

Punjab CM's wife sends notice to ex-judge over allegation of demanding Rs 5 cr to suppress rape case

CHANDIGARH, AUG 23: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's wife, Gurpreet Kaur, today sent a legal notice to a former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge in connection with the allegations that she sought Rs 5 crore to suppress a rape case.

According to AAP MLA Amandeep Kaur, Dr Gurpreet Kaur has sent a legal notice.

The notice sought an apology within 24 hours for the allegations, failing which it stated that legal proceedings would be initiated and the matter would be taken to court, she told reporters.

The matter came to lime-light after National Human Rights Commission issued a notice to the Punjab government and its police chief over a complaint alleging that Mann's wife demanded Rs 5 crore to suppress a rape case, officials said on Saturday.

Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring said that serious allegations have been levelled and the chief minister should clarify on the allegations made.

"The chief minister should give his clarification on the issue. Why such allegations have been levelled, what is the matter, he should clarify," Warring told reporters



here. Shiromani Akali Dal leader and former Punjab Minister Bikram Singh Majithia said that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann should respond to the allegations that have been levelled.

"A serious allegation of demanding a Rs 5 crore bribe has been levelled against your wife, and the NHRC has sought a report from your DGP and Chief Secretary," Majithia said in a post on X on Saturday.

He said Bhagwant Mann should immediately recommend handing over the matter to the CBI to ensure justice for the victim.

"Bhagwant Mann, a serious allegation of demanding Rs 5 crore has been levelled against your wife. You have lost the trust of the people of

Punjab on moral grounds. Immediately send your resignation to the Punjab Governor," Majithia said in his post.

Congress' Jalandhar MP and former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi said the matter pertaining to the allegations should be inquired by CBI.

After the opposition targeted the AAP over the issue, Aam Aadmi Party's Moga MLA Amandeep Kaur launched a sharp attack on the opposition, over what she claimed were "baseless allegations" being levelled against Dr Gurpreet Kaur, the CM's wife.

Amandeep Kaur said that in politics, it is the opposition's right to question, oppose and criticise the functioning of the government,

but making false allegations and attacking an individual's private life, reputation and character would not be accepted at any cost.

"When lies cross all limits, they will be answered not only politically but also through legal means," she said.

An NHRC official said the Commission has taken cognisance of the allegation of the complainant that the wife of Chief Minister Mann sought Rs 5 crore to suppress a rape case.

The National Human Rights Commission has directed the authorities to inquire into the allegation and submit an action taken report within two weeks.

The complainant alleged that a retired judge publicly stated that a demand of Rs 5 crore was made in connection with a rape case, allegedly involving the wife of the chief minister of Punjab, the proceedings dated August 21 read.

An NHRC official said the Commission has taken cognisance of the allegation of the complainant that the wife of Chief Minister Mann sought Rs 5 crore to suppress a rape case. According to the complaint, the allegation has been levelled by a former judge.

Nation-Wide Anti-Narcotics Fortnightly Drives To Begin From September

NEW DELHI, AUG 23: Anti-drugs trafficking agencies will launch a year-long national enforcement drive from September to apprehend absconding narcotics offenders, inspect medical shops for diversion of pharmaceutical drugs and prisons as part of an action plan to dismantle syndicates dealing in drugs trafficking.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has recently written to all the states and various central agencies tasked to fight drug crimes asking them to undertake 24 different special drives that will run for a fortnight each till August next year, officials told PTI on Sunday.

While an awareness program for students in schools and colleges is ongoing since

August 16, the enforcement action drives will begin from September which includes a fortnight where foreigners who indulge in drug crimes will be identified across the country for deportation while the next 15-day drive will target absconding narcotics offenders, according to the action plan.

Beginning October, the NCB along with the state and Union Territories Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs) will inspect medical stores and pharmacies in coordination with jurisdictional drug controllers to check diversion of pharma drugs for narcotics trafficking.

The action plan, according to the officials, will subsequently suggest separate fortnights for preparation of

dossiers against drug crime fugitives, creating awareness among coastal communities on maritime drug trade and coordinated checks at all land, sea and airports in the second-half of December.

The second fortnight of January 2027 will see detection and destruction of illicit cultivation followed by an awareness drive in chemical industries against diversion of precursor chemicals in the first-half of February and joint inspection of jails in the second half of that month.

The action plan also envisages special fortnights to engage the youth in sports, drug-free campus verification exercise in educational institutes and training of anti-narcotics government agents to scan the darknet,

crypto currency, synthetic drugs and clandestine drugs manufacturing laboratories, officials said.

These fortnightly campaigns are intended to supplement the regular tasks and time-bound targets already earmarked for various agencies in the country under the national Vision Document for Narcotics Control 2026-29 that was unveiled recently, the officials said.

The NCB has said these coordinated nationwide fortnightly campaigns will not only strengthen inter-agency collaboration but also enhance public awareness and contribute significantly towards achieving the vision of Nasha Mukta Bharat (Drugs Free India). (AGENCIES)

Is HM in search of 'super-tainted' 2/3rd majority to get delimitation-linked bill passed, asks Cong

NEW DELHI, AUG 23: Questioning the delay in pro-roguing the Monsoon session of Parliament, the Congress on Sunday asked whether Union Home Minister Amit Shah was still in search of his "super-tainted" two-thirds majority to get the delimitation-linked Constitutional amendment bill passed in a special session.

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were adjourned sine die on August 13.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the time gap between the adjournment of the Lok Sabha sine die and its prorogation (formal end) is generally two to four days, although there are many instances when adjournment and prorogation have taken place on the very same day.

Ten days have gone by since this Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die but still there is no information on its prorogation, Ramesh pointed out.

"It is true that the gap for the Monsoon session in 2015 was 28 days and in 2021 it was 20 days. But there were no diabolical moves afoot then," the Congress leader said on X.

"What explains the abnormal delay now? Is the Union Home Minister still in search of his super-tainted 2/3rd majority to get the Constitutional Amendment Bill on Delimitation passed in a Special Session?" Ramesh said.



He also shared the screenshot of a page from M N Kaul and S L Shakhder's "Practice and Procedure of Parliament" to highlight the process of prorogation of the House.

"Termination of a session of the House by an order made by the President under Article 85(2) is called prorogation. The President, in exercising the power to prorogue the House, acts on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister may consult the Cabinet before the advice is submitted to the President.

"Prorogation of the House may take place any time, even while the House is sitting. Usually, however, prorogation follows the adjournment of the sitting of the House sine die. The period between prorogation of the House and its reassembly in a new session is termed as 'inter-session period'," the book says.

The Congress had said earlier that it was the opposition's "success" that the at-

tempt to get a "tainted" two-thirds majority was underway, but it could not succeed and the Constitution Amendment Bill involving delimitation could not be brought.

"They don't have a two-thirds majority and will never get it," Ramesh had said after the two Houses were adjourned sine die.

The Congress last week called for freezing the current strength of Lok Sabha at 543 seats for the next 25 years and demanded that 33 per cent reservation for women be implemented from the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

The opposition party made the assertion after a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) at the Indira Bhawan here.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Ramesh had said that regarding delimitation, the Congress was in favour of keeping the current number of Lok Sabha seats -- 543 -- unchanged for the next 25 years.

"At the same time, we de-

mand the implementation of women's reservation on this very number," Ramesh said.

In a resolution passed at the meeting, the CWC reiterated its commitment to the immediate implementation of women's reservation.

"The Congress Working Committee reinforces its demand that the constitutional freeze on the current strength of the Lok Sabha and its present allocation among the states be extended for the next 25 years, while one-third reservation for women be implemented from the 2029 Lok Sabha elections itself," the CWC resolution said.

