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69.65% turnout ...

recorded 30.08 per cent polling this election compared to 24.83 percent in Lok Sabha polls, 27.75 per cent in 2014 assembly elections and 21.57 percent in the 2008 assembly polls.

Likewise, Pulwama marked a slight improvement as it touched 46.99 percent (this time) against 46.05 percent in 2008. In the 2014 assembly elections, it registered 44.08 per cent voting while it was 41.59 per cent in the Lok Sabha elections.

Shopian also recorded the highest poll percentage of 57.01 per cent in assembly elections this year compared to 43.88 percent in Lok Sabha elections (2024), 48.40 percent in the 2014 assembly elections and 50.65 per cent in the 2008 assembly elections.

The Baramulla district recorded 59.84 per cent polling in the 2024 assembly elections compared to 54.49 per cent in Lok Sabha elections earlier this year, 57.29 per cent in the 2014 assembly polls and 47.96 per cent in the 2008 assembly polls.

In the Jammu region, Kishtwar district recorded the highest poll percentage (80.20 percent) followed by Udhampur (75.87 percent) then Samba (75.22 percent) and Reasi (74.68 percent).

Among the 90 constituencies, the statement said the highest poll percentage has been recorded in Inderwal (82.16 percent) followed by Padder-Nagseni (80.67 percent) and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra (80.45 percent) in this assembly elections.

The votes will be counted on October 8.

The Election Commission in the evening said no reolls have been recorded so far in the three-phased Jammu and Kashmir assembly polls which concluded on Tuesday.

It also noted that despite an increase in the number of assembly seats from 83 in 2014 to 90 in 2024, the elections were completed in three phases this time as against five in 2014.

No major law and order incidents related to the elections were reported, a significant improvement from 2014 when over 170 incidents were reported, including 87 on polling days, it said.

There also have been no complaints pertaining to arbitrary preventive detention of political functionaries in these elections which is "unprecedented", the poll authority said.

The Election Commission (EC) had also strictly instructed against clubbing of polling stations just before the poll day, and accordingly, people voted at their actual polling station location as opposed to 98 polling stations shifted in 2014 at the eleventh hour.

The role of money and muscle power has been curtailed to a "significant extent", it said.

These assembly polls have seen a seven per cent increase in the number of candidates contesting as compared to the assembly elections in 2014.

Women candidates made a significant leap, increasing from 28 to 43 in the corresponding period, while independent candidates saw a 26 per cent rise.

Registered Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs) also demonstrated a remarkable 71 per cent increase in participation from 138 in 2014 to 236 in 2024, the EC said.

'Testimony to ...

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. Transparent, free & fair assembly polls 2024 will be written in golden letters in the history of J&K elections".

Turnout falls ...

Baramulla, Srinagar, Pulwama, Shopian and Kulgam districts registering a higher turnout, while the figures dipped in Kupwara, Bandipora, Gnaderbal, Budgam and Anantnag.

Region-wise, Jammu division witnessed a drop from 76.67% to 72.59% while the fall was more drastic in Kashmir Valley, going down from 65.84% to 55.20%.

However, at 63.45%, the 2024 Assembly election turnout was higher than 2024 Lok Sabha election's 57.89%, and barring Reasi, all 19 districts of Jammu and Kashmir witnessed an increase in the turnout.

77 years ...

Action Committee Labha Ram Gandhi told PTI.

Gandhi, who led the celebrations of the community in the border town, also known as the home of Basmati rice growers, said this was a dream come true for the community which had so far lived as "unwanted citizens".

This paves the way to elect an MLA from the community in the future, said the 63-year-old refugee leader whose name in the electoral roll at the Nundpur polling station in Samba.

"Credit goes to the prime minister and home minister for revoking Article 370, which enabled us to become voters of Jammu and Kashmir. We are grateful to them," he added.

According to records, 5,764 families of WPRs settled in various parts of Jammu after escaping West Pakistan during the Partition in 1947. The number of WPRs has increased to over 22,000 families or 1.5-2 lakh individuals.

Ahead of voting day in the final phase of polls in J&K, West Pakistan refugees celebrated by carrying out a parade through the markets in RS Pura's Purnapind area as hundreds of community members danced to beats of dhols and bands.

They visited a temple, offered prayers and exchanged sweets on the occasion. Similar scenes of celebration were witnessed in Samba and Akhnoor as well.

Enthusiasm was high among WPR voters at several polling booths in Charka, Bishnah, Chabbay Chak, Bhour Pind, Maira Mandrian, Kot Ghari, and Akhnoor in the Jammu and Samba districts.

Fifty-two-year-old Parveen Kumar, whose family had fled during the Partition and camped in RS Pura's Bhour camp area, voted at Bhour Pind.

He said, "The decades-old curse has been lifted today as we become voters of J&K. My father Nirmal Chand was a matriculate when they came here. He did not get any job when in 1947, a matriculate could secure positions like Tehsildars and officers. He was forced to do labour to feed his family. Who is responsible for that?"

"It was all because of Article 370, which barred us from becoming citizens of J&K. But we are thankful to Modi ji, who changed our fate. It is a festival for us. This day will be etched in the memory of all of us," Kumar added.

Mohinder Kumar, whose family came from Jhelum town in Pakistan and settled in Jammu, arrived with his son Ankit to vote at the Gandhi Nagar polling station.

"We lived under the symbol of the half-moon and star (Pakistan flag) for 75 years in Jammu and Kashmir. There was a black spot on our foreheads. Today, it has been removed by the central government. It is a national festival for us," Kumar

said.

Sikh Magar Singh (80), whose family came from a village in Pakistan after losing four family members to communal violence there in 1947, said the first generation who migrated are voting along with the young generation for the first time in the assembly elections.

"We thank the prime minister for restoring the respect and dignity of over 2 lakh people by granting them citizenship. It restored all our rights, including the right to vote, the right to jobs, and the right to own land. It is a moment of celebration for us," he said.

Twenty-year old Trishika and her grandmother Sarveshwari Devi voted at a polling station in the border area of Akhnoor.

Around 2,000 members of the Gurkha community in Jammu's Gorkha Nagar, too, are brimming with excitement now that they have voting rights.

Their ancestors migrated from Nepal to J&K decades ago to serve alongside the former Dogra Army. Even today, most families have at least one family member who is a war veteran.

"It was a dream come true for me and my family to vote in the assembly elections. We express our gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji and Home Minister Amit Shah ji for transforming our fortunes here. Thanks to their bold decision to revoke Article 370, we are now citizens of J&K," Suresh Chhetri said.

Situation 'stable' ...

talks in July and August with an aim to find early resolution of outstanding issues in their standoff on the LAC in eastern Ladakh.

"The positive signalling is coming from the diplomatic side, but what we need to understand (is that) the diplomatic side gives options and possibilities," Gen Dwivedi said.

"But when it comes to the execution on ground, when it relates to ground per se; it is dependent on the military commanders on both sides to take those decisions," he said, responding to a question.

The Chief of the Army Staff also referred to disputes in Depsang and Demchok and said all the pending issues are on the table.

"Whatever one can imagine is on the table along the northern front and that includes Depsang and Demchok," he said.

Asked about China's construction of villages along the frontier with India, the Army Chief said that country is carrying out "artificial immigration" and "settlements".

"No problem, it is their country," he said, adding India is also having "model villages" in border areas.

"But more importantly, now the state governments have been empowered to put in those resources and this is the time when the army, state governments and supervision by the central government are all coming together," he said.

The model villages that are being built now will be even better, the Army Chief said.

He said there is no Chinese population close to the LAC and that is the reason Beijing is carrying out the "artificial immigration".

The Army Chief also cited how the Chinese fishermen first came to the South China Sea and then the military arrived.

Last month, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks in the Russian city of St Petersburg with a focus on finding an early resolution to the row.

In the talks held on the sidelines of a conclave of BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) nations, the two sides agreed to work with "urgency" and "redouble" efforts to achieve complete disengagement in remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh.

In the meeting, NSA Doval conveyed to Wang that peace and tranquility in border areas and respect for the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are essential for return of normalcy in bilateral ties.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

India has been maintaining that its ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of Corps Commander-level talks to resolve the standoff.

