

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Congress, SP Pakistan's...

"extremely communal", "extremely casteist" and "extremely nepotistic". In an apparent attack on Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, he said in Delhi, a game of 'kattar bhrastachari' is being played out.

"These people have left no stone unturned to loot the people of Delhi and even courts are stunned by this. The people who came to change politics did the biggest betrayal," he said, adding that all INDIA bloc members are "extremely corrupt".

Modi warned that after returning for a third term, he will do an X-ray of corrupt people's wealth.

DGP, GoC review...

adapt to evolving security dynamics.

The meeting reaffirmed the collective commitment to safeguard the region and a pledge to continue collaborative efforts for enhanced security.

Poonch, which is part of the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency, is going to polls in the sixth phase of elections on May 25. The region has witnessed dozens of high profile terror attacks, particularly against the armed forces in the past two years. During the meeting, comprehensive discussions were held to synergise ongoing operations and review preparations in anticipation of forthcoming events, they said. The focus was on enhancing coordination and ensuring robust security measures across the region, they said.

Focus shifts to...

was reshaped on the recommendations of the Delimitation Commission in 2022, excluding Pulwama and some segments of Shopian and bringing in most of Rajouri and Poonch districts.

Mehbooba faces a tough challenge from National Conference candidate and influential Gujjar leader Mian Altaf and the Apni Party's Zafar Iqbal Khan Manhas, who has the BJP's backing.

Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) leader Mohamad Saleem Parray and 10 Independents are also in the fray.

The campaigning has now gathered steam especially after the Srinagar and Baramulla Lok Sabha seats witnessed record-breaking turnout on May 13 and 20, respectively, as voters put behind separatist-sponsored boycott calls of the past.

While the Srinagar constituency recorded nearly 38 per cent polling -- its second-highest in the past three decades -- Baramulla registered its all-time high voter turnout of 58.17 per cent.

Spread across 18 assembly segments - seven in Anantnag district, four in Rajouri, three each in Kulgam and Poonch and one in Shopian - the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency is witnessing a high-pitched campaign with leaders such as National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, his son Omar, Mehbooba Mufti, DPAP chairman Gulam Nabi Azad and Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari making all-out efforts to garner support.

Officials said there has been just one untoward incident so far that happened during an election rally of the National Conference in which three of its workers suffered injuries in a knife attack in the Mendhar area of Poonch on Sunday.

They said a total of 2,338 polling stations, 2,113 in rural areas and 225 in urban areas, are being set up across the constituency. Campaigning is scheduled to end Thursday evening.

Multi-layered security arrangements have been put in place in the poll-bound districts, the officials said, expressing confidence that the trend of record-breaking voting set by central and north Kashmir will continue in south Kashmir as well.

Choice for people...

COVID-19 crisis, with the prime minister of the day, the government of the day taking a "serious, sober view" of the challenge.

Jaishankar also cited the example of the eastern Ladakh situation that started four years ago and the way India responded to it.

"While Covid was going on, China decided, end of April, early May, to move a very, very large number of forces to our border. This was in violation of multiple agreements that we were not supposed to bring such a large number of forces the border. And, we were not supposed to bring weapons to the border. Now at that time, April-May, do remember, we were all under a lockdown.

"All of you were sitting in your houses. Nothing was moving in the streets, the airlines were shut down, the railways, the roads. In this situation, Prime Minister Modi took the decision that we will send our forces, I don't care what we have to do, they are coming, we will be there, right there....," he said.

The Union minister, a former foreign secretary who has previously been India's envoy in Beijing, termed the China situation back in 2020 a "crisis within a crisis", as it happened when the lockdown was at its peak.

"In this crisis, to have someone determined and resolute saying no, every part of the system has to do, whatever it has to do, but those multiple tens of thousands of troops with their tanks, artillery, whatever they have to do, will be out there, because there will be no compromise in the defence of India. That to me was also an experience. And, I asked myself that time, had there been someone less resolute...someone less nationalistic, someone less clear in their definition, in their response to our national security needs, what would have happened," Jaishankar added.

He said there is one thing which people often say to him, that "governments change but foreign policy doesn't change".

