

Cong, BJP lock horns in all 68 constituencies of Himachal

Rulling party releases manifesto; woos farmers, students

SHIMLA, NOV 1 /-/- An intense electoral battle is on the cards in the hills and valleys of Himachal Pradesh with traditional rivals, the Congress and the BJP locking horns in all 68 constituencies and 62 MLAs in the fray.

Chief minister Virbhadra Singh, 10 ministers, eight chief parliamentary secretaries, deputy speaker Jagat Singh Negi, former chief minister Prem Kumar Dhumal and over a dozen former ministers are among those who have thrown their hat in the ring. Speaker BBL Butail opted out in favour of his son Ashish Kumar from Palampur while nomination papers of senior-most minister Vidya Stokes was rejected. At present, the Congress and the BJP have 35 and 28 MLAs respectively in the 68-member House besides four independents while one seat is vacant. Of the four independents, Karnesh Jang and Pawan Kajal have been given Congress tickets from Paonta Sahib and Kangra constituencies while the BJP has given tickets to Balbir Verma from Chopal.

Manohar Dhiman, who won as an Independent from Indora was denied ticket by the BJP and is not in the fray. Two-time MLAs Gobind Sharma and BK Chauhan from Arki and Chamba, veteran BJP and five-time MLA from Mandutta Rikhi Ran Kaula and Anil Dhiman, who won the by-election from Bhoranj in April this year, were denied BJP tickets. BK Chauhan is in the fray as rebel from Chamba. The BJP has fielded six women candidates while the Congress has given tickets to three women candidates including sitting Rajya Sabha member Viplov Thakur who is contesting from Dehra. In all 19 women candidates are in the fray. There are 338 candidates in the fray including 16 CPM candidates and over 180 independents and a dozen rebels of Congress including former ministers Singhi Ram (Rampur) and Vijay Singh Mankotia (Shahpur). The ruling Congress today released its manifesto, promising to strengthen the farmers by granting interest free loans to farmers, creation of 1.50

lakh jobs in the government sector and free laptops to 50,000 college students.

Restoration of the pre-2004 pension scheme, regularisation of contract employees after two years, enhanced daily wages, social security pension and appointment of anti-corruption grievance commissioner were the other promises made in the manifesto. Himachal Pradesh goes to polls on November 9. The manifesto released by chief minister Virbhadra Singh, health minister Kaul Singh, who is also chairman of manifesto Committee and AICC general secretary Sushil Kumar Shinde claimed that Congress had fulfilled 95 per cent of poll promises and would implement the remaining promises and fresh promises in the next term. If voted to power, Singh said his government has ensured speedy and uniform development of the entire state which is visible on the ground and development and welfare of all sections of people will be the main plank. The health minister said the Congress

provided government jobs to 75,000 youth during the present term and 1.50 lakh jobs would be given in the next five years.

For land acquired by the government, four times the market value will be given as compensation. Private bus permits would be given to youth to generate self-employment, interest free loan of Rs 1-lakh would be given to farmers for purchasing agricultural inputs and 90 per cent subsidy on anti-hail nets. The Congress government promised to reduce the period of contractual employees and daily agers from five years and ten years to three years and five years and now it has promised to regularise contract employees and daily wagers after two and three years respectively.

The manifesto also promises enhancement of pension by 5, 10 and 15 per cent after the age of 65, 70 and 75 years, additional increments to employees after fourth, ninth and fourteenth year of service, increasing agricultural inputs and free laptops to 50,000 college students.

Chouhan begins 2-month-long 'Madhya Pradesh Vikas Yatra'

BHOPAL, NOV 1 /-/- Chief minister Shriya Singh Chouhan today began a two-month-long 'Madhya Pradesh Vikas Yatra' with an aim to meet people and chalk out new programmes for the state's development.

Claiming that MP now means 'Mera Pradesh' for its residents, Chouhan said during the yatra, he will interact with people of all religions. Notably, the Assembly elections in the state are due later next year. "All of us can achieve progress rapidly, when we have more and more dialogue with the people. New development programmes jointly at a faster pace. From today I am starting the two-month-long 'Madhya Pradesh Vikas Yatra', the chief minister said. "During the yatra, I will prepare more programmes to develop Madhya Pradesh further

while meeting with people of all religions," Chouhan stated greeting the people on the occasion the state's 62nd Foundation Day. Recalling the progress made by the state since it was formed on November 1, 1956, he said: "It came to my notice during the deliberation that electricity was available only in Jabalpur city at the time of freedom (1947) and it reached Sagor after a short time. "Gradually the electricity reached only the urban areas and the people of the rural areas were leading their lives in darkness for a long period," he said. "When I see Madhya Pradesh today, it gives me immense pleasure and satisfaction that the state has succeeded in establishing a completely different image in all the areas of development," Chouhan said.

"Today, Madhya Pradesh has very good availability of

electricity. We have become a power surplus state of the country.

Most of the regions of the state are being illuminated. Farmers are being provided 10 hours supply, and 24 hours energy (power) is available in the residential areas of the state," he said. Referring to progress in other areas, Chouhan said: "Madhya Pradesh has become a leading state of the country owing to your (people's) hard efforts. Not only in India but changes have been witnessed in the outlook of the foreign countries today regarding MP."

People are now inquisitive to learn about Madhya Pradesh as compared to earlier and wish to connect them with the state. The meaning of MP has become 'Mera Pradesh' now for the people more than 'Madhya Pradesh', he said.

Punjab CM counters Oppn's charges on law and order

CHANDIGARH, NOV 1 /-/- Rejecting his predecessor Parkash Singh Badal's charge that Punjab was slipping into anarchy, chief minister Amarinder Singh said today that law and order in the state had improved as compared to the situation in the previous 10 years. Challenging the 90-year-old five-time former chief minister to prove his allegations, Singh said there was a marked decline in major incidents of crime since the Congress government took over in March this year. "In stark contrast to the jungleraj prevailing during the SAD-BJP regime led by Badal, a general state of peace prevails today in Punjab with incidents of sacrilege and drug trading, as well as heinous crimes like murder and kidnapping coming down drastically in the past eight months," the 75-year-old chief minister claimed in a statement.

On Tuesday, Badal had expressed concern over the law and order situation and



said that Punjab was fast slipping towards a complete and dangerous anarchy. His comments had come in the backdrop of the assassination of a Hindu outfit leader, Vipan Sharma, in Amritsar and other incidents including alleged attacks on Akali workers. In his statement, the chief minister claimed that people were earlier living under a blanket of fear with gangsters ruling the roost under the patronage of the ruling coalition.

With the Congress government cracking down on them, gangsters and criminal elements are fleeing the state out of fear of arrest and penal action, he added. On Opposition charge about targeted killings being carried out in the state, Amarinder Singh said that such attacks commenced almost two years ago, when the Akalis were in power. "In fact, it was during the rule of the Badals when the state witnessed two fideyen (terror) attacks," he added.

Kerala observes formation day, CM calls for "corruption-free" state

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOV 1 /-/- Kerala today observed its 61st foundation day with chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan, calling for a "secular, democratic and corruption-free" state.

In a Facebook post, Vijayan said: "Let us all jointly march ahead for a secular, democratic and corruption-free Kerala." The chief minister in an article on the eve of the state's formation day, had said with neo-economist policies tightening its grip, some of the high social economic health indicators which the state was always proud of had started "sliding."

The LDF government was committed to reverse the trend through its policies, he said in the article published in various newspapers today.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also wished all Keralites on the occasion of Kerala Piravi day. In a tweet in Malayalam, he said: "Will pray for Kerala's Peace, development and prosperity in the coming years." The state was formed on November 1, 1956. According to Hindu mythology, Kerala was formed by Parasurama, an avatar of Maheshwara, as he threw his battle axe into the sea and from those waters, Kerala arose.



Kerala Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan presenting memento to writer and professor Panmana Ramachandran Nair on the occasion of 'Kerala Piravi' day in Thiruvananthapuram.

Death toll in Rajasthan transformer blast mounts to 14; probe ordered

JAIPUR, NOV 1 /-/- The toll in the transformer explosion in Rajasthan's Khatul village rose to 14 today, police said. A transformer had exploded in the Khatul village near Shaapura town of the state on Tuesday, killing five persons and injuring several others.

Medical superintendent of SMS Hospital, D Meena, said nine persons, who were sustaining severe burn injuries, succumbed while undergoing treatment at the SMS Hospital here late last night. "Women were performing 'Bhaat ceremony' (pre-wedding function) when the incident took place. Five persons had died on the spot and 22 others were rushed to the SMS Hospital. Out of the 22, nine more deaths, mostly that of women, were reported late last night. The casualties also included a pregnant lady. Three persons were discharged and ten are undergoing treatment at 14 today, police said.

Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje has ordered a high-level probe into the deaths of 14 people, including the victims at the SMS hospital here. Jaipur district collector Siddharth Mahajan announced a compensation of Rs 10 lakh for kin of the deceased. "The Jaipur Vidhyut Vitrnan Nigam Limited (JVNL) will give Rs 1 lakh to family of the deceased and Rs 5 lakh will be provided through CM relief fund," the police officer said. Congress leader Sachin Pilot called the incident unfortunate and said the explosion took place due to non-maintenance of the transformer. (PTI)

MNS and Cong workers clash in Dadar over hawkers' issue

MUMBAI, NOV 1 /-/- Workers of the Congress and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) clashed at Dadar this morning over the issue of hawkers' eviction, police said.

The clash broke out after the MNS workers disrupted the Feriwalla Samman Morcha (Hawkers' Felicitation March) organised by the city unit of Congress in support of the hawkers, police said. The workers of the Raj Thackeray-led party also raised slogans against Mumbai Congress chief Sanjay Nirupam. "Police swung into action and arrested 15 MNS cadres and eight Congress workers," deputy commissioner of police (Zone 5) Rajiv Jain told news agency PTI.

Jain said a case under relevant sections of the Maharashtra Police Act was registered against the workers of both the parties. Another senior official said mild force was used by the police personnel kept the situation under control. Shopkeepers and licensed hawkers due to keep their shops shut during this period. Nirupam said: "Congress party leaders and workers, mainly from Maharashtra, had organised this morcha to felicitate the Marathi hawkers. But that, too, was disrupted by the MNS. I blame the local police for the entire drama." "My only aim is to implement the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, which essentially gives rights to the street hawkers as well as to licensees. I hope this issue comes to the forefront," he added.

The MNS has adopted an aggressive stance against hawkers occupying railway station premises and has been evicting illegal hawkers from the railway station premises. "Battling for a water-based transport system for Mumbai, Tendulkar said "Water-based transport systems are integral to cities like Mumbai. This will help cut down road congestion and also help boost tourism in the city."

"We can draw examples from Hong Kong, New York and Singapore that have a dedicated water-based transport system. I have read recent reports of linking the various ferry points such as Gora/Andheri and others but I sincerely feel if multiple ferries are operated from multiple points in Mumbai, it will provide an alternative for people away from trains and roads," the Rajya Sabha MP added.

Sachin bats for dedicated hawker zones, water transport in Mumbai

MUMBAI, NOV 1 /-/- Cricket icon and Rajya Sabha member Sachin Tendulkar has suggested creation of dedicated hawker zones in the megapolis and other measures to combat various problems faced by Mumbai.

In a letter to Mumbai suburban district collector Deependra Singh Kushwaha, Tendulkar said, having a dedicated hawker zone/food zone will help clear pedestrian area in and around railway stations and on skywalks. "Pedestrians should be directed to take pavements (where available) or skywalks where constructed and not walk between traffic at station roads. Vacant spaces can be utilised in every suburb for creation of weekly markets with clear markings on space and temporary/permanent hawker zones," he said. Tendulkar wrote the letter in August, much before the recent agitation against illegal hawkers by the Raj Thackeray-led MNS erupted.

Battling for a water-based transport system for Mumbai, Tendulkar said "Water-based transport systems are integral to cities like Mumbai. This will help cut down road congestion and also help boost tourism in the city."

"We can draw examples from Hong Kong, New York and Singapore that have a dedicated water-based transport system. I have read recent reports of linking the various ferry points such as Gora/Andheri and others but I sincerely feel if multiple ferries are operated from multiple points in Mumbai, it will provide an alternative for people away from trains and roads," the Rajya Sabha MP added.

Jammu Police urge people to install CCTV cameras at colonies, shops

JAMMU, NOV 1 /-/- The police have urged residents of Jammu and Kashmir to install CCTV cameras in their colonies, shops and houses, and at important roads to prevent crime in their areas. Residents have also been asked to have details of tenants and domestic helps verified by the local police station, superintendent of police (SP), South Jammu, Sandeep Chaudhary said here. "We have appealed to people to install CCTV cameras in their mohallas (colonies), shops and at main roads. These cameras play a key role in identifying culprits and help prevent crime," Chaudhary said. The official said that CCTV cameras are instrumental in investigations, especially in cases of theft. "If families are going on a vacation, they should inform the police as thefts occur mostly when houses are left unattended for a long time," he said. These measures are more important during the wedding season. People should also keep valuables in bank lockers and not keep too much cash at their home, the SP said.

