

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Calm Returns To Jantar Mantar After 36-Day NEET Protest Ends; Dipke, Wangchuk Recuperate

NEW DELHI, JUL 26: The chants fell silent and calm descended on Jantar Mantar on Sunday, a day after the 36-day agitation over irregularities in exams and the NEET paper leak ended with the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. While CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke recovered from typhoid at home, environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk recuperated in a hospital.

The sprawling protest site in the heart of the national capital, which had echoed with slogans, speeches and fervent activity for more than a month, wore a deserted look as the makeshift tents had disappeared, and the volunteers and supporters had dispersed, leaving behind little trace of the agitation.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which organised the protest, shared a photograph of Dipke receiving intravenous fluids and a video message in which he said he had finally slept peacefully after more than a month of relentless campaigning and uncertainty.

"It feels really good. Today, finally, I could go to sleep and wake up in the bedroom without thinking about what to do next or what will happen till evening. There is no panic," Dipke said.

The protest, which began on June 20, intensified following police action against demonstrators on July 20 and later drew support from several student organisations and activists, including



Wangchuk, who undertook a prolonged hunger strike in solidarity with the movement.

The CJP declared on Saturday evening that it was withdrawing its agitation after the government agreed to all its remaining demands, including compensation for the families of students who allegedly died by suicide following the NEET paper leak and withdrawal of FIRs against protesters.

The last 36 days as "really, really difficult", Dipke thanked supporters across the country for standing by the fledgling outfit despite scepticism over its campaign.

"I want to thank each and every supporter... the people who supported us, showed their trust in us and loved us when everybody was doubting us. Without you guys, we wouldn't have been able to achieve this," he said.

Dipke also apologised to

supporters who had gathered at Jantar Mantar on Saturday after the protest ended, saying he could not meet them because he was suffering from typhoid and had a fever of 101 degrees.

"I have typhoid... That's why I had to come home," he said, thanking those who stayed at the protest site throughout the agitation.

In a conciliatory message, Dipke also thanked critics of the movement.

"The people who doubted us, criticised us or questioned us... I want to thank them as well. If you hadn't criticised us, we wouldn't have been able to improve," he said. Calling the campaign "just the beginning", Dipke said the CJP had "a long way to go".

Wangchuk, who joined the agitation with an indefinite fast and was later admitted to hospital after his health deteriorated, continues to recover at Medanta Hospital.

As the protest concluded, the familiar signs of a month-long agitation were being erased, with civic workers moving in to restore normalcy.

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) launched a massive round-the-clock clean-up operation at and around Jantar Mantar, deploying over 100 sanitation workers, heavy vehicles and mechanised equipment to clear nearly 60 metric tonnes of waste left behind after the protest.

Officials said around 52 metric tonnes of waste had already been removed by Sunday afternoon.

"Roads were being washed with pressure-jetting machines, while walls bearing protest slogans were repainted and damaged footpaths and curbstones repaired to restore the area after protesters dispersed," an NDMC official said. (Agencies)

UP CM urges teachers to combat misinformation, guide students towards credible sources

AGRA (UP), JULY 26: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday urged teachers and educational institutions to play a proactive role in combating misinformation and guide students towards credible sources, warning that social media misuse was being used to spread hatred and instability in society.

Addressing a function in Agra after launching the Mukhyamantri Shikshak Cashless Chikitsa Yojana for teachers and staff of higher educational institutions, he said India's adversaries are using technology and financial backing to spread falsehoods and divide society, making it imperative for educational institutions to prepare students to identify misinformation. History

The chief minister said forces opposed to India's progress were using digital platforms to create confusion and social discord.

"A confused society ultimately harms itself. Our educational institutions will have



to stand against every conspiracy that seeks to create instability in India," he said.

Adityanath said the growing reliance of young people on smartphones and social media for news had made it easier for misinformation to spread unchecked.

"Today, around 80 per cent of the youth rely on smartphones for information about the country and the world. Everything available on Google or social media doesn't need to be authentic."

contrasted social media with traditional journalism and said newspapers had

played a key role during the freedom movement due to editorial accountability.

"Print media played a major role in raising public awareness during the freedom struggle. There was accountability -- the reporter and editor were known. But on social media, anyone can create an anonymous account and spread hatred," he said.

The chief minister said teachers should encourage students to verify information, develop reading habits and spend more time in libraries rather than depending solely on social media

platforms.

"Teachers should upload good content, motivate students and make them aware of what is true and what is false.

Students should develop the habit of reading reference books in addition to their textbooks and spend minimum time on misleading social media platforms."

He said artificial intelligence and social media were essential tools that could not be ignored, but stressed they must be used responsibly.

"Social media platforms and artificial intelligence are today's necessities. We cannot remain behind or turn away from them. But we must learn how to use them for the welfare of society and the nation."

Calling teachers the architects of society, the chief minister said every student possessed talent that could be nurtured with proper guidance and urged educational institutions to prepare young people to think critically and serve the nation. (PTI)

INDIA Bloc Set To Raise Alleged Excesses Against NEET Protesters In Parliament; Rahul Writes To Shah, TMC Moves Notice

NEW DELHI, JUL 26: INDIA bloc parties are set to press for an urgent discussion in Parliament on the alleged use of excessive force against students protesting over the NEET paper leak, with Rahul Gandhi writing to Home Minister Amit Shah seeking accountability and TMC's Sagarika Ghose moving a notice for the suspension of the day's business to take up the issue of "grave national importance" on Monday.

While the Centre is scheduled to introduce a bill in the Lok Sabha on Monday to strengthen the anti-paper leak law and the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has called off its agitation following the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as education minister and the acceptance of other demands by the government, Congress and other opposition parties are in no mood to relent.

