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J&K records overall tentative turnout of 63.45%, higher than LS Polls

69.65% turnout in final phase; EC hails people's determination



■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The polling for the Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections concluded today in a peaceful and celebratory atmosphere, with the Election Commission dedicating the elections to the people of J&K acknowledging their determination and belief in the democratic process.

A voter turnout of 69.65 per cent was recorded in the third and final phase of voting Tuesday in the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said.

Overall, after the conclusion of the all three phases, the poll percentage stands at 63.45, which is higher than the turnout recorded in the recently held Lok Sabha elec-

tions in the Union Territory, the J&K CEO office said in a statement here.

However, he said the figures are tentative and likely to go up marginally with the final reports from the polling stations in far-flung areas and addition of postal ballots.

According to EC data, there were more than 39.18 lakh eligible voters in the final phase.

"Poll percentage in first phase (covering 24 constituencies on September 18) was 61.38 percent, in second phase (covering 26 segments on September 25) it was 57.31 percent and in last third phase (covering 40 seats) poll percentage is 68.72 percent (tentative). Overall poll percentage comes to 63.45 percent (tentative)," the statement said.

The ECI late night revised the third phase turnout to 69.65%.

The statement said the overall poll percentage in the assembly polls is far better than 57.89 per cent recorded in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections and 61.01 per cent in 2008 assembly elections.

However, it is slightly less than 65.84 percent in 2014 assembly elections, it said.

Highlighting the district-wise voter turnout in the last three elections -- two assembly polls (in 2008 and 2014) and one Lok Sabha elections (2024) -- the statement said the overall the poll percentage in the assembly elections in the Kashmir division remained 55.20 per cent against 47.27 per cent in Lok Sabha elections this year.

However, the 55.20 per cent was less than 2014 assembly poll percentage of 65.84 per cent and 2008 assembly poll percentage of 61.01 per cent.

Similarly, the 72.59 percentage of the Jammu division recorded during the three phases of assembly elections is higher than 69.63 per cent registered in Lok Sabha elections this year and 71.26 per cent registered in 2008 assembly polls but lower compared to 2014 assembly elections when overall 76.67 per cent polling was registered.

The statement said Srinagar, Pulwama, Shopian and Baramulla districts have set new records for voting this assembly election which is the best in the past three decades. Srinagar ► P11

'Testimony to vibrant democracy'

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha congratulated the voters of the third phase of assembly elections for the record turnout, saying the enthusiasm shown by them is a testimony to the vibrant democracy.

In a social media post, the Lieutenant Governor said, the great enthusiasm among voters in all three phases to exercise their franchise is a testimony to vibrant democracy in J&K and people's faith in democratic values.

The Lieutenant Governor posted on X: "Congratulations to the people for a record turnout in final phase of Assembly Elections. I applauded the tireless efforts of election officials, district admin, JKP & our security forces for successfully conducting multi-phased polls & strengthening the pillars of democracy. ► P11

Turnout falls in 9 Jammu districts, 14 of 20 overall

■ SAHIL RASGOTRA

Fourteen of the twenty districts across Jammu and Kashmir recorded lower voter turnout in the 2024 Assembly Elections than what was registered in 2014 polls, data from the election department revealed on Tuesday.

However, 19 of the 20 districts registered a turnout higher than what was logged in the Lok Sabha elections held earlier this year.

A deep dive into the statistics provided by the election department at 11 PM Tuesday evening revealed that both Jammu division and Kashmir division witnessed the percentage of people exercising their franchise in 2024 Assembly election dropping.

The overall voter turnout for Jammu and Kashmir also stood at 63.45% in 2024 against 65.84% in 2014 elections; however it is significantly higher than 57.89% registered in 2024 Lok Sabha elections. While in Kashmir division five

out of the ten districts registered a higher turnout, the numbers improved only in Kishtwar district across Jammu region.

Barring Kishtwar, which logged 80.20% turnout in 2024 polls against 76.03% in 2014 election, all nine districts of Jammu region including Doda, Ramban, Reasi, Udhampur, Kathua, Samba, Rajouri, Poonch and Jammu saw the figures dropping, some of them significantly.

The figures dropped by a couple of percentage points in Doda (from 73.92% to 71.32%), Poonch (from 76.92% to 74.37%) and Udhampur (from 76.89% to 76.09%), while the number were only marginally less in Ramban which logged 70.57% against 70.95% in 2014.

However, the biggest drop was witnessed in Rajouri (from 79.46% to 71.13%), Reasi (from 81.38% to 74.68%), Jammu (from 75.15% to 71.40%), Kathua (from 77.11% to 73.34%) and Samba (from 79.66% to 75.88%)

In Kashmir division, the equation was more complicated with ► P11

77 years after migrating, jubilant WPRs cast vote for first time in assembly polls; Valmiki community too

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Ruldu Ram's joy knew no bounds after he voted for the first time in his life at the age of 90, nearly eight decades after migrating from Pakistan during the Partition. He was among hundreds of West Pakistan refugees in the border town of R S Pura who cast their votes for the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

"I voted for the first

time. I was not entitled to vote before. We came from West Pakistan in 1947," he said.

This marks a historic moment for many who have long lacked political representation in the J&K assembly for the past 75 years.

