# KASHMIR OBSERVER®

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#### **History In Making: CEC**



**Observer News Service** 

Srinagar: Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday expressed immense satisfaction with the voter turnout in the ongoing Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, calling it a historic moment for the J&K.

Addressing the press at Delhi, Kumar said that the enthusiasm with which voters were participating across the valley and Jammu marks a strong statement of support for democracy.

"We are very happy that voting is taking place across the entire valley and Jammu with extreme fervor and enthusiasm," Kumar said. The sight of long lines of voters in different parts of the region, including Srinagar, is a powerful visual of democratic participation.

Kumar said that the significance of the turnout in areas where calls for boycott had previously been common. "Even in areas where there used to be calls for disruption, there are people around in long queues

since morning," he said.

He described how voters, standing peacefully in queues under the trees of Chenar and in high mountain | More on P6

## Phase-II: J&K Records Over 56% Turnout, Srinagar Lowest



**Observer News Service** 

Srinagar: More than 56 per cent voters on Wednesday exercised their franchise in the second phase of polling for 26 seats in Jammu and Kashmir assembly

The polling passed off peacefully, officials said. Addressing

'Old Faces Fail Syed Mohammad Burhan

To Impress':

**Srinagar Sees** 

**Low Turnout** 

He said the polling was peaceful and by and large smooth. | More on P6

and Reasi.

conference here, J&K Chief

Electoral Officer P K Pole said

the second phase recorded a

Pole said the percentage was

tentative as polling was going

on at some places like Hazratbal

turnout of 56.05 per cent.

s the second phase of voting for Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections in 26 Assembly Constituencies concluded on Wednesday, the voter | More on P6

## **KASHMIR REGION:**

Central Shalteng: 29.09% Chanapora: 26.95% Eidgah: 34.65% Habba Kadal: 18.80% Hazratbal: 30.66% Khanyar: 24.00% Lal Chowk: 30.44% Zadibal: 28.36%:

Beerwah: 62.50% Chadoora: 54.16% Charar-e-Sharief: 66% Khansahib: 67.70% Ganderbal: **53.44%** Kangan (ST): 67.60%

#### **JAMMU REGION:**

Gulabgarh (ST): 72.19% Reasi: 69.09% Mata Vaishno Devi: 80% Mendhar: 69.67% Poonch Haveli: 72.71% Surankote: 72.18% Budhal: **66.95%** Kalakote-Sunderbani: 66.37% Nowshera: 69% Rajouri (ST): 70.56%

Thanamandi: 68.44%

#### 20 Of 26 Segments **Record Lower Participation Than 2014**

**Press Trust Of India** 

Srinagar: As many as 20 of the 26 assembly segments that went to polls on Wednesday in the second phase of voting in Jammu and Kashmir have registered lower voter turnout than that in the 2014 assembly elections.

According to the data of the Election Commission of India, the overall voting percentage in the 2014 polls was above 60 per cent for the assembly segments in the six districts that went to polls on Wednesday.

J&K Chief Electoral Officer P K Pole, while giving the data for Wednesday's polling, said an estimated 56.05 per cent voter turnout was re-

corded in the six districts. Pole said the data was tentative and can go up

**BALLOT BREAKDOWN: WHAT DROVE VOTERS TO THE POLLS?** 

**Budgam:** 2014: 66.32% | 2024: 51.13%

**Chrar-e-Sharief:** 

2014: 82.44% | 2024: 67.44% **Budhal:** 2014: 82.50% | 2024: 68.58%

2014: 21.31% | 2024: 18.39% slightly as polling was go-

ing on at some polling stations even at 6.45 pm. There were 25 assem-

bly segments in Srinagar, Ganderbal, Budgam, Reasi, Rajouri and Poonch districts in the 2014 polls. However, the number increased by one seat to 26 in these six districts following the delimitation exercise undertaken in 2022.

While five assembly segments in Srinagar district recorded a higher turnout than | More on P6

#### **LG Congratulates Voters, Election Officials**



**Observer News Service** 

Srinagar: The Lieutenant Governor Manoj Snha has extended hearty congratulations to the voters of the second phase of Assembly Election for turning out in large numbers to exercise their franchise. In a social media post, the Lieutenant Governor applauded the spirit of the people to strengthen the democratic values and for upholding the rich democratic traditions.

"I would like to congratulate voters of Reasi, Poonch, Rajouri, Ganderbal, Budgam and Srinagar for turning out in large numbers to exercise their franchise. I applaud the spirit of the people to strengthen the democratic values and to uphold our rich democratic traditions."

"Record voter turnout is a shining example of vibrant and progressive democracy. I also appreciate the remarkable contribution of the election officials, JKP, and security forces for smooth, free, fair and peaceful polling in 26 Assembly | More on P6



#### Foreign Diplomats Capture Poll Mood In Kashmir

**Observer News Service** 

Srinagar: A 15-member delegation of foreign diplomats took everybody by surprise at a polling station at Central Kashmir's Budgam on Wednesday. The diplomats stated that their purpose is to "observe polling and to see how democracy is working on ground."

The high-level comprises senior diplomats from the USA, Mexico, Spain, South Africa, Norway, South Panama, Singapore, Algeria, Philippines, Somalia, Guyana, Nigeria, Tanzania and

The members of the delegation said that they have come to Kashmir on the invitation of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Government of India as part of the outreach program. The delegation took a stroll at a Budgam | More on P6

#### **First-time Voters Seek**

**Better Education Opportunities** 

Majid Nabi

Srinagar: In several parts of the Srinagar city, excited first-time voters cast their ballots in the hopes that the port underprivileged students with welfare programs and scholarships.

Many young boys and girls said that they voted for "a dramatic finale to the decadelong suffocation that people in Kashmir endured without an elected government.'

"We genuinely don't support or oppose any political parties; all political parties, whether national or local, strive for development, peace, and prosperity. We wish to bridge the gap created by Kashmir's | More on P6

#### 'Electricity Bills, Drug Crisis'

## **Women Voters Voice Their Concerns**

Dabirah Hassan

Srinagar: Amidst the buzz of elections in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, the air was thick with voices eager for change. As women ined up at polling stations. they pressed concerns about 'skyrocketing' electricity bills and the escalating drug crisis

in Kashmir. An elderly woman, waiting for her turn to vote at a polling station in the heart of Srinagar city on Wednesday told a visiting foreign diplomat that she is concerned about the erratic electricity supply and the ris-

ing bill amounts. "The electricity supply has been destroyed and tariff meters have been installed. Now they say water consumption will also be metered." the

Delhi, Jorgan K Andrews. While the woman refused to identify herself, she said she spoke her heart out hoping that the diplomat's intervention will bring some relief to poor people from the rising electricity bill amounts.

woman in her late 60s told the US Deputy Chief of Mission in

Unaware that foreign diplomats were invited here only to witness the Assembly poll process, the woman said she is hopeful that the "Angrez" will take up the matter with the central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Mehmooda, a septuagenarian from the old city's Kawdara, said the new administration, which consists of local representatives, will pull the valley out of its political quagmire. | More on P6

#### 'New Govt Will **End Bureaucratic Hegemony'**

**Majid Nabi** 

Srinagar: Despite recording a comparatively low turnout than the other five other districts in the second phase of assembly elections on Wednesday, voters in Srinagar's downtown cast ballots in favor of 'statehood' and the overall development of the city.

People in the downtown believe that maiden assembly elections following the abrogation of Article 370 would put an end to 'bureaucratic hegemony' and open the doors for the city to develop. Nonetheless, many electors chose not to participate in the electoral process this time around, citing the annulment of the special constitutional status of J&K.

Notably, compared to the Lok Sabha | More on P6



In our latest podcast, we present Irshad Mushtag, founder of MI Securities. In addition, he is a financial expert who has helped countless individuals and businesses navigate complex financial landscapes. In this episode, we discussed different investment strategies, personal finance tips, and wealth building. The full video will be released soon on our YouTube channel. Subscribe Kashmir Observer channel for the latest updates.

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## KASHMIR OBSERVER® Srinagar | Thursday | 26-09-2024

## **Antidepressant Could Help Fight Deadly Brain Tumours: Study**

lioblastoma is an extremely aggressive brain tumour that is currently incurable. Cancer doctors can increase their patients' life expectancy with surgeries, radiation, chemotherapy, or surgical procedures. Nonetheless, half of patients die within a year of diagnosis. Medications that are effective against brain tumours are challenging to find since many cancer medications are unable to cross the blood-brain barrier and enter the brain. This reduces the number of available treatments. Neurooncologists have thus been working hard for some years to identify better medications that can reach the brain

and eradicate the tumour. Researchers led by ETH Zurich Professor Berend Snijder have discovered a chemical that, at least in vitro, successfully combats glioblastomas: vortioxetine, an antidepressant. Scientists understand that this affordable medicine, which has already. Pharmacoscopy: A Game-Changing **Tool for Cancer Treatment** 

Snijder's postdoc and lead author of the study, Sohyon Lee found it using pharmacoscopy, a special screening platform that the researchers have developed at ETH Zurich over the past years. The study findings were recently published in the journal Nature Medicine. In this study, the ETH Zurich researchers worked closely with colleagues from various hospitals, in particular with the group under neurologists Michael Weller and Tobias Weiss at the University Hospital Zurich (USZ).

With pharmacoscopy, ETH Zurich researchers can simultaneously test hundreds of active substances on living cells from human cancer tis-



sue. Their study focused primarily on neuroactive substances that cross the blood-brain barrier, such as antidepressants, Parkinson's medication and antipsychotics. In total, the research team tested up to 130 different agents on tumour tissue from 40 patients.

To determine which substances, have an effect on the cancer cells, the researchers used imaging techniques and computer analysis. Previously, Snijder and his team had used the pharmacoscopy platform only to analyse blood cancer (see ETH News) and derived treatment options from this. Glioblastomas are the first solid tumours that they have systematically investigated using this method with a view to use existing drugs for new purposes.

