place to guarantee fair polls.

The subsequent phases of randomization will determine the specific allocation of EVMs to polling stations in the upcoming stages of preparation.

Udhampur-Doda LS seat braces for direct battle between BJP and Congress

AMIR TANTRAY

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

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

Dr. Jitendra Singh is a two-time and incumbent MP from this seat and was a giant killer in 2014 elections when he had defeated Congress stalwart Ghulam Nabi Azad with a margin of around 60000 votes. With this achievement, he was able to get a place in council of ministers of Narendra Modi government in first term and continued to enjoy the same treatment after winning the seat during 2019 elections.

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



great support from party leaders, both at the centre and in the state.

Currently he is relying on the work done by the Modi government in his constituency and is hoping that people will keep faith in him and leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

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

of work.

After distancing himself from BJP when he went against the party in demanding CBI inquiry into Rasana rape and murder case of a nomad girl, Choudhary Lal Singh formed his own party Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan and contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections but faced huge defeat. He was nowhere close to BJP candidate Dr. Jitendra Singh and Congress candidate Vikramaditya Singh. He was able to get only 19049 votes whereas Jitendra Singh had got over seven lakh votes.

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

With Lal Singh's entry as Congress party candi-

date, the battle on this high profile seat is expected to be a fierce one.

There are other aspects as well in this contest as Ghulam Nabi Azad, who formed his own party Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) after leaving Congress party, had fielded three-time MLA Ghulam Muhammad Saroori from this seat. Saroori being a native from Kishtwar district, enjoys a good image within his community and being a former Congressman, whatever votes he will be able to fetch will make a dent to Congress party. His party has already announced that they are fighting against INDIA alliance.

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

STUDENT SAFETY TOP PRIORITY

Amar Singh College clarifies tree felling decision



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: Amar Singh College on Friday clarified the circumstances surrounding the felling of trees on the campus, saying the decision to remove the "aged" trees was made with student safety as the top priority. It also said that the tree auction conducted by the Forest Development Corporation led to the cutting of Willow/Robina and poplar trees under due process of law.

Expressing concern over the sentiments expressed on social media regarding the felling of the green avenue of the college, the college administration in a statement issued said it was necessary to address "misinformation" and provide clarity on the matter.

The administration cited the aftermath of the

2014 floods in Kashmir, during which the college was submerged for an extended period, resulting in severe damage to both infrastructure and trees. "The weakened trees became prone to uprooting during minor windstorms, posing significant safety risks to students, visitors, and staff. Numerous complaints regarding safety and health concerns were documented by the college administration, necessitating urgent action," it said.

The college said the process to address the safety challenges posed by the trees began in 2018-19 when the matter was taken up with the Social Forestry Department.

Subsequently, an open auction notice was issued by the J&K State Forest Corporation for the cutting of 202 poplar trees within

the campus. However, the bidding process faced delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing the aged and weakened trees to continue posing safety threats.

According to the statement, the community members and district authorities had also expressed concerns about the potential dangers posed by the trees. It said that specific instances of trees falling during windstorms further highlighted the urgency of the situation.

While acknowledging the concerns raised by civil society, the college administration reiterated its commitment to creating a green, sustainable and safe environment for students.

It said a massive plantation drive of 500 conifer and other trees is planned for April to increase the

green cover on campus, adding that measures such as the establishment of micro forest clusters aim to improve air quality and environmental health.

The administration assured stakeholders of its continued dedication to preserving the legacy of Amar Singh College while undertaking substantial measures for its enhancement, including the construction of a see-through gate and a modern fountain.

"We earnestly request everyone to please rest your faith in our efforts that remain devoted to the betterment of this institution. We realise that change may often seem awkward or intimidating but we must also acknowledge that those who look only to the past are certain to miss the future," the college said—(KNO)

Visit Udhampur to see real development: Jitendra Singh

AGENCIES

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

Accompanied by Water Resources Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Singh emphasized that detractors who claim development has not occurred fail to recognize the tangible advancements taking place. He cited examples such as improved access to education, illustrated by the enrollment of local children in medical colleges and enhanced connectivity via expressways linking to Delhi.

He highlighted his role in facilitating the installation of Maharaja Gulab Singh's statue at Lakh-



pur, contrasting it with the previous administration's perceived subservience to Kashmir-centric policies.

Singh also criticized the Congress party for allegedly neglecting the interests of the region, particularly regarding the revocation of the Dogra Certificate and disparities in youth reservations. He underscored the Modi government's commitment to rectifying such injustices, pointing to recent initiatives aimed at ensuring equitable treatment for the youth of Kathua, Doda, and Udhampur—(KNO)

Tourist service providers in Pahalgam to have uniforms

JAHANGEER GANAIE

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

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

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

Stakeholders in the tourist trade are expected to uphold certain standards of professionalism to ensure visitor satisfaction and safety. Staff members interacting with tourists are expected to present themselves professionally and adhere to pre-



scribed uniforms or dress codes where applicable, and demonstrate courtesy, politeness and respect at all times.

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

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

The initiative aims to make Pahalgam a premier tourist destination known for its professionalism and hospitality.

Chief Executive Officer of Pahalgam, Tariq Hus-

sian Naik, said that the objective behind this move is to instill professional ethics in tourism.

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

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

Absconders arrested in Awantipora: Police

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

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

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

Subsequently, the

arrested accused persons were produced before the respective Court of Law. Similarly, a special team of Police Station Tral under the supervision of SDPO Tral Suhail Ahmed Rishi also executed a warrant under section 512 CRPC, issued by Court of JMJC Court Tral against an accused namely Abdul Samad Malla @Samad Inqelabi son of Late Ab Rehman Malla resident of Gunistan Sumbal who was evading his arrest from last 07 years and was involved in case FIR No. 49/2017 of Police Station Tral, the statement reads.

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

ECI allots 'Bucket' symbol to DPAP for Lok Sabha polls

GMK NEWS NETWORK

SRINAGAR: The Election Commission of India has allotted 'Bucket' as the symbol to Ghulam Nabi Azad led DPAP for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Party chief spokesperson,

Salman Nizami said that the ECI has allocated 'Bucket' as the election symbol to the party. Lok Sabha polls are scheduled to be held next month in 7 phases with the first phase commencing on April 19—(KNO)

Byju's says 262 tuition centres operational, a few to undergo 'strategic restructuring'

IANS

NEW DELHI: Embattled edtech company Byju's on Friday said that its tuition centres have entered the third successful year with 262 offline locations currently operational across the country.

Denying reports that 200 of its tuition centres are to be shut down as part of the latest cost-cutting move, the company said that there is no such reduction planned.

As the company strives for operational efficiency, "it has identified opportunities for improvement for a small percentage of tuition centres, which will undergo strategic restructuring to align with BYJU'S long-term vision," a company spokesperson said in a statement.

"Nearly all Byju's tuition centres continue to serve students successfully across India, gearing up to set new benchmarks

in hybrid learning, which brings together the best of offline and online learning," the spokesperson said.

"Ninety per cent of tuition centres -- 262 out of 292 -- will continue to function in this novel hybrid model, integrating the best and the latest technology in the coming years," the spokesperson added.

Last week, Byju's mandated all its employees to work from home as it gave up office spaces across the country amid several cash crunch.

The company is giving up office spaces as the leases expired, keeping only its Bengaluru-based headquarters.

The company is also yet to disburse full salaries for thousands of employees for the month of February as its funds remain stuck amid an ongoing NCLT case with some key investors.

Residential house gutted in Chattabal blaze

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

SRINAGAR: A residential house was damaged in a blaze that broke out near Pinchie Mandi area of Chattabal, Srinagar on Friday afternoon, officials said.

An official said that a double-story residential house was gutted while another house was partially damaged in the fire incident at Pinchie mandi area in Chattabal.

