

Direct Uttarakhand CM to ensure FIR against those involved in 'purification' incident: Kharge to Nadda

NEW DELHI, SEP 3: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has written to Rajya Sabha Leader of House J P Nadda over the "purification" that took place after his rally in Haldwani last month, asking him to direct Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to ensure that an FIR is filed against those involved in the incident.

Kharge reminded Nadda of his assurance when he had raised the issue in the Rajya Sabha that after an investigation, strict action will be taken against whoever is found guilty.

"You may recall that on August 13, 2026, in the Rajya Sabha, with great sadness and anguish, I raised the issue of purification related to untouchability after my public meeting in Haldwani on August 8, 2026," Kharge said in his letter in Hindi.

"In response to my intervention, you stood up in the House and said, 'Sir, what Honourable Khargeji has said is truly a very sad subject. It is not only sad for the Congress Party, but it is sad for all of us. Whatever has happened will definitely be investigated. I want to say that the Bharatiya Janata Party never supports such an activity. I condemn it, and the National President will also look into it thoroughly. The hurt caused to your sentiments is a matter of regret for all of us'," Kharge said.

The Congress president said that Nadda had stated that after the investigation, strict action will be taken against whoever is found guilty.

"The Honourable Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (C P Radhakrishnan) also expressed grief over this incident," he said.



Kharge said he is surprised that even after 24 days of this incident, not even a First Information Report (FIR) has been filed against the organisations and individuals involved in this heinous act in Haldwani.

"The most objectionable aspect of this incident was that at the Ramlila Maidan site where I addressed the rally, purification was carried out, contrary to the spirit of the Indian Constitution and human values. It is generally understood that this purification process is directly linked to untouchability," Kharge said in his letter to Nadda dated September 2.

Citing examples of untouchability being practised, Kharge recalled that Baba Saheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar took water from a pond during the Mahad movement and even back then, individuals driven by casteist arrogance performed a 'purification' ritual -- accompanied by the chanting of mantras -- using 108 pots of 'gomutra' and 'gobar'.

Merely chanting mantras or performing a 'havan' does not sanctify such a casteist act of 'purification', Kharge said.

"I wish to state clearly that this issue transcends my personal self or the office of the

Indian National Congress President; it is deeply connected to the sentiments of crores of people who confront this harsh reality on a daily basis. It is essential to teach such wrongdoers a lesson," the Congress chief said. Therefore, this outrage is not mine alone but an expression of those crores of people; it concerns a mind-set that directly affects a specific section of society, he said.

"For this very reason, I raised this issue in the House to draw the government's attention to it," Kharge said.

"I, therefore, urge you once again -- in light of these facts and the assurances given in the Rajya Sabha -- to direct the chief minister of Uttarakhand to ensure that an FIR is registered against the individuals and organisations involved in the 'purification' incident that took place at Ramlila Maidan following my public meeting in Haldwani," Kharge said.

Earlier this week, the had accused the BJP of perpetrating social injustice and protecting those who discriminate against Dalits after an FIR was filed in Uttarakhand against Rahul Gandhi over his remarks on the alleged purification of the venue where party chief

Kharge addressed a rally.

Calling the FIR against Gandhi an "attempt to divert attention and suppress voices", the opposition party said it will give a fitting response to it through democratic and legal means.

Congress workers protested at several places over the registration of the case against Gandhi and demanded its withdrawal and a case against those behind the "purification act" at the venue of Kharge's rally in Haldwani.

They also filed complaints across Uttarakhand demanding registration of cases under the SC/ST Act against those involved in the alleged purification act. BJP workers also staged protests in Uttarakhand and burnt Gandhi's effigies.

The BJP accused the Congress of doing petty politics over the issue due to upcoming assembly polls and called Gandhi the "most anti-Dalit leader".

The FIR was registered against Gandhi on Saturday following a complaint by a member of the Valmiki community in Haldwani alleging that the Congress leader at a recent press conference gave a casteist spin to a "religious ritual".

A political row erupted after some individuals allegedly performed a 'purification yajna' at the Ramlila Ground in Haldwani on August 11, following a public meeting there by Kharge on August 8. Political Analysis

At a press conference in New Delhi on August 29, Gandhi had criticised the incident and demanded registration of an FIR under the SC/ST Act against those responsible for the "purification". (PTI)

Raghav Chadha Claims His Name Marked 'Shifted' In Punjab Draft Rolls At AAP's Behest

CHANDIGARH, SEP 3: Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab Raghav Chadha on Thursday said that his name has been marked as "shifted" in the draft electoral rolls despite his voter ID being registered in Mohali, accusing the AAP government of using the electoral machinery for political vendetta. Political Analysis

The AAP hit back, accusing Chadha of trying to get his voter registration made in Delhi through a "backdated process", and attempting to put the entire blame on the Punjab government.

Chadha's name has been classified as "shifted" in the draft electoral rolls prepared after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in Punjab.

