



THE ECHO OF INDIA

www.echoofindia.com

DAILY FROM KOLKATA • PORT BLAIR • SILIGURI

https://www.facebook.com/The Echo Of India

Page-7

Page-12



VOL XIV ISSUE NO 123

PAGES 12

KOLKATA • TUESDAY • APRIL 24, 2018

Rs 1.50



An injured person being taken to hospital, at Suri, Monday

PANCHAYAT POLLS

Violence erupts during filing of nomination, 1 dies in Birbhum

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, APRIL 23/--/ Violence and bloodshed, murder and arson. Even the day that the Calcutta High Court sanctioned for filing nominations was marked by widespread violence across the state raising questions whether the State Election Commission (SEC) would be able to hold free and fair panchayat elections. Congress and PDS have moved Calcutta High Court, which in its order earlier asked the SEC to make all arrangements so that the elections could be held in a fair and peaceful manner, with the same appeal. Violence erupted at Suri in Birbhum district over the filing of fresh nominations today, in which one person was killed and a

few others were injured. Both the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP have claimed that the person killed was their worker. The filing of nominations began at 11 am and ended at 3 pm. The Calcutta High Court had on Friday directed the State Election Commission (SEC) to extend the date. The SEC issued a fresh notification on Saturday announcing April 23 as the new date for filing nominations to the three-tier panchayat elections. The Opposition parties alleged that violence took place in Birbhum, Murshidabad, Malda, Burdwan, Nadia, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas districts. According to the police, BJP and Trinamool Congress workers clashed at Suri in Birbhum district over filing of

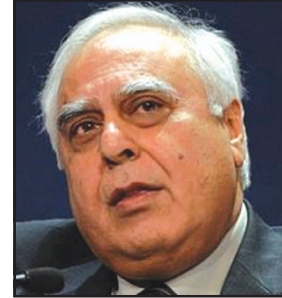
nominations. Bombs were hurled by both the sides during the clashes. State urban development minister Firhad Hakim said one TMC worker, Shaikh Dildar, was killed in Birbhum by the BJP activists. "Sk Dildar was a Trinamool activist. He was killed by contract killers from Jharkhand hired by the BJP. The party had in the past caused disturbances at Mohammadbazar by bringing people from Jharkhand," he alleged. On the other hand, state BJP president Dilip Ghosh claimed that the victim belonged to his party. "Our party activist was killed and a few others were injured when TMC goons attacked BJP workers in Suri. TMC is afraid of facing free and fair elections," he said. State Congress president Adhir

Chowdhury claimed that even MLAs and MPs were attacked by the ruling party. Congress chief whip in the Assembly Manoj Chakrabarty was assaulted in Murshidabad. He alleged that police remained mute spectators. "They (TMC) doesn't want democracy. In the name of rural election, they are enacting a farce," Chowdhury said. However, TMC secretary general Partha Chatterjee accused the BJP, Congress and CPM of trying to delay the poll process. "They have no organisation. The BJP should not think that this is Uttar Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh," he said. Chatterjee alleged that the state BJP president was using "threatening language" but the SEC was letting him go.

RS Chairman rejects notice to impeach CJI, Cong to move SC

Nariman, Sorabjee back rejection, Somnath feels Venkaiah acted in haste

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23 --/ Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu today rejected the notice given by Opposition parties led by the Congress for impeachment of CJI Dipak Misra citing lack of substantial merit in it. Naidu held extensive consultations with top legal and constitutional experts, including former Chief Justices and Judges, before taking the decision, sources said. The rejection of the notice comes a day after he held the consultations to determine the maintainability of the motion. Seven Opposition parties led by the Congress had last week moved a notice before him for impeachment of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on five grounds of "misbehaviour". The Vice-President said in an order today that he had detailed personal conversation on all the aspects arising from the notice and had considered each of the allegations made in it individually as well as collectively. "Based on all this, I have come to the conclusion that this motion does not deserve to be admitted... On careful analysis and reflection, I find there is virtually no concrete verifiable imputation. We cannot allow any of our pillars of governance to be weakened by any thought, word or action," he said. The Rajya Sabha chairman said that after having perused annexures to the motion, detailed consultations and studied opinions of constitutional experts, he was "satisfied that admission of this Notice of Motion is neither desirable nor proper". "In passing, I am constrained to observe that in this matter, the well established parliamentary customs and conventions as have been delineated in para 2.2 of the Handbook for Members of Rajya Sabha have been disregarded," Naidu said. "I have considered the material contained in the Notice of Motion and reflected upon the inputs received in my interaction with legal luminaries and constitutional experts. I am of the firm opinion that the Notice of Motion does not deserve to be admitted. I refuse to admit the Notice of Motion," he said. The sources said that Vice-President Naidu met the experts after re-scheduling his travel plans considering the seriousness of the matter. The Congress today lashed out at the Rajya Sabha chairman and said it would move the Supreme Court to challenge the illegal order which had shattered the confidence of people. Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal told newsmen here that Naidu's order jeopardised the country's legal system and said the government was not keen to see a probe into the case. The order is unprecedented, illegal, ill-advised and hasty," Sibal said, adding that it had been passed without a full-fledged enquiry. "We will certainly move a petition in the Supreme Court to challenge this order, Sibal said. The Congress leader stressed that never before in India's history had a motion moved by MPs been dismissed at the preliminary stage. The order shattered the confidence of the people and jeopardised the legal system, he added. We will ensure the CJI would have nothing to do with this petition, Sibal said. Earlier in the day, AICC media-in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala had also criticised the decision and said it was a fight between forces "rejecting democracy" and voices "rescuing democracy". The BJP "thanked" Venkaiah Naidu and said the Opposition party's attempt was an act of "blasphemy" towards the Constitution. BJP spokesperson Meenakshi Lekhi told a press conference that the Congress was adopting "intimidatory" tactics towards the Supreme Court and its move was not an attack on the individual but an institution as it wanted to create anarchy by making people "lose" faith in the judiciary. She accused the Congress of trying to create an impression in the world that India was a banana republic, something it had turned the country into when it was in power, by "disrupting institutions" and added that its institutions were "very strong" and command reverence of people. Hitting back at the party after it criticised Naidu for rejecting its notice, the BJP leader said the Rajya Sabha Chairman's office is not a post office meant to forward petitions it receives but has to apply its mind judiciously and take a call. It may be added here that Chief Justice (CJI) Dipak Misra and other Supreme Court judges today held a longer than usual morning meeting, leading to delay of about 15 minutes in starting of the proceedings in all courts, amid speculation that they discussed the notice to remove the CJI and its rejection.



NEW DELHI/ KOLKATA, APRIL 23 --/ Eminent jurist and former attorney general of India Soli Sorabjee today welcomed Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu's decision to reject the impeachment notice against CJI Dipak Misra, saying he has "rightly applied his mind". Sorabjee said the Vice-President has found no merit in the notice given by Opposition parties led by the Congress for impeachment and has consulted legal experts before arriving at the decision. "The Vice-President has applied his mind. He has consulted legal experts and has come to a decision. We did not want the matter hanging indefinitely. He (Naidu) has gone into the matter and has found no merit in it and no ground for impeachment, therefore, he rejected it," Sorabjee told a TV channel. When asked about the procedure ahead if the opposition moves the apex court to challenge Naidu's decision, Sorabjee said he did not see the petition succeeding. "I don't see chances of the writ petition (challenging the VP's decision) succeeding," he said. Another senior jurist Fali S Nariman had said on Sunday that "The Opposition move to impeach CJI is "a horribly black day in the history of the Supreme Court" and will not only diminish the public's faith in the judiciary, but will open the door for the ruling party to move against a judge if it doesn't like a particular judgment. "This is a horribly black day... The blackest possible day. I've never seen a day like this. In my 67 years, I've never seen a day like this," Nariman said. However, former Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee said today that the Rajya Sabha Chairman acted in a "hurried manner" while rejecting the impeachment notice against CJI. "This instance has set a bad precedence, which is not good for democracy," Chatterjee told news agency PTI here, adding that Naidu should have followed proper procedures before rejecting the notice. "There are procedures in the Constitution and chairman of Rajya Sabha should have followed it instead of acting in a hurried manner," Chatterjee said. Referring to previous instances of impeachment notices, the former Speaker said procedures were then followed properly. (PTI)

Rahul launches 'Save the Constitution' programme, lashes out at Modi

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23 --/ Congress president Rahul Gandhi today launched a blistering attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying the country could burn, girls may be raped and the rights of scheduled castes and minorities be under a threat, but Modi was merely interested in becoming the Prime Minister again. The twin burning issues of Dalit rights and women's safety were at the centre of Gandhi's all-out attack on Modi at the launch of the Congress's "Save the Constitution" programme, as he asserted that Constitutional values had been endangered under the Modi government

and assured the people that his party would not let it happen. Institutions such as the Supreme Court were being trampled on and Parliament had been shut down by the government, he alleged, claiming that if he was allowed to speak for 15 minutes on a host of issues, including the Nirav Modi scam, Modi would "run away". Going full throttle, he alleged that institutions were being packed with people who believed in the RSS's ideology. Quoting from what he described as a statement by the Prime Minister, the Congress leader said the Prime Minister saw spirituality in sanitation work undertaken by

