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Ex-Sarpanch killed...

was rushed to a hospital where he succumbed to injuries, they said. The areas in Anantnag and Shopian have been cordoned off and search operations have been launched to nab the attackers, the officials said. The back-to-back attacks come at a time when campaigning for the parliamentary polls in the Anantnag-Rajouri seat is going on. Polling in Baramulla will be held on May 20 in the fifth round of the seven-phase general elections. The BJP held a protest against the murder of party worker and former sarpanch Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh in Shopian and accused the Jammu and Kashmir civil administration of ignoring its requests for security to some key functionaries facing terror threats.

BJP workers gathered outside the 'mini secretariat' in Shopian and raised slogans against the district administration for not providing safe accommodation to vulnerable party leaders and workers.

One of the protesters said, "We have been requesting the Deputy Commissioner for a year to provide safe accommodation to our leaders and workers but he has been delaying. Now we have lost one worker."

Altaf Thakur, a party spokesperson, said there was a lapse on part of the district administration at some level.

"Terrorism will not be allowed to raise its ugly head in Kashmir again but there has been a lapse on the administration's part as well. The responsibility for Aijaz's martyrdom lies with the deputy commissioner," he told PTI Videos.

"Sometime ago, we had written to the deputy commissioner that Aijaz was getting threat calls but he ignored it," Thakur added.

The BJP in a statement said, "We strongly condemn the killing of ex-sarpanch Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh in Hirpora, Shopian, South Kashmir, by terrorists today."

"Aijaz Ahmad was a brave soldier of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP firmly stands with the family of Aijaz Ahmad, who lost his life in this terror attack," it said.

Meanwhile, neighbours and relatives visited Sheikh's family at Hirpora in Shopian and offered their condolences.

Sheikh is survived by his mother, his widow Shabnam Kausar and their three children, including a two-month-old daughter.

Kausar said Sheikh worked for the area's development and made people aware of schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.

"I want to ask him (the assailant) what my husband had done to him? Did he take his property that he murdered him? He made my three children orphans and me destitute. May Allah do the same to his (family)," she said.

Kausar said the assailant knocked on the door of their home late on Saturday and asked for her husband.

"I was preparing the feeder for my infant daughter when he came to the door. The moment my husband confirmed that he was Aijaz, the assailant fired seven to eight shots before fleeing," she added.

Political parties in Jammu and Kashmir, including the National Conference, PDP and the BJP, condemned the attacks.

Polling for the seat was scheduled to be conducted on May 7 but was deferred after few political parties in Jammu and Kashmir raised concerns over weather conditions. Polling will now be held on May 25.

National Conference president Farooq Abdullah and vice president Omar Abdullah also condemned the terror attacks.

Jail-break case...

The accused person namely Ali Mohd Lone @ Advocate Zahid Ali son of Habibullah Lone resident of Nihama Pulwama, who was involved in Case FIR No. 19/2019 under section 13 of UAP Act" surrendered before the police station concerned and was arrested on May 16 in the jailbreak case.

He was also booked at Rainawari Police Station under various sections of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC).

The spokesman said the accused was allegedly involved in conspiracy and commission of crimes involving arson, rioting, an attempt to jailbreak, raising anti-national slogans and stone pelting in Srinagar Central Jail in 2019.

A former chief of the JEl had recently said the outfit would contest future elections if the Centre lifts the ban on the outfit imposed in 2019.

Lone was released from custody in April after five years of detention under Public Safety Act.

The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, while ordering his release a month ago, had directed the union territory administration to pay a compensation of Rs five lakh to the former spokesman of banned Jamaat-e-Islami outfit for his illegal detention under the Public Safety Act.

Lone, who was spokesperson of Jamaat-e-Islami for a long time, was first arrested in March 2019 but his preventive detention was quashed by the court in July that year. However, he was detained again under preventive laws within six days but the order was set aside by the court in 2020. Within three months, he was again booked under preventive laws but the detention was again set aside by the court in 2021.

He was booked for the fourth time in 2021 under the PSA which was quashed by the court last month.

