

FAIR REPORT

THE DAWN OF A FEARLESS PEN

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BEYOND DELIVERY ROOMS

Rajasthan Bets on ‘Prasav Sakhi’ to Redefine Maternal Care for High-Risk Pregnancies

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

In a significant push to strengthen maternal healthcare, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma has unveiled a patient-support model aimed at ensuring that high-risk pregnant women receive continuous assistance throughout their hospital journey—from admission to childbirth and postnatal care. The initiative, titled ‘Prasav Sakhi’, seeks to bridge the gaps that often leave expectant mothers and their families navigating complex hospital procedures on their own. Under the new system, trained nursing personnel, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), or selected women healthcare workers, identifiable by their pink aprons, will accompany high-risk



pregnant women during registration, medical examinations, specialist consultations, treatment, delivery and discharge.

Officials said the initiative has been designed to provide not only clinical support but also emotional reassurance at a time when

delays in referrals, multiple consultations and unfamiliar hospital processes can prove overwhelming for vulnerable patients.

The state government is also integrating the 104 Janani Express ambulance service, the 24×7 Maternal and Child Health Help

Desk, and the Prasav Sakhi programme into a single continuum of care. The proposed framework aims to create a seamless pathway—from home to hospital admission, treatment, institutional delivery and post-delivery care—while en-

suring priority access for high-risk pregnancies.

The initiative aligns with the state government’s broader objective of reducing maternal mortality by strengthening monitoring during pregnancy, improving institutional deliveries and facilitating timely medical intervention. Positioning maternal health as a governance priority rather than merely a welfare programme, the Rajasthan government hopes the integrated model will transform the experience of childbirth in public hospitals by combining medical care with dignity, guidance and continuous support. If implemented effectively, the initiative could emerge as a template for patient-centric maternal healthcare beyond Rajasthan.

Treasure, Betrayal and a Crumbling Haveli: Jaipur Labourer’s Claim Sparks Buried Wealth Mystery

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

What began as the demolition of a dilapidated heritage haveli in Jaipur’s walled city has snowballed into a sensational dispute over an alleged cache of buried gold and silver coins, with a labourer claiming he was promised a share of the treasure only to be denied it after the discovery.

The controversy centres on a historic haveli located on Vidyadhar Ka Rasta in Tripolia Bazaar. According to the labourer’s allegations, the contractor supervising the demolition had assured him of 150 gold and silver coins if any hidden treasure was found during the work. The worker alleges that the promise was later withdrawn, prompting him to reveal the alleged discovery.

The disclosure has triggered a legal dispute. Haveli owner Rahul Sethi subsequently lodged a



complaint at Manak Chowk Police Station against the contractor and others, bringing the alleged treasure row under police scrutiny.

The demolition itself followed an official notice issued by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation after the ageing structure was declared unsafe. The Sethi family engaged a private firm, Divine-First, to carry out the demolition, which began in January 2026.

Adding another layer to the mystery, sources claim the owners had suspected the presence of hidden valuables inside the haveli even before

demolition commenced and had allegedly used a metal detector to search the premises. It is also alleged that the owners and the demolition firm had an understanding to divide any recovered treasure, with 67 per cent to go to the owners and 33 per cent to the contractor.

The claims have not been independently verified, and the police are examining the complaint. Meanwhile, the case has transformed a routine demolition into one of Jaipur’s most intriguing property disputes, reviving age-old legends of hidden wealth beneath the city’s historic havelis.

Water Cannons, Barricades and Political Heat BJP Workers Clash With Police During Jaipur March to Congress Office

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

Political tensions erupted in the Rajasthan capital on Wednesday as thousands of BJP workers marching towards the Congress office clashed with police, who deployed water cannons after protesters attempted to breach security barricades at Chaumu House Circle.

The protest, led by Rajasthan BJP president Madan Rathore, began at the BJP state headquarters and was aimed at the Congress office in Jaipur. The march was organised in response to the Congress demonstration outside the Prime Minister’s residence



in New Delhi a day earlier, where Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi led a protest demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the paper leak controversy.

Police had erected multiple layers of barricades at Chaumu House Circle to

prevent the BJP workers from advancing. As the procession reached the spot, protesters attempted to climb over and push through the barricades, leading to a tense face-off with police personnel. The confrontation soon escalated into a scuffle, following which the police used

Burger, Backlash and the Exit Door: Vijeta Dahiya Claims he Was Removed from CJP After Protest Row

New Delhi: A controversy over optics during the July 20 protest has spilled into the open, with former CJP member Vijeta Dahiya alleging that she was removed from the organisation after facing public criticism for eating a burger during the demonstration. In a statement circulated on social media, Dahiya claimed that she was “heckled by the public” after videos showing her eating a burger during the protest went viral. According to her, the backlash quickly translated into internal action. Dahiya alleged that she later received a call from Dipke, expecting reassurance amid the controversy.

Lightning Kills One in Kota as Monsoon Roars Back Udaipur Records Season’s Heaviest Rain, Ajmer Roads Turn Into Rivers

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

The southwest monsoon made a dramatic comeback across Rajasthan on Wednesday, unleashing torrential rain that submerged roads, swelled rivers, shrouded Mount Abu in dense fog, and claimed one life in a lightning strike in Kota.

Udaipur witnessed the season’s heaviest spell of rainfall, with an intense downpour lasting nearly an hour and transforming weather conditions across the Lake City. The sudden burst of rain caught residents off guard and



brought a sharp drop in temperatures.

Ajmer was among the worst-hit districts, where heavy rain inundated major roads, turning streets into fast-flowing streams and disrupting traffic and

daily life. In Kotputli-Behror, persistent morning showers caused waterlogging on service lanes along the Jaipur-Delhi Highway, slowing vehicular movement on one of the state’s busiest corridors.

In contrast, Mount Abu, Rajasthan’s only hill station, experienced light drizzle accompanied by dense fog that drastically reduced visibility, cloaking the town in a misty monsoon landscape.

The spell turned fatal in Kota, where a 23-year-old man died after being struck by lightning late on Tuesday night. The Hadoti region, particularly Kota and Baran, received more than five inches of rainfall over the past 24 hours, triggering a sharp rise in water levels across the Parwan, Kalisindh and other rivers.

RAS Officer’s ‘Hang Them in 7 Days’ Remark on Paper Leak Sparks Row Amid Delhi Students’ Protest

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

A Rajasthan Administrative Service officer’s fiery social media post has ignited controversy after he demanded capital punishment within seven days for those responsible for examination paper leaks — a remark that comes even as students in Delhi continue their protest demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation.

Pankaj Ojha, Additional Director in the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, posted his comments on Facebook alongside a picture of his daughter,

whom he said was “very hurt” by the ongoing discourse around the students’ agitation. “This post is not related to any party or anyone’s support or opposition,” Ojha wrote, framing his remarks as a father’s response rather than a political statement.

In his post, Ojha urged the public not to “defame the children’s protest,” describing the young protesters as “the future of our country” who “don’t even know how to demand” and simply want accountability. He said the demonstrators would be satisfied with Pradhan’s resignation alone, though he cautioned that such a step



would change little. “Someone else will come,

then the same thing will happen,” he wrote, call-

ing instead for structural reform.

Drawing on personal experience, Ojha re-

called that papers were leaked during his own RAS examination years ago, wiping out two years of preparation. He said aspirants at the time had approached the then chairman of the commission as a delegation to register their protest.

The officer’s demands went further still — he called for a “foolproof system” to prevent paper leaks altogether, and for anyone found guilty of exam malpractice to be hanged within seven days. He also demanded monetary compensation and government jobs for the families of students who have died by suicide over such leaks, saying such measures were es-

sential to ensure “children’s hard work does not go to waste.”

Ojha is no stranger to public attention. The officer has previously drawn scrutiny over controversial social media posts and allegations linked to his official conduct, making this latest intervention the subject of renewed debate within bureaucratic and political circles in Rajasthan.

The post comes against the backdrop of intensifying protests in the national capital, where students have been demanding Pradhan’s resignation over a series of examination paper leaks that have plagued national testing bodies in recent years.

Need to evolve governance with changing times: PM

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting with Secretaries to review progress of rural development, agriculture, social welfare and allied sectors towards Viksit Bharat Goals, at his residence at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg.

The meeting was attended by the Cabinet Secretary, Secretaries of key Ministries as well as senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office.

Prime Minister emphasised that the welfare of citizens must remain at the heart of all reforms. He said that reforms designed around people's needs should gather

real momentum and deliver meaningful transformation. He emphasised that the objective of reforms is not merely to improve the functioning of the Government, but to accelerate India's journey towards becoming a developed nation.

Prime Minister highlighted that governance systems are witnessing rapid changes and stressed the importance of adapting and strengthening governance processes to effectively meet the needs of a dynamic and evolving environment. He suggested undertaking a comprehensive mapping of emerging requirements across various Ministries and Departments. Modi stressed the need for



a whole-of-Government approach to achieve the nation's development goals. He further emphasised that the dream to build a Viksit Bharat should become a Jan Andolan and that India's youth should form the foun-

dation of this vision.

Sources said the PM underscored the importance of tackling the serious issue of drug abuse among youth. He suggested that efforts should be made to develop an institutional mechanism

to break departmental silos and foster greater inter-departmental coordination and convergence in youth-centric initiatives.

