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'Separatists playing with future of children'

Troops can cross LoC again if required to secure borders: HM

Army successfully handling infiltration: DM

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, Mar 17: Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh today declared that security forces can cross the Line of Control (LoC), if required to secure India's borders and said the Central Government wants to find out "permanent solution" to Kashmir problem. He described the children of Kashmir as "ours own" and said it was in this context that he had asked Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti to withdraw cases against first-time stone pelters.

**Watch video on www.excelsiornews.com*

Addressing TV18 Network's `Rising India Conclave' this morning in the Union capital, Rajnath charged Pakistan with trying to give political legitimacy to United Nations designated terrorist Hafiz Saeed by making him a politician and facilitating his decision to contest elections, which would give him access to Pakistan Parliament.

"Our security forces are protecting the borders very well. They are doing a great job inside. If required, they can cross the LoC to protect out territorial integrity. Our security forces have capability to do that. Don't take it lightly," he said in his address to the conclave followed by Question-Answer session.

Rajnath's statement assumed significance as it comes at a time when Indo-Pak troops were engaged in repeated skirmishes along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir. Indian Army had crossed LoC at four places in J&K in September 2016 in the aftermath of Uri attack and eliminated number of militants and Pakistani troops besides destroying the terror infrastructure.

Asserting that the BJP Government at Centre wants "permanent solution" to Kashmir problem, the Union Home Minister, without naming the separatists, charged them with playing with the future of Kashmir children.

"Some leaders (a reference towards the separatists) are playing with the future of Kashmir children. First these

(Contd on page 6 Col 3)

Omar, Naeem's war of words

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 17: War of words erupted between former Chief Minister and National Conference working president Omar Abdullah and Works Minister and PDP veteran Naeem Akhter after Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh's statement that he had asked Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti to release first-time stone pelters in Kashmir.

(Contd on page 6 Col 3)

SSP Shopian ambushed, escapes unhurt

5 arrested for killing cop

Fayaz Bukhari

SRINAGAR, Mar 17: Militants today ambushed the Senior Superintendent of Police Shopian, Sriram Ambarkar, in South Kashmir in which he escaped unhurt while police arrested 5 persons in the killing of security guard at Charar-e-Sharief shrine.

**Watch video on www.excelsiornews.com*

The SSP Shopian had a narrow escape when militants ambushed him at Hajipora area in South Kashmir district of Shopian.

Sources said that the SSP was on his way to 34-RR headquarters at Bihibagh in Kulgam district to attend a function there. He was travelling in a bullet proof car and was accompanied by escort vehicles when they were fired at indiscriminately by militants.

Bullets hit the vehicle of the SSP but he and his escort personnel escaped unhurt. His escort also fired at the militants but they fled taking the advantage of the topography.

Soon after the attack, Army and Special Operations Group (SOG) of Jammu and Kashmir Police cordoned off the area and launched searches to trace out the assailants in several neighbouring villages. However, militants had fled from the area.

Sources said that attack was carried out Lashkar-e-Toiba commander, Naved Jutt alias Abu Hanzulla and his two associates.

In the meantime, police arrested five persons in the killing of a cop who was guarding Charar-e-Sharief shrine. It may be mentioned that a group of militants fired upon Kultar Singh of JKAP 13th Battalion who was guarding Charar-e-Sharief shrine wherein he was severely injured and later succumbed to his injuries and militants snatched his rifle and fled away from the spot.

Police said that during the investigation it was revealed that one Umar Farooq resident of Pulwama along with five other accomplices - Shahid Ahmad,

(Contd on page 6 Col 3)

Pak to skip WTO meet in Delhi

ISLAMABAD, Mar 17:

Pakistan has decided to stay away from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meet in New Delhi next week in protest against alleged harassment of its diplomats in India.

India last month invited Pakistan Commerce Minister Pervez Malik to participate in the informal WTO Ministerial meeting scheduled to be held in New Delhi on March 19-20 and Islamabad had initially accepted the invitation.

(Contd on page 6 Col 5)

Navratra Greetings To All Our Readers.

'Peace must between India, Pakistan'

Kashmir problem will be solved: Farooq

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 17: National Conference president and former Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah today expressed confidence that the Kashmir problem will be solved, like many other problems of the world, but refused to say how and when it would be resolved.

Speaking at Zee TV's conclave this afternoon, Dr Abdullah quipped: "God knows when". He said this when asked to spell out as to how and when the problem will be solved.

"There is no problem in the world that can't be solved. Have trust and hope. The problem of Kashmir will also be solved," he said but added that till this problem is not resolved, there will be no peace between India and Pakistan.

Farooq said there were problems with Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka and now with Maldives.

"The problems with three neighbours have been addressed. The issue with Maldives will be resolved. Hopefully, Kashmir problem will also be solved," he asserted.

Reiterating that neither India can take back the part of Kashmir which is with Pakistan nor Pakistan can take back the part of Kashmir which is with India, Dr Abdullah said: "we shouldn't be under wrong impression. He, however, maintained that only talks will solve the issue of Kashmir.

"We have fought four wars, the last one being in Kargil but the Line of Control (LoC) is still the same. We won many areas during the wars but they all had to be restored," he recalled.

Farooq said when then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was heading to Lahore in Pakistan, he had given him the suggestion that let them keep that part of Kashmir and India will keep this part of Kashmir.

"On return, Vajpayee told me that Nawaz Sharief said this was

(Contd on page 6 Col 5)

4 years on, flood-damaged bridges yet to be rebuild in S Kashmir

Suhail Bhat

SRINAGAR, Mar 17: It is more than three years since major bridges of South Kashmir were washed away in September 2014 devastating floods but authorities are yet to reconstruct them leading to problems of commuting for thousands of people living in the area.

The restoration of the bridges has been going on at snail's pace in South Kashmir causing huge inconvenience to the people. Besides, as per contractors, the liabilities of the works executed are pending with the Government that affects the pace of work.

The construction work on all the major bridges including Rohmu Bridge, Trenz, Trisal, Batpora and Asthal Bridge is incomplete and thousands of people living in these areas have to take longer routes to reach their destination. "How long would the Government take to complete the bridges? I doubt whether the people would ever see the completion of these bridges in their lifetime," Nissar Ahmad, a local said.

An official at Jammu And Kashmir Projects Corporation said out of these bridges, two are funded by World Bank and because of their strict guidelines the construction work was delayed.

"It took us two years to complete all the papers work. This affected the pace of work. Since it was the first project of World Bank, it took us extra time," he said adding almost 20 percent of the construction work has been completed so far.

While divulging the details, he said the 300-meter bridge at Trenz is being constructed with an estimated cost of Rs 34.50 crores over Ranbir Ara and would connect Sheikhpora with Arihal. Rahmoo Bridge on Romshi Nallah which connects Pulwama with Budgam district via Charar-e-Sharief and Pakherpora is being constructed with an estimated cost of Rs 21.25 crores.

The locals of the area said that ever since the bridges were washed away in floods they have made repeated requests to the concerned authorities for their restoration but they are unmoved. "After overlooking the problems of the people for nearly two years the construction work on the bridge was started in August 2017," they said.

Deputy Manager JKPCC, Masood Ahmad, told Excelsior that they had only received 10 percent of the funding from the World Bank for one of the bridges and were yet to receive anything for other bridges. "With the 10% funding we can only clear 30% liability of the contractors. The pace of funds has dented the projects. Till now Corporation has been paying contractors money out of their own fund. The Romshi Bridge will be completed till March 2019 and the Trenz Bridge in December 2019 provided funds are released on time," he said.

In Asthal area of South Kashmir's Anantnag district, people lamented that in absence of proper connectivity; thousands of people living in Asthal village are forced to take a long detour to reach the district headquarters of Kulgam. "We are forced to take a longer route to reach our destination. It takes us double the time to reach to the district headquarters of

(Contd on page 6 Col 3)

Country fatigued under PM: Rahul

Modi's pre-poll promises were 'dramebaazi': Sonia

NEW DELHI, Mar 17:

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi today launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying his Government was "power-drunk" and the pre-poll promises of combating corruption and ensuring inclusive development were mere "dramebaazi".

In her address at the 84th Congress Plenary Session, she accused the Modi Government of using "all tricks in the trade" to wipe out the Congress and asserted that the party would never bow down.

She exhorted Congress workers to support new party chief Rahul Gandhi and be ready for any kind of sacrifice to strengthen the organisation.

Sonia Gandhi also asked the workers to free the country of "discrimination, vendetta politics and arrogance".

"We are exposing Prime Minister Modi and his colleagues' false claims, frauds and corruption with proof.

"People have now understood that the 2014 promises of 'sab ka saath, sab ka vikas' and 'na khaoonga, na khaane doonga' and his 'Mann ki Baat' on radio are only 'dramebaazi' (theatrics) and a trick to grab votes and electoral power," she said, referring to Modi's promises of inclusive development and corruption-free governance.

She claimed that the Congress was fighting a "tyrannical" Government and the people have begun to realise that the promises made by the BJP in 2014 were hollow

"In the last four years, this arrogant and power-drunk

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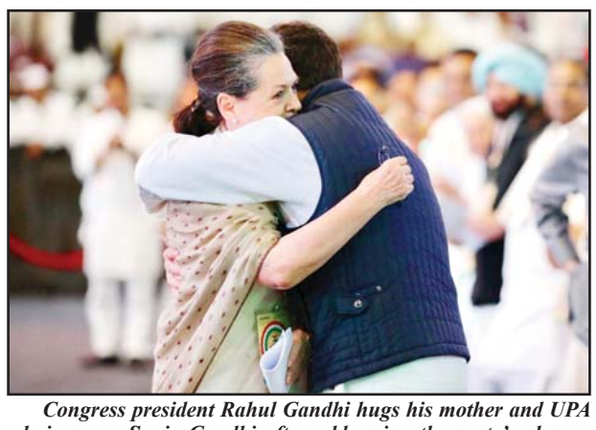


Congress president Rahul Gandhi hugs his mother and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi after addressing the party's plenary session, in New Delhi on Saturday. (UNI)

H&UDD to withhold promotion of 2 officers

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Mar 17: In a significant development in Rs 27 crore scam in J&K Housing Board, the Financial Commissioner Housing and Urban Development Department has informed the High Court that department will withhold promotions of two officers.

In the Action Taken Report (ATR) filed today pursuant to the directions of the Division Bench dated February 22, 2018, it has been mentioned that H&UDD has decided to impose a major penalty of withholding promotions of former Managing Director J&K Housing Board Ram Pal Sharma (presently attached with Housing and Urban

(Contd on page 6 Col 5)

Officers' panel fails to meet timeline for inquiry; erring officers remain unpunished

Embezzlement of funds meant for Pargwal Canal CAD Project

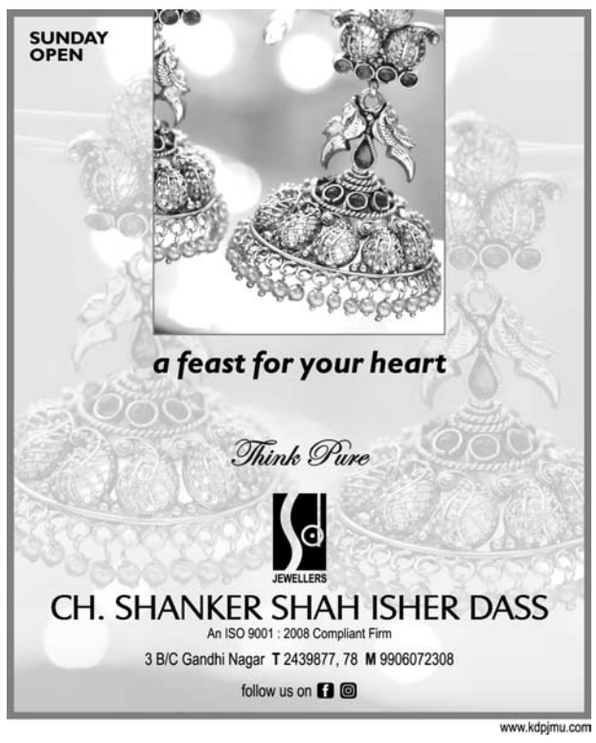
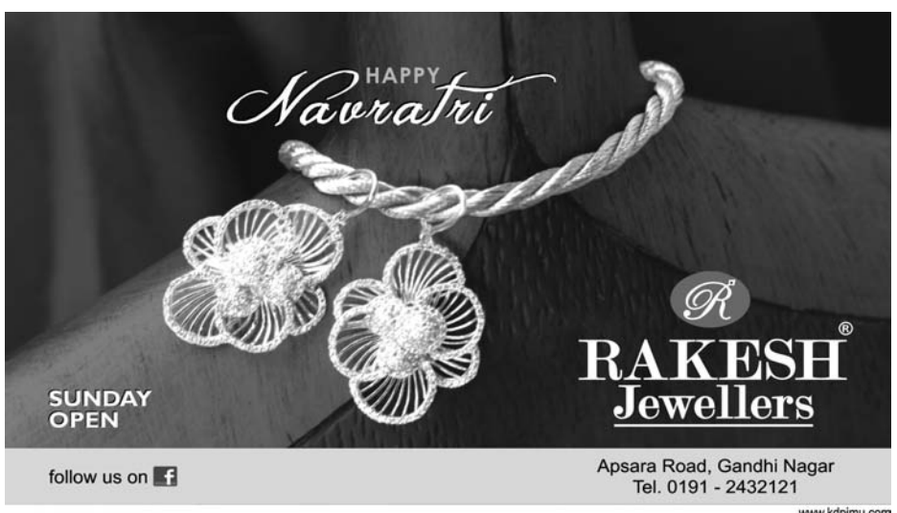
Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, Mar 17: Despite their clear-cut involvement in the embezzlement, loot and plunder of the funds meant for Pargwal Canal Command Area Development (CAD) Project, the erring officers have remained unpunished as a committee of senior officers has failed to meet the timeline for holding in-depth inquiry and making necessary recommendations to the Agriculture Production Department.

Official sources told EXCELSIOR that Agriculture Production Department received physical and financial progress ending June 2017 in respect of Pargwal Canal Command Area Development Project from Director Command Area Development Department vide communication No CADJ/Adm/2017-18/279 dated July 31, 2017 followed by letter dated September 20, 2017.

While going through the monthly progress report till June 2017 for the project, the Agriculture Production Department found that the Assistant Soil Conservation Officer Sarore had booked an expenditure of Rs 27.10 lakh within a period of one week of receiving funds.

As these funds were placed at the disposal of Assistant Soil Conservation Officer Sarore on June 13, 2017 by Project Officer SWM Command Area Development Jammu, the Agriculture Production Department while taking cognizance of un-usual high expenditure directed the Project Officer to submit report, sources said.

The Project Officer in his report submitted that it was not possible to take up new works with allotment of Rs 27.10 lakh because the executers of the project area were time and again approaching and pressing hard for clearance of their

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