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a division of votes. As many as 269 members voted in favour of the Bill and 198 against it.

Meghwal also introduced The Union Territories Amendment Bill, which seeks to align elections in the Union territories of Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir with the Lok Sabha polls.

He said the proposed bills did not attack the "basic structure doctrine, as claimed by the opposition".

Principles such as judicial review, federal character of the Constitution, separation of powers, secular character, supremacy of the Constitution had not changed, Meghwal said, adding that the objections to the Bill were political in nature.

Congress member Manish Tewari opposed the introduction of the bills and termed the move an assault on the basic structure doctrine that stipulates certain features of the Constitution are beyond the amending power of Parliament.

"One of the essential features is federalism and the structure of our democracy. The bills assault the basic structure of the Constitution and exceed the legislative competence of this House," Tewari, a former Union minister, said.

Samajwadi Party member Dharmendra Yadav said the measure to introduce "one nation, one election" by the BJP was an attempt to bring dictatorship in the country.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had favoured referring the bills to a joint committee of Parliament for wider deliberations at every level.

"Detailed discussions can take place in the JPC. The report of the JPC will be approved by the Cabinet. Then again, there will be a discussion on this (bills) in the House," Shah said.

Meghwal said he would move a resolution referring the Bills to a joint committee of Parliament.

Earlier, Trinamool Congress member Kalyan Banerjee said the bills linked the tenure of state assemblies to that of the Lok Sabha, thus undermining the mandate of the people.

"The state government is not subordinate to the central government or Parliament. The bills take away the autonomy of the state assembly. It is not an election reform but just the fulfilment of one gentleman's desire and dream," he said.

DMK member TR Baalu said, "The electors have the right to elect the government for five years and this right cannot be curtailed with simultaneous elections."

The opposition members also objected to Speaker Om Birla's move to call the treasury benches to speak on the bills, leading to a heated debate.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the speaker had given a ruling to allow floor leaders of all parties to speak on the introduction of the bills.

"You alone do not represent Parliament, every political party has a representation here," Rijiju said.

BJP allies the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Shiv Sena extended "unwavering support" to the election reform measure.

TDP member and Union minister Chandra Shekhar Pemmasani said "one nation, one election" would reduce expenditure on polls and enhance logistical efficiency.

Shiv Sena member Shrikant Shinde hit out at the opposition, saying they were allergic to reforms.

The DMK's Baalu and NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) member Supriya Sule favoured referring the bills to a parliamentary committee, if they could not be withdrawn.

"This Bill is aimed at maximising political gain and convenience. This Bill will finish off regional parties," All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi said.

### 'ONOE' will galvanise...

proposal becomes fully functional in 2029-2030, or say at a later date, as it might take 5-10 years to have simultaneous polls, voters won't have to head to polling stations every year for one poll or another. This will also lead to economic growth as the GDP growth of the country will rise by 1.5 per cent from 7.23 per cent at present," he said.

"Think about that if 1.5 points are added to the existing GDP it won't take long to reach the 10 per cent (GDP) figure. Then our country will be among the top 3-4 economic superpowers in the world," he said.

Kovind claimed that the 'one nation one poll' will galvanise the election process.

"If candidates have to ask for votes from people every year, they will have to reply why this development promise has not been implemented. Yearly elections make people averse to going to booths at times," he said.

He said the 18,000-page report of the committee is in public domain and will streamline economic governance.

"If you sit in one place, you can see it with the click of a mouse or mobile and there is no need to visit different libraries. A voluminous compilation of different parliamentary committee reports have been put in one place," he said recalling his stint as chairman of the high-powered committee on 'one nation one poll' proposal when he met delegations of different parties and Election Commission officials and others.

Turning to the gathering of 'poor, Dalits and backward castes', Kovind said, "They are holding the country. They represent the beautiful mosaic of culture and play a dominant role in projecting the dignity of Bharat by preserving their indigenous culture."

"We need to make them feel as stakeholders in nation-building. We need to have them inside this auditorium to listen to the proceedings and our speeches and not just present their cultural programmes in the open space before the building as the dignitaries enter," he said.

When this inclusivity becomes a reality, the nation will truly progress. It is already progressing in that direction with proposals like 'one nation one poll', Kovind said.

He called upon the members of tribal, backward-class communities to aim high and never back out from their resolve for better education.

"Education should always be your goal. Education can take you to maximum heights," the former President said.

Citing his own life's journey, Kovind said, "I was from a poor family who had to walk barefoot a distance of six km even during summer to attend classes in my boyhood days."

"We had to scamper from one part of room to another during heavy rains as the roof was leaking. But these things didn't deter me. I was resolute in my mission to pursue studies and did not abandon the path ever," he recalled.

"If I can become the President of the country, why can't you do better? You can become the President of the world one day," Kovind said.

Kovind, who talked about global warming and climate change in his speech, advocated shunning chemical fertilisers which may trigger crop production by multiple notches but spoil the soil.

He laid stress on manure-based natural farming in his speech at the programme of the tribal organisation 'Krishi Bikash Shilpa Kendra'.

He said certain fertiliser lobbies are at work to promote chemical use but advised organisation members as well as the farming community to opt for natural farming.

### BJP inquiring into...

were engaged with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's public event in Rajasthan, the sources said. Four to five MPs from BJP allies were also not present during the voting, they said, adding that this is also being looked into.

Two bills that lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections were introduced in the Lok Sabha after a fiery 90-minute debate on Tuesday.

The opposition alleged that the move was "dictatorial" and impinged on states' powers even as Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal refuted such concerns.

The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Meghwal after a division of votes. As many as 269 members voted in favour of the Bill and 198 against it.

### Making J&K sportiest...

place in J&K. I am confident they will work with dedication to earn glory for the country through their performances and continue to inspire the young generation," he said.

Remembering Prof. Chaman Lal Gupta, the Lieutenant Governor said the former Union Minister devoted his life for the welfare of the people of Jammu Kashmir. "The rapid development J&K UT has witnessed in the last few years is our tribute to him," the Lieutenant Governor said.

"Sports is a powerful tool for positive change and has always served as a bridge to connect people of different cultures. Today, J&K is emerging as a hub of national and international sporting events. Our renewed thrust on state-of-the-art sports infrastructure and allied facilities and nurturing young talent have revolutionised the sports sector of J&K," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor reiterated the commitment of the government, under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to provide the platform and necessary handholding to the budding sportspersons of J&K.

He highlighted that the vibrant sports ecosystem is fulfilling the aspirations of the youth of Jammu Kashmir.

The new sports policy has kindled brighter hope for our talented sportspersons.

Last year, we witnessed a record 53 lakh participation from children and youth of the UT in various sports disciplines, besides 30,000 players from Jammu Kashmir participated in national and zonal tournaments and 46 players represented India in international tournaments, he further added.

The Lieutenant Governor also commended the important contribution of Sports Department, Sports Council and all the stakeholders in the promotion of sports in J&K.

Arun Gupta, President, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jammu; Anil Gupta, President, J&K Amateur Kabaddi Association; members of Vansh Sabre Sports Foundation, prominent sports personalities and representatives of various sports associations were present.

Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner Secretary, General Administration Department; Sarnad Hafeez, Secretary, Youth Services and Sports Department; Nuzhat Gul, Secretary, J&K Sports Council and senior officials were also present on the occasion.

### 'NEET in online...

rounds of talks with the Health Ministry led by Union Minister JP Nadda. Currently, NEET-UG is conducted offline - in pen and paper mode - wherein students have to solve multiple choice questions on an OMR sheet.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) is the largest entrance exam in the country in terms of number of candidates appearing for the test. In 2024, a record over 24 lakh candidates took the exam.

"The administrative ministry of NEET is Health Ministry and hence we are in talks with them about whether NEET should be conducted in pen and paper mode or online mode. We have had two rounds of talks with Health Ministry led by JP Nadda. Whatever option will be considered best suited for conducting the exam, NTA is ready to undertake the exercise," Pradhan told reporters.

