

# FAIR REPORT

THE DAWN OF A FEARLESS PEN

Jaipur, Thursday, 3 September 2026

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A banana-stem raft becomes a lifeline for residents navigating floodwaters at Athabatia village in Baliapal area of Baleshwar district, Wednesday, after the season's third flood submerged roads and marooned more than 100 villages across the district.

## A LIFELINE AFLOAT

### ACB Books Former Deshnok Municipal Chairman for Allegedly Issuing Property Leases to Himself

**Jaipur:** The Rajasthan Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has registered a case against former Deshnok Municipal Board chairman Omprakash Moondhra and others for allegedly abusing his official position to issue property leases in his own name. According to the complaint received by the ACB, Moondhra allegedly misused his powers under Section 69-A of the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009, and issued lease deeds bearing his own signatures in his own favour. The complaint alleges that on December 31, 2021, three lease deeds were issued in Moondhra's name for plots measuring 71.88 square metres, 267.14 square metres and 42.53 square metres. The documents were subsequently registered on January 11, 2022. The allegations came under ACB scrutiny after a complaint was filed with the agency. Following a preliminary inquiry, the Bureau obtained the required prior approval under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act before proceeding with the case.

### ₹2-CRORE 'ROBBERY' WAS A STAGED HEIST: TRUCK DRIVER EXPOSED AS MASTERMIND IN 24 HOURS

**JAIPUR:** The 2-crore highway robbery that triggered a frantic police hunt turned out to be a stunning inside job, with the alleged victim himself emerging as the mastermind. In a dramatic 24-hour breakthrough, Paparda police arrested truck driver Mahir Azad after CCTV footage, toll records and the vehicle's FASTag trail allegedly blew holes in his robbery story. Azad had claimed that armed men hijacked his truck, assaulted him and left him bound by the roadside before escaping with a consignment of scooter parts worth nearly 2 crore. But investigators say the "robbery" was carefully scripted. The truck was traced to Firozpur Jhirka in Haryana, where police recovered it along with the high-value cargo.

## BJP Unveils Urban Development Charter for Rajasthan Promises 1 Lakh Plots, 15 Lakh Streetlights and 7 Lakh PNG Connections

**CM Bhajan Lal Sharma says 78% of BJP's 2023 Assembly poll promises have been fulfilled in 32 months; party pitches five-year roadmap for 309 urban local bodies**

■ FAIR REPORT  
JAIPUR

The Rajasthan BJP on Wednesday unveiled its 'Urban Development Sankalp Patra 2026', positioning the document as a five-year roadmap to transform the state's cities into cleaner, safer, greener and more technology-driven urban centres.

Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma said the BJP does not issue a conventional manifesto but a "Sankalp Patra"—a commitment to deliver—and claimed that 78 per cent of the promises made in the party's 2023 Assembly election document had been fulfilled within 32 months.

The charter comes ahead of the urban local body elections and covers 309 local bodies, with the BJP promising interventions ranging from housing and sanitation to public transport, traffic management, technology and environmental infrastructure.

"We do not merely make announcements; we make



commitments to work," Sharma said, arguing that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India must begin with better-developed cities.

One lakh plots, seven lakh PNG connections Among the headline commitments is a plan to work towards making one lakh residential plots available over the next five years for different income groups.

The party has also set a target of facilitating more than seven lakh PNG connections, installing 2,000 pink toilets aimed at improving facilities for women and putting up 15 lakh

streetlights in new and peripheral residential areas.

Senior citizens are promised dedicated Senior Citizen Service Centres.

The government also plans insurance coverage under the Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana for registered street vendors and CNG auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers.

Garbage, sewage and the urban infrastructure backlog

The BJP charter places considerable emphasis on the basic infrastructure that remains one of the biggest challenges facing Rajasthan's rapidly expanding

cities.

Modern vending zones, additional parking facilities and food courts are proposed in municipal corporation and council areas.

The party has promised scientific disposal of legacy waste accumulated at dumping sites and vehicle-tracking systems for door-to-door garbage collection vehicles.

Over five years, it proposes work on the repair and augmentation of 3,000 km of old sewer lines.

The charter also proposes the use of CCTV-based surveys to identify road and sewer defects and trench-

less technology to repair underground infrastructure without repeatedly digging up roads.

CCTV, parking and a faster building-plan system Security and traffic management form another major component.

The BJP has proposed CCTV coverage across urban local bodies, development of major roads and beautification of key intersections. For building permissions, the party has promised to simplify online processing and set a target of disposing of building-plan files within one week. A broader traffic and parking policy is proposed, including flyovers, underpasses, bridges and multi-level or common parking facilities in congested areas. The party has also proposed working towards ring roads to ease traffic pressure in major urban centres. Robots for sewers, AI for command centres The charter seeks to bring technology deeper into municipal administration.

