



A detained protester shouts anti-government slogans from a police van during a protest organized by supporters of India's Cockroach Janta Party demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over exam paper leaks. PHOTOS BY AMIT DAVE/REUTERS

Thousands march on India's parliament despite tear gas

'Cockroach movement' leaders say minister promises talks on demands

**Aftab Ahmed, Saurabh Sharma
and Anushree Fadnavis**

REUTERS

NEW DELHI – India's youth-led Cockroach Janta Party movement said on July 20 that a federal minister had promised the government would weigh its demands as thousands of protesters marched on parliament despite police efforts to scatter them with tear gas and cane charges.

The movement and the protest are seen as the biggest public challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his third term, drawing millions of supporters on social media before broadening its appeal to opposition parties.

A police decision to forcibly move hunger-striking activist Sonam Wangchuk to hospital on July 18 galvanized a movement demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over examination paper leaks.

Members say the leaking of the papers for a national entrance test to medical school in May – which forced some 2 million students to resit, and led to some taking their own lives – was a sign of deep-seated corruption in education.

Thousands of young supporters gathered through the night at the protest site of Jantar Mantar in New Delhi



Thousands came together for a protest organized by supporters of India's Cockroach Janta Party, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Ahmedabad, India, on July 20.

for the march on the opening day of parliament's monsoon session.

"Quit, quit," the protesters chanted. "Dharmendra Pradhan quit," "Narendra Modi quit," they said in Hindi.

Scores of police and paramilitary personnel turned out across the capital, stopping protesters as they chanted and waved the national flag.

Protests also took place in Bangalore and in Mumbai, where police detained demonstrators and took them away in vans, witnesses said.

In Goa, scores of people held a candlelight vigil shouting slogans demanding Modi's resignation.

Health Minister J.P. Nadda has asked for time to discuss the CJP's demands within the government, Ashutosh Ranka, the movement's national spokesperson, said in a post on X on July 20.

The demands include the release of Wangchuk – who is staging his hunger strike in solidarity with the movement – Pradhan's resignation and compensation of 10 million rupees (\$104,000) for each student who died by suicide following the leak.

Around 12 people have taken their own lives, according to media reports.

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