

Honour killing: UDF stalls Kerala Assembly, seeks CBI probe

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 4 /-/- The alleged incident of honour killing of a Dalit Christian man last month rocked the Kerala Assembly today, with the Opposition disrupting the proceedings to press its demand for a CBI probe.

The Congress-led Opposition UDF members, who entered the House carrying placards with slogans against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and police written on them, alleged that "laxity and lapse" on the part of the local police had resulted in the gruesome killing of 23-year-old Kevin P. Joseph.

Joseph was abducted on May 27 from Kottayam by a gang allegedly hired by his fiancée's family, who were opposed to their marriage. His body was recovered from a river in Kollam district the next day.

Coming down hard on the police, Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said lapses by the law enforcers had become a "daily affair" since the LDF came to power. "Kevin's was a cold-blooded murder and police was not prepared to register the case even after his family members came to the police station and informed them about his abduction," he said.

Alleging that police was hand in glove with the accused, Chennithala said there were serious lapses even on the part of senior officers. "Since we don't have confidence in Kerala police, the investigation should be handed over to the CBI," he demanded.

Virtually rejecting the Opposition's demand, the chief minister said a special team led by

range IG Vijay Sakhare was investigating the case and that the probe was proceeding in the right direction. He said stringent action would follow.

Altogether 14 people have been arrested and remained in the case so far, he said, adding action was also taken against police officials for dereliction of duty.

He admitted that the local police had initially not handled the case with the seriousness it required.

"The government will not protect any police officer who failed to take immediate action. More tough measures will follow," Vijayan said.

He also criticised the Opposition for trying to "politicise" the incident, which should not have happened in a progressive state like Kerala.

The chief minister rejected the

allegation by Congress member Thiruvanchoru Radhakrishnan that a junior doctor had conducted the post-mortem examination of the slain man.

Seeking admission of his notice for adjournment of the House and holding a discussion on the issue, Radhakrishnan alleged that police was trying to tamper with evidence and sabotage the investigation. As Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan rejected the notice, Opposition members trooped into the well of the House, raising slogans against the government. With his repeated requests for restoring order falling on deaf ears, the Speaker adjourned the House for the day after taking up some items listed on the agenda. (PTI)

Police foil immolation bid by two Cong MLAs at Amravati

AMRAVATI, JUNE 4 /-/- The police today foiled an immolation bid by two Congress MLAs over farmers' issues near the district collectorate here and detained both of them, an official said.

Virendra Jagtap and Yashomati Thakur, the legislators from Dharamgaon Railway and Tosa constituencies respectively in Amravati district, were detained just before they could pour kerosene and set themselves ablaze, Deputy Commissioner of Police Chinmay Pandit said.

The local Congress unit had recently taken out a 'silent morcha' and given an ultimatum to the district administration to ask the agricultural produce market committee (APMC) to start procurement of 'tur' (a pulse variety) and 'harbhara' (gram). Jagtap told PTI.

The party had also demanded that farmers be given arrears of three months for their crops which were already procured, he said.

"Since there was no response, we protested against the administration's apathy by taking out a morcha to the district collectorate today," he said.

The two MLAs had also threatened to

immolate themselves in front of the collectorate.

However, the district police had deployed personnel in plain clothes at the place in advance and detained the two legislators when they came to immolate themselves. The two MLAs were detained and later released, Pandit said.

Later Jagtap accused the BJP government of being "thick-skinned" and "insensitive" towards farmers.

"With monsoon just around the corner, the government has purchased tur and gram from only 25 to 30 per cent farmers who had registered online. The prices of tur and gram have now fallen," he said.

He claimed that 67 per cent farmers from the district were yet to benefit from the government's loan waiver scheme.

"Their farmers' condition is miserable. They don't have money to cultivate their land for kharif crops or to pay for labour. It is the government's good fortune that farmers are letting ministers and (ruling party) MLAs move freely," he said.

If the situation does not improve, farmers will not let the ministers and legislators move freely, Jagtap warned. (PTI)

BJP's by-poll defeat duo disenchantment of OBCs: Rajbhar

BALLIA, JUNE 4 /-/- Terminating disenchantment of OBCs as the reason for the BJP's defeat in by-elections, Uttar Pradesh minister-in-charge Prakash Rajbhar said the backward classes were unhappy with the party as BJP leader Keshav Prasad Maurya was not made the chief minister.

