

Bhalla leads INDIA Block protest in Samba against ECI, seeks CEC's resignation

Cong, NC, PDP, Panthers Party leaders accuse EC of compromising electoral credibility; seek transparency in voter rolls and democratic institutions

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, OCT 06

Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) Working President Raman Bhalla accompanied by former Minister Yashpal Kundal, former MLA Indu Pawar, Samba District President Sanjeev Sharma, Mohinder Singh of the National Conference, Ramesh Slathia of the PDP and Utam Chand of the Panthers Party today led a strong INDIA Block protest in Samba against the Election Commission of India (ECI), demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. The protest, organised by Congress District President Samba Sanjeev Sharma, brought together leaders and workers of the Congress, National Conference, PDP and Panthers Party. The protesters carried placards and raised slogans against the BJP-led government and the functioning of the Election Commission before taking out a rally through the main markets of Samba.

Led by Bhalla's address, Mohinder Singh of the National Conference, Ramesh Slathia of the PDP and Utam Chand of the Panthers Party also addressed the protesters. They supported the demand for accountability of the Election Commission and raised concerns over electoral-roll revisions and the protection of voters' democratic rights. Babbal Gupta, Working President Samba; Vijay Bawa, KD Singh, Vinod Kumar, Tirath Bhagat, Rajni, Soudagar Mal, Chander, Raj Khajuria, Pardeep Singh, Master Sadiq, Ismail, Janak Raj and Pritam Singh were also present and addressed the gathering at different points of the protest.

Addressing the gathering, Raman Bhalla said the protest was part of the wider democratic campaign being undertaken by INDIA Block parties across the country over what the opposition describes as serious concerns regarding the conduct of the Election



Commission and the integrity of electoral rolls. He said the demand for accountability of the Chief Election Commissioner had gained momentum among opposition parties following allegations surrounding the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The INDIA Block has been demanding greater transparency in the revision process, restoration of names allegedly excluded from electoral rolls and an effective opportunity for voters to appeal against deletion of their names.

Bhalla said the Election Commission is a constitutional institution whose credibility depends upon public confidence and complete transparency in the electoral process. He alleged that opposition parties had repeatedly raised questions over the manner in which voter lists were being revised and sought answers from the Commission on the safeguards available to protect genuine voters. He maintained that every eligible citizen must be able to exercise the right to vote without fear that his or her name could be removed from the electoral roll without adequate notice, verification and an accessible mechanism of appeal. The INDIA Block has made the issue of electoral-roll revisions a central component of its present campaign against the ECI.

The JKPCC Working President further said that the opposition parties were not opposed to the legitimate updating of electoral rolls, but wanted the exercise to be conducted in a manner that is transparent, verifiable and consistent

with constitutional safeguards. He said the Election Commission must make public the basis on which names are deleted, provide affected voters an opportunity to establish their eligibility and ensure that no genuine voter is excluded from the democratic process. Referring to the wider INDIA Block position, Bhalla said the opposition had also sought restoration of electoral rolls to the position preceding disputed revisions and demanded institutional measures to strengthen confidence in the election machinery.

Bhalla said the INDIA Block would continue to raise the issue through democratic and constitutional means, asserting that electoral transparency cannot be treated as a partisan issue. He pointed out that opposition parties at the national level have already held joint demonstrations and parliamentary protests demanding the removal of Gyanesh Kumar, while also questioning the implementation of SIR and seeking safeguards for voters. On October 6, INDIA Block MPs led a protest march towards the Election Commission headquarters in New Delhi, with the march being stopped by security personnel.

Calling upon people to remain vigilant about their names and details in electoral rolls, Bhalla said political parties and citizens alike have a responsibility to protect the credibility of democratic institutions. He said the present agitation was aimed at drawing attention to what the INDIA Block considers serious electoral concerns and

pressing the authorities for answers. He demanded that the Election Commission address the concerns raised by political parties in a transparent manner and restore confidence among voters, adding that the opposition would continue to use peaceful democratic forums to highlight the issue.

Indu Pawar said the Election Commission must ensure complete transparency in the preparation and revision of electoral rolls and address the concerns being raised by opposition parties. She said every eligible citizen must be assured that his or her right to vote is protected and that no genuine voter is excluded from the democratic process.

