

COURT EXTENDS POLICE CUSTODY OF MESSI EVENT'S CHIEF ORGANISER TILL JANUARY 9

Press Trust of India
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KOLKATA: A court in West Bengal on Sunday extended till January 9 the police custody of Satadru Dutta, the chief organiser of Argentine footballer Lionel Messi's event that dissolved into disorder earlier this month.

After the completion of his initial police custody, Dutta was produced before the Bidhannagar Sub-Divisional Court, where public prosecutors levelled multiple charges against him.

Dutta, who was arrested on December 13 over alleged mismanagement in the Salt Lake stadium event on that day, was also accused of entering into contracts with food and beverage suppliers without prior government approval and being involved in alleged corruption amounting to ₹23 crore.

The prosecution emphasised that Dutta wields significant influence, and for this reason, he should not be granted bail.

"The investigation requires further probe into the financial transactions and pre-planned arrangements for the event. His bail plea was rejected, and he (Dutta) was sent to police custody till January 9," a senior police officer told reporters outside the court.

The police informed the court that a contract for supplying food and beverages at the stadium had been finalised even before discussions were held with the administration for arrangements during Messi's programme. According to the police, the official food and beverage contract value stood at ₹40 lakh while Dutta allegedly received ₹60 lakh in cash.

21 to 5 members in 1 yr: Maoist panel decimated

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NEW DELHI: The leadership of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) has experienced a staggering decline this year, with its central committee (CC) members dropping from 21 to just five within the span of a single year, according to data from the Chhattisgarh Police. Officials engaged in anti-insurgency operations noted that the central committee — the highest decision-making body of the proscribed outfit — had at least 45 members in its ranks until three years ago.

The latest blow to Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in the country came on December 25, when security forces shot dead Ganesh Uike, a member of the CPI (Maoist)'s central committee who oversaw insurgent operations in Odisha and carried a cumulative bounty of ₹1.10 crore. Uike's demise marks the eleventh death of a Central Committee member so far this year.

"At the start of 2025, there were 21 CC members. Eleven were killed in gunfights across different states. Five others including their top leaders surrendered and joined the mainstream. These were people who were wanted for two, three or even four decades. Only five CC members are left now. We urge them to surrender. There is nothing left for them to fight. The security forces have covered all the vacuum areas that there were all these years. The locals are also with the security forces. It is just a matter of time before they too are traced. It is their choice," said P Sundarraj, inspector general of the Chhattisgarh police's Bastar Range, who is leading the operations



Ganesh Uike

against LWE.

Even as security forces across different states are working to end Maoism by March 31, 2026 — a deadline set by the Union government — officials said that the party has suffered its most extensive damage this year, with its top-ranking leaders arrested, killed in gunfights, or surrendering.

In the past year, security forces across Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Odisha neutralised at least 270 Maoists, secured the surrender of more than 1,225, and arrested 680 others, including top leaders. Those killed include senior cadres such as Madvi Hidma, Nambala Keshava Rao (Basavaraju), and Central Committee members Uday (alias Gajjala Rao), Katta Ramachandra Reddy, and Kadri Satyanarayan Reddy.

According to records maintained by security forces, the five remaining members are all above 60, with the eldest, Ganpathy (also known as Mupalla Lakshman Rao or Ramanna), believed to be in his late 70s. Ganpathy was formerly the party's general secretary and now holds the designation of a Politburo and CC member. Apart from Ganpathy, the four others are Thippiri Tirupati (alias Devji

or Sudharshan), Misir Besra (aka Bhaskar), Anil Da (aka Tufan), and Mallaraji Reddy (aka Satanna). Officials, who asked not to be named, said that Ganpathy is suspected to be hiding along the borders of Chhattisgarh's Bijapur, Telangana, and Maharashtra. During the peak of LWE extremism, the CPI (Maoist) maintained 40-45 CC members in its ranks.

An officer from a CAPF engaged in LWE operations said, "There are fewer than 100-150 full-time armed cadres in the south Bastar region below the Indravati River that divides North and South Bastar. These cadres are hiding in the remote areas of Chhattisgarh and the bordering areas. In North Bastar, there may be just 10-15 cadres who refused to surrender during the mass surrender of Maoists two months ago. The CC members, who are the primary decision-making leaders of the CPI (Maoist), are in their 60s and cannot move around as much as they could a decade ago. This, combined with the loss of cadres on the ground through surrender, death, or arrest, has put them in a spot where they are fighting a lost battle."

Among the most notable deaths of CC members this year were those of Basavaraju (killed in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur on May 21), Madvi Hidma (killed in Andhra Pradesh's Mareduhilli Mandal on November 18), and Katta Ramachandra Reddy (aka Raju) and Kadri Satyanarayan Reddy (aka Kosa) on September 22 in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur. The most notable surrenders this year were those of CC member Sujata, who was the wife of the slain Maoist leader Kishenji, and Mallujula Venugopal Rao (alias Bhupati).



Amit Shah

WITH 97% DROP IN CASES, INDIA TO SOON ERADICATE MALARIA: SHAH

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AHMEDABAD: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday said India has recorded a 97% reduction in malaria cases and the country will be free of the disease in a "short time".

He was addressing the 'All India Medical Conference - IMA NATCON 2025' of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Shela here. "Thanks to various healthcare related schemes like Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush, we have recorded 97% reduction in malaria cases and we will be almost free from malaria in a short time. The government has been able to bring down mortality rate in dengue to just 1%. There has been a 25% reduction in maternal mortality," he said.

"From ₹37,000 crore in 2014, the Centre's health budget now stands at ₹1.28 lakh crore under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. All these achievements happen when schemes are implemented on the ground. Work has also been done to bring about unprecedented changes in the health

The role of doctors and IMA has become more important today because the country needs a "healthy demography" to realise PM Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, Shah said.

{ SUSPENSION OF SENGAR'S LIFE SENTENCE }

HC erred with narrow definition of public servant, CBI tells SC

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NEW DELHI: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has challenged the Delhi high court's decision to suspend former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member of the legislative assembly (MLA) Kuldeep Singh Sengar's life sentence in the 2017 Unnao rape case, arguing the court adopted an unduly narrow definition of "public servant" that defeats the legislative intent behind child protection laws.

In its appeal filed on Friday, the agency urged the Supreme Court to adopt a "purposive" and "harmonious" interpretation of the term, contending that a sitting MLA—by virtue of holding a constitutional office—is vested with public trust and authority over the electorate.

A Chief Justice of India (CJI)-led bench of the top court is scheduled to hear the CBI's appeal on Monday.

The high court had on December 23 suspended Sengar's sentence on the ground that an MLA does not fall within the definition of "public servant" under Section 21 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for the purposes of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Sengar was convicted by a trial court in December 2019 under Section 5(c) of the POCSO Act for aggravated penetrative sexual assault of a minor and sentenced to life imprisonment. He has already served over seven years and five months.

The high court concluded that the aggravated offence under Section 5(c) was not made out and that only an offence under Section 3 of the POCSO Act would apply. It held that Supreme Court rulings treating

A CJI-LED BENCH OF THE TOP COURT IS SCHEDULED TO HEAR CBI'S APPEAL ON MONDAY

MPs and MLAs as public servants under the Prevention of Corruption Act could not be extended to POCSO offences. Finding serious fault with this reasoning, the CBI said the high court's approach ignores the common legislative intent underlying multiple statutes aimed at holding persons in positions of power accountable.

"A purposive and harmonious construction of these provisions ensures that MPs, MLAs, government functionaries, and other persons exercising public functions are treated as 'public servants' or 'persons in authority' wherever abuse of office or trust occurs, thereby advancing both the objectives of anti-corruption law and protection of vulnerable persons," the appeal stated, a copy of which has been seen by HT.

According to the agency, Section 21 of the IPC, Section 2(c) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and Section 5(c) of the POCSO Act, 2012, share a common legislative intent of imposing heightened accountability on those who occupy positions of trust, authority or public duty. The legislature, it said, has deliberately provided for stringent mandatory penalties and enhanced liability for such persons, reflecting a higher societal interest in protecting vulnerable victims, particularly children.

The CBI emphasised that the high court "failed to consider that a sitting MLA, by virtue of holding a constitutional office, is

vested with public trust and authority over the electorate, and that such a position carries heightened responsibility arising from duties owed to the state and society."

Explaining the scope of Section 5(c) of the POCSO Act, under which Sengar was convicted, the agency said: "A comprehensive and meaningful reading of section 5(c) [of] the POCSO Act leads to an irrefutable conclusion that it seeks to punish exploitation and sexual abuse of children from 'public servants', owing to use of their power, position or status be it political or otherwise."

The CBI further underscored the gravity of the offence. "The offences under Section 5(c) of the POCSO Act are of greater gravity than corruption offences by MPs/MLAs. While corruption undermines governance, Section 5(c) POCSO offences involve direct abuse of children, triggering severe physical, psychological, and moral harm," it stated.

Citing previous top court rulings, the agency reiterated that MPs and MLAs have been consistently treated as public servants and that suspension of sentence for a life convict can be granted only where the conviction appears prima facie unsustainable and there is a strong likelihood of success in appeal.

Sengar's appeal against his conviction and sentence is pending before the high court. The CBI and the survivor had earlier argued that the plea for suspension of sentence should be taken up only after hearing the main appeal and had warned that Sengar's release would pose a serious threat to the victim and her family—a ground now cited again by the CBI in seeking a stay of the high court order.

Rush at Patna station



Heavy rush of passengers at Patna railway station in view of train delays and cancellations on Sunday

SANTOSH KUMAR/HT

ONE KILLED IN GROUP CLASH OVER PLOUGHING DISPUTE IN BIHAR

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SASARAM: At least one person was killed in firing between two groups on a tiff over ploughing a disputed land at Lala Atimi village under Nasriganj police station of Rohtas district. Several persons from both sides were also injured during the fight, police said on Sunday.

Superintendent of police (SP) Raushan Kumar said there was a dispute on title and possession of a land between two groups at the village. Cases were also running in the court regarding the dispute.

On Saturday, one group led by Umesh Master started ploughing the land for sowing wheat. The other group led by Lal Babu Singh objected to it and attacked with traditional weapons and firearms, which was retaliated. Co-villager Arvind Kumar Singh, 35, intervened and tried to pacify the matter when a bullet hit his stomach. He was rushed to referral hospital at Bikramganj, where doctors declared him dead, police said.

Arvind was a poor farm labourer and sole bread earner of his four-member family of wife Seema Devi, and three minor children, two of them girls. The wife's condition was critical after hearing the death of her husband, villagers said and demanded government help for the family.

ASP Bikramganj, Sanket Kumar reached the village with SHO Avinash Kumar and raided the houses of the accused. Above 10 accused were arrested, the SP said, adding, three country-made pistols, 13 live and six empty cartridges were recovered.

Two tractor trolleys impounded

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BETTIAH: Bihar's Bagaha police on Saturday late evening impounded two tractor trolleys overloaded with sugarcane during a special drive in West Champaran's Bagaha-2, said officials

on Sunday, adding the vehicles posed a serious threat with regard to the safety of other commuters on the stretch.

Nirmala Kumari, superintendent of police (SP), in-charge of Bagaha said the tractor-cum-trolleys were carrying sugarcane far beyond permissible limits,

creating a grave risk of accidents and posing a serious threat to the lives of commuters using the road. "The two tractors have been taken to Naurangiya police station," the SP said, urging media persons to highlight the issue to bring this practice to its logical conclusion.

JJD president Tej Pratap Yadav seeks probe into basement claims at Rabri Devi's Patna residence

PATNA: Janshakti Janata Dal (JJD) president Tej Pratap Yadav on Saturday called for an investigation into claims that a basement exists at the official residence of former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi.

"Let an investigation be con-

ducted. (At Rabri Devi's residence) Whether there is a basement or not will come to light. When we were there, there was no basement. Whether there is a basement or not is a matter for investigation," he told ANI.

On November 25, the Bihar

Building Construction Department allotted House 39 on Harding Road to Rabri Devi in her capacity as Leader of the Opposition in Bihar Legislative Council. Until now, she had been residing at 10 Circular Road.

The decision triggered politi-

cal reactions, with JJD leader Shakti Singh Yadav expressing surprise over the move. He questioned the rationale behind changing the residence of a former CM, alleging increased influence of the BJP in the state government.

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Sale notice for sale of movable properties
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of movable Assets under the Hypothecation Clause

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower Late Neyaz Ahmad and his legal heirs Mrs. Ruhii (Wife) & Mr. Taha (Son), known to the Bank, that the below described vehicle hypothecated to the Bank, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Bank, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis on 31.01.2026, for recovery of Rs. 522,608.00 + Uncharged interest wef. 27.04.2025 due to the Bank of India Tilkamanjhi Branch from Late Neyaz Ahmad and his legal heirs.

Description of the vehicle:	
Branch Name	Tilkamanjhi
Borrower Name	Neyaz Ahmad
Address	S/o Aquil Ahmad, Near New Horizon School, Bhikhanpur, 03, Bhagalpur, Bihar, 812001
Registration number	BR-10AS-5232
Manufacturing year	2024
Vehicle Model	TATA TIAGO XE 1.2 L Petrol
Chassis No.	MAT626367RKD33291
Engine No.	REVTRN19DVXK51665

Details of Inspection Date/Date E-auction /Reserve price & EMD:

Inspection Date & Time of the Vehicle	On 30.01.2026 from 10.00 AM to 4.00 PM in consultation with the Authorized Officer of Bhagalpur Zone (Bihar)
Date, Time of E- auction	31.01.2026, From 11.00 AM to 4.00 PM (Followed by three extensions of 10 minutes)
Reserve Price	Rs. 3.60 Lakhs
EMD	Rs. 0.36 Lakhs

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Bank of India, Secured Creditors website i.e. <https://baanknet.com>

Date: 26.12.2025
Place: Bhagalpur
Authorized Officer
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