

Oppn disrupts proceedings in Kerala House over CM's 'extremist' remark

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 8 /- The Kerala Assembly today witnessed noisy scenes with the Congress-led Opposition UDF protesting the remarks of chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan that a section of it was encouraging extremist elements.

The Opposition sought to raise the issue as an adjournment motion during zero hour, which Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan disallowed saying that a debate could not be allowed on a remark made by a member in the House. Vijayan had on Thursday, while replying to an adjournment motion related to an incident of alleged police torture of a man at Aluva in Kochi, had stated the protest against police that followed the incident had "an

extremist character." Justifying his decision not to allow a debate, the Speaker said Congress parliamentary secretary K C Joseph, MIA, has written a letter to the Chair seeking to expunge the remarks terming it as 'undignified' and 'defamatory'. "The chair is examining the letter of Joseph, the Speaker added. Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala insisted on a discussion, saying the chief minister's remarks were very serious. He alleged that Vijayan had insulted the entire Opposition and also the people of Aluva. As UDF members continued anti-government sloganeering near the well of the house, the Speaker requested the chief minister's acceptance to speak on the issue. When

Vijayan rose to speak, opposition members disrupted his speech and the House plunged into turmoil with ruling bench legislators also joining the issue. UDF members had come to the house wearing a badge asking the chief minister whether they were extremists. As the commotion continued, Chennithala announced that they were boycotting proceedings and trooped out of the house. Making a statement in the House in the absence of the Opposition, Vijayan said he had reminded about the danger of extremism and need for a vigil against militancy.

He said his stand on the issue was very clear and stressed that it was a fact that there was intervention of extremist forces behind the protest

against police in Aluva. Encouraging such elements would be a danger to the nation, he added. In this context, Vijayan also said one of those who created trouble in Aluva was not only an extremist, but also had links with terrorists. Vijayan, a senior CPM politburo member, also reminded the Congress about the consequences the nation had to face for encouraging Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in Punjab. Later talking to newspersons, Chennithala said the chief minister will be charged against the opposition to cover up police lapses and atrocities. "We don't want any certificate from Vijayan for our fight against terrorists," Chennithala said.

Naxal commander killed in encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh

RAIPUR, JUNE 8 /- A Naxal commander was today gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Bijapur district, police said.

The gun-battle took place early this morning in the jungles of Jaramongia under Bhairamgarh police station limits when a joint team of District Reserve Guard (DRG) and local police was out on an anti-naxal operation. Bijapur superintendent of police Mohit Garg told news agency PTI.

"When the patrolling team was cordoning off Jaramongia jungles, located around 500 kms away from the state capital, it came under heavy fire by a group of 25-30 ultras following which gun-battle broke out between the two sides," he said.

The exchange of fire lasted for about an hour, after which the ultras fled into the dense forest, he said.

"During search of the spot, the body of a Maoist clad in 'uniform' along with one 7.62 mm pistol and its 3 live rounds, explosives, detonators, tiffin bomb, Naxal literature and Maoist related items were recovered from the spot," he said. The deceased Naxal was identified as Moti Farsa (28), who was active as Ider militia platoon commander of Maoists, Garg said. Further details are awaited as security forces were still carrying out a search of the area, he added.



Vehicles ply on a flooded road after rain in Lucknow on Friday.

KC-M back in Cong-led UDF in Kerala after a 2-year hiatus

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 8 /- The Kerala Congress-M was today back in the Opposition UDF a day after the Congress announced the decision to support its candidate for the Rajya Sabha election.

The seat is currently held by Rajya Sabha deputy chairman P J Kurian of the Congress who will retire on July 1. KC-M chief K M Mani said his party would strive to strengthen the democratic and secular forces, a cause espoused by the Congress.

The KC-M had walked out of the Congress-led UDF in August 2016, ending over a three-decade-long association alleging it was being "insulted" by the party leading the alliance. Relations between the two parties had soured over the bar

bery scam, and the rift widened after Congress leaders Oommen Chandy and Ramesh Chennithala attended the betrothal ceremony of the daughter of controversial hotelier Biju Ramesh and the son of Congress leader and former minister Adoor Prakash. Ramesh, the working president of the Kerala State Bar Hotel Owners Association, had levelled bribery charges against Mani when he was the finance minister. Mani also attended a meeting of the coordination committee of the UDF today where he was received by the Leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly Ramesh Chennithala. AICC general secretary Oommen Chandy, and IUML general secretary P K Kunhalikutty, an MP. The Congress's decision to spare the Rajya Sabha seat for KC-M candidate has not gone down

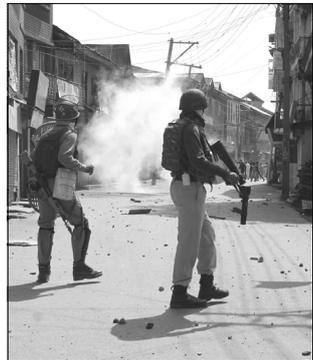
well with a section of the party. The state Congress's former president V M Sudheeran did not attend the UDF meeting, insisting the development would weaken the main opposition party and benefit the BJP. The decision, he said, lacked transparency and party workers were left disappointed. Soon after Congress leaders from Kerala announced the decision after a meeting with party president Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi on Thursday, Sudheeran called it "suicidal".

