

NC, PDP raise Art 370 in elections, common masses indifferent: Dr Jitendra

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said here on Friday that even as the Kashmir-centric regional political parties like National Conference(NC) and PDP continue to raise the issue of Article 370 in their election campaign, the fact on the ground is that the common masses in the Kashmir valley are indifferent to this issue. People of Kashmir valley are far more enthusiastic to be a part of the ongoing election process and to move on as a part of India's development journey, he said.

In an exclusive interview with the Editor of the popular "Open" magazine, Rajeev Deshpande, Dr Jitendra Singh said, the election in Kashmir valley is truly the celebration of



PHOTO - Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh in an exclusive interview with the Editor of popular "Open" magazine, Rajeev Deshpande at New Delhi on Friday.

the festival of democracy in letter and spirit. The heavy turnout of the voters reflects the will of people to make Kashmir a part of India's growth story instead of being tied down by the self-seeking slogans and rhetoric of the political parties hankering after Article 370 or the so-called Special Status for Kashmir; he

said. The credit goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said Dr Jitendra Singh, for having successfully broken the jinx and proved to the world that the people of Jammu & Kashmir; particularly Kashmir valley; are as much given to the democratic aspirations as anywhere else. While the voter turnout in Baramulla Lok Sabha con-

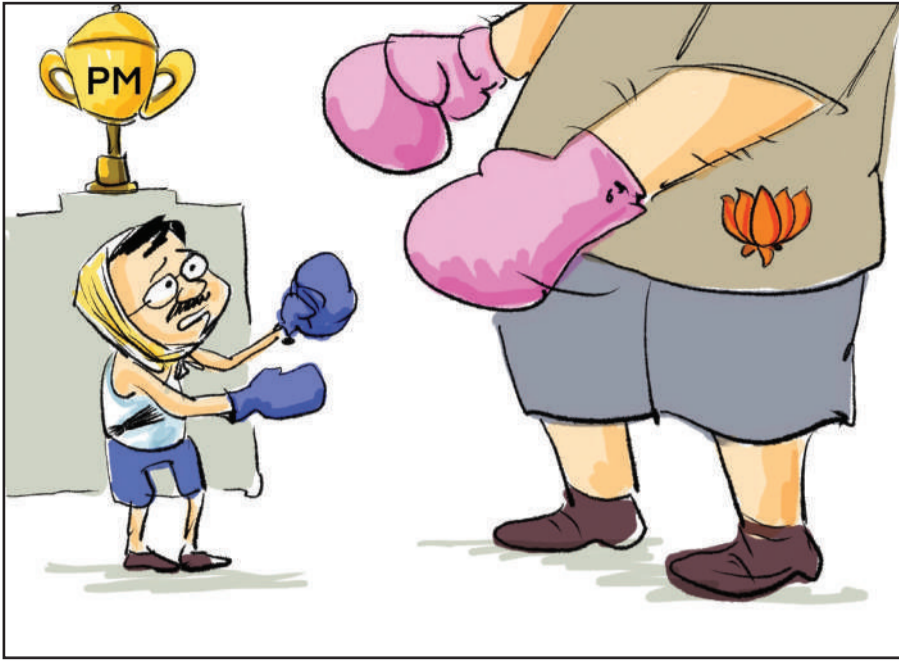
stituency was around 59%, it is expected to be higher in the polling to the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency, he said.

Come what may the opposition leaders say, Dr Jitendra Singh said, they will have no answer to the question as to why during the last over three decades, when Congress and its allies were in power both in Jammu & Kashmir as well as at the Centre, they could not even hold an election properly; leave aside the open public campaigning that is being witnessed today.

He said, it is the conducive-ness created by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government that even the opposition leaders are today enjoying the

luxury of holding large public rallies in the valley.

To a question as to why B-JP did not put up its own Party candidates in the valley constituencies, Dr Jitendra Singh said, for a Party whose motto is "Nation First", the decisions are taken based on the best interest of the nation and the democratic process. Regardless of who-ever is the candidate, he said, the victory of Modi-led BJP is evidently visible in the mass turnout of common people both for campaigning as well as for voting, which is something that was unimaginable even for Congress and its allies till a few years ago and is yet again a reiteration of the fact that "Modi Hai to Mumkin Hai".



PHDCCI Jammu Chapter hails LG Sinha for releasing pending Rs 52 Cr SGST reimbursement

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jammu Chapter, extended its heartfelt gratitude to Manoj Sinha Lieutenant Governor, Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary, Santosh D. Vaidya Principal Secretary of Finance Department, Vikranjit Singh Commissioner Secretary Industries and Commerce Department and Mahesh Dass Director General of Accounts and Treasuries, PK Bhat Commissioner GST J&K for their pivotal role in facilitating the release of the long-pending SGST reimbursement of Rs. 52 crores.

Rahul Sahai, Chairman PHDCCI Jammu Chapter, lauded the timely intervention and unwavering support from the esteemed officials and specially Arun Manhas Director Industry Jammu and Industry Department in Conducting Investors meet which is a monthly affair and addressing



the financial needs of the business community.

The reimbursement, which was pending since the second quarter of the last year, will significantly ease the financial strain on numerous businesses across Jammu and Kashmir.

"We are immensely thankful to Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Principal Secretary of Finance Santosh D. Vaidya, and Director General of Accounts and Treasuries Mahesh Dass for their concerted efforts in releasing the SGST reimbursement. This

timely disbursement will provide a much-needed boost to the business community, especially in these challenging times and requested to release it on regular basis now," said Sahai.

He further added, "The release of Rs. 52 crores is a testament to the government's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment in Jammu and Kashmir. This reimbursement will not only enhance the liquidity of businesses but also contribute to the overall economic development of the region."

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jammu Chapter, looks forward to continued cooperation and support from the government to address other pressing issues faced by the business community. The chamber remains dedicated to working alongside the government to create a conducive environment for trade and industry in Jammu and Kashmir.

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JAMMU: The University of Jammu (JU) is set to start admissions for its flagship "Design Your Degree" program, a pioneering four-year undergraduate course.

The final open house interaction for prospective students and their guardians took place today, reflecting a vibrant atmosphere filled with hope and aspirations. The interaction extended beyond the scheduled time to address the numerous queries from attendees. The "Design Your Degree" program, in alignment with the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), aims to empower students to tailor their education according to their interests and career aspirations. The program encourages a shift from traditional job-seeking mindsets to creating opportunities, fostering a well-rounded and interdisciplinary learning experience.

The Last Date to apply for the admission to Design Your



VC JU Prof. Umesh Rai speaking during the programme.

Degree program is May 29, 2024 and the Entrance Examination shall be held on June 1, 2024. The Academic Session shall begin from August 2024.

Speaking during the interaction, Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu Prof. Umesh Rai highlighted the program's alignment with NEP 2020 and its goal to equip students with a diverse skill set. He emphasized that the initiative aims to transform students into innovators and leaders, ready to tackle the challenges of the modern

world.

Prof. Rai addressed questions from students and parents, covering topics such as qualification potentials, opportunities for further studies, and placements. The interactive session provided clarity and reassurance about the program's value and prospects.

Prof. Rai emphasized that the "Design Your Degree" program is meticulously crafted to align with market demands, offering a flexible structure that promotes entrepreneurial thinking. The program focus-

es on comprehensive skill development, including life skills, soft skills, teamwork, analytical capabilities, digital proficiency, problem-solving, mathematical abilities, and critical and creative thinking.

Prof. Rai underscored the program's alignment with the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), emphasizing its motto, "Teach to Transform, Educate to Empower, and Learn to Lead," which reflects its commitment to educational transformation and empowering students.

Prof. Alka Sharma, Director of the Skill Incubation Innovation Entrepreneurial Development Center (SIIEDC), shared success stories from the previous batch, showcasing the significant progress made within six months. She highlighted the importance of skill development workshops and training sessions that have enhanced students' teamwork and other essential skills.

The event featured detailed presentations about the program, including a FAQ session led by Prof. Sadaf Shah. Current students and mentors, including Prof. Charak, Dr. Jatinder Manhas, Dr. Pallavi Sachdeva, Dr. Shalhu Sehgal, Dr. Sunil, Dr. Sandeep, and Dr. Chimmoyee Maharana, were present to answer individual queries. Their participation provided valuable insights and first-hand experiences, further enhancing the confidence of prospective students and their guardians about the program.

Yudhvir pitches for PM Modi's third term to continue India's development trail Urges people to ensure maximum participation in Rajouri Poonch on May 25 LS polls

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

POONCH: Yudhvir Sethi, J&K BJP Vice President emphasized the criticality of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's continuity in office for a third term to uphold India's ongoing journey of development and progress.

He was speaking while addressing an election campaign meeting in Menhdar, district Poonch to garner support for Apni Party candidate Zafar Iqbal Manhas on the last day of campaigning.

Addressing the gathering, Sethi said that the Pahari speaking people were suffered for more than 70 years due to selective discrimination by the successive regimes of J&K headed by National Conference, Congress and Peoples Democratic Party.

He said the people of Rajouri Poonch districts



J&K BJP Vice President Yudhvir Sethi addressing a gathering at Poonch.

were deprived of development as well as basic amenities.

