

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Amid uproar, J&K...

Abdul Rahim Rather, and passed through voice vote.
The resolution reads, "This Legislative Assembly reaffirms the importance of special status and constitutional guarantees, which safeguarded the identity, culture and rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and expressed concern over their unilateral removal."

It further reads, "This Assembly calls upon the Government of India to initiate dialogue with elected representatives of people of Jammu and Kashmir for restoration of special status, constitutional guarantees and to work out constitutional mechanisms for restoring these provisions."

"This Assembly emphasizes that any process for restoration must safeguard both national unity and the legitimate aspirations of people of Jammu and Kashmir", it added.

The unruly scenes in the House and vociferous protests by BJP members led to frequent disruptions of the proceedings and eventually the speaker adjourned the House for the day.

The resolution was passed without any debate as the Speaker put it to voice vote amidst noisy scenes.

With the passage of the resolution, the ruling NC said it has fulfilled one of its manifesto promises while Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said the "Assembly has done its job".

The members of the PDP, Peoples' Conference and CPI(M) supported the resolution during the voice vote.

While many political parties here welcomed the move, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said it was a "half-hearted" effort and the resolution could have been written "in a better way".

The Modi government abrogated Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, and bifurcated the erstwhile state into two Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

BJP members, including the Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma, opposed the resolution, saying it was not part of the listed business.

"We reject the resolution. The Business given to us was that the discussion is on the LG's address," he said.

The LoP said there is a rat race among parties here but they all know nothing is going to happen.

The Act has been passed by the biggest temple of democracy in the country (Parliament), he added.

Sharma's comments agitated the treasury benches and noisy scenes were witnessed in the House with most of the NC and BJP members on their feet.

BJP members tore the copies of the resolution and threw the pieces into the well of the House.

Amidst the din, MLA Langate, Sheikh Khurshed, tried to rush to the well, but was prevented by the assembly marshals.

NC members raised slogans that the resolution be passed, while Congress MLA from Bandipora, Nizamuddin Bhat, said the BJP members have done a dishonour to the House and violated rules.

However, the BJP members continued to raise slogans against the resolution.

Amidst the uproar, Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather said, "If the opposition members do not want to speak, I will put it to vote".

Rather put the resolution to voice vote and it was passed amidst the din.

As soon as the resolution was passed, the BJP members stormed the well of the House.

The Speaker then adjourned the house for 15 minutes.

Even after the House was adjourned, the BJP members continued to shout slogans like "5 August zindabad", "Jai Shri Ram", "Vande mataram", "anti-national agenda nahi chalega", "anti-Jammu agenda nahi chalega", and "Speaker hai hai".

BJP MLA Sham Lal Sharma alleged that the resolution was prepared "in collusion with the Speaker in a guest house".

"The mandate (of assembly polls) was in favour of abrogation of 370 because we (BJP) got 26 per cent votes while NC got 23 per cent," Sharma said.

He said the speaker should act independently. "Today he has acted as NC leader".

"I want to tell Kashmir centrie parties that their hegemony is over," he said while promising a strong response.

As soon as House assembled again at 11.05 am, BJP MLAs raised slogans against the Speaker.

The LoP said, "We have reports that you (Speaker) called a meeting of ministers yesterday and drafted the resolution yourself".

However, Rather told the protesting BJP members to take their seats as "enough is enough".

Amidst the din, the speaker called NC's Javaid Hassan Baig to move motion of thanks for the LG's address.

As the din continued, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings again for one hour.

Even as the House met again at 12:20 pm, the ruckus continued, with the BJP members raising slogans "Go back Go back, Speaker go back", and "take back illegal resolution".

The Speaker repeatedly asked the BJP MLAs to take their seats, saying, "This does not behave you".

The NC members also took to their feet and both the sides hurled barbs at each other.

"If you don't have confidence in me, bring a no confidence motion," the Speaker dared the BJP members, and adjourned the House till Thursday.

Welcoming the passage of the resolution, CPI(M)'s MLA M Y Tarigami said it was "historic".

Peoples' Conference chairman and MLA Handwara, Sajad Lone said what happened on August 5, 2019 "was against the will of the people of J-K".

The Congress, which is an alliance partner of the ruling NC, said statehood to J-K with constitutional guarantees, including protection of land and jobs rights must be restored, without any further delay.

