

Cong leader launches UMEED, Centre sanctions Rs 750 cr NC-Cong alliance to be decided by AICC, Modi's appointment not a concern: Rahul

Fayaz Bukhari

BUDGAM, June 15: The vice president of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), Rahul Gandhi today said that his party's future alliance with the National Conference in the State will be decided by the party high command.

While interacting with the media persons on the sidelines of the launch of UMEED, Women's Empowerment Project, in the State at Central Kashmir district of Budgam, Rahul said: "These are the matters that are not for me to discuss. These are the matters which have to be discussed within the party. So far the coalition has a healthy constructive relationship with each other and they are so far working together in the State in coalition".

The Congress leader said that he will not share his personal views on the future alliance with National Conference in front of media. "As a party general secretary, I have a view on future coalition with the NC. I

will express my views in front of my party leadership. There are certain things which are personal to the organizations. I have also a view and I will present my viewpoint to my leadership and



AICC(I) vice president Rahul Gandhi and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at a function in Budgam on Saturday. Another pic on page 11.

not in front of media," he said. Rahul declined to comment on the issue of the revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from the

State and said that the revocation of the Act is between Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. "There is an ongoing discussion between

me to make any statement on the issue," he said. On change of Government in Pakistan, Rahul said that any change in the situation in State was not dependent on change of Government in Pakistan. "Frankly, the way I look at it is that the real change has to come from within. We cannot be dependent on what is going on in the rest of the world."

Rahul said that the Centre's focus was on finding ways to involve people of Kashmir in the progress of the country and ensuring job opportunities for the State's youth. "Our focus is on how we can involve the people of Kashmir, how we can involve them in Government at the local level, how we can ensure youngsters have jobs. Whether the leadership in Pakistan is good or bad is not in our hands," he said.

On the stalled dialogue process with separatists in Kashmir, the Congress leader said that the UPA Government has, over the years, trans-

formed the mood in Kashmir. "There is massive progress in Kashmir. There is a progress in the sentiment of the people, there is progress in the connectivity in Kashmir, there is progress in tourism. We are going to ensure that people of Kashmir get the development they deserve," he said.

Rahul said: "Kashmir is very important for me. Historically, I come from Kashmir. I would like to see active participation of people, at local level, especially women, to see a progressive Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

Rahul said that he wants real change and progress in the State. "I want youngsters to have jobs and empower the people here. I was to see the State as fastest growing in the country."

Rahul while distancing himself from the next Prime Ministerial Candidate of the Congress party, said that such type of questions should be asked to the Congress high command and not to him. "The party has given me the

(Contd on page 11 Col 1)



A view of Trikuta Hills amidst an overcast sky from Sidhra in Jammu on Saturday. -Excelsior/Rakesh

Petrol prices up by Rs 2

NEW DELHI, June 15:

Petrol price was today hiked by a steep Rs 2 a litre, the second increase in rates this month, as devaluation of rupee against US dollar made imports costlier.

The hike, which is effective from midnight tonight, is excluding local sales tax or VAT and actual increase for consumers will be higher.

(Contd on page 11 Col 4)

Rahul's visit to quake hit areas cancelled

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, June 15: Much awaited visit of AICC (I) vice president Rahul Gandhi to earthquake affected areas of Doda and Kishtwar was cancelled today in view of bad weather conditions in the hilly districts.

Rahul accompanied by Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Ghulam Nabi Azad reached Udhampur Air Force station at about 9.30 am.

However, due to adverse weather conditions, the pilots refused to fly Rahul to Doda and Kishtwar. He then flew to Budgam where he addressed 'UMEED' function along with other dignitaries

(Contd on page 11 Col 4)

Maken quits, rejig on Tuesday

NEW DELHI, June 15:

Ajay Maken suddenly resigned tonight as Minister for Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, setting the ball rolling for an organisational rejig in the Congress party and a reshuffle in the Union Cabinet which is likely to take place next Tuesday.

