

Potential CM candidates in Rajasthan, MP arrive in Delhi to meet Congress chief

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 13

Amid hectic lobbying in the Congress for the top posts in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, party president Rahul Gandhi Thursday held deliberations with central observers and MLAs at his residence and said the names of the chief ministers would be declared soon.

Gandhi met the K C Venugopal for Rajasthan and A K Antony for Madhya Pradesh early morning along with the state unit in-charges and later met the contenders.

"Yes, you will see a chief minister soon...", he said when asked about when the decision will be taken.

"We are checking, taking inputs from different people in the party, we are taking inputs from MLAs, workers. We are getting a comprehensive answer to what the Congress party and others feel," he told reporters outside Parliament as the race for the top post in the three states heats up within the party.

The potential chief ministers in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh were earlier called in from Jaipur and Bhopal for last minute discussions with the party president

before a final call is taken on who will be the chief ministers.

The party observers gave their inputs to Gandhi after talking to the newly-elected MLAs in the states. The state legislature parties of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh earlier passed a one-line resolution authorising the party president to take the final decision on chief ministers.

The contenders for the top post in Rajasthan — Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot — and in Madhya Pradesh — Kamal Nath and Jyotiraditya Scindia — arrived early morning in the national capital and are slated to hold meetings with Gandhi.

Sources said while Nath is the front runner in Madhya Pradesh for the post of chief minister, Gehlot leads the race in Rajasthan, while state party chief Pilot is fighting his case and is putting up a stiff resistance.

With the young leaders in the party — Jyotiraditya Scindia and Pilot staking their claim for the top post too, the sources added that the Congress is working on a formula to have deputy chief ministers in two states and discussions on it are underway.

Gandhi had also sought

the views of party workers in the three states through an internal messaging platform after he sent out a pre-recorded audio message to them seeking their feedback on their choice of chief ministerial candidate in their respective states.

The sources said that the decision would be taken Thursday itself.

Congress observer for Chhattisgarh Mallikarjun Kharge will also be handing over his report to the Congress president after he met the newly-elected legislators in Chhattisgarh as also the top contenders.

Gandhi is likely to meet the top contenders in Chhattisgarh — state Congress chief Bhupesh Baghel, CLP leader T S Singh Deo, OBC leader Tamradhwaj Sahu and party veteran Charan Das Mahant.

Facing his first test within the Congress, Gandhi started hectic deliberations with senior party leaders since early morning Thursday.

The sources said Priyanka Gandhi was also present at Rahul Gandhi's Tughlaq Lane residence before a final call on the chief ministers is taken.

Top party leaders, including Rajasthan in-charge Avinash Pande and Madhya Pradesh in-charge Deepak Babariya, were also present during the meeting.

Oppn continues protests in LS, RS; both Houses adjourned

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 13

The proceedings in both Houses of Parliament were adjourned on the second consecutive day Thursday amid continued protests by opposition parties on several issues, including alleged corruption in the Rafale jet deal, construction of Ram temple and Cauvery river water.

Thursday was the third day of the Winter session. While on day one, both the Houses were adjourned after paying tribute to former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Union minister Ananth Kumar and some sitting members, the second day on Wednesday saw protests by the opposition.

While the Lok Sabha was adjourned Wednesday without transacting much business, the Rajya Sabha had passed a bill amid noisy scenes.

The Rajya Sabha Thursday was adjourned for the day without transacting any business following protests by Tamil Nadu parties inside the well over the Cauvery river issue.

No sooner had the House paid its respects to the nine persons who laid down their lives 17 years back when terrorist attacked the Parliament House complex and the listed papers presented, members belonging to the AIADMK and DMK trooped into the well of the House shouting slogans.

"Protect the right of Tamil Nadu," read the placards held by protesting members.

A couple of members from Andhra Pradesh too were in the well demanding special status for the state.

Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu warned that he would be forced to adjourn the proceedings for the day if members did not return to their seats and allow the House to function.

"I would like to urge members to at least allow the House today... 9 persons had laid down their lives to protect Parliament. Wrong message will go," he said. He said discussion on all issues including on Cauvery river issue will be allowed.

As his repeated pleas to members to allow the House to function fell on deaf ears, he adjourned the proceedings till Friday.

The Lok Sabha also witnessed repeated adjournments amid opposition protests. The House was adjourned twice in the Question Hour. It was later adjourned for the day during Zero Hour where only two members got a chance to speak.

Besides opposition members, ruling BJP's ally Shiv Sena also held protests in the House demanding law for construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Speaking in the House, party leader Anand Rao Adul said the BJP got full majority but "forgot" Hindutava, which was the main reason for the alliance between the two parties.

As the protests continued, Speaker Sumitra Mahajan asked members to allow the House to function but in vain.

The House was then adjourned for the day.

Earlier as soon as the Question Hour began after paying tributes to martyrs of the 2001 Parliament attack, members from the Congress, TDP and AIADMK rushed to the Well raising slogans, following which the Speaker adjourned the House.

TDP member Venkateshwara Rao (Babu) used a mike installed in the Well for the oath of a new member to prop up a poster seeking special status for Andhra Pradesh.

A Lok Sabha secretariat staffer tried to convince him not to use the mike.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Narendra Singh Tomar too tried to convince him to keep down the mike.

The TDP member's action invited the ire of Speaker Sumitra Mahajan who warned him that he will be named.

Once a member is named, he or she has to leave the House chamber.

Congress member Sunil Jakhar was seen wearing a neon reflective vest while standing in the Well.

The Speaker then adjourned the House for nearly 10 minutes till 11.20 AM.

When the House assembled again, Mahajan reminded members that they can raise issues under various rules.

Apparently referring to the Lok Sabha polls due in 2019, she said it was a "crucial time" and members should use it to raise issues related to the public.

She said the Lok Sabha is for all states and regions and all should get a chance to raise their respective issues.

But opposition members remained unconvinced and returned to the Well.

As the bedlam continued, the House was adjourned for nearly 30 minutes till noon.

Torch rally organised by SSUM at various places of the valley districts including Imphal city yesterday evening



Calling her sexual harassment plea false, JNU wants student barred

Agency
New Delhi, Dec. 13

She should be barred from the JNU campus, her degree should be withdrawn and she should never be employed at the university. These are among the recommendations of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) against the complainant in a case of sexual harassment against her PhD guide.

After the student filed a complaint against her guide on April 12 this year, alleging she was "molested, sexually harassed and threatened" by her professor, the ICC last month called her complaint "frivolous" and recommended a series of punitive measures against her.

The JNU Vice-Chancellor is yet to take a final call on the ICC report.

The recommendations, dated November 5 and signed by ICC Presiding Officer Vibha Tandon, said, "The complainant should be completely debarred from entering in the JNU campus. She shall not be allowed to take up any course or

employment in the JNU in future. She should not be allowed to enter in the JNU campus to attend any academic or non academic proceedings. She should not be allowed to enter in the JNU campus for her personal reasons what so ever."

The ICC further recommended that the complainant apologise to the university and the defendant. "The JNU administration... shall not issue any character certificate and no objection certificate to the complainant in future..." the ICC said.

Tandon did not respond to calls by The Indian Express. Gautam Jha, an ICC member until a month ago, confirmed that a report in the case had been finalised but declined comment. JNU VC Jagadeesh Kumar did not respond to queries.

ICC rules empower the body to take action against the complainant "if the ICC concludes that the allegations made were false, malicious or the complaint was made knowing it to be untrue, or forged or misleading information has been provided during the inquiry". However, it adds that "malicious intent on the part of the

complainant shall not be established without an inquiry".

Speaking to The Indian Express, the complainant said: "The ICC was hostile to me from the beginning and had told me not to travel abroad. I've submitted my PhD but I'm yet to receive my degree because of which I haven't been able to apply for a post-doctoral fellowship or a teaching job. The way they have barred me from campus and said I should be escorted by guards, I feel like I'm the criminal," she said.

The ICC also recommended that "In case if the complainant needs to come to the JNU campus for the purpose of inquiry, she will have to give prior intimation to the Proctor Office... She will inform the chief security officer about her entry and exit from JNU campus. The complainant will be escorted by two female security guards."

The ICC said that "the Academic Council may initiate proceedings to withdraw the degree of the complainant" and that her "degree shall be put on hold till the Academic Council concludes its proceedings".

Yeddyurappa's son takes oath as LS member

Agency
New Delhi, Dec 13

BY Raghavendra, son of BJP leader B S Yeddyurappa, Thursday took oath as member of the Lok Sabha.

Raghavendra had recently won the Shimoga Lok Sabha bypoll, which was necessitated following the resignation of Yeddyurappa who contested the assembly polls in Karnataka.

Goa mining dependents warn of stepping up agitation

Agency
Panaji, Dec 13

People affected by suspension of mining activity in Goa Thursday warned of intensifying their agitation in the state to draw the Centre's attention to their demand of resumption of the industry.

The Goa Mining People's Front (GMPF), an umbrella organisation of mining dependents, said if any Union minister attends any event in the state, protests would be held outside the venue.

The warning comes amid

the industry stakeholders' ongoing protests in Delhi.

The agitation in the national capital began on December 11 and continued at the Ramlila Maidan till Wednesday.

However, the protest was shifted to Jantar Mantar on Thursday.

Various politicians from Goa, including ministers, MPs, MLAs and other party office-bearers met the protesters there over the last two days.

"However, we have not got any firm assurance from the Union government or the BJP on

our demand. When we return to Goa, we will be forced to intensify our agitation," GMPF president Puti Gaonkar told PTI over phone from Delhi.

"Protests will be held outside the venues in Goa, wherever Union ministers participate... We want to send a clear message to Delhi that they can't play with the livelihood of the people," he said.

Gaonkar said the mining dependents will also try to get appointment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to tell him about the mining crisis.