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Trinamool, CPI oppose postal ballots for 65-plus voters

"The decision can lead to malpractices by parties in power"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The chorus against the Election Commission's decision to extend the postal ballot facility to voters who are 65 years or above has grown with the Trinamool Congress and the Communist Party of India shooting off letters to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora opposing the move.

(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury was the first to flag the issue. The Congress too wrote to the Election Commission (EC) last week protesting against the decision. According to informed sources, other Opposition parties too will be sending similar letters in the next few days.

The EC notified amendments to the Conduct of Election Rules on June 19, extending the postal ballot fa-



D. Raja

cility – that so far was available only for armed forces personnel and government servants posted abroad – to those above 65 years and any one suffering from COVID-19.

CPI General Secretary D. Raja in a letter to Mr. Arora said this decision could "jeopardise the democratic process of free and fair elec-

tions" and would "lead to malpractices and foul play by those parties which are in power and have resources". He urged the EC to hold wider consultations and not to act "unilaterally".

Arbitrary: Trinamool

The Trinamool Congress called the July 19 amendment "arbitrary, mala fide, unconstitutional" and "ex facie a violation of right to secrecy of vote and right to free and fair elections."

In a letter to the CEC, Trinamool General Secretary Subrata Bakshi pointed out that 6% of the population is 65 years old.

He said that with the postal ballot, there was a greater chance of disclosure of voter's preference to the public at large, which violated the fundamental premise of secrecy of vote.