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LG vows justice...

provided these families with support, courage, and renewed self-belief.

"Our campaign to deliver justice to terror victims' families has restored their tomorrow. We have succeeded in dispelling the shadow of injustice and ushering a new dawn of justice at doorsteps of terror victims' families. To date, around 400 NoKs have received employment and will continue relentlessly until we reach the very last family still awaiting justice," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that it is not merely an administrative exercise of signing papers, shuffling files, or filling posts but a profound commitment to justice.

"My aim throughout this process is to ensure that no terror-affected family slipped into the cracks of neglect, fading from public and official gaze. I view these appointment letters as true justice- and today's event stands as its living testament," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor said that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, important initiatives were taken over the past five to six years with a singular, overarching goal- to forge a Jammu Kashmir undefined by the pains of its past, but brimming with self-confidence.

"In August 2020, I had set this vision- to develop a Jammu Kashmir that measures its strength by the heights of its dreams, and to build a system rooted in social justice, dignity, and equal opportunity," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor directed the Principal Secretary Home to conduct a comprehensive review of the cases pertaining to property encroachment of victims of terrorism.

"I have repeatedly affirmed that lands or homes forcibly seized from terror-affected families will be liberated and returned, and cases yet to undergo investigation will receive impartial, transparent probes," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor highlighted that the administration is committed to the rehabilitation of those left scarred by terror.

"There are many victims of terrorism who have lost their eyesight or are living with severe disabilities. We will chalk out a robust framework for their rehabilitation. The administration has also outlined a timeline for providing essential housing and other support to the victims of terrorism," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor called upon people to preserve the unity and foil the efforts of separatist elements.

"Adhering to the Prime Minister's mantra of 'Zero Tolerance towards Terrorism', the administration, Police and Security forces are taking decisive action to dismantle terror networks.

We must remain vigilant against divisive elements attempting to divide us along sectarian lines. We are Indians; our collective duty is the peace and progress of our nation.

Officials and citizens must also work together to strengthen faith in our government institutions," the Lieutenant Governor further said.

Principal Secretary Home, Chandraker Bharti; Principal Secretary to Lieutenant Governor, Dr Mandeep K. Bhandari; Commissioner Secretary, General Administration



Department, M Raju; IGP Kashmir, VK Birdi; Deputy Commissioner Srinagar, Akshay Labroo; Dr GV Sundeep Chakravathy, SSP Srinagar; Chairman, Save Youth Save Future Foundation, Wajahat Farooq Bhat and other members of the Foundation, senior officials, members of various social organisations and family members of victims of terrorism were present.

Adequate fuel stock...

initiatives have contributed to greater employment opportunities and faster development in the region. The Minister outlined several welfare initiatives benefiting people in J&K. He informed that as of March 2026, 24,37,000 bank accounts have been opened in the Union Territory under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, with a fund allocation of 1754.25 crore rupees released from 2014-26, enabling greater financial inclusion.

In addition, he said 12,79,000 gas connections have been allotted in under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana to improve access to clean cooking fuel. He also informed that 25,09,000 loans, with an allocation of Rs 54267.91 have been provided to beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana from 2015-26. Besides, 35000 houses costing Rs 586 crore have been constructed in J&K under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) from 2016-26 to provide housing for all. Under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, Rs 3638 crore have been provided from 2018-26, benefiting 19,73,000 people.

The Minister also informed that Rs 94 lakh have been released for 13 old age homes in Jammu and Kashmir from 2023-25.

Highlighting India's economic progress, Athawale stated that the country has moved from being the 10th largest economy to the 4th largest in the world, and is expected to soon become the third largest economy. He noted that initiatives aimed at strengthening domestic manufacturing, including the Make in India initiative, and continued support for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have contributed to increased production and exports.

Athawale also stated that the government will initiate a caste-based census to better understand the socio-economic conditions of different communities.

He noted that the Scheduled Caste population constitutes approximately 16.6 per cent of the country's population.

The Minister highlighted that persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) in Jammu and Kashmir are now receiving reservation benefits following the abrogation of Article 370, thereby ensuring greater access to opportunities and social justice.

Athawale reiterated the Government's commitment to inclusive development, social justice and economic progress, while ensuring that the benefits of government initiatives reach all sections of society.

