

'Vote Chori, Govt Chori, Now Party Chori': Rahul Slams EC Order On TMC

NEW DELHI, SEP 18: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday slammed the Election Commission over its decision of directing rival Trinamool Congress factions to not use the party name and the "flowers and grass symbol" during the West Bengal bypolls, saying the poll body's constitutional responsibility is to protect the mandate but instead, it is aiding those very forces that overturn the people's verdict.

"First Shiv Sena, then NCP, and now Trinamool Congress. Every time, the same pattern - BJP and the Election Commission join forces to split a party. Then its election symbol is snatched away," Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

When an entire party can be stolen, it's hardly surprising that the votes of crores of Indians can be stolen too, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"Vote chori. Government chori. Now party chori - these have become symbols of our democratic decline," Gandhi said.

"The EC's constitutional responsibility is to protect the mandate but instead, it's aiding those very forces that overturn the people's ver-



dict," he said.

"This fight isn't just Mamata Banerjee's. It's the fight of every political party, every voter who wants free and fair elections," Gandhi said.

The Congress on Thursday condemned the Election Commission's decision of directing rival All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) factions to not use the party name and the "flowers and grass symbol" during the West Bengal bypolls, alleging that it was abdication of constitutional responsibility by the poll body.

The Congress had further said freezing the AITC name and symbol is CEC Gyanesh Kumar's "late night birthday gift" to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi.

The Election Commission has directed rival factions of the AITC not to use the party name and symbol during the bypolls, and asked them to submit their preferred names and symbols by Friday morning.

In its interim order issued on Thursday night, the Commission, after hearing leaders of the two factions led by Mamata Banerjee and Arup Roy, said the matter requires substantive determination by the poll body under provisions of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order 1968. In its interim order, the EC said, "On due consideration of the totality of information available on

record... the Commission is of the opinion that there are two rival groups in the All India Trinamool Congress, one led by Ms. Mamata Banerjee and the other led by Shri Arup Roy."

"Each group is now claiming to be the party, and therefore the matter requires a substantive determination by the Commission under Para 15 of the Election Symbols (Reservation & Allotment) Order 1968," it said.

Accordingly, the Commission said, to place both the rival groups on an even keel and to protect their rights and interests and going by the past precedent, the Commission gave its interim order to cover the purpose of the current by-elections and to continue till the final determination of the dispute in the matter. "Neither of the two groups led by Shri Arup Roy (Petitioner) and the other led by Ms. Mamata Banerjee (Respondent) shall be permitted to use the name of the party 'All India Trinamool Congress'.

"Neither of the two groups shall also be permitted to use the symbol 'Flowers and Grass', reserved for 'All India Trinamool Congress'," the Commission said. (Agencies)

Rohit Godara Gang Member Held With Rs 12 Crore Pakistani Heroin In Delhi

NEW DELHI, SEP 18: The Delhi Police Special Cell, in a joint operation with the Vadodara City Crime Branch, has arrested a 31-year-old alleged member of the Rohit Godara-Mahender Delana gang and seized two kg of heroin of Pakistani origin, valued at around Rs 12 crore, officials said on Friday.

The accused, Kuldeep Swami, was wanted in a Rs 10-crore extortion case registered by the Vadodara City Crime Branch, in which the first instalment of the extortion money was allegedly to be collected in Delhi, they said.

Acting on intelligence shared by the Gujarat Police, a joint team intercepted Swami in Kucha Ghasi Ram, Chandni Chowk, around 5.30 pm on September 12, police said. A currency note allegedly used as a hawala verification token and keys to

a car were recovered from him.

During interrogation, Swami allegedly disclosed that a consignment of narcotics had been concealed in the vehicle parked in Jai Vihar, Phase-1, Najafgarh. The team searched the car and recovered four packets containing around two kg of heroin hidden in a specially fabricated cavity near the spare-tyre area of the boot, officials said.

A case under Sections 21 and 25 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act was subsequently registered at the Special Cell police station on September 13, they said.

According to the investigation, the gang allegedly operated a network that combined extortion-money collection and drug trafficking. Communication between operatives was carried

out through social media platforms using pre-decided code words, live locations and photographs of currency notes to authenticate cash or drug handovers, police said.

Swami allegedly worked as a courier for the network and collected extortion amounts ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 50 lakh per transaction across Delhi-NCR and Rajasthan. He was allegedly paid Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 for each assignment, officials said.

Police said that on September 5, Swami travelled to Amritsar on the instructions of Delana to collect a drug consignment. The following day, he allegedly met two unidentified suppliers, received the heroin and concealed it in the secret cavity of his car before driving back to Delhi.

During interrogation, Swami allegedly told police

that he had turned to the network after suffering losses of more than Rs 50 lakh in his agricultural commodity trading business in Rajasthan in 2022. He had contacted Delana through Instagram, who allegedly promised to help him clear his financial liabilities, police said.

