



### Operation Sindoor

## Fear instilled by Navy, IAF skill, Army's bravery brought Pak on knees within no time: PM Modi

Joins Diwali celebrations on board INS Vikrant | Says armed forces deserve special salute for actions | BrahMos, Akash have proven their capabilities | Several countries now interested in purchasing these missiles

Sajid Raina

Panaji, Oct 20: Terming coordination among the armed forces during 'Operation Sindoor' as a main factor for Pakistan's surrender, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said fear instilled by the Navy, extraordinary skills of the Air Force and bravery of the Army brought the enemy on its knees within no time.

Addressing armed forces personnel during Diwali celebrations on board INS Vikrant, PM Modi, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the aircraft carrier represents India's capability to design and build its own warships. "INS Vikrant is not just a warship; it is a testimony to 21st-century India's



hard work, talent, impact and commitment," he said, adding, "It's a powerful symbol of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Its handover to the Navy led to renouncement of a major colonial legacy."

"A few months ago we had seen how INS Vikrant gave some

sleepless nights to Pakistan. INS Vikrant, the name itself puts an end to the courage of the enemy," PM Modi said.

PM Modi spent a night on-board INS Vikrant and witnessed the Navy's air power at the high seas with MiG 27

aircraft demonstrating its skills on the aircraft carrier built at the Cochin Shipyard.

Referring to the success of 'Operation Sindoor' PM Modi said, "When the enemy is in front and war is imminent, the side that possesses the strength to fight independently always holds the advantage."

"The fear instilled by the Indian Navy, the extraordinary skill demonstrated by the Indian Air Force, and the bravery of the Indian Army, along with the exceptional coordination among all three services, brought Pakistan on its knees swiftly during Operation Sindoor," he said, adding that the armed forces deserved a special salute for their actions. "For the armed forces to be strong, self-reliance is essential," | More on P6

## Exposition of Buddha's relics deepened spiritual connect between India & Russia: LG Sinha

Returns to Delhi, calls for building world full of kindness

KNO Correspondent

New Delhi, Oct 20: Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha on Monday said that the exposition of holy relics of Lord Buddha to Elista, the Capital city of the Republic of Kalmykia, deepened spiritual connect and mindfulness between India and Russia.

LG Sinha, according to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) returned to Delhi today after concluding his three-day visit to Kalmykia, Russia.

He was leading the delegation to bring back the Holy Relics of Lord Buddha to India following their exposition in Elista.

The Lieutenant Governor posted on X: "Holy relics of Lord Buddha are back home after a week-long exposition at Kalmykia, Russia. The exposition underscored our commitment to foster mutual understanding, build trust and cooperation and create



lasting connections through shared spiritual experiences.

Exposition of holy relics has deepened spiritual connect and mindfulness will always serve as a source of peace, ideals and inspiration for future generations. Holy relics are back home but Buddha's enduring presence in Kalmykia will continue to guide seekers for their own awakening".

During a ceremony at the

Central Temple also known as "the Golden Abode of Buddha Shakyamuni", the Lieutenant Governor while addressing revered monks and devotees observed that the holy relics will return to India but Lord Buddha's enduring presence in Kalmykia will continue to guide the seekers for their own awakening.

The Lieutenant Governor called for building a world full of kindness, | More on P6

## Alliance strained? Cong rejects NC's Nagrota offer amid RS seat row

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Oct 20: In a move widely seen as a protest against the denial of a Rajya Sabha seat by the National Conference, the Congress has declined the offer to contest the Nagrota Assembly seat. The party said that it has decided to leave the seat to its ally, the National Conference, in the interest of defeating the Bharatiya Janata Party.

In a statement issued last night to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the party said it has decided against contesting the seat, keeping in view the larger interests and the goal of defeating the BJP.

"After detailed deliberations

over the report of the Jammu & Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee, and taking into account various factors - including the fact that in the last Assembly elections in 2024, which were contested by Congress and NC on a friendly basis, the National Conference had secured second position in the final election results of the said constituency - the central leadership of the INC has decided to leave the seat to its ally, the National Conference, in furtherance of the broader principles and goals of the coalition to defeat the BJP," said JKPC Chief Spokesperson Ravinder Sharma.

The ties | More on P6

### J&K Assembly By-Elections

## 33 candidates file nomination papers for two seats

20 in fray for Budgam, 13 in Nagrota

KNO

Srinagar, Oct 20: A total of 33 candidates have filed nominations for the Budgam and Nagrota Assembly constituencies, as the deadline for submissions concluded on Monday.

According to official details available with the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), 20 candidates have submitted nominations for the



Budgam seat, while 13 have filed for the 77-Nagrota seat.

For the Budgam seat, National Conference nominee Aga Syed Mehmood,

Peoples Democratic Party candidate Aga Muntazir Mehdi, Bharatiya Janata Party's Aga Syed Mohsin, independent | More on P6

## Our Budgam candidate expects support from Aga Ruhullah: Omar

'Never betrayed people here, Aga Mehmood set for sweeping win'

Naveed UI Haq Ganaiee

Budgam, Oct 20: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday said that the National Conference (NC) candidate for the Budgam by-election, Aga Syed Mehmood, is expecting full support from Member of Parliament Aga Ruhullah Mehdi.

Speaking to reporters after Aga Mehmood filed his nomination papers, the Chief Minister, as per news agency—Kashmir



News Observer (KNO), said there was nothing more to add on Ruhullah's support. "Aga Mehmood has already stated that Aga Ruhullah is like his son. He expects his support for the upcoming assembly by-election. What else can I say about it," Omar said.

He added | More on P6

### Privilege over transparency?

## Legislative privilege invoked as J&K Assembly withholds question details

KNO Special Correspondent

Srinagar, Oct 20: The Jammu & Kashmir Assembly has refused to disclose information about the questions disallowed during the budget session, stating that such disclosure would breach the privilege of the legislature.

In its reply to an application filed under the Right to Information Act, 2005 - a copy of which is in possession of the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), the Assembly Secretariat cited Section 8(1)(c) of the transparency law to deny details of the questions disallowed by the Speaker during the



budget session held in March-April this year.

"The information sought comes under the exemption clause in terms of Section 8 (1) (c) of the Right to Information

Act, 2005, which applies to the non-disclosure of information whose disclosure would breach the privilege of Parliament or State Legislature," the Assembly Secretariat stated | More on P6

## NC deceived people, voters looking for alternatives: LoP Sharma

Naveed UI Haq Ganaiee

Srinagar, Oct 21: Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, Sunil Sharma, on Monday criticised the National Conference (NC), accusing the party of betraying the people of the region and promoting family politics.

Speaking with reporters in Budgam, Sharma, as per news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that the NC has lost public trust and that voters are now looking for alternatives.

"NC has deceived people in Jammu and Kashmir for



decades. Recently, it took a turn on smart meters. People are now seeking alternatives," Sharma said, adding that the Abdullah family has maintained control over politics in the region.

"People have started a fight against Abdullah | More on P6

## Govt to act tough against poor performing schools: Edu Minister

Waris Fayaz

Srinagar, Oct 20: Minister for Education Sakina Itoo on Monday said the government will take strict action against those schools that deliver poor academic results.

She emphasised on bringing accountability and more performance. "It will define the new phase of reforms in Jammu and Kashmir's education sector."

Addressing the students and staff at Government Girls Higher Secondary School (GGHSS) Baramulla, Minister Itoo as per the news

agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) said the education department has achieved a milestone in one year. "In a year of our government, we have achieved much more that was not achieved in the past decade."

Itoo also spoke about the completion of long-pending Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs), referral of 725 lecturer posts to the recruitment board and rationalisation of teaching staff among the key reforms.

"The education sector has witnessed a major transformation in a | More on P6

## Border fences lit, BSF remains alert along J&K borders on Diwali

Sajid Raina

Srinagar, Oct 20: As Diwali was observed across India, Border Security Force (BSF) personnel along the International Border (IB) and Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir marked the festival by lighting candles along the fences.

Officials told the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO) that personnel placed candles in multiple sectors, including Tangdhar, Keran, Gurez, Uri, and Akhnor, as well as along RS Pura in Jammu and

other IB and LoC areas. Night patrolling and monitoring continued in all sectors while the candles were arranged along the fences, they said.

"BSF teams are deployed around the clock to monitor cross-border movements and respond to any unusual activity," the officials said, adding that night patrols were intensified in key areas along both the IB and LoC, including north Kashmir and the Jammu division.

Army officials said that coordination with the BSF has been increased | More on P6

## Kulgam scientist breaks belief that Saffron grows only in Pampore

### Zahoor Ahmad Reshi urges agriculturists to 'move beyond textbooks, engage in hands-on experimentation'

Umaisar Gull Ganie

Kulgam, Oct 20: Breaking a decades-old notion that saffron can only thrive in Pampore, agricultural scientist Zahoor Ahmad Reshi from Kulgam has successfully cultivated high-quality saffron in his home district. This marks a breakthrough in Kashmir's traditional saffron cultivation practices.

Speaking to the news agency—Kashmir News Observer (KNO), Reshi said he first experimented with saffron cultivation during a biophonics trial two years ago - an experiment that led him to



several findings not documented in standard agricultural literature.

"While collecting data

during the trial, I discovered certain aspects of saffron growth that were not mentioned anywhere. I applied

those findings to the soil here, and the results were remarkable," he said.

According to Reshi, saffron is not limited to Pampore's soil conditions and can be cultivated anywhere in Kashmir, provided that certain environmental factors - especially water management - are properly maintained.

"People often say saffron should not be given any water, but that's not entirely true," he explained. "During a particular stage of its life cycle - which I call the 'transformative phase' - saffron actually needs the same amount of water as

vegetables. If it gets less, it won't grow properly, and the corms won't multiply."

Reshi, who is also working on a book detailing his findings, said that temperature and humidity play a vital role in the crop's success. He observed that in Kulgam, the optimum temperature arrives earlier than in Srinagar, leading to earlier flowering and taller plants.

"In Pampore, the fields lie beside the highway, and growth is often limited. But here, the plants grew up to 22 inches tall - that is the difference proper | More on P6



# Govt ensuring modern facilities reach every student in J&K: Sakeena

## Visits Baramulla, inaugurates multiple projects

KT NEWS DESK

BARAMULLA, OCTOBER 20: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday inaugurated newly constructed Additional Accommodation at Government Higher Secondary School Boniyar, Uri. The Minister also laid the foundation for additional classrooms at HSS Boniyar, being constructed under SAMGRA, further strengthening the educational infrastructure in the region.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister highlighted that the government is working tirelessly to ensure that students in every corner of the Union Territory have access to modern, well-equipped educational facilities. "Education is the cornerstone of progress. Our goal is to bridge the infrastructure gap and create inclusive learning spaces that nurture the potential of every student," the Minister said.

The Minister also interacted with students and faculty members, encouraging them to make the best use of the improved facilities and to continue striving for academic excellence. He emphasized the importance of community participation in maintaining educational assets and supporting local schools.

Later, the Minister visited Government Girls Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Baramulla and participated in Annual Day celebrations of the institution. MLA



Baramulla Javid Hassan Baigh; MLA, Sopore Irshad Rasool Kar; MLA Pattan Riyaz Bedar; MLA Gulmarg, Farooq Ahmad Shah; MLA Uri Dr. Sajad Shafi; Director General of School Education Kashmir, Dr. GN Itoo; district officers of various departments, faculty members and large number of students were also present on the occasion.

During the program, Minister Sakeena, along with MLAs, inspected stalls installed by the students, showcasing innovative projects developed in Atal Tinkering Labs.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Sakeena emphasized on

the importance of education, innovation, and holistic student development. She encouraged students to excel in academics, sports, and co-curricular activities and highlighted the government's commitment to providing modern facilities and resources to support student learning and growth.

Minister Sakeena further said that the projects of students in the exhibition reflected the creativity and technical skills of the students, adding that it showcases the government's efforts of promoting innovation at school level.

The Minister, during the

celebrations, also felicitated meritorious students and those who participated in various cultural and other competitions at UT and national levels. Students who performed exceptionally in academic, cultural, and sports activities were also recognized for their achievements, inspiring all attendees to pursue excellence.