"All foreign ministers have to hear this. It's like we don't count. We are doing it on auto-pilot. And, I tell people...it's actually not true. The sharpest example I can give you... It matters when I say, it matters who is in power; it matters what is their gut instinct, what is their belief," he said, adding, "look at our response to 26/11 (terror attack) in Mumbai and look at out our response to Uri and Balakot".

He said he thought that nothing could tell one "more clearly, more sharply", because at the end of the day, the armed forces are the same, the bureaucracy is the same, the intelligence is the same.

Something as big as 26/11 happened "without a strong response" on our side, he said, adding, that in "many ways led to a feeling that this country can be repeatedly punched and pushed, something happens and they will keep absorbing it and they will keep reacting to it, they will protest and the world will say yes, yes, very bad...and life will go on".

"Now, Uri and Balakot, was meant to demonstrate that no, life will not go on, and that there will be a price," the minister added.

"Don't think that because you have done something... and run away to that side, you are safe there, you will not be safe there. You will not be safe across the Line of Control and you will not be safe across the International Border. So, there was a very clear direct message out there, and I think the people to whom that message was intended to be sent, hopefully got it," he said.

During the interactive session, Jaishankar was also asked about India's bid for a permanent seat in the UNSC.

"My sense is things are moving in a positive direction. There will be people who will resist it. Because everybody competes, nobody wants anybody else to get ahead. But if you ask me a sense, which way is it moving, I think it is moving favourably, I think more and more countries recognise today what a strong case India has and more and more countries accept the UN itself needs to be reformed, there is no Africa, no Latin America there, very few developing countries out there, I think that also is a fact," he said.

"So, I feel as part of a Viksit Bharat.. the Viksit Bharat will have many, many faces, and many many expressions, and UN Security Council will be one of them," he added.

UNSC has 15 members. There are five permanent members -- China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US, and 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly (with end of term year).

"...As a nation, we must grow for today and leapfrog for tomorrow to realize our goals and aspirations," Jaishankar later posted on X.

In his address, he also said, "So, I tell people that and for those of us who live in Delhi, many of whom will be pressing a button in the next few days, and the button is not just for the next five years, that button is for Viksit Bharat. So, please keep that very much in your mind."

Will uplift, empower...

are given the opportunities and resources they deserve to improve their quality of life," he said.

Azad condemned a senior leader from the National Conference (NC) for defaming the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities by accusing them of accepting money to cast votes.

"The Gujjar and Bakerwal communities have always upheld their principles and integrity. They have faced bullets but never sold their soul for votes," he asserted.

Azad also slammed the regional parties for using religion to get votes, saying, "We must not involve religion in politics. Our focus should be on selecting leaders who can raise the voice of the people in parliament".

Azad said that his return to 'state' politics is driven by his dedication to the welfare of the underprivileged, particularly the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities.

Azad stated, "I have always prioritised the needs of the poor and marginalised.

During my previous tenure, I ensured the distribution of free land to the poor; especially benefiting the Gujjar and Bakerwal communities. Unfortunately, the current government has reversed these gains and taken back the land from these deserving people."

Azad further announced his intention to reinstate the Roshni Scheme if given the mandate to form the government.

The Roshni Scheme, which was originally introduced to provide land ownership rights to the underprivileged, will be a key focus of Azad's agenda.

Referring to the recent government actions, he pointed out that his party was at the forefront of resisting the land eviction orders.

"It was only our party that stood up against the unjust land eviction orders. We protested and successfully halted the use of bulldozers against the poor," he asserted.

He pledged to bring back the Roshani Scheme to protect the rights of the poor and reiterated his commitment to creating a just and equitable society in Jammu & Kashmir.

Azad said that his party will introduce a comprehensive land and job protection law for Jammu and Kashmir. This law aims to safeguard the rights of the local population by restricting outsiders from applying for jobs and purchasing land in the region.

He said, "Our property and our jobs should be reserved for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. There is no justification for outsiders to come and take our share. Such protective laws exist in many states across India. Why should Jammu and Kashmir be treated any differently?"