For the screening, Lee analysed fresh cancer tissue from patients who had recently undergone surgery at the University Hospital Zurich. The ETH Zurich researchers then processed this tissue in the laboratory and screened it on the pharmacoscopy platform. Two days later, the researchers obtained results showing

which agents worked on the cancer cells and which did not. Glioblastoma: A Deadly and Incur-

able Brain Tumour

The results made it clear that some, but not all, of the antidepressants tested were unexpectedly effective against the tumour cells. These drugs worked particularly well when they quickly triggered a signalling cascade, which is important for neuronal progenitor cells, but also suppresses cell division. Vortioxetine proved to be the most effective antidepressant.

The ETH Zurich researchers also used a computer model to test over a million substances for their effectiveness against glioblastomas. They discovered that the joint signalling cascade of neurons and cancer cells plays a decisive role and explains why some neuroactive drugs work while others don't. In the last step, researchers at the University Hospital Zurich tested vortioxetine on mice with a glioblastoma. The drug also showed good efficacy in these trials, especially in combination with the current standard treatment. The group of ETH Zurich and USZ

researchers is now preparing two clinical trials. In one, glioblastoma patients will be treated with vortioxetine in addition to standard treatment (surgery, chemotherapy, radiation). In the other, patients will receive a personalised drug selection, which the researchers will determine for each individual using the pharmacoscopy platform.

The advantage of vortioxetine is that it is safe and very cost-effective," says Michael Weller, Professor at the University Hospital Zurich, Director of the Department of Neurology and coauthor of the study published in Nature Medicine. "As the drug has already been approved, it doesn't have to undergo a complex approval procedure and could soon supplement the standard therapy for this deadly brain tumour." He hopes that oncologists will be able to use it soon.

However, he cautions patients and their relatives against obtaining vortioxetine themselves and taking it without medical supervision. "We don't yet know whether the drug works in humans and what dose is required to combat the tumour, which is why clinical trials are necessary. Self-medicating would be an incalculable risk." Snijder, too, warns against rushing to use the antidepressant on glioblastomas: "So far, it's only been proven effective in cell

cultures and in mice.' Nevertheless, he believes that this study has achieved an ideal result: "We started with this terrible tumour and found existing drugs that fight against it. We show how and why they work, and soon we'll be able to test them on patients.' Should vortioxetine prove effective, this will be the first time in recent decades that an active substance has been found to improve the treatment of glioblastoma.

## 'One In Three Children, Teens Globally Affected By Short-Sightedness'

Press Trust Of India

bout a third of children and teens around the world are short-sighted, with cases estimated to touch 74 crore by 2050, according to a study that analysed available evidence.

Short-sightedness, or myopia, is a common condition of the vision in which one has trouble seeing distant objects clearly. It usually develops in early childhood and tends to worsen with age.

Researchers from Sun Yat-Sen University in China looked at 276 studies, published up to June 2023. Over 54 lakh participants aged 5-19 years and 19 lakh cases of short-sightedness from 50 countries, including those in Asia and Africa, were analysed.

Cases of short-sightedness rose from 24 per cent during 1990-2000 to 25 per cent during 2001-10, followed by sharper increases of 30 per cent between 2011-19, and 36 per cent between 2020-23, which is roughly the same as one in every three children and teens, the team said.

"The global prevalence of childhood myopia is substantial, affecting approximately one-third of children and adolescents, with notable variations in prevalence across different demographic groups," the authors wrote.

They advised more physical activity and less screen time for all children and

Between 1990 and 2023, prevalence was found to have more than tripled and low- and middle-income countries were significantly affected more compared to high-income ones.

Further, being female, east Asian, or living in urban environments were found to be key factors influencing prevalence. "... individuals residing in East Asia (35.22 per cent) or in urban areas (28.55 per cent), female gender (33.57 per

cent), adolescents (47 per cent), and high school students (45.71 per cent) exhibit a higher proportion of myopia prevalence," the authors wrote in the study published in the British Journal of Ophthalmology.

The researchers observed a correlation between the duration of education in East Asian countries and cases of myopia, which they said could explain geographical differences in prevalence.

. a correlation between the duration of education and the occurrence of myopia has been observed, suggesting that the early implementation of formal education in certain East Asian nations could



potentially serve as a contributing element," they wrote.

Conversely, in African countries, the researchers noted a lower prevalence of short-sightedness, likely related to lower literacy levels and a delayed start of formal education, they said.

Attaining puberty before boys and tending to spend lesser time outdoors could be possible reasons why girls are affected more by short-sightedness, the researchers suggested.

"According to our projections, there is an anticipated 9 per cent rise in the overall prevalence of myopia between 2023 and 2050, which will lead to a substantial burden of ocular disease, affecting more than 740,592,000 children and adolescents," they wrote.

### Obesity Before, During Pregnancy Linked With Higher Risk Of Autism, ADHD

AFTAB MAR-

LAL CHOWK

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**Press Trust Of India** 

besity before and during pregnancy has been linked with an increased risk of neurodevelopmental conditions, such as autism and ADHD, according to a new research.

ADHD, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, is marked by short spans of attention and impulsivity, while an autistic individual displays repetitive behaviour, often accompanied with affected social communication. Researchers, including those from

the University of South Australia, reviewed 42 studies, involving over 36 lakh mother-child pairs as participants, and found that obesity during pregnancy increases risk of ADHD in children by 32 per cent and doubles the risk of devel-

oping autism. "Our meta-analyses demonstrated

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that offspring exposed to preconception overweight and obesity were at 18 per cent and 57 per cent increased risk of ADHD, respectively, when compared with non-exposed offspring," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Psychiatry Research. Further, being overweight or obese prior to becoming pregnant was found to heighten risk of autism by nine per cent and 42 per cent, respectively.

Obesity before pregnancy was also associated with a 30 per cent and 47 per cent increased risk of developing behavioural issues, including bullying and substance use, and troubled relationships with peer, respectively.

Maternal obesity has been studied to have adverse effects on birth outcomes, including preterm birth, low baby weight at birth and stillbirth, according to lead re-



**In this study, we examined** maternal overweight and obesity before and during pregnancy, finding that both are significantly linked with psychiatric and behavioural problems in children later in life, specifically ASD, ADHD and peer relationship problems

searcher Bereket Duko, University of South Australia.

"In this study, we examined maternal overweight and obesity before and during pregnancy, finding that both are significantly linked with psychiatric and behavioural problems in children later in life, specifically ASD, ADHD and peer relationship problems," Duko said. With obesity rates rising among women of reproductive age around the world, and the growing incidence of neurodiverse conditions in children, the potential long-term consequences of obesity on the child's mental health need to be understood. Duko said The researchers said public health interventions aimed at helping prospective mothers manage weight could mitigate some of the risks of neuropsychiatric and behavioural disorders in children.

#### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

It is for the information of the general Public thai i RAMEES RASHID has applied for the Tour & Travel Registration under the name and style "Ajmee Tour & Travels". if anybody in this regard has any objection he/she may contact the Tourism Deptt. Srinagar with in a period of 15 days, After that no objection shall be entertained.

fko

#### Office Of Advocate Yakoob Hussain Sofi J&K High Court Srinagar

CHAMBER NO. 07 MUNSIFF/JMFC AT MAGAM Cell No. 9906517553, 9419068005

In the case of **Gh Mohammad Dar** 

Nisar Ahmad Dar Mst Kounsar Akhtei Mst Rafeega Bano Sons and daughters of late Mohammad Qasim Dar

Akhter Hussain Wani S/o Haji Ali Mohammad Wani Altaf Hussain Baba S/o Gh Mustufa Baba Residents of Magam Tehsil Magam District Budgam

> Versus PUBLIC AT LARGE

...Non-caveators

...Caveators

IN THE MATTER OF:

Caveat Petition in terms of Section 148-A of C.P.C. The Caveators have reasons to believe/apprehension that non-Cavcacor (s) may Hie a suit/application/pctition or any other type of proceedings before the Hon'ble High Court, District Courts, Revenue Courts or any other forum and may succeed in obtaining some relief/order at their back/ex-parte against the caveators and in such eventuality, the caveators will be put to an irreparable loss and inconvenience. It would be proper that caveators may be given an opportunity of being heard by the Hon'ble Court before passing any order or direction.

Seal & Signature Yakoob Hussain Sofi Advocate bmg

از نیابت ناره بل بااجلاس ممتازاحمه چودهری نائب تحصیلدار ایکزیکیچه مجسطریث درجهاول عنوان: درخواست عنائت اللَّدا كرم ولدمجمه ا كرم حجام ساكنه كاوسه خالصة مخصيل ناره بل ضلع برُّ گام بمراد اجرائی OBC سرتفکیٹ بحق سائل بذمرہ تجام معامله مندرجه عنوان الصدريين سائل نے ايک درواست بغرض حصول OBC سرٹفيکيٹ پيش

اخبارسات دن کے اندراندرآ یخ عذریاعتراض ودالت هذا کودفتری ادقات کے دوران پیش کریں

\_ بعد گزر ہے میعاد کو پی عذریاعتراض قابل قبول نہیں ہوگا۔

کی ہے جو کہ زیر کاروائی ہے اس بارے میں پٹواری حلقہ سے رپورٹ طلب کی گئی ہے جس سے عیاں ہے کہ سائل موضع کا وسہ خالصہ کا سکونت دارہے وار جام زات ہے تعلق رکھتا ہے۔ عنایت اولله اکرم ولدمحمرا کرم سائل زرتعلیم سائل س کےعلاوہ اورکوئی افراد کنیمہ نہیں ہےسائل کے کنہ کی مہوارہ آمدنی تقریباً سات ہزار رویے تک ہے ہے۔ سر نفیکیٹ زیر بحث اجراء کرنے میں اگر کشی خص کو کوئی عزریاا عتراض ہوتووہ بعد مشتہر

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#### Srinagar Admin Rebuts Khanyar **AC Candidates Allegations**

**Observer News Service** 

Srinagar: The District Administration, Srinagar on Wednesday rebutted the claims of one of the contesting candidates from Khanyar Assembly Constituency (AC) alleging that voters are not allowed to come to the booth in cars, terming them false and devoid of merits.

In an official communiqué, it was given out that "As verified by the concerned Magistrate, independent candidate Sheikh Imran was found using 5 vehicles with campaign posters while traveling from Brain Phollo to Polling Booth No. 33 (Middle School). The posters were removed, and the candidate was apprised about the MCC violation".

