



THE ECHO OF INDIA



Modi dares Cong to contest Gujarat polls on development plank

■ Rahul forecasts 'jumlon ki baarish', Shah sets target of 137-plus for BJP

GANDHINAGAR, OCT 16 /--/ Sounding the poll bugle for Gujarat Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today dared the Congress to contest it on the development plank.

Mounting a fierce attack on the Congress, Modi told a BJP rally that the Nehru-Gandhi family dislikes Gujarat and Gujaratis. He said the Opposition party's current condition was because it has lost ability to think positive. "It is being driven by negative thinking," he said. The Prime Minister was addressing a massive rally organised by the state BJP to celebrate the conclusion of the saffron party's 'Gujarat Gaurav Yatra' (march for Gujarat's honour). "Gujarat polls are round the corner and the Congress has developed fever once again. Gujarat has been an eyesore for the party and the family. I won't repeat what they did to Sardar Patel, his daughter Maniben, and Morarji Desai. They did not speak about the work of Morarji Desai or his dedication and commitment to Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. They instead chose to talk about what he ate and drank," Modi told the BJP rally at Bhat village near Gandhinagar, referring to the former prime minister's fondness of urine therapy. The Prime Minister also targeted the Congress over the resignation of party leader Madhavsinha Solanki, who as the foreign minister was alleged to have sent a letter to his then Swiss counterpart to scuttle the Bofors scandal probe. "They forced Solanki to resign. the party can go to any extent to save the family," he said. The rally was held to mark the conclusion of the saffron party's 'Gujarat Gaurav Yatra' (march for Gujarat's honour) ahead of the high-octane electoral battle for the state where the BJP holds sway. However, Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi, in a 'weather report' ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to his home state today, said that rhetoric will rain down on Gujarat.

Rahul's dig comes in the wake of speculation that the prime minister may announce a host of sops for poll-bound Gujarat. "Weather report: Ahead of elections, Gujarat will today have rain of rhetoric," he said on Twitter, using the phrase "jumlon ki baarish" in his Hindi tweet. The Congress vice-president also tagged a report headlined "As Gujarat waits for poll date, state gets projects worth nearly Rs 12,500 crore" with his tweet. The Congress has accused the BJP and the government of "putting pressure" on the Election Commission to not announce simultaneous polls in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh. The Congress has alleged that if the Election Commission had announced assembly elections in

Talwars walk out of jail quietly; back to their Noida home

NEW DELHI, OCT 16 /--/ Just for a moment, the Talwars stood still. Then they quietly walked out of Ghaziabad's Dasna jail, where they had spent four years over the murder of their daughter Aarushi and domestic help Hemraj. Rajesh and Nupur Talwar, both dentists, looked sombre as they stepped out of the main inner gate of the jail towards a car that was waiting for them outside at 4.55 pm. Rajesh Talwar wore a white shirt and a pair of blue trousers, while his wife was dressed in an orange kurta, with a white salwar and dupatta. They both carried bags. Aarushi's uncle Dinesh Talwar, along with lawyer Tanvir Ahmed Mir, reached the jail at 4.48 pm. Minutes later, the Talwar couple was out of the prison, with photographers and camerapersons milling around to capture them in their frames. The two stood still for a few seconds, before walking up to the car, escorted by Dinesh Talwar.

EVENTS TODAY

Mamata visits ailing Buddha

KOLKATA: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee today visited her predecessor, senior CPM leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee who is suffering from respiratory problems and wished him speedy recovery. Mamata today visited Bhattacharjee at his residence to inquire about his health. He has been suffering for the past few days. "I had come to visit him. He asked me to sit, I wished him a speedy recovery. He wants his treatment to be done at home. I had spoken to his wife and assured her that we will provide all help," she said.

6 killed in Bengaluru building collapse

BENGALURU: At least six persons were killed and some others feared trapped when a two-storeyed building collapsed due to a suspected LPG cylinder blast near Ejjipura in the city today, the police said. Eye-witnesses said the blast took place at around 7 am. They said a noise of the blast was heard and the 20-year-old building was reduced to rubble. Personnel of the Fire brigade and National Disaster Response Force, who rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies including that of two women. Two of the deceased have been identified as Kalavathi (68) and Ravichandran (30). Two children, who were rescued from the debris were out of danger, police said.



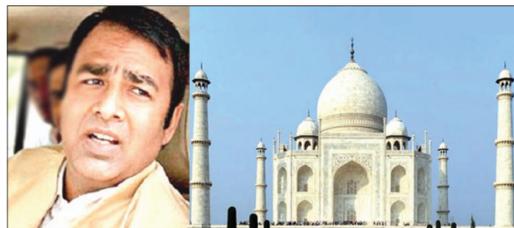
Gujarat along with Himachal Pradesh, the model code of conduct would come into force with immediate effect, leaving no scope for the BJP to announce any sops for people in Gujarat. Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh will be held on November 9 and results announced on December 18. The Gujarat elections have not been announced yet, though Chief Election Commissioner A K Joti has said they will be held before December 18. However, BJP president Amit Shah today made it clear that the party was seeking votes in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to retain power in Gujarat, and set a target of over three-fourths majority in the 182-member Assembly. "We want a victory by three-fourths majority. When Modi was chief minister, we got 127 seats. Now when he is the Prime Minister, this figure looks too small," Shah told thousands of cheering party workers here. Shah took a dig at the Congress vice-president, who has been leading his party's campaign in the poll-bound state, saying he had not done enough for his Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh and was questioning how the BJP has been developing Gujarat.

CBI faces Delhi HC flakin missing JNU student case

NEW DELHI, OCT 16 /--/ CBI today faced flak from the Delhi High Court for its "complete lack of interest" and not showing any result in its probe into the disappearance of JNU student Najeeb Ahmed, five months after being handed over the investigation. Najeeb (27), a student of M.Sc Biotechnology, had gone missing from the Mahi-Mandvi hostel of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on October 15 last year following a scuffle with some other students, allegedly affiliated to the Sangh Parivar student wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the previous night. A bench of Justices G S Sistani and Chandan Shekhar said during arguments, it was "very unhappy" with CBI after contradictions appeared in what was orally submitted in the court and what it has indicated in its status report. The contradictions appeared on the issue of analysis of the calls and messages of the suspect students in the case.

BJP MLA questions Taj Mahal's place in heritage, fuels controversy

MEERUT, OCT 16 /--/ Placing the Taj Mahal in the crosshairs of another controversy, BJP MLA Sangeet Som today questioned the 17th century architectural marvel's place in India's heritage and said history would be rewritten to erase Mughal emperors from it. Som's comments during a visit to Meerut district yesterday prompted an angry response from All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader and Lok Sabha MP Asaduddin Owaisi who asked if the government would tell tourists not to visit the monument. The BJP stepped into the row with party spokesperson G V L Narasimha Rao describing Muslim rule in India as "barbaric and a period of incomparable intolerance" while asserting that its members could hold any opinion they want on spe-



cific monuments. Som, the party's legislator from Sardhana, also distorted history to say it was built by an emperor who had imprisoned his father and targeted Hindus. In fact, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal, was the one imprisoned till the end of his days by his son Aurangzeb. In comments that came soon after the

person G V L Narasimha Rao said the party does not have any view on specific monuments and its members can hold whatever opinion they have. Responding to Som's comments, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi today asked if the government would tell tourists not to visit the monument. Owaisi, the Lok Sabha member from Hyderabad, tweeted, "Traitors" also build Red Fort will Modi stop hoisting Tiranga? Can Modi and Yogi tell domestic and foreign tourist not to visit Taj Mahal?" The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) chief also said Hyderabad House in Delhi, the venue for the Centre hosting foreign dignitaries, was built by "traitor". "Even Hyderabad House in Delhi was built by 'Traitor' will Modi stop hosting Foreign Dignitaries?" he asked.



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee presiding over the all-party meeting on Darjeeling at Nabanna — Shyama Maitra

