

Daily Excelsior, 1 December 2008

Hurriyat's boycott call spurned with 67% turnout in Kupwara

HANDWARA, Nov 30: In arguably the fairest ever exercise of the Indian democracy conducted by Election Commission of India in Jammu & Kashmir, 67% of the electorate today exercised franchise in Phase-3 of the polling in five segments of Kupwara district in Kashmir valley. Even as the border district remained sealed off for every unauthorized entry and the Valley outside reeled under undeclared curfew, voters in large numbers turned up at the polling stations while treating the separatist Hurriyat Conference's call for "total boycott" to Assembly elections with contempt

Daily Excelsior, 1 December 2008

Vaishno Devi yatra crosses 6 million mark

JAMMU, Nov 30: Even as pilgrimage to Mata Vaishno Devi shrine has crossed six million mark, it was falling short by more than six lakh by the end of this month in 2008 as compared to corresponding period last year. While pilgrimage to the widely revered shrine had declined in July and August due to Amarnath land agitation, the present downfall is being attributed to Assembly elections in three States-New Delhi, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh-which accounted for a large number of pilgrims

Daily Excelsior, 2 December 2008

Over 4 lakh votes polled in 10 segments

SRINAGAR, Dec 1: Massive participation of voters in the current Assembly elections, which has come as a surprise not only for both factions of the separatist Hurriyat Conference but also for heads of both the major mainstream political parties and former Chief Ministers---Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and Farooq Abdullah---has begun breaking many previous records of the voters' turnout in Kashmir valley. While the 2008 Intifada-ridden separatist camp had expected zero turnout in most of the Valley segments, PDP Patron, Mufti Sayeed, had strongly pleaded for postponement and claimed that post-SASB land controversy situation in the State was in no way conducive for holding the elections. NC Patriarch, Farooq Abdullah, had publicly asserted that the Hurriyat-sponsored boycott would have no negative impact on the elections but expressed his apprehensions that the democratic process would have little credibility as, only few voters, according to him, would turn up to vote due to November 14th snowfall in Kashmir

Daily Excelsior, 3 December 2008

Two Cong rebels; top NC, BJP leaders join fray

JAMMU, Dec 2: Two Congress rebels-Shivdev Singh (Nagrota) and Ashok Dubey (Bishnah), five prominent BJP leaders including former State unit chief Dr Nirmal Singh (Gandhi Nagar), Jugal Kishore (Nagrota), Chander Prakash Ganga (Vijaypur), Sham Choudhary (Suchetgarh) and Dr Garu Ram (RS Pura), influential NC candidate Tarlochan Singh Wazir (Gandhi Nagar) and Congress veteran Dharampal Sharma were among 67 candidates who jumped into electoral fray from Jammu district taking total number of nominations on penultimate day to a record 140. Three candidates in Jammu district have filed two sets of nominations

Tribune, 3 December 2008

Border villages fear return of hostile times

During an artificial limb camp organised by the Army in Uri for villagers crippled by enemy shelling and by stepping on hidden land mines, Bashir Malik, a resident, said he could reconcile to his wife's amputated leg, caused by a land mine, but what he feared most was the return of days when his family members and neighbours were always one blast away from death or being crippled forever. The heightened tension

between India and Pakistan over Mumbai terror attack means the worst nightmare of Malik (58) has come back to haunt him and hundreds of poor families like him living near the LoC. 'I know people are angry in India. But it is people like us who have to face hard consequences for the poor relation between two countries. They should think about us,' Malik, who works as a trader in Srinagar to supplement his family's meager income.

