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## Jammu constituency records impressive 71.91 pc turnout

69.23 pc, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi 74.65 pc, Suchetgarh (SC) 63.49 pc and Vijaypur 75.67 pc on the culmination of the voting.

There are a total of 22 candidates in fray in the constituency.

The Jammu parliamentary constituency is spread over 18 Assembly segments in four districts including Jammu, Samba, Reasi and Rajouri.

According to the figures provided by the office of Returning Officer 5-Jammu Parliamentary Constituency, there are a 17,80,835 registered voters in Jammu PC including 9,21,095 male, 8,59,712 female and 28 transgender electors. Among these 37,822 (37,025 male and 797 female) are service voters.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) had set up 2416 polling stations across the constituency including 18 Green Polling Stations, 46 Pink Polling Stations and 18 PwD manned polling stations.

Reasi district with three Assembly Constituencies, including Gulabgarh (ST), Reasi and Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, has 23,52,62 voters including 12,33,23 male, 11,19,36 female and three transgender voters. Among these 1393 are service voters (1364 male, 29 female). The ECI has set up 425 polling stations across the district including 97 vulnerable and 16 critical.

Samba district, comprising three Assembly Constituencies including Ramgrah (SC), Samba and Vijaypur has 2,59,198 voters, including 1,32,861 male, 1,26,336 female and one transgender voter. Among these 10,269 (10,073 male, 196 female) are service voters. The ECI has set up 365 polling stations in the district, including 72 critical.

Similarly, Jammu district, comprising 11 Assembly Constituencies including Bishnah (SC), Suchetgarh (SC), R S Pura-Jammu South, Bahu, Jammu East, Nagrota, Jammu West, Jammu North, Marh (SC), Akhnoor (SC) and Chhamb has 11,89,389 electors, including 6,13,988 male, 5,75,378 female and 23 transgender voters. Among these are also 24,315 service voters (23,768 male, 547 female). The ECI has set up 1488 polling stations across the district, including 38 vulnerable and 15 critical.

Likewise, Rajouri district with only Kalakote-Sunderbani Assembly Constituency falling in Jammu PC, has 96,986 voters (50,923 male, 46,062 female) and one transgender voter. Among these 1845 (1820 male, 25 female) are service voters. The ECI has set up 138 polling stations in the Assembly Constituency, including 88 vulnerable and 14 critical.

The R S Pura-Jammu South Assembly Constituency has the highest number of 1,24,744 voters (64,687 male, 60,054 female), three transgender voters including 1592 service. The EC has set up 147 polling stations across this AC.

Similarly, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Assembly segment of Reasi district has the lowest number of 55,737 voters (29,340 male, 26,397 female including 271 service voters) and the election authorities have set up 91 polling stations across the segment.

## 61 pc turnout in phase 2 of polls; Tripura records 78.53 pc

"Phase Two has been too good!"

Gratitude to the people across India who have voted today. The unparalleled support for NDA is going to disappoint the Opposition even more. Voters want NDA's good governance. Youth and women voters are powering the strong NDA support."

In Kerala, the turnout was 65.23 per cent. The election process, held amid tight security arrangements, was primarily incident free except for instances of bogus voting and breakdowns of electronic voting machines (EVMs) being reported in some booths of the state. Such incidents resulted in delaying the polling process in the affected booths.

One person each reportedly died at Palakkad, Alappuzha and Malappuram after casting their vote and a polling agent died after collapsing at a booth in Kozhikode. Tripura East Lok Sabha constituency recorded a turnout of 78.48 per cent. Election officials said there were some complaints from a few booths but those were "promptly addressed".

A jawan of the Madhya Pradesh Special Armed Force deployed on poll duty allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself with his service rifle at a government school where he was stationed in Gariaband district under the Mahasamund seat in Chhattisgarh, where a voter turnout of 72.61 per cent was recorded.

A polling booth at Sivni village in Balod district (Kanker seat) was decorated like a wedding 'mandap', with a display of rituals of traditional weddings. Several brides and grooms, dressed in their wedding finery, cast their votes at several polling booths.

The EC said people from 46 villages in Bastar and Kanker seats cast their votes in a polling booth set up in their own village for the first time in a Lok Sabha election.

In neighbouring Madhya Pradesh, there was a turnout of 55.77 per cent.

An estimated 70.68 per cent of the 77,26,668 voters exercised their franchise in the five parliamentary constituencies of Assam that went to polls in this phase.