"The BJP contested assembly polls with Keshav Prasad Maurya (a OBC) as its face but later Yogi Adityanath was made chief minister. Backwards supported the BJP in the hope that Maurya will become CM. The result of this anger reflected in the defeat of the BJP in bypolls", Rajbhar, who is cabinet minister and head of Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party, told PTI over phone.

Asked whether Yogi Adityanath is responsible for the defeat in bypolls, he said, "Government is responsible. The BJP should introspect about reasons of its defeat. It is up to the BJP whom to make CM. It's up to the party to make Yogi or Keshav as CM." The BJP lost both the Kairana and Noorpur assembly seats in recent polls. Tabassum Hasan of the Rashtriya Lok Dal won the Kairana seat by a margin of 44,818 votes, while Naemul Hasan of the SP bagged the Noorpur Assembly seat by 5,662 votes. The winning RLD candidate in Kairana was backed by the Congress, the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. In Noorpur, the main opposition parties supported the SP nominee.

Against this united opposition, the BJP's all-out effort to stop a chain of losses in bypolls in the state since 2014 proved futile, even though Chief Minister Adityanath led from the front. (PTI)



Samajwadi Party president and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav cycling at river front, in Lucknow on Monday morning.

Badal blames Cong 'misrule' for farmers' plight

NEW DELHI, JUNE 4 /-/- As farmers' protest entered 6th day in several states, Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badaal today blamed the Congress' 70-year "misrule" for the current plight of farmers and described the party as "pot calling the kettle black".

She further said Congress President Rahul Gandhi should first address the agrarian crisis in Punjab where farmers are committing suicide every day, before talking about transforming the entire nation. Farmers in several states including Punjab and Haryana have launched a 10-day agitation to press their demands, including loan waiver and right price for crops. They are dumping vegetables, milk and other farm produce on roads and blocking supplies to cities in several states. "The current plight of farmers was mainly due to 70 years of misrule by the Congress party," said the food processing minister, who is also a leader of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD). "They looted the nation and created policy paralysis. They are now fine talking about farmers. As far as Congress pointing out fingers to say anything is concerned, it is not calling the kettle black," she told media while highlighting the government's

4-year achievements in the food processing sector. Before talking about transforming the entire country, the Congress chief should first visit Punjab where five farmers are committing suicide every day, Badaal said. The poll promises made to farmers were not fulfilled, she said. "Before heading to transform the nation, please change small state Punjab so that people have some confidence that you can make a difference," she said adding that Congress should look within before levelling allegations. SAD is an ally of the ruling NDA. Punjab is ruled by the Congress.

Stating that food processing sector has grown significantly during the four-year NDA rule, Badaal said it is all set to become the most robust sector in India to contribute in a big way to the country's growth and double farmers' income by 2022.

In the previous regime, the food processing sector was totally disorganised and the industry was apprehensive of launching new projects or products and committed projects were being delayed and shelved. "After four years, we have reversed the business environment and turned it into the most buoyant and happening sector," she said. (PTI)

Haryana to introduce programme for students

CHANDIGARH, JUNE 4 /-/- The Haryana government has decided to introduce a two-day orientation programme for new students in all colleges for academic session 2018-19 so that they become familiar with the campus services, faculty, rules and regulations. While stating this here today, Education Minister Ram Bilas Sharma said that this programme would help the students to get acquainted with the new environment and inculcate in them the ethos of the institution with a sense of larger purpose. He said that it has been decided that at least 100 students would be provided with various facilities and information in their first week in the college.

These included providing copy of the time table, identity card, library card, copy of the syllabus, copy of the lesson plans, list of student clubs and societies, list of mentors and foundation booklet, he said.

Sharma said that in Haryana, 1.5 lakh students take admission in colleges every year. These students come from various backgrounds and are normally unaware of campus and college scenario, he added. In order to ease their transition into college, the department of higher education has decided to introduce two-day orientation programme in all colleges, he said. He said that the most important task of orientation is to get students acquainted with college life, he said.

By attending informational session and advising sessions, students can learn about school policies, general rules, the honour code and more, he said. Students will be given a wealth of information in a short period of time, he said. The colleges' goal for students is to immerse themselves in college life so that when they arrive on campus in new academic session they can hit the ground running, he said.

TN gov announces release of 67 lifers, DMK welcomes move

CHENNAI, JUNE 4 /-/- The Tamil Nadu government today announced the pre-mature release of 67 life convicts who had completed 10 years of imprisonment, in commemoration of the birth centenary of former Chief Minister M G Ramachandran and the move was welcomed by the principal opposition DMK.

