

BJP's Assembly vote share higher than ruling party in J&K: Dr Jitendra

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Even though we could not form the government in Jammu & Kashmir, BJP's vote share in the Legislative Assembly election was higher than the ruling party, National Conference. That is because we got more votes but lost a few seats by a very narrow margin. Our vote share in the Muslim dominated Kashmir Valley also showed a significant rise.

This was stated by the Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh at the "India Economic Conclave" organised by "Times Now" at Bharat Mandapam, here.

In response to a question, Dr Jitendra Singh accused the



Congress party of spreading misgivings and false myths about the BJP among the people of the Kashmir Valley like it had done in the Northeast, but now, like the people of the Northeast, the people across J&K have begun to realise that the BJP is the only party which can provide justice to all

without discrimination.

There was a time, recalled Dr Jitendra Singh, when it was a taboo to utter BJP's name in Kashmir valley, let alone carry its flag. But today the BJP election campaign in Kashmir presents the same scene as in any other part of the country, he said. Coming to the main theme of the Conclave, "Indian Economy, Dr Jitendra Singh said, in order to achieve the goal of 2047 and make India a global phenomenon, we need to follow global strategies and parameters.

While answering to a question on how India can unleash benefits out of its natural resources in future in terms of

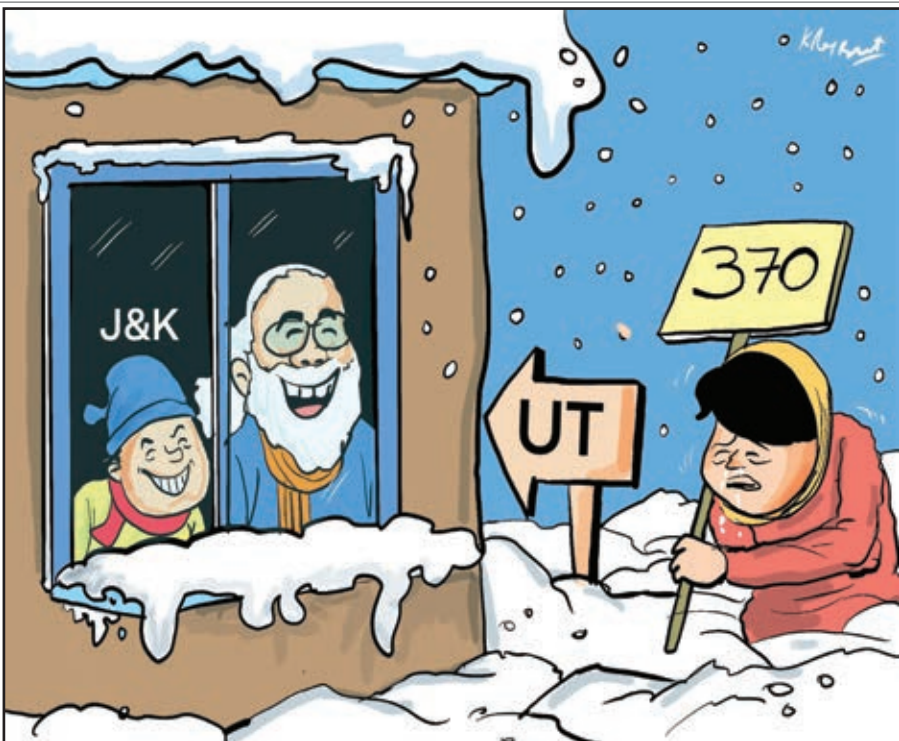
creative growth, the Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has opened the Space sector for private players which offers an ample opportunity to harness benefits. Presently India's space sector contributes eight to nine percent of the world space economy, said Dr. Jitendra and added that the Indian economy will rise threefold in the next ten years. This could not have been possible without the active leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Minister said that though ISRO was born later than NASA but today it is no longer lagging behind any other organisation in the world.

It's capacity is going up day by day. So far we have launched more than 432 Satellites out of which 397 were launched after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over in 2014.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, India will have its own space station by 2035. When asked about Jammu & Kashmir, Dr Jitendra said, BJP's performance in the recent Assembly election has been the best so far and "our vote share has not only increased but our vote share is higher than that of the ruling Party there".

He said, over 2 Crore tourists visiting the Kashmir Valley is a testimony to the return of normalcy.



