



A British mounted police officer sits on his horse between anti-India (L) and pro-India (R) demonstrators as they protest outside of the Indian High Commission in central London, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

UNSC to hold ‘closed door’ J&K meet today

THE STATESMAN/ANN, NDTV

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will hold a “closed door” meeting today to discuss India’s move to revoke Article 370 that had granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

UNSC President Joanna Wronecka told reporters on Wednesday said that they would discuss “the Jammu and Kashmir situation behind closed doors most likely on August 16”, according to media reports.

The development comes after Pakistan wrote a formal letter to the UNSC president calling for an emergency meeting of the UNSC to discuss India’s move to revoke the special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The letter was sent through Permanent Representative Maleha Lodhi to convene the meeting.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Pakistan considered India’s actions in Kashmir as a threat to the regional peace.

Meanwhile, China had also formally asked for “closed consultations” in the United Nations Security Council to discuss the Kashmir move.

China had earlier “assured Pakistan of its support and commitment” and announced that it supported Islamabad’s decision to approach the UN Security Council in the wake of India’s decision to scrap Article 370 of its Constitution that gave special status

to Jammu and Kashmir.

However, India has categorically told the international community that its move to scrap Article 370 of the Constitution removing the special status to Jammu and Kashmir is an internal matter and has also advised Pakistan to “accept the reality”.

Russia on Wednesday asked Pakistan to bilaterally resolve its dispute with India over Kashmir.

This message was given to Pakistan FM Qureshi when he telephoned his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. Russia is a permanent member of the Security Council. Although there has lately been improvement in relations between Moscow and Islamabad because of regional developments, Russia still remains a strong Indian ally and had supported Indian position after it annexed Occupied Kashmir last week.

The Russian foreign ministry further noted that its envoy at the UN would be guided by “this consistent position” and will “adhere to it” when the discussion on the Pakistani letter to the Security Council starts.

The Indian Parliament on August 6 revoked Article 370 of the Constitution and approved bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.

Tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad have heightened following India’s move on Kashmir.

Indian PM warns of ‘population explosion’

Vows to ban single-use plastics

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday warned of the risks of an “unchecked population explosion” in the nation of 1.3 billion people, the first time he has raised the issue, and called for family planning measures.

India is the world’s second-most populous country behind China with 1.4 billion, and its population is set to surpass its East Asian neighbour by 2024, according to the United Nations.

“It is time to accept the challenges up front... population explosion. It will bring a lot of challenges for the future generations of this country,” Modi said in an Independence Day speech in the capital New Delhi.

“We have to think if we can do justice to the aspirations of our children. There is a need to have greater discussion and awareness on population explosion.”

The prime minister hailed an “informed section” of Indians who were already having smaller families as “playing a big role in doing good for the country”.

India introduced forced sterilisations for men in the 1970s to limit its population growth, but was forced to abandon them due to widespread anger. More than 1.9 million people, mostly women, were sterilised across India in 2017 and 2018, according to the government’s National Health Mission.

Modi also vowed to ban single-use plastics. He called on Indians to make an effort to rid their country of plastic waste and raised the possibility of “strong first steps towards bidding adieu to single-use plastic on October 2.”

Modi hails Kashmir move

Slams opposition in I-Day speech; Pakistan observes ‘Black Day’, Imran slams world’s inaction

AGENCIES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday hailed his “path-breaking” move to strip Kashmir of its autonomy, as his Pakistani counterpart warned of possible “ethnic cleansing”.

Parts of Kashmir that India controls -- it is split with arch-rival Pakistan -- have been under lockdown since August 4, with freedom of movement restricted and phones and the internet cut.

A day later, New Delhi scrapped Article 370 in the Indian constitution that had granted Kashmir special status, splitting the state of Jammu and Kashmir in two and downgrading them to union territories.

In a speech from the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in Delhi for Indian Independence Day, Modi said that the decision was one of several “path-breaking” moves by his newly re-elected administration.

He said “fresh thinking” was needed after seven decades of failure to ensure harmony in the picturesque but tragic former Himalayan kingdom, where tens of thousands have died in the past 30 years.

“The old arrangement in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh encouraged corruption and nepotism, as well as injustice when it came to rights of women, children, (low-caste) Dalits, tribal communities,” said Modi, 68.

“Their dreams get new wings.” With the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, the



Indian PM Modi addresses the nation during Independence Day celebrations at the historic Red Fort in Delhi, yesterday; a Pakistani protester holds a back flag near the Indian High Commission during a protest rally in Islamabad.

dream of “One Nation, One Constitution” has been realized, added Modi.

He also lashed out at the opposition speaking against the move, asking if they felt it was so necessary why didn’t they make it permanent in the past 70 years.

Modi also talked about his aim to turn India into a \$5-trillion economy within five years, by spurring wealth creation, boosting exports and tourism, and spending 100 trillion rupees (\$1.4 trillion) on infrastructure, reported Reuters.

But he did not touch on sagging demand that has hit parts of the economy in recent months, especially the auto sector.

Wearing a flowing bright saffron-coloured turban, Modi also highlighted



his government’s practice of allowing a husband to instantly divorce his wife. Perhaps his most controversial announcement was the creation of a new post of chief of defence staff to ensure better coordination of India’s army, navy and air force, along the lines of Western military forces.

Fearing unrest over India’s latest move, tens of thousands of extra Indian troops have been deployed to Kashmir -- joining 500,000 already there -- turning parts of the main city of Srinagar into a fortress of roadblocks and barbed wire.

Sher-i-Kashmir Cricket Stadium, where the main Independence Day ceremonies

were held in Srinagar, was cordoned off by security personnel, with drones and helicopters monitoring the area.

Jammu and Kashmir governor Satya Pal Malik hoisted an Indian flag and inspected a police guard of honour, watched on by India’s national security adviser Ajit Doval.

Kashmiri politicians were missing from the event. The politicians, alongside university professors, business leaders and activists, are among more than 500 people taken into custody in the region.

“Restrictions will continue in some places of Kashmir for some time,” local police official Munir Khan told Indian media.

Pakistan meanwhile observed “Black Day” to coincide with Indian Independence Day to protest the Kashmir decision. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan replaced his Twitter profile photo with a black circle.

Khan, who has compared Modi’s government to Nazi Germany, yesterday took to Twitter to voice his alarm.

“Will world silently witness another Srebrenica-type massacre & ethnic cleansing of Muslims in IOK? (Indian-occupied Kashmir),” Khan wrote, referring to the killing of Muslim men and boys in Yugoslavia in 1995.

“I want to warn international community if it allows this to happen, it will have severe repercussions & reactions in the Muslim world setting off radicalisation & cycles of violence.”

INDIA’S KASHMIR MOVE

Business ties underpin muted Arab response

AGENCIES

Gulf Arab countries have remained mostly silent as India’s government moved to strip the Indian-occupied sector of Kashmir of its limited autonomy, imposing a sweeping military curfew in the disputed Muslim-majority region and cutting off residents from all communication and the internet.

This muted response is underpinned by more than \$100 billion in annual trade with India that makes it one of the Arabian Peninsula’s most prized economic partners.

Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia urged restraint and expressed concern over the brewing crisis. Other Gulf countries — Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman — do not appear to have issued any statements. The United Arab Emirates has gone a step further by apparently siding with India, calling the decision to downgrade occupied Kashmir’s status an internal matter.

Saudi Arabia’s response to the Kashmir situation is complicated by its close ties with both India and Pakistan, which have fought two wars over the disputed Himalayan region, as well as its ideological rivalry with Turkey and Iran for supremacy in the Islamic world.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has reached out to leaders in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in recent days to discuss India’s actions in Kashmir, but it’s unclear whether he would find Arab backing if he took his concerns to the United Nations Security Council.

The brief Saudi statement on the

Kashmir events said the kingdom “is following up on the current situation” and called for a “peaceful settlement” in line with international resolutions.

Gulf Arab states are home to more than 7 million Indian expatriates who help drive the region’s economy and keep its cities teeming with doctors, engineers, teachers, drivers, construction workers and other laborers.

Nowhere in the region is this relationship more pronounced than in the UAE, where Indians outnumber Emiratis three to one. Bilateral trade surpassed \$50 billion in 2018, making India the UAE’s second-largest trade partner.

Indian investments in the UAE amount to \$55 billion and Indians are the largest foreign investors in Dubai’s real estate market, according to India’s Ministry of External Affairs. Meanwhile, DP World, Dubai’s global port operator, has plans to develop a logistics hub in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

The decision by Modi’s Hindu nationalist government carries religious overtones for Muslim residents of the Indian-occupied Kashmir.

The revocation of the region’s constitutional status, which needs the approval of the ruling party-controlled parliament, means Kashmiris lose their hereditary right to jobs, scholarships and land ownership. Government critics see the move, which would allow Indians from outside the region to permanently settle and buy land, as an attempt to alter Kashmir’s culture and demographics with Hindu settlers.



South Korean protesters hold signs reading “No Abe!” during an anti-Japanese rally marking the anniversary of Korea’s liberation from Japan’s 1910-45 colonial rule, in central Seoul, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan emperor speaks of ‘deep remorse’ over WWII

Moon urges Tokyo to contemplate past, calls for dialogue

AFP, Tokyo

Japan’s new emperor spoke of “deep remorse” yesterday over the country’s wartime past in his first speech to commemorate the end of World War II since his enthronement in May.

Emperor Naruhito’s comments were being monitored in Tokyo and throughout Asia for any change in tone, but he closely echoed the language employed by his father Akihito.

“Looking back on the long peaceful years after the war, reflecting on our past, and bearing in mind the feeling of deep remorse, I earnestly hope

that the devastation of war will never be repeated,” said the 59-year-old Naruhito.

“During the 74 years since the end of the war, the peace and prosperity of our country today has been built through the tireless efforts of the people.

“Yet when I think of their past full of suffering, I am truly overcome with deep emotion,” Naruhito told the solemn ceremony in central Tokyo which also featured a minute’s silence for the war dead.

Meanwhile, conservative Prime Minister Shinzo Abe shied away from visiting a controversial shrine that

commemorates war dead, including convicted war criminals, that has become a flashpoint with Japan’s neighbours, especially China and South Korea.

This year’s ceremonies came as Tokyo and South Korea -- one of the countries that suffered most from Japan’s wartime military atrocities -- are embroiled in a war of words over trade and history.

During a speech to mark the anniversary of Korea’s liberation from Japan’s 1910-45 rule, President Moon Jae-in, however, struck a conciliatory tone towards Japan, offering to “join hands” if Tokyo chooses dialogue.

India tops world with most internet shutdowns

DAWN ONLINE

Of the 196 internet shutdowns documented across the world in 2018, India was responsible for the majority (67 per cent) incidents, according to a report released by Access Now.

Access Now is an international non-profit advocacy group dedicated to an open and free internet, and the #KeepItOn coalition has been documenting and verifying instances of internet shutdowns since 2016.

The global coalition noted that governments have been turning to network shutdowns with increasing frequency to quell unrest and suppress the spread of rumours and fake news. In 2018, it documented 196 internet shutdowns which is twice the number it recorded in 2017, and nearly three times the count from 2016.

As per its findings, India witnessed 134 network suspensions last year.

47pc of these have occurred in Indian-held Kashmir, according to a recent study done at Stanford University. Indian-held Kashmir, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra, together imposed more shutdowns in 2018 than the other 22 states in India, the report pointed out.

The current shutdown in Indian-held Kashmir is the 53rd this year. In one instance, mobile internet remained suspended for 133 days in the region in the wake of protests following the killing of popular leader Burhan Wani in 2016.



Indian security force personnel keep guard alongside a road during restrictions after the government scrapped the special constitutional status for Kashmir, in Srinagar, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS