

BJP seeks Mir's removal, Cong rejects

NEW DELHI, Apr 15: The BJP today demanded the sacking of Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief Ghulam Ahmad Mir, claiming that he was seen in a video terming the police probe in the Kathua rape-and-murder case motivated and defending the public protests against it.

Citing the BJP's decision to remove two of its Jammu and Kashmir Ministers, who had joined the public protests against the probe, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar wondered if Congress president Rahul Gandhi would only point fingers at others but maintain silence on the comments of his party's Jammu and Kashmir

Trial in Kathua case to begin today

JAMMU, Apr 15: The trial in the gruesome Kathua rape and murder case begin tomorrow against eight accused who allegedly held an 8-year-old girl in captivity in a small village temple in Kathua district for a week in January this year during which she was kept sedated and sexually assaulted before being bludgeoned to death.

The accused include a juvenile.

The Chief Judicial Magistrate of Kathua will be committing one of the charge sheets, in which seven people have been named, to the sessions court for trial as mandated under the law. The Chief

Conspirator's family for CBI probe

RASSANA (KATHUA), Apr 15:

The family members of Sanji Ram, the alleged conspirator of the Kathua rape and murder case, have said that he should be hanged publicly but only if a CBI probe into the case finds him guilty.

The family members also criticised the national media for portraying their agitation for a CBI probe into the case as "propaganda" and "pro-culprits", and said the scribes were "delivering judgments without investigation".

Huddled together under a tree in a nondescript hamlet in their village in Jammu and

Man shot at by militants

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Apr 15: A man was shot at by militants at Pinjora area of South Kashmir's Shopian district this evening.

Militants abducted one Kifayat Ahmad Mir son of Bashir Ahmad Mir of village Moolu Pinjora this evening.

He was shot at in leg and let off by the militants. He was immediately shifted to nearby hospital where from he was referred to Srinagar hospital for specialised treatment. His condition is said to be stable.

A police spokesman said: "Terrorists abducted a young man Kifayat Bashir Mir son of Bashir Ahmad, resident of

CM accepts resignations of Lal, Ganga; forwards them to Guv

Ministry strength down to 22

Excelsior Correspondent
JAMMU, Apr 15: Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti today accepted resignations of two BJP Ministers—Choudhary Lal Singh and Chander Prakash Ganga—and forwarded them to Governor NN Vohra for acceptance, reducing strength of the Council of Ministers to 22.

Official sources told the Excelsior that resignations of Forests Minister Choudhary Lal Singh and Industry and Commerce Minister Chander Prakash Ganga, the BJP MLAs from Basohli and Vijaypur respectively, have been accepted by the Chief Minister and forwarded to the Raj Bhawan for acceptance.

The Raj Bhawan could put its seal on the resignations tomorrow as today was Sunday, they said, adding it was a mere formality now.

The two Ministers had submitted their resignations to BJP president Sat Sharma on Friday, who had forwarded them to the

Chief Minister yesterday after the Legislature Party meeting of the BJP, chaired by Ram Madhav, national general secretary and party's pointman on Jammu and Kashmir.

The Ministers had resigned following controversy generated from some quarters on their participation in a rally at Hiranagar on March 1 supporting demand of the people of Rassana in Hiranagar tehsil of Kathua district for Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) probe into the rape-cum-murder of a minor Bakerwal girl.

Despite resignations, Lal Singh and Ganga continued to support the demand for CBI inquiry into the Rassana incident saying there was nothing wrong in their demand.

Meanwhile, strength of Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti led Council of Ministers has come down to 22 with the acceptance of resignations of Lal Singh and Chander Prakash Ganga.

As per Jammu and Kashmir's special Constitutional position,

the Government can have maximum of 25 Ministers including the Chief Minister i.e. 20 per cent of the total strength of both Houses of Legislature (Assembly as well as Council) as against the provision of 15 per cent of the total strength of the Lower House at Centre and other States.

