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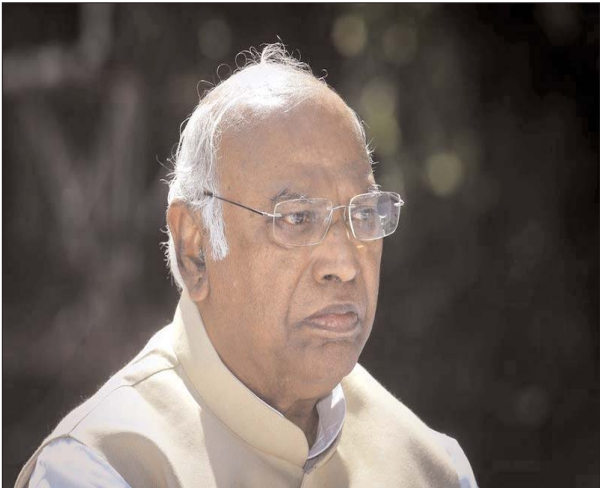
No 'sujalam', 'sufalam' under BJP rule in Gujarat: Kharge targets Govt

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday targeted the Gujarat BJP Government over a CAG report revealing water contamination in select villages and alleged that, during its 28-year rule, the party has only peddled false rhetoric and propaganda in the state.

"Modi ji's 'Har Ghar Jal' claims have been washed away in contaminated water," he said in a post on X, claiming that 90 per cent of water samples in the state were found to be unfit for drinking.

"When Modi ji was CM, the 'Sujalam-Sufalam' scheme was loudly trumpeted in 2004. Even today, Gujarat's people are still yearning for a drop of water," he said in his post in Hindi.

The Congress chief claimed that when he became the prime minister, the same empty rhetoric reached the 'Jal Jeevan Mission'.



"Now, the CAG has exposed the BJP Government's claim of 100 per cent tap connections in 2022. 14 lakh households are still waiting for water," Kharge alleged.

He claimed that the situation is such that just last week in Dholka, Ahmedabad district, there was news of 54 deaths from cancer due to drinking contaminated water. Epaper access

In Saurashtra, areas like Rajkot and Jamnagar are still yearning for drinking water, he claimed, adding that farmers in Kutch-Saurashtra are struggling due to drought.

"Gujarat's people were shown dreams of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, but 28 years of BJP rule have only peddled false propaganda, flaunted fake colorful pic-

tures and thrown dust in the people's eyes!

"Under BJP rule - there is no 'Sujalam', meaning pure water, nor 'Sufalam', meaning bountiful with fruits and fertile crops!," Kharge alleged. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) exposed severe flaws in the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission in Gujarat, flagging project delays, financial irregularities, and gaps in water quality testing across the state.

Tabled on the final day of the state assembly's Monsoon session on Friday, the CAG report found that nearly 89 per cent of water samples tested in select villages were unfit for consumption, while incorrect calculations and inadmissible spending resulted in excess contractor payments running into crores. The audit report covered the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission from 2019-20 to 2023-24. (PTI)

Youth Wants To Read, Need To Ensure Books Reach Them: Adityanath

LUCKNOW, SEP 12: Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said the youth today wants to read, but efforts need to be made to ensure that books reach them.

Adityanath was speaking at the inaugural programme of the 5th Gomti Pustak Mahotsav here. The book fair will conclude on September 20.

"When the first book fair was held, I asked that one such fair be organised in Gorakhpur. The turnout in Gorakhpur was even higher than in Lucknow, and more books were purchased in Gorakhpur as compared to Lucknow," Adityanath said.

"The results completely dispelled the notion that today's youth do not read books. We had not made the efforts to make the books reach them," Adityanath said.

The chief minister said it would be unfair to say that the youth spends too much time on social media.

Hitting out at the previous state governments, Adityanath said, "(Earlier) the schools and buildings were dilapidated, and there were no teachers. Since the state was 'BIMARU', the governments themselves were dilapidated, and hence the system became dilapidated."

