BATTLE LINES DRAWN FOR RS POLLS

NC, BJP Lock Horns As Congress Opts Out Of Race

7 key candidates in fray; forms of two non-locals to be rejected

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Oct 13: Battle lines have become clear for the Rajya Sabha polls in Jammu & Kashmir, with nine candidates-four from the National Conference and three from the Bharatiya Janata Party-filing nomination papers on Monday, the last date for nominations.

A total of nine candidates submitted their nomination papers before the Returning Officer of the election. The Secretary of the Assembly, Manoj Pandita, is serving as the RO for the polls.

According to details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), National Conference's Choudhary Muhammad Ramzan and BJP's Ali Muhammad Mir filed nomination papers for the first notification, under which the election will be held for one seat. A candidate named Prabhakar Dada also filed nomination papers.

Choudhary Ramzan is expected to easily win the seat, given that the NC-led alliance comprises 53 MLAs. He is likely to secure the seat even without the support of Congress, which is reportedly upset over the denial of a safe seat.

For this seat, the BJP commands the support of its 28 MLAs. The non-BJP opposition bloc, comprising seven MLAs, has kept its cards close to its chest.

According to details, NC's Sajad Kichloo and BJP's Ali Muhammad Mir have filed nomination papers for the second notification, under which elections will be held for one seat. Kichloo is expected to win, given that the voting pattern is likely to mirror that of the first seat.

Under the third notification, for which a combined election will be held for two seats, NC's Gurwinder Singh Oberoi, Imran Dar, and BJP's Sat Pal Sharma have filed nomination papers. A non-local candidate named Kante Sayanna has also filed nomination | **More on P6**

Rajya Sabha polls will expose BJP's real allies, says CM Omar

Claims BJP can't win even one without horse trading

Owais Gul

Srinagar, Oct 13: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections will act as a test of political loyalties in Jammu and Kashmir, claiming that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) cannot win even a single seat without indulging in horse trading.

He said the National Conference (NC) will contest all four seats independently after the Congress decided not to field any candidate.

The CM, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said BJP cannot win even a single Rajya Sabha seat without indulging in horse trading, adding that the upcoming elections will reveal who truly supports | **More on P6**

J&K Congress Chief: Trust has been broken

'NC may be reconsidering ties with INDIA Bloc'

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Oct 13: President of the Pradesh Congress Committee, Tariq Hamid Karra, on Monday said that the National Conference's (NC) 'backtracking' on its commitment to the Congress leadership regarding the Rajya Sabha polls suggests it may be reconsidering its relationship with the INDIA bloc.

Speaking to reporters, as per the news agency— Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Karra said the NC leadership had assured Congress of allocating a safe seat. "We were given an understanding that we would be allocated a safe seat-the first or second. When NC remained adamant about offering us the fourth seat, which was considered unsafe, we convened a core committee meeting. It was unanimously decided that we should not contest an election we are likely to lose. The committee also expressed resentment over | **More on P6**

Did Farooq Abdullah assure safe RS seat to Sonia Gandhi?

Cross-voting fears sink last-minute unity efforts between NC & Congress

KNO special correspondent

Srinagar, Oct 13: Did National Conference President Dr. Farooq Abdullah assure senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi that a safe seat would be allocated to the party in the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls?

Congress leaders claim he did, but the National Conference has denied giving any such assurance.

According to news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), senior leadership from both parties were engaged in behind-the-scenes negotiations over seat-sharing arrangements. Congress had requested a safe seat, but the National Conference declined, offering instead a "risky" seat where the BJP holds an advantageous position.

They revealed that Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge | **More on P6**

Buy swadeshi products to make Bharat Atamnirbhar: Amit Shah

Says India's system driven by justice rather than punishment

KNO Monitoring Desk

Srinagar, Oct 13: Urging citizens to make India a centre of production for the world, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday called on the people to buy swadeshi (indigenous) products to help grow the country's market and consumption.

After inaugurating an exhibition in Jaipur, Shah, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said, "We have to make Bharat Atamnirbhar and for that we have to focus on swadeshi."

Referring to the introduction of the three new criminal laws, he said, "India's system is driven by justice rather than punishment." | **More on P6**

BREIF NEWS

Minor killed in Bijbehara leopard attack

KNO

A 5-year-old child was killed in a leopard attack near the Awantipora canal in the Wopzen area Bijbehara belt in South Kashmir's Anantnag district on Monday. An official informed the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that the deceased has been identified | **More on P6**

Man killed, another injured in Bla mudslide

KNO

A man was killed while was another injured after a mudslide hit a construction site near Kanispora in North Kashmir's Baramulla today. Officials, as per the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), identified the deceased as Mohammed Ashraf Malik (30) son of Abdul Ahad Malik of Sheikhpora Haril in Kupwara. He was declared dead upon arrival at GMC Baramulla. The injured, | **More on P6**

CM for attracting investment, strengthening manufacturing base in J&K

Addresses FIEO's interactive session in Srinagar

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Oct 13: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday reiterated his government's commitment to addressing infrastructural and other constraints to make Jammu and Kashmir a more attractive destination for investment and manufacturing.

He was speaking during an interactive session with the Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) held in Srinagar. The meeting was attended by FIEO President S.C. Ralhan, Vice President Shrikant Kapoor, DG & CEO Ajay Sahai, regional chairpersons, past presidents, board members and other dignitaries.

The session discussed various opportunities of collaboration between J&K government and key representatives of India's export community.

Welcoming the FIEO delegation to Srinagar, the Chief Minister said that the organization's decision to hold its Board of Management meeting in the city was "an important vote of confidence" in Jammu and Kashmir. "Your presence here is very reassuring for us," he remarked, adding that J&K has always valued its long-standing association with India's trade and export community.

During his address, Omar Abdullah outlined the government's ongoing efforts to expand investment opportunities in J&K. "That is something, as a conscious effort, my government is trying to address so that we can attract more investment into Jammu and Kashmir, more manufacturing. Recognizing the constraints that we have, we are trying to address the infrastructure gaps," he said.

He acknowledged the unique challenges that J&K faces due to its geography and limited resources, stating that the government's focus is on leveraging sectors where Jammu and Kashmir holds inherent advantages. These include agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts, pharmaceuticals, IT services and electronics.

Speaking about the overall business environment, Omar Abdullah highlighted that confidence continues to play a crucial role in shaping the region's industry. He noted, "Confidence is one of the most vital elements for business, and regrettably, Jammu and Kashmir has been deprived of it for the past 30 to 35 years." He added, "We are doing everything possible to ensure that this lack of confidence does not define our future."

Highlighting the resilience of the local | **More on P6**

Police raid homes of 4 linked to JeI, Hurriyat

KNO

Srinagar, Oct 13: Srinagar Police today conducted search operations at multiple locations linked to individuals allegedly associated with the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) and Hurriyat Conference.

In a statement, issued to news agency—Kashmir News | **More on P6**

No one can stop India's rise: LG Manoj Sinha

Says inclusion is key to prosperity

KT News Desk

Jammu, Oct 13: "Inclusion is the key for prosperity," Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha said on Monday. He said in the past few years, the government's efforts were focused on ensuring all members of society participate fully in J&K's developmental journey and people with special abilities are able to unlock their potential and contribute to greater prosperity and social stability.

The Lieutenant Governor was speaking at the 45th Foundation Day of School for the hearing-impaired run by J&K Samaj Kalyan Kendra.

The Lieutenant Governor also observed that several forces based abroad and also in India are trying to stop the progress of the country. He said this conspiracy has been hatched by certain elements but no power can stop our march towards developed India.

"India will emerge more powerful defeating the challenges and hurdles created by certain elements. No one can stop our rise," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor, in his address, called for implementing inclusive rehabilitation measures for people with special abilities and ensuring equal opportunities for them in education and employment.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted the four important aspects for empowerment of people with special abilities. First, identifying their strengths and promoting them, secondly, to create an inclusive environment that helps them in independent thinking and taking independent decisions, thirdly, to provide full support to their decision-making abilities and fourthly, to create a conducive environment for self-learning and self-improvement.

The Lieutenant Governor also paid homage to Dr. R.R. Khajuria, founder of J&K Samaj Kalyan Kendra | **More on P6**

LG calls for transforming SMVDU into premier national level university

Chairs 36th meeting of Executive Council of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University

KT News Desk

Jammu, Oct 13: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday directed the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University to take a comprehensive review of the various important initiatives and programmes to regularly update the curriculum to meet the objectives of National Education Policy-2020 and transforming SMVDU into a premier educational institute at the national level.

The LG said this while chairing the 36th meeting of Executive Council of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, at Raj Bhawan on Monday The meeting was attended by (Dr) Pragati Kumar, Vice Chancellor, SMVDU; Umesh Rai, Vice Chancellor Jammu University; Nilofer Khan, Vice Chancellor Kashmir University; Pankaj Chandra, Vice Chancellor and Chairman, Board of Management of Ahmedabad University; A.S.K. Sinha, Director, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology, Amethi; Manoj Singh Gaur, Director, IIT, Jammu; Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari, Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor; Shri Sachin Kumar Vaishya, CEO, SMVDSB; Shri Ajay Kumar Sharma, Registrar, SMVDU and other members of Executive Council.

The Executive Council discussed several important academic and administrative issues and gave in-principal approval to various agenda points presented during the meeting.

The LG highlighted the need for a dedicated focus on lifelong learning skill and community engagement, increasing enrolment, industry collaboration and networking, skill enhancement through short term courses, research, innovation and incubation, patents, strengthening of faculty and staff, and the introduction of new programs from the upcoming academic year.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the University to establish a specialized faculty for languages to offer integrated courses in Hindi, Dogri, French, and German. He emphasized on encouraging students enrolled in foreign languages and technical courses to also pursue Hindi and Dogri languages. He instructed the SMVDU to implement the complete digitalization of all University records.

The meeting also reviewed the ongoing projects and construction works in the University, implementation of NEP-2020, | **More on P6**

CS directs geo-tagging of all water bodies

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 13: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Monday directed the Forest Department to compulsorily undertake geo-tagging of all water bodies across Jammu and Kashmir to facilitate their protection, conservation, and scientific management.

He issued these directions while chairing a high-level meeting convened to review the progress of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain (JSA: CTR) campaign being implemented throughout the Union Territory.

The meeting was attended by Additional Chief Secretary, Jal Shakti Department, Shaleen Kabra; Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF); Commissioner Secretary, Forests; Commissioner Secretary, Social Welfare Department; Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir; Secretary, School Education; Secretary, Rural Development Department (RDD) and other senior officers. Deputy Commissioners of all districts participated through video conferencing. The Chief Secretary underscored the need for seamless coordination between the Jal Shakti Department, Forest Department, and RDD to ensure comprehensive identification and geo-referencing of all water bodies both in forest and non-forest areas within the next month.

He stressed that this exercise is crucial to formulating future strategies for conservation and must be completed before the onset of snowfall in the winter zone areas. Calling for concerted and time-bound action, the Chief Secretary maintained that we must act with urgency to mitigate the challenges posed by climate change and ensure that our water resources are secure for future generations. Every department must play its designated role under the Catch the Rain programme.

Speaking on the occasion, ACS, Jal Shakti Department, Shaleen Kabra, highlighted that the Jal Shakti Abhiyan provides a robust platform to assess and accelerate progress in water conservation and management across the region.

He observed that the campaign is now transitioning from the planning phase to intensive, community-driven implementation, emphasizing that water security and sustainability form the core objectives of the initiative.

The ACS informed that 100% District Water Conservation Plans (DWCPs) have been prepared and uploaded for all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir on the JSA Portal. This achievement, he said, provides a scientific framework for effective and sustainable management of water resources across the UT.

The meeting also reviewed the progress made in districts including Doda, Ganderbal, Jammu, Bandipora, and Ramban. It was briefed about the post-monsoon visit reports of Central Nodal Officers, which have already been uploaded on the JSA portal.

It was reiterated that the Jal Shakti Abhiyan continues to align its activities around the five key interventions constitutes Water Conservation and Rainwater Harvesting, Renovation of Traditional and Other Water Bodies, Reuse of Water and Recharge Structures, Watershed Development, and Intensive Afforestation.

Officials apprised the Chief Secretary that the campaign emphasizes inter-sectoral convergence, with works being undertaken through existing resources and funding channels such as MGNREGS, Finance Commission Grants, and local funds—ensuring that no separate JSA funds are utilized.

It was noted that the 'Catch the Rain' campaign forms a key pillar in the Government's strategy to combat water scarcity and ensure long-term sustainability. The initiative seeks full convergence of departmental efforts with the guiding principle of "Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls."

By integrating science-based planning, geo-tagging, and community participation, the campaign aims to build climate resilience and water security for generations to come.

Ahsanul Haq Chishti assumed charge of CEO, WMDA

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, October 13: Ahsanul Haq Chishti, who has been transferred and posted as CEO, Wullar Manasbal Development Authority, assumed his charge Monday. On the occasion, the officer was welcomed by officials of TDA and local stakeholders.

Later, the CEO took a round of various assets of the Authority and directed their proper upkeep and maintenance.

COTPA 2023

DC Ramban reviews Tobacco Control measures

KT NEWS DESK

RAMBAN, OCTOBER 13: Deputy Commissioner Ramban Mohammad Alyas Khan Monday chaired a meeting of the District Level Coordination Committee for the implementation of National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) and reviewed control measures being taken, including the enforcement of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003.

