

RO Srinagar PC reviews preparations in all 18 assembly segments

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Returning Officer (RO) 02-Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency (PC), Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat on Sunday chaired a meeting of all Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), Deputy District Election Officers (Dy. DEOs), Nodal Officers for Postal Ballot, EDC and ETPBS for the upcoming Parliamentary Elections-2024 in the 2-Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency comprising 18 Assembly segments of Ganderbal, Srinagar, Budgam (Partly) and Pulwama and Shopian (Partly) Districts.

The meeting was held at the Conference Hall of the DC Office Complex Srinagar to review the preparations made and arrangements put in place for conduct of the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections-2024 in 02-Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency.

At the outset, the RO took a firsthand appraisal from all the AROs, Dy. DEOs and designated Nodal Officers with regard to tasks assigned to them for smooth conduct of Lok Sabha Elections-2024 in the Constituency.

The RO reviewed the



Returning Officer Srinagar PC, Dr. Bilal Mohi-Ud-Din Bhat chairing a meeting.

preparations being made by all concerned Officers related to key aspects of the Lok Sabha Elections-2024 including AMF/ arrangements at Polling Stations, Transportation of Polling Staff/ Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Postal Ballot and Voting by Polling Staff/ EDC, Postal Voting Centre (PVC), implementation of Model Code of Conduct (MCC), Material Management, Training programmes, Welfare measures, SVEEP and other related activities aimed at ensuring smooth, transparent and peaceful General Elections in 02-Srinagar Constituency.

The RO directed all the Officers to work with due diligence and dedication to ensure smooth, free and fair

elections.

He expressed confidence in the collective resolve and capability of all the Officers to fulfil their roles effectively and efficiently, thereby contributing to the successful conduct of the Lok Sabha Elections-2024 in 02-Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency.

He stressed all the Officers to work with a proactive approach and execute allotted tasks on ground and maintain cooperation and coordination with the line departments. He further asked them to go through comprehensive ECI guidelines regarding duties and responsibilities during the election period.

On the occasion, Dr. Bilal informed that as many as 1748091 registered elec-

torates are exercising their franchise in the upcoming Lok Sabha Elections-2024 in Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency including 875865 male 872165 female and about 61 Transgenders.

The RO added that as many as 15431 voters of over 85 years, 11679 PWDs, 56915 Migrants and 960 Service Voters are exercising their franchise in the Parliamentary Constituency on May 13, 2024 for which 2503 Electronic voting Machines (EVMs) have been kept in ready state.

The RO also informed that Model Polling Stations have also been setup at various locations across the Parliamentary Constituency including 36 Mobile Polling Stations, 20 Pink Polling Stations, 18 PWDs Polling

Stations, 18 Green Polling Stations and 18 Youth Polling Stations have been established in the Constituency to facilitate the voters on the Poll day and welcome them to experience a festive-like environment.

He added that dedicated facilities for voters including clean drinking water and ramps etc are also meticulously arranged to enhance the voting experience.

Earlier, the RO was briefed by all the AROs and designated Nodal Officers about the preparations made so far for the conduct of upcoming Lok Sabha Elections-2024.

The RO also emphasized encouragement of first-time voters so that they exercise their democratic right and make the poll process more participative.

He said 02-Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency has nearly 2.0 lakh first-time voters in the 18-20 age group eligible to vote in the Lok Sabha Elections on May 13, 2024 in the Constituency.

The RO also stressed on taking welfare measures for Polling Staff on the Poll day so that they do not face any inconvenience while discharging their duties.

Vacancies in state pollution control boards: NGT seeks explanation

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The National Green Tribunal has directed the member secretaries of all state pollution control boards and pollution control committees (in Union Territories) to file affidavits explaining why a large number of sanctioned posts are vacant.

Noting that almost 50 per cent of the posts across the country are vacant, the green panel observed that, "Such a huge vacancy is one of the major reasons for improper enforcement of (environment) acts and rules."

The tribunal was hearing a matter regarding the infrastructure, resources and capacity of the state pollution control boards and pollution control committees being impacted because of several reasons, including inadequate sanctioned strength of personnel and high number of vacancies, especially in technical positions.

Noting a report by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) following the tribunal's earlier order, a bench of National Green Tribunal Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said it shows a "very grim situation."

"We find that out of sanctioned staff strength exists in

the state pollution control boards and pollution control committees, appointments have not been made and posts are lying vacant which is affecting the regulatory mechanism at the state level on environmental issues," the bench, also comprising Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and Expert Member A Senthil Vel, said.

Noting the report, the tribunal said, "Almost 50 per cent posts are vacant. Maximum posts are lying vacant in Bihar, Jharkhand and the Union Territory of Daman-Diu. Such a huge vacancy is one of the major reasons for improper enforcement of acts and rules."

It said across committees and boards, there are 1,091 contractual staff, of which 146 and 450 are of technical and scientific background, respectively. "If such staff can be taken on contract then why regular recruitment cannot be made?" the tribunal asked in an order passed on April 12.

It also noted the lack of proper facilities and infrastructure across state pollution control board and pollution control committee laboratories.

"Out of 190 laboratories, only 14 laboratories are recognised as environmental lab under the Environmental Protection Act

(EPA). Further, merely having National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) certification in 48 laboratories has no meaning unless they form a part of the environmental laboratory," the tribunal said.

"No details of staff strength, ratio of administrative and technical posts, environmental laboratories, monitoring network has been disclosed for CPCB," it added.

According to the report, the average expenditure is much below the generation of income, it said.

"Hence, we direct the member secretaries of all the state pollution control boards and pollution control committees to file an affidavit before the member secretary of CPCB within a period of six weeks from today disclosing the reason as to why till now the full strength appointments have not been made and why so many sanctioned posts are lying vacant and also time schedule within which the vacant posts will be filled up and necessary in infrastructure in the laboratories will be created," the tribunal said.

The panel posted the matter to July 29 for further proceedings.

Intense heat sweeps large swathes of India, maximum temperatures settle four to six degrees higher

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Intense heat swept large swathes of India on Sunday, with maximum temperatures settling four to six degrees Celsius above normal in many areas. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), maximum temperatures hovered between 42 and 45 degrees Celsius in parts of Odisha and Rayalaseema, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Parts of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Uttar Pradesh recorded maximum temperatures between 40 and 42 degrees Celsius. Maximum temperatures settled 4 to 6 degrees Celsius above normal in many parts of Gangetic West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha; and 2 to 4 degrees above normal in parts of sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry & Karaikal, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha and Telangana, the IMD said.

The ongoing heat wave is the second heatwave spell this month. The first spell scorched parts of Odisha, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. On Sunday, Bahargora in Jharkhand recorded a maximum temperature of 46 degrees Celsius, Baripada in Odisha 44.6 degrees, and Bankura in West Bengal 44.5 degrees.

Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh registered a high of 44 degrees Celsius and Washim in Vidarbha 43.6 degrees.

The threshold for a heat wave is met when the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees in the coastal areas and 30 degrees in the hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 notches. A severe heat wave is declared if the departure from normal tempera-

ture exceeds 6.4 notches. Amid the prevailing but weakening El Nino conditions, the IMD had earlier warned of extreme heat during the April-June period when around a billion people are expected to exercise their franchise during the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, heightening concerns about vulnerability to heat waves.

Voting for the first phase of elections took place on April 19. The Met office has said four to eight heatwave days are expected in different parts of the country in April against a normal of one to three days. Ten to 20 days of heatwave days are expected against a normal of four to eight in the entire April-June period.

The areas and regions predicted to witness a higher number of heatwave days are Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Maharashtra, Vidarbha, Marathwada, Bihar and Jharkhand. Some places may record more than 20 heatwave days.