DC Jammu reviews proposed stamp duty rates for 2025



DC Jammu Sachin Kumar Vaishya chairing a meeting for finalisation of stamp duty rates.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Deputy Commissioner Sachin Kumar Vaishya, who is also the Chairman of District Valuation Committee, convened a meeting for finalisation of stamp duty rates for the calendar year 2025.

During the course of the meeting, deliberations were held with Sub Divisional Magistrates to establish criteria for the finalisation of rates.

The Deputy Commissioner emphasised the importance of adhering to established criteria for rate fixation and instructed officers to conduct a thorough review to ensure fair and accurate finalisation of the stamp duty rates. He also called for a classification of the rate structure

based on area categories to maintain transparency and alignment with market conditions.

The meeting was attended by Commissioner, Jammu Municipal Corporation, Commissioner Devansh Yadav, Additional Deputy Commissioner Shishir Gupta, Registrar, Assistant Commissioner (Revenue) Dr. Rajesh Kumar, Sub Registrar, Sub Divisional Magistrates and officers from the Public Works Department, among others.

The finalised stamp duty rates are to be communicated to the Division Level Committee next. This annual exercise aims to align the rates with current market trends and support ongoing developmental initiatives.

Sham Lal for strengthening governance, service delivery in Jammu North Constituency

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: MLA Jammu North, Sham Lal Sharma on Saturday convened an introductory meeting at the Tehsil Office, Bhalwal, with the aim to bolster governance and expedite service delivery for the public in Sub Division Jammu North.



MLA Jammu North, Sham Lal Sharma speaking at introductory meeting.

The meeting was attended by Nitish Rajora, SDM Jammu North, Monika Sharma, Tehsildar Bhalwal, Brijesh Sharma, SP Rural, BDO Bhalwal, along with XENS, AEEs, JEs, and sectoral officers from Jammu North Constituency.

Sham Lal emphasised the importance of good governance, punctuality, accountability, and teamwork, urging officers to be present at their stations to address public grievances promptly.

He stressed the need for departmental efficiency and transparency to resolve issues swiftly. Sharma also urged recognition for hard-working officials and workers, motivating them to continue their dedicated efforts toward public welfare.

Additionally, he announced that monthly review meetings will take place on the 5th of

every month to ensure progress and address challenges.

In his address, Sham Lal highlighted the significance of collective governance, emphasizing the necessity of cross-departmental coordination for achieving meaningful results.

He reminded officers of their duties as public ser-

vants, entrusted with the responsibility to serve the people and address their needs. He called for a united effort to ensure the well-being of the public, particularly the underprivileged, and to bring progress across all sectors in the constituency and urged all attendees to work with dedication, efficiency, and a sense of collective responsibility.

ity, as their concerted efforts will pave the way for a brighter future for the region.

Further, Sham Lal instructed the SDM to ensure that a proper work culture and accountability are maintained across all departments. He emphasized the importance of regular tours within the constituency, with a special focus on health services and educational institutions, to identify any gaps in service delivery.

He urged the SDM to immediately address any issues found and convey them to higher authorities for prompt action. He also stressed that there should be no backlogging of work and that all ongoing tasks must be completed on time to meet the needs of the public efficiently.

Dy CM reviews winter preparedness for snow clearance in J&K

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
SRINAGAR: Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary, on Saturday emphasised for an effective and coordinated mechanism in place to ensure snow clearance within shortest possible time in prone areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Deputy Chief Minister was chairing a high level meeting today at the Civil Secretariat, Srinagar, to review the preparedness for snow clearance operations for winter season.

The meeting was attended by several MLAs including Kangan, Sonawari, Gulmarg, Uri, Sopore, Pattan, Baramulla, Pampore, Beerwah, Shopian, Pahalgam, Anantnag East and Chanapora besides Divisional Commissioners of Kashmir and Jammu, Deputy Commissioners of all districts, Chief Engineer's and other senior officers from the Public Works (R&B) Department, Mechanical Engineering Division (MED), PMGSY,



Deputy Chief Minister, Surinder Choudhary chairing a meeting.

NHIDCL and BRO.

During the meeting, a detailed winter action plan was presented which envisaged smooth functioning of essential services and connectivity across the Union Territory, particularly in snow prone areas.

