

## !! Continuations from Page 1 !! UPA Govt resorted...

any country and people have to work with the "nation first" approach, he said, adding that it is this attitude which has powered India's rise.

He cited the huge growth in India's exports, forex reserves and other development indicators to make his point.

### CBI files two...

another charge sheet was filed under similar sections against the then Kupwara ADM and four others in the case.

"Investigation disclosed the nexus of then Licensing Authority/District Magistrate with middlemen and other gun house dealers. In furtherance of the criminal conspiracy, the gun house dealers lured the defence personnel posted at faraway places in the country and got their arms licence issued from district Kupwara in an illegal manner; despite those personnel neither being resident of the state nor posted in the district, without police verification.

"Alleged illegal gratification per licence was sought and collected by the gun house dealers and middlemen," the spokesperson said.

The official said the issuance of a large number of arms licences in a bordering district like Kupwara in an illegal manner to ineligible persons is a matter of grave concern and poses serious threat to law and order and public safety.

### NGT issues notices...

in the Union Territory.

The report said wetlands and water bodies in the Union Territory are in decline due to both natural and man-made causes such as rising temperatures, unchecked deposition of millions of tons of sediments annually, encroachment and waste discharge.

It also claimed pollution in water bodies such as Dal, Wular, Anchar and Manasbal lakes and wetlands, including Haigam Rakh in the Jhelum Valley, Hokersar near Srinagar and Shalbug in the central district of Ganderbal.

A bench of National Green Tribunal Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Expert Member A Senthil Vel said, "The news item reflects the need for effective management of wetlands and water bodies and swift and tangible measures to ensure their sustainability."

It also raised a "substantial issue" related to compliance with the environmental norms and implementation of the provisions of the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules and the Environment (Protection) Act.

In an order passed last week, the tribunal impleaded as parties several authorities, including member secretaries of the Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee and the Central Pollution Control Board, the secretary of the Union Territory's Forest, Ecology and Environment department and the regional officer of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

"Let notice be issued to the above respondent for filing their response at least one week before the next date of hearing (on May 22)," the tribunal said.

It noted that a report was submitted by the Jammu and Kashmir Pollution Control Committee regarding the monitoring of nine wetlands -- Hokarsar, Mirgund, Manibugh, Freshkooori, Chattlam, Kranchoo, Shalbugh, Hygam and Manasbal.

The committee, however, did not "disclose the physicochemical and biological, including bacteriological, data in terms of numeric values which may be needed for proper assessment of water bodies", the tribunal noted.

### RO 4-Udhampur...

and the Polling will be conducted from 07:00 AM to 06:00 PM.

Later, in a Press Conference addressed in this regard, the Returning Officer 4-Udhampur Parliamentary Constituency informed that there will be no nomination process on March 23rd, 24th and 25th, 2024, due to public holidays on these dates under Negotiable Instrument Act, 1881.

Dr. Minhas urged all eligible candidates and stakeholders to adhere to the election schedule and procedures outlined in the Election Notification. He also appealed for active participation and cooperation of all concerned parties to ensure a fair and transparent election.

### JKBOSE Class 12...

On the spot, the board authorities collected all the question papers from the entire J&K UT exam centres to avoid its circulation in the public domain. It reflects dereliction of board authorities clearly, he added. "If such a blunder would have been done by any official of Education Department then the concerned officials would have been placed under suspension immediately without any hearing," the ex-president of teachers association said. In 2017, some officials of Education Department were suspended in Kathua for opening wrong question paper of class 12 (English) without hearing their grievances. But the JKBOSE authorities today managed to hide the whole episode smartly in no time, the ex-president of teachers association Satish Sharma said. Here it pertinent to mention that to control the paper leakage of JK BOSE papers and its wrong distributions, the government has already engaged police department in the exam system. All bundles of question papers are deposited in concerned police stations. The concerned Exam Superintendents have to collect the question papers from concerned police stations on each day of exam. However, today it was not the matter of wrong distribution or collection. The Class 12 paper of Physical Education was set from Class 11 syllabus exposing the internal mismanagement in JKBOSE.