"Now if three judgments of this Court quashing preventive detention of the petitioner made three times hereto before have not been spared a passing glance, lest an application of mind, by and on the part of the SSP Pulwama, the respondent No.2-District Magistrate Pulwama and last by the respondent No.1- Govt. of UT of J&K as well, then how can it be claimed by the said three authorities at their respective end that the fourth time preventive detention of the petitioner is an outcome of an open and fair mindset acting upon changed factual scenario," the court had observed in its 13-page order.

SC to hear...

Last year, passed three key legislations -- the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill. President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the bills on December 25.

These new laws -- the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act -- will replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act respectively.

Seeking a stay on the operation of the three new laws, the PIL filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari has said they were enacted without any parliamentary debate as most of the opposition members were under suspension.

The plea has sought directions from the court for the immediate constitution of an expert committee that will assess the viability of the three new criminal laws.

"The new criminal laws are far more draconian and establish a police state in reality and violate every provision of fundamental rights of the people of India. If the British laws were considered colonial and draconian, then the Indian laws stand now far more draconian as, in the British period, you could keep a person in police custody for a maximum of 15 days. Extending 15 days to 90 days and more is a shocking provision enabling police torture," the plea has said.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita encompasses offences, such as acts of secession, armed rebellion, subversive activities, separatist activities or endangering the sovereignty or unity of the country, in a new avatar of the sedition law.

Need strong PM...

they have the atom bomb. Rahul baba, if you want to feel scared, feel scared of the atom bomb, but PoK belongs to India and we will take it back."

He pointed out that on August 5, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi abrogated Article 370, which had bestowed special rights on Jammu and Kashmir.

In Prayagraj, he said, "Rahul baba used to say if Article 370 is scrapped, then streams of blood will flow. I have come to tell Rahul baba that leave streams of blood, no one has the courage to even throw a small stone. This is the government of Narendra Modi, who has worked towards freeing the country from terrorism."

Claiming that opposition leaders did not attend the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as they were afraid of losing their vote bank, Shah said those in the BJP do not fear anyone.

"The Congress and the Samajwadi Party kept the Ram temple (matter) pending for 70 years. The SP government opened fire on kar sevaks. You made Modi the prime minister for the second time, he won the court case, performed the 'bhoomipujan' (ground-breaking ceremony) and also the 'pran pratishtha' (consecration) of the temple," he said.

In Kashmir, where the Army had to be taken along for hoisting the tricolour, "at that same Lal Chowk (in Srinagar) now, the 'shobhayatra' of Lord Krishna is taken out", Shah told the Jaunpur rally.

He said during the previous Congress-led UPA rule at the Centre, there were bomb blasts "virtually everyday".

"The alyia, maliya, jamaliya would infiltrate and explode bombs. When the Modi government came, they carried out explosions in Pulwama and Uri and in 10 days, surgical strikes and airstrikes were conducted and terrorists eliminated in Pakistan by Modi," the home minister said.

Claiming that leaders of the INDIA bloc have said Article 370 will be brought back if the alliance of opposition parties forms the government, he said, "Should Article

370 be brought back? They want to bring back triple talaq, should it be brought back? They want to give reservation to Muslims, should it be given? They want to scrap the CAA, should it be scrapped? They also want to destroy nuclear weapons. This INDI Alliance cannot take the country forward."

Over 500 centenarians...

throttle against each other and even bringing in the BJP to target each other despite the saffron party not contesting from any of the three parliamentary seats of Srinagar, Baramulla and Anantnag-Rajouri in the Valley.

However, it is the presence of jailed Awami Ittehad Party leader and former MLA Abdul Rashid Sheikh alias Engineer Rashid that has spiced up the contest.

The People's Democratic Party has fielded former Rajya Sabha member Mir Mohammad Fayaz while Muneer Khan, the brother of jailed separatist leader Nayeem Ahmad Khan, is contesting as an Independent.

Most observers, however, expect a triangular contest among Abdullah, Lone and Rashid. The Ghulam Nabi Azad-led Democratic Progressive Azad Party has backed Rashid's candidature while the Apni Party, led by Altaf Bukhari, has thrown its weight behind Lone.

