

# Former JJP leaders Anoop Dhanak, Ram Kumar Gautam, Jogi Ram Sihag join BJP

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

CHANDIGARH: Former Jannayak Janta Party leaders Anoop Dhanak, Ram Kumar Gautam and Jogi Ram Sihag, who quit the party recently, joined the BJP on Sunday giving the ruling party in Haryana a boost ahead of the October 5 Assembly poll.

The three leaders along with Ambala Mayor Shakti Rani Sharma were welcomed into the BJP fold by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, the party's state unit chief Mohan Lal Badoli and its Haryana affairs co-in-charge Biplab Kumar Deb at a rally in Jind.

Sharma is the wife of Haryana Janchetna Party chief and former Union Minister Venod Sharma. Her son and Independent Rajya Sabha member Kartikeya Sharma was also present at the Jind event.

Dhanak, Gautam and Sihag were Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) MLAs when they abandoned the party.

Gautam, who was with the BJP earlier, represented the Narnaud segment in Haryana Assembly after winning the seat on a Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) ticket in 2019. He, however, did not get a ministerial berth in the BJP-JJP coalition government and was also a vocal critic of former deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala on various issues.



Addressing the gathering rally, Gautam said the BJP will return to power in Haryana for a third consecutive term, adding, "Nayab Saini will again become chief minister, 200 per cent".

Anoop Dhanak, a former minister, was an MLA from Uklana while Jogi Ram Sihag represented the Barwala segment in the Assembly.

Recently, Jogi Ram Sihag, Ram Niwas Surjakhera, Ram Kumar Gautam and Anoop Dhanak extended support to BJP leader Kiran Choudhry's candidature for the Rajya Sabha bypoll in Haryana. Kiran was elected unopposed to the Upper House of Parliament.

Notably, Surjakhera was also expected to join the BJP at the Jind rally but was not seen at the event. A few days ago, he was booked on the charge of rape by the Jind police based on a woman's accusations against him. Surjakhera has dismissed the allegation as "conspiracies"

against him ahead of the Assembly polls.

Addressing the Jind rally, Chief Minister Saini said the joining of these leaders has come as a boost for the BJP.

Taking a dig at the Congress over its 'Haryana Maange Hisab' campaign, he accused the opposition party of spreading lies. Referring to Congress leaders' remarks a week ago that the saffron party has accepted defeat by seeking deferment of the polls, Saini said, "(Bhupinder Singh) Hooda sahab this is BJP. I want to tell Congress leaders that the BJP is not scared, we are always ready to face polls at any time."

Notably, the ruling BJP and the opposition INLD in Haryana had urged the Election Commission to revise the polling date, keeping in mind the long weekend which might result in poor voter turnout as people tend to go out on extended weekends.

State BJP chief Mohan Lal

Badoli, in a recent letter to the poll panel, had also said that on 'Asoj Anavasya' on October 2, several members of the Bishnoi community of Haryana will leave for Rajasthan to participate in an annual fair held on the occasion. This too can affect the voting percentage, he had said. The Election Commission on Saturday deferred the Haryana assembly poll date from October 1 to October 5, saying the decision was taken keeping in mind the Bishnoi community's festival.

Saini thanked the Election Commission for the decision.

Attacking the Congress, he said, "They have been seeking an account (of work done) from us. I posed some questions to the Congress, but they have not given any reply yet." "We undertook (projects for) equitable development. Jobs have been given on merit."

Saini said that after he took oath as chief minister in March and just three days later the Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha polls came into effect. The BJP replaced Manohar Lal Khattar with its then state unit president Nayab Singh Saini as chief minister in March, ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. Khattar got elected to the Lok Sabha from Karnal and was made a Union minister while Saini won the Karnal Assembly bypoll that was held along with the general elections.

Saini said that after the Lok Sabha poll process ended, from that date till the announcement of the Haryana polls on August 16, he barely got around two months. Even in that short period, the state government took several decisions for the welfare of various sections, including farmers, youth, employees and the poor, he said.

Saini said Congress neither has no policy, intent, or leadership.

"Those who are seeking an account (an account of work done) from us, I want to tell them that we have taken several decisions for the welfare of various sections.. they should also tell what they did when they were in power," he said at the Jind rally.

"But the Congress does not have answers to the questions we asked. The people of Haryana will give them a befitting reply on October 5 by bringing the BJP back to power," Saini said.

The Congress has been targeting the ruling party over several issues concerning farmers as well as on issues of unemployment, law and order and others.

The BJP is aiming for a hat-trick in the Haryana Assembly polls to be held on October 5 but faces a tough challenge from a resurgent Congress which is looking to cash in on the anti-incumbency factor.

# Mob rule being created as politicians assuring death penalty for culprits: SC judge Abhay Oka

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PUNE: Justice Abhay Oka of the Supreme Court on Sunday said "mob rule" is being created as politicians capitalise on certain incidents and assure capital punishment for culprits, stressing that only the judiciary can pass legal verdicts.

Addressing a conference organised by the Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa in Pune, Justice Oka underscored the importance of maintaining the judiciary's independence and delivering swift, just decisions.

He also said the judiciary is "bombarded with criticism" for no reason in certain cases over granting bail.

Justice Oka underlined the critical role of sensitivity among lawyers and the judiciary in ensuring adherence to the Constitution.

"If the judiciary is to be respected, its freedom must remain intact. The Constitution will be followed only if the lawyers and judiciary remain sensitive. Lawyers play a major role in maintaining the judiciary, and they must fulfil this responsibility; otherwise, democracy will not survive," Justice Oka said.

He further commented on the current state of public discourse, saying a "mob rule" is being created wherein politicians capitalise on certain incidents and assure people of



the death penalty for culprits even though only the judiciary has the power to pass legal verdicts.

"We have created a mob rule. When an incident happens, political people capitalise on it. Political leaders visit that particular place and assure people that the death penalty will be given to the accused, but the decision power rests with the judiciary," he said.

Though Justice Oka didn't name any particular incident, his remarks came against the backdrop of the Kolkata rape and murder incident and the alleged sexual abuse of two girls at a school in Badlapur in Maharashtra, which triggered demands for the strictest punishment for culprits.

Justice Oka further said the judiciary is "bombarded with criticism" for no reason when bail is granted in certain cases. "Judges should give the decision as per the law which should be transparent".

Notably, Union Minister Ramdas Athawale on Saturday demanded capital punishment for those involved in the alleged rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata, days after West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee promised an amendment to existing laws to ensure capital punishment to convicted rapists.

Meanwhile, Supreme Court judge Justice Prasanna Bhalachandra Varale, also present at the Bar Council event, highlighted the need for preserving constitutional values through education and awareness.

"Preserving our values and hard work is the key to success. It is not only important to know or read our Constitution but we should be aware of it. Considering the attacks on women, not only 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' is needed, but 'Beta Padhao' is also important now," Justice Varale said, suggesting the need for sensitising boys towards girls and women.

# MHA constitutes central team to assess damage caused by floods in Gujarat

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Home Affairs has constituted an inter-ministerial team to assess the damage caused by rainfall and floods in Gujarat.

The team will shortly visit the flood-affected districts of Gujarat, which was hit by heavy to extremely heavy rainfall between August 25 and 30 caused by a deep depression formed over Rajasthan and Gujarat, according to an official statement.

At least 25 people have died in rain-related incidents across the state on August 26 and 27.

The statement said the MHA has constituted an inter-ministerial central team (IMCT) led by the executive director, the National Institute of

Disaster Management (NIDM), to assess the damage caused by rainfall and floods in Gujarat, the statement said.

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were also affected by heavy to very heavy rainfall. Multiple spells of heavy rains, cloudbursts and landslides have caused extensive damage in Himachal Pradesh this year.

The MHA is in touch with senior officers of these states, and will depute IMCT there as well, if the severe damages are reported by them, the statement said.

During this monsoon, some other states have been affected by heavy rainfall, floods, cloudbursts and landslides.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the central govern-

ment is fully committed to providing all possible help to affected states, the statement said.

As per the decision taken by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in August 2019, the MHA, this year, constituted IMCTs which have visited flood and landslides-affected states of Assam, Kerala, Mizoram, and Tripura in advance for on-spot assessment of the damage without waiting for their memorandum.

The IMCT for Nagaland has also been constituted, which will visit the affected areas of the state shortly.

In the past, the IMCT used to visit the disaster-affected states only after the receipt of a memorandum from the state government, the statement said.

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

KOCHI: B Unnikrishnan, general secretary of the Film Employees Federation of Kerala (FEFKA), on Sunday said there were "strong alliances" in the cinema industry, but he was not aware of any "power group" as mentioned in the Justice K Hema Committee report.

Unnikrishnan, speaking to a TV channel, said that it was an "undeniable fact" that there were "strong alliances" of some production houses with certain directors, writers and actors to make big films.

"They often work together on several projects back-to-back and naturally, everyone would try to align themselves with them to get opportunities. However, such alliances are based on commercial interests," he said.

He also said that such

alliances were not confined to Malayalam cinema alone and were present in film industries everywhere.

At the same time, he said that there cannot be a secret lobby of different cinema-related organisations which meet periodically to decide who should be isolated from films. "The industry will not be able to work like that," he said in response to queries about whether there was a "power group" in the film sector.

Another undeniable fact that he admitted was the presence of the "casting couch".