Daily Excelsior, 4 December 2008

68.22% polling in Kupwara

JAMMU, Dec 4: As per the Presiding Officers' diaries of the five Assembly constituencies of Kupwara district, which went to polls on November 30 in the third phase of Assembly elections in the State, the average polling percentage in these segments was 68.22 per cent

Daily Excelsior, 4 December 2008

58 civilians, 11 trucks cross LoC

SRINAGAR, Dec 4: Mumbai terror attacks have no impact on the cross-Line of Control (LoC) bus and truck services as 58 people and 11 trucks crossed sides at Kaman Post, the last Indian military post on this side of the border, official sources said today. They said despite high degree of tension between India and Pakistan because of the Mumbai terror attacks, eight fresh guests from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) arrived here in the Karvan-e-Aman bus to meet their relatives here. As many as 16 residents of this side of the border, who had crossed into PoK returned after they met their relatives after more than six decades

Hindu, 5 December 2008

68.22 per cent voting in 3rd phase in J&K

Jammu/Srinagar: Election authorities on Thursday said that 68.22 per cent polling was recorded in third phase of election in five Assembly segment of Kupwara district after final compilation of the figures. 'With reference to the presiding officers diaries of the five Assembly segment of Kupwara district, which went to polls on November 30 in third phase of elections in the State was recorded as 68.22 per cent,' an official statement said. Giving further details, it said that 80.41 per cent of votes were cast in Karnah segment followed by 75.47 per cent in Handwara, 68.46 per cent in Lolab, 62.60 per cent in Kupwara and 61.46 per cent in Langate segment

Asian Age, 6 December 2008

LoC quiet despite rise in tension

Dec. 5: The Line of Control (LoC) as well as the International Border (IB) splitting Jammu and Kashmir between India and Pakistan have been quiet over the past week despite mounting tensions between the two countries in the aftermath of the Mumbai terror attacks. Officials in Srinagar and Jammu said on Friday that although the "dividing line" has witnessed a string of violation of the November 2003 ceasefire, no such incidents were reported during the past week. Also, no infiltration attempt by militants or any other undesirable elements has been reported taking place either along the 767-km LoC or the 198-km IB, called working boundary by Pakistan during this period

Daily Excelsior, 6 December 2008

People intercept vehicle distributing liquor, cash

REASI, Dec 5: Tension flared up in Reasi and Katra towns tonight after mob set on fire a Ford Endeavour vehicle in the convoy of Congress candidate for Reasi, Jugal Kishore, a former Minister and damaged about half a dozen vehicles including

Kishore's personal vehicle completely at village Bhagga, about seven kms from the town here. The mob reacted after they claimed to have caught a Tempo Traveller at Bhagga in which the Congress workers were allegedly taking cash and liquor for distribution among the electorates. PSOs of Mr Kishore had to fire several shots in air to rescue him from the mob fury after he reached the spot along with his supporters at Bhagga. More than a dozen supporters of Congress and BJP were injured in the clash while four workers of BJP have been detained by police for setting on fire and damaging the vehicles. As the report of BJP workers' arrest spread, the mob gheroad Katra police station demanding unconditional release of the persons and action against those involved in distributing cash and liquor among the voters on the eve of elections

Daily Excelsior, 7 December 2008

18 segments go to polls today amid tight security cover

JAMMU, Dec 6: With all six Assembly segments of Reasi and Udhampur districts heading for a photo finish and in the aftermath of yesterday's clash between Congress and BJP supporters at Reasi, authorities have made tight security arrangements for tomorrow's polling with deployment of 130 companies of Central forces in addition to mobilisation of local police. Three each constituencies of Reasi and Udhampur districts will go to polls in fourth phase tomorrow along with 12 segments of Baramulla (seven) and Budgam (five) districts in Kashmir

Daily Excelsior, 7 December 2008

Record 210 contestants left in fray in Jammu

JAMMU, Dec 6: A record number of 210 candidates were left in fray even after 12 contestants opted out of race in Jammu district today on last date for withdrawal of nominations. In none other 22 districts of the State, the number of candidates has crossed 200 mark. In Samba district, which will also go to polling along with Jammu district in seventh and final phase on December 24, there were 31 candidates in fray with none of them withdrawing from the race today