The meeting was attended by Additional SP Ramban Majeeb-Ur-Rehman, ACD Ashfaq Ahmed, CMO Kamal Je Zadoo, Divisional Coordinator NTCP Shiveta Raina, BMOs, CEO MC Ramban and officers from School Education, Higher Education and other departments.

During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized strict enforcement of the COTPA Act to eliminate tobacco usage particularly in public places across the district. He directed the concerned officers to install mandatory signage in educational and health institutions as well as public areas like bus stands and government offices to raise awareness about the prohibition and harmful effects of tobacco use.

The DC directed all stakeholders to launch an intensified enforcement-cum-awareness drive to effectively implement the NTCP in the district. He instructed BDOs, BMOs and ZEOs to work in mission mode to make all schools, colleges, other institutions and villages tobacco-free as per prescribed parameters.

Further, the Deputy Commissioner asked CEOs and institutional heads to strengthen anti-tobacco campaigns and administer anti-tobacco pledges to students during morning assemblies. He also instructed designated officers to actively participate in enforcement drives to ensure all educational and health institutions become tobacco-free zones. Reviewing the progress made by stakeholder departments, the DC directed them to launch a comprehensive IEC campaign to sensitize the public about the harmful effects of tobacco use and the provisions of COTPA-2003.

Earlier, in a detailed presentation, the CMO and Divisional Coordinator NTCP provided insights into the tobacco usage scenario in Jammu and Kashmir, explained the penal and enforcement provisions under COTPA-2003 and discussed strategies for implementing the Tobacco Free Youth Campaign 3.0.

DC Gbl approves 499 cases under various schemes

Reviews implementation of HADP, JKCIP & KKGs

KT NEWS DESK

GANDERBAL, OCTOBER 13: In order to take thorough review of the implementation of the Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP), Jammu & Kashmir Competitiveness Improvement of Agriculture and Allied Sectors Project (JKCIP), besides Kisan Khidmat Ghars (KKGs) in the district, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ganderbal, Jatin Kishore Monday convened a meeting here.

The meeting aimed to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination and ensure timely and effective execution of key government initiatives to benefit the farming community.

Addressing the meeting, DC stressed scaling up schemes covering Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry, Fisheries, Horticulture, Horticulture Planning & Marketing, and Sericulture. He emphasized extending benefits to more beneficiaries to maximize the outreach and impact of these programmes across the district.

The DC directed to focus on revenue generation and proper reporting of actual income generated by KKGs through Krishi Udyamis. He also directed timely issuance of fertilizer licenses to those who have completed the training course. The concerned departments were directed to take proactive steps to remove deficiencies and ensure maximum coverage under these schemes.

Earlier, District Nodal Officer HADP through a PowerPoint presentation briefed the chair regarding the overall performance achieved under various projects of HADP and JKCIP in Ganderbal district. Officers present also provided a detailed overview of the progress achieved under HADP, JKCIP and KKGs including farmer registration and enrollment through the Daksh Kisan Portal, completion of training courses, established units and fund utilization. Progress on the Kissan Sathi, KCC scheme status, PMFME and PMFBY status besides distribution of Kissan Smart Cards under HADP was also reviewed.

The DC reviewed the set targets, achievements so far, and identified implementation gaps. He directed the concerned departments to take proactive measures to bridge any deficiencies and ensure maximum acceptance of application and farmer coverage under these schemes.

Later, the DC reviewed and accorded approval to cases submitted under HADP, JKCIP and IDDS in the district.

After a thorough review of submitted applications, the DC approved 268 HADP cases, 224 JKCIP cases and 07 IDDS cases, empowering the farming community and promoting sustainable agricultural practices in the district.

The meeting was attended by GM DIC, Assistant Commissioner Revenue, Chief Planning Officer, AGM NABARD, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, Chief Agriculture Officer, Chief Horticulture Officer, District Sheep Husbandry Officer, District Sericulture Officer, Sr. Scientist KVK Ganderbal, Assistant Director Fisheries, Area Marketing Officer Horticulture (P&M) and Lead District Manager.

LS by-polls

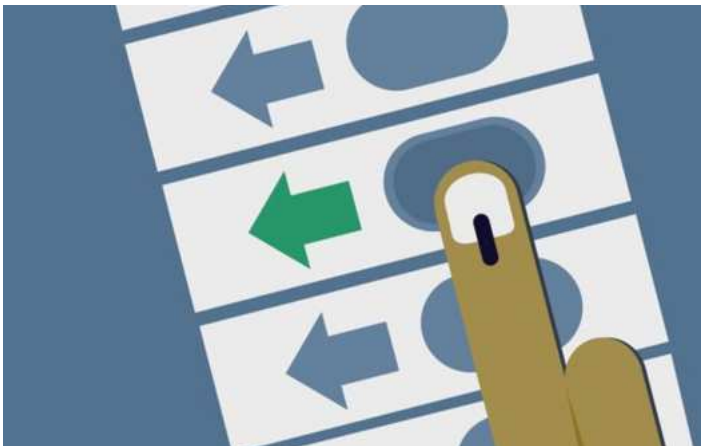# Nomination process begins for Budgam, Nagrota seats

KNO

Srinagar, Oct 13: The nomination process for Budgam and Nagrota assembly segments began on Monday with the Election Commission of India (ECI) issuing two separate notifications for it.

According to the notifications issued by the poll-body, the ECI said that candidates can file their nomination papers until October 20 for 27-Budgam and 77 -Nagrota.

The poll-body announced that scrutiny of nominations will take place on October 22, while the last date for withdrawal of candidature is October 24.

The voting is scheduled for November 11, with counting set to take place on November 14.

The Budgam seat fell vacant on

October 21, 2024 after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah chose to retain Ganderbal constituency following his victory from both seats in 2024

Assembly elections. The Nagrota seat was vacated due to the demise of BJP MLA Devinder Singh Rana on October 31, 2024—(KNO)

J&K receives top priority in Modi Govt: Jitendra Singh

REHAN QAYOOM MIR

Jammu, Oct 13: Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh Monday said that Jammu and Kashmir has received special attention from the Government of India over the past 11 years since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power.

Dr Singh was present with the three BJP candidates nominated for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections when they filed their nomination papers.

Speaking to reporters, he said that the Bharatiya Janata Party has fielded three candidates and expressed full confidence of winning all the three seats and ensuring strong representation for Jammu and Kashmir in the Upper House of Parliament.

He said the Rajya Sabha holds a significant place in the country's democratic system, as it traditionally sends experienced individuals for representation.

"Over the past 11 years, since

Modi Ji became the Prime Minister, Jammu and Kashmir has been given special priority. Under the leadership of the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has improved. Our caravan has once again set out on the path of prosperity," Dr. Singh said. He added

that strong representation in both Houses of Parliament is essential for safeguarding the interests of future generations, strengthening the Prime Minister's hands, and ensuring that the voice of Jammu and Kashmir reaches the highest levels.

"Jammu and Kashmir is

moving towards normalcy. Our children are now achieving top positions. They are excelling in all competitive exams, whether in civil services, NET, JEE, or startups," Dr. Singh said.

He noted that last week, a startup program was held in Jammu and Kashmir to encourage innovation among youth. "Our children have always been intelligent, but their potential was held back. Now, the world has started to realize that the era when India followed others is over. Today, India leads by example," he said.

Dr. Singh said India's success stories are being acknowledged globally. "Our best practices are being emulated worldwide, whether in the space sector or in vaccine production. Even today, India supplies vaccines to 200 countries. If you look at our warfare capabilities or advancements in electronics and quantum technology, the world now accepts that the coming era belongs to India," he said—(KNO)

NC sidelines Congress from very beginning: MLA Mir

UMAISAR GUL GANAIE

Anantnag, Oct 13: Senior Congress leader and MLA Dooru, Ghulam Ahmad Mir on Monday said that before finalising seats for the Rajya Sabha, the ruling National Conference should have consulted like-minded political groups in Jammu and Kashmir including the PDP to develop a consensus on the proper division of seats in the Upper House of Parliament.

Mir said that since the formation of the coalition government, Congress had been sidelined and its views were not considered by the ruling partner.

"When the coalition came into existence and the government was formed, the coordination and unity that should have been there among the partners were missing. The oath-taking ceremony was held without prior discussions between the coalition partners. Because of this, even then, Congress's issues were not included in the power-sharing agreement," Mir said.

He added that during the year that followed, many contentious issues for which the coalition was formed were ignored. "We had gone before the people, sought their votes, and received a strong mandate. Matters of public interest should have been deliberated upon from time to time, but that never happened," Mir said.

He said that Congress had sought one safe seat for the Rajya Sabha, and the issue was taken up with the National Conference at the highest level. "Their top

leadership had agreed in principle that one safe seat would be given to Congress. We asked them to work out the details with us, but there was no response from their side. Instead, we were told that Congress could field a candidate for the fourth seat," Mir said.

"However, there was no concrete vote bank for the fourth seat. The roles that leaders like Chief Minister or Dr Farooq Abdullah could have played in securing that seat were not something Congress could ensure

alone. So, we repeatedly asked them to nominate Congress for any one of the first three seats if they had assured us a safe one. They did not agree," he said.

Mir added that after detailed discussions, Congress decided not to field any candidate for the Rajya Sabha elections. "No one can deny that the National Conference received a big mandate, and the government is with them. It was their responsibility to take a call on this matter," he said.

He further said that the National Conference should have brought the PDP and Independents—those not likely to support the BJP—on board to create a combined vote bank of 60 seats. "With such coordination, the division of seats could have happened smoothly, and there would have been no issue over which party got which seat. Like-minded partners should have been called together and taken into confidence. That initiative should have come from the National Conference, but it did not," Mir said—(KNO)

Flood damage assessment report under final review: Minister Dar

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Anantnag, Oct 13: Minister for Agriculture Javed Dar on Monday said the ground assessment of flood damages across various parts of the Union Territory has been completed, and the compiled report is currently with the Chief Secretary for final review.

He added that once the final vetting is done, the report will be forwarded to the Government of India for necessary financial assistance

and relief measures.

Speaking to media persons in Anantnag, Dar said that the administration has taken a detailed stock of the damages caused by recent floods, particularly in the agriculture and infrastructure sectors. "The ground assessment report has been compiled after thorough verification by the concerned departments. The file is now lying with the Chief Secretary for the final touch, after which it will be sent to the Government of India for approval and

necessary action," he said.

Asked about the possible waiver of Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans for farmers affected by floods, the minister said that while no decision has been taken yet, the government remains hopeful of a favourable outcome. "Nothing concrete can be said at this stage about the waiver of KCC loans, but we are hopeful for something positive. The farmers have suffered heavy losses, and the government is committed to exploring every possible relief measure," he assured.

On the political front, Dar took a subtle dig at the opposition, saying that the presence of senior Congress leader Ghulam Ahmad Mir at a joint function indicates that the National Conference (NC) and Congress are effectively one. "When you see G A Mir as part of the same function, it clearly shows that Congress and NC are one and the same," he said, implying a deeper political understanding between the two parties ahead of the upcoming Raj Sabha elections—(KNO)

Congress is a puppet of NC: LoP Sharma

Says Sheikh Abdullah was imposed as CM on Congress MLAs in 1975

KNO

Srinagar, Oct 13: Leader of Opposition Sunil Kumar Sharma on Monday described the Congress party as a "puppet" of the National Conference (NC), claiming that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah was imposed on its MLAs as Chief Minister in 1975 following his release from jail.

Speaking to reporters, the BJP leader said that Congress is a non-entity in Jammu & Kashmir.

"Congress doesn't have its own existence in Jammu and Kashmir. It functions as a puppet of the National Conference. The Congress merely follows decisions made by the NC leadership. It is not

an independent party," he said in response to a question over its decision to opt out of Rajya Sabha polls after being offered the 'risky' seat by NC.

He said that NC founder Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah was imposed on Congress MLAs as CM in 1975.

"If you turn the pages of history, you will see that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah was released from jail in 1975 and then imposed on Congress MLAs as Chief Minister. Even today, all decisions of the Congress party are dictated by the National Conference. The Congress has been repeatedly humiliated by NC, yet it remains unashamed," he said—(KNO)

Gulmarg amazes downhill global riders

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Oct 13: Gulmarg has once again captured global attention as the world's top mountain bikers concluded the first-ever international-standard downhill mountain biking event, praising the destination for its stunning landscape, smooth organisation and welcoming atmosphere.

The event, part of the MTB Downhill – Zabarvan Legends Series brought together 23 professional athletes, including 9 international participants from Australia, Italy, Brazil, Taiwan, Indonesia and the Czech Republic. The competition featured a challenging 2.5 km high-difficulty trail through Gulmarg's steep slopes, combining technical precision with breathtaking scenery.

Minister for Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma, who presided over the closing ceremony, hailed the global participation and called the athletes "ambassadors of peace". He said the event reflected a new and confident image of Jammu and Kashmir before the world.

