

# FAIR REPORT

THE DAWN OF A FEARLESS PEN

Jaipur, Saturday, 18 July 2026

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## RESCUE MISSION

Children relocate sheep to a safer place by a boat after floodwaters submerged low-lying areas in Morigaon district of Assam, Friday.



### Sir Garfield Sobers: The Last of Cricket's Complete Men



FAIR REPORT  
NEW DELHI

There are statistics, there are records, and then there is Sir Garfield Sobers—a cricketer whose greatness was never confined to a scorebook. If reports of his passing at the age of 89 are confirmed, cricket has not merely lost one of its finest players; it has bid farewell to the man who defined the very meaning of an all-rounder. Few athletes have shaped a sport as comprehensively as Sobers shaped cricket. Across 93 Test matches between 1954 and 1974, the Barbadian maestro scored 8,032 runs, claimed 235 wickets, and held 109 catches. Yet these numbers tell only a fraction of the story.

## Modi Unveils 75 Redeveloped Railway Stations Rajasthan Gets Eight Under Amrit Bharat Mission

FAIR REPORT  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated 75 redeveloped railway stations across the country under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, marking another milestone in the Centre's push to modernise India's railway infrastructure and improve passenger experience.

Among the newly inaugurated stations, Rajasthan accounted for eight—Barmer, Dausa, Deeg, Gangapur City, Gotan, Jaisalmer, Khairthal and Somesar—strengthening connectivity across the desert state while giving a fresh impetus to regional economic growth, tourism and local commerce.

Addressing the state-level function at Gotan railway station in Nagaur district, Rajasthan Chief



Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma described the inauguration as a significant step towards realising the vision of "Viksit Bharat". He said the redevelopment of railway stations is not merely an infrastructure upgrade but an investment in the state's future, creating modern transport hubs that are safer, more accessible and

better equipped to meet the aspirations of citizens.

The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme aims to transform railway stations into integrated public spaces with improved passenger amenities, enhanced accessibility, better urban integration and modern architectural design that reflects local heritage. The

initiative is part of the Centre's broader strategy to build world-class transport infrastructure while stimulating economic activity in smaller towns and emerging urban centres.

With the inclusion of eight stations in Rajasthan, the state is expected to benefit from improved mobility, increased tourism potential and enhanced business opportunities. The redevelopment also underscores the government's emphasis on balanced regional development, ensuring that modern infrastructure extends beyond metropolitan cities to reach Tier-II and Tier-III regions. The inauguration reinforces the Centre's continuing focus on infrastructure-led growth, with railways emerging as a key driver of India's development agenda.

## Merz Draws a Red Line: Germany Tells Washington to Keep Out of Its Democracy

FAIR REPORT  
NEW DELHI

Germany has delivered one of its sharpest public rebukes to the Trump administration, with Chancellor Friedrich Merz warning Washington against any attempt to influence the country's upcoming state elections. Speaking at Berlin's annual summer press conference, Merz made Germany's position unambiguous: Berlin does not interfere in American elections and expects the same respect in return.

The immediate trigger is a US State Department programme worth nearly \$5 million, designed to support European organisations working on issues such as national sovereignty, migration, censorship and "lawfare." While political parties are not explicitly eligible, the programme's broad lan-



guage and timing—just weeks before elections in Saxony-Anhalt, Berlin and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania—have fuelled concerns that funds could indirectly benefit nationalist groups ideologically aligned with the Alternative for Germany (AfD). Merz underscored that foreign financing of political parties is illegal under German law, signalling that even indirect attempts to shape Germany's political landscape would be viewed as unacceptable.

## India Launches High-Stakes UNSC Campaign: New Delhi Seeks Ninth Stint on the Security Council

FAIR REPORT  
NEW DELHI

India has formally launched its campaign for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2028-29 term, projecting confidence that its global credentials, peacekeeping legacy and growing diplomatic influence will secure broad international support.

Addressing a media briefing on Friday, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed that India announced its candidature on July 13 and expressed confidence in the outcome. "We have given reasons why countries should vote for India. We are confident that all member states will give due consideration to our candidature," he said.

If elected in the June 2027 UN General Assembly vote, India will occupy the Security Council as a non-permanent member for the ninth time, having previously served eight terms



since 1950—an experience that underscores its longstanding engagement with the UN's principal security body.