49-year-old Maken, a Delhi Congress leader, is expected to be assigned a position in the AICC, mostly probably as a general secretary.

The possibility of his being appointed as Delhi Congress chief was also being talked about.

Maken submitted his resignation as Union Minister for Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation and has expressed his desire to work for the party, highly placed sources said.

(Contd on page 11 Col 6)

Slapping case listed on June 27

Excelsior Correspondent

KISHTWAR, June 15: District and Sessions Judge Kishtwar today listed the much publicized case of MoS Home slapping KAS officer for further hearing on June 27.

Today, Chief Prosecuting Officer (CPO) appearing for the State and Advocate Zulker Nein Sheikh appearing for the KAS officer put their arguments on the criminal revision petition filed by the Home Department seeking nullification and stay on the verdict given by CJM Kishtwar.

It is pertinent to mention here that CJM Kishtwar had directed the SHO Police Station Kishtwar to register case in the case.

Mehbooba meets Governor

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, June 15: Opposition People's Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti today called on Governor N N Vohra and discussed various matters concerning the implementation of socio-economic development schemes and programmes in the State.

Mehbooba, who is also leader of the opposition in the State legislative assembly, called on Governor at Raj Bhavan and discussed issues relating to the interests of the State, an official spokesman said.

JD(U)-BJP set for split

PATNA, June 15:

The BJP and JD(U) appeared set for imminent parting of ways in Bihar tomorrow when Chief Minister Nitish Kumar meets his top party leaders to take a final call in the wake of Narendra Modi's elevation.

Further hints of the break-up in the 17-year-old alliance were given today by senior JD(U) leader Shivanand Tiwari who said the announcement of a split was a "mere formality".

As JD(U) chief Sharad Yadav arrived in Patna, the Chief

(Contd on page 11 Col 6)

NC chief's convoy trapped on Mughal Road

Excelsior Correspondent

MENDHAR, June 15: Envisioning a new era of good neighborly relations between India and Pakistan, National Conference (NC) patriarch and Union Minister of New and Renewable Energy, Dr Farooq Abdullah expressed the hope that newly elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif will hold dialogue with his Indian counterpart, Dr Manmohan Singh to strengthen the peace process.

Talking to reporters at the sidelines of a function here today, Dr Abdullah showed optimism that Mr Sharif will hold dialogue with Dr Singh to further the peace process in the region as dialogue is the only way out for furthering peace in the Sub Continent.

He said there should be peace on borders and the hostilities between the two neighboring countries should end once for all. He asked the people to pray for everlasting peace and prosperity of the militancy ravaged State.

As Dr Abdullah visited Mendhar via Mugal road from Srinagar this morning his convoy was trapped for 25 minutes at Peer Ki Gali as the road was blocked at two places at Poshina

and Peer Ki Gali due to shooting of stones from early morning to 11-30 am.

Later the HCC working on construction of the road and



Farooq addressing a public meeting at Mendhar on Saturday. -Excelsior/Nazki

police put its men and machinery in action to remove the mulba and make passage for Dr Abdullah's convoy to attend the public meeting at Mendhar.

Later addressing the public meeting at Mendhar, the NC president said that bonds of friendship between the two neighboring countries will help in solving the problems of

millions of people on either side of the border and Line of Control (LoC). "Jammu and Kashmir in particular will reap the benefits of the Indo-Pak friendship", he added amidst thunderous applause from public.

Dr Abdullah while referring to softening of borders in Europe said "this has transformed the socio-economic landscape of entire Europe and I don't see any reason why Indo-Pak region will not progress and prosper once there is mutual trust and strong bonding between the two nations".

He said the idea of opening the roads is not new, it dates back to the era of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah who strived for softening of borders for mitigating the problems of people and giving boost to trade and commerce. He recalled his meeting with former Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Pakistan and said that he wanted to know why Sher-e-Kashmir was so keen for opening of the Muzaffarabad road. "My reply to Mr Bhutto was that Sheikh Abdullah wanted the people of two countries to have wide interactions and to see for themselves change taking place in various sectors" he added

(Contd on page 11 Col 4)

Cong Ministers' performance under review, to form basis of mandate in next polls: Rahul

* Takes appraisal of development activities, other problems

Mohinder Verma

JAMMU, June 15: Vice-president of the All India Congress Committee (AICC), Rahul Gandhi today said that performance of the Congress Ministers in Jammu and Kashmir is being continuously monitored by the party high command and the same would form basis for giving mandate during the next Assembly elections in the State.

Mr Gandhi, while chairing Congress Ministers' meeting at Nehru Guest House at Srinagar soon after his arrival at summer capital of the State, observed that majority of the Congress Ministers were focusing only in their constituencies.

The meeting was attended by Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union Minister for Rural Development, Jai Ram Ramesh, AICC Incharge J&K Affairs, Mohan Prakash and Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee president, Prof Saif-ud-Din Soz, Minister for Medical Education and Youth Services, Taj Mohi-ud-Din, Minister for Urban Development, Nawang Rigin

Jora and Minister for R&B, Abdul Majid Wani could not attend the meeting as they were in their respective constituencies to take stock of the people's problems.

"It has been observed by the party high command that ever since the formation of the Coalition Government in Jammu and Kashmir majority of the party Ministers have been focusing in their constituencies only", party sources said quoting Mr Gandhi as having stated in the meeting.

Sources said, "the AICC vice-president told the party Ministers that instead of becoming constituency specific Ministers they should behave like Ministers for the entire State and focus on those areas where the party has the potential to emerge winners during the forthcoming elections in Jammu and Kashmir".

"Your performance is being closely watched by the party high command. You should keep in mind that mandate during the next Assembly elections would be given on the basis of your performance as such you should leave no stone unturned to come up to the expectations of the

party high command", sources said further quoting Mr Gandhi's remarks made in the meeting.

Mr Gandhi also directed them to apprise the people of the programme and policies of the Congress party as well as Centrally sponsored schemes so that common masses could come to know about the exemplary initiatives taken by the Congress-led UPA Government for their overall development, sources said.

He also took appraisal from the party Ministers about the status of implementation of Centrally sponsored schemes in the State and shortcomings if any so that corrective measures could be taken well in time to provide intended benefits to the people.

According to the sources, Jammu-based Ministers sought the intervention of the party high command for bringing an end to the discrimination with the region in certain quarters. "The Ministers stressed that coalition partner should be asked to immediately take steps for further strengthening of grass root level democratic institutions by setting up second and third tiers

(Contd on page 11 Col 5)

Security to be in place by June 20 Army to man heights; para-military, police other routes of yatra

Sanjeev Pargal

JAMMU, June 15: Army would man the heights of holy cave shrine of Shri Amarnath Ji and National Highway of Jammu-Srinagar besides the roads leading to Baltal and Nunwan, Pahalgam base camps while para-military forces and police would make security arrangements for the yatris at all other places falling along the yatra routes.

Official sources told the Excelsior that all security arrangements for the annual Amarnath pilgrimage, beginning this year on June 28, have been completed and would be totally in place on June 20 i.e. about a week ahead of the start of the yatra.

"About 50 per cent security arrangements for the yatra have already been made while the rest 50 per cent would be in place on or before June 20," sources said,

adding that senior security officers would take a final review of the arrangements to plug the loopholes, if any, before start of the yatra on June 28 simultaneously from the base camps of Baltal and Nunwan.

They said the Army would be deployed at the icy heights of holy cave shrine of Shri Amarnath Ji and some places on the twin tracks of Baltal and Chandanwari. The Army would also man sensitive points on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway and the roads leading from Highway to Nunwan, Pahalgam and Baltal.

