

MY RANCHI

{ DHARNA OUTSIDE RAJ BHAWAN }

Cong stages protest over Sarna Code

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RANCHI: Congress party workers, led by Jharkhand unit president Keshav Mahto Kamlesh, state in-charge K. Raju, and other senior leaders, staged a dharna (sit-in protest) near Raj Bhawan on Monday to demand the inclusion of the Sarna religion code in the census form to ensure a separate religious identity for tribal people.

Addressing the programme, the party workers resolved to ensure the inclusion of the column in the same way "they compelled the Narendra Modi-led Union government to start a caste census and repeal the farm laws". "Just as we got the three black agricultural laws repealed and the caste census passed by the Cabinet, in the same way, we will get the Sarna Dharma Code included in the seventh column. We will not let the identity of the tribals be lost," said the party's Jharkhand in-charge K Raju.

Raju said his party would go to any extent to protect the rights of tribals. "Sarna religion code is the fundamental right of the tribals. It is the responsibility of the Congress party to protect it. Congress is continuously demanding this; now we have taken to the streets, and very soon a dharna will be organised at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, following which the President will be approached and requested to implement it," he said.

State Congress president Keshav Mahto Kamlesh echoed the same, saying he would not



Congress supporters take out a rally and walk towards the Raj Bhawan, in Ranchi on Monday. ANI

allow the Union government to violate the rights of the tribes. He said the Union government's slogan of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' is merely a slogan, as it does not want to develop tribal, Dalit, and minority communities.

"The central government is violating the rights and privileges of the tribals. It is trying to end the religious existence of the tribals under a conspiracy. We passed the proposal of the Sarna Dharma Code in the Assembly and sent it to the Centre, but the central government did nothing. It gives the slogan of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas but wants the destruction of tribals, Dalits, and minorities," he said.

All India Congress Committee secretary Pranav Jha was also present on the occasion. He

accused the BJP of being anti-tribal. "The tribals are the original inhabitants of India; they are worshippers of nature. The BJP always calls them Vanvasi; it has been discriminating against them since the beginning," he said. State minister Radhakrishna Kishore expressed his commitment to the Sarna Code, saying, "Yachana nahi, ab ran hoga (there will be war, not pleading)," Kishore said.

State minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey echoed the same. "Sarna religion is our identity. The central government does not want to give importance to our Pahan, Pujar, or religious places. The central government harbours hatred towards tribals," she said.

Health minister Irfan Ansari said the Sarna code is a constitu-

tional right. "Sarna religion code is a constitutional right, and until the central government grants it, we will continue to protest," he said.

Lohardaga MP Sukhdev Bhagat said the Union government is treating tribals "worse than animals" by not providing a Sarna religion code in the census form. "The government of India counts animals but does not want to count tribal people based on their religion and thus does not want to give them a religious identity," he said.

Later, the party workers also handed a memorandum to Raj Bhawan demanding necessary action for a Sarna religion code in the census form to ensure a space for tribal people to mention their religion and protect

their religious identity. The memorandum's first paragraph explains the efforts made by the party to fulfil the demand.

"The nature-worshipping tribal society has deep faith in nature. The Congress party has been demanding the Sarna Dharma Code from the beginning. Be it the Assembly or the Lok Sabha, the Congress has raised the demand for the Sarna Dharma Code through questions in the House. During the President's Ranchi visit in May 2023, a delegation of Congress also submitted a memorandum demanding the Sarna Dharma Code," the first paragraph of the memorandum read.

The memorandum informed Governor Santosh Gangwar about the proposal passed by the Jharkhand assembly for the Sarna religion column, requesting him to initiate action from his end. "A proposal related to adding a column for the Sarna religion code in the census form was unanimously passed in the special session of the Jharkhand Legislative Assembly on November 11, 2020, and sent to the central government for consideration through the state government. Despite the continuous efforts made by the Indian National Congress, no decision has been taken to date by the central government to add a separate column for the religious identity of the tribals, 'Sarna Dharma Code.' Therefore, we submit a memorandum to you on the demand for the Sarna Dharma Code and request necessary action," it added.