"The participants from across the globe

are our ambassadors of peace. They should tell the world that Jammu and Kashmir, especially Kashmir, is safe," Sharma said. "We have come up with the odds and are messengers of peace. Through sports, we will tell the world that everything is safe here". The minister said the government was determined to promote sports tourism and generate employment through such initiatives. "We are committed to uplifting sports tourism in Jammu and Kashmir. We will not bow down before challenges. We should always stay hopeful", he said,

lauding the efforts of the Gulmarg administration and all stakeholders involved in hosting the event. Gulmarg CEO Tariq Hussain credited Zabarvan for taking the initial initiative and said the event's success showed that Gulmarg has the infrastructure and capability to host world-class sporting events.

"It was Zabarvan who came up with the idea of hosting an international-standard downhill mountain biking event. We worked together to make it a reality," Hussain said. "The event's success reflects the

teamwork between the government, the organisers and the sponsors. It shows Gulmarg's potential and readiness for global adventure tourism".

The CEO said the weather conditions played a crucial role in the event's success, calling it "a perfect blend of nature and human effort". "The message is clear, Gulmarg is ready for the world. Its natural terrain, infrastructure and hospitality make it one of the most promising adventure destinations," he added.

Athletes from various countries expressed joy and admiration for

Gulmarg. "The venue was amazing and challenging. We enjoyed every bit of it," said a group of international riders. An athlete from Australia said, "I am very surprised to be here. The place is beautiful. I will remember this race forever". Others echoed similar feelings, saying, "We will be back to explore more".

Zabarvan Founder Sehan Shetty said the Gulmarg event marked the launch of Phase Three of their long-term mission to unify India's mountain sports community. "This milestone follows 1.5 years of discussions and support from both central and state governments. It coincides with Zabarvan's second anniversary," he said.

The Zabarvan Legends Series will continue with two more legs in Shillong and Guwahati, featuring different terrains and challenges.

Shetty said the initiative goes beyond sports promotion, focusing on nurturing homegrown talent and developing indigenous adventure gear.

He thanked the Jammu and Kashmir administration, Gulmarg Development Authority and sponsors for making the series possible—(KNO)

Ticket staff returns lost bag to passenger

KNO

Jammu, Oct 13: Indian Railways continues to demonstrate its commitment of safety, trust, and excellent service towards passengers. Northern Railway, Jammu Division in a statement said that Ticket Sub-Inspector Adil Hussain at Headquarters (Srinagar), demonstrated remarkable dedication by successfully recovering and returning a passenger's lost bag on Train No. 26402 Vande Bharat Express, running from Srinagar Railway Station to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra.

"A passenger travelling on seat number 42 in coach number C1 had accidentally left his bag in another coach. Upon discovering the missing bag, the distressed passenger immediately informed Adil Hussain, who was part of the ticket checking team on the train," it reads. It also said that, Hussain launched a search and located the lost bag. "After proper verification procedures, he ensured that the bag containing a mobile phone and approximately Rs 5,000 in cash was safely returned to its rightful owner."

The passenger expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Hussain and Indian Railways for their prompt cooperation and honesty.

Appreciating this exemplary act, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Mr. Uchit Singhal said, "We commend the promptness and dedication of the ticket checking staff. This incident demonstrates the unwavering commitment of our railway personnel to serve passengers with honesty and responsibility."

A commendation certificate has been announced for Adil Hussain's efforts and exceptional service.

This incident confirms that Indian Railways employees are always vigilant and committed to ensuring the convenience, safety, and satisfaction of their passengers—(KNO)

Rising Suicide Cases In J&K: Time To Tackle Underlying Issues

The rise in suicides in Jammu and Kashmir is very worrying and shows how much people are suffering. According to the latest report from the NCRB, 365 people ended their lives in 2023. This represents a 13 per cent increase from 2022, when 323 people took this tragic step. These numbers tell us that many families and individuals are going through difficult times. The main reason for this increase is unemployment. Almost half of the suicides

- 178 out of 365 – were because of joblessness. Most of these victims were men, and their numbers have more than doubled in just one year. Losing a job and being unable to find new work can leave many feeling hopeless, leading them to take extreme measures. Men, who often see work as their responsibility, are affected the most. Family problems are also a big reason for suicide, causing 60 deaths in 2023. Illness and health issues are other major causes,

with 46 people losing their lives because of health-related problems. The report also shows a sharp rise in suicides linked to love and relationships. In 2023, 40 people died because of broken relationships or emotional pain, which is more than double the number from the previous year. Financial problems are another major factor. Most victims – about 241 – had very low income, earning less than one lakh rupees a year. Even those earning between one and

five lakh rupees are not safe from these struggles. Money problems create a lot of stress and hopelessness, pushing some people to end their lives. Most suicides are carried out by hanging, which is the most common method. Poisoning is the second most used way. Experts say that men tend to choose more dangerous methods, which is why more men die from suicide than women. Women, on the other hand, try to end their lives more often but are less often

successful. Experts have called for comprehensive mental health services, accessible counselling, and awareness programmes. Addressing unemployment and economic instability, coupled with community-based support systems, can help stem this tide of despair. Without concerted efforts to tackle these underlying issues, the region risks further tragedy. All stakeholders must unite to restore hope and resilience among the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Transforming India with AI

Over ₹10,300 crore investment & 38,000 GPUs powering inclusive innovation

Press Information Bureau

India stands at the cusp of a new era powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), where technology is transforming lives and shaping the nation's progress. AI is no longer limited to research labs or big corporations. It is reaching citizens at every level. From improving healthcare access in remote areas to helping farmers make informed crop decisions, AI is making daily life simpler, smarter, and more connected. It is revolutionising classrooms through personalised learning, making cities cleaner and safer, and enhancing public services through faster, data-driven governance.

Initiatives such as the IndiaAI Mission and the Centres of Excellence for AI are at the heart of this transformation. They are expanding access to computing power, supporting research, and helping startups and institutions create solutions that directly benefit people. India's approach focuses on making AI open, affordable, and accessible, ensuring that innovation uplifts society as a whole.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of machines to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. It enables systems to learn from experience, adapt to new situations, and solve complex problems independently. AI uses datasets, algorithms, and large language models to analyse information, recognise patterns, and generate responses. Over time, these systems improve their performance, allowing them to reason, make decisions, and communicate in ways similar to humans.

This inclusive vision is also reflected in NITI Aayog's report, AI for Inclusive Societal Development (October 2025). The report shows how AI can empower India's 490 million informal workers by expanding access to healthcare, education, skilling, and financial inclusion. It highlights how AI-driven tools can boost productivity and resilience for millions who form the backbone of India's economy. The report also stresses that technology can bridge deep social and economic divides, ensuring that the benefits of AI reach every citizen.

AI Ecosystem in India at Present

India's technology sector is expanding rapidly, with annual revenues projected to cross USD 280 billion this year.

Over. 6 million people are employed in the tech and AI ecosystem.

The country hosts 1,800+ Global Capability Centres, including more than 500 focused on AI.

India has around 1.8 lakh startups, and nearly 89% of new startups launched last year used AI in their products or services.

On the NASSCOM AI Adoption Index, India scores 2.45 out of 4, showing that 87% of enterprises are actively using AI solutions.

Leading sectors in AI adoption include industrial and automotive, consumer goods and retail, banking, financial services and insurance, and healthcare. Together they contribute around 60 percent of AI's total value.

About 26% of Indian companies have achieved AI maturity at scale, according to a recent BCG survey.

As India builds an inclusive AI ecosystem, its growing global recognition reflects this progress. Rankings such as the Stanford AI Index place India among the top four countries in AI skills, capabilities, and policies. The country is also the second-largest contributor to AI projects on GitHub, highlighting the strength of its developer community. With a strong STEM workforce, expanding research ecosystem, and growing digital infrastructure, India is positioning itself to harness AI for economic growth, societal progress, and the long-term vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

IndiaAI Mission

Guided by the vision of "Making AI in India and Making AI Work for India", the Cabinet approved the IndiaAI Mission in March 2024, with a budget outlay of 10,371.92 crore over five years.[2] The mission marks a defining step towards making India a global leader in Artificial Intelligence.

Since its launch, the mission has made strong progress in expanding the country's computing infrastructure. From an initial target of 10,000 GPUs, India has now achieved 38,000 GPUs, providing affordable access to world-class AI resources.[3]

What is a GPU?

A GPU or Graphics Processing Unit is a powerful computer chip that helps machines think faster, process images, run AI programs, and handle complex tasks more efficiently than a regular processor.

Implemented by IndiaAI, an independent business division under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the mission is building a comprehensive ecosystem that drives innovation, supports startups, strengthens data access, and ensures the responsible use of AI for public good.

The seven pillars of the IndiaAI Mission are[4]:

1. IndiaAI Compute Pillar

This pillar provides high-end GPUs at affordable costs. As mentioned earlier, over 38,000 GPUs have been on boarded. These GPUs are available at a subsidized cost of just 65 per hour.

2. IndiaAI Application Development Initiative

This pillar develops AI applications for India-specific challenges. Sectors include healthcare, agriculture, climate change, governance, and assistive learning technologies. Thirty applications have been approved by July 2025. Sector-specific hackathons are organized with ministries and institutions. For example, the CyberGuard AI Hackathon helps develop AI solutions for cybersecurity.

3. AIKosh (Dataset Platform)

AIKosh develops large datasets for training AI models. It integrates data from government and non-government sources. The platform has over 3,000 datasets and 243 AI models across 20 sectors.[5] These resources help developers focus on AI solutions instead of building basic modules. The platform has over 265,000 visits, 6,000 registered users, and 13,000 downloads by July 2025.

4. IndiaAI Foundation Models

This pillar develops India's own Large Multimodal Models using Indian data and languages. It ensures sovereign capability and global competitiveness in generative AI. IndiaAI received over 500 proposals. In the first phase, four startups were selected: Sarvam AI, Soket AI, Gnani AI, and Gan AI.

5. IndiaAI FutureSkills

This pillar builds AI-skilled professionals. Support is provided to 500 PhD fellows, 5,000 postgraduates, and 8,000 undergraduates. Over 200 students received fellowships by July 2025. Twenty-six institutes onboarded PhD students. Data and AI Labs are being set up in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Twenty-seven labs have been identified with NIELIT. States and UTs nominated 174 ITIs and polytechnics for labs.

6. IndiaAI Startup Financing

This pillar provides financial support to AI startups. The IndiaAI Startups Global program launched in March 2025. It helps 10 Indian startups expand into the European market in collaboration with Station F and HEC Paris.

7. Safe and Trusted AI

This pillar ensures responsible AI adoption with strong governance. Eight projects were selected in the first round. They focus on machine unlearning, bias mitigation, privacy-preserving ML, explainability, auditing, and governance testing. Over 400 applications were received in the second round. An expression of interest was published on 9 May 2025 for partner institutions to join the IndiaAI Safety Institute.

Other Key Government Initiatives and Policy Push

The Government of India is turning its Artificial Intelligence vision into action through a series of transformative initiatives. These efforts are focused on building a robust AI ecosystem, promoting innovation, and ensuring that technology serves every section of society. From creating world-class research hubs to developing home-grown AI models, the government's approach combines policy, infrastructure, and capacity-building in equal measure.

Centres of Excellence for AI

To encourage research-driven innovation, the government has set up three Centres of Excellence (CoEs) in key sectors such as Healthcare, Agriculture, and Sustainable Cities. A fourth CoE for Education was announced in Budget 2025.[6] These centres are designed to serve as collaborative spaces where academia, industry, and government institutions come together to develop scalable AI solutions. Alongside, five National Centres of Excellence for Skilling have been established to prepare the youth with industry-relevant AI skills, building a future-ready workforce.

AI Competency Framework

This framework provides structured training for government officials, helping them acquire essential AI skills and apply them in policymaking and governance. Designed in line with global benchmarks, it ensures that India's public sector remains informed, agile, and prepared for the AI-driven future.

IndiaAI Startups Global Acceleration Programme

Launched in partnership with Station F in Paris and HEC Paris, this programme supports ten promising Indian AI startups by giving them access to global expertise, networks, and resources. It aims to help Indian innovators compete at an international level and expand their global footprint.

Sarvam AI: Smarter Aadhaar Services

Sarvam AI, a Bengaluru-based company, is translating advanced AI research into practical governance solutions. In partnership with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), it is using generative AI to make Aadhaar services smarter and more secure. In April 2025, Sarvam AI received approval to build India's Sovereign LLM Ecosystem,

an open-source model designed to enhance public service delivery and promote digital trust.

Bhashini: Voice for Digital Inclusion

Bhashini is an AI-powered platform that breaks language barriers by offering translation and speech tools in multiple Indian languages. It helps citizens access digital services easily, even if they are not comfortable reading or writing. In June 2025, the Digital India Bhashini Division and the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) signed an MoU to deploy multilingual AI solutions across public-facing railway platforms.[7]

Since its launch in July 2022, Bhashini has crossed one million downloads, supports 20 Indian languages, and integrates more than 350 AI models. With 450+ active customers, it continues to promote digital inclusion and bridge linguistic divides.[8]

BharatGen AI: India's Multilingual AI Model[9]

Launched on 2 June 2025 at the BharatGen Summit, BharatGen AI is the first government-funded, homegrown multimodal large language model. It supports 22 Indian languages and integrates text, speech, and image understanding.

Built using domestic datasets, BharatGen captures India's cultural diversity and provides a common platform for startups and researchers to create AI solutions tailored to Indian needs.