He said that these parties only misused the power of democracy to fill up their own pockets and cheated people on the name of region and religion.

Sethi mentioned that the National Conference Govt in 2009 had conspired against the people of Jammu region and brought ban on inter-district recruitment. He added that several communities faced injustice in the erstwhile state of Jammu

and Kashmir and their voices remained unheard over the decades.

Yudhvir stated that it was Modi Govt which broke the barrier of Art 370 and provided equal rights to the people of Jammu and Kashmir at par with the people of

India. He said it was Modi Govt which has provided the reservation benefit to Paharis who deprived of the benefit of reservation for several decades.

The senior BJP leader asked the people of Poonch and Rajouri districts that the time has come to choose that candidate and the Party which is working for the welfare of common masses as well as in the interest of the country. He appealed to people to extend their support to PM Modi by casting their votes in favour of Apni Party candidate for Rajouri Anantnag constituency, emphasizing the pivotal role they play in shaping the future of upcoming generations as well as India's destiny. He reiterated the BJP's commitment to serving the nation with integrity, innovation, and inclusivity.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: A condolence meeting to mourn the sad demise of Prof Dr. Sheetal Singh, Ex-Principal/ Dean GMC, Srinagar was held on Friday in Govt Medical College Srinagar.

The condolence meeting was attended by Principal/ Dean Govt Medical College Srinagar, Prof Dr. Iffat Hassan; Administrator Associated Hospitals, Mohammad Ashraf Hakak; Ex-HODs Prof Dr.Muneer Khan, Prof Dr.Fareeda Ashai, Prof Dr. T.S.Sethi, Prof Dr Shafeeqa Aslam, present HODs and Faculty members, Prof Dr. Sajad Nazir; Prof Dr Iqbal Saleem, Prof Dr. Manzoor Ahmad Latoo, Prof Dr. Hina, Prof Dr. Ghulam Mohammad, Prof Dr Sameena Farhath, Prof Dr MR Attri, Dr Sajjad, Medical Superintendent Govt. Lal Ded Hospital and staff of the GMC and Associated



Officials observing silence to mourn the demise.

Hospitals. On the occasion, two minute silence was observed in the memory of Late Prof Dr.Sheetal Singh.

The speakers remembered the services of Dr.Sheetal Singh as a Surgeon and as Principal/ Dean GMC Srinagar.

Prof Dr.Iffat Principal/ Dean GMC Srinagar while paying homage to Dr. Sheetal Singh was all praise for his professionalism and services towards Patient care/ Medical Education. She prayed that the departed soul may rest in

peace and showed her sympathies with the family of Prof Dr Sheetal Singh in this hour of grief.

Dr.Muneer Khan, Ex-HOD Surgery while paying his condolences remembered the dedication and devotion of Prof. Sheetal Singh in his professional services.

Prof Dr.Iqbal Saleem HOD Surgery reminisced the experience of Dr.Sheetal Singh in dealing with newcomers in the profession and how he would handhold them and guide them in learning all surgical skills.

Nidhi Aapke Nikat program to simultaneously take place across J&K, Ladakh on May 27



■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU:: EPFO Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are set to conduct Nidhi Aapke Nikat 2.0, an awareness and outreach initiative, concurrently at two venues Army Public School in Akhnoor, Jammu, and New Millennium Children School in Dambuchan, Leh, on May 27, 2024.

The program aims to sensitize employers and employees about social security provisions and cover topics like Filing Grievance & Fraud Prevention, Digital Services education, awareness, and fraud prevention.

P.F. Commissioner Rizwan Uddin encouraged active participation from subscribers, pensioners, establishments, employees'

representatives, and industrial chambers. District Nodal Officers Devendra Singh and Sandeep Kumar will address the programs in Jammu and Leh, respectively.

EPFO Jammu will extend handholding support to stakeholders, addressing their suggestions, inputs, and grievances, and resolving issues faced in implementing the EPF & MP Act, 1952.

Topics such as member enrollment, UAN Activation, Bank & Aadhaar Seeding, online claim filing, filing of e-nominations, e-sign, filing ECR, and other relevant EPFO-related matters will be covered. The program will also highlight the benefits of social security schemes like the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995, and the enhanced quantum of Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Schemes, 1976. EPFO invites valuable suggestions and feedback from stakeholders at the Nidhi Aapke Nikat program.

JU, IIT-J organize Policy Dialogue on Inclusive Blended Learning Practices

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: To enhance educational practices, a policy dialogue on "Developing Inclusive Blended Learning Practices for Universities and Colleges in Jammu and Kashmir" was organized here on Friday at the University of Jammu (JU).

This first-of-its-kind initiative was organized by the P.G. Department of Education, University of Jammu in collaboration with the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Jammu.

The Chief Guest, Alok Kumar, Principal Secretary of the Higher Education Department, JKUT, underscored the significance of academia-industry collaboration and localized strategies to promote an inclusive learning environment.

He emphasized the necessity of access and equity to achieve the goals of blended learning as outlined in NEP 2020. Alok Kumar advocated for a balanced approach, with 40 per cent of content delivered through blended methods focusing on instructions, while the remaining 60 per cent should involve experiential learning methods like problem-solving, project work, and field visits. He also recommended adopting the flipped classroom



Prpl Secy Higher Education Department, Alok Kumar chairing a meeting.

model and redefining teachers as mentors.

In his presidential address, Prof. Umesh Rai, Vice-Chancellor, JU highlighted the critical role of adaptive learning technologies, teacher training, and infrastructure development in facilitating impactful blended learning across disciplines.

Quoting Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Prof. Rai emphasized the true essence of education, advocating for integrating technology with experiential learning over traditional classroom learning.

He urged teachers to focus on sparking students' interest rather than worrying about the specific methods of delivering knowledge.

Prof. Rai emphasized the importance of a collaborative environment for sharing best practices and tailored strategies

to create a more equitable and resilient education system.

He also highlighted the need to cultivate a broad spectrum of skills among students, including life skills, soft skills, teamwork, analytical capabilities, digital and technical proficiency, problem-solving abilities, mathematical skills, and critical and creative thinking.

Earlier, Dr. Ana Bali, Lecturer, P.G. Department of Education, in her welcome address, outlined the day's activities. Dr. Sayantan Mandal, Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator of the Integrating Teaching and Learning with Digital Education Project, presented an overview of the policy document. He emphasized the research project's depth and the collaboration between IIT Jammu and the University of Jammu, led by Prof. Renu

Nanda, Head of the P.G. Department of Education.

Discussions centered on the necessity of integrating digital technologies into higher education to promote effective learning and develop a skilled, self-reliant youth, in line with the vision of Atamnirbhar Bharat.

The event brought together eminent policymakers, educationists, NGO's, faculty members, and researchers to discuss various aspects of the Policy Dialogue on Inclusive Blended Learning. Prof. Pankaj Srivastava, Director, Directorate of Distance and Online Education, JU pointed out two major barriers to digital teaching: non-uniform syllabus and the need for robust digital infrastructure to bridge the digital divide. Dr. Shashi Prabha, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, University of Jammu, high-

lighted the challenges faced by rural students during harvest seasons and the importance of blended learning in such contexts. Other notable speakers included Ms. Ashima Kaul, Founder of YAKJAH NGO, who raised concerns about the emotional and psychological aspects of digital learning, and Mr. Rajeev Khajuria, President, National Development Foundation, who focused on student engagement and fostering partnerships among stakeholders.

Dr. Alka Sharma from the School Education Department emphasized the importance of experiential learning and the crucial role of teachers while framing the digital teaching learning policies importance of teachers should be focused. Prof. B.B. Anand, Principal, M.A.M. College, raised concerns about digital infrastructure availability in rural areas and the true purpose of digital technology in education.

Later, the vote of thanks was proposed by Prof. Renu Nanda, Head, P.G. Department of Education wherein she reiterated that the roadmap for effective implementation of NEP 2020 has been given a special impetus through the discussions held this day wherein Alok Kumar himself has come for-

ward to ensure that digital technologies get implemented and augmented, aligning with the vision of the Government of India.

Among others, who were present on the occasion included Prof. Meena Sharma, Dean Planning and Development, Prof. Rajeev Rattan Sharma, Dean, Faculty of Education and Director CDC, Dr. Malay Dey, Centre for Studies in Museology, University of Jammu, Dr. Bhat Iqbal, Central University Jammu, Dr. Rupinder Kour, Cluster University Jammu, Prof. Bijoy Borouah, IIT Jammu, Dr. Gourav Bhaduri, IIT Jammu, Sheriya Sareen, research scholar, IIT Jammu, Rakhi Attri, School Education Department, Sunil Kumar Sharma, Senior Academic Officer, SCEIRT, Jammu, Ravinder Singh, Prof. Mubarak Singh, Former Head and Dean, Department of Education, University of Jammu, Dr. S.K. Panda & Dr. Kajal Devi Manhas, Faculty Department of Education, Sita Anand, Liaison Officer, GZSAC. Rishika, Surjeet students of M.A. Education and research scholars of Department of Education, University of Jammu were among the delegates who were also present on the occasion.