

Governor asks Congress, NCP to form ministry without delay

As the opposition pressed for president's rule in the state, Maharashtra Governor S.C. Jamir Wednesday called upon the Congress-Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) combine to 'respect the mandate of the people' and form a new government without further delay.

He was speaking to a delegation of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena that called on him at Raj Bhavan to demand imposition of president's rule in view of the 'inordinate' delay in forming the new government.

Jamir told the leaders that he was 'already seized of the problems' and was 'very anxious to have an elected government installed as early as possible'.

'I had reminded Chief Minister Ashok Chavan and NCP leaders Chhagan Bhujbal and R.R. Patil yesterday (Tuesday) that since the electorate of Maharashtra had given them a fresh mandate, it was their responsibility to respect the mandate and form a government without any further delay,' Jamir told the opposition delegation.

Jamir had Tuesday held separate meetings with Chavan and Bhujbal over the issue but failed to break the logjam as both the Congress and the NCP stuck to their stands on the issue of portfolio sharing.

BJP leader Eknath Khadse told reporters that the governor was reminded that it had been 14 days since the assembly election results were announced and the Congress-NCP alliance had secured an absolute majority to form the government.

The delegation, which also included Shiv Sena legislature party leader Subhash Desai, said the government has not yet been sworn in because the Congress and the NCP were wrangling over the issue of sharing portfolios.

Desai said the power struggle between the two was not just impeding the formation of the new government but has also brought the state administration to a standstill.

'The Congress-NCP have been given more than adequate time to form the government. Even the term of the existing assembly ended yesterday (Tuesday). We have demanded to the governor that if the Congress-NCP fail to form a government in 24 hours, he should recommend imposition of president's rule in the state,' Desai said.

The delegation also demanded that the caretaker government of Chief Minister Chavan should not be allowed to function indefinitely.

Issues like malnutrition in tribal areas and the deteriorating law and order situation were awaiting urgent attention from the government, the delegation said.

The Congress, with 82 seats, and the NCP, with 62 legislators in the 288-member assembly, are locked in a bitter squabble over sharing the portfolios in the new government.

Both parties have adopted an uncompromising stand on the issue of certain key portfolios like

home, finance, power, agriculture, urban development and public works ministries.

Last week, NCP leader Ajit Pawar said that in the 2004 elections, even though the NCP had 71 seats compared to 69 of the Congress, it agreed to accept the post of deputy chief minister and give the chief minister's post to the latter.

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