

Wangchuk To Continue Fast, Cites Police Action Against Protesters

NEW DELHI, JUL 20: Activist Sonam Wangchuk announced on Monday that he would continue his indefinite hunger strike, saying the police action against protesters during the Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) "Sansad Chalo" march has prompted him to extend the fast until youth leaders are allowed to meet parliamentarians or he is permitted to do so from the hospital.

In a handwritten statement issued from the Safdarjung Hospital, Wangchuk said, "Seeing the brutality with which peacefully protesting youth are being dealt with, I have de-



cided to continue my fast until the youth leaders are allowed to meet the parliamentarians at the Sansad Bhawan or I am allowed to meet them here at the hospi-

tal. "Hopefully, the government will fix accountability for the Education Minister before that," he added. Wangchuk said he is

"touched and moved" by the manner in which the protesters have maintained peace despite "provocation". "I appeal to the government and the police force to resolve the issue by simply allowing the students to present their grievances before Parliament today or tomorrow. I am sure the young protesters will maintain peace tomorrow as they did today," he said. The Delhi Police prevented the CJP's proposed march to Parliament, barricading roads around Jantar Mantar and detaining several protesters as thousands gathered despite heavy rain.

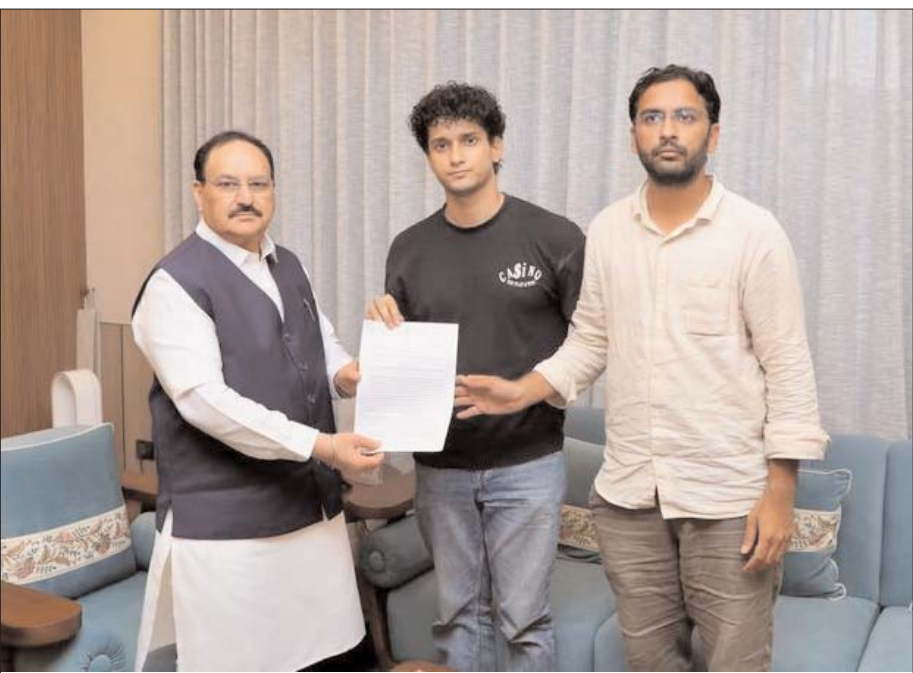
CJP Delegation Meets JP Nadda, Makes Three Demands Including Resignation Of Dharmendra Pradhan

NEW DELHI, JUL 20: Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) chief spokesperson Saurav Das on Monday said they met Union Health Minister JP Nadda and raised three demands including resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and compensation of Rs 1 crore to the families of the NEET aspirants, "more than 20 of whom have lost their lives".

He said activist Sonam Wangchuk, who is in a hospital, should be "released immediately".

Das said that the protest will continue till Dharmendra Pradhan resigns.

"We met JP Nadda twice. During the meeting, we stated our three demands. First, that Sonam Wangchuk be released immediately... Second, we demand that Dharmendra Pradhan must resign; he should either be dismissed from the Cabinet or resign voluntarily. The protest will continue until his resignation is secured. Third, we demand compensation of Rs 1 crore for the families of the NEET aspirants, more than 20 of whom have lost their lives. We approached JP Nadda regarding these demands," Das said. Das and CJP leader Ashutosh Ranka met the Union Health Minister. He also made a post about the demands in a post on X. He



said they were at Nadda's residence for about four hours.

"The demands have been conveyed, including immediate resignation/sacking of Dharmendra Pradhan," he said.

"The Minister assured us he will discuss this at the appropriate level. However, no commitments have been made so far. The peaceful protesters will not rest until the demand is met!" he added.

Nadda said in a post on X that the government held talks with the delegation of protesters.

"This morning, for the first time, a proposal came from

the protesters to hold talks with the government, and our discussions have been ongoing since 11:50 AM.

The meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere," he said.

"An initial verbal discussion was held in detail with their delegation, and they submitted a written petition to me around 4 PM. I have requested all the protesters to end their sit-in and assist the administration in restoring normalcy," he added.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police rejected claims by CJP that a 12-year-old girl was assaulted and dozens of people were seriously injured during the Cockroach Janata

Party's (CJP) protest, calling the allegations "false" and urged people not to spread misleading information.