Responding to queries regarding global developments, Athawale stated that fuel supply could be impacted due to the ongoing conflict involving US-Israel and Iran. However, he assured that the government has adequate fuel stock available, and is taking necessary steps to ensure uninterrupted supply.

"NDA confident of..."

Assam and Puducherry and is confident of sweeping the forthcoming elections in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

In West Bengal, the Union minister acknowledged the political strength of chief minister Mamata Banerjee, noting her role in ending decades of Left rule and her earlier association with the NDA government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

However, he alleged that the current situation in the state reflects rising law-and-order concerns, including crimes against women and political violence, claiming that the state government has not been fully effective in controlling the situation.

In Tamil Nadu, he criticized the ruling DMK government, alleging that development work over the past five years has not met expectations and that incidents of atrocities against Dalits have increased.

He said factions of ALADMK, BJP, and several smaller parties are working together, raising the possibility of a change in power in the state.

In Kerala, the minister said the BJP is receiving an encouraging response from voters, particularly in urban areas such as Thiruvananthapuram where the BJP got the post of Mayor, he said.

"What exactly will happen is not certain, but we believe that out of five, our government will definitely come in four places. And in Kerala also, we are continuing our efforts to bring an NDA government," the president of Republican Party of India (Athawale) said.

On foreign policy, the minister said the dialogue with Pakistan can begin only after an end to cross-border terrorism.

Referring to earlier efforts during the tenure of former prime minister Vajpayee and Pakistan's then leader Pervez Musharraf, he said India has consistently maintained that talks can move forward only if Pakistan stops supporting terrorist activities.

"Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India while issues related to Pakistan-occupied territory remain a matter of dispute. But good relations are possible if terrorism ends," he said.

He rejected allegations by some Congress leaders that Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power by making false claims, saying he presented facts before the public regarding lack of development and rising corruption during the UPA period.

EC announces polls...

will be three polling days in a 20-day period in these elections, which will see the BJP trying to retain power in Assam, while it will be pitted against ruling parties in West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Puducherry is governed by NDA partner All India N R Congress.

A total of 17.4 crore voters are eligible to vote in the elections to five assemblies with 824 constituencies, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said at a press conference here.

"Voting for all seats in Assam will be held on April 9. Voting in West Bengal will take place in two phases on April 23 and April 29.

"The voting for all seats in Kerala and Puducherry will take place on April 9, while all Tamil Nadu seats will go to polls on April 23," said Kumar, who was flanked by the two Election Commissioners -- Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi.

The model code of conduct has come into effect immediately with the announcement of the poll schedule.

Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala are currently ruled by opposition DMK, Trinamool Congress and Left Front, respectively.

There are 234 assembly seats in Tamil Nadu where DMK leader M K Stalin has been the chief minister since 2021.

West Bengal has a total of 294 assembly seats with TMC leader Mamata Banerjee in power since 2011.

Kerala has 140 seats and Left leader Pinarayi Vijayan has been the chief minister since 2016, leading the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government.

In Assam, there are 126 assembly seats, and the BJP has been in power in the Northeastern state since 2016. Himanta Biswa Sarma has been the chief minister since 2021.

Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy has been in power since 2021. The UT has a total of 30 seats where polling will take place.

CEC Kumar said the elections must be free of violence or inducement and warned that the EC will take strong action against any violation.

Asked about the announcement made by the West Bengal chief minister, barely minutes ahead of the scheduled announcement of the assembly polls, about the clearance of DA arrears of its employees and a hike in honorarium of purohiths and muezins, Kumar said whatever has happened has happened but the model code of conduct comes into effect immediately and no such announcements could be made henceforth.

For Assam, Kerala and Puducherry, the notification for the elections will be issued on March 16, and the last date for filing nominations is March 23. Scrutiny of nominations will take place on March 24 and the last date for the withdrawal of candidatures is March 26.

For Tamil Nadu, the notification for the polls will be issued on March 30 and the last date for filing nominations is April 6. The date for the scrutiny of nominations is April 7 and the last date for the withdrawal of candidatures is April 9.

In the first phase elections in West Bengal, notifications will be issued on March 30, while for the second phase on April 2. The last date for filing nominations for the first phase is April 6 and for the second phase is April 9.

