

Rajasthan polls: Over 20 per cent voter turnout in first three hours of voting

Agency
Jaipur, Dec 7

Over 20 per cent of over 4.74 crore voters exercised their franchise in the first three hours of polling in Rajasthan Friday amid reports of EVMs malfunctioning at some polling booths. The polling began at 8 am and the voting turn out was 20.9 per cent at 11 am, poll officials said. There were reports of some EVMs not working which delayed voting at a few polling booths. However, further details are awaited. As many as 51,687 polling booths have been set up in 199 out of the total 200 assembly constituencies where polling is going on amid tight security. A senior police officer said polling was taking place peacefully and elaborate security arrangements are in place. Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje, Pradesh Congress Committee

chief Sachin Pilot and other leaders were among those who exercised their franchise. Raje (Jhalrapatan), Pilot (Tonk), former chief minister Ashok Gehlot (Sardarpura) are among the 2,274 candidates in the fray. The election in Ramgarh constituency of Alwar district was put off following the death of Bahujan Samaj Party candidate Laxman Singh. The results will be out on December 11, along with those from the other four states which saw Assembly elections in the past few weeks. Raje, who is the BJP's chief ministerial candidate, is fighting against veteran BJP leader Jaswant Singh's son Manvendra Singh in Jhalrapatan, the constituency she has represented since 2003. Manvendra Singh just before the election, making the fight tougher for Raje this time. She had won 63 per cent of the

votes cast in 2013, winning the seat by a margin of 60,896. Tonk, with a sizeable Muslim population, is a keenly-watched contest between Sachin Pilot and BJP candidate and Rajasthan Transport Minister Yoonus Khan, who is the saffron party's only Muslim face in the elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had initially fielded sitting MLA Ajit Singh Mehta in Tonk. But in a change of strategy, the party dropped him and sent Khan to take on Pilot. This is a maiden assembly election for Pilot, a two-time MP who is seen as a chief ministerial possibility if the Congress wins. He has represented Dausa and Ajmer Lok Sabha constituencies in the past. In about 130 constituencies, the contest appears to be mainly between the BJP and the Congress. In the current House, the BJP has 160 seats and the Congress 25.

Congress MP Maulana Asrarul Haq Qasmi dies

Agency
Kishanganj, Dec 7

Congress MP and Islamic cleric Maulana Asrarul Haq Qasmi died of a heart attack at his village home in Kishanganj district on Friday, family members said. He was 76 and is survived by two sons and three daughters. A former state president of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hindi and member of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Qasmi had won the Kishanganj seat for the first time in 2009 Lok Sabha polls and went on to retain the seat five years later. In his condolence message, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar

said "Qasmi was known for probity in politics and his simplicity of heart. He was deeply interested in social work and enjoyed immense popularity in his constituency. "He had also played an important role in establishment of an extension campus of Aligarh Muslim University extension campus in Kishanganj." The chief minister announced that Qasmi's last rites will be performed with full state honours. RJD president Lalu Prasad issued a condolence message through his close aide Bhola Yadav, saying with the death of Qasmi, Bihar has lost an able and dedicated MP.

Delhi court to hear chief secy assault case on Jan 30

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 7

A Delhi Court on Friday said it would hear on January 30 the chief secretary assault case in which Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia have been named as accused. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Samar Vishal was told by the counsel for Kejriwal, Sisodia and other AAP leaders that they have not been provided with complete documents annexed with the charge sheet filed by the Delhi Police. The court asked the counsel for AAP leaders and police to complete the process of scrutiny of documents by January 30. The criminal case relates to alleged assault on the then Delhi Chief Secretary Anshu Prakash during a meeting at Kejriwal's official residence on February 19. Prakash was recently transferred and posted as

additional secretary in the Department of Telecommunications. Kejriwal and Sisodia had earlier approached the Delhi High Court challenging the trial court's order permitting two other advocates to conduct the prosecution on behalf of a Delhi Police officer, instead of a regular public prosecutor attached to the court concerned. The high court has sought response of the Delhi government, the police and Prakash on the plea. The ACMM, in an October 22 order, had said let the Delhi Police Commissioner assign the prosecution of this case to some officer not below the rank of Additional Commissioner of Police. Prakash had told the trial court that the Delhi Police had nominated three well-reputed and experienced counsels for appointment as Special Public Prosecutors and their consents had also been obtained. Despite recommendation

by the officers of the Home Department, the request of the Delhi Police was rejected by the Delhi Home Minister on grounds that the case did not disclose any special features, he had said. The plea was opposed by the Delhi Police in the trial court claiming that the complainant (Prakash) has not shown any "actual bias" but only an unfounded apprehension of bias and the other cases of similar accused persons have been conducted by regular prosecutors and no bias has been reported. On October 25, Kejriwal, Sisodia and nine other AAP MLAs were granted bail by the trial court in the assault case. The other two MLAs, Amanatullah Khan and Prakash Jarwal, who were also accused, were earlier arrested in the case and granted bail by the high court. The alleged assault had triggered a bitter tussle between the Delhi government and its bureaucrats.