## Rajasthan Cracks Down on Food Adulteration: Sale of Five Packaged Products Banned for Two Months

■ FAIR REPORT  
JAIPUR

Rajasthan's food safety authorities have intensified their crackdown on adulteration, suspending the sale, distribution and display of five packaged food products after laboratory tests found them unsafe for consumption.

The action has been taken under the state's 'Shuddh Aahar-Milawat Par Waar' campaign, with officials stepping up sampling and testing across districts. The products found unsafe include Nandi brand cow ghee, Ratwadi Tea (Golden Thar), G.S. Gold red chilli powder, KDP Dairy-Krishna ghee and KDP Dairy-Saras ghee. The ban will remain in force across Rajasthan for two months and covers specified batches and lots.

The findings are based on tests conducted by the State Public Health Laboratory, raising fresh questions over quality control and compliance in the packaged food supply chain. The department has also suspended the food licences of nine establishments after samples collected from their premises were found to contain un-



safe food products. The action covers businesses in Barmer, Churu, Bikaner, Ajmer, Jaipur and Tonk, involving products ranging from chilli powder and tea to fried peas, milk, mouth freshener and ghee.

In a separate action, the department cancelled the licences or registrations of three Jaipur establishments for continuing food-related business without valid authorisation despite earlier action against them. These include M/s Balaji Jaika in Vidhyadhar Nagar, M/s Ganpati Dry-fruits in Kukarkheda and The Kambu Cafe Food and Beverages in Nirman Nagar. The latest crackdown has been carried out under the guidance of Principal Secretary, Medical and Health, Gayatri Rathore, with Food Safety Commissioner Avichal Chaturvedi directing the operation and Additional Commissioner Bhagwat Singh overseeing the enforcement.

## When a Degree Pays Less Than a Day's Labour



Hemraj Tikamchand Tiwari

By Special Feature Desk

**India's wage problem is not simply about the price of work—it is about who has the power to price it.**

India's employment debate has an uncomfortable blind spot: we talk endlessly about the cost of labour, but rarely about the power that de-

termines its price. Consider a contrast visible in many local labour markets. A daily-wage worker may earn around 1,000 for a day's work, while a graduate, after years of education, may accept a 15,000-a-month job because alternatives are scarce. These are not national averages. They are illustrative contrasts. But they expose a disturbing question: Is India rewarding productivity—or merely bargaining power? Official data complicates the picture. The PLFS 2023-24 reported average daily earnings of casual labour engaged in work other than public works at about 433 nationally



during April-June 2024—417 in rural India and 516 in urban areas. The lesson is clear: there is

no single Indian labour market. Wages vary sharply by occupation, location, skill and demand. Yet one paradox remains stubborn: a degree does not automatically create bargaining power. A graduate without experience, networks, mobility, information or competing offers can be forced to sell skilled labour cheaply. Education can increase capability without increasing negotiating strength. That is where India's small and medium employers must rethink an old approach to salary negotiations. Too often the question is: "How badly does this person need the job?" It

should be: "What value will this person create?"

The distinction is not merely moral. It is economic. The Code on Wages, 2019 recognises that wages cannot simply be left to desperation, providing a framework for minimum wages based partly on skill and geography. Meanwhile, the nature of work is changing.

NITI Aayog estimated 77 lakh gig workers in 2020-21, projecting the number could reach 2.35 crore by 2029-30, or 6.7% of non-agricultural employment. The message for employers is increasingly unavoidable: Cheap labour is not necessarily cheap talent. Underpay a

capable employee and the immediate saving may be small. The eventual cost—turnover, recruitment, retraining, lost productivity and institutional knowledge—can be far greater. India's labour market is slowly moving from pricing workers by desperation to pricing skills by demand. The era of cheap labour may survive in pockets. But the era of priced talent has already begun. The question is whether Indian employers will recognise it—or be forced to by the market. Make the headline even punchier Sharpen the opening contrast Strengthen the employer accountability,



## PR can polish picture of GDP, but not economy itself: Congress slams Govt

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Wednesday cited former finance secretary Subhash Chandra Garg's reported remarks on GDP numbers to attack the Modi Government, saying it must understand that "PR can polish the picture" of the GDP but not the economy itself.

Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh shared a video clip of Garg in which he stated that by revising last year's GDP by as much as ₹6 trillion, the current year's GDP in the first quarter has gone up by around 10.3 per cent.

"If you had not revised last year's GDP, the growth in current prices would have been 2.6 per cent," Garg told a news channel.

In his post in Hindi on X, Ramesh said that no matter how much the Modi Government beats the drum of



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh

its fabricated GDP growth, conjured up through statistical jugglery by its team and media, its true reality will be exposed because what they are claiming is the complete opposite of ground realities.

