

Freezing government posts in name of austerity is cruel joke on unemployed youth: Bhalla

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, MAY 28



Expressing strong concern over the government's decision to freeze all vacant posts as part of its austerity measures, former minister and Working President of the Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC), Raman Bhalla, described the move as a cruel joke on the educated unemployed youth of Jammu and Kashmir who are already grappling with limited employment opportunities.

Addressing a public gathering at Channi Himmat in Jammu, Bhalla said the decision would further aggravate the unemployment crisis in the Union Territory and diminish the hopes of thousands of qualified young men and women aspiring for government jobs.

He urged the government to immediately review and withdraw the decision, arguing that austerity measures should not come at the cost of employment generation. Instead of freezing government posts, Bhalla said, the administration should focus on reducing extravagant expenditure incurred by the ruling establishment and the bureaucracy.

"The burden of austerity should not be placed on the shoulders of unemployed youth. If the government is serious about reducing expenditure, it should begin by curtailing unnecessary spending by the ruling elite

and senior bureaucrats rather than blocking employment opportunities for deserving candidates," he said.

Highlighting the growing unemployment challenge, Bhalla observed that joblessness among educated youth has emerged as one of the most pressing socio-economic issues not only in Jammu and Kashmir but across the country. However, he noted that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is particularly serious due to the region's unique economic structure and limited private-sector opportunities.

"Unlike many other states where industries, manufacturing units and private enterprises provide large-scale employment, Jammu and Kashmir has a relatively weak industrial base. For decades, government service has remained one of the principal sources of stable employment for educated youth. Any decision to freeze recruitment or keep posts vacant will only deepen frustration among job seekers," he said.

The Congress leader warned that prolonged unemployment could have se-

rious social and economic consequences, including increasing distress among young people and slowing the region's overall development. He stressed that employment generation should be treated as a priority area of governance rather than a sector where expenditure cuts are imposed.

Bhalla further said that thousands of vacancies across various government departments remain unfilled despite an acute shortage of staff in essential sectors such as education, healthcare, public administration and rural development. Filling these vacancies, he argued, would not only strengthen public service delivery but also provide much-needed employment opportunities to qualified youth.

Calling for a long-term solution to the unemployment crisis, Bhalla demanded that the government formulate and implement a comprehensive employment policy tailored to the needs and aspirations of Jammu and Kashmir's youth.

He said such a policy should focus on accelerating recruitment to vacant

government posts, promoting industrial investment, encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting start-ups, enhancing skill development programmes and creating opportunities in emerging sectors such as information technology, tourism, agriculture and allied industries.

"The youth of Jammu and Kashmir do not seek charity; they seek opportunities. The government must create an environment where educated young people can secure dignified employment and contribute to the economic growth of the region," he said.

Bhalla reiterated that addressing unemployment should remain at the centre of public policy and urged the administration to engage with stakeholders, youth organisations and experts while framing employment-related initiatives.

"The future of Jammu and Kashmir depends on its youth. Any policy that limits employment opportunities will only widen the gap between aspirations and opportunities. The government must reconsider its decision and take concrete steps to provide jobs and hope to the younger generation," he added.

Prominent among others were present S/Shri Kamal Singh ex-corporator, Jatinder Chib, Latish Sharma, Sahil Mathi, Rohit Ji, Mohinder Singh, Raju Kumar and Deepak Sharma.

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Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jammu & Kashmir, paid heartfelt tributes to Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a valiant son of Mother India, staunch nationalist leader, revolutionary social reformer, and charismatic orator, on the occasion of his 143rd birth anniversary at the party headquarters, Trikuta Nagar, Jammu.

J&K BJP President and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Sharma CA and General Secretary (Organization) Ashok Koul, accompanied by Vice-President Rekha Mahajan, General Secretaries Baldev Singh Billawaria and Gopal Mahajan, MLA Ch. Vikram Randhawa, senior leader Adv. Vibodh Gupta, Secretaries Reema Padha, and Arun Sharma, All Cell In-charge Ced Sharma, District Presidents Adv. Rajesh Gupta, Naresh Singh Jasrotia, Rajiv Pandita, and Rinku Choudhary, and other senior party leaders paid tributes on the occasion.

Floral tributes were offered to the portrait of Veer Savarkar while remember-



ing his immense contribution towards India's freedom struggle, social awakening, and nationalist ideology.

Sat Sharma, while addressing on the occasion, said that Veer Savarkar was one of the greatest patriots and visionaries India has ever produced, whose life was entirely dedicated to the service of the nation. He said that Savarkar's unwavering commitment to nationalism, social equality, and cultural pride continues to inspire generations of Indians.

Sat Sharma stated that despite facing unimaginable hardships and torture during the freedom struggle, Veer Savarkar never compromised with his principles and remained devoted to the cause of na-

tional unity and independence. He added that Savarkar strongly advocated social reforms and worked tirelessly against untouchability and social discrimination.

