

Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir: The complete history since 1952

■ TEN RESEARCH DESK

The lower house of the Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha or the House of the People, came up as per the provision of Article 79 of the Constitution of India as the highest legislative body composed of representatives of the people chosen by direct election on the basis of the adult suffrage. The maximum strength of the House envisaged by the Constitution is 552. As Per Article 81 of the Constitution, Subject to the provisions of article 331, the House of the People shall consist of— (a) not more than five hundred and thirty members chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the States, and (b) not more than [twenty members] to represent the Union territories, chosen in such manner as Parliament may by law provide. At present, the strength of the House is 543. As per the initial breakdown of seats among the states, Jammu and Kashmir was allocated six seats. Following reorganisation of 2019, Jammu and Kashmir is left with only five Lok Sabha seats while the sixth stands allocated to the Union Territory of Ladakh.

The Lok Sabha (Lower house of the People) was duly constituted for the first time on 17 April 1952 after the first General Elections held from 25 October 1951 to 21 February 1952. These elections, however, didn't take place in Jammu and Kashmir as no delimitation was conducted in this state till mid 1960s.

Therefore, the members to the first, second and third Lok Sabha in 1952, 1957 and 1962, respectively, were sent through nominations rather than direct elections which took place for the first time ever in Jammu and Kashmir in 1967.

While initiating the process of nomination (through supposedly indirect elections) first ever batch of six members to the Lok Sabha on March 25, 1952, the then Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah made following statement:

“in normal conditions a different method would have been adopted from the present one in order to choose members for the

Indian Parliament. I mean to say that for the four seats of the Councils of State the popular vote would have been for in a suitable way and the members for the House of the People would have been elected directly. The whole state would be divided into six constituencies for this purpose and every constituency would comprise six lakh or at the most seven lakh people and every adult would be entitled to vote. Like other States the voting would have taken place in the beginning of 1952 and then the successful candidates would have been sent to the House of the people. The present condition of the State is like this that a considerable area and a section of the population is still under the enemy occupation. Many people still live as refugees and are scattered over in the far-flung corners of India and Pakistan. For these reasons the delimitation of the constituencies was a difficult problem and in view of this difficulty provision was made in the Peoples Representation Act that election for the Indian Parliament in the Jammu and Kashmir State will be conducted in a different manner from the one to be observed in other States of India. And this is the manner according to which we are electing these ten representatives to be sent to the Indian Parliament”.

Sheikh Abdullah then moved resolution for recommendation of six members to the Lok Sabha. In the same resolution, four persons were nominated to the Rajya Sabha.

“This Assembly proposes the names of the following persons for being chosen as representatives of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in the two Houses of the Parliament of India and authorizes the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to make a recommendation to the President of the Indian Republic in accordance therewith.

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