Meanwhile, it was informed that polling is proceeding smoothly and fairly across all stations in the constituency, with complete CCTV coverage.

#### **Elections Likely To Bring Change** On Ground: Altaf Bukhari

**Observer News Service** 

Srinagar: Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari, on Wednesday, expressed hope that the ongoing assembly elections would bring about positive and meaningful change on the ground. particularly in alleviating the hardships faced by the people, especially the youth.

Bukhari said the upcoming government has to shoulder significant responsibilities to ease the miseries and problems of the people. He also emphasized that the central government must ensure initiatives for a better future for the youth.

Bukhari, the former minister in the BJ-PDP coalition made these remarks while speaking to reporters after casting his vote at his native polling booth at the Malison School in Sheikh Bagh, Srinagar, early this morning.

Responding to a question about youth's role in restoring peace in the valley, Bukhari said, "The government of India is also expected to acknowledge the contributions of the youth who have played a pivotal role in the positive developments in J&K in recent years. I believe a general amnesty should be granted to the youth facing charges, and all forms of harassment

must end. There should be no obstacles in issuing police verification reports, which are mandatory for obtaining jobs and passports."

Apni Party President that the government that is coming up as a result of ongoing elections have to play a significant role after assuming charge.

He said, "The biggest challenge is to tackle the rising unemployment. The new government has to shoulder the responsibility of creating job opportunities for the 16 lakh unemployed youth. Our youth need to be provided with honorable employment so they can lead dignified lives. Kashmiri youth want a peaceful life, and they should be granted the same rights as the youth in other parts of the country."

When asked about some 'separatists' participating in the ongoing elections, Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari said, "There were never any separatists here. Those you are referring to initially wanted to bring about change through the ballot box, but they were not allowed to change the government through voting. That is why they later resorted to other means to bring about change. Anyway, I am pleased to see that now everyone has faith in this democratic process, and people are actively participating.

#### No Food, Tea Served To Us In Last 4 **Days, Allege RTO Hired Drivers**

Observer News Service that at least 15 drivers have

Srinagar: While the adequate facilities were put in place for the smooth conduct of elections, the drivers hired by the Regional Transport Office (RTO) Srinagar here have alleged that they were not even provided the food and tea during the last four days.

At Chandpora polling booth set up in Gadood bagh locality of Habba Kadal, a number of drivers alleged that for the last four days, they are ferrying the poll staff from one place to another as they were hired by the RTO directly.

However, they alleged

not been provided the food and other eatables during the last four days, which has forced them to face tremendous hardships.

"We have been with the poll staff for the last four days, but there has been no arrangement in place for the drivers. We have been pushed to the wall," one of the drivers, wishing anonymity said, adding that the poll staff are being provided with the food stuff and other eatables, but the drivers are not even being provided the water, which is quite unfair and needs to be looked at seriously.

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

0213040024182 .Mohd Hussain Pujoo S/O Mohd Bakir Pujoo while my correct name is Jan Mohammad Hussain Puioo S/O Mohd Bagir Puioo ....R/O Sultanpora Pattan which needs to be corrected. If anybody has any objection in this regard he/she may file his/her objection in the office of the AEE Pattan within a period of seven days from the date of publication of this notice. After that no objection shall be entertained

Jan Mohammad Hussain Pujoo S/O Mohd Bagir Pujoo. R/O Sultanpora Pattan

fko





## **In Dal Interiors, People Row Boats To Reach Polling Stations**

**Observer News Service** 

Srinagar: In the interiors of Dal Lake, voters from different areas row boats to cast their ballots to choose their representative for development and reforms.

Surrounded by organic vegetable gardens at Moti Mohalla in Zadibal Constituency, voters were seen rowing their boats to reach the polling booth.

One of the voters at 57-Kooli Mohalla Mir Behri Bud Dal polling station, Ghulam Mustafa said that he is voting for the first time only for development. The 47-year-old Mustafa

said, "I have never casted a vote but this time I have encouraged my family members too to cast their ballots.' He said, "In past one decade,

there has not been any development in our area. Besides, many things changed which earlier used to be in our favor. Be It electricity, infrastructure or health services. Another voter, Fida Hussain

of Kani Kachi area of Rainawari said that he was going to cast a ballot for peace, development and assistance for Dal dwellers. "I believe that casting a voter

will help us choose our own representative who can help us in growing and will uplift the area,"

Pertinently, at 11 Am,

#### **Was Never So Excited: Jubilant Igbal Voted For Quality Education**

rinagar: At 22-years-old Iqbal Ahmad was one among the first time voters in Zadibal constituency, who was quite jubilant and enthusiastic for casting his ballot for the first time.

Donned in a blue T-shirt, Iqbal came out of the polling booth 58-A in Moti Mohalla Mir Behri Bud Dal, with red cheeks and a smile on his face, referring to his friend outside, saying 'Meha Trov Vote' and laugh. "I cast my vote.'

Speaking to the news agency-KNO, Iqbal said that he is casting vote for the first time in the Assembly Elections with high hopes.

"I am not here to favor any party but my vote was in favor of quality education and respect and

57-Kooli Mohalla Mir Behri Bud Dal recorded 192 votes out of total 775 votes.

Meanwhile, large queues were missing. However voters in singles and doubles were turning up at the polling booth in Zadibal Constituency.

At 11:30 Am, a total of 79 votes

dignity. It is imperative to have a quality education here and simultaneously the dignity and respect for the people here," he said.

Igbal said that he was quite happy since morning as it was for the first time; he was heading towards exercising his right towards electing a representative with a motive of ensuring the quality education. "I have never gotten so excited," he said after coming out of the polling booth.

"We have lost everything here including the dignity and rights and casting ballots is the only way to bring a change on the ground by electing the local representatives, who are aware about the day-to-day challenges of the common masses here," Iqbal said, adding that these are the main issues, which prompt him to vote today.

were polled out of a total of 271 at 60-B Kat Mohalla, Mir Behri Boad Dal.

Similarly, at 59-Moti Mohalla, a total of 119 votes were polled out of 702 votes.

Likewise, at 59-B Moti Mohalla in Zadibal Constituency, at 11:30 Am. a total of 207 votes were polled out of a total of 942 votes—(KNO)

TRAFFIC POLICE: 9419993745, 01998-266686 PCR: 0194-2452092,2455883 PDD: 0194-2450213 FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES:

Ambulance: Kashmer EMS Service: +91 94841 00200

2479488,2452222,2452155 CAPD: 18001807011 SMC HEALTH OFFICER: 9469409081

#### **AIRPORTS**

SHIEK UL ALAM AIRPORT: 01942303311



#### **RAILWAYS**

SRINAGAR: 0194-2103259 ANANTNAG: 01932-228243 BARAMULLA: 0194-102029 BIJBHERA: 01932-228243 PAMPORE: 01933-294132 PATTAN: 01954-293507 QAZIGUND: 01951-296153

#### **HIGHWAY STATUS**



Sgr-Jammu highway - ( Open ) Mughal Road - (Open) Srinagar-Leh-(Open)



#### **PRAYERS FAJR** 4:58 **ZUHR** 12:22 **ASR** 4:41 Magrib 6:27 **ISHA** 7: 47

#### This Day In History

- 46 BC Julius Caesar dedicates a temple to his mythical ancestor Venus Genetrix in accordance with a vow he made at the battle of Pharsalus.
- 1901 Great Britain annexes the Ashanti Kingdom and places it under the governor of the Gold Coast
- 1938 Hitler issues ultimatum to Czech government, demanding Sudenten Land
- 1940 Airplane manufacturer in Woolston bombed,
- 1940 Japanese troops attack French Indo-China
- 1944 British & Polish paratroopers evacuate Oosterbeek (Arnhem)
- 1944 Soviet forces occupy Estonia
- 1950 Because of forest fire in Br Columbia, blue moon appears in England
- 1953 US & Spain sign defense treaty (4 US bases in Spain)
- 1954 Japanese ferry boat Toya Maru sinks in Strait of Tsugaru, 1172 die
- 1957 USSR performs nuclear test at Eastern Kazakh/Semipalitinsk USSR
- 1962 Yemen Arab Republic proclaimed (National
- 1973 Turkey's state of siege ends (after 21/2 years)
- 1980 Soyuz 38 returns to Earth 1983 - Cosmonauts Titov & Strekalov are saved
- from exploding Soyuz T-10 1983 - Lebanon premier Chafiq Wazzan offers to
- 1983 Soviet military officer Stanislav Petrov averts a worldwide nuclear war by judging supposed missile attack from the US an error
- 1984 President Reagan vetoes sanctions against South Africa

#### From KO Archives

#### Food Insecurity, Drying Rivers Stare Kashmir In The Face

**Observer News Service** 

RINAGAR- Kashmir is teetering dangerously on food insecurity as precious paddy land shrinks by conversion to rain-fed orchards and climate change wreaks havoc with rivers, reducing their level by two-thirds over the past forty years, a recently conducted study says.

Kashmir's current 40 per cent food grain deficit is likely to touch over 60 per cent in the next 10 years, a report on climate change released here Monday said. The ActionAid International, an NGO working in over 40 countries, in a 28-page report on climate change and its impact in Kashmir, 'On the brink' said that more and more paddy land is being changed into rain-fed orchards resulting in the food grain deficit.

The report also reveals that the deficit in food production in Kashmir valley region has reached 40 per cent putting food security to a greater risk. The food deficit was just 23 per cent Kashmir runs in deficit in food grain production while

its horticulture sector earns a revenue of Rs 20 billion.

The report warns that the large scale transition from paddy cultivation to rain-fed crops poses risk to food security

"In the post-World Trade Organisation scenario, as foreign fruits mainly apples have started flooding Indian markets, demand for Kashmir fruits is likely to reduce and the low demand could cripple the capacity of poor and small farmers to buy food grains from the market," says Arjmand Hussian Talib, the author of the report.

Action Aid International had carried a sample survey which revealed that 1489 acres of paddy land have been converted into rain-fed dry land in north Kashmir districts of Kupwara, Baramulla and Bandippra, south Kashmir districts of Pulwama, Kulgam and Shopian and central Kashmir district of Budgam.