The Congress had termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to opposition parties to support the delimitation-linked bill for implementing women's reservation as a "drama", and alleged that his single point agenda was "Modi preservation, not women's reservation".

During the Budget session on April 17, the Modi government faced a setback as the Constitution Amendment Bill, involving delimitation, for the implementation of the women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies was defeated in the Lower House.

Of the 528 MPs who voted in Lok Sabha, 298 voted in support, while 230 opposed it. The Bill required 352 votes for a two-thirds majority. (PTI)

Mayawati opposes demand for reservation on economic basis, says it undermines constitutional safeguards

LUCKNOW, AUG 23: BSP supremo Mayawati on Sunday opposed the demand for replacing caste-based reservation with reservation on economic grounds, saying such a move would not be in the country's interest.

The former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said the constitutional provision of reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs was intended to address the discrimination and deprivation faced by these communities for centuries.

She said those raising demands against caste-based reservation should refrain from taking any step that could undermine the constitutional objective of building an egalitarian society and a developed and dignified nation.

The Delhi Police had on Friday detained several protesters, who gathered at Jantar Mantar in Delhi for an anti-reservation demonstration.

The protesters were mobilised through social me-



dia for the demonstration, demanding that economic criteria be given precedence over caste in determining eligibility for government support and reservation.

Referring to the demand, Mayawati said neither Rahul Gandhi nor any other Congress leader went there even to try to explain their position to the protesters.

She said this reflected what she described as the Congress's "anti-reserva-

tion mindset" towards these communities.

Mayawati cited B R Ambedkar's views on casteism and said abandoning casteism was the "greatest patriotism".

She said governments at the Centre and in the states were already spending substantial public money on several poverty alleviation programmes, but if their intended benefits were not reaching people because of corruption and administrative shortcomings, it was a

failure of the government system.

"Reservation on economic grounds is already in place in the country," she said, adding that even poor families from the upper-caste communities were not getting its full benefit and that the arrangement had largely proved inadequate.

Mayawati alleged that a "corrupt and casteist" Government system had prevented the constitutional provisions relating to reservation from being properly implemented on the ground.

SC, ST and OBC communities continued to face poverty, caste-based discrimination, exploitation, atrocities and social prejudice even decades after Independence, she claimed.

She urged Governments not to provide "shelter or protection" to elements opposing reservation and appealed to political parties and people not to indulge in "cheap politics" over the sensitive issue.

111 lives lost to rain, natural disasters in Himachal Pradesh

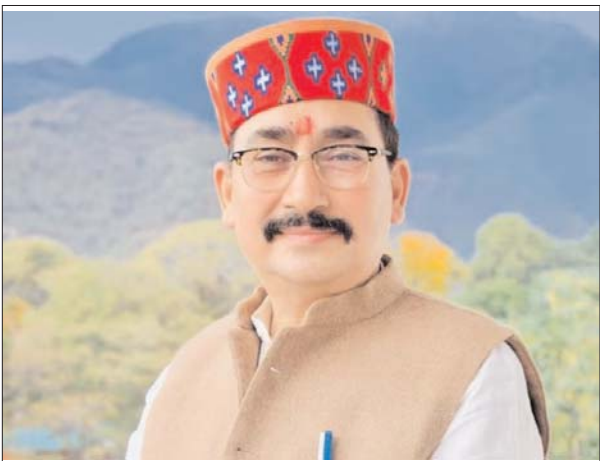
SHIMLA, AUG 23: Heavy rains and natural disasters have caused widespread damage in Himachal Pradesh in the financial year 2026, and 111 people have died as a result, according to Revenue Minister Jagat Singh Negi.

In a written reply to a question from BJP MLA Vipin Singh Parmar on Saturday, the minister said that the state recorded an average rainfall of 109.80 millimetres over the past five months.

Noting that three cloudburst incidents were also reported during this period, he added that these natural disasters have resulted in significant damage to lives, property, houses, roads, bridges, drinking water schemes, power infrastructure, and other basic amenities.

