

109 held in nationwide crackdown against PFI

NIA, ED and police conduct searches across 15 States; most of the arrests made in Kerala, followed by Karnataka and Maharashtra; Popular Front condemns the operation, terms the arrests 'unjust'

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

In a nationwide crackdown, 109 leaders and activists of the Popular Front of India (PFI) were arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the police during searches conducted across 15 States on Thursday.

Most of the arrests have been made in Kerala (22), followed by Karnataka (20) and Maharashtra (20), Tamil Nadu (10), Assam (10) and Uttar Pradesh (8).

'Baseless claims'

The PFI, through a statement, condemned the raids and termed the arrests "unjust", a witch-hunt against the outfit's members and supporters and "the harassment of its national and State leaders" across the country.



Under lens: Popular Front of India former chairman E. Abubacker being taken to the Patiala House court in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

"The NIA's baseless claims and sensationalism are solely aimed at creating an atmosphere of terror. We will never be intimidated by such scare tactics by a totalitarian regime that uses the Central agencies as its puppets," said the PFI national executive council.

Among the main persons arrested are PFI chairman O.M.A. Salam, vice-chairman E.M Abdul Rahiman, its national vice-chairman P. Koya, former outfit chief E. Abubacker and national general secretary Nasurudeen Elamaram.

The NIA searched 93 places in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, West Bengal, Bihar and Manipur.

"The houses of top PFI leaders and members were covered in connection with five cases registered by the NIA," said an agency official. At 45 locations, the ED officials were part of the joint teams, also comprising security personnel.

The clampdown was based on inputs that the accused were funding terror acts, organising weapon training camps and radicalising people to join banned outfits.

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