### India's resolve to...

Fast forward to the post-Independence era, the framers of India's Constitution inspired by rich legacy of democratic thoughts, "meticulously crafted" a document that would serve as "a guiding light" for what is today the world's largest democracy, Jaishankar said. "The Indian Constitution, a beacon of pluralism and inclusivity, stands as a testament to the confidence of the founding fathers to create a nation where every citizen regardless of the background, enjoys equal rights and opportunities. The spirit of debate, discourse and consensus building that pervaded our historical past, continues to breathe life into our democratic institutions," he added.

The external affairs minister said "as we navigate the complexities of the modern world, we draw strength from our heritage that recognise the intrinsic worth and dignity of every individual, mirroring the very essence of democracy. It is this amalgamation of ancient wisdom and contemporary values that positions India as the 'Mother of Democracy'."

"In the diverse tapestry of India, we find a compelling narrative of democracy, intertwined both with technological progress and a concerted effort to make elections more inclusive, a story that holds promise for future generations," Jaishankar said.

He said India's commitment to "conducting free, fair and inclusive elections underscores the resilience and adaptability of its democratic machinery, illustrating that even amidst complexities, the voice of every citizen matters". The minister also underlined India's achievements and space sector and measures taken for fostering a more inclusive India.

"Whether it is landing on the Moon's south pole or ensuring financial inclusion by opening 519 million bank accounts, whether it is aiding the world with Covid-19 vaccine assisting other countries with their capacity building requirements, the Indian experience serves as a testament to the transformative power of democracy, illustrating how it can empower communities, dismantle barriers, help countries emerge stronger to pave the way for a better tomorrow," he said.

## Ex-J&K minister Lal Singh rejoins Congress

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Former MP and Jammu and Kashmir minister Lal Singh rejoined the Congress in the presence of senior party leaders here on Wednesday.

He also announced the merger of his outfit, Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan Party (DSSP), with the Congress.

While Singh was the founder chairman of the DSSP, his wife Kanta Andotra (a former MLA) was its president.

Singh is a two-time former member of Parliament from Udhampur. He has been the health minister and forest minister in Jammu and Kashmir. Singh represented Basohli in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

While the Congress welcomed Singh's return to its fold, which will give a boost to the party in Udhampur; several leaders, including former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, questioned the grand old party for inducting Singh, who, he alleged, stood in support of the Kathua



rape accused in the past.

Singh (65), who hails from Kathua district, rejoined the Congress at the party headquarters here amid the speculation that he will be fielded against Union minister Jitendra Singh from Udhampur in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Udhampur goes to polls on April 19. Starting his political career as a student leader, Singh was elected as an MLA from the Basholi constituency in the 1996 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election. He was again re-elected as an MLA in 2002.

He was inducted into the Jammu and Kashmir cabinet as the minister for

health and medical education when the Congress-PDP coalition was in power in the erstwhile state. After that he was elected as an MP in the 14th Lok Sabha from Udhampur in 2004. Singh was re-elected as an MP from the same constituency in the 15th Lok Sabha in 2009.

He parted ways with the Congress in August 2014 after being denied a Lok Sabha poll ticket and formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in presence of its then president, Amit Shah, in Kathua. Singh resigned as a cabinet minister in 2018, quit the BJP and subsequently, launched the DSSP.

## Kargil observes strike amid massive rally to demand statehood, Sixth Schedule for Ladakh

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KARGIL: Shops and business establishments were closed as thousands of people marched on Wednesday in support of their demand for statehood and Ladakh's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

Separately, the hunger strike by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk in Leh to "remind" the BJP-led Centre of its promise to safeguard the Union Territory's fragile ecology and unique indigenous tribal culture entered its 15th day.

Responding to a call from the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), which announced a half-day strike and a protest rally in the town to express solidarity with Wangchuk, a large number of people took out a rally from Fatima Chowk to Hussaini Park via the main market and raised slogans demanding statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion under the Sixth Schedule.

All shops and business establishments remained

closed while those taking part in the procession held up banners, some of which read "Ladakh demands statehood and Sixth Schedule" and "Save Ladakh, Save Democracy".

The Apex Body, Leh (ABL), and the KDA -- both separate groupings of various political, social and religious organisations representing the two districts -- are jointly spearheading the agitation for various demands.

The two groups have been demanding statehood for Ladakh and its inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution over the past four years.

The provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave a special status to Jammu and Kashmir, were abrogated on August 5, 2019, and the erstwhile state was bifurcated into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

The KDA leadership addressed a huge gathering at Hussaini Park and urged

the people to prepare for a long struggle following the failure of its talks with the Centre.

They also announced the commencement of a hunger strike in Kargil from March 24.

"We want resolution of our main demands through dialogue but the central government closed the door of talks on March 4 by rejecting both our main demands -- statehood and (inclusion under) Sixth Schedule -- compelling the people to hit the roads," Asgar Ali Karbalai, the KDA's co-chairman, told reporters after the rally.

He added the people of Ladakh are determined to carry forward the struggle for their rights.

"We had several rounds of talks with the government of India but, unfortunately, they have been rude and gave cold-shoulder responses. They (government) believe that they will suppress the people of Ladakh with the might of their power but this is not going to happen as we

## Lok Sabha Election 2024: SVEEP awareness programme held for Women field functionaries in Kishtwar

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KISHTWAR: District Election Office Kishtwar, led by District Election Officer, Dr. Devansh Yadav orchestrated a significant awareness and sensitization workshop under Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) initiative for Anganwari Workers, ICDS helpers, ASHAs, and Women Self Help Group Members.

The event took place under the diligent supervision of Women Nodal Officer for Kishtwar Assembly Constituency 49, Chandan Manhas.

The primary objective of the program was to engage women field functionaries and workers in amplifying awareness regarding equitable participation of women in the electoral process, with a special emphasis on upholding ethical voting rights.

The workshop witnessed the presence of District Information Officer, Dr.

Kuldeep Kumar, CDPO Kishtwar, Ifat Ara along with Master Trainer, Riyaz Ahmed Butt, among other relevant stakeholders.

In her opening remarks, Nodal Officer, Chandan Manhas underscored the pivotal role of women citizens in the democratic process, particularly in the upcoming General Lok Sabha Elections of 2024. She emphasized the indispensable contribution of women frontline workers in galvanizing awareness among women voters to exercise their voting rights, thereby fostering maximum participation in democratic exercise.

She reiterated the commitment towards inclusion of every eligible woman of voting age in the Electoral Roll/Register, leaving no one behind. She articulated that the active participation of women in the democratic fabric is indispensable for nurturing an inclusive society that genuinely reflects the diverse needs

and perspectives of all constituents.

During the workshop, participants were tasked with identifying women who are yet to be enrolled in the Voters List/Electoral Roll and urged to liaise with respective BLOs to facilitate the registration of eligible women voters and first-time voters alike.

During the programme, Master Trainer, Riyaz Ahmed Butt provided comprehensive guidance on ethical voting practices while elucidating various amenities available at polling stations to facilitate women voters' seamless participation.

Anganwari Workers, Helpers, ASHAs, and Women SHG members were urged to fervently motivate women voters to exercise their franchise and ensure maximum participation on the polling day of the General Lok Sabha Election 2024, slated for 19th April 2024 in the district.

abode of Shiva from the attacks of industrial and mining lobbies and that is why people in Ladakh are demanding Sixth Schedule safeguards."

CPI(M) leader Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami also extended support to the people of Ladakh on the issue.

"We never desired for Ladakh to be separated from the (erstwhile) state of Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, it happened abruptly against our wishes. While a faction of society in Leh were demanding Union Territory status for Ladakh and celebrated it later, they now acknowledge the drawbacks and express a preference for constitutional guarantees for their empowerment," he said in a statement.

"We share a common history and concerns for Ladakh, resonating deeply with the aspirations of its people. It's imperative for the government to heed their voices and address their grievances promptly," he added.

## Power shutdown

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Chief Engineer (Distribution) JPDCL, Jammu has informed that the power supply to Bantalab, Radio Station, CRPF, Lakshmipuram, AYUSH Hospital, Keran, Nardni Station, Bhalwal, Kangarmorh, IRP, Hospital Bhalwal, Kote, Thather, Pooja Colony and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 22 from 9 am to 12 noon.

Similarly, the power supply to Birpur, Data Talab, Anasal and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 22 from 9 am to 1 pm.

Likewise, the power supply to Soora, Kunjwani, Apna Vihar, Bakshi Colony, Dental College, Bandu Rakh and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 22 from 2 pm to 5 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Industrial Centre

Udhampur, Battal Ballian, Airforce Station Udhampur and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 22 from 9 am to 3 pm.

Likewise, the power supply to Nanak Nagar and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 23 from 8 am to 2 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Babiliana and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 23 from 9 am to 3 pm.

Likewise, the power supply to Palli, Barwal, PHE, Industry and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 23 from 11 am to 2 pm.

Similarly, the power supply to Industries under 33/11KV Sub-Station, SICO, Birpur Complex, Bari-Brahmana, Palli, KothiMorh, Sevada and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 24 from 1 pm to 5 pm.

Likewise, the power supply

to Bhaddu, Billawar, Mandli, Lahri-Bathri, Dewal, Chanera, PHE and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 24 from 9 am to 11 am. Similarly, the power supply to Gandhi Nagar, Aquaf Market, Bahu Plaza, Shastri Nagar, Div. Com. Office and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 24 from 8 am to 2 pm. Likewise, the power supply to Gandhi Nagar Hospital, Gandhi Nagar, Police Line, Jammu University, Bahu Plaza, Power Grid, Chenab Valley, Green Belt, Div. Com Office, Apsara Road, Part of Trikuta Nagar and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 24 from 8 am to 10 am. Similarly, the power supply to CTM, Knit Fab, MD Enterprises and adjoining areas will remain affected on March 25 from 10 am to 12.50 pm.

## CEO Poonch starts enrollment drive with focus on girl child education

### ■ STATE TIMES NEWS

POONCH: In a commendable effort to bolster education in rural areas, CEO Poonch, Bishamber Dass, has started an enrollment drive with a particular emphasis on promoting girl child education. The initiative commenced from Government Middle School Dhant, nestled on the Line of Control in an extremely rural village within Kanuyian Zone in Poonch district.

Accompanied by N.M. Suri, DEPO Poonch, and Anwar Hussain, ZEO Kanuyian, CEO Bishamber Dass was greeted with warmth by the students, staff, and the School Management Committee of Middle School Dhant lead by Nazir Mughal, a Retired and veteran academician. As a



symbolic gesture of growth and sustainability, CEO Dass also planted a fruit plant in the school premises, signifying the nurturing of education in the region.

During the course of the drive, CEO extended personal visits to the homes of some students, urging parents to consider enrolling their wards in government schools. He highlighted the array of basic facilities

being provided, emphasizing the conducive learning environment offered by government educational institutions.

CEO Poonch, Bishamber Dass, emphasized the importance of collective effort for the holistic development of students. He urged parents, members of the School Management Committee, and the community at large to join

hands in ensuring the well-being and progress of the students. CEO Dass reiterated the crucial role of regular attendance in school, urging parents to prioritize their children's education by ensuring their consistent attendance.

N.M. Suri, DEPO Poonch, highlighted the significance of positive societal cooperation in maximizing the effectiveness of school staff. He emphasized that the synergy between the school and the community is essential for fostering an enriching educational environment where students can thrive.

ZEO Kanuyian, Anwar Hussain, affirmed the commitment to bolstering educational standards in remote regions, stating, "The school shall be

provided with kindergarten and other essential support to ensure the delivery of quality education in these far-flung areas." Darshan Kumar, Coordinator of the Enrollment Drive, provided insights to the visiting officers and the School Management Committee about various initiatives undertaken by the school. These initiatives include the renovation of the school infrastructure and the enhancement of facilities aimed at ensuring a holistic learning experience for the students.

Nazir Mughal, retired District Education and Planning Officer, and members of the School Management Committee expressed their appreciation for the proactive efforts of the

school staff. They commended the staff for their selfless contributions towards renovating the school infrastructure, setting a remarkable example for others in the community. Their dedication serves as a beacon of inspiration, exemplifying the spirit of collective responsibility towards educational advancement. During the event, the school staff members, including Manju Sharma, incharge of the school, Shaheen Akhter, Sapna Sharma, Jagmeet Kour, and Anil Sharma (PET), expressed their strong dedication to offering high-quality education. They promised to do everything possible to ensure that every student receives excellent education and support.