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### Omar rules out early Assembly polls, says NC-Cong on same page

strengthen the state's secular-democratic credentials and to ensure equitable inclusive development of all regions and sub-regions.

"They are also on the same page to fortify the bonds of amity and brotherhood among various sections of the society and to work for peace and all round development of the State," Omar said.

Some people want to weaken the bonds of coalition between the NC and the Congress for their vested interests, he said.

"Ill designs of such people will not succeed," Omar said.

The Chief Minister's remarks assume significance in the wake of criticism by the Congress over the nomination of four members to the Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council by the State Government without consulting the Coordination Committee.

The Chief Minister said the events and disturbances in 2008 affected the NC and the Congress equally because both parties champion the cause of democracy and unity among all regions and sections of the society.

He said both the two parties are working in tandem for the welfare and holistic development of the state.

Referring to attempts by some elements to flare-up communal tension in Kishtwar, Omar said forces behind such incidents are surviving on hatred.

He asked the people to maintain traditional brotherhood and isolate the forces dividing the society in the name of religion, creed, caste and colour.

On developmental programmes, Omar said projects started during the tenure of the then Chief Minister Gulam Nabi Azad have been completed by his government and new projects in all the sectors have been

### NC opts out of race, clears decks for Cong to form Kargil Council

the chairmanship of PCC (I) president Prof Saif-ud-Din Soz on Friday and Saturday besides the meeting of Co-ordination Committee demanding immediate cancellation of the nominations.

However, with NC opting out of the race, Deputy Commissioner, Kargil, Fida Hussain would invited Congress leader Aagar Ali Karblaie to form the Council after the Councilors were administered oath by Principal District and Sessions Judge Tahir Khurshid Raina on a date fixed by Ladakh Affairs Department of the Government, held by Abdul Rahim Rather.

The oath ceremony, earlier scheduled to be held yesterday, was cancelled at the last moment following pressure exerted by the Congress on withdrawal of nominations.

The National Conference had fielded Ladakh MP from Lok Sabha Gulam Hassan Khan in the Council in a bid to make him the CEC if the party secured majority. Khan as well as another strong NC leader Kachu Aagar Ali Khan had been elected to the Council.

Although National Conference and Congress are alliance partners in the State Government, they had contested the LAHDC Kargil polls against each other.

"We have decided that as Congress has won there, it will form the Council. It is the decision of the people there," Farooq said.

Abdullah said his party lost the elections due to "its own people" and it should accept the verdict.

"Our own people did wrong there and that is why we lost the elections. Now, we should accept that but do not worry, elections will come again," he added.

The Union Minister expressed hope that his party leader will "learn" from the mistakes and do better in the Assembly elections next year.

"They (party men) were flying high that we will win in Kargil, but we have not. So, we have to be cautious and not let it happen in the 2014 elections," Dr Abdullah said.

He said there were people who want the coalition partners

### Pak exploited geographical advantage in Balakote sector

were clearly visible from Balno and would have been targeted very easily. However, Indian troops refrained from targeting the civil areas and retaliated to Pakistan firing only after they were fired upon from across the LoC," sources said.

They added that Pakistan Army has also been using its geographical advantage to try and push the militants inside the Indian territory. However, alert Army troops have

launched to help develop the state in a comprehensive manner.

He also referred to initiatives taken by his government to empower people.

Asserting that Jammu and Kashmir has a total annual income of only Rs 6,500 crore from all sources, Omar said the present fiscal status of the State is grim.

"The present financial status of the State is grim. We have a total annual income of only Rs 6,500 crore from all sources," Omar said.

"While we have to pay Rs 13,500 crore as salaries and Rs 2,000 crore to pensioners, our electricity loss amounts to another Rs 2,000 crore annually," he said.

"In this situation, we have to remain totally dependent on central assistance," he said, thanking the UPA Government at the Centre for extending help to the State.

If there is a Government at the Centre which is unfriendly towards Jammu and Kashmir, the state would be in deep trouble, he said.

"In order to safeguard the economy and financial position of State, we have to focus on harnessing hydroelectric potential of our rivers," he said.

The Chief Minister related the State's financial autonomy with indigenous generation of surplus power and its export to neighbouring States.

