

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Committed to extend...

members for seamless coordination with Government Officials on the issues concerning the community.

The prominent Pahari leaders conveyed their heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for empowering the Pahari community while safeguarding the interest of Gujjar, Bakarwals and other listed tribes.

"We are all brothers and working with aim of nation-building," the Pahari community members said.

Muzaffar Hussain Baig, former Deputy Chief Minister lauded the Central Government and the UT Administration for fulfilling the long pending demands of the Paharis and other communities.

Rafiq Shah, a Pahari leader said that after 75 year of political and social slavery, Justice has been delivered. He said, today we are feeling empowered and free.

Senior leader Vibodh Gupta said that Gujjar, Bakarwal and Pahari community will work together for the development of J&K. He said Scheduled Tribes Community will play a major role in developmental journey of UT.

Dinesh Sharma lauded the historic decision of the government to grant scheduled tribe status to Paharis, Padari Tribes, Koli and Gadda Brahmin. It has removed the developmental imbalance and strengthened the vision of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas, he said.

This is a dawn of new prosperity of the Pahari community and the bright future of our young generation, Flail Singh said.

Raja Ajaz said the present government under the guidance of Prime Minister and Home Minister has created a conducive atmosphere for the Pahari community and the entire border belt.

Anjum, Pradeep Sharma, Iqbal Malik and Murtaza Khan thanked the UT Administration for working as a bridge between the Pahari community and the Government of India and ensure justice for the community.

Safina Baig, Chairperson, District Development Council Baramulla; senior political leaders, former PRI members, retired government officials, community elders and youth leaders were present during the interaction.

OBC Samaj members...

President BJP OBC Morcha; Rash Pal Verma, National Secretary BJP OBC Morcha; Raj Kumar Tarkhan, General Secretary OBC Morcha; Sajad Kumar, General Secretary OBC Morcha from Kulgam; Retd Brig Vijay Sagar Dhiman; Ramesh Kumar, ex-Sarpanch and other members of the community were present during the interaction.

After the meeting, the Lt Governor posted on X:

"Met a delegation of Other Backward Classes today. The delegation thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Jammu and Kashmir Administration for reservation in Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats in the Union Territory.

With this historic decision, for the first time in Jammu and Kashmir, Other Backward Classes will get reservation for democratic representation at the grass-roots level and like other states, this community will also get all the benefits."

Vaidya gets addl...

the charge of the post of Administrative Secretary, Home Department, in addition to his own duties, till further orders," reads an order issued by Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner Secretary, General Administration Department.

Army opens fire...

over the Indian territory late Sunday night, the officials said.

They said the movement of the enemy drone was picked up in the Nar Mankote area of Mendhar and the troops guarding the LoC fired at least three rounds to bring it down.

The drone returned to the Pakistan side in the face of firing by Indian troops, the officials said, adding that a search operation is underway in the area. The Jammu and Kashmir police recently announced a cash reward of Rs 3 lakh to anyone informing on drones flown from across the border to drop narcotics, arms or explosive materials, leading to the recovery of the material.

Anayat posted as...

Iqbal as Dy:CO IR-22M Battalion; Shivali Kotwal as Dy:CO IR-14th Battalion; Wajahat Hussain as Dy:CO IR-5th Battalion; Mohd Shafiq as Dy:CO IR-2nd Battalion; and Rashid Younis has been posted as Adl. SP Awantipora.

Union MoS visits...

by Central Ministry (MoEFCC) were brought to the notice of the Union Minister by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. These included release of funds under Nagar van scheme, Green India Mission and Forest fire Protection and Management scheme.

The PCCF (HoFF) also apprised the Union MoS of the progress, made so far, to achieve the targets under different deliverables assigned by the government especially under the flagship programs like Green J&K Drive, Har Gaon Hariyali, Ped Lagayen Beti Ke Naam, One Village One Beat Guard Program, Van Se Jal, Jal Se Jeevan, Demarcation and Strengthening of Forest Boundaries in J&K.

It was informed that, presently, a number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) are operational in J&K with 100 per cent support from Centre government like Green India Mission (GIM), which is one of the eight Missions outlined under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) with an aim of protecting, restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover and responding to climate change by a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures.

Besides, a total of 4775 hectare of identified landscape has been covered and planted with 16.94 lakh tree saplings at a cost of Rs 29.61 crore, so far. It was further informed that, J&K Forest Department has decided to develop at least one Nagar Van /Nagar Vatika in each ULB of the UT under the Nagar Van Yojna J&K. Besides, there are 80 ULBs which include 02 Municipal Corporations, out of these, 43 ULBs have been covered under the NRVY scheme and the work on remaining 37 is under progress. During the current financial year, Rs 98.3 lakh have also been released to combat forest fires under 'Forest Fire Prevention and Management' scheme.

Later, the Union MoS also inspected one of the Nagar Vans in Roop Nagar area of Jammu City and planted a sapling there.

Pertinently, the Forest department has been given the ever highest target of planting 175 lakh plants during 2023-24 both on forest and non-forest land with the active involvement of local people and PRI representatives.

Meanwhile "Rozgar Mela" under the Mission Recruitment Program of Govt. of India was organized on Monday at Frontier Headquarters, BSF Jammu, to distribute appointment letters to the selected candidates of BSF, CRPF CISE, Defence, Postal, CBDDT and Higher education department.

Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change graced the occasion as the chief guest.

The Rozgar Mela scheme is part of the Government's efforts to abate unemployment in the country. The mission mode recruitment drive aims to fill up more than 10 lakh jobs in the Government Sector.

At the commencement of the event, Prime Minister of India virtually launched the Rozgar Mela and addressed all the participants.

Inspector General D K Boora welcomed Chief Guest of the event, Ashwini Kumar Choubey, in BSF HQ Jammu.

Union Minister of State (MoS) handed over appointment letters to the selected candidates.

Senior officers from various government departments and CAPFs graced the occasion along with selected candidates and their family members. Parents of selected candidates praised the government's efforts in mitigating unemployment in general.

They appreciated the fact that the recruitments are being carried out across Central Government Departments and State Governments/UTs supporting this initiative.

The new recruits will be joining various Ministries/Departments such as the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Higher Education, Department of Atomic Energy, Ministry of Defence, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Ministry of Railways, as well as Central Armed Forces such as CRPF, BSF, SSB, Assam Rifles, CISE, ITBP in various positions.

Today, at 47 locations across the country, more than 1 lakh appointment letters are being handed over to new appointees.

It is worth mentioning that MHA has filled up various posts in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). This will significantly enhance the operational efficiency of our security forces and enable them to better manage a wide range of security duties across the entire country.

The newly inducted appointees are also getting an opportunity to train themselves through 'Karmayogi Prarambh', an online module on iGOT Karmayogi portal where more than 880 e-learning courses have been made available for 'anywhere any device' learning format.

Three sisters charred...

In a post on X, Union Minister Jitendra Singh expressed his condolences to the bereaved family and said he is in constant touch with the administration and all possible assistance would be provided.

Several political leaders, including Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) chief Ghulam Nabi Azad, J-K Pradesh Congress Committee president Vikar Rasool Wani and Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari, expressed shock over the incident and sought adequate compensation to the family.

In a fire in the Daggi-Thigna forest area in Doda district on Sunday night, a 92-year-old woman lost her life. Sheela Devi had gone to the forest along with her cattle and was found dead in a hut by villagers, the officials said.

BJP Govt has...

employment opportunities.

With over 1.25 lakh start-ups, India is the third largest eco-system in the sector; and youngsters are launching new firms in even smaller cities, he said, adding that it is creating lakhs of jobs.

Modi said 40,000 modern coaches like those used in the Vande Bharat trains will be manufactured and included in normal trains to increase convenience and comfort for passengers.

Acusing previous governments of not paying due attention to the railways, he said the entire sector is transforming now.

"They neglected the common people's expectations," Modi said, attacking the previous governments.

The prime minister said his government has extended tax rebates to start-ups and has announced a fund of Rs 1 lakh crore for research and innovation.

Highlighting the far-reaching impact of connectivity, Modi spoke of new markets, expansion of tourism, new businesses and the creation of lakhs of jobs due to this.

"Investment in infrastructure is being ramped up to accelerate development," he said, adding that Rs 11 lakh crore has been earmarked for investment in infrastructure in the recent budget.

"Rozgar Melas' have played a crucial role in enhancing the contribution of the country's young population in nation-building, the prime minister said, adding that a sizeable number of recruits will join the Central Armed Police Forces.

Recruitment examinations in the forces have now begun to be conducted in 13 Indian languages apart from Hindi and English, he said, adding that this will give equal opportunity to candidates.

On the occasion, he also laid the foundation stone of phase I of the integrated complex "Karmayogi Bhavan" here. This complex will promote collaboration and synergy among various pillars of 'Mission Karmayogi'.

The recruits will be joining the government in various ministries and departments, according to a statement issued earlier.

Will bring back...

He said, "If you believe my government was the best in last 75 years then lend me support. Together, we can achieve even greater milestones, including the creation of more jobs, roads, hospitals, bridges, and provisions such as free electricity for the needy."

Azad expressed his commitment to addressing poverty and ensuring access to essential services.

He emphasized, "Despite my efforts, poverty still persists, and many struggle to afford electricity bills. Therefore, if entrusted with power, we will provide free electricity to those in need."

Azad reaffirmed his commitment to reinstating the Roshni scheme, citing its significant benefits for the underprivileged.

While acknowledging any misuse of the scheme, he said the government should have taken appropriate action. However, the scheme has undeniably uplifted many impoverished families.

Azad also highlighted his party's stance on land eviction orders, stating, "We vehemently protested against such orders to ensure that no poor person would be adversely affected. Our priority is to safeguard the rights and welfare of poor and needy."

Azad emphasized the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity and urged public to support leaders who prioritize humanity and development for all, regardless of religion or caste.

Azad observed, "In a hospital, we do not inquire about the religion or caste of the blood we need. Similarly, why should we divide people based on such distinctions during elections? I vow to never discriminate and work tirelessly for the progress and upliftment of all."

Among others present in the meeting were Vice Chairman GM Saroori, General Secretary RS Chib, General Secretary Anita Thakur, Chief Spokesperson Salman Nizami, State Secretary Sunita Arora, Zonal President Gharu Ram, Provincial Vice President Adv. Ashok Sharma, Women Wing President Prabha Salathia, Masood Choudhary State Secretary, Sr DPAP leader Arun Sharma, Lovely Gupta state secretary, Zonal President Zahid Malik, Distt President Sushil Sharma, Anirudh Raina, Gourav chopra, Khurshid Janam and others.

Two Pakistan-trained...

letter-pads of banned terror outfits.

During questioning, they confessed that they had crossed the Line of Control illegally from Poonch district and stayed in Pakistan for over a decade and underwent arms training, the spokesman said.

He said on the directions of the commanders of banned Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), they returned to Jammu and Kashmir via Nepal to join active militants.

The money recovered from them was supposed to be distributed among the youth of Doda and Kishtwar for terror activities, the spokesman said.

He said during the course of investigation offences u/s 13,17, 20, UAP(P) Act and 120-B/RPC have been substantiated against the accused, who are presently bailed out by the orders of Court of law and accordingly, chargesheet of the instant case has been produced against both the accused persons in the Court of 3rd Addition Session Judge Jammu (NIA) for favour of judicial determination.

Both the accused are presently on bail, the spokesman said.

NC on verge...

addressing the needs and aspirations of all segments of society, like the Gujjars, Bakarwals, Pahadis, Gaddis etc.

Welcoming Dr. Shenaz Ganai into the BJP family, National General Secretary Tarun Chugh acknowledged her significant stature and influence in Jammu and Kashmir's political arena. He expressed optimism regarding the party's future trajectory in the region and alluded to the possibility of more prominent figures from Jammu and Kashmir making the decision to align themselves with the BJP in the near future, underlining the growing momentum and resonance of the party's vision for the state.

Chugh reaffirmed the BJP's commitment to expediting the electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir, highlighting the party's meticulous and comprehensive preparations across all districts of the region. He exuded confidence in the overwhelming support of the people of Kashmir, pointing to the BJP's proven track record of delivering tangible benefits and transformative change to the region and its populace.

Furthermore, Chugh proclaimed passionately, "We cannot overlook the transformative and inclusive governance agenda spearheaded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Jammu and Kashmir. Under his leadership, we have witnessed significant strides in dismantling entrenched political dynasties, ushering in a new era of participatory and people-centric governance." With unwavering conviction, he declared, "This is a testament to the BJP's commitment to fostering positive change and inclusivity in our beloved region."

Qatar releases 8...

to Qatari capital Doha on Wednesday after concluding his two-day trip to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), but indicated that the trip was long conceived.

The foreign secretary, without elaborating, said New Delhi continues to work with the Qatari government to ensure the return of the eighth Indian quickly.

In an early morning statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India appreciates the decision by the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani for enabling the release and home-coming of the Indians. It is learnt that the Emir ordered the release of the eight Indians.

The Navy veterans apparently faced charges of espionage, but neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi made the charges against them public.

"The Government of India welcomes the release of eight Indian nationals working for the Dahra Global company who were detained in Qatar," the MEA said.

"Seven out of the eight of them have returned to India. We appreciate the decision by the Emir of the State of Qatar to enable the release and home-coming of these nationals," it said in a brief statement.

The eight nationals are: Captains Navtej Gill and Saurabh Vasisht, Commanders Purnendu Tiwari, Amit Nagpal, SK Gupta, BK Verma, and Sugunakar Pakala, and sailor Ragesh. Commander Tiwari could not return due to some pending paper work, people familiar with the matter said.

"We are grateful to the government and the prime minister Narendra Modi as it

would not have been possible without his intervention," said one of the returnees.

The Navy veterans were on October 26 given death sentences by Qatar's Court of First Instance. The Court of Appeal in the Gulf nation on December 28 commuted the capital punishment and sentenced them to jail terms for varying durations. The Court of Appeal had also given 60 days time to appeal against the prison terms.

In December, Prime Minister Modi had met the Qatari Emir on the sidelines of the COP28 Summit in Dubai and discussed the "well-being of the Indian community" in Qatar.

It is learnt that National Security Adviser Ajit Doval played a key role in the negotiations with the Qatari authorities in securing the release of the Indians as he paid a number of quiet visits to Doha.

The Indian nationals, who worked with private company Al Dahra, were arrested in August 2022 reportedly in an alleged case of espionage. The charges were filed against the eight Indian navy veterans on March 25 last year and they were tried under Qatari law. In May last year Al-Dhara Global closed its operations in Doha and all those working there (primarily Indians) have since returned home.

"After completing his UAE visit, on February 14, the prime minister will travel to Doha, Qatar on February 14 afternoon. During the visit the prime minister will hold bilateral talks with Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad, the Emir of Qatar and other high dignitaries," Kwatra said.

The foreign secretary said India is grateful to Qatar for the return of the Indians. "We are gratified on their return. We deeply appreciate the decision of Qatar's government and the Emir to release them," Kwatra said.

"We are happy to have seven of those Indian nationals back. Eighth Indian national has also been released and we continue to work with the Qatar government to see how quickly his return to India would be possible."

"The prime minister has himself personally constantly supervised all the developments in this case and has never shied away from any initiatives that would ensure the return of the Indian nationals back to home," he said.

The foreign secretary declined to comment when asked whether the Qatar Emir granted a royal pardon to the Indians.

"We can talk about different terminology etc.. whether it is a release or pardon..but I think we should see the facts of what they are. Seven of the eight Indian nationals in the Al Dahra case are back in India, back to their homes," he said.

Former Indian Navy spokesperson Capt DK Sharma (retd) complimented the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for quietly working assiduously that had the backing of PM Modi. "It is a great achievement of diplomacy backed by the leadership of the country," he told PTI.

People familiar with the matter said families of the retired naval personnel were informed after they boarded the flight in Qatar.

BJP described the release of the Indian nationals as a "big diplomatic victory".

"It is a big diplomatic win for India. It shows how India has negotiated so well that we have our Navy veterans back," BJP spokesperson Shazia Ilmi said.

"It seemed at one point of time it would be very difficult to make it happen. But they have come back safe and sound. That is great news for every Indian. It shows how much the words of the Indian foreign ministry and Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) matter."

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said it is a moment of happiness that further strengthens the belief in the seriousness and ability of the Modi government to protect its citizens at any cost.

"Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi means the guarantee of life, limb and liberty of the people of India across the globe," he said in a post on X.

The Congress said it joins the entire nation in its relief and happiness. "It sends its greetings and good wishes to them and their families," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said.

"It's a huge relief - and a matter of quiet celebration for all Indians - that eight of our compatriots who were sentenced to death in Qatar have been freed & returned home. Congratulations to all those who worked quietly behind the scenes for their release," said senior Congress leader and former minister of state for external affairs Shashi Tharoor.

Dr Meetu Bhargava, Commander Tiwari's sister, said her brother hadn't come home yet but he had been freed and the family was very happy.

"If my brother had come, our happiness would have been complete," she told PTI Videos in Gwalior while thanking the prime minister, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and the government as well as the Emir.

All the former Navy officers had "unblemished stints" of up to 20 years in the Indian Navy and had held important positions including that of instructors in the force.

System in place to ensure 30k youth become forensic experts annually from 2025: Amit Shah

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AHMEDABAD: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said the Central government has put in place a system to ensure 30,000 youth become forensic experts annually from 2025 to meet the country's requirements.

The new criminal law -- Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita -- makes it mandatory for collection of evidence at the crime scene by a 'forensic expert' in all offences punishable by imprisonment of seven years or more, Shah said after inaugurating the campus of Narnarayan Shastri Institute of Technology (NSIT) at Jetalpur in Ahmedabad district.

"To prepare in advance for the new laws -- Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita -- the government set up National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) in 2020 to meet the requirement of forensic experts to serve the country, Shah said.

The NSIT, being managed by Swaminarayan Vividh Seva Niketan Trust, is affiliated to NFSU.

"Thousands of experts will be required when the visit of forensic science officers to every crime scene becomes mandatory. We brought the laws in 2024, but began preparation for it in 2020 when we set up NFSU, so that every year from 2025 onwards, 30,000 youths get ready as forensic science experts to serve the country," he said.

NFSU was elevated as a national university from state university and accorded a status of an institution of national importance from October 1, 2020.

Shah said while Congress ruled the country for 70 years, it allowed the criminal justice system to run on laws made by the British Parliament.

The laws were made by the British to rule India and not to ensure justice to her people, Shah said.

"When I stood up to present the three laws in the Parliament, the opposition questioned what was new in them without even studying them. In the new laws, the focal point is the people of the country, its women and daughters. This is a new beginning to ensure justice as per Indian judicial tradition," he said.

The new criminal laws make it mandatory to collect evidence at the crime scene by a 'forensic expert' in all offences punishable by imprisonment of seven years or more, Shah said. By training students in forensic science, NSIT will become a part of the entire judicial system, he said.

NDA Govt headed by Nitish Kumar wins trust vote in Bihar, RJD leader ousted as Speaker

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PATNA: The National Democratic Alliance government in Bihar, led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, on Monday won the trust vote in the state assembly, with 129 MLAs voting in favour of the motion, amid a walkout by all non-NDA members. Altogether, 129 legislators voted in favour of the motion, but Kumar rose to suggest that the vote of Deputy Speaker Maheshwar Hazari, who belongs to the JD(U), also be counted.

Usually, the person in the Chair does not take part in voting, unless there is a tie. Hazari ordered a headcount after having declared the motion as passed through voice vote, following a request from Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, which was seconded by Kumar, the JD(U) president.

The NDA, comprising the JD(U), BJP, former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi's HAM and an Independent, had a combined strength of 128 in the 243-strong assembly. However, it received a shot in the arm with three RJD MLAs Prahlad Yadav, Chetan Anand and Neelam Devi walking over to the ruling side.

BJP MLAs, who were elated at the party's return to power after a gap of nearly 17 months, erupted in chants of 'Jai Shree Ram' as the trust vote was won by the chief minister, who spoke for nearly 30 minutes, venting spleen against erstwhile allies RJD and Congress as also the opposition INDIA bloc, which he had helped form.

Pointing towards RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, who had served as his deputy till he remained with the Mahagathbandhan, Kumar fumed: "What was the shape of Bihar while it was ruled by his father (Lalu Prasad). There were no roads, people were afraid of venturing out in the dark after sunset. We set it right upon coming to power in 2005."

The JD(U) chief, who was taunted by Yadav with the remark "what is the guarantee that Kumar will not do a flip-flop yet again!", asserted that he was "with my old allies for ever" and lamented that his efforts to bring together parties opposed to the BJP proved to be of no avail.