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PRESS RELEASE

Shri Randeep Singh Surjewala, MLA & Spokesperson, All India Congress Committee has issued the following statement to the press today:-

“We are stunned by latest news reports from Prime Minister’s Office suggesting that Cabinet agenda along with annexures shall hereinafter be handed over to Cabinet Ministers on Kindle on their arrival in Cabinet Meetings to block ‘leakage of information’ on critical issues along with adequate safeguards that even during Cabinet Meetings, this agenda cannot be downloaded through a USB Port or Bluetooth.

PMO, it appears, has passed a ‘No-Confidence Vote’ in the entire Cabinet. While ‘unilateralism’ and ‘autocracy’ have become hallmarks of style of functioning of the Prime Minister, latest decision is a clear affront to the constitutional scheme of applying collective wisdom of Union Cabinet on all important issues of policy and legislation.

We ask Hon’ble Prime Minister and PMO to answer following five questions to the Nation:-

- (i) What happens to the Constitutional principles of Union Cabinet’s application of collective wisdom on issues of policy and legislation?
- (ii) Why does PM not trust his Cabinet? What is the reason for this sudden ‘No Confidence Vote’? Is it because some Cabinet colleagues are raising their voice against a spate of issues being bulldozed through ordinances or is it Mr. Modi’s fear of being pointed the obvious - absence of dialogue, discussion and democratic functioning in his apparatus?
- (iii) How can a Minister receiving agenda and annexures in the meeting itself, which often runs into hundreds of pages, express opinion and share his wisdom on crucial policy and legislative measures?
- (iv) When bureaucrats/officials in Cabinet Secretariat, PMO, concerned Ministry and connected line Ministry can have access to Cabinet agenda notes in advance, why can’t Members of Union Cabinet be not trusted?
- (v) If Union Cabinet Ministers are leaking confidential information to media, why does PM not remove such Ministers instead of making the process autocratic and restrictive?

Does the PMO not know that once a decision is taken on Cabinet agenda, it can be sourced by any citizen through RTI (other than matter relating to issue of National Security and Foreign Policy)? Why is this prevailing feeling of lack of faith in the Union Cabinet?”

RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA