

# BJP to expand base in Nepal, Lanka: Oppn slams Tripura CM's statement

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AGARTALA

OPPOSITION Left parties and Congress on Monday criticised the BJP leadership after Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb's reported comments to extend the base of the saffron party in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The opposition parties said that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's plan and target to expand its base in Nepal and Sri Lanka are against India's foreign policies and these cannot be done as the two countries are sovereign nations.

Deb while addressing a party meeting here on Saturday reportedly quoted Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and said: "When Home Minister was the BJP's National President he during a meeting with us in Agartala had said that we have extended our base

across India. Now we have to go to Sri Lanka and Nepal." The Chief Minister said that the BJP would form government in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and the party would remain in power in Tripura for 30 years as the CPI-M would be finished in the next assembly elections in 2023. "The BJP is the largest party in India now. It has maximum numbers of MPs, MLAs and other elected members," Deb said. The BJP, however, also supported the Chief Minister's views. Party spokesman Nabendu Bhattacharjee said that not only Sri Lanka and Nepal, the BJP's philosophy is being extended in many Asian and African countries. "Our targets and plans are not to form governments in those states. Our "Pracharaks" (functionaries)



Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb with Home Minister Amit Shah

are broadening BJP's philosophy and belief in those states. If the people of those countries accept our principles and viewpoints then the future course of action would be shaped," Bhattacharjee told the media on Monday.

Sharply criticising the Chief Minister's announcement, Communist Party of India-Marxist central committee member Jitendra Chowdhury said that Deb's speech is a combination of arrogance and ignorance.

Chowdhury, a former Tripura Minister, said that Deb's speech in a public forum portrayed the approach and method of governance that was prevailing in Tripura after the BJP-IPFT (Indigenous People's Front of Tripura) alliance came to power three years ago. "The BJP-led

governments both at the Center and the states have forcefully muted all kinds of civil liberties, freedom of speech and all pillars of democracy while a total lawlessness has been prevailing in Tripura.

"It has been revealed further from Deb's speech that the top brass in BJP is engaged in the internal affairs of our neighbouring countries, which is contrary to our long cherished foreign policy since independence," the veteran tribal leader and former Lok Sabha member said. He alleged that it is extremely unfortunate that this same BJP and their governments have brought sedition charges against the innocent citizens to silence the dissent voices, and octogenarian Varavara Rao, Gautam Navlakha and teen ager Disha Ravi like people are not spared.

## 96% Covid warriors skip 2<sup>nd</sup> dose

'7,668 beneficiaries received the second jab, which is just 4 per cent of the over 1,91,000 healthcare workers who received their first dose on Jan 16'

NEW DELHI

IN what could eventually become worrisome, 96 per cent of Covid Warriors have not been turning up for the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

On Saturday, 7,668 beneficiaries received the second jab, according to the provisional data released by the Union Health Ministry, which is just 4 per cent of the over 1,91,000 healthcare workers who received their first dose on January 16, according to News18 report.

The two vaccines that have been cleared for use in India - Covishield and Covaxin - require that two doses be given 28 days apart. However, as per the recommendation of the apex drug regulator, the doses can be taken within a window of four to six weeks.

The government has set a deadline of March 1 to complete the vaccination of the frontline workers across the country, with a five-day period for "mop up" activity to vaccinate those who might have been missed out, said joint secretary of the Union health ministry, Mandep Bhandari. For healthcare workers, the deadline is February 20.

India has been recording a steady decline in the number of daily new deaths since October 1, 2020, while the national recovery rates amongst the highest in the



### 'Vaccination for above 50 in 3 weeks'

NEW DELHI The Union government will begin vaccination drive for around 27 crore Indians above the age of 50 three weeks from now, Union Health Minister Harsh vardhan said on Monday.

"Three weeks from now, the government will start giving doses of coronavirus vaccines to 27 crore persons above the age of 50," he said at a press briefing here. An expert group on vaccination will discuss how to pay for the doses for those above 50, he added.

