

JAMMU & KASHMIR

J&K Voters of 'silent hamlet' cast ballots for basic amenities, threaten boycott of future polls

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
DODA, APR 19

The residents of Dhadhahi, known as the "silent village" in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district due to its large deaf-and-dumb population, exercised their right to vote in the Lok Sabha polls on Friday in the hope of getting basic amenities, such as roads, water, healthcare facilities and education.

However, they warned of boycotting future elections if their demands are not met.

Located amidst snow-clad mountains, Dhadhahi is primarily inhabited by members of the Gujjar community, known for their agricultural practices and nomadic lifestyle. The unique characteristic of the village is that more than half of its population has faced challenges in hearing and speaking due to congenital medical conditions since 1950.

Despite these challenges, more than 35 per cent of the eligible voters in the village cast their votes at two polling booths by the afternoon.

"We have voted to garner support for our long-standing demand for basic facilities. We urge the government to set up schools for the deaf-and-mute children in our village," Mohammad Hanief, a social activist, said.

The villagers emphasised the need for immediate attention to their issues, including teachers for a primary school, a doctor for a



primary health centre and linking the hamlet with the road network.

"The administration should look into the villagers' problems and ensure that the primary school gets teachers, the primary health centre gets a doctor and the village is linked to the road network," Hanief said.

The villagers said they will boycott future elections if their demands are not addressed promptly.

"We will boycott any election -- whether for the Assembly or panchayats -- if our demands are not met," Hanief said.

With the help of Hanief, Rahil Ali, a deaf-and-mute father of five kids, stressed the importance of a school for children with similar conditions.

"We cast our votes with this demand in mind. The

government should ensure the establishment of a deaf-and-dumb school to educate these children," he said in sign language, which was interpreted by Hanief.

The villagers also called for government support to help the deaf-and-mute youngsters become self-reliant by starting their own businesses.

"The government should provide them with loans, training and animals under various schemes to help them earn a livelihood," Hanief said.

Despite their hearing-and-speech impairments, the villagers were enthusiastic about participating in the polling process.

"We are very happy to take part in the polling to choose our MP. Everyone is enthusiastic that the new MP will provide justice to us by ensuring basic facilities,"

Shabir Ahmed said.

Dhadhahi is home to approximately 4,500 Gujjars. The first case of hearing-and-speech impairment was reported in the village in 1939.

The village is part of the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency, one of the 102 seats in the country that went to polls on Friday.

More than 57.09 per cent voters of Udhampur exercised their franchise by 3 pm despite torrential rains, election officials said.

The polling began at 7 am at 2,637 polling stations across the constituency, with more than 16.23 lakh voters eligible to cast their votes. No untoward incident was reported from anywhere, the officials said.

Twelve candidates, including Union minister Jitendra Singh of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP), former MP Choudhary Lal Singh of the Congress and former minister G M Saroori of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), are in the fray from Udhampur.

While Jitendra Singh is eyeing a third straight term in the Lok Sabha, Choudhary Lal Singh, who won the seat in 2004 and 2009, is also trying his luck for a third victory.

This is the first major electoral battle in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution and the erstwhile state's bifurcation into Union territories on August 5, 2019.

More than 11,000 polling staff, including reserves, have been deployed to ensure a free-and-fair election, the officials said.

According to the office of the chief electoral officer, 1,472 of the 2,637 polling stations have been equipped with webcasting facilities in the constituency that has 16,23,195 voters.

Among the voters, 8,45,283 are men, 7,77,899 are women and 13 are third-gender voters. Of the 2,637 polling stations, 2,457 are in rural areas and 180 in urban areas.

The highest number of 701 polling stations are in Kathua, 654 in Udhampur, 529 in Doda, 405 in Kishtwar and 348 in Ramban.

Udhampur consists of 18 Assembly segments spanning five districts -- Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Udhampur and Kathua.

VC JU releases Newsletter of Poonch Campus



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JAMMU, APR 19

The Vice Chancellor University of Jammu Prof. Umesh Rai today released the Newsletter of JU'S Poonch Campus.

In a momentous event highlighting the academic prowess and community engagement of the JU'S Poonch Campus, Professor Umesh Rai, the Vice Chancellor, University of Jammu commended the efforts of Director Poonch Campus, Professor Rakesh Vaid, for the release of the Newsletter of Poonch Campus.

The Newsletter serves as a comprehensive showcase of the remarkable achievements and initiatives undertaken by the Poonch Campus.

Professor Umesh Rai lauded the dedication and hard work of the entire

team at Poonch Campus, particularly acknowledging the contributions of Dr. Rubia Bukhari in ensuring the productivity and informativeness of the Newsletter. He expressed his sincere congratulations to the team for their commitment to excellence and service to the community.