Rath Yatra: BJP moves HC against refusal of permission

Agency
Kolkata, Dec 7

The BJP on Friday moved an appeal before a division bench of the Calcutta High Court against refusal of permission for its Rath Yatra. Granting leave to the BJP to file the appeal, a division bench comprising Justices B Somadder and A Mukherjee said it will hear the matter at 12.30 pm. The bench directed BJP's lawyers to serve copy of

the appeal to the West Bengal government and other respondents before the matter is taken up for hearing. A single bench of the high court on Thursday said it cannot grant permission at this stage for the BJP rally in Coochbehar, scheduled to be flagged off by party president Amit Shah on Friday, after the West Bengal government refused to allow the event on the grounds that it might cause communal tension.

The court directed that superintendents of police of all districts in West Bengal will file a report by December 21 to it on the holding of 'rath yatra' rallies by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), after hearing all district presidents of the party. Directing that the rally stands deferred till the next date of hearing on January 9, Justice Tapabrata Chakrabarty observed that the prayer of BJP for permission to hold the Rath Yatra cannot be granted at this stage.

People with big surnames came and went, but India could not develop: PM

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 7

Hitting out at the Congress, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday said people with "big surnames" ruled the country but India could not prosper despite having the best talent and natural resources. He also alleged that poverty was not alleviated as it could hit the "vote bank" of parties in the past. Addressing the 'Jagran Forum' organised by the

Dainik Jagran media group, the prime minister said, "People with big surnames came to power and went but no solution could be found to problems." He was making an oblique reference to the Nehru-Gandhi family. Modi said the country had targets but lacked commitment and passion. "If poverty was alleviated, how would the slogan of 'garabi hatao' be given ... it would hit vote bank politics," the prime minister said.

IndiGo first Indian carrier to have 200 aircraft in its fleet: Airline

Agency
Mumbai, Dec 7

Budget carrier IndiGo has said that it has become the first domestic airline to have 200 aircraft in its fleet. Four new aircraft have joined the fleet, including two Airbus A320neo (VT-IKA and VT-IKB) and two A320neo (VT-IZK and VT-IZI), taking the fleet count to 200 and number of deliveries to 226, IndiGo said in an internal communication. With the addition of VT-IZI, IndiGo has become the first Indian airline to have 200 aircraft in its fleet, the largest domestic carrier said in the

communication. The Gurgaon-based no-frills carrier, which enjoys over 40 per cent of the total domestic traffic, had inducted the 100th aircraft on December 24, 2015. "It has taken us only three years to take delivery of another 100 planes," it added. The airline's fleet now comprises 123 A320neos (current engine option), 61 A320neos (new engine option) as well as 12 regional jets ATR. IndiGo currently offers over 1,200 flights to 63 domestic destinations, which include 49 domestic and 14 international ones.

SC refuses to stay CBI probe against cops for firing during anti-Sterlite protests

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 7

The Supreme Court Friday refused to stay the Madras High Court order for a CBI probe against police officials for firing during the anti-Sterlite protests in Tamil Nadu in May this year. A bench headed by Chief

Justice Ranjan Gogoi issued notice to the CBI on the petition filed by the Tamil Nadu government challenging the High Court order. "We have to see the other side," the bench, also comprising Justice SK Kaul, said when senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi sought a stay of the high court's order.

In new video, Bulandshahr violence accused points fingers at slain UP cop Subodh Kumar Singh

Agency
Lucknow, Dec. 7

A day after Bulandshahr violence main accused Yogesh Raj claimed innocence on camera, a new video featuring another accused surfaced on Thursday. BJP leader Shikhar Agarwal, wanted by police for the mob violence that killed two, alleged that slain police inspector Subodh Kumar Singh is to be blamed for the incident. Agarwal, who has been named in the FIR by police, is Bharatiya Janata Party's Syana unit youth wing president. He's heard saying that it is the inspector "who created tension by stopping him and others from taking some carcasses to the Chingrawathi police post for filing an FIR over the alleged cow slaughter," as reported by Agency. Agarwal goes on to claim that Singh threatened to kill him and his aides, which he later reported

to Additional Director General of Police Avinash Chandra Maurya. The BJP leader also accused Singh of being "corrupt" and "siding with the Muslim community" to perpetuate cow slaughter. In Wednesday, Bajrang Dal leader Yogesh Raj – the main suspect in the Bulandshahr mob violence incident – claimed innocence. He alleges hearing about a "cow slaughter" at Mahaw village and reaching there with supporters. He went on to claim that they were still at the police station when reports of villagers pelting stones came in. "...We later went to the Siana police station to register our case. This is where we heard that the villagers were pelting stones and that there was firing in which a youth and a policeman received gunshot wounds...I was not present at the time of this second incident," says Raj. "I have nothing to do with it. I have full faith in God. I

will be cleared of all accusations," he added. A mob of around 400 people, including right-wing activists, clashed with the police on December 3 in Siana area of Bulandshahr district, after allegedly discovering cow carcasses thrown in a nearby jungle. The angry mob set fire to dozens of vehicles, stone pelted and fired at police who then retaliated with gunfire. Inspector Subodh Kumar Singh, the station house officer of Siana who once investigated Akhlaq lynching case, and 20-year-old Sumit Kumar were killed in the incident. Following the massive political and public outrage over the incident, the police arrested four people a day later. However, the main suspect – Bajrang Dal Bulandshahr convenor Yogesh Raj – is still absconding. Nearly 90 people have been named in an FIR filed in the case.

UN launches new framework to strengthen fight against terrorism

Agency
United Nations, Dec 7

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has launched a new framework to combat the scourge of international terrorism and coordinate efforts across the peace and security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable development sectors. Termed the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, the framework is an agreement between the UN chief, 36 organizational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL) and the World Customs Organisation, to better serve the needs of Member States when it comes to tackling the scourge of international terrorism. Speaking at the first meeting of the Compact's Coordination Committee here Thursday, Guterres highlighted the need to ensure full respect for

international human rights standards and rule of law in countering terrorism. "Policies that limit human rights only end up alienating the very communities they aim to protect and which normally have every interest in fighting extremism," he said, adding that as a result "such policies can effectively drive people into the hands of terrorists and undermine our efforts on prevention." Guterres said that despite recent successes against the ISIS and its affiliates, the threat posed by returning and relocating fighters, as well as from individuals inspired by them, remains high and has a global reach. He cited this year's Global Terrorism Index released by the Institute for Economic and Peace, which indicates that despite a 27 per cent fall in the number of deaths from acts of terrorism worldwide, the impact of terrorism remains

widespread, with 67 countries experiencing deadly attacks. "This is the second highest recorded number of countries in the past twenty years," he said. "Terrorist organization like Da'esh and Al Qaida continue to twist religion to serve their ends. At the same time, neo-Nazi and far right groups are also using the Internet as a platform to mobilize support across borders, exploit economic anxieties, radicalize, recruit and carry out attacks. It is our duty to protect communities from violent extremist groups and their hate-speech whoever they are," he said. He also urged greater vigilance against the misuse of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, drones and 3D (three-dimensional) printing, as well as against the use of hate-speech and distortion of religious beliefs by extremist and terrorist groups.

Nation indebted to armed forces for their service: Mamata

Agency
Kolkata, Dec 7

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday hailed the armed forces and said the nation is indebted to them for their service. Banerjee, in a Twitter post on Armed Forces Flag Day, extended her best wishes to personnel of the three armed forces. "Today is Armed Forces Flag Day. My best wishes to all those who are serving in the Indian Armed Forces. The nation

is indebted to them for their service. We must continue to work for the welfare of Indian Armed Forces personnel," the

CM tweeted. The Armed Forces Flag Day or the Flag Day of India is observed since December 7, 1949.

8 killed in separate accidents in UP

Agency
Agra, Dec 7

Eight persons were killed in separate accidents in Uttar Pradesh, police said Friday. Five persons were killed after an SUV collided head-on with a truck near Khandauli

on Agra-Aligarh road on Thursday evening, they said. Police said three persons died on the spot. One of the injured died on the way to S N Medical College hospital and another succumbed during treatment, they added.