India AI Impact Summit 2026[10]

India will host the AI Impact Summit in February 2026. The summit will showcase India's AI capabilities and encourage innovation across sectors. On September 18, 2025, India unveiled the event logo and key flagship initiatives.

The key flagship initiatives are:

AI Pitch Fest (UDAAN): A platform for AI startups from around the world with a focus on women-led ventures and differently-abled changemakers.

Global innovation challenges for youth, women, and other participants: An initiative to promote AI-driven solutions that address real world public challenges across sectors. Research symposium: A gathering to showcase latest AI research and bring together leading researchers from India, the Global South, and the wider international community to present their work, exchange methods, and evidence and encourage collaborations.

AI Expo: This Expo will focus on Responsible Intelligence and will feature 300+ exhibitors from India and 30+ countries.

The event that unveiled the Summit logo and key flagship initiatives also saw the launch of eight new foundational model initiatives to build indigenous AI models trained on India-specific data. Another major focus was the AI Data Labs, with thirty labs launched pan-India, forming a 570-lab network. The first 27 labs were set up in partnership with the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT). These labs provide foundational AI and data training under the FutureSkills initiative of the IndiaAI Mission.

The IndiaAI Fellowship Program and Portal was also expanded during the event to support 13,500 scholars. This includes 8,000 undergraduates, 5,000 postgraduates, and 500 PhD researchers across all disciplines. Fellowships are now open to students from fields such as engineering, medicine, law, commerce, business, and liberal arts.

AI in Everyday Life and Work

Artificial Intelligence is driving a new wave of innovation that touches every part of daily life, from healthcare and farming to education, governance, and climate prediction. It helps doctors diagnose diseases faster, assists farmers in making data-driven decisions, improves learning outcomes for students, and makes governance more efficient and transparent.

At the heart of this transformation is the Large Language Model (LLM), an advanced AI system that learns from vast amounts of data to understand and generate human-like text. LLMs are what make chatbots, translation tools, and virtual assistants possible. They make it easier for people to find information, use government services, and learn new skills in their own language.

India's approach to AI goes beyond technology, focusing on inclusion and empowerment. Through national initiatives and global collaborations, AI is being used to solve real-world challenges, enhance public services, and make opportunities more accessible to every citizen. From improving rural healthcare and predicting weather patterns to translating court judgments into regional languages, AI is emerging as a powerful enabler of progress in building a digitally empowered and equitable India.

Some key areas where AI is improving everyday life are:

Healthcare[11]

AI is transforming healthcare delivery. It helps doctors detect diseases early, analyse medical scans, and recommend personalised treatments. Telemedicine platforms powered by AI connect

patients in rural areas with specialists in top hospitals, saving time and cost while improving care quality. India's participation in HealthAI, a global body promoting safe and ethical AI in healthcare, and collaborations between ICMR and IndiaAI with countries like the United Kingdom and Singapore are ensuring responsible innovation and global best practices.

Agriculture[12]

For farmers, AI is a trusted digital companion. It predicts weather, detects pest attacks, and suggests optimal times for irrigation and sowing. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is using AI through initiatives like Kisan e-Mitra, a virtual assistant that helps farmers access government schemes such as PM Kisan Samman Nidhi.

The National Pest Surveillance System and Crop Health Monitoring combine satellite data, weather inputs, and soil analysis to provide real-time advice that improves yields and income security.

Education and Skilling[13]

AI is being integrated into India's education system to make learning more inclusive, engaging, and future-ready. Under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) offers a 15-hour AI skill module from Class VI and an optional AI subject from Class IX to XII. The DIKSHA digital learning platform by NCERT uses AI tools such as keyword search in videos and read-aloud features to enhance accessibility, especially for visually impaired learners.

In addition, the National e-Governance Division (NeGD) under MeitY, in collaboration with its partners, has implemented YUVAi: Youth for Unnati and Vikas with AI, a national programme aimed at enabling students from Classes 8 to 12 with AI and social skills in an inclusive manner. [14] The programme provides a platform for students to learn and apply AI skills across eight thematic areas: Krishi, Aarogya, Shiksha, Paryavaran, Parivahan, Grameen Vikas, Smart Cities, and Vidhi aur Nyaay, empowering them to develop AI-driven solutions for real-world challenges.

Governance and Justice Delivery[15]

AI is reshaping governance and public service delivery. As per the Supreme Court of India, under e-Courts Project Phase III, modern technologies are being integrated to make the justice system more efficient and accessible. Artificial Intelligence and its subsets such as Machine Learning, Optical Character Recognition, and Natural Language Processing are being used in translation, prediction, administrative efficiency, automated filing, intelligent scheduling, and communication through chatbots.

AI Translation Committees in High Courts are overseeing the translation of Supreme Court and High Court judgments into vernacular languages. Digital legal platforms such as e-HCR and e-ILR now provide citizens online access to judgments in multiple regional languages, making justice delivery more transparent and inclusive.

Weather Forecasting and Climate Services[16]

AI is strengthening India's ability to predict and respond to natural events. The India Meteorological Department uses AI-based models to forecast rainfall, fog, lightning, and fire. The Advanced Dvorak Technique helps estimate cyclone intensity, while MausamGPT, an upcoming AI chatbot, will offer real-time weather and climate advice to farmers and disaster management agencies.

Will AI Lead to Unemployment?

Artificial Intelligence is often seen as a threat to jobs, but in reality, it is creating new kinds of opportunities. According to NASSCOM's report "Advancing India's AI Skills" (August 2024), India's AI talent base is expected to grow from about 6 to 6.5 lakh professionals to more than 12.5 lakh by 2027, at a compound annual growth rate of 15 percent.

AI is driving demand in areas such as data science, data curation, AI engineering, and analytics. As of August 2025, around 8.65 lakh candidates have enrolled or trained in various emerging technology courses, including 3.20 lakh in AI and Big Data Analytics.

To prepare the workforce for the future, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, MeitY, has launched FutureSkills PRIME, a national programme focused on reskilling and upskilling IT professionals in 10 new and emerging technologies, including AI. As of August 2025, more than 18.56 lakh candidates had signed up on the FutureSkills PRIME portal, and over 3.37 lakh had successfully completed their courses.

AI for Inclusive Societal Development

NITI Aayog's report, AI for Inclusive Societal Development (October 2025), sets a roadmap for using technology to empower India's informal workforce. It asks a key question: how can the world's most advanced technologies reach the most overlooked workers so they can overcome constraints

and claim their place in India's growth story?

The report draws on real-life experiences of informal workers. It reflects the challenges and aspirations of a home healthcare aide in Rajkot, a carpenter in Delhi, a farmer, and many others. These stories show persistent barriers, but also the immense potential that thoughtfully deployed technology can unlock. For these millions, technology must not replace their skills, it must amplify them.

The roadmap discusses how Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, blockchain, robotics, and immersive learning can remove systemic barriers faced by India's 490 million informal workers. It envisions a future where, by 2035, voice-first AI interfaces overcome language and literacy barriers. Smart contracts will ensure timely and transparent payments. Microcredentials and on-demand learning will allow workers to upskill at the pace of their ambition.

At the heart of this vision is the Digital ShramSetu Mission, a national initiative to deploy frontier technologies at scale for India's informal sector. The mission focuses on persona- or sector-led prioritisation, state-driven implementation, regulatory enablement, and strategic partnerships to ensure affordability and wide adoption. It will mobilise government, industry, and civil society, guided by a robust multi-level impact evaluation framework.

The report emphasises that achieving this inclusive digital leap will require more than optimism. It calls for concerted investments in R&D, targeted skilling programmes, and a strong innovation ecosystem. India's past successes with digital public infrastructure such as Aadhaar, UPI, and Jan Dhan show that inclusive, at-scale platforms are possible.

Proposed Implementation Roadmap:

Phase 1 (2025–2026): Mission Orientation

Drafting of the mission charter with clear goals, timelines and measurable outcomes. Stakeholders from government, industry, academia and civil society will be engaged to set priorities and define objectives.

Phase 2 (2026–2027): Institutional Setup and Governance Design

Establishment of cross-sectoral governance structures, leadership roles and an implementation blueprint. This phase will also focus on legal, regulatory and digital infrastructure readiness, while promoting domestic innovation and public–private partnerships.

Phase 3 (2027–2029): Pilots and Select Programme Launch

Pilot projects will be rolled out in high-readiness sectors to test solutions in real-world conditions. Accessibility and last-mile adoption will be prioritised, supported by strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Phase 4 (2029 onwards): Nationwide Rollout and Integration

Proven solutions will be scaled across states and cities. Local adaptation will ensure regional relevance and worker mobility across sectors. The phase will aim to institutionalise the mission and sustain its benefits at scale.

By 2035, the mission envisions India as a global leader in inclusive AI deployment. It seeks to ensure that technology not only drives growth but also strengthens livelihoods, opens access to opportunities, and supports the nation's journey towards an equitable and empowered digital economy.

Conclusion

India's journey in Artificial Intelligence reflects a clear vision and decisive action. From expanding computing infrastructure to fostering homegrown models and supporting startups, the country is creating a robust AI ecosystem that benefits citizens and drives innovation. Initiatives in agriculture, healthcare, education, and governance demonstrate practical applications with real impact. Strategic initiatives like the IndiaAI Mission, Digital ShramSetu, and foundational model development are ensuring that innovation reaches every citizen while fostering research, skills, and entrepreneurship. These efforts lay a strong foundation for India to emerge as a global AI leader while advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

References:

Ministry of Electronics & IT
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2132817
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2108810
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2113095
https://www.pib.gov.in/FactsheetDetails.aspx?Id=149242
https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2132377
https://indiaai.gov.in/article/building-india-s-foundational-ai-models-indiaai-innovation-initiative

---

The views expressed by contributors on this page are their own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of the newspaper

CS reviews JKRLM functioning

Stresses on convergence of livelihood schemes to empower rural women

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Oct 13: Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo Monday chaired a high-level meeting to review the functioning of the Jammu & Kashmir Rural Livelihoods Mission (JKRLM) and directed for effective convergence of the Mission with Mission YUVA, PM Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME), and the Lal Ded Stree Shakti Scheme to maximize employment generation and ensure sustainable livelihood opportunities for women across rural areas of the UT.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary, Finance; Secretary, Rural Development Department; Managing Director, JKRLM, Subhra Sharma; and representatives from J&K Bank.

The Chief Secretary emphasized that the core objective of JKRLM is to empower rural women through creation of sustainable livelihoods, and this goal can be best achieved by enhancing their access to credit and entrepreneurial support. He stressed upon adopting a convergence-driven model, ensuring that the benefits of various women-centric and employment generation schemes complement each other to deliver tangible outcomes on the ground.

He directed the Mission to cover at least 5,000 women under the LalDedStree Shakti Loan Scheme during the current year and further enhance credit linkage for Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and Custom Hiring Centres being established under the Mission.

He also called for strengthening the capacity-building ecosystem by establishing community-managed training centres (CMTCs), identifying local resource persons, and fostering an environment of collective learning and participation.

Managing Director, JKRLM, Subhra Sharma, presented an overview of the Mission's major achievements and initiatives aimed at strengthening rural livelihoods and promoting women's economic independence.

She informed that under the UMEED Programme, JKRLM has successfully mobilized 7.66 lakh rural households into 94,962 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) across 20 districts and 265 blocks of the UT. A total capitalization support of Rs528.86 Cr has been provided to community-based organizations, while the SHGs have collectively accessed Rs2,806.06 Cr in bank credit since 2013-14 reflecting strong financial inclusion and repayment capacity.

Under the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), 7,280 rural enterprises have been established across 14 blocks, with 16.53 crore disbursed through the Community Enterprise Fund (CEF). The progress indicates a robust credit culture, with several SHGs now availing multiple doses of credit owing to their proven repayment track record.

The Mission is also expanding its digital financial footprint through the Banking Correspondent (BC) model. Presently, 710 SHG members are working as BCs — 553 with J&K Bank and 157 with J&K Grameen Bank who have together facilitated financial transactions worth ₹123 crore during the current fiscal year.

JKRLM has also launched the "Lakhpati Didi" initiative, aiming to transform SHG members into micro-entrepreneurs earning over ₹1 lakh annually. So far, 17,811 women have been trained under this initiative in collaboration with institutions like it is, NIFT, and the Central University of Jammu.

The Mission's efforts to enhance market linkages have also borne fruit, with SHG products now featured on e-commerce platforms such as Flipkart, Amazon, and Meesho. In addition, nine district-level Haats and Retail Outlets have been established, including sales counters at airports, while SHG members have participated in seven SARAS Melas and exhibitions across the country.

To deepen livelihood opportunities, 39,450 women members have been linked with various income-generating activities in Agriculture, Horticulture, and allied sectors, in collaboration with line departments. The Lal Ded Stree Shakti Scheme, recently launched to provide easy credit to women entrepreneurs, has already facilitated 285 disbursements.

Further, 8,820 Mahila Kisans have been brought under Agro-Ecological and Livestock Management Practices to promote sustainable and eco-friendly farming.

In line with the Chief Secretary's direction, the Mission is also working to integrate entrepreneurship promotion with Mission YUVA and the Lal Ded Stree Shakti Loan Scheme, which share the common goal of economic empowerment through self-employment and skill development.