"We have 20,000 MW capacity of generating hydroelectric power in the State and the coalition Government has already prepared a roadmap of producing 9,000 MW within the next few years," he said, adding that the initiative will not only help meet energy requirements of the State, but also export a good chunk of it to neighbouring states and utilise additional funds for the State's develop-

ment.

Omar said he wants to achieve financial autonomy of the State and relieve it from being constantly dependent on Central assistance for development purposes.

Omar said that implementation of Public Services Guarantee Act bringing about 70 services of 13 Departments under its ambit for time bound delivery, is an historic Act to give authority to people to demand listed public services within the prescribed time frame. He said any failure or delay on the part of Government officials in providing these services to the consumers makes them liable for fine and the consumer entitled for compensation.

The Chief Minister said that construction companies building various projects in the State in different areas including Ramban, Banihal and Chanderkote have been categorically directed to engage local youth in the work. He said that any complaint on this count would be seriously viewed and the erring companies taken to task accordingly.

However, Omar asked the youth to upgrade their skills by obtaining trainings in ITIs and Polytechnics established in their areas to snatch chances of excuse from these companies regarding non-availability of skilled youth in the area for specified works in the projects.

The meeting was also addressed by Deputy Chief Minister, Tara Chand, Minister of State for Power, Vigar Rasool, Legislators Abdul Gani Malik, Ashok Kumar and Khalid Najeeb Suherwordy.

The Chief Minister also received brief about the Baglihar Electro Hydro Project-II (BHEP-II) at a presentation meeting. He also inspected various units of BHEP-I.

er, supported Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi for the post of Prime Minister.

"Prime Minister (Manmohan Singh) has said it, it is good. He has seen him (Rahul), even I have seen him and I think he is good. He is young and a good choice and now he has to decide and bear the burden of this nation on his shoulders," Abdullah said.

Replying to a question on reports of a possible meeting between the Prime Minister and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Abdullah said talks between the two leaders would depend on "how the situation would be then".

"Pressures are always going to be there. The talks between the two Prime Ministers will depend on how the situation would be when the Prime Minister (Manmohan Singh) reaches America and how much relations between India and Pakistan would have improved by then, because political pressures will surely have an effect on this," he said.

Earlier, the Union Minister released four books on Kashmir including the English translation of the autobiography of his father and NC founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah - "The Blazing Chinar" at SKICC here.

Abdullah said the English translation of "The Blazing Chinar" is a step in the right direction and would provide an insight into the personality of Sheikh Abdullah.

"His personality has been misunderstood by people. There is one thinking about him in Delhi and another here. Hopefully, a time will come when people will understand him," the Union Minister said, adding there is a need to have a thorough research on the Sheikh's life so that both "good and bad" come in front of people.

Abdullah also appealed to the people to remain united against those who want to divide them on religious lines.

"There is a disaster in offing in the country. There are people who want to divide you on religious lines. But, you should not fight the battle of religion," he said.

ensure zero infiltration on the LoC," sources added.

Hostilities between India and Pakistan had escalated last month after the killing of five Indian Army soldiers in Sarla battalion area at Chakan-Da-Bagh in Poonch district. Over 50 ceasefire violations have been reported from Pakistan side during the past about one month on the LoC in Poonch and Rajouri districts and International Border (IB) in Jammu sector.

Steps have also been taken to

### Muzaffarnagar violence toll 21

Saxena said that adequate force has been deployed in the affected areas and incidents of violence have been reported from Sisauli, Shahpur, Fugna, Kalapur and Dhaurakala areas of Muzaffarnagar.

In one place Army had to resort to firing after someone opened fire at them, he said. Asked whether shoot at site orders have been given, Saxena said that directives have been issued to control the situation and for that if necessary firing can be done.

While curfew remained in force in Civil Lines, Kotwali and Nai Mandi town areas of the district with Army carrying out a flag march, violence has now spread to more rural areas.

ADG Kumar, who was escorted by a massive contingent of security personnel, claimed that only four police station areas were affected.

Officials said apart from Army, 10,000 Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel, 1300 CRPF men and 1200 Rapid Action Force personnel have been deployed.

In Kutba, where four people were killed, mobs set ablaze a religious place, several shops and vehicles. In Phugana village, cops said three members of a community had taken shelter in a police station, fearing violence.

The other badly affected villages were Shahpur, Bhuvana, Basi Kala.

Army's assistance has been sought by UP Government in nearby Shamli and Meerut district. Army sources said.

ADG Kumar said there was no information of riots spreading to other districts in the state includ-

### German Ambassador in dock over concert

tion or the celebrities. So this was just I want to say before, I leave," he added.

Nikolaus posed questioned over the handling of the event by German Embassy in New Delhi. "This was a beautiful effort and gesture from Zubin Mehta and all the artists and very unfortunate handling by German Embassy. It is the same message as Zubin did send yesterday. We want to play for everyone and why next time you not yesterday."

Nikolaus expressed his displeasure over excluding people of Kashmir. "People have been excluded. We do concerts and operas all around and everywhere it is open and even in Munich we make public view with no charging."

Nikolaus said that people were open for visit of the Orchestra. "I was here before the concert privately for one week. I met people in the mountains and everyone was open for the visit of Musicians," he said.

Nikolaus termed the behaviour of the Ambassador as undiplomatic. "And something struck me this morning when I read comments about the concert in the newspaper. One doctor said that what he could make of the concert was I found myself barricaded and I couldn't

### Capitation fee illegal: SC

fit of the student community and thereby serve the community, but for their own betterment," a bench of Justices K S Radhakrishnan and A K Sikri said.

The court said that quality of education has gone down in private colleges which are turning into students financing institutions. It said that Government agencies need to introspect on the issue to bring proper legislation.

"We cannot lose sight of the fact that these things are happening in our country irrespective of the constitutional pronouncements by this court in TMA Pai Foundation case that there shall not be any profiteering or acceptance of capitation fee etc.

"Central Government, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Central Bureau of Investigation or the Intelligence Wing have to take effective steps to undo such unethical practices or else self-financing institutions will turn to be students financing institutions," it said.

The court said that mushrooming of large number of medical, engineering, nursing and pharmaceutical colleges has definitely affected the quality of education in this country, especially in the medical field which call for serious introspection.

"Private medical educational institutions are always demanding more number of seats in their colleges even though many of them have no sufficient infrastructural facilities, clinical materials, faculty members, etc," it said.

Reports appear every now and then that many of the private institutions which are conducting medical colleges are demanding lakhs and sometimes crores of rupees for MBBS and for post-

ing sensitive Meerut district. "These are all rumours," he said.

District Magistrate Kausal Raj Sharma said 35 persons have been arrested in connection with the police.

However, authorities in Meerut have directed closure of all primary schools and degree colleges as a precautionary measure in view of the situation in Muzaffarnagar.

Army also staged flag march in Shamli and Kairana town near Muzaffarnagar. Tension prevailed in Agra following a clash between members of two communities in the Wazirpura locality of the city last evening.

Brick batting and firing occurred during the incident, officials said, adding police and PAC personnel have been posted as a precautionary measure with two persons being arrested in connection with the violence.

A high alert has been sounded in neighbouring Uttarakhnad also. Chief Secretary Subhash Kumar has asked the administration and the police to be vigilant especially in Dehradun, Haridwar and Udham Singh Nagar districts which border Uttar Pradesh.

Meanwhile, the Centre has sought a report from Uttar Pradesh Government on violence in Muzaffarnagar and directed it to take strong action to curb riots.

Union Home Ministry officials are in regular touch with the Uttar Pradesh Government and have assured it of all possible help to control the violence in the western UP district.

Officials sources said in Delhi the Centre has asked the State Government to take necessary steps to ensure that con-

reach the hospital. And this is such a contradiction to what we do and I think it is very un-diplomatic behaviour," he added.

Nikolaus rubbished the theories put forth by the Ambassador that people were kept out of the concert for security reasons. "I also want to stress on one point there is an argument about security. I would say, an English football match for hundred thousand people has more security problems. And this is not an argument that you have to select people for security reasons. We could have opened it for the public who wanted to come," he added.

Nikolaus said that musicians wanted participation of common people who were kept at a distance from the concert. "We love to be here and musicians love to play here and it was a beautiful concert and we would have loved people of Srinagar and Kashmiris see this concert."

However, Zubin Mehta told Excelsior that Kashmiris were part of the concert. "Nothing went wrong. There were 28 sponsors and they had to be invited and among others there were Kashmiris. They were chosen by the Jammu and Kashmir Government and German Embassy. There were 2700 and all 2700 could not be

elite", he added.

