

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Aiyar, Farooq scare...

built Baba Vishwanath's Darbar (in Varanasi) which was destroyed by Aurangzeb. Somnath temple is also being built of gold. Modi ji has worked to redecorate our places of worship," he said.

Shah termed the opposition's assertion that reservation would end if BJP wins 400 seats a "lie" and claimed that after Congress came to power in Karnataka and Telangana, its governments gave reservations to Muslims overnight by cutting the share of SC, ST and OBCs.

"Today, I am stating the 'Modi ki guarantee'... till the time the BJP has even a single MP, we will not allow scrapping of reservation for SC, ST and OBCs," Shah said.

Urging people to ensure the BJP wins 400 Lok Sabha seats, Shah said, "This election is an election is to make Narendra Modi prime minister for the third time, to make India the third largest economy in the world, to give a befitting reply to Pakistan for its actions and replying to terrorist's bullets with shells."

In Raebareli, he described the Gandhi family as a hindrance in the path of development of the constituency.

"You gave the Gandhi family chances for years, but no development work has been done ... They (Congress) do not believe in development. They do not even come to you in your happiness and sorrows."

Shah urged the people to vote for the BJP's Raebareli candidate Dinesh Pratap Singh, and said, "We will connect Raebareli with Modi ji's development journey."

"The 'shahzada' (prince) has come here to seek votes. You have been voting for many years. Have you received anything from the MP fund? If you have not received it, then where did it go? It went to their vote bank. Sonia Gandhi has spent more than 70 per-cent of the MP funds on minorities," Shah claimed.

Intensifying his attack, he said, "The Gandhi family is an expert in lying. They are now promising Rs 1 lakh for every woman. In the Telangana (assembly) polls, they had promised to give Rs 15,000 to every woman. The women of the state elected them (Congress) ... Forget about Rs 15,000, they did not even give Rs 1,500."

"Many people here told me that this is a family seat... It is true. The people of Raebareli have made the Gandhi and Nehru families win for years. But after getting elected from here, how many times did Sonia Ji and her family come to Raebareli? Okay, Sonia ji's health is not good, but has Rahul baba or sister Priyanka come!"

Referring to several accidents in Raebareli in the past years, including the boiler explosion at an NTPC plant in 2017, Shah claimed none from the Gandhi family visited the victims or their kin. "Our (candidate) Dinesh Pratap Singh visited every (grieving) household," he said.

At the rally in Pratapgarh, Shah alleged that the Congress, Samajwadi Party and the BSP were "taking care of Article 370 as their 'illegitimate child'".

"You made Modi ji prime minister for the second time and he scrapped Article 370, worked to end terrorism in Kashmir and make it an integral part of India. But these two princess... Akhilesh (Yadav) and Rahul Baba say that if they come (to power), they will bring back Article 370," Shah told the rally.

Asserting that the opposition INDIA bloc has no chance of winning the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP leader said, "Assuming that they do, who will be the prime minister?"

"When a reporter asked this, the answer was a one-year term on a rotational basis. Rahul baba, this is not a grocery shop," Shah said.

Referring to the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, he said that for 70 years, the Congress, SP and BSP kept the issue hanging. "Modi ji did 'bhoomipujan', and on January 22 he did the consecration," Shah said.

Army opens fire...

The drone activity from across the border and subsequent firing of a few rounds by the Indian Army were reported from the Keri sector; the officials said.

A thorough search of the area was conducted but nothing suspicious was found on the ground, they said, adding the anti-national elements are using drones to drop weapons and narcotics but the security forces are fully alert to frustrate their designs. Meanwhile, a flying object with blinking light was also seen hovering briefly in the air near Allahpir area of Poonch district on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. Police along with security forces searched the area and found nothing on the ground, the officials said.

J&K Police dismisses...

without basis. The Jammu and Kashmir Police is committed to enforcing the law and the MCC (Model Code of Conduct) guidelines pertaining to security in furtherance of free and fair elections," police said in a statement here.

The National Conference (NC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) sought the Election Commission's intervention on Sunday to stop the alleged harassment and illegal arrest of their workers.

The PDP's Lok Sabha poll candidate from Srinagar Waheed Para accused a senior IPS officer of trying to engineer a low voter turnout in areas where the party has a strong support base.

The statement issued by police said any action taken has been regardless of party affiliation and pertaining to violations of election rules.