As part of the Annual Day celebrations, students presented vibrant and energetic cultural performances, adding colour and enthusiasm to the celebrations. The performances included traditional dances, music, and dramatizations

that enthralled the audience and demonstrated the all-round development of the students.

On the sidelines of the event, Minister Sakeena e-inaugurated several educational infrastructure projects as well as laid e-foundation of projects, amounting to nearly Rs. 2067.18 Lakhs in different Assembly Constituencies of North Kashmir. The projects e-inaugurated include additional accommodation of three storey building and renovation of old 12 roomed 3 storey building for Girls HSS Sopore, 10 roomed double storey building at HSS Mirgund Pattan, additional accommodation of 3 roomed double storey building at BHSS Uri, additional accommodation at Girls Middle School Kralpora Nehalpora Gulmarg, Additional Accommodation at PM Shri MS Raram Gulmarg, 3 roomed double storied building at HS Trigam Sonawari, 03 roomed double storied building at GHS Sumbal Sonawari, Additional Accommodation 6 roomed double storey at HS Rakhe Shilvat Sonawari, 3 roomed double storied building at HSS Madwan Sonawari and Additional Accommodation 06 roomed double storey building for Govt. HSS Budagam Gurez, besides e-foundation stone for construction of Teacher Quarters at Government Higher Secondary School Chandiloora Gulmarg was also laid by the Minister.

Bye-Election to Budgam

## R&R Comm reviews arrangements for Kashmiri migrant voters



KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, OCTOBER 20: Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner (M), Dr. Arvind Karwani Monday took stock of the arrangements being put in place for facilitation of Kashmiri migrant voters at Jammu, Udhampur and Delhi, for upcoming Bye-Election to Legislative Assembly from 27-Budgam AC, with Assistant Returning Officers stationed at Jammu, Udhampur and New-Delhi.

During the meeting, Dr. Karwani was apprised about the arrangements in place for establishment of Special Polling Stations in Jammu, Udhampur and Delhi, distribution and collection of polling material/ EVMs and also the arrangements being put in place for Counting of Votes.

Relief Commissioner emphasized on ensuring all requisite Assured Minimum Facilities (AMFs) for voters like permanent ramps, drinking water, toilet facilities as per norms of Election Commission

of India. Camp Commandants/Zonal Officers were directed to reach out to the voters and facilitate their participation.

He also emphasized upon the officers for adequate training of polling staff well in advance, and strictly follow the laid down instructions /guidelines for free, fair and impartial polling.

Pertinently, special polling stations have been established for Kashmiri Migrants who are residing outside their territorial jurisdiction of their assembly constituency in Kashmir and who are staying in and around the Relief Camps in Jammu, Udhampur and Delhi, as done in earlier elections. In addition, special arrangements have also been made for those Kashmiri migrant electors who are staying elsewhere in India outside Jammu, Delhi and Udhampur with the option of either to vote in person at the polling stations in Jammu, Udhampur and Delhi or by postal ballot.

## Javid Dar inaugurates Autumn Flower Festival at SKUAST-K

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 20: Minister for Agriculture Production, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Cooperative and Election Departments, Javid Ahmad Dar Monday inaugurated Autumn Flower Festival (Chrysanthemum Show) at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology-Kashmir (SKUAST-K) here.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Dar congratulated the university authorities, particularly the Faculty of Floriculture, for organizing the colourful event that celebrates Kashmir's floral diversity and artistic traditions. He said that the festival aims to showcase the natural beauty of Kashmir's flora while attracting tourists, students, and entrepreneurs to explore the vast potential of floriculture in the region.

Highlighting the significance of the event, Javid Dar said that the Autumn Flower Festival,



featuring 15 indigenous varieties and over 80 colours of chrysanthemums, marks the first major attempt to promote autumn tourism in the Valley, complementing the region's traditional spring, summer and winter attractions.

Minister Dar emphasized that the initiative aligns with the government's broader vision of diversifying tourism and creating livelihood opportunities through agriculture and allied

sectors. He said that the Agriculture Production Department is encouraging farmers to adopt floriculture as a viable business venture alongside their routine farming, given its growing market demand and export potential. MLA Sonawari Hilal Akbar Lone; Vice Chancellor SKUAST-K Prof. Nazir Ahmad Ganie; Director Sheep Husbandry Kashmir, and other senior officers and scientists were present on the occasion.

## DSEJ extends Diwali greetings

KT NEWS DESK

JAMMU, OCTOBER 20: In a heartfelt message imbued with light and goodwill, the Director School Education, Jammu, Naseem Javid Chowdhary extended warm greetings to the students, teaching fraternity and all officers and officials of the department on the auspicious occasion of Diwali.

He described Diwali as "a festival where the outer illumination mirrors an inner awakening" — a reminder that education, too, is an act of lighting lamps in the corridors of the mind.

Chowdhary urged the teaching

community to continue being custodians of that sacred flame which dispels ignorance and nurtures wisdom.

To the students, he conveyed that every spark of learning they kindle today becomes the guiding lantern of tomorrow. He further wished that this Diwali bring peace, prosperity and renewed purpose to every home and every classroom across the Jammu region.

"May the triumph of light over darkness inspire us all to make knowledge our Diya and compassion our fragrance," the Director said, concluding his message of hope and harmony.

## DC Rajouri inaugurates Badminton Court

KT NEWS DESK

RAJOURI, OCTOBER 20: Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Abhishek Sharma Monday inaugurated a newly developed badminton court at the Sports Stadium-Kheora, marking another step towards strengthening sports infrastructure in the district.

After the inauguration, the Deputy Commissioner interacted with sportspersons, including boxers, badminton players and other young athletes who regularly practice at the stadium. He appreciated their dedication and encouraged them to continue pursuing excellence in the sports of their interest.

## Rana extends warm Diwali greetings

KT NEWS DESK

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 20: Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest, Ecology & Environment and Tribal Affairs, Javed Ahmed Rana has extended his heartfelt greetings to the people on the joyous occasion of Diwali.

In his message, Rana said that Diwali symbolizes the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. He urged everyone to celebrate the festival with love, harmony, and a spirit of togetherness. "May this Diwali bring peace, prosperity, and happiness to all. Let us also remember to share our joy with the less privileged and keep our environment clean and safe," he said.

He underlined the tradition of celebrating festivals in an atmosphere of amity and brotherhood and called for strengthening same in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the occasion teaches us to rededicate ourselves in the service of people, reaffirm our commitment towards brotherhood and selfless service to humanity.

## DC Ramban convenes mega public outreach camp

KT NEWS DESK

RAMBAN, OCTOBER 20: Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan Monday conducted a mega public outreach camp at Sangaldan to listen and address the grievances and developmental issues of the people on the spot. The camp was organised as part of the District Administration's ongoing efforts to strengthen public services delivery, promote participatory governance and ensure that government welfare schemes reach every household. The camp witnessed enthusiastic participation from locals and people from different Panchayats of the Sangaldan area.

Chairperson DDC Ramban Dr. Shamsad Shan; Assistant Commissioner Revenue Shokat Hayat Mattoo; Sub-Divisional Magistrate Gool, Imtiaz Ahmed and officers from all line departments were also present.

A large number of

individuals and delegations projected their demands pertaining to basic amenities, road connectivity, water and power supply, education, healthcare, sanitation and livelihood opportunities. The Deputy Commissioner gave a patient hearing to all concerns and resolved most of the issues on the spot by issuing necessary directions to the concerned departments.

Responding to public demands related to education, the DC directed the Chief Education Officer to rationalize staff if required to ensure smooth functioning of all government schools. He assured that issues regarding vacant posts of Headmasters and Lecturers would be taken up with the higher authorities for early filling of the same.

Regarding the augmentation of sanitation, the DC asked the locals to identify land in coordination with administration for the

construction of a community toilet unit in the main market. He further announced the Construction of a tubewell near Sangaldan Railway Station to improve the water supply system.

Addressing youth-centric issues, the DC emphasized the role of self-employment schemes and instructed the banking sector to expedite loan disbursements under Mission YUVA, PMEGP and other livelihood programs to support entrepreneurship and job creation.

The DC also informed that relief compensation has been disbursed among families affected by recent flash floods, heavy rains and landslides, adding that pending or additional cases, if any, would be verified and addressed promptly.

He further directed the Assistant Commissioner Development (ACD) to complete the pending work of Meeting Hall at Sangaldan within the stipulated time frame.

## DC Ramban inspects facilities at 'Tatapani'

KT NEWS DESK

RAMBAN, OCTOBER 20: Deputy Commissioner Ramban, Mohammad Alyas Khan Monday visited the Tatapani area in Subdivision Gool to review facilities and take first hand feedback from visitors regarding the amenities available at the popular spot. The Hot Water Spring at 'Tatapani' Sangaldan is a natural geothermal marvel renowned for its therapeutic and medicinal properties. The spring continuously emits naturally heated water believed to possess significant healing qualities that provide relief from various ailments. Owing to its curative potential, Tatapani has become a popular destination, drawing visitors from various parts of Jammu and Kashmir and neighboring regions.

The Deputy Commissioner inspected the Hot Water spring, bathing points, changing facilities and sanitation infrastructure, emphasizing the need to maintain cleanliness, hygiene, and safety standards to ensure

a better visitor experience. He interacted with visitors and local service providers about the requirements for improving the site's infrastructure and accessibility.

During the inspection, the DC directed the PWD and RDD departments to undertake immediate maintenance of roads, sanitation units and approach paths leading to the site. He specifically instructed officials not to use any unsafe or dilapidated infrastructure until it is fully repaired and made secure for visitors.

He further directed the Sub-Divisional Administration and Police Department to ensure adequate civil, traffic regulation and security arrangements at the destination to facilitate smooth movement of visitors especially during ongoing peak season. Keeping in view the tourism potential of Tatapani, the Deputy Commissioner said that the destination would be developed as a clean, sustainable, and visitor-friendly health destination aligning with the district's broader goal of promoting eco-tourism and local economic development.

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## JK reports around 2,200 dengue cases

JAHANGEER GANAIE

Srinagar, Oct 20: Jammu and Kashmir has reported a surge in dengue cases this year, with nearly 2,200 infections recorded so far, health officials said on Monday. They urged people to take preventive steps to stop further spread of the mosquito-borne disease.

According to official, 2,168 dengue cases have been confirmed across the Union Territory till date. Among these, Jammu district reported the highest number of cases (960), followed by Kathua (579), Samba (139), and Udhampur (257).

Other districts with reported infections include Reasi (42), Rajouri (52), Poonch (25), Doda (24), Ramban (29), and Kishtwar (7). Additionally, 23 cases have been reported from Kashmir division and 41 from



outside states.

An official told KNO that a total of 20,277 tests have been conducted this year. "Out of the confirmed cases, only 45 patients required hospitalisation, while nine are still under treatment. One resident of J&K succumbed to the disease at DMC Ludhiana," he said.

He cautioned that with no specific vaccine or antiviral treatment available for

dengue, prevention remains the most effective strategy. "People must adopt preemptive measures to combat this painful infection by destroying mosquito breeding sites and maintaining clean surroundings," he added.

Health experts said that dengue, caused by the Aedes aegypti mosquito, continues to pose a major public health challenge in the region.

"The Aedes mosquitoes breed in stagnant water found in flower pots, buckets, discarded tyres, and even bottle caps. Eliminating these water sources is the first line of defense," they said, adding that people should regularly clean water containers, use mosquito repellents, and wear full-sleeved clothes to minimise exposure.

The doctors advised that dengue-carrying mosquitoes are most active during early morning and late afternoon hours, and people should use mosquito nets or screens while sleeping, even during the day.

They said the common symptoms of dengue include high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, muscle and joint pain, nausea, vomiting, and rashes.

"Warning signs of severe dengue include abdominal pain, persistent vomiting, bleeding gums or nose, blood in vomit or stools, fatigue, or restlessness. Such cases require immediate medical attention," they warned.

