

RESTORING DEMOCRACY VERY IMPORTANT

SC: Any time frame for J&K statehood?

Says J&K UT status not permanent feature, but Ladakh to remain one

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G New Delhi, August 29

UNDERLINING THAT "RESTORATION of democracy" in Jammu and Kashmir is "very important," the Supreme Court asked the Centre Tuesday if it has a time frame and roadmap to grant statehood to the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir which was reorganised into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh in 2019.

"We are conscious of the fact that these are matters of national security. We under-



The SC asked the Centre if it has a time frame to grant statehood to the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir

stand that ultimately, preservation of the nation itself is the overriding concern. But without putting you in a bind, you and the Attorney General may seek instructions at the highest level. It is a time frame in view," Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, presiding over a five-judge Constitution Bench, asked

Surya Kant, that he will take instructions. He said he will show the statement made by the Union Home Minister or the floor of the House and the efforts being made to restore normalcy in J&K.

"I will show the statement made on the floor and the statement. And the statement is once the efforts are fruitful and everything is normal, then...after the situation returns to normal, we want it to be a state again," he said.

After taking instructions, Mehta said "instructions are that UT is not a permanent feature. I will make a positive statement the day after because the learned AG and I will meet personally and will make a statement... Ladakh will remain a UT."

During discussions on Parliament's power to carve out

UTs, the CJ, referring to the SG's remarks that the UT status is not meant to be permanent, asked, "If our government is in? When are you going to have elections?"

Although the SG did not give a time frame, he said, "I will show the steps taken to reach that stage."

The CJ also posed the question why Parliament should not be allowed to create a UT out of a state to meet national security challenges.

Delving into the history of creation of states like Manipur, Mizoram etc, the CJ said, "The creation of UTs...you have on one hand, examples like Chandigarh, carved out of Punjab, and retained a UT. It was part of a state and became a UT...Then you have progression where certain areas of existing states became UTs."

IAF looks to purchase six mid-air refuellers

AMRITA NAYAK DUTTA New Delhi, August 29

THE INDIAN AIR FORCE (IAF) is set to revive the process of procuring six mid-air refuellers after failing to make headway in two earlier attempts over the last two decades. Highly placed Defence officials told The Indian Express that the request for proposal to procure six mid-air refuelling aircraft, also called tankers, must be floated within six months to invite bids from interested Defence majors.

This is the IAF's third attempt since 2007 to buy the tankers. Two of its earlier tenders were scrapped due to pricing disputes. Officials said the IAF is looking to procure six "pre-owned" aircraft — these can be modified into tankers — to meet its requirement of refuellers so that they can serve for 25 to 30 years.

"Several global companies will get to offer older aircraft models in the next three to four years as they make the transition to advanced aircraft with new

engines. There will be an adequate number of pre-owned aircraft available in the market which can be modified into tankers," a Defence official said.

The IAF is looking for an Indian maintenance partner for the tankers. Once inducted, the refuellers will fill a critical capability gap in the IAF's inventory and will prove to be a vital strategic asset and will allow fighter aircraft to stay airborne longer.

The six aircraft will be procured in addition to another tanker which the IAF would take on lease from an interested global vendor to meet its training needs, the process for which has already been initiated. The IAF also provides limited refuelling efforts to the Navy's MiG-29K fighter aircraft.

"It might take two to three years to start the deliveries of the tankers. Meanwhile, the one tanker to be leased will be used for immediate training requirements of the force," the official said, adding that it cannot, however, be used in operations.

BJP tries to sidestep cracks in Rajasthan

HAMZA KHAN JAIPUR, AUGUST 29

THE BJP is all set to poll the poll bugle in Rajasthan with four 'Parivartan Yatra's, promising change, to be launched between September 2 and 5, and meant to cover all the 200 Assembly seats and to cover 9,000 km across the state. Launching the same will be four national leaders of the party: BJP president J P Nadda, Union Home Minister Anit Shah, and his ministerial colleagues Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari.

The decision to keep feuding state leaders away from the limelight seems pointed. With the number of aspirants for the Chief Minister's post within the Rajasthan BJP on the rise in the past five years, the party is clearly playing it safe, keeping one on one — including state BJP Chief P Joshi — in the front or relying solely on them. This might also be a precursor to what might happen if the

BJP will hold 'Parivartan Yatra's from September 2 to 5 in all 200 assembly seats of Rajasthan

BJP comes to power this December; that the party's central leadership will decide the next CM.

Most BJP top leaders in the state fancy their chances becoming CM, be it former CM Vasundhara Rajee or Union ministers Galendra Singh Shekhawat, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Arjun Ram Meghwal, former state president Satish Pooja, Leader of the Opposition Rajendra Rathore, and even Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Rajya Sabha MP Kirodi Lal Meena and party president Joshi.

Manipur passes resolution for peace

JIMMY LEVON & SUKRITA BARUAH Imphal (Gowahati), August 29

THE FIRST ASSEMBLY session in Manipur since the violence broke out in the state on May 3 lasted all of 11 minutes on Tuesday. There was no discussion on the clashes which have gripped the state for the last four months, but at the end of the Session, in an unprecedented move, a resolution calling for peace "through dialogue and Constitutional means" was declared as passed by the House.

The one-day Session had been hurriedly convened through a summons on August 21 to meet a Constitutional requirement. The gap between two Sessions of a Legislature cannot be more than six months, and this period would have ended on September 2. The 10 Kuki Zomi MLAs of the 60-member Assembly were absent, having said earlier that they would be unable to travel to Imphal for security

reasons. There, including the 10 Naga MLAs, were present. Manipur Congress chief and MLA K Meghachandra Singh questioned the resolution released by Legislative Assembly officials as having been adopted by the House.

"The resolution was not announced by the Speaker, there was no reading of it in the House," Meghachandra said.

Part of the resolution stated, "As peace is the priority of the state, this House will strive to resolve all the differences among the people, till complete peace returns to the entire state, through dialogue and Constitutional means." Soon after the Session began at 11 am, Congress Legislature Party leader and former Manipur CM Okram bi Singh began speaking in protest about how the Session had been convened. Finally, amidst the din by Congress MLAs, the Speaker adjourned the House for 30 minutes, after just 9 minutes of business.

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