

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Delhi HC asks police to reply to MP Mahua Moitra's plea to quash FIR

NEW DELHI, JULY 26: The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the city police to respond to TMC Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra's plea seeking quashing of an FIR against her over a "derogatory" social media remark on NCW chief Rekha Sharma.

Justice Neena Bansal Krishna issued a notice to the Delhi Police on the petition and asked it to file a status report within four weeks.

The high court listed the matter for arguments on the legality and validity of the FIR, as challenged in the petition, on November 6.

The police registered an FIR against Moitra this month Under Section 79 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) that deals with a word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty



of a woman.

This was the first FIR registered under the BNS by the Delhi Police's Special Cell since it came into force on July 1. The Trinamool Con-

gress (TMC) leader had commented on a video posted on X that showed National Commission for Women (NCW) chief Rekha Sharma arriving at the site of

a stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras on July 4.

Moitra later deleted the post, which referred to a man holding an umbrella and walking behind Sharma.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising, appearing for Moitra, submitted that they were not provided with a copy of FIR despite asking.

The counsel for the police then handed over the FIR copy to the petitioner's counsel in the court.

The FIR stated that the NCW took suo motu cognizance of Moitra's alleged "derogatory remarks" and the FIR was lodged based on a complaint by the NCW.

The FIR stated, "The crude remarks made by Moitra are extremely outrageous and a sheer violation of a woman's right to live with dignity."

Give Bharat Ratna to Kanshi Ram or stop misleading Dalits: Mayawati to BJP

LUCKNOW, JULY 26: Mayawati on Friday hit out at the BJP over a party MP seeking the Bharat Ratna for Kanshi Ram, saying the saffron party, which is in power at the Centre, should either award the highest civilian honour to the BSP founder or stop "misleading" Dalits.

BJP MP from Shahjahanpur, Arun Kumar Sagar, on Thursday demanded in the Lok Sabha that Kanshi Ram be conferred with the Bharat Ratna.

Hailing Kanshi Ram as a 'Bahujan Nayak', Sagar said the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) founder was an ace politician and a social reformer who dedicated his entire life to the welfare of the downtrodden.

BSP chief and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati, in a post in Hindi on X, said if the BJP-led cen-



tral government confers the Bharat Ratna on Kanshi Ram, the party would welcome it wholeheartedly.

"Instead of a Dalit MP of BJP from UP demanding Bharat Ratna for BSP founder Shri Kanshi Ram ji, (the BJP) should immediately get it done as its govern-

ment is in power at the centre and the BSP will welcome it wholeheartedly. Else (the BJP) should stop misleading Dalits," she said.

Mayawati also alleged that the Union Budget failed to give proper attention to a poor and backward state like Uttar Pradesh which has a

huge population.

In the budget presented by the NDA government in Parliament, the allocation was done in a biased manner for political gains instead of national and public interests, she said.

Although such step-motherly treatment by the Centre towards some states is not new as the BSP government had faced it too when it was in power in Uttar Pradesh, she said.

"The non-BJP ruled states are unhappy with the budget and have decided not to participate in the meeting of the NITI Aayog regarding this. How fair is it not to pay proper attention to a poor and backward state with a huge population like UP? It is very important for the Centre to keep the country and public interests paramount," she added in another post.

NEET case: CBI reveals 'collusion' between Oasis school principal, vice principal, mastermind

NEW DELHI, JULY 26: NEET paper leak case 'mastermind' Pankaj Kumar acted in collusion with the principal and the vice principal of Oasis School in Hazaribagh to access the question papers hours before the commencement of the exam on May 5 and it was solved and sent to candidates who had hire his services, the CBI said on Thursday.

In a statement issued on its probe in the NEET paper leak case so far, the agency said Kumar, one of the alleged masterminds, acted in connivance with Oasis School Principal Ehsanul Haque, also the NTA City Coordinator, and Vice Principal Imtiaz Alam, who was the Centre Superintendent.

All three have been arrested by the agency, it said.

The CBI said it could identify the centre using half burnt papers recovered from a hostel in Patna.

"The trunks containing the NEET UG 2024 question papers were brought to the school and kept in the control room in the morning of 05-



05-2024. Minutes after the trunks arrived, the above said Principal and Vice Principal unauthorised and illegally allowed access to the room where the trunks were kept, to the mastermind named above. The sophisticated tools used to open the trunk and access the question papers from the trunk have been seized," a CBI spokesperson said.

The paper was solved at Hazaribagh on the morning of examination by a set of solvers who are studying in MBBS courses at AIIMS Patna, RIMS Ranchi and a Medical College in Bharat-

pur. The agency has arrested seven alleged solvers.

"The solved paper was shared with certain selected students who paid money to the accused. All the solvers, who are MBBS students from reputed colleges, have been identified and most of them arrested. These solvers were specially brought to Hazaribagh as part of the conspiracy," the CBI spokesperson said.

Other masterminds gang members who acted with Kumar have been identified and some of them arrested.

"This group was actively assisted by a set of accused persons who arranged places

for housing the candidates, another set of accused were involved in mobilising and ferrying the candidates. The candidates who gained access to the solved question paper are being traced and necessary action is being taken," the CBI has said.

The agency has so far arrested 36 persons, he said.

In a major setback to unsuccessful aspirants of NEET-UG 2024, the Supreme Court on Tuesday dismissed the pleas seeking cancellation and re-test of the controversy-ridden exam, holding that there was no evidence on record to conclude that it was "vitiating" on account of "systemic breach" of its sanctity.

The court, however, said the fact that the leak of question paper indeed took place in Hazaribagh and Patna is "not in dispute", and referred to the Central Bureau of Investigation's status report to say that "155 students drawn from the exam centres at Hazaribagh and Patna appeared to be the beneficiaries of the fraud".

Kanwar directive on eateries to ensure peace, avoid 'potential confusion': UP govt in SC

NEW DELHI, JULY 26: The Uttar Pradesh government on Friday defended its directive requiring eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display the names of their owners and staff, saying the idea was to bring in transparency, avoid "potential confusion" and ensure a peaceful yatra.

On July 22, the apex court ordered an interim stay on the directives issued by the BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhnd governments.

"It may be noted that the idea behind the directives is transparency and informed choice of the consumer/kanwaria regarding the food they eat during the period of the Yatra, keeping in mind their religious sentiments so that they don't, even accidentally, fall foul of their beliefs," the Uttar Pradesh government said in its reply on pleas challenging the directive.

The directives asking eateries along the Kanwar Yatra routes were decried by the opposition as intended to promote religious discrimination.

The Uttar Pradesh government said in its submission to the Supreme Court that care is taken by the state to ensure that persons of all religions, faiths and beliefs coexist and equal importance is given to their festivals.

"It is submitted that the impugned Press Release was issued solely in the interest of ensuring a peaceful completion of the Kanwar Yatra, in which more than 4.07 Crores of Kanwariyas participate annually," it said.

The state government said it has imposed no ban or prohibition on the trade or business of the food sellers (except the restriction on



selling non veg food), and they are free to conduct their business as usual.

"The requirement to display the names and identities of the owners is merely an additional measure to ensure transparency and avoid any potential confusion among the Kanwariyas," it added.

According to the affidavit, the directives do not impose any discrimination and the requirement to display the names and identities applies uniformly to all food sellers along the route, irrespective of their religious or community affiliations. It added that the directive is limited to the route and for less than two weeks.

The Kanwar Yatra is an annual pilgrimage during the month of Shrawan performed by Shiva devotees who carry water from the Ganga from Haridwar and other holy places to offer to Lord Shiva at various places of worship across the state and even beyond the state, said the affidavit, filed

through standing counsel Ruchira Goel.

It added that crores of pilgrims take part with religious fervour, many not litterate, and walking barefoot. Even small confusions regarding the kind of food they are served, has the potential to hurt their religious sentiments and cause flare ups, especially in a communally sensitive area like Muzaffarnagar, the state government said.

"Such situations would obviously lead to flare ups... A mishap in the form of taking a meal unwittingly of a place that would have otherwise not been of their choice, could, for the Kanwaria, vitiate the entire Yatra, peace and tranquillity in the area, the maintenance of which is the bounden duty of the State," it added.

In 2008, it added, the apex court had even upheld the complete closure of slaughter houses in Gujarat for nine days during a Jain festival while keeping in mind the sentiments of the

devotees.

The UP government said it is imperative to take preventive measures that ensure a peaceful and harmonious pilgrimage.

"Past incidents have shown that misunderstandings regarding the type of food being sold have led to tensions and disturbances. The directives are a proactive measure to avoid such situations," it said.

On July 22, the top court had issued notice to the governments of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhnd and Madhya Pradesh and said the eateries may be required to display the kind of food they are serving whether they are vegetarian or non-vegetarian. The top court is hearing a batch of pleas challenging the directives. Among those who filed the petitions are TMC MP Mahua Moitra, academician Aakar Patel, and the NGO Association of Protection of Civil Rights challenging the directives.

Attacking Harris on basis of gender or race is not helpful, says Nikki Haley

WASHINGTON, JULY 26: Attacking Vice President Kamala Harris, presumptive nominee of the Democratic party, is not helpful, Republican leader Nikki Haley said on Thursday and insisted that she needs to be criticized based on her policies.

