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Dr Jitendra dares Cong to announce in LS whether it would restore Art 370 in J&K

providing livelihood to the people as it was impossible for any dispensation to provide government employment to everyone.

On the law and order situation, Dr Singh said there was a drastic fall in the number of infiltrations attempts by terrorists in the last couple of years.

Only four such attempts were reported in the current financial year as compared to 489 before the Modi government came into power in 2014.

He said that the Modi Government has initiated the project of building a dam in the State to prevent the flow of river water that belongs to India under the Indus water treaty to Pakistan.

Initiating the debate, Congress leader Manish Tewari asserted that the law and order situation in Jammu and Kashmir was concerning and said the Government has not been able to achieve the objectives it set out while abrogating Article 370 there, and asked when its full Statehood will be restored.

Tewari said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated "extremely noble sentiments" in her budget speech for Jammu and Kashmir but "ground realities are different".

He said that when the Government abrogated Article 370 and divided Jammu and Kashmir into Union Territories Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, it put forward two arguments that with this, the Kashmir's merging with India will be emotionally integrated, and the development there would be expedited.

"Today 33 months have passed. Has the Government been successful in achieving those objectives? I would like to State that the answer is no," he said, arguing that the situation is more sensitive than it was in 2019.

Tewari cited figures of ceasefire violations to buttress his point, saying that in 2018, there were 2,936 ceasefire violations, in 2019 there were 3,279, in 2020 they increased to 5,100 and in 2021, despite a ceasefire agreement with Pakistan, the ceasefire violations were 664.

He compared that to the UPA Government era, citing that in 2013, the ceasefire violations remained less than 100.

"These figures are also important because since April 2020, the situation in Eastern Ladakh is extremely sensitive. Chinese army is occupying those lands which India considers its own. The situation has become more complex now since 2020 because of factors such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Imran Khan's visit to Moscow, the agreement between Russia and China on February 4. All this impacts the border areas of India," he said.

The Congress leader urged the Government to seriously consider the question that whether the steps taken in 2019 have strengthened India's position in the border areas or its concerns have increased.

Citing data that 70 per cent of those who joined militancy have

been neutralised, Tewari said what is concerning is over the involvement of locals in militancy going up.

He said that while Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah have stated in the House that a decision on Jammu and Kashmir's statehood will be taken soon, it has not been done.

"Now we are in March 2022, but I want to ask that when the Government will act on the statements of the Prime Minister and Home Minister and when will Jammu and Kashmir's statehood be restored," he asked.

Tewari also flagged concerns of political parties over the delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Underlining that the interest of Sikh minorities should be safeguarded, Tewari said they should be given representation in Legislature.

He also questioned the Government over investments coming to Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that there is negligible interest from investors outside the Union Territory.

He expressed concern over the law and order situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Participating in the debate, BJP's Jammu MP Jugal Kishore Sharma said power was misused under Article 370.

He alleged that there was "bribery" and people were in a disarray before the abrogation of Article 370.

Earlier, money was not used for development but for the benefit of certain families only, he said.

Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, employment is being generated and funds are made available for development projects, Sharma said.

He alleged that Jammu used to be discriminated against earlier but that had changed now.

National Conference MP Hasnain Masoodi said the abrogation of Article 370 was "unconstitutional", and the narrative of normalcy is being manufactured by the Union Government.

Masoodi questioned why the Government insisted on debating the budget on the same day as it was presented. He said the MPs did not get time to read the budget papers, a complaint made by several Opposition leaders.

"Abrogation of Article 370 was unconstitutional, how can Parliament act as the Assembly of a State... Can the Centre take Statehood away from a State? If so you can snatch away statehood from all States," Masoodi said.

He also said that a petition challenging the abrogation remains pending with the Supreme Court.

Masoodi also said that the exercise of delimitation was being used as a tool to further disempower the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The narrative of normalcy is wrong. You are deceiving the country," he said. Masoodi also said 73 per cent budget approved for J&K is for the Home department and maintaining law and order.

Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, BJP MP from Ladakh said that a new era has begun in Jammu and Kashmir after abrogation of Article 370.

Participating in the debate Jamyang said that earlier it used to be said that if Article 370 is abrogated

it will lead to "rivers of blood" in the erstwhile State.

Welcoming the budget, he said: "Under PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, after removing 370 a new era has begun in J&K."

He said with the removal of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, the entire country is now one entity, bound by a single constitution, which has been welcomed by the whole country.

He said more than 300 MPs have visited J&K and Ladakh since then and claimed that the security situation has improved to such an extent that people can visit Lal Chowk without any fear even at 9 pm.

"Now people say that after removing 370 PM Modi has worked to bring Jamhooriyat, Kashmiriyat and Insaniyat to the people," he said, adding that for the first time, the people of the hills and the disabled are able to get the benefit of reservation in jobs.