He further emphasised the need to adopt an integrated approach for the development of sports. He noted that, with sports tourism emerging as a key focus area, India should aspire to host major international sporting events to establish itself as a global sports hub. He stressed the importance of promoting technology and fostering innovation through startups in the sports sector.

Prime Minister highlighted that the widespread adoption of initiatives such as the PM KUSUM Scheme by farmers

can bring transformative changes to the agriculture sector. He further stressed the need for a global mapping of skill requirements to ensure better alignment with international opportunities and future needs.

The Secretaries shared their experiences and perspectives on various initiatives and challenges in their respective domains. The Prime Minister shared his suggestions and his vision for the future course of action. The meeting was marked by comprehensive and productive discussions across the sectors, focusing on effective implementation, greater convergence and accelerated progress towards the goals of Viksit Bharat.

States Focus



I AM FINE: AMITABH BACHCHAN CLARIFIES HOSPITAL RUMOURS

Megastar Amitabh Bachchan has clarified that his recent blog post about hospitalisation, surgery and intensive care was not about his own health, saying people had "assumed incorrectly" that he was referring to himself.

The 83-year-old actor, whose cryptic post on Tuesday sparked concern among fans, said the post was inspired by Argentina's recent defeat to Spain in the FIFA World Cup final. "I am fine .. misunderstood post .. I was giving an example," Bachchan said in the new post on Tuesday night.

He said the post used recovery after surgery as a metaphor for the emotional and physical toll a champion endures after a crushing defeat, referring to Argentina captain Lionel Messi in the wake of the World Cup final loss.



‘330 OFFICIALS TRAVELLED ON LUXURY TRAINS IN 12 YEARS’

A total of 336 railway officials travelled on Indian Railways' luxury trains, such as Palace on Wheels, Maharajas' Express and Deccan Odyssey, over the last 12 years by utilising their travel passes, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. However, the minister did not reveal the names and designations of these officials, as sought by DMK MP VS Matheswaran.

The Railway Ministry, through the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), operates three luxury trains - Palace on Wheels, Maharajas' Express and Deccan Odyssey - whose fares range from ₹4.5 lakh to ₹26 lakh per person, depending on the itinerary.

Matheswaran wanted to know the "details of railway officials, including their names, designations and cla travel, who availed complimentary travel on luxury trains like Palace on Wheels, Maharajas' Express and Deccan Odyssey from 2014 till date, year-wise." (PTI)

India needs you, not in suffering, but in service: Opposition MPs urge Wangchuk to end fast

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

Assuring Sonam Wangchuk that his message had resonated across the country and would now be raised in Parliament, a delegation of opposition MPs urged the activist to end his indefinite hunger strike that entered its 25th day on Wednesday over alleged examination irregularities. The delegation, which included Congress MP Vivek Tankha, TMC MP Sagarika Ghose and CPI(M) MP John Brittas, met Wangchuk and his wife Gitanjali Angmo at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram.

They appealed to the activist to withdraw his indefinite fast, saying the struggle for a fair and transparent examination system had become a national cause.

Wangchuk has been on an indefinite hunger strike for the last 25 days in support of students demanding accountability over alleged examination irregularities.



"The nation, especially its youth, needs your wisdom and guidance far more than your sacrifice... Just as the Union Territory of Ladakh needs Sonam Wangchuk, India needs you too... not in suffering, but in service, serving those causes that will benefit generations to come. The country needs you," the MPs said in a letter handed over to the activist.

After the meeting, Ghose said the delegation had appealed to Wangchuk to end his fast while extending complete support to the students' movement. "...while wholeheartedly supporting the cause of the students, we fervently urged Sonam

Wangchuk ji to give up his fast in the interests of the nation and the students," Ghose said in a post on X. In their letter, the MPs said Wangchuk's "selfless commitment to the cause of India's youth" and his advocacy of "a fair, transparent and accountable examination system" had inspired millions across the country. "We, as Members of Parliament, request you to kindly withdraw your fast, while we take forward in Parliament the national mission and debate on educational reforms and the future of India's youth, so passionately espoused by you," they said.

Senior CPI(M) leader Rajeev calls out Satheesan remarks about Waqf Board

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Kochi

Senior CPI(M) leader P Rajeev on Wednesday termed as "lies" Chief Minister VD Satheesan's claims regarding the issues of Waqf Board appointments and investments from the Tata Group, saying that the CM needs to ensure the veracity of the statements he is making.

Satheesan, at a press conference in the state capital in the morning, accused opposition leader Pinarayi Vijayan of trying to turn the Muslim community against the UDF Government by making communal remarks in connection with the Waqf Board issue.

