

**!! Continuations from Page 1 !!
61.11 pc turnout...**

polls and three assembly elections," he said, attributing the increase in the voter turnout to various factors including improved security situation, active participation of political parties and candidates and a campaign by the department.

He said Kishtwar district recorder the highest 77 percent turnout, while Pulwama district witnessed the lowest 46 percent, reported PTL.

Pole expressed hope that the remaining two phases on September 25 and October 1 will also see high polling percentage.

An official statement stated that 'building on the successful foundation of the Lok Sabha Elections 2024, peaceful and enthusiastic voting marked the beginning of assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir. Voters from all sections of society responded to the 'call of democracy' wholeheartedly, reaffirming the confidence expressed by CEC Rajiv Kumar during the announcement of assembly elections that people of J&K will give a befitting reply to the nefarious forces attempting to disrupt the electoral process. Long queues of voters at the polling stations showcased the entire world, the deep trust and confidence of the people of J&K in the democratic exercise'.

Polling in the first phase recorded an approximate voter turnout of 58.85 per cent as of 7:30 pm.

Polling was held across 3276 Polling Stations established in 24 ACs spanning 7 districts namely, Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam, Kishtwar, Anantnag, Ramban and Doda. In each of the 7 Districts where polling was held, the voting participation exceeded the participation during the Lok Sabha 2024 elections. The performance builds on the trend witnessed during the Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir which saw a voter turnout of 58.58 per cent at polling stations, highest in the last 35 years.

A total of 219 candidates are in the electoral fray in the first phase of which 9 are women candidates. Young and women voters shone bright at the polling stations, a testament to the deepening and embrace of democracy in J&K. Their enthusiasm to cast their vote is an emphatic response in favour of the ballot against boycotts and violence.

The Commission led by CEC Rajiv Kumar along with ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Dr. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu kept a close watch on each and every aspect of the poll process from the very beginning. Meticulous preparations, clear directions and strong security measures were in place creating a conducive environment for voters to cast their vote without fear or intimidation. Along with webcasting in all polling stations, 32 Central Observers kept a vigilant eye on the election process on the ground, ensuring no disruptions to the electoral process.

Kashmiri Migrant voters were also empowered to exercise their franchise through 24 Special Polling Stations setup in Jammu (19), Udhampur (1) and Delhi (4). Earlier, the Commission had eased the process for Kashmiri migrant voters by abolishing the cumbersome Form-M and enabling self-certification.

Home-voting facility, introduced for the first time in Assembly elections in J&K saw democracy being taken to the doorsteps of those who are bound by physical limitations. Many voters aged above 85 years and PwDs with 40 per cent benchmark disability opted to vote from the comfort of their homes, while those who visited polling stations were greeted with warmth and all assured minimum facilities.

As part of ECT's commitment to make the voting experience pleasant and memorable, Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF's) like drinking water, electricity, toilet, ramp, furniture, adequate shelter, helpdesk, wheel chair & volunteers amongst others were provided at all Polling Stations. One polling station each, exclusively managed by women and PwDs, was set up in every AC for giving a comfortable voting experience.

The elections were also truly participative and encompassing in nature as reflected in the data on eVIGIL usage. Since the start of the elections and till September 18, 2024, 355 complaints against electoral malpractices were disposed of with a disposal rate of 98.3 per cent, which reduced campaign clutter and noise. The Suvidha platform has ensured transparent and timely approval of 4458 requests ahead of phase 1, by political parties and candidates for seeking permissions for rallies, grounds, halls, etc.

The Commission in its resolve to ensure that no voter is left behind, ensured that Polling Stations are accessible even in remote corners of Jammu and Kashmir and even quiet villages were brought into the fold of the democratic exercise. In one such village in Dhadkai, famed as the "Silent Village", the PwD voters with speech/hearing impairment made their voice heard loud and clear with their votes at Polling Station 195 Kuthyara in Bhadarwah AC, district Doda.