J&K has witnessed fluctuating dengue patterns in recent years. The Union Territory reported around 7,000 cases in 2024, 6,403 in 2023, and the highest-ever 8,269 cases in 2022, which also saw 18 deaths. In contrast, dengue was almost negligible a decade ago, with only two cases reported in 2009 and none in 2010.

Health authorities have once again urged citizens to join hands in combating dengue by ensuring cleanliness and removing stagnant water from their surroundings—(KNO)

## NC will win all 4 RS seats: Tanvir Sadiq

Says many surprises for RS polls

OWAIS GUL

Srinagar, Oct 20: National Conference (NC) Chief Spokesperson and MLA Zaidal, Tanvir Sadiq Monday said that there are many surprises for October 24 Rajya Sabha elections in Jammu & Kashmir and that the party will secure all the four seats. Speaking with reporters in Srinagar, Sadiq said that he believes if somebody votes for them he is a friend and not an opponent. "Many surprises will be there on October 24. NC will bag all the four seats," he said.

He said that the NC will get support in Rajya Sabha elections from the people who are not part of the alliance. "There is also an opportunity for us to win the Nagrota seat this time. Shameem Begum, the party candidate, got a good number of votes during DDC elections. Congress will also support us and there are some reports coming that some locals disgruntled with the BJP will also support us. We have also nominated Aga Mehmood for Budgam seat after threadbare discussions. We expect to secure both seats," he said.

He added that they have many issues to put forth before the people and expect voters to support them like



they did in the last 2024 assembly elections.

"There is no rift with the Congress and the party preferred the NC candidate for Nagrota as in the last election, the party stood second. We will put our efforts to win all the elections that are being held in the next one month," he said.

On AIMIM Chief Assaduddin Owaisi's PSA remark, he asked where he was in 2019 when people of J&K were being suppressed. "He was then sitting with the BJP and didn't say anything. Now, when the time has come to serve the people, he raised his fingers. I want to make an appeal to him to focus on Hyderabad. We have got a mandate from the people and we will do our job," he added—(KNO)

## Dy CM bats for NC candidate in Nagrota

KNO

Nagrota, Oct 20: Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary on Monday said that the National Conference (NC) will emerge victorious in the upcoming Nagrota Assembly by-election, asserting that the people of J&K have full faith in the leadership of Omar Abdullah.

Speaking to reporters during an interaction at Nagrota, Choudhary said the National Conference has nominated Shamim Begum as its candidate for the by-election and expressed confidence in her victory.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir trust the National Conference. With Omar Abdullah reviving the Darbar Move, he has also revived the economy of J&K," Choudhary said. He appealed to the people of Nagrota to vote for the National Conference, saying that the party has always made bold and people-centric decisions for the state.

"It was the National Conference that gave the position of Deputy Chief Minister to Omar Abdullah and made Satish Sharma Sahib a minister. Our party has always worked for the development of Jammu and Kashmir," he added. The Deputy Chief Minister urged voters to rise above caste and religion, accusing



the BJP of dividing people on communal lines.

"BJP fights elections in the name of caste and religion. I appeal to the people of Nagrota to vote for Shamim Begum, the NC candidate, if they want their work to be done," he said.

Referring to the party's inclusive representation, Choudhary noted that the National Conference has given significant positions across all regions of J&K, including Jammu and the Chenab Valley. "Despite the challenges, Omar Sahib has ensured representation for every region — whether in the Legislative Assembly, the Cabinet, or even the Rajya Sabha," he said, citing examples such as Satish Sharma and Sajad Kuchloo.

Criticizing the BJP's long tenure in the constituency, he said that those who ruled for 28 years "failed to deliver anything substantial."

"Those who couldn't help people even during the floods have nothing to offer

now. The people should not rely on those who are still crying over their failures," he remarked.

Addressing internal party matters, the Deputy CM refused to acknowledge Aga Ruhullah, clarifying that he only recognizes those who respect the party leadership.

"I respect only those who respect our leaders, Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah. I consider anyone who stands with them as my colleague. Those who deviate from the party's line, I do not acknowledge," he said.

He, however, expressed respect for Aga Mahmood, describing him as "a true leader fighting for the National Conference."

Concluding his address, Choudhary reiterated confidence in the party's win in Nagrota.

"The National Conference will take even bigger decisions for the future of Jammu and Kashmir. We will surely win the Nagrota seat—(KNO)

## LG Gupta celebrates Diwali with soldiers



KNO

Ladakh, Oct 20: Saluting the Army jawans for their bravery, Lt Governor of Ladakh Kavinder Gupta on Monday celebrated Diwali with soldiers of Fire & Fury Corps at Rinchen Auditorium, Leh. While addressing the jawans, LG Gupta said, "Our soldiers guard the borders under extreme conditions and are always ready to foil

nefarious designs of the enemy." He said, "Entire nation is proud of its soldiers and always stands with them. We are able to live our lives peacefully due to our jawans guarding the borders and maintaining a tight vigil."

LG Gupta also paid homage to Kargil & Siachen heroes, and reiterated GoI & UT's commitment towards their welfare—(KNO)

## Satish Sharma extends greetings

KT NEWS DESK

Jammu, Oct 20: Minister for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, Transport, Information Technology, Youth Services and Sports, Satish Sharma has extended his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the auspicious occasion of Diwali – the Festival of Lights. In his message, Satish Sharma said that Diwali is a celebration of the eternal victory of light over darkness and righteousness over evil. He said the festival reminds us of the power of truth, compassion, and unity in strengthening the social fabric and fostering a spirit of collective progress.



The Minister urged the people to celebrate the festival with joy and mutual respect, promoting harmony and goodwill among all sections of society.

Satish Sharma also prayed for peace, prosperity, and the overall development of Jammu and Kashmir, wishing that the light of Diwali brings renewed hope and happiness to every home.

## Sakeena greets people

KT NEWS DESK

Srinagar, Oct 20: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Social Welfare and Education, Sakeena Itoo has extended her heartfelt greetings to the people of Jammu and Kashmir on the joyous occasion of Diwali- Festival of Lights.

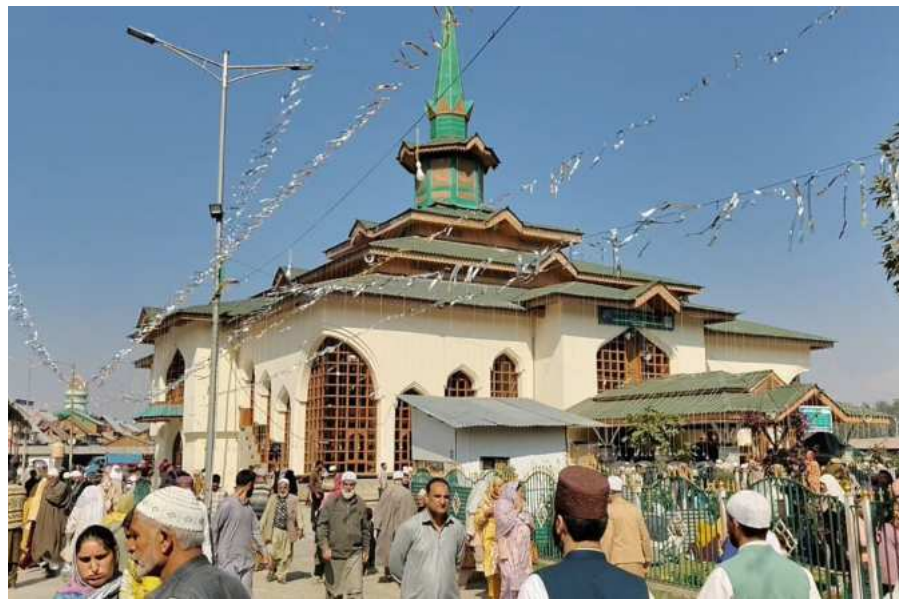
In her message, the Minister said that Diwali is a festival that symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil, and reminds us of the power of hope, compassion and collective effort in building a brighter and



healthier future for all.

The Minister also prayed for peace, progress and prosperity of entire Jammu and Kashmir.

## Urs Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani (RA) observed with religious fervour



NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIEE

Budgam, Oct 20: The annual Urs of Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani (RA), popularly known as Sheikh-ul-Alam (RA), was observed at Charar-i-Sharif in Budgam district on Monday with religious fervour. Thousands of devotees from across Jammu and Kashmir thronged the shrine, offering prayers and supplications.

Special prayers, recitations of Darood and Naats, and other devotional activities were held throughout

the day, while night-long prayers were observed on the intervening night of October 19-20.

The Urs celebrations were attended by religious scholars, caretakers, and devotees. Mutawali Ziyarat Younis Haji thanked the administration for ensuring smooth arrangements, including uninterrupted water, power, and transport facilities.

"Thousands of devotees from across the region had participated in the sacred event," he said.

During the occasion, religious scholars highlighted the life, teachings, and spiritual contributions of Hazrat Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani (RA), who devoted his life to preaching Islam and spreading harmony. Devotees were seen offering prayers, distributing sweets, almonds, and walnuts within the shrine premises. The Urs will continue till Wednesday, with special prayers scheduled on Wednesday and Jumamah Namaz to be observed at 2:30 pm—(KNO)

## Incentives for rural doctors in pipeline: Sakina Itoo

WARIS FAYAZ

Srinagar, Oct 20: Jammu and Kashmir's Health and Education Minister, Sakina Itoo Monday said that the government is actively considering providing special incentives for doctors serving in remote and rural areas of the region, acknowledging that such areas continue to face major challenges in healthcare access and manpower.

Speaking during her visit to Baramulla village, the Minister said that many doctors prefer postings in urban centers due to lack of basic facilities in rural areas, including housing, power and water supply. She said the government is working to address these gaps and motivate medical staff to serve in far-flung regions. "Our doctors face real difficulties in rural postings. There is no proper accommodation, no electricity and water supply remains an issue. Incentives should be higher in rural areas than in cities and the government is working on this," Sakina Itoo said.

She added that improving conditions for healthcare workers in such areas is key to ensuring quality patient care. "If doctors do not go to rural areas, who will serve the people there? They are our own people and we must make it easier for our medical staff to stay and work among them," she said.

The Minister while addressing the complaints regarding senior residents' attendance at GMC Baramulla said the government has already acted on several such issues, including transfers of doctors, who had remained in the same postings for long periods. "Doctors are working as per their duty rosters and we are continuously reviewing operations at GMC Baramulla to ensure accountability," she said.

She further announced that the government plans to introduce an offline ticketing system at GMC Baramulla and other hospitals to assist patients from remote areas who lack smartphones or internet access.

"Not everyone can use QR codes or online registration. People from remote villages face problems. I have already spoken to my department to ensure an offline admission facility for such patients," she said.

The Minister also said the government had sanctioned major projects, including MRI and Cath Lab facilities for GMC Baramulla to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in north Kashmir.

"Equipment will only be installed where trained professionals are available. There is no point in placing machinery without doctors or technicians to operate it," she said, adding that the government's focus remains on making advanced healthcare accessible beyond urban limits—(KNO)

## Para accuses NC of aiding BJP in 'normalising' Aug 05 decisions

NAVEED UL HAQ GANAIEE

Budgam, Oct 20: Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader and MLA Pulwama, Waheed ur Rehman Para on Monday said the Budgam by-election is not just a local contest but a chance for people to reject the ongoing "normalisation" of August 5, 2019 decisions — a process he alleged is being aided by the National Conference (NC).

Speaking to media outside the Returning Officer's office in Budgam, where he accompanied PDP candidate Aga Muntazir Mehdi, Para said that after a long time, people

of Jammu and Kashmir gave a one-sided mandate, bringing the NC to power. "Despite having an absolute majority, NC has failed to speak on political rights or challenge the decisions taken after the abrogation of Article 370. In fact, every move of the BJP is being normalised with NC's silence," he said.

He said the Budgam bypoll is an opportunity for people to reclaim their political voice. "People have elected a Chief Minister from here, but they still have no one to address their local issues. Muntazir belongs to Budgam — win or lose, he will

remain here, among his people," Para said.

Calling the by-election crucial for the political discourse of Jammu and Kashmir, Para added, "This vote is not just for Budgam; it's a message across Kashmir that parties making tall promises and failing to deliver must be held accountable."

On the reservation issue, Para said PDP is seeking its rationalisation based on population. "A big mandate was given to the NC, but they avoid talking about detainees, the ban on Jamaat-e-Islami or Article 370. Even our assembly is not ready to raise these issues," he remarked—(KNO)



## EDITORIAL

### Attack On Kashmiri Student: Justice Must Be Swift And Certain

The reprehensible attack on a Kashmiri postgraduate student at Government Medical College, Jammu, where his accommodation was vandalised and he was subjected to communal slurs, is not an isolated incident but a disturbing symptom of a deeper malaise. That such an act was allegedly perpetrated by fellow medical professionals makes it even more condemnable. This is an assault on the very idea of India as a harmonious, pluralistic society. The incident strikes at the heart of the constitutional values of dignity and fraternity. When a

young doctor, dedicated to saving lives, is targeted with hate-filled abuse and property destruction, it reveals a dangerous erosion of empathy and ethics. Such actions traumatise not just the individual but entire communities, creating alienation and fear among students who travel far from home to pursue education and contribute to the nation. The government must respond with unequivocal sternness. A swift, transparent investigation must be conducted, and the perpetrators – regardless of their position or influence – must face stringent legal and

disciplinary consequences. The GMC Jammu administration must initiate an internal inquiry and demonstrate zero tolerance for such misconduct. Medical institutions are meant to be temples of healing and humanity; they cannot become spaces where prejudice and intimidation thrive. Beyond punitive measures, proactive institutional reforms are essential. A robust grievance redressal mechanism, sensitisation programmes promoting inter-community harmony, and clear protocols to address harassment must be implemented across educational

and professional spaces. The administration must send a clear message: such acts will not be tolerated, and every student, irrespective of origin, will be protected. Kashmiris are not outsiders in their own country; they are integral to India's cultural and professional fabric. To allow such incidents to go unpunished is to betray the trust of millions who believe in unity amid diversity. The government must act decisively, not just to deliver justice in this case, but to ensure it is never repeated. The soul of our nation depends on it.

## I want to assure the people of J&K—if mistakes were made, we will correct them: Vajpayee

On 15 August 2002, PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee delivered a speech outlining the many challenges facing India – from terrorism, poverty to natural disasters – while calling for national unity to take the nation forward

Sisters and brothers, it is 55 years since we became independent. Today, we pay our homage to all the martyrs of the Freedom Struggle. We bow our heads before Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, and all other great leaders.

We salute our soldiers, jawans of paramilitary forces, and police personnel who laid down their lives in combating terrorism.

Our tributes also to the martyrs who foiled the terrorist attack on our Parliament on December 13.

Terrorism has become a festering wound. It is an enemy of humanity.

Our neighbour claims to oppose terrorism at the international level, but adopts double standards in the context of our region. After facing defeat in wars, it has resorted to cross-border terrorism for grabbing Kashmir.

We wish to state once again that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. It will remain so.

The world cannot accept that the cruel massacre of the Amarnath pilgrims, or the carnage of innocent women and children at Kaluchak and Kasim Nagar are a part of any "Freedom Struggle".

For us, Kashmir is not a piece of land; it is a test-case of Sarva Dharma Samabhava – secularism. India has always stood the test of a secular nation. Jammu and Kashmir is a living example of this. And this itself is Kashmiriyat.

We shall defeat cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. This is our resolve.

We wish to have good neighborly relations with Pakistan. The Lahore Journey and the Agra Summit are a testimony to this.

India wants all issues to be resolved peacefully and through negotiations. We are prepared to take some more steps in this direction. However, for this, it is necessary to create a conducive environment.

Infiltration into Jammu and Kashmir continues even today. Those who call the forthcoming elections in the State farcical should not give us lectures on democracy. Let them take a look at their own track record.

How can attempts to flagrantly provoke the people of Jammu and Kashmir to boycott elections create an atmosphere for any meaningful talks. Instead of resolving problems, this will only exacerbate them.

Sisters and brothers, I am deeply saddened when I compare South Asia with other parts of the world. When Japan, which was devastated in the Second World War, today stands as one of the front-ranking nations; when the whole of Europe has united, forgetting all the old enmities; why can't we resolve all our contentious issues through talks?

We can. We will.

Why can't we unite and fight against our real enemy, the poverty?

This is a challenge. No one is going to come from outside and meet it for us.

The process of peace and democracy has now arrived at a decisive turn in Jammu and Kashmir, which has been grappling with terrorism.

Elections are going to take place in the State. The dates have already been announced.

I am confident that these elections will be fully free and fair. No one need have any doubts on this score.

I appeal to the people of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh, as also to their representatives to participate actively and in large numbers in the elections and thereby demolish the motivated propaganda being conducted from across the border.

No one will be allowed to create disturbances in the elections in Jammu and Kashmir. All the designs to create an atmosphere of fear will be frustrated.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir want to live in peace. For many many years they have seen and suffered violence and bloodshed. They want to create a future for their children.

My brothers and sisters in Jammu and Kashmir, today is an opportunity when we can together heal these wounds. Together, we can participate in the creation of a happy



Jammu and Kashmir.

I would like that no citizen of the State feels alone and helpless. The entire Nation is with them.

I am confident that all the displaced people, including Kashmiri Pandits, will be able to go back to their homes with respect, in the new situation that will be created after the elections.

I wish to assure the people of Jammu and Kashmir that if any mistakes have occurred, we shall make amends. For this, we shall talk to the elected representatives and organizations. Discussions will also take place on the demand for more powers to the State.

The desire for peace is growing in India's North-Eastern States too. The demand for faster economic development is intensifying.

People are realizing the fact that the gun can snatch away life, but it cannot make people's lives better.

Our efforts for permanent peace in Nagaland are progressing towards success. We invite all those who have taken to the path of violence in other North-Eastern States for peace talks.

Sisters and brothers, in addition to external difficulties, we also have had to grapple with nature. A large part of the country is reeling under a severe drought. In some places, floods have shown their wrath.

Standing crops are wilting, sown seeds have gone bad. Kisans are concerned. We share their concern.

The Government has taken every possible step to deal effectively with the drought. Our godowns are brimming with foodgrains. We will not let anyone die of hunger.

Relief is being reached to the weaker sections of society by extending the scope of the Antyodaya Anna Yojana. Under the Rs. 10,000-crore Sampurna Grameen Rozgar Yojana, drought relief programmes are being speedily implemented. Five thousand crore rupees have been given to States to undertake various "Food-for-Work" activities.

Prices of essential goods are under control. But all these are temporary measures.

The Government is now preparing an effective, long-term strategy to protect the country from the curse of drought and floods.

We will make concerted efforts to save every drop of water. We will have to adopt watershed management, rainwater harvesting, and all such techniques.

We will shortly unveil a new initiative, which will be called Pradhan Mantri Grameen Jal Samvardhan Yojana.

We shall soon start three important programmes:

One lakh hand-pumps will be installed in water-scarce areas; One lakh primary schools in rural areas will be provided with drinking

water facilities; and, One lakh traditional sources of drinking water will be revived.

Dear countrymen, with your trust, affection, and support, I am in front of you for the fifth consecutive year on the ramparts of Red Fort.

There is stability in the country today. People want the experiment of coalition governance to succeed.

Democracy has become stronger. Its roots have reached every village and town. After Independence, thirteen elections to the Lok Sabha have taken place. Governments have been formed and changed, but always without any bloodshed and violence.

My Government is committed to carrying out electoral reforms. It is our firm resolve to keep criminal elements away from power.

Dear countrymen, today, India stands proudly on the world stage – tall, self-reliant, and full of self-confidence. Our prestige is on the rise internationally.

It is necessary that we do not overlook our achievements. Undoubtedly, our progress in certain areas has been tardy. We have to honestly introspect on this. For, we have the potential to achieve much more than what we have achieved so far.

Sometimes, we tend to talk about our shortcomings much more than is necessary. This gives rise to disappointment. The Nation's energy dissipates.

On the other hand, the feeling of national pride inspires us to work to achieve more.

We are proud of our kisans. Until a few years ago, we had had to import foodgrains from abroad. Last year, we exported foodgrains worth Rs. 6,400 crore.

We are proud of our scientists and engineers. They successfully launched into space not only Indian satellites, but also satellites of other countries.

We are proud of our entrepreneurs in the computer industry. Could anyone have even imagined that one day, India would earn Rs. 40,000 crore in computer software exports? But it has happened.

Behind these achievements, is the talent, the hard work, and the determination of us Indians. The credit for this goes especially to the youth of our country. Come, let us congratulate our younger generation for this.

Sisters and brothers, we have a multi-party system. The race for power is natural in this system. However, this race has to remain within the limits of the "Nation First" principle.

We will have to draw a Lakshman Rekha in our political conduct. This must never be crossed for temporary gains.

Today, there is consensus among political parties on issues of national security. Then, why can't we create a similar consensus on certain pressing issues of social and

economic development?

We can create this consensus. We must create this consensus.

Take for example, the problems in the power sector. The scarcity of electricity has assumed crisis proportions in many States.

I appeal to all political parties to arrive at a consensus on the minimum agenda for power sector reforms.

However, it is not enough to change the mindset of political parties. It is also necessary to bring about a change in the mindset of the people.

Just think of the extensive theft of power, and of the Rs. 25,000 crore that is lost through it every year. How can this be tolerated?

Today, kisans want quality power; they are willing to pay more if the power supply is uninterrupted. But there should be no interruptions and cuts and no impediments in its transmission to the desired destinations.

Countrymen, the economic reforms that have been implemented in the past few years are in front of you. An economy of scarcity has been transformed into an economy of surplus.

Today, there are no crowds in front of ration shops. There are no lines for gas and telephone connections. The queues for kerosene have become shorter. Prices of vegetables may have risen in rainy season, but we have strived to keep onion prices in check!

Telecom and Internet services are available to more and more people. Their rates too are continuously falling.

Our chief objective of economic reforms has been to remove poverty speedily. We are moving rapidly in this direction. The living standards of the common man are rising. Today, a fan, a TV, a refrigerator, or a scooter can be seen even in poor localities.

My dream is to see that every family has its own house. In the past four years, we have initiated the process of construction of nearly sixty lakh new houses. Of these, 35 lakh houses are in rural areas and eighty percent are for poor families.

I dream of an India in which both the Government and Society are sensitive. Our policies and programmes have been formulated with this end in mind.

Brothers and sisters, faster development of the infrastructure in our country is the need of the hour. We are fully determined to ensure that this happens.

A network of world-class highways is being laid across the country. The National Highways Development Project is being implemented rapidly. Rs. 55,000 crore will be spent on it. This is the biggest and most ambitious road project to be implemented in India after Sher Shah Suri's Grand Trunk Road.

Similarly, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak

Yojana, costing Rs. 60,000 crore, will link every village with an all-weather road in five years.

These two road projects are generating jobs for lakhs of people.

Dear countrymen, our aim is to free India from the curse of poverty and unemployment. It is to make India a Developed Nation by 2020.

When this country of one billion people works with a common resolve, then no goal is impossible to achieve.

The Tenth Plan has set the target of eight percent yearly growth in GDP.

We are taking some important new measures for economic and social development. These will be announced separately today.

Sisters and brothers, I appeal to you to display the same emotional unity on the issue of National Development as you always do on the issue of National Security.

Come, let us make Development a powerful People's Movement.

For this, it is necessary that everyone rises above casteism and communalism. We will have to leave behind all those things that divide us.

The horrific explosion of communal violence in Gujarat was one unfortunate example of this. There can be no place for such violence in a civilized society.

We must maintain peace, communal amity, national unity and integrity even in the most serious and provocative of circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the Government and Society alike to provide security and equal opportunities for the minorities.

Countrymen, come, let us as a nation look ahead, look to the future.

Someone has rightly said: "Beeti Tahi Bisar De, Aage Ki Sudh Le" (Forget what happened in the past, look forward to the future.)

