

SC seeks Response Of States, UTs On Plea Alleging Prolonged Vacancies In Power Regulatory Bodies

NEW DELHI, OCT 9: The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from 15 states and the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on a PIL filed by NGO Energy Watchdog seeking directions to ensure that their state electricity regulatory commissions are properly constituted under the law.

The bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana issued notice on the PIL filed by the NGO through lawyer Pranav Sachdeva.

The petitioner has sought the apex court's directions directing the states and UTs to take all steps to comply with the provisions of the Electricity Act, 2003, and with the directions of the apex court in a verdict of April 2018 regarding composition of State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs).

The plea said there were



several "statutory infractions", such as prolonged vacancies in the offices of chairperson and members and the complete absence of a person of law on the Commission, across 230 SERCs in the 15 states and the UTs. In the 2018 ruling, the Supreme Court held that SERCs have the "trappings of the court" and must have a suitably qualified person of law as a member, the plea said. It said the commissions across several states, including West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Ker-

ala, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland, continue to lack a person of law despite this ruling. The plea said in Tamil Nadu, all three offices are vacant, while in Andhra Pradesh, the chairperson and member (technical) posts are vacant, and the Commission functions with a sole member (finance). Plan Trips It said that in West Bengal, only the chairperson's office has been created, and the incumbent does not have the

required legal background. The plea said the failure "strikes at consumers' access to justice" under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution and, without the mandated person of law, consumers cannot get lawful adjudication of complaints under the Electricity Act. "Consumers' access to that remedy cannot be made dependent upon indefinite executive inaction," the plea said.

It sought directions to the states of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Kerala, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Sikkim, and to the UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, directing the authorities concerned to file a reply disclosing the steps taken to ensure that their SERCs had been constituted in compliance with the Electricity Act provisions.

Unprecedented Security Clampdown In Delhi; 25K Personnel Deployed, 57 Metro Stations Shut, Mobile Internet Suspended

NEW DELHI, OCT 9: An unprecedented security clampdown has been enforced in the Capital ahead of Saturday, after Delhi Police denied permission to the Cockroach Janta Party to hold a protest at Jantar Mantar, with the deployment of 25,000 police and paramilitary personnel, closure of 57 metro stations, suspension of internet services and intensive checks at city's border points, railway stations, bus terminals, hotels and other sensitive locations.

According to police, the elaborate security arrangements are aimed at preventing protesters from staging an unauthorised sit-in at Jantar Mantar and to maintain law and order across the city amid the possibility of large-scale mobilisation of people.

Internet services will be suspended within a 4-kilometre radius of Jantar Mantar from 10 pm on October 9 to 10 pm on October 10, sources said. The Union home ministry has approved the decision, they said. The suspension will apply to all mobile internet services. Internet services in the rest of Delhi will remain unaffected, they said.

The New Delhi district has been divided into 20 zones to strengthen security arrangements and maintain law and order. Each of the 20 zones will be monitored by a Joint Commissioner of Police, a Deputy Commissioner of Police and an Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police to ensure close supervision of the security arrangements, the sources said.

Special Commissioners of Police heading various units will also closely monitor the zones and coordinate with senior officers whenever required to respond to any law-and-order situation, they added.

Addressing a press conference, Joint Commissioner Nupur Prasad said on Friday that police have denied permission for the proposed October 10 demonstration, citing the short notice given for the event and alleged violations of rules and directions during an earlier protest.

She said the application seeking permission for the demonstration was submitted on October 7, just three



days before the proposed gathering, adding that according to rules, such applications have to be submitted at least 10 days in advance.

Police said the application did not meet the stipulated notice period and that the conduct of the July demonstration had raised concerns over compliance with directions issued by authorities.

The restrictions have been proposed in view of the Cockroach Janata Party's protest at Jantar Mantar on October 10 against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

Kumar is facing allegations of voter-list tampering under the guise of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and of bypassing his two colleagues to alter Form 6, a key document to register as a voter.

As part of the security arrangements, Delhi Police conducted mock drills at several locations.

More than 120 companies of Central Armed Police Forces are expected to be involved in the security arrangements.

Liquor shops across Delhi have been ordered to remain closed on October 9 and 10 as a preventive measure. Entry and exit gates at 57 Delhi Metro stations, including Rajiv Chowk, New Delhi, Central Secretariat, Patel Chowk and Kashmere Gate, will remain closed from 9 pm on Friday till further notice.

According to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), restrictions will also continue on October 10, with the interchange facility remaining available at all affected stations except for the New Delhi metro station.

Other prominent stations where entry and exit gates will remain closed include Janpath, Mandi House, Barakhamba Road, Supreme Court, Indraprastha, ITO, Delhi Gate, Khan Market, Jama Masjid, Chandni Chowk, Hauz Khas and INA.

The list also includes Shaheen Bagh, Jamia Millia Islamia, Okhla Vihar, Kalindi Kunj, Lajpat Nagar, Ashram, Sarai Kale Khan-Nizamuddin, Welcome, Shahdara, Rithala, Rohini, Azadpur, Kashmere Gate and Shivaji Stadium, among others.

Railway services are also expected to be disrupted, with several trains scheduled to arrive at or depart from New Delhi and Hazrat Nizamuddin railway stations between 4 am and 2 pm on Saturday reported cancelled.

The restrictions are intended to prevent large groups from converging on sensitive locations and moving towards areas where demonstrations are not permitted.

The proposed measures could affect office-goers, students, shoppers and other commuters who rely on the metro for daily travel. Passengers have been advised to check official announcements.

Meanwhile, police have stepped up monitoring of social media platforms, with more than 200 content creators reportedly under scrutiny in connection with mobilisation for the protest.

Borders of the national capital will also face heightened surveillance and additional security cameras have been installed.

There is a possibility of re-

strictions on vehicles entering New Delhi after 6 am on Saturday, depending on the security assessment and the situation on the ground, police sources said.

Hotels, lodges, guest houses and dharamshalas are being checked as part of the preventive security exercise. Police are also issuing appeals from various mosques and temples, urging people to maintain peace.

Bus terminals across the Capital will witness heightened vigilance, with security personnel monitoring passengers and vehicles arriving from neighbouring states.

The airport and its approach roads are expected to remain under heightened security, with additional checks and surveillance to ensure that passenger movement remains orderly. Travellers heading to the airport have been advised to account for possible congestion and security checks while planning their journeys.

Police will keep a close watch on people associated with the protest and assess attempts to mobilise supporters through social media platforms.

More than 200 content creators have reportedly come under scrutiny as part of the monitoring exercise. Police teams are examining online posts and messages relating to mobilisation, gathering points and the proposed demonstration.

Police said security personnel will monitor developments throughout Saturday and respond to any incidents, including crowd build-up, traffic obstructions and attempts to breach barricades. (Agencies)

Russian strikes kill 2 in Ukraine as Kyiv struggles to counter escalating Russian attacks

KYIV, OCT 9: Russian strikes killed two people and wounded five more across Ukraine, officials said Friday, as Ukraine struggles to counter escalating Russian bombardments that have killed more than 50 people over the past three days.

One man was killed, and five people were wounded in Russian strikes on Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region Friday morning, said Mykhailo Semikin, the head of the regional military administration. He said that the attacks hit residential areas and that a child was among the wounded.

Another man was killed in Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine, Svitlana Onyshchuk, head of the regional military administration, reported.

Russia also attacked warehouse facilities in the Bucha district of the Kyiv region on Friday, wounding three people, Ukraine's Interior Ministry said on Telegram. It said that rescuers were searching for a woman who may still be under the rubble.

Russia and Ukraine are locked in a long-range aerial war while their armies remain largely deadlocked on the front line, more than 4 1/2 years since Moscow's full-scale invasion.

Elsewhere, a Ukrainian attack on Russia's eastern Belgorod region killed two people Friday, the area's regional emergency headquarters said. Regional gov-



ernor Alexander Shuvayev said that 12 people had been wounded in Ukrainian strikes.

Russian attacks have killed dozens of civilians across Ukraine over the past three days using a mix of ballistic missiles and jet-powered drones. On Thursday, a Russian guided bomb exploded next to public buses filled with passengers in eastern Ukraine, killing 30 people.

A day earlier, a Russian missile strike killed 22 people, including five children, in the northern Ukrainian town of Pryluky.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has warned that Moscow will likely escalate daily attacks as winter approaches, putting pressure on Ukraine as it prepares for winter and hitting the infrastructure keeping its war-battered economy afloat. Recent Russian targets have in-

cluded energy systems, key industries, railways, post offices, shopping centres, telecom networks, gas stations and grain exports.

Zelenskyy appealed on Thursday for additional defence support from NATO countries.

"It is important that support in words takes concrete form in new packages for Ukraine's defence," he wrote in an online post. "Supplies of anti-ballistic capabilities, ammunition for our combat aircraft and investments in interceptors -- all of this is directly helping save lives every day."

Without ammunition for its US-made Patriot air defence systems, Ukraine can't stop Russian ballistic weapons. It is racing to develop a new generation of interceptors fast enough to catch Moscow's high-flying jet-propelled drones.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone strike damaged a data

centre belonging to Russian technology giant Yandex, the company confirmed. It said that several modules at the centre in Russia's Kaluga region had been "completely disabled."

It is the second time in two days that the company has been targeted, with an earlier drone attack Thursday taking a data centre in Russia's western Ryazan region offline.

The governor of the Kaluga region, Vladislav Shapsha, said Friday that nine people had been wounded by drone attacks on the region.

Meanwhile, Tver regional governor Vitaly Korolyov said a Ukrainian drone sparked a fire at a factory in Redkino. No casualties were reported.

Russia's Defence Ministry said that its air defences downed 505 Ukrainian drones from late Thursday until early Friday.

