

States Focus

Himalayan disaster plan reviewed after Nepal floods



PM PAYS TRIBUTE TO UTTAM KUMAR ON BIRTH CENTENARY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday paid rich tribute to Bengali film legend Uttam Kumar on his birth centenary, saying his timeless performances connect with people across generations. Born on September 3, 1926, Uttam Kumar, whose original name was Arun Kumar Chattopadhyay, died on July 24, 1980.

"Mahanayak Uttam Kumar... A legend whose timeless performances connect with people across generations. Tributes on his birth centenary," Modi said in a post on social media.

The prime minister also shared part of his August 30 radio address 'Mann Ki Baat' where he described Uttam Kumar as a versatile actor who became deeply embedded in people's hearts through his performances. (PNS)



VP TO LAUNCH NEW FACILITIES AT PANJAB UNIVERSITY

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan will inaugurate various facilities at Panjab University in Chandigarh on Friday. The vice president is also ex officio Chancellor of the University.

A statement from his office on Thursday said during the visit, Radhakrishnan will inaugurate the Advanced Instrumentation Facility at Sophisticated Analytical Instrument Facility/Central Instrumentation Laboratories.

He will also inaugurate the Panjab University Tech Innovation Forum, marking a major step forward in strengthening the university's research, innovation and startup ecosystem. (PNS)

FAIR REPORT

New Delhi

With the unprecedented floods in Nepal sounding a warning for India, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan on Thursday reviewed the preparedness of the Himalayan States and Union Territories against the risks posed by Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and snow avalanches. During the meeting, he took stock of early warning systems, monitoring of vulnerable glacial lakes and snow-covered areas, identification of high-risk locations and flow paths, timely dissemination of alerts, evacuation preparedness, and strengthening of response mechanisms.

The message from a high-level review chaired by the Home Secretary was blunt: scientific warnings must no longer sit in files. Institutions that monitor glaciers, lakes and slopes already generate data. The gap, officials said, is the speed with which those

alerts reach district administrations, hydropower operators, road agencies and communities living downstream.

Gaps in early-warning networks and evacuation routes must be identified. Officials said gaps in early-warning systems and evacuation routes need to be found now, not after another disaster. Fixes should not be delayed until the next monsoon or winter.

The Centre issued a clear order to Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh, which are part of the National Glacial Lake Outburst Flood Risk Mitigation Programme approved in 2024, to speed up the project. 2023 South Lhonak disaster in Sikkim, when a massive rock collapse into a glacial lake generated a displacement wave that tore down the Teesta valley, destroying a major hydropower dam and settlements. Two years later, officials say progress on monitoring stations, lake-lowering works, downstream warning



Residents pull a newly installed zipline to help people commute across the Trishuli river in the aftermath of flash floods at Bidur in Nepal's Nuwakot district, Nepal on Wednesday

systems and community training has been uneven.

The floods in Nepal on August 26 highlighted the dangers in the region. When a glacier collapsed near the border, it sent water rushing down the Bhothe Koshi and Trishuli rivers. The flood destroyed bridges, roads, hydropower tunnels, and entire hillsides. Rescue teams are still looking for bodies, and thousands of people remain missing. Rivers flowing into Bihar and Uttar

Pradesh rose rapidly, putting Indian border districts on alert. By the time the flood reached the plains, its worst effects had faded. However, the same geological risks, warming trends, and downstream dangers exist on the Indian side too.

There are about 7,500 glacial lakes in India's Himalayan region. National agencies have marked nearly 200 as high-risk. The most dangerous lakes are in Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim,

Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttarakhand.

Many of these lakes are above hydropower projects, highways, Army and ITBP posts, and crowded valleys. If a lake breaks, the flood can travel for tens of kilometres within minutes. Sometimes, there are only hours or even less to warn people.

The ministry's meeting stressed the need for last-mile connectivity. Tools like satellite data, automated weather and water stations, pressure probes, and local profiling equipment are already in use or being set up. But officials admitted the real challenge is turning these signals into timely evacuations and road closures. States were told to map every settlement and important facility that could be affected if a lake bursts, mark high-flood lines, and practice evacuations before the next monsoon. Better coordination between agencies was also highlighted.

