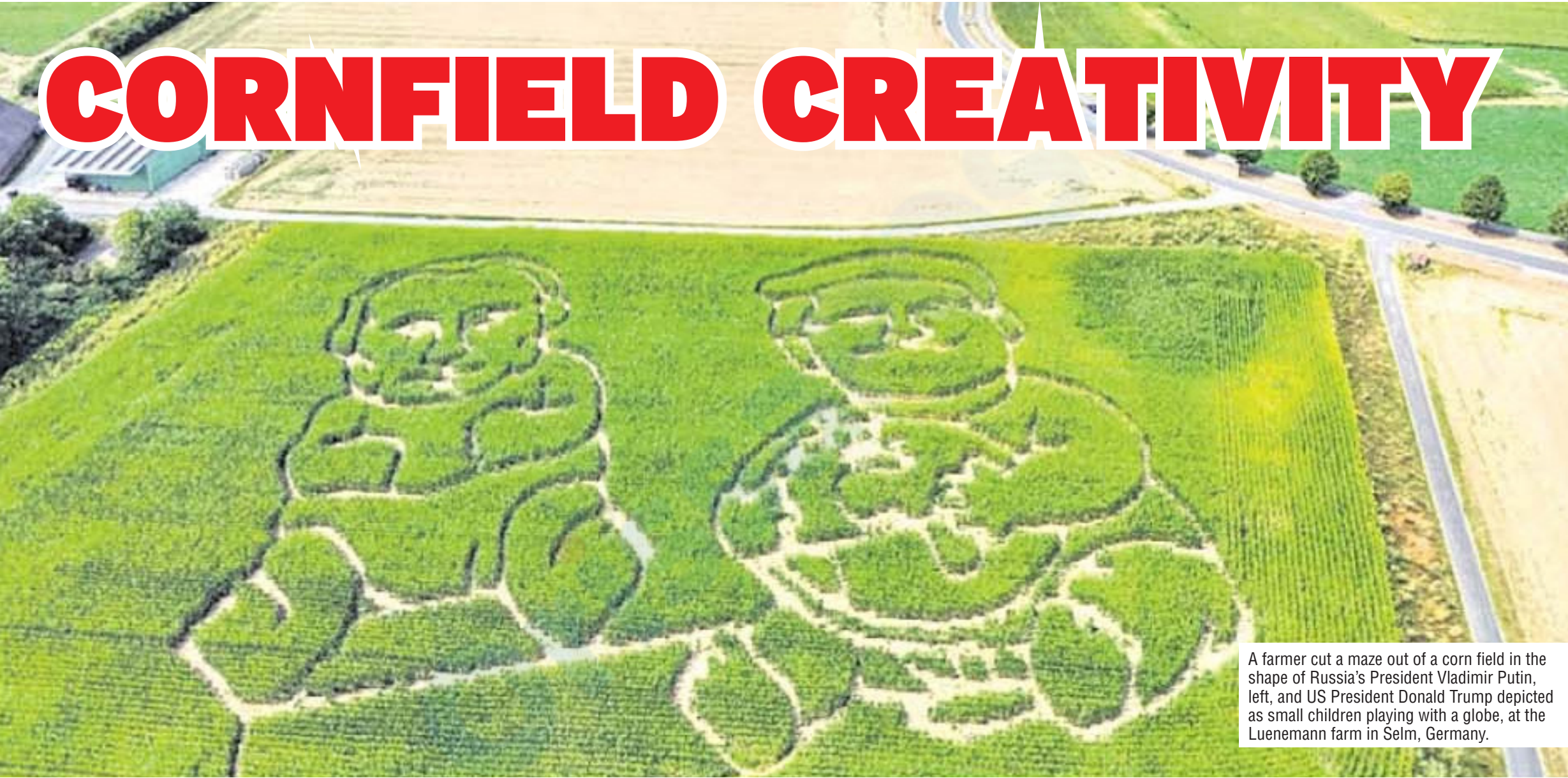


FAIR REPORT



A farmer cut a maze out of a corn field in the shape of Russia's President Vladimir Putin, left, and US President Donald Trump depicted as small children playing with a globe, at the Luenemann farm in Selm, Germany.

OBC Report Sets Stage for Rajasthan's Local Polls, CM Pushes 'One State, One Election' Vision

■ FAIR REPORT
HEMRAJ TIKAMCHAND

Jaipur | Rajasthan's road-map for long-pending local body elections gathered fresh momentum on Wednesday after Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma received the 2026 report of the Rajasthan State Other Backward Classes (Political Representation) Commission on OBC reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies.

The report, submitted by Commission Chairman Madan Lal Bhati and other members, is seen as a significant procedural milestone in clearing the path for local elections, where the issue of OBC political reservation has remained central.

Reaffirming the government's commitment to grassroots democracy, Sharma said the state was moving swiftly towards fulfilling its promise of conducting local body elec-



tions on schedule. He asserted that strengthening democratic institutions at the village and municipal levels remains a key priority of the government.