The scrutiny of nominations for the first phase elections in West Bengal will take place on April 7 and for the second phase on April 10. The last date for the withdrawal of candidatures for the first phase is April 9 and for the second phase is April 13.

In West Bengal, polling will be held in 152 assembly constituencies in the first phase and in 142 seats in the second phase.

CEC Kumar said presiding officers at all polling booths will upload voter turnout data every two hours and immediately after voting ends.

"The Election Commission will ensure greater transparency in the counting of votes and announcement of results. Election Commission has asked all enforcement agencies to ensure elections are impartial and violence-free," he said.

Opposition parties had raised questions on the voter turnout data after the last few assembly elections.

The term of the assembly will come to an end in West Bengal on May 7, in Tamil Nadu on May 10, in Assam on May 20, in Kerala on May 23, and in Puducherry on June 15.

There are 6.4 crore voters in West Bengal, 5.67 crore in Tamil Nadu, 2.7 crore in Kerala, 2.5 crore in Assam and 9.44 lakh in Puducherry.

There will be 2,18,807 polling stations in all four states and one UT -- of which 31,486 booths are in Assam, 30,471 in Kerala, 75,032 in Tamil Nadu, 80,719 in West Bengal and 1,099 in Puducherry.

A total of 25 lakh election officials will be deployed, out of which 15 lakh are polling personnel, 8.5 lakh security personnel, 49,000 micro observers for polling, 1,444 observers, 40,000 counting officials, 21,000 sector officers and 15,000 micro observers for counting.

Fresh snowfall in higher reaches of Kashmir

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Few areas in the higher reaches of Kashmir, including the Gulmarg tourist resort, received fresh snowfall, while the plains were lashed by rains on Sunday, officials said. The upper reaches of Gulmarg, including Apharwat and Kongdoori bowls, received snowfall, which continued till last reports came in. Pir Ki Gali, along the Mughal Road in Shopian district of south Kashmir, and Sonamarg Zojilla axis also received fresh snowfall.

The snowfall on the Zojilla Pass forced the closure of the Srinagar-Leh national highway, the officials added.

The plains of the valley, including Srinagar, were lashed by rains which were going on till last reports, the officials said. The wet weather has brought down the day temperature across the valley. The Meteorological Department has forecast erratic weather till March 20.

It said intermittent light to moderate rain, or snow in the higher reaches was likely till Monday morning.

There is a possibility of a



brief spell of light rain or snow, in the higher reaches, at isolated places on Tuesday.

From March 18-20, the weather will remain generally cloudy with a possibility of intermittent light to moderate rain or snow at many places.

The MeT Office said another wet spells is likely on March 24-25, with light rain, or snow in the higher reaches, at scattered places.

It said there is a possibility of thunder or gusty winds, about 40-50 kmph, at a few places on Sunday and Monday.

Food Safety Department conducts intensive market inspection

SHOPIAN: In anticipation of the auspicious festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, the Food Safety Department Shopian carried out a comprehensive market inspection across the localities of Killora, Krawora, and Traperpora within the jurisdiction of Shopian District today.

The inspection drive was undertaken with the primary objective of ensuring strict adherence to food safety standards and safeguarding public health during the heightened commercial activity associated with the upcoming festive celebrations. During the inspection, special focus was laid on establishments dealing with commonly consumed food items, including bread makers, mutton shops, bakery units, and vegetable vendors.

The inspection team conducted a thorough scrutiny of food handling practices, storage conditions, and the quality of food items being offered for sale. During the course of the inspection, certain expired snack items were found in the possession of some Food Business Operators (FBOs).

DC Poonch reviews progress of work on Eklavya Model Residential School Behra Mendhar

STATE TIMES NEWS

POONCH: Deputy Commissioner Poonch, Ashok Kumar Sharma, chaired a meeting to review the progress of work on Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) being constructed at an estimated cost of ₹1594.99 lakh at Behra Mendhar.

The meeting was attended by SDM Mendhar, Executive Engineer PWD Mendhar, Executive Engineer PWD Poonch, Chief Planning Officer, Principal EMRS Behra Mendhar, AEE PWD Mendhar and the concerned Junior Engineer (JE).