He also told reporters that the previous LDF administration had passed orders saying two non-Muslim members would be appointed to the Board after the Bar Council polls are over.

The CM further contended that the state Government had in the Kerala High Court sought dismissal of the pleas challenging the validity of the



current Waqf Board.

Regarding the proposed shipbuilding venture of the Tata Group in Kerala, Satheesan claimed that representatives of the company had met him and held discussions on issues related to their proposed investments in the state.

He also contended that the state expects investments worth around Rs 10,000 crore in the first phase of various maritime sector projects being planned under its 'Mission Samudra' initiative.

Terming all the statements by the CM as "lies", Rajeev, who was Law Minister in the previous LDF Government, said that every-

one expected Satheesan to correct his stand on the Tata project issue, but he did not.

On the Waqf Board issue, the former minister said that everything claimed by the CM was false.

He said that Vijayan adopted the same stand as the top Congress leadership, including Rahul Gandhi, regarding appointment of non-Muslim persons to the Waqf Board, so how can the Marxist veteran's remarks be termed as "communal".

He also said that in the previous LDF administration's order constituting the Waqf Board, the term 'non-Muslim' is not mentioned anywhere.

Rajeev further said that the Supreme Court has not rejected the pleas challenging the amendments to the Waqf Act and its section 14 as claimed by the CM.

"The Supreme Court is only going to consider the pleas. He (CM) could have said that the section 14 has not been stayed. He cannot authoritatively claim that the matter has been rejected," he said.

India and China continue diplomatic reset as Jaishankar meets Wang Yi in Manila

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Manila

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Chinese Foreign Minister and Politburo member Wang Yi on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila, signalling continued efforts by India and China to stabilise bilateral relations more than six years after the deadly Galwan Valley clashes.

The meeting comes amid a gradual improvement in ties following sustained diplomatic engagement between the two Asian neighbours. Referring to the progress made since the leaders' meeting in Kazan in October 2024, Jaishankar said relations had been steadily moving towards normalisation. "Since the meeting of our leaders in Kazan in October 2024, relations between India and China have been gradually normalising," Jaishankar said. "This direction was further affirmed when they met in Tianjin last August."

The External Affairs Minister underlined that a stable India-China relationship was essential not only for the two countries but also for the broader regional and global order. "Such a relationship can make a valuable contribution to a multipolar Asia and a multipolar world," he said, adding that bilateral ties should be guided by the principles of "mutual respect, mutual interest and mutual sensitivity."

Reiterating India's long-standing position on border issues, Jaishankar stressed that peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) remained the foundation for normal bilateral relations. "Peace and tranquillity in the border areas is obviously the prerequisite for normal ties. Since October 2024, both sides have engaged to ensure that important objective. This will continue to need our constant attention," he said.

He also recalled the understanding reached by the two leaderships that "differences should not become disputes," emphasising the need for sus-



Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Manila, Philippines

tained diplomatic engagement to manage differences responsibly. Highlighting recent confidence-building measures, Jaishankar welcomed the resumption of direct flights, updated visa arrangements, the restart of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, and the reopening of border trade. At the same time, he flagged unresolved economic concerns, including the need for fair market access, addressing the trade imbalance, and ensuring more predictable supply chains.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of a gradual reset in India-China relations. Following the violent Galwan Valley clash in June 2020, which claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers and an undisclosed number of Chinese troops, the two sides have carried out disengagement at several friction points along the LAC while maintaining military and diplomatic dialogue.

The two ministers also discussed multilateral cooperation. India, which holds the BRICS chairmanship this year, will host the BRICS Summit in September.

China has extended its support for India's BRICS Presidency, reflecting a shared interest in maintaining engagement through multilateral platforms even as both countries continue to address bilateral challenges.

Opposition using students' protests as political tool to serve interests: Rajnath

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday expressed serious concern over the ongoing students' protest in Delhi and accused the opposition of attempting to use it as a "political tool" to fulfil its political interests. Singh urged the opposition to raise issues in Parliament instead of on the streets.

His remarks came as protests led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) at Jantar Mantar entered the second month, with more supporters joining the agitation.

Additionally, leaders of several opposition parties, wearing black clothes, held a demonstration outside Parliament on Wednesday to express solidarity with students protesting against the NEET paper leak issue. "It is extremely unfortunate that some people are attempting to use the stu-



dents and youth of our country as a political tool to fulfil their political interests," Singh said in a post on X. He said the Narendra Modi Government is committed to fulfilling the aspirations of students and ensuring that no injustice is done to them.

"It is our responsibility to listen to every concern of our students and resolve it. I am fully confident that India's aware, mature and sensible youth fully understand such deceptive attempts and will choose

the path of progress, development and nation-building," he said.

The defence minister alleged that some opposition leaders are displaying a "manufactured sense of anger" to confuse and mislead people, especially the youth. "We are fully sensitive to the sentiments and concerns of the youth. Parliament is in session and the Government has also stated its willingness to have meaningful debates on every issue," Singh said. He further accused the

opposition of making an "inappropriate attempt" to resolve issues not in Parliament but on the streets. Congress leaders, led by Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and party president Mallikarjun Kharge, held a dharna outside the prime minister's residence on Tuesday, demanding Modi's resignation over the police action against students protesting the alleged NEET paper leak issue.

Besides Rahul Gandhi, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and other opposition leaders were later detained by the police.

The defence minister said Parliament is the appropriate forum for discussions in a democracy and the opposition should allow the smooth functioning of the ongoing Monsoon session if it is serious about raising public issues.

Suvendu attacks Mamata, Abhishek over appeasement politics, corruption

FAIR REPORT ■ Kolkata

Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari continued his tirade against corruption even as he on Wednesday warned that strong actions would be taken on the top functionalities of the previous Trinamool Congress Government if they were found guilty in the Comptroller and Auditor General report which his Government would table in the State Assembly on July 25.

Addressing the issue in the Assembly Adhikari said that "the previous Government did not table the CAG reports ... but the reports will be placed on July 25 and if any evidence of corruption is found in the CAG reports, we will act according to the recommendations of the report ... no one will be spared — be it the former CM or any minister. We will immediately approach the



Governor for his consent to prosecute the persons concerned ... the Government will directly recommend to the Governor for an FIR to be lodged... more so in the case of misuse of funds for (super cyclone) Amphan."

The super cyclone hit the State in 2020 post which the Centre had sent ₹3,750 crore for relief. But there were allegations of large-scale corruption in the use of the Amphan funds.

He said, "Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi-ji provided ₹3,750 crore in two

installments during Amphan ... but soon there were reports of major corruption (in utilisation of funds and distribution of relief) ... this even led to Public Interest Litigations (PILs) in the Calcutta High Court."

Adhikari slammed the previous Mamata Banerjee Government for not tabling the report of the CAG inquiry which was ordered by the High Court adding while the report will be placed on July 25 full discussion would take place in the next session post which actions if required would be taken against those found to be guilty.

The Chief Minister also said that the Uniform Civil Code Bill would be tabled in a special session of the House only after the Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai report on the issue was placed before the Government.

Alleging that the previous Government had systemati-

cally demolished all the constitutional bodies including the Human Rights Commission, Women's Commission, Child Protection Commission, Information Commission etc the Chief Minister said that all these commissions would be made functional from August 1. "From August 1, all these constitutional bodies will be functional. They will have to accept complaints and will be bound to take action on them," he said.

Referring to a severe statement from TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee that scores would be settled when his party would come back to power in 2031, Adhikari said that Banerjee who is also the nephew of Mamata Banerjee would not be able to win the next parliamentary elections in 2029 from Diamond Harbour seat which he had won by 7.5 lakh votes in 2024.

FAIR REPORT ■ Kolkata

The Mamata Banerjee faction of the Trinamool Congress cried "victimisation" and expressed its full support to party MP Kalyan Banerjee after he was suspended from the Lok Sabha for the remainder of the Monsoon session due to an altercation and alleged use of unparliamentary language against break-away members of his party including some women MPs who had joined the NCPI post TMC's debacle in the April-May Bengal Assembly elections.

Reacting to Wednesday's developments in Lok Sabha senior TMC leader and party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said "One should not comment on whatever transpired in the House but for Kalyan da we firmly stand behind as he has not done anything wrong by showing the traitors the mirror ... those who left Mamata Banerjee's hand after the elections could not ever had won a panchayat election without using her picture ... by remind-



ing them of their treachery he has done the right thing ... after today it is clear that the traitors are patronized by the BJP whereas Kalyan Banerjee is being victimised."

Referring to an open stage altercation between Mamata Banerjee and Kalyan Banerjee during a rally on Tuesday where the latter told the former that it was only him who was standing by her and everyone had fled under pressure from the BJP. "Considering that at least now you should be more gentle while dealing with those who are with you," Kalyan told the former Chief Minister in full public glare after she openly chided her for occupying the mike and speaking too long and making her wait for one hour.

WB CM ANNOUNCES ₹5 LAKH AID FOR KIN OF TRAWLER, SIKKIM TUNNEL VICTIMS

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday announced an ex gratia of ₹5 lakh and a civic volunteer's job for one member of the family of every person from the state killed in the recent trawler tragedy off the state's coast and the under-construction tunnel disaster in neighbouring Sikkim.

Making the announcement in the state assembly, Adhikari expressed grief over the two tragedies and said the state Government would stand by the affected families.

