Stone pelting on poll parties, booths despite massive security

By **Daily Excelsior** - 24/04/2014

Polling staff inspecting the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) ahead of election in Anantnag seat. -Excelsior/ Sajad Dar

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Srinagar, Apr 23: Amid massive security arrangements for the polls in Anantnag constituency, over a dozen of polling booths across the constituency were attacked by local youth with stones forcing police and para-military Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) to fire tear smoke shells and resort to aerial firing.

Reports reaching here from South Kashmir said that youth pelted stones at polling booths and polling staff in Dadsar, Seer villages in Tral area of Pulwama district and Koil, Zasu, Tahab, Batmaran, Sambora, Ratnipora areas of Pulwama district and Kundalan, Pinjora and Rawalpora of Shopian district.

Reports said that polling staff and their vehicles were stoned by youth at Sambora in Pulwama district this evening. Window panes of several vehicles were smashed and police fired gunshots in air to disperse the youth. However, no one was injured.

At Tahab in Pulwama, two vehicles were damaged when youth pelted stones at vehicles carrying poll staff this evening. Youth also attacked the polling staff with stones at Kundalan, Pinjora and Rawalpora in Shopian district. However, no one was injured in the attack.

The Shopian town observed shutdown for second consecutive day against the arrest of two youth ahead of polls on charges of stone pelting. Stone pelting was reported from Batapora and Mangam area of the town, however, no one was injured.

The Deputy Inspector General of Police, South Kashmir, Vijay Kumar told Excelsior that there were incidents of stone pelting at few places in Shopian and Pulwama district. He said that they have apprehensions that there may be stone pelting tomorrow evening when polling ends. He, however, said that adequate security arrangements are in place to deal with it.

Over 32000 police, para-military and military forces have been deployed in the constituency for the smooth conduct of the polls. Kumar said that 15 Battalions of CRPF, 10 Battalions of Army and 5600 policemen have been deployed on security duty in the constituency.

Earlier in the day, Electronic Voting Machines and other polling material was handed over to the Poll staff at district headquarters of the constituency and they were dispatched to the polling booths a day ahead of the polls. The constituency has 16 Assembly segments of Bijbehara, Anantnag, Pahalgam, Dooru, Kokernag, Shangus, Tral, Pampore, Pulwama, Rajpora, Wachi, Shopian, Noorabad, Kulgam, Homeshalibugh and Devsar. Around 4845 poll staff has been deployed in the constituency for conducting polls.

Twelve candidates are in the fray in the constituency which include Syed Abid Ahmad Shah of National Panthers Party, Mirza Mehboob Beg of National Conference, Mehbooba Mufti of PDP, Mohammad Sharief of BSP, Mushtaq Ahmad Malik of BJP, Asif Jeelani of All India Forward

Block, Dr. Tanvir Maqbool Dar of AAP, Ghulam Nabi Shah of Samajwadi Party, Mohammad Yaqoob Rather of All J&K Republican Party and Mohammad Yousuf Ganie of Ambedkar Samaj Party, besides Tanveer Hussain Khan and Abdul Ahad Mir as Independent candidates.

The constituency has 13, 01, 142 voters and 1615 polling stations out which 80 per cent are hyper sensitive. There are 27,000 migrant voters in the constituency as well.

Last time in 2009, Dr Mehboob Beg of NC backed by Congress defeated Peer Muhammad Hussain of the PDP by a margin of 5224 votes. The total voting percentage was at 27.09.

In 2004 Parliamentary elections, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti defeated Dr. Mehboob Beg of NC by a margin of 38,931 votes. Mehbooba polled 74,436 while Beg got 35,498 votes and the polling percentage was 15.04.

National Conference has represented Anantnag constituency five times, Congress thrice while the PDP and Janta Dal have won the seat one time each.

In 1967, 1971 and 1977 Parliamentary elections, the constituency was represented by Muhammad Shafi Qureshi. In 1980 bi-elections, NC candidate Ghulam Rasool Kochak was elected from here and in 1984 Begum Akbar Jehan of NC won the seat.

In 1989, NC candidate Pyare Lal Handoo was elected from Anantnag while in 1996 Janta Dal candidate Muhammad Maqbool Dar emerged victorious. In 1998 mid term polls, Mufti Muhammad Sayed won the seat on Congress ticket. In 1999, Ali Muhammad Naik of NC won from here.

Daily Excelsior

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