

NC hits out at Pak for 'interfering' in J&K on Article 35A

JAMMU, AUG 12 /-/- The opposition National Conference (NC) today hit out at Pakistan for "interfering" in Jammu and Kashmir, saying that Article 35A, which provides special rights and privileges to permanent residents, was a shield for the people of the state. Pakistan's Foreign Office Spokesperson Nafees Zakria in a statement on Thursday had accused India of trying to alter the demography of Jammu and Kashmir. The main opposition party also lashed out on the local BJP for giving a "political and communal colour" to the issue and called for a referendum in Jammu region on Article 35A. "The article empowers state legislators to define 'permanent residents' of the state and provide special rights and privileges to those permanent residents."

Provincial president Devinder Singh Rana announced a campaign to educate people about benefits of Article 35A with the inauguration of a seminar by party working president Omar Abdullah here on August 14. He would also inaugurate another seminar in Kashmir on the same day. Block presidents, block secretaries, district presidents and

district secretaries would participate in it and later disseminate the information at grassroot level, he said. Speaking to reporters at the party headquarters here, he said the statement issued by Pakistan seems to be part of a "conspiracy to make the issue of India versus Pakistan to pave way for its abrogation". He also said if the Article 35A is tinkered with, the Dogras will suffer the most and Article 370 of the Constitution, which gives special status to the state, will be rendered merely a "skeleton". "The BJP is trying to sell that the Dogras are with it in its demand for revocation of the Article 35A and gives it a communal and regional colour. There should be a referendum on the issue in Jammu and Dogras be given a chance to decide whether the law should remain or go. Questioning those who term the presidential order as "illegal", Rana said if that order is illegal, what about the other orders passed by the president. He said the defense of certain rights and we will protect those rights," he said. The National Conference leader questioned the BJP leadership for introducing a domicile certificate in Himachal

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NC trying to create fear psychosis over Article 35A: BJP

JAMMU, AUG 12 /-/- The BJP today accused the opposition National Conference of trying to create a "fear psychosis" among the people of Jammu over the issue of Article 35A of the Constitution. The saffron party, which is in power in Jammu and Kashmir in alliance with the PDP, alleged that the NC was responsible for promoting "majoritarianism" at the cost of minorities in the state. The party was reacting to a statement by the Jammu provincial president of the NC, Devinder Rana, on the issue of Article 35A of the Constitution, which defines the residency laws of Jammu and Kashmir and bars outsiders from buying any immovable property or applying for jobs in the state government.

"We are taking a serious note of the statement... he (Rana) tried to create a scare picture of the ill-effects on the people of Jammu region if Article 35A is held illegal by the Supreme Court. He is creating a fear psychosis," BJP state spokesperson Anil Gupta said.

His (Rana) statement that Jammu will be affected far more than Kashmir since no outsider will like to settle there but will flock in hordes to settle in Jammu clearly indicates the mindset of this party that has always advocated politics of exclusion," he said. It is a direct attack on the composite culture and communal tolerance of the people of Jammu, the BJP spokesman said.

The Supreme Court had last month asked the Centre to file a reply within three weeks to a writ petition filed by an NGO seeking that Article 35A be struck down. The plea said the state government, under the guise of Article 35A and Article 370, which grants special autonomous status to the state, has been discriminating

against non-residents who are debarred from buying properties, getting government jobs or voting in the local elections.

"The NC was responsible for 'majoritarianism' in the state at the cost of the minorities leading to a demographic invasion of the Jammu region taking shelter under the discriminatory provision of Article 35A," Gupta said. Gupta also took a dig at the NC leader for equating the West Pakistan Refugees with the Rohangiya refugees. "The comparison is not only absurd but defies all logic," he said. The BJP of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the NC leadership was so sure of the legal correctness of Article 35A, why are they resorting to agitation politics? The website also asked the Kashmiris? "Rather than rabble-rousing, they should present their case before the Supreme Court," he added.(PTI)

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Union minister Pradhan slams critics of armed forces

PANAJI, AUG 12 /-/- Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan today came down heavily on the critics of armed forces, saying India must be the only country in the world where its defence forces have to face so much flak. Earlier, only politicians were criticised but now a days this trend has extended to our security agencies and soldiers who operate in difficult conditions, the minister of state for petroleum and natural gas said. He said that armed forces are subjected to unfair criticism by people who are not aware of their sacrifices.

