

Ashwini Vaishnav Reviews Passenger Movement at Railway Board War Room; Commends Staff for 24x7 Efforts and Extends Diwali Greetings

NEW DELHI, OCT 20

Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting, and Electronics & Information Technology, Shri Ashwini Vaishnav, visited the War Room at the Railway Board and took stock of passenger movement during the festive season today. He appreciated the staff for working round the clock and extended his best wishes to them on the occasion of Diwali. < Indian Railways (IR) has made extensive arrangements to cater to the surge in passenger demand during the ongoing festive season. To ensure smooth travel during Pujā, Diwali, and Chhath, IR is operating 12,011 special trains. The significant increase from 7,724 trains operated during the same period last year.

Indian Railways is operating at full strength to ensure smooth and comfortable travel for passengers during the ongoing festive rush. In



addition to regular train services, IR has successfully operated 3,960 special trains between 1st October and 19th October 2025 to meet the increased travel demand during the festive period. To further cater to the expected surge in passenger traffic for Diwali, and Chhath, Indian Railways plans to operate around 8,000 more special trains in the coming days. These special trains are being run across all zones of Indian Railways, with

Northern Railway (1919 trains), Central Railway (1998 trains), and Western Railway (1501 trains) operating the highest numbers. Other zones, including East Central Railway (1217) and North Western Railway (1217), have also deployed additional services to meet regional travel requirements. The zone-wise breakup of these 12,011 trains is under. Between 1st October and 19th October 2025, more than 1 crore passengers have already been facilitated by these special

services. The management of passenger movement has been streamlined across stations, with the provision of dedicated holding areas, additional ticket counters, potable drinking arrangements, display of timing of trains and other comforts for the smooth travel of passengers. Indian Railways remains committed to providing safe, comfortable, and hassle-free travel for all passengers during the festive rush. More than 12 lakh Railway employees are working tirelessly round the clock to ensure efficient operations and a pleasant journey experience for every traveller.

October 2025, as compared to 13.66 lakh passengers during the corresponding period last year, marking an increase of 1.51 lakh passengers. Earlier, the Union Minister also visited New Delhi & Vihar Railway stations and interacted with passengers to get feedback on arrangements made by Indian Railways for the Special Arrangements, including holding areas, more number of ticket counters, potable drinking arrangements, display of timing of trains and other comforts for the smooth travel of passengers. Indian Railways remains committed to providing safe, comfortable, and hassle-free travel for all passengers during the festive rush. More than 12 lakh Railway employees are working tirelessly round the clock to ensure efficient operations and a pleasant journey experience for every traveller.

GY CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR, OCT 20

Candidates contesting the Rajya Sabha elections from Jammu and Kashmir have disclosed their assets and liabilities in affidavits, showing a wide disparity in wealth. Rakesh Kumar of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerges as the wealthiest candidate with total assets of Rs 33.67 crore, including movable assets of Rs 2.39 crore and immovable property worth Rs 31.28 crore. He has declared liabilities of Rs 4.40 crore. His spouse's income for 2023-24 was Rs 8.61 lakh, while there are no criminal cases pending against him. Choudhary Mohammad Ramzan of National Conference (NC) ranks second with total assets of Rs 12.64 crore. His affidavit shows movable and income tax returns for 2023-24 and 2024-25 were filed.

11.87 crore. Self-acquired property is valued at Rs 55.77 lakh while inherited property totals Rs 7.25 crore. No liabilities or government dues are reported. Sajad Ahmad Kichloo of JKNC reported a total asset of Rs 7.64 crore. Movable assets are 43.77 lakh, while immovable assets including self-acquired and inherited property, amount to Rs 7.20 crore. Liabilities include loans totalling Rs 43.10 lakh. His total income for 2024-25 is Rs 15.90 lakh. No criminal cases were declared. Gurinder Singh Oberoi of JKNC declared total assets of Rs 7.16 crore including movable assets of Rs 2.03 crore (self and HUF) and immovable property of Rs 5.13 crore. He has no liabilities or disputed loans and income tax returns for 2023-24 and 2024-25 were filed.

Sat Paul Sharma of BJP declared movable assets of Rs 2.99 crore (self, spouse, dependent) and immovable property of Rs 1.07 crore, totalling Rs 4.06 crore. His and his spouse's combined income exceeds Rs 20 lakh. No liabilities or government dues were reported.

Dr. Ali Mohammad Mir of BJP declared no movable or immovable assets, no liabilities and no income tax returns and also no criminal cases are pending.

Imran Nabi Dar of JKNC has total assets of approximately Rs 3.43 lakh, including movable assets of Rs 2.98 lakh and immovable property of Rs 3.40 lakh. His spouse and dependent hold some assets. His last income tax return was filed for 2015-16, showing total income under Rs 5 lakh. No criminal cases are pending.

