

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Compelled To Fast Again, May Even Die But Won't Step Back: Sonam Wangchuk

NEW DELHI, JUN 29: Climate activist and educator Sonam Wangchuk, who began an indefinite fast at the ongoing CJP protest at Jantar Mantar here on Monday, said he had hoped he would never have to return to agitation, but was left with no choice as promises made to the people of Ladakh remained unfulfilled and dialogue with the Centre had stalled.

In an interview with news agency, Wangchuk, who has been at the forefront of Ladakh's movement for constitutional safeguards, including Sixth Schedule status, said he remained committed to dialogue and hoped his hunger strike would revive meaningful engagement.

"I was thinking I would not be required to sit on a protest. I am sad I have to sit on a fast again. I am not doing it happily; it is not easy either. I may even die, but even if I die, I will not step back," Wangchuk said.

Wangchuk's latest agitation comes amid the prolonged movement in Ladakh over demands for constitutional safeguards, statehood and greater political representation for the Union Territory.

The demand for bringing Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution has remained one of the key issues raised by civil society groups from the Union Territory.

Recalling the dialogue process with the Centre, Wangchuk, who was detained under the National Security Act (NSA) in September 2025 during the



Ladakh protests and released in February 2026, expressed hope that meetings held during and after his detention would help rebuild trust.

"February 4, when I was in jail, one meeting was held, which was nearly unsuccessful. May 22, after my release, another meeting was held. I had a lot of hope with that because it was said they released me to create an atmosphere of trust and that the dialogue would continue," he said.

According to Wangchuk, the May 22 meeting had offered an opportunity to move forward, but he alleged that the conclusions were not formally recorded.

"The May 22 meeting was like that, but they are now shying away from putting the conclusions on paper. This was an opportunity to build trust with the people. Taking one step forward and two steps backwards, people lost faith," he said.

Wangchuk said the trust deficit was rooted in earlier assurances as well.

"There was already a trust deficit because after making promises in 2013-14, they went back on their words," he said, referring to the de-

mand for Sixth Schedule safeguards.

However, he insisted that he had not lost faith in dialogue.

"I still have hope, else I would have also committed suicide, but I am still here. It means I still have hope. We hope their conscience will awaken and they will realise they are doing wrong. They had promised it in writing," he said.

Wangchuk said governments should respond to people's concerns with empathy and avoid treating dissent as a threat.

"If you consider India a democracy... if you don't, if you think of it as a totalitarian authoritarian government, then you can have a stern approach, but then stop calling yourself a democracy," he said.

Calling for accountability, Wangchuk said the issues raised by the protesters should be debated in Parliament.

"There should be accountability. One resignation may not change everything, but we would want this to be raised in the upcoming session. There should be a debate," he said.

Appealing to political par-

ties to support the movement, Wangchuk said they should look beyond politics and think of future generations.

"I urge all parties, you are a part of this movement if you stand for the generations to come. Adopt a positive approach. Consider this a blessing that people are still raising their voices. If they were dead, they would not raise their voice. You don't want a graveyard," he said.

He also urged protesters to remain peaceful. "Don't have fear, but also don't have hatred. Raise your message with flowers. All people of India will be with you. When people are with you, no government would be able to ignore your demands," he said.

Drawing from his own experience of detention, Wangchuk encouraged young protesters not to fear imprisonment.

"Don't be scared of jail, I can tell by my personal experience, it will transform you. Don't fear anything. You will get justice," he said.

Reiterating that his movement was centred on education and environmental protection, Wangchuk said Ladakh's concerns should not be allowed to linger. City & Local Guides

"My two eyes are education and environment. Regarding the environment, I am sitting here to raise the issue of Ladakh and call for it to be resolved.

"Don't let it become a festering wound. It is a border area which is very sensitive. Keeping it hanging is not in favour of the country," he said. (Agencies)

Defence Minister unveils DFP-2026 to boost DRDO efficiency, speed up defence R&D projects

New Delhi, June 29: The government released a revised framework titled Delegation of Financial Powers to DRDO 2026 (DFP-2026), aimed at accelerating the production and induction of defence systems, platforms, and technologies developed through India's research and development ecosystem.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled the framework in New Delhi, describing it as a major reform designed to improve efficiency, accountability, and timely execution of strategic defence R&D projects. According to officials, the new policy will strengthen functional empowerment at various levels within the Department of Defence R&D.

Singh said the revised framework will help fast-track the transition of technologies from laboratories to the armed forces, thereby improving operational readiness. He also highlighted that it will promote stronger



collaboration between industry, academia, and research institutions in line with the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which functions under the Ministry of Defence, is expected to benefit significantly from the updated financial structure. The framework introduces

dedicated provisions for trial campaigns, testing, evaluation activities, and pre-project R&D approvals.