Daily Excelsior, 7 December 2008

Top LeT militant shot dead in Doda

JAMMU, Dec 6: A hardcore militant of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit was gunned down by police, Army and CRPF in a joint operation while his Pakistani associate was injured at village Joura under the jurisdiction of Gandoh police station in Doda district early this morning. A manhunt has been launched by police and Army to nab the injured Pakistani in upper reaches of Joura forests

Daily Excelsior, 8 December 2008

Brisk polling in Budgam, moderate in Baramulla

BARAMULLA/ BUDGAM, Dec 7: Even as the separatist leadership's call for boycott to the Assembly elections had a substantial impact in the urban localities of Baramulla and Sopore segments, polling in remaining 10 segments of Baramulla and Budgam districts witnessed brisk to moderate turnout in Phase-4 of the electoral process today. While majority of the voters in Baramulla and Sopore townships stayed away and put up anti-election demonstrations, Hurriyat's boycott call failed in 10 segments, which had a heavy voter turnout like 10 segments of Bandipore, Ganderbal and Kupwara districts in the first three phases of polling in November. Chief Electoral Officer, B R Sharma, told EXCELSIOR at 2345 hours tonight that in today's polling, Baramulla district had recorded turnout of 48% and Budgam district 54%. He said that Presiding Officers' diaries were being checked in Uri, Rafiabad and Sopore segments. He said that there was possibility of one percent increase and the

final figures would be available tomorrow. According to the official figures available with CEO at 2330 hours, turnout was a whopping 80% in Uri segment, 57% in Rafiabad, 33% in Baramulla, 22% in Sopore, 51% in Pattan, 47% in Sangrama, 59% in Gulmarg, 48% in Beerwah, 50% in Budgam, 50% in Chadoura, 61% in Khanshab and 62% in Chrar-e-Sharief.

Daily Excelsior, 8 December 2008

Over 75 pc turn-out in Reasi, about 63 pc in Udhampur

JAMMU, Dec 7: A massive turn-out of approximate 75 per cent was recorded in three segments of Reasi district while over 63 per cent electorates exercised their franchise for an equal number of constituencies in Udhampur district, which went to polls today in fourth phase. Highest ever voting percentage in four phases of polling in Jammu region so far was recorded today in Gulabgarh segment (77.8). Barring an incident of firing in air by PSOs of an Independent candidate at Tuli in Gulabgarh segment of Reasi district and a couple of clashes between BJP and Panthers Party supporters in Udhampur town in which BJP candidate Pawan Gupta was among half a dozen persons injured, the polling in all three segments passed off peacefully.

Daily Excelsior, 9 December 2008

147 CPF coys takeover entire Doda belt

JAMMU, Dec 8: A highest number of 147 companies of Central Police Force (CPF) are being deployed in Doda belt which is considered the toughest for polling from the militancy point of view in Jammu region. Three districts of Doda belt including Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban, which were part of a single administrative unit till last year, will together go to polling in sixth and penultimate phase of elections on December 17. A total of 101 candidates including former Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and former State BJP president Daya Krishan Kotwal are in the fray in Doda belt.

Daily Excelsior, 9 December 2008

Over 62% turnout in Hizb chief's village in Budgam

SRINAGAR, Dec 8: While the voter turnout in Budgam segment was 55.16% and aggregate turnout in five segments of Budgam district was 62.41% in yesterday's polling, it was a little higher in Soibug--residential village of Hizbul Mujahideen's "Supreme Commander" and United Jihad Council (UJC) chief Syed Salah-ud-din. Breaking records of all Assembly and Parliamentary elections since 1987, Soibug had polled 3,805 votes (62.62%) when enthusiastic voters were jostling for their turn and Presiding Officers were facing a tough time and resistance on closing down the polling one hour after it was supposed to end at 1600 hours.

Tribune, 9 December 2008

Militants shifting camps

With tension mounting between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the Mumbai terror attack, the militant training camps across the border are being vacated and relocated to other places. As India has constantly been building diplomatic pressure on Pakistan and America has also been backing India in its claim over Pakistan to hand over the people responsible for the terrorist attack in Mumbai, the militant leadership fearing a 'surgical strike' by India on their camps in PoK, are slowly vacating the camps. 'For the past few days we have been witnessing increase in activities across the line of control and we have intelligence inputs that the militant training camps across the border are being vacated and the inmates shifted to other locations.' a senior intelligence officer told The Tribune on condition of anonymity.

