

Would not allow the state's peace to be disturbed at any cost

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Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Tuesday said his government would not stop students from protesting against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and other controversial actions of the central government, but would not allow the state's peace to be disturbed at any cost.

Referring to the proposed January 1 statewide protest by left aligned student unions against the CAA, as well as the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR), the Chief Minister said protest was the democratic right of every citizen of India and people, including students, were within their right to stage peaceful dharna, march etc. against these draconian initiatives of the central government, as long as such protests were conducted peacefully.

Even his government, Captain Amarinder pointed out, was totally opposed to CAA, NRC etc in view of the fundamentally divisive and discriminatory nature of the legislation/action initiated by the BJP-led government at the Centre. In fact, during an anti-CAA dharna organised by the Punjab Congress in Ludhiana on Monday, he had reiterated his government's decision not to allow the controversial legislation to be implemented in the state under any circumstances.

There was, thus, no question, of barring students from coming out against these actions of the central government, said the Chief Minister, making it clear that as long as the protestors did not take the law in their hands in any manner, the police would not prevent them from carrying out their proposed campaign.

However, the Chief Minister warned that no violence or destruction of public property would be tolerated during the planned protest. The police had been directed to come down heavily against any attempt by the protestors to vandalise public property or otherwise indulge in any violence during their protest, he added.

Captain Amarinder also urged the student leaders to ensure that proposed protest is carried out peacefully, and to keep a check for possible infiltration of goonda elements among the protestors. It may be noted that peaceful protests in some other states had ended up in violence due to such infiltrations.

The police will, said the Chief Minister, maintain a strict vigil not just in and around the university campuses but in other sensitive areas and public places across the state, throughout the day.

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