3 wanted Naxalites surrender in Sukma

RAIPUR, NOV 1 /-/- Three Naxalites, carrying rewards of various amount, have surrendered before the police in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district citing their "disillusionment" with the "hollow ideology" of Maoists. Laxman Podyiyam (27), Sukda Muchaki (30) and Manish Muchaki (27), all active as members of the naxal front wing Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sangthan (DAKMS), turned themselves in before the officials of the police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) at Tongpal, around 450 kms away from here, a local police official told news agency PTI.

While Podyiyam was carrying the reward of Rs 5000, Sukda Muchaki and Manish Muchaki were carrying a reward of Rs 2000 each on their heads, he added. "The trio were working under Kanger Ghati area committee of Darbha division of Maoists, which has been instrumental in executing several deadly Naxal attacks in south Bastar," the official said, adding that each surrendered ultra was given Rs 10,000 in cash as an "encouragement money".

The trio told the police that they were fed up and disillusioned with the hollow ideology of Maoists, he added. (PTI)



Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje meeting Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi.

Centre allocated Rs 109 cr to promote tourism projects: Puducherry CM

PUDUCHERRY, NOV 1 /-/- Puducherry chief minister V Narayanasamy today said the Centre has earmarked Rs 109 crores to promote tourism projects under 'Swadesh Darshan' in the Union Territory.

Addressing public on the occasion of the 63rd Liberation (De facto) day of Puducherry here, Narayanasamy said: "Tourism has been given priority by the administration and the government intended to promote Puducherry as a vibrant tourism destination." The Union Territory ministry has already earmarked Rs 109 crores for Puducherry to promote heritage and spiritual tourism under 'Swadesh Darshan' scheme. He further said the Rs 1,828 crore smart project being implemented in Puducherry through a specially floated statutory organisation, Smart City Project Limited would be yet another feather in the cap of the administration.

Earlier, chief minister took salute at a march past presented by various contingents. Speaker V Vaithilingam, Ministers, legislators of the ruling Congress, the French Consul General Catherine Suard, Director General of Police S K Gautam, chief secretary Manoj Parida and secretaries of various departments of the government were also present. Puducherry and its outlying regions of Karaikal, Mahé and Yanam became free from the French rule on November 1, 1954. (PTI)

Heritage tagged Mumbai Police HQ undergoing major restoration

MUMBAI, NOV 1 /-/- For the first time since it was built around 121 years ago, the Anglo-Gothic style heritage building housing the Mumbai police's headquarters is undergoing a major restoration work, a senior official said.

The landmark building, having an old world charm and commonly known as police commissioner's office, is located at the busy Crawford Market in South Mumbai. Designed by architectonic executive, engineer and surveyor John Adams, the iconic building's construction work had commenced on November 17, 1894 and it was inaugurated on December 24, 1896. Since its inauguration, various police commissioners, including Jehangir Bharucha, Julio Ribeiro, Hasan Gafoor, Satyapal Singh, Sanjeev Dayal and Rakesh Maria, operated from this historical building. The ground plus three storeyed building's restoration, entrusted to the Public Works Department's presidency division, is estimated to cost around Rs 15 crore, a senior police official said. The restored building's ground floor will have a police museum, which will showcase exhibits evoking memories of the landmark incidents in the city's crime chronicles. There will be a big lift attached to the museum, he said. There will also be a spacious record and storage room along with a lavishly appointed corridor. The official said. On the first floor, the authorities plan to set up a conference room with a seating capacity of 50, a lounge and a waiting room, he said.

The offices of the Police Commissioner and the joint commissioner of police (law and order) will also be renovated, he said, adding that plans for revamping the second and third floors were yet to be finalised. The internal restoration is expected to be completed in the next three months while the outside work will take about a year, he said.

"As the building is very old, its restoration and repairs have become necessary," Mumbai's Police Commissioner Datta Padsalgikar told news agency PTI. "When the building was constructed in 1894, there was no electricity. Gas lamps were used when the construction began. The work was carried out in the light of gas lamps at night. Now, we are replacing the old electrical wiring with the optical fibre cables," Padsalgikar said. Since the building is a heritage structure, the permission of the heritage committee, which includes district collector, PWD's executive engineer, deputy director of town planning and a professor from the J J School of Arts, was obtained before starting the restoration work in another police official said.