Hindu, 12 December 2008

Pakistan invokes the 'K' word

New Delhi: Pakistan on Tuesday responded to India's call for the United Nations to act against the Jamat-ud-Dawah and other organisations linked to the Mumbai terrorist attacks by saying it would ban the outfit if asked by the U.N. to do so. But it also added the diplomatic equivalent of a non-sequitur by invoking the 'K' word and calling for terrorism's 'root causes' to be addressed. Speaking at a special session on terrorism of the Security Council, Pakistan's U.N. ambassador began by saying he was 'deeply troubled' by what had happened in Mumbai. 'The best outcome of the tragedy,' he said a few seconds later, 'would be the resolution of the issue of Kashmir.'

Daily Excelsior, 13 December 2008

113 in fray for Valley segments

SRINAGAR, Dec 12: Fate of 113 candidates will be decided tomorrow when over 4.36 lakh electorates will cast their votes for 6 segments spread over two districts going to polls in the fifth round of ongoing Assembly elections in the Valley. The constituencies going to the polls tomorrow are - Tral, Pampore, Pulwama and Rajpora in Pulwama district and Wachi and Shopian in Shopian district. Twenty one candidates each are contesting from Shopian and Tral Assembly constituencies. Militancy-infested Shopian and Tral segments have the maximum number of 21 candidates each followed by 19 each in Pulwama and Wachi

Hindu, 14 December 2008

Jehad Council in silent mode: report

Islamabad: The Pakistan-based United Jehad Council (UJC), a conglomerate of militant groups that are active in Kashmir, has 'temporarily' dissolved itself, with its leaders going underground following the crackdown on the Jamat-ud-Dawah and other banned terror outfits, a media report said on Saturday. The UJC, headed by Syed Salahuddin, comprises his Hizb-ul Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Ansar, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, Al-Jihad, Al-Barq, Ikhwan-ul-Mussalmin and the Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen

Daily Excelsior, 14 December 2008

47 pc turn-out for 6 Valley segments

Srinagar, Dec 13: More than 47 per cent of the 4.36 lakh eligible electorate today exercised their franchise for six Assembly constituencies of Shopian and Pulwama districts in the fifth phase of polling, which turned out to be the bloodiest so far as one person was killed and 19 others injured in clashes between police and anti-election protestors. Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Masaud Samun told reporters that as per the tentative data available with the Election authorities, more than 47 per cent voters cast their votes in today's voting

Daily Excelsior, 14 December 2008

70 per cent cast votes in Kathua, names' deletion triggers protests

JAMMU, Dec 13: A heavy turn-out of 70.2 per cent was recorded in five segments of Kathua district, which went to polls today in fifth phase in Jammu region as several incidents of clashes between supporters of rival candidates and protests by voters on deletion of their names were reported from Kathua proper in which Scorpio vehicle of former Minister and Congress rebel candidate Babu Singh was damaged. BSP candidate from Kathua Som Raj Majotra led a massive protest at Main Chowk in Kathua town this evening protesting against deletion of electorates of a particular community at several polling stations. People also blocked roads and held demonstration on not finding their names in the voters' lists in Kathua segment. At several places in Kathua, people shouting slogans against the Election Commission

for "deliberately deleting the names of a particular community" from the electors list

Daily Excelsior, 15 December 2008

Bigwigs prefer plots, banks outside Jammu

JAMMU, Dec 14: Influential candidates of different political parties especially those contesting from the City segments have something in common-most of them have invested heavily in real estate business not only in Jammu but in New Delhi as well. And despite owning property worth crores, a number of them have taken loans from the Legislature as well as financial institutions. Surprisingly, Ajatshatru Singh, NC candidate from Nagrota against whose name property worth crores has been listed in affidavits submitted before Returning Officers while filing nominations is among the contestants who have taken loan from the financial institutions