Jamyang said that under the previous Congress party Governments, Block Development Council elections and even Panchayati elections were not allowed.

"The two families wanted to run everything in the State," he said, referring to the Abdullah family and the Mufti family, who have been ruling the erstwhile State earlier.

"Now under PM Modi, true grassroots democracy is being brought about," he added. He recounted benefits of Government welfare schemes reaching every person in J&K, and how the Modi Government has started 50 new colleges and other educational institutions.

Raising questions about the Budget, he said the most worrisome number is GDP and debt ratio.

"Why there are so many minus... Smart city is a failed project," Sule said.

M S Reddy (YSRCP) said the Modi Government has undertaken a lot of development works in J&K.

Observing that tourism was thriving in Kashmir, he urged the people to visit the Union Territory.

Reddy also said that it was time for J&K to develop its own sources of revenue as the Centre cannot indefinitely fund development activities in the Union Territory.

JD (U) member Sunil Kumar Pintu said that the Budget will help in promoting the development of the union territory.

"Special package is required to promote tourism in J&K," he said, adding now both domestic and foreign investors are showing keenness to invest.

He also demanded that in the next year's Budget, provisions should be there for the development of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) also.

Danish Ali (BSP) also demanded the restoration of statehood to J&K.

"I would urge the Government to conduct elections... It should not be blocked by giving the excuse of delimitation," he said, asking how many Kashmiri Pandits have been rehabilitated by the Government after the abrogation of Article 370.

Bhartuhari Mahtab (BJD) suggested an adequate Budget be allocated for dealing with floods in J&K and the development of rural areas to promote tourism.

The problems in Jammu and Kashmir have got aggravated after the abrogation of Article 370, AIMM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said, insisting the measure failed to treat the disease (marz).

Participating in the debate, Owaisi wanted to know if the Modi government's economic policy has resulted in any gains for the people of the region after the abrogation of Article 370.

He said the measure has not treated the disease (marz), but aggravated the malaise.

"How Parliament of India can pass the budget of Jammu and Kashmir?" Owaisi asked.

Under-utilisation of funds by Ladakh: Parl Panel

Central Government to reserve 33 per cent posts at constable level for being filled by women in the CRPF and CISF to begin with and 14-15 per cent posts at constable level in border guarding forces -- the BSF, SSB and ITBP.

"The committee is disappointed to note that women constitute only 3.68 per cent of the total strength of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). The committee recommends that MHA should take concrete steps to increase the representation of women in CAPFs," the committee said in its report submitted to Rajya Sabha on Monday.

The panel said the Union Territories without legislature have utilised approximately 66.83 per cent of the total allocation made to them in BE 2021-22 till January, 2022.

"The committee is disappointed to note the persistent under-utilisation of funds by the UT of Ladakh. The committee recommends that the MHA should closely monitor the fund utilisation by Ladakh in the ensuing year and take necessary corrective steps for enhanced utilisation of funds in the UT," the report said.

"The committee believes that proper utilisation of funds is very important, failing which, it may lead to cuts by the Finance Ministry and weaken the case for enhanced allocations in subsequent years," the report said. (PTI)

The number of Army personnel who suffered injuries during terrorist attacks/counter-terrorist operations in the last five years was 323, according to Bhatt's written reply.

"No Naval personnel suffered any casualties during this period," he said.

Bhatt also said an amount of Rs 7.14 crore was provided to the families of the deceased Army personnel as part of financial support

been taken for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandit community.

Supriya Sule (NCP) alleged that the Government has not done anything for the displaced Kashmiris in the Budget.

"The Government talks a lot about Kashmiri Pandits, but in its Budget document, there is no mention about them," she said adding "if you feel for them, please include them... Let's not live only in a bubble, please deliver".

She said that the contention of the Government that nothing had happened in the last 60 years has become "boring" and now they should come up with some "new dialogue".

The Government had promised thousands of jobs, but nothing has happened at that front also, Sule alleged.

"That dialogue of what happened in the last 60 years has become boring now. You have had seven years now. If a child is malnourished, a mother will feed a child for seven years and make him/her healthy!" she said.

Sule said that the Modi Government should not become a "prisoner of the past", but should live in the present and move ahead.

The Government should tell what they are going to do for Kashmiri Pandits and discuss their future, she said adding the BJP members should visit the Union Territory and find out the ground realities.

Raising questions about the Budget, she said the most worrisome number is GDP and debt ratio.

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"How Parliament of India can pass the budget of Jammu and Kashmir?" Owaisi asked.

HM module busted, 3 held

Police busted a module of HM outfit involved in the recent killing of Sarpanch Shabir Ahmad Mir and arrested three militant associates who were actively involved in his killing. He said that they recovered incriminating materials including two pistols on their disclosure.

