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NC, Cong sweep...

candidates, respectively. Both parties said the arrangement was restricted to areas where there was a tough contest with the BJP.

The BJP, which won one seat in the last election and later took its tally to three with the joining of two PDP councillors, had fielded 17 candidates this time. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) tried its luck on four seats while 25 Independents were also in the fray.

Electronic voting machines were used for the first time for the council elections which took place at 278 polling stations across the district.

Wake-up call...

the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference is delighted to announce its victory in the LAHDC-Kargil elections," Abdullah said in a statement here.

"This result sends a message to all forces and parties that have, undemocratically and unconstitutionally, divided the state of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh without the consent of its people," he added.

The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said the poll victory belongs to the people of Zanskar, Kargil and Drass, "who have decisively endorsed" the NC-Congress alliance.

"We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all the elected councillors, recognising their dedication to serving the people. We also extend our gratitude to the leadership of the Congress party for their unwavering support," he said.

Abdullah said the poll results should serve as a wake-up call for the BJP.

"It is time to cease hiding behind the Raj Bhawan and unelected representatives and, instead, acknowledge the people's rightful desire for a democratically-elected government in Jammu and Kashmir. Democracy demands the voices of the people be heard and respected," the NC leader said.

He thanked the party workers for their hard work to ensure the poll victory.

"JKNC remains committed to the principles of democracy, justice and unity, working tirelessly to uphold the rights and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir," Abdullah said.

Direct impact of...

contest among the NC, Congress and the BJP in Article of the 26 seats, is the first key poll in Kargil after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, and the creation of the Ladakh Union territory.

The NC and Congress had announced a pre-poll alliance but fielded 17 and 22 candidates, respectively. Both parties said the arrangement was restricted to areas where there was a tough contest with the BJP.

Kohli's class, Rahul's...

are their spinners. Ravindra Jadeja (3/28 in 10 overs) along with Ravichandran Ashwin (2/34 in 10 overs) and Kuldeep Yadav (2/42 in 10 overs) made life miserable for the Australians while bowling them out for 199 in 49.3 overs.

But Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood were incisive during the first three overs as Ishan Kishan, Rohit Sharma and Shreyas Iyer were walked back for ducks and the scoreboard read a sorry 2/3.

The audacious Kohli, whom the Indian fans fall in love with again every day, showed the first glimpse of fightback and unfurled an elegant drive past pacer Hazlewood, a shot that was worth million dollars.

Gauging that the ball is not coming onto the bat, Kohli slightly put his front-foot across and showed full face of the bat, rather than being rooted to the crease.

India weren't out of the woods at that point but it felt as if nothing was wrong. However, it could well have been 12 for 4 in no time.

Kohli mistimed a pull shot off Hazlewood but a running-in Mitchell Marsh failed to settle in properly under the ball as it slipped through his hand.

Skipper Rohit spoke about a bit of luck which is mandatory in big events and Marsh's big time bungle was exactly the rub of the green that the hosts needed at that moment.

It was the reprieve that Kohli needed and with the target not being a big one, he and Rahul focussed on rebuilding the innings with singles and twos.

That 61 of his runs came through singles and doubles during his 116-ball knock stood as a testimony to his fitness.

For nearly 50 deliveries, he didn't hit a boundary until Cameron Green's military medium pace was introduced -- two deliveries on the pads were clipped away with disdain.

Once he reached 50 off 75 balls, Kohli pulled a slow bouncer from Pat Cummins towards deep mid-wicket.

Starc hit him flush on the helmet with a short delivery when Kohli was batting in the 70s. A concussion test was done and two balls later, a square driven four reiterated that 'Batter Kohli' can't be unnerved that easily.

Just when it looked like Kohli was cruising to his 48th ODI hundred, his pull off Hazlewood found Marnus Labuschagne.

No praise would be enough for Rahul, a man who often gets flak for the chances he wastes.

But on this day, Rahul showed why he is so highly rated. On a pitch where Indian spinners dictated the proceedings, Rahul literally nullified Adam Zampa with a late cut, back cut and an extra cover drive in a single over.

He matched Kohli stroke for stroke and after keeping wickets for 50 overs, Rahul batted for another 41.2 overs to show that he is ready for each and every battle.

In fact, when he realised that Kohli could reach a 48th hundred, he was content taking the singles and doubles until the senior man got out. Rahul hit eight fours and two sixes - the second of which sealed the win.

Earlier, Jadeja became the biggest nemesis among Indian spinners on a tacky Chepank track to set up the facile win.

Jadeja, who knows the track like the back of his hand, courtesy his decade-plus association with Chennai Super Kings, took 3 for 28 in 10 overs as the slowness of the surface and subtle variations used by the all-rounder became Australia's undoing.

"I was happy after seeing the track. I knew on this track, even I wouldn't know which delivery will turn and which delivery will go straight," he told host broadcaster Star Sports.

It was Jadeja's show all the way as he tilted the scale in India's favour with quick dismissals of an under-pressure Steve Smith (46 off 71 balls) and an unusually subdued Labuschagne (27 off 41 balls).

Jadeja, who has dismissed Smith 10 times across formats, hoodwinked his bunny with subtle variations.

Scared of getting trapped in front of the wicket, Smith was consistently trying to keep his pads outside the line of Jadeja's deliveries.

Jadeja, who was bowling at a pace around 96-97 kmph and not actually turning it much, gauged his bunny's apprehension.

The next delivery Jadeja bowled was at least 5 kmph slower and the ball turned way more than usual. In his bid to negate the leg-before possibility, Smith didn't cover the delivery which turned past his bat to dislodge the bails.

Australia's chances of posting a big score were over at that very moment.

Earthquakes kill over...

A hand is seen cradling the baby's torso as rescuers ease the child out of the ground. Rescuers said it was the baby's mother.

Abdul Wahid Rayan, a spokesman at the Ministry of Information and Culture, said Sunday the death toll is higher than originally reported.

Villages have been destroyed, and hundreds of civilians are buried under the debris, he said while calling for urgent help.

"Besides the 2,060 dead, 1,240 people are injured and 1,320 houses are completely destroyed," said Rayan.

At least a dozen teams have been scrambled to help with rescue efforts, including from the military and nonprofit organizations like the Red Crescent.

The United Nations migration agency has deployed four ambulances with doctors and psychosocial support counselors to the regional hospital.

At least three mobile health teams are on their way to the Zenda Jan district, which is one of the worst affected areas.

Doctors Without Borders set up five medical tents at Herat Regional Hospital to accommodate up to 80 patients. Authorities have treated more than 300 patients, according to the agency.

Irfanullah Sharafzai, a spokesman for the Afghan Red Crescent Society, said seven teams are busy with rescue efforts while other teams are arriving from eight nearby provinces.

"A temporary camp has been set up for people who have lost their houses and need shelter for now," Sharafzai said.

"Whatever is in our capacity we will do for our poor and needy people at this difficult time."

Neighbouring Pakistan said it was deeply saddened by the earthquake. "We are in contact with the Afghan authorities to get a first-hand assessment of the urgent needs of those affected by the earthquake," said the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

"Pakistan will extend all possible support to the recovery effort."

Afghan cricket star Rashid Khan said he was donating all his cricket world cup fees to help Herat's earthquake survivors. "Soon, we will be launching a fundraising campaign to call upon those who can support the people in need," he told his 1.9 million followers on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Japan's ambassador to Afghanistan, Takashi Okada, expressed his condolences saying on the social media platform X, that he was "deeply grieved and saddened to learn the news of earthquake in Herat province."

In June 2022, a powerful earthquake struck a rugged, mountainous region of eastern Afghanistan, flattening stone and mud-brick homes. The quake killed at least 1,000 people and injured about 1,500. (AP)

Railways to set...

nine to 10 major railway stations across India.

"The initiative is being experimented nationwide. To my knowledge, it is already operational at several railway stations like Jabalpur, Bhopal, Lucknow, and Varanasi," the DTM said.

The two restaurants at Jammu and Katra railway stations will also serve non-vegetarian food and will be fully air-conditioned, he said.

Surjeet Singh, a passenger from Delhi, said tourists are excited about the rail-coach restaurants in Jammu.