MARANDI SEEKS QUOTA IN LIQUOR POLICY FOR WAR VETERANS, TRIBALS

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RANCHI: Leader of Opposition Babulal Marandi on Monday demanded an amendment to the new state liquor policy, pushing for a quota for poor tribal women and war veterans in the granting of licences to run retail liquor outlets, besides the implementation of a 'one person-one shop' methodology.

Alleging that the liquor policy, approved by the Hemant Soren Cabinet on May 15, would benefit the liquor mafia, Marandi wrote to Governor Santosh Gangwar seeking his intervention and direction to the state government for an amendment to the policy. The state government is set to auction and allot licences for 1,453 liquor shops across the state.

Marandi said, "As per the new policy, one person can get 36 shops across the state, which would once again pave the way for big businessmen and syndicates to run the liquor shops. The government should ensure that one person gets only one shop. It would help in employing more youth and the poor."

"The state government should also provide a quota in the allotment of liquor shops to poor tribal women and war veterans, as done by the central government, which provides quotas for Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, women, divyang, and war veterans in the allotment of petrol pumps and gas agencies," added Marandi.

Bank More flyover work nears completion

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DHANBAD: The rehabilitation work of the crucial Bank More flyover in Dhanbad is progressing steadily and is nearly 50% complete, with the remaining repair expected to be wrapped up by June 10, district officials said on Monday.

A high-level team, led by additional district magistrate (law & order) Piyush Sinha and sub-divisional officer Rajesh Kumar, conducted a site inspection on Monday and reviewed the status of the ongoing repair work. The team confirmed that casting and layering work on half of the bridge (facing Ray Talkies Cinema

Hall) has already been completed. The work on the remaining half (facing Ara More) is scheduled to commence on June 1, officials said.

ADM Piyush Sinha stated that strict instructions have been issued to the road construction department, particularly the executive engineer, to ensure proper flooding during the casting process.

He also highlighted the need for extreme caution while working on the side carrying the Maithon Water Pipeline, stressing that any lapse could lead to water supply disruptions. The Drinking Water and Sanitation Department has been alerted to monitor the situation closely.

Maoist killed, another captured in Latehar

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RANCHI: Security forces killed a member of the CPI (Maoist), carrying a bounty of ₹5 lakh on his head, and captured a zonal commander of the banned outfit during a gunfight in Latehar district, officials said on Monday.

"The killed Maoist was identified as Manish Yadav, a sub-zonal commander of CPI (Maoist), while the one arrested has been identified as zonal commander Kundan Kherwar," an official said.



Security personnel after an anti-Maoist operation in Latehar district on Monday.

The encounter between security personnel and Maoists was specific intelligence, a special

JMM seeks special Parl session on 'Op Sindoor'

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RANCHI: Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) on Monday demanded that the Centre convene a special session of Parliament and apprise the nation and political parties about 'Operation Sindoor' and the subsequent developments.

Addressing a press conference, JMM general secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya said that while all parties strongly support the central government in the India-Pakistan conflict, the Opposition parties also deserve to be informed about the situation that led to Operation Sin-

door and the developments following it.

Operation Sindoor was India's decisive military response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 lives. Launched between May 7 and 10, the operation targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

"A team of parliamentarians has been sent to 37 countries to apprise them about Operation Sindoor. This is a welcome continuation of tradition. However, it is equally important for the government to engage with Opposition parties who have stood with them and apprise them and the countrymen of all

related developments. And there could be no better platform than Parliament," said Bhattacharya.

The JMM leader also hit out at the Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for allegedly using Operation Sindoor for political gains. He also criticised external affairs minister S Jaishankar for his purported remark about informing Pakistan of the impending attack against the terrorist network there.

"Jaishankar's comment would be considered treason. There have been such developments about which the government should provide clarification during the special Parliament session. The Prime Minister, on the

other hand, has started doing rallies and addressing events in states that are going to polls in the coming months," he said.

BJP spokesperson Ajay Sah hit back at the JMM, describing the remarks as "anti-national". "It's difficult to comprehend whether Supriyo Bhattacharya was speaking as the spokesperson of the JMM or Pakistan. The JMM government has been a sympathiser of terrorists due to vote-bank politics. Modules of even Al-Qaeda were busted in the state recently with the arrest of a trainer, Dr. Ishfaq Ahmed. However, they have been sympathising with such people and Bangladeshi infiltrators."

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