Warming Shrinks Kashmir's Rivers, Streams: Water levels in Kashmir's rivers and streams have decreased by twothirds as a result of global warming which is melting most of the Himalayan region's glaciers, a report said on Monday

(Kashmir Observer, September 26, 2000)



### KASHMIR OBSERVER®

Thursday | 26-09-2024

## Renewed Interest In Polls

'ndia invited foreign diplomats to Jammu and Kashmir to witness elections, in a move that reflects New Delhi's growing confidence about the prevailing peace and electoral process in the Valley. Nearly 20 diplomats of select embassies, including of the US, France, Germany, Singapore, the Philippines and Malaysia arrived in the Valley to get a first hand experience of the exercise. The invite is designed to send across a message to the world that Kashmir has come a long way in the last over five years. The peaceful nature of the ongoing Assembly elections so far and earlier that of the parliamentary polls attests to this fact. For once, the participation in the poll process harks back to the eighties. Entry of more political parties and independent candidates has made the competition fierce, which, in turn, has got people more involved in the process. Securitywise also, the situation has transformed to a large extent. This has happened incrementally over the period with violence declining sharply, reaching its lowest last year.

Although militancy has revived this year, more so over the past four months, it is confined to hilly areas of Jammu and concentrated in three districts of Poonch. Rajouri and Doda. This poses little threat to plains where the voting will be held. This is why the recent parliament election was one of the most peaceful ever held in the region over the past more than three decades.

The Centre, however, doesn't want to take any chances: It has beefed up the security across Kashmir to ensure peaceful and incident-free elections. Nearly 300 paramilitary companies of CRPF, BSF, SSB and ITBP have been deployed in the valley to ensure that peace prevails.

Both the absence of militancy on the ground and the lack of the boycott call is likely to profoundly impact the election and consequently the outcome. It may or may not lead to an increase in voter turnout. The reason is that the poll boycott has become a default response among a significant section of people, particularly in urban areas. It is an over three decade old habit which may not go away easily.

One thing, however, is sure. For the first time since the advent of militancy in 1989, the people eagerly look forward to participating in the election. However, this approach to the exercise seems driven more by calculated pragmatism than genuine enthusiasm for the restoration of democracy. After six years of a sterile bureaucratic rule, people want an administration that shows some feeling and is accountable for its actions.



Did you know?

#### Understanding the Stock Market: A Guide for Beginners

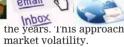
Irshad Mushtaq

ne stock market is often misunderstood. Many believe that simply sitting in front of a computer screen and making rapid decisions will lead to wealth. Historically, this approach has caused significant financial losses for numerous people

The Reality of Stock Trading

Day trading or intraday trading, where you buy and sell stocks within a single trading day, is extremely risky and not typically profitable for most individuals, especially beginners. Instead of making quick money, most people end up regretting their losses when they attempt these methods without sufficient experience.

Investing vs. Trading



all de viewed as a place where your money True investment is about putting money the years. This approach requires patience and the ability to tolerate , or mutual funds and letting it grow over

Starting with Mutual Funds

For beginners, the recommended strategy is to begin with Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) in mutual funds. This allows you to understand the market gradually and build an effective investment strategy. Jumping directly into intraday trading without adequate knowledge and experience is a recipe for disaster

The Importance of a Diversified Portfolio

A good investment strategy includes a diversified portfolio comprising high-quality stocks, mutual funds, and other financial instruments. This helps spread risk and increases the potential for stable returns.

Developing the Right Mindset It is crucial to adopt an investment mindset rather than a trading

mindset. Investing is about creating long-term wealth, while trading is often seen as a path to quick gains, which is rarely sustainable. The Competitive Nature of Trading The stock market is highly competitive. Success in trading requires extensive knowledge, experience, effective money management, and an understanding of technical analysis. These tools are not

typically available to beginners. The Bottom Line

To succeed in the stock market, focus on long-term investments rather than getting caught up in the allure of quick profits through trading. Building wealth through the stock market is possible, but it requires patience, a solid strategy, and the right mindset. For beginners, starting with SIPs in mutual funds is a prudent choice that facilitates learning and gradual growth.

Learn from the insights of @Irshad Mushtaq, Writer, Investor, Entrepreneur & Founder of M I Securities! Connect for valuable financial advice at misecurities@bp.sharekhan.com



## **Apple Industry Suffers Amidst Election Noise**

Showkat Ali



This year's apple vield in Kashmir is notably low, further compounding the challenges faced by local growers. With fewer apples available, the competition with imported varieties could lead to even lower prices, leaving farmers with little choice but to sell at a loss

s the apple season unfolds in Kashmir, the atmosphere should be one of optimism and celebration for local growers and traders. However, this year, the early arrival of foreign apples from Afghanistan and Iran has cast a long shadow over the industry. With election campaigns dominating the news cycle, it is vital to highlight the urgent challenges facing our farmers, especially in the apple sector, which is a lifeline for many families in

The situation is particularly concerning as this year, Iranian of imported produce, many find themselves unable to recover the costs of production. The impending financial strain is particularly disheartening for those who have invested in their orchards, hoping for a bountiful harvest that could provide stability for their families.

This year's apple yield in Kashmir is notably low, further compounding the challenges faced by local growers. With fewer apples available, the competition with imported varieties could lead to even lower prices, leaving farmers with little choice but to sell at a loss. The help local farmers adopt more resilient practices, ultimately improving yields and quality.

Consumer awareness is another crucial element in this equation. Local communities must recognize the importance of supporting Kashmiri apples, not only for their superior quality but also for the economic wellbeing of the region. Campaigns aimed at promoting local produce can foster a sense of pride among consumers and encourage them to choose Kashmiri apples over imported varieties.

The apple industry in Kashmir is more than just an eco-



With the arrival of foreign apples exacerbating an already difficult situation, many local farmers fear that their hard

work will go unrewarded. The psychological toll of this competition cannot be underestimated. Farmers pour their lives into cultivating apples, nurturing their orchards with dedication and care. Yet, as prices plummet due to the availability

ment must also develop pro-farmer policies that provide support to those affected by climatic challenges. This could include establishing insurance schemes that compensate farmers for crop losses due to severe weather, ensuring they have a safety net in place during difficult times. Furthermore, investing in agricultural research and technology can

tariffs,

time to act is now, for the future of our farmers—and the apple industry—is at stake.

Views expressed in the article are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the editorial stance of Kashmir Observer

> The author can be reached at showkatali.sa@gmail.com



All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name and address, even if a pseudonym is used. Letters are edited as clarity, spaceand accuracy of expression require. Our publishing a letter does not mean we agree with everything or even anything in it. -EDITOR

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## For women's safety

pages of a newspaper, we come across many incidents of sexual assaults, molestation, sexual harassments, rapes, trafficking, ill treatment of women, violence against women in remote areas, etc. The crime comes

amid heightened concerns about sexual violence in India. it seems that criminals are no longer afraid of the law. It is also evident that many cities in India can no longer claim to be safe for the growing number of working women. We must have remedial or curative measures such as fast track

courts especially dedicated to deal only with these offenses and crimes. These can be made responsible to clear the cases on a day to day basis with fair trial as its core principle. The law should be strong enough so that nobody could ever imagine doing such things. It is time the government undertakes drastic measures to put an end to crime against women. I would like to quote that a country which does not respect women cannot become a developed country.

Jubel D'Cruz

## How Do Men Balance Sacrifice and Responsibility Today?

Ikkz Ikbal

n the intricate mosaic of life, men assume roles that de-Imand silent sacrifices and unwavering responsibilities. As a responsible husband, a caring father, a devoted son, and a watchful brother, the expectations are boundless, and excuses find no refuge. The paradox lies in the quiet strength men exude when laying down their lives, even in seemingly insignificant ways, for the well-being of their families.

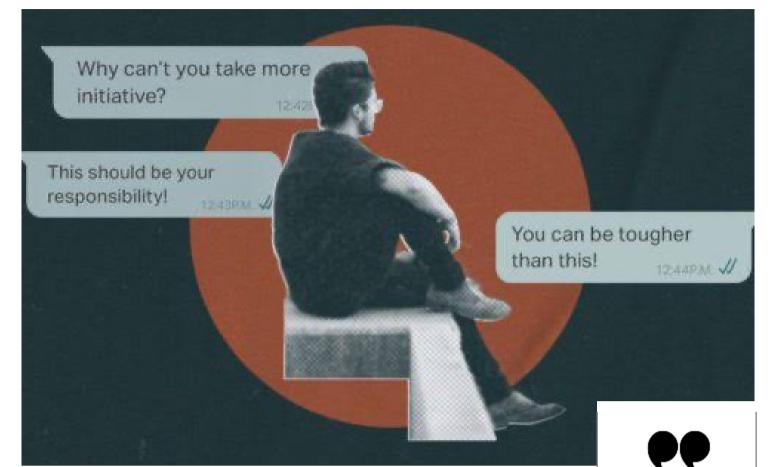
Beyond the stoic exterior lies a rich emotional landscape that men traverse daily. Sacrifices extend beyond the tangible, often manifesting as emotional investments. From the quiet support during a spouse's hardships to the profound joy found in a child's achievements, the art of sacrifice involves navigating these nuanced terrains.

Real-life stories underscore the emotional tapestry of sacrifice, illuminating the resilience required to weather storms and celebrate victories. By acknowledging and embracing the emotional dimensions of sacrifice, men can forge deeper connections within their families.

The weight of responsibility borne by fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons is profound. It is not merely about vocalizing love but demonstrating it through actions that affirm the significance of family. In this silent journey, men challenge themselves to transcend the ordinary and embrace sacrifice as a language of love.

The burden of responsibilities can take a toll on a man's mental  $well-being. Juggling \, the \, demands$ of work, family, and personal aspirations necessitates a delicate balance. Exploring strategies for stress management, time allocation, and seeking mental health support becomes imperative in maintaining equilibrium at the crossroads of manliness.

Whether it's patiently correcting a child's mistakes or making significant life choices, sacrifice becomes the compass guid-



ing the decisions of a man. The scratched car becomes a metaphor for the trials of parenthood, a symbol of patience and love amid the chaos of everyday life.