Rather than getting bogged down in the issues and disputes of the past, let us create a new future for ourselves.

All our programmes will succeed and all our dreams for progress will come true only when we strictly adhere to probity and morality in public life.

We will not compromise with corruption at any level. Those who are in high offices should remember that people expect equally high conduct from them.

While on the one hand, there is a need for those in politics and administration to change their behaviour, equally, our citizens need to change their attitude.

Do not talk only of your rights. Remember also your own duties and responsibilities.

The mindset of depending on the Government for every work has to change.

I call upon all citizens and voluntary organizations to come forward for social work. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that Dalits, oppressed, and people belonging to backward classes enjoy social justice and equality. We do not do them any favour by doing this.

My Government has extended the period of reservations for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in government service for another ten years. Their opportunities for promotion in government service have also been properly ensured.

These reservations are not a dole, rather they are an instrument for bringing about social equality.

My dear countrymen, this 55th anniversary of Independence conveys one more message to us. And that message is that all of us strive to our utmost for the realization of the dream of making India a Developed Nation.

May our goal be the limitless heights of the sky. May our feet be on the ground. May our minds be full of unyielding determination. May our hands be clasped together. May our resolve be to march together. If we do this, our victory is certain.

Come, let all of us unitedly affirm this resolve with the victorious salutation of Jai Hind.

Join me in saying thrice: Jai Hind! Jai Hind!! Jai Hind!!!

Source: The Print





Sgr shines bright: Diwali celebrations light up hearts in J&K. Photos by Shah Jahangir

## Sakeena calls for improved public service delivery

KT News Desk

BARAMULLA, OCTOBER 20: Minister for Health and Medical Education, Sakeena Itoo Monday conducted surprise inspection of Primary Health Centre (PHC) Sheeri and PHC Boniyar in North Kashmir's Baramulla district here to take stock of health-care facilities and assess on-ground functioning of these public health institutions.

During the visit, the Minister reviewed the availability of essential medicines, diagnostic facilities, manpower position, and overall patient care services being provided at both these health centres. She interacted with patients and attendants to gather first-hand feedback from them on healthcare delivery.

Interacting with doctors and other medical staff on the occasion, the Minister directed them to maintain people-centric approach while discharging their duties.

Expressing concern over certain deficiencies noticed during the inspection,



Minister Sakeena instructed the CMO to take immediate corrective measures to ensure that all essential services are available round the clock. She also emphasized on strict adherence to duty rosters, proper maintenance of records, and cleanliness within hospital premises.

"The government is committed to strengthen the public health system, especially at the primary level, to ensure quality healthcare reaches

every citizen, particularly in remote and far-flung areas," the Minister stated.

She reiterated that transparency, accountability and dedication must form the core of health service delivery.

MLA Uri, Dr. Sajjad Shafi; MLA Baramulla, Javid Hassan Beigh; CMO Baramulla and other senior officers of district administration also accompanied the Minister during the visit.

## Diwali Cup 2025 Golf Tournament Satish Sharma attends closing ceremony at JTGC Jammu

KT News Desk

JAMMU, OCTOBER 20: Minister for Youth Services & Sports, Satish Sharma Monday attended the closing ceremony of Diwali Cup 2025 Golf Tournament held at Jammu Tawi Golf Course (JTGC) Sidhra here.

The tournament, organised by JTGC in collaboration with Tourism Department Jammu, was teed off by Director Tourism, Jammu, Vikas Gupta in presence of Secretary JTGC, Manav Gupta.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Sharma said that Golf Tourism should be more boosted in future so that such tournaments and events shall be organized at Jammu Tawi Golf Course on a regular basis. He added that these events bring Jammu & Kashmir on the international Golfing map with an opportunity for local talent to showcase their skills.

The Minister also presented trophies and mementoes to the winners, Runner-ups and other players, who were adjudged best in different categories.

Secretary JTGC, Manav Gupta informed that several big international level tournaments like PGTI were conducted in 2022, 2023 & 2024 at JTGC in which many professional Golfers from all over India/South-East participated.

As many as 83 players participated during the day-long



tournament, who were divided into 21 four-balls.

Sanjay Mahajan and Dr. Anil Slathia/Atharv Rishi were adjudged as the overall winner and Runner up respectively of the tournament. Gurdeep Singh bagged the award for the straight drive at Hole No.06. The longest drive award went to Col. Amit Gupta, Rajeev Thakur and Vedant Handa. While Closest to the pin went to Sunita Kapoor, Col. J.B Singh and Jaideep Manocha. Winner best net for Senior Citizen Category went to Danesh Chopra and Runner up Col. Vijay Mahajan. Best among Fourball went to Garib Dass, Rakesh Gupta, Ashkoor Wani, Col. Manav Sharma, S.S Pathania, Col. Amit Gupta, Rohit Bhalla, Pankaj Thakur, Col. J.B Singh, Sanjay Mahajan, Faizan Choudhary, Akash Bhola, Sunand Kumar, Col. Yashpal Tora, Varun Raina, Firdous Masoodi, Hemant Kumar Sharma, Col. Vijay Mahajan, Danesh Chopra, Swarn Singh and Danin Khan

## Dir Agri Jammu reviews departmental activities in Billawar

KT News Desk

JAMMU, OCTOBER 20: Director Agriculture Jammu Anil Gupta Monday conducted an extensive tour of Sub-Division Billawar in District Kathua.

At the outset, the Director chaired a meeting at the office of the Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer to review the ongoing departmental activities, physical and financial progress under the central and UT Government sponsored schemes, including CAPEX, NABARD and HADP.

The meeting was attended by the Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer, Subject Matter Specialists, Agriculture Extension Officers, Junior Agriculture Extension Officers, Agriculture Extension Assistants and other field functionaries.

During the tour, the Director Agriculture visited the Mushroom Shed of Kartar Chand, resident of Bhaddu Billawar, where he assessed on-ground mushroom cultivation practices and encouraged progressive farmers engaged in

mushroom production. Director Anil Gupta appreciated the farmer and stressed upon the promotion of mushroom cultivation as a viable source of income generation and rural employment.

The Director Agriculture also inspected the Toria crop field of Amir Singh, resident of Bhaddu Billawar, where 12 kanal land has been brought under oilseed cultivation. He appreciated the farmer for adopting crop diversification and emphasized the importance of timely agronomic interventions, integrated nutrient management and the use of quality seed for achieving higher productivity.

Anil Gupta impressed upon the officers to work in close coordination with the farming community to ensure effective implementation of departmental schemes at the grassroots level. He exhorted farmers to avail the benefits of various government initiatives and adopt modern scientific practices for enhanced production and profitability.



Veteran actor  
Asrani dies after  
brief illness

PTI

Mumbai, Oct 20: Veteran actor Asrani, who cemented a special place in the hearts of audiences through his portrayal of the eccentric jailer in Sholay and best known for his comic roles, passed away in a hospital here on Monday, his manager said. He was 84.



The veteran of several films spanning over five decades, Govardhan Asrani, known popularly by mononym Asrani, was remembered for his characters in "Sholay", "Namak Haram", and "Guddi". The end came on Monday afternoon, four days after he was admitted to Bharatiya Arogya Nidhi Hospital in suburban Juhu. "He was a bit unwell. He was admitted following breathing issues. He passed away today at 3:00 PM. We were told by the doctors that water had accumulated in his lungs," Asrani's manager Babubhai Thiba told PTI.

Asrani had acted in over 300 films in a career spanning over five decades. He has largely played character roles, and has garnered wide acclaim for his impeccable comic timing.

His dialogue, "Hum angrezon ke zamane ke jailor hai" has achieved a cult status. The comical character in Sholay was modelled after Charlie Chaplin in "The Great Dictator".

Some of his popular films include "Bawarchi", "Golmaal", "Hera Pheri", "Chup Chup Ke", "Hulchul", "Deewane Huye Pagal", "Welcome", among others.

His last rites were held this evening at Santacruz crematorium which was attended by family and close friends.

"We did not inform anyone about his demise as it was his wish that we should keep it a private thing," Thiba added.

Asrani is survived by his wife.

Indian economy exhibit resilience  
driven by strong macroeconomic  
fundamentals: RBI bulletin

PTI

Mumbai, Oct 20: The Indian economy has so far exhibited resilience, driven by a focus on strong and durable macroeconomic fundamentals amidst broader global uncertainty and weak external demand, a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletin said on Monday.

Global uncertainty has edged up, said an article on 'State of the Economy' published in the RBI's October Bulletin.

In the US, both trade and economic policy uncertainty increased in September. Global growth, however, has broadly held up. Investor sentiments dampened in October, on renewed US-China trade tensions and prolonged US government shutdown, after a phase of buoyancy.

The Indian economy displayed resilience amidst broader global uncertainty and weak external demand. High-frequency indicators point to a revival in urban demand and robust rural demand.

"While the Indian economy is not immune to global headwinds, it has so far exhibited resilience, driven by a focus on strong and durable macroeconomic fundamentals, including low inflation, robust balance sheets of banks and corporates, adequate foreign exchange reserves and a credible monetary and fiscal framework," the article said.

The RBI said the views expressed in the bulletin article are of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India.

Headline consumer price index (CPI) inflation moderated sharply in September, marking its lowest reading since June 2017, as per the bulletin.



The article also noted that high-frequency food price data for October so far (up to 17th) point towards a pick-up in cereal prices.

Among pulses, prices moderated for gram dal, tur/arhar dal and moong dal.

Within edible oils, prices firmed up for mustard oil, sunflower oil and palm oil while groundnut oil prices eased. Key vegetable (tomato, onion, and potato) prices softened, with the decline being most pronounced for tomatoes.

"As noted in the Monetary Policy Committee resolution of October 1, 2025, the growth outlook remains resilient, supported by domestic drivers, despite uncertainties on the external front," it added.

The RBI's article further said domestic structural reforms are helping to somewhat offset the drag on growth from the weakening external demand conditions.

The current macroeconomic conditions and the outlook, as noted by the MPC, has opened up policy space for

further supporting growth.

On the domestic currency, it said the rupee depreciated against the US dollar in September amidst elevated trade tensions, heightened global uncertainties, and persistent foreign portfolio investment outflows.

The depreciation in the real effective exchange rate was mainly driven by the depreciation in the nominal effective exchange rate.

Net foreign portfolio investment flows continued to remain negative for the third consecutive month in September driven by equity outflows amidst weak investor sentiments on concerns over US tariff measures and the steep hike in H-1B visa fees.

It also noted gross inward foreign direct investment (FDI) moderated in August. Singapore, Cayman Islands, the UAE, the Netherlands, and the US accounted for more than three-fourths of total inflows.

Manufacturing, computer services, construction, and financial services were the top recipient sectors.

GST rationalisation to lift  
organised apparel revenue  
by 200 bps: Report

PTI

Mumbai, Oct 20: The recent goods and services tax (GST) rationalisation is set to lift revenue growth of organised apparel retailers by about 200 bps this fiscal, keeping the topline steady at 13-14 per cent for the second financial year in a row, a report said on Monday.

The GST rate cut on apparel priced below Rs 2,500 is likely to lift demand in the mid-premium segment, while the fast fashion or value segment will continue to drive the momentum, Crisil Ratings said in a report.

Though limited, the GST relief provides timely support to sustain growth, the report stated.

The uniform 5 per cent GST rate -- versus the previous dual structure of 5 per cent below Rs 1,000 and 12 per cent between Rs 1,000 and Rs 2,500 -- has widened the consumption base, it added.

Conversely, Crisil Ratings said, the increase in the GST rate on apparel priced above Rs 2,500 from 12 per cent to 18 per cent has weighed on premium categories, including wedding wear, woollens, handlooms, and embroidered clothing.

The premium segment accounts for about 35 per cent of organised apparel sales.

"Extending the 5 per cent GST slab to apparel priced up to Rs 2,500 boosts price

competitiveness across the fast-fashion or value and mid-premium segments, whose customers are price-sensitive. With the timing of the GST rate cut coinciding with the festive season, demand should increase as middle-class spending picks up," Crisil Ratings Senior Director Anuj Sethi said.