"The AAP government in Punjab has now taken its politics of revenge to the draft electoral rolls. I am a sitting Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab, with my voter ID registered in Mohali, Punjab. Yet my name has been classified as 'shifted' in the draft electoral rolls," Chadha said in a post on X.

"This does not seem like a mere clerical mistake. This is a clear case of political vendetta," he alleged.

Chadha, who switched sides from the AAP to the BJP in April, said he was in the process of availing remedies provided under the SIR guidelines.

Thankfully, these are only the draft rolls, not the final rolls. Names are corrected during the 'claims and objections' process, which is ongoing. The final rolls will be published in October. I am already in the process of availing the remedies provided under the SIR guidelines," the former Delhi minister said.



He also questioned who marked him as "shifted", who verified the classification and who processed it at a higher level, alleging that officials of the Punjab government were involved in the process.

"Who marked me as 'shifted'? An official of the AAP government. Who verified that classification? Again, an officer of the AAP government. Who processed it at a higher level? Once again, the same AAP government's official," Chadha alleged.

He claimed that from the booth-level officer (BLO) to the chief electoral officer of the state, every operational level of the SIR exercise is staffed by Punjab government officials.

"The BLO is ordinarily a junior Punjab government employee. The AEROs, EROs and DEOs in between are Punjab government officials. At the top is a Punjab-cadre IAS officer serving as the chief electoral officer," he said.

Such officials are susceptible to political pressure as their transfers, postings and careers are controlled by the state government, he claimed.

"These officials know that the AAP government controls their transfers, postings

and careers once their electoral duty ends. They know who can transfer them and who can make their lives difficult. This is how the AAP government applies political pressure on state officials to execute political revenge," he alleged.

He also said that ever since he left the "corrupt" Aam Aadmi Party, its leadership has been seething with anger.

"The AAP has unleashed the Punjab Police and the administrative machinery against those of us who refused to remain silent. The other MPs who left the AAP and joined the BJP have also been targeted by the Punjab government. This wrongful classification is only the latest act of that political vendetta," he said.

Chadha also cited Paragraph 4(d) of the detailed SIR guidelines, which, according to him, provides for a "protected list" of public representatives.

"This includes judges, MPs and MLAs. It states: 'All names of members of judiciary, public representatives, holders of declared offices and personalities from fields of arts, culture, journalism, sports and public services, etc., earlier flagged in the electoral database, are to be included in the draft electoral

rolls, so that necessary documents can also be collected during the period of claims and objections'," Chadha said.

"I am a sitting Member of Parliament from Punjab. If at all my name was flagged, Paragraph 4(d) required my inclusion in the draft rolls. The instruction was not overlooked. It was willfully violated in my case.

"AAP may run the Punjab government, but the draft rolls are not its private property," he said.

Countering Chadha, a Punjab AAP spokesperson said the Election Commission conducts SIR, not the state government.

"Punjab government has no role in deciding whose name is included or deleted from the electoral rolls," he said.

"It is a matter of public record that Raghav Chadha has been living in Delhi, and not in Punjab. If he no longer resides in Punjab, maintaining or shifting his voter registration was his own responsibility. He cannot now blame the AAP or the Punjab government for the deletion of a voter entry," the spokesperson said.

He also claimed that the AAP received information from Election Commission sources that Chadha was trying to get his voter registration made in Rajinder Nagar, Delhi, through "a backdated process".

"If any such backdated or unlawful exercise took place, it must be investigated, and the entire truth be brought before the public. If the BJP or anyone else facilitated any such backdated entry, we will pursue the matter to its logical conclusion and expose the truth," the spokesperson said. (Agencies)

NALSAR row: BCI lacks power to regulate students' conduct, says SC

NEW DELHI, SEPT 3: The Supreme Court on Thursday held that the Bar Council of India (BCI) has no statutory power to regulate the conduct of law students, observing that it was for educational institutions to take action against students in accordance with their own regulatory norms.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalaya Bagchi and V Mohana passed the order

while dealing with the controversy arising out of the BCI's action against students of Hyderabad's NALSAR University of Law over their objections to the CJI's proposed participation in the university's convocation.

It set aside two notifications issued by the BCI in connection with the NALSAR row, even though both were withdrawn within hours of their issuance following widespread criticism.

The bench made it clear that the BCI could not exercise regulatory control over students before they became advocates and came within the statutory framework governing the legal profession.

It said any action against students for their conduct was a matter for the educational institution concerned to consider under its own rules and regulations.

The controversy had erupted on August 14 after

the BCI directed state bar councils not to enrol NALSAR's 2026 graduates as advocates until further orders over allegations relating to a campaign against CJI Kant's proposed visit to the university.

When the matter was mentioned before the Supreme Court, the CJI had strongly disapproved of the BCI's intervention, saying, "It's a dialogue between students and me.

Ahmadabad media delegation visits Biotech Park Kathua, gathers insights of Agri-Startups & Bio-incubation activities

KATHUA, SEP 03: Ahmadabad based media delegation which is on tour to J&K, locally coordinated by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), visited the Industrial Biotech Park (IBTP), Kathua, to see the biotechnology, startup and agriculture-related initiatives being implemented through CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu.