While taking a facilitative approach to the legitimate requests of candidates and political parties, the Commission has firmly cracked down on illegitimate means to sway voters. Powered by technology and intelligence based targeted action, ECs persistent efforts for an inducement free elections, have led to seizures worth Rs 124.3 crores in J&K as on 18.09.2024, with firm crackdown on supply and distribution of drugs and narcotics which recorded seizures worth Rs. 107.9 Cr. Freebies amounting to over Rs. 15 Crore have also been seized. Enforcement Agencies are intensifying efforts to curb the menace of money power in the upcoming phases also.

The provisional voter turnout figures of 58.85% as of 7.30 PM will continue to be updated AC wise on the Voter Turnout App by the ROs, as and when the polling parties formally close the poll and return from the polling stations based on the geographical/logistical conditions and after scrutiny of statutory papers and consideration of repolls, if any. The Commission for convenience of stakeholders, will also issue another press note with provisional voter turnout figures at 2345 hours today.

Polling for the second and third phase will be held on September 25 and October 1, 2024 respectively. Counting of votes is scheduled on October 8, 2024.

LG congratulates voters...

said, their enthusiastic participation is a testament to the strength of Indian democracy and people's faith in democratic values.

"Congratulations J&K for a historic voter turnout! I would like to thank all voters, who exercised their franchise in 1st Phase. Record polling in the peaceful, free & fair election attests to the strength of Indian democracy & people's faith in democratic values.

I must congratulate all my sisters & first-time voters for participating in large numbers to celebrate festival of democracy. Heartfelt gratitude to outstanding security forces, JKP & Election Officials. Approx 59% polling in first phase shows Jammu/region is flourishing in J&K. Long queues of voters in Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban, Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag demolished the motivated propoganda of the adversaries. People have also rebuffed the agenda of divisive elements and reaffirmed their faith in democracy", the Lieutenant Governor posted on X.

Giant stride towards...

been witnessing transformative reforms. Today, in this direction, Bharat takes a giant stride towards landmark electoral reforms with the Union Cabinet accepting the recommendations of the High-Level Committee on One Nation One Election," Shah wrote on 'X'.

The home minister said this reflects Prime Minister Modi's "iron will" to bolster the country's democracy through clean and financially efficient elections and accelerate economic growth through more productive allocation of resources.

Double-murder case...

chores," the SSP told reporters.

The couple lived alone after their two daughters moved outside Jammu and Kashmir a few months back, Singh said.

He said Sonu had left his house on September 3 and his wife lodged a missing report on September 9.

The SSP said Sonu returned on September 12, forcibly took Rs 5,000 from his wife and left again. He added that investigations have revealed that he worked alone in committing the crime.

The official said CCTV cameras proved very helpful in solving this case, and requested residents to expand the coverage of their gadgets to cover the main roads as well.

Time for rise...

rise of sanatan dharma has come. It has come. We are witnessing it. Yogi Arvind had declared it. The attitude of the whole world is also changing in this direction, we know this as well," the RSS chief said.

In this process, the publication of Hindi commentary of vedas written by

Shripad Damodar Satvalekar is also an indication to this, he added.

Bhagwat said the knowledge of religion comes from the vedas because the foundation of these scripture lies in the realisation of truth that the entire world is one and all divisions and the battle of sin and virtue is momentary. "Dharma embraces all, unites everyone, uplifts them, leads them to success. That's why dharma is the basis of life," the RSS chief said.

"The concept of life is based on religion. If the body, mind, intellect and soul are in harmony, one remains alive. If this balance is disturbed, then one becomes insane. If it ends, then one dies," he said, adding, "dharma provides balance and liberates".

Bhagwat said the vedas have all the knowledge.

"Then someone can ask that CT scan is not mentioned in veda, It's true. It's not mentioned there. But veda knows the source of the science of city scan," said Bhagwat. "Thousands of years before the advent of modern science, vedas mentioned how far is the earth from the sun and how much time sunlight takes to reach earth. Mathematics is found in vedas' mantras," he added.

Cabinet accepts 'one...

polls, while the local body elections for municipalities and panchayats are managed by the state election commissions.

The panel has recommended a total of 18 constitutional amendments, most of which will not need ratification by state Assemblies. However, these would require certain Constitution amendment bills that would have to be passed by Parliament.

Some proposed changes regarding the single electoral roll and single voter ID card would need ratification by at least half of the states.