Chennithala, Chandy and KPCC president M M Hassan had said the decision to allow the RS seat was taken to strengthen the UDF as part of the party's resolve to bring together democratic and secular forces to take on the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls.

YSR Cong, Congress release chargesheets against Andhra govt

AMARAVATI, JUNE 8 /- The principal Opposition YSR Congress and Congress today released chargesheets on completion of four years of the Chandrababu Naidu-led government alleging it was the biggest failure of the Chandrababu government. The chief minister mortgaged the special category status for a special economic package and pushed the state 15 years' backward," Venkateswarlu, a former Union minister, charged. Not one permanent structure has been built in the last four years in the states new capital city Amaravati despite the Centre releasing Rs 1500 crore, he said. "That's the biggest failure of this government," the former Union minister added. Congress leader Pallam Raju said the TDP government betrayed the state's youth by failing to create job opportunities. "There are 30 lakh unemployed youth in the state but the government cut down the number to just 10 lakh. It promised to pay unemployment allowance but for four years since it assumed power, the TDP did nothing," he said.

National Crime Records Bureau data exposes the worst law and order scenario in AP," Venkateswarlu said. "That the promises made in the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014 have not been fulfilled speaks of biggest failure of the Chandrababu government. The chief minister mortgaged the special category status for a special economic package and pushed the state 15 years' backward," Venkateswarlu, a former Union minister, charged. Not one permanent structure has been built in the last four years in the states new capital city Amaravati despite the Centre releasing Rs 1500 crore, he said. "That's the biggest failure of this government," the former Union minister added. Congress leader Pallam Raju said the TDP government betrayed the state's youth by failing to create job opportunities. "There are 30 lakh unemployed youth in the state but the government cut down the number to just 10 lakh. It promised to pay unemployment allowance but for four years since it assumed power, the TDP did nothing," he said.



Youths clashing with security forces after Jumata-ul-Vida prayers on the last Friday of Ramjan, near Jamia Masjid in Srinagar.

Son of MGNREGA labourer cracks NEET, father says dream came true

KOTA, JUNE 8 /- Krishan Kumar's tireless pursuit of excellence is an inspiration to students in his village and his success in cracking the NEET's source of pride to his parents, who work as MGNREGA labourers.

Kumar is the only person in Sakhwara panchayat in Rajasanshi's Dholpur district to clear the National Eligibility cum Entrance

Test. His parents said they wanted him to unshackle himself out of the misery they had faced in life. "My long-awaited dream has come true. I am proud my son would be the first doctor in my panchayat," said Munna Lal, who has studied till Class 5. Kumar's mother is illiterate. The 19-year-old spent several nights studying under kerosene

lamps in his village before moving to Kota, a city more than 300 km away from his home which has a number of coaching institutes, in 2015 to prepare for the entrance test. Kumar found success on his third attempt, securing an All India rank of 3,099 in the recently-held NEET. He is on his way to become the first MBBS doctor from his panchayat. His journey until

now has been difficult. Kumar remained largely surrounded by books in his tedious hostel room in Kota city, away from his comforting surroundings of his home. But it was the conviction of his parents that kept him going. They kept the 19-year-old motivated and consistently encouraged him after he failed in his first two

attempts. Kumar completed his higher secondary education from a Hindi medium government school, about 20 km away from his village. He said he wants to contribute to develop health facilities in rural India, possibly because he does not want other students to struggle with limited resources as he had in his preparation.

Haryana govt seeks share of athletes' earnings, withdraws after flak

CHANDIGARH, JUNE 8 /- The Haryana government today courted controversy when it asked sports persons employed by it to deposit one-third of their earnings from commercial and professional commitments to the state sports council but put the notification on hold after drawing sharp criticism from elite athletes.

"I have asked for the relevant file of sports department to be shown to me & the notification dated April 30th to be put on hold till further orders," chief minister ML Khattar tweeted. "We are proud of the immense contribution by our sports person & I assure them of a just consideration of all issues affecting them," Khattar added. His intervention came after athletes reacted sharply to the notification issued by principal secretary (sports and youth department), Ashok Khemka. "One-third of the income earned by the sports person from professional sports or commercial endorsement will be deposited with the Haryana State Sports Council. The money shall be used for the development of sports in the State," it stated.

Khemka had hit the headlines during his stint as head of land registration department by alleging irregularities in land deals involving Robert Vadra a few years ago. Sports and Youth Affairs Minister Anil Vij had also defended the move, insisting it was not aimed at the income generated from amateur sports "... here we are talking about income from professional sports," he said. "It is government's old rule/service rule, Rule 56, as per which if any government employee generates commercial income or professional income, then he shall have to deposit one-third of such earnings," he added.