India has been pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas.

The two sides held the last round of high-level military talks in February.

Rashid's bail ...

He campaigned in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections.

Iran fires ...

Israel vowed retaliation for Iran's missile barrage, which it said had caused only a few injuries.

Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said the country's air defenses intercepted many of the incoming missiles, though some landed in central and southern Israel.

"This strike will have consequences," he said. He said the attack had caused only "very few" injuries, but did not elaborate.

Israel and Iran have fought a shadow war for years, but rarely have they come into direct conflict.

Israel considers Iran to be its greatest foe -- citing Iran's repeated calls for Israel's destruction, its support for Arab militant groups and its nuclear program. Iran denies Israeli accusations that it is developing a nuclear weapon.

Moments before Iran launched its missiles, a shooting attack in Tel Aviv left six people dead, police said, adding that the two suspects who had opened fire on a boulevard in the Jaffa neighborhood had also been killed.

The United States had warned there would be severe consequences for Iran in the event of an attack on Israel. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris monitored the attack on Israel from the White House Situation Room.

Iran launched another direct attack on Israel in April, but few of its projectiles reached their targets. Many were shot down by a U.S.-led coalition, while others apparently failed at launch or crashed in flight.

Iran said it fired the missiles into Israel as retaliation for attacks that killed leaders of Hezbollah, Hamas and the Iranian military. It referenced Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and Revolutionary Guard Gen. Abbas Nilforushan, both killed in an Israeli airstrike last week in Beirut. It also mentioned Ismail Haniyeh, a top leader in Hamas who was assassinated in Tehran in a suspected Israeli attack in July.

Earlier on Tuesday, Israel said it had begun limited ground operations against Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

Israeli airstrikes and artillery fire pounded southern

Lebanese villages, and Hezbollah responded with a barrage of rockets into Israel. There was no immediate word on casualties.

While Hezbollah denied Israeli troops had entered Lebanon, the Israeli army announced it had also carried out dozens of ground raids into southern Lebanon going back nearly a year.

If true, it would be another humiliating blow for Hezbollah, the most powerful armed group in the Middle East. Hezbollah has been reeling from weeks of targeted strikes that killed Nasrallah and several of his top commanders.

On Tuesday morning, Israel warned people in southern Lebanon to evacuate to the north of the Awali River, some 60 kilometers (36 miles) from the border and much farther than the Litani River, which marks the northern edge of a U.N.-declared zone intended to serve as a buffer between Israel and Hezbollah after their 2006 war.

The border region has largely emptied out over the past year as the two sides have traded fire. But the scope of the evacuation warning raised questions as to how deep Israel plans to send its forces into Lebanon.

High Voltage ...

hit out at the Centre

The BJP, however, described the Congress' condemnation of the detention of Wangchuk and several other Ladakhis as "hypocrisy in extreme".

Wangchuk was leading the march, 'Delhi Chalو Padyatra', which began from Leh a month ago. He and around 150 others from Ladakh were detained on Monday night.

The march was organised by the Leh Apex Body (LAB), which along with the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), has been spearheading an agitation for the past four years to demand statehood for Ladakh, seek its inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, early recruitment process along with a public service commission for Ladakh and separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil districts.

Wangchuk and those accompanying him were detained at the Delhi border for violating prohibitory orders and were taken to different police stations, including Bawana, Narela Industrial Area and Alipur, according to a police officer.

"We tried to convince them to go back as Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (earlier section 144 of CrPC) which prohibits assembly of five or more people, is imposed in the national capital but they were adamant," the officer said.

They remain under detention, he said.

Delhi Police on Monday had banned the gathering of five or more persons, people carrying banners, placards arms and or protests in the central part and bordering areas for the next six days in the national capital, citing law and order issues, including calls of protests given by several organisations.

A representative of the group claimed that Wangchuk was taken to Bawana police station and was not being allowed to meet his lawyers.

The activist and others have launched an indefinite fast at the police stations where they have been kept, the representative said.

Wangchuk and the other members of the group had sought official permission and even emailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah but that information was used to detain the protesters, the representative claimed.