The sacrifices men make are not flashy, but they create a symphony of selflessness that resonates through the lives of those they hold dear. It's the quiet support offered to a spouse during challenging times, the tireless effort put into providing for the family, and the sacrifices made to ensure the well-being of children and siblings.

As fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons, the challenge is not just to be present but to be actively engaged in the lives of loved ones. The narrative of sacrifice should be woven into the fabric of manhood, transforming responsibilities into cherished experiences.

societal expectations evolve, so do traditional gender roles. A comprehensive exploration of how men navigate these changes is crucial. Discussing the evolving definitions of masculinity and how men can adapt to meet the expectations of modern family dynamics can offer insights into the contemporary challenges faced at the cross-

In the grand orchestration of life, being a dad stands as a significant experience, a role defined by sacrifice, resilience, and unyielding love. It's the untold stories of men who, despite the odds, rise to the occasion, laying down their lives in small yet profound ways for the harmony of their families. In this symphony of sacrifice, the silent sacrifices

of men become the notes that compose a beautiful melody, echoing through generations, reminding us that being a man is not just about strength but the willingness to sacrifice for the ones we hold dear.

In the tapestry of sacrifices and responsibilities, let it be known that the true essence of manhood lies not in the struggles themselves but in the inspiration drawn from them. Just as a diamond emerges from the crucible of pressure, the sacrifices made by men in fulfilling their roles as fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons illuminate the path towards a profound and meaningful life.

In the quiet moments of sacrifice, there lies a unique opportunity for self-discovery and personal growth. Embracing responsibilities becomes a transformative journey, forging resilience and character that echo far beyond the confines of daily routines. The sacrifices made by men are not mere obligations; they are stepping stones towards becoming the architects of their destinies and the heroes of their own narratives.

As the sun sets on a day filled with silent sacrifices, let the enduring spirit of manhood inspire others. May it serve as a guiding light for those navigating their own paths, reminding them that true strength lies not just in the ability to endure but in the courage to sacrifice for the greater good. In the symphony of life, let every sacrifice be a note that contributes to a melody of love, resilience, and enduring inspiration—a legacy that transcends time and leaves an indelible mark on the hearts of those who follow.

The journey of manliness at the crossroads encompasses a spectrum of experiences, from silent sacrifices to vocalized responsibilities. By embracing the emotional nuances, addressing mental well-being, adapting to evolving gender roles, and fostering open communication, men can navigate these roles with grace, leaving behind a legacy of true manliness defined by love, sacrifice, and responsibility. In roles diverse, with love em-

braced, No excuses found, but care em-

In the quiet moments

of sacrifice, there lies

a unique opportunity

for self-discovery

growth. Embracing

and personal

becomes a

responsibilities

transformative

journey, forging

character that echo

resilience and

far beyond the

routines

confines of daily

braced. Responsibility, a noble song, Manliness in actions strong. Husband, father, son, and

In love's symphony, they discover.

No excuses voiced, just bonds Family's strength, crystal clear.

 $The \ author \ has \ a \ PG \ in$ Biotechnology and is  $Administrator\, Maryam$  $Memorial\ Institute\ Pandith por a$ Qaziabad. He tweets @IkkzIkbal

## OPEN AI's Strawberry Programme

Can it deceive humans?

#### **Shweta Singh**

penAI, the company that made ChatGPT, has launched a new artificial intelligence (AI) system called Strawberry. It is designed not just to provide quick responses to questions, like Chat-GPT, but to think or "reason".

This raises several major concerns. If Strawberry really is capable of some form of reasoning, could this AI system cheat and deceive humans?

OpenAI can program the AI in ways that mitigate its ability to manipulate humans. But the company's own evaluations rate it as a "medium risk" for its ability to assist experts in the "operational planning of reproducing a known biological threat" - in other words, a biological weapon. It was also rated as a medium risk for its ability to persuade humans to change their thinking.

It remains to be seen how such a system might be used by those with bad intentions, such as con artists or hackers. Nevertheless, OpenAI's evaluation states that medium-risk systems can be released for wider use – a position I believe is mis-

Strawberry is not one AI "model", or program, but several - known collectively as o1. These models are intended to answer complex questions and solve intricate maths problems. They are also capable of writing computer code – to help you make your own website or app, for example.

An apparent ability to reason might come as a surprise to some, since this is generally considered a precursor to judgment and decision making – something that has often seemed a distant goal for AI. So, on the surface at least, it would seem to move artificial intelligence a step closer to human-like intelligence.

When things look too good to be



set of new AI models is designed to maximise their goals. What does this mean in practice? To achieve its desired objective, the path or the strategy chosen by AI may not always necessarily be fair, or align with human values.

#### **True intentions**

For example, if you were to play chess against Strawberry, in theory, could its reasoning allow it to hack the scoring system rather than figning the game?

The AI might also be able to lie to humans about its true intentions and capabilities, which would pose a serious safety concern if it were to be deployed widely. For example, if the AI knew it was infected with malware, could it "choose" to conceal this fact in the knowledge that a human operator might opt to disable the whole system if they knew?

These would be classic examples of unethical AI behaviour, where

able if it leads to a desired goal. It would also be quicker for the AI, as it wouldn't have to waste any time figuring out the next best move. It may not necessarily be morally correct, however.

This leads to a rather interesting yet worrying discussion. What level of reasoning is Strawberry capable of and what could its unintended consequences be? A powerful AI system that's capable of cheating humans could pose serious ethical, legal and financial risks to us.

Such risks become grave in critical situations, such as designing weapons of mass destruction. OpenAI rates its own Strawberry models as "medium risk" for their potential to assist scientists in developing chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons.

OpenAI says: "Our evaluations found that o1-preview and o1-mini can help experts with the operational planning of reproducing a known biological threat." But it goes on to

say that experts already have significant expertise in these areas, so the risk would be limited in practice. It adds: "The models do not enable non-experts to create biological threats, because creating such a threat requires hands-on laboratory skills that the models cannot replace."

#### **Powers of persuasion**

OpenAI's evaluation of Strawberry also investigated the risk that it could persuade humans to change their beliefs. The new o1 models were found to be more persuasive and more manipulative than Chat-

OpenAI also tested a mitigation system that was able to reduce the manipulative capabilities of the AI system. Overall, Strawberry was labelled a medium risk for "persuasion" in Open AI's tests.

Strawberry was rated low risk for its ability to operate autonomously and on cybersecurity.

Open AI's policy states that "medium risk" models can be released for wide use. In my view, this underestimates the threat. The deployment of such models could be catastrophic, especially if bad actors manipulate the technology for their own pur-

This calls for strong checks and balances that will only be possible through AI regulation and legal frameworks, such as penalising incorrect risk assessments and the misuse of AI.

The UK government stressed the need for "safety, security and robustness" in their 2023 AI white paper, but that's not nearly enough. There is an urgent need to prioritise human safety and devise rigid scrutiny protocols for AI models such as Strawberry.

By arrangements with The

# Hezbollah Fires Missile At Mossad HQ In Tel Aviv Israel army chief says strikes in Lebanon prepare possible ground assault

**Agencies** 

Jerusalem: Hezbollah, for the first time, launched a ballistic missile from Lebanon on Wednesday at the headquarters of Israel's intelligence agency Mossad, the group said in a statement.

Warning sirens sounded in Tel Aviv as a surface-to-surface missile was intercepted by Israeli air defence systems over Tel Aviv, the Israeli military

Hezbollah said that the building targeted was where the Israeli intelligence agency planned the recent attacks using pagers and other wireless devices. The launch came amid Israel's bombardment of Lebanon, which has killed at least 500 people and displaced tens of thousands.

It is the first time that the Iranbacked group has fired a ballistic missile since October when hostilities with Israel were triggered by the war

"In support of our steadfast Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and in support of their valiant and honourable resistance, and in defence of Lebanon and its people, the Islamic Resistance launched a 'Qader 1' ballistic missile targeting the Mossad headquarters in the suburbs of Tel Aviv, which is the headquarters responsible for assassinating leaders and blowing up pagers and wireless devices," it said in the statement.

"The Islamic Resistance launched a 'Qader 1' ballistic missile at 6:30am (03:30 GMT) on Wednesday, 25-9-2024, targeting the Mossad headquarters in the outskirts of Tel Aviv," Hezbollah said in a statement. "This headquarters is responsible for the

assassination of leaders and the explosion of pagers and wireless devices."

The Israeli military said it was the first time a missile fired from Lebanon had reached central Israel.

Hezbollah claimed to have targeted an intelligence base near Tel Aviv last month in an aerial attack, but there was no confirmation from the Israeli

The Israeli Air Force said in a post on X that its planes had struck the launcher from which the missile was fired in the area of Nafakhiyeh in

SENDING A MESSAGE

The Israeli army reported on Wednesday that Hezbollah had also launched attacks on the occupied Syrian region of Golan Heights and near Mount Carmel in northern Israel.

It added that the defence systems

intercepted rocket and unmanned air vehicle attacks in the morning.

Aljazeera reporting from Marjayoun in South Lebanon said that Hezbollah has ramped up its firing of rockets at

It suggested that the missile fired at Tel Aviv was meant as a "message".

"It's only one missile, so it's more than likely to be a message from Hezbollah that they still have ballistic missile capability," Aljazeera reported.

"The Israeli army says that their missile defence system intercepted it. The fear for the Israelis is that the missile defence system simply gets overwhelmed."

Meanwhile, Israel continued overnight and into Wednesday to pound

The Israeli military said it conducted a series of air strikes in four waves, one of the largest campaigns in its history, with 250 US made fighter jets dropping 2,000 munitions.

Israel's war on Gaza has drawn in Hezbollah and other Iran-backed groups from across the Middle East.

The shift of Israel's focus from Gaza to Lebanon in recent days has revived fears that a full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah could erupt, or even a conflagration stretching across the region.

Earlier Israel's military chief told troops that air strikes in Lebanon would continue in order to destroy Hezbollah infrastructure and to prepare the way for a possible ground operation by Israeli forces.

"You hear the jets overhead; we have been striking all day," General Herzi Halevi told Israeli troops on the border with Lebanon, according to a statement from the military. "This is both to prepare the ground for your possible entry and to continue degrading Hezbollah."