This development is notable especially following six consecutive quarters of moderate growth, despite festive seasons and prolonged discounts to boost revenue, the report stated.

The impact will likely be most visible among buyers in the Rs 2,500-Rs 3,500 range, it said.

"Apparel retailers with a higher share of premium sales may choose to absorb part of the GST hike to sustain demand during the ongoing festive and wedding season, when buying activity is buoyant. However, lower cotton prices and the reduction of GST on synthetic fibres and yarn, from 18 per cent and 12 per cent to a uniform 5 per cent, will ease input costs," Crisil Ratings Director Poonam Upadhyay said.

Overall, GST revisions align with India's evolving consumption dynamics, which are driven by rising middle-class incomes, urbanisation, and a visible shift towards affordable, fashion-forward clothing, the report added.

CONTD. FROM FRONT PAGE

Fear instilled by Navy,

he said, asserting that over the years India's forces have steadily advanced towards self-reliance.

"Missiles such as BrahMos and Akash have proven their capabilities during Operation Sindoor. Several countries around the world are now interested in purchasing these missiles," PM Modi said.

He said that the armed forces have identified thousands of items that will no longer be imported, resulting in most essential military equipment now being manufactured domestically.

He said that in the last 11 years, India's defence production has more than tripled, crossing Rs 1.5 lakh crore last year.

Since 2014, Indian shipyards have delivered over 40 indigenous warships and submarines to the Navy, PM Modi said, adding that on an average a submarine or warship produced domestically is being inducted every 40 days.

He said India was building the capacity to export weapons and equipment for all three armed forces.

"India's goal is to be counted among the world's top defence exporters", Modi said, adding that over the past decade, the country's defence exports have increased more than 30-fold.

He credited this success significantly to the contributions of defence start-ups and indigenous defence units.

The Prime Minister also commended the Indian Coast Guard for their vital role in national defence and noted their continuous coordination with the Navy to secure India's coastline day and night.

He recalled the moment when INS Vikrant was handed over to the nation, and said the warship was grand, immense, panoramic, unique and exceptional.

"Vikrant is not merely a warship; it is a testament to 21st-century India's hard work, talent, impact, and commitment," PM Modi said.

"On the very day the nation received the indigenously built INS Vikrant, the Indian Navy renounced a major symbol of colonial legacy," he said.

PM Modi highlighted that inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the Navy adopted a new flag.

INS Vikrant, India's first home-built aircraft carrier, was commissioned in 2022 to strengthen the country's naval presence.

Described as a city on the move, INS Vikrant is the largest warship to be built in India and also India's second operational aircraft carrier after INS Vikramaditya, which was built on a Russian platform.

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PM Modi had dinner with the extended family of naval personnel during the Bara Khana.

On Monday morning, Modi joined a Yoga Session on the deck of INS Vikrant and also

witnessed a spectacular steampast of warships and flypast by aircraft.

The warships which took part in the steampast included INS Vikrant, INS Vikramaditya, INS Surat, INS Mormugao, INS Chennai, INS Imphal, INS Kolkata, INS Tushil, INS Tabar, INS Teg, INS Betwa, INS Deepak and INS Aditya.

The flypast included Chetak, with flag and naval ensign, MH 60 R, Seaking, Kamov 31, Dornier and P81 and MiG 29K.

"Last night spent onboard INS Vikrant is hard to put into words. I saw the immense energy and enthusiasm you all were filled with. When I saw you singing patriotic songs yesterday, and the way you described Operation Sindoor in your songs, no words can ever fully convey the experience that a jawan feels standing on a battlefield," PM Modi said.

"My Diwali has been special as it was spent amongst you," he said.

The Prime Minister has been celebrating Diwali with the armed forces since 2014. (KNO)

Exposition of Buddha's

Just, free of all discrimination and rooted in wisdom to support the well-being of all.

"We must build a world full of kindness. We must build a world rooted in wisdom and free from suffering. We must build an awakened and peaceful world in which people care for others and support the well-being of all. We must build a just world in which humanity upholds the moral integrity for equality and fairness. We must build a world free of all discrimination and biases. We must build a world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature. And, I strongly believe Buddha's teachings will provide humanity a roadmap in this direction," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that the cultural and spiritual exchange between India and Russia remains one of the highest priorities.

"It is based on our shared belief in the enduring values of peace, spiritual ethos and compassionate living," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He also observed that in today's fast-paced world, Buddha's message is like a source of light for humanity.

"His teachings on compassion, non-violence and pure mind can bridge the divide and foster universal brotherhood. Spiritual salvation is the greatest treasure that is possible for human beings. This is what India, the land of Lord Buddha, taught the world," the Lieutenant Governor said.

He called upon the seekers to follow the teachings of Buddha and search for truth without any desire.

"Lord Buddha taught us that spiritual experience cannot be a borrowed experience, but it has to be existential. Buddha taught us that life is all about search for truth without any desire. Be a Light unto Yourself- look within as the light and pure awareness is within you," the Lieutenant Governor said. (KNO)

Our Budgam candidate

that the NC leadership took the decision to nominate Aga Mehmood after detailed consultations, believing him to be the right choice for the Budgam seat.

"There was no delay in announcing our candidate. Almost all other parties filed their nominations today as well. Like them, we too acted strategically," the Chief Minister said.

Replying to a query, the Chief Minister said that he has never betrayed the people of Budgam, recalling that he had to contest from two seats earlier, even against his preference.

He said that despite leaving one seat, the development of Budgam never took a backseat.

"I along with my team worked extensively in Budgam," he said, adding that he, along with his Ministers and NC candidate Aga Mehmood, will visit local areas to highlight the government's achievements in the constituency over the past year as the campaigning begins.

Omar also clarified that the Congress was offered the Nagrota seat, even though the NC had won there in 2014 and had fielded its own candidate in the previous assembly election. "Since the Congress decided not to contest from Nagrota, our party fielded Shameema Begum, who also filed her nomination papers today," he said.

Reiterating the NC's confidence in Aga Mehmood, Omar said the entire organization stands firmly behind him. "From today, we will take our message and our candidate's appeal to the people of Budgam. We hope that when the results are declared, Aga Syed Mehmood will represent the people of Budgam in the Legislative Assembly with an overwhelming majority," Omar added. (KNO)

33 candidates file

candidates Nazir Ahmad Khan, Muntazir Mohiuddin, Jibran Dar, and Aam Aadmi Party's Deeba Khan are among the 20 candidates who have filed their nomination papers.

On the last day of filing nominations, candidates from all major political parties submitted their papers before the Returning Officer in Budgam.

NC candidate Aga Syed Mehmood was accompanied by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, several MLAs, and senior party leaders when he submitted his nomination papers.

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Aga Syed Muntazir Mehdi was joined by Waheed-ur-Rehman Parra during the filing of his nomination.

Similarly, BJP candidate Aga Syed Mohsin was accompanied by the Leader of Opposition (LoP) and MLA Padder-Nagsenai, Sunil Sharma.

For the Nagrota seat, BJP's Devyani Rana, Panthers Party's Harshdev Singh, and National Conference's Shamim Begum are among the 13 candidates who have filed nomination papers.

The election for the Budgam and Nagrota seats is scheduled for November 11, with counting to take place on November 14. The by-poll for the Budgam seat was necessitated after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah vacated it, opting to retain his traditional stronghold of Ganderbal following his dual victory in the 2024 Assembly elections. The Nagrota seat fell vacant due to the demise of BJP leader Devinder Singh Rana in October last year. (KNO)

Alliance strained?

between the National Conference and Congress have taken a hit after the former refused to offer the latter a safe seat in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections, scheduled for October 24. The NC had offered Congress the fourth, relatively riskier seat, which the latter declined to contest.

The Congress leadership in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as in New Delhi, is miffed over the National Conference's 'reneging' on its commitment to offer a 'safe' seat to the party in the Rajya Sabha polls. (KNO)

Legislative privilege

in its response.

It further explained that the exemption is intended to shield the Assembly's proceedings from external interference.

"This exemption ensures that the Legislature can conduct its proceedings without external interference by preventing the disclosure of information protected by legislative privilege," said the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) of the Assembly Secretariat, citing inputs from the Question Branch.

The application was filed by Syed Adil, an activist from Central Kashmir's Ganderbal district. He had sought details of the questions that were disallowed, along with the names of the MLAs who had submitted them and the reasons for their disallowance. (KNO)

NC deceived people

family and will reject them. A big fight has begun in Kashmir against family dominance," Sharma said.

He alleged that the public is no longer willing to tolerate dynastic politics. "The National Conference will soon collapse like a pack of cards and its MLAs will be seen scattered," he said.

He also criticised what he called "double standards" on governance issues, referring to the issue of smart meters and other policies. "Those who eat with silver spoons can never understand the pain of poor people," Sharma said.

Sharma also said that the BJP would implement policies at the ground level in Budgam and across the region. "PM Modi's policies are pro-poor. The BJP will take these welfare measures to the people in Budgam and throughout Kashmir," he said.

The Budgam by-election was necessitated after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah retained his Ganderbal seat following the 2024 assembly elections. BJP has fielded Aga Mohsin for the bypoll to Budgam seat. (KNO)

Govt to act

short time. We are committed to continue these efforts with your suggestions and support until the best education system is achieved in Jammu and Kashmir", she said.

The Minister said that the schools that will have poor results in upcoming examinations will be dealt with firmly, while institutions that perform well will be recognised and appreciated. "We will not tolerate negligence. Every school must take responsibility to ensure students perform to their potential", she said.

Itoo on the occasion lauded students especially female students for their strong academic performance and resilience despite challenges. "Our girls are leading with determination and hard work. Their success makes us proud and inspires others to follow", she said.

She urged all the concerned stakeholders to recognise and appreciate the talent of students from government schools instead of glorifying private institutions, saying government schools have produced capable and talented students who deserve equal acknowledgment.

"The progress we have made is because of the commitment and dedication of our teaching staff and other faculty members. The government under the guidance of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah will ensure that remaining gaps are filled at earliest and the quality education reaches every corner of Jammu and Kashmir", Itoo added.

Meanwhile, speaking to reporters, the Minister said that students in Jammu and Kashmir have one of the best prescribed syllabi in the country. "We wish to see more students enrolling in government schools rather than private ones", she said.

Responding to a query about admission

fee violations, Itoo said that a Fee Fixation Committee has already been constituted and all complaints are being examined.

On another query regarding unfilled vacancies in the School Education Department, the Minister said the process is underway to fill all the posts including the BOSE Chairman post and other key positions.

"We started from zero. There were no ZEOs, CEOs, lecturers or professors in the department. However, our government has addressed almost every issue, from rationalisation to recruitment. Achieving 100 percent results in a year is not possible, but whatever could not be done in ten years, we made it possible in a year only," she said. (KNO)

Border fences

to maintain joint patrolling and observation posts in strategic locations. Surveillance continues to ensure prompt response capability in case of incidents.

They said that with the latest technology, including drones and vehicles, security forces are monitoring the border round the clock to foil any infiltration, cross-border terrorism, or other activity from the enemy side.

A BSF officer posted on the LoC said teams are deployed throughout the night to observe any unusual activity. "Our operations continue while we mark the festival in this way. We ensure citizens can celebrate without any security threat," he said. "National security is our Diwali. While citizens celebrate the festival, our focus is on maintaining vigilance along the IB and the LoC."

In addition to lighting candles along the fences, BSF and Army personnel at forward posts exchanged sweets among themselves. (KNO)

Kulgam scientist breaks

moisture makes," he noted.

Clarifying a common misconception, he said that saffron should remain dry only during its dormant phase, as excessive moisture then can cause rotting. However, during its growth phase, balanced humidity is essential for healthy flowers and corm multiplication.

Reshi believes that with a controlled environment, it is even possible to harvest two to three saffron crops a year, provided conditions like temperature and humidity are properly managed.

Recounting how the experiment began, he said the idea struck when a senior colleague, Sheikh Farhan, was about to discard leftover saffron corms from an experiment. "I stopped him and said, 'Don't throw them away - let me use them.' That is how it all started," Reshi said.