With the induction of Tassaduq Hussain Mufti and Javid Mustafa Mir as the Cabinet Ministers from the PDP in December 2017, the State had exhausted its quota of 25 Ministers.

However, Finance Minister Dr Haseeb Drabu was unceremoniously removed from the Cabinet over his Kashmir remarks last month by Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti reducing strength of the Ministry to 24. The Chief Minister had given additional charge of the Finance Ministry to Education Minister and her party colleague Altaf Ahmad Bukhari.

With the exit of two BJP

BCI asks Jammu, Kathua Bar bodies to call off strike

NEW DELHI, Apr 15:

The Bar Council of India (BCI) today asked the Jammu and Kathua Bar associations to call off their strike and decided to send a five-member team headed by a former High Court Chief Justice to investigate the alleged incident of misconduct on part of the lawyers there in connection with the Kathua rape-murder case.

BCI chairman and senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra told reporters that if any lawyer is found guilty, then the council will go to the extend of cancelling the legal practise licence.

"The BCI has decided to issue a direction and make an appeal to the Jammu High Court Bar Association and the Kathua Bar Association to call off their strike with immediate effect. We have made a request and issued a direction to them to convene an extra-ordinary meeting tomorrow to decide on the issue," he said.

The bar council's decision came after its general body meeting which was convened today in the backdrop of the Apex Court's notice to it.

The Supreme Court had

Overwhelming view in Jammu for CBI inquiry in Rassana case

PDP, NC conveniently ordered, favoured CBI probe in many cases

People up in arms against BJP for letting down Jammu

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, Apr 15: Persistent rejection of the demand for Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) probe into Rassana rape-cum-murder of an eight year old girl by the PDP-BJP coalition Government notwithstanding, there has been overwhelming perception among the people of Jammu that only a CBI probe can give justice to the minor and her family as there has been history of Jammu and Kashmir Police and Crime Branch failures in many prestigious cases prompting the judiciary to intervene and hand-over the cases to the Central investigating agency.

Even the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Opposition National Conference, which have been opposing, tooth and nail, the CBI probe demand into Rassana rape, obviously for political reasons, had been in forefront in raising such a demand for many

cases in Kashmir or themselves handing over the cases to the CBI when they were in power. Significantly, not only the

can bring out the facts in mysterious rape-cum-murder of little girl and give justice to her as well as her family, apart from

CBI probe in J&K cases

Following is list of some of the cases that were handed over to the CBI by NC and PDP when they were at the helm of affairs and by the Judiciary

- * Killing of 5 villagers at Patherbal in 2000
- * 2006 much-publicized Kashmir sex scandal
- * 2009 death of two girls at Shopian
- * 1998 case of 19 civilians' killing at Sailan, Surankote
- * Scam in Farooq Abdullah led Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association in 2015.
- * Custodial death of Rajneesh Sharma of Jammu, killed at Ram Munshi Bagh Police station, Srinagar in 2013.
- * Missing of 12 year old child of Vijaypur in 2016.
- * Missing of holy Quran from Srinagar museum in 2003. After 13 years of Crime Branch probe, the High Court had handed over the case to the CBI.
- * There were many other cases in which the successive Jammu and Kashmir Governments and Judiciary had ordered the CBI inquiries.

Hindus but number of Gujar and Bakerwals including some relatives of the victim were arrested and charged with rape the view that only a CBI probe

SAC puts question mark on implementation of around Rs 1800 cr worth schemes in J&K

RDD fails to give satisfactory information about CSS

Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, Apr 15: In a major embarrassment for the PDP-BJP Coalition Government, the State Accountability Commission (SAC) has put a big question mark on the implementation of around Rs 1800 crore worth Centrally Sponsored Schemes in rural development sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

Moreover, while observing that no mechanism is in place to constantly monitor progress of works under these schemes, the Commission has sought seven-point information along with the proof from the Commissioner/Secretary of the Rural Development Department within a period of four weeks before

Says no mechanism in place to monitor progress of works

passing further orders in the matter.

Reliable sources in the Rural Development Department told EXCELSIOR that in compliance to the previous orders, the Administrative Secretary of the department was supposed to appear before the Full Bench of the State Accountability Commission comprising Chairperson Justice B A Khan and Members Justice J P Singh and Justice Bashir A Kirmani.

However, on behalf of the Commissioner/Secretary, Additional Secretary of the Rural Development Department

caused appearance before the Commission few days back and explained the position in respect of six Centrally Sponsored Schemes being executed by the department.

These schemes are MGNREGA, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (G), Swachh Bharat Mission (G), National Rural Livelihood Mission, Integrated Watershed Management Programme and Rurban Mission.

As per the sources, the Additional Secretary apprised the Commission that under MGNREGA budget of Rs 1400

crore was allocated for 2017-18 and job cards were supplied to 12 lakh households, who have also been asked to open their bank accounts for receiving the monetary benefits.

The SAC was further informed that under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (Gramin) an amount of Rs 123 crore was allocated during 2017-18 and survey for identifying the beneficiaries was conducted by the Government of India under which 18,000 people were identified. Out of the allocated budget, an amount of Rs 68 crore was spent and remaining Rs 55 crore were lying in PFMS account. However, the Additional Secretary could not furnish the

(Contd on page 4 Col 3)

Farooq for Spl Assembly session

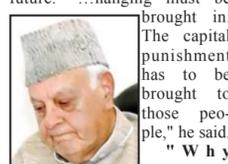
Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR, Apr 15: Member of Parliament and NC president Dr Farooq Abdullah today urged Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti to make a law in which hanging will serve punishment to those involved in child rape cases.

Abdullah's reaction was in reference to Kathua minor rape and murder case during a meeting of the Party's Provincial Committee for Kashmir Province at Party Headquarters, 'Nawa-e-Subha' in Srinagar today. "After all she was an eight year old girl. She is just like my daughter...thank God! today nation has waked up. And they have taken it very seriously. I hope justice will be done," said Farooq.

Abdullah said Mehbooba should call a Special Assembly session to bring a bill in Assembly which will be passed by the members so that these

crimes are not repeated in future. "...hanging must be brought in. The capital punishment has to be brought to those people," he said.



"What should we do now? Let her Government take a decision on this and call a special session of the Assembly just for this sake. And if a special session of Assembly is called, this bill will be passed. In future, such crimes will not take place," he said.

Abdullah said that nomadic girl's rape and murder was not an isolated, spontaneous crime but the manifestation of a deeply repugnant and repressive politics that hinges on the harassment, intimidation and disempowerment of the nomadic Gujar-Bakerwal communities.

"The hardworking, peaceful and harmonious Gujar Bakerwal communities have been at the receiving end of threats and intimidation ever since the present political dispensation came to power. Ministers of this Government openly threatened the Gujar Bakerwal community of dire repercussions and one such Minister went to the extent of reminding them of the horrors of the 1947 massacre. The Gujar Bakerwal communities have been hounded, targeted and intimidated for nearly three years now while PDP has remained a mute spectator. Had the PDP objected to this harassment and intimidation, perhaps things would not have come to this tragic pass. The Chief Minister's silence over repeated attempts to harass and threaten the Gujar Bakerwal communities emboldened these elements and the consequences are here

(Contd on page 4 Col 1)

Firm asked to wind up for failure to complete Jhelum dredging

Suhail Bhat

SRINAGAR, Apr 15: After facing criticism on the progress of work, the Department of Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) has asked the Kolkata based dredging firm to wind up operations here after it failed to meet the 31st March deadline.