MLA Bla petitions Minister over exclusion from school functions

Dept told to ensure lawmakers' presence at official events

GY CORRESPONDENT

BARAMULLA, OCT 20

Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Javid Hassan Baigh on Monday raised concerns over the education department's selective invitations to official functions, urging immediate corrective measures.

During the annual day function at Baramulla Higher Secondary School, Baigh, as per the news agency, complained to Education Minister Sakina Itoo that elected representatives are often excluded from departmental events.

He said officials such as CEO and ZEOs tend to invite individuals, who were not elected, while serving legislators, who represent the people are overlooked. Baigh stressed that the representative role of elected members should not be undermined and called on the minister to issue a directive ensuring the presence of lawmakers' at all official events.

He expressed hope that future functions would be more inclusive and respectful of elected representatives.

Meanwhile, responding on the spot, Minister Sakina Itoo directed the education department to ensure that all elected representatives, regardless of political affiliation, are consulted and invited to official events.

Many surprises for RS polls, will win all 4 seats: NC's Tanvir Sadiq

GY CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR, OCT 20

National Conference (NC) Chief Spokesperson and MLA Zaidil, Tanvir Sadiq Monday said there are many surprises for the RS polls.

Speaking with reporters in Srinagar, Sadiq, per an opportunity for us to win the Nagrota seat this time. Shameem Begum, the party candidate, got a good number of votes during DDC elections. Congress will also support us and there are some reports coming that some locals disgruntled with the BJP will also support us. We have also



the alliance. "There is also an opportunity for us to win the Nagrota seat this time. Shameem Begum, the party candidate, got a good number of votes during DDC elections. Congress will also support us and there are some reports coming that some locals disgruntled with the BJP will also support us. We have also

nominated Aga Mehmoosul for Budgam seat after threashere discussions. We expect to secure both seats," he said. He added that they have many issues to put forth before the people and expect voters to support them like they did in the last 2024 assembly elections.

"There is no rift with the Congress and the party preferred the NC candidate for Nagrota as in the last election, the party won second. We will put our efforts to win all the elections that are being held in the next one month," he said. On AIMIM Chief Asadullah Owaisi's PSA remark, he asked where he was in 2019 when people of J&K were being suppressed. "He was then sitting with the BJP and didn't say anything. Now, when the time has come to serve the people, he raised his fingers. I want to make an appeal to him to sit with the Congress. We have got a mandate from the people and we will do our job," he added.

PDP's Para accuses NC of aiding BJP in 'normalising' Aug 05 decisions

GY CORRESPONDENT

BUDGAM, OCT 20

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader and MLA Pulwama, Waheed ur Rehman Para on Monday said the Budgam by-election is not just a local contest but a chance for people to reject the ongoing "normalisation" of August 5, 2019 decisions – a process he alleged is being aided by the National Conference (NC).

Speaking to media outside the Returning Officer's office in Budgam, where he accompanied PDP candidate Aga Muntazir Mehdi, Para, as per the news agency – Kashmir News Observer (KNO), said that after a long time, people of Jammu and



Kashmir gave a one-sided mandate, bringing the NC to power. "Despite having an absolute majority, NC has failed to speak on political rights or challenge the decisions taken after the abrogation of Article 370. In fact, every move of the BJP is being normalised with NC's silence," he said. He said the Budgam bypoll is an opportunity for people to reclaim their political voice. "People have elected a Chief Minister from here, but they still have no one to address their local issues. Muntazir belongs to

Budgam – win or lose, he will remain here, among his people," Para said. Calling the by-election crucial for the political discourse of Jammu and Kashmir, Para added, "This vote is not just for Budgam, it's a message across Kashmir that parties making tall promises and failing to deliver must be held accountable."

On the reservation issue, Para said PDP is seeking its rationalisation based on population. "A big mandate was given to the NC, but they avoid talking about detainees, the ban on Jamaat-e-Islami or Article 370. Even our assembly is not ready to raise these issues," he remarked.

Devotees gather in devotional fervour for Urs Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani (RA)

Thousands throng Charar-i-Sharif, scholars highlight Sheikh-ul-Alam (RA's) spiritual legacy

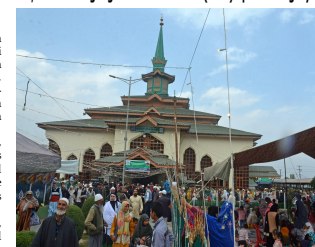
GY CORRESPONDENT

BUDGAM, OCT 20

The annual Urs of Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani (RA), popularly known as Sheikh-ul-Alam (RA), was observed at Charar-i-Sharif in Budgam district on Monday with religious fervour.

As per the news agency, thousands of devotees from across Jammu and Kashmir thronged the shrine, offering prayers and supplications.