Centre yields to Mamata's pressure, keeps 8 companies of CRPF in hills

Withdrawal of force part of design to destabilise state, alleges CM

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, OCT 16 /--/ Faced with fierce opposition from the West Bengal government, the Centre today allowed continued deployment of eight companies of paramilitary personnel in Darjeeling to maintain law and order in the hill areas. As of now, 15 companies of paramilitary forces were deployed in Darjeeling and the Union government wanted to withdraw 10 of them for deployment in other places for duties during festival season, a home ministry official said. However, as the state government opposed the move vehemently with chief minister Mamata Banerjee writing to both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and union Home minister Rajnath Singh requesting them to reconsider the move, the MHA after a fresh assessment, decided to withdraw just seven companies and allowed the remaining eight companies to remain in the hill areas. A company of paramilitary comprises around 100 personnel. As the situation has become relatively calm, the local police should take over, the official said. He said there were demands from other states also as festivals are coming up and there will be elections in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat. "The central forces cannot be converted into local police," he said. On Sunday, the home ministry had ordered with-

drawal of 1,000 paramilitary personnel, including 300 women, deployed in Darjeeling. The situation in Darjeeling has improved in the past few weeks, another official said. The Mamata Banerjee government had last month formed a nine-member board of administrators, headed by Binay Tamang, instead of the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) to look into the development works in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Earlier in the day the chief minister who presided over an all-party meeting to solve the Darjeeling problem said withdrawal of forces was part of the Centre's designs to destabilise the state. "I wrote to the prime minister and the home minister and asked them not to withdraw the forces from the hills," she said at a press conference at the state secretariat here after the all-party meeting held at Nabanna. Describing the decision of the withdrawal as unilateral and unfortunate, Mamata said, "The Central government is being run from the BJP party office. It is really unfortunate that the Central government has taken such a bad decision unilaterally to withdraw forces from the hills". She also accused the Centre and BJP of hatching a conspiracy to destabilise the hills as well as the state. "They are conspiring to destabilise Bengal so that violence keeps on occurring. It is unfortunate,"

Mamata stated. "Union home minister Rajnath Singh told me seven companies would be withdrawn. I want to ask why this step motherly attitude towards Bengal when huge numbers of Central forces are deployed in other states," she said. Accusing BJP's Darjeeling MP S S Ahluwalia of helping fugitive GJM supremo Bimal Gurung foment trouble in the region, she said the BJP was allowing the hills to "burn for the sake of a seat". The all-party meeting decided to work together for the restoration of peace in the hills. It was attended by several hill parties excluding the Jan Andolan Party headed by Harka Bahadur Chhetri. Said Chhetri: "We won't join any other meeting convened by the state government further as we feel that the real issue has been diverted. The state government now only looks for the welfare of Binoy Tamang without looking at the demands for all the hill parties. On 29 September the first all-party meeting was held and there we have decided that our demand for Gorkhaland will continue, but after that we saw that Tamang has been made the chairman of the board of administrators to run GTA and we are unaware about such developments. State government should have taken a unanimous decision by consulting all the hill parties before taking such a major decision".

'Gorkhaland can be achieved through peaceful agitation'



GTA Board of Administrators chairman Binay Tamang addressing the media after the all-party meet at Nabanna — EOI Photo

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, OCT 16 /--/ Deploring violence in the agitation for a separate state in the Darjeeling Hills, Gorkha leader Binay Tamang today said the people would launch a movement for Gorkhaland in a "democratic manner". The chairman of the Board of Administrators for Darjeeling Hills was here to attend an all-party meeting convened by the state government today on the current impasse in Darjeeling. "Gorkhaland cannot be achieved through a violent agitation. We should follow the Gandhian philosophy and launch a movement in a peaceful and democratic manner," Tamang said. The expelled Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) leader said the people of the hills believed in democratic movements. He had earlier announced that there would be no more bands for Gorkhaland in the hills. Darjeeling witnessed a long spell of unrest after the GJM called for an indefinite shutdown to press its demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland. The shutdown was called off on September 27 after 104 days, in response to an appeal by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh. With GJM chief Bimal Gurung, against whom cases have been registered for alleged involvement in bomb blasts, in hiding, Tamang has emerged as the main leader in the hills. He had represented the party in the previous rounds of the all-party meeting organised by the West Bengal government. Tamang, who met state Governor K N Tripathi yesterday, requested him to talk to the Centre to initiate tripartite talks to solve the Darjeeling impasse. "We have told him that we are willing to talk to the Centre on the Darjeeling issue. The Centre must intervene as soon as possible and call us for talks on all pending issues, including Gorkhaland," he had said. Describing the location of Darjeeling as "strategic" because it shares its borders with Nepal and Bhutan, Tamang said discussions should be held as soon as possible keeping in mind the sensitivity of the place.

“ We should follow the Gandhian philosophy and launch a movement in a peaceful and democratic manner ”