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Karnataka bypolls will be deferred, EC tells SC

He said it was "not defection if you give up membership of a political party for reasons of conscience, then you resign and go back to face the public mandate. This is recognition of the MLAs right to resign". He submitted that for an MLA, his constituency was sovereign. A party whip cannot stop him from doing good for his electorate. In such cases, the legislator may opt to resign rather than continue his participation in an ineffectual government.

Senior advocate C.A. Sundaram, for former Congress MLA D. Sudhakar, had submitted that the authority of the Speaker when faced with the resignation of an MLA was limited. The Speaker was to only see if the resignation was voluntary or genuine.

"A Speaker is not the party boss. He is the master of the house and not the president of the party," he said.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for some other disqualified legislators, had highlighted the procedural flaws in the events leading to the disqualification, including the lack of notice

TIMELINE	
JULY 1 TO 10:	As many as 17 legislators from Congress and JDS submit their resignations
JULY 11:	Supreme Court hears a petition filed by rebel MLAs and directs the Speaker to take a decision on their resignations forthwith
JULY 18:	Chief minister H.D. Kumaraswamy moves confidence motion
JULY 23:	The coalition government falls after Mr. Kumaraswamy loses trust vote
JULY 25 & JULY 28:	17 MLAs who submitted resignations are disqualified by Speaker Ramesh Kumar till end of tenure of Assembly
JULY 26:	B.S. Yediyurappa takes over as chief minister
JULY 29:	Mr. Yediyurappa proves majority
JULY 30:	MLAs challenge disqualification in SC
SEPTEMBER 23:	Election Commission announces bypolls
SEPTEMBER 26:	EC tells Supreme Court that bypolls will be deferred

period. Mr. Rohatgi had, as interim relief, wanted a stay of the election notification issued on Saturday last or, in the alternative, give them permission to contest the polls in October.

'Rescind' action on Art. 370, OIC tells India

The statement also called on India to provide solemn assurances that it will not change the occupied territory's demographic composition and not allow non-Kashmiris to acquire property or residency in [J&K]...halt its human rights violations...repeat its draconian emergency laws, and withdraw its heavy military presence".

The statement after a ministerial meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) from the contact group, which has issued statements against India on the Kashmir dispute in the past, follows a statement by the OIC on August 14.

MEA silence

The MEA did not respond to the statement from the OIC that represents 57 member states, but has routinely dismissed any comments on what it considers India's "internal matter".

Speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday pointed to the fact that several major Muslim community groups, including the Jamaat ulema-e-Hind, had backed the government's moves in Kashmir.

"I would not agree that the Kashmir issue should be seen through a communal lens," Mr. Jaishankar said in response to a question.

"In terms of how the State and the (BJP) approaches this issue...today, if there is one area we have visibly good relations, particularly in the last five years, it would be in the Gulf...and you know what the dominant faith in the Gulf is," he added.

In fact, the OIC group's

statement is one of very few at the United Nations that have been critical of India's actions, even though Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi made the situation in Kashmir their single talking point at dozens of bilateral and multilateral meetings.

At a press conference on Tuesday, Mr. Khan told journalists that he was "disappointed by the international community," as they have not accepted Pakistan's concerns.

"There is no pressure on Narendra Modi to lift the siege," Mr. Khan added at a press conference where most of his comments were restricted to events in Jammu and Kashmir.

In contrast, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina refused to make any comment on Kashmir, indicating her support for the government's actions.

When confronted with a direct question from an audience member at the Council on Foreign Relations on why the Islamic world had not raised the issues of Kashmir and the Rohingya refugees more forcefully as a collective, Ms. Hasina said it was because the OIC is "not united" and there are differences between countries that have "more resources" and those who have less.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the only leader to raise Kashmir at the UN thus far and said Kashmir remains "besieged and eight million people are stuck in Kashmir despite resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council", stressed that the only solution for the "Kashmiri people" was through dialogue.

Modi meets Rouhani, discusses Chabahar

Despite a sanction carve out for India's participation in the construction and development of Iran's Chabahar port - a strategic project that would connect India, Afghanistan and Iran to Central Asia, while circumventing Pakistan - work on the project was "very slow", Ali Chegeni, Iran's envoy to India, had told *The Hindu* earlier this month.

Mr. Chegeni had also said that India should not have cooperated with the U.S. sanctions.

The meeting comes a day before Mr. Modi's UNGA address and a day after Mr.

Rouhani's, in which the Iranian leader had said Iran would not talk to the U.S. unless sanctions were lifted.

European countries, such as France and Germany had hoped to arrange a meeting between Mr. Rouhani and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday that Mr. Trump had enlisted his help in mediation and that he had spoken with Mr. Rouhani.

However, Mr. Trump left New York shortly after noon on Friday without having met Mr. Rouhani.

NSA discusses steps to ease J&K curbs

Decision on the phased restoration of mobile telephony in the Valley to be announced soon

PEERZADA ASHIQ
VIJAITA SINGH
SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI

National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval camped in Srinagar ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Friday.

For the past week, security officials have been making arrangements to ensure no violence is reported in Kashmir in the wake of the high-profile event as it might affect India's image globally. Mr. Doval did not accompany Mr. Modi unlike on other visits when he was a regular part of his entourage.

Series of meetings

Mr. Doval held a series of meetings in Srinagar to review the security arrangements and discussed measures to ease restrictions in Kashmir further. He appreciated that no complaints regarding human rights violations were reported from any part of Kashmir Valley



No business: A CRPF vehicle in front of a closed market in Srinagar on Thursday. •NISSAR AHMAD

over a month-and-a-half.

Official sources privy to the meetings said the NSA, on his second visit to J&K since his special status was revoked, sought "facts and figures on several aspects of the Union Territory".

It included ground reports on the law and order situation, militancy and infiltration graph, shutdown in the Valley and status of educational institutions.

He was also briefed about the undercurrents of discontent fuelled further by fears of losing land and jobs in the Union Territory. The phased restoration of mobile telephony was also discussed and a decision would be announced soon, the officials said. Sources said the NSA was apprised of fresh infiltration bids across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, especially in Kupwara and Ban-

dipora's Gurez area, in the past three days.

During his interaction with the Army and the BSF, the NSA stressed that in view of the reports of large-scale infiltration attempts, the anti-infiltration grid along the border must be kept on high alert.

"Wherever attempts of infiltration are reported, strong action must be taken," Mr. Doval was quoted

Army, BSF sound red alert along the LoC

JAMMU

Taking serious note of Pakistan using Chinese drones to air drop weapons in Punjab, the Army and BSF have sounded an all-out alert along the entire Indo-Pakistan border and LoC and have asked border-guarding troops to keep a "hawk's eye" over similar air-intrusions in future. GPS-fitted drones flew in from Pakistan seven to eight times to air drop several caches of arms, ammunition and fake currency, which were seized in Punjab. PTI

by the official spokesman as saying. He urged the security forces to continue the good conduct and maintain peace in the Union Territory.

The spokesman said Mr. Doval called upon the paramilitary forces, police and civil administration "to win the hearts and minds of the people and immediately respond to emergencies and any issues raised by the people."

J&K students reject invite of Adityanath

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GHAZIABAD

Kashmiri students of Aligarh Muslim University have rejected the invitation of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to discuss the advantages of the removal of Article 370 in J&K. Mr. Adityanath on Wednesday invited 40 Kashmiri students from different districts of the State through magistrates to share their concerns.

Bilal Majid, a Ph.D. scholar in the Department of History, told *The Hindu* that the Kashmiri students had unanimously decided not to accept the invite as it could be used "to perpetuate the propaganda that everything is normal in Kashmir". He said the district administration pursued them but they politely declined. "Our conscience doesn't allow us. However, if there are one or two students who want to go, they could attend the meeting," said Mr. Majid.

No clarity on Maharashtra for BJP

Party's poll panel likely to clear names for Haryana on September 29

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The BJP will most likely hold a meeting of its central election committee on or after September 29 for clearing the candidates for the Haryana Assembly election, and await the declaration of its seat-sharing arrangement with the Shiv Sena for the Maharashtra polls around the same time.

Party president Amit Shah was engaged in day-long meetings on Wednesday and Thursday with core groups of both States at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi. International wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt, former India hockey captain Sandeep Singh and Shiromani Akali Dal MLA Balkaur Singh joined the party while the meetings were under way.

No ticket for kin

The meetings with regard to Haryana decided to deny ticket to the kin of senior



Home Minister Amit Shah and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis in New Delhi on Thursday. •PTI

leaders, pre-empting attempts by at least three Union Ministers from the State who were lobbying for ticket for their relatives.

"There were more than three requests and its been made clear that kin of leaders will be considered last for ticket," said a senior leader present at the meeting.

The only exception to the "no kin" rule could be Choudhary Birendra Singh, who had earlier resigned as

Union Steel Minister after his son Brijendra Singh got Lok Sabha ticket from Hissar.

Mr. Singh has sought ticket for his wife and has offered to resign his Rajya Sabha seat to facilitate the nomination.

The new entrants into the party and wrestler Babita Phogat are tipped to get ticket, with sources saying several new faces will be fielded and around 15% of sitting MLAs will be dropped.

Region-wise review

At Thursday's meeting, where Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis was also present, sources said Mr. Shah held a region-wise review of the State.

"Most likely, the seat-sharing arrangement will be cleared by the high command here, but declared in Mumbai with Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray in tow," added the source. While some numbers are making the rounds, the only thing that is clear is that the BJP is determined to take the largest share.

Sonia, Rahul to lead Gandhi Jayanti march

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

In an effort to reclaim Mahatma Gandhi's legacy, Congress leaders would be leading *padayatra*s on October 2 as part of his 150th birth anniversary celebration. While Congress president Sonia Gandhi is expected to lead the *padayatra* in Delhi, former chief Rahul Gandhi is expected to take part in the march in Wardha and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is expected to lead the event in Uttar Pradesh.

Earlier, AICC general secretary K.C. Venugopal told the State units to have a week-long programme to observe the anniversary.

'BJP ruined education, employment'

Unemployment rate at 8.19% in August, highest in over 50 years, says Congress

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Howdy, Modi!' event in Houston, the Congress on Thursday accused the BJP government of ruining "access to education and employment opportunities".

At a press conference, Congress communication chief Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "Indian youth have a straight question - howdy education and howdy unemployment? The BJP government has ruined education and employment in India."

Mr. Surjewala said two reports - the Eighth Annual All India Survey on Higher Education 2018-19 by the Minis-



try of Human Resource Development (HRD) and a report by the Centre for Monitoring India Economy (CMI) on unemployment in India - put the unemployment rate at 8.19% in August, the highest in over 50 years, and very poor statistics on higher studies.

He said a shocking fact

was that the more a person was literate, higher were the chances of being unemployed.

Global average
While the rate of unemployment for men was 6.1%, for women it was 17.5%.

"The global average unemployment is 4.95%, as es-

timated by the International Labour Organisation, but the unemployment in India is nearly double," he said.

Criticising the report of the HRD Ministry on the state of higher education, Mr. Surjewala said only 2.5% educational institutions provided for PhD studies and only 0.5% youths were enrolled.

According to the report, about 74% of youth in the 18-23 age group were not enrolled for graduate degrees, he said.

"Time for Prime Minister to go back from event management and stage managed Howdy programme to addressing Howdy education and Howdy unemployment," said Mr. Surjewala.



Daljeet Singh Cheema

Singh Cheema told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Cheema said the core committee had observed that the BJP had not only betrayed the SAD but also backtracked from the commitments it had made vis-a-vis the Haryana Assembly elections slated for October 21.

"The SAD has always stood through thick and thin with the BJP in the national interest, he said."

Birthday wishes pour in for Manmohan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Birthday greetings poured in for former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh who turned 87 on Thursday. "His sagacious leadership ensured that India took a determined leap forward, even during trying times," said Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

"On his birthday, let us acknowledge Dr. Manmohan Singh's selfless service, dedication & incredible contribution to the cause of nation building," tweeted former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also wished Dr. Singh.

SC raises doubts on findings of ASI in Ayodhya case

Counsel for Sunni Wakf Board questioned the inferences of the survey, saying archaeology is an inexact science

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Justice S.A. Bobde of the Supreme Court said on Thursday that the court could not be expected to reconstruct the history of the Babri Masjid site from ruins, and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) findings may not be "authoritative".

The oral remarks of the judge, who is part of the Constitution Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, came when the Muslim side argued that if the Hindu side could infer a grand temple from materials unco-

vered in the ASI excavations at the Babri Masjid site in 2003, nothing prevented the Muslim parties from deducing the pre-existence of an Idgah mosque on the very same spot.

'Conjecturing so much'

Senior advocate Meenakshi Arora, for the Sunni Wakf Board, pointed to how the ASI report even inferred there was a circular shrine, believed to be of the sixth century and dedicated to Shiva at the site. "We are inferring so much... conjecturing so much," she rued about the



nature of the court hearings which reached their 32nd consecutive day. "We cannot reconstruct what happened from the ruins, that is why we want expert opinions," Justice Bobde reacted.

"This [about the shrine] is there in the ASI report... It is the ASI which is saying there was a shrine. The experts [ASI] themselves are inferring. That is why archaeology is an inexact science. We dig and we imagine our past," Ms. Arora said.

"The ASI cannot be considered authoritative," Justice

Bobde suddenly remarked. Ms. Arora immediately responded: "If that's so, I rest my case!" Ms. Arora has been all along arguing that the ASI report is riddled with "inherent, palpable" inferences, which contradict each other. The report had suggested the pre-existence of a massive, multi-pillared structure believed to be a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Ram and thus proof of his birth at the spot. Ms. Arora, however, went on to reveal that the ASI report also has references to finding "Islamic material" during the excavation.

"Lime *surkhi* is used in some of the materials dug up by the ASI. Lime *surkhi* is synonymous with Mughal construction. It is not possible to find the use of lime *surkhi* in the construction of structures believed to be built centuries before the entry of the Mughal sultanate," Ms. Arora explained.

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, for the Sunni Waqf Board, submitted that they did not want to question the authorship of the ASI report and apologised for delving into the claim on Wednesday.