The intense heat could strain power grids and result in water shortages in parts of India.

Global weather agencies, including the IMD, are also expecting La Nina conditions to develop later in the year: El Nino conditions - periodic warming of surface waters in the central Pacific Ocean - are associated with weaker monsoon winds and drier conditions in India. La Nina conditions - the antithesis of El Nino - lead to plentiful rainfall during the monsoon season.

In a mid-April update, the IMD said India would experience above-normal cumulative rainfall in the 2024 monsoon season with La Nina conditions, expected to set in by August-September; being the dominant factor.

The monsoon is critical for India's agricultural landscape, with 52 per cent of the net cultivated area dependent on it. It is also crucial for replenishing reservoirs critical for drinking water apart from power generation across the country.

MI eye revenge against RR in reverse fixture

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAIPUR: A resurgent Mumbai Indians will need to address their bowling woes as they look to exact revenge on table-toppers Rajasthan Royals in their reverse fixture of the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

With three wins in last four games, MI have hit the recovery road to reach sixth spot in the points table after a poor start this season, while RR are on a rampaging run as they occupy the top spot with 12 points.

The five-time champions survived a late onslaught from Ashutosh Sharma to eke out a nine-run win over Punjab Kings in the last game.

It was once again Jasprit Bumrah, who was left to do the heavy lifting as he stood out with his three wickets. The star India pacer shone with the new ball and then returned to produce a breakthrough, and he did all this without conceding much.

With 13 scalps, Bumrah tops the list of the most wickets this IPL. He also has the second-best economy of just under six runs but while he has been on the mark, his bowling colleagues have struggled.

Gerald Coetzee, too, has made an impact with 12



wickets but has gone for runs. But Akash Madhwal and skipper Hardik Pandya were being inconsistent.

While Shreyas Gopal has taken a wicket each in the three games he has played so far, MI also need to use the experience of veteran Afghanistan all-rounder Mohammed Nabi as a bowler.

In batting, former skipper Rohit Sharma's scintillating century, albeit in a losing cause, has been the highlight, while Ishan Kishan has been inconsistent. Hardik, too, hasn't made much of an impact so far, while Tilak Verma has done moderately well.

A huge positive for MI is Suryakumar Yadav's return

to form. His 53-ball 78 against PBKS was the cornerstone of MI innings and on his day he can destroy any attack.

The last time MI faced the RR bowling unit, they looked like a rabbit caught in the headlights, as Trent Boult removed three of their top-order batters for naught and the veteran left-arm pacer will again be a massive threat.

Avesh Khan has been entrusted with the responsibility of bowling at the death and he has done well. Kuldeep Sen, too, showed his skills but he needs to work on his economy.

With 12 wickets, leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has been RR's most valuable

player in the bowling department, though off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has struggled.

For RR, Riyan Parag has been the batter of the season. The young Assam batter has reinvented himself and his 318 runs is one of the reasons why RR find themselves at the top of the pecking order.

While the batting has revolved around him, skipper Sanju Samson too has produced some fine knocks for the team, aggregating 276 runs so far.

England's Jos Buttler single-handedly chased down a 200-plus total to win RR their last match against Kolkata Knight Riders but the form of fellow opener

Yashasvi Jaiswal has been a matter of concern as he has failed to capitalise on his starts.

Shimron Hetmyer has also hit top gear when needed, rescuing the team against PBKS the other day.

Teams (from): Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Rovman Powell, Shubham Dube, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger, Tanush Kotian, Keshav Maharaj.

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shephard, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai, Nehal Wadhwa, Luke Wood.

Congress a synonym for scams, terrorism and Naxalism; gave pistols to youths: Adityanath

STATE TIMES NEWS

RAJNANDGAON/KORBA/BILASPUR: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday launched a scathing attack on Congress, saying it is synonymous with scams, terrorism and Naxalism, and accused the party of instigating youth to fight against the country by handing them pistols.

