

Why CIC order on environment cost not enforced: HC

NEW DELHI, JAN 31 /-/- A Delhi High Court today sought response of Delhi government on why it has not complied with a 2011 CIC order to display information of the environmental cost, including the number of trees felled, of each development project in the city. Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva issued notice to Delhi government departments of forest, wildlife, environment and urban development and asked them to appear on a plea seeking implementation of the August 5, 2011 order of the Central Information Commission (CIC). The order was listed for further hearing on March 3.

The petition was filed by a lawyer who has claimed that when he had in 2013 sought, under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the reason for non-implementation, he was informed by the forest department that the CIC order was not complied with as it "was not traceable to account of a fire accident" in April 2012. The department, however, had said that all concerned divisions have been asked to comply with the order of the Commission, advocate Aditya Prasad had said in his petition. Thereafter, in 2015, when he sought details of implementation under RTI, he was told that the divisional office has not received the CIC order. Prasad has contended that even as the current environmental situation in the city was deteriorating day by day, the authorities were displaying a "lackadaisical attitude" by "willfully disobeying" the order of the CIC. CIC, in its order, had directed the departments to publish on their websites from September 1, 2011 onwards, the environmental cost, including number of trees felled, of the projects along with details of compensatory plantations. Information to be displayed also included "details of permissions given for felling and pruning trees along with applicant's details, number of trees, reasons for approval and location, among others".

As per the petition, the departments also had to display "details of complaints received on the tree helpline, together with details of number of trees cut, location, status of complaint and status of prosecution undertaken", if any. (PTI)

Mehbooba's remarks on Article 370 rock JK Assembly; BJP sees red

JAMMU, JAN 31 /-/- Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was today rocked by a chain of protests, walkouts and two adjournments over Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's remarks that those working to scrap Article 370 will be doing a big "anti-national" act as BJP demanded that her comments be expunged. During the Zero Hour, BJP MLA Rajiv Jasrotia drew the attention of Speaker Kavidar Gupta and the House towards the remarks made by Mehbooba in the state Assembly yesterday. "I want to draw your attention towards the chief minister's remarks. Some want autonomy, some self rule and BJP has its own ideology. BJP has the core issue of abrogating Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir and we are not anti-

nationals," Jasrotia, who is an MLA from Hiranagar, said. He demanded that her remarks should be expunged as those opposing Article 370 are not anti-nationals. As the Speaker agreed to the demand, the members of NC and Congress were up on their feet in opposition, terming the move as illegal. NC member Ali Mohammad Sagar, flanked by other opposition members, asked the Speaker, "How can you do it (expunge the CM's remarks). You are making a mockery of this House." The members walked into the Well of the House, raising anti-government slogans, and demanded that the government should resign over this issue. PDP members also staged a walkout over the expunging of the remarks. Protests, sloganeering and

noisy scenes forced the Speaker to adjourn the House for 15 minutes. Earlier in the morning, Independent MLA A from Udhampur Pawan Gupta was marshalled out of the Assembly when he created an uproar and protested against Mehbooba's remarks. BJP MLA Ravindra Raina had also raised the issue soon after the House began this morning, claiming that Article 370 is defrauding the people of Jammu and Kashmir and its abrogation is the core ideology of BJP. "BJP does not have full majority if the BJP gets two-thirds majority, it will scrap Article 370. Let there be a discussion in the House over Article 370," Raina said. In a clear message to ally BJP, the CM had yesterday

said anybody weakening Article 370, which grants special status to the state, will be doing the "biggest anti-national act". There are some forces within this country who think that by scrapping Article 370, the issue of Kashmir will be resolved and everything will be alright," she said. BJP's stated position is that Article 370 should be scrapped for total integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India. "There is a conspiracy being hatched against our culture and state. Those who speak against Article 370, they don't know that the Article 370, which is our special status, is in our character because of which we have dismissed the two ideological narrative of two-nation theory and also religion, and have shaken hands with India," Mehbooba said. (PTI)

EC orders closure of 5 distilleries in poll-bound Punjab

CHANDIGARH, JAN 31 /-/- The Election Commission today ordered closure of five distilleries in Punjab until the assembly elections are over, days after more than one lakh bottles of liquor were seized in one of the biggest seizures of alcohol in Bathinda. "The Commission has ordered closure of five distilleries. The production and dispatching of liquor in these distilleries have been stopped till the elections are over," Punjab Chief Electoral Officer V K Singh told reporters here. The five distilleries and bottling plants, which have been shut down, are BCL Industries in Bathinda, Patiala Distillers and bottlers in Patiala, Adri Brownson Breweries, Kiri Aggans in Gurdaspur, Mank Sangur and Pernod Ricard Gholumajra in Mohali, an official said. Singh said that liquor in huge quantity had been recovered in several parts of Punjab including Pathankot, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana and Jalandhar ahead of assembly polls. "The source of supply of (illegal) liquor to vendors from where the seizure was made have been established and five distilleries have been stopped temporarily. Liquor trade is regulated and no one can take out even one