In the first phase, 67 convicts who have served 10 years, in prisons across the state, as on February 25 would be released, an official released today, he said.

The decision had been announced by chief minister K Palaniswami during an MGR birth centenary event at Dindigul in December last.

In accordance with Article 161 of the Constitution, which empowers a Governor to grant pardons and to commute sentences and as per guidelines of the Supreme Court and High Courts on the issue of pre-mature release, two Government Orders were issued.

The GOs envisage guidelines for the release of prisoners, it added.

Welcoming the move, Leader of Opposition, M K Stalin, asked why the announcement was not made in the Assembly and if it was in keeping with the House tradition. Law Minister C V Shanmugam said the release of prisoners, being proposed by the government was a "continuing task," indicating that was why an announcement in this regard was not made in the House.

Opposition Banwarilal Purohit has to give sanction for the proposed release of prisoners. Shanmugam said adding a case by case review of convicts including their criminal background was being done in keeping with the Supreme Court guidelines.

"Unlike the release of prisoners during your (DMK) regime (2006-11), now it is being done on a case by case basis as per Supreme Court guidelines," he said.

In the Central prisons in the State, committees were set up to give recommendations for remission of sentence, he noted.

CM seeks public support for polythene-free Uttarakhand

DEHRADUN, JUNE 4 /-/- Chief Minister Trivedra Singh Rawat today sought the support of people of the state for building a polythene-free Uttarakhand. In his message to the people on the eve of the World Environment Day, Rawat expressed his government's commitment to build a polythene-free Uttarakhand, but said that the objective could not be achieved without their support.

The theme of the World Environment Day 2018 is 'Beat Plastic Pollution', describing Uttarakhand as the flag-bearer of environment protection due to its huge forest wealth and rivers, he said besides government efforts, public support was a must for protecting the state's rich biodiversity.

The chief minister appealed to the people, public representatives and voluntary organisations to make the public aware of the importance of environment protection and make efforts for its preservation.

Chandrababu Naidu indulging in spit and run politics: BJP

AMARAVATI, JUNE 4 /-/- The BJP today accused the ruling TDP in Andhra Pradesh of indulging in "spit-and-run politics" and carrying out "organised propaganda" against the saffron party's government at the Centre for political gains.

Lashing out at Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for his attack on the Centre, BJP national spokesperson G V Narasimha Rao said the TDP's "supremacy" was "carrying out an organised propaganda and spreading lies".

Since snapping ties with the NDA in March this year, Naidu has been targeting the BJP at the Centre, accusing them of going back on the "promise" of granting special category status to Andhra Pradesh and also hatching conspiracies against the TDP, Rao said. "He (Naidu) is trying not only to hoodwink people but also provoke them for political gains. This is opportunistic and cynical politics." Naidu was adopting "spit-and-run politics" and trying to sling mud at the BJP and the Narendra Modi government, which was unbecoming

of a chief minister, he told reporters here. The BJP national spokesperson alleged that Naidu had no stability of thought and was spreading "falseness" on different issues such as the financial assistance to capital city Amaravati and the special economic grant to backward districts.

"How can the state government expect funds without submitting proper utilisation certificates for the money already granted?" he asked.

Rao alleged, "His (Naidu's) only success in the last four years had been in making Andhra Pradesh the number one state in the country in corruption. India Corruption Study, an annual survey of corruption in various states, clearly established this."

While the Centre was ready to help Andhra Pradesh by all means, the state government remained indifferent, he claimed, adding, "We are ready to implement the special (economic) assistance measures promised in September 2016."

"However, the state government is not coming forward to do its part, like

setting up a special purpose vehicle to draw funds for different projects," Rao said.

The state government only wanted direct fund flow with an "ostensible aim of misappropriating it. We will not let that happen," the senior BJP leader said.

He recalled that the TDP's supreme had on April 10 last year proposed a resolution during an NDA meeting that Narendra Modi should continue to be the NDA's prime ministerial candidate in 2019.

"But we all know how he changed colours, putting even a chameleon to shame," Rao said referring to Naidu snapping ties with the NDA over special category status for Andhra Pradesh.

BJP state president Kanna Lakshminarayana alleged the Chandrababu Naidu government had been splurging crores of rupees of public money on wasteful events like "Dharma Parata Deeksha and Nava Nirmana Deeksha." "Why is people's money being spent on a party's political propaganda?" he asked. (PTI)

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