Rest of the places including Jammu-Pathankote National Highway, Bhagwati Niwas Yatri base camp and forward base camps of Baltal and Nunwan and other roads and lodgment centres, langars etc would be manned jointly by para-military forces and

police, which have been deployed or were being deployed at these places in adequate numbers.

Sources said police authorities have mobilized the cops from existing strength by utilising reserve police forces from the battalions and Police Training Centres besides withdrawing some force from police stations of peaceful areas. The para-military forces have also been utilised mostly from existing resources within the State as the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had refused to give additional forces to the State in view of their deployment in Naxal hit areas.

First batch of the pilgrims would leave Bhagwati Niwas Yatri camp on June 27 while the yatris would start journey from Baltal and Nunwan base camps in the Kashmir Valley on June

(Contd on page 11 Col 1)

Topographic complexities put hurdles in LPG home delivery in towns

Nishikant Khajuria

JAMMU June 15: Topographic complexities are creating hurdles in hundred per cent coverage of the area under home delivery scheme for LPG distribution in notified town area committees in Jammu and Kashmir.

Notwithstanding the standing instructions of the Government and creation of additional infrastructure by the Natural Gas Agencies for home delivery, the exercise is facing practical problems in hilly towns of the State.

Owing to no road connectivity to some localities of notified town area committees, the Distribution Agencies are unable

to provide home delivery in these pockets, official sources informed the Excelsior.

More than 20 per cent area is still uncovered in Jammu as well as in Kashmir divisions of the State where May 30 was the deadline for covering all the notified town area committees under the LPG Home Delivery scheme, sources added.

Pertinent to mention that the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution Choudhary Mohd Ramzan had directed Oil and Natural Gas companies to ensure LPG home delivery in all towns of Jammu Kashmir and May 30 was set as deadline for the same. The service is already implemented successfully in the capital cities of

Jammu and Srinagar.

Even as the exercise in this regard, such as setting up required infrastructures and publicizing the contact number in print media of the respective gas agencies to facilitate the consumers, was initiated soon to meet the deadline, the topographic complexities of some hilly towns put hurdles in the complete success.

The distribution agencies are facing practical problems in hilly districts of Ramban, Doda, Poonch and Rajouri in Jammu province while similar difficulty is being faced in Kupwara, Gurez, Machail, Karnah and some other areas of Valley, sources explained.

When contacted, Director CAPD Jammu G S Chib and Director CAPD Kashmir M A Mir admitted that some pockets of the notified town area committees were still left uncovered owing to geographical conditions such as no road connectivity, narrow lanes and scattered population.

After both the capital cities, all the District headquarters have been covered but the problem is being faced in some pockets, particularly in hilly areas where home delivery is not possible due to no road connectivity, they said adding that there was no option other than to continue with the point delivery system for catering these areas.

(Contd on page 11 Col 4)

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INSIDE		WEATHER	
• No halt in development ...Page 6		JAMMU	
• Precarious stalemate		Possibility of light rain/thunder shower.	
• UPA has created record		TEMPERATURE	
• in corruption: BJP ...Page 3		Max: 27.6 Degree C	
• Contractors slam Government		Min: 21.6 Degree C	
• for not clearing dues ...Page 3		RELATIVE HUMIDITY	
• Shabir calls for further		Highest: 81.0 per cent	
• improvement in hospitals ...Page 5		Lowest: 72.0 per cent	
• Utilize STP funds for		Sunset on Sunday: 07.41 p.m.	
• development of tribal		Sunrise on Monday: 05.21 a.m.	
• areas: Altarf ...Page 5		KASHMIR	
• India crush Pakistan		Possibility of light rain/thunder shower.	
• by 8 wickets ...Page 10		TEMPERATURE	
		Max: 21.9 Degree C	
		Min: 15.8 Degree C	
		RELATIVE HUMIDITY	
		Highest: 88.0 per cent	
		Lowest: 59.0 per cent	

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