According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), many agencies are involved, including the NDMA, the Central Water Commission, the Geological Survey of India, ISRO, the Defence Geo-informatics Research Establishment, state disaster authorities, the Army, and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. They were told to share risk information in real time, not after a disaster starts. The Centre wants a change that is not just technical, but also cultural.

In the past, Himalayan disaster management was measured by how fast National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams responded after floods or landslides. Now, the goal is to need those teams less often. This involves lowering water levels in unstable lakes when possible, installing sensors that alert district control rooms, training local volunteers familiar with the area, and seeing every new hydropower or road project as a possible risk, not just a separate asset.

Magnitude a problem but society moving towards inclusivity: KCND president

FAIR REPORT

New Delhi

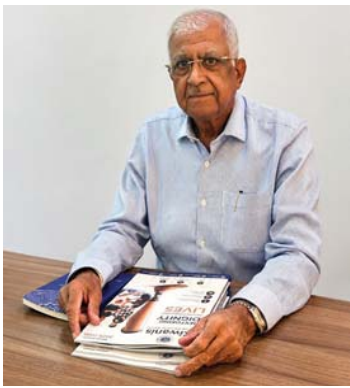
At a time when the nation's view has been affected by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the international fraternity changing the description of handicapped to the differently-abled, affecting the attitude of the society towards such citizens, one may be surprised that a healthcare non-Governmental organisation — Kiwanis Club of New Delhi (KCND) has been doing this for the affected and those in need for nearly five decades free of cost.

In an exclusive interaction with *The Pioneer*, KCND president and former managing director of Sakata Inx (India), Vijay Kumar Seth shared his experience of making a difference and the challenges that the nation still faces while progressing gradually towards a better situation.

Speaking about the organisation, Seth said, "A number of achiev-

ers including former generals, senior Government officials, industry leaders and subject experts from various fields have been working in this organisation.

The KCND has been working mainly for providing artificial limbs free of cost- to more than one lakh persons so far, pain management/ physiotherapy and cerebral palsy assistance. Reputed institutions like AIIMS also refer patients to us. We have a team of dedicated skilled professionals whose passion to work and do something for the society has enabled us to hold camps with the army too. We hold about half a dozen camps in association with the army in border regions of Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan especially for those who have lost their limbs due to mines or enemy fire. The KCND focuses on all aspects for those needing artificial limbs, cerebral palsy assistance and pain management help. We



facilitate speech, behavioural and cognitive skills training for patients in need along with teaching their parents too. Our efforts are aimed at restoring the dignity of those who have lost hope and enabling them to lead better lives," he said.

Regarding factors which lead to situations needing artificial limbs, he said that the problem is big in

magnitude when it comes to factors like road accidents or awareness of health conditions like cerebral palsy. The solution cannot be left to the Government alone as the public being aware and acknowledging its obligation towards safety and factors to prevent such situations is also important. "A positive change in social behaviour and awareness is vital to address such issues. The KCND engages with institutions including the IITS and colleges to raise awareness and elicit positive action on these aspects. The positive change that we all want to experience can be affected by education- it starts there. Incorporating empathy, awareness and more facts in education will lead to improvement. For example, in Japan, the kids are taught from the start in schools to respect those who are not equal due to physical and other aspects and this strengthens social values which benefit the

society as a whole," Seth said.

Regarding the funding for such activities, he said that voluntary donations from members and funds received under Corporate Social Responsibility play a major role. The organisation is presently working on a 3-D printed artificial limbs project which will cost about ₹25-30 lakh. "The usual artificial limbs are not very comfortable due to various factors so we are working on 3-D printed artificial limbs which will be much more comfortable and practical for the users," he said.

Having been in the hub of the corporate sector for about five decades, Seth said that he is fuelled to do this work, as is his team, by the motivation to make a positive change in the lives of those who have little hope. Changing a life riddled with hopelessness and helplessness into one filled with hope and empowerment is what Seth and his team are motivated by.

ED strikes southern drug money trail in four-State sweep

FAIR REPORT

New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), on Thursday, launched a coordinated money-laundering offensive across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana and Kerala, treating narcotics trafficking as a financial enterprise rather than a string of isolated street crimes.

Teams simultaneously covered about 30 premises under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), converting predicate drug cases into a hunt for proceeds, properties and overseas linkages that keep the trade alive.

The geography of the searches mapped the southern supply chain. In Tamil Nadu, teams moved through Chennai, Tirunelveli, Nagapattinam, Velankanni and Ramanathapuram-urban distribution points as well as coastal districts long associated with sea-borne consignments.

In Karnataka, searches

covered Kolar, Malur in Kolar district and Hoskote in Bengaluru North.

In Telangana, the action reached Serilingampally, Nanakramguda and other parts of Ranga Reddy district around Hyderabad. In Kerala, officials searched premises in Kozhikode, Kannur, Malappuram and Thrissur. Inland supply pockets, metropolitan retail hubs, and coastal transit points were treated as a single financial map.

Officials said the Directorate's case rests on about eight First Information Reports and linked chargesheets filed by state police units and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). Those files concern separate trafficking episodes that investigators now view as connected through money flows. The substances under scrutiny include methamphetamine, marijuana and MDMA.

The networks, officials said, involve more than two dozen Indian and foreign nationals



and show cross-border linkages to Sri Lanka and certain West Asian countries. That mix of synthetic drugs, cannabis and party drugs, plus overseas counterparts, points to a hybrid trade that uses southern India both as a market and as a transit zone. Once a scheduled offence under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act is established, the PMLA allows investigators to examine whether the resulting income was concealed, layered or projected as legitimate wealth.

Searches are designed to recover documents, digital

devices, property papers, bank trails and other material showing how drug money was parked in real estate, businesses, cash holdings or informal channels. Early accounts of Thursday's action did not list confirmed seizures.

Officials indicated that findings would emerge as teams completed searches and analysed recovered material. The timing reflects a larger policy shift. The operation has been placed within the Union Government's Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan and the enforcement plan set out in the Ministry of Home

Affairs' Vision Document on Narcotics Control for 2026-2029. That document treats financial disruption as central to narcotics control.

It calls for intelligence-led operations against inter-state and transnational cartels, mandatory financial investigations in major drug cases, the attachment of illicit assets, tighter precursor controls, and stronger coordination among the NCB, state police, customs, and financial agencies. Thursday's multi-state sweep is an operational expression of that doctrine: Strike several linked files at once, follow the money across state borders, and treat foreign linkages as part of the same case.

Southern India has become a high-priority theatre for this approach. Tamil Nadu's coastline has repeatedly featured in consignments bound for Sri Lanka. Kerala's urban and coastal districts have seen MDMA and other synthetics enter student and nightlife

markets. Karnataka's periphery belt around Bengaluru has seen an increase in inquiries for manufacturing and warehousing. Hyderabad and adjoining Ranga Reddy localities have been associated with organised retail of ganja.

By covering all four states in one day, the Directorate is signalling that these will no longer be handled as separate local problems. The investigative logic is simple. Trafficking generates cash that must be hidden. Cash is converted into property, vehicles, firms, hawala transfers, bank deposits or digital assets. If that conversion can be proved, assets can be attached even after the original drug seizure is complete.

Foreign nationals and West Asian, as well as Sri Lankan, linkages raise the further possibility of inbound and outbound value transfers, which investigators typically examine through banking records, travel histories, and informal remittance patterns.

Senior IPS officer Jag Mohan appointed Special Director of IB

FAIR REPORT

New Delhi

Jag Mohan, a senior officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS), was named Special Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) on Thursday. Mohan, an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer from the 1995 Bihar cadre, is now serving as Additional Director in the IB.