During the event, Director Poonch Campus, Professor Rakesh Vaid, provided a detailed briefing to the Vice Chancellor about the significant achievements and ongoing initiatives at the Poonch Campus. He highlighted the various awareness programs being organized, specifically tailored to benefit the local community, with a particular focus on the agricultural sector and the welfare of farmers in the area.

On this special occasion, Prof Rahul Gupta, Registrar, Prof. Meena Sharma,

Dean of Planning and Development, Prof Seema Langer, Head of the Department of Zoology, Prof Dipankar Sengupta, former Director of Poonch Campus Dr. Ranjeet Kalra, Teaching faculty MMTC, all took the opportunity to address the audience. Each of them spoke warmly, extending their congratulations to the director of Poonch Campus and the entire team involved in finalizing the Newsletter. Their words of appreciation echoed the collective effort and dedication put forth by the team, underscoring the significance of their accomplishment.

Dr. Rubia Bukhari, Campus Officer said the release of the Newsletter marks a pivotal moment in the journey of the Poonch Campus, reflecting its dedication to academic excellence, community empowerment, and societal development.

BJP reviews election preparation in Jammu Parliamentary constituency

JAMMU, APR 19: J&K BJP held a meeting of its former MLAs from the Jammu Parliamentary Constituency to review the on-going election preparations.

Ashok Koul, General Secretary (organization) chaired the meeting. He was accompanied by Kavinder Gupta, former Deputy Chief Minister, and Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal, General Secretary & State Convener, Parliament election management committee.

BJP senior leaders Sat Sharma, Sham Lal Sharma, Surjit Singh Salathia, Chander Prakash Ganga, Sukhmandan Choudhary, Priya Sethi, Bali Bhagat, Ajay Nanda, Baldev Sharma, Ch Vikram Randhawa, Rajeev Sharma, Prof Gharu Ram, Dr Krishan, Giridhari Lal Raina, and Swarn Lata, participated in the meeting.

Ashok Koul stressed on the ever-increasing enthusiasm of voters in the sup-



port of BJP. He appreciated the dedicated work of the party leaders and especially the ground-level workers, who have been working incessantly taking the party's achievements to the public to seek their paramount support for the party's MP candidates in the Parliamentary election.

Ashok Koul added that the people have now witnessed the 10 years of the Modi government which is characterized by unprecedented development, multi-faceted infrastructure built-up, enormous investments, and improvement in medical, educational, water, electricity, homes, and

other facilities to the general public, especially the needy and the neglected population, which had earlier received step-motherly treatment by the previous governments led by Congress, NC, and PDP.

Ashok Koul asked the senior leaders to go through all the voter lists themselves roping in the local leaders from the districts, and mandals up to the booth level. He asked them to discuss the proper arrangements at the booth levels to ensure the maximum voter turnout on the polling day in the Jammu-Parliamentary Constituency.

Asking the party leaders

to focus on the Booth Vijay Abhiyan, Koul said that the concentration should be on the Booth to win the election with a margin greater than that of the 2019 Parliamentary elections. He especially asked them to make an extra effort on the booths, in which the party managed less than expected votes in the last elections, stressing on the call of "Booth Jeeta, Chunav Jeeta".

Kavinder Gupta asked the senior leaders to counter the deceptive campaigns of opposition parties. He said that these people deliberately left Jammu and Kashmir abandoned and bleeding, when the people needed their help the most.

Dr. Devinder Kumar Manyal coordinated the meeting and presented the election-related reporting. He said that the party leaders are already giving their best at the ground level and BJP is set to secure a good margin in the election.

BJP bridged gap between urban-rural population: Jugal

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During the ten years rule of BJP-led NDA government under Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, the urban and rural areas have been treated equal in matters related to infrastructure development and the social welfare. Jugal Kishore Sharma, BJP candidate from Jammu-Reasi parliamentary constituency, said this while addressing public in Amb Gharota, Kangra, Barn, Seri Pandita, Gaik, Amb, Gharota Chowk, Thathi Chowk, Tung, Gorda, Rabta, Agore Ranjan villages, along with senior leader and former MLA Devender Rana, DDC Chairman Bharat Bhushan, Jammu North district president Omi Khajuria and other leaders. Jugal Kishore Sharma said that the ten years works of Modi government itself speaks that there was no consideration of region, faith, gender and all were treated equal in all



matters. Due care has been taken to ensure that the infrastructure development projects are not confined to major cities and towns but reach the remotest village to lessen the rural-urban gap and take all on board. Jugal Kishore Sharma said that the mega projects of road connectivity has covered every area, whether in cities or villages. The rail facility has also covered rural and urban areas. He said that there has been no dearth of development funds and the Modi government liberally

granted sanction to numerous projects in Jammu and Kashmir. Making a fervent appeal to the electorates, Jugal Kishore Sharma, said that the people should not forget that the Congress-led UPA had been responsible for scams, whereas the BJP-led NDA has the distinction of being a dispensation of schemes of public welfare. He said that the Congress misled the voters of the country for decades on false and pleasing slogans but in practical, it did nothing which could be appreciated.