"There have been actions regardless of party affiliation pertaining to violations such as seizure of cash, narcotics, liquor and preventive actions against miscreants and potential offenders with a background of linkages to terrorism and separatism," it said.

"The Jammu and Kashmir Police and its leadership are resolved to secure candidates and political workers, their places of stay, political rallies, roadshows irrespective of which party one belongs to, as it considers elections as sacrosanct and all players participating in it are therefore equally sacred and also, that together we face a common adversary. History bears testimony to this," it added.

Police said notwithstanding the common cause and sacrifices on each sides, criticism of the security personnel has always been accepted as a professional hazard.

"However, speculative statements when made against individual police officers and put in the public domain, it exposes the individual to security hazards as seen in the past. Nevertheless, we reiterate our dedication and commitment to impartial enforcement of law," it said. The Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency will go to polls on Monday.

Multi-layered security...

to provide a safe and secure environment so that the electorate can exercise their franchise in large numbers.

A multi-layer security blanket has been thrown around the polling stations as well as distribution centres and strong rooms across the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency which includes entire districts of Srinagar, Ganderbal, Pulvama and parts of Budgam and Shopian districts.

As many as 2,135 polling stations have been set up across Srinagar, Ganderbal, Pulvama and parts of Budgam and Shopian districts where polling will be held. Twenty-six special polling stations have been set up for migrant voters of Kashmir Division with 21 in Jammu, four in Delhi and one in Udhampur District.

"In total, more than 8,500 polling staff, including reserve staff, will be deployed on duty on polling day. Voting will take place from 7 am to 6 pm," an official said.

All the polling stations will have CCTV cameras for live webcasting to control rooms set up at the districts and the CEO's office.

"There are a few polling stations which fall in communication shadow areas. Suitable alternative arrangements by providing satellite phones, wireless sets and special runners have been put in place around those polling stations," an official said.

Today's polling will decide the fate of 24 candidates trying their luck in the seat.

While the BJP may not be contesting any of the three Lok Sabha seats in Kashmir, the party is confident that the elections in the Valley will end the domination of the National Conference and People's Democratic Party in the region.

Supported by the India bloc, the National Conference has fielded influential Shia leader and former minister Aga Ruhullah Mehdi while the PDP has named its youth unit president Waheed Para as the candidate.

Even though the Srinagar seat is expected to witness a virtually head-on contest between Mehdi and Para, Apni Party's Mohammad Ashraf Mir and DPAP's Amir Ahmad Bhat are also in the fray along with 20 others, including two women.

Whoever emerges victorious, will be going to Parliament for the first time.

The voter turnout in the redrawn Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, following the delimitation exercise in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, will be keenly watched as most of the areas under the seat had previously witnessed low polling percentages due to boycott calls given by the separatists.

To encourage people to exercise their franchise, district election officers in the constituency organised various outreach programmes, used audio, visual and print medium and also held street plays and sports events.

Officials said all arrangements have been put in place for Monday's polling.

"A total of 17,47,810 voters have been enrolled in phase IV, including 8,75,938 men, 8,71,808 women and 64 third-gender voters. There are around 11,682 persons with disability and 705 voters above the age of 100 years," they said.

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They said 20 polling booths will be managed entirely by women, 18 by specially-abled persons and 17 by youths. Also, there will be 21 green polling stations to spread mes-

sages about environmental concerns.

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Election parties dispatched...

going to polls in the fourth phase of ongoing Lok Sabha Polls tomorrow on 13th May, informed an election official.

The polling for the fourth phase will be held across 2,135 polling stations in 1,323 locations. Around 2700 vehicles have been deployed by the administration for successful and smooth conduct of these elections.

Speaking on the welfare provisions in place for the polling parties, the CEO said, "The district administrations have been directed to ensure all requisite arrangements in place for the polling parties besides special Nodal officers have been appointed across the districts to take care of welfare of these election officials."

The polling in the Srinagar PC shall be held from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and shall continue till the last voter cast his ballot. A total of 17,47,810 voters are eligible to cast their vote. All the polling stations in the parliamentary constituency will have CCTV type cameras for live webcasting. The Polling shall be viewed live from the district headquarters as well as from the Central Command Centers established at Jammu and Srinagar. The Chief Electoral Officer has appealed to the eligible electorates to participate in the festival of democracy by utilizing their right to vote for which the election authorities and the local administrations have put in place all necessary arrangements.