"The fire has been put under control and no loss of life or any other injury has been reported in the incident," he added—(KNO)

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

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

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

An official said that following the reporting of the fire incident at Bohri Kadal Srinagar, involving three single-storey shops, the men and machinery from the Fire and Emergency Services Department were pressed to douse the flames.

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

GOVERNMENT OF (U.T) JAMMU & KASHMIR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER JAL SHAKTI(PHE)DEPTT.
GROUND WATER DIVISION SRINAGAR
BAGHI-ALI-MARDAN, NOWSHARA SRINAGAR.
 E-mail:-phegwd@yahoo.com, Tel./FaxNo:-0194-2411285

CANCELLATION NOTICE

Sub: Construction of 01 No. 125 mm machine drilled Bore Well at Alchiward Hiller Arhama District Anantnag.

Ref: This office e-NIT. No: 32 of 2023-24 issued vide this office endorsement No: JS-PHE/GWDS/Corrs./ 5855-68, dated: 25-10-2023, figuring at S.No. 05 Bearing ID No. 2023_PHE_234814_5.

Refer to the subject & reference cited above, in this matter due to the administrative reason the above mentioned work is hereby cancelled.

No: JS-PHE/GWDS/Corrs./ 12010-12023
 Dated: 22-03-2024.
 DIPK-18180-23
 Dt: 22/03/2024

Sd/= Executive Engineer, Jal Shakti (PHE) Deptt. Ground Water Div. Srinagar.

Good Morning Kashmir

EDITORIAL

No Compromise On Corruption

Corruption can lead nations to doom. We have examples of countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan in front of us. Countries that at one point were excelling in every economic front are now dependent on World Bank bail-out packages and are on the verge of bankruptcy. The Mr. Ten percent in these countries have wreaked havoc with the economies of these countries. They import a hell lot more than what they export and there is no enterprise or initiative to change that status. During the two terms of Congress, there were some of the biggest scams that could shake the foundations of the Indian economy. However, given the size of the Indian economy, the economy kept on bouncing back to normal order. India in those days had a coalition government that was weak with pressures being exerted from all medium-weight and feather-weight parties. The government during those ten years was incapable of launching a crusade against corruption due to political compulsions. The last ten years have been a revelation. A strong government at the center has ensured that there is no getting away from corruption – no matter who you are, no matter what party you are affiliated with, no matter what your social background or political inclination is. This revolution was brought in by the Prime Minister of the country Narendra Modi himself. There is a crusade going on against corruption, there is literally no place for corrupt officials or corruption in India anymore. These days we are seeing the law of the land being followed in letter and spirit. Any government servant who indulges in corruption is put behind bars, let him be the acting chief minister of any state. Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed a tremendous development of fact that the Lieutenant Governor of the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha has taken it upon himself to rid Kashmir valley as well as the Jammu region of the scourge of corruption. We are seeing frequent tireless raids on corrupt officials. Any civilian now has the power to call on the anti-corruption helpline number to get redressal of his/her problems. Things are changing for the better.



PROF. JASIM MOHAMMAD

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been a prominent force in shaping the socio-cultural landscape of Bharat for nearly a century. Founded by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925, the RSS has evolved into one of the largest volunteer organizations in the world, with a presence in almost every district of India. In recent years, under the leadership of Dr. Mohan Bhagwat, the RSS has garnered increased attention and scrutiny, prompting a deeper exploration of its ideology, activities, and impact on society. Dr. Mohan Bhagwat, the current Sarsanghchalak (chief) of the RSS, has articulated the organization's vision and principles on numerous occasions. In one of his speeches, he speaks about the RSS's commitment to nation-building and social cohesion, stating, "Our goal is to create a strong, united, and prosperous India where every citizen can thrive and contribute to the nation's growth."

Dr. Manmohan Vaidya Ji's assertion that "RSS is the organization of the entire society," is true because the RSS has been actively working towards societal development and national integration across India. With its presence in 99 percent of districts and a structure that reaches from the national level down to villages, the RSS has a wide and inclusive reach. The organization conducts thousands of daily shakhas (branches) that engage a diverse group of individuals, including students and working professionals. Indeed, the RSS's extensive network of shakhas (branches) and outreach programs serves all segments of society, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion.

Moreover, the RSS's emphasis on women's empowerment through initiatives such as Mahila Samanvaya programs is commendable. By providing a platform for women to participate in discussions on Bharatiya (Indian) thought and social transformation, the RSS is demonstrating its dedication to fostering a more inclusive society where every member has the opportunity to contribute to the nation's progress. This approach aligns with the RSS's broader goals of unity and national strength through collective effort and empowerment. The RSS's efforts to commemorate historical figures like Ahilyabai Holkar, so by raising awareness about Ahilyabai's contributions to religious tolerance and economic development, the RSS is actually inspiring future generations to uphold her values of compassion and service.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been instrumental in promoting Indian culture through various ini-



tiatives that emphasize the country's rich heritage and values. The organization's efforts to celebrate historical figures like Ahilyabai Holkar and events such as the Ram Lalla Pran Pratishtha are reflective of its commitment to cultural preservation. By highlighting the contributions of significant personalities in India's history, the RSS instills a sense of pride and respect for the nation's past among its citizens. Furthermore, the RSS's educational programs, particularly the Sangh Shiksha Varg, are designed to inculcate traditional values and practices among the youth. The inclusion of practical training in the curriculum ensures that the cultural teachings are not just theoretical but also applicable in everyday life. This approach helps maintain the continuity of Indian cultural practices and ensures they remain relevant in the modern context.

The surge in 'Join RSS' requests on the official website is indicative of the organization's growing appeal and relevance in contemporary India. As more individuals express their desire to become part of the RSS's mission of nation-building and social upliftment, it is evident that the organization's message resonates with a wide cross-section of society. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is not only active in India but also has a presence in other parts of the world. Although its roots are in India, the RSS has expanded its reach to connect with people of Indian origin living abroad. This global outreach promotes Indian culture, values, and traditions beyond national borders.

In countries with significant Indian diaspora communities, the RSS organizes events, discussions, and cultural programs to foster a sense of belonging and connection to their Indian heritage. These initiatives strengthen ties between individuals of Indian origin

and promote a deeper understanding of Indian culture and ethos. Through its overseas branches and affiliates, the RSS provides opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to engage with its ideology and principles. These interactions often focus on promoting traditional Indian values such as family, community, and service to society, resonating with individuals seeking a connection to their cultural roots. The RSS's global presence also facilitates collaboration and exchange between Indian communities worldwide, fostering solidarity and mutual support. Whether through social, cultural, or philanthropic activities, the RSS seeks to unite people across borders in a shared commitment to promoting Indian ideals and contributing to the betterment of society.

As per official reports of RSS, the organizational structure of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), known as Sangh Rachana, encompasses 45 Prants nationwide, further divided into Vibhag, Districts, and Khands. The RSS operates 73,117 daily shakhas across 922 districts, 6,597 khands, and 27,720 mandals, with each mandal covering 12 to 15 villages. The number of Shakhas has grown by 4,466 year-on-year. These Shakhas comprise 60 percent students and 40 percent working karyakartas, with 11 percent of the shakhas catering to Swayamsevaks aged forty and above. Additionally, there are 27,717 saptahik Milan, marking an increase of 840 from the previous year, and the current count of Sangh Mandali stands at 10,567. In urban areas, 10,000 Bastis host 43,000 shakhas.

This data signifies the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) extensive organizational reach and its robust growth trajectory in India. The figures reflect a strong grassroots presence, with a vast network of daily shakhas that cater to a diverse group of individu-

als, including students and working professionals. The increase in the number of shakhas and programs like the saptahik Milan and Sangh Mandali indicate a growing interest and participation in the RSS's activities.