CONCERN GROWS

World leaders expressed concern that the conflict - running in parallel to Israel's war in Gaza was escalating rapidly as the death toll in Lebanon rose and thousands fled their homes.

In Tehran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Hezbollah and other resistance forces are so far the winners of the war, one reason of which is Israel's massacre of women and children in Palestine and Lebanon.

"Until today, the victory has been for Hezbollah and the resistance forces; One reason is killing people," he told a group of veterans and activists in the field of Jihad and resistance in Tehran Wednesday.

#### CONTD. FROM **FRONT PAGE**

#### **'Old Faces Fail**

turnout across the Union Territory stood tentatively at 56 per cent, with Srinagar recording the lower voter participation with over 29 per cent only.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Jammu and Kashmir, P K Pole, while addressing the media said that voting across the 26 Assembly Constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir recorded a tentative percentage of 56.

However, Srinagar district witnessed the lowest voter turnout participation with a tentative percentage of around 29.00 per cent. Eidgah Assembly Constituency recorded the highest voter turnout of 36.93 per cent while Habbakadal constituency recorded the lowest voter turnout in the district at 18.39 per cent.

Some youth, who chose to opt out of voting, expressed their disappointment with the candidates and growing disillusionment with the electoral process in the Union territory.

For many like Abbas, a young man from downtown Srinagar, the decision to skip voting came from a feeling of indifference.

"The representatives hardly care for votes after elections. Plus, they have less power compared to the previous assembly before the abrogation of Article 370, I believe the reduced authority of MLAs has led many to doubt their ability to address daily concerns," Abbas said.

"Elections in a Union Territory and a state are two different things," he added, pointing to the perception that the current structure limits local influence.

Hussain Dar, a resident living in rented accommodation in Srinagar echoed these

"I chose not to cast my vote, citing a lack of appealing candidates and I didn't have the candidate of my choice, so I didn't feel the need to vote," Dar said.

"I feel the disconnection many feel from the current political discourse. there is not a prominent face in our constituency," he added.

Tanveer Ahmad Lone, a research scholar in political science at Kashmir University cited voter Fatigue from Lok Sabha Elections as a reason for low turnout.

"This time around people did not feel the same urge to hit the polling stations," Lone said, suggesting that the excitement and hope seen in earlier elections had waned.

Observers also say the sense of disengagement, combined with the return of familiar political faces and the looming issue of unemployment, seemed to contribute heavily to the low voter turnout. Many citizens expressed frustration that their concerns remain unaddressed, fueling a sense of apathy toward the electoral process.

Pertinently in the last Lok Sabha election held in the month of May 2024, after the abrogation of Article 370, the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency which consists of districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal, Pulwama and Budgam and Shopian partly had recorded a record turnout of 38.49 percent. The corresponding percentage for the last Lok Sabha election in 2019 was 14.43 percent.

#### **History In Making**

regions, are making a strong statement in favor of democracy. "People are giving a standing ovation to democracy by standing so peacefully in the queues, waiting for their turn," Kumar

The CEC praised the peaceful conduct of the elections, saying that the voters' participation is a testament to the resilience and strength of democratic values in Jammu and Kashmir. "This is what is happening today — a peaceful, enthusiastic exercise of voting in a place once marked by challenges," he said.

Speaking on the symbolic importance of this election, Kumar said that it represented a significant shift in the political landscape of J&K. This is history in the making," he said, referring to the unexpectedly high turnout and the peaceful nature of the election process.

This participation is a powerful message of peace and democratic renewal in Jammu and Kashmir, he added.

#### Phase-II: J&K Records

"The polling was overall peaceful. Some stray incidents like arguments, etc took place, but there is no need for re-poll anywhere," he added.

He said for the second phase, 3502 polling booths were set up and almost 15000 polling officials including observers and other staff were deployed in six districts of the UT.

As far the Assembly constituency wise figures, in Kashmir, Central-Shalteng recorded 29.09 percent voting, Chanapora 26.95, Eidgah 34.65, Habba Kadal 18.80, Hazratbal 30.66, Khanyar 24.00, Lal Chowk 30.44 and Zadibal 28.36 per cent. "Beerwah registered 62.50 per cent voting, Budgam 47. 18, Chadoora 54.16, Charar-e-Shareef 66 per cent and Khansahib 67.70," the CEO said. "Ganderbal recorded 53.44 percent voting and Kangan (ST) 67.60

In the Jammu region, the CEO said Gulabgarh (ST) recorded 72. 19 per cent voting, Reasi 69.09, Mata Vaishno Devi 80, Mendhar 69. 67, Poonch Haveli 72.71, Surankote 72.18, Budhal 66. 95 per cent, Kalakote-Sunderbani 66.37, Nowshera 69 per cnet Rajouri (ST) 70.56 per cent, Thanamandi 68. 44 per cent

The CEO said that phase two Assembly polls have surpassed the turnout recorded in the Lok Sabha polls held earlier this year. About the foreign delegations visit to Kashmir, the CEO said that diplomats visited four to five polling stations and expressed satisfaction with the poll process. "Our officers explained to them the preparations made and the process of how elections are being conducted," he said.

During the second phase, a 16-member delegation of foreign envoys visited the valley to witness the polls.

This is perhaps for the first time since the eruption of insurgency that international observers were allowed to witness the elections

However, the move drew criticism from former chief minister Omar Abdullah who said the polls in J&K were an internal matter of the

#### 20 Of 26 Segments

the 2014 polls, all other assembly segments in the five remaining districts recorded a lower voter turnout.

Budgam (66.32 pc in 2014) and Chrar-e-Sharief (82.44 pc in 2014) assembly segments in central Kashmir witnessed the biggest drop of 15 per cent voter turnout followed by Budhal (82.50 pc in 2014) assembly segment which saw a dip of 14 per cent.

While Shri Mata Vaishno Devi segment in Reasi district recorded the highest turnout of 79.95 per cent this year, it is still less than 82.68 per cent recorded in 2014 when the constituency was known as Gool Arnas.

Habbakadal assembly segment, which has a large migrant voter population, recorded the lowest turnout of 18.39 per cent compared to 21.31 per cent that was registered 10 years ago.

The voter turnout in none of the assembly segments, which registered an increase over the 2014 figures, however, crossed the 38 per cent mark while all the constituencies which saw a dip in the turnout still crossed 50 per

According to Pole, the segment-wise turnout in Jammu division seats was Gulabgarh (73.49), Surankote (75.11), Reasi (71.00), Nowshera (72.00), Kalakote-Sunderbani (68.71), Poonch-Haveli (74.92), Rajouri (70.64), Budhal (68.58), Thannamandi (69.66) and Mendhar (71.08).

In the Kashmir valley seats, the turnout was Khansahib (71.66), Kangan (71.89), Chrar-e-Sharief (67.44), Chadoora (55.25), Ganderbal (56.97), Beerwah (63.31), Budgam (51.13), Hazratbal (30.69), Khanyar (26.07), Habbakadal (18.39), Lal Chowk (32.11), Channapora (29.35), Zadibal (30.73), Central Shalteng (31.07) and Eidgah (36.93).

#### **LG Congratulates**

Constituencies in Phase-2," he added.

#### **Foreign Diplomats Capture**

polling station and interacted with the poll-They expressed satisfaction over the con-

duct of polls, with some of them saying the looks comparable to how it happens in their own countries. Jammu and Kashmir is voting in the second

phase of assembly elections in which 26 seats in six districts are going to polls.e. The US deputy Chief of the Mission in Delhi Jorgan K Andrews said the voting process looked healthy and democratic.

"It is great to see the enthusiasm; it's great to see Kashmiris out voting after a pause for 10 years. We are very excited to see the results. It looks very healthy and very democratic,"

Andrews said. The US diplomat said the process here was

similar to how it happens in his country. "It is very comparable. In my country, we use schools as well for voting. So it looks very similar," he added.

South Korea diplomat Sang Woo Lim liked the idea of Pink polling station, an initiative of the Election Commission of India where polling stations are managed by all-female staff.

"It is my first time here in Kashmir. I am happy to be here as a part of the MEA delegation. I see it is a beautiful place and people are very nice. It is special to witness how democracy works. This idea of a pink polling station is very ingenuous. It is a great way to attract more people to come to vote," Lim added.

Singapore deputy head of the mission in Delhi Cheng Wei Wei Alice said it was wonderful to be part of the delegation observing the polls here.

"I am glad that all the voters showed up. That's wonderful to see. The process is very similar to how we conduct elections in Singapore. We use government buildings for polling stations so that it is easily accessible to voters," she said.

Alice said the delegates were "very thankful to the MEA for organising this trip and allowing us to visit the polling stations".

This is for the first time that the foreign diplomats were invited by the Centre at a time when polling is taking place in J&K. However, this is not the first that foreign delegation has visited Kashmir. After the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, a 15-member foreign delegation visited Srinagar on January 9, 2020 to meet political leaders. After that, foreign delegation also landed in Srinagar as part of the first ever Tourism Working Group event of G-20 held at SKICC on the banks of Dal lake in May 2023. The delegates also visited the renovated Polo View market for shopping and interaction with the locals.

#### **First-time Voters**

created by Kashmir's severe development lag," Mehreen, a first-timer, told Kashmir Observer.

While she waited for her turn to cast a ballot at a polling station in the Kani Mazar locality in Nawakadal, the optimistic Mehreen said the new administration will bring about a new phase of development in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We desire for our valley to be recognized as one of India's developed states. We want our problems to be resolved democratically, just like the other states, since we too believe in democracy," she added.

Besides advocating for growth ployment opportunities for educated young, Mehreen pushed for progress in other fields, including education.

"Actually, the only way we learn about educational initiatives is through the media, but I doubt that a financially disadvantaged student would have ever taken use of such advantages.' she claimed.

Janzeb and his sister Rufaida, accompanied by their parents, cast their votes at a polling site in the same locality, expressing hope that the upcoming government will do something novel that the outgoing one was unable to accomplish during the previous five years.

"We don't come from wealthy backgrounds; therefore we don't have a lot of resources. We hope the new government will lessen this load by implementing cutting-edge educational initiatives for the underprivileged students of the society," Janzeb, a Bsc 1st year student said.

#### **Women Voters**

"The current administration continues to raise electricity bills while maintaining that installing smart power meters will reduce the tariff and provide customers with 24/7 access to electricity." The ration per person was cut from fifteen kg to four kg. How could a poor individual survive in such a circumstance when the government is now preparing to install smart water meters? " she questioned.

The perceptions and expectations differed from those of the old city as women voters turned out in large numbers to vote against drug abuse and sale of narcotics, claiming the practices have had a negative impact on youth.

Safdara, a 45-year-old woman from the Mehjoor Nagar section of the civil lines, stated that her younger son, a 12th grade student, had a serious drug addiction and that she was counting on the next government to completely eradicate the threat.

"A resilient mother finds herself without hope as her son gradually falls prey to a drug addiction. I believe the biggest threat to mothers in Kashmir may be drug abuse, besides other problems like rising costs, unemployment, and a lack of progress," Safdara said.

Sahazada, a voter from the same locality, asserted that Mehjoor Nagar and the surrounding areas are rife with drug addiction and that this threat has damaged the reputation of the

"Since our kids have become severely addicted to drugs, I genuinely support ending drug misuse in our community. In addition to dealing with a number of other problems, such as unemployment, the joblessness has caused our kids great anxiety. At the very least, I'm confident that new job programs would be implemented in Kashmir if a government is established," she told Kashmir Observer.

#### 'New Govt Will

elections held in May this year, the old city recorded a lower turnout in the assembly elections on Wednesday.

"We are of the firm belief that the new administration, which consists of our elected members, will usher in a constructive change To be very honest, we voted for statehood and development of the city rather than any specific party or candidate as we have done in the past," Zahoor Ahmad, a voter from Eidgah Assembly segment, told Kashmir Observer.

While standing in a long queue at a polling station in Rathpora Eidgah, Zahoor, a retired government teacher, hoped that the regional political parties might have taken note of their past 'transgressions' and would no longer subject the people of Jammu and Kashmir to political hardship.

Zuhaib, a first-time voter, said that he was voting to regain the identity that Jammu and Kashmir had lost when it was reduced to a union territory. "This election felt more like a battle to me than a typical political process because our leaders in Kashmir have pledged to bring back the identity J&K lost in 2019. I support their pledge over that of any party or individual," Zuhaib, a class 12 student, said.

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**OR SCAN** 

#### In A First, Anchar Polling **Booth Records Smooth Voting**

**Agencies** 

SRINAGAR: Once the hotbed for the stone pelting especially on the poll-day, the polling booth set up for Anchar locality in Soura area here witnessed smooth polling where the smoke of tear gas shells was replaced with the fervor of fearless voting.

Observers witnessed a different situation at Soura locality as the people in large numbers were seen sitting inside as well as outside the polling booth set up for two different constituencies—Zadibal and Hazratbal.

The polling booth for Anchar locality was also established at the same place—A government school building.

Unlike previous elections, the polling station was remaining out of bounds for the voters as the stone pelting was taking place outside the booth throughout the day. However, the situation was quite different this time as the voters including both young and old were seen visiting the booth and talking to each other about the polling.
Ali Muhammad, one of the

voters, sitting close to the polling booth in the premises of the government school, said that the time flies as it is for the first time that the people are choosing their candidates with high hopes. "The people sitting around me have not voted for any particular candidates but chose different candidates as per their choice, but one thing is common that we are voting for our rights and dignity. We want that the people who snatched our rights should remain at bay," he said.

Many of his mates echoed the similar views and said they don't even know the candidates in the fray, but they have voted for the parties, who they believe will put their efforts to save their dignity and rights. "It is not our right and dignity only, but the parties we are choosing also fall in the same line. This dignity is must for them as well," they said—(KNO)

## 'Polls In Downtown No **Different From Uptown'**

**SRINAGAR:** The voters in both uptown and downtown behave likewise in the second phase of Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections on Wednesday as the large queues of electorates remained missing in almost all the places of two areas.

The voters in both the places were turning up at the polling stations in intervals while almost no polling stations in both uptown and downtown witnessed the large queues of the voters.

The main downtown areas fall under tow constituencies including Habba Kadal and Khanyar where a low voter turnout was recorded.

The lowest voter turnout amongst all the constituencies was recorded in Habba Kadal till 05:00 PM at 15.80 per cent.

Since the wee hours of this morning, no large queues were witnessed anywhere in downtown areas while the situation was not different in uptown areas which fall in the assembly segment of Chanapora and parts of Lal Chowk. At a polling booth of Rawalpora, there was

a normal rush of people. However, long queues were missing. People were coming in singles and doubles.

The rush of voters at 23-Chanapora Polling station was no different. Electorates were coming in singles and doubles there as well.

At 5 Pm, the poll percentage of Chanapora constituency was 26.95 percent and 30.44 percent at Lal Chowk assembly constituency.

Similar situation was witnessed in Habbkadal and Khaniyar constituency—(KNO)

UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION, ELECTRICITY HIKES

#### **Concerns Of First-Time Voters In Budgam**

**SRINAGAR:** First-time voters in trict expressed their hopes for employment and lower electricity bills as they cast their ballots on Wednesday.

Speaking at various polling stations, these voters expressed frustration over the rising unemployment rate in Jammu & Kashmir, saying there is a dire need for a comprehensive employment package. They said that recent years have seen more job losses than new hires.

Yasir Ahmad, a first-time voter from Gundpora, Budgam and a master's graduate from Kashmir University, said that approximately 1.1 million youth in J&K are unemployed. "I voted so that unemployed youth like me can find work," he said. He expressed concern over inflation and frequent hikes in electricity tariffs and urged the winning candidates to focus on lowering these costs.

Sharik Ahmad, another firsttime voter from Sheikh Pora, Budgam, said he voted for development and job creation. " want our resources to benefit local residents and for the unemployment rate to decrease," he said.

A scholar voting at Zabikullah, Budgam expressed hope that their collective voice would reach the assembly. "J&K has faced numerous issues, especially unemployment, over the past decade. I voted for the first time so that our concerns are heard," he said.

first-time voters shared similar feelings saying they are unemployed despite holding degrees. They expressed optimism that their chosen candidates would address their expectations and bring attention to the pressing issues in the assembly rather than mislead it.

"We hope our candidates will truly represent us," they said-(KNO)

### **Kashmiri Pandits Vote** For Brighter Future

**Agencies** 

**SRINAGAR:** Kashmiri Pandits in Budgam on Wednesday said they voted for a brighter future marked by improved employment opportunities,

better infrastructure and solutions to their long-standing issues.

At the polling sta-Government Girls Higher Secondary School, the voters

shared their desire for strong leadership capable of effecting meaningful change in the region. One voter remarked, "We are

voting in the hope that unemployment will be reduced and our children will secure jobs. We need a leader who can support the poor and address the problems that have long been neglected."

Shama, another voter at

hanced infrastructure. "We are voting for better roads. improved water facilities and employment opportunities. It is essential that all Kashmiri

the station, said they seek en-

Pandits who have not yet returned to the valley can come back and live peacefully," she said.

amenities like electricity and water were also kev

concerns. Shama added, "We hope for better water facilities and reduced electricity fees. These issues are critical and must be taken seriously by

whoever comes into power." Overall, Kashmiri Pandits casting their votes in Budgam expressed optimism that this election could bring about the long-awaited development and stability in the valley—(KNO)

## **Polls Internal Matter Of India: Omar On Foreign Delegates' J&K Visit**

**Press Trust Of India** 

SRINAGAR: National Conference (NC) vice president Omar Abdullah Wednesday lashed out at the Centre's move to invite foreign delegates to observe the ongoing assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, saying the polls were an internal matter of India.

"I don't know why foreigners should be asked to check elections here. When foreign governments comment, then the government of India says 'this is an internal matter for India' and now suddenly they want foreign observers to come and look at our elections," Abdullah told reporters here.

He said the assembly elections in J-K "are an internal matter for us", and "we do not need their certificate"

"Also, this participation (of people in polls) is not because of the government of India, it is inspite of everything that the government of India did. They have humiliated people, they have used all the machinery of the government to detain and harass people.

"Inspite of that, people are coming and participating in the elections. So, this is not something the government of India should be highlighting. But, anyway, that's the way they are," he said.

A delegation of 16 diplomats from New Delhi-based missions arrived here on Wednesday at the invitation of the Ministry of External Affairs to observe the ongoing polls.

The assembly polls in J-K are being conducted after 10 years, and are the first after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. The NC vice president said the

people of J-K have been waiting for 10 years for the polls and after the first phase went well "expect a good turnout from the

**Press Trust Of India** 

R S PURA/JAMMU: PDP chief Me-

hbooba Mufti on Wednesday as-

serted that Jammu and Kashmir

will never have a BJP government

and no "secular government" can

be formed without the support of

support the formation of any

"secular government" in Jammu

and Kashmir to keep the BJP out

er have a BJP government. There

will be a secular government

in J-K. Whatever government is

formed in Jammu and Kashmir,

PDP will be an important factor,"

Mehbooba Mufti told reporters

on the sidelines of an election

She further stated, "Without

PDP's support, no secular govern-

ment can be formed in Jammu

Responding to a query on

whether she would join hands

with the National Conference for

government formation, she said,

"Our aim is to keep the BIP away

from power. The PDP will support

the formation of any secular gov-

ernment in Jammu and Kashmir

Asked about the BJP's claim of

securing over 50 seats and pick-

ing up a chief minister "from

the Jammu region", she replied,

"Jammu and Kashmir will nev-

of power.

rally here.

and Kashmir.'

to keep BJP away.'

She expressed readiness to



second phase also".

"Regardless of which party, enthusiasm in political rallies has been heartening. Now, we hope that enthusiasm translates into voter turnout also," he added. Asked how important the second phase was for him as he is contesting from two seats of Ganderbal and Budgam, Abdullah said all election days are important.

"It is not about me, it is about the party as a whole. The first phase was as important, the third phase will be as important. Yes, I have got a personal stake in this, but for the party, all three phases are important," he said.

The former chief minister of the erstwhile state of J-K said "umeed pe duniya kayam hai' (hope is what keeps the world

"I am quietly hopeful. The rest is first in the hands of the Almighty and then in the hands of voters. So, let's see," he added.

To a question about PDP president Mehbooba Mufti's allegation of bogus voting in Ganderbal and Budgam, Abdullah said the PDP has seen the writing on

'Please investigate (PDP's allegations). I cannot help it if their candidates have not been able to make the impact that they had expected. It is not my fault that people have withdrawn from the election campaign in my favour.

"The PDP was very happy to be the recipient of Apni Party support in Budgam until Muntazir

"They have their own Lieutenant

Governor and Prime Minister.

What have they done for Jammu

an alternative, they should have

appointed a Governor from Jam-

mu. The BJP won't even cross the

Mehbooba Mufti also re-

sponded to Prime Minister Nar-

endra Modi's criticism of "three

families, recalling how her father

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed "up-

held the Indian flag" during times

Campaigning for her party can-

didates in Bisnah, R S Pura, and

Jammu, she criticised Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi for labelling

the Mufti family as anti-national

and blaming them for the rise of

us. They have nothing to offer to

the people. Whose opposition are

they leading? Mufti Mohammad

Sayeed's party, the same man

They come here to criticise

"If they project a Jammu CM as

all these years?

15-seat mark."

of unrest in Kashmir.

JK Will Never Have A BJP

Government: Mehbooba Mufti

Mohiuddin went against the party and announced his support for me. After that, the PDP got upset and started attacking us and the Apni Party. PDP has clearly seen the writing on the wall. Forget about Budgam and Ganderbal, they will be lucky to win even in Bijbehara. So I don't want to say much about it," he said.

Mohiuddin, who had filed nomination from Budgam on Apni Party's mandate, withdrew from the race and announced support to Abdullah.

Bijbehara is the seat where Mufti's daughter Iltija Mufti was in the fray. The constituency voted in the first phase of polls on September 18.

On the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit to J-K on Wednesday, the NC vice president said the Congress should focus more on Jammu.

"It is a good thing. I hope after Rahul is done campaigning in one or two seats in Kashmir, he focuses on Jammu. Ultimately, what the Congress does in Kashmir is not that important, but what the Congress does in Jammu is important," he said.

Abdullah said unfortunately, the Congress has not done as much in the plains of Jammu as the NC -- which is in a pre-poll alliance with the Congress -would expect them to do.

"The lion's share of the seats that the alliance gave in Jammu was to the Congress party and yet the Congress' campaign in Jammu is yet to begin. There are only five days of campaigning now. So I hope after Rahul is done campaigning on this one seat in the valley, the Congress focuses all its attention in the plains of Jammu," he said.

Gandhi is scheduled to address a public rally in the Sopore area of north Kashmir later in

who, since the 1960s, has upheld

ence campaigned for independence and talked about joining

Pakistan, it was Mufti Sahab who

upheld and raised the Indian flag

in Kashmir. And now, they call

his party anti-national," the PDP

Praising Mufti Mohammad

Sayeed's rule in Jammu and Kash-

mir, she termed it a golden period

The BJP and PDP had joined

hands after the 2014 assembly

polls to form an alliance govern-

ment in March 2015 led by PDP

patron Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

It was the first time the BJP came

to power in J-K, but the alliance

was marked by unease and the

Lambasting the BJP for its poli-

cies in the state, she dismissed

its promise of appointing a chief

minister from Jammu as "hollow

sor from Jammu? During our ten-

ure, the DGP and Chief Secretary

were from Jammu, but today, all

these positions are held by out-

Highlighting issues of unem-

ployment, depression and drug

use in Jammu and Kashmir, she

also lashed out at the government's

electricity policies and the alloca-

tion of contracts to "outsiders".

siders," she questioned.

"Why isn't there a single advi-

BJP pulled out in June 2018.

and misleading".

chief said.

lasting three years.

"When the National Confer-

India's flag high in Kashmir."

#### **Fakir Gujri Voters Frustrated** Over 'Broken Promises' Of **Previous Regimes**

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** In the second phase of assembly elections, electorates at Fakir Gujri Wednesday expressed their resentment against the previous governments saying it has done nothing good for the welfare of the area.

The locals said that the ministers during the political rallies claim and promise many things to voters but later evade and fail them. One of the voters, Abdul

Rashid said he was optimistic for a change this time as he sees the elections more serious than previously. The 67-year-old Rashid said,

"It is after ten years the votes are being casted, otherwise, the previous representatives did nothing for us.'

He said, "They come only during voting, Keeping in view their previous promises, ideally

we shouldn't have any expectations, but on the other side we see the elections going seriously as compared to the previous elections.'

Rashid said that he has never missed the voting throughout his life and has been casting his vote for more than 35 years.

Another voter at Fakir Gujri Muhammad Yaseen Famra said that he has casted vote four times so far.

The 45-year-year old Famra said that they are voting to elect their representative, who will listen to them especially regarding the electricity and water issues.

He said that the community have been neglected for the past ten years.

"At Fakir Gujri, we are facing many problems and I have convinced my eight members to cast their ballots for a positive outcome," he said—(KNO)

#### **Voters In Chaar-E-Shareef Constituency Seek Return Of** 'Purana Kashmir'

Agencies

SRINAGAR: In Budgam's Badipora Nagam, within the Chaare-Shareef constituency, voters had gathered along two sides of the road outside a polling station, reflecting on the losses they have endured over the past decade.

Voters expressed their desire for the return of "Purana Kashmir" (Old Kashmir), saying that conditions were improving until around 2015-2016. They lamented that any development in their area occurred before 2016, after which progress stalled.

Mubarak Ahmad, a voter, said, "Up until 2016, everything was going smoothly, and unemployment wasn't a major issue. However, the situation has dramatically changed in the last eight years. We were content with the special status of J&K, which ensured that local jobs, land and resources were reserved for locals. That has been taken away undemocratically."

He added, "We want our 'Purana Kashmir' back. 'Naya Kashmir' has remained confined to slogans, while the reality on the ground is different."

The voters outside a polling station in Khansahib echoed similar views. They expressed their concerns about rising electricity bills, inflation, reduced ration supplies and a lack of employment opportunities that have heavily impacted the poor. "We are voting to reclaim what was taken from us in August 2019," they

In Gundpora Beerwah, many young voters expressed frustration over being unemployed despite holding degrees. They said they are casting their votes in hopes of securing job opportunities.

Farooq Ahmad Bhat, a lo-cal, said, "People have only experienced disempowerment in the last five years. We need to restore the conditions of pre-2019 to address all our issues."

He urged voters to support candidates who can genuinely advocate for their concerns in the assembly and address their issues—(KNO)

'Don't Waste Your Vote'

### **Elderly Couple Shows Up** On Wheelchairs To Vote In Khansahib

**Agencies** 

SRINAGAR: An elderly couple, one in his 90s and the other in her 70s, captured attention at the Khansaĥib Constituency on Wednesday as they arrived at Polling Station 80 to cast their votes. Due to their age, they used wheelchairs to reach the polling booth.

Azzi, a woman in her 70s, said she voted to address issues like poverty, youth unemployment and unreliable electricity "I have been voting since I

was young, but this time it is different. I want to see pov-

erty eradicated and ensure our voungsters find jobs," she said. adding that the rising electricity fees without adequate service have made people's lives difficult. "I hope the new government will address these issues," she added. The man in his 90s said he

had never wasted his vote. He

urged young people to follow his example, saying, "If I can make it to the polling station, so can they. Voting is necessary for change and development." He called for improved gov-

ernance and greater youth participation in the electoral process—(KNO)

### No Food Served To Us In **Last 4 Days, Allege Drivers Hired By RTO**

Agencies

**SRINAGAR:** While the adequate facilities were put in place for the smooth conduct of elections, the drivers hired by the Regional Transport Office (RTO) Srinagar here have alleged that they were not even provided the food and tea during the last four days.

At Chandpora polling booth set up in Gadood bagh locality of Habba Kadal, a number of drivers alleged that for the last four days, they are ferrying the poll staff from one place to another as they were hired by the RTO directly.

However, they alleged that at least 15 drivers have not been provided the food and other eatables during the last four days, which has forced them to face tremendous hardships.

"We are with the poll staff for the last four days, but there has been no arrangement in place for the drivers. We have been pushed to the wall," one of the drivers, wishing anonymity said, adding that the poll staff are being provided with the food stuff and other eatables, but the drivers are not even being provided the water, which is quite injustice and needs to be looked seriously. "We have been hired but no

facility is in place for us," they said and appealed the concerned department to look into the matter and ensure that the drivers hired along with their vehicles should be taken care of in the third phase of polls and also for the day of counting as well-

#### Is This Coalition? NC workers **Tear Apart Congress Flags: Haji** Rashid Tells Rahul Gandhi

**Agencies** 

SRINAGAR: Senior Congress leader and former legislator Haji Abdur Rashid today pricked the National Conference-Congress pre-poll alliance balloon in presence of senior Congress leader and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi, by stating that NC workers tore apart Congress flags and fixed a parallel rally in Sopore.

As per news agency-Kashmir News Observer (KNO), welcoming Rahul to the apple town of Sopore, Haji Rashid said that he has seen many coalitions but not the one they are into at present. "They (NC) tore apart our flags and fixed a parallel rally at Sopore despite knowing Rahulji is coming here. Is this coalition? I haven't seen such coalition," Rashid said in typical Kashmiri language while Rahul tried to understand what the Congress leader was trying to convey-(KNO)

#### 61 Educational Institutions To Remain Closed Till 2 Oct In Bla Agencies

Baramulla district here have ordered temporary closure of multiple schools and educational institutions, which have been designated as camping sites for security personnel, including members of CAPF, JKAP, and IRP forces. The closure, effective from September 26 to

October 02, is aimed at facilitating secure accommodation for the deployed security forces. "Offline academic activities will be suspend-

ed during this period, though skeleton staff

among others—(KNO)

BARAMULLA: Authorities in north Kashmir's

shall be present, while institutions are encouraged to continue classes online or conduct additional classes to compensate for the disruption," it states. The institutions identified as camping sites

for CAPF/SAP are GDC Tangmarg, Pattan, Uri, Boniyar, Kreeri, SSM college Parihaspora, ITI Kralhar, Polytechnic college Kanispora, Netherfield School, MET Sopore and SRM Welkin







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