Addressing campaign rallies in Chhattisgarh, Adityanath alleged the Congress has an "internal understanding" with Naxalism as part of an "evil attempt" to divert youth from the mainstream of society.

The wait of 500 years for Ram Lalla (installation of the idol) in Ayodhya ended because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Adityanath said while addressing a rally in Kabirdham district, which comes under the Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha constituency.

The BJP has fielded Santosh Pandey from Rajnandgaon seat against Congress stalwart and former chief minister Bhupesh Baghel.

"Congress is a synonym for scams, terrorism and Naxalism. At the age when a tablet and a good book should be in the hands of youth and they should have the spirit to take the world forward, the Congress gave pistols to their hands. The Congress instigated them to fight against the country in the name of Naxalism and terrorism,"

Adityanath claimed.

He said the people witnessed a change in the country over a decade under PM Modi's leadership.

"Modi ji says this country needs to be transformed into a big power in the world. A developed India has to be made...to create a self-reliant India, where every citizen feels safe. Be it a daughter or a businessman, only the BJP can provide a guarantee of security to everybody. Only BJP can respect your faith," he said.

Adityanath asked the gathering whether the Congress could have given free ration, built the Ram temple, reduced the Naxal menace and provided security to daughters and businessmen.

"Congress is the synonym for problems, it gives problems whereas the BJP is the name of solution," he added. He said Bhupesh Baghel was allegedly involved in multiple scams during the previous government in the state. Love jihad was given an exemption in Chhattisgarh under the erstwhile Congress rule, Adityanath added.

"No one has forgotten what happened with Bhuneshwar Sahu. I congratulate the people of Chhattisgarh for keeping Bhuneshwar's memories alive by electing his father Ishwar Sahu as an MLA. He had sacrificed his life protesting against love jihad and the appeasement policy of Congress," he said.

Sahu (22) was killed last

April in violence in Bemetara district after an altercation between school children belonging to two communities.

Addressing another rally in Korba Lok Sabha seat, the UP chief minister alleged the Congress has an "internal understanding" with Naxalism as part of an "evil attempt" to divert youth from the mainstream of society.

Adityanath said while India was giving free ration to 80 crore citizens under PM Modi's leadership, 23 crore people are fighting hunger in Pakistan.

India's prestige and standing in the world have risen due to the leadership of Modi, its borders are safe and the nation is capable of giving a befitting reply to terrorism and Naxalism, he added.

"The Congress has an internal understanding with Naxalism. It is not hidden from anyone. Youth should have had tabs in their hands but Congress governments handed them pistols. They (Congress governments) made an evil attempt to divert youth from the mainstream of society," Adityanath alleged.

He accused the Congress of playing with the future of youth and working to divide society.

"When they can't do anything, then they start abusing PM Modi. But the entire country is one family for Modi ji. He works to serve 140 crore Indians," the UP

CM said.

Under the Congress rule, people died of hunger, farmers committed suicide, women and businesspersons were unsafe and terrorists struck routinely after entering the country, he claimed.

"But, this situation changed after 2014 and now even if a firecracker goes off (in India), Pakistan quickly clarifies that it has nothing to do with the incident. Because, Pakistan knows this is new India and if any link is found of the neighbouring nation, then the Indian Army will enter there and strike," Adityanath said.

The BJP has fielded Saroj Pandey from the Korba Lok Sabha constituency against Congress' Jyotsna Mahant.

Addressing a third rally in Bilaspur city under Bilaspur LS constituency, Adityanath stepped up his attack on Congress.

"When Congress came to power after Independence, instead of taking the country towards prosperity, the Grand Old Party pushed it towards terrorism, Naxalism, regionalism, casteism, anarchy, and corruption. They deliberately made some provisions in the Constitution," he said. Adityanath also accused Congress of insulting B R Ambedkar.