In restive Manipur, where polling is being held under high presence of security personnel, the turnout was a high 77.18 per cent.

There were reports of intimidation by suspected militants, altercation between Congress workers and NPF supporters and damage of EVM at a polling station in the Tangkhul Naga-dominated hill district.

At KK Leishi Phantit polling station in Ukhrul, irate voters destroyed an EVM and other items after alleged disturbances by armed miscreants.

The overall voting percentage in Karnataka was 64.85. A case was booked against BJP MP and Bangalore South Candidate Tejasvi Surya for allegedly posting a video on a social media platform and soliciting votes on the grounds of religion, the Election Commission said.

Another BJP leader CT Ravi was booked for allegedly promoting hatred and enmity between citizens through his social media post.

Various restaurants in Bangalore were offering free dosas, laddu, coffee and other food items at discounted rates to customers who cast their vote.

A private hospital assisted 41 inpatients cast their vote with the help of city civic body Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). Green corridors were created for the ambulances across constituencies to ensure easy, hassle-free voting.

Some EVMs were destroyed at a polling station in Indiganatha village in Chamarajanagara district of Karnataka during a clash between two groups of people over whether to vote or not. Officials said an FIR is being filed the Election Commission will take a call after getting a detailed report.

A voter turnout of 53.84 per cent was recorded in eight constituencies in Maharashtra, while in Rajasthan, the turnout was 62.46 per cent. Incidents of confrontation between the supporters of the Congress candidate and an independent candidate were reported at a couple of places during polling in Barmer-Jaisalmer Lok Sabha constituency of Rajasthan.

Police said they were looking into the complaints besides some about fake voting from some places.

The by-election for the Bagidora assembly constituency in Banswara district was also held simultaneously on Friday and 73.25 per cent voting took place.

A voter turnout of 53.71 per cent was recorded in the eight parliamentary constituencies of Uttar Pradesh. Senior citizens dominated the early hours of voting in Noida in the Gautam Buddh Nagar constituency. Some residents' welfare associations made arrangements for electric vehicles to ferry voters to and from the polling booths.

In Bihar, the turnout was 54.91 per cent, 71.84 per cent in West Bengal and 71.21 per cent in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Lok Sabha polls are the first major electoral battle in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of the erstwhile state into Union territories — Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh — on August 5, 2019.

The Election Commission registered nearly 300 complaints in West Bengal, mostly related to EVM malfunctioning.

After Friday's phase, polling is over in Kerala, Rajasthan and Tripura. In the first phase on April 19, polling was completed in all seats of Tamil Nadu (39), Uttarakhand (5), Arunachal Pradesh (2), Meghalaya (2), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (1), Mizoram (1), Nagaland (1), Puducherry (1), Sikkim (1) and Lakshadweep (1).

The third phase of elections for 94 seats across 12 states and Union territories will be held on May 7. Counting will be done on June 4.

## Board exams twice a year from 2025

twice a year, the sources said.

The CBSE is currently in the process of working out the modalities of how will the academic calendar be structured to accommodate another set of board exams without impacting the undergraduate admission schedule, they said.

"The ministry has asked the CBSE to work on the logistics of how will board exams be conducted twice a year. The board is working out the modalities and a consultation will be organised next month with school principals," a source said.

"The idea being explored is to conduct two editions of the board exams at the end of the year from the 2025-26 academic session but the modalities still need to be worked out. However, there is no plan to implement the semester system," the source added.

According to the New Curriculum Framework (NCF) announced by the education ministry last year, board examinations will be held twice a year to ensure that students have enough time and opportunity to perform well and get an option to retain the best score.

## Separatist ideology 'dead' in J&amp;K: Sajad Lone

is dead. People see that it was futile and I would also add that the ball is in Delhi's court."

"Kashmiris are ready to be a part of India but they are looking at a dignified coexistence, they are not looking at the status of indignity or (being) unequal Indians. They are looking at being Indians with pride and at par with an Indian from Gujarat or Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu," he added.

Lone, who is contesting Lok Sabha polls from Baramulla constituency, said one of the reasons he wants to go to Parliament is to strive and advocate for the same set of laws for the children of Kashmir and the rest of the country.

Lone also underlined the importance of reintegration in conflict resolution. "Those who rebelled against the system, how much time will you give them to reintegrate into the system? So, if they are clean for 10 years, it is time to take the stigma off and let them live like normal civilians. This is done in all civilised countries," he said.