"Fact check: False information is being currently circulated on social media regarding the posts claim that an individual named Geetanjali, a 12-year-old girl was assaulted, had her hair pulled, sustained a head injury, and approximately 40 to 50 other individuals suffered broken heads.

"This information is false. The claims being circulated in the posts are not true. Please do not spread or amplify false or misleading information," Delhi Police said. (Agencies)

Thousands participate in Jagannath Rath Yatra in Himachal's Nahan town

NAHAN (HP), JULY 20 : Amid day-long drizzle, thousands of devotees participated in the Shri Jagannath Rath Yatra on Sunday in Himachal's Nahan town with great enthusiasm and fervour.

This was the 18th celebration in a row and has become the biggest annual religious congregation in Nahan town, Sirmour district, said Prakash Bansal, president of Shri Jagannath Ji Rath Yatra Mandal.

Nahan market remained closed in honour of the Rath Yatra.

After performing yagna and vaidik rituals in the 400-year-old Sri Jagannath temple in Bada Chowk, the palanquins of Lord Jagannath, Devi Subhadra and lord Balbhadra were carried to Chougan Maidan in a religious procession, where "56 Bhog" were offered to the lord.

In the Chowgan Maidan, BJP MP Suresh Kashyap, state BJP chief Rajiv Bindal, BJP MLA Ajay Solanki and Sirmour's Deputy Commissioner Priyanka Verma, among others, participated in the ceremony before the formal initiation of Rath Yatra.

A large number of distinguished political leaders across party lines, adminis-



trative personalities, society and religious leaders were among the thousands of devotees who participated in the holy procession.

After the completion of puja, the idols of Lord Jagannath and other deities were placed in a beautifully decorated chariot, which was pulled by thousands of devotees.

There was a rush among the people to pull the chariot of Lord Jagannath, said Ratan Lal, a devotee who has attended every Rath Yatra in the town.

Just like the the Rath Yatra of Shri Jagannath Puri in Odisha, this religious congregation in Himachal has turned out to be the biggest

annual religious congregation of the town, said Kishan Lal Sharma, a Vedic scholar.

The Rath Yatra went through Mall Road, all up till Raghunath temple in Katcha tank. After circling the town, the idols of Lord Jagannath and other deities were again placed in the palanquin and taken to the Jagannath temple via the main bazaar in the evening. Geographic Reference

Prakash Bansal, president of Shri Jagannath Ji Rath Yatra Mandal, Nahan, told PTI that in 2009, some enthusiastic youths of the town took out the first Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath, adding that this year's was the 18th such celebration in a row.

He said that the size of this celebration has been increasing each year.

Earlier, a week-long Shrimad Bhawat Katha, yagna and traditional rituals and Vedic Puja of Lord Jagannath were performed in the four-century-old historic Shri Jagannath Temple in the town, Bansal said.

Karishma Thakur, a researcher of Sirmour's history, said that the 400-year-old Shri Jagannath Ji temple in Nahan is considered among the oldest "peeth" in Northern India.

A complete written record of the lineage of kings spanning the last 400 years is preserved at this temple, she said.

IWT Won't Work In Current Form, Its Future Hinges On Pak Ending Terrorism Against India: Govt Sources

NEW DELHI, JUL 20: The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in its present form will not function again and Pakistan has shown no signs of ending cross-border terrorism against India -- a prerequisite for resuming cooperation under the over 65-year-old pact, government sources said on Monday.

For any future reactivation of the river water-sharing provisions, the treaty would need to be renegotiated in a modified format -- a step that remains contingent on Islamabad permanently halting its support for terrorism directed against India, they said.

According to the sources, Pakistan is attempting to push a false narrative claiming that India's decision to keep the treaty in abeyance is causing water scarcity. In reality, a significant volume of the water Pakistan receives is lost due to its own lack of storage infrastructure, rampant leakages and ongoing water-sharing disputes among its provinces.

Although India is not actively looking to withdraw from the IWT at this stage, the sources stressed that as a sovereign state, it always reserves the right to terminate any treaty that is demonstrably against its interests.

"It (exiting the IWT) depends on the actions that Pakistan takes going forward," said a source.

India decided to put the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as part of a series of punitive diplomatic and economic measures unveiled soon after the Pahalgam terror attack in April last year that killed 26 civilians. <

officials have said the attack was carried out by The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy for the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). In May, India carried out Operation Sindoor to target terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan in response to the terror attack.

"It would be accurate to say that the IWT in its present form will not function again. If provisions related to



river water sharing have to be reactivated, they have to be done in a different form, not in the present form. And only if Pakistan abjures terrorism," the source said.

In the last few months, Pakistan's civilian and military leadership have stepped up their rhetoric against India on issues ranging from the use of nuclear weapons to going to war if India stops the water of cross-border rivers following the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty.

Under the World Bank-brokered Indus Waters Treaty, India holds the rights to the eastern rivers -- Ravi, Beas and Sutlej -- while Pakistan controls the western rivers -- Indus, Jhelum and Chenab. While the pact allows both nations specific usage rights on each other's rivers, it explicitly permits India to construct run-of-river hydroelectric projects - such as the Kishenganga and Ratle plants-- on the western tributaries before they cross into Pakistan.

India and Pakistan signed the IWT on September 19, 1960, after nine years of negotiations with a sole aim to manage cross-border rivers. Prior to suspending the treaty, the Indian side strongly pitched for modification of the treaty following Islamabad's "intransigence" in handling certain disputes.

The Indian side has also been pressing for following the graded mechanism prescribed under the pact for addressing disputes, and that two different approaches

can't be simultaneously initiated to tackle differences. Geographic Reference

While Pakistan sought the appointment of a neutral expert to handle its objections to the Kishenganga and Ratle projects in 2015, it unilaterally retracted this in 2016 and sought a Court of Arbitration. In 2016, the World Bank appointed both a neutral expert and the Court of Arbitration, which wasn't recognised by India.

India had attended meetings convened by the neutral expert but stayed away from proceedings of the Court of Arbitration.

The sources said any decision by India to revive the IWT will primarily depend on Pakistan's actions, including stopping cross-border terrorism.

"We haven't seen any evidence that they are making any effort in that direction (to end cross-border terrorism).

"On the contrary, we continue to receive reports that proscribed individuals and entities sanctioned by the UN Security Council's 1267 sanctions committee continue to appear at public events in Pakistan, continue to be able to have platforms that they can use to propagate their messages," said another source.

"The evidence that our agencies have in terms of their activities just across the Line of Control also suggests that there are no credible steps that have been taken so far to control terrorist activi-

ties," it added.

The sources said Pakistan's conduct under the IWT has also reflected a consistent pattern of obstruction rather than cooperation.

Since the early years of implementation, virtually every Indian project on the Western Rivers -- irrespective of its size, storage capacity or technical design -- has been objected to by Pakistan.

Even a small 200 KW hydropower project intended to electrify a remote tribal area was subjected to prolonged objections, the sources said, adding major projects including Salal, Tulbul, Baglihar, Kishanganga, Ratle and Pakal Dul have all faced similar resistance.

This tactic of exploiting and abusing the Treaty was employed by Pakistan not to ensure treaty compliance but to delay and frustrate India's legitimate developmental rights, they said.

The sources said the dispute resolution provisions of the treaty, intended as an exceptional mechanism for resolving genuine differences, were progressively converted into instruments for delaying Indian projects.

Pakistan repeatedly escalated routine technical issues to third-party forums, prolonged bilateral discussions without resolution and, in recent years, sought parallel proceedings before both the Neutral Expert and the Court of Arbitration, contrary to the graded dispute resolution framework of the treaty, they added. (Agencies)

CJP March: Forces Lathicharge As Protesters Try To Breach Barricades Near Parliament Street

NEW DELHI, JUL 20: Forces resorted to a baton-charge near Parliament Street after thousands of Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protesters allegedly tried to breach barricades while marching towards Parliament on Monday.

At around 11.25 am, protesters attempted to push through multiple barricades erected in the high-security zone, sources said.

A scuffle-like situation ensued, in which some protesters and police personnel sustained minor injuries, they said. Around 10-15 protesters were said to have been detained, sources said.

A heavy deployment of uniformed police personnel, along with officers in plain



clothes, was in place across the area to maintain law and order and prevent protesters from moving towards Parliam-

ent, according to sources.

New Delhi Deputy Commissioner of Police Sachin Sharma, however, stated

that not even a single Delhi Police personnel has used force on protesters so far. (Agencies)

Singapore minister resigns over controversial 'interactions' with woman

SINGAPORE, JULY 20: Singapore's acting Minister-in-Charge of Muslim Affairs Faishal Ibrahim has resigned after questions regarding his conduct were raised over his interactions with a woman, according to an official statement.

"Most of their interactions took place through online messages. They also met on the sidelines of public events," Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said in a statement on Monday.

Last month, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) received an email from a woman detailing her interactions with Faishal, following which Wong directed the relevant authorities to review the sit-

uation.

During the investigation, both parties alleged harassment against each other.

Later, the police concluded that no criminal offences were committed and that no action will be taken against either of them.

"But there was a separate question of whether Associate Professor Faishal's conduct met the standards expected of a Political Office Holder and MP," the statement said.

"Upon reflecting on the matter, Associate Professor Faishal accepted that his conduct fell short of these standards, and tendered his resignation," it said. Zaqy Mohamad, senior minister of

state for defence and sustainability and the environment, will replace Faishal, according to the statement.

"While there was no physical relationship between us, and I did not intend for the interactions to develop into one, there was a lapse of judgment on my part in how I handled the interactions and in failing to establish clearer boundaries at an earlier stage," Faishal said in a letter to Wong, which was released to the media.

Faishal, who entered politics in 2006 after an academic career at the National University of Singapore, has held several government positions over the years.