"It will be a great addition to the beauty of the place. It's the first restaurant of its kind here, offering a different and unique dining experience at the railway station," he said. Rajiv Dwivedi, who was visiting Mata Vaishnodevi cave shrine, said, "It is a commendable step. Thanks to the government for taking this initiative. I believe the food will be excellent." The Railways' Food-on-Wheels restaurants will feature stylish interiors and exteriors, along with display panels offering virtual tours of various destinations in Jammu and Kashmir, with photos showcasing the cultural essence of Dograland, officials said.

Israel declares 'state...

reports that "several" Americans were killed or are missing.

The high death toll, multiple captives and slow response to the onslaught pointed to a major intelligence failure and undermined the long-held perception that Israel has eyes and ears everywhere in the small, densely populated territory it has controlled for decades.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the country was at war and would exact a heavy price from its enemies. His Security Cabinet officially declared the country at war in an announcement on Sunday, saying the decision formally authorises "the taking of significant military steps."

The implications of the announcement were not immediately clear. Israel has carried out major military campaigns over the past four decades in Lebanon and Gaza that it portrayed as wars, but without a formal declaration.

Yohanan Plesner, the head of the Israel Democracy Institute, a local think tank, said the decision is largely symbolic, but "demonstrates that the government thinks we are entering a more lengthy, intense and significant period of war."

A major question now was whether Israel will launch a ground assault into Gaza, a move that in the past has brought intensified casualties. Netanyahu vowed that Hamas "will pay an unprecedented price." But, he warned, "This war will take time. It will be difficult."

Civilians paid a staggering cost for the violence on both sides. Several Israeli media outlets, citing rescue service officials, said at least 600 people were killed in Israel, including 44 soldiers, while officials in Gaza said 313 people had died in the territory.

Some 2,000 people have been wounded on each side. An Israeli official said security forces have killed 400 militants and captured dozens more.

Israeli TV news aired a stream of accounts from the relatives of captive or missing Israelis, who wailed and begged for assistance amid a fog of uncertainty surrounding the fate of their loved ones. In Gaza, residents fled homes near the border to escape Israeli strikes, fleeing deeper inside the territory after warnings in Arabic from the Israeli military.

In neighboring Egypt, a policeman shot dead two Israeli tourists and an Egyptian at a tourist site in Alexandria, the Interior Ministry said. Egypt made peace with Israel decades ago, but anti-Israel sentiment runs high in the country, especially during bouts of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The flare-up on Israel's northern border also threatened to draw into the battle Hezbollah, a fierce enemy of Israel's which is backed by Iran and estimated to have tens of thousands of rockets at its disposal.

Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets and shells on Sunday at three Israeli positions in a disputed area along the border and Israel's military fired back using armed drones. Two children were lightly wounded by broken glass on the Lebanese side, according to the nearby Marjayoun Hospital.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, an Israeli military official, told reporters the situation at the northern border was calm after the exchange. But he said fighting was still underway in the south and that there were still hostage situations there.

He said troops had moved into every community near the Gaza frontier, where they planned to evacuate all civilians and scour the area for militants.

"We will go through every community until we kill every terrorist that is in Israeli territory," he said. In Gaza, "every terrorist located in a house, all the commanders in houses, will be hit by Israeli fire. That will continue escalating in the coming hours."

Hamas said that overnight it had continued to send forces and equipment into "a number of locations inside our occupied territories," referring to Israel. Hamas-linked media reported that the son of Nizar Awadallah, a senior political official, was killed. The Islamic militant group has not reported any senior members being captured, killed or wounded.

The surprise attack Saturday was the deadliest on Israel in decades. In an assault of startling breadth, Hamas gunmen used explosives to break through the border fence enclosing Gaza, then crossed with motorcycles, pickup trucks, paragliders and speed boats on the coast.

They rolled into as many as 22 locations outside the Gaza Strip early Saturday morning, including towns and other communities as far as 24 kilometres (15 miles) from the Gaza border, while Hamas launched thousands of rockets at Israeli cities.

"Israel is waking up this morning to a terrible morning," said Lt. Col. Richard Hecht, an Israeli military spokesman. "There are a lot of people killed ... children, grandmothers, families, bodies."

Israeli media said at least 600 people were killed and 2,000 wounded in Saturday's attack.

Hamas fighters took an unknown number of civilians and soldiers captive into Gaza, and a line of Israelis with missing relatives snaked outside a police station in central Israel to supply investigators with DNA samples and other means that could help identify their family members.

Israel struck 426 targets in Gaza, its military said, flattening residential buildings in giant explosions.

Among the 313 killed in Gaza were 20 children, and close to 2,000 people were wounded, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

J&K ranks 2nd...

manner without affecting the basic design and serviceability requirements.

With the help of the UT level team of consultants and the technical advices provided by experts from National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM), various cost effective and technically viable solutions have been adopted. Slow Sand Filtration Plants, based on the level and occurrence of turbidity in the sources, have been designed with optimum utilization of space which otherwise was a constraint in their construction.

Similarly, to achieve economy and speed in some areas, construction of SMC-GFRP panel water storage tanks and laying of HDPE pipe distribution system have been opted which is being used in other parts of the country like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Ladakh etc.

To monitor the quality of water being supplied to the rural areas, about 1.50 lakh water samples have been tested through 98 Water Testing laboratories setup all across the UT. Besides 10 district laboratories have already been accredited by NABL and the process for accreditation/ recognition of remaining laboratories is at an advanced stage. Also, under the JJM about 32000 women across all the villages have been trained for using Field Testing Kits (FTKs) to test the water samples at their own level and report the test results on the WQMIS portal. Under Water Quality Monitoring & Surveillance, J&K has been ranked at 2nd place at national level on the

basis of performance in water quality testing.

With the picking up of the pace of implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission from last one year, the UT expects to achieve the drinking water security for all of its rural populace for next 30 years.

It may be recalled that the JJM registered around nine thousand activities during its outreach fortnight in August this year during which a massive awareness and outreach in rural areas across J&K was conducted.

IAF role in...

and radars have been deployed in forward areas at specific locations to pick up any enemy activity.

He said the IAF is the lifeline of Ladakh as it ensures delivery of ration, ammunition and other supplies to the troops deployed in the forward areas.

Expressing happiness over the maiden airshow, Lt Governor Mishra said this provided an opportunity to local youths to know the strength of the IAF at their backyard.

"Our IAF is capable of defending this airfield and the city. We should also be proud of our country which is manufacturing fifth generation aircraft," he said.

The LG said only a few countries are in the possession of fifth generation jets which are still not inducted.

The marquee event started with students and the general public witnessing the displayed aircraft and missile systems. They were also briefed about the strengths and capabilities of each system.

"Successful conduct of the event was a testimony to the cooperation and coordination between the functionaries of Air Force Station and Civil Administration," a defence spokesman said.

He said the show not only motivated the young generation to join the IAF but also showcased the advancements in the country's aerospace power.

Union Minister visits...

infrastructure. He had a comprehensive overview of the Saffron park's operations, emphasizing its crucial role in maintaining saffron quality and securing the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

The Department of Agriculture presented a brief overview of working of this Saffron park describing the pivotal role of this unit in maintaining the quality of saffron and inscribing the Geographical Indication (GI) tag on saffron produce.

This recognition ensures the authenticity and origin of the saffron, further enhancing its value in domestic and international markets.

In a meeting with saffron growers, Dr. Pandey gathered experiences crucial for shaping policies supporting saffron cultivation and promotion.

The farmers, while interacting with the Union Minister, expressed happiness over the role and efforts of Government in facilitating them saying that this intervention has led to a substantial increase in their incomes.

Later, felicitation ceremonies were held to honor individuals who had qualified for various beneficiary-oriented schemes.

Besides, mementoes and prize amounts were also distributed among the individuals who had excelled in their respective fields by the Union Minister.

Union Minister highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts to boost these industries, pledging government resources and support for local communities and economic growth.

Union Minister's visit to Spice Park Pampore underlines the Central Government's dedication towards promotion of region's spice and saffron sectors.

Muslim artisans from...

our (Hindu) co-workers also use this visit to pay obeisance at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine," he said.