The visit was part of the delegation's ongoing press tour of CSIR-IIIM and its associated facilities, showcasing the institute's work in taking scientific research from laboratories to farmers, startups, industry and society.

The delegation was briefed about the BioNEST Bioincubation Centre and Centre of Excellence (CoE) at IBTP Kathua, which provide support to technology-based startups and innovators through scientific facilities, mentorship and infrastructure for product development, testing and validation.

Welcoming the delegation, Dr. Saurabh Saran, PI, BioNEST IIIM-TBI, spoke about the incubation and entrepreneurship activities being carried out through the institute.

"Under the leadership of Dr. Zabeer Ahmed, Director, CSIR-IIIM Jammu and CSIR-NBRI, Lucknow, CSIR-IIIM is strengthening its incubation and innovation ecosystem by providing entrepreneurs access to scientific mentorship, research infrastructure and technical support to convert promising ideas into market-oriented products," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Suphla B. Gupta, Nodal Aroma Mission, apprised the delegation about the Aroma Mission and Floriculture Mission of CSIR-IIIM and the institute's work with farmers in medicinal and aromatic plants.

She highlighted the promotion of lavender cultivation under the Purple Revolution, along with the development of quality planting material, scientific cultivation practices, post-harvest management, processing and value addition.

"CSIR-IIIM's Aroma Mission has helped expand lavender cultivation in Jammu and Kashmir, with cultivation now spread over around 1,500 hectares and benefiting more than 5,000 farmers," she said.



Dr. Gupta explained that the focus of the Aroma Mission was not limited to cultivation but extended across the entire value chain, from providing quality planting material and improving farm practices to harvesting, processing, distillation and marketing of value-added products.

"The institute has facilitated lavender oil production and value addition, with annual extraction crossing 4,000 kg of lavender oil,

while revenues generated through the lavender ecosystem have exceeded ₹18 crore," she added.

She said the availability of processing and distillation facilities had helped farmers and local entrepreneurs derive greater economic value from aromatic crops. The initiative has also created opportunities in areas such as oil extraction, product development, packaging and marketing,

thereby generating additional avenues for employment and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Gupta further said that CSIR-IIIM was working to promote integrated farming approaches, including the integration of beekeeping with aromatic and other crops. Besides improving pollination, she said, beekeeping could provide farmers with an additional source of income.

She also highlighted CSIR-

accident in Rajasthan's Phalodi area that claimed 15 lives, said that encroachment and stationary vehicles on highways were the two major issues.

The counsel appearing for the NHAI said they have issued circulars for regular inspection and patrolling to check unauthorised parking on the highways.

"Why can't you think of having a camera surveillance system? You can have moni-

toring rooms at all toll plazas," the bench said.

Senior advocate ANS Nadkarni, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in the matter, said one of the major issues was illegal parking of vehicles on highways, which leads to road accidents.

The bench noted that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Tamil Nadu government

have not yet filed their compliance affidavits in the matter.

The bench posted the matter for October 6 and directed the Tamil Nadu government to file an affidavit before the next date of hearing. In November last year, the top court took suo motu cognisance of the November 2 road accident in Phalodi in which a tempo traveller rrammed into a stationary trailer truck.

IIIM's efforts to provide farmers with scientific guidance and technical support at different stages of cultivation, enabling them to adopt improved practices and make medicinal and aromatic plant cultivation a more viable source of livelihood.

Dr. Amit Nargotra, Scientist-F, briefed the delegation on the scope of Artificial Intelligence-driven innovations, covering the potential of emerging technologies in scientific research, innovation and technology development.

Earlier, Dr. Ajaz Ahmad Mir, CEO, BioNEST Bioincubation Centre, IBTP, made a detailed presentation on the BioNEST Bioincubation Centre and the Centre of Excellence at Kathua.

He apprised the visiting journalists of the facilities available for emerging entrepreneurs and innovators, particularly in biotechnology, agriculture, nutrition and health.

"IBTP Kathua has an Agri, Nutri and HealthTech Bio Incubator that is supporting technology-driven ventures in agriculture, nutrition and healthcare. The facility is also supporting the establishment of a Centre of Excellence

aimed at strengthening research and innovation infrastructure in the region," he said.

The delegation was also informed about the wider startup ecosystem of CSIR-IIIM. The Jammu BioNEST incubator has registered 165 startup companies, with 10 incubatees at the product-development stage and three startups having launched products in the market. More than 1,000 students have also been trained through skill-development programmes.

At IBTP Kathua, the Agri, Nutri and HealthTech Bio Incubator is supporting the development of an ecosystem bringing together biotechnology, agriculture, nutrition, healthcare and entrepreneurship.

The media delegation later visited laboratory facilities at IBTP, where scientists explained the research and technology-development infrastructure available at the park.

The visit was followed by a tour of the Biofarm at IBTP, giving the journalists a first-hand view of field-level applications of scientific interventions and the institute's efforts to connect laboratory research with agriculture.