

FAIR REPORT

THE DAWN OF A FEARLESS PEN

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Rescue workers try to put out a fire at a mail sorting center after a Russian air guided bomb strike in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine. AP/FTPIPHOTO

Rousing Reception for Dharmendra Pradhan as Massive Crowd Gathers at Bhubaneswar Airport

■ FAIR REPORT
BHUBANESWAR

Former Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan received a grand welcome at Bhubaneswar airport on Tuesday as hundreds of BJP workers, supporters and well-wishers gathered to greet the senior leader upon his arrival.

Visuals from the airport showed a large crowd raising slogans, waving party flags and cheering Pradhan, underscoring his continuing political influence in Odisha. Party workers described the turnout as a reflection of his enduring connect with the state's cadre and grassroots supporters.

The reception comes at a politically significant time, with the BJP intensifying organisational activities and public out-



reach in Odisha. Senior party leaders and local office-bearers were present to receive Pradhan, who acknowledged the enthusiastic welcome and interacted briefly with supporters.

The show of strength is being viewed as a demonstration of the BJP's organisational mobilisation in the state, where the party has sought to consolidate its political footprint through sustained public engagement and cadre-driven campaigns.

Rahul Gandhi Launches Blistering Attack on Education Minister Pralhad Joshi, Says 'India's Women Will Never Accept Him'

■ FAIR REPORT
NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi, accusing him of defending individuals accused of rape and questioning his suitability to head the country's education system.

In a strongly worded statement posted on social media, Gandhi said, "There can be no filthier type of man than one who defends rapists." He further alleged that Joshi's appointment was "an insult to our education system and an insult to every student in it."

Referring to the large



number of women enrolled in educational institutions across the country, Gandhi said, "Crores of young women study in the institutions he now oversees," adding that "India's wom-

en will never accept PM Modi's new Education Minister." The remarks mark a sharp escalation in the political confrontation between the Congress and the BJP, with Gandhi directly

targeting the minister's moral credibility and fitness for office.

The BJP had not immediately responded to Gandhi's allegations at the time of writing. The controversy is expected to intensify political exchanges, with the ruling party likely to challenge both the substance and tone of the Congress leader's claims.

The allegations made by Rahul Gandhi reflect his political position and have not been independently verified. Any assessment of the claims would depend on the underlying facts, evidence and responses from the parties concerned.

'Change Your Heart's Angle, Not Your Camera's': Priyanka Gandhi Targets PM Modi Over Selfie Videos in Lok Sabha



■ FAIR REPORT
NEW DELHI

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday launched a sharp political attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Lok Sabha debate on the anti-paper leak legislation, accusing the government of relying on image-building exercises instead of addressing the concerns of millions of young Indians.

Linking the issue of examination paper leaks with the government's outreach to Gen-Z, Priyanka Gandhi questioned whether carefully crafted social media content could restore the confidence of students who have repeatedly faced disruptions in recruitment and competitive examinations.

"If you want to win back Gen-Z's trust, shooting videos from different camera angles won't cut it," she said, before delivering a pointed swipe at the Prime Minister: "Change the angle of your heart, not the angle of your camera."

The remarks come days after Prime Minister Modi's selfie-style videos attracted nearly 40 crore views across digital platforms, becoming a major social media talking point. Priyanka Gandhi sought to contrast the government's online messaging with what she described as the unresolved anxieties of stu-

dents affected by recurring paper leak controversies.

Her intervention transformed a legislative debate into a broader political critique, arguing that trust among young voters cannot be rebuilt through optics alone. Instead, she suggested, the government must demonstrate accountability by ensuring transparent recruitment systems and protecting the aspirations of job seekers.

The Congress has consistently accused the BJP-led government of prioritising political branding over governance, particularly on issues affecting students and unemployed youth. Priyanka Gandhi's remarks echoed that line of attack, framing the paper leak crisis as a test of administrative credibility rather than communication strategy.

The government had not formally responded to her comments at the time of writing. Meanwhile, the debate on the anti-paper leak Bill continued in Parliament, with the Opposition expected to intensify its scrutiny of the legislation's enforcement framework and its ability to deter future examination fraud. Priyanka Gandhi's remarks are political criticism made on the floor of Parliament. The government has not yet issued a response, and the broader policy debate over examination reforms remains ongoing.

'Disciplined Youth Will Define Rajasthan's Future': CM Bhajan Lal Sharma Unveils Vision for a Skilled, Startup-Driven Generation

HEMRAJ TIKAMCHAND
■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

Positioning youth as the cornerstone of Rajasthan's long-term development agenda, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Tuesday said that a disciplined, value-driven and skilled young population would be the driving force behind a "Developed Rajasthan." Addressing students, young professionals and volunteers during the Sapno Ki Udaan programme at the Chief Minister's Residence, Sharma outlined the state government's roadmap for creating greater employment opportunities, strength-



ening skill development and fostering entrepreneurship.