Around 1.5 to 2 lakh people residing in various areas of Jammu, Samba and Kathua districts, particularly in the border regions, members of three communities — West Pakistan

refugees (WPR), Valmikis, and Gurmukhs — finally have domicile status following the abrogation of articles 370 and 35-A.

This made them natives of J&K and therefore get rights to vote in the assembly elections, employment, education and land ownership. Previously they could only vote in the Lok Sabha polls. In July of this year, the J&K administration decided to grant proprietary rights to WPR families for

the state land allocated to them during their resettlement after the 1947 migration.

"For us, it is a national festival today. It is a red-letter day in the history of these three communities, particularly West Pakistan refugees. We became part of true democracy in Jammu and Kashmir as we exercise our right to vote for the first time in our lifetime today," President of the West Pakistan Refugees ► P11

Situation 'stable' but 'not normal': Army Chief on eastern Ladakh row

NEW DELHI: The situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh is stable but not normal and remains sensitive, Chief of Army Staff Gen Upendra Dwivedi said on Tuesday amid the dragging standoff between Indian and Chinese militaries in the region.

Though a "positive signalling" is coming out from the diplomatic talks between the two sides, the execution of any plan depends on the military commanders on the ground, he said.

In the entire gamut, the "trust" has become the "biggest casualty", Gen Dwivedi said at a curtain raiser event on

Chanakya Defence Dialogue.

"The situation is stable, but it is not normal and it's sensitive. If that be the case what are we wanting. We are wanting that the situation that was there pre April 2020 should be restored," he added.

The military standoff between the two sides began in early May of 2020.

The full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points.

"Till the time the situation is not restored, as far as we are concerned, the situation will remain sensitive, and we are fully operationally prepared to

face any kind of a contingency," the Army Chief said.

He listed several pending issues such as troops on ground, buffer zones along the LAC and resumption of patrolling by troops as planned.

Gen Dwivedi also briefly touched upon the Indian military's overall approach towards China.

"As far as China is concerned, it has been intriguing our minds for quite some time. And I have been saying that with China, you have to compete, you have to cooperate, you have to coexist, you have to confront and contest," he said. India and China held two rounds of diplomatic ► P11

Rashid's bail extended till Oct 12

JAMMU: A Delhi court on Tuesday extended the interim bail of Baramulla Lok Sabha MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, till October 12, his lawyer said.

The 57-year-old will have to surrender the next day, Vikhyat Oberoi, Rashid's lawyer told a news wire in National Capital.

Rashid's counsel had moved an application seeking extension of the interim bail.

Rashid, who faces terror funding charges, was granted interim bail on September 10 and he walked out of the Tihar Jail on September 11. ► P11

Iran fires dozens of missiles into Israel as retaliation for killing of Hezbollah

JERUSALEM: Iran launched dozens of missiles into Israel on Tuesday, sharply escalating a conflict between Israel and the Iran-backed militias Hezbollah and Hamas that began nearly a year ago and threatening to push the Middle East closer toward a region-wide war.

The orange glow of missiles streaked across Israel's night sky as air raid sirens sounded across the country and millions of residents scrambled into bomb shelters. The attack raised the strong likelihood of an Israeli reprisal.

Before Iran's attack, Is-



rael had landed a series of devastating blows in recent weeks against Hezbollah's leadership in Lebanon. It then ratcheted up the pressure on the militant group — which has been firing rockets into Israel since the war in Gaza began — by launching what it said is a limited ground incursion in southern Lebanon.

Israel has said it will continue to strike Hezbollah until it is safe for citizens displaced from homes near the Lebanon border to return. Hezbollah has vowed to keep firing rockets into Israel until there is a cease-fire in Gaza. ► P11

High Voltage Drama as Wangchuk, 150 others detained at Delhi border; shutdown in Ladakh; hunger strike in Capital

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: High-voltage drama unfolded as climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and around 150 others were detained at the Delhi border while marching to the capital to demand Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh on Monday night, leading to them launching an indefinite fast at police stations where they have been kept.

Both the districts of Ladakh observed a complete shutdown on Tuesday, following a call by the KDA and LAB, disrupting daily life and movement across the region, against the detention while at least three petitions



were filed in the Delhi High Court on Tuesday against the detention, with a bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela agreeing to list a habeas corpus petition on

October 3.

The Ladakh leaders addressed a presser at Press Club of India in the national capital claiming that along with Wangchuk, other prominent

leaders including KDA Co-Chairman and former MLA Haji Asgar Ali Karbalai, CEC of LAHDC Kargil, Mohd Jaffar Akhoo, and Member of Parliament from Ladakh Mohd Haneefa, have also been detained, while expressing deep concern and disappointment over the government's decision to prevent the Padyatris from entering Delhi after a month-long peaceful march.

At the same venue, social activist Medha Patkar led another press conference under the banner of the National Alliance of People's Movements and announced that she would observe a day-long fast on Wednesday in

solidarity with Wangchuk and asked for public support.

The Congress led the attack against the union government, with Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi terming it as "unacceptable" and saying PM Narendra Modi would have to listen to Ladakh's voice, while Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the "arrogance of the Modi government", consumed in power, has detained a group of citizens from Ladakh peacefully marching to Delhi. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, People's Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti and CPI (M) leader MY Tarigami also ► P11