"Former Finance Secretary Subhash Garg has now burst the bubble on this claim. His assessment is that the real GDP growth is around 2.6%, not 7.8%," Ramesh said.

"We want the economy to truly be strong, but the path to a strong economy doesn't come from embellishing

numbers fabricated on a foundation of lies - it comes from accepting the truth," the Congress leader said.

The Government should first acknowledge the real economic situation, then undertake reforms - jobs should be created for the youth, MSMEs and private investment should be boosted, demand and incomes should rise, economic inequality should decrease, and instead of promoting crony capitalists, fair competition should be

ensured, Ramesh said.

"The Modi Government must understand: PR can polish the picture of GDP, but not the economy itself," the Congress general secretary said.

"It's clear that on the very GDP for which Modi is urging citizens to burst crackers and celebrate Diwali, serious questions are being raised by his own former Finance Secretary," Ramesh said.

Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera also lashed out at the Modi Government over Garg's remarks.

"Subhash Garg has punctured the Government's tall claims of 7.8% GDP growth, arguing that India's real GDP growth is closer to 2.6%. His contention is even more damning: the previous year's GDP growth was revised downward, making this year's growth rate look stronger by comparison," Khera said on X.

## AIMIM spokesperson Syed Asim Waqar joins Congress

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

Syed Asim Waqar, who rose to prominence as an AIMIM spokesperson, joined the Congress on Wednesday and took a swipe at the Asaduddin Owaisi-led party, alleging that it pays lip service to removing the BJP from power but on the ground fights those seeking to dislodge the ruling party.

Waqar joined the Congress in the presence of AICC in-charge for Uttar Pradesh Rajendra Pal Gautam, UP Congress chief Ajay Rai and AICC Minority Department chairman Imran Pratapgarhi at the AICC Office at 24 Akbar Road, here.

"Under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, a movement is underway across the country on issues concerning education, employment, students, women, and marginalised sections," Gautam said at a press conference after Waqar was inducted into the party.

"Rahul Gandhi ji is firmly raising the voice of every section and continuously cautioning the Government on every front. Inspired by this, senior leaders from various parties are joining the Congress Party and strengthening the hands of Shri Mallikarjun Kharge and Shri Rahul Gandhi," he said. In his remarks, Waqar said



all those who love the country have only one objective, which is to dislodge this "anti-national" Government of the BJP and form a secular Government which works for the people's interest.

"But I felt, being in the AIMIM for so many years, that we pay lip service by stating that the BJP must be removed, but on the ground we don't fight the BJP; we fight the Congress, the SP; we are fighting every other person who wants to remove the BJP," Waqar said.

"So, I felt that if we keep fighting the Opposition and do not allow it to blossom, then we are helping the BJP. I have decided that if we are true nationalists and want to remove the BJP honestly, then our objective should be to fight the BJP. If we are fighting the enemies of the BJP, then we are friends of the BJP," he said.

"In reality, if someone is fighting the BJP across the country, it is Congress, Rahul Gandhi and his team," Waqar asserted.

## Ex-minister Karan Singh calls for setting up Himalayan authority to save mountain range

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

Veteran Congress leader and former Union minister Karan Singh on Wednesday suggested the setting up of a Himalayan authority by Himalayan nations to help save the mountain range and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take the initiative.

He also termed the four-laning of highways to connect the Char Dhams in Uttarakhand "reprehensible", saying the Government of India must adopt a proactive role in saving the Himalayas from destruction.

Singh also expressed deep sympathy with the people of Nepal over the loss of lives after the disaster, saying he has a special attachment to the country as his late wife hailed from the place.

"The cataclysmic events in Nepal have led to a considerable loss of life and property. I would like to express my deep sympathy with the people of Nepal in this hour of tragedy," Singh said, noting that his late wife was from Nepal, and thus, he has a special attachment to that "beautiful country" and its people.

"I must add that the event that triggered the disaster took place in Tibet. In a way, the episode has once again reminded us of the fragility of the Himalayan region. This is



why many lovers of the Himalayas, like myself, have constantly been urging that the Government of India must take some proactive role in saving the Himalayas from destruction," said the veteran leader, who is also the former governor of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The destruction that four-lane roads in such delicate areas, as the Char Dham in Uttarakhand, is reprehensible. This involves massive blasting and widening of the roads. In my view, four-lane roads should be totally banned in the Himalayas. There is no reason why tourists and pilgrims cannot travel on two-lane roads," he asserted.

