

RG Kar: Junior doctors' hunger strike enters 9th day, others on 'symbolic fast'

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
KOLKATA: The hunger strike by junior doctors of West Bengal to press for their demands following the RG Kar hospital incident entered the ninth day on Sunday, when people are holding a "symbolic fast" at various parts of the state to express solidarity with the agitators.

Three of the junior doctors who were observing 'fast unto death' in Kolkata and Siliguri city in the northern part of the state have so far been hospitalised after their condition deteriorated.

"Their conditions are worsening but the state administration remains unmoved," a leader of the agitating Junior Doctors Forum said.

Meanwhile, a group of former students of RG Kar hospital have reached the medical establishment for a symbolic fasting of 12 hours to express solidarity with the students on hunger strike.

However, they faced resistance from the CISF personnel who were on security duty at the hospital following a court order. The ex-students, most of whom are senior citizens, said they will go ahead with their proposed symbolic fast programme, come what



may.

Several people are also observing the "symbolic fast" during the day in Malda and Murshidabad district.

The agitating doctors have urged people to observe "Arandhan" (no cooking) on Sunday to show solidarity and support for their cause.

A large number of common people visited the venue of the hunger strike during the past few days when the Durga Puja festivities were on.

The junior doctors have been demanding justice for the RG Kar hospital victim, immediate removal of Health Secretary N S Nigam, workplace security and other measures.

Their other demands include the establishment of a centralised referral system

for all hospitals and medical colleges in the state, the implementation of a bed vacancy monitoring system, and formation of task forces to ensure essential provisions for CCTV, on-call rooms, and washrooms at their workplaces.

The hunger strike from October 5 followed nearly 50 days of 'cease work' in two phases. Their agitation began after an on-duty post-graduate trainee was allegedly raped and murdered inside state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9. While one person was arrested by the Kolkata Police the next day, the CBI is now investigating the case on a Calcutta High Court order. On Friday, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) urged West Bengal Chief

Minister Mamata Banerjee to intervene before the situation escalates.

Doctors of private hospitals called for a 48-hour "partial cease work" from October 14 in medical establishments across West Bengal, in solidarity with the agitating junior medics observing a fast-unto-death.

The doctors, under the banner of Healthcare Professionals of Private Hospitals, however, said emergency services in all medical facilities will remain operational.

The Joint Platform of Doctors, West Bengal, has also called for a 'protest carnival' on October 15 at Esplanade.

The date coincides with the West Bengal government-organised carnival on Red Road, situated nearby, where prominent Durga Puja idols and decorations are showcased through processions and cultural events.

The ongoing agitation also prompted the Federation of All India Medical Associations (FAIMA) to warn of a nationwide "complete shutdown of medical services" if any harm is caused to the protesting junior doctors.

Railway safety commissioner to conduct inquiry, NIA probe on

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
CHENNAI: The Commissioner of Railway Safety will conduct a statutory inquiry into the Tamil Nadu train accident and the probe by the National Investigation Agency is continuing, authorities said on Sunday.

The inquiry will be held on October 16, 17 in Chennai. "Any member of the public with information regarding the accident or related matters may provide evidence to the Commissioner," an official railway release said.

Commissioner of Railway Safety, Southern Circle, Bengaluru, A M Chowdhary will conduct the statutory inquiry into the mishap of Mysuru-Darbhanga Bagmati Express colliding with a stationary goods train at Kavaraipettai.

NIA sources said an investigation to find out if the mishap was caused by any 'sabotage activity' is ongoing and an official has completed preliminary site inspection.

Asked about 'meddling' with operational mechanism, as unfastened bolts-nuts were reportedly found at the accident site, sources



declined to answer.

A three-member technical team of senior railway officials from the Signal & Telecom, Engineering and Operations department raised serious apprehensions of sabotage after inspecting the accident site at Kavaraipettai Railway Station in Tamil Nadu, railway sources said.

The government railway police has also registered a case into the mishap, and authorities are also investigating a case of reported tampering last month with operational systems at Ponneri, near the accident site of Kavaraipettai.