The minister further informed that relief funds have been distributed to 1,871 affected families in the state so far, while 1,260 families have not yet received compensation.

He said that in most of the pending cases, affected families had not applied for relief through the RMS portal. In some instances, applications



were incomplete. He assured that eligible families would receive relief funds as soon as the necessary formalities were completed.

The minister mentioned that three cloudburst incidents were recorded: one in the Seva Dug area of Bhuntar Tehsil in Kullu district, and two others in Shugu Khangsar and Dondal Nala Karpal in Lahaul-Spiti district. No deaths or injuries were reported in connection with these incidents.

According to the revenue minister, the highest number of deaths due to natural disasters this year occurred in Sirmour district, where 87 peo-

ple lost their lives. Sixteen fatalities were reported in Lahaul-Spiti, four in Solan, two in Mandi, and one each in Kangra and Kullu, bringing the total death toll in the state to 111.

He further highlighted that heavy rains had damaged 12 bridges statewide, with Lahaul-Spiti suffering the most, accounting for four affected bridges. Three bridges sustained damage in both Kinnaur and Solan, while one bridge in each of Chamba and Shimla was also affected.

Regarding housing damage, Solan district was the worst affected, with 239

houses damaged. Other districts also reported damage: 155 houses in Kangra, 136 in Mandi, 89 in Chamba, 50 in Shimla, 33 in Sirmour, 21 in Kullu, 14 in Hamirpur, 12 in Una, nine in Bilaspur, and eight in Kinnaur.

The rains also impacted the road network across all districts of the state. Kangra reported the highest number of damaged roads at 736, followed by 615 in Mandi, 614 in Shimla, 394 in Chamba, 288 in Bilaspur, 266 in Solan, 254 in Hamirpur, 196 in Sirmour, 113 in Kullu, 100 in Una, 74 in Lahaul-Spiti, and 58 in Kinnaur.

Additionally, the minister stated that Rs 802.56 crore has been received from the central government for disaster relief during the current financial year as of August 1.

This amount was allocated under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF), and State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF).

In the previous financial year, the state had received Rs 3,007 crore under these heads.

Rahul Gandhi says women belong to themselves, rejects Manusmriti's prescription about their identity

PUNE, AUG 23: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi today said that women belong to themselves and not to their fathers, husbands or sons, and termed as shameful the Manusmriti's norm that a woman should remain under the authority of male relatives at every stage of her life.

India's biggest strength is the "70 crore unique journeys, unique imagination, unique dreams" of its women, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said, speaking at his party's youth outreach programme 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' here.

"I (would) like to quote here the Manusmriti, which says clearly that in childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth she belongs to her husband and, when her lord is dead, she belongs to her sons. A woman must never be independent. These words are a shame. These words should



not have been spoken," Gandhi said.

Women are the country's biggest asset, he said, adding that they should stand for themselves and believe in themselves.

"You belong to nobody, except yourself. You have a relationship with your father, brother, husband, your son, but you do not belong to them, and you belong to

yourself," Gandhi said.

He had come to the city not to lecture or discuss politics, but to allow young people to express what they felt and discuss their ideas, he said at the programme held on the ground of a local college where young women were present in large numbers.

Calling on the audience to "break the cage", Gandhi told the youth that every individ-

ual is unique and has their own dreams and vision. Hinduism

"You are unique, you are special, you are individual, and you have your own dream and vision," he said.

Explaining why he considered women a greater asset of the country, Gandhi said, "My logic is that women are by nature more sensitive, more gentle, more compassionate and more forward-looking than men."

Women were often confined to three identities, daughter, wife or mother, the Congress leader said, adding that while there was nothing wrong with these relationships, these could not be their only identity.

Women become professionals and sportspersons and are active in several fields, but their identities are often defined through their relationships with men, Gandhi pointed out. (PTI)