Dalits. But people know there was no place for the community, weaker sections of society and women in his heart, Gandhi added. Attacking the Prime Minister on employment and other promises made by him before the last Lok Sabha polls, Gandhi said Modi would now come up with new promises for votes. Modi's earlier slogan of 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' (Save daughters, educate them) had become 'Beti bachao' (Save daughters) from the BJP and its leaders, the Congress president said in a reference to the alleged involvement of a BJP MLA in a rape case in Unnao. (PTI)

Activists, parents of minor rape victims oppose death penalty, urge Govt to strengthen judiciary

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23 --/ Not just child right activists, even parents of minor victims today came out against the Union government's ordinance providing the death penalty to child rapists, saying it could lead to victims being killed by perpetrators. At a programme in New Delhi, three parents, whose children were raped, urged the central government to instead strengthen the judicial mechanism to support the children, who have to deal with the crimes and struggle in their aftermath. "My child was 3.5 years old when she was raped in her playschool days after the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case. She was still breast-feeding," a father, whose testimonial moved those present at the programme to tears, said. "We sat in the police station with her from 9am to 9:30pm to register an FIR and she was asked

where she was touched and how much pain she experienced. She was made to repeat her statement again and again for months. I want to ask everyone if I was wrong to ask for justice for my daughter," he said. The Union Cabinet, two days ago, cleared the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance 2018, which proposes stringent punishments, ranging from a minimum of 20 years to life term or death, for raping girls below the age of 12. President Ram Nath Kovind has approved the ordinance. The Ordinance was brought after a nationwide outrage over cases of sexual assault and killing of minors in Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir, in Gujarat's Surat, and the rape of a girl in Unnao in Uttar Pradesh. Child rights groups reiterated that the real deterrent in such cases is the implementation of the laws and the certainty of punishment, rather than the



Children at a rally against atrocities on women

death penalty. They said the ordinance was "reactionary, impractical in terms of procedural changes brought in and disproportionate with regards to sentencing." "The move to bring in the ordinance was based on brutality and not on any understanding of the dynamics of incest and child abuse, which is of epidemic proportions in India and is taking place in our homes as a matter of daily routine," said Anuja Gupta of RAHI foundation, a centre for women survivors of incest and child sexual abuse. She said in her 20 years of working with rape survivors, she realised they do not want to take the burden of punishment to the abuser, especially if the abuser is a family member. In 94 per cent of cases the perpetrator is known to the victim and introducing the death penalty will further decrease reportage

of these cases to the authorities, she feared. A mother, whose child was raped by her husband - the child's father, said she does "not want him to be hanged". "I want him to be alive. I want him to compensate us monetarily for the rest of his life so that I can bring up my children. Why should he hang and be free of his responsibilities?" "I fear if the death penalty is introduced, children like mine would be raped and then killed, so that there remains no evidence. As a mother, I appeal to the cops to be more sensitive, judges to be more patient and - above everything else - don't make us feel bad about seeking justice for our children," she said. In 2017, activists said, a Women and Child Development Ministry report on child abuse said that 53.2 per cent of children admitted to having faced some form of sexual abuse.

AT A GLANCE

PMT visit Nepal

KATHMANDU: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Nepal for a two-day state visit on May 11, his third visit to the Himalayan nation in the last four years, according to a media report today. The date, proposed by the Indian side, was endorsed by Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli this morning, the Kathmandu Post reported. Citing highly-placed sources at the Foreign Ministry, the paper said that an advanced Indian team has already arrived in Nepal to prepare for Modi's visit.

Poland for greater trade ties with West Bengal

KOLKATA: Poland is keen to foster greater business association with West Bengal, a top diplomat of the European nation said today. Poland has formed a small working group with senior officials from different ministries of the country to explore business opportunities with the state, Ambassador of Poland to India Adam Burakowski said. The group is expected to carry out a study of interest and come out with a report for the state government on the scope of mutual cooperation, he said on the sidelines of an interactive session with Merchants' Chamber of Commerce and Industry here.