It also clarifies financial powers related to grants-in-aid for extramural research projects, innovation centres of excellence, and technology development fund initiatives.

Officials said the reform will ensure clearer segrega-

tion of financial responsibilities and accelerate decision-making processes, ultimately leading to faster delivery of critical defence systems.

Chief of Defence Staff Gen N. S. Raja Subramani, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary (Defence Production) Sanjeev Kumar, and other senior officials were present at the event.

Andhra CM directs officials to make govt services more citizen-friendly

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to make government services more accessible, transparent and citizen-friendly, stressing the need to simplify administrative procedures and improve delivery mechanisms across departments.

Reviewing the performance of various departments at the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) Centre at the Secretariat, the Chief Minister instructed officials to streamline service delivery and reduce complexity for citizens availing government services. He was briefed that the government has already begun simplifying procedures across 11 categories of services.

Naidu also emphasised the strengthening of the Public Grievance Redressal System, directing officials to make it more efficient and accessible. He suggested expanding dig-



ital options for citizens, including online complaint filing and the use of the "Mana Mitra" WhatsApp governance platform, which will also allow voice message submissions.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that around 3,000 locations in the state currently face mobile connectivity issues. Naidu directed that these be resolved within three months to ensure seamless access to digital governance services.

The Chief Minister was

also briefed on the 'Navachetana' Early Childhood Development Screening Programme being implemented by the Women and Child Welfare Department. The programme focuses on assessing the physical and mental development of children between birth and three years, with nearly 34,000 children already screened across the state.

Officials explained that the initiative is based on activity-driven learning principles such as "serve and return,"

along with caregiver practices like love, talk and play, aimed at promoting holistic child development. Teams are conducting household visits and anganwadi-based screenings, with a pilot project planned for better follow-up.

Naidu further directed that senior officials undertake regular field visits as part of a new accountability framework. As per the circular, secretaries will spend three days, department heads six days, and district collectors eight days every month in field inspections to ensure better governance outcomes.

Later in the day, the Chief Minister visited the RTGS Centre along with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Director General Chandrajit Banerjee and other industry representatives. He urged them to speed up the establishment of the CII Global Leadership Centre in Andhra Pradesh.

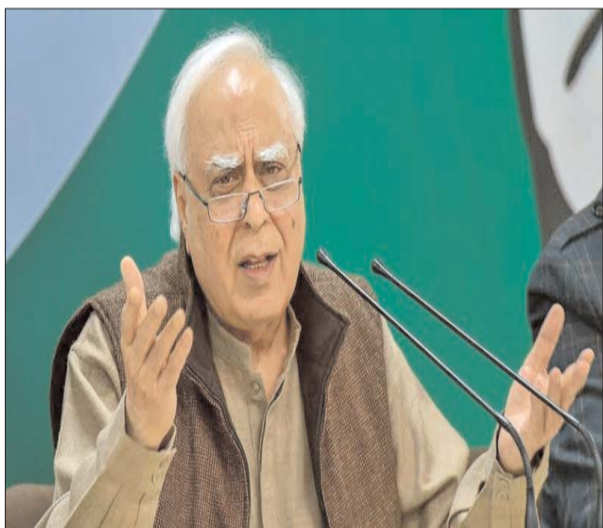
'Ram ko loota, desh ko loota': Sibal takes dig at BJP on Ram temple donation theft

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29: Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Monday urged the people to defeat the BJP Government, alleging that they had looted the country and did not even spare Lord Ram. Government

Sibal said the Modi Government's slogan of "achche din" was also a "lie". The Independent Rajya Sabha MP used rhyming lines to take pot shots at the BJP.

In a post on X, Sibal said, "Defeat this Government, Ram ko loota, Desh ko loota, Achhe Din ka nara jhootha." "Aise shasan ko tordein ge; Mil ke Desh ko jordein ge; Na dilon ka ho ga batwara; Sab ka Desh hai Desh hamara." Sibal said in a rhyming verse.

The opposition has questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence on the alleged embezzlement of



donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya and demanded stringent punishment for those behind the "scam".

The Congress has also sought answers from the Government over the alleged irregularities, saying this is not merely a financial "scan-

dal" but a "betrayal of faith" as the Ram temple construction was touted by the BJP as a national movement and every Indian had donated for it. On June 13, the Uttar Pradesh Government constituted an SIT on a request from the temple Trust fol-

lowing allegations of misappropriation of donations received at the Ram temple.

The SIT comprised Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, IGP Kiran S and Finance Department Special Secretary Neel Ratan.

Based on the SIT's report, eight people -- Avinash Shukla, Anukalp Mishra, Lav Kush Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey, Ram Shankar Mishra, Subhash Srivastava and Ramashankar alias Tinnu Yadav -- were arrested in connection with the alleged embezzlement. They were associated with counting cash and valuables received as donations at the Ram Temple.

On Monday, a local court in Ayodhya remanded all eight accused to 14 days' judicial custody. (PTI)

India Doesn't Take Cognisance Of Such Events: Vikram Misri On Reports Of India-Pak Track 2 Dialogue

NEW DELHI, JUN 29: Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Monday (June 29, 2026) said the government has no involvement with retired diplomats and military officials participating in overseas discussions on India-Pakistan ties in their personal capacities and that New Delhi does not even take cognisance of such deliberations.

Mr. Misri's remarks to the media at Victoria in Seychelles came in the wake of reports that Indian and Pakistani experts comprising retired military officials, diplomats and politicians participated in Track 2 discussions on the sidelines of a regional security conference in Colombo last week.

"Dozens of these kinds of events take place in dozens



of places around the world on a whole variety of subjects. There's nothing new, nothing special about these events," the Foreign Secretary said.

"As far as we are concerned, these are private events organised by private parties. There is nothing offi-

cial about them," he said.

The Foreign Secretary was responding to a media query.

"Obviously, I cannot speak for the government of Pakistan, but as far as the government of India is concerned, there is no official participation, no official sup-

port or involvement, in these visits.

It should be obvious, therefore, that anybody from India who is participating in these events, whether they are retired diplomats, retired military officials, or members of civil society, they speak for themselves and they represent their own point of view," Misri said.

The Foreign Secretary said India does not take any cognisance of these events.

"They do not in any way; they cannot in any way represent the view of the government of India. So that is the other important thing to keep in mind," he said.

"We really take no cognisance of these events. They really don't hold much value, as far as we are concerned," Mr. Misri added. (Agencies)

Haryana, Rajasthan Sign MoU to implement 1994 Yamuna Water Agreement

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29: Haryana and Rajasthan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement the long-pending 1994 Upper Yamuna River Baring (UYRB) agreement, paving the way for Rajasthan to receive its allocated share of Yamuna water through the Hathini Kund Barrage during the monsoon season.

The agreement was signed in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma also attended the signing ceremony.

The implementation marks a major breakthrough



after more than three decades, as the 1994 water-sharing agreement had remained pending due to the absence of a dedicated canal network to transport water to Rajasthan.

Under the new arrangement, Rajasthan will receive its allocated share of Yamuna

water through an underground pipeline from the Hathini Kund Barrage during the monsoon months, eliminating the earlier infrastructure bottleneck that had delayed implementation.

The original Memorandum of Understanding was signed on May 12, 1994, be-

tween the Yamuna basin states—Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and the National Capital Territory of Delhi—for the allocation of the Yamuna River's surface water.

Following the creation of Uttarakhand in 2000, the newly formed state was also included as a signatory to the water-sharing arrangement.

The agreement is expected to improve water availability for Rajasthan while strengthening inter-state cooperation on river water management. Officials said the implementation of the decades-old pact reflects the Centre's efforts to resolve long-pending inter-state water-sharing issues through consensus and infrastructure development.

Masked burglars target jailed ex-Judge Giribala Singh's home in Twisha Sharma Death Case

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29: 3 masked men allegedly broke into the Bhopal residence of former district judge Giribala Singh and her advocate son, Samarth Singh, late Saturday night, escaping with valuables in a burglary that has added a new twist to the high-profile Twisha Sharma death case. Police have launched an investigation into the incident and are examining CCTV footage and other evidence to identify the accused.

According to police, the burglars entered the house while Giribala Singh re-

mained in judicial custody in connection with the ongoing CBI probe into the death of former model Twisha Sharma. The residence, located in Bhopal, was reportedly targeted during the night, with the intruders fleeing after stealing valuables from the property.

Authorities said forensic teams have inspected the crime scene, and investigators are trying to determine whether the burglary was a routine theft or if it was linked to the sensitive investigation into Twisha Sharma's death. Reports indicate that police are also verifying

whether any important documents were taken during the break-in.

The incident comes weeks after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested Giribala Singh and her son Samarth Singh in connection with the death of Twisha Sharma. Both are currently in judicial custody as the agency continues its probe into allegations surrounding the case.

Police officials said efforts are underway to identify the masked intruders, establish their motive and recover the stolen property.