

FAIR REPORT

THE DAWN OF A FEARLESS PEN

FIERY

OUTBURST

Eruptive activity continues on Mount Etna, where lava flows continue to descend on the slopes of the volcano, as seen from Serracozzo near Catania in Italy,

‘Their Struggle Is a Historic Chapter of Democracy’

Bhajan Lal Sharma Honours Emergency-Era Democracy Defenders

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Wednesday paid tribute to those who resisted the Emergency, describing their struggle as a historic chapter in the defence of democracy and a powerful reminder of the price paid to protect democratic values.

Addressing the Loktantra Senani Samman Samaroh at the Chief Minister’s residence, Sharma said the courage, sacrifice and commitment of democracy defenders during the Emergency represented an enduring legacy for the country. “The struggle of democracy fighters during the Emergency is a historic saga of the defence of democracy,” Sharma said, underlining the significance of their sacrifices for future generations.

The Chief Minister said the sacrifice and dedication of Loktantra Senanis should serve as a source of



inspiration for the younger generation, particularly at a time when democratic institutions and constitutional values remain central to public life. Sharma also urged those who experienced the Emergency and participated in the struggle for democratic freedoms to share their experiences with society. Their personal accounts, he said, can help younger generations understand the importance of democratic values and inspire them to work with greater commitment towards preserving and strengthening democracy.

From memory to responsibility

Sharma’s remarks sought to move the discussion beyond remembrance, framing the experiences of Emergency-era democracy defenders as a living lesson in civic responsibility. He urged the Loktantra Senanis to use their experiences not merely as memories of a turbulent period in India’s political history, but as a means of educating society about the importance of democratic freedoms, constitutional principles and responsible citizenship. The message was particularly directed at the youth: democracy, Sharma suggested, cannot be treated as an inherited entitlement alone; it must be understood, protected and strengthened by every generation. The ceremony thus became both an occasion to honour those who stood up during one of the most contentious periods in independent India’s history and a call to ensure that the lessons of that era are not forgotten. For Sharma, the legacy of the Loktantra Senanis is ultimately not about the past alone.

OPEN JAIL, OPEN TARGET: MURDER CONVICT GUNNED DOWN IN BROAD DAYLIGHT ON JAIPUR STREET

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

An open jail inmate was shot dead in broad daylight on a public street in Jaipur on Wednesday — a killing so brazen it raises uncomfortable questions about how safe the state’s open jail system really is, and how easily armed men can walk up to a convict and execute him in full public view.

Mohan Kumawat (40), an inmate of the open jail already serving a sentence for murder, was gunned down in the Karni Vihar police station area. Ac-

cording to police accounts, two masked assailants rode up on a motorcycle in the Janki Vihar locality of Dhawas and opened fire three times before fleeing the scene, leaving Kumawat’s body lying on the road as bystanders gathered around.

The visuals from the spot are stark: a man sprawled face-down on the tarmac, his motorcycle toppled beside him, a crowd of onlookers standing in silent witness — a scene more reminiscent of gangland retribution than anything the state’s crimi-

nal justice system is meant to permit.

That the victim was an open jail inmate is the detail that should trouble authorities most. Open jails are built on a premise of low-risk reintegration — inmates who’ve earned a measure of trust and freedom. A murder convict shot dead in public while under that very system exposes a gap between paper-based classification and real-world security that the Jaipur police, and the jail administration, cannot brush aside as a routine law-and-order matter.

Two masked men, a getaway bike, three rounds fired in a residential locality — this bears the hallmarks of a targeted, planned hit, not a chance altercation. The question now is whether this was old enmity catching up with a man serving time for one murder, or something more organized. Either way, the police have a narrow window to make arrests before the trail goes cold — and the state has a harder question to answer about who exactly is being supervised, and how, inside its open jails.

‘Pressure From Above’: CJP Founder Alleges Venue Owners Were Threatened, BJP Accused of Blocking Delhi Meet

■ FAIR REPORT
NEW DELHI

A political controversy erupted in the national capital after Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke alleged that his organisation was prevented from holding a volunteers’ meeting in Delhi after the owners of a booked venue were allegedly threatened.

In a statement, Dipke claimed that the party had struggled to find a hall for its scheduled meeting, with venue owners allegedly citing “pressure from

above” as the reason for refusing to rent their premises. According to Dipke, the CJP eventually managed to secure a hall and had a receipt confirming the booking. However, he alleged that the venue owners received threats on the morning of the meeting and were warned against allowing the event to take place. “They were told that if they allowed the CJP meeting to take place here, they would be hung upside down,” Dipke alleged. The CJP founder directly accused the BJP

of orchestrating the alleged pressure, claiming that the episode demonstrated growing political anxiety over youth mobilisation. “Their actions and words clearly reveal that they are afraid of the country’s youth,” Dipke said, adding that attempts to intimidate his organisation would not force it to retreat. The allegations, however, remain claims by the CJP founder, and no independent evidence or official confirmation of the alleged threats was cited in the statement.