Daily Excelsior, 16 December 2008

Keen contest on cards in 6 segments

JAMMU, Dec 15: With high pitched campaigning in militancy infested Doda belt ending this evening, six segments of Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban districts were all set for a keen contest on December 17 in sixth and penultimate phase of polling. About 4.53 lakh electorate are eligible to cast their votes to elect six MLAs from amongst 101 candidates including two women in the three districts. On last day of campaigning, BJP president Rajnath Singh accompanied by senior party leader R P Singh flew-in to Doda, Bhaderwah, Paddar (Gulabgarh) and Gandoh and addressed public meetings in support of party candidates while PCC (I) chief and Union Minister for Water Resources Prof Saif-ud-Din Soz and former Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, who is contesting from Bhaderwah, held rallies in Bhaderwah and Dudu. A number of State Congress leaders including Choudhary Lal Singh, MP from Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat, Jugal Kishore and Abdul Gani Vakil besides a number of other former Ministers also campaigned for Mr Azad in Bhaderwah

Daily Excelsior, 16 December 2008

Electioneering over for 10 Valley constituencies; Mufti among 168 candidates in fray

Srinagar, Dec 15: The electioneering for 10 constituencies of South Kashmir-- Anantnag and Kulgam districts in the penultimate phase of State Assembly elections came to an end today with all the candidates trying to convince the electorate to vote for them on Wednesday. As many as 168 candidates including former Chief Minister and PDP patron Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and several former Ministers are trying their luck for the 10 Assembly segments. The number of candidates for these 10 seats is 150 per cent more than the last elections. Only 68 candidates contested the elections in 2002

Daily Excelsior, 16 December 2008

After zero, 12 PoK citizens reach Poonch

JAMMU, Dec 15: After last week's zero arrival from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) in weekly Poonch-Rawlakote bus service from Chakan-Da-Bagh in Poonch district, 12 PoK citizens arrived in the bus today as tension between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of last month's Mumbai terror attacks has started receding. Last week, not even a single citizen from PoK had come to this side following strained relations between two countries and rumours that cross-LoC routes might be closed down after Mumbai attacks. This was for the first time since cross-LoC route was opened on November 21, 2005 that not even a single PoK citizen had come to this side

Daily Excelsior, 17 December 2008

20,000 securitymen for Jammu, Samba

JAMMU, Dec 16: A whopping 20,000 para-military and police personnel are being deployed in Jammu and Samba districts which go to polls in final seventh phase on December 24 in Jammu region. This election related deployment is in addition to security forces and Punjab Police deployed on the International Border from Samba to Pallanwalla to thwart possibility of any infiltration from across the border to sabotage elections. Besides 11 Observers appointed by the Election Commission of India, Micro Observers are being appointed in 250 'critical polling stations', identified by the District Election Officer (DEO) in Jammu district

Daily Excelsior, 18 December 2008

62 pc turn-out in 10 Valley segments amid chill, rains

Srinagar, Dec 17: Braving cold weather and early morning rains, more than 62 per cent of the 7.16 lakh eligible voters today exercised their franchise in the sixth phase of elections for the 10 Assembly constituencies of Anantnag and Kulgam districts of South Kashmir. Anantnag district registered a voter turn out of 63 per cent while Kulgam district recorded a poll percentage of 61 per cent in today's voting which was by and large peaceful as no major untoward incident was reported from anywhere in the two poll bound districts, Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Masood Samoon told reporters at the routine briefing

Daily Excelsior, 18 December 2008

68.5 pc polling in militancy infested 6 Doda constituencies

JAMMU, Dec 17: A massive turn-out of 68.5 per cent was recorded in three militancy-infested districts of Doda belt, which went to polls in sixth and penultimate phase in Jammu region today. Except for few stray incidents of clashes between polling agents of rival political parties, the voting process passed off peacefully without a single militancy related incident in any part of six Assembly segments spread over the three districts. The State Election Department has recommended a re-poll in Sumbar polling station (No. 74), located in remote area of Banihal segment in Ramban district as the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) there went out of order after only three votes had been cast. Though a new EVM was rushed to the polling station at 2 pm, people refused to cast their votes demanding a re-poll