## Process initiated to dismiss CRPF DIG in sexual harassment case

tion of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), they said.

The final orders will be issued after taking into consideration the reply received from the accused officer within 15 days, the sources said.

The notice for dismissal against the officer, currently posted in Mumbai, was issued recently after a probe conducted by the CRPF found him "guilty" on sexual harassment charges.

The CRPF headquarters accepted the probe report prepared by the internal committee and forwarded it to the UPSC and the MHA for taking appropriate disciplinary action. The UPSC and the MHA have hence issued orders for dismissal against Khajan Singh, the sources said.

The officer is facing at least two such charges and the notice for dismissal has been issued in one case. The other case too is in progress, the sources said.

Khajan Singh served as the chief sports officer of the Central Reserve Police Force, the country's largest paramilitary force. He won a silver medal at the 1986 Seoul Asian Games in the 200m butterfly event which was India's first medal in swimming at the event since 1951.

He had earlier denied the allegations and said that the allegations of sexual harassment were "absolutely false" and made to "spoil his image".

The CRPF, which has about 3.25 lakh personnel, first inducted women in combat ranks in 1986. It has six all-female battalions at present with an overall strength of about 8,000 personnel in them.

It also has women personnel in sports and other administrative wings.

## Use of school goers in poll campaign by Mufti, NCPDR seeks probe

munication addressed to Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar raised concerns about the potential violation of election guidelines and the Model Code of Conduct by Mufti.

## Congress manifesto bears imprint of Muslim League: Modi

position even more. Voters want NDA's good governance. Youth and women voters are powering the strong NDA support," PM Modi posted.

Five phases of polling are left to be held now and the counting of the votes will take place on June 4.

As the country went for the second phase of polling, the Supreme Court rejected petitions seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail.

Modi said the verdict was a tight slap to the Congress-led opposition which must apologise for committing the sin of creating distrust against EVMs.

"When the Congress, the RJD and other INDI alliance parties were in power, the poor, backwards and Dalits used to be deprived of their votes through booth capture. With the introduction of Electronic Voting Machines, they are no longer able to play their old game. Hence, they committed the sin of creating distrust against EVMs," Modi said while addressing a rally in Araria constituency of Bihar.

"When the Congress, the RJD and other INDIA bloc parties were in power, the poor, backwards and Dalits used to be deprived of their votes through booth capture. With

the introduction of Electronic Voting Machines, they are no longer able to play their old game. Hence, they committed the sin of creating distrust against EVMs," alleged the prime minister.

The prime minister also accused the Congress of having "stolen" reservations meant for the OBCs and transferring the benefits to Muslims in Karnataka, where the party is in power.

The grand old party wanted to replicate the "conspiracy" in the rest of the country, including in Bihar where its ally "has not spoken a word against" the move in the southern state, he alleged.

"Being an OBC myself, I know the hardships faced by the backward classes", said Modi, adding, "in future, they may loot reservations for SCs and STs as well".

Claiming that the previous government headed by Manmohan Singh had given its "assent" for reservations to Muslims, the prime minister slammed the Congress and its "ecosystem" for "trying to browbeat me, without success".

Modi also underscored the need for a healthy voter turnout, in the backdrop of the same having been lower than usual in the first phase, saying "on the polling day, the atmosphere should be festive, leaving behind the acrimony during the campaign".

"The current elections are crucial for the country's future with regard to its economic and defence capabilities. I urge the people, especially the youth, to come out and vote in large numbers", said Modi.

## Apex Court seeks EC reply on NOTA

provision of negative voting would be in the interest of promoting democracy as it would send clear signals to political parties and their candidates as to what the electorate thinks about them" and directed the Election Commission to provide the option of NOTA in all EVMs.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Khera, and issued the notice.

Initially, the bench was reluctant to consider the PIL, saying it was for the "executive to decide".

"We will issue a notice. This is about the electoral process also. Let us see what the Election Commission has to say....," the CJI said.

The senior advocate said that present plea was important keeping in mind the development at Surat in Gujarat where a BJP nominee was declared winner before polling as some nomination papers were rejected and few withdrew from the race.

"It is most respectfully prayed that this Court may be pleased to issue a writ... directing the Election Commission to frame rules to the effect that if NOTA gets a majority, the election held in the particular constituency shall be declared null and void and a fresh election shall be conducted to the constituency," it said.

The PIL also sought a direction to the poll panel to frame rules stating that the candidates who poll fewer votes than NOTA shall stand debarred from contesting all elections for a period of five years.

It also sought a direction to ensure "proper and efficient reporting/publicity of NOTA as a 'fictional candidate'".

The plea referred to the apex court judgement and the report of the Law Commission on the issue in its support.

Buttressing the plea for re-election if NOTA wins and barring the candidates from poll process if they poll less than NOTA, the PIL said, "since 2013, the implementation of NOTA has not fulfilled the very purpose that it was supposed to".

On the contrary, it has not led to increased voter participation, the PIL said, adding it has also not compelled political parties to field good candidates.

## Land sinks at Ramban; 50 houses, power infra damaged

land, while a team of district officials has been deployed round-the-clock to supervise the rehabilitation of the affected population and restoration of essential services.

"The land is still sinking and our effort is to restore essential services like the road and electricity as our first priority. We will provide tents and other items and also organise medical camps for the victims," the deputy commissioner said.

He advised people not to panic and take precautionary measures to safeguard their lives.

Local volunteers joined SDRF and NDRF teams in helping the affected people to move their belongings from the damaged houses.

Meanwhile, the officials said an alternate road via Sumbar-Digdal has been made operational to connect Gool sub-division with the district headquarters.

In February last year also, at least 16 houses were damaged and road connectivity between Gool and Ramban was snapped due to sinking of land at Duksar Dalwa village in the Sangaldan area.

## "Will this country run on Sharia?"

## Amit Shah asks Rahul

law, which is about dividing the country. Personal laws can't be implemented in this country. I am confident that we will see Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of the country for the third time," Shah added.

Targeting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Shah said, "Rahul Baba, you can do whatever you want for appeasement. As long as BJP is there, it will not allow personal laws. It is our promise and a guarantee of Modiji that we will implement UCC in the entire country as we have done in Uttarakhand."

He also said the Modi government has ended Naxalism and terrorism in the country.

"In 2019, the Modi government abrogated Article 370 in just one stroke. Rahul Baba got afraid and said that rivers of blood will flow...But Rahul Baba, this is not a Congress government...It's Modi government. They don't even have the courage to hurl a single stone, let alone talk about rivers of blood," Shah said.

"The government has freed the country from terrorism and Naxalism and also liberated Madhya Pradesh from it," he added.

Earlier, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath hit out at Congress, accusing it of planning to implement the 'Sharia law' in the country and redistribute people's property.

The Uttar Pradesh CM, while addressing a public rally in Amroha, claimed that Congress has in its election manifesto expressed its intention to implement the 'Sharia law' in the country, posing a threat to the Constitution.

"Congress has written in its manifesto about bringing personal laws for a particular community. Through this move, Congress aims to impose Sharia law, bringing a Taliban-style rule to India. This clearly indicates that Congress and the I.N.D.I alliance pose a threat to the Constitution crafted by Baba Saheb," he said.

## Minor boy's body recovered after 11 days

of police and SDRF. The body was shifted to SMHS Hospital for medico-legal formalities.

Six people were killed while three others had gone missing after a boat carrying them capsized near Gandbal area on April 16.

## 2 top terrorists killed in Sopore gunbattle

where their condition was stated to be stable. A large quantity of arms and ammunition were recovered from the encounter site.

The operation was continuing in the area when reports

last came in. There were, however, no reports of forces having arrested suspects during searches in and around the village.

Reinforcements too had been rushed to the area. Security had been further stepped up across the valley ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, especially after the killing of an employee of social welfare department in Thanamandi area of Rajouri early this week.

Security along the LoC too had been enhanced to foil any intrusion bid by the terrorists based in PoJK, officials said.

## Cong wanting to give quota meant for SCs, OBCs to Muslims: Nadda

cluding in Karnataka where the BJP government, he said, had ended the quota but it was brought back by the Siddaramaiah government. "It had attempted to give reservations to Muslims in Andhra Pradesh too but could not due to the Supreme Court's orders," he said.

He said the Congress in its 2009 election manifesto had promised reservation for Muslims in educational institutions and jobs through a sub-quota in the Other Backward Classes category.

He claimed that the Congress' stand against majoritarianism in its 2024 poll manifesto underscores its "hate" for the SCs, STs and the OBCs as they make up for a majority in the society.