Special prayers, recitations of Darood and Naats, and other devotional activities were held throughout the day, while night-long prayers were observed on the intervening night of October 19-20. The Urs celebrations were attended by religious scholars, caretakers, and devotees. Mutawali Ziyarat Younis Haji thanked the administration for ensuring smooth arrangements, including



uninterrupted water, power, and transport facilities.

"Thousands of devotees from across the region had participated in the sacred event," he said. During the occasion, religious scholars highlighted the life, teachings, and spiritual contributions of Hazrat Sheikh Noor-u-Din Noorani (RA), who devoted his life to

preaching Islam and spreading harmony. Devotees were seen offering prayers, distributing sweets, almonds, and walnuts within the shrine premises. The Urs will continue till Wednesday, with special prayers scheduled on Wednesday and Jumma Namaz to be observed at 2:30 pm.

Kulgam scientist breaks belief that Saffron grows only in Pampore

Zahoor Ahmad Reshi urges agriculturists to 'move beyond textbooks, engage in hands-on experimentation'

GY CORRESPONDENT

KULGAM, OCT 20

Breaking a decades-old notion that saffron can only thrive in Pampore, agricultural scientist Zahoor Ahmad Reshi from Kulgam has successfully cultivated high-quality saffron in his home district. This marks a breakthrough in Kashmir's traditional saffron cultivation practices.

Speaking to the news agency, Reshi said he first experimented with saffron cultivation during a biophonics trial two years ago – an experiment that led him to several findings not documented in standard agricultural literature. "While collecting data during the trial, I discovered certain aspects of saffron growth that

were not mentioned anywhere. I applied those findings to the soil here, and the results were remarkable," he said.

According to Reshi, saffron is not limited to Pampore's soil conditions and can be cultivated anywhere in Kashmir, provided that certain environmental factors – especially water management – are properly maintained. "People often say saffron should not be given any water, but that's not entirely true," he explained. "During a particular stage of its life cycle – which I call the 'transformative phase' – saffron actually needs the same amount of water as vegetables. If it gets less, it won't grow properly, and the corms won't multiply."

Reshi, who is also working on a book detailing his findings, said that temperature and humidity play a vital role in saffron cultivation. He observed that in Kulgam, the optimum temperature arrives earlier than in Srinagar, leading to earlier flowering and taller plants. "In Pampore, the fields lie beside the highway, and growth is often limited. But here, the plants grow up to 22 inches tall – that is the difference proper moisture makes," he noted.

Clarifying a common misconception, he said that saffron should remain dry only during its dormant phase, as excessive moisture then can cause rotting. However, during its growth phase, balanced

humidity is essential for healthy flowers and corm multiplication. Reshi believes that with a controlled environment, it is even possible to harvest two to three saffron crops a year, provided conditions like temperature and humidity are properly managed. Recounting how the experiment began, he said the idea struck when a senior colleague, Sheikh Farhan, was about to discard leftover saffron corms from an experiment. "I stopped him and said, 'Don't throw them away – let me use them.' That is how it all started," Reshi said. Encouraging local farmers, Reshi said saffron can be cultivated much like vegetables – either commercially or

out of personal interest – as every part of the plant has economic value. "Saffron farming can be highly successful if approached with a proper mindset. Anyone with passion can do it," he added. Acknowledging the support of his family and colleagues, Reshi said his work has been driven purely by passion and curiosity. "My family and seniors have supported me throughout. They're proud of my work and never discourage experimentation," he said. Concluding with a message for young agriculturists, Reshi urged them to move beyond textbooks and engage in hands-on experimentation. "Not everything in literature is true," he said.

GY CORRESPONDENT

SRINAGAR, OCT 20

In a major breakthrough under its ongoing "Operation Fire Trail", the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has successfully busted a sophisticated smuggling attempt involving the illegal import of Chinese-origin fireworks and firecrackers into India.

During this operation, DRI officers intercepted a 40-foot container at Nhava Sheva port, originating from China and destined for ICD Ankleshwar, which was declared as carrying "leggings." A detailed examination revealed

46,640 pieces of concealed Firecrackers/ Fireworks hidden behind a superficial layer of garments at the front. The entire consignment, valued at ₹48.82 crore, was seized.

Subsequent searches led to the recovery of incriminating documents revealing the modus operandi of the smuggling syndicate, and the arrest of a key person behind it from Veraval, Gujarat.

The import of firecrackers is 'Restricted' under the ITC (HS) Classification of the Foreign Trade Policy and requires valid licences from both the Directorate General of

Foreign Trade (DGFT) and the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO) under the Explosives Rules, 2008.

The unlawful import of such hazardous goods poses grave risks to public safety, national security, critical infrastructure, and the wider shipping and logistics chain. The DRI remains steadfast in its mission to safeguard public from hazardous contraband and uphold the integrity of the country's trade and security ecosystem, by detecting and dismantling such organized smuggling networks.