He assured that the BJP in its third term under PM Modi, will work more vigorously to bring more development, restore complete peace and normalcy and take Jammu and Kashmir on the path of more progress and prosperity. Devender Rana, in his addresses, said that one of the major and important gift to the people of Jammu and Kashmir from Modi government has been the provision of covering every citizen under Ayushman Gold Health Card Scheme.

62 pc voting recorded in Ramban district

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The Polling successfully concluded in all 348 Polling Stations of AC-54 Ramban and AC-55 Banihal, of parliamentary constituency 04- Udhampur amidst continued rainfall across the district.

District Election Officer, Ramban, Baseer-Ul-Haq Chaudhary informed that the General Election Lok Sabha, 2024 has been safely, securely and smoothly conducted in district Ramban. He informed that as many as 62.44% votes have been polled including 66.7% in AC-54 Ramban and 56.7% in AC-55 Banihal, despite challenging weather conditions



marked by continuous rainfall.

Total 136825 votes out of 219124 have been polled in district Ramban. 64391 out of 96528 votes including 34186 male and 30205 female votes have been polled in AC-54 Ramban, while total 72434 out of 122596 votes including male 41352 and female 31082 votes have been polled in AC-55 Banihal.

The DEO said that to en-

sure the integrity of the electoral process, around 2211 polling staff and 2539 personnel from CAPF and Police under the Supervision of Senior Superintendent of Police, Ramban, Anuj Kumar were deployed across the district including Zonal Magistrates, Sector Magistrates, Micro Observers, Zonal Officers, and Sector Officers. 12 special/model polling booths including Pink polling stations, Youth

Polling stations, PwD Polling Stations, operated by women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities (PwD) employees respectively, have been established across the district.

The DEO said that comprehensive arrangements for transportation, accommodation, and other essential facilities were meticulously put in place in both assembly segments, AC-54 Ramban and AC-55 Banihal, catering to the needs of all polling staff and security personnel.

The District Administration also ensured the provision of Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF) at all 348 polling stations across the district, ensuring Voter's convenience remains a top priority.

CUJ organises Mind Meet on New Education Policy

JAMMU, APRIL 19: Panel discussion on "Unveiling the Power and Potential of the National Education Policy: Navigating from Primary to Higher Education" organised at CUJ in collaboration with Eutierria, The Botanical Society, the event explored the power and potential of the New Education Policy 2020 as a part of Thursday Mind Meet.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Sanjeev Jain praised the initiatives by the Department of Botany and the School of Life Sciences, encouraging them to organize similar events for the holistic development of students.

The discussion began with Prof. Vandana Sharma, Dean, School of Languages at CUJ, explaining the importance of Thursday Mind Meet events as forums for university stu-



dents and scholars to discuss national and international topics. Prof. J. N. Baliya of the Department of Educational Studies provided an overview of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. He also spoke about the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and its significance in giving academic flexibility to the students. Guest of Honour, Mr. Islam Khan, Assistant Commissioner at KVS Regional Office in Jammu, discussed the implementation of NEP in school education and

highlighted the challenges and benefits for students. He praised Kendriya Vidyalaya Schools for their role as torch bearers and pace-setters for government initiatives.

Prof. Brij Mohan Singh Bhau, Head, Department of Botany, discussed the initiatives being taken to incorporate NEP into the curriculum and emphasized the policy as a lifelong learning process. He also stressed the importance of skill enhancement courses and the variety of choices

available to students under NEP 2020. Dr. Samantha Vaishnavi discussed concerns regarding the quality of teaching, particularly in science courses, and shared her experiences and challenges. Dr. Yogesh Kumar summarized students' apprehensions about the new system.

He also described the challenges pertaining to implementation of a 3-language system for students who move between states. Student panelists and the audience shared their concerns about NEP, including the mixed curriculum, its efficacy, and the impact on job prospects. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Ashok Kumar, who expressed gratitude to all panelists and participants for their contributions to the Thursday Mind Meet.