During the meeting, the progress of various components of the project was reviewed in detail. It was informed that out of 15 components of the building project, 8 components have been completed and handed over, while work on the remaining 7 components is in progress.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the PWD authorities to expedite the pace of work and ensure completion of the remaining components at the earliest. He further instructed the Principal EMRS and Executive Engineer PWD to submit a detailed estimate of the remaining works of the project.



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LG Ladakh inspects heritage areas; calls for infra upgrade

STATE TIMES NEWS

LEH: Ladakh Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday inspected the Leh main market and old town heritage areas, directing officials to prepare a comprehensive plan to address sanitation and infrastructure issues and ensure a clean, organised and tourist-friendly urban environment.

Accompanied by senior officers, including Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra and DGP Ladakh Mukesh Singh, Saxena, who took over on March 13, visited the main market and the old town heritage areas Chuteyrantak and the Central Asian Museum to review civic infrastructure, cleanliness and heritage conservation, an official spokesman said.

The L-G walked the streets and by-lanes around the main market and Old Town and issued instructions for the maintenance and upkeep of public places



and other amenities, the spokesman said, adding that Saxena also interacted with several locals and heard their grievances.

He directed officials to prepare a comprehensive plan within one month to address sanitation, infrastructure improvement and urban management issues in Leh town to ensure a clean, organised and tourist-friendly urban environment.

During his visit to Leh Main Market, the L-G emphasised the need to maintain a uniform design and signage system in the market area to enhance its aesthetic appeal.

Saxena emphasised the need to promote traditional architectural styles while constructing houses, particularly in the Leh Old Town area, to preserve the region's unique cultural identity.

Highlighting the problem posed by dangling and exposed electrical wires, which create an unsightly appearance and pose safety risks, especially for children, Saxena directed that cables be laid underground through ducts along with sewage pipelines.

He also instructed that exposed live wires be properly covered to prevent accidents. He directed that encroachments along pavements and pathways be removed while undertaking tile-laying and pavement work.

Emphasising the need for long-term urban planning, Saxena called for the preparation of a comprehensive plan for sewage treatment to address current issues and accommodate future population growth over the next decade.

He also stressed the need for proper street lighting and well-planned drainage systems to improve public convenience.

The L-G also highlighted the need to develop adequate parking spaces in the town and called for public awareness initiatives to encourage people to follow traffic regulations and park their vehicles in designated areas to prevent congestion.

4 NC MLAs, others meet LG



SRINAGAR: Tanvir Sadiq, Member of Legislative Assembly from Zadibal called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday.

He was accompanied by Ali Mohammad Dar, Member of Legislative Assembly, Chadoora; Javaid Riyaz Bedar, Member of Legislative Assembly, Pattan and Hilal Akbar Lone, Member of Legislative Assembly, Sonawari.

SRINAGAR: Nasir Aslam Wani, Advisor to the Chief Minister called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Sunday.

SRINAGAR: A delegation of All Minority Employees Association Kashmir, led by its President Sanjay Koul, called on Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, on Sunday.

MGAC Brantal schedules annual yagya for Apr 29-30

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Maha Ganesh Asthapan Committee (MGAC), Brantal, Sirru, Pattan, Baramulla, convened a meeting to plan the solemnization of its annual yagya and address vital issues, including the reconstruction of the temple and sarai at the Asthapan premises in the Valley.

In a landmark decision, members resolved to host the grand yagya on April 29-30 (Ganesh Chaturdashi) at Durga Mandir, Durga Nagar, Jammu, uniting the community in devotion and renewal. To ensure seamless execution, the committee unanimously approved a fundraising drive, committing Rs 2,000 per family toward the event's organization. Volunteers are advised to assemble at Durga Mandir premises on April 29, 2026, at 9:00 AM. The presence of all families, including the daughters of Sirru, is mandatory. Members have also resolved to conduct a Satsang starting at 4:00 p.m. on the same day. Lunch and dinner will be provided at the venue itself. Attendees at the meeting included PL Pandita, Rattan Lal Dhar, Hriday Nath Bhat, Bhushan Lal Koul, Sohan Lal Bhat, Kiran Ji Koul, Dr. Ravinder Pandita, Maharaj Krishan Pandita, and Rajesh Dhar. Rajinder Koul and Pawan Pandita participated via video conference.