Southern railway also said

that EMU train services in Chennai Central-Gummidipoondi section are now being operated upto Gummidipoondi railway station. Two coaches of empty local train derail in Mumbai; services restored after 5 hours

Mumbai: Two coaches of an empty local train derailed while entering a car shed from Mumbai Central, affecting operations on the Western Railway on Sunday afternoon, officials said.

There were no reports of any injuries as the train was empty when it derailed around 12.10 pm, said Vineet Abhishek, chief pub-

lic relations officer of Western Railway.

The derailment severely affected the suburban services as the slow track towards Dadar was blocked, he said.

"The slow track towards Dadar between Churchgate and Mumbai Central is blocked. However, trains are being diverted to the fast line between these two stations to ensure continued operations," the official said.

At least 60 services were cancelled and many others were delayed due to the derailment.

The coaches were re-railed nearly three-and-a-half hours which were blocking both down slow line and the track leading to the Mahalaxmi carshed from the southern end, said a Western Railway spokesperson.

The services on the down slow line were restored around 5.35 pm, about two hours after re-railing the coaches, he said.

According to sources, derailment of a local train at the spot was not an isolated incident, recalling three such incidents from the last two decades.

Harmanpreet's unbeaten fifty in vain as Australia dent India's T20 WC semifinal hopes with 9-run win

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
SHARJAH: Captain Harmanpreet Kaur struck an unbeaten 54 but India's nine-run loss to six-time champions Australia took her side's fate for a semifinal spot out of their hands in the women's T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

With Australia marching into the semifinals undefeated, the defeat meant India will now have to wait for the outcome of third-placed New Zealand's match against Pakistan on Monday.

A win for New Zealand will see them leapfrogging India - who currently have a better Net Run Rate but same points (four) - for the final four.

Chasing 152, India were bolstered by Harmanpreet's fifty (54 not out off 47 balls, 6x4s)

and her 63-run stand for the fourth wicket with Deepti Sharma (29), but they crumbled under pressure to be restricted to 142 for nine in 20 overs.

With 28 needed off the last two overs, India took 14 off the penultimate over. Needing 14 runs from the last over, they lost as many as four wickets to concede the game to Australia, as Harmanpreet was stranded on the other end.

India paid the price for sloppy fielding and also leaving it too late in run chase. Only two fours were hit between 7.4 and the end of 14th over as Harmanpreet hit her first boundary on her 15th ball.

India's lack of initiative resulted in the asking rate zooming past 10 per over and 53 from the last five,

but a four each from both Deepti and Harmanpreet in the 16th over did, even though momentarily, raised hopes.

Deepti found Wareham at the deep midwicket, perishing for a 25-ball 29 with three fours.

If Deepti's dismissal broke India's momentum, Richa Ghosh's (1) run out three balls later off a superb direct hit from Phoebe Litchfield dealt a body blow to India's hopes.

Harmanpreet also had luck favouring her when Darcie Brown spilled a catch while diving forward at deep backward square leg, off Wareham in the 13th over, when she was on 15.

At the start of run chase, Shafali showed the right intent but perished soon.

Having hit a four and a six off Megan Schutt's second over, she found Annabel Sutherland at long-on off Ashleigh Gardner in the fourth over for a 13-ball 20.

Jemimah Rodrigues hit consecutive fours off Sutherland to put pressure back on Australia, but Smriti Mandhana's struggle to find any momentum with the bat met a disappointing end.

With leg-spinner Sophie Molineux angling the ball into the left-hander, Mandhana played a horrendous across the line shot, only to be hit in front of the wickets.

It was indeed a surprise that Australia were forced to go upstairs after being rejected by the on-field umpire, which they successfully got overturned.

India's misfortune per-

sisted when Jemimah, looking in red-hot form, hit one straight to Gardner at deep midwicket who made no error in collecting a diving catch.

Jemimah made a 12-ball 16 with three fours.

Renuka Singh Thakur (2/24) and Deepti Sharma (2/28) played pivotal roles in the bowling department but Australia posted 151 for 8 after opting to bat.

While Renuka struck twice early on, Deepti grabbed the crucial wickets of Grace Harris (40) and Ellyse Perry (32) in later stages.

However, contributions from makeshift opener Harris, stand-in skipper Tahlia McGrath (32), veteran Perry and Phoebe Litchfield's late nine-ball 15 not out helped Australia set a tough target for India.