"Vehicles used in the commission of crime have also been seized and during the investigation, it was learnt that the Sarpanch was killed by HM militant Mushtaq Yattoo on the directions of HM chief militant Farooq Nalli," he said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Kupwara Dr G V Sundep Chakravarthy told reporters that on March 11, militants barged into the residential premises of Sarpanch Shabir Ahmad Mir of Adoora, Kulgam and fired indiscriminately at him.

"He was promptly evacuated to the District Hospital Kulgam where he succumbed to his injuries," the SSP said, adding that "taking cognizance of the incident, a Case FIR No. 32/2022 u/s 7/27 Arms Act, 13, 16, 18, 20 UAPA was registered in Police Station Kulgam and a Special Investigation Team has been constituted."

The SSP said that during the course of investigation, it came to surface that the active militant (HM), Farooq Nali alias Umer received directions from Pakistani handlers to target the public representatives of Kulgam and identified the target and later further directed active HM militants Mushtaq Itoo alias Faizan, Zubair Sofi alias Farhan to execute the act with the support of their associates -- Danish Ahmad Dar of Mohanpora, Kulgam, Faisal Hameed Wagay of Adoora, Kulgam and Nisar Rashid Bhat of Tempora, Shopian to conduct recce of the Sarpanch's presence to arrange transport and provide logistics to execute the act.

"With strenuous efforts of Kulgam Police, the three militant associates have been arrested and the vehicles used in the commission of crime have been seized and from their possession incriminating materials including two Pistols, 3 Pistol Magazines, 11 pistol rounds, 2 grenades, 1 magazine of AK 47, and 15 rounds of AK47 have been recovered," he said, adding that the investigation is going as more arrests and recoveries are expected.

"Also, massive searches are going on to neutralise the militants involved in this killing," he said.

The IGP said that militants had killed the soldier who was on leave in Budgam and so far one LeT associate has been arrested while three other militants involved in his killing have been identified.

Kumar, said here that case of death of soldier Sameer Ahmad Malla of Khag Budgam turned out to be act of militants who abducted and later murdered him.

He said that the person has been identified as Abrar Bashir son of Bashir Ah Bhat resident of Takiya Pulwama. "Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition including a pistol, one magazine, 12 rounds and one grenade were recovered from his possession," he said.

As per police records, the arrested militant is a categorized terrorist as he had recently joined the JeM.

He said that during the course of investigation, specific leads were generated which led to one suspect identified as Ather Illahi Sheikh.

"During questioning, he confessed that on 6th March, three militants of LeT came to his house and stayed there for night and next day pursuant to a well-knit conspiracy Sameer Ahmad Malla was called by the militant associate Ather Illahi to his residence where from he was kidnapped by all the four and thereafter was taken to the spot where from the body was ultimately retrieved," the spokesman said.

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Kupwara is militancy free, most peaceful in Kashmir: GOC

wherever we get inputs of militants hiding but it was the collective responsibility of the society to prevent killings of security forces personnel who come to their homes on leave and also to stop youth from treading the wrong path," he added.

He said that local militant recruitment was much less this year as compared to previous years and on the LoC, "we are alert to foil all possible infiltration bids."

The GOC said that at least 170-175 militants are still active in Kashmir while militancy have also registered a significant decline from the last two years.

"As compared to the last two years, the active militant rate has come more down while as 170-175 militants are active in

Kashmir," he said in reply to a query whether militancy is decreasing in Kashmir and how many are still active.

On Kunan-Poshpora, the GOC said that a delegation from the village met them and were demanding the rehabilitation and self-employment opportunities for the people as after the 1991 incident a fake narrative was created which kept them away from all the basic facilities and they were kept separate from other areas.

"Today, I personally visited the area and their demands that including computer centre, self-employment generation for girls, sports development and other were being met," he said, adding that there are further demands as well which will be addressed soon.

Russia keeps up attacks, both sides hold talks

water and medicine. "Everyone is waiting for news," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a new video address on the 19th day of the war.

The negotiations, which took place by video conference, were the fourth round involving higher-level officials from the two countries and the first held in a week. Previous discussions, held in person in Belarus, did not produce lasting humanitarian routes or agreements to end the fighting in

injured after Russian forces struck an airplane factory in Kyiv, sparking a large fire. The Antonov factory is Ukraine's largest aircraft manufacturing plant and is best known for producing many of the world's biggest cargo planes.

Russian artillery fire also hit a nine-storey apartment building in the northern Obolonyskiy district of the city, killing two more people, authorities said. Firefighters worked to rescue survivors, painstakingly carrying an injured woman on a stretcher away from



Ukrainian soldiers and firefighters search in a destroyed building after a bombing attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on Monday.

Ukraine. The two sides expressed some optimism in the past few days. Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said over the weekend that Russia was "listening carefully to our proposals." He tweeted Monday that the negotiators would discuss "peace, ceasefire, immediate withdrawal of troops & security guarantees." The talks ended without a breakthrough after several hours. Podolyak said the negotiators took "a technical pause" and planned to meet again Tuesday.

Air raid alerts sounded in cities and towns all around the country overnight, from near the Russian border in the east to the Carpathian Mountains in the west, as fighting continued on the outskirts of Kyiv. Ukrainian officials said Russian forces shelled several suburbs of the capital, a major political and strategic target for their invasion.

Ukrainian authorities said two people died and seven were

the blackened and still smoking building.

A town councilor for Brovary, east of Kyiv, was killed in fighting there, officials said. Shells also fell on the Kyiv suburbs of Irpin, Bucha and Hostomel, which have seen some of the worst fighting in Russia's stalled attempt to take the capital, local officials said.

Airstrikes were reported across the country, including the southern city of Mykolaiv, and the northern city of Chernihiv, where heat was knocked out to most of the town. Explosions also rang out overnight around the Russian-occupied Black Sea port of Kherson.

In the eastern city of Kharkiv, firefighters doused the remains of a four-storey residential building on a street of apartments and shops. Ukrainian emergency services said a strike hit the building, leaving smoldering piles of wood and metal. It was unclear whether there were casualties. (PTI)

Woman, toddler among 4 charred alive; over dozen injured as LPG cylinders explode due to fire

nearby Police Station Peer Mitha led by SHO Inspector Zaeher Mushtaq rushed to the spot and assisted the fire fighting and rescue operation.

Fire fighters along with tenders reached the spot and started operation to evacuate the persons trapped inside the building and to douse the raging ablaze.

Sources said three people, including a child, were charred to death in the incident and 13 others were rescued and rushed to the hospital. Another body was recovered later, which raised the death toll in the incident to four. The fire affected people were mostly workers from Assam, sources added.

The injured persons were evacuated from the site with hectic efforts of police and Fire and Emergency Services personnel assisted by the local people.

All the injured persons were immediately rushed to Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) here, where they were responding to the treatment, when last reports came in.

The deceased were identified as Saraj-ul-Haq, Ishub, Roban and one and half year old Khalida.

The injured were identified as Marjeema Khatoon of Assam, Anwar Hussain of Assam, Momina Khatoon, Menar-ul-Hussain, son of Mehju Din, Baby (7) of Assam, Asrar-ul-Islam, son of Anwar Hussain of Assam, Anku Ram alias Antu, son of Krishan Lal of Gole Gujral District Jammu, Pappu, son of Babu Lal of Bihar, at present Bhagwati Nagar District Jammu, Nilma, Mehju Din, son of Anwar Hussain of Assam, Sukitama, wife of Zehrulla Islam of Assam, Semirinis, wife of Ishub of Assam and Suzu Bano (4), son of Ishub of Assam.

The bodies of the deceased have been shifted to mortuary of GMCH Jammu for completion of medical and legal formalities.

An official of Fire and Emergency Services said that fire tenders along with fire fighting team and ambulance were pressed into service. After hectic efforts of

couple of hours, the fire was brought under control and later doused, he said, adding that loss in the fire incident is yet to be ascertained.

"Four people died and 14 got injured after a fire broke out in a scrap shop around 6.15 pm. Cylinders inside the shop also exploded," said Mukesh Singh, ADGP Jammu Zone while talking to the reporters near the spot. He has directed SSP Jammu Chandan Kohli to investigate the incident.

"Over a dozen families were living at the fire incident spot. The fire spread very fast, many of the residents could not escape immediately," said a fire affected victim Anwar Hussain. Another survivor, Yasmeena Khatoon, said that victims lost everything in the fire.

"We could not retrieve anything and tried to flee the raging fire," she said, adding that many of her relatives are either injured or missing after the incident.

However, Residency Road Police has taken cognizance in this regard and started investigation to ascertain the exact cause of the fire.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir Manoj Sinha has condoned the loss of lives due to the LPG cylinder blast in Jammu.

The Lt Governor has sanctioned an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased and Rs 1 lakh each to those who got seriously injured in the unfortunate incident.

The Lt Governor said, "Deeply saddened by the loss of lives due to LPG cylinder blast at a scrap shop in Jammu. My condolences to the bereaved families and prayers for speedy recovery of the injured. Directed the district administration to provide all the necessary assistance".

"An ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakh each to be given to the families of the deceased in Jammu LPG Cylinder blast incident. Ex gratia of Rs 1 lakh to be given to the seriously injured and Rs 25,000 to those with minor injuries," the Lt Governor said.