"False claims were made through the Sachar committee report and it was said that Muslims are worse off than Dalits. It means that the Congress had been making the ground for Muslims to be declared as SCs so that they can given the reservation due to Dalits," Nadda said.

The party has this old habit of robbing the SCs, STs and OBCs of their rights, he said, citing B.R. Ambedkar's criticism of Jawahar Lal Nehru for not speaking about the welfare of Dalits in speeches. "Nehru was always in support of Muslims," he claimed.

Nadda said he never wanted Muslims to be neglected but that they should not get undue benefits at the cost of other communities. "Those who need more protection should get these benefits," he said, accusing the opposition party of giving the impression that there are Dalits among Muslims too so that the minority community gets the SC quota benefits.

The Congress brought laws to overturn court judgements to end reservation for deprived Hindu communities in institutions like Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia, he added.

## People tasted 'real democracy' under Modi: Jitendra

Narendra Modi.

"BJP will register a landslide victory and form a stable and strong government for the third consecutive term," he said after casting his vote in Jammu parliamentary constituency.

"After Modi took over in 2014, the people got a feel of real democracy, especially in Jammu and Kashmir where the grassroots level democracy was strengthened with the holding of panchayat and urban local bodies elections and implementation of the 72nd and 73rd constitutional amendments after the Congress deprived the people of these benefits," he said.

"There is enthusiasm among the voters, especially the first-timers. The country has witnessed revolutionary transformation in the past 10 years under the leadership of Modi. In 2014, the youth of the country was disappointed and looking for opportunities to leave the country but today the situation is such that the youth working outside the country wants to return," he added.

## SC rejects plea for full VVPAT-EVM tally; upholds EVM usage

chines after declaration of the results on the request of candidates who stood second and third.

Request for the verification of the microcontroller can be made within seven days of declaration of the results after payment of fees, the court said.

"If EVM is found tampered during verification, fees paid by the candidates will be refunded," it said.

An EVM comprises three units — ballot unit, control unit and the VVPAT. All three are embedded with microcontrollers which have a burnt memory from the manufacturer.

Currently, the Election Commission conducts random matching of VVPAT slips with EVMs at five polling booths per assembly constituency.

"While maintaining a balanced perspective is crucial in evaluating systems or institutions, blindly distrusting any aspect of the system can breed unwarranted scepticism...," Justice Datta said.

The bench suggested the poll panel can examine whether electronic machines can be used for counting VVPAT slips and also whether bar codes can be used for parties along with their symbols.

Besides seeking to return to the ballot paper system, the three petitions before it had prayed that VVPAT slips should be given to the voter to verify and put in the ballot box for counting and there should be 100 per cent counting of VVPAT slips, the bench said.

"We have rejected all of them," Justice Khanna said. A few hours later, the prime minister referred to the verdict in his Araria rally.

"When the Congress, the RJD and other INDIA bloc parties were in power, the poor, backwards and Dalits used to be deprived of their votes through booth capture. With the introduction of Electronic Voting Machines, they are no longer able to play their old game. Hence, they committed the sin of creating distrust against EVMs," he said.

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal described the decision as "fabulous".

He said the Supreme Court's ruling has exposed opposition parties, including the Congress, which had left no opportunity to "defame" the Election Commission.

"The Supreme Court in its decision said the EVM system is alright, it's credible and there cannot be any tampering with it. We welcome this decision on behalf of the BJP," Meghwal told reporters.

Election Commission officials pointed out that constitutional courts had rejected petitions challenging the reliability of the electronic voting machines on at least 40 occasions.

The functionaries also referred to Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar's recent remarks that EVMs are "100 per cent safe" and political parties know in the "heart of their hearts" that the machines are fair.

"Political parties have come into existence due to EVMs. There are many smaller parties, which in the age of ballot paper, might not have come into existence," he had said.

Hearing the matter on April 24, the apex court bench said it cannot "control the elections" or issue directions simply because doubts have been raised about the efficacy of EVM.

The petitions claimed the polling devices can be tinkered with to manipulate the results.

NGO Association for Democratic Reforms, one of the petitioners, had sought reversal of the poll panel's 2017 decision to replace the transparent glass on VVPAT machines with an opaque glass through which a voter can see the slip only when the light is on for seven seconds.

The petitioners also sought the court's direction to revert to the old system of ballot papers. To enhance transparency and verifiability in the poll process, the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 were amended in 2013 to introduce the use of VVPAT machines. They were first used in the by-election to the Noksen assembly seat in Nagaland.