Congress Legislature Party leader Ghulam Ahmad Mir said the Congress, through a resolution passed in its CWC on August 5, 2019, has endorsed the 'resentment of people against downgrading and bifurcation of erstwhile J-K state, describing the move as undemocratic and unconstitutional on the part of BJP government at the Centre'.

In Jammu, the local unit of the BJP staged a protest to denounce the passing of the resolution.

Led by party president Sat Paul Sharma, a group of BJP members set ablaze a joint effigy of chief minister and his deputy amid slogan-shouting.

Won't allow Assembly...

of the Assembly's listed business and reflects the mindset of the newly-elected government in the Union Territory.

Sharma said the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution, which had conferred special rights on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, was abrogated in Parliament, the highest temple of democracy.

"Then some people challenged the Parliament's decision in the Supreme Court. The court ruled that the Parliament's decision was right. So what constitutional right do they have to bring this resolution? We have opposed it strongly and the BJP will continue its protest and not accept it at any cost," he said.

Taking a dig at Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather, Sharma said he behaved as an agent of the ruling National Conference (NC) and "ripped apart" the dignity of the chair.

He also asked the Congress, an alliance partner of the NC, to clear its stand on the resolution.

"Congress leaders should come out and clearly say whether they support it or not. If they support it, the people of the country will question them. If not, then without their six MLAs, the resolution as well as the government is in minority," Sharma said. He said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has promised that statehood will be restored to Jammu and Kashmir, but "we have to wait for the appropriate time".

Trump wins Presidential...

we overcame obstacles that nobody thought possible, and it is now clear that we've achieved the most incredible political thing."

Trump also promised to usher in a "golden" period in the US.

"I want to thank the American people for the extraordinary honour of being elected your 47th president and your 45th president," he said. "I will fight for you, for your family and your future."

"Every single day, I will be fighting for you and with every breath in my body, I will not rest until we have delivered the strong, safe and prosperous America that our children deserve and that you deserve. This will truly be the golden age of America," he added.

The victory by Trump is largely being seen as a remarkable comeback after he lost the 2020 presidential election to Joe Biden which appeared to be the end of his political career.

Trump challenged the election results and even indirectly urged his supporters to march on the US Capitol that reportedly triggered the violent attacks and clashes inside the seat of American democracy sending shockwaves across the globe.

In the following months, Trump unsuccessfully challenged the results in court.

In effect, he became the first former president to get the nomination for the top office on the planet after being convicted of a felony.

Trump won the battleground states of Pennsylvania, Georgia and North Carolina and Wisconsin.

Counting of votes is still underway in some other battleground states of Arizona, Michigan and Nevada.

As a clear trend in the counting of votes emerged earlier, Harris cancelled an election watch party in her alma mater Howard University.

The results are a big disappointment for Harris. She joined the race after President Biden dropped out from his reelection campaign in July, weeks after he came under severe scrutiny following his incoherent performance at a televised debate with Republican nominee Donald Trump.

The nomination itself was historic as she became the first woman of colour in the US to be fielded by a major party in the presidential race.

In her address after formally accepting the nomination, Harris vowed to "chart a new way forward" far devoid of bitterness, cynicism and divisive politics.

The US has 50 states and most of them vote for the same party in every election except the swing states.

Generally, there is not much surprise over the candidates picking up victories in states other than the pivotal battleground ones. Overall, a total of 538 electoral college votes are up for grabs.

The swing states of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, known as part of the Rust Belt, have been traditionally the strongholds of the Democratic Party.

Earlier, exit polls showed the state of democracy, the shape of the economy and abortion are the most important issues for American voters in the election.

Almost six in 10 people ranked the state of democracy as their number one issue, according to exit polls released by CBS News.

It was followed by abortion as five per cent of the voters felt it was an important issue for them. Over one in 10 chose the economy as a priority issue.

An exit poll by CNN said roughly three-quarters of the electorate holds a negative view of the way things are going in the US today.

Only about one-quarter call themselves enthusiastic or satisfied with the state of the nation, with more than four in 10 dissatisfied and roughly three in 10 saying they are angry, according to the poll.

Voters remain generally optimistic, with more than 6 in 10 saying that America's best days are in the future, and only about one-third that they're already in the past, the CNN poll found.