India's campaign has also been reinforced by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who used the UN platform to present New Delhi as a responsible global stakeholder committed to peace, development and multilateral cooperation. Highlighting India's "SHANTI" vision, its distinguished record in UN peacekeeping operations and development partnerships spanning 79 countries, Jaishankar argued that India represents the aspirations of the Global South while

acting as a bridge across geopolitical divides. India faces Tajikistan in the contest for the Asian seat, with victory requiring the support of a two-thirds majority in the 193-member UN General Assembly. Beyond the immediate election, the campaign carries wider geopolitical significance. A successful return to the Security Council would further strengthen India's case for long-pending UN Security Council reforms, including its demand for permanent membership, reflecting its expanding economic influence, diplomatic reach and role in shaping the evolving global order.

## CM Sharma Frames Women's Empowerment as Cornerstone of "Viksit Bharat" Vision at Degana Chaupal

FAIR REPORT  
JAIPUR

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma used a village development interaction in Degana's Tilanesh village on Friday to lay out his government's case that economic, social, and political empowerment of women forms the real foundation of progress, tying Rajasthan's welfare schemes directly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stated vision of empowering four groups — women, youth, farmers, and labourers.

### The Chaupal as Political Theatre and Policy Showcase

The format was deliberately intimate: a direct dialogue with women beneficiaries of state schemes, several of whom presented self-made products through Rajeevika, the state's rural livelihood mission, after sharing how government programmes had reshaped their household economics. The Chief Minister used the platform to urge women to make full use of existing schemes and to bring more women into the fold.



Sharma's pitch rested on a now-familiar list of flagship initiatives: the Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao campaign for girls' education and protection; the



Swachh Bharat Mission's construction of household toilets, which he described in terms of dignity and safety for women; and the Ujjwala Yojana's LPG con-

nections, credited with improving women's health by reducing smoke exposure in kitchens. Priority allocation to women under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yo-

jana was also cited as evidence of the government's targeting strategy.

### The Economic Empowerment Argument

On livelihoods specifically, the Chief Minister pointed to a Rs 5-per-litre subsidy for dairy farmers linked to animal husbandry, alongside Rajeevika's self-help group model, as the state's primary vehicles for women's self-employment and financial independence. The Lakhpati Didi scheme, offering loans of up to Rs 1.5 lakh at a subsidised 1.5 percent interest rate, was presented as the entrepre-

neurship-focused piece of that puzzle. Politically, Sharma invoked the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, which provides for 33 percent reservation for women in state assemblies and Parliament, framing it as the mechanism that will deepen women's participation in governance and decision-making processes going forward. On welfare delivery for expecting mothers and children, the CM cited the Maa Voucher Yojana's free sonography services for pregnant women, and continued nutritional support, including regular milk distribution, through anganwadi

centres. He also referenced direct bank transfers of social security pensions for senior citizens and state-run pilgrimage schemes for elderly citizens. The government's messaging leaned heavily on first-person accounts from women who credited these schemes with transforming their household finances — from a Rajeevika cluster manager whose annual income now stands at roughly Rs 1.25 lakh, to a self-help group entrepreneur overseeing a collective earning close to Rs 2.5 lakh monthly through jute bags and toy production.



## States Focus



### ₹45 cr released to clear MIS apple procurement dues: CM

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu on Friday said payments have already been made to growers under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) from 2022 to 2025 have been cleared through Direct Benefit Transfer.

Chairing a meeting of the horticulture department here, the chief minister said payments have already been made to growers who supplied up to 30 bags of apples under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) and the process for releasing payments to growers who supplied 100 bags or more was now underway.

In a statement, he said the state Government has released Rs 45 crore to clear the pending liabilities. Sukhu, who reviewed preparations for apple procure under the scheme this season, launched the Horticulture MIS website and mobile application. The digital platform would facilitate end-to-end recording of the procurement process, from apple purchase to processing, ensuring greater transparency and efficiency. (PTI)



### No room for lapses in WAVES 2027 preparations: Fadnis

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on Friday directed officials to begin preparations for WAVES (World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit) 2027 conference on a war footing, stressing there should be no shortcomings in planning for the global event.

Chairing a review meeting here, Fadnis asked officials to complete planning related to departmental responsibilities, budgeting, publicity, transport, technical infrastructure and inter-departmental coordination well in advance. He said the next edition of the conference should be "broader, more streamlined and more impactful" than the inaugural event. "The first WAVES conference created a strong impression globally and enhanced Maharashtra's brand value. The next edition should be organised on an even grander scale through meticulous planning," the chief minister said. (PTI)

# ED raids 8 locations across Bihar, Delhi and Rajasthan

FAIR REPORT  
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted coordinated searches at eight locations across Bihar, Delhi, and Rajasthan as part of an investigation into alleged large-scale illegal sand mining in Bihar's Banka district, amounting to ₹131 crore.