Among others present on the occasion included Mohd Amin Bhatt Provincial President, Salman Nizami Chief Spokesperson, Zanir Ahmed Distt President and others.

National security of...

been granted by the high court. However it is equally well settled that if such order of granting bail is found to be illegal and perverse, it must be set aside, it said.

"This court has often interpreted the counter terrorism enactments to strike a balance between the civil liberties of the accused, human rights of the victims and compelling interest of the state," the bench said.

"It cannot be denied that national security is always of paramount importance and any act in aid to any terrorist act - violent or non-violent is liable to be restricted," it said.

The bench said the UAPA was one of those Acts that have been enacted to provide for effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations, and to deal with terrorist activities, as also to impose reasonable restrictions on the civil liberties of persons in the interest of sovereignty and integrity of India.

It said there was sufficient material in the form of statements of witnesses and other incriminating evidence in the form of digital devices, books, photographs etc collected during the investigation and relied upon by the NIA to form an opinion that there were reasonable grounds for believing that accusations against the accused were prima facie true.

"Considering the nature and gravity of the alleged offences and considering their criminal antecedents, in our opinion high court should not have taken a lenient view, more particularly when there was sufficient material to show their prima facie involvement in the alleged offences under the UAPA," the bench said.

"In the instant case, we are satisfied from the charge sheet as also the other material/documents relied upon by the appellant (NIA) that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusations against the respondents are prima facie true and that the mandate contained in the proviso to section 43(D)(5) would be applicable for not releasing the respondents on bail," it said.

While setting aside the high court verdict, the top court said these eight accused shall forthwith surrender themselves before the NIA.

Noting that charge sheet has already been filed before the trial court, the bench directed that the special court shall proceed with the trial as expeditiously as possible and in accordance with law, without being influenced by any of the observations made by the apex court in this order.

It noted that the eight accused -- Barakathullah, Idris, Mohamed Abuthahir, Khalid Mohammed, Syed Ishaq, Khaja Mohaideen, Yasar Arafath and Fayaz Ahmed -- were arrested on September 22, 2022 and were in custody hardly for 1.5 years.

On October 20 last year, the apex court had posted the NIA's plea challenging the high court order for hearing advocate Rajat Nair, appearing for the anti-terror agency, mentioned it for urgent listing.

In its plea, the NIA had claimed that the PFI is a fundamentalist Islamic organisation and it was formed only to achieve the "dangerous goal" of establishing Muslim rule in India governed by Sharia law.

It had said an FIR was registered against the alleged office bearers, members and cadres of the PFI, which had been spreading the extremist ideology across Tamil Nadu after establishing its state headquarters at Purasaiyakkam in Chennai and offices in various districts of the state through their frontal organisations.

"It is respectfully submitted that the leaders/cadres of PFI had formed the organisation only to achieve a dangerous goal of 'Vision India 2047', that is to make this country ruled by Muslims as per sharia law," it had said.

Traffic resumed on...

Commuters are advised to follow lane discipline to avoid congestion.

The highway was closed on Tuesday for unspecified reasons, though sources indicated it was for repair and maintenance work.

Meanwhile, the Mughal Road and Bhaderwah-Chamba Road are open for traffic.

The traffic police official also said that there was slow movement on the highway due to the breakdown of five heavy motor vehicles, movement of 10 nomadic flocks and single-lane traffic at several points, including Dalwas, Mehar, Panthyal, Magerkote, Nachlana, Gangroo, and Shalgari.

Passengers and operators are advised to travel during daylight hours to avoid inconvenience due to the nomadic movement towards the Kashmir Valley and the risk of shooting stones between Ramban and Banihal.

‘Should our Govt...

work. During the Congress' 55-year rule, the ED, CBI had seized just Rs 32 lakh in corruption matters," he said.

But nearly Rs 22,000 crore cash has been seized and property worth Rs 1 lakh crore has been forfeited in the last 10 years, Singh said referring to action taken in the Modi government.

"Should we not act against corruption...but they are raising fingers at this too," he said.

Singh recalled the Emergency period and said how people were put in jails.