Meanwhile, election teams have been successfully deployed to all 260 polling stations across Ganderbal, part of Srinagar Parliamentary Constituency.

Under the meticulous supervision of the District Election Officer (DEO) Ganderbal, Shyambir, the process of dispatching of Poll Parties from two Dispatch cum Receipt Centres (DCRCs) established at Degree College Ganderbal for 18-Ganderbal Assembly Constituency and PTS Manigam for 17-Kangan Assembly Constituency was conducted successfully.

The district has 260 polling stations including 155 in Ganderbal Assembly Constituency and 105 in Kangan Assembly Constituency.

Comprehensive arrangements were made for departure of polling parties, encompassing vehicles, seating arrangements, refreshments, and security measures.

The District Election Officer, accompanied by SSP Sandeep Gupta, conducted visits to both the centers. They interacted with polling parties, urging them to adhere to Election Commission guidelines diligently and execute their assigned tasks with dedication and integrity.

Army Chief visits...

the state-of-the-art infrastructure on April 10 and visited the hospital on his return from a two-day trip to Ladakh on Saturday, the official said.

Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Indian Army shared on 'X' several pictures of General Pande's visit to the command hospital. "The COAS interacted with the patients undergoing treatment and also the paramedics. He lauded all ranks for their professionalism and exhorted them to continue striving for excellence," the ADGPI said.

It said the hospital is equipped with cutting-edge technologies and eco-friendly features. Specialised multi-discipline facilities for treatment, sophisticated medical gas pipeline system, state-of-the-art fire-fighting mechanism, central air-conditioning system with optimal patient care and safety standards, effluent treatment plant and sewage treatment facility are some of the modern features and facilities available at the hospital, the ADGPI said.

Phase-four: Voting...

seeking re-election from Asansol where he is pitted against BJP's veteran leader S S Ahluwalia. BJP's former West Bengal president Dilip Ghosh and Trinamool Congress' Kirti Azad are contesting from Bardhaman-Durgapur.

So far, till phase three of the Lok Sabha elections, polling has concluded in 283 seats out of 543.

Polling will be held on Monday in all 17 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, all 25 seats in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Uttar Pradesh, five in Bihar, four in Jharkhand, eight in Madhya Pradesh, 11 in Maharashtra, four in Odisha, eight in West Bengal and one in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nearly 17.48 lakh electorate are eligible to vote in the election to the prestigious Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency and 24 candidates are in the fray. It is the first major election in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019.

The National Conference has fielded influential Shia leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi while youth leader Waheed Para is contesting on the People's Democratic Party ticket. The Apni Party has fielded Ashraf Mir, while the BJP is not contesting.

The BJP-led NDA has MPs from over 40 of these 96 seats that will go to polls on Monday.

The voter turnout in the first three phases of the Lok Sabha elections was 66.14 per cent, 66.71 per cent and 65.68 per cent, respectively.

The EC believes that the heatwave conditions are one of the reasons for lower voter turnout in the last three phases as compared to the 2019 parliamentary polls.

Citing an India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast, the poll authority on Sunday said that "there is no significant concern regarding hot weather conditions for the polling in Phase 4."

The weather forecast indicates that the parliamentary constituencies going to polls are likely to experience normal to below normal temperatures and there will be no heatwave-like conditions in these areas on polling day.

Keeping in mind the hot weather conditions and people's reluctance to step out in the afternoon, the Election Commission has increased poll timing in some Telangana seats.

While the usual hours of voting are from 7 am to 6 pm, they are curtailed keeping in mind the terrain, time of sunset and security situation.

Issues like reservations, appeasement policies, corruption and jobs dominated the battle of narratives in the fourth phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

Among the 13 poll-bound constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, a close contest is on between SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and sitting BJP MP Subrat Pathak in Kannauj, while in Unnao, incumbent BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj is up against SP's Annu Tandon.

In West Bengal, the EC has identified 3,647 polling stations as "critical" across the eight constituencies.

A total of 152 companies (around 100 personnel each) of central forces would be deployed in Bardhaman Purba district, followed by Birbhum (131), Asansol Durgapur Police Commissionerate (88), Krishnanagar Police District (81), Murshidabad Police District (73) and Ranaghat Police District (54), an official said.

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In Andhra Pradesh, the ruling YSRCP is contesting in all 175 Assembly seats and 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state.