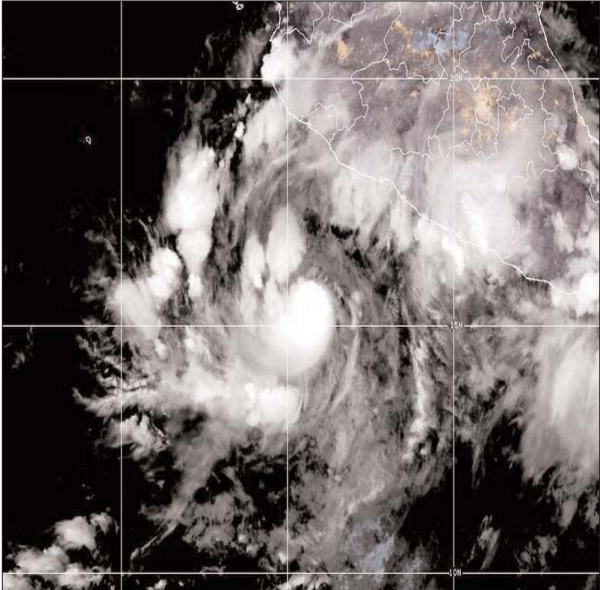
Hurricane Simon forecast to get much stronger as it heads to Mexico's Pacific coast

MIAMI, OCT 9: Hurricane Simon was headed toward part of Mexico's Pacific coast Friday and forecast to get much stronger.

US forecasters issued a hurricane warning for parts of the central and southwest coast, where hurricane-force winds were expected within 36 hours.

Simon had maximum sustained winds of 120 kph (75 mph) early Friday and was moving northwest at 7 kph (5 mph), the US National Hurricane Center in Miami said.

The Category 1 hurricane was forecast to turn to the north by early Saturday and approach the coast. Simon was expected to intensify rapidly and become a Category 4 storm before landfall. Category 4 hurricanes on the Saffir-Simpson scale have maximum sustained winds of 210-250 kph (130-156 mph).



Simon was centred about 355 kilometres (220 miles) south of Manzanillo and 525 kilometres (325 miles) south-southeast of Cabo Corrientes.

Tropical storm conditions were possible along the coast later Friday.

Simon was expected to produce torrential rainfall that could cause flooding and

mudslides. US forecasters said 20 to 38 centimetres (8 to 15 inches) of rain could fall in southwestern Mexico, with isolated areas getting up to 63 centimetres (25 inches).

Farther north, Tropical Storm Rachel was expected to reach Baja California, northwestern Mexico and Southern California this weekend. It had 95 kph (60 mph) winds and was forecast to weaken, though it may bring heavy rain to the area.

Tropical storm activity has been above average this season in the Pacific, due to the effects of a strong El Nino. The climate phenomenon typically depresses storm activity in the Atlantic. Hurricane Isaia, which was expected to hit the US Gulf Coast late Friday or Saturday, developed more than four months into the Atlantic hurricane season. (AP)

TOKYO, OCT 9: Japan on Friday slammed Russia's request for the extradition from the Netherlands of the president of the International Criminal Court, a Japanese national, and eight other officials of the court based in the European country.

The extradition requests came after Moscow issued warrants for the nine in response to the ICC's 2023 arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin over the war in Ukraine. The Moscow City Court last year sentenced the nine in absentia to prison terms.

A high-ranking Japanese official said Friday that Tokyo has expressed its protest to Moscow over the requests.

"Measures targeting individuals connected to the ICC are unjust and unacceptable," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Masanao Ozaki told reporters. "We regret that Russia made extradition requests to multiple countries nevertheless."



Ozaki said Japan would "respond appropriately, including lodging additional protests."

His comments came after Russia's Prosecutor General's Office on Thursday submitted requests to the Netherlands and a number of other countries for the extradition of the nine ICC staff, including its president, Tomoko Akane.

Moscow has accused the ICC of issuing arrest warrants against Russian citizens in violation of funda-

mental principles and norms of international law without any evidence, according to the Russian state news agency Tass.

Relations between Japan and Russia have worsened since Putin visited a Pacific Island chain claimed by Japan in August. The Soviet Union captured the islands from Japan in the final days of World War II, leading to the dispute that has kept the two countries from signing a peace treaty formally ending their hostilities.

Japan has also struggled to balance its support for the ICC and ties with the United States, which does not support the court.

Also, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has been criticised at home, including for balancing her close alliance with the US with Japan's backing of the Netherlands-based court.

"We have consistently supported the ICC and will continue to do so," Takaichi told a parliamentary session Friday.

Washington has accused the ICC of overstepping its mandate and has imposed sanctions on Akane and about a dozen other court staffers in retaliation for investigations into Israeli officials over the war in the Gaza Strip and probes into the conduct of US military personnel in Afghanistan.

The US measures freeze any assets held in US jurisdictions by those sanctioned and prevent court officials and their families from entering the US. (AP)