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi was stopped outside the Bawana Police Station on Tuesday while she was heading to meet Wangchuk. Atishi reached the police station around 1 pm but was stopped by police officers, the party said in a statement.

Ladakh MP Mohamad Haneefa told a newswire that around 30 women were among those detained and they were kept with the male detainees.

"Several people from Ladakh have been detained. They have been kept at different police stations. I met some of them late last night and early today," Haneefa said.

He said around 60-70 people from Kargil who had come to join the march at the Singhu border on Tuesday morning were also stopped by Delhi Police.

Around 30 women were also detained, Haneefa said. "They were kept in a place where male detainees were also there," he said.

However, Delhi Police had said on Monday night that women protesters were not detained.

Wangchuk, in a post on Instagram shortly before being detained, shared visuals from the Delhi border, where amid huge police presence their buses were stopped.

The climate activist could be seen interacting with police officials in the video.

In his post, Wangchuk said several vehicles of Delhi Police and Haryana Police were accompanying their buses and while they initially thought they were being escorted, as they approached the national capital, it was clear they were going to be detained.

"As we are approaching Delhi, it appears we are not being escorted, we are being detained," Wangchuk said.

He said around 1,000 police personnel have been deployed at the Delhi border and they have been informed that heavy deployment of security forces has been done at the Ladakh Bhawan in Delhi, and in areas where students from Ladakh reside.

"It appears they don't want to allow this padyatra to take place," he said.

In Delhi, Leh Apex Body head Dorjay Chering Lakruk, President Anjuman Imamia Leh, Ashraf Barcha, President Anjuman Moimul Islam Leh, Dr Abdul Qayoom, student representatives of AKSAD and LSWS and other leaders addressed a press conference, expressing deep concern and disappointment over the government's decision to prevent the Padyatris.

"Alongside Sonam Wangchuk, prominent leaders from Ladakh, such as Kargil Democratic Alliance Co-Chairman and former MLA Haji Asgar Ali Karbalai, Chief Executive Councilor of LAHDC Kargil, Mohd Jaffar Akhone, and Ladakh's Member of Parliament Mohd Haneefa, have also been detained. This situation has caused deep anguish and unrest within the Ladakhi community," a statement said.

The march was organized to advocate for the four-point demands that the government had promised to address. Despite years of patient waiting, these promises remain unfulfilled, and the voices of the Ladakhi people continue to be ignored. It is imperative that the legitimate concerns of Ladakh's people are acknowledged and resolved, it said.

"We, the people of Ladakh, call upon the Central Government to respect our demands and allow us to live in peace, in harmony with our land, culture, and way of life," added the statement.

Back in Ladakh, the daily life remained disrupted as both Leh and Kargil districts observed a complete shutdown in protest, upon a call given by KDA and LAB.

As reports of the detentions spread, thousands of emotional and outraged Ladakhis gathered at the Polo Ground in Leh to stage a peaceful protest. Slogans were raised against the Union government and the Delhi Police, with demonstrators accusing authorities of undermining democratic principles by detaining a peaceful group of protesters.

The detention also led to wide spread condemnation by the political parties across the country with Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi terming it as "unacceptable" and saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi would have to listen to Ladakh's voice.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "The detention of Sonam Wangchuk ji and hundreds of Ladakhis peacefully marching for environmental and constitutional rights is unacceptable."

The former Congress chief also asked why elderly citizens were being detained at Delhi's border for standing up for Ladakh's future.

"Modi ji, like with the farmers, this 'Chakravyuh' will be broken, and so will your arrogance. You will have to listen to Ladakh's voice," Gandhi said.

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.

Kharge said it was nothing but a "cowardly action, and is deeply undemocratic in nature".

In Ladakh, there is a growing wave of public support, with widespread calls for safeguarding tribal communities under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, he said.

"Instead, the Modi government wants to exploit the ecologically sensitive Himalayan glaciers of Ladakh to benefit its crony friends. This incident tells us that the fight against Modi Govt's brazen despotism is far from over!" Kharge said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra hit out at the government, saying the propaganda machinery's "world's most powerful" prime minister is "so weak" that "he got scared" of a few protesters.