JKRLM has recently signed an MoU with the National Resource Organisation (OMPLIS) to strengthen its implementation capacity through Model Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) and Community Managed Training Centres (CMTCs). The partnership aims at conducting Training Needs Assessments (TNA), developing modules on Governance, Finance, and Gender, and enhancing leadership and financial systems within the CLFs.

Additionally, the Mission has initiated exposure visits for SHG members and officials to successful livelihood models in states like Andhra Pradesh, to learn from best practices and replicate them in J&K.

The Chief Secretary appreciated the Mission's efforts and urged all stakeholders to work in close coordination to scale up livelihood interventions, promote financial literacy, and ensure the economic self-reliance of rural women across Jammu and Kashmir.

Javid Dar inaugurates Kisan Mela at Khanabal

KT News Desk

Anantnag, Oct 13: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election departments, Javid Ahmad Dar Monday inaugurated Kisan Mela-cum-Exhibition at Khanabal here.

The mela was organised by Department of Agriculture Production and Farmers Welfare, district Anantnag, under the SMAE-ATMA 2025-26 scheme to aware, educate and motivate farmers about various welfare schemes available with the department.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, the Minister emphasized on the importance of Kisan Melas and exhibitions, as they provide a platform to create awareness among farming community about Modern technology equipments and other schemes.

Highlighting the department's plans to conduct similar events across J&K, the Minister added that the Mela will educate the farmers about latest technologies available to boost agriculture, horticulture and allied sectors.

Javid Dar highlighted that the subsidies are available for farmers to purchase farming equipment, with over 50% subsidy in various schemes. He emphasized that the agriculture sector is a prosperous field for humanity, offering vast opportunities for growth, employment, and sustainable livelihoods.

The Minister underscored the government's commitment to prioritizing agriculture and supporting farmers to enhance productivity, incom, and overall well-being. He noted the region's potential for fisheries, oilseeds, fruits, and vegetables, as well as allied activities like beekeeping, mushroom cultivation, and floriculture, offering farmers vast opportunities to enhance income and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

During the event the Minister also inspected various stalls established by Horticulture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Sheep Husbandry, Cooperative, Labour and Employment departments showcasing various schemes and services available for farming community.

MLA Dooru, Gulam Ahmad Mir; MLA Pahalgam, Altaf Ahmad Wani; MLA Bijbehara, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Shah Veeri; MLA Anantnag East, Reyaz Ahmad Khan; MLA West, Abdul Majeed Bhat; Director Agriculture Kashmir, Sartaj Ahmad Shah; other district and sectoral officers, members of farming community and large number of locals were also present on the occasion.

DC Shopian inaugurates 3-day sports fest for girls

KT News Desk

Shopian, Oct 13: A vibrant three-day sports festival dedicated to the daughters was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shopian, Shishir Gupta Monday at YSS Play Field Sindo Shirmal, Shopian.

The event was organized under the banner of "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao" (BBBP) by the Department of Youth Services & Sports (DYSS), Shopian in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare and featured events of Kho Kho, Volleyball and Tug off War.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Commissioner lauded the efforts of both the Youth Services & Sports Department and the Social Welfare Department for organizing such a meaningful event under the BBBP initiative.

The DC emphasized the pivotal role of sports in developing confidence, leadership and resilience among young girls, which are essential qualities for their personal and professional growth.

He further added that the district administration is committed to promoting equal opportunities for girls in all spheres of life and will continue to support initiatives that nurture their talent and aspirations, urging them to pursue sports with dedication and determination.

The event aimed to promote gender equality, empowerment and inclusivity by encouraging the participation of girls in various sports disciplines and witnessed an impressive turnout of students, teachers, parents, and sports enthusiasts.

The sports festival was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Zakir Hussain Faaz; District Social Welfare Officer, Abrar Hussain; DYSSO, Sunil Kumar, and other officers and officials.

District Capex 2025–26

DC Baramulla reviews progress of developmental works

KT News Desk

Baramulla, Oct 13: Deputy Commissioner Baramulla, Minga Sherpa, Monday chaired a meeting to review the physical and financial progress of developmental works being executed under the District Capex Budget 2025–26.

During the meeting, sector-wise progress of works taken up by various departments was discussed in detail.

The DC took a comprehensive review of ongoing projects and directed the concerned officers to ensure timely completion of all works while maintaining quality standards. He emphasized strict adherence to timelines and called for regular monitoring to address bottlenecks hampering progress.

The DC further instructed departments to expedite the completion of works having

significant public impact, particularly in key sectors such as education, health, rural development, and infrastructure.

While stressing judicious utilization of funds, the DC directed the officers to achieve 100% expenditure targets well before the closure of the financial year.

The meeting was attended by Chief Planning Officer, Assistant Development Commissioner, Superintending Engineers, District Officers, Tehsildars, Block Development Officers, Executive Engineers, sectoral officers, and other concerned officials.

AYUSH Deptt conducts awareness camp at GMC Handwara

KT News Desk

Kupwara, Oct 13: As part of the ongoing 8th Rashtriya Poshan Maah 2025 celebrations, the AYUSH Unit, in collaboration with the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Section and Laboratory Section, organized a comprehensive awareness Camp Monday at GMC Handwara.

The camp witnessed active participation of over 300 individuals, including members of the general public, ASHA workers, and Anganwadi workers from Handwara Town.

Key activities conducted during the camp included screening for Non-Communicable Diseases, Anaemia Check-ups, Mizaj (Temperament) Assessments, besides general Health and Nutrition awareness sessions.

The camp aimed to promote early health screening, better nutritional practices, and holistic well-being under the theme, "Building Suposhit & Samriddh Bharat."

SP North Sgr to organize drug de-addiction awareness seminar

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Oct 13: The Superintendent of Police, City North Srinagar, has informed that the Police Department is organizing a Drug De-Addiction Awareness Seminar at V.B. College, Rainawari on October 15, 2025, under the theme "No to Drugs, Yes to Life."

In this regard, the Superintendent of Police, City North Srinagar, has extended an open invitation to all concerned citizens, students, and stakeholders to actively participate in the seminar and contribute towards building a healthier and drug-free future.

Director sericulture flags-off silkworm rearers to HP

KT News Desk

Srinagar, Oct 13: As part of the ongoing Skill Development Programme of the Sericulture Development Department, Director Sericulture J&K, Ajaz Ahmad Bhat Monday flagged off a group of Silkworm Rearers for four-day Inter-State Farmers Training Programme to Himachal Pradesh under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme – ATMA (2025-26).

The programme commenced on 13th October, marking another significant step by the department towards strengthening farmers' technical knowledge and promoting sustainable sericulture practices across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

A total of 35 progressive sericulture farmers, representing all districts of the Kashmir Division, are participating in this exposure-cum-training programme. The key objective of this initiative is to familiarize the farmers with the latest technological advancements, modern equipment, and innovative practices being adopted in other states, thereby improving the quality and productivity of silk in J&K.

During the four-day programme, the farmers will visit some of the most reputed research and sericulture institutions in Himachal Pradesh, including the Agriculture University and Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), and the State Sericulture Department's Grainage, Palampur. The itinerary also includes visits to the Regional Extension Centre (REC), Oak Tassar, Central Silk Board, the Divisional Office of the State Sericulture Department, State Farm for Mulberry/Eri cultivation, Post-Cocoon Reeling Units at Nadaun and Ghumarwin, as well as the Sericulture Museum at Nalagarh.

These institutional visits have been meticulously planned to impart hands-on training in both pre-cocoon and post-cocoon technologies, helping farmers to gain practical exposure to scientific sericulture practices. The interactions with experts and field professionals will enable participating farmers to adopt advanced methods that can be replicated in local conditions across J&K.

Speaking on the occasion, the Director highlighted that the department is deeply committed to empowering sericulture farmers through continuous skill upgradation, exposure visits, and training programmes. He emphasized that such initiatives under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme ATMA play a crucial role in bridging the knowledge gap and encouraging farmers to embrace modern technologies and improved rearing techniques.

The director further informed that the Department is also working on introducing Seri-Tourism in J&K and in this connection the instructions have been already issued to the officers of the department to ensure all the arrangements necessary for the purpose are made and wide publicity is given to the Seed Station Manasbal for attracting sizable number of tourists from within and outside.

The Sericulture Development Department reiterated its mission to build a sustainable and profitable sericulture sector in Jammu & Kashmir by ensuring that farmers remain at the forefront of innovation, skill development, and best practices that contribute to the overall growth of the silk industry in the Union Territory.

DC Kathua reviews Dengue control preparedness

KT News Desk

Kathua, Oct 13: Deputy Commissioner Kathua Rajesh Sharma Monday convened a meeting of stakeholder departments to review the preparedness and response measures put in place to contain the spread of Dengue in the district.

At the outset, Chief Medical Officer Dr. Vijay Raina briefed the meeting about the prevailing situation. He informed that a total of 527 dengue cases have been reported in the current year so far, with no casualties. He further stated that September and October are the most vulnerable months for the spread of Dengue and sampling of suspected cases has been intensified to ensure early detection and timely treatment.

Highlighting the identified hot spots, the CMO informed that in Kathua urban areas, Ward No. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 have reported increased activity. Similarly, the vulnerable locations have also been identified in Parole, Barnoti, CTM, Hatlimorh, Saktachak, Govindsar, Hamirpur, Dyalachak, Mela (Billawar), Ramkote, Lakhri (Basohli), Mahanpur, Bani town, Backon, Ghatti and Rolka.

It was informed that blood

sample collection centres have been established at block levels with samples being transported to GMC & Associated Hospital Kathua for testing. Two dedicated beds with mosquito nets have also been designated for dengue-positive patients in each Sub-District Hospital at Parole, Hiranagar, Billawar, Basohli and Bani.

The CMO further informed that Gambusia fish, known for controlling mosquito larvae have been introduced in 134 permanent ponds across the district as part of vector control measures. The meeting also discussed the functioning of Rapid Response Teams at both district and block levels to ensure swift response to any reported outbreak.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all departments to work in close coordination to ensure effective prevention and control measures. He laid emphasis on the Municipal Council Kathua to intensify fogging operations, sanitation drives and awareness campaigns through public announcements and jingles.

He directed the Principal GMC Kathua to ensure daily updation of dengue cases and to keep separate provisions for dengue patients. The CTM was asked to maintain sanitation and activate the health unit for quick response.

The Education Department was instructed to create awareness among students about dengue prevention during morning assemblies, while the Jal Shakti Department was directed to repair leaking water taps and ensure regular testing of water sources. The PWD was asked to ensure proper disposal of materials and prevent water stagnation near construction sites.

The Rural Development Department was directed to raise awareness among rural masses about preventive measures, while the Information Department was tasked to intensify information dissemination through print, electronic and social media platforms.

The DC urged all departments to remain vigilant and adopt a proactive approach to ensure a dengue-free Kathua through community participation and coordinated action.

ADC Vishavjeet Singh; ACD Akhil Sadotra; SE PWD, Medical Superintendent GMC & AH Kathua and other concerned officers were also present.

CM Omar chairs review meeting at Pulwama
Reviews progress of dev works, stresses timely execution of projects, lays foundation stone of shopping mall at Pampore

KT News Desk

Pulwama, Oct 13: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday chaired a review meeting of District Pulwama to assess the status of development works and implementation of various government schemes in the district.

During the maiden district review meeting, the Chief Minister called upon officers to accelerate the pace of project execution and enhance expenditure levels under both District Capex and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). He expressed concern over the low percentage of expenditure against the approved outlay and urged the departments to step up efforts for timely utilization of funds.

"First of all, I would like to thank the DDC Chairman and MLAs for their valuable suggestions and ideas. I have already given several on-spot directions during the review, but I have one overarching request — please pay more attention towards execution. There is a lot of need for overall improvement," the Chief Minister said, while addressing the officers.

"We are now in mid-October, and if we fail to utilize the first instalment under the new SASCI scheme by December, further funds will be withheld — which would be a huge loss for us," he cautioned.

Omar Abdullah directed the Deputy Commissioner to closely monitor progress of approved projects and ensure that any lapses are immediately corrected. "Please keep reviewing the projects regularly. Wherever there are delays, address them promptly. We have restarted the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) for Hon'ble MLAs, but a lot more needs to be done in terms of expenditure," he said.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javed Rana, Javid Dar, Satish Sharma, Chairman District Development Council Pulwama Abdul Bari Andrabi, MLAs Justice (Retd.) Hasnain Masoodi (Pampore), Ghulam Mohiuddin Mir (Rajpora), Waheed-ur Rehman Para (Pulwama), and Rafiq Ahmad Naik (Tral), besides Additional Chief Secretary to CM Dheeraj Gupta, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg, Deputy Commissioner Pulwama Dr. Basharat Qayoom, heads of departments, and district officers.

Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Pulwama Dr. Basharat Qayoom presented a detailed overview of the District Capex Budget 2024-25, CSS 2024-25, and physical and financial achievements under Capex 2025-26, CDF, and MPLADS. He gave details of approved capital outlay of the district for 2025-26 and the details of works for which administrative approval has been accorded so far. The DC also gave department-wise, scheme-wise, and sector-wise performance reports covering Public Works (R&B), PMGSY, PMAY(G), Urban Development, School Education, Jal Shakti, Irrigation & Flood Control, Agriculture and allied sectors, Power, Cooperatives, Social Welfare, Employment, Youth Services & Sports, SDRF, Tribal Affairs, Revenue and Food & Civil Supplies.