A statement from the Personnel Ministry said that the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet had approved Mohan's appointment as Special Director, IB, until his superannuation on 30 June 2031. The Special Director General (DG) level has also been assigned to his other five classmates in their respective organisations.

Sandeep Khirwar and Rajesh Kumar have now been appointed as Special Deputy Generals in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF); at present, they hold the position



of Additional Directors General (ADGs) in the same force.

Puneet Rastogi and Satosh Shriramaji Khandare will now hold the position of Special DG in the Border Security Force (BSF); at present, they are both serving as ADGs in the BSF.

Padmakar S Ranipse, who is the ADG of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), has been appointed as Special DG in the force.

BJP alleges AAP leaders settling rape cases for bribes

FAIR REPORT

New Delhi

The BJP on Thursday accused AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and his wife of running an alleged corruption syndicate through middlemen in the state to settle rape cases in exchange for bribes of up to ₹5 crore, calling it the "AAP loot model".

The allegations come in the backdrop of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) ordering an inquiry into a complaint that Mann's wife Gurpreet Kaur allegedly demanded ₹5 crore to quash a rape case.

The NHRC on August 21 directed the Punjab chief secretary and director general of police to inquire into the allegations and submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) within two weeks.

Addressing a press conference here, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari played purported audio recordings of the alleged middlemen and cited other evidence, claiming the involve-



ment of Mann, his wife, and Kejriwal, whom he described as Punjab's "super CM".

"The audio recordings that we are going to play before you, and the evidence that has come before us, point towards the fact that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann is running a new loot racket and a new corruption racket," Bhandari said.

"In this corruption racket, allegations are that he and his wife, through middlemen, are seeking bribes of up to ₹5 crore to get legitimate rape cases settled," he alleged.

Bhandari alleged that middlemen have been deputed across Punjab on the instructions of the chief minister and his wife to facilitate such deals.

"The chief minister and the wife of the chief minister have deputed middlemen across Punjab. These middlemen, on the instructions of the chief minister and his wife, have innovated a new model of corruption, which we call the Aam Aadmi Party's 'loot model', in which these middlemen are taking bribes of ₹5 crore to settle rape cases," he further alleged.

Referring to one alleged rape case, he played recordings that he claimed established the charge.

"The middleman is speaking to a relative of the accused and saying that we have also informed 'CM sahab' about this and now CM sahab has also become

involved," he alleged. He also questioned Kejriwal's alleged role in the purported racket.

"Does the chief minister and his wife run a syndicate in which they are taking bribes and money to withdraw rape cases?" he said.

"Has the chief minister's office become a syndicate of corruption?" Bhandari asked.

"Has the Aam Aadmi Party's 'loot model' now become a model in Punjab where money is being taken for rape cases, just like the corruption and loot model of the 'Sheesh Mahal' in Delhi?" he asked.

Referring to the NHRC ordering probe, Bhandari said, "On August 21, 2026, the National Human Rights Commission, taking cognisance of this matter, has already written a letter to the Chief Secretary of the Punjab Government and the Punjab DGP."

"It has asked to investigate whether the chief minister's office and the chief minister himself are running a corruption racket in Punjab in which bribes of ₹5 crore are being offered to withdraw cases of rape victims," Bhandari said.

NCPCR rescues over 3,800 children from child labour under a special campaign

FAIR REPORT

New Delhi

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) launched a special "Pan-India Rescue and Rehabilitation" Campaign on 12 June 2026, which continued up to 31 August 2026. NCPCR undertook coordinated measures with the concerned State Governments/ UT Administrations, District Magistrates, Labour Departments, Police authorities and other stakeholders to intensify the identification, rescue and rehabilitation of children engaged in child labour and those vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

According to a press release, the NCPCR issued communications to the concerned authorities requesting intensified and targeted rescue operations at child labour and trafficking hotspots, including factories, brick kilns, construction sites, hotels/dhabas, workshops, markets, railway stations and other vulnerable locations.

States/UTs were also requested to furnish regular State-wise and District-wise data on rescue operations, children rescued, FIRs



registered, rehabilitation, restoration, educational mainstreaming, compensation and other follow-up measures.