Noting that Wangchuk and more than 100 of his companions were coming to Mahatma Gandhi's Samadhi on foot from Ladakh and were detained at the Delhi border, she asked, "Is Delhi a dictator's fortress where the common people cannot enter?"

"Is it a crime to demand to save the environment and restore democracy?" Priyanka Gandhi said.

Such "undemocratic actions" are totally unacceptable in a democracy, she added.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday cautioned the Centre against "political deafness", urging it to listen to the "voice" of people from Ladakh including Wangchuk, who were allegedly stopped at Delhi's border by police.

In a post on X in Hindi, Yadav said, "Those who are afraid of peace are scared from within. The BJP government cannot achieve anything by obstructing the peaceful Delhi visit of environmentalist and Ladakh well-wisher Sonam Wangchuk ji. If the Centre does not listen to the voice of the border, it will be called its political deafness."

People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti hit out at the Centre over the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and several other Ladakhis, saying even the fundamental right to protest has been "snatched" from the people.

"Even the very fundamental right to protest has been snatched from us for raising our voice against the onslaught on our identity & resources. We stand in solidarity with the people of Ladakh," Mehbooba said in a post on X.

CPI (M) leader M Y Tarigami condemned the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and several other Ladakhis, saying it reflects the government's "utter disregard" for democratic freedom.

"Condemning, in no uncertain terms, the detention of prominent climate activist Sonam Wangchuk along with his supporters at Singhu border. Scuttling the peaceful Delhi Chalو Padyatra of Wangchuk reflects the government's utter disregard for democratic freedom," he said in a post on X.

Social activist Medha Patkar also condemned the detention, likening their treatment to that of the farmers during their protests.

Calling it a conspiracy, Patkar announced that she would observe a day-long fast on Wednesday in solidarity with Wangchuk and asked for public support.

Environmentalists, climate experts, and social activists gathered for a press conference at the Press Club under the banner of the National Alliance of People's Movements to address Wangchuk's detention. They expressed their support for the demands of the 'Padyatris,' which include granting statehood to Ladakh and securing Sixth Schedule status for the region.

"These activists are being treated like the farmers were. After walking all the way on foot, they expected the Centre to engage in dialogue with them. Instead of talking, a prohibitory order was issued and they were detained in different police stations. This is a conspiracy," Patkar alleged.

She added that both the Prime Minister's Office and the Home Ministry were informed in advance about their march.

"A letter was written for October 3 but that was also rejected. The government is afraid of us and is using the police to block us," she said.

Meanwhile, the BJP described the Congress' condemnation of the detention of Wangchuk and several other Ladakhis as "hypocrisy in extreme".

Asked about the Congress' reaction, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "I don't know the facts. I will have to check the facts."

"If Rahul Gandhi has a comment to make, why (does) he maintain a conspicuous silence when cartoonists are lifted in Kolkata and a satirist is jailed in Tamil Nadu," Shankar asked, adding that the Congress leader's reaction to Wangchuk's detention was "hypocrisy in extreme".

At least three petitions were filed in the Delhi High Court on Tuesday against the detention of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and several others at the Delhi border.

A habeas corpus petition was mentioned before a bench of Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela for listing on October 3 by a lawyer for Wangchuk's "next friend".

The court agreed to list it on that day if the plea is in order, saying that it has already allowed a request for listing in another petition concerning the detention.

A habeas corpus petition is filed seeking direction to produce a person who is missing or illegally detained.

Two other writ petitions, filed by social activist Azad, who said that he works closely with Wangchuk and the Leh Apex Body, and lawyer Mustafa Haji, the legal advisor to the Body, also assail the order of the Delhi Police prohibiting assembly of five or more "unauthorised" people as well as protests in various parts of the capital, including the border, from September 30 to October 5.

Haji's petition was mentioned for listing before the Chief Justice's bench by lawyer Vikram Hegde before it rose for a lunch break.

Refusing to list the matter today itself, the court agreed to list it for hearing on October 3, if it is in order by 3.30 pm.

The two petitions seek an order directing the release of those detained as well as permission for the group to peacefully enter Delhi to raise their concerns.