The DDC Chairman and MLAs raised several public issues concerning their respective constituencies, including irrigation and flood mitigation measures, beautification of Pulwama, Pampore and Tral towns, road connectivity, crop insurance, desilting of rivulets, revenue settlement, illegal mining, completion of the Degree College building at Rajpora, and upgradation of health centres.

The Chief Minister and Ministers gave on-spot directions to the concerned officers for immediate redressal of the highlighted issues.

Taking serious note of illegal mining, Omar Abdullah directed the Deputy Commissioner and concerned departments to initiate strict measures to curb such activities. "If complaints are being received, action must be taken immediately. Whatever has to be done to stop illegal mining, should be done," he asserted.

Expressing concern over the absence of toilets in certain schools, particularly for girls, the Chief Minister directed MLAs to allocate funds from their CDF to such institutions, stressing that lack of basic facilities contributes to higher dropout rates among girl students.

He urged all departments to expedite ongoing works and ensure completion within the stipulated timelines.

On the occasion, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also laid foundation stone of a new Shopping Complex at Pampore in virtual mode.

CII Chandigarh Fair 2025
J&K shines through JKTPO's vibrant display of unique regional culture, craftsmanship

KT News Desk

Jammu, Oct 13: The Jammu and Kashmir Trade Promotion Organization (JKTPO) marked a significant presence at 28th edition of the CII Chandigarh Fair 2025, held from October 10 to 13 at Parade Ground, Sector 17, Chandigarh.

The Fair was inaugurated by Minister of Industries & Commerce, Investment Promotion, NRI Affairs & Power, Government of Punjab, Sanjeev Arora.

The event served as a vibrant platform to highlight Jammu & Kashmir's cultural legacy and exquisite craftsmanship, leaving an indelible mark on visitors.

Under the visionary guidance of Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah and Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary and active support of Commissioner Secretary, Industries & Commerce, JKTPO facilitated and sponsored the participation of 25 exhibitors from the Union Territory in the Fair.

The showcased products from J&K included Luxurious Pashmina shawls and stoles, renowned for their softness and warmth, exquisite handwoven carpets, symbolizing the region's timeless weaving traditions, world-famous Kashmiri saffron, celebrated for its unparalleled quality and aroma, renowned agricultural delights like Rajmash, Honey, and Spices, horticultural treasures including Apples, Walnuts, and Almonds and intricately hand-embroidered garments reflecting authentic Kashmiri artistry.

The J&K Pavilion, designed to emphasize the authenticity, purity, and natural advantage of the Union Territory's offerings, became a major attraction at the fair. The pavilion drew significant footfall, with visitors from diverse backgrounds eager to explore the vibrant array of handcrafted products and traditional specialties showcased by JKTPO.

Minister of Industries & Commerce, Investment Promotion, NRI Affairs & Power, Government of Punjab, also visited the J&K pavilion, commending the rich diversity of products and the spirit of innovation on display—testament to the region's vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Visitors to the JKTPO stall had the opportunity to not only witness these exquisite products but also to engage with the artisans themselves. The stories behind each creation and the dedication of the craftspeople were shared with enthusiasm, creating a unique and immersive experience for attendees.

India urges focus on adaptation at pre-COP30 meet

PTI

New Delhi, Oct 13: Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav on Monday said COP30 should be the "COP of Adaptation" and called for transforming climate commitments into real-world actions that directly improve people's lives.

At the Pre-COP30 Ministerial Roundtable in Brasília, Yadav said the 30th UN climate summit in Belém, Brazil, in November must send a strong signal that multilateralism remains the cornerstone of global climate action.

"As we mark a decade since the adoption of the Paris Agreement, COP30 must send a resolute political message that multilateralism remains the cornerstone of global climate action," Yadav said.

He said the key to achieving tangible outcomes in Belém lies in translating global policy commitments into practical, locally grounded solutions.

"The focus must be on transforming climate commitments into real-world actions that accelerate implementation and directly improve people's lives," he said.

Calling for a stronger focus on resilience and local adaptation, Yadav stressed that "COP30 should be the COP of Adaptation".

He said all countries should agree on a minimum package of indicators under the UAE-Belem Work Programme.

"We should send an inspiring message to the world with the Baku Adaptation Road Map, that we are on the way to ensuring the safety and well-being of billions, leaving no one behind," he added.

Yadav also stressed the urgent need to strengthen and intensify the flow of public finance towards adaptation, which could encourage additional support from other sources.

He said the Paris Agreement mechanism is now fully functional and warned against introducing new processes after the Global Stocktake that could undermine its architecture.

"Let us be informed by the first GST and do our utmost as per our national circumstances," he said.

Reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's view that India seeks to be part of the solution, not the problem, Yadav highlighted India's global initiatives, such as the International Solar Alliance, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the International Big Cat Alliance, as examples of cooperative and action-oriented multilateralism.

"Let COP30 in Belém reaffirm faith in multilateralism, equity and collective resolve to deliver real, measurable action for people and the planet," Yadav concluded.

The two-day pre-COP brings together environment and climate ministers, senior negotiators and observers to narrow differences on politically sensitive topics and try to build ministerial consensus ahead of the UN climate conference in Belém.

Ministers use pre-COPs to test negotiating text, identify shared ground on sensitive matters and prepare ministerial positions so that negotiations at the main COP can advance faster.

Pre-COPs are not formal UNFCCC events but have become routine host-country instruments to focus ministerial attention on a short list of political questions that negotiators otherwise take weeks to resolve.

COP30 is taking place against a complex geopolitical backdrop, with the United States withdrawing from the Paris Agreement and several developed countries reassessing their climate strategies amid economic and energy security pressures.

In the run-up to the annual climate meeting, disagreements over climate finance, the pace and responsibility for the energy transition and burdens on developing countries remain sharp.

Trust between developed and developing countries remains weak after COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, where many in the Global South said the finance outcome fell short of needs and expectations.

At the core of this divide are disagreements over the scale and nature of climate finance, whether it should be provided as grants or loans and how predictable and usable new funds will be for adaptation and loss and damage.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

NC, BJP Lock Horns

papers for this seat.
The two candidates who receive the highest number of votes will win these two seats.

The NC-led alliance is expected to ensure the victory of Gurwinder Singh Oberoi alias Shammi Oberoi by securing a minimum of 29 votes for him, while allocating the remaining 24 votes to Imran Dar. Meanwhile, BJP MLAs are expected to cast all 28 votes in favor of Sat Sharma.

Sources told KNO that the nomination forms of both non-local candidates are likely to be rejected by the Returning Officer due to the absence of mandatory proposers. (KNO)

Rajya Sabha polls

the saffron party and who stands in opposition to it.

Speaking to reporters here, Abdullah said the NC had initially reserved one seat for the Congress, but the latter decided not to contest.

"We had kept one seat for Congress, believing they were best positioned to win that fourth seat. However, they chose not to field a candidate," Omar said, adding that the NC would now contest all four Rajya Sabha seats independently.

"This election will show us who stands with the BJP and who stands against it. Anyone who abstains or votes in their favour will be exposed before the people," he said.

The Chief Minister said the BJP is two votes short of the required 30 to win the fourth seat. "They have only 28 MLAs. There's not a single MLA beyond those 28 who have supported them last year," he said. "If they claim victory beyond that, it will only be through money power, muscle power, or the misuse of agencies."

Responding to the BJP's claim that NC president Dr Farooq Abdullah was denied a mandate, Omar clarified, "Who says Dr Farooq was not given the mandate? He himself chose to step aside. No one in the party stopped him."

He added that Dr Farooq would not contest from Budgam either, adding, "If he didn't wish to contest a Rajya Sabha seat, he surely won't take on an Assembly campaign."

Calling Dr Abdullah "the tallest leader of Jammu and Kashmir", the CM said his role remains that of a guiding light for the NC.

On the Budgam bypoll, Omar said, "No election should be taken lightly. We will put our best foot forward and leave the decision to the wisdom of the people."

Taking a swipe at PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, Omar said he does not comment on issues he lacks knowledge about, unlike her. "Mehbooba Mufti speaks on every issue. I don't speak about things I don't know," he said. "I don't even know how much she understands about relations between India and Afghanistan." (KNO)

J&K Congress Chief

the backtracking of commitments made at the level of Sonia Ji and Kharge Ji," he said.

He added that the NC leadership conveyed that anything beyond fourth seat was non-negotiable.

"When Mir Sahab and I sent a joint letter to Omar Sahab, he directed us to speak with Farooq Sahib. Farooq Sahib's response was self-explanatory-he told us they were only willing to discuss the fourth seat," Karra said.

When asked whether NC had betrayed Congress, Karra responded, "I wouldn't use the word betrayal. But our trust has been broken."

He further said that NC's actions indicate it may be reconsidering its relationship with the INDIA bloc.

"It is not that the understanding with NC in J&K has been unfulfilled. But it also suggests that NC may be evaluating whether to remain in the INDIA bloc," he said.

On Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma's remark that Congress is a puppet of NC in Jammu & Kashmir, Karra declined to comment.

"I would not react to irresponsible statements made by BJP," he said. (KNO)

Did Farooq Abdullah

personally initiated communication with the NC leadership. "He spoke to Dr. Farooq Abdullah over the phone and expressed the desire that a safe seat be allocated to Congress," sources said, adding that Dr. Abdullah later met Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi.

During these talks, Congress leaders claimed that Farooq Abdullah had offered a safe seat to the party, although there was no independent confirmation of this.

In a handout issued to the media on Sunday evening, Congress reiterated its claim. "The meeting expressed dismay over the unilateral announcement by senior coalition partner National Conference of its three candidates and the offer of a fourth seat to Congress, despite an assurance to the top leadership of Congress of leaving a secure seat for our party," the handout stated.

Sources also said that Congress MP and general secretary in-charge of J&K, Syed Nasir Hussain, had planned to travel to Srinagar to discuss the seat-sharing arrangement. "He was advised to meet Omar Abdullah in Delhi, who was scheduled to arrive the following day," sources added.

The meeting between Omar Abdullah and Nasir Hussain reportedly took place on October 9 in New Delhi.

During the meeting, Omar Abdullah is said to have told Hussain that the NC had not offered a safe seat to Congress. "The NC leadership did not maintain communication with Congress after the meeting. There was complete silence between the two sides from October 9 to October 12," sources said.

Fear of cross-voting derailed final push for unity

Last-ditch efforts to bring NC and Congress together for the Rajya Sabha polls failed due to disagreements over the voting conditions of independent MLAs, who are not required to disclose their votes to authorized polling agents.

Discussions between the two parties continued late into the night, following Congress's public refusal on Sunday evening to contest the riskier seat offered by NC.

"We made it clear to the NC leadership that we cannot afford to depend on independents to vote for our candidate. We requested that they spare five of their MLAs for us and, in return, ask the independents to vote for the NC candidate contesting under the third notification, which involves a combined election," a senior Congress leader told KNO.

However, the proposal was reportedly rejected by NC. "The independents are not bound to show their marked ballots to anyone. If they do, their votes are liable to be cancelled. In contrast, NC MLAs, being part of a political party, are required to show their marked ballots to authorized polling agents," the Congress leader added.

Of the 53 MLAs supporting the ruling alliance, five are independents: Satish Sharma (Minister, Chamb segment), Pyare Lal (Inderwal), Dr. Rameshwar Singh (Bani), Muzaffar Khan (Rajouri), and Choudhary Akram (Surankote).

As per election rules, independent MLAs are not required to display their marked ballots, unlike party-affiliated MLAs who must show their votes to authorized agents.

These voting conditions raised concerns within Congress about the possibility of cross-voting. "How can we rely on independents when we are not in power and are merely offering outside support?" a Congress leader questioned. (KNO)

Buy swadeshi products

The Union Home Minister said that the new criminal laws ensure easy and timely access to justice to all and India's criminal justice system has shifted from a punitive approach to one focused on justice and transparency. "The three new laws will provide easy and timely access to justice for all. Through the new criminal laws, our system will be driven by justice," Shah said.

Pertinently, the new laws — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam — came into effect on July 1, 2024, replacing the colonial-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Indian Evidence Act. (KNO)

CM for attracting

economy, he said, "Given the extent of the challenges that we face and the disadvantages inherent to doing business in Jammu and Kashmir, we are still an economy that is growing reasonably well. Our own estimate is that our GDP will grow in the double digits, around 10–11% this year."

At the same time, the Chief Minister expressed concern over the economic repercussions of recent events, noting that tourism has suffered a serious setback. The impact, he said, has spilled over into agriculture, horticulture, handicrafts sectors and also impacted exports.

He underlined the government's priority to position Jammu & Kashmir as a hub for MSMEs and high-value, low-volume industries, mentioning that the region once had a budding high-tech manufacturing base before militancy disrupted progress in the late 1980s. "Prior to the militancy breaking out in 1989, Kashmir was emerging as a hub for new high-tech manufacturing industries. We believe those are the areas of economy that remain ripe for revitalization," he noted.

The Chief Minister emphasized several advantages that could support renewed industrial growth in the region, including competitive electricity rates, an educated young workforce, and favourable policy frameworks. However, he acknowledged that the perception of the region as a risky business destination has to change for the better.