It was informed that as a matter of priority, MED will oversee the clearance of 10,223 km of roads with 6,728 km categorised as Priority-1, including highways, hospital routes and roads to critical infrastructure. Besides, PMGSY has finalised contracts for snow

clearance on 4042 km of rural roads with an additional 4 contracts under process, the meeting was apprised.

It was also given out that 310 snow clearance machines have been mobilized by MED, with an increase from 254 machines last year. Besides, a total of 293 operational staff have been deployed, compared to 231 last year, to handle challenging conditions.

The meeting discussed key roads and highways such as NH-44 (Banihal-Qazigund), Mughal Road, Bandipora-Gurez Road, and Patnitop

routes as critical areas of focus requiring special focus. Ensuring uninterrupted supply chains for LPG, petroleum and essential commodities was identified as a priority area.

BRO, NHIDCL and PWD (R&B) highlighted the availability of snow cutters, dozers and graders to maintain road connectivity. Besides, SMC and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) presented their readiness to handle city roads with 422 machines including de-watering pumps and de-icing materials.

The Deputy Chief Minister

emphasised the need for inter departmental coordination and directed all the Deputy Commissioners to monitor ground level operations through virtual meetings regularly.

The Divisional Commissioners presented PowerPoint summaries of their respective regions showcasing the available infrastructure, personnel and strategies to tackle heavy snowfall.

The Deputy Chief Minister commended the officials for their proactive approach and directed the departments to ensure prompt road clearance and adequate stockpiling of essential supplies such as de-icing salt, urea and fuel.

"This winter preparedness plan is vital to ensure the safety and well-being of the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir. It is our collective responsibility to ensure uninterrupted services and timely response to emergencies," the Deputy Chief Minister maintained.

Dir Tourism holds introductory meeting



■ STATE TIMES NEWS
JAMMU: Director Tourism Jammu, Vikas Gupta, on Saturday held an introductory meeting with the officers, officials, and support staff of the Directorate of Tourism, Jammu.

Addressing the gathering, the Director Tourism emphasised the importance of working with dedication and efficiency, ensuring the timely resolution of all pending matters in their respective wings. He underscored the need for transparency at all levels to foster a healthy work culture and strengthen internal relationships. During the meeting, the Director Tourism conducted a comprehensive sector-wise review of various wings, including Planning, Publicity, Registration, Establishment, Adventure, and Estates. He highlighted the significance of capacity building for the Directorate's workforce and stressed the adoption of responsible tourism practices to enhance the overall development of the tourism sector in Jammu. A special focus was placed on the upcoming Jammu Marathon-2025, a flagship event of the Tourism Department, J&K. The Director called for coordinated and vigorous

efforts from all officers, officials, and support staff to ensure its success. He expressed confidence that with collective dedication, the event would set new benchmarks in the promotion of tourism in Jammu.

The Director Tourism also urged the team to maintain the positive momentum established by the Directorate over the years by organizing more events and initiatives in the coming year, aimed at promoting Jammu as a prime tourist destination. Furthermore, he emphasized the need for close collaboration with stakeholders to bolster the tourism industry in the region.

Sunaina Sharma Mehta, Joint Director Tourism, Jammu; Shokat Hayat Mattoo, Deputy Director Tourism, Jammu; Savita Chauhan, Deputy Director Tourism, Publicity; Neha Mahajan, Deputy Director Tourism (P&S), Jammu; Muzammil Hassan Choudhary, Assistant Director Tourism, Rajouri/Jammu; Janak Raj, Accounts Officer; Kamal Gupta, Senior Private Secretary and Dr. Rajesh Raina, Tourism Officer (Samba/Kathua/Udhampur), along with other officials, attended the meeting.

Should not those who call for protection of COI unitedly work for undoing amendments made in 1976 & 1978 to Art-74 ?

Congress Government in 1976 & Morarji lead Janta Govt in 1978 constitutionally weakened Institution of President of India Will Block NDA and Block INDIA unitedly work to bring Art-74 back to its original form?

■ DAYA SAGAR
The 42nd Constitution Amendment Act of 1976 and the 44th Constitution Amendment Act of 1978 indeed altered Article 74 [original Art-74 < 74. (1) There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President in the exercise of his functions And after amendments Art 74 reads <There shall be a Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister at the head to aid and advise the President who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice:[Provided that the President may require the Council of Ministers to reconsider such advice, either generally or otherwise, and the President shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration.....>] of the Indian Constitution, limiting the options for the President to act solely on the advice of the Council of Ministers.