Zubin said that next time he will perform in a Stadium in Kashmir. "Next time I will perform for more Kashmiris may be in a stadium. When Shalimar Bagh was offered to us, how can I say no to such an incredible atmosphere?" he added.

When asked when he will perform in Kashmir, Zubin said: "Whenever Geelani (Syed Ali Shah Geelani) wants me. Basically I have no animosity, I am his friend. I can see their point of view but I don't want the whole world to see this infighting. Do something positive for Kashmir," he added.

"I say this thing everywhere. I said in Israel as well. I am against the settlements. We have to live together. I don't want to go to 1947. Mistakes have been made. But let us live together", Zubin told Excelsior.

"I know there was an opposition. I was hurt by some of the things they said without knowing all the details. I was hurt by the statements about this elite business. We had sponsors like Lufthansa and BMW and we had to provide them tickets and seats and I don't know how much others were given. I don't deal with that. I deal with music", said Zubin.

munal tension does not spread to other parts of the State.

If necessary, steps like preventive arrest and house arrest of those who may create trouble to disturb peace should be taken, the sources said.

Condemning the violence in Muzaffarnagar, Muslim clerics cautioned the people against "political conspiracies" aimed at dividing them on religious lines and appealed for peace and harmony in Uttar Pradesh.

"The Muzaffarnagar violence in condemnable.... For past few days, there were attempts to create tension in western UP.... The violence there is result of political game, which should be exposed," member, All India Muslim Personal Law Board, Maulana Khalid Rashid Farangi Mahli said, appealing to people to ensure that peace is restored.

All India Shia Personal Board spokesman Mulana Yasooob Abbas alleged that some "forces" were trying to create divide among religious groups for political gains.

Tension has been running high since three persons were killed in Kawal village on August 27. At least 11 persons, including a TV channel journalist and a photographer, were killed yesterday.

The violence had occurred as a meeting was being held in Naglabadhoth in defiance of prohibitory orders to demand withdrawal of cases registered in connection with August 27 violence in Kawal.

Authorities are trying to identify the people who had provoked the violence during the meeting, an official said. (PTI)

### BJP, RSS, VHP leaders meet

in the meeting, which was also attended by Modi.

The Gujarat Chief Minister left for Ahmedabad in the evening as he is due to open the Vibrant Gujarat Global Agriculture Summit tomorrow.

BJP sources said an announcement on the party's PM candidate could be made by September 20.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has already held a meeting with Advani and Swaraj in a bid to reach a consensus on Modi's name.

RSS was represented by General Secretary Suresh Bhaiyaji Joshi and Joint General Secretaries Suresh Soni and Dattatreya Hosbole while Praveen Togadia of VHP was also present.

The participants discussed the BJP's electoral strategy and a need was felt to galvanise young voters in the party's favour.

The conclave is discussing issues which are to be taken to the people from the block level upwards, sources said, adding it will also chalk out strategy for better coordination among Sangh organisations.

The Sangh outfits plan to carry out programmes to reach out to all sections—minorities, SC, OBCs, tribals, women and the young—in tandem.

Among other issues, the VHP's recent yatra in UP which was not allowed by the State Government and the incidents of communal riots causing polari-

sation of communities also came up for discussion.

"Faltering" economy and national security came up for discussion, and sources said that participants blamed "minority appeasement" policy of the UPA Government for its "soft stand on terror".

The ruling alliance suffered from policy paralysis, they said, adding that it did not take up the matter of Chinese incursions into India strongly and nor could it take a firm stand on the beheading of Indian soldiers by Pakistan army.

The issue of Defence Minister AK Antony's flip-flop on the beheading of soldiers was also discussed as he was "compelled" by BJP to take a firm stand against Pakistan.

BJP also forced Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to make a statement on the country's economy which is going through a slump amid a drastic fall in the rupee's worth, they noted.

The meeting blamed corruption, highlighted by the exposure of a number of scams, for the policy paralysis, sources said.

BJP Chief Ministers, Shiraj Singh Chauhan and Manohar Parrikar, who were expected to participate in the conclave, are not likely to turn up, they said.

BJP, RSS and the Sangh affiliate organisations are upbeat about the party's prospects in the next elections after two consecutive defeats in 2004 and 2009. (PTI)

## Romesh Bhandari no more, body cremated

NEW DELHI, Sept 8:

Former Foreign Secretary and ex-UP Governor Romesh Bhandari died in a hospital in Gurgaon at the age of 85 after protracted illness.