The announcement came after BJP MLA Chandrasekhar Mondal raised the issue of the fishing trawler that went missing in the Bay of Bengal on July 2 with several fishermen on board. The trawler, based in Shankarpur in Purba Medinipur district, was traced five days later, overturned near Bagher Char off Kakdwip. "So far, 11 decomposed bodies of fishermen have been recovered from the trawler, while four others are still missing," the chief minister said, describing the incident as a major tragedy. He said most of the deceased fishermen hailed from the coastal areas of Purba Medinipur, Howrah and Nadia districts. Adhikari announced that the next of kin of each deceased fisherman would receive ₹5 lakh financial assistance and that one eligible member from every affected family would be appointed as a civic volunteer in the local police station.

The chief minister also announced the same compensation package for families of West Bengal residents killed in the tunnel disaster in Sikkim. (PNS)

States Focus



Representation image

ABVP SEEKS HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON COMPETITIVE EXAM REFORMS

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Wednesday demanded that the Centre constitute a high-level committee to conduct a comprehensive review of the integrity, transparency and institutional reforms in competitive examinations. In a statement, the youth organisation affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) said the committee should submit "concrete, time-bound recommendations" to make the examination system more credible and accountable. The youth organisation also condemned the acts of "chaos, public disruption, and violent clashes" that unfolded at Jantar Mantar during recent demonstrations regarding NEET-UG and education reform.



NGT SEEKS NMCG REPLY ON GANGA FLOODPLAIN IN VARANASI

The National Green Tribunal has asked the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) to explain the basis for the criteria it used to demarcate the Ganga River's floodplain in Varanasi, noting potential discrepancy between its adopted methodology and rules. A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and expert member A Senthil Vel was hearing the matter regarding an alleged illegal construction by M/s Sri Wari Chemicals Private Ltd inside the active floodplain zone at Ramghat in Varanasi.

CCTVs in police stations: SC says things moving very well

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said things are moving well and have taken a positive turn in the matter concerning installation of CCTVs in police stations across the country. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was informed by senior advocate Siddhartha Dave, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in the matter, that substantial progress has been made. "It is heartening to note that in this matter, things are moving very well and we must give credit to Dave for his efforts," the bench said, adding that things have taken a positive turn in the last few months.

The top court was hearing a suo motu matter concerning the lack of functional CCTVs in police stations. During the hearing, the bench flagged two issues — extension of the funding scheme for installation of CCTVs in police stations and maintenance of cameras installed. The law officer appearing for the Centre said he would take instructions on these aspects. The top court granted two weeks to the law officer to take instructions and posted the matter for hearing on August 5. It noted that the amicus has placed before it a note based on the meeting held on July 11 with the representatives of the Centre, states and the Union Territories (UTs).



On May 13, the amicus had informed the bench that most of the States were proceeding in the right direction and substantial work was carried out with regard to the installation

of CCTVs in police stations. Earlier, the issue concerning utilisation of funds by the states for the installation of CCTVs was flagged before the court.

The bench was informed that the Centre gives 100 per cent funds in UTs and 90 per cent in the hilly States. It was told that in the remaining States, the Centre gives 60 per cent, while the remaining 40 per cent funding is by the respective State. The top court had earlier directed registration of a suo motu case over the lack of functional CCTVs in police stations after taking cognisance of a media report. The apex court had in 2018 ordered the installation of CCTV cameras across police stations to check human rights abuses. In December 2020, the top court directed the Centre to install CCTV cameras and recording equipment at the offices of investigating agen-

cies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA). It said that States and UTs should ensure that CCTV cameras were installed at every police station, at all entry and exit points, main gate, lock-ups, corridors, lobby and reception, as well as in areas outside the lock-up rooms so that no part was left uncovered. The top court had said that CCTV systems must be equipped with night vision and have audio as well as video footage. The court had made it mandatory for the Centre, states and the UTs to purchase such systems which allow storage of data for at least one year.

Jadhav proposes Ayush OPDs in military hospitals

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

Union minister Prataprao Jadhav has written to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh proposing the establishment of Ayush OPDs and the provision of Ayush-based treatment services across military and field hospitals. Jadhav, the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ayush, highlighted in his letter the role played by the Armed Forces Medical Services in providing healthcare to the country's soldiers serving in diverse and often challenging operational environments. While noting that the Armed Forces have a robust modern medical infrastructure, he said integrating India's traditional systems of medicine can further strengthen preventive, promotive and holistic healthcare for defence personnel,



according to a statement issued by the ministry. Jadhav said Ayush facilities are presently available only in a limited number of institutions under the Ministry of Defence and that a large number of military and field hospitals do not yet have dedicated Ayush services. He suggested that expanding Ayush facilities across these hospitals would provide soldiers with greater access to evidence-based traditional healthcare, particularly in the areas of preventive healthcare, lifestyle management, rehabilitation and overall well-being.