"In 1952, the Constitution was amended and a special provision of Article 370 was included for Kashmir. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee sacrificed his life to make

Kashmir a part of India," he said.

Accusing Congress of doing nothing for 65 years, Adityanath said Article 370 was abrogated after Modi took charge as PM and Amit Shah as Home Minister, and J&K was linked to the mainstream of democracy with 'Ek Bharat-Shrestha Bharat'.

He said people are enthusiastic about the consecration of Lord Ramlalla's idol in the Ayodhya temple.

"After a wait of 500 years, Shri Ram Lalla has been installed again in Ayodhya. There was more enthusiasm in Chhattisgarh than in Uttar Pradesh and the countrymen," he said.

Adityanath further said Chhattisgarh is "nanihal" (birthplace of Lord Ram's maternal grandparents) of Lord Ram.

He accused Congress of rejecting the existence of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna, insulting the "eternal faith" of India, and adopting "double standards" after the construction of the Ayodhya temple. "Now when the temple is built in Ayodhya, Congressmen say that Ram belongs to everyone. People must understand the double standards of Congress," the Uttar Pradesh CM said.

Adityanath said UP has become free of riots and curfews after 2017 when BJP came to power.

Rajnandgaon will vote on April 26, and Korba and Bilaspur on May 7.

Health ministry asks states, UTs to act strictly against hospitals involved in illegal transplant

STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Union health ministry has asked all states and UTs to investigate any violations and take appropriate action, including suspension of registration, against hospitals performing illegal organ transplants, officials said on Sunday.

In a letter to all states and UTs, Dr Atul Goel, Director General of Health Services (DGHS), Government of India, urged all states and Union Territories to ensure regular collection and sharing of data of all transplant cases, including those of foreigners, with the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO) on a monthly basis. The ministry's direction comes over two weeks after an organ trafficking racket, involving Bangladeshi nationals, had been busted. Referring to media reports mentioning commercial dealings in organs involving foreign citizens, Dr Goel stated, "It has also been noted from the registry of NOTTO that there has been a surge in the number of organ transplants of foreigners in the country, which calls for monitoring of such transplants by the state or UT government authority concerned."

Goel, in the letter issued on April 10, directed that appropriate authority of the state appointed as per the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994, should investigate the transplant cases of foreign nationals in their respective states. He also asked the officials to take appropriate actions whenever a breach of any provision of the Act or any of the rules made thereunder are noted. "Investigate any violation of the THOTA, 1994 and rules thereunder and take appropriate action including suspension of registration for performing Organ Transplant, of the hospitals involved in illegal activities," the letter said.

It should be ensured that a unique NOTTO-ID for both donor and recipient is generated by the hospital from NOTTO website (www.notto.mohfw.gov.in), in all cases of organ transplant, whether from a living donor or deceased donor," the letter said.

Besides NOTTO-ID being mandatory for considering allocation of organ in case of deceased donor transplant, this ID in case of a living donor transplant, shall also be generated at the earliest, at least within 48 hours of the transplant surgery, the ministry said, it added.

The letter called for devising a system of regular

inspection of the registered transplant or retrieval hospitals by the state appropriate authority, so as to maintain on-site monitoring of their activities, quality of transplantation, post operative follow-up of donor and recipient and outcome of the transplantation.

"Time and again, letters have been written to states for sharing of data related to organ donation and transplantation with NOTTO. However, complete data is still not being received. It is again requested to ensure regular collection and sharing of data of all transplant cases, including those of foreigners, with NOTTO on monthly basis," the ministry said. The health ministry also asked all states and UTs to submit an action-taken report on the instructions within 15 days.

On April 4, a joint team of CM flying squad, Gurugram health department and police busted a gang that got kidney transplant done for money in two private hospitals in Jaipur, according to officials.

The racket was busted following a raid at a hotel in Gurugram where a Bangladeshi national was found who had undergone a kidney removal procedure at a hospital in Jaipur under "suspicious" financial arrangements, they had said.