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Prime Minister, he wiped out the Maoist menace and ushered in development," he said.

The Home Minister said the credit of freeing Jharkhand and Budha Pahad from the clutches of Maoists goes to BJP and PM Modi.

He said it is the BJP regime that ensured respect and dignity for tribals and the Prime Minister has already announced to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh' in 2025.

Birsa Munda waged a war against the British and its effect reverberated across India, but the Congress and JMM governments did not give tribals their due, he said.

"Now, the tribal population faces the biggest threat from infiltrators who are building homes in tribal villages and marrying local girls. If anyone can stop them, it is only the BJP," he said.

"Under Prime Minister Modi, the tribal welfare budget was enhanced to Rs 1,33,000 crore from Rs 29,000 crore in the previous Congress regime," he said and added that 40,000 teachers will be appointed for Eklavya Model schools across the country. A total of one lakh children are enrolled in 740 such schools," he said.

The Home Minister emphasised that Rs 88,000 crore under DMFT (District Mineral Foundation Trust) was being spent across the country for development of tribal areas.

The Modi government is building 10 tribal museums in various parts of the country at a cost of Rs 200 crore, he said.

Shah urged people to vote for BJP candidate and Union Minister Arjun Munda. The minister is contesting against Congress's Kalicharan Munda whom he had defeated by a slender margin of 1,445 votes in the 2019 elections. Khunti will go to polls on May 13 alongwith Lohardaga, Sinbhum and Palamu seats.

Colour-coordinated theme...

colourfully vibrant, conveying special messages regarding women, persons with disabilities, (PwD) and the youth, besides (making) environmentally-viable and sustainable polling stations," he said.

Bhat, who is also the Returning Officer of Srinagar parliamentary constituency, said that eight pink polling stations have been established for women in different areas of Srinagar - from Hazratbal, Anchar to Central Shalteng.

He said these polling stations would be managed by an all-women staff, comprising booth-level officers, presiding and polling officers, police and security forces.

The polling stations have the women-centric theme to drive home the point that women are capable of discharging duties in any sphere of life, Bhat said.

Bhat said eight red polling stations have been set up for persons with disabilities which will be staffed by PwDs.

"These polling stations have been equipped with wheelchairs, ramps, braille script and other features to infuse confidence into differently-abled to make voting process a smooth activity for them.

"...the idea is to instill confidence among the section and encourage them to vote wherever they are besides increasing sensitisation about their issues," the DEO said.

Additionally, more than 40 per cent of PwDs have already been given the opportunity to cast votes under ECI's initiative 'Vote from Home', he said.

The three-day campaign for home voting which was flagged on May 7 by the DEO concluded Thursday.

Eight polling stations have been painted blue across Srinagar district for the youth.

"To foster the cause of environmental sustainability, eight polling stations have been coloured green while plantation activity shall be carried out on the polling day by the first voter," he said adding that the polling stations will be plastic-free.

Nearly 17.50 lakh people are going to decide the fate of the 24 candidates in the fray for the Lok Sabha polls in Srinagar on May 13.

Among these, over two lakh are the first-time voters, who are in the age group of 18-20.

Freedom of speech...

issue has been that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistani elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity.

"It is not so much a question of running out of options. What we have seen to our regret has been the direction of Canadian politics where separatists, extremists forces, many of whom openly advocate violence have been given political space in that country," Jaishankar said.

"And there are people in positions of prominence today in Canadian politics who actually espouse that kind of separatism and extremism," he said.

Jaishankar said India cannot overlook the issue for the sake of good relations.

"Whenever we have taken it up with the Canadians, and it is not a new issue -- it has been going on almost for 10 years; they keep saying, 'oh we have freedom of speech'," he said.

"We also have freedom of speech in our country. But freedom of speech does not mean freedom to threaten foreign diplomats, freedom of speech does not mean the kind of positions and the kind of activities which people in Canada are doing which does harm to our country because of its support for separatism," he said.

"And freedom of speech does not mean this kind of space which is also given to people of various dubious background -- people associated with organised crime and so on," he said.

His remarks came in response to a question on how India plans to deal with challenges emanating from Canada and whether the options for New Delhi are running out.

"We cannot for the sake of good relations overlook that," he said during the free-wheeling interview at PTT's headquarters.

In the last few months, India has been expressing concerns over the security of its diplomats in Canada and calling on Ottawa to ensure that they are able to carry out their responsibilities without fear.

There have been instances of pro-Khalistani elements threatening to harm Indian diplomats.

Days after Trudeau's allegations last September, India asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country to ensure parity. Canada subsequently withdrew 41 diplomats and their family members from India.

India has been asserting that its 'core issue' with Canada remains that of the space given to separatists, terrorists and anti-India elements in that country.

Last week, Canadian authorities charged three Indian nationals with the murder of Nijjar. It is reported that they entered Canada on student visas.

On Thursday, India said Canada has not provided any "specific" evidence or information in the case yet.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal also said that India continued to remain concerned about the security of its diplomatic representatives in Canada and expect Ottawa to ensure that they are able to carry out their responsibilities without fear.

SSP Jammu for...

of good number of old pending cases and Inquest proceedings.

He was also apprised regarding the new initiatives taken by Domana team in land disputed cases where proceedings under sections 145 CrPC have been initiated in good numbers.

Meanwhile, SSP Jammu Dr. Vinod Kumar also conducted inspection of Border Police Post Jogwan. During the visit he was accompanied by SP Rural Jammu, Brijesh Sharma-JKPS and SDPO Akhnoor, Mohan Lal Sharma, SHO Khour, Inspector Neeraj Choudhary, Incharge PP Pallanwala and Incharge BPP Jogwan.

SPP held the security review meeting of the area with concerned officers and on spot directions were given to have a joint naka with army in vulnerable areas.

Apart from this brief VDG members to remain extra alert.

Some welfare oriented issues of jawans were also resolved on spot & those



SSP Jammu Dr Vinod Kumart during visit to Akhnoor.

pending will be resolved on priority.

LS polls will...

"I do not accept the status of the state assembly which it has been degraded to. I consider it an undemocratically degraded institution which we can at the best call a glorified municipality," Mehdi told PTI in a free-wheeling interview on his campaign trail in this central Kashmir district, which is a part of the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency.

The Srinagar constituency has been represented by three generations of the Abdullahs.

Mehdi said by participating in the assembly elections and being part of "that degraded assembly", he would be "legitimising" that status.

"That is something I do not want to do. As an individual, I do not want to give that legitimacy to the assembly and the status quo. Therefore, I am clear I am not participating in any assembly elections," he added.

Mehdi, a former three-time MLA of central Kashmir's Budgam assembly segment, said he was not fighting elections for power or opportunities.

"Assembly elections for me are an easier and comfortable option and that gives more opportunities to me to be in the power corridors. But accepting that assembly and being part of it would amount to legitimising that degraded assembly. I do not want to be a part of that," he said.

Referring to the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, Mehdi said the parliamentary polls give him an opportunity to create a political space, to resonate "this sentiment" and take this expression to the institution (Parliament) where these decisions were taken.

"Parliament should know that the decisions that it took were completely undemocratic and the people of J-K had no participation and no role to play in that decision-making. This is the institution where we need to take that sentiment, expression and opinion. Through that, I intend to take this expression to the rest of India.

"So, this is completely a different thing from the assembly and I am sure that I am not going to participate in the assembly elections for these reasons," he added.

The former minister said the Lok Sabha elections are important because they are happening for the first time after the decisions that were taken on in 2019.

"The constitutional status that J-K enjoyed was taken unconstitutionally and undemocratically. The status of J-K was degraded and the rights and guarantees that were assured to us when we had acceded to the Union of India were snatched from us unilaterally and without the wish and will of the people.

"This abrogation happened while the entire population was put into an open-air prison," he said.

The government had imposed a strict lockdown on August 5, 2019, restricting the movement of the people and snapping telephone service, including landline and internet services across J-K. Several mainstream leaders had been detained or were put under house arrest.

Mehdi said the Lok Sabha elections provide an opportunity to express not only to Parliament of India but also to the rest of the nation "that we do not subscribe to the status to which we have been degraded".

"We do not accept the decisions that were taken against us on August 5, 2019 and this status of being second-class citizens is not the reason that we had acceded to the Union of India," he said.

The NC candidate said the parliamentary elections also provide an opportunity to create a political space for "dissent and expressing the opinion which was otherwise denied to us for the last four-five years".

"The entire population was intimidated. The media fraternity which wanted to reflect the facts on the ground was intimidated and many of them were put in jails. The activists are still in jail.

"No such atmosphere was allowed in which we would peacefully and democratically express our views. So this is an opportunity for us to express the anger and the sentiment which were otherwise denied to us," he added.

To a question about not contesting from his bastion -- north Kashmir's Baramulla Lok Sabha seat which includes many Shia-dominated areas including his own assembly segment Budgam, Mehdi said at the moment the challenge that the people face is not local.

"It is not district-wise. It is not a challenge to a district or to a constituency. The challenge that we face, the existential crisis that we have, is the same for everyone. It is as similar for the people of Srinagar as it is for the people of Baramulla or for Budgam or Anantnag. The issues are similar. The challenge is the same," he said.

The Shia leader said it does not matter who contests from where. He said he sees coming out of his bastion as an encouragement for him.

"Standing and fighting for a cause and generating the kind of an opinion or support from areas 'which have not been my bastion' is an encouragement for me. It means that I am not doing localised politics. I am not doing politics for a particular sect or an area," he said.

Mehdi said he is doing politics for the nation. The people are understanding this and they are coming along, he added.

Reject exploiters; vote...

citizens over unfulfilled commitments, indicating a growing dissatisfaction among the electorate. He emphasized the importance of track records and tangible results in governance.

Azad challenged the notion that regional parties only deceive the public, asserting that his administration's actions speak louder than words.

He cited numerous initiatives undertaken during his tenure aimed at uplifting the underprivileged and fostering development.

One notable achievement, Azad highlighted, was the construction of the Hajj House in Srinagar within a record time of six months, showcasing the efficiency and dedication of his administration.

He stressed the imperative to cease exploiting people through hollow slogans. He stressed that citizens are craving authentic transformation, development, and tranquility.

Azad lamented the regional parties' history of duping Kashmiris, pointing to their vacillation from advocating autonomy to self-rule, and now fixating on Article 370.

Reflecting on his solitary stand in Parliament against the abrogation of Article 370, he contrasted it with the reticence and abstentions of select regional MPs.

He emphasized the significance of electing candidates, who prioritize public issues and endorsed Amir Bhatt, a candidate from the DPAP, as someone who would echo the people's concerns in Parliament, mirroring Azad's own approach.

Among others present on the occasion were, Amir Bhatt Lok Sabha Candidate, Salman Nizami Chief Spokesperson, Bilal Khan Working President Budgam, Gh Nabi Parwana Distt President and others.

Congress 'anti-Hindu'...

in their own country," he claimed. "Are they talking about vote jihad because of this?"

Attacking the Congress government in Telangana, Modi said he referred to double R (RR) tax in the state, without taking any names, but Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is giving explanations to the media indicating who is associated with it.

In the rally held in Mahabubnagar Lok Sabha constituency, Modi stopped his speech briefly and directed that seating arrangements be made for some 'divyang' women.

RO Jammu PC...

management, with special emphasis on security access through proper security passes. Additionally, arrangements for staff welfare, such as food, drinking water and other basic amenities, were meticulously reviewed by the RO.

The District Election Officer directed all concerned officers to ensure timely completion of the arrangements for the smooth conduct of the counting process.

Counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections is scheduled on June 4, starting from 8 am at Government Polytechnic College Bikram Chowk and MAM College Jammu.



District Election Officer Sachin Kumar Vaishya chairing a meeting in Jammu on Friday.

AIJMS takes serious note of non-issuance of OBC Certificates to Jat community members

STATE TIMES NEWS

KATHUA: The All India Jat Maha Sabha (AIJMS) convened a crucial meeting to address the pressing issue of the non-issuance of OBC (Other Backward Class) certificates to members of Jat community by the authorities.



Ch. Mannohan Singh, President of AIJMS and others after the meeting at Kathua.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Ch. Mannohan Singh, President of AIJMS, Jammu & Kashmir, and former Mayor of Jammu in which several key issues related to the Jat community were discussed threadbare. The meeting was attended by Avtar Choudhary District President Kathua, Ch Sat Pal Tehsil President, Ch. Krishan Lal, Ch. Lekh Raj, Ch. Dalip Singh, Ch. Jagar Singh, Ch. Ramesh Kumar, Ch. Rakesh Kumar; Swarn Singh, Ch. Parkash Singh, Ch. Charan Dass and S.P Choudhary (AGM Retd.)

The Sabha members raised serious concern over the non-issuance of OBC certificates to Jat community members, despite the government's affirmative stance on extending OBC benefits. They high-

lighted the unfortunate bureaucratic hindrances faced at the level of the concerned authorities, notably the Tehsildar.

In his address, Ch. Mannohan Singh laid stress upon strengthening the working of the Sangathan, emphasizing proactive outreach initiatives to address the needs of the community comprehensively. He said we need to work together better so we can help our community more effectively.

Ch Mannohan Singh emphasized the vital role of youth empowerment in shaping the future trajectory of the Jat community. He called upon Sabha members to remain vigilant and proactive

in guiding and educating the youth about the detrimental effects of substance abuse, particularly drugs. He stressed the need for holistic approaches that encompass education, awareness campaigns, and community support systems to address the root causes of drug abuse and promote healthier lifestyles among youth.

Addressing the pressing issue of the non-issuance of OBC certificates, Ch. Mannohan Singh reassured attendees of his unwavering resolve to expedite resolution. He assured to take this matter with the Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, to resolve this crucial issue at the earliest.

Khelo India Hockey Centre Jammu wins inaugural tie of Hockey League

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The two-week Jammu District Hockey League tournament started on Friday at K K Hakku Astro Turf here.



Member Sports Council, Rajiv Sharma interacting with players.

The competition is organised under 'My Youth My Pride' initiative by the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council.

Member Sports Council, Rajiv Sharma flanked by Baljinder Singh, Divisional Sports Officer, J&K Sports Council inaugurated the tournament.

As per handout, league will be organised in two phases from May 10 May 13 and May 22 to May 25 in women (three teams) and men (nine teams) categories respectively.

In an inaugural match,

Khelo India Hockey Centre Jammu outclassed Sahara Warrior Hockey Club 14-0.

Anju Kumari was declared as woman of the match.

The match was officiated by Sahil Kumar and Tanishpreet Singh, Technical Officer Sonia, Judged Gargi and Tarandeep Singh and the Technical delegate Saksham Sharma monitor

the match.

The opening ceremony was held guidance of Ajay Gupta, Manager K K Hakku Stadium, Jagjit Singh, Hockey Coach, Dalvinder Singh, Hockey Coach and Anjali Thakur, KIC Hockey Coach. As per fixture, Sahara Warrior will lock horns with K K Hockey Club at K K Hakku Stadium Club.

Bukhari lashes out at NC, PDP for failing to live up to expectations of J&K people

STATE TIMES NEWS

SRINAGAR: Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari on Friday lashed out at political opponents, especially National Conference and Peoples Democratic Party, for failing to live up to the expectations of people of Jammu and Kashmir.



Apni Party President Syed Mohammad Altaf Bukhari welcoming new entrants into partyfold.

Addressing a public meeting at Rawalpora, Srinagar, the senior politician alleged the various regional parties of being involved in corruption for their petty self-interests.

"These political parties have time and again deceived the people of Jammu and Kashmir and remain busy in corrupt practices for their mere petty self-interests," he said.

Bukhari further said that he would prefer to remain with a party which will ensure release of passport verifications', early restoration of Statehood and revoca-

tion of AFSPA.

"After the August 2019, it was I who dared to reach out to the Centre which ensured that we were given protection of jobs and land," Bukhari said, adding, "I pledge to make sure the dignity and honour of my youths is held high." Alleging the NC and PDP of failing the people of Jammu and Kashmir,

Bukhari said, "What did our senior politician and MP Dr. Farooq Sahab and Justice (Hasnain Masoodi) and Akbar Lone do while the

Article 370 was revoked? PDP also had MPs there, but they didn't even do anything."

"Since 1947 they have been failing us and it is time that people understand it and vote in favour of J&K Apni Party, which is contesting its first election," Bukhari said. The event later-on witnessed a mass joining programme, wherein people from different walks of life joined Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party in presence of Bukhari.

KPS condemns Dr. Farooq Abdullah's remarks on Pran Pratishtha of Shree Ram Lalla

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The Kashmiri Pandit Sabha (KPS) Jammu strongly condemned the insensitive and inappropriate remarks made by Dr. Farooq Abdullah during an election meeting regarding the Pran Pratishtha of Shree Ram Lalla in the Ayodhya temple on January 22, 2024.

"It is appalling to witness the former chief minister disregarding all norms of respect and decency while making such comments about Shree Ram Ji, who is revered by over 1.4 billion people in the nation and abroad," said S.L. Bagati, General Secretary.

These remarks were made in an attempt to denigrate

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he added.

Such statements, Bagati said, have revealed Dr. Abdullah's true mindset and political motives, stripping away the facade of secularism he has purported for decades.

"It is evident that the entire politics of the National Conference is focused on gaining power at any cost, even if it means stooping to such levels. In a nation where the majority holds Shree Ram in the highest regard, these remarks will permanently tarnish Dr. Abdullah's image as a communal figure," Bagati said.

The Sabha, Bagati said, demanded an unconditional

apology from the President of the National Conference for hurting the sentiments of followers of Sanatan Dharma.

The party's much-touted slogan of Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity, coined by its founder Sheikh Abdullah, seems to have been forgotten by the present leadership, Bagati said.

Kashmiri Pandits, who aspire to return and resettle in their ancestral land with honor, dignity, and a sense of security, do not expect such communal and derogatory remarks from leaders of political parties that have governed the state for decades and may do so again in the future, Bagati added.