Given the huge turnout at the rallies and roadshows, political observers expect Baramulla to break turnout records in Kashmir.

The election authorities gave permission for 1,859 rallies, meetings and roadshows while 300 applications were rejected.

In 2019, the constituency recorded 34.17 per cent polling with Kupwara district registering the highest turnout at 51.7 per cent, followed by Bandipora at 31.8 per cent and Baramulla at 24 per cent.

The constituency is spread over 18 assembly segments in the three districts of Kupwara, Baramulla and Bandipora and also includes two segments of Budgam that were included on the recommendations of the delimitation commission two years ago.

According to Election Commission officials, 17.37 lakh people are eligible to cast their votes at 2,103 polling stations.

"There are 527 persons above the age of 100 who are eligible to exercise their franchise. There are 8,75,831 (8.75 lakh) male and 8,62,000 (8.62 lakh) female voters, besides 34 from the third gender. More than 17,000 voters are persons with disabilities," they said.

More than 8,000 polling staff, including reserves, have been deployed at the polling stations to ensure smooth conduct of the polls, the officials said and added that 28 polling stations are located in the border areas of Kupwara and Baramulla districts. Voting will be held from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

There are 18 polling booths managed by women, 17 manned by specially-abled persons and 18 by youngsters. To spread messages on the environment, the authorities have also set up 21 green polling booths.

Election Deptt takes...

and Rajouri as second highest and Udhampur and Ganderbal districts as third highest while lowest number of violations have been reported from Kishtwar, Bandipora, Reasi and Samba districts, added the communique.

Extreme hot weather...

ever required." The maximum temperature in Jammu is between 40 to 42 degrees C for past one week, forcing people to stay indoors.

Regional parties neglecting...

increasing unemployment, and the growing problem of drug abuse among youth. He emphasized that young people are forced to compete with outsiders for jobs, further exacerbating their struggles. "Why are these critical issues not part of the election agenda?" he asked.

Azad urged the electorate to demand accountability and focus on real solutions to the challenges they face daily. He said, "It has become their habit to fool Kashmiris. For years they fooled them with self-rule and autonomy, and now they are fooling the people with Article 370. I want to ask them, if you are serious about Article 370, why didn't you file an appeal in the Supreme Court? Why didn't you speak in Parliament? Do you expect the BJP or Congress to restore Article 370? They don't even talk about it anymore. In fact, many Congress leaders, including sitting MPs and Chief Ministers, supported BJP on Article 370, including even many opposition parties like AAP and others. Now you expect them to get Article 370 back? They haven't put it in their manifesto. So enough of fooling people. I promise if we come to power, we will pass the land and job protection law."

He promised that if DPAP comes to power, they will pass laws to protect land and jobs for the people of the region.

"Enough of fooling people. We will take concrete steps to ensure the rights and well-being of our citizens", he added.

Meanwhile, Azad urged the people to support his party's candidate, Advocate Saleem Parray, in the upcoming Lok Sabha election. He assured the electorate that Saleem Parray is committed to raising their issues and demands in Parliament.

He further emphasised his commitment to empowering young leaders and giving young Kashmiris the opportunity to represent their communities.

"I have given the opportunity to these young leaders to stand up for their people," he stated.

"Other parties only promote their children, but my children are here to support me, not to contest elections." He further criticised regional parties, accusing them of preventing common people from rising to top positions. "For how long will the innocent people of Kashmir be fooled?"

Among others who were present on the occasion were Adv Saleem Parray Candidate, Salman Nizami Chief Spokesperson, DPAP Senior leader Mufti Sarwar and others.

Fifth phase: Voting...

lakh polling officials have been deployed across 94,732 polling stations. Among the seats going to polls, 13 are in Maharashtra, 14 in Uttar Pradesh, seven in West Bengal, five in Bihar, three in Jharkhand, five in Odisha, one in J-K and the lone seat in Ladakh. This round covers the least number of seats (49) in the seven-phase elections.

It is another important phase for the BJP as over 40 of these seats were with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

On the eve of polling, the Election Commission on Sunday pointed out that Mumbai, Thane and Lucknow have shown apathy towards voting in the past and asked city dwellers there to turn out in higher numbers.