"It is a reality we have all heard about. We cannot escape from it by saying it is present in other film industries too. Our endeavour should be to ensure that such things are not there in the Malayalam film industry," he said.

Unnikrishnan also said that the names of the perpetrators in the Hema Committee report should be disclosed.

Regarding south Indian actress Radhika Sarathkumar's startling claim that objectionable videos of female actors were recorded with hidden cameras inside caravans on the shooting sets, he said that a thorough investigation would be carried out into the matter.

Sarathkumar had said on Saturday that at the shooting set of a Malayalam film, she had seen men watching clips of actresses captured using hidden cameras in their caravans.

On whether the response of the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) to the committee report was delayed, Unnikrishnan said that it

was not late, but what they said was criticised by the general public.

"They (AMMA) should be ready to accept that criticism and learn from it," he said.

He also said that the present crisis in AMMA was due to the fact that it was not a trade union like organisation and has a loose structure. They lack the "experience and flexibility" to deal with the issues that were mentioned in the Hema Committee report, he further said.

"If they had a trade union like structure or system, all this would not have happened," he added. The Justice K Hema Committee was constituted by the Kerala government after the 2017 actress assault case, and its report revealed instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the

Malayalam cinema industry.

Regarding director Vinayan's complaint to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to remove him (Unnikrishnan) from the cinema policy making committee, the FEFKA general secretary said there was no need to keep him away from the panel.

"I am in the panel as the general secretary of FEFKA representing people of 21 crafts or trade unions and not as an individual. What I say there will be the opinion of those 21 trade unions. So, I see no requirement to remove me from the committee," he said. Vinayan has sought Unnikrishnan's removal from the panel on the grounds that he had been penalised by the Competition Commission of India for unfair trade practices.

The CCI order had come on Vinayan's complaint.

# Violence against 'health warrior' on Aug 9 'barbarity expressed in extremity': Dhankhar

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

DEHRADUN: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday termed the violence committed against a "health warrior" at Kolkata's RG Kar Hospital on August 9 as "barbarity expressed in extremity".

Addressing students and faculty members at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh, the vice president said such barbaric incidents put the entire civilisation to shame and shreds what Bharat stands for.

Lamenting the use of the term 'symptomatic malaise' by some stray voices, Dhankhar said such statements "aggravate our excruciating pain and add salt to our injured conscience".

"When humanity has been shamed, there are some stray voices, voices that cause concern. They only aggravate our excruciating pain. To put



it mildly, they are adding salt to our injured conscience and what do they say 'it is a symptomatic malaise, a frequent incident'.

"When it comes from someone who is a Member of Parliament, a senior advocate, then the culpability is of an extreme degree. There can be no alibi for such kind of demonising thoughts. I call upon such misguided souls to revisit their thoughts and publicly tender apology. This is not an occasion where you should be looking through political prism. This political

prism is a dangerous one, it kills your objectivity," he added.

Recognising his accountability to the medical fraternity and the country's women by virtue of his constitutional post, Dhankhar said, "I am before you. As a matter of fact holding a constitutional position, I have to show my accountability, I have to justify the position I hold as vice president and chairman Rajya Sabha." "... Our heart is injured, our conscience is crying and our soul is seeking accountability," he added.

Referring to the work of medical professionals as 'Nishkam Seva' as pronounced by Lord Krishna without any expectation just doing their duty, the VP condemned acts of violence against the doctors in any form.

Expressing his concern for the safety of doctors at workplace, he emphasised upon the need to bring out a mechanism where "health warriors" are protected.

"A doctor can help only to a limit. A doctor cannot convert himself to god. He is next to god, so when somebody dies, out of emotive feelings and uncontrolled feelings, doctors are not given the treatment they deserve... a security of the doctors, nurses, compounders, health warriors must be impenetrably protected," he added.

Criticising the "selective silence" of NGOs, Dhankhar said, "Certain NGOs on road

for... drop of a hat are in silence mode. We have to question them. Their silence is much worse than the culpable act of perpetrators of this heinous crime on August 9, 2024. Those who seek to play politics and earn brownie points, are not responding to the call of their conscience".

Underlining the responsibility of society to prevent such incidents and develop a mechanism where women feel safe, the vice president said, "Whoever has done it will be held accountable, but the society is also to be held accountable. The society cannot escape its responsibility. I don't want to make it a matter of the government or a matter of political parties. It is a matter of the society..."

"It has shaken the very foundation of our existence. It has questioned what India stands for and stood for thousands of years".

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

PATNA: Former Bihar minister Shyam Rajak on Sunday joined Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U), less than two weeks after quitting the RJD headed by the CM's arch-rival Lalu Prasad.

Rajak, who had been expelled from the state cabinet as well as the JD(U) in 2020, got re-inducted into the party here by national working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, in presence of a number of top leaders.