"There is no place for hatred... it is a form of art and anyone can possess it. Last year, we also dispatched effigies to Srinagar," he said.

Giyasuddin said most of these artisans do other works for a living back home for the rest of the year.

Jasbir, who is accompanied by his brother and son, said they have been working as a team for decades and have not faced any issues.

"I have been coming here with Rehan since 1998. Our other teams are working in Delhi and Punjab," he said.

Lilu Kumar said both Hindus and Muslims are a single family. "I have been coming here with my Muslim brothers for the last 25 years. We are working round-the-clock to meet the deadline."

GDC Udhampur, SSB impart awareness on drug

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

UDHAMPUR: In a concerted effort to address the pressing issue of drug abuse, the NCORD Cell of Government Degree College (GDC) Udhampur, in collaboration with SashtraSenaBal (SSB), Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, organized an informative and interactive orientation program on NashaMukti (Drug De-Addiction). This initiative was part of the Nashamukt Bharat Activities carried out during India's G20 presidency.

The program featured Prof. (Dr) Romesh Kumar Gupta, the Patron and Principal of GDC Udhampur, as the Chief Guest. Sh. ParagChaturvedi, 2nd in Command of 31 Bn, Adhoc Commandant, SSB, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, graced the event as the Guest of Honour and served as the resource person. Dr.Pankaj Sharma, Convenor of NCORD Cell, played a pivotal role in coordinating the event. Dr.Pankaj Sharma welcomed the distinguished guests and outlined the objectives of the NashamuktiAbhiyaan undertaken by the NCORD Cell as part of Nashamukt J&K and Nashamukt Bharat Abhiyaan.

Prof. (Dr) Romesh Kumar Gupta highlighted the college's active role in raising awareness and combating drug abuse at the grassroots level. He praised the collaborative efforts of NCORD Cell and SSB in addressing this critical issue and emphasized the severe consequences of ignoring the problem of narcotics and substance abuse. He called for a collective effort to safeguard the youth from falling victim to addiction. During the technical session, Parag Chaturvedi engaged the audience in an interactive discussion on the theme "Say 'NO' to Drugs." Short documentaries illustrating the grim realities of drug addiction and its consequences were screened.

Students were strongly encouraged to refrain from natural, semi-synthetic, and synthetic drugs, with an emphasis on the life-altering consequences of addiction. They were inspired to consider careers in the armed forces and other uniformed services, recognizing the enduring appeal of serving the nation in uniform.

The program included a feedback session where students expressed their views and concerns. Participants solemnly pledged to say 'No' to drugs, symbolizing their commitment to a drug-free life. A special session dedicated to female students addressed unique aspects of narcotic drugs, and a motivational movie was screened to inspire and empower young women. The event received unwavering support from faculty members, and technical and media teams ensured its successful execution.

Prof. Romesh Atri, HOD Botany, conveyed the formal vote of thanks, underscoring the college's dedication to organizing such awareness programs regularly.

The program concluded with the singing of the National Anthem, echoing the participants' commitment to building a drug-free India.

This collaborative initiative underscores the commitment of NCORD Cell GDC Udhampur and SashtraSenaBal in the fight against drug abuse, contributing to the vision of a Nashamukt Bharat (Drug-Free India).

Choudhary Club faces Asan in Volleyball final

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

RAJOURI: Choudhary Volleyball Club Rajouri shall take on Asan Club Rajouri in the final of ongoing Manjakote Volleyball Championship, organised by Indian Army at Manjakote (Rajouri).

In the semifinals, decided today, Choudhary Club defeated Manjakote Volleyball Club 2-0 (25-18, 25-15) while Asan Club Rajouri trounced Peerpanjal Club Manjakote 2-0 (25-21, 25-19).

In today's matches, Ibrar Khan, SHO Manjakote was the chief guest, who appreciated the efforts of Indian Army (155 TA JAK RIF) and Mohd Tariq, Incharge Rajouri Volleyball Association in promoting sports among the youth. Today's matches officiated by the technical penal including Intazar Ali, Ikhlaiq Ahmed, Shabir Khan, Rashid Khan, Shakeel Khan, Jameel Ahmed and Shabir Ahmed.



A volleyball match in progress at Rajouri.