"I have been suggesting for some time that the Himalayan nations should set up a Himalayan authority. This would include Pakistan, Tibet, India, all the way to Bangladesh and Bhutan. Only then can a

uniform policy be adopted. It would be appropriate if Prime Minister Narendra Modi were to take the initiative in this regard with the prime minister of Nepal," the former Union minister said.

The death toll from Nepal's devastating flash floods rose to 1,127 on Wednesday as rescuers are racing to find thousands still missing a week after the Himalayan disaster, police said.

According to the Nepal Police, 348 more dead bodies were recovered from Chitwan, 217 from Nawalparasi East, 190 from Nawalparasi West and 155 from Nuwakot.

Similarly, 66 bodies were recovered from Gorkha, 59 from Dhading, 45 from Rasuwa, and 38 from Tanahu.

So far, security forces have rescued 6,541 people from the affected areas while search operations continued for 4,858 missing people, the police said.

## India sends more relief supplies to Nepal

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

India on Wednesday dispatched a fifth tranche of over five tonnes of essential medicines to flood-ravaged Nepal, alongside an 11-member rescue team.

The death toll from last week's flash floods in Nepal has risen to over 1,000 after rescue workers recovered more bodies from affected areas, according to Nepalese authorities.

While emergency teams have rescued more than 12,000 people, roughly 4,000 remain missing as search and rescue operations continue.

"The fifth Indian aircraft has departed for Nepal. It is carrying an 11-member rescue team with specialised equipment, and 5.5 tonnes of essential medicines," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said



## Rijiju slams Congress for questioning GDP numbers

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

Attacking the Congress for questioning India's GDP numbers, Union minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday asked if the Opposition party was in a "state of deep intoxication" or had become "so swayed by their blind loathing of India's growth that they lost touch with ground reality".

Rijiju made the remarks in a post on X in reply to a post by Kerala Congress, which said, "Nobody believes the fake story anymore. The world can see through the fakery."

The Kerala Congress also posted an image of a beer mug showing the Indian economy as the actual liquid and the official GDP numbers as fizz.

"Is the Congress in a state of deep intoxication due to drinking too much beer or Congressmen are so swayed by their blind loathing of India's growth that they have lost touch with the ground reality?" Rijiju said.



India's economy grew at a faster-than-expected 7.8 per cent in the April-June quarter, showing resilience against concerns of an economic downturn over the war in West Asia.

Gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the first quarter of the 2026-27 fiscal slowed from a barnstorming 8.6 per cent in the previous quarter, but remained well above expectations when the conflict erupted and dis-

rupted energy markets.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has termed the GDP growth a "herculean feat".

Earlier in the day, the Congress cited former finance secretary Subhash Chandra Garg's remarks on GDP numbers to attack the Modi Government, saying it must understand that "PR can polish the picture" of GDP but not the economy itself.

Congress general secre-

## SIR aimed at helping BJP win polls, SC must stop bulk deletions: Sibal

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Wednesday alleged that the SIR being carried out by the Election Commission is an exercise aimed at helping the BJP win elections and urged the Supreme Court to stop the "bulk deletions" taking place under it.

The former Union minister also alleged that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that is ongoing in various states is aimed at helping the BJP win elections.

Sibal's remarks came over a report in The Indian Express which claimed that in Godda district of Jharkhand, BJP agents are



seeking to delete voters, mostly from the minority community, with Booth Level Officers, who are employees of the state Government headed by the JMM-Congress, raising red

flags over the issue.

In a post on X, Sibal said, "Politics of exclusion. BJP agents: Target Muslims, seek bulk deletions. Supreme Court needs to stop this!"

"SIR is an exercise: To

manipulate the voters list. Help BJP win elections!" the Independent Rajya Sabha MP said.

Later, addressing a press conference, Sibal said that in Jharkhand, there were bulk forms called form 7 being filed by BJP workers.

"You can file bulk forms - in the sense you can get 45, take 45 of them, or 100 of them, or even 400 of them. You can file the forms, and you can say that this name should be deleted. You don't have to give any reason for it, and if it is found to be false, it doesn't matter," Sibal said.

In this particular report in a national newspaper, when an investigation was done, the names that were target-

ed belonged to the Muslim community, he said.

And those people have been interviewed, and they have said [they've] been living there for years; their families have been living there for years. So if this is the way things are going to be done, what's the point of having an election?

It has been found that those Muslims whose names were sought to be deleted by bulk forms by BJP workers were actually living there for years, many of them ever since Independence, he said.

"And therefore this is a very serious issue, and if courts don't take care of this issue, if courts just believe that the SIR exercise is by a

neutral Election Commission of India, then I think we are in deep trouble - this democracy will be in deep trouble," Sibal said.

"For example, in Delhi itself, about 45 lakh to 47 lakh names have been cut, have been deleted. Now how many will be restored, I don't know, but that's almost 23-24 per cent of the entire electorate of Delhi, which is 1.5 crore," he said.

In Uttar Pradesh, 2.05 crore names have been cut, and crores of names are being cut like this, Sibal said.

"So far about five to six crore names have been cut overall ever since this process of SIR started," he said.

## TMC alleges misuse of police in West Bengal against its members

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

Alleging that police were being misused in West Bengal to target her party's leaders and activists, TMC Rajya Sabha deputy leader Sagarika Ghose on Wednesday said authorities were failing to upload FIRs online and serve mandatory notices to the accused.

Addressing a press conference, Ghose said the Supreme Court has directed police to upload FIRs online so an accused can know the allegations against them,

but this direction is not being followed.

She said the FIRs should be uploaded in a manner that makes them clearly legible, alleging that police were deliberately not making them available online.

Ghose also referred to provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita under which an accused in cases carrying a punishment of less than seven years is required to be served a notice, and alleged that this requirement was also not being followed.

"FIRs are not being uploaded online, and



TMC Rajya Sabha deputy leader Sagarika Ghose

notices are not being given," she said, alleging that cases relating to incidents dating

back to 2018 and 2019 were being revived by filing fresh complaints.

"This is a conspiracy against TMC activists," Ghose alleged.

Referring to the police questioning of TMC Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien in Kolkata, she claimed the senior Parliamentarian was pushed and fell, yet a complaint was lodged against him.

She said the alleged misuse of the police was part of a wider pattern of "political atrocities" and intimidation of senior TMC leaders.

"The manner in which the police are being misused in

Bengal, the Constitution, law and order are being attacked," she said.

"If the police are misused, no one will remain safe," she said. She said the party would challenge the alleged misuse of police, and also raise the issue at the international level.

"The manner in which police action is happening is a violation of human rights," she said.

The TMC was defeated by the BJP in May 2026, ending Mamata Banerjee's 15-year reign as West Bengal chief minister.

## BJP slams actor Swara Bhasker for her Padmaavat remark

**FAIR REPORT**  
 ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Wednesday hit out at actor Swara Bhasker for her remarks on the depiction of 'Jauhar' in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's 2018 film *Padmaavat*, saying a woman should respect other women.

The BJP's response came after Bhasker criticised the depiction of 'Jauhar' in "Padmaavat", questioning the message conveyed by the film's final sequence.

"I was watching it, and I thought that if God forbid, I was a rape survivor, what is this film telling me? I would feel like a coward that I didn't commit suicide to save my honour... Are we saying that rape is the end of a woman's life? This scene was so problematic," she said at an event recently, which led to social media backlash.

Asked for a reaction, BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia said, "You have taken the name of such an individual whose 'swar' (tone) has gone bad. It is said that her 'swar' (tone) also matches what is instructed to her. I understand that such kind of comments should not be made. A woman must respect other women."

Bhasker later clarified that her remarks criticising the 'Jauhar' scene in Sanjay Leela



Bhansali's 2018 film *Padmaavat* were "completely mistranslated" and she never called Rani Padmaavati or other women who committed Jauhar "cowards".

The actor has been at the receiving end of social media ire over comments made during an event last week, where she said the film glorified 'Jauhar', the practise among some Rajput communities, in which women committed mass self-immolation to avoid capture, enslavement or sexual violence when defeat in war appeared imminent.

In a video posted on X on Tuesday night, Bhasker explained the context of her remarks.

"This morning, a clip of mine has been going viral on social media. It was from an event yesterday, where I was asked why I had sent

an open letter to Sanjay Leela Bhansali after watching 'Padmaavat'. While explaining what my issue was, I said something that is now being completely mistranslated and spread falsely, claiming that I had said that Rani Padmaavati and the other women who committed Jauhar were cowards," she said.

"Maine kaha tha jab main climax dekh rahi thi, mujhe laga, bhagwan naa kare agar main rape peedita hoti toh main kayar mehsos karti ki maine apni jaan kyun nahi li, Ki main balatkar ke baad Zinda Bach gayi toh main kayar hoon (While watching the climax, I felt that, God forbid, if I were a rape survivor, the film might make me feel cowardly for not taking my own life and for having chosen to survive after the assault)," she added.



## NC, BJP clash in J&K, CM Omar Abdullah alleges police bias

**FAIR REPORT** ■ Jammu

After the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35-A, the main city centres of Srinagar, including the Lal Chowk area, for the first time on Wednesday witnessed high-voltage 'political' protests as the ruling National Conference and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused each other of failing the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

The large assembly of BJP workers and their supporters near Ghanta Ghar stunned political pundits as they raised slogans accusing Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's government of failing on governance, jobs, and basic services. The state unit Chief and Rajya Sabha MP Satpal Sharma and Leader of the opposition, Sunil Sharma, led the protest from Lal Chowk toward the Civil Secretariat. The National Conference workers led by their elected representatives assembled near Gindun Sports Complex in Rajbagh, attempted to march toward the BJP headquarters in Jawahar Nagar,

demanding the Centre restore statehood and honour commitments made in Parliament and before the Supreme Court.

The policemen deployed at ground zero stopped both processions. BJP workers were halted near Hari Singh High Street and Jahangir Chowk; NC protesters, including ministers and MLAs, were blocked at Rajbagh.

Both parties alleged bias in how the administration handled the two events. The NC said its peaceful protest was restricted while the BJP was facilitated and escorted by the police personnel.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah reacted strongly, accusing the police and the administration of adopting different standards while dealing with protests by the BJP and the National Conference, claiming that while the saffron leaders were escorted, those from his party were dragged.

Talking to reporters, Abdullah said that while police "facilitated" the BJP leaders during their march to the Civil Secretariat on



Police personnel stop BJP leaders and workers as they attempt to march towards the Civil Secretariat during a protest in Srinagar on Wednesday

Wednesday, his National Conference (NC) colleagues were "brutally repressed".

"You saw one protest that was denied. It showed the situation in J&K today: if you want to march on the Chief Minister's residence, you're allowed to; if you want to gherao the Secretariat, you're allowed to; but if you want to protest outside the BJP's office, God forbid, you will not be allowed, because the police are there only to protect the honour of the BJP; they don't care about anything else," the Chief Minister said. BJP protesters also burnt an effigy of Omar Abdullah

and raised slogans such as "Omar teri sarkar mein andhera hai andhera hai," pointing to a recent electricity tariff hike and the unkept poll pledge of 200 units of free power. They also alleged outsourcing of around 24,000–25,000 Government jobs, backdoor appointments, delay in panchayat and urban local body elections, water shortages, and corruption. "The JKNC's peaceful protest was stopped from moving forward. People were prevented from joining, and elected representatives were mishandled. Yet, when the BJP held a protest outside

the Secretariat, it was allowed to proceed. What a shame!" the NC said in a post on X.

NC MLA and chief spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq said the BJP did not fulfil its promise to restore statehood to J&K. "Where is statehood? It has been two years since the elections. The time has come to fulfil the promise made to us," he told reporters.

Demanding restoration of statehood and the constitutional guarantees revoked by the Centre on August 5, 2019, Sadiq said the NC will continue its protest till "what was snatched from us is given back". Addressing the party workers, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Sunil Sharma, said the people of J&K are facing hardships, but the Government is doing nothing to address their problems.

He said the protest centred around four issues: "selling" jobs instead of conducting fair recruitment; not conducting local body polls; "rampant corruption"; and power tariff hikes.

Sharma also accused Abdullah and his party of only parroting the issue of

Statehood and not focusing on governance.

Criticising the chief minister, the BJP leader asked if people elected him to "live like a prince and go skiing in Gulmarg and Pahalgam?"

He also dared Abdullah to resign from his home constituency, Ganderbal, and seek a fresh mandate over the issue of restoration of statehood to J&K.

"If you have any self-respect left, fight an election on it (statehood). Only then will we acknowledge it as your issue," Sharma said. He also said the issue of Statehood belonged to the BJP, as it has promised the people of J&K to restore it at an appropriate time. "If you (Abdullah) truly wish to protest on the issue of statehood, resign from Ganderbal. I challenge you from this historic venue – Crown Prince, resign over the issue of Statehood and contest a fresh election.

"If people re-elect you, we will accept that Statehood is your genuine issue. Otherwise, we will conclude that Statehood is not your

issue; it is the agenda of the BJP. Misleading the public must stop," Sharma said. Responding to Suni Sharma's demand for his resignation as the chief minister, Abdullah said there was no reason for him to step down.

"Why should I resign? Should we assume that they have no intention of granting statehood to this Government? If so, why are we not hearing it directly from the Centre? If they truly intend to tear the Constitution to shreds, disrespect the Supreme Court, disrespect Parliament and prove Modi's promise as false, let them do so. I am not going to resign just to please the LoP," Abdullah said.

The chief minister said the people of J&K gave his party a mandate for five years and he will present a report card to them. "As for the allegations (of corruption), does my government even have the authority to conduct an investigation? Let the LoP tell us what investigation was carried out. If backdoor appointments took place, which agency investigated them? Let him name just

one. "The Anti-Corruption Bureau is not under my control. The Crime Branch is not under my control. The CID is not under my control, let alone the central agencies. Tell us, where was an FIR filed?" he asked.