Jha said the entry of Rajak, "a leader with grassroots-level support" will strengthen the party, "especially among the state's 'Mahadalits' who were recognised as a separate category by Nitish Kumar".

"Sub-categorisation of Dalits may have become a buzzword in the backdrop of the recent Supreme Court judgement, but our leader was the veritable pioneer. The presence of Rajak in our



party will send across this message more forcefully," he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Rajak said he had joined the RJD "in a fit of emotion" but ended up feeling "stifled and insulted" in the party, where "corruption and dynasty rule seem to be the guiding principles".

"The RJD is alleging that I have joined the JD(U) just because the party is in power. I need to remember that I had joined them giving up a ministerial berth.

But, they let me down," said Rajak, who had also served in

the cabinet headed by Lalu Prasad's wife Rabri Devi.

The party-hopper was understood to have been sore over the RJD not considering him for a berth in the Rajya Sabha or the state legislative council, even though he was made to give up his Phulwari assembly seat in the 2020 polls because of the party's alliance with the CPI(M)L.

After quitting the RJD, Rajak had dropped hints that he would like to try his luck again in the assembly polls due next year from the seat, which he has represented six times.

# 13,227 people from 294 villages evacuated due to rains in Andhra, says minister

■ STATE TIMES NEWS

AMARAVATI: Andhra Pradesh Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha on Sunday said 13,227 people were evacuated from 294 villages in five districts due to torrential downpours in the past two days.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reviewed the weather situation with senior officials and asked them to incorporate technologies such as drones to assess the deluge and accordingly plan the relief works.

Meanwhile, the depression over north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha coasts, which has been causing heavy rainfall over the past two days, moved northwestwards to cross the southern state's coast near Kalingapatnam in the wee hours of Sunday, said a India Meteorological Department official.

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha noted that 100 rehabilitation centres were set up in NTR, Krishna, Bapatla, Guntur and Palnadu districts to accommo-

date the evacuees, along with the arrangement of 61 medical camps.

"Until now nine people died due to the heavy rains. Police, NDRF and SDRF teams rescued 600 people from the marooned places. As many as 17 NDRF and SDRF teams undertook rescue operations at 22 submerged places in seven districts," she said in an official release.

Citing preliminary estimates, Anitha said 62,644 hectares of paddy crops and 7,218 hectares of orchards were submerged.

Further, she highlighted that the command and control rooms and toll free numbers were set up in all the districts, along with the appointment of nodal officers to monitor the situation.

The chief minister, who reviewed the weather situation with senior officials, was apprised that 6,000 people living downstream of Prakasam Barrage in Bapatla district were evacuated.

In a teleconference with officials, Naidu observed that rain intensity has subsided on Sunday, compared to August 31, quoting information from the districts, but observed that some colonies and houses are still waterlogged. Directing officials to divert water from inundated roadways, he tasked them to solve the flooding issues plaguing colonies and houses. Stating that some places received up to 27 cm rainfall, the CM instructed officials to focus on these areas, and noted that the record rainfall not seen in the past 50 years had occurred.

"Even national highways turned into ponds due to the unprecedented deluge. Write a letter to the National Highways Authority (NHAI) and work in coordination with it," he directed officials, according to a release. Advising officials to incorporate technologies such as drones to assess the deluge and accordingly plan the relief work, Naidu instructed them to be careful of food and water contamination

that could occur due to the floods. He also instructed officials to take clean up works in the villages, divert floodwaters from residential areas as soon as possible and also undertake sanitisation to avoid disease outbreaks.

Civil Supplies Minister N Manohar informed the CM that rice and some basic necessities were provided to the needy in some places.

Following the subsidence of floods, Naidu called for a survey of crop loss, asset destruction and also distribution of aid to farmers. The CM estimated that up to 10 lakh cuses of water could be discharged from Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada by Sunday evening, directing officials to alert downstream villagers and evacuate them.

DGP Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao informed the CM that rail movement has been stopped at Rayanapadu railway station in NTR district due to flooding.

Following the stoppage of Tamil Nadu express at

the railway station, the home minister noted that alternate travel arrangements through APSRTC buses are being made for the passengers to reach their destinations. Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner H M Dhyanaachandra told PTI: "Budameru (canal) is overflowing in multiple areas and there was a breach also. Up to 12 wards were submerged. Upstream gates were closed to arrest the inflows. Around 3,000 people were evacuated."

Assuring that the Budameru situation would come under control, the municipal commissioner noted that two NDRF and two SDRF teams would be deployed for relief operations. Earlier, a Meteorological Department official observed that the depression over north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha coasts, which has been causing heavy rainfall over the past two days, moved northwestwards to cross the southern state's coast near Kalingapatnam in the wee hours of Sunday.