

LDF, UDF  
nominees set  
to get selected to  
RS from Kerala

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 12 /-/-** All three official nominees of the ruling LDF and Opposition UDF are set to be elected to the Rajya Sabha from Kerala unopposed, after the nomination of the lone Independent candidate in the fray was rejected, officials said today.

The nomination of K Padmanaban was rejected after some documents required to be filed were not submitted. With this, decks have been cleared for the election of CPM's Elamaram Karsten, CPI's Binoy Viswam, both candidates of the Left Democratic Front, and Jose K Mani of the Kerala Congress.

Polling for the biennial election for three Rajya Sabha seats from the state is scheduled for June 21, but it looks unlikely now. These seats will fall vacant on July 1 when the terms of Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman P J Kurien of the Congress, CP Narayanan of the CPI and Joy Abraham of Kerala Congress end.

### BJP nominee wins Maharashtra Legislative Council election

**MUMBAI, JUNE 12 /-/-** BJP candidate Suresh Dhas today won the Maharashtra Legislative Council election from the Osmanabad-Beed-Latur local bodies seat. The former Maharashtra minister defeated NCP-backed Ashok Jagdale by a margin of 74 votes, an election official said. Of the 1003 voters, Dhas got 526 votes, while Jagdale polled 452 votes, an official release said.

Altogether 25 votes were declared invalid, while a voter opted for the None of the Above (NOTA) option. Counting of votes was held today for seat, where biennial polls are held along with five other Legislative Council seats, were held on May 21. While counting of votes for those five seats was held on May 24, the process for Osmanabad-Beed-Latur local bodies seat was deferred due to a court order on suspension of some local bodies members in Beed district.

### No student would be denied higher secondary education due to shortage of seats: Kerala CM

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 12 /-/-** Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan today assured that no student in the state would be denied a chance to pursue higher secondary education due to shortage of seats for plus one course in government and aided schools.

However, Vijayan admitted that there was some disparity in the availability of seats in the state, especially in Malabar (north Kerala) region, where there is a dearth of the same. "The government would adopt a practical solution to address the problem," he said. The chief minister said this in the state Assembly when the Congress-led UDF opposition raised concerns about non-availability of sufficient seats in government and aided higher secondary schools in northern districts. "The disparity in the availability of plus one seats has been an issue in northern districts for some years. The number of seats is high in some districts while it is not upto the demand in others," Vijayan stated said.

But, the government would take all necessary steps to ensure that no child is denied higher secondary education due to paucity of seats, he said. Stating that a "practical solution" is the need of the hour to address the issue, Vijayan said action would be taken after knowing the number of seats that would fall vacant with the completion of the admission process. State education minister C Ravendranath said the first allotment of seats for plus one students in government and aided schools began today and they would get a clear picture only after the completion of the process on June 18.

## UP BJP to prepare 'cyber sena' to reach out to voters before 2019 LS polls

**LUCKNOW, JUNE 12 /-/-** The UP BJP has geared up to prepare its 'cyber sena' for the 2019 Lok Sabha election, with the party hoping to have around 2 lakh such trained social media experts across the state within the next three months to reach out to voters.

However, the Congress said that the move will not reap any significant dividend, as the people are disillusioned with the policies of the BJP. "For the upcoming general elections to Lok Sabha in 2019, we are preparing cyber sena across the state, and at every polling booth, there has to be a cyber noddy (cyber warrior)," state BJP vice-president JPS Rathore said at a

recent meeting of the members and office bearers of the IT cell of the state unit. The IT kaaryakartaas (IT cell workers) of the party had come from different parts of the state. "The internet and social media have become an effective and efficient tool to take various welfare measures to the masses. They have also evolved as a viable medium to communicate the party's thoughts to the masses. The party is mulling to prepare an army of 1.5 lakh to 2 lakh trained workers across the state," Rathore told PTI.

Rathore exuded confidence that the "trained workers will be ready in the next three months". The BJP

leader also said that social media will be extensively used for implementation of various programmes pertaining to the organisation, social integration and dissemination of information pertaining to various schemes of the Centre and state government. When asked whether this cyber army has been made specifically for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Rathore said: "The party always remains in an election mode. As soon as one election gets over, we start preparations for the next. Election preparation and creative work for the organisation continue simultaneously." He said that keeping in mind the parliamentary

elections, social media can play an important role in spreading awareness among people who are 18-year-old or more to enroll themselves as voters. "For the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, we have to constitute a social media team at every polling booth, which will become an example for other state units of the party," the BJP leader told the IT cell workers. Rathore said that the trained workers will be used to link new voters with the party. "They will make efforts to ensure that names of genuine voters are in the voter's list, and that no fake voter's name exists on the voter list," he added.



Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath flagging off bus service from Alambagh bus station to Chapia (Gonda), in Lucknow on Tuesday.

## Sidda rules out disquiet among MLAs over ministerial berths

**BENGALURU, JUNE 12 /-/-** Former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah today maintained there was no discontent within Congress now over denial of ministerial berths and expressed confidence that no party MLA would join hands with the BJP.

Confident about the Congress-JD-S coalition government completing its full five year term, Siddaramaiah, who is also leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP), said: "There is no one who is dissatisfied... everyone is satisfied now." Pointing out he has had talks with everyone who were reportedly upset over not becoming a minister, including M B Patil, he said "how much ever BJP tries to entice our MLAs, no one will go." There was growing discontent among

newly elected Congress lawmakers who were left out during the June 6 cabinet expansion, with some openly expressing dissatisfaction and holding separate meetings.

The disquiet that had come out in the open soon after the exercise has gone silent in the last two days following efforts by the party leadership to pacify upset MLAs. Responding to BJP state President B S Yeddyurappa's comments that several Congress leaders are eager to join his party, Siddaramaiah said Yeddyurappa's words have no value. He (Yeddyurappa) himself doesn't know what he is talking about," he told reporters in Mysuru, as he hit out at the BJP, accusing it of trying to entice Congress MLAs with money

and posts. The former chief minister said the coalition government's first coordination committee meeting is scheduled for June 14. Siddaramaiah, who heads the coordination committee that has the responsibility to oversee smooth functioning of the coalition government, said the agenda has not yet been prepared. "I will look into it once I go to Bengaluru tomorrow," he said. Stating that he hasn't spoken to Congress president Rahul Gandhi yet regarding the issue of new Karnataka Pradesh Congress President, the former chief minister, in response to a question, said he would go to New Delhi after completing pending work here, including his nature care treatment.

### Lake-deepening not enough to quench Gujarat's thirst: Ex-CM

**AHMEDABAD, JUNE 12 /-/-** Former Gujarat chief minister Sureshchandra Mehta today claimed that the state government's recently-concluded drive of deepening lakes and ponds would quench the thirst of only 10 per cent population.

Addressing a press conference here today, Mehta said out of over one lakh lakes and ponds across the state, only 13,000 were covered under the month-long water conservation drive - Sujalam Sulalam Jal Abhiyan - which ended on May 31. "In Gujarat, there are over one lakh ponds and over 200 lakes. Out of these, only 13,000 such water bodies were deepened by removing silt during the month-long drive. This is not enough, as it would only quench the thirst of 10 per cent population. What about others?" he asked. The former chief minister was referring to the state-wide Jal Abhiyan, under which 13,000 lakes and ponds as well as 20 major rivers were deepened. The drive was aimed at increasing the water storage capacity by carrying out de-silting work. Mehta also attacked the BJP-led state government over the construction of new farm ponds. "For 52 lakh farmers in the state, there are only 2.61 lakh farm ponds available. It shows that the government has not paid adequate attention to construct farm ponds, depriving farmers of getting irrigation water," he alleged. Referring to various government documents and reports, he raised question on the effectiveness of the water conservation drive in providing potable water to a large rural population.

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## Spiritual guru Bhayyu Maharaj commits suicide in indore

**INDORE, JUNE 12 /-/-** Spiritual guru Bhayyu Maharaj Bhayyu Maharaj, who had refused to accept ministerial rank granted by the Madhya Pradesh government over two months back, today allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself here, police said.

"Bhayyu Maharaj has committed suicide by shooting himself", Indore's Deputy Inspector General (DIG) H C Mishra said. He shot himself at his home, Mishra said. A large number of his supporters gathered in front of the hospital where the 50-year-old 'godman' was rushed after the shooting incident. Bhayyu Maharaj, whose original name was Uday Singh Deshmukh, was one of the five 'saints' to whom the Shriji Singh-led government of Madhya Pradesh had granted minister of state (MOS) rank in April. However, he had refused to accept it, saying "a post holds no importance for a saint".

Prior to becoming the spiritual guru, he had done a modelling stint, his disciples said. He entered a large following among politicians and film stars. Mostly all Maharashtra chief ministers including the incumbent, Devendra Fadnavis and former President Pratibha Patil used to pay obeisance to him. When India Against Corruption (IAC) movement was launched by him, it was at its peak some years back, he had negotiated with the agitators to break their fast.