Yash Pal Kundal said the INDIA Block would continue to raise issues concerning electoral transparency and accountability through peaceful and democratic means. He stressed that the credibility of elections depends upon public confidence in the institutions conducting them and urged the Election Commission to respond transparently to the concerns raised by political parties and voters.

Sanjeev Sharma, Congress District President Samba and organiser of the protest, said the demonstration reflected the collective concern of INDIA Block constituents over the functioning of the Election Commission.

He said the Congress would continue to raise issues concerning voters' rights, electoral-roll transparency and accountability of constitutional institutions through democratic forums.

Rally for HIV/AIDS Awareness at GCW Gandhi Nagar

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, OCT 06

The Red Ribbon Club of Government College for Women, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu, in collaboration with the NSS Unit-I, Health Centre Committee, and Department of Zoology, organised a HIV/AIDS Awareness Rally in the college on October 6, 2026, under the able guidance of Dr. Kulvinder Kour, Principal, GCW Gandhi Nagar on the occasion of International Youth Day under the Intensified IEC Campaign, 2026, launched by the J&K AIDS Control Society (JKACS), Department of Health and Medical Education.

The rally was organised to create awareness and sensitise the youth about HIV/AIDS, its modes of transmission, preventive



measures, and the importance of eliminating stigma and discrimination associated with the disease. Students carried awareness placards, delivered speeches and raised slogans highlighting the importance of AIDS/HIV prevention, early awareness, responsible behavior,

and compassion towards people living with HIV/AIDS.

The programme emphasised the crucial role of young people in spreading accurate information and building an informed, supportive and stigma-free society.

The Principal appreciated the efforts of the Red Ribbon Club, NSS Unit-I, Health Centre Committee and Department of Zoology for organising the awareness initiative and encouraged students to actively participate in health and social awareness programmes.

NC Govt Committed to Promoting Social Justice, inclusive development of ST, SC, OBC: Gupta

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, OCT 06

Senior National Conference leader and Provincial President Jammu, Rattan Lal Gupta, said that the NC Government led by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is committed to promoting social justice, inclusive development and welfare of the Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Classes (OBC) and other disadvantaged sections of society, particularly those living in far-flung and rural areas.

He said that development is being extended to villages and basties inhabited by ST, SC and OBC communities through improved facilities relating to Jal Shakti, electricity, roads, communication and other essential civic amenities.

Mr. Gupta was speaking while welcoming Manzoor Ahmad Wani, Retired Inspector, resident of Bathindi, along with his supporters into the National Conference at the Party Headquarters, Gandhi Nagar, Jammu. The joining programme was held under the chairmanship of Ch. Nadeem, District President, ST Cell, Jammu Urban, in the presence of Sheikh Bashir Ahmed, Provincial Secretary; Vijay Lochan, Chairman SC Cell and Shama Akhtar, former Corporator;



Welcoming Mr Wani and his supporters into the party fold, Mr. Gupta said that their decision to join the National Conference reflects their commitment to the party's principles of social justice, equality and inclusive development. He expressed confidence that the joining of Mr Wani and his supporters would further strengthen the National Conference at the grassroots level, particularly among the ST community and other weaker and disadvantaged sections.

Mr. Gupta reiterated that the National Conference would continue to work for equitable development and ensure that the benefits of government schemes and basic civic facilities reach people living in remote and underserved areas of Jammu Province.

Among others who were present on this occasion: Rajinder Parshant Sharma, Vijush Kumar, Monu Kumar, Sikender Dogra and others.

CEO, SMVDSB Reviews Yatra Preparedness Ahead of Shardiya Navratra

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS
JAMMU, OCT 06

To ensure a smooth and hassle-free yatra during the forthcoming Shardiya Navratra, Shri Sachin Kumar Vaishya, Chief Executive Officer, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) today chaired a meeting with local authorities and security agencies at the Conference Hall of the Central Office, Katra, to comprehensively review preparations for the upcoming Navratra, which begins on October 11 and continues till October 20, 2026.

The meeting was attended by the Addl. CEO, SMVDSB; SSP Reasi; Commandant, CRPF; Joint CEO, SMVDSB; SDM Katra; SDM Bhawan; SP Katra; Asstt. CEOs, SMVDSB; SDPO Katra; SDPO Railway; and representatives of the Army, Fire and Emergency Services, SDRF, IB and other allied agencies.

Expecting a heavy rush of devotees during the Navratra festival, both at the Holy Shrine and at the Katra base camp, the CEO called for close coordination among all stakeholders. He urged concerted action on multiple fronts to ensure a hassle-free yatra in the days ahead.

As per the directions of the Hon'ble Chairman, SMVDSB (Lt. Governor, J&K UT), the CEO underlined the importance of disaster management readiness, including fire fighting arrangements and mock drills.



He directed SDRF personnel to work closely with the Board's Disaster Management Task Force to keep vulnerable areas under watch and strengthen crowd management capabilities.

The CEO instructed that public announcements be made regularly, and that joint beat monitoring be carried out to decongest crowds and set up designated holding areas. He emphasised that essential rescue equipment must be kept ready in all sectors, and called for a stronger communication network through the wireless sets and improved infrastructure for

seamless coordination.

The CEO stressed the effective utilization of the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) to strengthen real-time monitoring, coordination and prompt response during the yatra. He reiterated that possession of a valid RFID card is mandatory for every pilgrim undertaking the pilgrimage. To ensure strict compliance, additional handheld RFID scanners will be deployed at key locations, supported by adequate manpower for verification and monitoring.

The meeting also reviewed measures for strengthening the verification of Pithoo and Ponywallas to prevent impersonation and ensure

that only duly registered and genuine service providers are permitted to operate along the track.

Sanitation, drinking water facilities and illumination of dark spots in Katra were also reviewed, with directions to make necessary improvements to ensure the safety, convenience and smooth movement of pilgrims.

The SSP Reasi and the Commandant, CRPF presented the detailed security grid already in place and described the measures to be implemented en route to the Holy Shrine, including the deployment of Quick Response Teams (QRTs) and a multi-tier security grid comprising the police, CRPF, and other paramilitary forces.

FDA conducts Enforcement, Awareness Drive among Street Food Vendors

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 06:

The Food & Drugs Administration (FDA), J&K conducted enforcement, inspection and awareness activities among street food vendors across all districts with the objective of strengthening compliance with food safety standards and ensuring the availability of safe, hygienic and wholesome food to consumers.

As part of the UT-wide drive, 395 street food vendors were inspected across all the districts. The inspections focused on personal hygiene of food handlers, cleanliness and sanitary conditions of vending premises, safe handling and storage of food, use of food-grade utensils, packaging materials and proper management of cooking oil.

During the enforcement drive, 38 cases were compounded under Section 69 of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, resulting in a cumulative fine of ₹50,500.

In addition, 68 cases were recommended for appropriate statutory action before the concerned Adjudicating Authorities (Additional Deputy Commissioners) of the con-



cerned districts, based on the nature and gravity of the violations detected, under the relevant provisions of the Act, including 39 cases under Section 56, which provides for a penalty of up to ₹1,00,000 for unhygienic or insanitary processing or manufacturing of food and 29 cases under Section 58, which provides for a penalty of up to ₹2,00,000 for contraventions for using non-food grade utensils/packaging materials. Approximately 130 kg of unsuitable food/snack articles were

also destroyed in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

Alongside enforcement, 92 awareness and sensitization sessions were conducted across the Union Territory.

During these sessions, vendors were sensitized about personal hygiene, cleanliness of vending premises, safe food handling and storage practices, use of food-grade utensils and packaging materials, avoidance of non-food-grade materials and newspapers for wrapping food, prohibition of

unauthorized synthetic food colours, prevention of cross-contamination and proper management and disposal of used cooking oil.

Special emphasis was laid on Used Cooking Oil (UCO) management and testing through Digital Oil Testing Meters.

During the drive, 75 samples of cooking oil were tested, and all 75 samples were found within the permissible range, with no instance of Total Polar Compounds (TPC) exceeding the prescribed limit of 25% re-