Separately, the Law Commission is also likely to come up soon with its own report on simultaneous polls, of which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a strong votary.

Sources said the Law Commission is likely to recommend holding simultaneous polls for all three tiers of the government -- the Lok Sabha, state Assemblies and local bodies like municipalities and panchayats -- starting 2029 and a provision for a unity government in cases like a hung house.

The country had simultaneous elections between 1951 and 1967 but thereafter, polls started getting dispersed due to various reasons, including mid-term elections.

Holding all polls simultaneously will require a lot of manoeuvring, including advancing some elections and delaying some others.

While the Lok Sabha polls were held in May-June this year, states like Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh also went to polls along with the parliamentary election.

The Assembly election process for Jammu and Kashmir and Haryana is currently underway, while Maharashtra and Jharkhand are also scheduled to go to polls later this year.

Delhi and Bihar are among the states that are scheduled to go to polls in 2025.

The terms of the current assemblies in Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Puducherry will end in 2026, while the terms of the Goa, Gujarat, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand assemblies will end in 2027.

The terms of the state assemblies in Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Telangana will end in 2028.

The terms of the current Lok Sabha and the state assemblies that went to polls together this year will end in 2029.

Approves continuation of...

control the price volatility of essential commodities by ensuring their availability at affordable prices to consumers," the government said.

PM-AASHA will now have the components of Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Stabilization Fund (PSF), Price Deficit Payment Scheme (POPS) and Market Intervention Scheme (MIS).

PM-AASHA is an umbrella scheme to ensure MSP (minimum support price) to farmers.

Under the PSS, the procurement of notified pulses, oilseeds and copra at MSP will be 25 per cent of national production from 2024-25 season onwards. This would enable states to procure more of these crops at MSP from farmers to prevent distress sale.

"However, this ceiling will not be applicable in case of tur, urad and masur for 2024-25 season as there will be a 100 per cent procurement of tur, urad and masur during in 2024-25 season as decided earlier," the government said.

The Centre has renewed and enhanced the existing government guarantee to Rs 45,000 crore for procurement of notified pulses, oilseeds and copra at MSP.

This will help in more procurement of pulses, oilseeds & copra whenever prices fall below MSP in the market.

The purchases will be undertaken by the Department of Agriculture from farmers at MSP including pre-registered farmers on eSamridhi portal of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) and eSamyukti portal of National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF).

"This would also motivate the farmers to cultivate more of these crops in the country and contribute in achieving self-sufficiency in these crops leading to reduction in dependence on imports to meet domestic requirement," the government said.

The extension of the PSF scheme will help in protecting consumers from extreme volatility in prices of agri-horticultural commodities by maintaining strategic buffer stock of pulses and onion for calibrated release.

The scheme would help discourage hoarding and unscrupulous speculation.

Procurement of pulses at market price will be done by the Department of Consumer Affairs including Pre-registered farmers on eSamridhi portal of NAFED and eSamyukti portal of NCCF whenever prices rule above MSP in the market.

Apart from buffer maintenance, the interventions under PSF scheme have been undertaken in other crops such as tomato and in subsidized retail sale of Bharat DaIs, Bharat Atta and Bharat Rice.

In order to encourage the states to come forward for implementation of Price Deficit Payment Scheme (PDPS) as an option for Notified oilseeds, the coverage has been enhanced from existing 25 per cent of state production of oilseeds to 40 per cent and also enhanced the implementation period from 3 months to 4 months for the benefits of farmers.

The compensation of difference between MSP and Sale/Modal price to be borne by Central Government is limited to 15 per cent of MSP.

The extension of implementation of the MIS with changes will provide remunerative prices to farmers growing perishable horticulture crops.

"The Government has increased the coverage from 20 per cent to 25 per cent of production and has added a new option of making differential payment directly into the farmers' account instead of physical procurement under MIS," the statement said.

To bridge the price gap in TOP (Tomato, Onion & Potato) crops between producing states and consuming states during peak harvesting time, the Government has decided to bear the transportation and storage expenses for the operations undertaken by nodal agencies like NAFED and NCCF.

BJP suspends Pawan...

headed by Sunil Sethi, the spokesman said. Khajuria and Singh had entered the election fray as an independent and a candidate of National Panthers Party (NPP), respectively from Udhampur East assembly segment where BJP has fielded former MLA R S Pathania. Bhau is fighting as an independent from Chhamb constituency of Jammu against party candidate and former MLA Rajeev Kumar. Senior Congress leader and former deputy chief minister Tara Chand is also trying his luck from the seat.

The BJP spokesman said party's working president Sat Paul Sharma ordered the suspension of the three leaders from the membership of the party for an "act of indiscipline" in contesting elections against the official candidates of the party.

The BJP has faced rebellion in nearly a dozen assembly constituencies with several of its prominent leaders announcing resignation and some jumping into the fray as independents to fight the elections.

Dr Shahid posted...

and Panchayati Raj. Mohammad Aijaz shall continue to hold the charge of the posts of Administrative Secretary, Civil Aviation Department, Public Grievances, Civil Aviation Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer, Economic Reconstruction Agency, till further orders, it added.

Voters throng booths in Jammu region in first assembly polls under UT status

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
DODA/KISHTWAR: In the first assembly polls in J-K since the abrogation of Article 370, enthusiastic voters queued up at polling stations to exercise their franchise in the Doda district of Jammu region, which has seen an increase in terror-related activities over the past few months.

Expressing happiness about taking part in the assembly elections to elect their government, the voters also said they hoped that the democratic exercise would be followed by the restoration of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir.

Polling started at 7 am at all 1,328 polling stations set up across the eight assembly seats in the Chenab valley districts amid heavy security, as parts of the region especially Doda and Kishtwar have witnessed a spurt in terror activities since June. Six Army personnel, including two officers, lost their lives in these and four terrorists were gunned down.

Pandit Shanti Prakash

(96), a resident of Ghata village of Bhaderwah, said he was happy that the assembly elections were finally taking place.

"We are happy that the assembly elections are finally taking place after a long gap of 10 years, providing us an opportunity to finally elect our own government. We hope the elections will be followed by the restoration of statehood," he told PTL.

Prakash, who chose to exercise his franchise at a polling booth instead of opting for home voting, said he wished to have a popular government in place, along with statehood. "One is getting fulfilled and I hope the other will also come true shortly."

Khalid Bashir Mughal (52), a former sarpanch from Chinode village, said the heavy rush of voters from the beginning of the polling reflects people's desire to have their own government.

He added that the region has always voted enthusiastically even at the peak of terrorism, saying, "We are expecting a record turnout."

First-time voters Muqadas and Mashail, sisters studying in Amritsar, said they came home to cast their votes for a better future.

"We want a government that focuses on improving education infrastructure so that nobody has to go outside," Muqadas said.

A long queue of voters was also seen outside the pink polling station in Kishtwar town.

Expressing concerns over the recent terror incidents, Chetan Bandari said they want a strong government that will end terrorism and ensure a safe environment for the people.

"A terror-free atmosphere is key for overall development. I am voting against terrorism," she said, waiting in a queue for her turn.

First-time voters were also thrilled to exercise their democratic right in the elections to elect their assembly representatives. "This is my first vote and I am casting it for the bright future of the youth," Arjun Parihar said after casting his vote.

Cabinet okays development of Venus Orbiter Mission

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the development of Venus Orbiter Mission for exploring and studying the planet.

The 'Venus Orbiter Mission' to be helmed by the Department of Space will involve placing a scientific spacecraft in the orbit of Venus for better understanding of its surface and subsurface, atmospheric processes and influence of the Sun on the Venusian atmosphere.

Venus, the closest planet to Earth and believed to have formed in conditions similar to Earth, offers a unique opportunity to understand how planetary environments can evolve very differently, a statement said.

The study of the underlying causes of the transformation of Venus, which is believed to be once habitable and quite similar to Earth, would be an invaluable aid in understanding the evolution of the sister planets, both Venus and Earth, it said.

The Cabinet has allocated Rs 1,236 crore for the mission, of which Rs 824 crore will be spent on the development of the spacecraft by the Indian Space Research Organisation.

Inter district narco module busted; huge quantity of heroin recovered, 3 hard-core narco-smugglers arrested

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
UDHAMPUR: Continuing its campaign against Drugs and Narcotics, District Police Udhampur achieved a major success by recovering 488.76 grams of Contraband Heroin like substance at Naka Point Tikri (NIHW) and arresting 3 hard-core narco smugglers.

Police team of Police Post Tikri led by its ICPP was conducting routine vehicle checking at Naka Point Tikri and a vehicle (Creta) bearing registration No. JK02DHI/2486 was made to stop which was coming from Jammu side towards Kashmir valley. During checking of said vehicle, Police team recovered 03 transparent packets containing 488.76 grams of Heroin like substance from three narco smugglers who were smuggling the above contraband in the said vehicle. All the 03 narco smugglers have been arrested on spot.

The arrested persons were identified as Mukhtar Ahmed, son of Mohd. Rashid, resident of Karmara Poonch; Mohd. Hafiz, son of Mohd. Hussain , resident of W.No.10 Jhulass, Poonch and Abdul Hamid, son of Mohd. Hussain , resident of W.No. 10 Jhulass, Poonch .

In this connection, A case FIR No. 212/2024 under sections 8/21/22 NDPS Act stands registered at Police Station Rehambal and further investigation of the case has been taken up.

Two theft cases solved; notorious thief arrested; stolen property recovered

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
SAMBHA: Police has solved two theft cases registered at Police Station Samba, arrested accused person and has recovered stolen property from his possession.

Based on two different written reports lodged at Police Station Samba by Vikas Kumar R/o Adarsh Colony Samba and Vikas Mahajan R/o Main Bazar Samba regarding theft in their respective shops during intervening night of 5th and 6th of September 2024, two different FIRs viz FIR No. 230/2024 u/s 331(4)/305 BNS & FIR No. 232/2024 u/s 331(4)/305 BNS were registered at PS Samba and investigation got started.

During the course of investigation, different police teams under SHO PS Samba were constituted by DySP Hqrs Samba to work out the said theft cases. Consequently, several suspects were rounded up for questioning.

Based on physical intelligence along with technical analysis, a suspect namely Mohit Singh S/o Govardhan Singh R/o Kehli Mandi Samba was apprehended, who upon sustained questioning confessed his involvement in said theft cases. On his disclosure, stolen property including cash and articles was recovered from his possession. Further investigation is underway.

It is worthwhile to mention here that the accused is an infamous notorious burglar involved in number of theft cases registered in his name at different Police Stations of district Samba and outside J&K UT.

Cyber Cell Jammu solves online fraud, recovers Rs 1,00,000

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
JAMMU: Cyber cell DPO Jammu, a dedicated unit to deal with cases of online/offline frauds and cyber crime who has been relentlessly working day in and day out for ensuring the safety and security of masses in general has once again successfully recovered an amount of Rupees one lakh from a fraudster who used to deceive the people by adopting different tactics and extract money from them.

In this regard the complainant approached cyber cell Jammu of being fraudulently cheated. Taking the cognizance of matter the cyber cell Jammu took no time to start the investigations and acted swiftly while exhibiting the ultimate professional excellence through its dedicated skilled human resource which was put to task and in no time the lost amount of ₹1,00,000, was recovered from the fraudster.

Police hands over desktop computer with printer to Govt School Kheli Mandi

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
SAMBHA: In a generous gesture under the Civic Action Programme (CAP), the J&K Police has donated a desktop computer alongwith printer to Govt. Boys Middle School Kheli Mandi Samba.

The desktop PC and printer were handed over to the school management in a simple but impressive distribution ceremony which was overseen by DySP Hqrs Samba, accompanied by SHO PS Samba, under the guidance of Senior Superintendent of Police, Samba.

The distribution ceremony was held in the presence of the Headmistress Smt. Renu Gupta of GBMS Kheli Mandi Samba which was well-attended by a large number of students, teachers, locals of the area and other members of the school management.

Expressing gratitude, the Headmistress of Govt. Boys Middle School Kheli Mandi Samba extended heartfelt thanks to the Police Department for their generous contribution towards enhancing the learning environment for the students.