Mehbooba slams Omar for ruling out Article 370 return

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Srinagar

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday said that Chief Minister Omar Abdullah "ruling out" the reinstatement of Article 370 was like pouring acid on the hopes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, trying to instil a sense of defeat among them. "Stating that (Article) 370 will not return is like throwing acid on the hopes of the people of J&K, which should not be done. He (Abdullah) wants to instil a sense of defeat among people, which I don't think any leader should do. It is not right," Mehbooba told reporters when asked about the issue. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, Abdullah said, "Some people tell us to talk about (restoration of) Article 370 and J&K's special status first... I want to ask them, what does Article 370 or 371



PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, along with former MLA Shoaib Lone, who recently joined the party, addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in Srinagar on Wednesday

mean without Statehood?" He argued that clubbing the demand for Statehood with the restoration of Article 370 only gave the BJP-led Centre an excuse to delay restoring Statehood to J&K. "To expect the BJP Government to restore Article 370 will be foolishness. What we can get from this Government is the foundation for restoring special status," Abdullah said. Asked about her views on Abdullah's remarks,

Mehbooba said, "The Kashmir issue is alive even today, and it has to be resolved." "Articles 370 and 35A should be a part of it (the resolution). Statehood is a part of what happened to us in 2019. It is like cutting off someone's feet and then saying, since the feet are gone, give me the shoes. I feel this is unfair to the people of J&K and to his (Abdullah's) own party (National Conference), which made grand promises

ranging from plebiscite to autonomy. I think it is unfair," she said. The former J&K chief minister also accused the National Conference (NC) of trying to normalise the post-2019 situation in J&K. "The NC has always normalised such situations. When the late (NC founder) Sheikh Abdullah signed the 1975 accord, there were posts of prime minister and 'Sadar-e-Riyasat'. But he compromised on both to become the chief minister, thereby normalising the erosions that took place until then. "Similarly, look at mar Abdullah's current activities going to the Jantar Mantar and talking only about Statehood, avoiding talking about Article 370 and now claiming that its restoration is impossible. I believe they are normalising what was done to J&K in 2019. They are normalising the situation, just like the BJP," Mehbooba said.

TMC MLA marshalled out of West Bengal Assembly, suspended

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

TMC MLA Kunal Ghosh of the Mamata Banerjee-led 'Kalighat' faction of the party was on Wednesday marshalled out of the West Bengal Assembly and later suspended for the remainder of the day after he disrupted proceedings by preventing Opposition Chief Whip Akhruzzaman from speaking during a debate. Dramatic scenes unfolded during the discussion on the budgetary demands of the Home and Hill Affairs Department, as Ghosh resisted eviction, prompting Assembly marshals to lift and carry him out of the House after repeated appeals by the Speaker failed to restore order. The scuffle triggered noisy protests, with members trooping into the well before proceedings could resume. The dramatic scenes, marked by slogan shouting, jostling and intervention by marshals, underscored the deepening rift within the Trinamool Congress legislature party between the TMC's Kalighat camp and the rebel



faction headed by Opposition Leader Ritabrata Banerjee. The commotion began when Akhruzzaman, a legislator aligned with the Ritabrata camp, rose to participate in the discussion. Ghosh immediately left his seat and stood in front of the microphone allotted to Akhruzzaman, repeatedly asking him why his own name had been removed from the list of speakers. "Why did you strike off my name? Why are you not allowing me to speak?" Ghosh was heard asking

Akhruzzaman, triggering loud protests from members on both sides. At that time, Ritabrata Banerjee was seated beside Akhruzzaman, while senior ministers Firhad Hakim and Javed Khan occupied the adjacent benches. Within moments, members trooped into the well of the House, bringing proceedings to a standstill. Several BJP MLAs also moved towards the well before Tourism Minister Shankar Ghosh persuaded them to return to their seats.

Congress protests in Delhi delay Karnataka Cabinet reshuffle

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

With the Congress central leadership occupied with the students' protest in the Capital, the much-awaited expansion of the Karnataka cabinet has been delayed further. Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and predecessor Siddaramaiah were unable to finalise the list of probable ministers with the Congress high command on Tuesday. The two leaders, along with Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president BK Hariprasad, had travelled to Delhi for the meeting. However, the discussion could not take place as Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, along with several MPs, took part on Tuesday in a dharna outside Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence over the police action against protesting students. "Senior leaders have been asked to come again for the discussion on Saturday or Sunday. The list may be finalised then, and the swearing-in will be next week," PWD Minister Satish Jarkihole told reporters. He added that the discus-



Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar

sion could not take place "due to the protest held in the interest of the country." Talks are also on for creating two posts of deputy chief ministers to represent the Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Lingayat communities. "We have heard about this, but the final decision is to be taken by the senior leaders," Jarkihole said, adding that he had not personally demanded a deputy chief minister's post from the ST community. Before leaving for Bengaluru, Siddaramaiah

held a breakfast meeting in Delhi with a few legislators, including Basavaraj Rayareddy, Ashok Pattan, Rajendra Rajanna, Basavaraj Shivannavar and Tejaswini Gowda, among other State Congress leaders. Asked about his next visit to the national Capital, Siddaramaiah said the decision rested with the Congress high command. Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah and Hariprasad flew back to Bengaluru on a private flight after the meeting fell through.

Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav led a sit-in outside the PM's residence demanding Modi's resignation over Monday's police action against protesting students. The chief ministers of Karnataka and Kerala, along with several MPs, joined the dharna, which began around 3.30 pm after Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi visited injured students at a hospital. Rahul Gandhi was

detained and released later on Tuesday night. Preliminary talks were held last week, but the list could not be finalised after AICC president Mallikarjuna Kharge had to leave for Bengaluru on urgent work. "The discussions have just started... very soon there will be an expansion of the Karnataka Cabinet," AICC in-charge for Karnataka Randeep Surjewala had said after that round. The reshuffle is also expected to address the vacant assembly speaker's post as it fell vacant after UT Khader took over as health minister and the vacancy of deputy chairperson of the Legislative Council. Surjewala had said selection of probable candidates would factor in caste, religion and regional representation, with young leaders likely to get priority. A woman minister is also expected to be inducted, as the Cabinet currently has no woman member. With Delhi visits piling up and Kharge yet to take stock of the State unit's list, sources said the leadership faces mounting pressure to manage competing claims from aspirants.

Govt warns of exponential rise in drone drug smuggling

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

Agencies have noticed an exponential rise in the use of drone-assisted narcotics smuggling by drug trafficking syndicates, who are using encrypted digital platforms to shield operatives' identities and obfuscate financial transactions, with Punjab emerging as the "most affected border State", the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday. In a written response, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said drone-assisted drug trafficking has witnessed an "exponential rise", making Punjab "the most affected border State" in the country. Rai said trends of cross-border narcotics infiltration reveal that drug trafficking



MoS Home Affairs Nityanand Rai speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Wednesday

syndicates operating from across the border have increasingly been employing sophisticated methods such as drones, GPS-enabled consignments, encrypted communications and local receiv-

er networks to infiltrate heroin, methamphetamine and arms and ammunition into India. "In 2025 alone, 305 drone-related drug trafficking incidents were reported nation-

wide, of which 298 occurred along the Punjab border, resulting in the seizure of about 460 kg of narcotic drugs, including 448 kg of heroin, 9 kg of methamphetamine and 3 kg of opium, which reflects the concentration of this emerging threat in the State," Rai said. He said the Government is extending comprehensive support for combating trans-border narcotics trafficking through various means like deployment of advanced anti-drone systems along most vulnerable stretches, installation of enhanced surveillance systems including CCTV cameras, PTZ (Pan-Tilt-Zoom), NVD (Night Vision Devices), strengthening border fencing through installation of new design fence, border flood light, etc.

Google defends Play Store after Hyderabad cyber crime police name India head

FAIR REPORT ■ New Delhi

Google on Wednesday said it has initiated an immediate investigation after being alerted about alleged cyber fraud cases involving investment apps and found that only one of them was available on the Play Store and complies with its financial services policy. The comment from the tech giant assumes significance as Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police has named the "Head of Google in India" as a co-accused in three cyber fraud cases in which the complainants alleged that fraudsters cheated them in the name of high returns to their investments by making them download "fake" apps from Google Play Store. "Google Play strictly prohibits all forms of deception. We investigated this issue as soon as we were alerted, and confirmed that only one app was available on the Play Store. Our reviews



reveal that the app complies with Play's financial services policy," a Google spokesperson said. The spokesperson further said Google reviews valid legal removal requests when notified through the correct legal processes "and, where appropriate, we restrict or remove

apps in keeping with local laws". In the Hyderabad cases, complainants have alleged that they downloaded the fraudulent trading applications, believing them to be genuine and trustworthy because they were available in the Google Play Store. Based on the three separate complaints, police registered cases under relevant sections of the IT Act and BNS against the fraudsters and the Google India Head. A senior police official said that they are in the process of issuing a notice to Google India seeking information about such apps. The complainant stated that the accused, through the fraudulent investment platform, whose app is available on the Play Store, dishonestly induced him to transfer huge sums of money on the false promise of high investment returns and then refused to release his funds.