Highlighting the priorities of the BJP-led "double-engine government," the Chief Minis-

ter asserted that decisive measures to curb examination paper leaks, a record pace of government recruitment, expanded support for startups and sustained investments in

skill development were collectively reshaping the aspirations of Rajasthan's youth.

"The future of Rajasthan will be determined by the discipline,



character and capabilities of its young citizens," Sharma said, emphasising that governance reforms aimed at transparency and merit-based recruitment were designed

to restore confidence among job aspirants.

The interaction brought together a diverse cross-section of young achievers, including students, athletes,

young professionals, Sambal Sakhis, NCC cadets and NSS volunteers, reflecting the government's attempt to engage directly with the state's emerging workforce.

Law and Justice Minister Jogaram Patel was also present during the event.

With Rajasthan seeking to position itself as an investment and innovation destination, the government's outreach signals a broader push to align education, employability and entrepreneurship with the state's long-term economic ambitions. The emphasis on clean recruitment processes, startup ecosystems and workforce skill-ing is expected to remain central to the government's vision of transforming Rajasthan into a competitive, future-ready economy.

India blames Pakistan for SAARC stagnation amid Maldives push

FAIR REPORT ■ New Delhi

India on Tuesday underscored its commitment to meaningful regional collaboration in South Asia while pointing to the actions of one member state as the primary barrier to progress within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The comments came in reply to Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's recent appeal for the group's revival.

Speaking at a regular media interaction, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that New Delhi has long supported vigorous regional ties and continues to pursue them. He noted that people across South Asia understand which nation and which patterns of behaviour have obstructed SAARC's effectiveness, adding that genuine cooperation depends on mutual goodwill.

Muizzu raised the issue



External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal

during the Maldives' Independence Day address on Sunday. He described SAARC as an important vehicle for regional stability and urged members to settle disagreements through talks. The Maldivian leader also indicated his country's readiness to help restart stalled meetings and, if required, to facilitate dialogue between parties.

SAARC brings together Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Established in 1985, the organisation last held a summit in Kathmandu in 2014. Plans for a 2016 gathering in Islamabad collapsed after India declined to attend in the wake of a major terrorist assault on an army base in Uri that September. Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan similarly stayed away, and no summit has convened since.

Over the past several years India has directed greater attention toward BIMSTEC, viewing the Bay of Bengal

grouping as a more practical and productive arena for multi-sectoral cooperation. Officials have indicated that limited movement under SAARC prompted this shift in emphasis.

Bangladesh has voiced comparable interest in reactivating SAARC in recent months, sometimes linking it to complementary work with BIMSTEC. India has consistently maintained that any deeper engagement requires an environment free from cross-border terrorism and built on trust.

The regional body represents roughly two billion people and a combined economy approaching five trillion dollars. While technical exchanges have occurred intermittently, the prolonged absence of leadership-level meetings has left the organisation largely dormant.

Jaiswal's remarks reaffirmed India's openness to cooperation provided the necessary atmosphere of goodwill exists.

MHA approves ad hoc promotions to ease officer shortage in Ladakh

FAIR REPORT ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved temporary promotions to address the officer shortage in Ladakh. Eligible officials will fill vacant Group 'B' Gazetted Administrative Service posts. Announced on July 27, 2026, this temporary measure aims to improve governance in the region.

The MHA explained that while a permanent system for regular promotions is being developed, the Union Territory Administration can use temporary appointments to fill current vacancies. This short-term solution should quickly help departments facing staff shortages and give officials who have been waiting for promotions a chance to move forward.

This approval came after Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena personally raised the issue with the Ministry. He pointed out that regular promotions have



been delayed because the necessary Recruitment Rules have not yet been announced. Because of this, many departments have had fewer officers, slowing decision-making and affecting public services.

After the Ministry's approval, LG Saxena said the decision would strengthen governance in Ladakh and support the career goals of deserving officials. "It will help overcome the shortage of Gazetted officers, improve administrative efficiency and ensure uninterrupted delivery of public services," he said. He has asked the Chief Secretary to start the promo-

tion process immediately so the benefits reach people as soon as possible.

Officials say the shortage has been especially noticeable in field administration, where gazetted officers are key to coordination, supervision, and the timely implementation of schemes. By letting eligible candidates take on these roles temporarily, the administration expects smoother operations, faster approvals, and better service for people in Leh, Kargil, and other remote areas.