The Chief Minister also strongly pitched the concept of "One State, One Election," arguing that synchronised elections for local bodies would ensure continuity in governance,

minimise administrative disruptions, and reduce expenditure on repeated electoral exercises. According to Sharma, a unified election cycle would save time, public money and government resources while allowing development and welfare programmes to proceed without interruption. The meeting was attended by Panchayati Raj

Minister Madan Dilawar, Law and Justice Minister Jogaram Patel, Urban Development and Local Self Government Minister (Independent Charge) Jhabar Singh Kharra, Chief Secretary V. Srinivas, OBC Commission Secretary Ashok Kumar Jain, and Commission members Prof. Rajeev Saxena, Gopal Krishna, Mohan Morwal

and Pawan Mavandiya, along with senior government officials.

The submission of the commission's report assumes political significance as Rajasthan prepares for the next round of Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Body elections, with OBC reservation expected to remain a decisive factor in the electoral framework.

Grade III Teachers Stage Sit-In at Jaipur's Shaheed Smarak, Demand Education Minister's Resignation

JAIPUR: Hundreds of Grade III teachers gathered at Shaheed Smarak in Jaipur on Wednesday, escalating a long-simmering demand for a transparent transfer policy into a direct call for Education Minister Madan Dilawar's resignation. The protest, organised under the banner of the Third Grade Teacher Struggle Committee, began as a demonstration seeking implementation of a transfer and deputation policy, alongside redressal of several long-pending demands. By evening, the tone had visibly hardened.

"Until 5 PM today, we were only demanding transfers from the government, but now we want the resignation of Education Minister Madan Dilawar," said Sunil Mahla, state convener of the committee, addressing the gathering. "Our sit-in will continue until the government fulfils our demands."

Mahla accused the state government of abandoning a core electoral commitment. "The Rajasthan government is backing out of its election promise.

IndiGo Flight Develops Mid-Pushback Snag at Jaipur Airport, Over 70 Passengers Rushed Off Aircraft

Flight 6E-7031 to Ahmedabad delayed by 3.5 hours after cockpit alert forces last-minute abort

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

A routine departure turned tense at Jaipur International Airport on Wednesday when IndiGo flight 6E-7031, bound for Ahmedabad, was forced to abort its pushback after a technical snag flashed inside the cockpit — with more than 70 passengers still strapped into their seats. The Airbus had completed boarding and was already being pushed back toward the runway when the warning appeared. Taking no chances, the pilot brought the aircraft to an immediate halt and turned it back toward the stand, refusing to proceed until the fault was cleared.

What followed was an anxious wait. Airline staff moved swiftly to deboard all passengers one by one, escorting them back to the arrival hall as engineers swarmed the aircraft for a full technical inspection.



For over three hours, passengers who had already braced themselves for take-off found themselves back where they started — stranded at the terminal with no immediate answers. IndiGo has since informed passengers of the delay, with the flight now rescheduled to depart around 5 PM — nearly three and a half hours behind schedule. Airline sources maintained that the abrupt call was driven entirely by caution: the moment the technical indication surfaced, the flight was pulled back rather than risk taking to the skies. The final go-ahead, officials said, will only come once engineers formally certify the aircraft safe for departure — a decision that, for now, keeps over 70 passengers waiting on IndiGo's word.

Delimitation Math Shifts Dramatically: DMK Support Claim Could Bring NDA Within Striking Distance

■ FAIR REPORT
NEW DELHI

A fresh political claim has sparked intense speculation over the future of the proposed Delimitation Bill, with reports suggesting that the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) could extend support to the legislation—a move that, if realised, would significantly alter the parliamentary arithmetic.

According to the claim, the DMK's strength of 22 members in the Lok Sabha and 8 members in the Rajya Sabha, combined with the eight MPs of the NCP (Sharad Pawar fac-

tion), would bring the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) substantially closer to securing the special majority required for the constitutional measure. By this calculation, the ruling alliance would reportedly need the backing of only a handful of additional MPs to cross the threshold.

The development, if confirmed, would mark a significant political shift, particularly given the sensitivity surrounding delimitation and its potential implications for the balance of parliamentary representation among



states. However, there has been no official confirmation from the DMK or the Union government regarding any decision to

support the Delimitation Bill. Political observers caution that parliamentary numbers alone do not determine the fate of a constitutional amendment, as voting patterns, attendance and formal party positions remain crucial. With delimitation expected to be among the most consequential constitutional debates in the coming years, any realignment of support is likely to trigger fresh political negotiations and sharpen the national discourse on representation, federalism and electoral reform.

Tiranga Yatra Marks Seven Years Since Article 370 Reforms, BJP Reaffirms Kashmir Integration Narrative

■ FAIR REPORT
SRINAGAR

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday organised a Tiranga Yatra in Srinagar to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the abrogation of Article 35A and the constitutional changes to Article 370, reiterating its position that the 2019 decision ushered in a new era of integration, development and governance in Jammu and Kashmir. Party leaders, workers and supporters participated in the march carrying the national flag, with the event highlighting the BJP's continued emphasis on national unity and constitutional integration. The yatra also

served as a symbolic reaffirmation of the Centre's stance that the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status has strengthened democratic institutions, accelerated development and improved connectivity in the Union Territory. The constitutional changes announced on August 5, 2019, revoked the special status previously accorded to the erstwhile state and reorganised it into the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The move remains one of the most consequential constitutional decisions in independent India's history and continues to evoke sharply differing political views.

Jharkhand job exam row: students expand stir, CM offers talks

FAIR REPORT

■ Ranchi

Students and job aspirants intensified their protest over alleged irregularities in recruitment examinations in Jharkhand with five demonstrators joining an indefinite hunger strike, even as Chief Minister Hemant Soren said the question paper leak issues are a national problem and offered talks to resolve the impasse.

The protest, which began on July 25 under the banner of the JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch at Jaipal Singh Munda Stadium here, emerged as one of the biggest student-led movements in the state in recent years.

The demonstrators are demanding cancellation of the 14th Jharkhand PSC Civil Services Examination and an independent probe into the alleged irregularities in the recruitment test either by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or by a panel of retired high court judges from

outside Jharkhand.

They also stressed comprehensive reforms in the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) and Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC).

Ahead of the monsoon session of the State Assembly, set to begin on Thursday, five protesters, including two women, joined Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha (JLKM) leader Devendra Nath Mahto, who has been on a hunger strike for the past four days.

Mahto's health became a matter of concern after his blood sugar and blood pressure levels dropped significantly.

Social activist Sonam Wangchuk, who recently observed a 26-day hunger strike in Delhi over the NEET paper leak issue, spoke to Mahto over the phone and urged him to at least drink water to safeguard his health. Following Wangchuk's appeal, Mahto agreed to end his complete fast by drinking water



while continuing his indefinite protest.

The protesters said they had been forced to adopt the extreme form of agitation after repeated appeals to the Government failed to produce any concrete action.

“Our five friends, including two women, have joined the hunger strike to strengthen the move-

ment and press for our demands,” said JPSC-JSSC Reforms Manch spokesperson Jivan Kumar. One of the fasting protesters, Sabita Kumari, said the Government had ignored students' concerns, leaving them with no alternative but to intensify their agitation.

Another agitator, Habiba, made an emotional appeal to the CM,

saying, “The chief minister is like our guardian. When children remain hungry, a guardian also feels pain. We hope he will listen to our grievances. We want action and justice, not just assurances.”

The protesters also organised a Tiranga Yatra at the protest site to highlight their demands and draw public attention to the alleged recruitment irregularities.

As the agitation gained momentum, the State administration initiated efforts to break the deadlock through dialogue.

Ranchi Sub-Divisional Officer Kumar Rajat and Additional District Magistrate (Law and Order) Dhananjay Kumar visited the protest site and invited a five-member delegation of students for discussions at the Chief Minister's residence.

“The students have sought some time to deliberate on the proposal,” the SDO said.

Responding to the growing protests, Soren acknowledged the seriousness of the issue,

describing recruitment paper leaks as “not merely a Jharkhand issue but a major national problem affecting the youth across the country.”

In a post on X, Soren said the concerns raised by students were being treated with utmost seriousness by his Government.

He asserted that probe agencies were working round the clock and those responsible for the alleged irregularities were being sent to jail.

“Our objective is not just to investigate but to provide a permanent solution to students' concerns,” the chief minister said, adding that the doors of the state Government remained open for the students to present their demands and suggestions.

He assured that every point would be examined carefully and a concrete solution would be announced soon.

Earlier in the day, Soren met Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar and briefed him on the

ongoing protests as well as the progress of the investigation.

According to a Raj Bhavan statement, the Governor described the alleged recruitment irregularities as a matter of grave concern and stressed that the commissions that conduct competitive exams must function with complete transparency and credibility to maintain public confidence, particularly among the youth.

The CM assured the governor that no injustice would be allowed against students.

The issue also triggered political reactions across party lines.

A BJP delegation led by Leader of Opposition Babul Marandi visited the protest site and reiterated the party's demand for cancellation of the 14th JPSC examination and a CBI investigation into the alleged irregularities. Marandi alleged that the ongoing CID probe was intended to cover up the issue instead of exposing those responsible.

Parliamentary panel calls for next generation reforms in Panchayati Raj

FAIR REPORT

■ New Delhi

The Government should undertake a comprehensive review of the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and formulate a roadmap for the “next generation of panchayat reforms” to strengthen democratic decentralisation, financial sustainability and citizen participation, a parliamentary committee has recommended.

In a report tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj said that while PRIs have emerged as important instruments of democratic decentralisation over the past three decades, several structural challenges continue to persist.



“The Committee are of the considered view that after more than three decades of experience, the time has come to move beyond the mere creation of institutions and focus on strengthening their effectiveness, responsiveness and capacity to deliver sustainable and inclusive development,” the report said.

It recommended that the Ministry of Panchayati Raj “undertake a comprehensive review of the functioning of

Panchayati Raj Institutions in consultation with States, experts and other stakeholders and formulate a roadmap for the next generation of panchayat reforms”.

