

!! Continuations from Page 1 !! Delhi CM Kejriwal...

carried out their action inside, additional Delhi Police personnel and Rapid Action Force (RAF) and CRPF teams were deployed around the chief minister's residence. The additional deployment was made as the ED sought extra security measures in anticipation of protests by AAP supporters, sources said.

A large number of AAP workers and leaders gathered near the chief minister's residence and shouted slogans hailing Kejriwal and denouncing the ED action.

The Delhi Police also stepped up security around the agency office on A P J Abdul Kalam Road in central Delhi.

During the day, Kejriwal moved the Supreme Court against the high court's order denying him any relief in the matter. Later, AAP leader Atishi said they have moved the Supreme Court for quashing the arrest of Kejriwal and "asked for an urgent hearing...tonight itself."

The ED's action is virtually a replay of what transpired during the arrest last week of Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha, who is now in ED custody in the same case.

The case pertains to alleged corruption and money laundering in formulating and executing the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22, which was later scrapped.

AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh are in judicial custody in the case. Kejriwal's name has been mentioned multiple times in the charge sheets filed by the ED. The agency has alleged that the accused were in touch with Kejriwal for formulating the excise policy that resulted in undue benefits to them in return for which they paid kickbacks to the AAP.

The ED had recently alleged in a statement that BRS leader Kavitha and some others "conspired" with top AAP leaders like Kejriwal and Sisodia to get favours in the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy by paying Rs 100 crore to the political party that rules Delhi.

Forty-six-year-old Kavitha, the MLC daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, was arrested by the federal agency last week from her Hyderabad home and she is in custody till March 23.

AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bhargava, who reached Kejriwal's residence soon after the ED team's arrival, told reporters, "It seems that the ED is carrying out raids. I have not been allowed to go inside. It looks like ED is planning to arrest him."

Atishi who were among those gathered outside the chief minister's residence, told reporters, "This entire episode shows how scared Prime Minister Narendra Modi is of Kejriwal. He has hatched a conspiracy to send him to jail before the Lok Sabha election." Reacting to the ED action, AAP MP Raghav Chadha alleged a "big conspiracy" to arrest Kejriwal just before the Lok Sabha elections.

In a series of posts on X, the party said, "ED reached the house of Delhi's son @ArvindKejriwal! BJP should know that it is trying to move the mountain in whose support the entire country stands today. The people of Delhi are watching everything. No one will sit silent today."

Using the hashtag #IstandWithKejriwal, it said, "The BJP can stoop down to any level to make Arvind Kejriwal bow down. The people of the country including entire Delhi are standing with their hero Arvind Kejriwal today. This dictatorship of yours will not last. And a Kejriwal will emerge from every house."

Reacting to the agency action, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said, "If Kejriwal has any morality left he should step down and cooperate with the ED."

Earlier in the day, a Delhi High Court bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Manoj Jain refused to grant Kejriwal any protection from coercive action in the case.

The bench listed the AAP leader's application for further consideration on April 22 when his main petition challenging the summons is fixed for hearing, and asked the Enforcement Directorate to file its response.

Kejriwal is also facing an ED case in connection with alleged irregularities in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB).

AAP FACES LEADERSHIP...

portfolios including health and urban development.

He, too, is a well known face of the party, often engaged in defending the party and its leaders and counter-attacking the BJP and its government at the Centre on a range of governance-related and political issues.

However, in December last year, the AAP launched a signature campaign 'Mai Bhi Kejriwal', asking people whether he should resign as Delhi chief minister or run the government from jail if arrested.

During the campaign, the AAP supremo also met party MLAs and municipal corporation councilors in Delhi for their feedback on the issue.

Bhargava recently told reporters in a press conference, "Nearly 90 per cent of people in this exercise opined that Kejriwal has the mandate of Delhi and he has been elected and hence, only he would run the government in Delhi no matter from where."

The AAP leadership also has to find a replacement of Kejriwal to head the party that runs governments in Delhi and Punjab besides having MLAs in Gujarat and Goa as well. In this area also, the options of the party are rather limited.