Delana is an alleged associate of gangster Rohit Godara and is wanted in multiple criminal cases across three states, according to police. Investigators are probing the alleged links between the gang's extortion operations and narcotics network.

Police have recovered two mobile phones and the vehicle, besides the heroin. Further investigation is underway to identify other operatives, trace the alleged hawala and narcotics routes and apprehend Delana and other associates. (Agencies)

Anti-Drug Campaign Must Reach Every Corner Of Punjab: Nitin Nabin

PATHANKOT, SEP 18: BJP president Nitin Nabin on Friday said that Punjab has to be freed of the scourge of drugs and the anti-drug campaign must be taken to every corner of the state.

In Pathankot, the BJP chief flagged off the first of four statewide anti-drug Yatras from the Ekta Sthal.

The second Yatra will begin from Fatehgarh Sahib on September 19, followed by the third from Fazilka on September 20, and the fourth from Talwandi Sabo in Bathinda on September 21.

Together, the 13-day 'Nasha Mukht Punjab Yatra' will traverse around 4,000 km across all the 117 Assembly constituencies in Punjab to create awareness against the menace of drugs, especially among the youth, BJP sources said.

Upon the culmination of the four Yatras, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will address a rally in Jalandhar on September 30.

Addressing a public gathering, Nabin said, "I have come from Patna with one message - we have to take this anti-drug campaign to every corner of the state. We have to make Punjab drug-free."

"Today, we are facing an enemy which silently enters our villages, our homes and gradually takes the entire family under its grip. This enemy is drugs and we have to end this scourge."

"I am not here just to flag off a yatra, but to launch a fight against drugs with a pledge that we will root out the menace," he added.

Nabin also targeted the Bhagwant Mann government, saying it only gives "tarikh pe tarikh" to end the drug problem, but nothing happens on the ground.

Senior BJP leaders, including its Punjab chief Kewal Singh Dhillon, Satish Poonia, Tarun Chugh, Sunil Jakhar, Manpreet Singh Badal, Saudan Singh, Preet Kaur, Raghav Chadha and Iqbal Singh Lalpura



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Mayawati Attacks Govt Over UPI Fees And Smart School Scheme, Says It Will Increase Financial Burden On Public

LUCKNOW, SEPT 18: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati has criticised the Central government over the new UPI fees, which will come into effect on October 15, and the Uttar Pradesh government's plan to convert 14,429 primary schools into smart schools.

She said that instead of imposing additional financial burdens on the general public already struggling with inflation and unemployment, the government should focus more on public welfare policies.

In a statement released on the social media platform 'X' on Friday, Mayawati said that after initially promoting UPI digital transactions,

now imposing fees on them is natural, causing uneasiness and anger among the people.

She said that the government should consider the impact before accepting a system that imposes an additional financial burden on the public.

It is worth noting that under the new provision, a 0.4 % merchant discount rate (MDR) will be applicable on select business UPI transactions exceeding Rs2,000 from October 15.

However, according to the Finance Ministry, this fee will not be charged to customers, and individual UPI transactions and approximately 96 percent of mer-

chant transactions will be exempt from the fee.

said that a large population of the country is affected by inflation, poverty, and unemployment.

Therefore, government policies should provide relief to the common people and alleviate their financial difficulties.

The BSP chief also questioned the Uttar Pradesh government's plan to convert 14,429 council primary schools into smart schools. She said that before providing digital facilities to children with this approximately Rs300 crore scheme, basic amenities should be ensured in schools.

She said that schools

should fully provide basic amenities such as shelter, benches and chairs, books, toilets, playgrounds, and cleanliness. Mayawati urged the government to consider this initiative sympathetically.

On Tuesday, the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approved a proposal to develop 14,429 primary schools into smart schools. A budget provision of Rs300 crore has been made for this purpose, with an amount of approximately Rs2.07 lakh earmarked for each school.

The plan calls for providing internet connectivity and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. (UNI)

'Fallacious': Congress Slams Mahtab's Remarks On 'Oppn MPs' Support To MDR Levy' In Parl Panel

NEW DELHI, SEP 18: The Congress on Friday termed Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance Chairperson Bhartruhari Mahtab's reported remarks on opposition MPs' support for levying a merchant discount rate (MDR) on UPI transactions "erroneous and fallacious", and said his being a "2024 Odisha cadre" of the BJP explains his eagerness to "mislead".

Congress MP Manish Tewari hit out at Mahtab, saying to suggest that "certain members" of the opposition supported the proposal by not dissenting is both unfounded and unfortunate and therefore, incorrect.

Mahtab, who heads the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance, has said the opposition MPs' presence and being party to the panel's report were matters of record.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP was quoted as saying in a media report that the record shows that three opposition MPs -- Trinamool Congress's (TMC) Saugata Roy and Congress's Manish Tewari and Pramod Tiwari -- were part of the deliberations, which made the recommendations to levy the MDR on UPI payments of above Rs 2,000.