The roadmap, it said, should focus on “deepening democratic decentralization, strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing financial sustainability, promoting digital governance and ensuring greater citizen participation”.

The panel also recom-

mended institutionalising “robust performance assessment and monitoring mechanisms” and promoting “evidence-based planning and decision-making at the grass-roots level through appropriate indices and data-driven frameworks”.

The committee also expressed concern that Gram Sabha meetings were losing their vitality.

“The Committee notes with concern... that in many areas Gram Sabha meetings are becoming ceremonial in nature and public participation has declined considerably,” it said.

Warning that this would weaken grassroots democracy, the report said, “The Committee are of the view that weakening of Gram Sabhas would adversely affect the spirit of democratic decentralisation envisaged under the Constitution.”

PM hails J&K, Ladakh growth post-Article 370 abrogation

FAIR REPORT

■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the lives of people in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh have witnessed wide-ranging transformation, with expansion of infrastructure and growth in opportunities in education, healthcare, entrepreneurship and sports sectors.

On the seventh anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, Modi said the Centre remains committed to the development of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and to ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to “dream big, achieve and contribute” to the making of a Viksit Bharat.

He said infrastructure in the two Union Territories has expanded, while opportunities in areas such as education, healthcare, entrepreneurship and



sports have grown.

Be it women or marginalised communities, those who were denied their basic constitutional rights for decades have been empowered thanks to the full application of the Constitution of India, Modi added.

In a post on social media, the prime minister said, “Seven years ago, on this day, Articles 370 and 35(A) became history, marking a

decisive new chapter in the journey of Jammu and Kashmir as well as Ladakh...”

On August 5, 2019, the BJP-led Centre abrogated Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and the erstwhile state was bifurcated into two union territories — Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

“We reaffirm our commitment to the progress of

Jammu and Kashmir as well as Ladakh and to ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to dream big, achieve and contribute to the making of a Viksit Bharat,” he added.

PM Modi said, “August 5 this year assumes even greater significance as this is the year the nation commemorates the 125th birth anniversary of Syama Prasad Mookerjee”.

“His lifelong commitment to national unity continues to inspire generations. What he envisioned decades ago found historic fulfilment on 5th August 2019,” he said.

Mookerjee was the founder of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the precursor of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. He had fought for full integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India by scrapping Article 370. Born on July 6, 1901, Mookerjee died under detention on June 23, 1953, in Srinagar.

Union Govt approves key foreign postings to IMF, ADB, ICAO

FAIR REPORT

■ New Delhi

The Centre on Wednesday approved key foreign postings, including those in Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian Development Bank in the Philippines, among others.

Senior bureaucrat Satyajit Mohanty, currently working as Joint Secretary in the Defence Ministry, has been appointed to the post of Representative of India in the Council of International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), Montreal, Canada for three years, a Personnel Ministry order said.

Rahul Jain, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, has been named Senior Adviser to the Executive Director (India),



International Monetary Fund (IMF), Washington DC, USA for a period of three years, it said.

Jain is a 2005-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Madhya Pradesh cadre.

Baldeo Purushartha, a 2002-batch IAS officer of Punjab cadre, will be Senior Adviser to the Executive Director, Asian Development Bank, Manila, Philippines, the order said.

He is currently joint Secretary in the Department



of Economic Affairs.

The foreign deputation tenure of Hemang Jani as Senior Adviser to the Executive Director, World Bank, Washington DC, USA has been extended for a further period of two years beyond July 16, 2027 (that is up to July 16, 2029), the order said.

Kapil Patidar, Director in the Department of Economic Affairs, has been appointed as Adviser to the Executive Director (India), IMF, Washington.

West Bengal BJP cracks whip, expels 30 workers over extortion

FAIR REPORT

■ Kolkata

Cracking the whip hard on erring party men, the Bengal BJP has expelled at least 30 of its subaltern-level party members and suspended about 250 of them following complaints of extortion against them.

The decision comes days after State party president Samik Bhattacharya and subsequently senior leader and Minister Agnimitra issued strong warnings to the party brass against stepping into the shoes of the Trinamool Congress by taking to corrupt ways that included extortion.

Some inside sources, however, placed the number of expulsions at 22, adding 250 workers at mandal level had not been suspended but slapped with show-cause notices for their conduct. A senior State leader associat-



Representative image

ed with the party disciplinary committee said that initially 30 workers had been expelled following complaints but later on some of them were taken back as they were found innocent.

“We are firmly walking our talk... Our leadership is very strong about the issue of corruption... our State president had repeatedly warned

the workers against tolabbaji (extortion)... they were asked to mend their ways, asking which they would face the music and now they are facing the music,” the leader said, adding the next step could be criminal action.

“The party will keep a close watch on the workers... if they are found guilty, then they could even be criminal-

ly prosecuted,” another leader said.