"I was 24-year-old then and I was jailed for two-and-half months in Mirzapur and then transferred to Naini central jail. We were in jail for 18 months. They had murdered democracy.

"And when my mother died after suffering brain hemorrhage, they did not even give me parole and I did not even petition for that. Because I don't believe in filing pleas, I believe in fighting the battle," he said.

At the Karnal rally, where he campaigned in favour of BJP candidate and former chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Singh said that the BJP in its election manifesto has promised to implement 'one nation, one election'.

This work should have been done earlier, he said while taking on the previous Congress government.

"The Congress and other opposition parties now say how will this be done. If anyone has capacity to make impossible possible, it is the BJP," said Singh.

Singh also alleged that the AAP and the Congress betrayed Anna Hazare and Mahatma Gandhi.

The AAP leaders had once said they would not form any political party, but they did and betrayed their "margdarshak" Anna Hazare, he said.

Singh said that after Independence, Mahatma Gandhi had said the aim of country's freedom had been achieved, and the Congress should be dissolved.

The AAP did not listen to what Anna Hazare said and the Congress did not listen to "Bapu" (Mahatma Gandhi), the defence minister said.

Singh also referred to the alleged assault on AAP MP Swati Maliwal in Kejrival's residence and the arrest of Kejrival's aide Bibhav Kumar in the case.

"She is their Rajya Sabha MP. She was badly beaten, her hair was pulled. But he (Kejrival) is not speaking a word about him (Bibhav)," Singh said.

Attacking the Congress, he said they ruled the country for nearly 55 years, but failed to alleviate poverty.

From Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi to Manmohan Singh, they talked of alleviating poverty, but it did not happen, he said.

First time in independent India, it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who brought 25 crore Indians out of poverty, he said.

The way India is moving ahead, it will become a super power in times to come, said Singh.

Even Pakistani leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that 'India is going to become a superpower, while we (Pak) are begging to avoid bankruptcy', the defence minister said.

"If we are aiming to become a superpower, it is not to occupy any territory, not to

attack a country, but for the world's welfare. Our saints always treated the whole world as one family," he said.

He also said that what the BJP promises it fulfils that as he spoke of scrapping of Article 370 and bringing a law against 'triple talaq'.

He also said the dream of millions of "Ram bhakts" was fulfilled with the construction of a grand Lord Ram temple in Ayodhya.

He also said that corruption was rampant during the previous Congress-led UPA government.

However, be it Atal Bihari Vajpayee or Modi government, not even one minister has been accused of corruption, he said.

"They (opposition) say if Modi gets more than 400 seats, democracy will be in danger. People now are politically aware, no one can befool them," Singh said.

He praised Khattar for running a transparent administration in Haryana when he was the chief minister.

Voting for all 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana will take place in the sixth phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections on May 25.

CJ administers oath...

attended by a Former Judge of High Court, Advocate General, Assistant Solicitor General of India, Jammu, Director General of Police, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Secretary to Government, Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Principal District Judge Jammu, members of various Bars, other officers of civil and police administration besides officers and staff of the Registry.

Property of LeT...

to join the ranks of terrorists, the spokesperson said.

Continuing its crackdown on the terror ecosystem, police attached Sheikh's property, including a plot of land and a house.

This action became inevitable in view of his continuous involvement in terrorism and spoiling the career of poor, innocent youth of the area, the spokesperson added.

Two more Govt...

of Mohammad Sidiq Khan, resident of Hari Ganiwan working as CPW in GHSS Hari Ganiwan is hereby disengaged from the service with immediate effect as per the direction received from Nodal Officer MCC Ganderbal.

In another order, Shabir Ahmad Rather, sin of Mohammad Sidiq Rather, resident of Kangan, working as CPW in GHSS Kangan is also disengaged from the service with immediate effect for violation of Model Code of Conduct.

Pertinent to mention, both the employees were actively participating in election campaigns of Political Party in violation of the Model Code of Conduct.

PWD AEE Angrez Singh re-instated; period of suspension treated on duty

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: The government reinstated the Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE), Maira Mandrian, PW(R&B) Division. Akhnoor, Angrez Singh.