Concluding his remarks, Omar Abdullah thanked the FIEO delegation once again for their presence in Srinagar, stating:

"Your presence here does, to a large extent, enable us to try and change the perception of Jammu & Kashmir being too unsafe to visit. I thank all of you for choosing Srinagar for your Board of Management meeting, and I look forward to more such engagements that can help J&K move forward."

No one can stop

and commended all the members of the organisation for their selfless service to the society.

He assured every possible support and assistance to J&K Samaj Kalyan Kendra for the smooth functioning of the school. He called upon the corporate houses, business community, and citizens to come forward and contribute to this noble endeavour.

The Lieutenant Governor appreciated the children with special abilities for presenting enthralling performances to mark the occasion.

K.B. Jandial, President, J&K Samaj Kalyan Kendra; Dr. Rakesh Khajuria, Vice President; J.K. Vaidya, General Secretary, and other members of J&K Samaj Kalyan Kendra, special educators and students were present.

Dr Ashok Bhan, Ms Gunjan Rana and Suresh Kumar Sharma - Members of Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board; Ramesh Kumar, Divisional Commissioner Jammu; BR Sharma, Chairman, Indian Institute of Public Administration, J&K and senior officers also attended the foundation day ceremony.

LG calls for transforming

important matters pertaining to admissions, recruitment, faculty career advancement, non-functional promotions for non-teaching staff, end to end digitisation of student life cycle management process and utilization of e-Samarth dashboard.

The chair was informed that the university has now been designated as a 'TCS Priority College' by Tata Consultancy Services for a period of three years as part of their campus placement program.

(Dr) Pragati Kumar, Vice Chancellor, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University presented various Agenda items before the Executive Council for approval and ratification.

Police raid homes

Observer (KNO), a spokesperson said that searches were carried out at the residences of Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat of Batamaloo, Ashraf Sehrai of Baghat, Mehrajuddin Kalwal of Hamza Colony, Kanihama and Zameer Ahmad Sheikh of Gulshan Nagar, Nowgam.

The statement reads that searches were conducted strictly in accordance with legal procedures. "During searches, various materials including literature and photographs allegedly linked to banned separatist outfits were seized," it reads.

It added that these actions are part of a broader campaign aimed at dismantling the terror and separatist ecosystem in the Valley by targeting its support structures and networks.

Minor killed

as Abdul Razak Bajad, son of Mohammad Iqbal of Reasi.

The official said the deceased sustained severe injuries in the attack and died on the spot.

Man killed, another

Om Raj (45) son of Omkar Singh from Ramban village is receiving treatment at the hospital, they said.

Officials added that, a case in this regard has been registered and further investigations have been taken up.

EPFO liberalises EPF part withdrawals, members can withdraw up to 100 pc

PTI

New Delhi, Oct 13: The board of retirement fund body EPFO on Monday approved liberalised part withdrawals for its more than seven crore subscribers, allowing up to 100 per cent EPF withdrawal.

The Central Board of Trustees (CBT), the apex decision-making body of EPFO, headed by Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, took several path-breaking decisions during its meeting, a Labour Ministry statement said on Monday.

To enhance the Ease of Living of EPF members, the CBT decided to simplify the partial withdrawal provisions of the EPF Scheme by merging 13 complex provisions into a single, streamlined rule categorised into three types, namely, Essential Needs (illness, education, marriage), Housing Needs and Special Circumstances.

Now, members will be able to withdraw up to 100 per cent of the eligible balance in the Provident Fund, including employee and employer share.

Withdrawal limits have been liberalised—education withdrawals allowed up to 10 times and marriage up to 5 times (from the existing limit of a total of 3 partial withdrawals for marriage & education in all).

The requirement for minimum service has been uniformly reduced to only 12 months for all partial withdrawals.

Earlier, under 'Special Circumstances,' the member was required to clarify the reasons for partial withdrawals viz. natural calamity, lockouts/closure of establishments, continuous unemployment, outbreak of epidemic, etc.

This often led to rejection of claims and consequent grievances. Now, the member can apply without assigning any reasons under this category.

A provision has been made for earmarking 25 per cent of the contributions in the Members' account as Minimum Balance to be maintained by the member at all times.

This will enable the member to enjoy a high rate of interest offered by EPFO (presently 8.25% pa) along with compounding benefits to accumulate a high-value retirement corpus.

This rationalization enhances ease of access while ensuring members maintain a sufficient retirement corpus.

Scheme provision simplification along with greater flexibility and zero need for any documentation will pave the way for 100 per cent auto settlement of claims for partial withdrawal and ensure ease of living.

Complementing the above, it is also decided to change the period for availing premature final settlement of EPF from the existing 2 months to 12 months and final pension withdrawal from 2 months to 36 months.

The liberalization of partial withdrawals ensures members can meet immediate financial needs without compromising their retirement savings or pension entitlements.

The EPFO has also rolled the 'Vishwas Scheme' to reduce litigation through rationalised penal damages.

The ministry explained that one of the major reasons for litigations has been the imposition of damages for belated remittances of PF dues. As of May 2025, outstanding penal damages stand at Rs 2,406 crores, with over 6000 cases pending across forums, including High Courts, CGITs and the Supreme Court.

Further, nearly 21,000 potential litigation cases are pending under EPFO's e-proceedings portal.

Under the Vishwas Scheme, the rate of penal damages will be reduced to a flat rate of 1 per cent per month, except for a graded rate of 0.25 per cent for default up to 2 months and 0.50 per cent for default up to 4 months.

The scheme shall remain in operation for six months and is extendable by another six months.

The scheme covers ongoing litigation cases under Section 14B (pending in CGIT, High Courts, or Supreme Court), Finalised but unpaid 14B orders, Pre-adjudication cases (where notice has been issued but final order is pending).

All cases pending shall stand abated, in case of compliance under the 'Vishwas Scheme.

The Board has approved signing an MoU with India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) to provide doorstep Digital Life Certificate (DLC) services to EPS'95 pensioners at a cost of Rs 50 per certificate, fully borne by EPFO.

This initiative will allow pensioners, especially in rural and remote areas, to submit their life certificates from home through IPPB's vast postal network, free of charge. The partnership aims to enhance ease of living for elderly pensioners, ensure timely pension continuity, enable quicker family pension initiation and improve accuracy under the Centralised Pension Payment System (CPPS).

As part of EPFO 3.0, CBT approved a comprehensive member-centric digital transformation framework to modernize provident fund services.

The hybrid design integrates a proven Core Banking Solution with cloud-native, API-first, micro services-based modules for account management, ERP, compliance and a unified customer experience.

Implementation will proceed in phases, ensuring secure, scalable and uninterrupted services.

The initiative will enable faster, automated claims, instant withdrawals, multilingual self-service and seamless payroll-linked contributions, reaffirming EPFO's commitment to transparent, efficient and technology-driven service delivery for over 30 crore members.

The Central Board has approved the selection of four Fund Managers for managing the debt portfolio of EPFO for a period of five years.

The approval follows the recommendations of the Selection Committee and subsequent endorsement by the Investment Committee, comprising members of the Central Board, senior officers, and an external investment expert.

This decision marks a significant step towards ensuring prudent management and diversification of EPFO's investment portfolio, aimed at safeguarding and enhancing returns on members' provident fund savings in line with the organisation's long-term investment objective.

During the meeting, Mandviya inaugurated a series of key digital initiatives of EPFO, aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency and user experience in service delivery.

Jan Suraaj Party names candidate for 65 Bihar seats

PTI

Patna, Oct 13: The Prashant Kishor-led Jan Suraaj Party on Monday announced its second list of candidates for 65 seats for the Bihar elections.

However, Kishor's name, who is expected to contest the polls from the Raghopur seat against RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, was missing from the list.

Addressing a press conference, Kishor said that with this, the party has named candidates for a total of 116 seats.

"In the first list, we had announced candidates for 51 seats, and in the second list, we named nominees for 65 seats. Candidates for the remaining seats will be announced later," he said.

Kishor said among the candidates announced so far, 31 belonged to the extremely weaker sections, 21 to Other Backwards Classes, and 21 are Muslims.

The party has fielded Kamlesh Paswan from Harnaut, a seat long considered CM Nitish Kumar's stronghold, though he hasn't contested an assembly election there in three decades.

BJP accuses Mamata of 'victim shaming' over her remarks on Durgapur gangrape

PTI

New Delhi, Oct 13: The BJP on Monday launched a fresh attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for asking female boarders not to go out at night following the alleged gangrape of a medical student, accusing her of indulging in "victim shaming" and demanding justice for the survivor.

In the wake of the alleged gangrape of a student studying at a private medical college in Durgapur on Friday night, Banerjee said female boarders, especially those from outside the state, should follow hostel rules and not venture out late at night.

As her remarks drew criticism from the opposition, Banerjee later claimed that the comments were taken out of context.

Slamming the chief minister, BJP MP and national spokesperson Bansuri Swaraj said, "It's unfortunate that women are unsafe in West Bengal. But when a woman chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, insensitively indulges in victim shaming and victim blaming of the rape survivor, then it becomes painful and shameful for the entire society

"You (Mamata Banerjee) raise the slogan of 'maa, maati and manush'. Due to your insensitivity, misgovernance and conservative mindset, maa (mother) is embarrassed, maati (land) is soaked in blood and manush (people) are badly off," Swaraj told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here.

The BJP leader asked Banerjee to stop justifying the incident. "Provide justice to the victim," she demanded.

The BJP alleged that this is not the first time that Banerjee has tried to justify rape.

Citing the remarks Banerjee made after incidents of rape in the state in the past, Swaraj alleged that the ruling TMC in West Bengal has become synonymous with "conservative mindset".

"After the Park Street rape case in 2012, Mamata Banerjee blamed the victim and called it a staged incident, implying that the victim had fabricated the incident. On the rape of a 14-year-old minor in Hanskhali 2022, she said it was a love affair gone wrong, trivialising the case," the BJP leader said.

Auto retail sales witness recovery during Navratri

Dhanteras, Deepawali to give boost

IANS

New Delhi, Oct 13: During the Navratri festival, auto retail sales witnessed a robust recovery with growth ranging between 15-35% year-on-year (YoY) across passenger vehicle (PV) and two-wheeler (2W) segments.

Further, Dhanteras and Deepawali are set to deliver peak festive sales for both PVs and 2Ws.

According to a report by Centrum Institutional Research, retail demand in the PV segment across dealerships grew between 15-22% YoY, led by major automakers including Maruti Suzuki India (MSIL), Tata Motors (TTMT), Honda Motor India (HMI), and Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M).

The report further said that the overall tone from dealers suggests that retail growth during Navratri stood in the range of approx. 15-35% YoY across PV and 2W. Dhanteras & Deepawali are expected to deliver peak festive sales.

The 2W segment recorded higher growth of 25-35% YoY across Honda, Hero, TVS, and Royal Enfield, although Bajaj sales remained muted during the period, it added.

In the PV segment, the festive sentiment has resulted in a sharp 35-40% surge in dealership footfalls. This boost was supported by recent price corrections, including GST rate cuts, and a notable increase in first-time buyers.

For two-wheelers, premium and 125cc+ offerings continued to outperform, with TVS and Royal Enfield leading the growth trajectory.

The report highlighted that the first 20 days of September were impacted due to purchase deferrals amid GST-cut implementations, but momentum picked up in the latter half of the month and continued into early October.

Gold rallies Rs 1,950 to record high of Rs 1,27,950 per 10g in Delhi

PTI

New Delhi, Oct 13: Gold prices rallied by Rs 1,950 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 1,27,950 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, driven by safe-haven demand amid renewed US-China trade tensions.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,26,000 per 10 grams on Friday.

In addition, gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped by Rs 1,950 to touch an all-time high of Rs 1,27,350 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). The yellow metal had settled at Rs 1,25,400 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

"Gold prices rose sharply higher as renewed US-China trade tensions reignited safe-haven demand," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

The US administration's announcement of a 100 per cent tariff hike on select Chinese products, coupled with China's threat to restrict rare earth exports, has heightened global uncertainty and risk aversion.

"This geopolitical tension, along with sustained demand from investors seeking safety, continues to keep gold's outlook bullish," Trivedi said. Silver prices too witnessed robust traction in the spot markets. The white metal bounced by Rs 7,500 to hit a new record of Rs 1,79,000 per kgram (inclusive of all taxes) on Monday. It had finished at Rs 1,71,500 per kg on Friday, as per the Association.

In the international markets, spot gold rose nearly 2 per cent to hit a fresh record high of USD 4,084.99 per ounce. "Bullion prices have reached fresh and unprecedented levels, primarily driven by vigorous festive demand and structural supply & liquidity constraints.

"The surge in gold is principally catalysed by rising investment interest, set against a backdrop of enduring geopolitical tension and concerted accumulation by global central banks," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities. Traders contend that the current secular bull market for precious metals is poised for continued ascent, sustained by both investment momentum and seasonal buying cycles, Parmar added.

Spot silver increased by nearly 3 per cent to hit a fresh all-time high of USD 51.74 per ounce in the overseas markets.

"Silver jumped more than 2 per cent to above USD 51 per ounce on Monday, marking a new all-time high as renewed US-China trade concerns, political instability, and expectations of further US rate cuts fuelled demand for safe-haven assets," Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, said.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump threatened to impose an additional 100 per cent tariff on Chinese goods starting November 1 in response to Beijing's new export controls on rare earth minerals. However, Trump later signalled openness to negotiate ahead of a possible meeting with President Xi Jinping later this month, saying that trade relations with China will all be fine.

"Meanwhile, expectations that the Federal Reserve will cut rates by 25 basis points later this month and again in December, alongside a tightening physical silver supply in London, continued to bolster the white metal's rally," Trivedi said.

7 signs your vegetables are nutrient-deficient and how to fix them

TOI HEALTH

New Delhi, Oct 13: If your vegetable garden isn't thriving as expected, despite your best efforts, it might not be a matter of neglect but of nutrition. Just like humans, plants need a balanced diet to grow strong and produce bountiful harvests. Recognizing the early signs of nutrient deficiencies can make all the difference between a struggling garden and a flourishing one.

A study published in the Journal of Plant Nutrition in 2024 provides valuable insights into diagnosing nutrient deficiencies in vegetables. The research outlines common symptoms associated with deficiencies in essential nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and iron. For instance, nitrogen deficiency often manifests as yellowing of older leaves, while phosphorus deficiency can cause purpling of leaf margins.

Understanding these symptoms is crucial for gardeners and farmers to maintain healthy crops. By regularly monitoring plant health and soil conditions, you can ensure that your vegetables receive the necessary nutrients for optimal growth.

How to identify nutrient deficiencies in vegetables:

Nitrogen deficiency

Nitrogen is vital for plant growth, contributing to chlorophyll production and overall plant vigor. A deficiency typically results in yellowing of older leaves, stunted growth, and poor fruit development.

To address this, consider applying a balanced fertilizer or incorporating organic matter like compost into the soil.

Phosphorus deficiency

Phosphorus plays a key role in energy transfer and root development. Deficiency symptoms include purpling of leaf margins, delayed maturity, and poor root growth. Solutions involve using phosphorus-rich fertilizers or bone meal to replenish soil levels.

Potassium deficiency

Potassium is essential for water regulation and disease resistance. Deficiency signs are browning or scorching of leaf edges, weak stems, and increased susceptibility to disease. Potassium sulfate or wood ash can be used to correct this imbalance.

Magnesium deficiency

Magnesium is a central component of chlorophyll. A deficiency often presents as interveinal chlorosis (yellowing between veins) on older leaves. Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate) can be applied to the soil to alleviate this issue.

Iron deficiency

Iron is crucial for chlorophyll synthesis. Deficiency leads to yellowing of young leaves while veins remain green. Iron chelates or foliar sprays can be effective treatments.

Calcium deficiency

Calcium is important for cell wall stability and root development. Deficiency symptoms include blossom end rot in fruits and distorted new leaves. Lime or gypsum can be added to the soil to increase calcium levels.

Micronutrient deficiencies

Deficiencies in micronutrients like zinc, boron, and manganese can cause various symptoms such as leaf curling, poor fruit set, and reduced flowering. Foliar sprays containing these micronutrients can help correct these deficiencies.

Identifying and addressing nutrient deficiencies in vegetables is crucial for maintaining healthy crops and ensuring a bountiful harvest. Regular monitoring of plant health and soil conditions, along with timely application of appropriate fertilizers, can prevent and correct these deficiencies.

Disclaimer: This article is for general informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the guidance of a qualified healthcare provider regarding any medical condition or lifestyle change.

What to know as Israel, Hamas exchange hostages, prisoners as Trump arrives in Middle East

AP

Jerusalem, Oct 13: A critical day is unfolding for the Middle East as Israel began receiving the last 20 living hostages held by Hamas and released some of the nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners in exchange in a breakthrough Gaza ceasefire deal.

U.S. President Donald Trump arrived on Air Force One to a red carpet in Tel Aviv on Monday, where he will address Israel's parliament in Jerusalem before heading to Egypt for a ceremony marking the ceasefire plan.

More ramped-up aid was being readied for Gaza, much of which is in ruins after two years of war that began when Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and taking about 250 hostage. In Israel's ensuing offensive, more than 67,600 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

What we know and what remains unknown:

Hostages are being released

Monday was day 738 since the hostages were taken, a number many Israelis have updated daily on strips of adhesive tape worn in national commemoration.

Twenty living hostages were returned Monday to Israel and will be reunited with their families and then transferred to hospitals, the Israeli military said.

Hamas first released seven and then 13 hostages on Monday. Israel is expected to free over 1,900 Palestinian prisoners. The exchange comes as part of the ceasefire reached in the two-year Israel-Hamas war that is the first phase of a peace plan brokered by the Trump administration.

It appeared unlikely the remains of up to 28 others will be returned at the same time. Medical experts and advocates say that would be crucial to begin the healing process for many families, and for society at large, but one ceasefire document contains stipulations for remains that aren't returned within 72 hours of the end of the fighting. That deadline is roughly noon Monday in the Middle East (0900 GMT).

On Sunday, Israel said "an international body" will help locate the remains if they are not released Monday.

Palestinian prisoners released

Buses carrying dozens of freed Palestinian prisoners arrived Monday in the West Bank city of Ramallah and the Gaza Strip, the Hamas-run Prisoners Office said.

They are the first to be released from about 1,700 people that troops seized from Gaza during the war and have held without charge, as well as about 250 Palestinians serving prison sentences.

Many are members of Hamas and the Fatah faction who were imprisoned over shootings, bombings or other attacks that killed or attempted to kill Israelis, as well as others convicted on lesser charges. They'll return to the West Bank or Gaza or be sent into exile.

It is unclear who will be among the prisoners released back into Gaza, and whether any will be deported.

Aid expected to surge in Gaza

Humanitarian organizations said they're preparing to surge aid into the Gaza Strip, especially food that's been in short supply in many areas.

That includes some 400 trucks from Egypt on Sunday that will have to undergo Israeli inspection before being allowed into the strip. The Israeli defense body in charge of humanitarian aid in Gaza said around 600 trucks of aid per day will be entering soon, as stipulated in the ceasefire agreement.

The world's leading authority on food crises said in August that the Gaza Strip's largest city was gripped by a famine that was likely to spread across the territory without a ceasefire and an end to restrictions on humanitarian aid.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification said famine was devastating Gaza City — home to hundreds of thousands of people. That famine was expected to spread south to the cities of Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis by around now if the situation did not change.

The larger task of rebuilding Gaza is daunting, as much of it is in rubble and most of its two million residents displaced.

Trump to travel to Israel and Egypt

Trump, who pushed to clinch the ceasefire deal, arrived in Israel to a red carpet Monday morning.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog greeted Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, his daughter Ivanka Trump, her husband Jared Kushner and advisor Steve Witkoff, who is thought to be leading the U.S. negotiation team in Egypt.

Trump is scheduled to meet with families of hostages and speak at the Knesset, Israel's parliament, before traveling to Egypt for a "peace summit" attended by regional and international leaders later on Monday. From there, he was slated to return to the White House, arriving overnight Tuesday.

Daunting issues remain unsolved

The ceasefire and release of hostages is the first step in the proposed peace plan. Competing demands remain on the next steps, casting uncertainty on whether the conflict is indeed over.

Israel wants Hamas to disarm, and Hamas wants Israel to pull its troops out of all of Gaza. The future of Gaza's government, which has been in Hamas' hands for two decades, also remains to be worked out.

Gaza's Health Ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants but says around half the 67,600 deaths were women and children. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, and the U.N. and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties

AP

Nobel economics prize goes to 3 researchers for explaining innovation-driven economic growth

AP

Stockholm, Oct 13: Joel Mokyr, Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt won the Nobel memorial prize in economics Monday for "having explained innovation-driven economic growth" including the key principle of creative destruction.

The winners represent contrasting but complementary approaches to economics. Mokyr is an economic historian who delved into long-term trends using historical sources, while Howitt and Aghion relied on mathematics to explain how creative destruction works. Dutch-born Mokyr, 79, is from Northwestern University; Aghion, 69, from the Collège de France and the London School of Economics; and Canadian-born Howitt, 79, from Brown University.

Aghion said he was shocked by the honor. "I can't find the words to express what I feel," he said by phone to the press conference in Stockholm. He said he would invest his prize money in his research laboratory.

Asked about current trade wars and protectionism in the world, Aghion said that: "I am not welcoming the protectionist way in the US. That is not good for ... world growth and innovation."

The winners were credited with better explaining and quantifying "creative destruction," a key concept in economics that refers to the process in which beneficial new innovations replace — and thus destroy — older technologies and businesses. The concept is usually associated with economist Joseph Schumpeter, who outlined it in his 1942 book "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy."

The Nobel committee said Mokyr "demonstrated that if innovations are to succeed one another in a self-generating process, we not only need to know that something works, but we also need to have scientific explanations for why."

Aghion and Howitt studied the mechanisms behind sustained growth, including in a 1992 article in which they constructed a mathematical model for creative destruction.

Aghion helped shape French President Emmanuel Macron's economic program during his 2017 election campaign. More recently, Aghion co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Commission, which in 2024 submitted a report to Macron outlining 25 recommendations to position France as a leading force in the field of AI.

NATO chief mocks 'broken' Russian submarine as Moscow denies malfunction

REUTERS

Amsterdam, Oct 13: NATO chief Mark Rutte mocked Russia on Monday over the "limping" condition of one of its submarines as Russian authorities denied it had been forced to surface because of technical problems.

Russia's Black Sea Fleet said the diesel-powered submarine Novorossiysk had surfaced off France to comply with navigation rules in the English Channel, and rejected reports it had suffered a serious malfunction. But Dutch authorities said at the weekend that the submarine was under tow in the North Sea. And Rutte, in a speech in Slovenia, said the vessel was "broken."

"Now, in effect, there is hardly any Russian naval presence in the Mediterranean left. There's a lone and broken Russian submarine limping home from patrol," he said.

"What a change from the 1984 Tom Clancy novel 'The Hunt for Red October'. Today, it seems more like the hunt for the nearest mechanic."

VChK-OGPU, a shadowy Telegram channel that publishes purported Russian security leaks, reported on September 27 that fuel was leaking into the hold of the Novorossiysk, raising the risk of an explosion.

NATO's Maritime Command published photographs on October 9 of what it said was a French navy frigate observing a Russian submarine operating on the surface off the coast of Brittany. "NATO stands ready to defend our Alliance with constant vigilance and maritime awareness across the Atlantic," it posted on X, without naming the submarine.

China's Xi calls for greater inclusion of women in governance

REUTERS

Beijing/Hong Kong, Oct 13: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday called for greater representation for women in politics and government at a global women's summit in Beijing, a move he said would ensure that gender equality is "truly internalized" within society.

The two-day "Global leaders meeting on women," held in conjunction with UN Women, seeks to further advance women's development globally, gender equality and the well-rounded development of women, authorities said.

Leaders from Iceland, Sri Lanka, Ghana, Dominica and Mozambique are attending, state media reported.

Xi said that countries needed to "broaden channels for women to participate in political and decision-making, and promote women's broad participation in national and social governance."

Peace and stability are prerequisites for women's all-round development, Xi said.

The summit comes as China has made great strides in educating women, who account for around 50 percent of students in higher education and around 43 percent of the total employed population.

Sourav Ganguly to lead charge as brand ambassador for BCPL

ANI

New Delhi, Oct 13: A new era in sports is set to dawn with the official announcement of the Bhartiya Corporate Premier League (BCPL) 2025. The pioneering T20 cricket tournament is proud to announce that the legendary former captain of the Indian cricket team and one of the nation's most revered sporting icons, Sourav Ganguly, will be its official Brand Ambassador.

The BCPL is conceptualized with a grand vision: to create India's most prestigious and aspirational sporting platform for working professionals. It aims to transcend the boundaries of the office, bringing together professionals from diverse industries to compete, collaborate, and celebrate the spirit of cricket. The 2025 season will feature 10 city-based teams featuring employees and working professionals from across the nation, battling it out for the coveted championship title.

The appointment of Sourav Ganguly, affectionately known as 'Dada,' as the Brand Ambassador is a testament to the league's commitment to excellence and leadership. Ganguly's transformative captaincy and his fearless, inspiring leadership style resonate deeply with the ethos of the BCPL.

Speaking on his association with the league, Sourav Ganguly said, "I have always believed that the lessons learned on a sports field are invaluable in any professional sphere--teamwork, handling pressure, and the zeal to win. The BCPL is a fantastic initiative that brings the excitement of cricket to the corporate world. It's a platform to unearth talent, foster team spirit, and promote a healthy work-life balance I am thrilled to be a part of this journey and look forward to seeing India's working professionals become cricketing champions."

The Chairman of the BCPL Organizing Committee, Mr. Saurabh Jha, shared his excitement, stating, "Our vision for BCPL is to build a community where the common workforce of India can shine beyond their professional roles. We want to create an unforgettable experience that blends the thrill of high-stakes cricket with the spirit of work culture in India. Having a legend like Sourav Ganguly as our Brand Ambassador is a monumental honour. His name is synonymous with leadership and integrity, and his presence will undoubtedly inspire every player and team associated with the league."

Adding to this, Muhammad Muzammil, Chief Marketing Officer of BCPL, remarked, "BCPL isn't just a tournament; it's a celebration of the spirit that drives India Inc. We are creating a high-energy, engaging platform that will captivate audiences nationwide. This league offers a unique opportunity for brands to connect with a highly aspirational and influential demographic in a dynamic and authentic setting. We are building more than a league; we are building a legacy."