### Maha Minister bats for 3T formula

Aurangabad: The "3T formula" of tracing, testing and treatment will have to be implemented strictly to tackle a rise in COVID-19 cases in some parts of Maharashtra, state health minister Rajesh Tope said. Talking to reporters, Tope said the state government had managed to flatten the curve in the last one month as far as daily addition of cases was concerned, but a recent rise in numbers in Mumbai, Wardha and some other pockets was "alarming".

world, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday. "Since 1st October 2020, the nation has seen an unabated decline in Case Fatality Rate. The Case Fatality Rate today stands below 1.5 (1.43 percent). India's Case Fatality Rate is one of the lowest in the world," it said. The recoveries have surged to 1,06,11,731 with 11,016 patients getting discharged in a span of 24 hours. "India's Covid-19 recovery rate of 97.31 per cent is amongst the highest in the world. The difference between the recovered and active cases has grown to 1,04,74,164 as on date," the ministry highlighted.

Meanwhile, the night curfew, currently in force in four major Gujarat cities, including Ahmedabad, to stem the COVID-19 spread, was on Monday extended till February 28, officials said. However, in a concession to people, the curfew from now on in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara and Rajkot will be in force between midnight and 6 am instead of the earlier 11pm to 6am, they added.

The Centre on Monday approved the proposal of the Press Information Bureau's journalist welfare committee to provide a financial relief Rs 5 lakh each to families of 39 journalists who died due to the coronavirus, a panel member said. The government has earmarked an additional fund for this purpose for the Journalist Welfare Committee (JWC), and journalists from across India will be covered under the scheme.



## Rupani collapses, tests Covid +ive

AHMEDABAD

GUJARAT Chief Minister Vijay Rupani has tested positive for coronavirus, said a hospital where the CM is admitted after he fainted at a rally. He has mild symptoms and his condition is stable, the Ahmedabad-based medical facility said on Monday. On Sunday, Rupani, 64, fainted on stage while addressing a rally in Vadodara for the upcoming civic polls in the state, following which he was flown to Ahmedabad and admitted to the U N Mehta Heart Hospital here. Rupani's sample was collected on Sunday night and sent for RT-PCR test which has come out positive for coronavirus, said a health bulletin issued by the hospital on Monday. "His symptoms are mild and his condition is stable," it said. The hospital also said the chief minister fainted on Sunday due to "tiredness and physical weakness". His ECG, blood test and other examinations were conducted and their results are normal, it said. State Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel told reporters that on Sunday night it was decided to keep Rupani under observation for 24 hours. "After his test report came out positive for coronavirus, he is being treated for the infection as per the course and protocol," said Patel.

## 15 killed after truck overturns in Jalgaon

JALGAON

Fifteen people were killed and five others injured after a truck carrying labourers overturned and fell into a roadside pit in Maharashtra's Jalgaon district in the wee hours of Monday, police said.

The accident took place near a temple in Kingaon village around 1 am when the papaya-laden truck was on its way to Yawal tehsil in Jalgaon from Dhule, an official from Yawal police station said.

The deceased included two children, aged 3 and 5 years, and a 15-year-old girl. A 14-year-old boy, who was sleeping on top of the truck, escaped unhurt, the official said. The labourers belonged to Abhoda, Vivra, Kerhala villages and Raver tehsil in the district, he said.

PM Narendra Modi expressed grief at the loss of lives. The Maharashtra government announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh to the kin of each of the deceased. After the accident, police and some locals rushed to the spot and the truck was brought out of the pit with the help of a JCB machine, the police official said.

## Two more activists on police radar Toolkit makers on the run

NEW DELHI

NON-BAILABLE warrants have been issued against a Mumbai lawyer and a Pune engineer for allegedly creating a protest toolkit backing the farmers' agitation along with arrested climate activist Disha Ravi and collaborating with pro-Khalistani elements, Delhi Police officials said on Monday.

Lawyer Nikita Jacob and engineer Shantanu, who are absconding, also attended a Zoom meeting organised by "pro-Khalistani" group Poetic Justice Foundation, Joint Commissioner of Police (Cyber) Prem Nath said.

The three had created the toolkit and sent it to others, officials said as a fierce political debate broke out between the opposition and the ruling BJP over the action against 21-year-old Ravi in the case related to the "toolkit Google doc" that came to light when it was shared by global climate campaigner Greta Thunberg. "Disha, Shantanu and Nikita created and edited the toolkit. Disha sent the toolkit to Greta Thunberg through Telegram. Disha deleted a Whatsapp group which she created to spread the toolkit. Due procedure was followed when Disha was arrested," Nath said.

Ravi was arrested from Bengaluru on Saturday and sent to police ream for five days by a Delhi court on Sunday with officials claiming she was an editor of the "toolkit Google doc" and "key conspirator" in its formulation and dissemination.



Historian Ramchandra Guha (right) along with other activists holds placards during a protest against the arrest of climate activist Disha Ravi, in Bengaluru on Monday

### Nikita moves HC for bail

Mumbai Mumbai-based lawyer-activist Nikita Jacob moved the Bombay High Court for anticipatory bail after a Delhi court issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against her.

Jacob's plea for an urgent hearing was mentioned by her lawyer Abhishek Yende before Justice P.D. Naik on Monday who has posted the matter for Tuesday.

A practicing lawyer since the past six years, Jacob is a resident of Goregaon and has been active in public causes.

Terming the Delhi Police FIR as "false and baseless", she sought transit anticipatory bail for a period of four weeks to enable approach the court in Delhi concerned and apply for a pre-arrest bail.

### Is State so weak? Sibal

New Delhi: The Congress termed the arrest of climate activist Disha Ravi as 'shocking' and 'unfortunate' and asked if the 'state was so weak that a tweet threatened its security'.

"Is the State so weak that a tweet threatens its security? Is the state so paranoid that a 22 year is a national security threat? Is the state so intolerant that it cannot tolerate youth standing with farmers? Is this the "badlav" Modiji wanted?": Congress leader Kapil Sibal tweeted. The party's Deputy leader in Rajya Sabha, Anand Sharma tweeted: "Police should recognise her right to liberty and courts must respect the Supreme Court Judgement which says bail is the rule and Jail an exception."

## What is a toolkit?

A toolkit, simply put, is a document created to explain any issue. It also provides information on what one needs to do to address the issue. This might include information about petitions, details about protests and mass movements and so on. The toolkit that Thunberg shared, tries to "explain the farmers' protests" in the national capital.

"This is a document meant to enable anyone unfamiliar with the ongoing farmers protests in India to better understand the situation and make decisions on how to support the farmers based on their own analysis," the toolkit states.

The toolkit then goes on to apparently summarise the situation of farmers in India and talks about the Centre's recent agriculture legislations.

"Instead of being supported to become self-reliant and prosperous, a majority of farmers are increasingly being subjected to the control of large corporations and international institutions whose sole focus is profits, and necessarily involves increased exploitation of nature," the toolkit states.

It further lists out what actions one can take to support the farmers' protests and the Delhi Police is currently trying to ascertain who created it.

## War of words between BJP, Oppn

NEW DELHI

Accusing the government of "murdering democracy" by using force against a 21-year-old, the Opposition said the voice of India cannot be silenced even as the BJP defended the action, saying a crime is a crime no matter at what age. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi led the opposition offensive following the arrest of 21-year-old Disha Ravi in the case and said the country will not be silenced.

"Your lips are free to speak. Say that the truth is still alive. They are scared, not the country," he said in a tweet in Hindi. "India will not be silenced," he added. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said, "Arrest of 21 year old Disha Ravi is an unprecedented attack on Democracy. Supporting our farmers is not a crime."

RJD leader Manoj Jha said democracy is under threat. "I am worried about democracy, as it is passing through the most difficult times," he said. Union Minister and BJP leader Gajendra Singh Shekhawat tweeted: "If age is the criteria then Param Veer Chakra Second Lt Arun Khetarpal, martyred at 21 is who I am proud of. Not some toolkit propagandists." BJP general secretary B L Santosh tweeted: "21 year old...environment activist...student...Are these credentials for becoming a part of breaking India forces? How does she get the access for editing tool kit...? Why she is part of anti-national WhatsApp groups...? Many questions...But only one answer...21 year old." Bengaluru, Greta Thun-

### Disha argued her own case

Disha Ravi did not have her own lawyer when she was produced in court with charges of sedition and conspiracy. According to Disha Ravi's legal team, she argued her own case before the magistrate.

In a post, lawyer Rebecca John has alleged "shocking abdication of judicial duties". According to her, the magistrate failed to ensure that Disha had legal representation in court. "Deeply disappointed by the conduct of the duty magistrate... who remanded a young woman to five days in police custody, without first ensuring that she was being represented by counsel," Ms John wrote.

berg, Vegan, sole bread winner, student, 21 year old, passionate activist...so many attempts to white wash a sin...!! Not one anarchist ready to answer the question...How 21 year old student got access to edit Toolkit," he asked. Former Union ministers P Chidambaram and Jairam Ramesh have also come out strongly against the police action in the case, accusing the government of running an authoritarian regime as it was threatened by a student. "I strongly condemn the arrest of Disha Ravi and urge all students and youth to raise their voices to protest against the authoritarian regime," Chidambaram said.

## Forging and fabricating medical prescription of Sushant Singh Rajput

# Mumbai HC refuses to quash FIR against sister Priyanka Singh

MUMBAI

THE Bombay High Court on Monday refused to quash an FIR lodged against late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's sister Priyanka Singh for allegedly forging and fabricating a medical prescription for her brother. A division bench of Justices S S Shinde and M S Karnik, however, quashed the FIR against Meetu Singh, another sister of Rajput.

The court said while there was prima facie evidence against Priyanka Singh, the case against Meetu Singh does not stand. "We are of the considered opinion that the FIR against petitioner Meetu Singh does not survive,"

the bench said. "However, the FIR against petitioner Priyanka Singh is not quashed as we prima facie find that a case is made out," the court said.

The bench said its judgment shall not cause an impediment for the investigating agency to probe the FIR and submit whatever report it deems fit. The sisters had approached the HC seeking to quash the First Information Report (FIR) lodged for alleged forgery and fabrication of a medical prescription for their brother for anxiety issues. The FIR was lodged against Priyanka Singh, Meetu Singh and doctor Tarun Kumar of Delhi's Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital by the Bandra police in Mumbai on September 7 last year, based on a complaint filed by Rajput's



girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty. As per the complaint, Rajput's sisters and the doctor prepared a forged and fabricated prescription for anti-depressants for the actor a

few days before his death.

Rajput, 34, was found dead at his home in suburban Bandra on June 14 last year. His father K K Singh later lodged a case of abetment of suicide and cheating against Chakraborty and her family members. The CBI is conducting a probe into the case.

After registration of the FIR against Rajput's sisters, the Bandra police forwarded the case papers to the Central Bureau of Investigation, as per directions of the Supreme Court which had said all cases pertaining to the death of Rajput shall be probed by the CBI. Senior counsel Vikas Singh, appearing for Rajput's sisters, had argued that telemedicine practice guidelines permitted a

doctor to prescribe medicines after online consultation. He had claimed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Rajput could not go for physical consultation.

Even assuming that such a prescription was procured, there was no evidence to show Rajput consumed any medicines, Singh told the court. Senior counsel Devdutt Kamat, appearing for the Mumbai police, had opposed the plea and said there was no online consultation done. Rhea Chakraborty's advocate Satish Maneshinde had also opposed the plea of Rajput's sisters, and said one of the circumstances that may have led to the actor's death was the "dangerous cocktail of drugs, narcotic substances and medicines"