Bhandari, who was suffering from pancreatic cancer, breathed his last at Medanta Hospital in Gurgaon last night, family members said.

The mortal remains of the diplomat, who is survived by his wife and daughter, were consigned to flames at the Lodhi Road crematorium here this evening.

Family members, friends, admirers and leaders across the political spectrum bade him a tearful adieu.

Vice-President Hamid Ansari, Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, former Cabinet Minister Natwar Singh, Rajya Sabha MP Balbir Punj, former SP leader Amar Singh and other public figures attended the cremation.

Noted cardiovascular surgeon Naresh Trehan and his wife Madhu Trehan and former diplomat Salman Haider were also present.

Bhandari, who had served as the Lt Governor of Delhi apart from serving as the Governor of Tripura and Goa, was admitted to the Medanta Hospital three weeks ago.

"Bhandari was admitted on August 31. He had been ailing for some time. He was admitted in the ICU and died at 9:50 PM last night due to multi-organ

failure," a hospital spokesperson said.

Bhandari was the UP Governor in July 1996 when the State was under President's rule. He was the Foreign Secretary between 1985-86.

Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had appointed him as the chairman of the Congress party foreign cell after his retirement.

Born on March 29, 1928 in Lahore, he had joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1950 as the Vice-Consul at the consulate in New York.

Leaders attending the cremation paid glowing tributes to Bhandari describing him as an able administrator and a seasoned diplomat.

Ansari, who laid a wreath on his body, consoled the grieving family members.

"He was a lovely person and lived a long fulfilling life. My condolences to the family," the vice-president said.

Former diplomat Natwar Singh said "as a diplomat he climbed the highest position as a Foreign Secretary. He became the Lt Governor of Delhi and the Governor of Goa and UP. He lived a long and eventful life."

Condoling his death, the Delhi Chief Minister described him as an able administrator.

Amar Singh described Bhandari as a man "whose profession was diplomacy but whose trait was transparency. He lived a life that was large."

BJP MP Balbir Punj said "he lived an eventful life. I pray his soul may rest in peace." (PTI)

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Intelligence agency sounds 'alert' to check gold smuggling

NEW DELHI, Sept 8:

An alert has been sounded by a financial intelligence agency to all international airports and other transit points within the country to check smuggling of gold.

Citing recent structural changes in import duty of gold by the Finance Ministry, the Directorate General of Revenue Intelligence (DGR), which analyses and disseminates intelligence related to smuggling and customs duty evasion, has sent an alert to all international airports and customs check points to remain vigilant, official sources said.

They have been asked to intensify measures, including minutely scanning suspect passengers and commercial consignments to check smuggling of gold, the sources said.

The officials fear that the upcoming festive season, including Diwali and marriages solemnised between November and February, will push the demand for gold in the country, giving rise to its smuggling, they said.

There are 19 international airports in the country -- Srinagar, Amritsar, Jaipur, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Nagpur, Mumbai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Goa, Bengaluru, Chennai, Calicut, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Port Blair.

Officials have been asked to be alert at international transit

land routes, including Attari-Wagah border (Punjab) and Munabao Railway Station under Jodhpur (Rajasthan), among others, the sources said.

However, after noticing fall in prices of gold globally, the Finance Ministry had on September 2 reduced the import tariff value of the yellow metal to USD 458 per 10 grammes. Earlier on August 30, the tariff value -- base price on which the customs duty is determined to prevent under-invoicing -- of gold was increased to USD 461 from USD 432 per 10 grammes.

The prices of yellow metal had touched an all-time high of Rs 34,500 per 10 grams in last week of August in the national capital. At present, 10 grams of gold cost about Rs 31,000 in Delhi's bullion market.

India, the largest gold consumer in the world, imported 860 tonnes of gold in 2012. In the first four months of the current fiscal, the import rose by 87 per cent to 383 tonnes.

On August 13, the government had raised import duty on gold to 10 per cent from 8 per cent.

Sources said the customs department is also scanning credentials of suspect cargo coming from Gulf countries and other nations like Malaysia to foil any bid to smuggle the precious metal inside the country.

Of late, a number of passengers have been arrested from Delhi's international airport for allegedly trying to smuggle gold into the country. (PTI)