"Er Angrez Singh, Incharge Assistant Executive Engineer, Sub-Division Maira Mandrian, PW(R&B) Division, Akhnoor, who was placed under suspension vide Government Order No-464-PW(R&B) of 2023 dated November 16, 2023, is reinstated with immediate effect. The period of his suspension with effect from November 16, 2023 to the date of issuance of this order; shall be treated as the period spent on duty," reads an order issued by Bhupinder Kumar, Secretary Jammu and Kashmir Public Works (R&B) Department.

"Er: Angrez Singh, Incharge Assistant Executive Engineer is also warned to remain careful in future and to act with responsibility in the conduct of official business particularly while delivering information to the higher authorities in the Department," it added.

CEO presides over mega SVEEP program at Aharbal

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KULGAM: In an effort to encourage and inspire eligible electorates to exercise their right to vote, a mega Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) program was held on Wednesday at Aharbal, Kulgam.

The event was presided over by Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) J&K, P.K.Pole.

The event featured a multitude of activities aimed at fostering voter awareness, including folk music, a horse rally and sports activities. These initiatives were designed to create a vibrant and engaging atmosphere to highlight the importance of voting.

District Election Officer/Deputy Commissioner Kulgam, Athar Aamir Khan, State Nodal Officer SVEEP, Akthar Qazi, State Media Nodal officer, Sapna Kotwal, Assistant Returning Officer, D.H.Pora, Bashir Ul Hassan, Nodal Officer SVEEP, Nazia Hassan, Chief Education Officer, District Youth Services and Sports Officer, Tehsildar and other officers besides the public attended the programme.

Addressing on the occasion, the CEO urged upon the people to come out in large numbers to vote on May 25th, the day of polling in the district. He emphasized the importance of voter participation in the democratic process and encouraged attendees to act as ambassadors for the cause, spreading the message of civic duty and participation.

The District Election Officer highlighted the objective of the program, stating that it aimed at to instill a sense of civic duty and enthusiasm among the participants while raising awareness about the significance of voting.

This SVEEP program at Aharbal underscores the commitment of the Election Commission and district authorities to ensure high voter turnout and informed participation in the electoral process.

Omar questions PDP's allegiance to INDIA bloc, accuses Mufti of targeting only NC not BJP

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PAHALGAM : Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah has criticised the PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, questioning her allegiance to the INDIA bloc and the PAGD, and alleging she never campaigned against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), solely targeting his National Conference.

Reiterating the unity of the Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD) and its joint efforts during elections, Abdullah said the People's Democratic Party's decision to distance itself from the grouping was driven by self-interest rather than any ideological issue.

"There was a method that they did. As far as the PAGD is concerned, the PAGD is intact. The PAGD fought this election together; whether it was the Awami National Conference, CPI(M) and the NC, it was only the PDP that moved away," the NC vice president told PTI.

The PAGD was formed by six parties which also included the CPI and Sajad Lone's People's Conference. However, Lone's party moved away after defeat in the local body elections.

Abdullah, who kickstarted the final round of campaign in Anantnag-Rajouri seat, questioned the PDP's stance on the BJP, highlighting the absence of any active canvassing by Mehbooba Mufti in favour of the Congress or the INDIA bloc, and against the BJP in places like Udhampur and Jammu.

"She didn't campaign against the BJP in Udhampur, nor did she campaign in Jammu. So how can she claim to be part of the INDIA bloc? How can she claim to be against the BJP? She is only against the NC, she is not against the BJP," Abdullah said.

The Anantnag-Rajouri seat goes to poll in the sixth phase on May 25.

Abdullah accused the PDP of fostering animosity against the NC, saying the party had been consistently criticising the NC for the past two years.

Without directly naming the PDP's Srinagar Lok Sabha candidate Wahid Para, Abdullah pointed out that as he resumed political activities after being released from jail, his initial speeches were aimed against the National Conference, indicating a deliberate PDP strategy.

"So clearly, the PDP did that by design. There was a method that they did...For the PDP, this alliance was not about ideology, it was self-interest. They wanted a seat from the NC which they did not get. For us and for other constituents of PAGD even INDIA bloc, this was ideological.