The acronym 'BIMARU' (which means sick in Hindi) was coined by demographer



Ashish Bose in the mid-1980s. It was formed from the first letters of the names of some of the country's then-poorest states -- Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. South Asians & Diaspora

Adityanath said Lucknow had long been a centre of literature and the city and its surrounding region had produced numerous literary figures whose timeless works had captured the nation's imagination.

He also highlighted the spiritual importance of Naimisharanya, a Hindu pilgrimage site on the banks of the Gomti River in the Sitapur district, Kashi University in Prayagraj, which hosts the Kumbh Mela, and Muzaffarnagar.

Posing a question to his audience, Adityanath said, "Who could have stopped a state like UP, which possessed such a rich tradition,

from moving ahead? Yet, when we attempted to confine knowledge within narrow limits, the adverse consequences became evident to us all.

"The narrow mindset plunged us into an identity crisis. It relegated UP to the category of 'BIMARU' states. When someone falls ill, the ailment is not merely physical. It arises when a certain mental atmosphere develops, or when a person feels spiritually weak," he said.

The same applies to a society and a nation. When its capacity ends and it severs ties with its heritage, it is forced to face such circumstances, he said.

"And what is the result? It earns the label of 'BIMARU'," he added.

The chief minister said Uttar Pradesh, too, had the 'BIMARU' label attached to it until a decade ago.

"The youth here faced an

identity crisis. Citizens could not venture outside or openly declare their identity; they would try to conceal who they were. However, the positive initiatives launched over the last 10 years are now giving results that are clearly and powerfully visible to us all," he said.

Referring to the book 'Exam Warriors' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Adityanath said every child should read it and assimilate its message.

"It is not meant solely for school students; it is for every young person and every citizen, as everyone has to navigate various examinations at some point in time, be it in some situation or for a degree, for a certificate course, or while facing the trials of life's journey," he said.

He said that when one's courage falters, 'Exam Warriors' serves as a source of strength and guidance.

"That is why the sages of India have always inspired us with the message, let noble thoughts come to us from every direction. They have consistently inspired everyone not to limit knowledge or view it within a narrow, constricted scope.

"The doors and pathways for knowledge to flow in from all directions must remain open. It is with this spirit that the Indian tradition of sages has carried this philosophy forward," he said. (Agencies)

Iranian President's Daughter Visits PM Museum, BRICS Bazaar

NEW DELHI, SEP 12: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's daughter Zahra Pezeshkian visited the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya (Prime Minister's Museum) and the BRICS Bazaar here on Saturday, experiencing the democratic legacy and cultural heritage of India.

The visit took place on the sidelines of the opening day of the two-day BRICS summit being held at Bharat Mandapam here.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the summit, which is being attended by several world leaders, including President Pezeshkian.

While leaders discussed the emerging economies and the Global South, some of their family members chose to explore the city beyond the diplomatic corridors.

Zahra Pezeshkian visited the museum amid tight security. She also visited the BRICS Bazaar at the National Crafts Museum, adjoining the summit venue.

Philippine First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos, who is accompanying President Ferdinand R Marcos Jr., also explored the museum housed at the Teen Murti Bhawan complex, it is learnt.

"Zahra Pezeshkian,



daughter of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, visited the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya in New Delhi. She explored the museum showcasing the journeys, contributions and legacies of India's Prime Ministers," the Iranian Embassy in India posted on X.

It also shared a video of her visit. After Zahra Pezeshkian visited the BRICS Bazaar, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annpurna Devi posted on X, "It was a pleasure to welcome Ms. Zahra Pezeshkian, daughter of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian to the #BRICS-

Bazaar at the National Crafts Museum, New Delhi."

"Had the opportunity to show them around the Bazaar and share the rich traditions, art, crafts and cultural heritage showcased by BRICS member and partner nations," the minister said. From Brazilian clay art, one of the Americas' oldest living traditions, to the traditional folk craft of willow weaving in Belarus, the heritage bazaar showcases cultural heritage of various member and partner countries of the grouping and celebrates the creative spirit of the BRICS community.

