

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: 39 prime minister Rajya Sabha

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE : 10/8/2022

Teary-eyed PM bids farewell to Azad

RS term of three others also ends

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday gave a teary-eyed farewell to Congress' Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad.

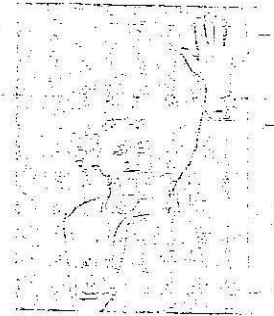
"We have been very close, there has not been an occasion when we have not been in touch," he said.

Mr. Modi choked as he recalled a terror attack when Mr. Azad was the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, and eight tourists from Gujarat were killed.

"The first call I received was from Ghulam Nabiji. That call was not only to inform me of the incident, but one of concern, like a family member. His tears were not stopping on the phone. That time, Pranab Mukherjee was the Defence Minister. I asked if an aircraft could be provided to get the bodies back home. Mukherjee Saheb ensured that it was provided. Ghulam Nabiji called again in the night; he was at the airport," the Prime Minister reminisced, trying to stop his tears.

Other than Mr. Azad, Meer Mohammad Fayaz and Nazir Ahmad Laway, both from the Peoples Democratic Party, and Shamsher Singh Manhas of the BJP were given a farewell by the House. With their tenures getting over, the newly created Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will not have a single representation in the Rajya Sabha.

"Not a single session has gone by when Mir Mohammad and Nazir Ahmed have not discussed issues with me in my chamber. Sometimes, they came with their families. The kind of infor-



Ghulam Nabi Azad

mation and insight they provided was unique, their commitment and ability will be useful for the country and to J&K," Mr. Modi said.

Mr. Azad, in an emotional speech, said he is a proud Indian. He recalled that during his college days in Kashmir, where both August 14 and 15 were celebrated, he was among the minority who participated in the Indian Independence Day celebrations.

Mr. Azad also said he was proud that he is an "Indian Muslim". "I am among those fortunate people who never went to Pakistan. When I read about circumstances in Pakistan, I feel proud to be a Hindustani Muslim." The Indian Muslim believed in peaceful existence unlike strife and war in Muslim nations, he said.

At the same time, he sounded a word of caution for the majority community, asking them to be two steps ahead in maintaining peace.

There were only a few instances when he cried out loud and these were when Sanjay Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi died. Referring to the massacre of the Gujarati pilgrims, recalled by Mr. Modi, he said it was a time when he could not hold back his tears.