

BJP strategy is to marginalise allies in states it's not in majority: Sibal

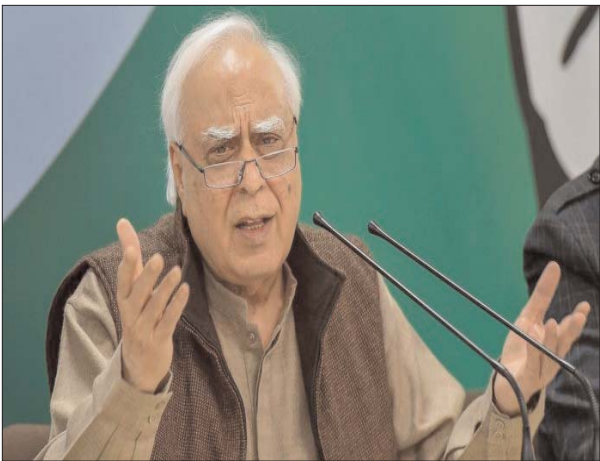
NEW DELHI, JAN 18: Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Sunday said the BJP's political strategy in states where it is not in power or in majority is to ally with other political parties, come to power and then marginalise them.

He said this strategy was successful in Bihar and was being played out in Maharashtra.

In an X post, Sibal said, "BJP's political strategy: In states where they are not in power or are not in majority —? ally with other political parties, come to power, then marginalise them." "This strategy: Successful in Bihar. Being played out in Maharashtra!" the Independent Rajya Sabha MP wrote.

The BJP won 1,425 out of 2,869 seats in the Maharashtra civic polls to emerge as the single largest party in more than a dozen municipal corporations, including Mumbai and Pune, breaching the bastions of the Thackerays and Pawars.

The saffron party won 89 seats in the 227-member Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), ending the Thackeray family's three-decade-old dominance in the



cash-rich civic body.

BJP ally Shiv Sena bagged 29 seats, while the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) managed 65, and MNS got six seats. The Congress, which fought in alliance with Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA), bagged 24 seats, AIMIM 8, NCP 3, Samajwadi Party 2, and NCP (SP) got just one seat in the BMC.

The BJP has emerged as the single largest party in Navi Mumbai with 65 seats, Kalyan-Dombivli (50), Mira-Bhayandar (78), Nashik (72), Panvel (55), Pune (119), Pimpri-Chinchwad (84), Solapur (87), Chhatrapati Sambhaji-

nagar (57), Nanded (45) and

Nagpur (102).

The saffron party stunned the Pawars in the Pune polls, clinching 119 seats, with Ajit Pawar-led NCP coming in distant second with 27 and its ally NCP (SP) getting three seats, while the Congress managed 15 seats.

In the 151-member Nagpur civic body, the BJP held sway bagging 102 seats, while the Congress bagged a mere 34. Nashik saw the BJP bagging 72 seats, Shiv Sena 26, Shiv Sena (UBT) 15, Congress 3 and NCP 4.

The BJP's victory streak continued in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, where it won 57 seats, followed by Shiv Sena (15), Congress (1),

while other parties registered with the SEC, especially the AIMIM, bagged 33 seats.

The Congress, which ran a muted campaign in the run-up to the polls, managed significant victories in Bhiwandi, where it won 30 seats, Chandrapur 27, and Latur 43.

According to the final tally, the BJP won 1,425 out of a total 2,869 seats across 29 municipal corporations, Shiv Sena 399, Congress 324, NCP 167, Shiv Sena (UBT) 155, NCP (SP) 36, MNS 13, BSP 6, parties registered with the SEC 129, unrecognised parties 196, and 19 independents.

The elections were held in the following municipal corporations: Mumbai, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Navi Mumbai, Vasai-Virar, Kalyan-Dombivli, Kolhapur, Nagpur, Solapur, Amravati, Akola, Nashik, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, Ulhasnagar, Thane, Chandrapur, Parbhani, Mira-Bhayandar, Nanded-Waghala, Panvel, Bhiwandi-Nizampur, Latur, Malegaon, Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad, Jalgaon, Ahilyanagar, Dhule, Jalna and Ichalkaranji. (PTI)

Govt Seeking Dates As No Merit In NSA Case Against Sonam Wangchuk, Says Wife Gitanjali Angmo

NEW DELHI, JAN 16: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk's arrest reflects the state of democracy in the country where power is used to "illegally detain" people, his wife Gitanjali Angmo said, asserting that he should already be out of prison due to "procedural lapses" by authorities.