PAKISTAN BOMBS ITS OWN PEOPLE: 30+ DEAD AS FIGHTER JETS HIT BALOCH VILLAGES

Quetta: Pakistan’s military stands accused of turning fighter jets on its own citizens after a night-time bombing raid on the Gudar area of Sorab district in Balochistan reportedly left over 30 civilians dead, including women and children, with dozens more injured.

Baloch rights defender Mir Yar Baloch said Pakistani Air Force jets, alongside ground forces, carried out heavy bombing and shelling in the densely populated civilian areas of Gudar and Sorab (Organiser Weekly). Residents reported drones and Cobra attack helicopters (Organiser Weekly) circling overhead as the military tightened its grip on the region.

Human rights body Baloch Voice for Justice went further, alleging that the Pakistani Air Force carried out “indiscriminate bombing” of civilian areas (Prokerala), and claiming hospitals in the affected zone were surrounded by military personnel while doctors and medical staff were intimidated and prevented from providing timely care (Prokerala). Some victims, it said, died simply because they could not reach hospitals in time (Prokerala). The rights body has demanded an immediate, independent, transparent and internationally monitored investigation (Prokerala), insisting the identities of the dead be made public and those responsible held to account.

DRAVYAVATI’S DEATH SENTENCE: WHEN A RIVER BECOMES ACID



Hemraj Tikamchand Tiwari

By Special Feature Desk

■ FAIR REPORT
JAIPUR

A river that once carried Jaipur’s lifeblood has been reduced to a chemical drain — and the state’s own High Court has said so in words sharper than any editorial could manage. Hearing a case on en-



croachment and pollution in the Dravyavati river, the acting Chief Justice’s bench remarked bluntly that the river now con-

tains nothing but dravya — acid — with no water left to speak of. It is a damning one-line obituary for a project that was

once sold to citizens as an urban renewal triumph. What makes this indictment sting harder is the timeline behind it.

Amicus curiae Shobhit Tiwari told the court that his February report had already flagged multiple lapses — and six months

on, the state government’s only response has been to ask for more time. The bench’s irritation was evident: this, the judges said, was the government’s final chance to respond. When a constitutional court has to warn a state administration twice about the same set of failures on the same river, the message is less about bureaucratic delay and more about institutional indifference.

The petitioner’s charge goes further, alleging that land parcels along the riverbed have been encroached upon — and that the JDA itself has regularized several such encroachments rather than

removing them. JDA’s defense, that court stays have hampered action in some cases, sounds less like an explanation and more like an admission of a system that has let violations calcify for years.

The Court has now ordered JDA to produce a full list of encroachments and details of every pending case linked to the river’s land, with officials directed to be present at the next hearing. Whether this becomes a genuine course correction or another entry in Rajasthan’s long ledger of unheeded court directions will depend on what the state produces next — not what it promises.

FAIR NATION

FAIR REPORT 02

You have changed: Modi, Kharge exchange banter at social event

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi

High temperatures in the current monsoon session of Parliament notwithstanding, bonhomie between political opponents was on display at a social event. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge exchanged banter, with the former commenting, “*Aap badal gaye ho* (you have changed)” in response to the latter saying, “I am just the same as always.”

The friendly chat took place at the wedding reception of NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule's daughter in New Delhi on Monday. Who's who of politics were present at the gathering. A video has now emerged showing Kharge and Modi engaging in a light-hearted conversation.

Political rivalry took a backseat; the Prime Minister, Congress chief and the Gandhi siblings shared the same frame at the reception. Rare as the sight was, a video



of the leaders sharing a light-hearted exchange has now gone viral on social media. The interaction began with Modi asking Priyanka Gandhi Vadra about how she was doing. “How is Priyanka doing?” he can be heard asking in the clip. “I am doing well, sir! How are you?” Priyanka, who is not visible in the video, replies.

To this, the Prime Minister said, “I am just the same as always”. Modi's reply drew a chuckle from the Congress president who was standing nearby. “*Bhai saab, aap thoda*

badal gaye saab (Brother, you have changed a bit),” Kharge was heard telling PM Modi. He, however, did not elaborate on his remark.

The Prime Minister appeared amused by Kharge's quip. “Oh really?” he responded before both sides broke into laughter. Rahul Gandhi is also seen in the frame smiling at the interaction between the two leaders.

The light-hearted exchange happened as political leaders from across the spectrum attended the wedding reception of Supriya Sule's daugh-

ter Revati at Sharad Pawar's 6, Janpath, residence in New Delhi. Another photo of PM Modi and Sharad Pawar engaged in an intense discussion at the wedding reception also grabbed attention, coming amid speculation of NCP(SP) warming up to the BJP. However, Sule has previously clarified that the party's recent engagements with PM Modi were strictly regarding issues related to Maharashtra.

The high-profile gathering came as Parliament witnessed a logjam amid protests by the Congress over the police crackdown on students during their ‘Sansad Chalo’ march on July 20.

The high-profile reception at 6 Janpath in Delhi celebrated Revati Sule's marriage to Nagpur-based industrialist Sarang Lakhani. The couple married in Mumbai in June, with the Delhi gathering marking a grand reception.

The reception witnessed a galaxy of political stars who turned up to bless the newlyweds.

West Bengal passes delimitation laws for Kolkata, Howrah

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Kolkata

The Bengal Assembly, through a special one-day session on Wednesday, passed two civic delimitation amendment bills aimed at delimiting the civic areas under the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and Howrah Municipal Corporation.

The first bill is the Howrah Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the second one is the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2026.

Following the gubernatorial assent, the number of wards under Kolkata Municipal Corporation would go up from 144 to 209, whereas the number of civic wards in Howrah would go up to 68 from the existing 50. Apart from this, the Bally municipal area would be separated from Howrah Corporation.

The on-ground delimitation exercise would be taken up by the State Election Commission in cooperation with the Kolkata district administrative authorities, Chief Minister Suwendu



West Bengal Legislative Assembly

Adhikari said, referring to a question raised by senior opposition MLA and former Mayor Firhad Hakim.

“It seems that the honourable member is ill-informed about the delimitation exercise... presently only the numbers of the two municipal corporations have been fixed whereas actual delimitation exercise will take place subsequently... The State Election Commission will mark the boundaries of the wards... based on the number of voters, population and other details,” the Chief Minister said, referring to Hakim's

apprehensions of a “politically motivated delimitation” targeting certain specific wards or communities.

Hakim, however, said that he was not opposed to the delimitation of the wards in principle “but it should be made clear on what policy or criteria the entire process is being carried out.”

The Chief Minister said that apart from the SEC, the Land and Land Reforms Department and officials responsible for the administration of Kolkata district would be involved in the process before a draft notification was issued.

Following notifications, the citizens would be given at least seven days — extendable to 15 days — to file objections and representations against the draft.

He also said the State Election Commission would convene two all-party meetings during the process — one before publication of the first draft and another before the final notification.

Referring to the “much needed delimitation” exercise, Bengal Urban Development Minister Agnimitra Paul said that the amendment law was long required “for the development and delivery of civic amenities to the citizens... it will further streamline the development of the civic wards with better services, facilities and monitoring.”

Presently, both the KMC and HMC boards were non-functional — and were being governed via administrators — following the dissolution of the respective houses in the wake of resignations submitted by the Mayors. The next elections to the civic boards are expected by the year-end.

SIA raids 9 locations in 1990 Kashmiri Pandit murder probe

FAIR REPORT ■ Jammu

Thirty-six years after the merciless killing of renowned Kashmiri Pandit scholar and poet, Sarwanand Koul ‘Premi’ and his son Virender Koul, the Jammu and Kashmir State Investigation Agency on Wednesday conducted raids across nine locations in Baramulla, Rajouri and Jammu to gather vital evidence against the perpetrators behind the targeted killing at the peak of militancy in April 1990.

The searches were carried out after obtaining search warrants from the competent court in connection with FIR No. 45/1990 registered at Police Station Dooru, relating to the killing of Premi and his 27-year-old son.

According to official sources, searches were conducted across 6 locations in Rajouri, 2 in Jammu and 1 in Baramulla.

After filing a 737-page chargesheet in the abduction, torture and brutal killing of Sarla Bhat, a staff nurse at Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Srinagar, the SIA has launched a fresh probe to identify the killers and key conspirators behind the gruesome murder of Premi and his son.

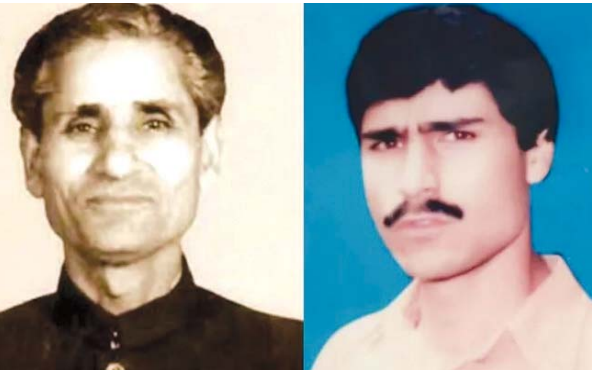
Sarla Bhat was killed by JKLF terrorists on 18 April 1990. Eleven days later, three terrorists stormed the residence of a social activist and freedom fighter of the Quit India Movement, Sarwanand Koul, in Anantnag and

abducted him on the night of April 29-30, 1990. The terrorists allegedly looted valuables and cash and ordered him to accompany them to their commander. His younger son, Virender Koul, insisted on going with his father, reportedly out of concern for his safety.