They are expected to demand answers from the government in both Houses over allegations of pellet gun use, the deployment of men in plain clothes during the July 20 protest and the injuries suffered by several students.

In a letter to Shah, Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, demanded accountability for what he termed the "barbaric assault" on peacefully protesting students and questioned whether the home minister had approved the use of "lethal force", including pellet guns, against the youth.

The Congress leader alleged that hundreds of students had suffered injuries during the police action and claimed women protesters were assaulted by police personnel.



Referring to 19-year-old student Sahil Lochab, whom he met on Friday, Gandhi said the student was likely to lose vision in one eye after allegedly being hit by pellets during the July 20 protest.

He also sought to know whether men in plainclothes seen beating students with lathis were police personnel or volunteers and who had authorised their deployment, saying "the country is demanding answers".

He asserted that peaceful protest was integral to democracy and that the government's responsibility was to protect protesters and address their grievances through dialogue.

Separately, Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha deputy leader Ghose submitted a notice under Rule 267 seeking suspension of the day's business in the Rajya Sabha on Monday to allow an immediate discussion on what she described as the "use of excessive force on student protestors during NEET examination protests".

Calling it a matter of grave national importance, Ghose said the right to peaceful protest was a constitutional right, but student protesters had allegedly been subjected to "lethal and semi-lethal force" by security agencies.

Her notice referred to reports of pellet gun injuries, "including the possible loss of vision of one student due to use of the pellet gun by the Rapid Action Force", and sought answers on who authorised the use of such weapons and what protocols were followed.

It also referred to eyewitness accounts alleging that individuals in plain clothes used coercive and violent methods against students.

A senior opposition leader said the resignation of Pradhan did not mark the end of the issue.

"Pradhan's resignation is not the full stop; it is only a semicolon. The Prime Minister should apologise to the students, while the Home Minister must explain where the pellets came from and who authorised their use. The role of the Home Minister has to be investigated. The youth have now handed the baton to Members of Parliament," the leader said.

The issue is expected to dominate proceedings when Parliament meets on Monday, with the Opposition preparing to target the government over the July 20 crackdown while the Centre seeks to push through fresh legislation to deal with paper leaks.

The first week of the Mon-

soon Session was washed out due to protests by the Opposition which had extended support to the CJI-led stir over the NEET issue

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill, 2026, listed for introduction in the Lok Sabha on Monday, proposes setting up fast-track courts in every state for paper leak cases and completion of investigations within two months.

It also has provisions for enhanced punishment, including imprisonment of up to 10 years and fines up to Rs 50 lakh for individuals involved in paper leaks. Organised crimes related to paper leaks could attract fines of up to Rs 10 crore.

The proposed amendments come after nationwide protests over the NEET paper leak. The agitation, spearheaded by the CJP, began at Jantar Mantar on June 20 and gathered momentum after activist Sonam Wangchuk joined an indefinite fast on June 28.

The July 20 police action against protesters marching towards Parliament became a turning point in the movement and triggered allegations of excessive force, including the alleged use of pellet guns.

The 36-day agitation ended on Saturday after the government accepted key demands of the protesters and Dharmendra Pradhan resigned as education minister. <

Delhi Police has denied that its personnel used pellet guns during the July 20 protest, while the CRPF has not publicly responded to allegations involving the Rapid Action Force. (Agencies)

New UK Defence Secretary seeks to restore London's ties with US: Reports



refused to assist in the operation against Iran. History

Streeter is seeking to mend Britain's relationship with Donald Trump through joint work to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, as well as promising to modernise the

armed forces, the newspaper said.

The newspaper, citing a source close to Streeter, reports that the Defence Secretary had held a "very cordial" conversation with US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth,

MOSCOW, JULY 26: Defence Secretary Wes Streeting is seeking to restore the UK's relations with US President Donald Trump, which deteriorated under the previous Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, by trying to build cooperation on reopening the Strait of Hormuz, the Telegraph reported.

In March, the Telegraph reported that Starmer refused to send warships to restore shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, despite Trump's request to do so. Trump, for his part, stated that he was seriously considering withdrawing the US from NATO after the alliance

Cong cites household expenditure data to slam Govt, says youth crying out for remedial action

NEW DELHI, JULY 26: The Congress on Sunday said the Jantar Mantar and other protests in recent weeks have had proximate causes in a rigged exam system but the agony and anger of youth and their parents have more fundamental causes of both accessibility and affordability revealed by household expenditure data.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the youth and their parents are crying out for remedial action on accessibility and affordability.

"The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) has very recently done a detailed analysis based on its household expenditure data between 2014/15-2025/26. The conclusions are stark. Education costs are rising substantially faster than household income. Households are allocating a consid-



erably larger share of their income towards education.

"Private tuition has emerged as one of the fastest-growing components of household expenditure on education. School and college fees have recorded sustained growth throughout the last decade, consistently outpacing household income growth," Ramesh said, citing CMIE analysis.

He further said spending on books is rising even faster

that may reflect rising textbook and reference material prices, greater spending on competitive exam preparations, and on supplementary learning resources.

"The Jantar Mantar and other protests in recent weeks have had proximate causes in an unfair and rigged exam system put in place by the deadly duo of Pradhan Mantri and (ex-)Mantri Pradhan. But the agony, anguish, and anger of

youth and their parents have more fundamental causes of both accessibility and affordability revealed by the CMIE household expenditure data," Ramesh said.

They are crying out for remedial action NOW," he added.

His remarks come a day after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned amid mounting pressure over the NEET paper leak controversy, with the Centre conceding the principal demand of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP)-led agitation after weeks of protests that spread from the national capital to several parts of the country.

Pradhan announced his decision in a statement, saying the developments of the past 10 days had "saddened" him deeply and that the issue was "not a matter of personal prestige". (PTI)