### State Notes

#### Woman Cong MLA evicted from TN Assembly after spar with Speaker

**Chennai, June 12 /-/-** A woman Congress legislator was today evicted from the Tamil Nadu Assembly after she engaged in a verbal duel with Speaker P Dhanpal who condemned her behaviour and said sterner action will be initiated if she continued with such demeanour. When Congress legislature party leader K R Ramasamy tried to raise the matter after her eviction, Dhanpal told him not to divert the issue and all the Congress members staged a walk out to signify their protest. Following the question hour, Congress MLA S Vijayadharani said she wanted to raise an issue related to her native Kanyakumari district.

#### Sarpanch beaten to death in Punjab

**HOSHARPUR, JUNE 12 /-/-** A 42-year-old sarpanch of Lamra village was allegedly beaten to death by a police friend following a dispute over plantation of trees, police said today. Davinder Singh was seriously wounded when Manmohan Singh, alias Mohni, of his village allegedly assaulted him with a wooden stick on Monday night, they said. Singh succumbed to his injuries at a local civil hospital today, police said. Station house officer of Bulhawal police station, Yadwinder Singh, said there was some dispute between Singh and Manmohan over plantation of some trees near the house of the latter.

#### Farmer's son killed over poll enmity in Muzaffarnagar

**MUZAFFARNAGAR, JUNE 12 /-/-** A 19-year-old son of a farmer was killed allegedly over a caste-based election enmity in Bhadoda village in the district, police said here today. The body of Monu was found with injuries in the fields on Monday, they said. The police have booked former village head Jaykar Singh, his two sons Ravi Kumar and Ashu and one other Prem Singh for the killing, said SP (city) Ombr Singh. All the accused were absconding, the SP said. The security was tightened in the village after the incident and extra police force has been deployed as a precautionary measure, he added.

#### Former BJP MP passes away

**NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, JUNE 12 /-/-** Former BJP MP from Faridabad, Ramchandra Baina, breathed his last at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in the national capital today. Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar has expressed grief over Baina's demise. In his message, Khattar described Baina as a seasoned politician who worked for the uplift of people belonging to the weaker sections of the society. Baina was associated with a number of social, cultural and literary organisations engaged in the upliftment of the downtrodden, he said.

#### Army jawan dies of gunshots in Poonch

**JAMMU, JUNE 12 /-/-** A jawan has died due to gunshot wounds in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, with the Army suspecting it to be a suicide case. 23-year-old gunner Ranjot Singh was at forward post in Poonch when other jawans heard a gunshot. They rushed to the area and saw him in an injured condition yesterday, police officials said. He was declared brought dead by a hospital later, they said, adding that the post-mortem of the body was conducted after registering a case. A court of inquiry has been ordered into it, an Army official said, adding that the deceased jawan belonged to Poonch.

## Artificial intelligence can bridge rich-poor divide: Fadnavis

**MUMBAI, JUNE 12 /-/-** Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis today said Artificial Intelligence will create more jobs and help in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. The technology could also help in facilitating the growth of health services to remote areas, Fadnavis said. He was speaking at a panel discussion on Governance and Artificial Intelligence, where Vice Premier of Quebec Dominique Anglade in Montreal. Dismissing the fear of losing jobs due to artificial intelligence, he said "On the contrary, it will create even

more jobs and not just that, it will repair and solve many problems. Artificial intelligence has the power to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor." The chief minister said that due to the information asymmetry in India facilitating the growth of health services to remote areas, Fadnavis proposed to use artificial intelligence tools for access to basic services. "Health services can be provided in remote villages using artificial intelligence-powered diagnostic tools like retinal photography and its transmission via internet to centrally located

doctors," he said. Artificial intelligence (AI) is an area of computer science that emphasizes the creation of intelligent machines that work and react like humans. The chief minister also spoke about the death of several farmers in the state's Yavatmal district last year while spraying pesticides in their fields. Start-ups were now showing way out by using drones and artificial intelligence for the purpose, he said. The chief minister also spoke about the use of technology in service delivery and to bring sustainability in the era of climate

change. "Technology is like a horse, one has to take control of it and ride it. Once you start riding it, it will be at your service," he said, while elaborating the government's role as a facilitator in the use of technology. The Maharashtra government also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Fonds de recherche du Quebec - Nature et Technologies, to form an international working group on agriculture for crop disease eradication, use of artificial intelligence for agricultural technologies and soil management.



A boy jumping in river Ganga on top of a buffalo to beat the heat on a hot summer day, in Mirzapur on Tuesday.

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