On May 1, 1990, the family recovered the mutilated dead bodies of their head of the family and a young son. Eyewitness and media reports claimed that part of Premi's forehead, where he used to apply sandalwood, was cruelly pierced by a sharp weapon and the skin was peeled off. The entire body bore the marks of cigarette burns. The limbs were found broken, and the eyes of both the father and the son were gouged out. They were later hanged and, to be doubly sure, shot dead too.

Sarwanand Koul ‘Premi’ was a respected school headmaster from Soaf Shali in Kokernag. A celebrated literary figure, he authored and translated more than three dozen works. Among his notable literary contributions were translations of Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali into Kashmiri, the Bhagavad Gita into Urdu and the Ramayana into Kashmiri.

At the peak of militancy, when terrorists started targeted killings of members belonging to the minority community, Premi had decided to stay put in the Valley, believing that the goodwill and personal rela-



Sarwanand Koul 'Premi' and his son Virender Koul

tionships he had built across communities would protect him. His merciless killing became one of the most chilling episodes associated with the targeting of Kashmiri Pandits in the valley and triggered a mass exodus of hapless families.

Official sources told The Pioneer that the SIA team investigating the double murder case of Sarwanand Koul and his son is on the job to collect evidence and identify individuals who may have participated in, facilitated or assisted the perpetrators of the 1990 crime.

Without identifying the dreaded terrorist behind the killing of Sarwanand Koul, a senior officer revealed that the terrorists behind the gruesome murder had been eliminated long ago. The raids were conducted at the residences of close relatives and their associates.

Speaking to The Pioneer over the telephone, Rajinder Koul, the elder son of

Sarwanand Premi, said this is the struggle for the last 36 years, which I have been personally pursuing not only with the government of Jammu and Kashmir but also with the Union Government. The promises the government made to us were broken. Not a single promise of assurance given to us at that time was kept. “When we left Kashmir after the killing of my father and brother, we stayed in Jammu for a very brief time period and then went to Delhi after completing the rituals. There was no communication with the government”. He said my struggle dates back to 1991. When we started pursuing our matters with the Jammu and Kashmir government. “Our local temple was demolished by the mob in 1992, our two houses in our native village were burnt down in 1998, and an FIR was also registered”. He said the State Human Rights Commission was approached; they deliv-

ered a decision after almost five years. “A comprehensive and considered judgment was given by the two-member bench of the commission. The recommendations were not translated into action by the government. Many meetings were held in the state government. Nothing conclusive happened. Then we moved to the National Human Rights Commission. The NHRC also made certain recommendations. They heard me for four or five long years. They said, ‘Nothing doing’. The NHRC has no business to intervene in our matter. We don't have the manpower to look into all this. The files have gathered dust, and we cannot dig out the old record. Koul claimed they requested the NHRC to keep this matter in abeyance. I have no hesitation in saying that my family has been a victim of bureaucracy, Koul said. According to him, on 18 April 2024, the NHRC delivered a final judgment in the matter. They said the whole case should be looked into afresh purely on a humanitarian angle, not from any other angle, because they could understand that this was political victimisation.

Koul also welcomed the raids, hoping that all cases would be handled this way.

Rajender further demanded justice for everyone. “I appeal to the State Government that all the cases should be handed over to the SIA for expeditious and effective investigation.

34-point questionnaire: Inside Ram temple’s search for CEO

FAIR REPORT
 ■ New Delhi/Ayodhya

The application process for Ayodhya Ram Mandir's first full-time CEO was much more thorough than usual. The 18 shortlisted candidates for the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust had to fill out a detailed 34-point online questionnaire about their personal background, work experience, and religious beliefs.

The form sought full name and date of birth. The form asked for basic details like full name, date of birth, age, address, contact information, and email. Candidates also had to share their language skills in Hindi and English, highest education level, current or past job status, and details about their employer. It included questions about years of management or administrative experience, the sector they worked in, and the size of teams they managed. Organised or supervised events, including estimated attendance, duration, year, event name and the candidate's role, vital for handling large religious gatherings.

Applicants disclosed any prior association with religious institutions, monasteries, social organisations or temples, along with duration and scale. A key query asked whether the candidate considered themselves a “staunch Hindu,” “true Hindu” or “hardline Hindu,” versus simply a believer, plus details of links to Hindu religious institutions. The form also required a vision statement for the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, a proposed work plan and suggestions for temple management, plus names, positions and contacts of



at least two reputable references for verification of professional, social or religious experience.

The form also collected family and personal information. During the closed-door interviews, which lasted 40 to 50 minutes or more, the three-member panel asked more questions about personal and religious practices. Some of the reported questions were: “Are you a staunch Hindu?” “Do you eat non-vegetarian food?” “Are you a pure vegetarian?” “Do you keep a shikha (tuft of hair)?” “Do you wear a janeu (sacred thread)?” “Do you consume alcohol or are you a teetotaler?”

Candidates were also questioned about their comfort with traditional Hindu attire, their faith in Lord Ram, and their understanding of the temple's religious and social importance. The panel asked about their experience managing large crowds, family background, personal prefer-

ences, people skills, and their overall vision for running the temple's administration, finances, security, and daily operations.

These questions show that the Trust wants the CEO to be a practising Hindu between 50 and 70 years old, follow Hindu traditions, be a strict vegetarian and teetotaler, have at least 20 years of relevant experience, speak Hindi and English fluently, and live in Ayodhya. The job comes with a three-year initial term and involves managing the temple's daily administration, finances, legal matters, security, and operations.

The search for a full-time CEO began after allegations of embezzlement of temple donations came up in June 2026, leading to closer checks on financial management. Over 5,200 applications were received from all over India. After about 20 days of screening, which included the Google Form and some online meetings,

the panel shortlisted 18 candidates. Most of them are retired bureaucrats, former senior corporate executives, retired defence officers, or people with experience managing temples or religious trusts.

Interviews started on 11 August 2026 at the temple complex and continued for several days. The selection panel includes retired Supreme Court Justice Pramod Kohli, retired Lt Gen Vishnukant Chaturvedi, and Suresh Haware, former chairperson of the Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust in Shirdi. The panel will recommend three candidates to the Trust, which is expected to decide at its meeting around 2 September 2026. The full list of the 18 shortlisted candidates has not been officially released, keeping the process confidential.

Only a few names have been shared by sources so far: former IPS officer Rajesh Kumar Pandey (sometimes called an encounter specialist and linked to Lucknow's Hanuman Mandir), Dinesh Chandra (former Jaunpur District Magistrate), Yogeshwar Ram Mishra (retired IAS officer and former Faizabad district magistrate), and Sameer Pandaya. On the first day of interviews, three former IAS officers, one former IPS officer, and four former military officers reportedly took part.

The detailed questionnaire and personal questions show that the Trust is looking for someone who is both professionally skilled and closely aligned with the spiritual values of the Ram Mandir. The person chosen will need to manage complex logistics, finances, and meet the expectations of millions of devotees.

Opposition slams Suwendu’s move for anti-conversion law in West Bengal

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Kolkata

The Opposition parties have questioned the “intention behind” Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari's announcement that his Government was planning to bring legislation to prevent forced conversions in tandem with the proposed Uniform Civil Code.

While senior pro-Mamata Banerjee Trinamool Congress leader Kunal Ghosh said that such laws were only a “diversionary tactic to hide the Government's failure to implement the social programmes that were promised before the elections,” CPI(M) central committee member and former MP Sujan Chakrabarty said “both the proposed UCC and anti-conversion laws are a part of the BJP's divisive agenda... but that will not succeed in a State like



TMC leader Kunal Ghosh

Bengal... here you have to work and win by ideological appeal and nothing else because the people are politically conscious.”

Adhikari had on Tuesday told reporters at Bankura that his Government was planning to introduce a bill to prevent forced religious conversions in the state. Informing that the Uniform

Civil Code would be implemented in the state shortly, he said that the draft bill in this regard has already been prepared and was being scrutinised by an expert committee.

The State Government

had formed a nine-member high-level committee led by former Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai to examine the draft UCC law.

Alleging that funds that were coming to Bengal from abroad in the name of setting up religious institutions were in fact being used for religious conversions, Adhikari said that his government was planning a new law to stall such activities.

He also said that a new and strict law would be brought on transfer of property through transaction of lands.

“A strict law is also in the offing to control the sale and purchase of lands,” he said, apparently against the backdrop of reports of large swathes of lands belonging to a particular community getting transferred to another community in some minority dominated districts or areas along the international borders.

Maharashtra ATS busts inter-state methamphetamine network

FAIR REPORT
 ■ Mumbai/New Delhi

Maharashtra's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) seized 4.738 kg of methamphetamine worth Rs 9.4 crore in an inter-state operation that started in Bandra East and ended at a hidden factory in Greater Noida. Police arrested one Israeli man and two foreign women, and sealed the manufacturing unit.

On Tuesday, the ATS Kalachowki unit got a tip that a courier would be near Amber Hotel. Officers set up a trap on Anant Kanherekar Marg, near Bandra Court, and caught the suspect. They found 2,050 grams of the drug, worth Rs 4 crore. He was arrested under the NDPS Act. During questioning, he admitted he bought the drugs from a factory in Greater Noida to sell in Mumbai.

An ATS team, with help from local Uttar Pradesh police, raided the site the same day. Officers seized another 2,688 grams of the drug, worth Rs 5.4 crore, along with materials used for making it, and shut down the premises. Nawal Bajaj, Additional Director General of Police, ATS Maharashtra, confirmed both seizures and the three arrests.

During questioning, the arrested man said he bought the drugs from a factory in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, to sell in Mumbai. The ATS, with help from local police, raided the factory and found another 2,688 grams of methamphetamine worth Rs 5.4 crore, along with materials used for making the drug. The factory was sealed. In total, officers seized 4.738 kg



of methamphetamine, valued at about Rs 9.4 crore.

ATS is looking for women who are co-accused and are still missing, showing that the investigation is still in its early stages. This operation shows how synthetic drug networks are spreading across state borders. Methamphetamine, also known as crystal meth, is a growing concern for law enforcement because it is valuable and easy to produce in small units.

Greater Noida has been involved in several past cases with foreign nationals and secret drug facilities, partly because it is well connected to the National Capital Region. Officials said the ATS is now looking into where the raw materials came from, how the drugs were transported to Mumbai, and the exact roles of those arrested and any other people involved.

The involvement of foreign nationals has prompted investigators to look into possible transnational links. Because foreign nationals are involved, investigators are now checking for possible international connections. They are

also trying to find out if the network reached other cities or distribution channels in Maharashtra. The NDPS Act has strict penalties for cases involving large amounts of these drugs. Authorities said sealing the Greater Noida factory was a clear blow to the supply chain. Still, they warned that synthetic drug operations often change locations quickly. They challenged traditional narcotics in both volume and profitability. The agency continues to work with counterparts in Uttar Pradesh to map the full extent of the racket.

Additional arrests and recoveries cannot be ruled out as custodial questioning and forensic examination of the seized materials progress. This case shows why police from different states need to work together to fight modern drug syndicates that take advantage of gaps between jurisdictions. Law enforcement agencies across India have increased their efforts against synthetic drugs because of growing worries about addiction and social problems, officials said.

States Focus



HAR GHAR TIRANGA A POWERFUL MOVEMENT NOW: NITIN NABIN

BJP president Nitin Nabin on Wednesday said that the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' initiative has transformed into a powerful public campaign with every section of society joining it to express national pride.Addressing a Tiranga Yatra at Kartavya Path here, Nabin said the Tricolour is a symbol of India's valour, sacrifice, unity and self-respect, as he called upon the youth to resolve to build a developed India by 2047.

Nabin urged people to participate in the Har Ghar Tiranga campaign on August 13, 14 and 15 by hoisting the national flag at their houses and taking selfies with it. "On 13, 14, and 15 August, for 3 days, the honour of Tricolour must be carried forward in every home. The Tricolour must be hoisted at our homes, selfies must be taken with it," he said.



CHHATTISGARH GOVT COMMITTED TO FARMERS' WELFARE: CM SAI

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Wednesday said his government was committed to the welfare and economic empowerment of farmers and has taken several measures to strengthen the agriculture sector.

Addressing a Hareli festival celebration at his official residence in Nava Raipur Atal Nagar, Sai said the agrarian festival reflects Chhattisgarh's deep bond with agriculture, nature and rural life.

Hareli, one of the major traditional festivals of Chhattisgarh, is celebrated on the new moon day (amavasya) of the month of Savan. Sai said the Centre and the state government have taken several important steps to strengthen farmers economically.

BJP slams Rahul over police action on students in Ranchi

FAIR REPORT
 New Delhi

The BJP criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday over police action against protesting students in Ranchi, alleging that the Congress-led Opposition is unwilling to demand a CBI probe into alleged irregularities in Jharkhand's recruitment examinations.

The remarks came as ruling NDA MPs staged a protest on the Parliament premises over alleged police action against protesting students in Ranchi. They carried placards that read "Jharkhand me chhatron par lathicharge par Rahul Gandhi jawab do" and "Jharkhand me chhatron par hue anyap par Rahul Gandhi jawab do".

Speaking to reporters in the Parliament House complex, Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth demanded CBI and ED probes into the alleged irregularities. "You may issue as many Tughlaq-style orders as you



Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth

want, you may adopt as much of an authoritarian approach as you want, but a CBI inquiry and an ED inquiry will have to be conducted," Seth said.

He alleged that the entire scam in Jharkhand is worth around ₹400 crore.

"Whether it is through the TDPL, the JPSC or the JSSC, this is a scam worth hundreds of crores. The students are asking: who received a share of this money? Why are they not ordering a CBI investigation? Because people close to the chief minister and people associated with senior

Congress leaders are caught up in this web.

"That is why, out of sheer obstinacy, they are not ordering a CBI investigation. They know that the JMM Government will be in jeopardy," Seth alleged.

The Congress is part of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led Government in the State. Seth slammed Gandhi over the issue, alleging that the Congress leader lacks the courage to demand a probe in Jharkhand.

Seth claimed that the Jharkhand agitation is different from political protests in Delhi and is being led by stu-

dents and youngsters.

"The Jharkhand movement is non-political. This is an agitation by students and youngsters. There is no politics behind it," he said.

"We are public representatives, so naturally we will raise our voice," Seth added.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader alleged that electricity supply at the protest site is being cut off at night and claimed that police have removed a generator set arranged by the students at their own expense.

"Last night, the electricity supply was cut off. Early this morning, the students had arranged a generator with their own money to ensure electricity supply, but police also removed that generator. This shows an authoritarian approach, a Tughlaq-style order," he said.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey hit out at Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge over the students' protest in Ranchi and questioned why the party is not demanding a CBI probe now.

Opposition protests over Ram temple funds, police action against students



FAIR REPORT
 New Delhi

Opposition MPs, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, held a protest in the Parliament House Complex on Wednesday over the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya and "police excesses" on student protesters last month.

They also demanded that Home Minister Amit Shah come to Parliament and make a statement on the

alleged police excesses on students during their July 20 Parliament march over the NEET paper leak issue.

Carrying placards, the MPs stood in front of the Makar Dwar of Parliament and raised slogans such as "Amit Shah sadan mein aao", "Amit Shah maafi maango" and "Chanda chor, kahan milenge, BJP ke daftar mein".

The Opposition MPs, mostly from the Congress, the Samajwadi Party and the TMC, lined up behind a big banner that read "Chanda kisne loota?" and raised slogans against the BJP.

Karnataka bans sale of tobacco products for one year

FAIR REPORT
 Bengaluru

The Department of Food Safety and Drug Administration has issued a notification prohibiting the sale and distribution of products containing tobacco and/or nicotine in Karnataka in the interest of public health, officials said on Wednesday.

The notification, dated August 10, 2026, will remain in force across the State for one year from the date of its issuance, they said.

The Food Safety Division of the Department of Food Safety and Drug Administration, Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Karnataka, is undertaking stringent enforcement measures against products containing tobacco and/or nicotine, officials said.

Special inspection and enforcement operations are being conducted under the leadership of Food Safety Officers, targeting the manufacture, storage, transportation, distribution and sale of



gutkha, pan masala and other prohibited products containing tobacco and/or nicotine, they said.

"In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 30(2)(a) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and Regulation 2.3.4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011, the Department of Food Safety and Drugs Administration has issued a Government Notification dated 10-08-2026," Srinivas K, Commissioner, Department of Food Safety

and Drugs Administration, said in a statement.

The notification prohibits the sale and distribution of products containing tobacco and nicotine in Karnataka in the interest of public health, he said.

The department has appealed to the public to inform the concerned authorities if they come across the manufacture, sale or distribution of prohibited tobacco and nicotine products and to extend their cooperation in building a healthy and addiction-free Karnataka.

Assam needs over ₹1,000 crore for flood relief: Himanta

FAIR REPORT
 Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said more than ₹1,000 crore may be required for repairing damaged properties and rehabilitating people affected by the latest wave of floods in the State.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Sarma said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured full assistance from the Centre in the rehabilitation process.

"To give permanent relief, a rapid relief assessment drive was launched on August 9. As per an initial report, over 8,000 families have been assessed, and ₹150 crore damage has been estimated," he said.

The CM said the assessment will continue till August 30 and is expected to cover 50,000-60,000 families in Upper Assam districts severely affected by the latest floods.

"I believe there will be a spending of over ₹1,000 crore in damage repair and rehabilitation. The PM has assured



People gather on geo-tubes amid embankment repairs as part of the Assam Flood Response in Jorhat

that there is no issue in paying the affected families and asked us to do the assessment without any lapse," he said.

Sarma said the assessment would be conducted in multiple stages, with the final survey likely to be completed by September.

In several areas, including Nepalikhuti, Majgaon and Kamal Chapori, every house has suffered damage, he said.

"We are talking to the Centre and social scientists if a model housing scheme can be launched to rebuild

their houses. The Assam Government is looking to find a permanent solution to such floods," he added.

Acknowledging support from various groups in providing relief, Sarma said 72 YouTubers had raised funds for flood-affected people across the country.

"Many of them are already working on the ground and giving relief to the people. We are keeping a close watch on them whether they are spending the money for flood-affected areas or not," he said.

Sarma also released ₹11.3

crore for rebuilding 494 flood-damaged Anganwadi centres across Upper Assam.

"We want to restart these centres as soon as possible so that all services can be provided. Altogether 494 Anganwadi centres, which were damaged, will be rebuilt in this drive," he said.

Each centre will receive up to ₹2.5 lakh for restoration, he said.

The flood situation in Assam remained serious on Wednesday, with more than 1.12 lakh people affected across four districts amid a forecast of more rainfall.

Sarma said 64,891 flood-hit families had received ₹15,000 each as initial assistance, while another 31,212 families would receive the aid in the coming days.

"From August 20, ₹1.5 lakh each will be provided to affected Namghars, a place of worship for Vaishnavite followers, in flood-ravaged Sivasagar and Charaideo districts to rebuild the institutions. PWD has engaged 50 machines to clear the debris from roads," he said.

9 kids die in Balaghat tribal belt amid unexplained illness since June

FAIR REPORT
 Bhopal

Nine children have died since June 26 amid an unexplained illness reported in tribal areas of Balaghat district, with health authorities yet to determine the exact cause of the deaths.

