

## Farooq Abdullah to Push for J&K Statehood at INDIA Bloc Meet in Delhi



National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah has announced he will raise the issue of restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood at a meeting of the INDIA bloc opposition parties in New Delhi. The meeting, convened by a Congress leader, is set to be a key forum for opposition parties to strategize and address national issues. Abdullah's commitment to raising the matter underscores the persistent demand for a return to statehood in the Union Territory, which has been in place since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

The announcement comes after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah wrote a letter to the heads of 42 political parties, including Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, urging them to press the central government to introduce legislation for the restoration of statehood during the ongoing Parliament session. Farooq Abdullah, who will attend the meeting himself, expressed confidence that the opposition bloc will continue to support the cause, just as it has in the past.

The restoration of statehood has been a central demand of political parties in Jammu and Kashmir since the region was downgraded from a state to a Union Territory. Critics of the 2019 decision argue that it was a fundamental departure from India's federal structure and that the delay in restoring statehood is a violation of constitutional rights. The Supreme Court, while upholding the government's decision to abrogate Article 370, had also observed that statehood should be restored as soon as possible.

The meeting in Delhi is expected to focus on a range of issues, including a controversy over alleged manipulation of electoral rolls in Bihar and the upcoming vice-presidential election. For Farooq Abdullah, however, the central issue is the restoration of political rights and a democratically elected government with full powers in Jammu and Kashmir. He has been vocal in his criticism of the current administration, arguing that the region is being ruled by a "viceroy" from New Delhi through the Lieutenant Governor.

Abdullah's participation in the INDIA bloc meeting provides a national platform to advocate for the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The focus on this issue by a major opposition leader brings it back into the national political dialogue and puts pressure on the government to act on its previous assurances regarding the restoration of statehood.