The amendments to Art -74 should have sparked concerns due to the restrictions imposed on the President's ability to fulfil the obligations enshrined in the oath (under Art 60) as Preserver, Protector, and Defender of

the constitution taken at the time of entering the office as President (swear in the name of God "I, A. B., do solemnly affirm that I will faithfully execute the office of President (or discharge the functions of the President) of India and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law and that I will devote myself to the service and well-being of the people of India.">), but did not happen so . Even those who are in 2024 so vociferously declaring / presenting their self 'as' solely committed for protection of Constitution of India that the Constituent Assembly on twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, did adopt, enact and give to 'ourselves' have not taken serious notice of weakening of the Institution of President. Our elders under the leadership of Dr. Rajendra Prasad ji (President of Constituent Assembly) and Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar ji (Chairman drafting Committee) had so particularly placed in the Constitution in 1949 a Protector, preserver & defender in the name of the President of India and surely they had provided a safe guard against the politicians also who would be voted to power through Parliament but may any time

go over "ambitious" . But through the amendments made under 42nd& 44th Constitution amendment Acts in 1976 & 1978 have in a way have ultimately made the Institution dependent. So far no political leadership has made the reversal of amendments to Art-74 as 'it' agenda item. No doubt Dr. Rajendra Prasad Ji was the also the 1st President of India .

What important role had been enshrined in the Institution of President could be easily sensed from Articles like Art-52 (There shall be a President), Art-53{ (1) The executive power of the Union shall be vested in the President and shall be exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinate to him. in accordance with this Constitution. (2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provision, the supreme command of the Defence Forces of the Union shall be vested in the President, and the exercise thereof shall be regulated by law}, Art- 54 (The President shall be elected by the members, of an electoral college consisting of- members of Lok Sabha, mem-



A Look through the Mist Part-II

bers of Rajay Sabha and the members of Legislative Assemblies of States/ UTs), Art- 60 (oath as protector, preserver and defender of constitution), Art-61 (impeachment of President), Art-75 (appointment of Prime Minister , Schedule III Form of Oath by Prime Minister (Form of oath of office for a Minister for the Union:- "I, A. B., do swear in the name of God that I will bear true faith solemnly affirm and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, 1[that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India,] that I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge my duties as a Minister for the Union and that I will do right to all manner of people in accordance with the Constitution and the law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will." II Form of oath of secrecy for a Minister for the Union:- "I, A.B., do swear in the name of God that I will not directly or solemnly affirm indirectly communicate or reveal to any person or persons any matter which shall be brought under my consideration or shall become known to

me as a Minister for the Union except as may be required for the due discharge of my duties as such Minister."), Art-77 (Conduct of Bussiness of Government : of India 77-1 All executive action of the Government of India shall be expressed to be taken in the name of the President), Art-79 (Part V UNION CHAPTER II-PARLIAMENT Art - 79. Constitution of Parliament-There shall be a Parliament t for the Union which shall consist of the President and two Houses to be known respectively as the Council of States and the House of the People.).

What serious safeguards had been taken in the original Constitution well reflects also from Part y Chapter IV The Union Judiciary Art -124 and the text of oath taken by Chief Justice of Supreme Court ("I, A.B., having been appointed Chief Justice (or a Judge) of the High Court at (or of)..... do swear in the name of God) solemnly affirm that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India as by law established, 2[that I will uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India,] that I will duly and faithfully and to the best of my ability, knowledge and judgment perform the duties of my

office without fear or favour, affection or ill-will and that I will uphold the Constitution and the laws.").

Not only amendments of Art- 74 some sections of The 42nd Constitution Amendment Act of 1976 enacted during the Emergency period also were aimed to reduce the Supreme Court's role/ power including the restriction on judicial review. But In retrospect, the Apex Court did address some aspects of the 42nd Amendment while taking on the Minerva Mills case (1980) when out of the two new sections (Section 4 and section 5 added to Art- 368 the Section-4 was held not valid which prevented judicial review of the actions of the Parliament and was so held as against basic structure of constitution.). But amendments to Art- 74 have not so far come under judicial review (directly or indirectly).

So a valid question remains , " should the Apex Court have taken more proactive measures to examine the amendments' to Art-74 (implications on the President's role) and the Constitution's basic structure?

To be continued
(The writer is Sr Journalist, social activist and analyst J&K affairs)