Encouraging local farmers, Reshi said saffron can be cultivated much like vegetables - either commercially or out of personal interest - as every part of the plant has economic value. "Saffron farming can be highly successful if approached properly. Anyone with passion can do it," he added.

Acknowledging the support of his family and colleagues, Reshi said his work has been driven purely by passion and curiosity. "My family and seniors have supported me throughout. They're proud of my work and never discourage experimentation," he said.

Concluding with a message for young agriculturists and researchers, Reshi urged them to move beyond textbooks and engage in hands-on experimentation. "Not everything in literature is true," he said. "Be practical - research with your own hands. Only then will you truly understand how agriculture works." (KNO)



# PM Modi celebrates Diwali with Navy personnel onboard INS Vikrant

ANI

Panaji, Oct 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated Diwali with naval personnel onboard aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, which he described as a towering symbol of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India).

Modi arrived here on Sunday evening and boarded the home-built aircraft carrier off the coast of Goa. The entire journey was done in a discreet manner, sources said.

While onboard INS Vikrant, the prime minister went to the Flightdeck, surrounded by MiG 29K fighter aircraft.

He witnessed the takeoff and landing of MiG 29 fighter jets on a short runway of the aircraft carrier, both during the day and in the dark night.

Modi also witnessed a vibrant cultural programme where the officers and sailors of the Indian Navy sang various patriotic songs, including a song specially written by them to commemorate the success of Indian Armed Forces in Operation Sindoor.

The prime minister was deeply moved by this experience, sources said.

Modi had dinner with the



extended family of naval personnel during the Bara Khana.

On Monday morning, Modi joined a Yoga Session on the deck of INS Vikrant and also witnessed a spectacular steampast of warships and flypast by aircraft.

He delivered an inspiring address to the Navy personnel and also gave them sweets. "INS Vikrant is not just a warship. It is a testimony to 21st-century India's hard work, talent, impact and commitment," Modi said.

PM Modi added that the

name Brahmos strikes fear in some minds and now many countries are keen to buy these missiles.

"Last night spent onboard INS Vikrant is hard to put into words. I saw the immense energy and enthusiasm you all were filled with. When I saw you singing patriotic songs yesterday, and the way you described Operation Sindoor in your songs, no words can ever fully convey the experience that a jawan feels standing on a battlefield," Modi said. "My

Diwali has been special as it was spent amongst you," he said.

INS Vikrant, India's first home-built aircraft carrier, was commissioned in 2022 to strengthen the country's naval presence.

Described as a city on the move, INS Vikrant is the largest warship to be built in India and also India's second operational aircraft carrier after INS Vikramaditya, which was built on a Russian platform.

The prime minister has been celebrating Diwali with the armed forces since 2014.

# Diwali cheer lifts markets

PTI

Mumbai, Oct 20: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher on Monday, taking their winning run to the fourth day in a row, driven by buying in blue-chip Reliance Industries and sustained foreign fund inflows.

A sharp rally in global markets also added to the markets' optimism.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 411.18 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 84,363.37. During the day, it zoomed 704.37 points or 0.83 per cent to 84,656.56.

The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 133.30 points or 0.52 per cent to 25,843.15.

From the Sensex firms, Reliance Industries climbed 3.52 per cent after the firm on Friday reported a 9.6 per cent year-on-year rise in net profit for the September quarter, driven by strong performance in its consumer-facing retail and telecom businesses and a recovery in its core oil-to-chemicals segment.

Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Bharti Airtel were also among the gainers.

However, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Eternal, Adani Ports and Power Grid were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled higher. Markets in Europe were trading in the green. US markets ended in positive territory on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 308.98 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) also bought stocks worth Rs 1,526.61 crore on the same day. "The Indian market extended its



**FOREIGN INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS (FIIS)** BOUGHT equities worth Rs 308.98 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) also bought stocks worth Rs 1,526.61 crore on the same day. "The Indian market extended its upward march on Monday, carrying forward the festive rally ahead of the Diwali Muhurat trading session. The Nifty-50 climbed, driven by strong buying in index heavyweights such as Reliance Industries," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

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Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.29 per cent to USD 61.11 a barrel. On Friday, the Sensex jumped

484.53 points or 0.58 per cent to settle at 83,952.19. The Nifty climbed 124.55 points or 0.49 per cent to 25,709.85.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,451.37 points or 1.75 per cent, and the Nifty surged 424.5 points or 1.67 per cent.

Stock exchanges BSE and NSE will conduct a special Muhurat trading session on Tuesday.

# RJD announces 143 candidates for Bihar assembly elections

## Tejashwi Yadav to contest from Raghopur constituency

ANI

Patna, Oct 20: The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) has released its list of candidates for the upcoming Bihar Assembly Elections, fielding 143 contenders across the state. The official list was released on the last day of nominations for the second phase. 24 Women candidates are among the 143 named as contestants.

With this announcement the shape of the Mahagathbandhan alliance is also clear with RJD contesting 143, Congress 61, CPI ML 20 and the remaining likely to go to Mukesh Sahani's VIP. There maybe last minute withdrawals as well as the alliance has not been formally announced.

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav will contest from Raghopur constituency, Lalit Yadav from Darbhanga Rural, and Dilip Singh from Barauni, Ram Vilas Paswan in Pirpaiti (SC), and Savitri Devi in Chakai. The other



candidates include Renu Kushwaha in Bihariganj constituency, Anita Devi Mahto in Warsaliganj, Mala Pushpam in Hasanpur, Sandhya Rani Kushwaha in Madhubani, Ritu Priya Chaudhary in Imamganj (SC), Tanushree Manjhi in Barachatti (SC), Chandni Devi Singh in Banapur constituency, Arvind Sahani in Sarairanjan, Prema Chaudhary in Patepur (SC), Shambu Nath in Brahampur, and Mukesh Yadav in Bajpatti.

Meanwhile, after comparing the candidate lists from the RJD and the

Indian National Congress (Congress) for the Bihar assembly elections, there are three common seats where both parties have fielded a candidate despite being in the Mahagathbandhan.

In Narkatiaganj, Deepak Yadav (RJD) will face Shaswat Kedar Pandey (Congress); in Kahalgao, Rajnish Bharti (RJD) will compete against Praveen Singh Kushwaha (Congress); and in Sikandra (SC), Uday Narayan Chaudhary (RJD) will go up against Vinod Chaudhary (Congress). There is likely to be a compromise between

the allies with one of the parties withdrawing in favour of the other.

Earlier on Saturday, the Congress released its second list for the Bihar assembly elections, announcing candidates for Narkatiaganj, Kishanganj, Kasba, Purnia and Gaya Town assembly seats.

The party has fielded Shaswat Kedar Pandey from Narkatiaganj and Qamrul Hoda from Kishanganj. Irfan Alam, Jitender Yadav and Mohan Shrivastava will contest elections from Kasba, Purnia and Gaya Town constituencies, respectively. The party also named Minnat Rahmani as its candidate from Supaul.

Earlier, on October 17, the Congress party released its first list of 48 candidates for the upcoming Bihar Legislative Assembly elections.

Polling for the Bihar elections 2025 will take place on November 6 and 11. The results will be announced on November 14.

# Congress releases another list of 6 candidates; 60 names declared so far

PTI

New Delhi, Oct 20: The Congress on Monday (October 20, 2025) released another list of six candidates for the Bihar Assembly polls, taking the total number of candidates announced by the party to 60.

The Congress's list was announced post-midnight, even as a formal seat-sharing deal has alluded the Mahagathbandhan with the RJD and the Congress, the two main constituents of the alliance, unable to reach an understanding.

According to the list of six candidates, the Congress fielded Surendra Prasad Kushwaha from Valmiki Nagar, Abidur Rehman from Araria, Jalil Mastan from Amour, Tauquir Alam from Barari, Praveen Singh Kushwaha from Kahalgao and Vinod Chaudhary from Sikandra (SC).

Chinks in the INDIA bloc's armour became all too obvious on Sunday (October 19, 2025) in poll-bound Bihar, where disgruntled aspirants in the RJD and the Congress had a field day charging the leadership with having put tickets up for sale.

The last day for filing of nomination papers for the second and final phase is Monday (October 20). The Congress and the RJD have continued to disburse party symbols.

The Congress on Thursday (October 16) released its first list of 48 candidates for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections, fielding its State unit chief Rajesh Ram from the Kutumba seat and CLP leader Shakeel Ahmad Khan from Kadwa. Then on Friday, the party fielded Rishi Mishra from Jale, in a one-off announcement.

# 'Hydrogen bomb turned out to be a dud': BJP's jibe at Rahul, Tejashwi over 'vote theft'

ANI

The BJP IT Department In-charge, Amit Malviya, took a jibe at Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav over "vote theft" allegations, calling Gandhi's "hydrogen bomb" a dud bomb.

Sharing a parody video on X, he wrote, "Mahol Aandhi (Rahul Gandhi) came to expose vote theft — but got exposed themselves in front of the media! Not a hydrogen bomb, bro, these turned out to be dud bombs."

The parody video showed Rahul Gandhi and Tejashwi Yadav, with their names altered, addressing a press conference where they were confronted with questions about vote theft, a speculated rift between the Congress and RJD in Bihar, and allegations of "jungle raj" against RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav.

Rahul Gandhi had referred to the proof of "vote theft" allegations against the Election Commission of India (ECI) as a "hydrogen bomb."

Gandhi had alleged an attempt to delete over 6,000 votes in Karnataka's Aland, and also rallied against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list in Bihar during his 'Voter Adhikar Yatra'. Meanwhile, this jibe comes ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections, where the opposition Mahagathbandhan's failure to announce the seat-sharing pact has signalled confusion and tussles within the alliance.

The last date to file nominations for the second phase of the Bihar Assembly Election is Monday (October 20). It also marks the last date for withdrawal of nominations for the first phase of the Bihar Assembly elections, covering 121 constituencies.

Earlier today, the BJP's candidate from Bankipur assembly seat, Nitin Nabin, slammed the Mahagathbandhan and said, "It would be better not to call it an alliance at all now... There are more than 36 seats where two parties are facing each other; would that be called an alliance?" "Tejashwi Yadav is a highly ambitious person. Congress never accepts an alliance, and no alliance can thrive around Congress... How can an alliance be formed between such parties where there is a tradition of cheating?" he added.

Polling for all 243 assembly seats in Bihar will be held in two phases on November 6 and 11, with the results set to be declared on November 14.

# AAP releases fourth list of 12 candidates

IANS

Patna, Oct 20: The Aam Aadmi Party released its fourth list of candidates for the upcoming Bihar Assembly election this year, naming 12 candidates who will file their nominations on Monday, the last date for filing nominations for the second phase of polling.

According to the list, Kumar

Kunal will contest from Madhubani, Rani Devi from Sitamarhi, Asha Singh from Khajauli, Gorishankar from Phulparas in Madhubani district, Brij Bhusan alias Navin from Supaul, Mohammad Muntazir Alam from Amour in Purnea district, Pritam Kumar from Pirpaiti in Bhagalpur district, Shrawan Ghuiya from Kutumba in Aurangabad district, Sachitanand Shyam from

Gaura Bauram in Darbhanga district, Anil Kumar from Gaya Town, Rahul Rana from Sikandara Jamui district, and Ramashish Yadav from Jamui Assembly constituency.

Earlier, on October 18, the Aam Aadmi Party had released its third list of 50 candidates, all of whom will also contest in the second phase of elections, scheduled for November 11.

Notably, the Aam Aadmi Party is contesting independently in Bihar this time, without forming any alliance.

The party faces a tough challenge in carving out space amid established political players such as the BJP, JD(U), RJD, Congress, CPI-ML, CPI, CPIM, VIP, AIMIM, Jan Suraj Party, Jantankri Janata Dal, Bahujan Samaj Party and others.

# Study finds disparities in cancer research in India despite economic growth

PTI

New Delhi, Oct 20: India had a largely inconsistent growth in clinical research related to cancer since 2001, despite a strong economic growth, suggesting that development could be a contributing factor towards disparities among the low and middle-income countries in cancer research, according to a new study.