The poll authority noted that in the past these cities have "suffered" from urban apathy in voting. "The Commission especially calls upon these city dwellers to erase the stigma by turning out in higher numbers," it said.

So far, the last four phases have registered a total voter turnout of 66.95 per cent.

DGP promises tough...

terrorists would find it hard to hide and escape consequences. Enemy's plans and frustrations and tasking of their agents and proxies to disrupt the democratic process, devious schemes to undertake selective targeting, to disrupt economic activities aimed at harming employment and income were analysed. Localised steps for countering the people's enemy were devised.

DGP was accompanied by IGP Kashmir VK Birdi, DIG South Kashmir Altaf Ahmad Khan also undertook a check of the night domination action of the security forces especially in the Pahalgam axis.

Search operation launched...

said. The searches are underway in Tarnah nallah and adjoining villages, including Rakh Sarkar Pallhi and Pathwal when last reports were received, the officials said.

International bodies must...

several terror attacks took place under the previous UPA regime. "In 2008, our IPS officers fell to bullets in Mumbai (26/11 attack)... what was the then Congress government doing? But now, nobody dares to attack India. People have understood India's capability of eliminating terrorism not only within the country but also across the border," he asserted.

"However, we have never attacked any country or tried to occupy an inch of any other country's land. But Pakistan has all along tried to create disturbances in our country," he said.

Singh also addressed two other rallies in Rairakhol in Sambalpur Lok Sabha seat and Patana in Keonjhar parliamentary constituency.

Bodies of two...

The police, on getting information, launched a search operation and were joined by teams of the SDRF and NDRF following which Rajinder's body was recovered on Saturday, the officials said.

They said a team of the Army's nine para unit also joined the search operation which culminated with the recovery of the second body this afternoon.

The bodies of both the deceased were handed over to their families after completion of legal formalities, the officials added.

Three NC workers...

candidate Mian Altaf in Mendhar. The rally continued without any disruption. Officials said there was a clash between two groups over some issue during the rally. Taking advantage of the melee, the attackers managed to escape, the officials said.

Police have registered a case in connection with the incident and are trying to nab the culprits, they said.

Sohail Ahmad and Yaseer Ahmad, both residents of Harni, and Mohd Imran of Kasblari village, received stab injuries and were taken to a local hospital, the officials said.

They said the condition of Sohail and Yaseer was stated to be serious and they were referred to Government Medical College (GMC) Hospital, Rajouri for specialised treatment, they added.

Senior NC leader Javed Ahmad Rana termed the incident a "security lapse" and demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

He said it is very strange that people carrying knives managed to enter the rally venue.

"It is a serious incident and should be probed," said Rana.

Some days ago, one of the injured youth's brothers was attacked by the same group and an FIR was registered against the accused, said the NC leader, who rushed to the hospital to inquire about the condition of the injured.

Pak occupied Kashmir is ours: Rana

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
DINANAGAR (PUNJAB): Referring to the unanimous Parliament Resolution of 1994 and growing anger of the persecuted people across the Line of Control against Pakistan atrocities,



Senior BJP leader Devender Singh Rana addressing a gathering at Dinanagar.

Senior BJP leader Devender Singh Rana said PoK is ours and belongs to us.

"PoK is an integral part of India", Rana said while addressing booth meetings under day-long Booth Sampark Abhiyan in Doaba in Dinanagar assembly constituency seeking vote and support for the party candidate for Gurdaspur Parliamentary Constituency Dinesh Singh Babbu alongwith DDC Vice Chairman Jammu Suraj Singh.

He said that the Indian nation has unwavering commitment to realize the unanimous Parliament resolution on PoK, an integral and inseparable part of the country. He castigated Pakistan and her notorious ISI for inflicting miseries to the people of slave PoK and using the soil for terror camps to engage with India and the people on this side.

Devender Rana said that PoK has always been a part of the erstwhile Dogra state of Jammu and Kashmir, which acceded to India in 1947. But for the treachery of Pakistan the people of PoK would not have suffered humiliation for over seven decades at the hands of the rogue nation. Pakistan has now touched the lowest depths of human values and subjected the people to the worst type of human rights violations, he added.

He said the BJP's vision for a strong, prosperous, and inclusive Bharat resonates deeply with the aspirations of millions of Indians across the country. From vibrant global reputation, robust economic reforms to decisive actions on national security, the BJP's agenda reflects its unflinching commitment to serve every segment of Indian society. While the past decade has been India's tryst with development and economic resurgence, the next term under Prime Minister Modi will witness the nation growing as a world leader, he added.

Rana said that those finding political investment in disturbed conditions in Punjab and J&K stand isolated on the face of determination of people and coordinated efforts of the security forces in foiling the terror machinations. These elements are now desperately trying to garner sustenance from Pakistan masters, in terms of open political support being extended by some discarded politicians, to impact the mega democratic process in the world's largest democracy. All these machinations are going to prove counterproductive as the politically matured people see through the game plan of the enemies of nation, he said, hoping the electors will give a befitting reply to them by mandating the BJP led NDA to over four hundred seats. The third term in office under Modiji will prove transformative for the country in a big way, he added.

Udhampur police observes 'Thana Diwas'

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
UDHAMPUR: Thana Diwas-an initiative of J&K UT Administration as a public outreach program was organised in Rehambal.



SSP Udhampur Joginder Singh speaking during the event.

The event was chaired by SSP Udhampur Joginder Singh, while DySP Hqrs. Prehlad Sharma, SHO Rehambal Insp. Nishad Ahmad, PSI Sahil Chib IC PP Tikri and other police officers of Police Station were also present.

PRIs including Sarpanches, Panches, senior civil society representatives, shopkeeper associations, and respected individuals from the area participated in it and highlighted various issues of public importance. SSP Udhampur, demonstrated a patient and attentive approach, attentively listening to the concerns raised by the participants. He assured them that police-related matters would be given utmost priority, and issues pertaining to civil administration would be taken up with the District Administration for swift resolution.

During the program, SSP Udhampur also urged the participants to extend their cooperation to the Police and Administration in maintaining law and order. He emphasized the significance of identifying and reporting anti-national and antisocial elements to ensure the safety and security of the region.

Furthermore, the participants were enlightened about the risks associated with cybercrimes and the modus operandi of cyber criminals.

Thereafter, SSP Udhampur also held a crime review meeting in PS Rehambal and examined the performance of Police Station Rehambal and Police Post Tikri.

The main focus of the meeting was to improve the quality of investigation. Besides, Disposal of missing persons, inquest proceedings, arrest of absconders and action under preventive measures were also reviewed. The issues of public complaints pending were also discussed. In the meeting, SSP also advised SHO of PS Rehambal for finalization of the pending cases/public complaints to give the relief to the general public. The investigating staff was also directed to conduct the investigation of cases with zeal, dedication and with transparency at an earliest possible time in the public interest and bring the pendency to the minimum.

Farooq demands probe into twin terror attacks in J&K, asks Pakistan to stop terrorism

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
MENDHAR: National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Sunday urged the Centre to order a probe into the twin terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir a day earlier and also asked Pakistan to stop supporting terrorism in the region.

The former chief minister said if a probe is not ordered into the two gruesome incidents, his party would "invite an international committee" to conduct an investigation to find out the culprits behind such attacks.

"I have been repeatedly saying that those sitting in Delhi are misleading the people by saying Article 370 was responsible for terrorism. How many years have passed since the abrogation of the Article? Has terrorism stopped?" Abdullah told reporters on the sidelines of an election rally in the Mendhar area of Poonch district.

Referring to the killing of Sheikh, he said an innocent former sarpanch of BJP lost his life in the attack. "Had he not the right to live? This is a free country and any party can propagate their ideology. Who killed him should be probed and that too soon," the NC chief said. He also demanded an investigation into the attack on the tourists in Anantnag. "If they (Centre) do not go for the probe, we should invite an international committee to investigate who is responsible for such attacks," Abdullah said. He said peace will elude the region till the terrorism is completely stopped. "I want to tell our neighbour Pakistan to stop terrorism (in J-K). After the terror activities are stopped, both countries can sit together and resolve their issues," he said.