RSS has historically been perceived as promoting Hindu-centric ideologies. However, it has shown signs of adopting a more inclusive stance towards the Muslim community in India. It has indeed showcased a noteworthy shift in its stance towards the Muslim community in India, epitomized by the inclusive statement made by its Chief, Mohan Bhagwat. Bhagwat's assertion that "anyone who says Muslims should not live in India is not Hindu" signals a departure from past rhetoric. By unequivocally denouncing any form of discrimination against Muslims, Bhagwat and the RSS leadership are setting a new tone, one that prioritizes unity and harmony among India's diverse religious communities.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) evolving stance towards the Muslim community in India is a positive development which is even a broader acceptance and respect for the country's religious diversity. This shift is indicative of a more inclusive approach that aligns with the principles of unity and harmony which are essential in a pluralistic society like India. Such a stance has the potential to strengthen communal bonds and promote a collective national identity.

Overall, these developments suggest that the RSS is actively working towards fostering a sense of community, national pride, and civic responsibility, while also striving for organizational growth and societal impact.

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Beyond The Classroom

The Untold Story Of Underpaid Private Teachers



ER AAUSRYF IBN FAROOQ

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

- Nelson Mandela



Teachers serve as mentors, guides, and facilitators of knowledge, imparting academic lessons and instilling values, nurturing curiosity, and fostering critical thinking skills in their students. They play a pivotal role in shaping the character, aspirations, and perspectives of the next generation, laying the foundation for a more enlightened and compassionate society. Through their dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment, teachers inspire, empower, and transform lives, leaving an indelible mark on the world.

Every morning, as the sun casts its golden rays over the

valleys of Kashmir, dedicated teachers embark on a journey of enlightenment, armed not with swords, but with knowledge and passion. With each lesson imparted, they weave the fabric of tomorrow, nurturing young minds and igniting the flames of curiosity. Yet, behind their noble endeavors, lies a tale of struggle and resilience, where private teachers in Kashmir face daunting obstacles despite their unwavering dedication. Private teachers in Kashmir, equipped with advanced degrees and qualifications, find themselves trapped in a cycle of underemployment and financial instability. Despite their dedication to imparting knowledge and

shaping young minds, they face numerous challenges that threaten their livelihoods and well-being.

One of the primary concerns plaguing private teachers in Kashmir is the disparity between their qualifications and the compensation they receive. Many of these educators hold master's degrees or even doctorates in their respective fields, yet they accept meager salaries that barely cover their basic needs. This glaring mismatch between qualifications and remuneration not only demoralizes teachers but also undermines the value of education in society.

Adding to their financial

woes, private teachers in Kashmir face the challenge of receiving winter salaries irregularly. The harsh winter months, characterized by heavy snowfall and logistical challenges, often disrupt the payment process by school management, leaving teachers struggling to make ends meet during the most challenging time of the year. The precarious nature of employment in the private education sector exacerbates the challenges teachers face in Kashmir. Many educators are hired on short-term contracts or as hourly wage workers, lacking job security and stability. This uncertainty not only affects their financial stability but also hampers their ability

to plan for the future and invest in their professional development.

The predicament private educators face in Kashmir is not limited to financial difficulties, it also affects their general welfare and morale. With low pay, long hours, and unfulfilled expectations, educators frequently experience chronic stress, anxiety, and burnout. In addition to hurting their mental health, overcoming these obstacles emotionally depletes them of motivation and makes them feel unappreciated.

To address the systemic issues plaguing private teachers in Kashmir, concerted efforts are needed from various stakeholders, including educational institutions, government authorities, and civil society organizations. Firstly, schools must recognize the value of qualified teachers and provide them with fair compensation and job security commensurate with their qualifications and experience. Additionally, policymakers need to implement measures to regulate the private education sector and enforce labor laws to protect the rights of teachers. This includes establishing minimum wage standards, ensuring timely payment of salaries, and providing avenues for grievance redressal.

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IDEAS, OPINIONS AND VIEWS EXPRESSED IN ARTICLES PUBLISHED ARE WRITERS' OWN AND MAY NOT BE FOUND IN ACCORD WITH THOSE OF GOOD MORNING KASHMIR

Why Artificial Intelligence Must Be Stopped Now

RICHARD HEINBERG

Those advocating for artificial intelligence tout the huge benefits of using this technology. For instance, an article in CNN points out how AI is helping Princeton scientists solve “a key problem” with fusion energy. AI that can translate text to audio and audio to text is making information more accessible. Many digital tasks can be done faster using this technology.

However, any advantages that AI may promise are eclipsed by the cataclysmic dangers of this controversial new technology. Humanity has a narrow chance to stop a technological revolution whose unintended negative consequences will vastly outweigh any short-term benefits.

In the early 20th century, people (notably in the United States) could conceivably have stopped the proliferation of automobiles by focusing on improving public transit, thereby saving enormous amounts of energy, avoiding billions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions, and preventing the loss of more than 40,000 lives in car accidents each year in the U.S. alone. But we didn't do that.

In the mid-century, we might have been able to stave off the development of the atomic bomb and averted the apocalyptic dangers we now find ourselves in. We missed that opportunity, too. (New nukes are still being designed and built.)

In the late 20th century, regulations guided by the precautionary principle could have prevented the spread of toxic chemicals that now poison the entire planet. We failed in that instance as well.

Now we have one more chance

With AI, humanity is outsourcing its executive control of nearly every key sector—finance, warfare, medicine, and agriculture—to algorithms with no moral capacity.

If you are wondering what could go wrong, the answer is plenty. If it still exists, the window of opportunity for stopping AI will soon close. AI is being commercialized faster than other major technologies. Indeed, speed is its essence: It self-evolves through machine learning, with each iteration far outdistancing Moore's Law.

And because AI is being used to accelerate all things that have major impacts on the planet (manufacturing, transport, communication, and resource extraction), it is not only an uber-threat to the survival of humanity but also to all life on Earth.

AI Dangers Are Cascading

In June 2023, I wrote an article outlining some of AI's dangers. Now, that article is quaintly outdated. In just a brief period, AI has revealed more dangerous implications than many of us could have imagined.

In an article titled “DNAI—The Artificial Intelligence/Artificial Life Convergence,” Jim Thomas reports on the prospects for “extreme genetic engineering” provided by AI. If artificial intelligence is good at generating text and images, it is also super-competent at reading and rearranging the letters of the genetic alphabet. Already, AI tech giant Nvidia has developed what Thomas calls “a first-pass ChatGPT for virus and microbe design,” and applications for its use are being found throughout life sciences, including medicine, agriculture, and the development of bioweapons.

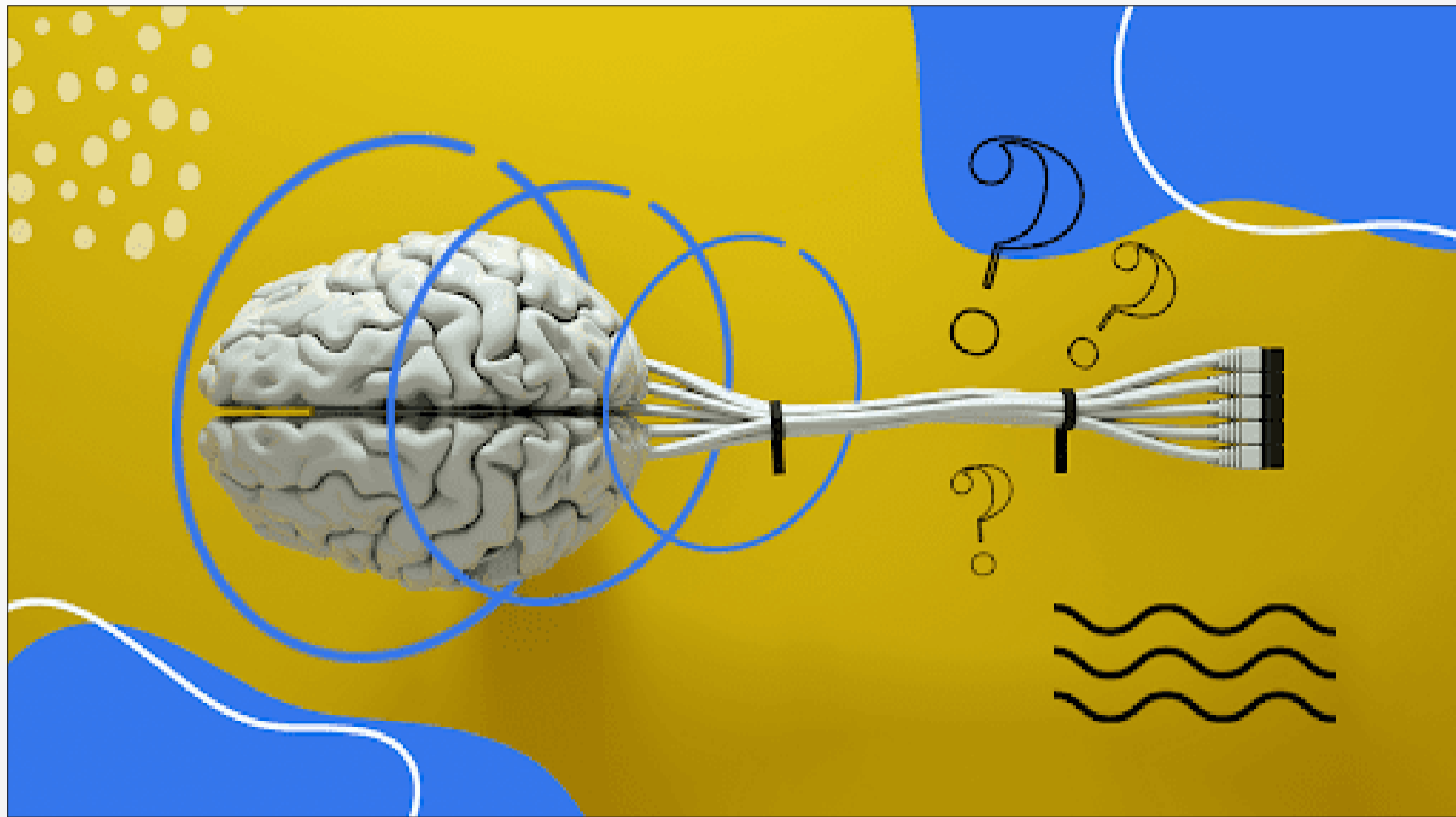
How would biosafety precautions for new synthetic organisms work, considering that the entire design system creating them is inscrutable? How can we adequately defend ourselves against the dangers of thousands of new AI-generated proteins when we are already doing an abysmal job of assessing the dangers of new chemicals?

Research is advancing at warp speed, but oversight and regulation are moving at a snail's pace.

Threats to the financial system from AI are just beginning to be understood. In December 2023, the U.S. Financial Stability Oversight Council (FSOC), composed of leading regulators across the government, classified AI as an “emerging vulnerability.”

Because AI acts as a “black box” that hides its internal operations, banks using it could find it harder “to assess the system's conceptual soundness.” According to a CNN article, the FSOC regulators pointed out that AI “could produce and possibly mask biased or inaccurate results, [raising] worries about fair lending and other consumer protection issues.” Could AI-driven stocks and bonds trading tank securities markets? We may not have to wait long to find out. Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Gary Gensler, in May 2023, spoke “about AI's potential to induce a [financial] crisis,” according to a U.S. News article, calling it “a potential systemic risk.”

Meanwhile, ChatGPT recently spent the better part of a day spewing bizarre



nonsense in response to users' questions and often has “hallucinations,” which is when the system “starts to make up stuff—stuff that is not [in line] with reality,” said Jevin West, a professor at the University of Washington, according to a CNN article he was quoted in. What happens when AI starts hallucinating financial records and stock trades?

Lethal autonomous weapons are already being used on the battlefield. Add AI to these weapons, and whatever human accountability, moral judgment, and compassion still persist in warfare will tend to vanish. Killer robots are already being tested in a spate of bloody new conflicts worldwide—in Ukraine and Russia, Israel and Palestine, as well as in Yemen and elsewhere.

It was obvious from the start that AI would worsen economic inequality. In January, the IMF forecasted that AI would affect nearly 40 percent of jobs globally (around 60 percent in wealthy countries). Wages will be impacted, and jobs will be eliminated. These are undoubtedly underestimates since the technology's capability is constantly increasing.

Overall, the result will be that people who are placed to benefit from the technology will get wealthier (some spectacularly so), while most others will fall even further behind. More specifically, immensely wealthy and powerful digital technology companies will grow their social and political clout far beyond already absurd levels.

It is sometimes claimed that AI will help solve climate change by speeding

relationships via online dating, AI has the potential to replace human-to-human partnering with human-machine intimate relationships. Already, Replika is

In the mid-century, we might have been able to stave off the development of the atomic bomb and averted the apocalyptic dangers we now find ourselves in. We missed that opportunity, too. (New nukes are still being designed and built.)

being marketed as the “AI companion who cares”—offering to engage users in deeply personal conversations, including sexting. Sex robots are being

it'll just be you and your machines against the world.

As the U.S. presidential election nears, the potential release of a spate of deepfake audio and video recordings could have the nation's democracy hanging by a thread. Did the candidate really say that? It will take a while to find out. But will the fact-check itself be AI-generated? India is experimenting with AI-generated political content in the run-up to its national elections, which are scheduled to take place in 2024, and the results are weird, deceptive, and subversive.

A comprehensive look at the situation reveals that AI will likely accelerate all the negative trends currently threatening nature and humanity. But this indictment still fails to account for its ultimate ability to render humans, and perhaps all living things, obsolete.

AI's threats aren't a series of easily fixable bugs. They are inevitable expressions of the technology's inherent nature—its hidden inner workings and self-evolution of function. And these aren't trivial dangers; they are existential.

The fact that some AI developers, who are the people most familiar with the technology, are its most strident critics should tell us something. In fact, policymakers, AI experts, and journalists have issued a statement warning that “mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war.”

Don't Pause It, Stop It

Many AI-critical opinion pieces in the mainstream media call for a pause

comprehensive laws to regulate AI.

Whenever a new technology is introduced, the usual practice is to wait and see its positive and negative outcomes before implementing regulations. But if we wait until AI has developed further, we will no longer be in charge. We may find it impossible to regain control of the technology we have created.

The argument for a total AI ban arises from the technology's very nature—its technological evolution involves acceleration to speeds that defy human control or accountability. A total ban is the solution that AI pioneer Eliezer Yudkowsky advised in his pivotal op-ed in TIME:

“[T]he most likely result of building a superhumanly smart AI, under anything remotely like the current circumstances, is that literally everyone on Earth will die. Not as in ‘maybe possibly some remote chance,’ but as in ‘that is the obvious thing that would happen.’”

Yudkowsky goes on to explain that we are currently unable to imbue AI with caring or morality, so we will get AI that “does not love you, nor does it hate you, and you are made of atoms it can use for something else.”

Underscoring and validating Yudkowsky's warning, a U.S. State Department-funded study published on March 11 declared that unregulated AI poses an “extinction-level threat” to humanity.

To stop further use and development of this technology would require a global treaty—an enormous hurdle to overcome. Shapers of the agreement would have to identify the key technological elements that make AI possible and ban research and development in those areas, anywhere and everywhere in the world.

There are only a few historical precedents when something like this has happened. A millennium ago, Chinese leaders shut down a nascent industrial revolution based on coal and coal-fueled technologies (hereditary aristocrats feared that upstart industrialists would eventually take over political power). During the Tokugawa Shogunate period (1603-1867) in Japan, most guns were banned, almost completely eliminating gun deaths. And in the 1980s, world leaders convened at the United Nations to ban most CFC chemicals to preserve the planet's atmospheric ozone layer.

The banning of AI would likely present a greater challenge than was faced in any of these three historical instances. But if it's going to happen, it has to happen now.

Suppose a movement to ban AI were to succeed. In that case, it might break our collective fever dream of neoliberal capitalism so that people and their governments finally recognize the need to set limits. This should already have happened with regard to the climate crisis, which demands that we strictly limit fossil fuel extraction and energy usage. If the AI threat, being so acute compels us to set limits on ourselves, perhaps it could spark the institutional and intergovernmental courage needed to act on other existential threats.

Richard Heinberg is a senior fellow at the Post Carbon Institute and the author of *Power: Limits and Prospects for Human Survival*. He is a contributor to the Observatory.

This article was produced by Earth | Food | Life, a project of the IMI



up the development of low-carbon technologies. But AI's energy usage could soon eclipse that of many smaller countries. And AI data centers also tend to gobble up land and water.

AI is even invading our love lives, as presaged in the 2013 movie “Her.” While the internet has reshaped rela-

developed, ostensibly for elderly and disabled folks, though the first customers seem to be wealthy men.

Face-to-face human interactions are becoming rarer, and couples are reporting a lower frequency of sexual intimacy. With AI, these worrisome trends could grow exponentially. Soon,

in its development “at a safe level.” Some critics call for regulation of the technology's “bad” applications—in weapons research, facial recognition, and disinformation. Indeed, European Union officials took a step in this direction in December 2023, reaching a provisional deal on the world's first

Here's Why You Should Indulge In A Glass Of Pomegranate Juice For Better Health

Pomegranate is a fruit that originated in regions of Iran and the Himalayas, but it is now widely grown and consumed around the world. It has a round shape, a thick and leathery deep red or yellow skin, and is known for its distinctive sweet and tangy taste.

Pomegranate juice is derived from the seeds and pulp of the pomegranate fruit. It can be consumed either by squeezing the juice directly from the fruit or buying commercially produced juices. In this article, we discuss the many benefits of consuming pomegranate juice.

12 Ways drinking a glass of pomegranate juice regularly can boost our health:

1. **Antioxidant power**
Pomegranate juice is rich in antioxidants, primarily polyphenols, which help neutralise harmful free radicals in the body and protect cells from damage.

2. **Cardiovascular health**

Studies have shown that pomegranate juice can improve overall cardiovascular health by reducing blood pressure, lowering LDL cholesterol levels, and preventing the formation of arterial plaque.

3. **Anti-inflammatory properties**

Pomegranate juice contains compounds that possess anti-inflammatory effects. This can



help reduce chronic inflammation in the body, which is linked to various health issues such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

4. **Immune system support**

The high vitamin C content in pomegranate juice helps boost the immune system and enhances the body's ability to fight off infections and diseases.

5. **Digestive health**

Pomegranate juice is a good source of dietary fibre, promoting healthy digestion and prevent-

ing constipation. It also contains natural enzymes that aid in the breakdown of food.

6. **Anti-cancer effects**

Some research suggests that pomegranate juice may have potential anti-cancer properties. It may help inhibit the growth and spread of cancer cells and reduce the risk of certain types of cancer, including breast and prostate cancer.

7. **Skin health**

Pomegranate juice is known to have anti-aging effects on the

skin. The antioxidants present in the juice help protect against skin damage caused by sun exposure and promote a healthy complexion.

8. **Cognitive function**

Pomegranate juice may improve memory and cognitive function. It has been found to have neuroprotective effects, protecting brain cells from oxidative stress and reducing the risk of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease.

9. **Weight management**

The high fibre content in pomegranate juice can help promote feelings of fullness and reduce overall calorie intake, aiding in weight management.

10. **Bone health**

Pomegranate juice contains several nutrients important for bone health, including calcium, magnesium, and vitamin K. Consuming it regularly may help improve bone density and reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

11. **Diabetes management**

compounds that inhibit certain enzymes responsible for the breakdown of carbohydrates, leading to more stable blood sugar levels.

12. **Anti-microbial properties**

Pomegranate juice has been found to possess antimicrobial properties, which can help fight against harmful bacteria and viruses.

It is believed that the high concentration of antioxidants, polyphenols, and other bioactive compounds present in pomegranate juice contribute to these health benefits. They help reduce inflammation,



Pomegranate juice may help control blood sugar levels and improve insulin sensitivity. It also contains

oxidative stress, and cellular damage, while also improving various physiological functions in the body.

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

India To Become Third

people, Anurag Thakur said, adding this was done in two years -- something the Congress-led government could not do in so many years.

The Union Minister said that during the erstwhile Congress rule, as pilferage was huge, the money was not reaching the beneficiaries. "However, PM Modi used technology, Department of Telecom and linked Aadhaar and Jan Dhan accounts and money was reaching the beneficiaries 100 per cent," he said.

Anurag Thakur also said that every Indian is now secured under the 'Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana' which was never there before 2014.

The Union Minister also said that PM Modi-led government has provided 4 crore houses to the poorest of the poor.

CS Reviews Functioning

and coverage of UT population under NFSA, Non-NFSA and PMFSS schemes. He took notice of the areas not having online POS facility available and reach of Aadhar/OTP authenticated transactions, e-KYC and route optimization status.

Bihar Diwas

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

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

DIPR Gets Creative

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

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

Experts Call For Urgent

practices to mitigate the impacts of the

water crisis. They said there is a need for collaborative efforts to safeguard this invaluable resource and ensure access to clean water for everyone.

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

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

Flight Fares Skyward

Rs 10,000, placing additional strain on travelers' budgets. Similarly, flights from Jammu to Ahmedabad are now priced between Rs 6,000 and Rs 8,000, while those to Indore range from Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000.

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

Court Sends Kejriwal

the CM of Delhi is the key conspirator and kingpin in demanding kickbacks from businessmen. The agency further claimed that Kejriwal was directly involved in the formation of the Excise policy.

The ED counsel claimed that Vijay Nair, who was the media in charge of AAP, was working for Delhi CM Kejriwal. Nair, who the agency said lives adjacent to the residence of Kejriwal, acted as a middleman between the AAP and the South group.

The ED counsel further claimed that the proceeds of crime are not only Rs 100 crore but profits made by bribe givers were also proceeds of crime. The counsel said that the agency had traced Hawala trails of Rs 45 crore that were used in the Goa Election.

ASG SV Raju said that AAP is a beneficiary that exists as a company. Every person responsible for the conduct of the company is responsible. Apart from being liable as an individual, the CM is also vicariously liable.

The ASG said that Kejriwal's role via the AAP is important in addition to his role in the alleged scam. The counsel further said that Kejriwal was not cooperative during the search.

ED further alleged that Kejriwal is

responsible for all AAP affairs. He is the national convener of the party. The kickbacks came in cash and were used in Goa assembly elections. The excise policy is a scam, it was only made to fund the Goa elections the counsel said.

Senior Advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi appearing for Kejriwal opposed the remand plea and submitted that the agency needs to show the necessity to arrest. Singhvi argued that the power of arrest and the necessity of arrest are two different things.

Singhvi said that in the history of 75 years of independence, this is the first time a sitting CM is arrested, the first time four leaders of his party are arrested. Singhvi further said it's like having the result before the first vote is cast.

Singhvi said that 80 per cent of the people have not mentioned Kejriwal or any dealings with him. Any remanding court is not an automatic rubber stamp, Singhvi argued.