"Those who criticise the Indian armed forces don't know their capability. They risk their lives everyday so that we are able to sleep peacefully in our homes," Pradhan said. The minister was speaking in Vasco near here after commissioning an Indian Coast Guard ship, 'Shaurya'. "India is a democratic country. Initially, only politicians faced criticism. Now even the Army, Navy, Coast Guard and BSF (Border Security Force) have to face criticism," Pradhan said. This stems from lack of understanding of the armed forces, the minister said. "It is unfortunate that today we are not able to understand and respect the armed forces. We should give respect to them which they deserve. There must be criticism but there should be a reason for it," Pradhan said. "CG Shaurya" has been designed and built by Goa Shipyard Ltd, a Central PSU, and fitted with advanced navigational and communication systems. The vessel can carry one twin engine light helicopter and five high-speed boats.(PTI)



Police officers patrol with a sniffer dog on railway tracks ahead of Independence Day celebrations in Guwahati-REUTERS

India, China flag meeting remains inconclusive

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /-/- Senior army officials from India and China today held a flag meeting at Nathu La mountain pass in Sikkim and extensively discussed the Doklam stand-off but the "deliberations remained inconclusive", sources said. In the Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) attended by Major General rank officers from both sides, India insisted that the face-off could be resolved through simultaneous withdrawal of troops by the Indian and Chinese sides, they said.

Today's deliberations follow a meeting between brigade commanders of the two sides on August 8. "The meeting remained inconclusive as the Chinese side insisted on withdrawal of Indian troops from Doklam immediately," a senior Indian official said. The BPM set up was launched by both countries to sort out local issues and ensure peace and tranquillity along the sensitive border. The two sides hold BPM in five points which include Daulat Beg Oldie in northern Ladakh, Kibithoo in Arunachal Pradesh, Chusul in Ladakh, Bum-La near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and Nathu-La in Sikkim. India and China have been locked in a face-off in the Doklam area of the Sikkim sector for nearly eight weeks after Indian troops stopped the Chinese Army from building a road in the area.

China claimed it was constructing the road within their territory and has been demanding immediate pull-out of the Indian troops from the disputed Doklam plateau. Bhutan says Doklam belongs to it but China claims it to be its territory. China has been ramping up rhetoric against India over the last few weeks demanding immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from Doklam. The Chinese state media, particularly, have carried a barrage of critical articles on the Doklam stand-off slamming India. External affairs minister Sushma Swaraj had recently said both sides should first pull back their troops for any talks to take place, favouring a peaceful resolution of the border stand-off. (PTI)

Separatists-sponsored strike affects normal life in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, AUG 12 /-/- Abnormal life in Kashmir came to a halt today due to separatists-sponsored strike against the legal challenge to Article 35A of the Constitution, which they termed as a move to change the demography of the Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir.

Article 35A of the Constitution defines the residency laws in Jammu and Kashmir and bars outsiders from buying any immovable property or applying for jobs in the state government. Schools, colleges, shops, business establishments and private offices remained closed, officials said, adding that attendance in most government offices was very thin.

Buses stayed off the roads in most parts of Kashmir, while a few private vehicles could be seen plying, the officials said.

Authorities imposed restrictions on the movement of people in five police stations - Maharajgunj, Nowhatta, Khanayri, Nowhatta and Rainawari,

apprehending violent protests. "The separatist camp, including both hardline and moderate factions of the Hurriyat Conference and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), called for the complete shutdown. They said the plea against Article 35A was part of plans to change the demography of Jammu and Kashmir, which is a Muslim majority state. The separatists said the strike was also against the "continuous killing of Kashmiris at the hands of Indian forces".

The Supreme Court had last month asked the Centre to file a reply within three weeks to a writ petition filed by an NGO seeking that Article 35A be struck down. The plea said the state government, under the guise of Article 35A and Article 370, which grants special autonomous status to the state, has been discriminating against non-residents who are debarred from buying properties, getting a government job or voting in the local elections.(PTI)

Nitish govt to launch drive against child marriage

PATNA, AUG 12 /-/- The Bihar government will launch a drive against child marriage and provide financial assistance for supplementary diet to pregnant women and newborn children. This was decided at a review meeting of Health department chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi and Health minister Nitya Mishra were present in the meeting. Briefing reporters that state government would launch a comprehensive drive against child marriage in the state from Gandhi Jayanti.

