

# FROM EDITOR'S DESK

## J&K's Long Pending Date With Democracy

Having played second fiddle to Assembly for seven decades, Lok Sabha polls 2024 are different. Jammu and Kashmir's past is the mirror of its present

Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing its first electoral exercise in five years, with first of its five Lok Sabha constituencies having voted last week, and the second one undergoing polling as you read this edition. The last time, people here voted, Jammu and Kashmir was a full-fledged state, had six parliamentary constituencies, Ladakh was a part of its territorial jurisdiction and it had its special status intact. Ever since, people here have witnessed the erstwhile state's reclassification as a union territory, the detachment of Ladakh from its territorial and electoral boundaries, and the Jammu and Kashmir of today is as integral a part of India as any other region.

Without a doubt, these much-anticipated and much-talked-about Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir are in the limelight across the globe. And that's all about the promises of this election being different from earlier ones. How closely this enthusiasm of change among the 86.9 lakh electorate of Jammu and Kashmir translates into ground reality remains to be seen as this year's elections will be held in seven phases spread over 44 days in seven phases.

As many as 86.9 lakh electorate including 3.4 lakh first-time voters are eligible to vote in these elections in Jammu and Kashmir. These include 44.34 lakh men and 42.55 lakh women, of which there are 67,400 persons with disabilities and 158 transgenders. The ongoing election will see average 747 voters per polling station with a total of 11629 stations set up across the Union Territory, of which



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9307 are located in rural areas and 2322 in urban areas. Jammu and Kashmir will vote in the first five phases. Udhampur has voted on April 19, while Jammu is voting on April 26. The Anantnag constituency, which spreads across the Pir Panjal range and includes Rajouri and Poonch areas after delimitation, will go to polls on May 7, followed by the Srinagar Lok Sabha seat on May 13, and Baramulla constituency on May 20, and the results would be announced on June 4.

In this edition, we take a deep dive into how Lok Sabha elections have been held in Jammu and Kashmir in last 72 years, which includes the first three Lok Sabha elections, in which people in Jammu and Kashmir were not eligible to vote for their representatives; the first ever representatives of Jammu and Kashmir in Lok Sabha and how and why they were chosen; the date with democracy which Jammu and Kashmir missed in the 1990s; and where the now-relegated-to-just-another-union territory finds itself as it goes to voting for the first time post the August 2019 abrogation of Article 370.

Our team delves deep into the past trends of voting in Lok Sabha elections over the past seven decades and how crucial these trends would be in shaping the discourse of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. While Lok Sabha elections never evoked a strong excitement among the people and leaders of erstwhile State, alike, the long due date of electorate with the democracy has certainly made this year's election an interesting proposition.

### In This Issue



#### Complete History of Lok Sabha elections in J&K, since 1952

From accession to abrogation, how Lok Sabha elections were held in Jammu and Kashmir, and what will change as its votes in first polls since Article 370 abrogation

P-3

#### HISTORY

##### Maharaja Gulab Singh

Persian Historiography under first Dogra ruler ▶ P12

#### LITERATURE

##### Siachen 1987

History & geography of the frozen frontier ▶ P14

#### EDUCATION & CAREER

##### Visual Arts

Career and opportunities in aesthetic expression landscape ▶ P15

#### ENVIRONMENT

##### Pine Needles of J&K

Converting fire risk into livelihood opportunities ▶ P16

#### HEALTH & WELLNESS

##### Indian Medical Services

Discontinued in 1947, does the country need its re-introduction? ▶ P17

#### WRAP-UP

##### Congress, Redistribution & Muslims

Huge uproar over Modi's contentious address in Banskara, ECI gives notice ▶ P20

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