



THE ECHO OF INDIA

DAILY FROM KOLKATA • PORT BLAIR • SILIGURI

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VOL. XIV ISSUE NO 110

PAGES 12

KOLKATA • WEDNESDAY • APRIL 11, 2018

Rs 1.50

Cong boycotts Lokpal panel meet again

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10 / - / The Congress today once again boycotted the meeting of the Lokpal Selection Committee with the leader in Lok Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge saying that he was invited by the government as a special invitee with the singular intention of excluding the opinion of the opposition in the selection process.

Kharge shot off a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi declining the offer to attend the meeting and alleged that his government has not accorded priority and importance to the leader and its "double standards" stood exposed. Inviting the leader of single largest opposition party as a "Special Invitee" instead of the singular intention of excluding the opinion of the opposition from the selection process of Lokpal," he said in his letter.

The Congress leader said the government is aware that there is no provision in the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act for a special invitee without rights of participation, recording of opinion and voting in the procedure and it has been done only to "mislead" the nation and the people, rather than sincerely seeking the participation and opinion of the Opposition.

"Therefore, to participate in this charade while your government runs roughshod over the rights and spirit of the Lokpal Act would amount to dereliction of my constitutional duty," he said. Kharge said the people of the nation should know that the government has wasted four precious years in the fight against corruption by not amending the Lokpal Act to include the leader of single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha as a member of the selection committee under the said Act. "The world has established the bonafides of the government in fighting corruption before the people," he said.

ATA GLANCE

Two Army jawans killed in Pak mortar shelling JAMMU: Two jawans were killed in heavy mortar shelling and firing by Pakistani troops along the LOC in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. "Pakistan Army initiated unprovoked and indiscriminate firing of small arms, automatics and mortars from 5.15 pm in Sunderbani sector along the Line of Control (LOC) last night," a defence spokesman said. The Indian Army was giving a befitting reply, he said. Rifleman Vinod Singh and Rifleman Jaki Sharma were grievously injured in the firing and later succumbed to their injuries, the spokesman said.

Assam youth suspected to have joined Hizbul, mother says he should be shot dead

GUWAHATI, APRIL 10 / - / A missing youth from Assam is suspected to have joined militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen in Jammu and Kashmir after his photo in which he was seen holding an automatic rifle surfaced that prompted his mother to say government should shoot him dead.

After the photo went viral in the social media, the Assam Police today said it has started a probe into the matter and is trying to find out if the youth identified as Qamer Uzzaman has joined the terrorist organisation. In the photo, Qamer, who hails from

Calcutta HC passes interim stay on State Election Commission's order

Earlier SEC cancelled its Monday's order extending deadline for filing nominations for one day

KOLKATA, APRIL 10 / - /

Calcutta High Court today passed an interim stay on the West Bengal Election Commission's order that cancelled its previous directive to extend deadline for filing of panchayat poll nominations.

The SEC on Monday night had extended by a day the process of filing of nomination, but revoked the order this morning.

State BJP leader Pratap Bandopadhyay moved the high court challenging the cancellation. Justice Subrata Talukdar heard the petitioner and his opponent in his chamber, following resistance by lawyers in view of the ongoing case.

Emerging from the judge's chamber, Bandopadhyay said that the court had passed an interim injunction on SEC's cancellation of its yesterday's order and said that the matter would be heard again on April 23. All parties involved in the matter have been asked to file affidavits stating their position on the matter.

The Tamil Nadu Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee, who



Members of the Left parties who came to stage a demonstration in front of the State Election Commission being resisted by the police—Arjit Ganguly

withdrew the extended deadline for filing nominations for next month's panchayat elections in the state, State Election Commissioner A K Singh cancelled the poll panel's earlier order which had extended the deadline for filing nominations, sources in the commission said.

Opposition parties - the BJP

and the CPI(M) - alleged that the State Election Commission (SEC) was forced by the ruling Trinamool Congress to cancel its previous order extending the deadline.

The new notification issued by the SEC said, "It appears that there was no specific direction by the Supreme Court of India for extension

of the nomination date. Therefore on perusal of all the papers and considering all the points, the Commission hereby recalls the said order and therefore rescinds the (previous) order."

Though the last day for filing nominations for the rural polls slated for May 1, 3 and 5 was till Monday, the

SEC had extended it till 3 pm today on complaints that the opposition candidates had been prevented from filing papers.

According to the new notification, the SEC received two letters, one from the special secretary of the state government and another one from the Trinamool Congress, citing

legal infirmities in the previous order of the Commission.

The Opposition saw red in the SEC's move and held that it had done so under pressure from the ruling Trinamool Congress.

"The SEC had to bow before the pressure of the ruling party. I have doubt whether he can continue till next month's panchayat elections. Earlier, a State Election Commissioner (Sushanta Ranjan Upadhyay) had to resign," he said, adding that the BJP is ready for the panchayat polls. CPI(M) leader in the state Assembly, Sujan Chakrabarty alleged that the SEC had "no freedom and the state ministers have put pressure on him." Left workers staged demonstration in front of the SEC office here protesting the withdrawal of the order extending the deadline.

Refuting the charges, TMC leader and MP Kalyan Banerjee said opposition party leaders had put pressure on the SEC to give the "illegal order" extending the deadline.

"The order was illegal and I sent him an e-mail objecting to it yesterday at 11.36 pm," Banerjee said.

Nationwide anti-quota bandh makes partial impact in some states

BHOPAL/JAIPUR/LUCKNOW, APRIL 10 / - /

A nationwide anti-quota bandh call today received mixed reactions with shops remaining closed in some parts of states such as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan amidst heavy security arrangements, while internet services were restricted in a few sensitive areas.

Reports from Bihar showed attempts to block trains, while some schools suspended their bus services in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (MP), which was the worst hit during the April 2 nationwide bandh called by Dalit groups with at least eight groups in MP said in violent protests. Officials in Bhopal said the call for Tuesday's bandh was given on social media and no organisation had come forward so far to claim responsibility for it in Rajasthan, which was also hit badly during the Dalit convened bandh, the state government has issued prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPc and blocked mobile internet services in the state capital as precautionary measure.

The police chiefs and collectors of districts across the state have been asked to take prompt action if any nuisance is created, officials in Jaipur said. On Monday, the Union home ministry had issued advisory to all states to beef up security and



Police personnel keeping a vigil during Bhart Bandh called by the Dalit organisations over SC/ST issue, in Moradabad.

prevent violence during the Bharat Bandh against caste-based reservations in jobs and education. The ministry of home affairs also said the districts magistrates and superintendents of police (SPs) would be personally held responsible for any violence in their area of jurisdiction. The directive came a week after a similar protest saw massive violence in different parts of the country leading to the death of at least 11 persons. The situation in the state (Rajasthan) was peaceful, ADG (law and order) NRK Reddy told news agency PTI in Jaipur. Reddy said that companies

of paramilitary forces including BSF and CRPF have also been deployed at sensitive areas of different districts in the state. Markets in the walled city area of Jaipur as well as in the areas such as Bajaj Nagar and nearby places were not open on Tuesday.

However, no demonstration or rally has taken place and the situation is quite peaceful. Private schools were closed and transport vehicles are plying normally. The authorities in Bhopal have announced daytime curfew in Morena and Bhind, besides enforcing prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal

Procedure Code (CrPc) in Gwalior, Bhopal, Sagar and some other sensitive towns of the state to avoid any untoward incidents. "We are monitoring the situation. There has been no impact of the alleged bandh so far. The state police is also keeping a watch on the social media," Madhya Pradesh home minister Bhanupras Singh told newsmen.

The internet services too have been blocked in the Gwalior-Chambal region to prevent rumour-mongering, officials said. Bhopal range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Dharmendra Choudhary had said on Monday that the social media messages were being monitored. He had warned that those spreading hate messages would be booked under the Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for disobedience to order promulgated by public servant.

In Uttar Pradesh, life remained by and large normal and officials said there was no report of any untoward incident from anywhere in the state till around noon. Today's anti-quota protest came a week after a nationwide protest by Dalit groups against "dilution" of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act by the Supreme Court, entailing massive violence in different parts of the country and leading to the death of nine people.

PM to observe day-long fast on April 12 in protest against Parliament washout

Slams Oppn for hindering govt's bid for development

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10 / - / Prime Minister Narendra Modi will observe a day-long fast on Thursday with BJP MPs to protest the recent washout of the Budget session of Parliament, while party chief Amit Shah will hold a sit-in at Hubli in poll-bound Karnataka on the same day.

While observing fast, Modi will not disturb his daily official routine of meeting people and officials, and clearing files, sources in the know said. Addressing BJP MPs on Friday, Modi had accused the Opposition,



PM Narendra Modi in conversation with Bihar CM Nitish Kumar during a programme on "Satyagrah Se Swachhagrah" in Motihari.

particularly the Congress, of practising divisive politics and said that BJP MPs will observe a fast on April 12 to protest the impasse in Parliament. The Congress had tried to preempt the BJP event by announcing that the party members would observe a fast on April 9 to promote communal harmony in the country. All BJP MPs will also observe fast on April 12 in their respective constituencies.

Shah will hold a 'dharna' (sit-in) in poll-bound Karnataka's Hubli. The Prime Minister today slammed the Opposition for allegedly trying to break up society and put hurdles, "from the Parliament to the streets," in the government's efforts to uplift the poor.

Without mentioning the RJD-Congress combine in Bihar, Modi lauded chief minister Nitish Kumar for his "fight against the corrupt and anti-social forces in the state" and said the Centre stood firmly behind his efforts. "From the streets to Parliament, roadblocks are being created in the government's work. While the Centre is working towards uniting people, opponents are working towards breaking the society," he said here. The Prime Minister was addressing over 20,000 Swachhagrahis (cleanliness volunteers) at the concluding ceremony of Champaran Satyagrah centenary celebrations.

The Prime Minister's remarks came in the wake of recent disruption of parliamentary proceedings by opposition parties over issues like dilution of SC/ST Act and their support to the "Bharat Bandh" called by Dalit and tribal organisations, which resulted in violence in several parts of the country.