The operations took place on Friday and targeted premises associated with Mahadev Enclave, a company based in Banka controlled by Ashok Chandak and his son Raghav Chandak, both originally from Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan. The locations searched included sites in Banka and Patna districts of Bihar, as well as in Delhi, Sri Ganganagar, and Jaipur. Preliminary investigations indicated that Mahadev Enclave engaged in illegal sand extraction in Banka without obtaining necessary permits or reporting to the Bihar Mining Department.

The extent of the violations was revealed following a geospatial analysis commis-



sioned by the Enforcement Directorate from IIT Patna in October 2024, which concluded that the company had excavated sand valued at approximately ₹131 crore between the fiscal years 2015-16 and 2022-23. These findings were shared with the Bihar State Mining Corporation Limited, prompting the state's Mines and Geology Department to file an FIR with the police in August 2025.

The ongoing money-laundering investigation is a direct follow-up to that FIR. The operation spanning multiple states exemplifies the

The involvement of IIT Patna in geospatial analysis indicates a shift towards data-driven investigations in such cases. The agency is expected to scrutinise bank accounts, property records, and financial transactions linked to the Chandak family and the company. No arrests have been made to date; however, the searches are likely to result in further questioning and potentially the provisional attachment of properties under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

The involvement of a Rajasthan-based family operating within Bihar also highlights the inter-state nature of such illicit activities.

The ED's actions align with increased scrutiny of sectors vulnerable to large-scale illegal extraction and money laundering. "The outcome of this investigation could set a precedent for the application of geospatial technology and inter-agency cooperation in combating environmental crimes with significant financial implications", an official said.

In Banka, the alleged extraction over nearly eight years underscores deficiencies in monitoring and enforcement by state authorities.

## 5 dead as train hits car at crossing in West Bengal

FAIR REPORT  
■ Kolkata

At least five people including four school girls and a cyclist were on Friday killed when a speeding train rammed against school van at a manned railway crossing near Karna Subarna of Behrampur in Murshidabad district the railway police said adding gateman Anupam Karmakar was instantly suspended by the authorities for dereliction of duty and subsequently arrested.

The incident occurred at around 7 in the morning locals said when Nimitta-Katwa local passenger train hit a pool car crossing the

Gobindopur railway gate. The driver of the mangled vehicle which was dragged several metres away by the train was not at fault locals said adding the gateman had left the gates open for road traffic.

While three persons died on the spot two succumbed in the hospital while being treated in the ICU, sources said.

"He is a drunkard and regularly does so and repeated complaints to the authorities would not yield any result," one of the villagers said adding the negligent gateman was locked inside his cabin and later handed over to the police in a drunken state.



Another railway staff had also been suspended following complaints from the local villagers.

Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari immediately sent two of his ministerial colleagues to eh spot

and warned that his administration would tolerate no negligence and if found guilty the erring staff would be criminally punished.

"I have been told that the police have already been arrested the gateman... I have told them not to tolerate any negligence... it is a shocking news... that we lost four little ones... four innocent school children... the Government will take strictest possible action," the Chief Minister said.

Meanwhile, both the Indian Railways and the State administration announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh and ₹5 lakh for the kin of the deceased.

## BJP slams Congress MP Jawed over remark that Sanskrit came from outside

FAIR REPORT  
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Friday criticised the Congress after its Lok Sabha MP Mohammed Jawed claimed that Sanskrit came from outside, and said this reflects the party's appeasement mindset and its habit of insulting Indian identity and civilisation.

The BJP's reaction came after a video clip, purportedly showing Jawed saying that Urdu originated in India, unlike Sanskrit and English.

In the video, Jawed, MP from Bihar's Kishanganj constituency, was purportedly heard saying, "In Bihar, Urdu is the second language. We will not allow the second language to be wiped out like this. We want Urdu, which is the language of the people of Hindustan and did not come from outside, to be preserved. "Sanskrit came from outside, English came from outside. Hindi and Urdu are our languages; they originated in Hindustan."

Responding to the remarks, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari, in a post on social



media, said this thought can only come from those who do not believe in Sanatan.

"For those who regard Babur as their ideal, Sanskrit is a foreign language. Every Indian language belongs to India. This statement clearly reflects a mindset of appeasement," he said in a video post.

"They called the Ram Temple useless, and now they are calling Sanskrit a foreign language. Such thinking was characteristic of the Mughals. They consider invaders as their ideals and call Lord Shri Ram imaginary," he claimed.

Another BJP spokesperson, Shehzad Poonawalla, said

the Congress has a history of insulting India, its identity and civilisation.

"We have seen not only Sam Pitroda saying that Indians look like Africans and Chinese, but now a Congress MP has claimed that Sanskrit came from outside. Everyone knows Sanskrit is an Indian language. It is a language of India and was born out of India's civilisational heritage," he said in a video statement.

Members of Congress whose leaders came from abroad -- a reference to Sonia Gandhi's Italian origin -- should stop claiming that Sanskrit came from outside India, Poonawalla said.

"Their leaders are imported, their party was formed by imported powers and foreign forces, by the British. They are making such claims. The Congress was formed by Allan Octavian Hume. It has had many foreign presidents.

"Sonia Gandhi herself came from Italy, and Rahul Gandhi loves to be abroad rather than in India. Maybe they should stop insulting Indian identity, Indian culture and Indian civilisation," he said.

## BJP criticises Congress for opposing bill to honour Vande Mataram

FAIR REPORT  
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Friday criticised the Congress for allegedly opposing the Centre's move to table a Bill that provides for punishment for insulting or obstructing the mandatory singing of Vande Mataram at official events, in the upcoming Parliament session. The ruling party said the Congress has historically shown disrespect towards the national song.

The Government has listed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill -- which seeks to give the national song Vande Mataram the same statutory protection as the national anthem Jana Gana Mana -- for introduction in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon session beginning July 20.

A bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat said the Bill has been listed for introduction, consideration and passing.

BJP national spokesper-



BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla

son Shehzad Poonawalla alleged that instead of welcoming the move and celebrating 150 years of Vande Mataram, the Congress has a problem with it.

"Congress and its ecosystem hate Vande Mataram. The Government is bringing the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act in order to give Vande Mataram, as the national song, the same respect given to the national flag and the national anthem. But instead of welcoming this, instead of celebrating the 150 years of Vande

Siddaramaiah, the Madhya Pradesh Congress, or Sonia Gandhi, we have seen that they have a hatred towards Vande Mataram," he said.

The BJP spokesperson claimed that while the Congress "eulogises" Naxals and has a "soft corner" for terrorists, it continues to display hatred towards Vande Mataram.

"Even now, they hate Vande Mataram; this shows their mindset. They can eulogise Hidma, say 'Naxali shaheed hai' (Naxals are martyrs); they can have a soft corner for terrorists like Afzal and Yakub. But when it comes to Bharat Mata and Vande Mataram, they have a problem. This shows that it is not the INC, Indian National Congress, but ANC, Anti-National Congress," he said.

"Back then, they opposed Vande Mataram under pressure from the Muslim League. Today, they continue to oppose Vande Mataram because they are in alliance with the Muslim League in Kerala," he added.

## Jagannath chariots reach Puri's Gundicha temple



A large number of devotees gather around the chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra near the Shree Gundicha Temple during the annual Rath Yatra festival in Puri, Odisha

PTI

FAIR REPORT  
■ Puri

The chariots of Lord Jagannath and his siblings deities reached their destination of Shree Gundicha Temple here on Friday afternoon, a day after the Rath Yatra.

Shree Jagannath Temple Administration's (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee said that according to tradition, the idols will remain on their chariots for the night and be carried into the Shree Gundicha Temple, considered the birthplace of the sibling deities, on Saturday evening. The return car festival, called Bahuda Yatra, will be held on July 24.

The three chariots could not reach the Shree Gundicha Temple, around 2.6 kilometres from the 12th-century Jagannath Temple, on Thursday due to a delay in the ritual of moving the idols from the sanctum sanctorum to the carriages.

As per tradition, the chariots cannot be pulled after sundown. Though the carriages were scheduled to reach Shree Gundicha temple by Thursday evening, the chariot pulling was suspended around 7 pm due to fading light and it resumed on Friday morning, an official said.

Lord Balabhadra's Taladhwa chariot, which began moving at 5.10 pm on Thursday against its scheduled time of 4 pm, stopped at Market Chhak after cover-

ing around 700 metres on the Grand Road.