Reacting to Mahtab's remarks, Tewari said, "My attention has been drawn to some reports attributed to the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Com-



mittee of Finance @BhartruhariM that 'certain members' of the Opposition supported the proposal to 'Merchant Discount Rate -- MDR'."

"With great respect this is both erroneous and fallacious and therefore facetious," Tewari said.

The core of the Committee's recommendation while examining and reporting on the Demands of the Department of Financial Services -- DFS for FY 2026-27 on 12th March 2026 is as follows: 'The Committee recommend that while the proposed 3-year multi-year scheme and cash back components are necessary to democratise digital payments in untapped Tier 3-6 cities, the Department of Financial Services must concurrently explore a self-reliant, tiered revenue model,' he said in a post on X. The Congress leader pointed out that the key word is "explore".

He also pointed to the "action taken" report filed by the government on the observations or recommendations contained in the 32nd Report of the Standing Com-

mittee on Finance on "Demands for Grants (2026-27)" of the Ministry of Finance (Department of Financial Services) laid on the floor of the Lok Sabha on August 12.

"Given the sustainability of the UPI ecosystem and the burden on the Government exchequer, the Department is currently exploring two options: (i) Examining the feasibility of restoring MDR for certain high threshold transactions/merchants; and (ii) a tiered incentive structure to phase-out the Government support in the next few years," Tewari quoted the government as saying.

He said the key words again are "currently exploring". The current proposal to levy a transaction fee or MDR on UPI and other digital payments never came before the committee thereafter, he said.

"To suggest 'certain members' of the opposition supported the proposal by not dissenting is both unfounded and unfortunate and therefore incorrect. Thank you for your attention to this matter," the MP from Chandi-

garh said.

Tagging Tewari's remarks, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The Chairperson, otherwise a seasoned and sober Parliamentarian, is 2024 batch Odisha cadre of the BJP. This explains his eagerness to mislead and misinform."

Mahtab switched over to the BJP from the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

The Congress on Thursday rejected claims that its MPs who were part of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance had supported the decision to levy a fee on high-value UPI payments and said the Modi government is making "pathetic" attempts to divert attention from the "gigantic backlash" generated after the "UPI tax" decision.

The opposition party's assertion came after the government questioned the rationale behind its leader Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the decision to levy a fee on UPI payments to merchants of above Rs 2,000, saying the parliamentary panel had backed the move and the Congress members on the panel had supported it.

A senior government functionary had said the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance had pressed for a tiered MDR or revenue framework for Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and noted that it should be notified and operationalised without delay.

Changes in routine blood tests in patients with unexplained weight loss could help identify cancer: Study

NEW DELHI, SEPT 18: Changes across routine blood tests among patients with unexplained weight loss could be associated with a cancer diagnosis and should be interpreted after accounting for age and sex, according to a study.

Findings published in the journal PLOS Medicine suggest that monitoring changes in routine blood test results in patients with unexplained weight loss could help identify patients in primary care who would benefit from additional cancer testing.

"Blood test abnormalities should be interpreted after age and sex adjustment to improve triage for cancer investigation in patients attending primary care with UWL (unexplained

weight loss)," authors wrote.

"We show how blood test results are made more accurate for cancer by adding patient age and sex. This relatively simple calculation could easily be performed at the laboratory," author Brian Nicholson, from the UK's University of Oxford, said.

Researchers said that while abnormal blood test results, such as low haemoglobin or increased platelet counts, can provide clues about a patient's risk of developing cancer, monitoring trends over repeat tests could provide further clues in some instances, by identifying cancer-related changes in blood test results that do not appear abnormal.

Assessing patterns in blood test ab-



normalities and trends alongside unexplained weight loss could enhance cancer risk assessment and support earlier diagnosis, they said.

team looked at more than 2,75,000 patients, nearly 14,000 of whom were subsequently diagnosed with cancer within six months -- this allowed the researchers to relate abnormalities on single tests and trends over repeat blood tests to cancer diagnosis.

Overall, 26 blood test trends were associated with overall cancer risk, with abnormalities also associated with specific cancer types.

After accounting for age and sex, blood test trends were found to be more discriminative for cancer diagnosis, compared to individual abnor-

mal test results.

For example, trends in white blood count and neutrophils were linked to lung cancer while trends in red blood cell count, haematocrit, and platelet-to-lymphocyte ratio were associated with prostate cancer.

Haematocrit is the ratio of the volume occupied by packed red blood cells to the volume of the whole blood.

The study found "twenty six trends for cancer overall, mean cell volume trend for bowel cancer and lymphoma, white blood count and neutrophil trend for lung cancer, and aspartate aminotransferase, red blood cell count, haematocrit, and platelet-to-lymphocyte ratio trend for prostate cancer." (PTI)