Modi congratulates 'friend'...

the India-US Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership," Modi said in a post on X.

"Together, let's work for the betterment of our people and to promote global peace, stability and prosperity," he said.

The prime minister also posted pictures of his previous meetings with Trump, who was the US president from 2016-2020.

Last month, Trump had praised Prime Minister Modi as "the nicest human being", saying the Indian leader is "a friend of mine".

Trump had made the comments in response to a question during the Flagrant podcast.

"Modi, India. He's a friend of mine. He's great... Before him, they were replacing them every year. It's very unstable. He came over. He's a friend of mine. But on the outside, he looks like he's your father. He's the nicest, but he's a total killer," he had said.

Trump had also recalled Modi's visit to Houston in 2019 to attend the 'Howdy Modi' event during his tenure, saying, "It was beautiful. It's like 80,000 people going crazy. We were walking around..."

The Republican candidate had said he shares a "very good relationship" with Modi.

The 'Howdy Modi' event was followed by Trump's 2020 visit to India, where he was welcomed with the 'Namaste Trump' rally, organised by PM Modi in Ahmedabad, with about 100,000 people attending the event at a cricket stadium. Modi and Trump had also met in 2017 in Washington DC.

SC permits LMV...

Vehicle' without needing additional authorization under Section 10(2)(e) of the MV Act specifically for the 'Transport Vehicle' class.

"For licensing purposes, LMVs and Transport Vehicles are not entirely separate classes. An overlap exists between the two.

"The special eligibility requirements will however continue to apply for, inter alia, e-carts, e-rickshaws and vehicles carrying hazardous goods," the bench held.

Besides the CJI and Justice Roy, the bench also comprised Justices P S Narasimha, Pankaj Mithal and Manoj Misra.

While acknowledging concerns about road safety raised by insurance companies, the verdict said there was no empirical evidence linking LMV-licensed drivers with increased road accidents and moreover, the issue pertained to the livelihood of commercial drivers.

"Road safety is a serious public health issue globally. It is crucial to mention that in India, over 1.7 lakh persons were killed in road accidents in 2023," it said, adding that the causes of such accidents are diverse and assumptions that they stem from drivers operating light transport vehicles with an LMV licence are unsubstantiated.

"Factors contributing to road accidents include careless driving, speeding, poor road design and failure to adhere to traffic laws. Other significant contributors are mobile phone usage, fatigue and non-compliance with seat belt or helmet regulations," it said.

It said driving a motor vehicle is a complex task requiring both practical skills and theoretical knowledge and safe driving involves not only technical vehicle control but also proficiency in various road conditions, including managing speed.

"We are able to reach such a conclusion as none of the parties in this case has produced any empirical data to demonstrate that the LMV driving licence holder, driving a 'Transport Vehicle', is a significant cause for road accidents in India," the verdict said.

The additional eligibility criteria specified in the MV Act and the rules will apply only to such vehicles "(medium goods vehicle', 'medium passenger vehicle', 'heavy goods vehicle' and 'heavy passenger vehicle') whose gross weight exceeds 7,500 Kg", it clarified.

"This will also effectively address the livelihood issues for drivers operating Transport Vehicles (who clock maximum hours behind the wheels) in legally operating 'Transport vehicles' (below 7,500 Kg) with their LMV driving licence," it said.

The bench said its interpretation on how the licensing regime would operate is unlikely to compromise the road safety concerns.

"The... interpretation also does not defeat the broader twin objectives of the MV Act i.e. road safety and ensuring timely compensation and relief for victims of road accidents... An authoritative pronouncement by this court would prevent insurance companies from taking a technical plea to defeat a legitimate claim for compensation involving an insured vehicle weighing below 7,500 kgs driven by a person holding a driving licence of a 'Light Motor Vehicle' class," it said.

The bench referred to the attorney general's statement that the Centre was contemplating amending the MV Act suitably on the legal question whether a person holding a driving licence for an LMV is entitled to legally drive a 'transport vehicle' of a specified weight.

"Had Parliament acted sooner to amend the MV Act and clearly differentiated between classes, categories and types, much of the uncertainty surrounding driving licences could have been addressed, reducing the need for frequent litigation and an unclear legal terrain. The confusion and inconsistency in judicial decisions continued to persist for 25 years starting from the 1999 decision in the Ashok Gangadhar Maratha case," it said.