Earlier, Bhattacharya said that the disciplinary committee had found no major complaints against any MLA or MP. “Some workers at the grass-roots level have been doing some mischief... we told them that we will not tolerate this... if we are not Trinamool Congress,” Bhattacharya had

earlier warned, saying “if the party workers continued to follow in the footsteps of the TMC then the future of BJP in Bengal was bleak.”

Incidentally, Paul had during a meeting on Monday said that some people were thinking that as they had come to power they could earn money via extortion but warned: “such actions will be dealt with very firmly.”

Saying that Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari was following a zero-tolerance policy against corruption, which was why he had started four helpline numbers for the people to register their complaints. “These helpline numbers have been provided against illegal toll tax, illegal syndicates, extortion, and liquor dens. People can call there to lodge complaints,” she said, adding the BJP Government would not preach one thing and act in a different manner.

Ex-Ethiopian Airlines chief Tewolde named Air India CEO

FAIR REPORT

■ New Delhi

Air India on Wednesday appointed former Ethiopian Airlines chief Tewolde Gebremariam as its new CEO and Managing Director to replace Campbell Wilson, marking another change of guard at the airline after the takeover by the Tata Group four years ago. Gebremariam, who will be the second foreign CEO at Air India, will be taking over the reins at a time when the airline is working on its ambitious expansion plans amid multiple external headwinds. Wilson resigned in April this year after overseeing the initial phase of airline's transformation. The country's two top airlines — Air India and IndiGo — now have foreign CEOs. On August 3, Irish national and former chief of global airlines' grouping IATA, Willie Walsh, took over as IndiGo CEO.

Announcing his appointment, Air India said Gebremariam is widely recognised as one of the most suc-



cessful aviation chief executives. The executive transition marks a pivotal juncture in the airline's transformation journey to become a world-class, leading global airline, the airline said in a release.

“During his decade-plus tenure as CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group, he spearheaded a multi-billion-dollar expansion, transforming a regional carrier into Africa's largest, most profitable, and decorated airline group — growing revenue by more than fourfold and fleet size nearly three-fold,” Air India said in a release.

According to the release, his unique strength lies in managing complex operational land-

scapes, driving cultural transformation, building competitive global hubs, and developing world-class MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul) and aviation training infrastructure.

Tata Sons and Air India Chairman N Chandrasekaran said that having completed the initial phase of stabilisation, integration, and fleet commitments under Campbell's guidance, the airline is now entering a critical execution and expansion era. “Tewolde's track record in building one of the world's most efficient and profitable airline groups makes him uniquely suited to lead Air India.” His operational

expertise, commitment to safety, and vision for hub development will be instrumental as we establish Air India as a premier global carrier and a source of national pride,” he said. Gebremariam said Air India carries an incredible legacy, and the opportunity to build a world-class global airline that reflects India's extraordinary economic potential is uniquely exciting. The airline's board conducted a comprehensive search to identify the next leader for Air India, overseen by a dedicated Board committee. The committee rigorously evaluated internal as well as highly accomplished external candidates from across the world, according to the release.

His international experience includes serving as Regional Director for India and Southeast Asia based in Mumbai, followed by a stint as Area Manager for Saudi Arabia in Jeddah. When Ethiopian Airlines launched direct flights to the United States, he was

appointed Area Sales Manager for Northeast USA and Canada, based in New York.

His rise within Ethiopian Airlines continued with appointments as Executive Officer for Marketing and Sales in 2004 and Chief Operating Officer in 2006, where he oversaw commercial operations, flight operations, customer services, and maintenance and engineering.

On January 1, 2011, he was elevated to Group Chief Executive Officer, a position from which he built Ethiopian Airlines into Africa's largest and most profitable carrier. Beyond the airline, Gebremariam has held several influential positions in the global aviation ecosystem. He has served on the Board of Governors of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the executive committee of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA), and the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Group on Sustainable Transport.

Zero coal leakage drive: CISF faces hurdles in Jharkhand, West Bengal

FAIR REPORT

■ Ranchi

A month after the Union Government launched a ‘zero coal leakage’ drive, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) flagged several obstructions, including a lack of “timely and adequate” logistical support from coal field managements, manpower shortages and a dearth of necessary funds and legal powers across Jharkhand and West Bengal.

The paramilitary force's field formations have written to the Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL), Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL), Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) and the CISF headquarters in Delhi apprising them of these issues.

Despite these challenges, official sources and documents accessed by PTI state that the central force has



recovered over 6,171 metric tonnes of coal that was either pilfered or stolen, sealed 106 illegal mines and registered 229 FIRs since the drive began a month ago on July 4.

The CISF is entrusted with guarding the country's major coal fields. The Union Government recently authorised the CISF as a designated agency to undertake search and seizure operations under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957

(MMDR) to check coal theft from the coalfields under its jurisdiction.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) directed the force to launch a special drive against the coal mafia and criminals to achieve the target of ‘zero coal leakage’.

Official sources said the CISF had to delay or postpone raids at a number of places for periods ranging between seven and ten days due to a “lack of timely and adequate logistical support” from the coal field managements.

