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Over 2,200 youth apply for army jobs amid calls for azadi in Kashmir

Of the 86 people who died in the anti-India protests across Kashmir since the killing of militant commander Burhan Wani in July, the highest number – 22 – died in the southern district of Anantnag.

Yet when the army announced a recruitment drive in the district from Wednesday, over 2,200 applications were received.

Brigadier JS Samyal said they started a recruitment drive in Kashmir, beginning in Anantnag district, from Wednesday.

“We will be conducting the recruitment rallies from September 21 to 24 in south Kashmir. In north Kashmir, the drive will be held from September 29 to October 02,” he said.

So far, over 2,200 youth from Anantnag applied for jobs, the process for which includes grilling physical tests.

“Despite the situation here, we decided to go for the recruitment rally to give opportunity to the youth to serve army,” an army official said, adding the recruitment drive is conducted across the country.

Anti-India and pro-freedom protests have become routine in Kashmir since the killing of Wani, the Hizbul Mujahideen commander who was gunned down in an encounter with security forces on July 8. His death sparked a law and order crisis on Kashmir, leading to the Valley being put under curfew for more than two months and disrupting normal life.

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As violent protests spread, 86 people were killed and hundreds injured in stone pelting and from the security forces pellet guns. Fifty of these deaths occurred in south Kashmir’s districts of Anantnag, Kulgam, Shopian and Pulwama.

Abid Ahmad, a local form Anantnag who was selected during the drive, said he signed up because he wanted to achieve something in life.

“I want to request the youth to stop pelting stones so that we could reach to some level in life and show our talent,” he said.

The army’s decision comes amid the state government’s recruitment drive for special police officers in the state. More than 23,000 youth have applied for posts amid the Azadi wave across the Valley.

The violence in the Valley has led to a dearth in jobs. Thus, despite the pro-independence calls, many of Kashmir’s youth are stuck in the conundrum of seeking a government job.

Separatists called on people to desist from joining the forces while militants have threatened to attack those signing up for the recruitment drive.