After September 2014 devastating floods, to carry the first phase of dredging work on River Jhelum the government hired a Kolkata-based Reach Dredging Limited to clear the excessive siltation that had accumulated and drastically reduced the carrying-capacity of River Jhelum. However, the company has



A file image of dredging work being carried out in river Jhelum at Srinagar. —Excelsior/Shakeel

failed to complete the project on time and after missing several deadlines the Irrigation and Flood control has asked it to wind up its

operation here. The department claims that nearly 75 percent of the dredging is complete and

(Contd on page 4 Col 5)

Cong deliberately ignored far-flung areas: Dr Jitendra

Nishikant Khajuria

UKHRAL (RAMBAN), Apr 15: Holding the previous Governments and earlier elected representatives responsible for the lack of development in remote areas, Union Minister Dr Jitendra

*Watch video on www.excelsiornews.com

Singh today alleged that Congress deliberately ignored far-flung areas.

"Congress party and its representatives deliberately ignored development of far flung areas so that people of these belts remain backward and cut off from outer world for continuously using them as mere vote bank," he said while addressing a well attended public meeting at remote village Ukhral near

Pogul Paristan in Ramban district, here today.

Without naming Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Union Minister of State in PMO said that those who remained at authority at Centre for more than three decades, multiplied their fortunes but the people who voted them to power, were intentionally deprived from development and kept backward in respect of basic facilities of life.

"Contribution of those elected representatives of Congress party, which was in power both at Centre and State till 2014, can be gauged from the fact that the

remote hamlets were recently electrified and even first ever Post Office in certain area were also opened only after our party



Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh addressing a public meeting at Ukhral in Ramban on Sunday. —Excelsior/Rakesh

formed Government," said Dr Jitendra Singh, who represents Kathua-Udhampur-Doda Parliamentary constituency in the Lok Sabha.

Listing achievements of the

Modi Government, Dr Jitendra Singh sought to differentiate between previous Congress regimes and the

present BJP rule. "Instead of adopting pick and choose policy as was being practiced by previous regimes, the Modi Government is taking care of

(Contd on page 4 Col 1)

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INSIDE

- Pir Panchal as tourist destination ...Page 6
- Taliban, Haqqani thrive in Pakistan ...Page 3
- Civil society, Bar vow to continue agitation ...Page 3
- BJP castigates NC for its communal agenda ...Page 3
- Bali for equipping every hospital with modern healthcare facilities ...Page 5
- National media wrongly projected agitation of Bar: Women lawyers ...Page 5
- Young and old 'shine bright like a diamond' in India's eventful CWG campaign ...Page 10

WEATHER

JAMMU:

Possibility of rain/thundershowers

TEMPERATURE

Max: 34.6 Degree C

Min: 18.8 Degree C

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

RH-I (Morning): 52.0 per cent

RH-II (Evening): 29.0 per cent

Sunset on Monday: 07.02 p.m.

Sunrise on Tuesday: 06.01 a.m.

SRINAGAR:

Possibility of light rain/thundershowers

TEMPERATURE

Max: 24.9 Degree C

Min: 7.5 Degree C

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

RH-I (Morning): 58.0 per cent

RH-II (Evening): 24.0 per cent

LEH:

TEMPERATURE

Max: 16.8 Degree C

Min: 3.0 Degree C

7 years on, Pulwama DIET campus awaits completion

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Apr 15: Notwithstanding the tall claims of the Government to improve infrastructure in Education sector in the State, the new campus for the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) Pulwama, coming up in South Kashmir's Pampore town is far from completion, despite passing of 7 years.

With an aim to impart training to teachers across Pulwama District, the construction work of the campus was taken up in 2011. The project was handed over to Roads and Building Department (R&B) with an estimated cost of Rs 4.78 crores. However, there have been no headways in the project for last

two years owing to the lack of funds. "The construction work



Incomplete DIET complex in Pampore area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district. —Excelsior/Younis Khaliq

was going on until 2014 but after that, the project has been almost abandoned by the Government," a DIET official said.

He, however, alleged that unwillingness on the part of the

Government to complete the projects initiated by their predecessors was the main reason behind the abandonment of the

(Contd on page 4 Col 7)

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