NC, PDP observe black day on Article 370 anniversary

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Jammu

Mainstream political parties, barring the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), on Wednesday observed a 'black day' to mark the seventh anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A in Jammu and Kashmir.

The BJP workers took out a 'Tiranga' rally at several places, maintaining that the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A on August 5, 2019, marked the beginning of a new era of unity, equality and development for Jammu and Kashmir and fulfilled a long-standing national commitment.

The ruling National Conference party leaders remained at the forefront in staging protest demonstrations in both the capital cities of Jammu and Srinagar.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who visited flood-hit Poonch to assess damage and relief efforts, once again reiterated his commitment to reversing the Centre's

decisions, saying the ruling National Conference has not accepted the "current circumstances".

His political adversary, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chief and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, highlighted that no amount of manufactured normalcy or carefully crafted narratives can erase the aspirations of the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Their demand for dignity, justice, and the restoration of 370 remains as strong as ever.

PDP's young turk, Ilitja Mufti, also took out a protest march in Srinagar in support of the restoration of the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Ilitja, along with party leaders, including MLA Pulwama Waheed Para, and spokesperson Mohit Bhan, took out the protest march at Sonwar.

Raising slogans demanding the restoration of Article 370, the PDP leaders tried to march towards the Dalgate area, but were stopped by



the police. Speaking to reporters, Ilitja said the party will "fight" for the rights "snatched from us seven years ago".

"I want to remind the Prime Minister and the Home Minister that we will fight for it. We want to protest peacefully for it. You are snatching even that right from us. The police here are doing real terror," she said.

Echoing similar sentiments, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, in

a post on X, said, "Seven years, we haven't forgotten, and we haven't reconciled, far less accepted our current circumstances."

My party and I remain committed to reversing all that was done to J-K that took away our rights and threatens our identity, he said.

BJP marked the seventh anniversary of the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A with celebrations across the Union Territory.

At the party office in Srinagar's Jawahar Nagar area J-K BJP general secretary (organisation) Ashok Kaul cut a cake to commemorate the occasion.

The party's youth activists had planned a bike rally from Pantha Chowk to the Lal Chowk City centre, but police did not allow them to proceed towards Lal Chowk and diverted them to the party office.

In south Kashmir's Anantnag district, BJP workers took out a Tiranga rally to celebrate. Scores of party workers, carrying the Tricolour and raising patriotic slogans, participated in the procession.

The rally passed through various parts of the town under tight security arrangements.

BJP leader Altaf Thakur said August 5 was a day of celebration as it ended the system of two constitutions and two flags in the country.

To mark the day, the ruling National Conference leaders held a protest in Srinagar, demanding

restoration of the special status of the erstwhile state. Scores of NC leaders, MLAs and workers, led by Minister Sakina Itoo, assembled at the party headquarters, Nawa-i-Subah, and took out a protest march.

Carrying placards in support of Article 370 and the restoration of special status, the protesters tried to take the march out of the party office complex but were stopped by police.

The Congress and the National Conference (NC) held separate protest rallies in Jammu on the seventh anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, observing it as a "Black Day".

They also demanded the restoration of statehood and constitutional safeguards for land, jobs and other rights.

The police prevented the protest marches towards the city centre, leading to a brief jostling with workers at different locations. We want our statehood back. Our jobs, our land and our rights must be protected. Instead

of listening to our democratic demands, the Government is stopping us from protesting. We are observing a 'Black Day' today. We will continue our agitation until Jammu and Kashmir regains its statehood," a Congress leader told reporters.

In Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir LG Manoj Sinha dismissed the protests held by NC and PDP for the restoration of special status to the Union territory, saying he "did not see" any demonstrations.

"I did not see any (protest). If I see, I will talk to you (about it)," the LG told a reporter when asked about protests by the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Sinha said August 5, 2019, the date marking the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, ended the "discriminatory system" in Jammu and Kashmir. "This day, I believe, is also important because it has a great historical significance in ending the discriminatory system," he said.

J&K LG hands over job letters to 37 terror victims' families

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Jammu

The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, on Wednesday handed over appointment letters to 37 Next of Kins (NoKs) of civilians who were brutally killed by terrorists.

He said it is a profound honour to stand with the families of terror victims on this historic day, and it is not merely about appointment letters but it is about remembrance of martyrs, justice to terror victim families, and the reaffirmation of our national will.

"My heartfelt tribute to the innocent civilians martyred by terrorists, and I salute the families who, after decades of anguish and wait, now hold appointment letters that restore dignity and liveli-



FAIR REPORT

hood. Sinha said these appointment letters are not just documents of employment, but they are symbols of social justice, recognition and the nation's solemn promise that its martyrs will never be forgotten, nor their families abandoned.

He also stated that our commitment is reflected in decisive action. After 5th

August 2019, we have dismantled the terror ecosystem to a large extent, strengthened law and order, restored equal rights and created opportunities that allow families to rebuild their lives with confidence.

"The transformation we witness today in Jammu and Kashmir is due to the historic changes of 5th August 2019.

That day marked a constitutional correction and a new beginning for the UT.