In an interview with news agency, Angmo alleged that the Solicitor General has been seeking "dates after dates" as they have realised that there is "no merit in the case".

Angmo, who co-founded the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh, with Wangchuk, said that it's an "open and shut case".

Wangchuk, a Magsaysay Award-winning climate activist and educator, was detained under the stringent National Security Act (NSA) on September 26, two days after protests demanding statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh left four people dead and 90 injured in the Union territory, and was taken to Jodhpur jail.

"...it's not just about Sonam Wangchuk as an individual, but about the state of democracy in this country, about the use of power for illegal detention of people who have been working for this country. If it can happen to Sonam, it can happen to anybody else," she said.

Angmo said she was a "bit disappointed" that Wangchuk's detention has not faced stronger pushback. "We cannot afford to be silent. I think the voice needs to be more collected and louder," she said.

Angmo, also an educator, has filed a habeas corpus petition challenging Wangchuk's detention and seeking his immediate release.

"It has been quite an uphill task, getting the detention



order and meeting Sonam needed a habeas corpus to be filed in the Supreme Court and even after that was filed, to get his handwritten notes was a challenge," Angmo said.

The handwritten notes prepared by Wangchuk regarding his detention are part of legal documentation submitted to the Supreme Court.

Angmo said as per the NSA, authorities should provide all documents, including the ones that establish the grounds of detention, to the detainee within "five or maximum 10 days".

"But these four videos were given to him on the 28th day, on October 23. This is a very big procedural lapse, based on which the detention order should be made void ab initio and quashed," she said.

"In a way, it is an open and shut case just on this alone because it violates Section 8 of the National Security Act. Corollary to this is that because he did not get these videos, he was denied a chance to make an effective representation — Section 11 of the NSA — in front of the advisory board," she said.

Angmo said the grounds of detention used against Wangchuk "are stale" and some of them "rely on videos that are one and a half years old or one year old".

She said out of the five FIRs that have been relied upon, three don't name him.

Apple Harvest Keeps Youth Away From Terror: How A Potential Suicide Bomber Backed Out Of Red Fort Plot

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, JAN 18: Investigations into the "white collar" terror module busted after the recent car bombing near Red Fort showed that the mastermind Dr Umar-un Nabi had attempted to recruit a second suicide bomber but could not succeed as he backed out of the terror plot citing the need to help his family during the apple harvest, officials said on Sunday.

The Srinagar Police and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) have uncovered a parallel terror module orchestrated by Nabi, the man who was driving the explosive-laden vehicle that detonated outside the historic Red Fort on November 10, killing over 12 people.

Interrogations of the arrested suspects have highlighted recruitment tactics used by the doctor-turned-terrorist, leading to the nabbing of a Shopian resident, Yasir Ahmed Dar, by the NIA.

The officials said Nabi had successfully radicalised Dar as a potential suicide bomber, but during a meeting in August last year, he backed out at the last minute, citing the "apple harvest season" and repairs at home as reasons.

According to the officials, Dar had been in contact with Nabi since 2023 and he admitted that Nabi's professional status as a medical doctor played a significant role in his influence, making his extremist rhetoric more persuasive and "trustworthy" to recruits.

The probe indicated that Nabi was not merely a terrorist but a strategic recruiter who was actively building secondary, independent cells to ensure the continuity of operations even if primary cells were compromised, the



officials said.

During the investigation, the police also recovered a voice note from the phone of one of the accused in which he is pronouncing 'Bayat' (oath of allegiance) for Jihad.

The name of Dar, a school dropout, had surfaced earlier in investigations when one of his friends had joined the ranks of terror groups.

During interrogation, it came to light that he had been in touch with Nabi through Telegram and he was always asked to ensure the best physical training, the officials said.

Dar is the second potential suicide bomber that Nabi was trying to rope into the terror module, as he was a "hardcore radical" and insisted that a human bomber was essential for their terror operations, they said. As the terror module was being exposed by the Srinagar Police last year, one person identified as Jasier alias Danish was arrested from Qazigund in South Kashmir.

A bachelor in political sciences, he admitted to having met the 'Doctor module' in October 2024 at a mosque in Kulgam, from where he was taken to rented accommodation at Al-Falah University in Faridabad.

Jasir had told his interrogators that while others in the white-collar terror module wanted him to be an over-ground worker (OGW) for the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed, he was intensely brainwashed by Nabi over several months to become a suicide bomber.

The plan, however, collapsed in April last year after he backed out, citing his poor economic condition and the belief that suicide was forbidden in Islam.

The suicide bomber scouting plot of the module, cracked by Srinagar police led by its Senior Superintendent of Police Dr G V Sundeeep Chakravathy, adds a dangerous new dimension to the investigation into the interstate terror network linked to the JeM.

As reported by the news agency earlier, Nabi, a 28-year-old doctor from Pulwama, emerged as the most radicalised and key operative in the network spanning Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. Officials believe he was planning a powerful Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast timed around the Babri Masjid demolition anniversary on December 6.

He planned to place the

VBIED around a crowded place, either in the national capital or at some place of religious importance, and then disappear, the officials said.

According to the interrogation of the co-accused, Nabi's transformation began after a trip to Turkiye in 2021 with co-accused Dr. Muzamil Ahmad Ganaie, where they allegedly met JeM over-ground workers.

Following the trip, Nabi and Ganaie, who taught at Faridabad's Al Falah University, began accumulating vast quantities of chemicals from the open market, including 360 kg of ammonium nitrate, potassium nitrate and sulphur, much of which was stored near the university campus.

The December plot fell apart when Srinagar police's meticulous investigation led to Ganaie's arrest and the seizure of the explosives, which caused Nabi to panic and finally resulted in a premature blast outside the Red Fort.

The intricate inter-state terror network was exposed after a small but significant incident of the appearance of JeM posters on walls in Bunkpora, Nowgam, on the outskirts of Srinagar on October 19, 2025.

Need To Erase Caste From Mind To End Discrimination: RSS Chief Bhagwat

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, JAN 18: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat has said that if caste discrimination is to be eliminated from social practice, then caste must first be erased from the mind.

In the past, caste was linked to profession and work, but later, it became entrenched in society and led to discrimination, Bhagwat said on Satur-

day at the Jan Sangoshthi organised here as part of the centenary year of the RSS, where he held an interaction with members of the public.

Prant Sanghchalak Anil Bhalerao was also present on stage.

Addressing the caste system issue, Bhagwat appealed to people to remove it from their minds.

"To end this discrimination, one must eradicate caste from the mind. If

this is done honestly, caste discrimination will be eradicated within 10 to 12 years," he said. Responding to questions from the audience, Bhagwat said the Sangh aims to lead India to its ultimate glory along with society.

The Sangh works for nation-building through individual character building. It is not an organisation created out of reaction, nor is it in competition with anyone, he said.

Remarks Against Col Sofiya Qureshi: SC To Hear Plea Of MP Minister Vijay Shah

NEW DELHI, JAN 18: The Supreme Court is likely to hear on January 19 a plea of Madhya Pradesh minister Kunwar Vijay Shah against a high court order directing registration of an FIR against him for using "language of the gutters" against Indian Army officer Col Sofiya Qureshi.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Dipankar Datta and Joymalya Bagchi is likely to hear the plea of the minister, who has expressed regret over his remarks.

On July 28, 2025, the top court had pulled up Shah for not placing a public apology over his remarks on record against Col Qureshi, saying he was "testing the court's patience".

It had pointed out that the minister's conduct was prompting it to doubt his intentions and bonafide.

Senior advocate K Parmeshwar, appearing for



Shah, had argued that the minister has issued a public apology, which was shared online, and would be placed on court's record.

"What is an online apology? We are starting to have doubts about his intentions and bonafide. You place the apology on record. We will have to see it," the top court had said.

It had asked the special investigation team (SIT) constituted to probe the statements made by the minister to submit its report by August 13, 2025.

An SIT officer had appeared in court with a sealed cover report, stating statements of 27 people examined by the probe team were currently under scrutiny.

The bench had said statements of those whose sentiments were hurt should have been recorded by the SIT instead of Shah's statements.

On May 28, last year, the top court ordered closure of proceedings before the Madhya Pradesh High Court against Shah for his controversial remarks against Col Qureshi and asked for a sta-

dates which are quick enough".

Angmo also said that over the last three and a half months, she observed that society is becoming more and more "polarised".

"You know, we are either belonging to this party or that, or this sect or that. My appeal to everybody would be to become a true citizen of independent India, you know, with a mind and wisdom of our own. To be above even party ideologies and to think in the larger interest of the nation," she said.

"Let us not lose our wisdom and discernment and be swayed by narratives and party ideologies," she stressed.

Asked about their institutes, HIAL and SECMOL (Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh), she said, "I would like to really applaud our second line of leadership, who have really risen to the occasion and have not allowed any disruption to happen".

She added, however, that the case has led to delays in the new projects they were planning.

"The new projects that we were envisaging, which I was personally leading, like the teacher training fellowship and the kindergarten K-12 school that we were planning to launch this year, have been delayed," Angmo said.

She also said many who were funding their institutions have said "they are being pressured" not to stop funding.

"The silver lining is that a lot of people earlier used to tell me that people don't know about HIAL as much. But now more and more people know about the school. I'm sure once we tide this over, there will again be a lot of support and open support," she added. (Agencies)

tus report from the SIT.

Earlier, the top court chided Shah and constituted the SIT to probe the FIR lodged against him.

Shah came under fire after a video, which was circulated widely, showed him allegedly making objectionable remarks against Col Qureshi, who gained nationwide prominence along with another woman officer, Wing Commander Vyomika Singh, during the media briefings on Operation Sindoor.

The high court rebuked Shah for passing "scurrilous" remarks and using "language of the gutters" against Col Qureshi, and ordered police to file an FIR against him on the charge of promoting enmity and hatred.

After drawing severe condemnation, Shah expressed regret and said he respects Col Qureshi more than his sister. (Agencies)

UP: 1.3 Crore Devotees Take Holy Dip On Mauni Amavasya Morning At Sangam

PRAYAGRAJ (UP), JAN 18: More than 1.3 crore devotees took a holy dip in the Ganga and at the Sangam by 8 am on Sunday on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, the main bathing festival of the ongoing Magh Mela here, officials said.

A senior mela administration official said devotees began arriving at the Ganga and Sangam ghats from midnight, braving dense fog, and continued to stream in from all directions through the early morning hours.

Earlier, about 1.03 crore

devotees had taken a dip on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, while nearly 85 lakh people bathed in the Ganga and Sangam on Ekadashi.

Divisional Commissioner Saumya Agrawal said reflective tapes have been installed on poles across the mela area to help pilgrims navigate correctly, while civil defence volunteers have been deployed to guide devotees.

She said the Magh Mela has been spread across 800 hectares and divided into

seven sectors. More than 25,000 toilets have been installed in the mela area, and over 3,500 sanitation workers are deployed to maintain cleanliness.

Agrawal added that a tent city has been set up for tourists and pilgrims wishing to observe short-term Kalpvash (purification rituals), with facilities for meditation and yoga. To ensure smooth movement, services such as bike taxis and golf carts have also been provided.

Superintendent of Police

(Magh Mela) Neeraj Pandey said over 10,000 police personnel have been deployed across the mela area to ensure security and smooth movement of devotees. For crowd management and traffic regulation, 42 temporary parking zones have been created this year, with a capacity to accommodate over one lakh vehicles.

He said a total of 12,100 feet-long bathing ghats have been constructed for the Magh Mela 2025-26, equipped with all essential basic facilities. (Agencies)