

Punjabi singer Moosewala shot dead

Opposition parties slam AAP govt. for breakdown of law and order in State

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Punjabi singer Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, known as Sidhu Moosewala, was shot dead on Sunday at Jahawarke village in Mansa district of Punjab, a day after the State police withdrew his security cover and that of many others. The police said the incident looked to be the result of an inter-gang rivalry.

The Opposition parties launched a major offensive against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, alleging a breakdown of law and order in the State.

Director-General of Police V.K. Bhawra said the murder looked to be the result of an inter-gang rivalry. "The incident occurred around 5.30 p.m. on Sunday. Mr. Moosewala was driving his vehicle and two private persons were accompanying him. Two vehicles from the front and one at the back blocked his vehicle before the firing started, in which he sustained bullet injuries. He was declared brought dead at a local hospital. We have recovered around 30 empty cases, which show at least three different weapons were used to fire," Mr. Bhawra said.

SIT to probe

"The Lawrence Bishnoi gang has claimed responsibility for the killing through a Canada-based operative. The investigation is under way. Mr. Moosewala had four



A file photo of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala. ■PTI

commandos of the Punjab police for security, but in the wake of *ghallughara* and Operation Bluestar anniversary as every year, the security was thinned. Currently, he had two commandos. However, today [on Sunday] before leaving his house, Mr. Moosewala asked the two commandos to stay at home. Also, the singer has a private bulletproof car, but he did not take it. We are setting up a special investigation team [SIT] to probe the case," the DGP said.

The Punjab police had withdrawn or reduced security cover of 424 people, including current and former legislators, heads of religious sects, and police officers, inviting sharp criticism

from the Opposition parties.

Controversial figure

Mr. Moosewala, who had been surrounded in controversies for allegedly promoting 'gun culture' and violence in his songs, contested the 2022 Assembly election as the Congress candidate from Mansa. He had been booked in multiple cases by the Punjab police for glorifying gun culture under different Sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Arms Act.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said, "I am shocked and deeply saddened by the gruesome murder of Mr. Moosewala. Nobody involved will be spared. My thoughts and prayers are

with his family and his fans across the world. I appeal everyone to stay calm."

AAP supremo and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the murder of Mr. Moosewala was very sad and shocking, and said he had spoken to Mr. Mann on the incident.

Mr. Kejriwal said the culprits would be given the harshest punishment.

Shocked, says Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said, "Deeply shocked and saddened by the murder of promising Congress leader and talented artist Moosewala. My heartfelt condolences to his loved ones and fans from across the world."

Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal said, "This is an extremely critical hour, requiring all of us to exercise restraint and statesmanship. On his part, the Chief Minister must reflect deeply why Punjab under him has drifted into anarchy with total breakdown of law and order. The CM also must honestly think if the cheaply populist decision to withdraw Mr. Moosewala's security is directly responsible for the tragedy."

"After all, he faced tangible threat to life. This is no time for political point scoring but someone must take responsibility for the situation," he added.

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