The MHA has stipulated that all such promotions must strictly adhere to the guidelines. The Ministry has

said that all promotions must follow the rules set out in the Department of Personnel and Training's Office Memorandum dated 3 April 2013, as updated. Candidates must meet the eligibility criteria to ensure a fair and transparent process. Once these temporary promotions are in place, they should bring new talent into important administrative roles, help keep governance running smoothly, speed up decisions, and improve public services in the Union Territory.

The ultimate goal, the present measure offers a practical bridge that balances administrative exigencies with the career progression of officials who have been waiting for years. The step marks a significant intervention by the Centre in response to the ground realities of Ladakh's administrative setup. It reflects the priority being accorded to strengthening institutions in the strategically important Union Territory.

SC slams CBI, Delhi Police over silence in Indiabulls probe

FAIR REPORT ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday pulled up the CBI and Delhi Police's Economic Offence Wing (EoW) for being silent on allegations of dubious transactions involving Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited (IHFL), terming their conduct "shocking" and saying it appeared to be a "case of quid pro quo". In July 2024, the tainted company changed its name to Sammaan Capital Limited and changed the shareholding pattern.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana criticised the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for neither taking a final call on registering a regular case despite earlier directions nor filing a status report on the investigation carried out so far.

"Owing to the negligence of CBI and EoW of Delhi Police in not even filing a status report and total failure to apprise this court about steps taken for registration of RC (Regular Case) for investigation, we would have summoned the heads of these agencies but for the persuasion of ASG SV Raju, who assures that needful will be

done and status report will be filed within two weeks," the bench said in its order.

The bench had initially directed the presence of the CBI director and Delhi Police commissioner in the court but deferred the move after Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Raju assured the court that a comprehensive affidavit and a status report would be filed within two weeks.

"This is a case which is very shocking to us. Investigating agencies are keeping silent on the status of investigation in the case. Definitely this is a case of quid pro quo. They are completely silent... file a status report," CJI Kant said.

Appearing for petitioner NGO Citizens Whistle Blowers Forum, advocate Prashant Bhushan said the last affidavit filed by CBI in January had referred to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) finding instances of siphoning of funds.

He pointed out that the EoW had registered certain FIRs and the CBI was considering clubbing five cases flagged by the ED with the Yes Bank investigation.

Bhushan also informed the court that former Indiabulls promoter Sameer Gehlaut had moved to London and



argued that the matter warranted the constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT).

The bench noted that no affidavit had been filed by the investigating agencies since January and asked the ASG what the probe agencies were doing in the case.

Raju said the investigation was continuing and that the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) had taken up one case while the EoW was investigating four cases.

"Please give me two weeks to file a comprehensive affidavit in the matter along with a status report," the ASG said, adding that it has been found that all loans extended by Sammaan Capital have been repaid in full, with interest.

The CJI said, "What has

the CBI been doing from January to July? We don't want to hold an investigation against innocent persons. Let them have the courage to say that because money was returned, no offence was made out. What was EoW doing? Does it not have the guts to file a status report in the case? In this case, the conduct of CBI and EoW was highly questionable."

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Sammaan Capital, said Gehlaut has no shareholding in the company and has nothing to do with it. Senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Nalin Kohli, appearing along with Singhvi, also denied any wrongdoing.

On December 17 last year, the top court directed the CBI Director to take a final call

within a week on the registration of regular cases and file a fresh compliance affidavit on the date fixed.

Earlier, on November 19, the court had questioned the "reluctance" of the CBI and SEBI to probe the allegations of "dubious transactions" against IHFL. It ordered the agency director to hold a meeting with SEBI, the SFIO and the ED to look into the matter.

It had also pulled up the Ministry of Corporate Affairs for the compounding of multiple offences committed by IHFL, and came down heavily on SEBI over the "double standards" adopted by the market regulator in different cases over its jurisdiction to probe into illegalities.

The NGO has alleged large-scale irregularities in the affairs of IHFL, claiming that the company and its erstwhile promoters advanced dubious loans to entities owned by large corporate groups, which then allegedly routed the funds back into the accounts of companies owned by the promoters to increase their personal wealth.

The NGO has challenged the February 2, 2024, order of the High Court refusing to order an investigation into the matter.

President Murmu's 300 gifts to be e-auctioned beginning from August 5

FAIR REPORT ■ New Delhi

As many as 300 gifts, including a memento in honour of Operation Sindoor, received by President Droupadi Murmu will be e-auctioned from August 5.

Launched on Tuesday to mark the occasion of the successful completion of four years of Murmu's presidency, this initiative reflects the enduring spirit of public service, inclusivity, and shared national responsibility, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. Murmu (68) was sworn in as the 15th President on July 25, 2022, making her the country's first tribal head of state.