Discriminatory barriers were removed, and equal rights were extended to those who were suffering due to discriminatory laws. The principle of one nation, one flag, one constitution was fully implemented and one standard of dignity, justice, and opportunity for all the Indian citizens was upheld," the Lieutenant Governor said, further adding that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the marginalised groups, tribals, displaced persons from PoK and Chhamb and refugees have received legal rights such as full citizenship, voting rights and ownership rights over property under the Constitution of India.

Row over Mehbooba holding Tricolour upside down

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Jammu

Former Jammu and Kashmir Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Chief Mehbooba Mufti has once again sparked a political furore after she was spotted holding the National Flag upside down during a protest in Srinagar on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A.

The incident drew sharp criticism from the ruling party, with Union Minister Giriraj Singh calling her a "terrorist".

Hitting back, PDP MLA Waheed Ur Rehman Para on Wednesday termed Union Minister Giriraj Singh's remarks describing former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti as a "terrorist" as "outrageous" and "irresponsible". In a post on X, Para posted, "Giriraj Singh's remarks calling PDP President Mehbooba Mufti a "terrorist" are outrageous, irresponsible, and



beneath the dignity of a Union Minister. Such language against a former Chief Minister of J&K and a senior Muslim woman leader reflects nothing but prejudice and political intolerance. This is not a political statement; it is a reflection of Giriraj Singh's own

mindset". Singh also claimed that the BJP had tried to reform Mufti during its alliance with the PDP. "Since there was no improvement, we let her go," he said.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also reacted cautiously when he was asked to comment on the controversy.

"You have to ask this question from her. It must be a mistake. I cannot believe that a person who served as a CM would deliberately display the flag of the country upside down. I don't think it would have been done deliberately. It must be a mistake."

Interestingly, Chief Spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and a close aide of Omar Abdullah, Tanvir Sadiq claimed,

"There are only two possibilities — either Mehbooba Mufti deliberately displayed the national flag upside down, or she did not know the proper protocol despite having served as Chief Minister".

DRI seizes Pak-origin dry dates worth ₹3cr at Kandla Port

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence has seized 364 metric tonnes of Pakistan-origin dry dates worth ₹3 crore in a crackdown on attempts to circumvent India's prohibition on imports originating from the country.

In a statement, the Finance Ministry said the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has unearthed a case involving the clandestine routing and mis-declaration of Pakistan-origin goods through third countries.

In an intelligence-led



operation, officers of DRI intercepted 13 containers carrying 364 metric tonnes (MT) of dry dates, valued at approximately ₹3 crore, imported at Kandla Port. Investigation revealed that the goods, though declared as originating from the UAE, were in fact of Pakistan origin.

The enquiries established that the goods were first transported from Pakistan to Dubai and subsequently shifted to another set of containers before being exported to India.

The importers allegedly suppressed material facts and mis-declared the country of origin in an attempt to evade the prohibition on import of Pakistan-origin goods.

Accordingly, the entire consignment has been seized under the relevant provisions of the Customs Act, 1962.

Last week, DRI officers had uncovered an attempt to import around 14 MTs of Pakistan-origin Guggul resin valued at ₹1.4 crore through misdeclaration of description and country of origin at Tuticorin port.

Datia verdict sparks BJP reset, Tomar apologises

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Bhopal

In a significant political move following the BJP's defeat in the Datia Assembly bypoll, Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker and senior BJP leader Narendra Singh Tomar has publicly apologised to the Kushwaha community, acknowledging that his remarks during the election campaign may have caused hurt and contributed to the party's electoral setback.

Tomar became the first senior BJP leader to express regret after the party's internal assessment reportedly indicated that the influential Kushwaha community, which constitutes around 12 per cent of Datia's electorate, shifted its support towards the Congress, playing a crucial role in the bypoll outcome.

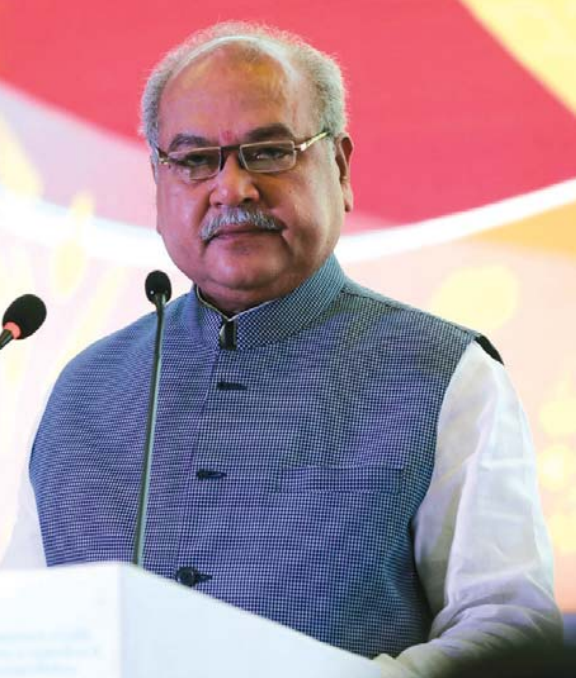
Tomar issued a signed letter addressed to members of the Kushwaha community. In the letter, he said the BJP and the Kushwaha community have always shared a close relationship and stressed that he has consistently respected the community throughout his public life.