The bench had reserved its verdict on August 21 on the vexatious legal issue after Attorney General R Venkataramani had submitted that the consultations to amend the MV Act were "almost complete".

The question arose from the apex court's 2017 verdict in the case of Mukund Devangan versus Oriental Insurance Company Limited.

On July 18 last year, the Constitution bench commenced a hearing on 76 petitions to deal with the legal question. The lead petition was filed by M/s Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Limited.

NC insulting Parliament...

the BJP carries a huge mandate of J&K people endorsing the abolition of Article 370.

The NC government, Chugh said, is deliberately trying to disturb the law-and-order situation in J&K by politicizing such issues and is trying to take J&K back to stone-age. The Modi government, he said, has already laid down a path of development and progress for the J&K youth and it would be a grave tragedy if the NC government gets J&K back to the dark age times of bullets and violence.

LG, AP Chief...

on October 31. Sinha was the first to reach Rana's residence in Gandhi Nagar where he paid tributes to the departed leader besides consoling the bereaved family, officials said.

Former J-K minister Bukhari also visited the residence of Rana, who was the sitting MLA from Nagrota, to express his grief over the senior politician's demise.

"Rana sahab's passing away has left a huge void in the society. He was a popular leader who was accessible to everyone. His welfare works will always be remembered," Bukhari said.

Bukhari later chaired a meeting here to review the party's functioning post the Assembly elections and chalk out a future strategy to strengthen its roots across the region.

Following a threadbare discussion, he directed the party leaders to work among the masses and strive hard to resolve public issues, a party release said.

Bukhari said the party is fully committed to get constitutional protection for land and jobs in the region so that they cannot be snatched.

This was Bukhari's first visit to the Jammu region after his party's poor show in the Assembly elections in which it failed to open its account.

CS favours making...

the past few years. He pointed out that they had also created many revenue generating assets in both the cities during this course while implementing this mission in J&K.

The Chief Secretary impressed upon the authorities in these SPVs to come up with a workable model that would guarantee their functioning in a self sustainable manner for times to come.

He enjoined upon them to see the potential of existing assets with those in pipeline in terms of revenue generation and calculate the recurring expenditure to be made year after year to have an exact picture of the sustainability for years ahead.

He encouraged them to study models adopted in other states/UTs for this purpose. He also told them to idealise some viable projects to be taken up under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode which would assist in generating enough revenue for meeting all their operational costs efficiently.

Earlier, the Chief Secretary also took appraisal of the progress made in developing a model for securing 100 more e-buses under PM e-Bus Sewa to be fetched by central assistance.

It was given out by Commissioner Secretary, H&UDD, Mandeep Kaur, that the central government is going to extend its assistance for assured kilometers at the rate of Rs 24/Km for 12 M buses, Rs 22/Km for 9 M and Rs 20/Km for 7 M buses.

She further added that besides providing 100% assistance for 'behind the meter power' infrastructure, 90% of the costs for raising depot infrastructure upto the extent of Rs 20 Cr would also be borne by centre itself.

The meeting also discussed the possible models of reorganization of Town Planning Organization for better planning and development of the urban areas of J&K.

It was given out that the Department contemplates to bring all the 78 Municipal bodies under the ambit of Town Planning in the times to come for designing them in a way to ensure a good standard of living for its residents.

Cabinet approves PM...

Vidyalaxmi, if they so desire," an official statement said.

For loan amount up to Rs 7.5 lakhs, the student will also be eligible for a credit guarantee of 75 pc of outstanding default.

"This will give support to banks in making education loans available to students under the scheme. In addition, students having an annual family income of up to Rs 8 lakhs, and not eligible for benefits under any other government scholarship or interest subvention schemes, 3 percent interest subvention for loan up to Rs 10 lakhs will also be provided during moratorium period.

"The interest subvention support will be given to one lakh students every year. Preference will be given to students who are from government institutions and have opted for technical and professional courses. An outlay of Rs 3,600 crore has been made during 2024-25 to 2030-31, and 7 lakh fresh students are expected to get the benefit of this interest subvention during the period," the statement said.

The Department of Higher Education will have a unified portal, 'PM-Vidyalaxmi', on which students will be able to apply for the education loan as well as interest subvention, through a simplified application process to be used by all banks. Payment of interest subvention will be made through e-voucher and Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) wallets.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the scheme will empower millions of students from the poor and middle class.

"Universalising access to 21st century higher education for India's talented youth is PM Modi's guarantee. PM's approval to #PMVidyalaxmi with an outlay of Rs 3,600 crore will remove obstacles to higher education and enable our yuva shakti to pursue their dreams.

"Collateral-free and guarantor-free education loans under PM Vidyalaxmi will maximise access to higher education for meritorious students and ensure that financial constraints do not prevent students from pursuing education," he said in a post on X.

CBI probe initiated...

proved it through the documents where he claims to be a citizen of Britain as well as of India," Swamy contended.

The bench, however, noted, "The prayers in that petition are too wide. So let him (Shishir) file the documents which he wants."

Following a previous Delhi High Court order, Swamy had filed a copy of the petition pending before the Allahabad High Court on the issue of Gandhi's citizenship.

Swamy's plea, filed by advocate Satya Sabharwal, said on August 6, 2019, a letter was sent to the ministry alleging Gandhi had "voluntarily disclosed" to the British government that he was a citizen of British nationality, amounting to holding a British passport.

Earlier, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court had asked the Centre whether it had taken any decision on Shishir's representation filed under the Citizenship Act, 1955, asking it to inquire into the allegations.

Shishir claimed he had conducted "detailed enquiries" into Gandhi being a British citizen and received several new inputs.

Swamy, on the other hand, claimed the Congress leader, being an Indian citizen, violated Article 9 of the Constitution, read with the Indian Citizenship Act, and would cease to be an Indian citizen

He said he had sent many representations to the ministry inquiring about the status of his complaint but neither any action was taken nor did he receive any intimation.

Resolution seeking restoration...

and revoked the constitutional provision granting a special status to Jammu and Kashmir after proper discussions. However, the resolution passed in the Assembly on Wednesday is an insult to Parliament, which is a breach of privilege.

"All those who moved and seconded the resolution, besides the speaker who passed the resolution without any discussion, should face the consequences and they will face it," the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said.

He said Congress leaders have neither talked in support of or against the resolution so far.

"The Congress should clear its stand on its support to the resolution," Sharma said.

After the developments of 2019, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed peace and development, which did not go down well with 'some people', he added.

"The special status was of no benefit to the people of Jammu and Kashmir except for 100 families. They are still concerned about themselves rather than the common people," Sharma said.

Asked about the resolution reflecting the NC's election manifesto, he said the ruling party used it as a poll promise despite being aware that the restoration of Article 370 is a prerogative of Parliament.

"The BJP got the highest vote share of 26 per cent against the NC's 23 per cent (in the recently-held Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls). We have 1.85 lakh more votes than the regional party," Sharma said, rejecting the argument of the ruling party that the resolution reflects the aspirations of the people of the Union Territory.

The BJP leader also criticised the speaker's role and said he should have ensured a discussion on the resolution rather than passing it in a hurried manner.

"The speaker, once appointed, becomes like a judge and does not belong to any party.... The opposition will make noise as we saw during the revocation of Article 370 in Parliament. Still, a discussion took place in a proper way but here, he did not act neutrally and is liable for breach of privilege as well," Sharma said.

Meanwhile, the BJP's Jammu and Kashmir unit staged a protest here to denounce the resolution on the restoration of J-K's special status.

Led by party president Sat Paul Sharma, a group of BJP workers came out of the party headquarters at Trikuta Nagar in the outskirts of the city this afternoon and set ablaze a joint effigy of Chief Minister Omar Abdullah and his deputy Surinder Choudhary amid slogans against the National Conference-led government. Sharma said Choudhary was "Jammu's Jaichand" and added that he had taken votes to safeguard the interests of Jammu but is trying to disturb the environment here by moving the resolution. Jaichand was the king of Kannauj who is projected as a betrayer to the Indian cause in some historical accounts.

Former J-K BJP president Ravinder Raina, who was also present in the protest, slammed the National Conference and its coalition partner Congress and said "by bringing the resolution, they have betrayed the nation".

"Article 370 gave birth to separatism and terrorism in J-K and was buried by the BJP-led central government to restore peace in the region. We know such resolutions will not help in the restoration of the revoked constitutional provision," he said.