Money would be transferred in the bank accounts of beneficiaries for supplementary diet to pregnant women and newborn children of six month till two year. Earlier, the CM flagged off ambulances which would cross-criss across the state to provide medical assistance to needy particularly elderly population. The secretary said it was decided to include three diseases bone-marrow transplant, haemophilia and surgery of transgender - in the existing list of 11 diseases for which monetary assistance is provided by CM Medical Assistance fund at present.

He said it was also decided to provide medical assistance to cancer patients going to Tata Memorial hospital in Mumbai for treatment through Commissioner Investment of Industries department posted at Mumbai. The meeting resolved to increase vaccination coverage to 90 per cent in the state by 2018 by giving incentives to five states in the country. Priority household families would be provided free dialysis facility, the CS said.

Number of mortuary vans would be increased for carrying body after death in government hospitals. The CM in a meeting with the secretary of PHED (Public Health Engineering and Department) gave the instruction to provide pure drinking water in arsenic and fluoride affected areas within two year.(PTI)

Haryana BJP chief's son, friend sent to judicial custody till Aug 25

CHANDIGARH, AUG 12 /-/- Haryana BJP chief Subhash Barala's son Vikas and his friend Ashish Kumar were today sent to the judicial custody till August 25 by a court here in the alleged stalking and attempt to abduction case of a 29-year-old woman.

Amid tight police security, both were presented before the court of duty magistrate Gaurav Dutta. Defence counsel Surya Prakash said, "both the youths have been sent to 14 days of judicial custody". They had been earlier sent to the police remand for two days till August 12. The two accused were re-arrested on August 9 after they joined the police investigation and charged with attempted abduction under section 365 of the IPC and section 511, which relates to an attempt to commit an offence punishable with life or other imprisonment. Police reconstructed the "crime" scene on August 10 - six days after the incident took place - in connection with the stalking and attempt to abduction incident. The defence lawyer had earlier claimed that Vikas (23) and Ashish (27) had not committed any offence and said that a "media trial" was going on in the case. They were arrested last week following the complaint of the IAS officer's daughter but released on bail as they had been booked under bailable sections of the IPC and the Motor Vehicles Act. The stalking incident - and their release - triggered a nationwide outrage and a spate of protests. Last night, several people in Chandigarh held a march 'Bekhauf Azaadi' in support of the victim, and to raise awareness on the women safety issue.(PTI)

CBI case against society collecting money in PM's name

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /-/- The CBI has lodged an FIR against a group housing society for allegedly collecting donations in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The CBI called in its FIR that the Faridabad-registered society, 'Narendra Modi Vichar Man', had links to Prime Minister Modi. The President of the organisation, J P Singh, along with unknown persons has been charged with demanding and collecting donations illegally and fraudulently by inducement and misusing the name of the Prime Minister of India. The FIR alleged, Singh is maintaining website www.nvmdia.org which displays a photo of Modi. It said the website also carried the photograph of J P Singh in the capacity of the President of the said 'sanshad', it alleged. A case of criminal conspiracy and cheating has been registered against Singh and unidentified persons.(PTI)

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Shah invites Nitish to join NDA

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /-/- BJP president Amit Shah has invited Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar to join the ruling NDA, following the latter's alliance with the saffron party in the state to form a new government "It may be JD(U) president Nitish Kumar at my residence yesterday. I invited JD(U) to join the NDA," Shah said in a tweet today. The Bihar-based party is expected to endorse a proposal to join the NDA in its national executive meeting in Patna on August 19, after which it is likely to join the Narendra Modi cabinet. Asked if the party would join the Modi cabinet, a JD(U) leader said such a decision would be "natural". "When we are together in government in Bihar, it is only natural that our party joins the Union government," he said.(PTI)

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Shah begins 3-day trip to Karnataka to re-energise BJP cadre

BENGALURU, AUG 12 /-/- BJP president Amit Shah began his today on a three-day visit to Karnataka to re-energise the rank and file, and asserted that the party stood united and would return to power in next year's assembly polls under the leadership of state unit chief B S Yeddyurappa. "Friends, our party stands united, and is geared up to take to the electoral battlefield under the leadership of Yeddyurappa in coming days, and see to it that we form a BJP government in the state," Shah told party workers near the Kempe Gowda International Airport here. Shah was accorded a rousing reception by BJP workers. He claimed the people had

decided to vote the BJP to power as the party had been exposing the "corrupt, polarising and oppressive" rule of the Congress in the last five years.

"I am hopeful that the way the party has been exposing the corrupt, polarising and oppressive rule of the Congress, the people