

Katju calls for boycott of Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh

IT News
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Fomer Supreme Court judge Markandey Katju has asked the public to boycott Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh until journalist Kishorchandra Wangkhem, who is in jail for uncomplimentary remarks about the Biren Singh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), is released. Wangkhem, who is the new editor of a private channel, was initially arrested for defamation in November and was given bail. He was later re-arrested and sent to detention for a year under the National Security Act. Wangkhem's wife Ranjita Elangbam's plea challenging

the governor's order is to be heard in Manipur High Court on Friday.

"The people of Manipur should lead India. Your chief minister Biren Singh has lost his mind and is drunk on power. Find ways to punish him. First, socially boycott him. Do not go to his social functions and those who do should also be boycotted. Don't invite him to any function. Treat him like a pariah," Katju said. Elangbam, who also spoke at several public meetings here, highlighted the constant harassment of her family, including their two young daughters. "The community started looking at us as criminals. People stopped talking to us out of fear that they would

be arrested too. He (Wangkhem) is now tagged as a habitual offender and false rumours of him being an abusive alcoholic and a womaniser are spreading. Propaganda can't cover up the truth. As a mother with two small daughters, I don't know whether there is democracy or human rights?" Elangbam and her lawyer Shreejit Bhavsar said they were initially not allowed to meet Wangkhem before filing a habeas corpus writ in the high court. Elangbam credited the Manipur Students' Association Delhi (MSAD) for their support to get Wangkhem released and for holding

several protests here and contacting lawyers. MSAD president Thokchom Veemom attributed the lack of public outrage to the fatigue of severe state action. "To them (Manipur residents) the National Security Act doesn't matter as they are conditioned to live in a terrible world. Manipuri society continues to live in a fear. Their conscience is beaten and battered every time they resist."

Indian Journalists Union secretary general Sabina Inderjit called this, "the worst case of a government trying to suppress its people from speaking" and called for scribes to throng the courthouse on Friday

Rahul Gandhi's Patna rally today to set tone for Congress campaign in 2019

Agency
Patna, Feb. 3

Congress president Rahul Gandhi will kick off his party's election campaign for the Lok Sabha polls with a rally at the historic Gandhi Maidan today. Being held after a gap of 28 years — the last was addressed by the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 — the Congress' rally, titled Jan Akanksha rally, is significant for the party which had been on decline in the state since 1998 when it joined hands with Lalu Prasad-led Rashtriya Janata Dal.

"By holding the rally on its own, the Congress will also explore the possibility of going it alone in future elections," said Bihar Congress spokesman Harkhu Jha, adding that the party does not want to leave coalition

partners away either.

All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge Shaktisinh Gohil, who has been supervising the party's campaign to mobilise people's support for the rally, has put off seat-sharing talks because of the rally. Party leaders claimed the success of the rally would help the Congress finalise the seat-sharing exercise with renewed confidence. The Congress is looking to contest about 12-15 seats out of 40 in the coming Lok Sabha elections. However, the RJD's insistence of being the 'big brother' in the grand alliance is making the job difficult for the party in Bihar. The Congress has decided to go it alone in UP. "If the RJD does not offer a respectable number seats in Bihar, Congress is free to fight alone here as well," said a senior Congress leader.

The Congress had won two out of the 12 seats it had contested in the last Lok Sabha elections in alliance with the RJD. In assembly, however, it had contested 41 seats and managed to elect 27 MLAs in alliance with the

RJD and JD(U) in 2015. The RJD had won four seats and NCP one in the last Lok Sabha polls. Meanwhile, Rishi Mishra, former MLA of JD(U) and son of JD(U) MLC Vijay Kumar Mishra, joined the Congress on Saturday along with his supporters in presence of BPCC chief Madan Mohan Jha. Rishi is grandson of former Union minister Lalit Narayan Mishra. Many other leaders, including former NCP MP Tariq Anwar and president of Bihar Pradesh Vaishya Mahasammelan Jagannath Gupta, have joined the Congress. "Many sitting MPs of the NDA are waiting for opportune moment to become flag-bearers of the Congress and strengthen hands of Rahul Gandhi," said party spokesman Rajesh Kumar Rathore. Besides the CMs of three states recently wrested by the Congress, former deputy CM and RJD leader Tejashwi Prasad Yadav, former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi, RLSP chief Upendra Kushwaha, former JD(U) president Sharad Yadav and president of Vikassheel Insan Party Mukesh Sahni are slated to shake the dais with Rahul Gandhi and address the crowd.

AFSPA big enabler for operations in Manipur, CBI probe hasn't hit troop morale, says army official

Courtesy HT
New Delhi, Feb. 3.

The ongoing probe into cases of alleged extrajudicial killings in Manipur has not hit troop morale or led the force to rework its counter-insurgency strategy, and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is a "big enabler and a prerequisite" for operations in Manipur, a senior army officer said, stressing the force adhered to a strict human rights code.

Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh said the law should be reviewed, with the caveat that the decision be taken factoring in that the state shares a porous

border with Myanmar. The neighbouring country is known to harbour insurgent safe havens.

"The army is doing its job. Why should our strategy change because of the probe? We have full faith in the due process of law. We are a well-trained and regimented force and there is no apprehension about troop morale," said Major General VK Mishra, who heads the Leimakhong-headquartered 57 Mountain Division.

His comments come at a time when the Supreme Court has ordered a special investigation team (SIT) to speed up the registration of cases on alleged fake encounters in Manipur and even as at least 700 soldiers have petitioned the top court against dilution of the AFSPA that shields them from prosecution without the central government's nod.

In July 2017, a three-judge bench constituted an SIT to probe 1,528 allegations of human rights violations by security personnel in Manipur.

This was a blow to the immunity enjoyed by security forces in

disturbed areas and was seen as diluting the protection under the AFSPA.

Mishra was also very clear it was not the right time to review the AFSPA or even dilute the law by withdrawing it from certain areas, given the security climate in the insurgency-hit state.

"We apprehend around 350 insurgents every year on an average. They come out on bail. They are there. Under these conditions, is it the time (to review AFSPA)? Denotifying

disturbed areas can convert them into insurgent safe

havens," said Mishra, who controls counter-insurgency operations in northeast India's most violent state. As many as 941 security personnel and 1,942 insurgents have been killed in Manipur over the last three decades. "AFSPA was brought in to control the situation. Naga and Manipuri insurgents were given advanced weapons by outside powers. They have AK-47s, rocket launchers and missiles," army chief General Bipin Rawat said, responding to a question on the controversial law. AFSPA

bestows sweeping powers on the forces and prohibits prosecutions from being initiated without the go-ahead from the Centre, if the allegations are linked to the public duty of the accused. AFSPA is not in force in Imphal, an area of 34 sq km, where it was denotified in 2004.

The 700 army petitioners have questioned the apex court's ordering of the CBI probe into alleged extra-judicial killings by the army, the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Police. The army's stand has been clear on AFSPA — that soldiers

need special protection to discharge duties in areas that have been declared disturbed and the security situation does not merit restricting the scope of the law.

Mishra said that from training to operations, the army has an "in-built human rights" code and the force is very sensitive to such issues. The SIT is currently probing 19 army operations involving 35 deaths. Responding to a question on the SIT probe, Biren Singh said everyone should get justice, be it the security forces or civilians.

World Wetlands Day observed at Sendra

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The World Wetlands Day 2019 was observed yesterday at the state-level on the theme 'Wetlands and Climate Change' at Sendra, Bishnupur district jointly organised by the Loktak Development Authority (LDA) and Loktak Lake Tourism Development Co-operative Society Limited.

World Wetlands Day is observed on 2nd February of each year to mark the date of adoption of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971. The Convention is the only multilateral environmental agreement to date for conservation and wise usage of wetlands. The World Wetland Day is being organized to raise awareness on the values wetlands have for nature and society. Each year, the World Wetlands Day is attached to a specific theme. Addressing the gathering as the chief guest of the state-level function, Forest and Environment Minister Shri Thounaojam Shyamkumar said that the conservation of environment is vital for the survival of the human beings. Adding that water is necessary for sustaining life

and wetlands are the life support systems that ensure functioning of water cycle, he said the wetlands have special attributes as cultural heritage of humanity and have deep connections with our beliefs and practices. They are indeed an important part of our natural wealth and assets, he added.

Taking example of the environmental degradation, he said the pollution of the Loktak Lake, known as the mirror of the Manipur, is not a sign of development. Speaking on the importance of the Loktak Lake which is the largest fresh water lake in the North East India, he said the lake including other wetlands moderate the climate of the State. He said that active public participation is necessary to save the Loktak Lake.

Speaking on the decrease in the production/cultivation of the *yongchak* (parkia speciosa) in the State, he opined that the decreasing number of population of the bats could be a reason behind the less production of the popular *yongchak*. He said the rampant hunting of birds in the State has direct impact in the environment. Opining

that we should plant trees for every occasion for the improvement of the environment, he said that the existence of wildlife is also equally important that is why hunting of animals and birds should be stopped. He said in the present world, a nation is known as a developed one if it conserves and protects the environment and the wildlife. Shri K. Jugeshwar Singh, Principal, Kumbi College and Dr S. Shyamjai Singh, Scientific Officer, LDA spoke in length about the observation of the day, importance of the wetlands, scope of wetlands tourism and link between the wetlands and the environment.

Stating that the forest is the lungs of the earth and the wetlands are the kidneys, Dr Shyamjai said that wetlands occupy 6 percent of the total earth's land surface and 12 percent of it acts as a carbon sink. He said that wetlands are vital for our water and food security and it help stabilize water supplies, cleanse polluted waters, protect shorelines and recharge groundwater aquifers.

He said that wetlands play an important role in

reducing the impact of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and cyclones and it act as a natural sponge, absorbing and storing excess rainfall and reducing flooding. During the dry season, they release the water stored, delaying the onset of droughts and reducing water shortages, he added.

As part of the function a spot painting competition was held among 109 students of various schools at the Loktak Inland Transport complex. The winners were given certificates along with cash reward of Rs 3,000, Rs 2,000, Rs 1,000 as first, second and third prize respectively. Two students received Rs 500 each as a consolation prize and certificates.

Shri K. Robindro Singh, Deputy Speaker, Dr Radheshyam Yumnam, Chairman MANITON/MANIDCO, Shri Suhel Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary (Forest and Environment), Shri L. Bhagaton Singh, Project Director, LDA, students and teachers of various schools of the area, among others attended the function

eShala Digital Education launched

IT News
Thoubal, Feb. 3

Under the initiative of Centre For Microfin And Livelihood, CML, TATA Trusts and SELCO Foundation Bangalore conducted SNL Energy Solutions, Manipur in hands with Kids' Mold School in Yairipok Bamol Leikai conducted a one day training programme on solar energy the programme was attended by Samuel Meite, founder

Administrator of Kids' Mold School Principal of the school O. Nabachandra Singh and vice-principal Administration K. Abhiram along with vice-principal Academic, K. Nilakanta Singh as dignitaries. programme manager of Selco Foundation Bangalore, Prashanta Sharma and proprietor of SNL Energy Solution Manipur Moirangthem Seth, Operation head Bimal Moirangthem gave lecture on Digital Education.

Renowned Manipuri filmmaker returns Padma Shri to protest Citizenship Bill

Source Hindustan time
Imphal, Feb. 3.

Internationally acclaimed filmmaker from Manipur Aribam Syam Sharma on Sunday announced that he was returning the Padmashree awards in solidarity with the ongoing public protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016. Addressing reporters at his Imphal residence this afternoon, renowned film director and composer Syam said the people in Manipur need protection.

Saying that the state has only one or two MPs in a house of 500 plus members, he questioned what voice can the northeast have in Parliament. "They should respect us as a state — small or big. It should not be counted on population basis. I raise this because the

Union of India is made up of states," he said. "When the northeastern states jointly represent or present something in the government, they should consider it and if they do not consider, naturally we have to oppose."

"So, as part of showing solidarity, I decided to return the award," says the 83-year-old prominent filmmaker who debuted in the Manipuri film scene as an actor in the first Manipuri film 'Matangi Manipur' in 1972. Late president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam had conferred the Padmashree award to the noted filmmaker for his contribution to Manipuri cinema and world of films in 2006.

Manipur has been witnessing continuous public movement against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill after the Bill was passed in the Lok Sabha on January 8.