Abdullah also accused the BJP of making baseless allegations since it didn't have anything else to say. "We are bearing the brunt of their mistakes; we are trying to fix them, yet they are the ones protesting," he said.

Reacting to these simultaneous demonstrations, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti accused the police of adopting double standards with different political parties. "The same police that won't allow PDP to step outside its office to hold a peaceful protest on public issues have facilitated both the BJP and the NC to protest against each other," Mehbooba said on X.

She said, "These blatant double standards must be explained – who authorises these selective restrictions and why the law is being applied differently to different political parties".

## Sikkim landslide snaps road link to SSB battalion HQ

**FAIR REPORT**

■ Gangtok

A major landslide washed away a section of a highway in West Sikkim on Wednesday, snapping road connectivity to the headquarters of the 72nd Battalion of the SSB at Yuksom and halting vehicular movement along a major tourism route.

An official release said that no casualty was reported in the landslide, triggered by heavy water flow from the Siksa Khola stream, between 6.30 am and 7 am at Rimbi



Representative image

which is around 4.5 km from the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) battalion headquarters.

"A large quantity of landslide debris, accompanied by a heavy flow of water from Siksa Khola, caused damage to the road on the

Geyzing-Pelling-Yuksom route, resulting in complete disruption of connectivity," the release said. Geyzing-Pelling-Yuksom route links a tourism and historical circuit in Gyalshing district in the western part of the Himalayan State.

While Pelling offers panoramic, close-up views of the Khangchendzonga mountain range, Yuksom is the first capital of Sikkim where the first Chogyal (king) was crowned in 1642. It is also home to Dubdi Monastery, the oldest monastery in the State.

A joint inspection of the affected site was carried out by the Commandant of the 72nd Battalion, District Magistrate of Gyalshing, police officers and officials of various government departments. They assessed the extent of damage and chalked out immediate measures for restoration of the route, the release said.

On the request of the district administration, the Rescue Relief Team (RRT) of the SSB 72nd Battalion was deployed to help clear debris and reopen the road.

## 16th Aero India to be held in Bengaluru in February 2027

**FAIR REPORT**

■ New Delhi

Aero India, Asia's largest air show and one of the world's premier aerospace and defence exhibitions, is all set to return with its 16th edition at Air Force Station, Yelahanka in Bengaluru, from February 8 to 12, 2027, the defence ministry said in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Organised by the Department of Defence Production, Ministry of Defence, the event will bring together leading global aerospace and defence companies, policymakers, technology experts, innovators, industry stakeholders and defence forces personnel on a common



platform. Aero India has emerged as a flagship international event showcasing the nation's growing capabilities in aerospace, defence manufacturing, emerging technologies and innovation.

It provides a dynamic platform for busi-

ness engagement, technology exchange, international cooperation and strategic dialogue, while highlighting India's expanding defence industrial ecosystem and its growing role in the global aerospace and defence sector.

The five-day event will feature a comprehensive exhibition and a range of business and strategic engagements, providing opportunities for industry-to-industry interactions, Government-to-industry engagements, technology demonstrations and collaborations.

It will also feature spectacular aerial displays by the Indian Air Force and participating international flying teams, offering visitors an opportunity to witness advanced aviation capabilities in action.

## BJP confident of winning Kolkata, Howrah civic polls

**FAIR REPORT** ■ Kolkata

The ruling BJP is confident of winning more than 150 out of newly delineated 209 wards in the prestigious Kolkata Municipal Corporation elections.

Union Minister and former State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar has said that the saffron outfit was raring to go and was confident of winning more than three-fourths of the seats. "We are ready and raring to go... We are confident of winning 150 to 175 seats... We have asked our workers to get prepared for the elections and reach out to the people," he said.

While Majumdar has been made the BJP's charge de



Representative image

affairs of KMC elections and Rajya Sabha MP, another former State party president Rahul Sinha has been given the charge of Howrah Municipal elections.

"We do not doubt that we will win but... That is not the question... The question

is how by how many seats we will win... It will be a huge victory coming BJP's way," Sinha said, adding, "TMC has been thrown out of power as a most corrupt political party... While the Left has been rejected and is unlikely to leave any imprint... In

that case it is the BJP all the way." The West Bengal State Election Commission is planning to conclude the election process by the first week of December, sources in the SEC said following a meeting of senior officials.

West Bengal Government had decided to hold civic elections to municipal boards including Kolkata, Howrah and Bally.

Most of the civic boards had been rendered non-functional after the TMC-elected representatives resigned their posts soon after this year's Assembly elections, which saw the BJP coming to power with 209 seats. The TMC got only 80 seats, and later they were

further reduced to a non-entity following rebellion within the party, with about 62 MLAs forming a separate group out of the one led by the former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Meanwhile, the break-away faction of the TMC MPs who had joined the NCPI after the State elections said that they would like to contest the civic elections as constituents of the NDA, while the BJP leadership said that they would contest the elections alone.