"On completion of four years of her Presidency, President Droupadi Murmu launched the third edition of e-Upaahaar, featuring 300 curated presidential gifts for public auction. The auction will be open from 5 August to 5 September 2026. All proceeds from the auction will be used to support social causes," the Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a post on social media on Tuesday.

These are far more than ceremonial gifts and they are expressions of affection, respect, and goodwill, reflecting India's extraordinary cultural diversity, artistic excellence, and the collective aspirations of its people, read a booklet on the e-auction of the presidential gift collection.

"Every artefact carries a unique story of a place, a tradition, a community, or a memorable moment in the nation's journey," it said.

One of the items on the auction is a "memento in honouring Operation Sindoor".



"This golden, hued memento symbolises national strength, pride, and unwavering resolve," it said.

It stands as a living tribute to the Indian Air Force's valour and commitment to national defence, inspiring future generations with ideals of bravery, honour, and patriotism, the description reads.

Another item on auction is "I03 LVM3 (formerly GSLV MK III) launch vehicle replica", symbolising India's space achievements, technological excellence and self-reliance.

The Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LVM3), earlier known as the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (GSLV MK III), is ISRO's most powerful heavy lift space launch vehicle.

It can carry up to 4,000 kilograms into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit and up to 8,000 kilograms into low earth orbit.

A painting of Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath ji, replica of Shri Tripureshwari Devi temple (in Tripura), Rajasthani miniature painting and a framed painting of Gautam Buddha are also among the selected gifts to be made available on auction.

West Bengal launches anti-corruption helplines

FAIR REPORT ■ Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari formally walked the talk against corruption, formally inaugurating on Tuesday an Artificial Intelligence-powered control room at State secretariat Nabanna with four dedicated toll-free numbers. This, in addition to his Government formally rolling out ₹5-lakh Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme for those who would fall short of eligibility for the centrally sponsored Ayushman Bharat insurance scheme.

The helpline numbers would operate between 9 am and 6 pm from Monday to Saturday. The newly inaugurated helpline numbers—155334 for cut money, 155335 for syndicate raj, 155337 for illegal road taxes, 155339 for illegal distilleries—would allow people to register complaints regarding any kind of corrupt acts, including extortion, and deficiency in service, from delay in imple-



West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari during a felicitation ceremony for 100 NEET toppers from the State in Howrah

menting infrastructural projects to denial of Government services.

"From now on, all the complaints will directly reach me regarding cut money, syndicate raj, illegal tolls or illegal distilleries that often cause hooch tragedies," the Chief Minister, whose Home Department on Tuesday effected a massive reshuffling in the subaltern section of the police and executive administration, said.

About 99 Block Development Officers, 31 Police Inspectors and 8 inspectors of women's police

stations were on Tuesday shuffled out, sources said.

The helpline numbers are comparable to a similar initiative by the previous Mamata Banerjee Government, which had launched a Didi ke Bolo (tell it to Didi — as Banerjee was called) campaign in 2021 but arguably failed to achieve its desired ends.

Apart from starting the helpline the Adhikari Government on Tuesday formally rolled out the Mukhyamantri Swasthya Bima Yojana (MMSBY) (Chief Minsiter's Health Insurance

Scheme), enabling the citizens to avail of a cashless health insurance package of up to ₹5 lakh—"but not those who qualify for Ayushman Bharat or have already enrolled in the previous Swasthya Saathi scheme," sources said.

The package will be available to all members of the family that has less than a household income of Rs 8 lakh per annum, the Chief Minister said. The scheme would be valid throughout the country, Government sources said.

However, those who were already enrolled in CGHS or ESI schemes would not be eligible for the MMSBY, sources said. Other people who have been excluded from the scheme are State or Central Government employees, pensioners under Government health frameworks, and 70-plus senior citizens covered directly under Ayushman Bharat. The scheme would require Aadhaar-based verification, sources said.

Omar hits out at Mehbooba: 'If' is not a genuine apology

FAIR REPORT ■ Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday 'literally' took a masterclass to explain the difference between regret and forgiveness.

The tutorial was delivered promptly by Omar shortly after the former Chief Minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, expressed regret over her recent remarks at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, which had triggered a political controversy.

Responding to the controversy, Mehbooba Mufti said she had attended the protest at the request of Kashmiri students studying outside Jammu and Kashmir. During an interaction with journalists at Jantar Mantar, Mufti used the word "bahana" (excuse) to refer to militancy, a remark that drew criticism.

"I said that militancy becomes a bahana (an excuse). I did not use that word accidentally or in haste. I thought about it before saying it."

