

Weather at a glance

Srinagar

Today

30.0°

Mainly clear sky.

Yesterday's TEMPERATURE

Max 31.0° Min 16.3°

Sunset 7:46 Sunrise 5:29

Jammu

Today

39.0°

Rain/thunderstorm.

Yesterday's TEMPERATURE

Max 39.8° Min 27.3°

Sunset 7:42 Sunrise 5:33

Leh

Today

30.0°

Mainly clear sky.

Yesterday's TEMPERATURE

Max 27.8° Min 15.0°

Sunset 7:35 Sunrise 5:17

Panchs fear attacks before Assembly polls

Demand security, increase in honorarium

ABID BASHIR

Srinagar, July 8: Accusing the National Conference-Congress government of failing to fulfill its commitment of empowering panchayats, a group of panchayat representatives Tuesday said they fear more attacks ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections as most of attacks on them in past took place when polls were near. The Panchayat representatives also demanded hike in their monthly honorarium stating that a Sarpanch must get Rs 10,000 a month and a Panch at least Rs 5000.

Addressing a press conference here, president All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Conference (AJKPC), Shafiq Mir, said three of their colleagues were attacked when Parliamentary polls were round the corner in JK. "So far we have lost nine of our colleagues while over 50 are injured. We fear our colleagues may be attacked once again as Assembly elections are coming closer," Mir said. He said the government has failed to provide security to Sarpanchs and Panchs who have requested for it.

"We don't say provide security to entire 33000 panchayat representatives. But at least government must have taken care of those who have demanded it. Unfortunately, we are being made scapegoat by the present regime," he said.

On who was behind the killings of panchayat representatives, Mir said: "When NC, Congress and PDP trade blames over killings of our colleagues



PICT: MUBASHIR KHAN/GK

with each party blaming one another, we can't say anything more. We demand an impartial probe by a transparent agency of Government of India keeping in view the statements made by the top politicians like Dr Farooq Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti."

He said they would welcome if a probe is initiated by National Investigating Agency (NIA).

He said the present NC-Congress regime has failed on all fronts. "Panchayat empowerment has remained just a dream. Nothing has been done. The present government is most corrupt and inefficient and it doesn't deserve to be in the office. The best way to teach them a lesson is that we will vote against the present regime," said Mir.

On whether Sarpanchs and Panchs would boycott the upcoming polls, he said boycott politics has failed in JK. "The best way is to teach the government a lesson through ballot."

He said the government must immediately enhance the monthly honorarium of Sapanchs and Panchs. "We are

getting a meager Rs 2000 and Rs 1000 a month. We demand every Sarpanch must get Rs 10,000 a month while a Panch be given Rs 5000," Mir said. This demand, he said, was genuine and should be met without any further delay. "How can we deliver when 73rd Amendment is still a dream and when Panchayat representatives are on the verge of begging?"

Talking to *Greater Kashmir* on the sidelines, spokesman AJKPC, Ghulam Hassan Panzoo, said government has unfortunately created confusion over panchs' security. "In many police stations, our representatives have requested for security. They should be provided security first," he said. "Tomorrow, if they would be attacked, who would be responsible?"

The panchayat representatives castigated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not meeting them during his recent visit to the state. "He didn't even mention the pathetic condition of Sarpanchs and Panchs, which is very unfortunate," they said.

Proposal to involve Panchayats in power tariff collection shelved

CM's scheme finds no takers

ABHINAV VERMA

Jammu, July 8: The state government seems to have shelved the proposal to involve panchayats in power tariff collection. The proposal was put forward by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in the Assembly during the last Budget session but so far the government has shown little interest to give practical shape to it.

Facing criticism from lawmakers over revenue deficit and poor power scenario in the state, the Chief Minister on Feb 22 had said that Panchayat members will be empowered to collect power tariff on the basis of commission (one percent of collected revenue) to be used for developmental purposes of respective halqas.

While the proposal was welcomed by majority of the members, the government has done nothing on the ground.

The Chief Minister had said that initially the scheme would be taken up at some places on trial basis. "If the scheme proves successful then it will be implemented in the entire state. And if it fails, I will make a confession in the House," Omar had said.

A senior functionary of Rural Development department, on condition of not to be named, told *Greater Kashmir* that the implementing agencies have not received any intimation from the government in this regard.

He also said there was no exercise going on in the department to explore feasibility for entrusting the Panchayat Raj Institutions with any such responsibility.

"We have apprised the government that the panchayat representatives are always ready to work for the benefit of masses. We suggested that instead of giving one percent, the panchayats be given 3 percent share of the power tariff collected for the development of panchayat halqa. But nothing has been done so far," Anil Sharma, president All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Conference (AJKPC) told *Greater Kashmir*.

This Middle School functions in 1 room of panchayat ghar

No furniture, no drinking water, staff scant

GK CORRESPONDENT

Tulail (Gurez), July 8: This Government Middle School functioning from a single room of panchayat ghar with 43 students on rolls is an example of the sorry state of most government schools in Bandipora district of north Kashmir.

Government Middle School Baduaab Tulail in Gurez has students of Class 1st to 8th studying in one room with only two teachers and total absence of all basic facilities.

The institution was opened as Primary School in 2009 and 'upgraded' to Middle School within three years. Among the two teachers, only one is permanent while the other is working on deployment.

The construction of school's own building was started two years ago, however concerned department has failed to expedite the work despite repeated representations from locals.

"The tall claims of the state government about upgrading the infrastructure of educational institutions in rural areas falls flat here," local residents told *Greater Kashmir*.

"One portion of the building is used for teaching the students while other houses a Panchayat," the locals said, adding the studies of children suffer due to paucity of space.

"The school also lacks teaching staff which is adversely affecting the studies of children," the locals added.

"We raised the issue about the space constraints and lack of staff with the senior functionaries of the



district administration and the School Education department, but they turned deaf ears to our repeated pleas," the locals said.

Teachers and locals told *Greater Kashmir* that they informed Education department at regular intervals since 2010 about the problems, but haven't got any response.

The school has no drinking water and toilet facility and teachers are imparting education in absence of furniture. Since the school functions from one room of panchayat building, officials have locked the toilets and never allowed children to use the same, said a teacher.

Residents alleged that Education department sanctions buildings only at such places where there is no dearth of schools and the practice is just to adjust their kith and kin under ReT scheme.

"There are several places where school buildings have been constructed within a gap of hundred yards and the roll of students is too

low," said a retired teacher of the village.

According to official figures, 85 works have been taken up with an estimated cost of Rs 11.11 crore under State and District plan on Education Sector while over Rs 5.96 crore are being spent under Border Area development Programme (BAPD) in the zone. Presently, 6623 boys and girls are receiving education in 162 schools established in Gurez zone.

Admitting that there is problem of space and infrastructure in the school, Zonal Education Officer, Gurez, Nazir Ahmed told *Greater Kashmir* that department has requested nearby Higher Secondary School administration to provide accommodation for the students till construction of the school is completed.

"We have also issued notice to the concerned contractor to expedite the work on the school building and efforts are on to complete the building during current session," the ZEO said.

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