Ashok Koul said that Veer Savarkar was not merely a freedom fighter but also a profound thinker, writer, and reformer whose ideas played a pivotal role in shaping nationalist consciousness in India. He said that Savarkar's courage, sacrifice, and farsighted vision remain highly relevant even today. He added that the BJP remains committed to preserving and promoting the ideals and legacy of great national icons like Veer Savarkar.

Baldev Singh Billawaria said that Veer Savarkar's

life symbolizes courage, patriotism, and unwavering dedication towards the nation. He said that every citizen should remember his sacrifices for India's independence and social reform.

Gopal Mahajan, while conducting proceedings, stated that Veer Savarkar inspired countless freedom fighters through his revolutionary thoughts and writings.

Ch. Vikram Randhawa said that Veer Savarkar was a fearless leader and intellectual who worked tirelessly to awaken patriotic spirit among the people.

Adv. Vibodh Gupta emphasized that the younger generation must follow his ideals of discipline, nationalism, and service to society.

'Mere Sheher Ke 100 Ratan-2.0' scholarship to be conducted over 3000 schools in state

SHIMLA, MAY 28:

Crack Academy on Thursday announced the launch of its flagship scholarship initiative, 'Mere Sheher Ke 100 Ratan-2.0' which will be conducted over 3000 schools in Himachal tomorrow.

Designed as a large-scale talent discovery and academic empowerment program, the initiative aims to identify and nurture meritorious students from classes 9th to 12th, said Neeraj Kansal, Founder and CEO of Crack Academy.

The focus particularly is on smaller towns and emerging educational centres by providing them access to structured mentorship, advanced learning resources and competitive exam preparation opportunities, informed Neeraj.

Through 'Mere Sheher Ke 100 Ratan-2.0', the Crack Academy seeks to bridge this gap by bringing



a world-class academic ecosystem directly to the grassroots level ensuring that talent is recognised and supported irrespective of geography or economic background, asserted Neeraj. Under the initiative the top 100 students from every designated regional cluster will receive a 100%

scholarship covering tuition fees, premium study material and assessment support.

The next 200 qualifying students will be awarded a 75% scholarship while an additional 500 students will receive a 50% fee concession.

Selected scholars will

gain entry into specialized coaching programs featuring live interactive sessions with experienced educators, carefully curated academic modules and AI-powered diagnostic mock tests aimed at strengthening preparation for India's most competitive examinations.

Jammu Students Shine in SOF International Olympiads

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In a remarkable display of academic excellence, students from Jammu have brought laurels to the city with their outstanding performance in the Science Olympiad Foundation (SOF) examinations for the academic year 2025-26.

This year's SOF Olympiad witnessed participation from millions of students across 72 countries, including more

than 24 thousand students from Jammu. Among the top performers, Mohammad Ibaad Bin Rafiq (Class 4) from Doon International School, in the International General Knowledge Olympiad (IGKO), Anahita Mahajan (Class 1) from Heritage School in the International English Olympiad (IEO), and Anvika Mahajan (Class 2) from Jodhamal Public School in the National Science Olympiad (NSO) secured Rank

1 and will be awarded Gold Medals along with Certificates of Outstanding Performance.

Commenting on the achievement, the Founder & Director of Science Olympiad Foundation (SOF) Mahabir Singh said, "The SOF Olympiads for the 2025-26 academic year continue to inspire young minds to strive for excellence and develop critical thinking abilities.

Ambani draws no salary for sixth year in row

NEW DELHI, May 28: Asia's second richest man Mukesh Ambani drew nil salary from his oil-to-telecom-and-retail conglomerate Reliance Industries for the sixth year in a row and dividends remain his main source of earnings.

Ambani, 69, had capped his annual remuneration at Rs 15 crore from financial year 2008-09 (April 2008 to March 2009) to 2019-20 (FY20); and since FY21, he opted to forego his salary, due to COVID-19 pandemic, until the company and all its businesses were fully back to their earnings potential.

In 2025-26 (FY26), he got 'nil' as salary, allowances, and perquisites as well as retiral benefits, according to the latest annual report of the company.

This voluntary foregoing of remuneration began in June 2020, when Ambani decided to give up his entire pay in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's devastating impact on the nation's social, economic, and industrial health.

He continued this decision - entirely voluntarily

- in FY 2021-22, FY 2022-23, FY 2023-24, FY 2024-25, and now FY 2025-26.

This is a striking example in today's global corporate landscape, where excessive executive compensation is a major shareholder and governance concern. By contrast, in FY 2025-26, Reliance reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 95,754 crore - the highest ever - and a market capitalisation of Rs 18,19,103 crore (USD 191.8 billion).

However, dividend income seems to be the source of earnings for the world's 21st richest person with a net worth of just under USD 100 billion.

He directly holds 1.61 crore shares in Reliance, earning Rs 9.66 crore in dividend income based on the Rs 6 per share dividend declared by the company for FY25.

The promoter group firms that he controls, own 664.5 crore shares, or 50.07 per cent, give a dividend income of Rs 3,987 crore.

The remuneration of Ambani's cousins Nikhil and Hital Meswani re-

mained unchanged at Rs 25 crore each. This was made up of Rs 10 crore in salary, allowances and perquisites, Rs 44 lakh in retiral benefits and Rs 14.56 crore as commission on profit.

Executive Directors P M S Prasad saw his remuneration rise to Rs 20.58 crore in FY26 from Rs 19.96 crore in 2024-25.

Ambani's three children - Isha, Akash and Anant, who were appointed to the board in October 2023 at nil salary, just got a sitting fee and a commission on profit. Twins Akash and Isha got Rs 5 lakh each as sitting fee and a commission of Rs 2.5 crore.

Anant, the youngest of Ambani's children, was last year appointed as an executive director on Reliance board and in FY26 drew a salary of Rs 12.17 crore (including Rs 2.29 crore commission).

Other non-executive directors include Raminder Singh Gujral, Shumeet Banerji, former SBI chairperson Arundhati Bhat-tacharya, former CVC K V Chowdary, veteran banker K V Kamath and Saudi sov-

ereign wealth fund nominee Yasir Othman H Al Rumayyan.

All independent directors got Rs 2.5 crore commission, up from Rs 2.25 crore of last year, and a sitting fee.

Ambani, who has been on the board of Reliance since 1977 and was elevated as chairman of the company after the death of his father and group patriarch Dhirubhai Ambani in July 2002, was in 2023 re-appointed as the head of Reliance for another five-year term till April 2029 - a period during which he opted to draw nil salary.

Since forgoing salary in June 2020, Ambani has not availed of any allowances, perquisites, retiral benefits, commission or stock options from Reliance for his role as the Chairman and Managing Director.

Prior to that, the Chairman and Managing Director had his salary capped at Rs 15 crore since 2008-09 in order to set a personal example of moderation in managerial compensation levels.

Varuna attends Made in WUD 2026, boosts FICCI FLO collaboration in Design, Craft & Creative Education

NEW DELHI, MAY 28: FICCI FLO National Initiative Head and Co lead for Textiles, Handlooms & Handicrafts, Ms. Varuna Anand, along with Ms. Ambar Pariddi Sahai, attended the prestigious Made in WUD (MIW) Design Show 2026 at the invitation of Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Vice Chancellor, World University of Design (WUD). The exhibition is being held from May 28 to 31, 2026, at the Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

Now in its second edition in the capital after a highly successful debut last year, MIW Design Show 2026 has emerged as one of India's most significant showcases of graduating creative talent. The exhibition brings together carefully curated works across Fashion & Textile Design, Communication Design, Interior Architecture, Architecture, Product Design, Transportation Design, UI/UX, Visual & Performing Arts, Animation, Digital

Media, and Business, reflecting the interdisciplinary, innovative, and future-oriented spirit that defines WUD.

Out of more than 319 graduating projects presented during MIW Week at the WUD campus, sixty selected projects were showcased at the Delhi edition, offering compelling responses to contemporary themes including sustainability, mobility, technology, identity, communication, wellbeing, retail, culture, craft, and digital experiences.

Developed through industry collaborations, research-driven inquiry, and interdisciplinary exploration, the projects highlighted the growing importance of design education in shaping industries, businesses, communities, and society at large.

The visit also marked an important step in strengthening the collaboration between WUD and FICCI FLO through WUD's newly launched e-campus initiative aimed at taking de-



sign education and skill development opportunities to underprivileged sections of society, including weavers, artisans, and craftsmen across India. The initiative seeks to empower tradi-

tional craft communities by enabling them to refine their skills, embrace innovation, and engage with contemporary design practices and digital platforms.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Varuna Anand said, "Design today extends far beyond aesthetics. It influences every sphere of life including sustainability, communication, mobility, business, technology, and cultural preservation.

The work presented by the students at MIW 2026 reflects remarkable sensitivity, innovation, and a deep understanding of the evolving global creative economy. It is inspiring to witness young designers creating solutions that are culturally rooted while being globally relevant and future ready."

Ms. Ambar Pariddi Sahai added, "The exhibition beautifully demonstrates the power of interdisciplinary learning and creative thinking. The students have showcased exceptional originality and professionalism while addressing real-world challenges through design. It is encouraging to see institutions like WUD nurturing

innovation while remaining deeply connected to craft, culture, and social impact."

Dr. Sanjay Gupta, Vice Chancellor, World University of Design, remarked, "Made in WUD has been envisioned as a platform where academia, industry, culture, and society come together to engage with the future of creativity and innovation.

Our collaboration with FICCI FLO will further strengthen outreach, inclusion, and opportunities for artisans, weavers, and emerging creative communities across India through design education, skill development, and meaningful partnerships."

MIW Design Show 2026 continues to reinforce the growing cultural and economic significance of the creative industries while celebrating the WUD philosophy of learning that is collaborative, experimental, socially conscious, and strongly connected with industry and innovation.