

Abhishek hails Covid fight in Diamond Harbour Fresh pat for 'Model' from WFP

SNEHAMOY CHAKRABORTY

Bolpur: Trinamul Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Monday took to social media again to promote his "Diamond Harbour model" and thanked people of his parliamentary constituency for their role in keeping the positive confirmation rate under 3 per cent despite proximity to Calcutta and Gangasagar.



Abhishek Banerjee

Sources in Trinamul said the Diamond Harbour MP's post made it clear that he was in no mood to retreat with the promotion of the so-called model that has generated friction in the ruling party.

"Diamond Harbour PC (parliamentary constituency) does it once again! Despite its close proximity with Gangasagar and Calcutta, Diamond Harbour PC maintains a positivity rate (percentage of total samples testing positive for Covid 19) below 3 per cent. I wholeheartedly thank the people of DIAMOND HARBOUR for their continued support and cooperation in this fight," posted Abhishek on Facebook.

The "model" is a decision in the ruling dispensation since January 8 when Abhishek went public with his personal opinion to stop all crowd-pulling events, including fairs and elections, for two months amid the third wave.

The opinion was apparently in direct contradiction of that of

the state government headed by his aunt and chief minister Manmata Banerjee.

The confusion at Nabanna seemed to have spread to the district administration of South 24 Parganas — where Diamond Harbour is situated — that led to some laxity in the sternness of the measures supposed to be taken in the constituency.

On Saturday, Trinamul secretary-general Partha Chatterjee warned of stern action against those who take any public issued as an anecdotal or mainstream media, to the detriment of the party.

On Sunday, Kamarhati MLA Madan Mitra mocked Chatterjee over the statement.

After what sources said was "a furious phone call" from Chatterjee, Mitra on Monday apologised, withdrawing his statements made the day before and lauding both the party's general secretary and

national general secretary.

Kurseong DD telecast shutdown draws flak

VIVEK CHEETRI AND BIRESWAR BANERJEE

Darjeeling: Leaders of the BJP and arch rival Trinamul Congress were on the same page in their protest against the Centre's decision to close down Analog Terrestrial TV Transmitter of Kurseong Dordardhan Kendra.

The transmission was stopped on December 31, 2021. On Monday, Shanta Chhetri, Rajya Sabha member of Trinamul, wrote to Union minister of Information and Technology Anurag Thakur to protest the Centre's decision.

BJP MLA from Kurseong, B.P. Bagchi, has also been protesting the decision. Prasar Bharati held on August 16, 2021, it was decided that 412 ATTs across the country would be closed down in three phases — on October 31, 2021, December 31, 2021 and March 31, 2022.

While most ATTs across the country were to be closed, a decision was also taken to maintain status quo of 54 ATTs in strategic areas.

The decision was taken after the I&B ministry "found that the ATT method of broadcast of television content, besides being inherently inefficient in taking the television content to the public..."

An expert committee on Prasar Bharati — India's public service broadcaster — had in January 2014 also recommended switching off analog terrestrial TV broadcasters in view of proliferation of alternative technologies and adoption of DTT Direct (DTH) as Dordardhan's primary mode of transmission.

Chhetri said Dordardhan was never established to make profits. "Unfortunately, Prasar Bharati, to whom the management of DD have been entrusted since 1997, has decided to close down the Terrestrial Services of Dordardhan with the sole aim of making profits, comparing itself with the Commercial Broadcasters which are meant only for business," Chhetri wrote in her letter.

BJP MLA Bagchi also spoke on similar lines. "We understand that analog transmission is not the way forward but technology can always be upgraded. In fact, work for digitisation of transmission from Kurseong had started and almost 70 per cent of the work had been completed before this decision was taken."

A four-day hospitalisation earlier this month on account of Covid-19 complications got Sarkar thinking. "I suffered a lot because of the pandemic and the hospitalisation prompted me to think of a solution to avoid a large physical gathering. I shared my thoughts with my family and with Aditi (Das, his fiancée). Everyone, including all my friends, wel-

Posters, 'picnic' add to BJP woes

ARKAMOU DATTA MAUMUDAR

Calcutta: Giant posters seeking the removal of the state general secretary (organisation) of the BJP, Amitava Chakrabarty, were seen near the party's state headquarters here and in other parts of central and north Calcutta.

The Bengal BJP has been witnessing an unprecedented spate of inner-party squabbling since the last month's organisation reshuffle in which several prominent faces of the party were dropped from the state committee. Dissenters in the BJP are openly demanding removal of Chakrabarty by calling him as the man of Prashant Kishore, Trinamul's post-consultant, in the BJP.

"I can't recall such loud demands for removal of a general secretary (or organisation) of our party... This is indeed unprecedented," said a BJP insider, referring to the last few days of development.

The post of general secretary (organisation), reserved for people coming to the party from the RSS, has always been held "sacrosanct", said the source.

WEDDING ONLINE & FOOD ON DOORSTEP

Way to beat crowd cap

SNEHAMOY CHAKRABORTY

Bolpur: A 58-year-old social worker and trader from East Burdwan's Palla Road, Sandipan Sarkar, has invited 400 people for his wedding on the evening of January 24, but without flouting the 200 head ceiling set by the state government for such events in the wake of the third wave of the pandemic.

Sarkar has decided to use Google Meet to telecast his wedding live for the invitees. He also tied up with Zomato to have dinner sent to the doorstep of the e-guests.

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Even as the demand for the removal of Chakrabarty, known as a low key organisation man, grew louder, sources close to him said the dissenters were overestimating their worth by orchestrating such public protests.

On Monday, several dissenting BJP leaders — led by Union Minister and Bengal candidate from Krishnagar BJP, by Opposition leader Sudendu Adhikary under the anti-defection law.

A bench of Justice L. Nageswara Rao and B.V. Nagarathna didn't, however, pass any specific directive, but rather orally hoped that the Speaker would take a decision in two weeks.

The court posted the matter for further hearing to the second week of February.

The bench adjourned the matter after briefly hearing senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi for Trinamul and senior counsel Shekhar Naphade for BJP legislator Ambika Roy, who had earlier challenged Mukul Roy's appointment as the Public Accounts Committee chairman.

The post is generally reserved for someone from the Opposition party.



Aditi Das and Sandipan Sarkar

comed the idea and asked me to go right ahead," he said.

So now, there will be only a handful of people at the ceremony, besides the bride and the groom. A link for live telecast of the ceremony would be sent to all invitees.

"I had requested all the guests to stay home and have the dinner we used, while watching our wedding online," said Sarkar. He is also part of a family-owned transport business, besides a home-based business in the area. His fiancée is a resident of Burdwan and was employed with an IT firm in Calcutta. Zomato's local offices,

SC order on Mukul defection

OUR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday allowed Bengal Assembly Speaker Biju Banerjee two weeks to take a decision on the disqualification plea filed against Mukul Roy, who had won as a BJP candidate from Krishnagar.

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Thanks for the Virattacking captaincy! Amul Leader of the pack!

Overloading whip awaits officials

KINSUK DASU

Calcutta: The Bengal government has decided to pull up officials in the transport department after showcasing them for the plying of overloaded trucks and other goods vehicles, a practice that has been strictly banned.

Transport Minister Prhad Hakin said on Monday that complaints of overloading of trucks were mostly pouring in from parts of Barhumbur, Murshidabad and the two districts of Burdwan, where most sand and stone mine quarries are located.

"Chief minister Manmata Banerjee is keen to stop the practice of overloaded vehicles moving down roads and highways damaging the road surfaces," Hakin said. "Huge amount of government expenditure is getting wasted regularly repairing roads and thoroughfares because of the wear and tear caused by movement of overloaded trucks."

The minister later offered his WhatsApp number and invited citizens to send him pictures of the vehicle, along with the name of the road where it has been spotted moving down with overloading materials.

"Overloading of goods ve-

hicles has resumed in different parts of Bengal and the transport department is deeply concerned. I have instructed the transport secretary to seek an explanation from officers regarding how overloaded vehicles were being allowed to move down roads in the districts," Hakin said on Monday.

"I will soon meet the chief secretary of the state to discuss ways as to how police can be utilised to identify the quarries across the districts from where overloading of materials is being carried out."

Although the limit is 200 tonnes — equivalent to 10 tonnes per truck, a section of residents from parts of East Burdwan, Barhumbur and Murshidabad has been complaining to the transport department top brass about how often double that amount of sand is being ferried on trucks seriously hampering the condition of the road surfaces.

9,385 fresh cases and 33 deaths

MEGHDEEP BHATTACHARYA

Calcutta: Bengal on Monday reported 9,385 Covid-19 cases, including 1,879 from Calcutta.

The state-wide tally of four digits is the first in the third wave after January 4. During the 24-hour period till 9am on Monday, the state also logged 11,634 recoveries and 33 deaths, resulting in a drop in the total of active cases by 1,682, to 1,58,623. This was the first instance of a drop in the third wave. The last drop in the total of active cases was registered on December 27 last year.

Although the infection count was considerably less than that of Sunday (total 14,508 in Bengal and 3,858 in Calcutta), the state logged only 35,515 tests on Monday. The test count was over 18,000 less than the figure on Sunday, nearly 20,000 less than Saturday and more than 37,000 less than Friday.

Twelve of the state's 23 districts reported zero deaths. Calcutta logged 32 fatalities and North 24 Parganas 11. The positive confirmation rate — the percentage of samples testing positive for the novel coronavirus — improved slightly over these three days, to 26.43 per cent on Monday (27.73 on Sunday, 26.39 on Saturday, and 14.41 on Friday). But it still means more than one out of every four tests in the states returning positive, much higher than the 5 per cent ceiling deemed tolerable in a pandemic.

At the peak of the devastating second wave last year, the rate had climbed to 33 per cent.

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