bottle without permission," said Singh. After the code of conduct came into force, the Election Commission launched a crackdown on the illegal supply of liquor for luring voters during Punjab assembly polls. In one of the biggest seizures of alcohol in Punjab, the state excise department on Saturday recovered over one lakh bottles of liquor in Bathinda district, brought from multiple states like Haryana, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh. Besides, 1,000 cases of liquor in Hoshiarpur and 2,100 cartons from Pathankot were also recovered. Liquor distributed from the state was also recovered in Jalandhar and Samrala in Ludhiana. The haul of illegal liquor was made after the Election Commission placed a state-wide drive to check distribution of liquor during high-stakes assembly polls in Punjab. Asked about any action in case of Bathinda seizure, Punjab Additional Director General of Police V K Bhawra said police was investigating the matter and action would be taken against the owners of godown from where the liquor bottles were recovered. Poling will be held in Punjab tomorrow. The state assembly 4 and results will be declared on March 11. (PTI)



Jaat community people staging a dharna against reservation in Jind on Tuesday.

TN tables bills to circumvent NEET

CHENNAI, JAN 31 /-/- In a bid to continue Tamil Nadu's present system of admitting students to MBBS, BDS and post graduate medicine and dentistry courses, two Bills were today introduced in the State Assembly apparently aimed at circumventing the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test. In Tamil Nadu, admission to MBBS and BDS is being done on the basis of 12th standard marks, which include qualifying examination, and admission to PG courses in medicine and dentistry is done on the basis of an entrance exam and experience. Moving the Bills, Health Minister C Vijayabaskar in his Statement of Objects said admission to MBBS and BDS courses are done in the State as per the TN Admission in Profession Educational Institutions Act, 2006 adding admission to PG courses are on the basis of 12th standard marks. The Centre has amended the Indian Medical Council Act and the Dentists Act to conduct a uniform entrance exam (NEET) at the UG and PG level, he noted. "The bulk of students who

would appear for the uniform entrance exam in Tamil Nadu come from rural areas and facilities for them to access coaching classes to equip themselves for the examination are not available," he said and cited paucity of funds and economic conditions of students. "It has been opined that the uniform entrance exam have become a traumatic experience for the parents and children as it appears to determine at one stroke the future of the child." Two exam itself was a "serious exam of merit" casting a high burden on students, he said and added that it was very much an entrance test to get admitted to higher level professional courses obviating, hence, the need for any separate uniform entrance examination, which would be an additional burden on students, he said. "The syllabus, methodology and the content of the uniform entrance exam (proposed by the Centre) is based on the syllabus prescribed for Higher Secondary Course of the CBSE which is different from the syllabus of the Tamil Nadu

Board," he noted. "Hence to meet such challenges of the Tamil Nadu students, the government has taken a policy decision to continue the present procedure of admission to MBBS and BDS courses on the basis of the 12th standard marks," he said. As regards PG admissions, it is being done after excluding 50 per cent seats reserved for all India quota based on entrance examination and experience. "Fifty per cent of seats in each specialty of the PG Courses is allocated to doctors in government service," he said adding on selection, the government doctors are required to serve the government till superannuation and non-service doctors to serve the State for not less than two years to provide quality health care to the people. Under the circumstances, if the Uniform entrance exam is held by the Centre for admission to PG courses, the "scheme presently followed by the State would be thrown out of gear and the avowed objective of providing quality health care to the rural and needy would be defeated." (PTI)

Court extends Manipur's proscribed KCP chief's custody

NEW DELHI, JAN 31 /-/- A Delhi court today extended till February 13 the judicial custody of Manipur's proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) chief Khoirom Ranjit, arrested here earlier this month for allegedly planning to carry out terror strikes here. Additional Sessions Judge Reetesh Singh also extended the custody of Ranjit's associates Inugbam Sanatombi Devi and P Prem Kumar in Fihar Jail two weeks after the Delhi Police special cell said more persons are likely to be apprehended in the case. The court extended the custody of all the three accused after they were produced before it on the expiry of their earlier judicial remand. Ranjit and Devi were arrested on January 12 from East Delhi's Mayur Vihar area while Kumar was arrested in Imphal at the same date. The Special Cell had claimed that the accused had shifted the terror outfit's base to Delhi and were planning to carry out terror strikes here. It had said that all the three accused were members of the banned outfit and Ranjit was its commander-in-chief. It had contended that the accused were required in several cases in Manipur. (PTI)

E-commerce portal directors arrested in cheating case

HYDERABAD, JAN 31 /-/- Two directors of a Delhi-based e-commerce portal have been arrested for allegedly cheating a sales professional from here of Rs 5.12 lakh on the pretext of delivering him a car, which he was told to have won in a lucky draw, police said today. Directors of e-commerce portal www.dealsdilli.com - Amit Bidra and Chandrashekar Upadhyaya were arrested from New Delhi for cheating a Senior Zonal Sales Manager of reputed company of Rs 5.11,899 after promising him delivery of a Honda Amaze car which he was stated, by the accused, to have won in a lucky draw for his previous purchase from their portal. Rachakonda Commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat said today. In the second week of August 2016, the victim purchased an item worth Rs 2,000 online from www.dealsdilli.com and after the items were delivered he received e-mail from sales@dealsdilli.com that he won a Honda Amaze car for doing online shopping from their website. For that, they asked him to pay only for the registration and delivery charges for receiving the car.

Believing it to be true, initially he paid Rs 2499. After that, the accused through lady tele-callers made him to transfer money for charges like insurance, colour, handling charges, facilitation fee, etc. Likewise, the victim paid Rs 3,18,899 till December last year, the Commissioner explained. From first week of January this year, the victim started receiving calls from new numbers claiming to be calling on behalf of the accused and asked him to pay money for legal process charges for the return of the money he already paid. Trusting their words and because of constant persuasion through phone calls he further paid Rs 1,89,000 for claiming the previously paid sum. Thus he totally paid Rs 5,11,899. Ultimately, he realised that he was cheated and lodged a complaint, Bhagwat said. A case was booked and during course of investigation, the two directors were nabbed in Delhi on January 29 and brought them to Hyderabad on transit remand and were remanded to judicial custody. Further probe is on. (PTI)

Jat stir enters third day, remains peaceful

CHANDIGARH, JAN 31 /-/- The ongoing Jat quota agitation in Haryana today entered its third day and no untoward incident was reported from anywhere, officials said here. Amid elaborate security arrangements, the Jats held dharnas at several locations which remained peaceful, they said. The call for the fresh stir has

been given by some Jat outfits, especially those owing allegiance to All India Jat Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti. The members of the community have been staging peaceful dharnas at Ramayan village near Hisar-Bhiwani railway track, Joliath village on Sonapat-Gohana road, Jassia village on Rohtak highway,

Rasalwala Chowk in Jhajjar, Umraikheri village near Panipat-Shamli road and at some other places. Internet services had been suspended in the vicinity of dharna sites to check spread of rumours. Authorities have also imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC in some areas of the sensitive districts, banning

gathering of five or more people. Paramilitary forces are out in sensitive areas while heavy police force has been deployed to maintain strict vigil. During a similar stir a year ago, there were 30 deaths and widespread destruction of property. This time, Haryana has been put on maximum alert, officials said. Rapid Action Force has

been deployed at Munak canal in Sonapat district to ensure uninterrupted water supply to the national capital. The agitators had damaged the canal during last year's stir. Notably, Rohtak and some of its neighbouring districts, including Sonapat and Jhajjar had been worst-hit by the violence.

Boy dies of swine flu in private hospital

Coimbatore, Jan 31 /-/- A one-year-old boy succumbed to swine flu at a private hospital here today, police said. The boy was brought to the hospital from Salem few days ago. However, he died this morning, they said. This is the fourth death due to swine flu in the district since January one, they said. Special wards have been created in all government hospitals in the district. There was sufficient stock of medicines and testing kits were available in government hospitals, health department sources said. (PTI)

Special cinema package begins in Kochi today

KOCHI, JAN 31 /-/- A cross-border production by two filmmakers who never once met in person during its three-year shoot will be the first film shown in a special cinema package that begins tomorrow at the ongoing third edition of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale. The critically acclaimed Indian film package conceived by the Kochi Biennale Foundation. The screening, which begins at 6.30 pm on Wednesday at the Pavilion in Cabral Yard, is a part of the Foundation's Artist's Cinema programme.

Films in the special package will be screened intermittently throughout the Biennale, according to a release here. Directed by Miriam Chandry Menacherry from Mumbai and Maheeb Zia from Karachi, the film is structured as a coming-of-age story, following the lives of four girls, Aaga, Mehroz, Javeria and Sherbano, who live in multi-ethnic, volatile Lyari.

Lugging guitars that are bigger than themselves, the girls make the often perilous journey to a music school in the suburb. The commute is so dangerous that their instructor Hamza Jafri a musician famous for his hand-hitting political lyrics trow out in an armed vehicle. Covering the period from 2012-2015, the narra-

tive intertwines personal story arcs with on the ground events in Pakistan general elections, the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Malala Yousafzai in 2014 and the attack on Army Public School in Peshawar later that year as seen through the eyes of the young protagonists. "The story is timeless and universal: on the search for a space of creativity and self-expression in the face of overt threats and violence. Such spaces are quickly shrinking around the world when confronted by ideologies and extremism of all hues said Riyas Komu, KBF Secretary. "The individual acts of seeking them out despite the risks are crucial acts of resistance and deserve not

only to be chronicled, but also communicated to diverse audiences on diverse platforms. The screening of Lyari Notes on the sidelines of the Biennale is one such attempt," he said. The making of the film was a story in itself with Menacherry and Zia communicating via Skype chats, enlisting the help of Indian and Pakistani cine technicians and transmitting footage across the border by swapping hard drives. In between, Zia would film in Karachi when advised by the locals of Lyari that it was safe to do so and Menacherry would edit in Mumbai. Going through a crowd-funding phase in December-January 2015, the film received contributions from across the world. (PTI)

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