Cancer cases and deaths are projected to surge in the coming decades with low and middle-income countries expected to bear a disproportionate burden.

However, researchers, including those from the Latin American



Cooperative Oncology Group, said that clinical trials of cancer are disproportionately concentrated in high-income countries, even as previous evidence suggests an increase in trials among low and middle-income nations.

The study, published in the journal 'CANCER', looked at disparities in the numbers and complexity of clinical trials over time and according to economic changes. Datasets from World Bank and ClinicalTrials.gov were analysed.

Between 2001 and 2020, a total of 16,977 cancer clinical trials were found to have been registered in low and middle-income countries -- an increase from 1,053 during 2001-2005 to 7,661 during 2016-2020. In India, 54

clinical trials were registered between 2001 and 2005. The figure was seen to increase to 126 during 2016-2020. A total of 506 clinical trials related to cancer had been registered in the country over the entire study period.

"(Clinical research) development has been unequal among LMICs. Strong EG could be a contributing factor but only to some extent," the authors wrote.

"Only China and South Korea meaningfully developed independent and high-complexity clinical research," they said.

However, south and southeast Asian countries, including India, Thailand and Vietnam -- also showing a strong economic development -- "had mainly

inconsistent growth in clinical trials", the researchers said.

South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico were found to have registered an increased number of clinical trials on cancer, despite relative economic stagnation, they said.

The team added that in Africa, Egypt showed strong economic growth with a corresponding increase in clinical trials, but no such correlation was seen in South Africa.

The findings suggest that economic growth is a contributing factor towards increase in cancer-related clinical trials among low and middle-income countries.



## China's Communist Party begins key meet; to finalise new 5-yr plan, Trump's tariffs, crackdown on military

PTI

Beijing, Oct 20: China's ruling Communist Party on Monday commences a key meeting to finalise a new five-year plan amid concerns over an economic slowdown driven by US trade tensions and a sweeping purge at the top of the military.

The Communist Party of China, headed by President Xi Jinping, began the three-day meeting of the plenary session, considered to be the most important in the current context of growing strategic competition with the US. According to the data released on Monday, China's economy grew at 4.8 per cent, the slowest pace this year compared to the previous quarters.

The slowdown of the world's second-largest economy was attributed to its growing trade conflict over the tariff war initiated by US President Donald Trump, blunting China's exports to America, one of its major markets.

The data for this quarter was the weakest pace of growth since the third quarter of 2024.

The economy slowed down from a 5.2 per cent pace of



growth in the previous quarter, but close to the official annual target of five per cent GDP for this year, figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed on Monday.

The slowdown was a concern for the CPC as it will further deepen the increasing unemployment, especially that of youth, which was stated to be around 20 per cent.

Official media announced that the plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC, comprising 370 members, began its deliberations on Monday.

President Xi Jinping, who

is also the General Secretary of the party, delivered a work report and expounded on the Party leadership's draft proposals for the formulation of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) for national economic and social development, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Besides the prevailing economic situation, the new five-year plan, the high-powered body, also called plenum, with party leaders from across the country, is expected to discuss the shifting global strategic environment with Trump's efforts to expand the US global leadership, challenging

China's influence, especially in the global south.

The closed-door plenary session, being held in Beijing from October 20-23, will discuss major issues related to the formulation of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) for national economic and social development, according to an earlier official announcement.

Discussions on the new five-year plan were expected to factor in the continued slowdown of the economy, with stagnated domestic consumption, the excess capacity of new productive forces, especially the E-Vehicles produced in large volumes, and the impact of Trump's tariffs and export curbs on them.

The thrust of the five-year plan was expected to boost growth to focus on job creation as the unemployment rate is steadily climbing, causing concern to the CPC leadership.

Chinese President Xi Jinping stepped up his sweeping anti-corruption campaign in the military by expelling two top Generals along with seven other top officials ahead of the plenary meeting, sparking speculation of a purge in the party.

## EU states agree to end Russian gas imports by end 2027

AFP

Brussels, Oct 20: EU countries on Monday agreed to phase out their remaining gas imports from Russia by the end of 2027, breaking a dependency the bloc has struggled to end despite Moscow's war on Ukraine. Energy ministers meeting in Luxembourg approved a plan by the European Commission to phase out both pipeline gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports from Russia, subject to approval by the bloc's parliament.

Lars Aagaard, energy minister of Denmark, which holds the European Union's rotating presidency, called it a "crucial" step to make Europe energy independent. The plan is part of a broader EU strategy to wean the bloc off Russian energy supplies.

"Although we have worked hard and pushed to get Russian gas and oil out of Europe in recent years, we are not there yet," Aagaard said. The commission is in parallel pushing for LNG imports to be phased out one year earlier, by January 2027, as part of a new package of sanctions aimed at sapping Moscow's war chest.

But sanctions need unanimous approval from the EU's 27



nations, which has at times been hard to reach.

Trade restrictions like those approved Monday instead require the backing of a weighted majority of 15 countries.

All but Hungary and Slovakia, which are diplomatically closer to the Kremlin and still import Russian gas via pipeline, supported the latest move, according to diplomats.

"The real impact of this regulation is that our safe supply of energy in Hungary is going to be killed," Budapest's top diplomat, Peter Szijarto, told reporters.

His government says the landlocked country needs to import gas from Russia due to

geographical constraints.

Under the proposal approved Monday, which is expected to win the support of the European Parliament, Russian gas imports under new contracts will be banned as of January 1, 2026.

Existing contracts will benefit from a transition period, with inflows under short-term contracts allowed until June 17 next year and those under long-term contracts until January 1, 2028.

Although gas imports from Russia via pipeline have fallen sharply since the invasion of Ukraine, several European countries have increased their purchases of Russian (LNG) transported by sea.



## Cristiano Ronaldo unlikely to travel to India for FC Goa clash

PTI

Margao, Oct 20: Saudi Arabia's top club Al-Nassr are arriving in India Monday night for their AFC Champions League 2 away match against FC Goa but marquee player Cristiano Ronaldo is unlikely to accompany the visiting team for the game scheduled on October 22. According to Saudi Arabia's sports newspaper Al Riyadhiyah, the 40-year-old Ronaldo is not going to be a part of the travelling party despite multiple requests from the FC Goa management. Al-Nassr are bracing up for their third game in the continental club tournament after their comfortable league won over Al-Fateh, and their next match is scheduled to take place at the Jawa-

harlal Nehru Stadium in Fatorda.

FC Goa had defeated former AFC Cup winners, Al Seeb, to qualify for ACL 2, and were then drawn alongside Ronaldo's Al Nassr in Group D of the tournament. Al-Nassr and Indian Super League club FC Goa being drawn in the same group of the continental tournament has raised expectations of the Portuguese superstar making a trip to India for a competitive match.

It is understood that his contract with Al-Nassr has a clause giving him the right to pick and choose matches outside Saudi Arabia. Al-Nassr will be arriving at the Dabolim international airport.

Ronaldo, who is looking to play in next year's World Cup, is also focussed on managing his workload and give himself a chance to compete in the showpiece. Moreover, Al-Nassr have won both their group-stage fixtures of Asian AFC Champions League 2 in the absence of Ronaldo, and are poised to advance to the next round.

## Many websites, apps go dark as Amazon's AWS reports global outage

REUTERS

New Delhi, Oct 20: Amazon's cloud services unit Amazon Web Services (AWS) was hit by an outage on Monday, causing connectivity issues for many companies around the world and disrupting services for several popular websites and apps including Fortnite and Snapchat.

"We can confirm increased error rates and latencies for multiple AWS Services in the US-EAST-1 Region," AWS said in an update on its status page. AI startup Perplexity, cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase and trading app Robinhood attributed the outages to AWS. "Perplexity is down right now. The root cause is an AWS issue. We're working on resolving it," Perplexity CEO Aravind Srinivas said in a post on X.

AWS provides on-demand computing power, data storage and other digital services to companies, governments and individuals. Disruptions to its servers can cause outages across websites and platforms that rely on its cloud infrastructure. AWS competes with Google's and Microsoft's cloud services.

## UN weather agency urges action to close gaps in disaster warning systems

REUTERS

Geneva, Oct 20: The World Meteorological Organization urged action to close gaps in a global system of surveillance meant to protect people from extreme weather, saying on Monday that such early warnings were particularly needed in developing countries. Convening a special meeting in Geneva, the WMO said that in the past five decades, weather, water and climate-related hazards have killed more than 2 million people, with 90 percent of those deaths occurring in developing countries. WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo has made boosting early-warning systems a priority but still only 55 percent of countries have built up the surveillance capacity, data from the UN weather agency shows.

"Many millions of people lack protection against dangerous weather which is inflicting an increasing toll on economic assets and vital infrastructure," the WMO said in a statement.

The number of countries using early-warning systems has doubled in three years to 119. But a WMO assessment of

62 countries showed half of them possess only basic capacity and 16 percent have less than basic capacity.

However, the WMO is seeing progress in Africa, including Mozambique and Ethiopia, with more countries having functioning websites and issuing standardized alerts. "Early warning means early action. Our goal is to not only warn the world it is to empower it," Saulo said in a opening speech to the conference in Geneva. Deaths from disasters are six times higher and the number of people affected is four times higher in countries with limited multi-hazard early warning systems, the WMO has found.

The head of Switzerland's Federal Department of Home Affairs, Elisabeth Baume-Schneider, told delegates at the conference that no country or region was spared from the impact of climate change and extreme weather.

She pointed to the example of how the regular monitoring of a mountain glacier allowed scientists to warn about its imminent collapse in May 2025, allowing for the evacuation of the Swiss village of Blatten.

## Can India find a way to fit in Kuldeep Yadav in remaining two games?

PTI

New Delhi, Oct 20: India's head coach Gautam Gambhir has always been unwavering in his cricketing conviction, and picking multi-skilled players to shore up the batting till number eight is primary among them.

So it becomes doubly difficult for a Kuldeep Yadav, with 181 wickets from 113 games, to fit in the head coach's scheme of things at the moment.

Only three 50-over games in Australia isn't big enough sample size to reach a definitive conclusion on whether Gambhir's punt (not Shubman Gill's) of playing three all-rounders is the way to go forward on those tracks, which offer both bounce and seam movement.

With India scoring only 136 in a game featuring multiple rain stoppages, it would also be unfair to judge the bowling unit, which had few runs to defend.

But if India play three all-rounders in Nitish Kumar Reddy, Axar Patel and Washington Sundar, with the last two being specialist finger-spinners, it becomes virtually impossible to fit in the man from Kanpur, who is now 10th in the list of all-time wicket-takers for the country in 50-over cricket.

There is every possibility that India might go into the second ODI in Adelaide on Thursday (October 23) with an unchanged XI but there will remain a question mark whether that is



the best combination for the visitors.

This pattern of making Kuldeep the disposable guy isn't something that is only prevalent in the Gambhir era. It has happened when Ravi Shastri has been the head coach and repeated when Rahul Dravid was in charge. Formats changed, but the pattern remained identical.

And none other than Ravichandran Ashwin feels that this is something that can actually hurt Kuldeep's psyche where self doubts start to invariably creep in.

"Am I the reason team will lose? Kuldeep might think, I am bowling so well, even after that I am not playing, then am I the problem in this team? It is a crushing feeling and not everyone can handle it. Lot of people lose courage to fight," Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel after India lost the

rain-curtailed opening game by seven wickets.

Ashwin says if there is a seam bowling all-rounder in Reddy, then there is no reason not to include Kuldeep in the set-up.

"Having Nitish in the side, if you can't play your best spinner, I don't know," said Ashwin, who doesn't subscribe to the theory that No. 8 batter will act as a protection to the top-order.

Since Kuldeep's debut in 2017, India have played six ODIs Down Under (7 if Perth ODI on Sunday is also counted), and the wily spinner has featured in two of them during the 2018-19 series, grabbing 2 for 54 off 10 overs in one of the games.

While batting is a primary reason that Washington Sundar has been picked, being a finger spinner means that over-spin on the deliveries (in simple terms forward rotation) will help him extract more bounce.

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