Russian President

Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, among other leaders, are also attending the BRICS summit being held on September 12 and 13. BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the UAE and Saudi Arabia, with Indonesia joining in 2025.

Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam became BRICS partner countries last year. (Agencies)

Congress will formulate new agenda for new 'powerful, progressive' Gujarat: Surjewala

AHMEDABAD, SEP 12: Newly appointed Gujarat Congress in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala on Saturday said his party will formulate a new agenda for a new Gujarat that will be a powerful, progressive state that fosters employment and enterprise, and truly belongs to farmers and the poor.

The ideology and vision of the Congress were born in the soil of Gujarat, and for the party it is not merely a state but a source of strength, the Rajya Sabha MP asserted.

"We have invited our colleagues to share their thoughts on this in the coming days. By consolidating these ideas, we will formulate a new agenda for a new Gujarat. This is the fundamental decision we have taken today," Surjewala told reporters after meeting the state leadership at Rajiv Bhavan, the party's headquarters here.

Surjewala arrived in Ahmedabad, his first visit to the state since taking charge, as he seeks to rebuild the party ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

"I often tell my colleagues that invoking the names of Babu (Gandhiji) and (Sardar) Patel naturally brings to mind four principles rooted in this very soil: 'Satya, Sahas, Sangathan aur Andolan' (Truth, Courage, Organisation, and Agitation).

We wish to embrace this mantra once gifted by Babu and Patel to the Congress to embark on a fresh journey: building a new, powerful, progressive Gujarat that fosters employment and enterprise, a Gujarat that truly belongs to farmers and the poor," he said.

Party leaders discussed about how to strengthen the ideology of Gandhiji and Patel and transform it into a vibrant movement across the country, he said. South Asians & Diaspora

Discussions were held on the issues affecting farmers, Surat diamond and textile workers as well as youth in the state, Surjewala added.

The party leaders highlighted the confusion and conflicting views among



farmers today regarding solar and wind power corridors being developed, he said.

"While we agree they should be built, we must ask if they will destroy agriculture across more than twenty districts? We need to consider how to ensure the progress of these farmers and the poor, and how to secure their share in the resulting prosperity. Our state Congress president will devise a strategy and a movement to address this issue," he said.

Discussions were also held on the plight of the 12-15 lakh diamond workers of Surat and questions were raised as to why a welfare board was not being constituted for them, the Congress leader said.

"Why were so many driven to suicide, and why did their

families receive no compensation? Why can't arrangements be made through the Welfare Board to cover a worker's salary for at least 24 months if they lose their jobs," he asked.

Solutions should also be reached for traders facing a crisis driven by the rise of lab-grown diamonds, US sanctions on Russia, issues with raw diamond imports, declining exports, and losses amounting to lakhs of crores, Surjewala said.

He said that the distress of the Surat textile trade was also discussed and questions were asked as to why the 5 percent GST on fabric was not removed.

"It was reduced from 18 percent to 5 percent, but why can't you establish centres in places like Ludhiana, Surat, and Panipat where no GST has to be paid," he said.

Exam paper leaks affecting the state's youth were also discussed at the meeting, he said.

"The agenda is to build a 'New Gujarat.' Colleagues agreed to submit their views within the next 10 days. We will compile these inputs, consult with the PCC President and the Legislature Party Leader, and then formulate a new policy and vision for a 'New Gujarat' based on the pillars of Truth, Courage, Organisation, and Agitation," he said.

united in the fight against corruption and that Rahul Gandhi was raising his voice against corruption in the education system through the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme. "Therefore, I have taken a major decision... I am a member of the Uttarakhand Pradesh Congress Committee's executive body and a permanent invitee to the Congress Working Committee at the national level. I wish to step down from both these positions very humbly, as the party's struggle should not suffer any setback because of me," Rawat said.

Congress Leader Harish Rawat Quits Party Posts After Cash, Jewellery Recovered From Aide's House

DEHRADUN, SEPT 12: Senior Congress leader Harish Rawat on Saturday announced his decision to step down from all party posts after the Enforcement Directorate recovered cash and jewellery from his personal assistant's house.

The former Uttarakhand Chief Minister said he took the decision to ensure that the party's campaign ahead of the assembly elections due early next year is not affected.

A dozen luxury wristwatches and Rs 32 lakh in cash were seized from the premises of Chandan Singh

Jeena during the ED raids undertaken on Thursday. Jeena is currently Rawat's personal assistant and had earlier served as an officer on special duty during the Congress leader's tenure as chief minister during 2014-17.

The ED said that the raids were conducted as part of a money laundering investigation linked to alleged irregularities in a 2016 exam conducted by the state service selection commission.

In a social media post in Hindi, Rawat said that while he did not believe the allegations of irregularities in re-

cruitment exams levelled against Jeena, who has long been his associate, he absolutely did not want the issue to weaken the party's campaign. Geographic Reference

"Shri Jeena is an extremely decent, humble, and hard-working person. If there is evidence that he tampered with OMR sheets during the recruitment of village development officers or committed any such error, then I am ashamed of this alleged audacious act. However, I do not believe these allegations at all," Rawat said. Rawat said the Congress and its workers were

united in the fight against corruption and that Rahul Gandhi was raising his voice against corruption in the education system through the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme. "Therefore, I have taken a major decision... I am a member of the Uttarakhand Pradesh Congress Committee's executive body and a permanent invitee to the Congress Working Committee at the national level. I wish to step down from both these positions very humbly, as the party's struggle should not suffer any setback because of me," Rawat said.

PM Modi Holds Bilateral Talks With Leaders Of UAE, Malaysia, Vietnam And Ethiopia

NEW DELHI, SEP 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday held separate bilateral meetings with leaders from Malaysia, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia, focusing on critical minerals, energy, and food security to shield trade and supply chains from rising global tensions.

The meetings took place on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit.

In talks with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Modi discussed with him the overall situation in West Asia and ways to take forward the India-UAE strategic partnership. Geographic Reference

"Discussed taking our strategic partnership forward across defence, AI, space, critical minerals, energy, food security and connectivity," Modi said in a social media post.

"At a time of uncertainty in West Asia, a strong India-UAE is a symbol of stability, prosperity and peace," he added.

In their meeting, Modi and Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar bin Ibrahim reviewed the progress in bilateral co-operation across a range of areas, including trade and investment, defence and security, semiconductor, infrastructure, digital economy, energy and fintech.

"Prime Minister Modi appreciated Malaysia's continued support in strengthening ASEAN-India relations. The leaders exchanged views on key regional and global issues of mutual interest," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

The two leaders expressed their continued commitment to advancing the India-Malaysia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, it said.

The meeting between Modi and Vietnamese Prime Minister Le Minh Hung largely focused on bilateral trade and investment ties.

"The meeting provided an opportunity for both leaders to review the progress made in bilateral ties, which were elevated to an Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," the MEA said.

It said both leaders also exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual importance, and reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthening their partnership.

"India and Vietnam share a time-tested friendship rooted in shared civilisational heritage, mutual trust and understanding. Vietnam is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy and an important partner in India's broader engagement with Southeast Asia," the MEA said.

Modi's talks with his Ethiopian counterpart Abiy Ahmed Ali too centred around ways to further expand two-way relations in areas of defence and trade.

"The two leaders held discussions aimed at further strengthening the bilateral strategic partnership. They reviewed progress across key sectors, including economic cooperation, defence and security partnership, and capacity building," the MEA said.

The meeting built on Modi's visit to Addis Ababa in December last year.

"The two leaders also exchanged perspectives on regional and international developments of mutual interest. They reaffirmed their commitment to close cooperation in multilateral fora," the MEA noted. (Agencies)