



INTERVIEW | RAJNATH SINGH

‘Our government doesn’t discriminate on the basis of religion’

Home Minister says cease-ops in Kashmir generated goodwill, and if Pakistan wants to start a dialogue, it should stop terrorism that emanates from its soil

VIJAITA SINGH

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh speaks on issues ranging from Jammu & Kashmir, Nirav Modi and Rohingya. He visited J&K last week, after the Home Ministry announced suspension of operations on May 16 on the occasion of Ramzan.

How was the response to your visit to J&K recently? This was your first visit since the Centre announced the suspension of operations, or cease-ops, during Ramzan?

As my vehicle passed on the road in Srinagar, I waved at people and they responded with great enthusiasm. This was not the case earlier. Whenever a leader from the Centre visited, there used to be a shutdown, this time there was none.

Is this the impact of cease-ops?

It has generated goodwill. We implemented it during Ramzan as we did not want any civilian casualties. We will see what needs to be done later, but this was done to give relief to those Muslims who are inclined to peace. It’s a *muqaddas* (pious) festival.

Can we say this is a deviation

from the government’s earlier policy?

This is a decision that has been taken after consulting everyone, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on board. Our government doesn’t discriminate on the basis of religion, but a terrorist doesn’t have religion or creed. The decision was taken so that those Muslims who want peace do not face inconvenience during Ramzan.

Will it continue beyond Ramzan? What is your opinion?

We will take a decision after a security review.

You reviewed the security situation when you went to Srinagar last week?

Though goodwill has been generated, there have been incidents of grenade attacks

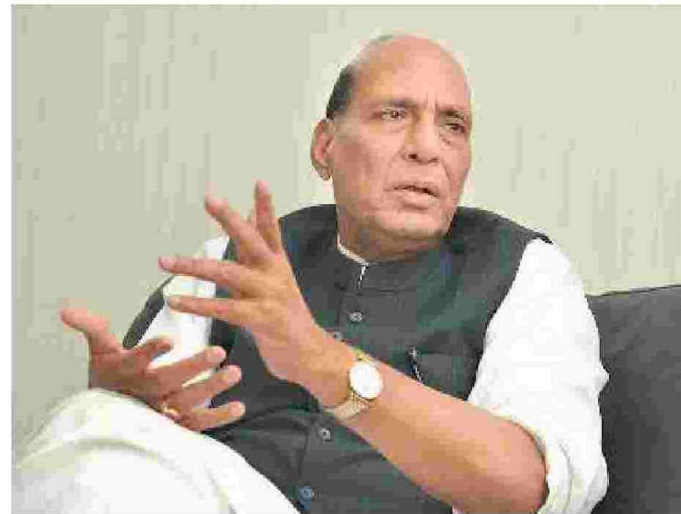
and a day ago, two policemen were killed by militants. It is a cause of concern. It should be seen on humanitarian grounds. No country wants terrorism to thrive on its soil.

The Directors-General of Military Operations of India and Pakistan recently issued a statement that the 2003 ceasefire pact would be followed in letter and spirit?

While infiltration continues, cross-border firing has gone down a bit. Pakistan should stop this. The decision of the DGMOs is significant and it should be honoured. Cease-fire violations are happening.

Is any Track II dialogue with Pakistan on? Or a dialogue with the political leadership?

If Pakistan wants we can start a dialogue. It should stop terrorism that emanates from its soil. We took several initiatives. The Prime Minister broke all protocols and went to Pakistan to attend a wedding [then Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif’s granddaughter’s wedding]. We did not get



I have said in the past that we will talk to anyone who wants to talk to us

the kind of response we expected for the gesture. One, you are not able to stop terrorism, but admit it at least. Pakistan should ask for our help, if it is unable to tackle terrorism. India can work with it to wipe out terrorism from Pakistan.

Why don’t you speak to the Pakistan Army. They seem to be in control of the affairs in the neighbourhood?

No, but an elected govern-

ment is important. Any initiative is to be done with the elected government.

Is Special Representative Dineshwar Sharma holding back-channel talks with the Hurriyat?

Till now, no such talks have taken place. He has been sent there to talk to everyone. He hasn’t gone there for sight-seeing. We have not tied his hands. He can talk to whoever he wants.

Where is Nirav Modi?

Whatever information you have got through newspaper reports, I am also privy to the same.

How could he reach London when his passport was revoked? And why all the economic offenders escape to London?

I don’t know. The countries concerned should know. We have brought the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill that will help us confiscate the properties of economic offenders even in foreign countries. We are making all efforts to bring him back. If the government was not honest,

we wouldn’t have got this Bill. It’s a baseless allegation that we closed our eyes deliberately.

Any timeline for Nirav Modi’s return?

Let us wait.

People are being lynched in the name of the cow, Bharat Mata and national anthem, and there are several such videos in circulation.

It is not a new type of crime. The State government has taken cognisance of the [recent] incident in Assam and five people were arrested. It is not that lynchings have increased. Videos are not only circulated from here, they come from outside the country as well. These are sporadic incidents but it should not happen. The Home Ministry had issued advisories when violence in the name of cow protection increased. The State governments have to take cognisance of such incidents. The Centre is not responsible. The PM has also taken a tough stand on this.

What is the strategy on Rohingya?

The Home Ministry has directed that a survey should be done. Rohingya should be numbered and their biometrics captured. There are strict directions that no such document should go into their hands with which they could claim citizenship in future. Once the States provide us with the information, we will ask the External Affairs Ministry to talk to Myanmar. We have spoken to them once, but we will give them more information. All Rohingya would be deported.

You held a meeting on strengthening PM’s security?

I have directed everyone that a thorough security review should be done and the security should be tightened as much as possible.

There are inputs other than the e-mail seized by the Pune police. He is a popular PM, India is progressing fast under him and there would be many countries that don’t like India’s rise and could go to any lengths to destabilise it.

We cannot rule it out. For full interview, visit bit.ly/IntRajnath