"We are members of the NDA and naturally would like to contest elections as constituents of the group," said senior leader Sudip Bandopadhyay.

## Suwendu drives road roller over one lakh seized drug bottles

**FAIR REPORT** ■ Kolkata

In what is being viewed as symbolic of the BJP Government's "firm commitment" to end transborder drug smuggling, West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday drove a road roller over about one lakh seized cough syrup bottles at Balurghat in South Dinajpur district.

Adhikari, who was accompanied by Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar and Bengal Health Minister Shardwat Mukherjee, said that the programme was meant to send across a



message to the youth that the Government was firmly determined to end the drug menace in the State.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative towards making India drug-

free, Adhikari said: "This is my first message to those involved in drug smuggling that the government is determined to bring the youth out of drug addiction."

This was Adhikari's first visit to Balurghat after becoming the Chief Minister of the State. He said that a large quantity of drug bottles had been seized in the last four months in joint operations conducted by State police and the BSF, adding, 'the bottles we are destroying today are those seized bottles, sending across a straight message that we want to make Bengal drug-free.

## CBI files chargesheet against 19 accused, including six Haryana IAS officers

**FAIR REPORT**

■ New Delhi

On Wednesday, the Central Bureau of Investigation filed a chargesheet against 19 people. Among those accused are six Haryana-cadre IAS officers, three officials from IDFC First Bank, and one from AU Small Finance Bank. They are accused of misappropriating Rs 504 crore from several Haryana government departments and organisations.

This is the third chargesheet filed in the Haryana part of the investigation and was submitted to the Special Judge for CBI cases in Panchkula. In addition to the six IAS officers and four bank officials, nine other State Government officials

are named. They face charges such as criminal conspiracy, cheating, destruction of evidence, forgery, use of fake documents, falsification of accounts, breach of trust, abetment under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and bribery and misconduct under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

With this latest filing, a total of 37 people and entities have now been chargesheeted in the Haryana case. Previously, the agency filed charges against 18 others, including bank officers, public servants, private individuals, and companies. Officials said 26 people have been arrested so far, and 54 searches have uncovered incriminating material, including gold worth about ₹20 crore.

The CBI says its investigation found that public servants and bankers from IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank worked together on a planned scheme. Surplus funds from eight government departments and organisations were moved from approved banks into accounts at certain branches where the accused bank officers worked, mainly at IDFC First Bank's Sector 32 branch in Chandigarh and a branch of AU Small Finance Bank.

The agency said these transfers broke Finance Department rules on financial prudence and fraud prevention. Instead of putting the money into a real fixed deposit, as claimed, investigators say the accused used fake or non-existent fixed-



deposit receipts and false debit notes to divert the funds to unrelated third parties. The money was then moved through several accounts and converted into cash, which benefited the accused. They offered high interest rates to persuade officials to move idle Government balances into

these accounts, after which the funds were siphoned off rather than invested.

The eight entities whose funds were affected include the Department of Panchayats, the Municipal Corporations of Panchkula and Kalka, the Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad, the Haryana Labour

Welfare Board, the Haryana State Agricultural Marketing Board, the Haryana State Pollution Control Board, and Haryana Power Generation Corporation Limited.

The largest single loss found earlier in the investigation was about ₹169 crore from HSPCB accounts. Other alleged losses of about ₹60.54 crore were linked to school education and agricultural marketing accounts that were opened in violation of state rules. Investigators also looked into suspected siphoning from the Panchkula municipal corporation and other local bodies. These issues came to light earlier this year when departments tried to close or review accounts and found big differences between recorded deposits and actual

bank balances.

Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau first registered the case in February. Because of the fraud's size and complexity, the state government later asked the CBI to take over the investigation. The central agency re-registered the case and received approval to investigate the role of senior public servants.

Several senior officers and former bank executives had already been arrested in the earlier stages of the investigation, including those linked to the Panchkula municipal corporation, school education, agriculture, and the pollution control board, as well as former bank officials who allegedly approved account openings and debit transactions. Private individuals and shell compa-

nies named in earlier chargesheets are accused of stealing and moving the stolen money. Other CBI investigations involving Chandigarh Smart City Limited, the Municipal Corporation of Chandigarh, and CREST report another alleged diversion of about ₹153 crore. This brings the total amount mentioned by the agency to about ₹657 crore.

The Enforcement Directorate is also conducting a separate money-laundering investigation. After the fraud was discovered, IDFC First Bank publicly reported the unauthorised transactions. The bank returned much of the principal and interest to the Haryana Government, but said its employees had worked with outsiders.