However, she said the remark had subsequently been interpreted differently from what she intended.

"That single word was blown completely out of proportion."

Speaking to media persons on the sidelines of the Mega Job Fair 2026 at Amar Singh College, Srinagar, Omar Abdullah said there is a clear difference between expressing regret and seeking forgiveness.



Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah during a job fair at Desh Bhagat University in Srinagar on Tuesday

She (Mehbooba Mufti) had not issued an unconditional apology over her controversial remarks, asserting that expressing regret with the word "if" cannot be termed a genuine apology.

"When someone says 'if anyone was hurt,' it is not an apology. There is a difference between regret and forgiveness," Omar said.

Omar also criticised PDP MLA Waheed Parra over his claim that the controversial video was AI-generated, saying the PDP chief herself had now admitted that the video was genuine.

"For five days people were told it was AI. Today their own party president admitted she herself made those remarks. Those who misled the people should answer for it," he said.

On the PDP's proposed August 5 protest seeking restoration of Article 370, Omar said the party itself was responsible for the

present political situation.

"If they had not brought the BJP to power in Jammu and Kashmir, we would not have reached this stage. If they now realise their mistake and want to rectify it, that is their decision," Omar Abdullah said.

Addressing a press conference in Srinagar during the day, Mehbooba also clarified she never claimed that the video was fake or AI-generated and made it clear that her statement had been misconstrued because of an incomplete expression made in haste while speaking to several journalists.

She said she has dedicated nearly three decades of her life to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and has never sought personal gain through politics, adding that whatever she has earned is the trust and affection of the people.

"If my words have hurt the sentiments of the people of

Jammu and Kashmir, I sincerely apologise. The people here consider me their own, and if they have been pained because of my remarks, I express my regret," she said.

Mehbooba accused political opponents of attempting to exploit the controversy for political gains and alleged that her remarks were deliberately projected out of context to damage her credibility.

She further said despite facing political and personal pressures over the years, including actions against members of her family after 2019, she has continued to raise issues concerning the rights and dignity of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Reiterating her stand, the PDP president said her political struggle has always remained focused on safeguarding the interests of Jammu and Kashmir and serving its people.

Mobile disaster alerts reach all networks, remote areas: Govt

FAIR REPORT ■ New Delhi

From avalanches in the Himalayas to industrial and man-made disasters in urban centres, India's mobile-based disaster alert system issues geo-targeted warnings in regional languages that reach users across all mobile networks, including those in remote and vulnerable areas, the Government informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

In a written response, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said that the



Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai

Cell Broadcast Alert System is used to provide timely warnings for disasters with very short lead time, including cyclones, tsunamis, heavy rainfall, light-

ning, flash floods, thunderstorms, hailstorms, avalanches, cloudbursts and industrial or man-made disasters, besides other events requiring immediate public alerting.

Warning-generating agencies provide geo-targeted warnings, which are then disseminated to people in the affected areas.

Rai said the system operates through the Integrated Alert System based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP), implemented by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

Rajnath unveils policy reforms for ICG

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday here unveiled two significant policy reforms for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) aimed at promoting gender parity in the induction and service conditions of officers, and streamlining the administrative procedures for granting ex gratia to the families of personnel reported missing at sea while on duty.

The first policy directive establishes a comprehensive, women-centric approach by ushering in a gender-neutral framework for the induction of officers into the ICG.

The highlights of the policy include induction of women candidates into both Short Service Appointments (SSA)



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the unveiling of two policy reforms for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in New Delhi

and Permanent Appointments (PA) at par with their male counterparts. SSA has also been opened for male candidates.

The policy ensures equal opportunities for career progression, commencing right from the ab-initio training

phase. The existing PA women officers shall also be considered for promotion to higher positions subject to fulfilment of eligibility conditions. The existing serving women officers on SSA will also be provided an option to convert their service to a PA,

subject to the fulfilment of stipulated conditions. This progressive step reflects the Government's commitment to Nari Shakti and equal opportunity in the nation's maritime security apparatus.

The second policy reform brings relief and administrative ease to the Next of Kin (NoK) of the personnel who unfortunately go missing at sea in the line of duty. The key highlights of the policy include the authority to declare an ICG personnel missing at sea while on duty as 'presumed dead' for the purpose of ex-gratia.

The reform significantly eases and accelerates the process for the grant of ex-gratia compensation and terminal benefits to the NoK.

This measure ensures that the families of brave person-

nel are not subjected to prolonged administrative delays during times of mental trauma.

Lauding the ICG for its exemplary service over the past five decades, Rajnath Singh exuded confidence that these forward-looking policies will further strengthen the morale and operational efficacy of the force as it marches toward its Swarnim Jayanti (Golden Jubilee) in 2027.

He reaffirmed Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government's resolve to strengthen the ICG as a modern, capable and future-ready maritime force. Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, DG ICG Director General Paramesh Sivamani and other senior officials attended the event.

Change dil ka angle, not camera angle: Priyanka

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi needs to change his "dil ka angle" instead of camera angles if he wants to win over the Gen Z, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi told Parliament Tuesday in a sharp barb over his Instagram outreach to student protesters last week.

Priyanka Gandhi also launched a stinging attack on the Government over the lathi-charge on students, saying every 'lathi' blow on any boy or girl, hurt the Government's prestige more than the backs of the students. "Why was it necessary to fire tear gas shells at students, to rain lathis on them? Why was it necessary — to humiliate young girls by tearing their clothes, to have them beaten mercilessly? Why was it necessary to fire pellet guns and AK-47s at the country's youth? Are they terrorists," the Congress general secretary asked, participating in a discussion in Lok Sabha on 'The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill 2026'.

"Today, these questions are being asked not just by the Congress party, but by the entire nation, and the responsibility to answer them lies with the Government. Why does this Government fear the country's youth? Who gave it the right to suppress their voices," she said. Priyanka Gandhi also dismissed the Government's announcement of setting up fast-track courts to deal with paper leaks, saying fast track courts already have a very poor record. "Blaming



the opposition in Parliament, playing hollow political games won't work. If the prime minister wants to win over the Gen Z, then making videos with different camera angles will not help. The prime minister needs to change his 'dil ka angle', not the angle of cameras," she said. "This new generation is aware and has an immense capacity to recognize lies. To win their hearts, PM Modi will have to step onto the path of truth," Priyanka Gandhi said.

Under Modi's governance, grave "injustice and barbarity" has been done to the youth, she alleged. "Accept this truth, take responsibility, take concrete steps, and consult experts and take all stakeholders along to prepare a new education system after deep consultations...PM Modi will have to take steps to create employment. Education and healthcare must expand in the country, so that children can dream of a bright future," she said.

In her 29-minute speech, Priyanka Gandhi also said students can be removed from the streets, but not their questions. "Every 'lathi' blow on any boy or girl,

hurt the Government's prestige more than the backs of the students. The youth of the country are demanding justice?' not charity. They had come not to topple the Government, but to redeem their trust," she said.

Home Minister Amit Shah and Modi will have to answer who gave the order to attack the children with pellet guns, she asked and added that the question is being asked by the entire country.

Talking about her visit to RML hospital last week to meet a young woman injured in the protests and the interaction with her mother, Priyanka Gandhi asked Modi and Shah as to what was the need for suppressing an innocent little girl, humiliating girls and tearing their clothes, unleashing tear gas, pellet guns, and AK-47s on students.

Priyanka Gandhi said the demand of the protesting students was the: tion should be taken against those who leaked exam papers, reform of education system, education minister Dharmendra Pradhan should resign, and action should be taken against those who brutalized students, and an apology be issued.

No paper leak case in Punjab, Opposition lying: Cheema



Harpal Singh Cheema

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Chandigarh

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Tuesday rejected the Opposition's charge of a paper leak in the State, claiming that it is trying to spread lies against the AAP Government.

Addressing the media here, Cheema said there has been no paper leak in the past four years of the Bhagwant Mann Government.

Opposition parties have been attacking the Mann Government over the issue of a cheating racket detected recently in a pharmacy officer recruitment exam and are demanding the resignation of Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains and Health Minister Balbir Singh.

On July 19, Punjab Police dismantled a highly sophisticated, interstate cheating racket operating during the pharmacy officer examination. A total of seven key conspirators and 28 candidates were held. Police also recovered 27 battery-operated wireless cheating devices.

Cheema said, "There has not been a single case of paper leak in Punjab. Opposition parties are trying to mislead our youths."

Referring to the pharmacy officer exam, the minister said some youths in the exam were caught cheating using electronic means.

Students must be protected, not arsonists: BJP

FAIR REPORT ■ NewFAIR REPORT

The BJP on Tuesday said the Supreme Court's interim order on petitions related to protests over the alleged NEET paper leak draws a clear distinction between genuine student protesters and those involved in violence, stressing that while "dissent is okay, danga (riot) is not".

The remarks came after the Supreme Court directed authorities not to take coercive action against protesters while continuing investigation in FIRs and to release those under 18 years of age, provided they have no criminal records. It also asked authorities to preserve electronic and digital evidence relating to the recent nationwide stir over the NEET paper leak.

"The allegations prima facie warrant consideration of a fair and independent probe, which must also address the concerns of families of over 200 injured police personnel," a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant observed, while hearing a batch of peti-



BJP spokesperson Shehzaad Poonawalla

tions alleging police brutality during the demonstrations. BJP national spokesperson Shehzaad Poonawalla said the Supreme Court has dealt with the matter in a "mature" and "sensitive" manner. "SC has weighed in very maturely and sensitively. It must be welcomed by all," he said in a post on social media.

"Students and arsonists or rioters are different. Students must be protected. Arsonists cannot. The court says this. Dissent is okay, danga (riot) is not. Students, okay; arsonists, not. Protests

are okay; provocation is not," he said. Poonawalla asserted that the Government is already committed to ensuring that no cases are pursued against genuine protesters.

"But cases will continue for arsonists. There can be no blanket suraksha kawach (protection shield) for those who assault, molest, etc with established criminal antecedents," he added. Citing CJJ's observations, Poonawalla also said the court has noted that the allegations "prima facie warrant consideration of a fair and independent probe, which must also address the concerns of families of over 200-250 injured police personnel."

The bench, also including Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, directed all States where protests were held to preserve CCTV footage, drone recordings, body-camera footage, wireless communication records, PCR logs and other digital evidence pertaining to the protests. It also ordered that any digital data collected on protesters be preserved but not brought into the public domain.

Assam flood situation improves with receding water levels, no fresh deaths

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Assam's flood situation improved with no fresh fatalities reported, the number of affected people decreasing to 4.45 lakh and water levels receding in several districts, officials said on Tuesday. A central team visited Sivasagar, one of the worst-hit districts in the current wave of floods, and reviewed the situation in the eastern parts of the state, they said.

The toll is currently at 68 with no fresh deaths recorded and no person was reported missing, an official bulletin said. The officials said Sivasagar, Golaghat, Charaideo, Jorhat, Nagaon and Kamrup (Metropolitan) continued to be impacted by the floods, but the number of people hit by the deluge decreased to 4.45 lakh. Charaideo remained the worst-hit district, where 1.88 lakh people remained affected, followed by Sivasagar (1.44 lakh) and Jorhat (74,458).

Till Sunday, the number of affected people was over 5.24 lakh across five districts. Altogether 90 relief camps remained opera-



Assam CM Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma chaired a review meeting with Ministers, MLAs, District Commissioners and senior officials to review the prevailing flood situation and the ongoing relief and rehabilitation measure

tional, sheltering 28,695 displaced people. Additionally, 94 relief distribution centres were also functional, the bulletin said. The Dhansiri (S) river was flowing above the danger level at

Numaligarh in Golaghat district. Multiple agencies, including the NDRF, SDRF and civil defence personnel, are carrying out the rescue and relief operations. A total crop area of 37,139.52 hectares was still

submerged, while damage to houses, roads and other infrastructure was reported from various parts of the affected districts, the officials said.

Chief Minister thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "personal attention" to the Assam flood, which has claimed 68 lives so far while over 4.45 lakh people continue to reel under the deluge. He said the state Government has been able to reach all affected villages and was working on a war footing to provide relief to the flood-hit population.

PM Modi on Tuesday held a meeting with Union Ministers and BJP MPs belonging to Assam at the Parliament House complex to review the state's flood situation and later said on X the Centre was working closely with the Assam Government in providing relief to the affected people. A five-member central team led by MHA Joint Secretary M Ramachandrudu visited Sivasagar on Monday to review Upper Assam's flood situation with state ministers Keshab Mahanta and Bimal Borah, and local officials

accompanying them. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, in a social media post, said power restoration work was going on in a phased manner.

"Since this morning, the number of families without power has declined by another 25 per cent. As floodwaters continue to recede, power supply is being restored across more affected areas. I will continue to share regular updates and keep you posted until power is restored to every affected household," he said in the post late on Monday evening.

Sarma also said that with water receding, disinfection and fogging drives across villages have been started to prevent the outbreak of any disease. Water Resources Minister Susanta Borgohain said steps were being taken to bury livestock and animals killed in the deluge. "The recent floods in Assam have sadly claimed the lives of many livestock. To prevent water contamination and the spread of diseases, the deceased animals are being buried and disposed of scientifically," he said.

21 crore screened, 6 lakh treated for Hepatitis: Govt

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

More than 21 crore people have been screened for viral hepatitis and over six lakh patients have received free treatment under the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme (NVHCP), the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

Marking World Hepatitis Day and eight years of the programme, Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel called for a "Hepatitis-Mukt Bharat" and urged the Centre, states and other stakeholders to intensify efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Patel said India is among the few countries providing free treatment for Hepatitis C and free management of Hepatitis B — a serious liver infection caused by a virus.

She said the cost of medicines has been reduced to less than a dollar and quality diagnostics are being made increasingly accessible to facilitate early diagnosis and timely treatment.

Highlighting the pro-



Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel

gramme's expansion, Patel said screening and treatment services are now available through the country's network of over 1.85 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, taking hepatitis care closer to communities.

She said the Hepatitis B vaccine, introduced under the Universal Immunisation Programme in 2011, has achieved more than 92 per cent birth-dose coverage.

The minister, however, said only around 65 per cent of pregnant women are currently being screened for Hepatitis B and urged states and Union Territories to achieve 100 per cent screening to ensure timely administration of the Hepatitis B birth dose and Hepatitis B

Immunoglobulin (HBIG) for newborns of infected mothers.

Calling Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C "silent killers", Patel stressed the need to vaccinate healthcare workers, strengthen interventions among high-risk groups and create greater public awareness about free testing and treatment services available at Government health facilities.

Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava said the programme has established 1,153 treatment centres, surpassing the target of one treatment centre in every district, including more than 70 specialised centres providing advanced care.

Mehbooba Mufti announces protests on August 5 for restoration of Article 370

FAIR REPORT ■ Srinagar

People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday announced that her party would hold peaceful protests at district headquarters across Jammu and Kashmir on August 5 to press for the restoration of Article 370 and "resolution of the Kashmir issue".

The Centre revoked J&K's special status by abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019.

"All our people, who are sitting here, will hold peaceful protests in their districts on August 5 for the restoration of Article 370, 35A, and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue," Mehbooba Mufti said at a press conference at the party headquarters here on the occasion of the PDP's 27th foundation day.

The announcement comes close on the heels of National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, ministers, MLAs and party workers holding a protest in the national capital on July 20, demanding the immediate restoration of statehood to the Union Territory.

Mehbooba Mufti, the former chief minister, said that August 5 was the day "everything was stripped from us". She said the party, on its foundation day, has passed a resolution including on "resolution of Kashmir issue".

"The party hereby resolves to reaf-



firm its belief in 'peace with dignity' as the only sustainable path towards lasting peace, through dialogue, reconciliation, confidence-building and meaningful democratic engagement among all stakeholders," the resolution read.

She said PDP is committed to "peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue", alongside the restoration of Article 370, Article 35A, "our identity, and statehood".

"PDP remains committed to this cause. We will continue our struggle, and God willing, we will achieve it," she said.

Mehbooba Mufti said her father and PDP founder Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's vision cannot move forward

unless Jammu and the Kashmir valley walk together, understand each other's pain and sorrow and work jointly for each other's progress.

"We will endeavour to walk hand-in-hand, just as the people of Kargil and Leh in Ladakh move forward together," she said.

She also called for restoration of trade and connectivity, saying J&K has been constrained like a flower in a pot, even as it can become a vital bridge between Central Asia and South Asia. "Whether across the Line of Control (LoC) or other regional borders, we will strive to reopen these routes for movement and trade.

"The Muzaffarabad and Rawalakot trade routes opened in 2005 following our efforts were unfortunately closed. We appeal to the Central Government to reopen them for trade, and also to open the Sharda Peeth corridor for our Kashmiri Pandit brothers and sisters," she said.

The PDP president called for the release of political prisoners and undertrials, and withdrawal of the Army from areas where militancy has reduced.

"In areas where militancy has reduced, as the Government of India itself frequently claims, we urge the Central Government to relocate the army back to barracks. This is not a new demand; we have voiced it previously and are reiterating it today," she said.

Parliament panel summons Meta, X, Google over regulation

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

A Parliamentary panel has summoned representatives of major social media platforms, including Instagram, along with officials of the ministries of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Home Affairs, on August 3 to discuss regulation of social media and digital platforms.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, who chairs the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, said the panel has called representatives of Meta (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), Google, X (formerly Twitter) and Snapchat on August 3 to explain how they protect the privacy of women, children, farmers, rural residents, labourers and the general public, and ensure public order.

The meeting comes days after social media, particularly Instagram, was extensively used by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) to publicise and mobilise participants for its student protest at Jantar Mantar. The demonstrations, which were held over the NEET-UG paper leak and other issues, drew widespread attention online, with videos, reels and live updates from the protest sites being shared across social media platforms.

According to the notice issued on Tuesday, the agenda includes a "briefing by the representatives of (i) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY); (ii) Ministry of Home Affairs; and (iii) Social and Digital Media Platforms — Snapchat, Google, X (formerly Twitter), Meta (Facebook and Instagram) on the subject 'Social and digital platforms and their regulation'."



BJP MP Nishikant Dubey