Apart from Sunita Kejriwal, name of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Atishi too are taking rounds as leaders who could hold the responsibility of new AAP national convener.

DB set-aside...

selection process for making selection for three services through a Combined Competitive Examination, 2010 conducted by the Public Service Commission.

He applied in the Open Merit category and secured 1220 marks. Three more candidates also secured the same marks. Accordingly, 02 candidates in the order of merit were selected for appointment, whereas the writ petitioner along with another candidate, namely, Ruppali Phull was left out. It was averred that the writ petitioner figured at Sr. No.112, i.e., next after the last selected candidate in the open merit category.

It was averred that the Public Service Commission had advertised 189 posts, however, after selection it recommended only 182 candidates for appointment. It was argued that had the Public Service Commission recommended 189 candidates as per the advertisement notice, the writ petitioner would have certainly been in the list of appointed candidates.

Further certain selected candidates did not come forward to join. Even, the Public Service Commission had failed to draw up the waiting list of candidates in the order of merit in terms of Rule-57 of the Jammu & Kashmir Public Service Commission (Business & Procedure) Rules, 1980 and SRO 387 dated December 1, 2008. Since the writ petitioner was next in merit and there was no waiting list, he filed SWP No.979/2012. However, the learned Single Judge dismissed the writ petition. Hence, the present appeal on behalf of writ petitioner.

DB after hearing Sr. Adv PN Raina with Adv JA Hamal for the petitioner whereas Advocate General DC Raina with Advocates KDS Kotwal and Adv FA Natoo for the UT and PSC, observed that LPA No.263/2019 has already been decided, whereby the order of Writ Court to consider the case of Ruppali Phull came to be upheld with a further direction that she shall be entitled to all consequential benefits including seniority, promotion etc. from the date the other similarly situated candidates came to be appointed minus the monetary benefits. But, it is also a fact that the rank of writ petitioner-Hitesh Choudhary has been shown to be above the rank of Ruppali Phull in the order of merit in the open merit category.

Therefore, the claim of writ petitioner-Hitesh Choudhary cannot be ignored or rejected once the claim of Ruppali Phull has been allowed and upheld in LPA No.263/2019.

Even after accommodating Ruppali Phull in terms of judgment dated September 12, 2023 delivered in LPA No.263/2019, one more post is still lying vacant due to the non-joining of certain candidates and against the said post writ petitioner-Hitesh Choudhary can also be considered, DB order accordingly.

DB further observed that further, since common question of facts and law are involved in LPA No.263/2019 and present LPA No.42/2019, therefore, the directions passed in LPA No.263/2019 shall also apply to the writ petitioner-appellant herein. LPA No.263/2019 shall also form part of this order/judgment. Accordingly, the present appeal is allowed. Consequently, order/judgment dated 01.04.2016 passed in SWP No.979/2012, so far as it pertains to writ petitioner-Hitesh Choudhary, is hereby set aside and quashed.

BRO commences work...

This 427-km long highway connecting Ladakh to the rest of India via Manali in Himachal Pradesh has strategic importance for the movement of the armed forces and their supplies to forward areas in Ladakh, apart from connecting the people of Ladakh to the rest of India.

Every winter, this national highway witnesses extreme weather conditions leading to heavy snowfall and avalanches, which leads to road closure, the spokesperson said.

Shabir Shah's daughter...

later chargesheeted by the National Investigation Agency also for alleged terror

financing.

The case stemmed from a 2005 incident in which Mohammed Aslam Wani, an alleged hawala dealer, was apprehended by the Special Cell of Delhi Police with a substantial amount of cash, purportedly intended for Shah.

Sama was summoned by the ED in 2019 in connection with the case, but she did not appear at that time as she was in the United Kingdom studying law.

ACB register case...

abuse of official position and authority as same was beyond competence of the officer," ACB official said.

"The verification conducted further revealed that five works were illegally and fraudulently executed on approval basis, even without inviting tenders by the then Chief Executive Officer namely Zulfikar Mohammad Khan and then Executive Engineers, Wullar Manasbal Development Authority; Bashir Ahmad Baba and Zahoor Ahmad Sheikh AEE during the period 2016-2019," official added.

"The accused persons not only granted illegal and fraudulent extensions in these works but also raised and provided huge exorbitant rates to contractors on various items utilized in these works during execution of works which was also in grave violation of lid down norms in vogue," official said.

During the course of preliminary probe, the official said that the experts from Engineering wing of ACB Kashmir conducted spot inspection of the works executed by the accused public servants and scrutinized the record on the basis of which the loss caused was computed and liabilities of the officers fixed.

The acts of omission and commission on part of the accused public servants in connivance and conspiracy with private beneficiaries (contractors) led to huge loss to state exchequer and commensurate undue pecuniary benefits upon the contractors, official further stated.

Immediately after the registration of FIR FIR No. 03/2024 under section 5(1) (d) r/w Section 5(2) J&K P.C Act Svt. 2006 & section 120-B RPC at PS ACB Baramulla, house search warrants in respect of accused public servants were issued by the court of Special Judge Anti Corruption Baramulla and in pursuance to House search warrants, the ACB conducted searches in multiple locations simultaneously belonging to accused persons at Rhematabad Colony Hyderpora, Malik Masjid Soura, Sabzi Mandi Soura and Durpora Mangiam Ganderbal in presence of respective jurisdictional Magistrates.

The searches were conducted meticulously, in accordance with legal/laid down procedure, to gather evidence linked with the investigation of the case. During the course of searches various incriminating documents have been recovered, official said adding that further investigations of the case are going on.

Dr Jitendra files...



Union Minister and BJP candidate for Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency addressing a massive public rally at Ramlila Maidan, Kathua.

Doda had come here yesterday to show their love and faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is proof of the work done in this region. But the opposition failed to see any development," Singh told the rally in Kathua.

Seeking the support of the people, he said, "I bow before you for the love and faith in me and I again seek your blessings".

Before filing the nomination papers, Singh took out a rally that saw the participation of Dalip Singh Rana, better known as 'The Great Khal' for his exploits in the World Wrestling Entertainment, and BJP J&K chief Ravinder Raina.

Khali, who is also a BJP leader, sought votes for Singh and said the region has progressed under him.

The Udhampur-Kathua Lok Sabha constituency was once a stronghold of the Congress party.

In 2014, Singh defeated former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and veteran Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad by more than 60,000 votes from the Udhampur seat.

Singh received 4,87,369 votes to 4,26,393 votes garnered by Azad, who has since quit the Congress.

In 2019, he won against Congress candidate Vikram Aditya Singh, the son of Congress leader Karan Singh. He won by a substantial margin of 3,57,252 votes. After a recent summary revision, the Udhampur-Kathua constituency now has over 16.20 lakh registered voters. Lok Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir will be conducted in five phases with voting in each of the five parliamentary constituencies to be held in a separate phase. Polling in the five Lok Sabha constituencies will be held on April 19 (Udhampur), April 26 (Jammu), May 7 (Anantnag), May 13 (Srinagar) and May 20 (Baramulla). The Ladakh Lok Sabha seat spread over Kargil and Leh districts will go to polls in the fifth phase of polls.

BJP not averse...

former BJP leader Chaudhary Lal Singh, Abdullah said, "I will not say anything on it as it is an internal matter of the Congress. It is better you ask the Congress about it."

Singh had supported the people accused and later convicted of the brutal rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua in 2018.

Singh, who had left the Congress ahead of the 2014 Lok Sabha polls and joined the BJP, is seen as a front-runner for a Congress ticket to contest the parliament elections from Kathua. The NC, which is part of the INDIA bloc, will have to support Singh -- if he is named as Congress candidate -- according to the seat-sharing agreement.

SC refuses to...

parliamentary law. There cannot be framing of law in a particular way."

Bhushan alleged non-compliance of the 2023 apex court verdict, saying the Chief Justice of India has been dropped from the selection panel.

The top court said the 2023 verdict of the constitution bench nowhere held there has to be a representative from the judiciary on the selection panel for the appointment of election commissioners and the CEC in the new law and that the court had left it to Parliament.

Bhushan said there will not be any chaos and the new ECs may be allowed to work for some time as elections are round the corner. Thereafter, fresh appointments can be made by a panel that includes the CJ, as was proposed in the 2023 verdict, he said.

The bench told Bhushan that the 2023 verdict, which proposed a selection panel comprising the prime minister, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India, was intended to be in force until Parliament enacted a new law governing the appointment of the ECs and the CEC.

The verdict was intended to nudge Parliament to enact a law as there was a "vacuum" but it didn't say what kind of law should be made, Justice Khanna told Bhushan.

The bench said it prima facie agrees with Bhushan's submission that the procedure adopted for the appointment of the two new ECs was not transparent.

While questioning the procedure adopted by the Centre, it told Mehta that the selection committee should have been given more time to apply its mind to the appointment of the new ECs.

"The selection committee for appointment of election commissioners should have been given a fair share of time to understand the background of candidates," the bench observed.

It said, "For one vacancy, there were five names. For two, you send only six. Why not 10? This is what appears from the record. They can consider 200 names, but what is the time given, maybe 2 hours. 200 names to be considered in 2 hours? You could have been transparent," the bench said, after Mehta pointed out that the two new election commissioners were among the six short-listed from a pool of 200 names suggested by a search panel.

On Bhushan pointing out to the bench that the meeting of the selection committee was advanced, Justice Khanna told Mehta that the Centre should have deferred the meeting by a day or two as it knew about the pendency of the matter in the apex court.

"The manner in which it was done could have been avoided. The matter was sub-judice. Plus, a member of the selection committee had also said that he needed some time to go through the names," Justice Khanna said.

Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had said he needed some time to go through the 200 names.

The bench said it is not questioning the credentials of the election commissioners

appointed but the procedure.

Under the new law, the selection panel has the prime minister as the chairperson, and the leader of opposition or leader of the largest opposition party and a Union minister nominated by the prime minister are the two other members.

Cong's poll panel...

Patwari and J&K unit chief Vikar Rasool Wani were present in the meetings held for their respective states. Also, the AICC state in-charges -- Avinash Pande (UP), Jitendra Singh (MP) and Bharatsinh Solanki were also present when candidates for their respective states were discussed.

The meeting of the CEC was attended by former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, party general secretary K C Venugopal and other members of the panel.

However, Rahul Gandhi, who is also a member of the panel, was not present.

Sources said the party's third list would be out "very soon".

This is the third straight day when the Congress' CEC is holding its meeting.

The CEC on Wednesday had deliberated on the candidates for the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan. The Congress has so far announced 82 candidates in two lists for the seven-phase Lok Sabha polls beginning April 19.

Lal Singh gets reception in Jammu after rejoining Cong

STATE TIMES NEWS

JAMMU: Hundreds of workers on Thursday gave a rousing reception to former MP and former minister Lal Singh on his arrival here after rejoining the Congress and expressed confidence that the party will win both the seats in Jammu and Kashmir.

Singh, 65, who hails from Kathua district, rejoined the Congress at its headquarters in Delhi on Wednesday amid speculations that he will be fielded against BJP minister Jitendra Singh from the Udhampur parliamentary constituency which is going to polls in the first phase on April 19.

Flanked by his wife and former legislator Kanta Andotra, and J-K Congress working president Raman Bhalla, Lal Singh was received by the workers and leaders of the party amid beats of drums and showering of flowers.

"It (his joining Congress) is not enthusiasm but a change in Jammu and Kashmir. It is a big change to boost the forces fighting BJP in Jammu and Kashmir," Lal Singh told reporters soon after his arrival from New Delhi.

He claimed that the Congress will win both the seats of Jammu and Udhampur.

"I am confident to win from Udhampur seat. After becoming a two-time MP and minister, it is unfortunate that he has done nothing", he said.

Hitting out at the BJP, he said unemployment is at a high level in the Union Territory amid increase in the level of crime.

"There is rampant drug menace and youth are being destroyed due to unbridled drug addiction", he said.

Lal Singh also announced the merger of his outfit, Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan Party (DSSP), with the Congress.

While Lal Singh was the founder chairman of the DSSP, his wife Kanta was its president.

He is a two-time former member of Parliament from Udhampur seat in 2004 and 2009. He was also the health minister and the forest minister in Jammu and Kashmir. He represented Basohli in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in 1996 and 2002.

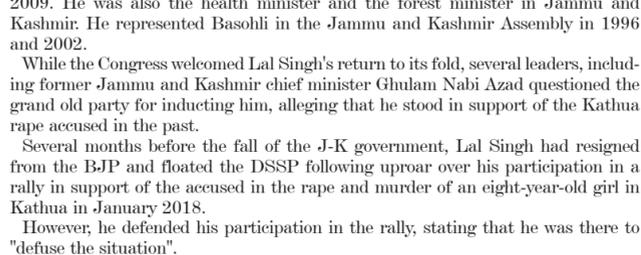
While the Congress welcomed Lal Singh's return to its fold, several leaders, including former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad questioned the grand old party for inducting him, alleging that he stood in support of the Kathua rape accused in the past.

Several months before the fall of the J-K government, Lal Singh had resigned from the BJP and floated the DSSP following uproar over his participation in a rally in support of the accused in the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Kathua in January 2018.

However, he defended his participation in the rally, stating that he was there to "defuse the situation".

On November 7 last year, he was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with a money laundering case against an educational trust run by his wife. However, he was released on bail three weeks after his arrest.

Short film on Ayushman Bharat, Jan Aushadhi released



BJP leader Sat Sharma and others during launch of short film.

JAMMU: Suman Keser Productions released a short film on Ayushman Bharat and Jan Aushadhi. The film was shown in KC PVR 2.

The event was graced by former Minister, Sat Sharma, President of Shri Kailakh Jyotish Avim Vedic Sanathan Trust Mahant Rohit Shastri and senior officials of the Jammu and Kashmir Government including Angrez Singh, among other citizens.

Sat Sharma mentioned that the short film on Ayushman Bharat and Jan Aushadhi is presenting an inspiring story to convey a message about health along with the Ayushman card.

On this occasion, Mahant Rohit Shastri praised Dharun Kesar and his team, stating that whether it's art, music, sports, or athletics, they will not be left behind when opportunities arise.

He mentioned that alongside education, the youth of Jammu and Kashmir are making a mark in various fields, achieving fame at the national and international levels. Angrez Singh expressed hope that Dharun Kesar will continue to work on such topics that carry a message for society, which will greatly help in creating awareness in society. Dharun Keser thanked everyone present.

Present at the event were senior BJP leaders Dil Bahadur Singh Jamwal, Bawa Ram, Jagdev Singh Chib, Vijay Seth, Naresh Raina, Subhash Jamwal, Kanan Kaur, Rajesh Ajnabi, Meenu Sharma, Aman Sharma, Ankur Sharma, Manik Sharma, Sagar, Anshul Sharma, Mohd Janab, Vishal Sharma, Saurav, Vikrant, Prerana, KK Malhotra, V Kath, Prashant Singh, Gopal Datt, Vinakshi, Asha, and other citizens.

Rupee rises 6 paise to close at 83.13 against US dollar

STATE TIMES NEWS

MUMBAI: The rupee appreciated 6 paise to close at 83.13 against the US dollar on Thursday, supported by a firm trend in domestic equities and a weak greenback amid rising appetite for riskier assets.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.07 against the greenback. The unit hit an intra-day high of 83.04 and a low of 83.16.

The local unit finally settled at 83.13 against the dollar, higher by 6 paise from its previous close of 83.19. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.15 per cent higher at 103.54. Though the US dollar is trading on a higher note, it has retreated from its elevated level of 104 after the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) kept interest rates unchanged in the range of 5.25-5.5 per cent range.

Fed Chair, Jerome Powell stuck to his previous forecast of three rate cuts in 2024. He revised growth projections for 2024 to 2.1 per cent from 1.8 per cent earlier. This led to a sharp rally in global risk assets, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.