The Minister said a decision in this regard is expected soon and the reforms will be implemented in the 2025 edition of the exam.

### ACB arrests SG...

and also compelled complainant to pay Rs 1500 through bank account to some unknown person on pretext of fee for NOC beside made him install various instruments at proposed Timber depot through selected shopkeeper at higher price.

As the complainant was not interested in payment of bribe he accordingly approached ACB with his complaint and demanded legal action against concerned dealing hand Nisar Ahmad Wani of Fire Deptt Sopore for demanding bribe for NOC issuance purpose.

On receipt of the complaint a discreet verification was conducted by ACB PS Baramulla. The discreet verification prima facie discloses commission of offence punishable under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018) on the part of Nisar Ahmad Wani, Clerk in Fire & Emergency Services Sopore District Baramulla. Accordingly on recommendations of the verifying officer a case FIR No 16/2024 Under Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018) was registered against Nisar Ahmad Wani, Clerk in Fire & Emergency Services Sopore District Baramulla and the investigation of case was initiated.

During investigation, a trap team headed by Dy.SP rank officer was constituted. The team laid a successful trap and accused clerk Nisar Ahmad Wani of Fire service department Sopore was caught red-handed while demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 4000 from complainant at Fire service office Sopore in lieu of NOC and also gave further rebate of Rs 500 during exchange of bribe.

Accordingly, after completing all legal formalities the accused clerk was arrested on the spot. The bribe money was also recovered from his possession in the presence of independent witnesses. Further investigation of the instant case is going on.

General public is requested to report demand of bribe by any public servant on ACB J&K helpline No 9419678060 or on e-mail id directorvigilance@jk.gov.in.

### CM inaugurates MRI...

affordable and quality healthcare. "The hospital operates like a private institution in terms of its services but ensures affordability, charging even lower than government hospitals," Omar Abdullah said.

Reflecting on the hospital's journey, the Chief Minister acknowledged its humble beginnings as a single-room dispensary and praised its evolution into a reputable healthcare institution. "This transformation is truly remarkable and worthy of admiration," he added.

The Chief Minister also lauded the hospital's neo-natal section, noting with satisfaction that the recovery rate for infants in the ICU stands at an impressive 100 percent.

"This achievement is reassuring not only for the hospital but also for the parents whose children are being treated here," he said.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister took a round of the hospital, inspecting various sections, and interacted with faculty members and patients alike to understand their experiences and concerns.

Emphasizing the importance of humanitarian service, Omar Abdullah remarked, "To serve God, we must serve humanity."

The Chief Minister reiterated his government's support for the hospital, promising assistance from his administration and cabinet colleagues to further strengthen its healthcare initiatives.

### One Nation One...

to bring about unprecedented efficiency and coherence in our electoral system. By aligning the election schedules of the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, we will significantly reduce the frequency of elections, thereby minimizing the disruption to governance and public life."

Chugh quoted the Union Law Minister's reference to Article 327, which empowers Parliament to make provisions concerning elections to legislatures. Notably, Article 327 of the Indian Constitution grants Parliament the authority to make provisions concerning elections to both the Houses of Parliament and the Legislatures of States. This Article allows Parliament to establish the necessary laws for the conduct of elections, including the preparation of electoral rolls, the delimitation of constituencies, and all other matters necessary for ensuring free and fair elections. Article 327 essentially provides the framework within which the Indian electoral process operates, ensuring that elections are conducted in an organized and consistent manner across the country.

Chugh further noted that this bill is not just a procedural change; it is a monumental step forward in the history of the Indian Constitution. "It reflects our dedication to good governance and the progress of our nation. The 'One Nation, One Election' reform will enhance the stability of our political environment, allowing for more consistent and focused governance. It will also lead to substantial savings in terms of time, resources, and public expenditure, which can be redirected towards developmental activities," he added.

Chugh described ONOE as Prime Minister's visionary step in enhancing citizen-centric governance and this reform is the best example of Narendra Modi's unwavering commitment to ensuring good governance in our country. This reform is set to make a significant impact on the lives of millions of Indians, he added.

Chugh commended the visionary ONOE reform, saying: "Together with the efforts of the Modi government, we can ensure that our democratic processes are more streamlined, efficient, and conducive to the overall growth and prosperity of our great nation".

### NTA will be...

year," Pradhan told reporters. He clarified that the Common University Entrance Test - Undergraduate (CUET-UG) would continue to be held once a year.

The high-level panel headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief R Radhakrishnan noted that the NTA outstretched itself to accommodate diverse requests from many test indenting agencies for handling end-to-end operations of tests.

"The NTA should primarily conduct entrance examinations. Enhancing its scope for other examinations may be considered after the capacity of the NTA is augmented," the panel said in its report.

Suggesting restructuring of the NTA, the committee recommended 10 specific verticals, headed at the director level. The verticals will be related to technology, products and operations, test security and surveillance.

"The NTA needs to be manned with internal domain-specific human resources and a leadership team with domain expertise, proven experience and skill sets who should take charge of the testing process in the future," it said.

The committee also noted that the NTA should have an "empowered and accountable" governing body with three designated sub-committees to oversee test audit, ethics and transparency; nomination and staff conditions; and stakeholder relationships.

The panel recommended the introduction of a DIGI-EXAM system on the lines of DIGI-YATRA to ensure that only the candidate writing the exam joined the intended programme.

"Essentially, multi-stage authentication of the candidate's identity is envisaged which makes use of Aadhar and biometrics and AI-based data analytics," it said.

Laying down a roadmap for testing centres, the panel suggested that it was possi-

ble to integrate such testing centres from Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, reputable universities and institutes to establish a nationwide network of about 400-500 testing centres within a time frame of a year or so, which would provide about 2-2.5 lakh testing capacity for conducting CBT in one session nationwide.

"Eventually, one could envisage that every district headquarter should have a standardised and well-equipped CBT testing centre," it said.

In the line of fire over alleged irregularities in NEET-UG and PhD entrance NET, the Centre in July set up the panel to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations by the NTA.

While NEET-UG was under the scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, the UGC-NET (University Grants Commission - National Eligibility Test) was cancelled as the ministry received input that its integrity had been compromised. Both matters are being investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

### NCERT textbooks to...

reporters. "Since the volume of printing of books is going to be high, the prices of textbooks for some classes will be reduced. However, the price will not be increased for any class to ensure there is no financial burden on parents," he added.

The minister informed that the process of updating textbooks, according to the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF), was underway.

"The process is on and textbooks for classes 9-12 will be ready by the 2026-27 academic session," he said.

"New textbooks have been made available for seven out of 15 grades, with textbooks coming out for four more grades in the next academic year. Textbooks for arts, physical education, and wellbeing (classes 3-8) and vocational education (classes 6-8) are being developed. Textbooks are being prepared in all scheduled Indian languages and made accessible via online platforms," the minister said.

### BJP likely to...

national president. A senior leader said the tenure of nearly 60 per cent of the BJP's state unit presidents is over, and their replacements are likely to be in place by the middle of the next month.

The BJP's constitution stipulates that organisational polls should be completed in at least half of its state units before the process to elect the national president is started.

"We expect that a new BJP president will assume the charge by the end of February," the functionary said.

Asked whether the new BJP president may be someone who is currently serving as a Union minister, he said it could be either from the government or from the organisation, adding that nothing has been finalised yet.

Incidentally, Nadda, also the Union health minister, had taken over as the party's national president in February 2020.

Though the tenure of a president is of three years, he was given an extension in view of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in which the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance returned to power for a their straight term under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

### Shantmanu posted to...

Kashmir segment of the AGMUT cadre," read an order issued by Rakesh Kumar Singh Under Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

As per order, Shantmanu has joined the cadre on December 12, 2024, and the period from the date of his joining the cadre to the date of issue of this order shall be treated as 'Awaiting Posting.'

"The order issued with the approval of the Competent Authority," it added.

### Udhampur-Baramulla Rail link ready, operations likely to start by January: Railway official

■ STATE TIMES NEWS ANANTNAG: Kashmir is likely to be connected to the rest of the country through rail next month as the work on the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) has been completed, a senior Railway official said here on Tuesday.

The Northern Railway General Manager Ashok Verma told reporters here that the work on the final tunnel located in the Reasi area will be completed within a week.

"The project will be completed very soon. We are hopeful of the connectivity in January. Then all trains including Vande Bharat will run and a timetable will be framed for all the trains. We hope to start this project in January," Verma said.

He said the completion of the project would make a huge difference and "there will be a total change in the situation in Kashmir".

Verma said the work on the tunnel at Reasi, which was previously called as T-1 but is now known as T-33, is in its final stages and would be completed within a week.

"Track-laying work has been completed, and electrical work is currently underway. This is expected to be finished within a week. The CRS inspection will also be conducted in the next 15 days, after which the trains will run," he added.

GM Verma visited several railway stations across the Valley to review operations and assess the ongoing infrastructure development.

The track work for the 3.2-km T-33, located at the foothills of Vaishno Devi and connecting Katra to Reasi, was completed last week " leading to the completion of the final 17-km stretch between Katra and Reasi which would allow the first direct train operation from Kashmir to Delhi.

### Imran Goni meets Minister Javed Dar, discusses drainage issues in Sujwan Channi

■ STATE TIMES NEWS JAMMU: National Conference senior leader Imran Goni met Jammu and Kashmir Minister Javed Dar on Tuesday at the Civil Secretariat in Jammu.

Imran Goni was accompanied by Saqib Showket Ganie, Para Legal Member, Jammu Province, National Conference. During the meeting, Imran Goni highlighted the long-standing drainage issues in the Sujwan Channi area of Jammu, emphasizing the hardships faced by local residents due to waterlogging and poor infrastructure. He urged the minister to take swift action to resolve the problem and improve civic amenities in the region. Saqib Showket Ganie, who was present during the meeting, also supported the appeal and stressed the importance of addressing the grievances of the residents on a priority basis. In response, Minister Javed Dar assured the delegation that the matter would be reviewed promptly and necessary steps would be taken to address the drainage issue.



### Ajay Singh elected President of All Auto Spare & Repairs Association Jammu

■ STATE TIMES NEWS JAMMU: The election of ASSRA Jammu was held at Baby Caterers Rehari Colony Jammu for the post of president and General Secretary.

Two members, Bishamber Dass and Ajay Singh Chandel were contested for the post of president. After the counting of the votes, Ajay got 146 and Bishamber Dass got 100 votes; thus, Ajay Singh won with the margin of 46 votes. For the post of General Secretary, Kamal Jeet Singh, Pankaj Malhotra and Anil Bhan were contested against each other. Pankaj had got 142, Kamal had got 101 and Bhan got 05 votes. Hence, Pankaj won the post of General Secretary with the margin of 41 votes from Kamal Jeet. Newly elected President, Ajay Singh Chandel and General Secretary, Pankaj Malhotra thanked all the ASSRA members for their presence and peaceful voting process. The vote of thanks was presented by P. S. Mann, Chairman of the Association. And the programme was culminated with Get-to-gather Lunch of 350 persons.



Two JKAS officers transferred

■ STATE TIMES NEWS JAMMU: The government on Tuesday transferred two JKAS officers.

As per order issued by Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner/Secretary, General Administration Department (GAD), Joginder Singh Rai, JKAS, awaiting orders of adjustment in the GAD, has been posted as Special Secretary with Deputy Chief Minister and Abdul Khabir, JKAS, Special Assistant with Deputy Chief Minister, has been transferred and posted as Deputy Secretary, Tribal Affairs Department.