Devi Subhadra's Darpadalana chariot halted at Marichikote Chhak after covering around 400 metres, while Lord Jagannath's Nandighosha chariot was pulled only for a few yards and remained near the main gate of the 12th-century shrine.

Shree Gundicha Temple is considered the birthplace of the sibling deities.

The idols were kept on their chariots on Thursday night, and lakhs of devotees jostled to catch a glimpse of the deities amid tight security. "There was no closure of 'darsan' all night," Padhee said.

In a video message, Puri's titular king, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, who is also the chairman of the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTM), said, "There is nothing wrong in chariot pulling on the day after the scheduled Rath Yatra."

"Many a time, the chariots cannot reach their destination on time, and they are pulled the next day. The chariot pulling was halted on Thursday due to sundown," he said.

Thousands of devotees spent Thursday night in the holy town braving inclement weather and began pulling the chariots with renewed vigour on Friday morning, chanting 'Jai Jagannath' and 'Hari bol'.

## CPI(M) concerned over Wangchuk's health, announces nationwide protests on July 20



Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk being attended by a medical professional during protest at the Jantar Mantar in New Delhi

PTI

FAIR REPORT  
■ New Delhi

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) has expressed concern over the reported deterioration in the health of social activist Sonam Wangchuk, who the party said is on a hunger strike demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the alleged NEET examination paper leak.

In a statement issued by its Polit Bureau, the CPI(M) criticised the Union Government for what it described as its refusal to engage with protesting students and leaders.

The party alleged that the Government's response reflected "insensitivity and authoritarianism" amid ongoing protests over alleged irregularities in the conduct of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET).

The CPI(M) also linked the alleged examination irregularities to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, claiming that the policy's emphasis on centralisation and commercialisation of education had contributed to the rapid growth of the coaching industry.

The party further alleged that these developments, along with what it termed the "communalisation" of education, were among the underlying causes of paper leaks and other examination-related irregularities.

## Conservation effective when communities are stakeholders: President Murmu

FAIR REPORT  
■ New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said that conservation efforts will be more effective and long-lasting when communities are stakeholders in protecting forests. Addressing probationers of the Indian Forest Service (IFoS), who called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, she said technological advancements, demographic changes and rising aspirations will continue to present new challenges before them.

"As officers, you must remain adaptable and forward-looking. You should keep learning and remain open to innovation while staying firmly rooted in constitutional values," Murmu said. The president asked them to encourage people's participation in conservation, restoration and sustain-

able livelihood initiatives. Understanding the views and concerns of tribal communities, forest dwellers, women, farmers and local institutions will provide you with valuable insight, she said. "Indigenous knowledge has preserved the forests for generations. You should build trust between the administration and the local people. When communities are stakeholders in protecting forests, conservation efforts will be more effective and long-lasting," Murmu said.

The president said that the IFoS officers' responsibilities extend beyond conservation alone.

"Ecological protection must be harmonised with the legitimate aspirations of people who live in and around forests. Development and conservation should not be viewed as opposing goals. You should work



President Droupadi Murmu in a group photograph with probationers of the Indian Forest Service during a meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre in New Delhi

PTI

towards solutions where both nature and communities can thrive together," she said.

Addressing the officers, the

president said they are not only administrators of forests but the custodians of India's natural heritage.

"Your role has become more significant today. The world is facing the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Forests are central to addressing these challenges.

"They conserve biodiversity, regulate local climates and sustain the livelihoods of millions of people. Your work will therefore contribute not only to India's environmental security but also to global efforts towards sustainable development," she said.

Asserting that technology is becoming indispensable for environmental governance, Murmu said that the use of technology enables better monitoring of forest health, wildlife movements, fire prevention and restoration efforts.

"However, you should remember that technology can never be a substitute for human touch, ethical decision-making and com-

passion. The best decisions often emerge when scientific evidence is combined with wisdom gained through experience and dialogue with people," she said.

The president said that their integrity must remain unquestionable. "Your words should reflect humility. You must lead from the front, particularly during difficult situations. You should always remember that empathy is one of the finest qualities of a public servant," Murmu said.

She said that public service is about improving the lives of people and contributing to the nation's progress.

"Ecological security is integral to the national goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047. I am confident that as Indian Forest Service officers, you will play a defining role in ensuring that India's progress remains green, inclusive and sustainable," the president said.