He said he never intended to insult anyone and withdrew his earlier remarks, expressing regret if his words had hurt the sentiments of any member of the community.

The controversy stemmed from remarks made by Tomar during the campaign, in which he said the Kushwaha community had a tendency to switch sides, suggesting that its political loyalties often shifted. The statement drew sharp criticism from community leaders, who accused the veteran leader of questioning the community's political integrity and undermining its contribution to the BJP over the years.

The apology comes amid intense introspection within the BJP after the party lost the high-profile Datia bypoll to Congress candidate Kunwar Ghanshyam Singh by a margin of 6,016 votes. Party leaders believe even a limited shift in support among Kushwaha voters may have significantly influenced the result.

Congress leaders have claimed they successfully consolidated support among Other Backward Class communities, particularly the



Kushwahas, through an extensive grassroots campaign led by Satna MLA Siddharth Kushwaha. The party had focused on booth-level outreach while the BJP grappled with internal discontent over ticket distribution and local factionalism.

The Datia defeat has triggered an unusually public review within the BJP. Soon after the results, Chief

Minister Mohan Yadav held a meeting with senior party leaders and campaign managers to assess the reasons behind the loss. The party subsequently dissolved its Datia district unit, constituted review committees and began examining allegations of internal sabotage and organisational lapses that may have contributed to the unexpected defeat.

Maharashtra bans analogue paneer for one year, cites food safety norm violations

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Mumbai

The Maharashtra Government has imposed a one-year ban on the manufacture and sale of "analogue" or non-dairy paneer in view of public health concerns and widespread violations of food safety norms, officials said on Wednesday.

Offenders could face life imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹10 lakh, as per a recent Government order.

Maharashtra is the second State after Chhattisgarh to impose such a ban.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said it found that several hotels, restaurants, caterers and other food establishments were using analogue paneer in place of conventional paneer without disclosing the substitution on menus, invoices or display boards.

Analogue paneer is a non-dairy substitute made using vegetable oils, starches, emulsifiers and other additives instead of milk fat. It is cheaper to produce than conventional paneer and generally contains lower



protein levels. A gazette notification issued by Maharashtra Food Safety Commissioner Tukaram Mundhe has prohibited the manufacturing, processing, preparation, packing, storage, distribution, wholesale and retail sale, as well as offering for sale, of analogue paneer across the State.

An FDA official said that the Food Safety and Standards Act permits such prohibitory orders for a maximum period of one year.

"The law itself has a provision of banning such items for one year only. As per our information, analogue paneer has very low nutri-

tional value. But there is no legal support for us to put a complete ban on such types of paneer," the official said.

The FDA has warned that serving analogue paneer as conventional dairy paneer without informing consumers would amount to an unfair trade practice under the Food Safety and Standards Act and attract penal action.

Depending on the extent of harm caused, offenders could face imprisonment -- from six months with a fine of ₹1 lakh to life imprisonment and a minimum fine of ₹10 lakh in cases where consumption of unsafe food results in death, the FDA said.

13,092 schools selected as PM SHRI schools across States, UTs: Government

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

The Government on Wednesday told the Rajya Sabha that 13,092 schools have been selected as PM SHRI schools across the states and Union Territories.

In a written response in the Upper House, Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary said the centrally sponsored PM SHRI scheme was approved by the Cabinet in 2022 and fund allocation, release and utilisation began in 2023-24.

"Under the PM SHRI scheme, as of now, a total of 13,092 schools have been selected as PM SHRI schools across the States/UTs including KVS/ NVS/ NCERT," the minister said.

The state and UT-wise



number of PM SHRI schools selected includes 1,888 in Uttar Pradesh, 982 in Andhra Pradesh, 946 in Maharashtra, 944 in Madhya Pradesh, 904 in Bihar, 840 in Odisha and 832 in Telangana.

Karnataka has 660 PM SHRI schools, according to the response.

As informed by the state Government of Karnataka,

the district-wise details of funds allocated, released and utilised in various districts under the PM SHRI scheme during financial year (FY) 2023-24, FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26 were also provided in the response.

During FY 2023-24, the approved project approval board (PAB) outlay of various districts of Karnataka was

₹5,023.46 lakh, funds released were ₹2,350.72 lakh and expenditure was Rs 991.42 lakh.

During FY 2024-25, the approved PAB outlay was ₹24,593.09 lakh, funds released were ₹1,856.32 lakh and expenditure was ₹1,102.01 lakh. During FY 2025-26, the approved PAB outlay was ₹26,902.07 lakh, funds released were ₹20,726.84 lakh and expenditure was ₹13,245.57 lakh.

The PM SHRI (Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India) scheme is a centrally sponsored initiative launched on September 7, 2022, to upgrade over 14,500 existing Government schools into model institutions that showcase the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

