

Hindustan Times

Amid Azadi wave, 23000 Kashmiris apply for police jobs

In Kashmir where pro-freedom protests have been going on for 74 days, at least 23,000 youth have applied for the posts of Special Police Officers (SPOs).

Of the 23,000, around 5,000 have applied in the southern districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama and Shopian which witnessed the brunt of the anti-India and pro-freedom protests and killings since the death of Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani on July 8.

Hindustan Times collected figures from the offices of deputy commissioners of the various districts. The highest number of applications, 8868, came from north Kashmir's Kupwara district. In Baramulla district, 3,800 applied while 2,266 applied in Bandipora and 1,600 in Ganderbal.

The least number of applications, 500, came from south Kashmir's Shopian district. The districts of Anantnag, Kulgam and Pulwama in south Kashmir received 2,400, 1,258 and 800 applications respectively. In the summer capital Srinagar, the number of applicants is 1,363.

Officials said that youngsters have been making a beeline for district development offices after the state announced plans to engage SPOs in order to meet the emerging requirements in different fields of policing.

The announcement was made in early August as the Valley was reeling under spiralling protests, curfews and shutdowns in the aftermath of Wani's killing.

Immediately after the announcement, Hizbul Mujahideen asked youngsters not to join any Indian agency. Zakir Rashid Bhat, a close aide of Wani, posted a video asking the youth to shun the recruitment drive saying they will be used to "create another Ikhwan", a counter-insurgency force formed in the mid-nineties.