The athletes employed with the state government include star boxers Vijender Singh and Akhil Kumar, both of whom are DPS in state police, hockey captain Sardar Singh and wrestler Babita Phogat, Sardar, Geeta and Babita are also employed with the Haryana Police. Of them, Babita, who won a silver at the Gold Coast CWC, was the only one to react to the move, calling it "disrespectful." "This notification will hamper an athlete's preparation. How can the government give such an order? We pay taxes over whatever we earn and now this notification to pay one-third," Phogat tweeted. "Phogat said, "Can the government understand how much sacrifice an athlete and his or her families have to make to earn a medal for the country? The Haryana government should immediately make this order back and review it," he added. Some other Haryana athletes, not employed with the state government, also reacted with shock.

"I am not yet seen the notification. I am only coming to know of it through media reports. I can only say that the athletes who compete in Olympic sports are already from very poor families," said double-Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, who is with the Railways Sports Promotion Board. "The government should make policies which encourage athletes. I haven't heard of such a policy anywhere else in the world. The athlete should be competing with a free mind, not with stress like this," he added.

STF formed to curb plastic use, Maharashtra govt tells HC

MUMBAI, JUNE 8 /- The Maharashtra government today told the Bombay High Court it has formed a special task force comprising plastic manufacturers' associations and government officials to come up with a solution to put an end to plastic use in the state.

On March 23 this year, the government had issued a notification, imposing a ban on the manufacture, use, sale, distribution and storage of all plastic materials like flame-use bags, balloons, PET and PETE bottles and also thermocol items. The notification gave a period of three months to manufacturers, distributors and retailers to dispose of existing stock of the banned items. Consumers and users were, however, given only a period of one month to dispose them. The notification was challenged in the HC by plastic, PET bottle and thermocol manufacturers and retailer associations on the ground that the ban was arbitrary, bad in law and violated their fundamental right to livelihood.

In April, a division bench of Justices A S Oka and Riyaz Chagla refused to stay the notification after observing that the court cannot ignore the adverse effects of plastic waste on environment. The court had, however, protected citizens from prosecution for possession of these items for a period of three months. The bench had then also directed the petitioners to file representations before the state government for further consideration on the issue. The state government today filed an affidavit saying it has formed two committees - an expert committee under the chairmanship of the Additional Chief Secretary and an implementation committee. The affidavit added that the expert committee was looking into the representations submitted by the petitioner associations.

The government has formed a task force comprising different plastic manufacturing associations, experts from different institutions and government officials concerned to find out solutions and to prepare an action plan for plastic waste management to end the life cycle of plastic," the affidavit said. "The petitioner associations have not come up with any foolproof buyback mechanism for recycling of plastic waste," the affidavit filed by Sanjay Sandanshi, under secretary of the environment department, said. The court today directed the government to give copies of its affidavit to all petitioners and posted the matter for further hearing on June 22.

Ukrainian model released from Gorakhpur jail

GORAKHPUR, JUNE 8 /- Ukrainian model Daria Molcha, who was arrested by the special task force from a private hotel here for staying in the country without a valid visa, was released from the district jail today.

On April 3, the 20-year-old model walked free today after civil judge Surendra Pratap Singh issued her release order on Thursday. "Daria Molcha, who was jailed under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Foreigners Act, was released around 1.00 pm. We had received the release order very late yesterday that is why she was released today," jail superintendent Ramdhani said. Molcha has been sent to the Ukrainian embassy in Delhi under police protection, senior superintendent of police Shalabh Mathur said.

Two men from Kolkata - Chandari Rawat and Anand Kumar - had come here on a chartered plane and they went to the Chief Judicial Magistrate court for the release of Molcha. The application of the Ukrainian model's bail was rejected by the district court on April 12. After that, the bail application was filed in the High Court, which granted her bail about a week ago. The Ukrainian model had crossed the Indian border without any valid documents and she was arrested by the STF from a private hotel on Park Road here.

Five die in Kanpur hospital ICU; kin allege AC failure

KANPUR, JUNE 8 /- Five elderly patients died in the ICU of a state-run hospital here during the last two days, with their attendants alleging that AC plant failure was the reason for their deaths, a charge denied by hospital authorities. The incident brought back memories of the Gorakhpur hospital deaths last year allegedly due to shortage of oxygen. While the attendants of patients alleged that the AC plant in the ICU of Lala Lalpat Rai Hospital was not working for the past several days leading to their deaths, the principal of the Ganesh Shankar Vidyaarthi Medical College, under which the hospital functions, said the patients died due to serious illness and not because of any AC failure. "There were

problems in the AC plant yesterday. The problems were fixed, but they again cropped up." Principal Navneet Kumar admitted but emphatically denied the charge that the patients died due to air conditioning problems.

The ICU has serious patients but none died due to AC failure," Kumar told newsmen here. He said technicians have been asked to rectify the problem in the AC plant at the earliest and a probe has been instituted into the matter. The deceased patients were identified as Indrapal (75) of Nurwal, Ganga Prasad Yadav (75) of Budhi-Khera Umnao, Rasool Baksh (62) of Sandeela Haradi, Murari Lal (65) of Azamgarh and another person whose identity could

not be established immediately. Accepting that there were certain air conditioning problems, ICU in-charge Saurav Agarwal said the AC plant of the medicine department ICU had shut down just two days back.

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