Daily Excelsior, 19 December 2008

Two top LeT comdrs gunned down in Doda; Jawan killed, operation still on

JAMMU, Dec 18: Doda police today achieved a major success when they killed two top militant commanders of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit including Saifullah Qari, a Pakistani in two fierce gun-battles at Krara and Bharat in Doda district. A jawan of Territorial Army also lost his life in the gun-battle. SSP Doda Prabhat Singh said a small team of police personnel cordoned off village Amritgarh under the jurisdiction of Krara police post and Thathri police station yesterday after developing an information that Saifullah Qari along with his two body-guards had sneaked into the area

Hindu, 30 December 2008

It will be Omar : Farooq Abdullah steps aside; Congress sends positive signals

SRINAGAR: The former Chief Minister and National Conference patron, Farooq Abdullah, on Monday paved the way for his son and party president Omar Abdullah to become the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. On Sunday, Dr. Abdullah hinted at the choice of Mr. Omar Abdullah as the chief ministerial candidate, but changed the statement late in the night. He told a news channel, 'You are talking to the next

Chief Minister of the State.' However, he told reporters at his residence on Monday that he had made up his mind to leave the slot for his son. 'I will recommend to the party that Omar Abdullah be our chief ministerial candidate. I will pursue my career at the national and international levels. Jammu and Kashmir is a small canvas for me.'

Daily Excelsior, 30 December 2008

Cong decision on Govt formation in J&K likely to be delayed

NEW DELHI, Dec 29: The Congress today said it would take a decision on its stand in the Government formation in Jammu and Kashmir after carefully considering different aspects, including the logic of the verdict, the security and cross-border situation and longevity of a future Government in a clear indication that the formulation of its stand would take more time

Daily Excelsior, 30 December 2008

92 pc candidates forfeit security deposits in Valley

Srinagar, Dec 29: An astonishing 92 per cent of the losing candidates in the 50 Assembly constituencies of Kashmir division including Ladakh region lost their security deposit in the just concluded Assembly elections in the State. According to the data available with Election Commission, 653 of the 707 losing candidates lost their security deposit in 46 Assembly constituencies of Kashmir and four in Ladakh region. A total of 757 candidates were in the fray for these 50 seats

Hindu, 31 December 2008

NC-Congress to share power

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Tuesday announced its decision to support the National Congress in government formation in Jammu and Kashmir under NC president Omar Abdullah and be part of the set-up. Union Minister and in-charge of party affairs in the State Prithviraj Chavan told journalists that Congress president Sonia Gandhi accepted the NC proposal to form a coalition government

Daily Excelsior, 31 December 2008

PDP to play role of constructive Oppn: Mufti

Srinagar, Dec 30: As National Conference president Omar Abdullah emerged as the new Chief Minister of the State, arch rival People's Democratic Party wished him well saying it will play the role of a constructive opposition as per the mandate of the people. "We are happy that we will have a democratically elected Government in the State soon. People have given us the mandate to play the role of a good, constructive opposition (in the State) and we will do that," PDP president Mehbooba Mufti told reporters after Omar was confirmed to lead the NC-Congress coalition Government in the State

Daily Excelsior, 31 December 2008

Massive decline in Cong, NC vote bank; 11.1 pc swing in BJP's favour in Jammu

JAMMU, Dec 30: A massive 11.1 per cent swing in favour of BJP in Jammu region took its tally from 1 to 11 seats in the Assembly while a huge decline of 6.7 per cent in vote bank of Congress as compared to 2002 Assembly election cost as many as nine seats to the party. Though the Congress suffered a negative swing of 6.7 per cent across Jammu region covering 37 Assembly segments, it still polled highest number of 4.98 lakh votes out of a total of 21.53 lakh votes polled in the region