As part of a seat-sharing deal among NDA partners, the TDP was allocated 144 Assembly and 17 Lok Sabha constituencies while the BJP will contest from six Lok Sabha and 10 Assembly seats.

The Janasena will contest two Lok Sabha and 21 Assembly seats.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the YSRCP had won 22 seats while TDP was reduced to just 3.

YSRCP president and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy (Pulivendla), TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu (Kuppam) and Janasena chief and actor Pawan Kalyan (Pithapuram), among others, are in the Assembly poll race.

With the polling on eight seats in Madhya Pradesh, elections to all 29 seats in the state will be completed. The eight constituencies spread over 64 assembly segments in 15 districts in the state's Malwa-Nimar region are considered the bastion of the BJP. In Indore, after Congress candidate Akshay Bam withdrew his nomination at the last minute and joined the saffron party setting the stage for a one-sided contest for BJP's Shankar Lalwani, who won by nearly 5.4 lakh votes in 2019, the Congress urged voters to hit NOTA (None Of The Above) option. Polling for the next three phases in the country is on May 20, May 25 and June 1. The counting of votes is on June 4.

Arms, ammunition recovered...

the joint troops of Rashtriya Rifles and police during search and cordon operation in Kot Budhan forest in Mahore area this morning, the officials said.

Besides nine IEDs fitted with electric detonators and three pistols along with three magazines and 20 rounds, the forces also recovered one kg explosive powder, seven explosive safety fuses, 21 batteries of various types, 50 metre electric wire, 15 Ak assault rounds, eight metre rope, one blanket and three dressing bandages, the officials said. They said the operation was still continuing when last reports were received.

DPAP will ensure...

Paharis, Gujjars, or Kashmiris. It breaks my heart to see these parties, failing in their development efforts, resorting to dividing people. I will never tolerate such actions, neither within my party nor my government when mandated to power. Our commitment remains steadfast to work tirelessly for the betterment of all."

Vowing to champion the concerns of the people, Azad highlighted the concerning trend and referred to the absence of any substantial contribution from MPs of NC or PDP following his retirement.

He emphasized the importance of elected representatives actively engaging in parliamentary debates to address the needs of their constituents.

Azad lamented the silent demeanor of NC and PDP MPs, likening them to mute spectators in Parliament. He urged politicians today to deceive the public, emphasizing the responsibility of elected officials to advocate for the interests of those they represent.

Azad expressed dismay over the exploitation of innocent voters, who place their trust in leaders only to be let down later. He emphasized the importance of parliamentary performance, citing his own track record as an example.

He questioned the necessity of bringing candidates from other districts to contest seats in South Kashmir, suggesting it reflects a failure on the part of NC MPs to effectively represent their constituents.

Azad said that if they had raised public issues, there would have been no need for such actions.

He further stated that it's imperative to reinstate the Roshni scheme, restore statehood, initiate power projects, provide free electricity, ensure land and job protection, and usher in an era of development.

He urged the people to support his party in achieving these objectives.

Among others present on the occasion included Mohd Amin Bhatt Provincial President Kashmir, Salman Nizami Chief Spokesperson, Adv Saleem Parray candidate, Shafiq Shabnam, Shuby Jaan, Zamir Mir and others.

With neighbour like...

policy that if I can actually build up my economy, if I can build up my manufacturing, if I can create the kind of capabilities which today I am trying to do, I think you are going to find the foreign policy has much more resources and much more tool in its toolkit to actually influence the world," he added.

His response came to a query on why India's bilateral trade volume with China is going up when New Delhi has been insisting that the ties cannot be normal if the border situation is abnormal.

Jaishankar suggested that such a scenario has arisen as adequate attention to the manufacturing sector was not given before 2014 in the country.

The Indian and Chinese militaries have been locked in a standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 2020 and a full resolution of the border row has not yet been achieved though the two sides have disengaged from a number of friction points.

"I think it is common sense that If there is no peace and tranquility in the border, how can you have a normal relationship," Jaishankar said.

"After all, if somebody is at your front door in an unfriendly manner; you are not going to go out there and act as though everything is normal. That to me is a straightforward proposition," he said.

India has been consistently maintaining that peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) were key for normalisation of overall ties. However, trade between the two countries is steadily expanding, especially with rising imports from China.

Since the beginning of the last decade, bilateral trade between India and China recorded significant growth.

From 2015 to 2022, India-China bilateral trade grew by 90.14 per cent, an average yearly growth of 12.87 per cent. In 2022, the overall trade with China increased by 8.47 per cent year on year to reach USD 136.26 billion, crossing the USD 100 billion mark for the second time in a row, according to official data.

However, the trade deficit came to USD 101.28 billion as India's imports from China witnessed a major increase.

In the last few years, the government has been making efforts to expand manufacturing in a number of critical areas as part of an aim to de-risking from China.

There has also been a greater focus on India acquiring critical technologies to minimise import dependency.

"When you talk about trade, what has happened is in many ways, the fact that we actually neglected manufacturing in this country. That in many ways, we did not give the kind of support to our manufacturers, especially our small and medium enterprises," Jaishankar said.

BJP Govt has...

minister said. He referred to the four-point agenda of the Leh Apex Body and the Kargil Democratic Alliance that are jointly spearheading the ongoing agitation and said "the way forward is dialogue and we have a roadmap for the future of Ladakhl".

Asked about the demand for extension of Sixth Schedule to the region, Rijju said the BJP is committed to address all demands of the people of Ladakh.

"We are committed to meet the aspirations and expectations of the people of Ladakh. We have solutions to every issue, whether related to the Sixth Schedule or something else. The central government has the roadmap but the people need to come forward and ensure victory for our candidate for smooth progress of the dialogue and development work," he said.

The Union minister said Gylson's win is directly linked to the future of Ladakh.

"If someone else is elected from here, Ladakh will be at a loss. We have granted Union Territory status to the region and we are committed to address all other pending demands," he said, adding those who were opposing Union Territory status for Ladakh have no right to talk about it.

MHA directs CAPFs...

guard but the model can be utilised by them as per their nature of duties, the officer said. These forces, about 12 lakh in combined strength, are deployed for a variety of internal security tasks like guarding India's international borders, anti-Naxal operations, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency duties. The aim of replicating the BSF West Bengal beekeeping model is to generate employment in remote locations, making friends and earning goodwill of the locals, who act as the "eyes and ears" in these areas from the security point of view, a senior BSF officer said. Launched in November last year, the BSF unit in Nadia has installed close to 200 beehives on the India-Bangaldesh alloy-made border fence till now, with a multi-pronged aim of stopping border crimes like cattle, gold and narcotics smuggling, fence cutting and engaging the population in productive remuneration-based work. Commandant Sujet Kumar, the commanding officer (CO) of this BSF battalion, earlier spoke to PTI and explained that the initiative was launched after it was analysed that trans-border crimes were directly linked to scanty livelihood opportunities in the region leading to allurements of locals into criminal activities. The 'beehives on fence' initiative is aimed to engage the locals in producing honey for sale, planting flowering and fruit-bearing plants for the honeybees and also for the purpose of trade and shallow water pisciculture through the fresh ditches being made in this border area to store water, he had said.

Won't waste time...

somehow comes back to power, which seems increasingly impossible now, they are committed to restore statehood to Jammu and Kashmir: If the government changes, which we are hoping for, our effort will be that we get full statehood before the assembly elections take place," he added. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha in December last year, Home Minister Amit Shah had assured the country that full statehood would be restored to Jammu and Kashmir at an appropriate time.

Tributes paid to martyrs Rahul Bhat, Deepak, Rajni others Release educational expenses in favour of martyr Rahul's daughter: Speakers appeal LG Admn

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Floral tributes were paid tributes to martyrs Rahul Bhat, Deepak Chand Mehra, Rajni Bala and others on Tribute Memorial Day, here on Sunday.

A large number of people from all walks of life participated in the event, which was held at Asha Bhawan banquet hall, Roop Nagar, here. The event also saw the participation of the parents and relatives of these martyrs.

During the event, which was organised by one and all, the speakers threw light on the life of these courageous martyrs, who laid down their lives, while serving the people.

These martyrs were bravely fell to the bullets of terrorists. These martyrs were remembered by one and all especially the employees, who are still working in the various districts of the Kashmir despite threat to their lives.

"The commitment made by Lieutenant Governor JKUT Manoj Sinha administration regarding the educational expense of daughter of martyr Rahul Bhat is still pending and nothing has been till today", the speakers said. The speakers have appealed to the LG Administration to do needful in this regard at the earliest.