"It's not helpful. It's not helpful. I mean, we're talking about a liberal senator who literally has not accomplished very much and what she was given she didn't do much with. You don't need to talk about what she looks like or what gender she is to talk about that. The American people are smarter than that," Haley told CNN in an interview.

She was responding to a question on the attack on Harris based on the colour of her skin and gender.

"Talk about the fact that she doesn't believe in fracking. Tell that to the voters in Pennsylvania. Talk about the fact that she doesn't want to talk about paying down debt. She wants to increase taxes. Tell that to the American people. Talk about the fact that consumer prices have gone up 19.5% since Joe and Kamala were in office," she said.

"Talk about the fact that she's always sided with the Palestinian protests instead of our friend Israel. There are so many issues we can talk about when it comes to Kamala Harris. It doesn't matter what she looks like. It mat-



ters what she said, what she's fought for, and the lack of results that she's had because of it," Haley said.

The former Republican presidential candidate, who lost to Donald Trump in the primary race, said she was not surprised when Democratic nominee and incumbent President Joe Biden dropped out of the race, paving the way for Harris to be on the party's ticket.

"I wasn't surprised and I didn't take happiness in it. Through the whole campaign, I fought for mental competency tests. I wasn't doing it to be disrespectful. I wasn't doing it to be mean. I was doing it because I think it's not just Joe Biden. There is an issue that we have in DC where people will go into office and they won't let go. And then their staffers and their family keep propping them up and it's a problem for the American people," she said.

"So, I never thought he

would make it to the election. I always said a vote for Joe Biden is a vote for Kamala Harris, and I think that's what's playing out," she said.

Haley, the former South Carolina Governor and US Ambassador to the United Nations, said the Democrats are very smart to put in a younger candidate.

"I think that that's what America has craved. But I think what you look at is they put in the weakest candidate they could put in," she said.

"You look at the fact that Kamala.. she had one job. That was to deal with illegal immigration and the border. She didn't do it. She was the most progressive Senator that we had next to Bernie Sanders. You can see it playing out, whether it's the fact that she didn't show up at Bibi's speech yesterday, whether it's the fact that she pushed for all this government spending, whether it's the fact that when she was in California, the most liberal

state, there was no tax she didn't propose. There was nothing that she didn't want to see," Haley said.

"All of her, the things she's doing from not wanting fracking to not wanting oil drilling, all of these things are incredibly liberal. And she is much more progressive than Joe Biden ever was. So, the fact that they put in Kamala Harris, kudos for putting in someone younger. The fact that you put in one of the most liberal politicians you probably could have put in it's going to be an issue," Haley said.

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rightwing Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), went ahead with its protest rally by defying the ban and claimed that police arrested several workers.

In Lahore, more than 150 workers of both parties were arrested by law enforcement agencies of the Punjab province.

Khan, the 71-year-old PTI founder has been incarcerated at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi in multiple cases since August last year.

Imran Khan's party workers arrested from across Pakistan, prevented from demonstrations in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE, JULY 26: Except in the Pakistani capital, party leaders and supporters of Imran Khan held demonstrations across the country where hundreds of workers were arrested on Friday while protesting the inflated electricity bills and demanding the former prime minister's release from jail.

After the government banned protests in Islamabad, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) approached the Islamabad High Court, urging it to order the administration to allow it to hold protests. The court, after hearing arguments, reserved its judgment.

The main opposition party, PTI, could not hold its much-publicised protest in the national capital after the government banned public gatherings. However, its ally, the

of other commodities.

However, police imposed section 144, banning all kinds of gatherings, including protests in the federal capital, sealing the Red Zone for all entries. The zone houses key government offices and embassies.

"Any kind of protest or rally will not be allowed in the federal capital. No one will be allowed to violate Section 144 and strict action will be taken against the violators," the Islamabad administration had warned.

Later, the PTI Islamabad unit president Amir Mughal issued a video message announcing that the party had called off its protest in Islamabad and rescheduled it for Monday.

Police also partially closed the Islamabad Highway at the Faizabad Interchange, which sits on the main entry point from Rawalpindi to Is-

lamabad, to stop the protestors' movement.

JI spokesperson Qaisar Sharif said in a statement that dozens of its workers, who were reaching Islamabad to take part in the anti-inflation protest, were taken into custody.

Condemning the action of the police, Sharif said that despite the Shehbaz Sharif government's "fascist tactics" the JI workers would hold a sit-in at D-Chowk in Islamabad.

Separately, the Punjab Home Department imposed section 144 in the province to ban all protests and gatherings from July 26 to 29.

In Lahore, a senior police officer said: "Police have detained over 150 workers of JI and PTI from Lahore, Multan, Gujranwala and Faisalabad districts of Punjab so far. Most of the arrested belong to the JI."