Singhvi contended that according to ED Kejriwal had been arrested for non-cooperation, but all necessary documents were already in possession of the agency and summoning him 'in person' was a ploy to illegally arrest him and the present matter is a clear case of malice.

Kejriwal's counsel further said that without dealing with various discrepancies and legal lacunae pointed by him, ED issued back-to-back cyclostyled summons under Section 50 PMLA directing him to appear.

Singhvi further stated that there is no direct evidence. Without there being any material in possession of the Enforcement Directorate based on which Kejriwal can be believed to be guilty of an offence, he is being illegally and arbitrarily arrested by the ED.

Singhvi while concluding his arguments, requested the Special Judge to please do not look at the remand as a routine, it requires the application of significant judicial mind as there are larger issues of democracy involved.

Senior Advocate Vikram Chaudhari appearing for Kejriwal submitted that the administration of the criminal justice system was at stake and that on Thursday the matter was before the High Court, which said no interim orders were called for at this stage but within hours the Delhi Chief Minister was arrested.

Earlier, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had produced Kejriwal before the Rouse Avenue Court under tight security.

While entering the court complex Kejriwal told reporters "My life is dedicated to the country whether I am inside or outside the prison."

Kejriwal was arrested by the Enforce-

ment Directorate (ED) in the excise policy case on Thursday after the Delhi High Court refused interim protection to him from coercive action in connection with the excise policy case.

The case pertains to alleged irregularities and money laundering in framing and implementing the Delhi excise policy case 2022, which was later scrapped.

J&K's 3 Vital Roads

that primary contributors to these accidents include excessive speed, overloading and aggressive driving. —(KNO)

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VIKSIT BHARAT AMBASSADOR MEET-UP

Chennai residents give thumbs up to Modi govt's 2047 vision

IAN S

NEW DELHI: At the Viksit Bharat Ambassador (VBA) meet-up program in Chennai, the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Minister Anurag Thakur enumerated achievements of past ten years and also shed light on Modi government's vision for Viksit Bharat 2047.

A couple of Chennai residents, in conversation with IANS, gave thumbs up to the Viksit Bharat 2047 mission and also heaped praise on progressive and ground-breaking initiatives, launched under the Modi government.

Srivatsa, a Chennai-based resident lauding the initiative, said, "Everyone should become part of the Viksit Bharat journey because a collective effort will help achieve the mission before the 2047 deadline."

He said that today youths are being coaxed and cajoled to join the India growth story while the government is making adequate funding to support the entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. All this will add pace to the all-round growth of the country.

Another resident Rangaraj, excited at his first participation in the VBA meet-up program, called it a landmark step and said that this initiative will enthuse and energize people of the country to take an active role in taking forward the Viksit Bharat 2047 mission.



Umesh Agarwal, a Chennai-based entrepreneur told IANS that the Viksit Bharat campaign will take the country to new heights.

"We are already nearing \$5 trillion economy and \$40 trillion economy is the stipulated target by 2047. PM Modi is trying to make the country 'atmanirbhar' in many sectors including aviation, semi-conductors, defence, genetics, space," he said while praising the GIFT city, a sign of the nation's rising economic prowess.

He further said that the Modi government is generously funding entrepreneurs who have an intent to generate jobs and enterprise. Railways and airports have undergone huge transformations while highways and expressways

are being built at a fast pace. All these make for a good foundation of Viksit Bharat 2047.

"Entrepreneurship is getting good support. Today, there are 5 crore MSEs in the country and they are the backbone of the economy. Besides corporates, they are also getting good support from the government because, without their contribution, India can't achieve its true potential," he added.

Laxminarayana, another resident of Chennai showered lavish praise on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and also credited him for making India popular on the world stage and also giving the Indian diaspora a new-found identity and respect.

"PM Modi's charisma and aura on foreign soil has uplifted the morale and spirit of the Indian diaspora," he said.

He said that India was now realising its true potential as it has taken a tough stance on border issues including Pakistan and China while also won the goodwill of global powers by initiatives like Vaccine Maitri.

"Domestically, Swachh Bharat Yojana has brought respite to lakhs and crores of women deprived of basic hygiene while the linking of bank accounts with Aadhar has prevented leakages to 100 per cent in government schemes," he added.

Notably, the Viksit Bharat Ambassador (VBA) meet-ups and events are being organised across the country with an aim to encourage citizens to take responsibility for contributing to India's development. Through these events, the participants are encouraged to engage in constructive discussions, exchange ideas and also to explore practical solutions to nagging problems.

Through the Viksit Bharat Ambassador programs, the participants are informed about the transformative journey in the past decade under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Attendees are informed about achievements pertaining to various sectors including the economy, and start-ups leading to the nation's remarkable progress.

Kejriwal kingpin of alleged excise policy scam, non-cooperative in investigation: ED

IAN S

NEW DELHI: Arrested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is the kingpin of the alleged excise policy scam and is directly involved in its implementation and giving favours to the 'South Group', the ED told a court here on Friday as it sought his custody for questioning.

Kejriwal, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the liquor policy case on Thursday evening, was produced in Rouse Avenue Court as he withdrew his plea filed before the Supreme Court.

Seeking 10 days custody, Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, who appeared for the ED with special counsel Zohab Hossain, said that Kejriwal was non-cooperative in the investigation. "We want to gather information and interrogate him," he said.

He contended that the CM "is involved in the use of proceeds of crime", and had demanded kickbacks from the "South Group" in exchange for giving favours to them.

The South Group in question includes accused persons from whom, the



ED claimed, that AAP leaders received kickbacks to the tune of Rs 100 crore, including Sarath Reddy, Raghav Magunta, and Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy. Last week, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLC K Kavitha was allegedly held for being a part of this group.

"Proceeds of crime of about Rs 45 crore received from the South Group were used by Aam Aadmi Party in the Goa campaign in 2021-22," ASG Raju said, adding that proceeds of crime were not only the Rs 100 crore bribe but also the profits made by bribe payers.

"Aam Aadmi Party is a beneficiary but it doesn't

exist individually. It is a company. Every person who is involved in the functioning of the company is responsible and shall be deemed to be guilty," he said.

Kejriwal was arrested after being questioned at his official residence for more than two hours in connection with the money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam before he was taken to the probe agency's office on A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Road at 11 p.m. on Thursday. The Chief Minister remained in the ED jail overnight before he was produced before the Rouse Avenue Court on Friday after a medical examination.

Senior advocates Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Vikram Chaudhary and Ramesh Gupta, appearing for Kejriwal, have moved an application for rejection of remand prayer.

Notably, Kejriwal was rushed out amid heavy security from the court after his BP took a low mid-reading. Talking to the media present in the court, Kejriwal said: "My life is dedicated to the nation if I stay outside the jail or inside it." It was his first statement after his ED arrest.

Moreover, a PIL has also been filed before the High Court seeking the removal of Kejriwal from the post of Chief Minister of Delhi.

Rohan Gupta quits Cong citing insult to Sanatan Dharma

IAN S

NEW DELHI: In more trouble for the Congress, its National Spokesperson, Rohan Gupta, resigned from all posts and the primary membership of the party on Friday, citing "constant humiliation" and "character assassination by one of the senior leaders in the Communication Department" of the grand old party and insult to Sanatan Dharma.

The resignation by Rohan Gupta comes a day after the Congress was left red-faced on Thursday by senior leader Anand Sharma castigating the party and opposing former party President Rahul Gandhi's caste census promise. In a letter to party President, Mallikarjun Kharge, veteran leader Anand Sharma wrote that the Congress never engaged nor endorsed identity politics and hence it is detrimental to democracy.

Just a few days before his resignation on Friday, Rohan Gupta had withdrawn his candidacy from the Ahmedabad East Lok Sabha seat. Rohan Gupta's father, Rajkumar Gupta, was once an MLA in Gujarat and had unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha elections in 2004.

In his resignation letter to Congress chief Kharge, Rohan Gupta said that he had served the party with honesty and sincerity with the support of the national

leadership and it was the most "difficult decision of his life" to withdraw his candidature and put his personal ambitions aside.

Without naming anyone, Rohan Gupta stated that even as he was going through a personal crisis due to his father's illness, the same leader had continued his smear campaign against him "for the last

three days with the support of his close aides in Gujarat and at the national level."

He wrote that he was going through a lot of "mental agony" and "stress" due to the leader's behaviour and this had compelled him to resign. Apart from the resignation letter to the party chief, the leader also put out a post on micro-blogging site X, which gave a larger picture of the fighting within the Congress.

In his emotional post on X, Rohan Gupta wrote, "I spent the last 3 days with my father while he is battling serious health conditions, which has really helped me understand his perspective. "He narrated the incidences of betrayal and sabotage for the last 40 years and how the leaders got away in spite of their ill-doings. The wounds of those incidences have still not healed, which I could see in his tears."



"He doesn't want me to pay the same price as the whole family has seen the mental trauma I have gone through in the last two years, which was caused by the senior leader connected with the Communication Department."

He added, "I am not afraid of anything. But when there is a systematic conspiracy to betray me, I need to raise my voice. My humbleness should not be considered as my weakness. I have learnt my lessons the hard way. I took the most difficult decision of my life of withdrawing my candidature. Now I am

taking another most difficult decision of leaving the party after serving it for the last 15 years because of constant humiliation and character assassination by the leader connected with the Communication Department."

"The person who has humiliated me for the last two years, the person who has not budged from doing it in the last three days, I am sure that he will not refrain from doing it in future and nobody will be able to stop him. But now I am not ready to take any more assault on my self-esteem," he wrote in his post.

He continued that the same leader had damaged the Congress party also with his arrogant and rude behaviour.

"Due to his extreme Leftist mindset he ensured the party's silence on insult of Sanatan Dharma which hurt me personally and I was forcefully stopped from opposition (to) insult of Sanatan Dharma on national TV. "This has done serious damage to the party's image and to the morale of the party's leaders. The leadership should not ignore such activities by such leaders which leaves imprints of insult on the souls of honest workers and leaders and compels them to leave the party. Some might see conspiracy here but people close to me will understand my viewpoint," he stated in the post.

ISRO's step towards realising Indian space shuttle 'Pushpak'

IAN S

CHENNAI: India progressed further in its attempt to realise a reusable launch vehicle (RLV)/ rocket named 'Pushpak' by successfully test landing RLV LEX-2 on Friday at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) in Karnataka's Chitradurga.

According to Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the RLV LEX-2 demonstrated the autonomous landing capability from off-nominal initial conditions at the release from a helicopter.

The Indian space shuttle' the winged Pushpak was lifted by an Indian Air Force helicopter and was released from 4.5 km altitude.

Post release, Pushpak at a distance of 4 km on its own approached the runway along with cross-range corrections.

Pushpak landed precisely on the runway and came to a halt using its brake parachute landing gear brakes and nose wheel steering system, ISRO said.

For the second time ISRO successfully completed a test landing of its RLV.

"The mission successfully simulated the approach and high speed landing conditions of RLV returning from space. With this second mission, ISRO has revalidated its indigenously developed technologies in the areas of navigation, control systems, landing gear

and deceleration systems essential for performing a high speed autonomous landing of a space returning vehicle," the Indian space agency said.

ISRO had used the winged body and all flight systems that were used in RLV-LEX-01 test thereby validating the reuse capability of flight hardware and flight systems.

According to ISRO, the airframe structure and landing gear of RLV-LEX-01 was strengthened based on the first test landing.

The mission was achieved by ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) along with the Liquid Propulsion System Centre and the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit.

The Indian space agency collaborated with various other government agencies.

According to Dr. S. Unnikrishnan Nair, with the repeated success, ISRO could master the terminal phase maneuvering, landing and energy management in a fully autonomous mode, which is a critical step towards the future orbital re-entry missions.

The team was guided by Sunil P, Programme Director, Advanced Technology and Systems Programme, VSSC, J. Muthupandian, Project Director, RLV and the Mission Director and B. Karthik, Deputy Project Director, RLV and the Vehicle Director for the mission.

DGCA imposes Rs 80 lakh fine on Air India for flight duty timing violations

IAN S

NEW DELHI: India's aviation regulator, DGCA, has imposed a financial penalty of Rs 80 lakh on the Tata-owned Air India for violation of flight duty time limitations (FDTL) and fatigue management system (FMS) regulations of flight crews.

According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), as a proactive step towards ensuring a high level of safety in aviation, it conducted a spot audit of Air India Ltd in January this year to verify the regulatory compliance by the operator in respect of FDTL and FMS regulations.

During the audit, evidence was collected and fleet-wise random reports were analysed.

"The analysis of reports and evidence revealed that Air India Ltd operated flight(s) with both flight crew aged above 60 years flying together in a few instances, which is a violation of Sub Rule (2)

of Rule 28 A of the Aircraft Rules, 1937," DGCA Director General Vikram Dev Dutt said.

He also said that the operator was also found deficient in providing adequate weekly rest, adequate rest before & after ultra-long range (ULR) flights, and adequate rest on layover to the flight crew, which violates the extant provisions of the Civil Aviation Requirements on FDTL.

Moreover, instances of exceeding duty periods, wrongly marked training records, overlapping duties etc. were also observed during the audit. A show cause notice was issued to Air India Ltd on March 1 for submitting a response to the observed violations. "The operator submitted its response to the SCN which was not found satisfactory. Pursuant to the non-satisfactory response submitted by the operator, a fine of Rs 80 lakh has been imposed on the operator," Dutt added.

PM Modi announces Rs 10,000 cr support for Bhutan in next 5 years

IAN S

THIMPH: Acknowledging the exemplary ties of friendship between India and Bhutan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced a support of Rs 10,000 crore for the Himalayan nation in the coming five years.

The leader, who was presented with the kingdom's highest civilian honour for strengthening bilateral ties, said India stands firmly with Bhutan in its efforts to achieve self-reliance and become a high-income nation.

"India will provide all cooperation and assistance for the Bhutanese government's 13th Five Year Plan (FYP), and I want to announce that in this direction, the Indian govern-

ment will be providing support of Rs 10,000 crore to the nation in the next five years," PM Modi said as he addressed the Himalayan nation.

India's development support will be geared towards the development of infrastructure, building connectivity in its broadest form which includes road, rail, air, and digital connectivity, and in sectors like agriculture, healthcare, education, skilling, and cultural preservation.

Prior to this, India provided development assistance of Rs 5,000 crore to Bhutan's 12th FYP, which, according to PM Tshering Tobgay, immensely contributed to the socio-economic well-being of the people of Bhutan.

"To fulfil your goals,



India stands with you for BB - Brand Bhutan and Bhutan Believe. I assure you that the upcoming 5 years will give a new energy to our relations. We will work to create avenues in the connectivity, infrastructure, trade and energy

sectors," PM Modi said. He also appreciated the King's vision of the Gelephu Mindfulness City, which he said will lead to economic prosperity and development in Bhutan in a sustainable manner, and further strengthen

economic and investment linkages between India and Bhutan.

He said that B2B -- Bharat to Bhutan -- and P2P -- People-to-People form the foundation of the strong relationship between the two countries.

CS reviews functioning of ARI, Trainings Department

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo, Friday had a detailed review of the working of Administrative Reforms, Inspections and Trainings (ARI & Trainings) Department of Jammu and Kashmir.

Besides the Secretary, ARI and Trainings, the meeting was attended by HoDs and other concerned officers of the Department.

During this meeting, the Chief Secretary took stock of different aspects of working of the department. He reviewed department's performance for the past year regarding administrative inspections, finalization of recruitment rules and printing services being extended to different government departments/organizations.

Dulloo asked for devis-



ing updated proformas for carrying out inspections as per the concurrent needs.

Secretary, ARI & Trainings, Shabnam Kamili, highlighted different works being performed by

the department, including administrative inspection of various offices.

It was given out that schedule of inspections is notified for the calendar. It also took note of the revenue realized by both

the government presses at Jammu and Srinagar. Besides, the meeting discussed finalization of recruitment rules and their placement before the standing committee meant for the same.

Behavioural change important towards judicious use of water: Div Com

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

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

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

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



change towards judicious use of water and taking small steps leading to bigger impact in saving water like storing rain

water, avoiding excess use of water wherever possible. Emphasizing the importance of water, the Div Com said that shortage of water

can threaten the existence of a whole civilization while as saving water can safeguard the existence of living beings.

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

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

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

Div Com attends opening ceremony of NAG C'ship

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

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

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

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



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

He further remarked that better facilities and unprecedented sports culture has led to emergence of new sports icons from Jammu Kashmir in number of sports disciplines. Ace para archer Sheetal Devi of J&K is an international icon of sportsman spirit and resili-

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

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

LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

Training imparted to Youth, NCC, NSS volunteers in Shopian



GMK NEWS NETWORK

SHOPIAN: The Office of the District Election Officer, Shopian, Faz Lul Haseeb organized a comprehensive training session for the Volunteers of NCC, NSS and youth groups in the Meeting Hall of DC Office Complex, here Friday.

The primary focus was to acquaint the Volunteers with

detailed knowledge on essential election procedures.

Speaking on the occasion, DEO said that the Volunteers shall be tasked with assisting specially-abled persons, senior citizens and other special voters so that they can exercise their franchise with ease and comfort.

To make their access easy into polling stations, volunteers shall be handy in assistance of these

voters, said DEO.

Trainers, while imparting training to these Volunteers, made them aware about guidelines and norms of election process and their role in assistance for the smooth and more inclusive election process.

The Dy. District Election Officer, Jahangir Ahmed, officers and officials of Election department and Volunteers in large numbers were present.

First Phase of EVM randomization conducted in Kupwara



GMK NEWS NETWORK

KUPWARA: The first phase of randomization was conducted for allocation of Ballot Units (BUs), Control Units (CUs) and VVPATs for all the six assembly segments of the Kupwara district for the upcoming parliamentary elections 2024 on Friday.

The process was overseen by District Election Officer (DEO), Kupwara, Ayushi Sudan in presence of AROs, Dy. DEO Kupwara and Political party representatives.

The first randomization was aimed to allocate Ballot Units, Control Units, and VVPATs, for all the six assembly constituencies of the district as there are a total of 611 polling centers in the district for upcoming Lok Sabha Elections. Randomization was shared

with AROs and political parties.

The District Election Officer, on the occasion, emphasized that the objective of randomization is to ensure transparent and impartial elections, devoid of human interference, facilitated by dedicated software.

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

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

First Phase of EVM Randomisation held at B'la

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

ARO Sopore, Shabir Ahmad Raina, Deputy Election Officer Baramulla, ARO Baramulla, ARO Rafiabad, ARO Pattan, ARO Gulmarg, and Nodal Officer EVM Management, as well as other officials from the District Elections office and representatives from political parties were present on the occasion.

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

Following the completion of the randomization process, the report of randomisation for all 7 Assembly Constituencies was handed



over to all political party representatives for their review and satisfaction.

Post- Randomisation, the EVMs will be securely transferred to dedicated strong rooms in their respective constituencies, adhering to stringent security protocols.

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

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

Subsequent phases of randomization will continue to ensure the equitable allocation of EVMs to polling stations while upholding the highest standards of security and transparency.

RTO Jammu conducts safety audit of school buses

GMK NEWS NETWORK

JAMMU: Motor Vehicles Department Jammu on the directions of Secretary Transport J&K, Niraj Kumar conducted safety audit of school buses at K.C Public School here.

The surprise inspection for safety audit of school buses was conducted by team of Regional Transport Office Jammu at K.C Public School.

The team was constituted by Regional Transport Officer Jammu, Pankaj Bhagotra; comprising of ARTO HQ, Rehana Tabassam along with M.V.Is Vikas Srivats; Surinder Kumar and Jagandeep Singh and M.V.T.A Taranjot Singh who conducted safety audit of more than 35 vehicles inside the premises of school which included thorough inspections of each bus, checking for compliance with safety regulations such as seat belts, emergency exits, first aid kits, and overall maintenance of the vehicle. Also, more than 10 vehicles were inspected on road and at



trial ground Nagrota.

The team conveyed to the school authorities about the deficiencies with regard to fitness of vehicles, other documents besides mandatory parameters pertaining to safety of school children in each vehicle and directed to rectify the deficiencies immediately and submit the compliance report within 10 days positively.

The safety audit comes after recent concern over the safety of school buses in the region, prompting the RTO to take proactive measures to address any potential risks.

Earlier a circular regarding safety of school children in school buses was also issued by RTO Jammu with the direction to implement the same in letter and spirit.

This surprise inspection was also conducted to check whether the school authorities have implemented the circular instructions or not. Similar drives have also been conducted by Assistant Regional Transport Officers in various districts of Jammu Division to ensure the safety of school children in every nook and corner of the province.

Transport department has again appealed to all school authorities to ensure strict implementation of all safety parameters issued by the department to promote safety of school children. Any deviation or non-serious approach on part of school authorities will be dealt seriously which may lead to seizure of school buses also.

Mastermind of excise policy scam finally in custody: Smriti Irani



IANS

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Smriti Irani on Friday said that the mastermind of the Delhi excise policy 'scam' is finally in custody as a Delhi court sent arrested Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to a six-day ED remand.

Reacting to the court order, she said that it has proved that no one involved in corruption is above the law "even if he is Kejriwal".

Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, Smriti Irani said that revelations in the documents submitted by the ED in the court are mind-boggling.

She said that when the ED said in court that AAP media in-charge Vijay Nair sat with representatives of some liquor companies to

frame the policy, Arvind Kejriwal's side didn't refute the claim. Nor had it contested the bank transactions cited by the ED, she added.

The Union Minister also said that Arvind Kejriwal's lawyers did not counter the ED statement related to the evidence and dealings done by Nair, Sameer Mahendru, Manish Sisodia's aide and BRS leader K. Kavitha.

She attacked the AAP leaders who had protested against Kejriwal's arrest saying all details of the money trails were furnished in the court.

The BJP leader said that the AAP had utilised Rs 45 crore of the kickbacks it received from the 'South Group' to fund its Goa Assembly campaign was also not refuted by Arvind Kejriwal's lawyers.

First Phase of EVM randomization conducted at G'bal

GMK NEWS NETWORK

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

The randomisation was held

in presence of Assistant Commissioner Revenue Ganderbal/Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) Ganderbal, M Altaf, and Sub-Divisional Magistrate Kangan/ARO Kangan, Nuzhat Qureshi; besides representatives of recognized National and local political parties, this crucial phase focused on the fair allocation

of ballot units, control units, and VVPATs for two assembly segments within the district. Transparency and impartiality were the cornerstones of this process, as emphasized by the AROs. With the aid of dedicated software, the randomization ensured that the elections would proceed without any human inter-

vention, instilling confidence in the integrity of the democratic process.

Following the randomization, all EVMs were securely transferred to designated strong rooms in their respective constituencies, under strict security measures.

Prior to the commencement of the randomization, political rep-

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