To monitor implementation and address field level issues, the NCPCR conducted meetings with the District Administrations of 227 districts, across the country.

Themeetings focused on reviewing rescue operations, addressing operational bottlenecks, ensuring timely

submission of ATRs and strengthening coordination among the concerned departments and agencies.

Where the requisite information was not received within the stipulated period, the NCPCR issued reminder communications to the concerned authorities.

The NCPCRalso undertook awareness and outreach through social media and other communication platforms, disseminating information regarding the campaign, reporting of child labour and the importance of rehabilitation and educational mainstreaming following rescue. With sustained and proactive monitoring of above campaign, NCPCR in collaboration with state authorities successfully rescued over 3,800 children. Further, over 575 FIRs have been registered during the Campaign.

While most of the State Governments participated enthusiastically in the campaign, Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of children rescued, with 1,480 children, followed by Rajasthan with 804 children and Gujarat with 630 children.

Bihar reported 183 children rescued, while Andhra Pradesh reported 147 children rescued.

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
 PTI

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

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

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".

Swine Flu claims woman's life in MP; Bhopal battles kit shortage

FAIR REPORT

■ Bhopal

Swine flu has claimed a life in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, with a 60-year-old woman from Ujjain dying in Indore after testing positive for H1N1. The death has raised concern in Bhopal, where six H1N1 cases have already been confirmed, but regular testing at Gandhi Medical College (GMC) has not yet started because testing kits are unavailable.

The woman died after undergoing treatment in Indore for 16 days. Her H1N1 infection was confirmed during investigation. The development comes at a time when hospitals in Bhopal are witnessing a significant number of patients reporting respiratory symptoms. According to available figures, around 10,000 patients visit the OPDs of JP Hospital, Hamidia Hospital and AIIMS Bhopal every day. Nearly half of them are reportedly presenting with symptoms such as sore throat, cough, fever, runny nose and fatigue. This indi-



Representative image

cates a substantial number of patients with viral or respiratory infections.

At GMC, however, H1N1 testing has not yet begun. Dr Deepthi Chaurasia, head of the Microbiology Department, said the facility was currently not conducting H1N1 tests because kits were unavailable. She said the kits were expected to arrive and testing would start once they were received.

At AIIMS Bhopal, officials said routine H1N1 testing was not being conducted for every patient. Samples are being sent for testing after assessing patients with symptoms suggestive of H1N1 and considering their clinical condition. Around

10 samples have been sent for testing in the past week, with no H1N1-positive case reported by AIIMS so far.

Pulmonologist Dr Lokendra Dave said sudden changes in weather, humidity and cooler conditions can contribute to a rise in viral respiratory infections, including influenza. He said patients with symptoms such as cough, fever and sore throat had been visiting hospitals consistently for nearly three months. However, he stressed that the present situation was neither abnormal nor indicative of an epidemic.

According to Dr Dave, around 95 per cent of influenza cases are self-lim-

iting. However, severe cases can develop complications such as pneumonia.

Patients developing hypoxia or low oxygen levels may require hospitalisation and ICU support. Doctors have also reported cases in which respiratory symptoms spread among family members within two to three days. Influenza A (H1N1), influenza B, adenovirus and respiratory syncytial virus may be circulating, with their initial symptoms often overlapping. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish between common viral infections, influenza, H1N1 and Covid-19 based on symptoms alone.

Dr Dave advised people with fever, cough or cold symptoms against self-medication and urged them to seek medical advice. Patients prescribed antiviral medicines should complete the full course and consult a doctor if symptoms worsen. Doctors have also advised symptomatic people to isolate themselves, wear masks, take adequate rest, drink sufficient fluids and maintain hand hygiene.

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 investiga-

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,

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



deposit receipts and false debit notes to divert the funds to unrelated third parties. The money was then moved through several

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

The eight entities whose funds were affected include

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

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,

nies named in earlier chargesheets are accused of receiving 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