A joint team of doctors from Jabalpur Medical College and Balaghat visited the affected areas to assess the situation. According to the medical team, affected children have shown symptoms including pneumonia, anaemia, dehydration, fever, itching, malaria and signs of kidney involvement.

Samples collected from the affected areas have been sent to a laboratory in Pune for testing. Health officials said the exact cause of the illness would be established only after the laboratory reports are received. The Health Department has not indicated when the reports are expected.

Civil Surgeon Dr Nilay Jain said all the affected children belonged to villages under Adori and Machhurda gram panchayats. Between June 26 and July 22, five children — siblings Lamanin and Sahil from Bondari, along with Pooja, Sachin and Preeti from Kundekasa — died. Two more deaths were reported later, with Arvind dying on August 6 and Mangli Markam on August 8.

Priyanka Dhurve was admitted to the



district hospital on August 9 and died on the night of August 11.

Doctors said the child was suffering from multiple health complications and that efforts were made to save her.

The continuing deaths have raised concern over the health situation in the tribal belt. Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh has written to Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav seeking an immediate state-level investigation into the deaths.

Singh has also demanded strict action against officials found responsible and financial assistance of ₹10 lakh each for the families of the deceased

children.

He further urged the government to airlift critically ill children to major hospitals in Nagpur, Raipur or Bhopal and bear the entire cost of their treatment. With the cause of the illness still undetermined, health authorities are awaiting the Pune laboratory reports to establish whether the deaths are linked to a common infection, disease or other medical factors.

The situation remains under close observation as medical teams continue to assess affected children and the overall health conditions in the area.

Abhishek urges LS speaker to decide on disqualification pleas against 20 rebel MPs

FAIR REPORT
 New Delhi

Trinamool Congress's (TMC) Lok Sabha leader Abhishek Banerjee said on Wednesday that he met Speaker Om Birla in the morning and sought an early decision on the party's pending disqualification petitions against 20 rebel MPs, warning that he would approach the Supreme Court if the speaker fails to act within the period required by law and judicial directions.

Banerjee said he first raised the issue with Birla in June, when the individual disqualification petitions were filed against the MPs, but nearly two months have passed without any satisfactory response.

"I had already raised this issue with the speaker in June, when individual disqualification petitions were moved against each of them. Nearly two months have



passed since then, but I have still not received any satisfactory response. Even today, I have been given essentially the same answer, while the petitions remain pending," he told reporters outside Parliament.

Banerjee said he is relying on the Supreme Court's directions regarding timely disposal of disqualification peti-

tions by the speaker.

"If the speaker does not decide on these petitions within the period required by law and applicable judicial directions, I will be compelled to approach the Supreme Court and seek its intervention," he said.

Banerjee said he and other TMC MPs have repeatedly taken up the matter with Birla.

Hilsa returns to upper Ganga after decades

FAIR REPORT
 Kolkata

The hilsa fish has been recorded in the middle and upper stretches of the Ganga after remaining virtually absent from these reaches for decades, in what officials called a significant milestone in river restoration and aquatic biodiversity conservation.

According to the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR-CIFRI), two hilsa weighing a combined 740 grams were found in the river near Markandey Mahadev Temple in Chandauli district of Uttar Pradesh, nearly three decades after the species had vanished from the upstream reaches.

Historically, hilsa migrated from the Bay of Bengal through the Ganga system



up to Varanasi, Prayagraj and beyond. However, the commissioning of the Farakka Barrage in 1975 severely disrupted its migratory pathway, causing a drastic decline in the middle and upper Ganga and affecting riverine fishing communities dependent on the species.

Recognising the ecological, nutritional, cultural and livelihood significance of the fish, ICAR-CIFRI, Barrackpore, and the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) had initiated a long-term scientific programme for Hilsa restoration.

Russia appoints ex-CJI Chandrachud arbitrator in Ukraine dispute

FAIR REPORT
 New Delhi

In a rare honour for a former Chief Justice of India, Russia has appointed DY Chandrachud as an arbitrator in a high-stakes investment treaty dispute between Russia and Ukrainian-owned Oschadbank. He retired on November 10, 2024, after serving as the 50th Chief Justice of India.

Justice Chandrachud will represent Russia in an international arbitration tribunal hearing a dispute brought by Ukrainian state-owned bank Oschadbank.

The case pertains to the war between Russia and Ukraine and the claimed impact of military operations on the bank's operations.

The case stems from Oschadbank's claim over



assets and business operations in Ukraine's Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

The bank says it lost these following Russia's military actions in Ukraine after 2022. The dispute is being heard under the 1998 bilateral investment treaty between Russia and Ukraine, reported Bar and Bench. Oschadbank's claim is understood to be worth hun-

dreds of millions of dollars. The tribunal will have three members. Costa Rican arbitrator and former trade minister Dyalá Jimenez will serve as its president after being selected jointly by Russia and Oschadbank.

Greek arbitrator and National University of Singapore (NUS) professor Stavros Brekoulakis was chosen by Oschadbank as the third member.