Rahul raises questions on Agnipath scheme, asks why life of one soldier is not same as another

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: After the death of two Agniveers in Nashik during training, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Sunday demanded answers from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on why the life of one soldier is more valuable than the other.

He asked why the families of the two soldiers, who died as 'Agniveers' would not get the same pension and benefits as other martyred soldiers and said that he would keep fighting against this "injustice".

"The death of two Agniveers - Gohil Vishwaraj Singh and Saifath Sheet - during training in Nashik is very tragic. My deepest condolences to their families.

"This incident once again raises serious questions on the Agniveer scheme, which the BJP government has

failed to answer. Will the families of Gohil and Saifath receive timely compensation that is equivalent to the com-



pensation for any other martyred soldier?" Gandhi asked in a post in Hindi on X.

"Why will the families of Agniveers not get the benefits of pension and other government facilities? When the responsibilities and sacrifices of both the soldiers are the same, then why this discrimination after their martyr-

dom?" he asked.

The Congress leader said the Agneepath scheme is an "injustice" to the army and an "insult" to the martyrdom of our brave soldiers.

"The prime minister and the defence minister should answer why the life of one soldier is more valuable than that of another soldier," Gandhi said.

"Let's stand together against this injustice. Join our 'Jai Jawan' movement today to remove the BJP government's 'Agniveer' scheme and secure the future of the country's youth and army," he said.

Agniveers Gohil and Saifath died during a field firing exercise in Maharashtra's Nashik district.

Several people paid their last respects to Agniveer Vishvarajsinh Gohil, whose mortal remains were received at his native Aneshvad village in Gujarat's Rajkot district.

President Murmu arrives in Algeria; accorded warm ceremonial welcome

■ AGENCY
ALGIERS: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday arrived here in Algeria on the first leg of her three-nation visit where she was accorded a warm ceremonial welcome.

"President Droupadi Murmu arrived in Algiers, Algeria on the first leg of her three-nation visit. This is the first visit by an Indian President to Algeria," the official handle of the President of India said in a post on X.

"At the airport, the President was received by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria as a special gesture. Other



members of the cabinet were also present. The President was accorded a warm ceremonial wel-

come," the post said.

Randhir Jaiswal, the Official Spokesperson of the Ministry of External

Affairs, said in another post: "President Droupadi Murmu @rashtrapatibhvn arrived in Algiers to a ceremonial welcome on the first leg of her 3 nation visit. This is the first visit by an Indian President to Algeria. In a special gesture, President was warmly received by President @TebbouneAmadjid of Algeria."

The President earlier on Sunday departed for her State visits to Algeria, Mauritania and Malawi.

This will be the first-ever visit by an Indian Head of State to these nations to deepen India-Africa ties, the MEA spokesperson said on X.

Foreign delegations arrive in Pak for SCO summit; security beefed up in Islamabad

■ AGENCY
ISLAMABAD: Foreign delegations started arriving in Pakistan Sunday for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, amid heightened security and the deployment of the army in the national capital to maintain law and order during the event.

A 76-member Russian delegation and seven representatives of the SCO reached Pakistan. Separately, a four-member official delegation of India also arrived in Pakistan, Geo News reported quoting airport sources.

A 15-member delegation from China, a 4-member delegation from Kyrgyzstan and a two-member delegation from Iran also reached Islamabad.

The 23rd meeting of the heads of government of the member states of the SCO is set to take place in Islamabad on 15 and 16 October for which strict security arrangements have been made by the authorities.

In a statement, Islamabad Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Nasir Ali Rizvi said that a "comprehensive" security plan had been chalked out ahead of the all-important summit in the federal capital.

"Security personnel will be deployed at funnel areas, hotels and places where foreign delegations are staying," he said, adding that they ensured the security of foreign leaders, delegations and guests.



Furthermore, Rizvi said search and information-based operations were underway, with personnel of the Pakistan Army, intelligence agencies, Frontier Corps (FC) and Rangers performing their duties.

The police chief pointed out that more than 9,000 personnel of the police force have been deployed for security. "An integrated traffic plan has also been issued for the convenience of citizens."

The government already deployed army troops in the capital to tackle any untoward situation, while announcing a ban on all kinds of protests and rallies in Islamabad, neighbouring Rawalpindi and some other cities.

According to an official statement, Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will be among the senior regional government officials attending the event.

However, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party has threatened to hold a protest on October 15 against the restriction

imposed on its jailed leader Imran Khan and demanded that the government allow him to meet his family, legal team and doctor.

The News reported that the party is divided over the issue of protest and saner elements in PTI are trying to get the protest call withdrawn.

Asad Qaiser, Hamid Khan and Raoof Hasan are among the minority that believe it is not in the interest of Pakistan to hold such a protest. Ali Muhammad Khan, though not a part of the PTI's political committee, is also upset with the protest call for October 15.

PTI sources have said that Shehbaz Gill, Hammad Azhar, Khalid Khurshid and Hafiz Farhat are leading the hawkish elements, who prevailed in pursuing the political committee to give a call for protest at the D-Chowk Islamabad for October 15.

It sounds unbelievable but a source said a person like Salman Akram Raja also supported the hawkish elements and endorsed the idea of protest. Raja, who is a lawyer, could not be reached for comments. However, Chief Minister

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin CM Gandapur, who in public appears aggressive, voted against the PTI protest on the occasion of the SCO summit.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that Pakistan was fully prepared to host the SCO summit.

"We are ready to extend a warm welcome to the summit participants, including the Indian foreign minister," he told the media during a walk-through event in Islamabad to review the event's arrangements.

He said that Pakistan was hosting a major international event after several years and would handle its responsibilities with excellence.

Dar said the Chinese Premier would also hold bilateral talks with his Pakistani counterpart. He said there's no request for a bilateral meeting from India.

Without naming the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Dar criticised the party for trying to sabotage the summit with their call for protests. "Protests during nationally significant events do not send a positive message," Dar said.

The SCO, established in 2001, aims to promote political, economic, and security cooperation in the region.

The SCO comprises Pakistan, China, India, Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus - with 16 more countries affiliated as observers or "dialogue partners".

Opposition, BJP train guns over Baba Siddique murder; online post claims Bishnoi gang's role

■ STATE TIMES NEWS
MUMBAI/DELHI: The murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique in Mumbai's upscale Bandra triggered a fiery exchange between the opposition and BJP on Sunday even as a viral social media post claimed Lawrence Bishnoi gang's role behind the shocking crime.

A court here remanded one of the two accused arrested in the case in police custody till October 21 and directed the cops to conduct a bone ossification test to determine the age of the second accused after he claimed to be a minor.

Police told the court they wanted to probe if the case was the fallout of political rivalry since Maharashtra assembly polls are around the corner. The

Congress led the opposition attack demanding a thorough investigation into the ex-MLA's killing and said Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Home Minister Devendra Fadnis should take moral responsibility for "law and order failure" in the state and resign. The BJP slammed the opposition for indulging in "petty politics" over the murder.

Siddique's party chief and Deputy CM Ajit Pawar said the murder should not be politicised. The 66-year-old former Maharashtra minister died soon after he was waylaid and shot at by three men at Kher Nagar in Bandra outside his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office on Saturday night. The Congress alleged that the BJP-led Mahayuti government in

Maharashtra has failed to protect its own leaders and the people of Mumbai who feel scared, claiming it was trying to postpone the election dates through these incidents. "It is a Government that is on its last legs. With this, the countdown for its exit has begun," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said on X. His party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi said the Maharashtra government must take responsibility and order a thorough and transparent investigation. "The tragic demise of Baba Siddique ji is shocking and saddening. My thoughts are with his family in this difficult time. This horrifying incident exposes the complete collapse of law and order in Maharashtra. The gov-

ernment must take responsibility, and justice must prevail," Gandhi said on X.

"Justice must be ensured, and the present Maharashtra Govt must order a thorough and transparent investigation. The culprits must be brought to book at the earliest. Accountability is paramount," Kharge posted on the social media platform.

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Congress' alliance partner in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra, said each move of the Shinde government is looked upon with suspicion - "like the two arrests made in the murder of Siddique and even the police encounter of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde".