Sidhu proposes new law to raise revenue from outdoor advertising

CHANDIGARH, AUG 12 /--/ Punjab minister Navjot Singh Sidhu today announced to bring a new and "potent" policy to increase the state government's annual revenue from outdoor advertising to at least Rs 300 crore.

The Local Bodies' minister also blamed the previous SAD- BJP government for causing "revenue leakage" by framing a "toothless" law in this regard. Besides, he claimed that the state had suffered a loss of Rs 2,000 crore from the cable business. Sidhu also proposed to levy a token amount of entertainment tax to keep a check on the "cable mafia", which he alleged had "proliferated under the previous dispensation". Punjab is earning a meagre amount of Rs 25 crore annually from outdoor advertising and hoardings in 164 cities of the state as compared to Rs 200 crore being earned by neighbouring Haryana from its municipal areas, he claimed. Sidhu also hit out at the SAD for allegedly "looting" the state by facilitating individuals in the outdoor advertising and the cable businesses.

"Out of the Rs 25 crore , Rs 10 crore comes from Mohali, Rs 2.5 crore from Zirakpur. Ludhiana alone has the potential to generate income of Rs 150 crore per annum," he said. Sidhu accused the SAD-BJP government of framing laws pertaining to outdoor advertising and hoardings which catered to vested interests. "After an inquiry, following a complaint, I came to know that the government cannot levy penalty or make seizure despite violation of the advertisement law. "They (the previous government) made toothless laws which facilitated only individuals," he said. Sidhu said, "The aim was to raise the annual revenue from Rs 25 crore to Rs 300 crore from advertisement in municipal areas." He said his department would propose laws on outdoor advertising and cable businesses which are "potent and will fix accountability".

"An advertisement policy will be brought in consultation with experts in order to increase revenue by 10 times to Rs 300 crore annually in the state," Sidhu said. Citing an example of "blatant violation of the law", the minister claimed that a particular company was given "undue" advantage in allotting advertisement contract on 82 bus shelters in Ludhiana and that it had resulted in a loss of Rs 100 crore to the state exchequer. Sidhu said his department will also come out with a cable law, proposing entertainment tax, to check the "mafia". "I have already submitted a proposal to the chief minister in which a token tax of Rs 2 to Rs 3 is needed to be levied. We might have a token tax which will make people (cable mafia) accountable... and bring them under the purview of law," he said. The state had witnessed a revenue loss of Rs 2,000 crore because of the "cable mafia", he claimed. Sidhu had earlier accused the previous SAD-BJP regime of sheltering a private multi-system operator in cable business.(PTI)

Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forest & Climate Change Harsh Vardhan releasing the publication, on the occasion of World Elephant Day 2017, in New Delhi on Saturday.

Sena minister Desai offers to quit, Fadnavis turns down

MUMBAI, AUG 12 /--/ Shiv Sena Minister Subhash Desai, accused of graft by the opposition, today offered to resign, but Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis turned down his request. The development comes a day after Fadnavis announced a probe by Lokayukta against Housing Minister Prakash Mehta, who has been accused by the opposition of impropriety in a slum redevelopment project here. He belongs to the BJP. The opposition has accused Desai of violating norms while allegedly denotifying lands acquired by state-run MIDC in Nashik. On allegations against Desai, Fadnavis had yesterday said the government will request the Lokayukta to consider the case and if that does not work out, an independent probe would be conducted. The 75-year-old Sena veteran, who holds the industries portfolio, said he met Fadnavis and offered to quit the state cabinet, but his request was rejected by the chief minister. "I met the chief minister at 'Varsha' (the CM's official residence) with my resignation letter and requested him to relieve me until I am proved innocent. However, the chief minister refused to accept my resignation and said I need not resign," Desai told PTI. "The chief minister said let there be an independent inquiry and until the result is out for everyone to see, I should continue performing my duty," he said. Desai said he has decided to co-operate with whatever inquiry is instituted and accept its result. "I met Uddhavji (Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray) last evening and apprised him of my decision to resign. Uddhavji then spoke to the chief minister and both of them jointly decided that my resignation would not be accepted," he said. Thackeray, speaking to reporters today, backed Desai and said those (in opposition) levelling allegations are themselves "stuck knee deep" in corruption. "It is dangerous that they (the opposition parties) are not ashamed of what they have done (in the past). Levelling baseless allegations and asking for resignations will dent the image of the state," Thackeray said. "The chief minister has promised a fair probe. We hope the truth comes out soon. The party stands firmly behind Desai," he added. Later, the opposition parties slammed Fadnavis for not accepting Desai's resignation. Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Dhananjay Munde of the NCP said by not accepting Desai's resignation, Fadnavis has discreetly saved Mehta, who is also accused of corruption. "The ministers accused of corruption have no moral right to keep occupying their chairs. Unless they are removed, a fair probe cannot happen. Even if the CM is backing them, we will continue our fight against the corrupt ministers and the government," Munde said. Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said Fadnavis has proved he is a "political opportunist" and has no firm stand against corruption. "The chief minister had immediately accepted the resignation of (then minister) Eknath Khadse (last year) but refused to do so now. This shows he is an opportunist who will only do what suits his politics," Sawant said. Khadse, a BJP leader, had last year resigned after facing allegations of committing impropriety in a land deal in Pune. The chief minister had said mere denotification of land does not mean corruption has taken place.(PTI)

AIADMK factions will unite soon, say TN ministers

COIMBATORE, AUG 12 /--/ Two senior Tamil Nadu ministers today exuded confidence that AIADMK factions, one led by Chief Minister K Palaniswami and the other by his predecessor O Panneerselvam, will soon come together and the government would complete its full five-year term. "What is going on at present is disagreement between brothers, which will be settled amicably at the earliest," Forest Minister Dindigul Srinivasan told reporters here.

Separately, Cooperation Minister Sellur L Raju said that "we will work together to fulfil the dreams of former chief minister J Jayalalithaa . The process of merger of the two factions is going on for the last seven months and the days were not far for them to coming together, Srinivasan said. "The present government would complete its full term," he a About T T V Dhinakaran, nephew of jailed party general secretary V K Sasikala, reportedly calling chief minister E K Palaniswami a '420' (used to refer to people who cheat), Srinivasan said it could have been due to a slip of tongue, as he had clarified later and there was no need to play it up further. However, the minister said he was not aware of Palaniswami calling Dhinakaran a '420'. To a question on reports of O Paneerselvam becoming the deputy chief minister, Srinivasan said it had come out in some sections of the press. Any fact would be revealed by Palaniswami, as both the party and government are working under him, he said. "His opinion is my opinion."

Meanwhile, in a separate press conference, Cooperation Minister Sellur L Raju, on his way to Udhagamandalam, said he alone could not take a decision on participation in the MGR centenary celebrations convened by Dhinakaran in Melur on August 14. A decision would be taken after consultation with Palaniswami and other ministers, he added. The government was ready to rectify the shortcomings pointed out by anybody, be it Dhinakaran or other leaders and provide good governance, he said. Stating that nobody can create confusion among AIADMK workers, Raju said not a single worker has switched over to any party including the DMK so far, which is a clear indication of the unity among the cadres. "To fulfil the dreams of former chief minister J Jayalalithaa, we will work together," he said.(PTI)

A security man stops a young boy on his mini bicycle playing on a deserted road in Down Town area in Srinagar.

Stalin fishing in troubled waters: BJP on his 'no-confidence motion' plan

CHENNAI, AUG 12/--/ The BJP today attacked DMK leader MK Stalin over his announcement of moving a no-confidence motion against the AIADMK government saying he is "trying to fish in troubled waters". In the backdrop of likely merger of two AIADMK factions after the removal of TTV Dhinakaran as AIADMK (Amma) deputy general secretary, Stalin had said on Friday DMK would move a no-confidence motion against the government "if required".

"DMK working president Stalin is trying to fish in troubled waters. When he says he will move a no-confidence motion if required, it shows he is not confident about that," BJP state unit president Tamilisai Soundararajan told reporters here. She said the announcement was made with the intention of keeping the media spotlight on Stalin, who is also the Leader of Opposition. Speculation are also rife that post-merger, the AIADMK might join the BJP-led NDA. The BJP is aiming to make inroads in the southern state where it has just one Lok Sabha MP and no representation in the 234-member Assembly. Palaniswami, who was sworn-in as chief minister following a revolt by his predecessor O Panneerselvam against jailed party chief V K Sasikala earlier this year, had won a trust vote on February 18 in the Assembly. On BJP National President Amit Shah's upcoming three-day tour of Tamil Nadu starting August 22, Soundararajan said it was aimed at strengthening party's "fundamental structure".

Besides interacting with party office-bearers, Shah is scheduled to meet a range of people, including scholars and others from various fields, she added.

Raje pitches for conservation of state's small forts, palaces, havelies

JAIPUR, AUG 12 /--/ Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje today directed the state tourism department officials to draft a policy for the conservation of small forts, palaces and havelies which are turning into ruins. The state is famous for its forts, palaces and havelies. Small forts and those old and historic structures which are turning into ruins should be protected and a policy should be framed for their conservations, she said while chairing the review meeting of the Departments of Tourism and Devsthan here. She also directed senior officials to get done the photography of such structures in all the districts, so that they could be protected. Raje also suggested that investors should also be roped in for conserving such properties through online bidding. The chief minster reviewed various other projects being run the department.

3.5 lakh Guj college students to get tablets at Rs 1000 each

AHMEDABAD, AUG 12 /--/ Around 3.5 lakh college students in Gujarat will get tablets at a subsidised rate of Rs 1,000 each under a state government scheme launched by state Chief Minister Vijay Rupani here today. Under this scheme, the first year college students in the state will get 7-inch 'NAMO E-Tab' tablets, which have a market value of Rs 8,000 each, by just paying Rs 1,000. Several students, who had already registered for the scheme, received the tablets from the chief minister at the launch ceremony here today In the coming days, more such events will be organised in different parts of state to distribute the tablets, which have voice-calling facility, a government release said. NAMO E-Tab is the acronym for 'New Avenues of Modern Education through Tablets'.

The state government has allocated Rs 200 crore for this scheme, Rupani said during the launch function."Our aim is to realise the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to build a new India. Though the tablets, made by well known companies, are worth Rs 8000 in the market, we are giving it at a token rate of Rs 1,000 to the college students," he said. On the upcoming assembly elections in Gujarat, Rupani said the BJP government does not believe in giving false p "Whenever election comes, parties promise to give laptops, houses and what not. But, we do not walk on that path. Our aim is to transform our youth into the new age power, not just new age voters. I am confident that these tablets will open new frontiers for our students," he said.

Rupani said the government is not distributing such tablets for free because people, usually do not value such (free) things. He announced that the government will spend Rs 30 crore, earned through the distribution of such subsidised tablets, on building digital infrastructure in college campuses across the state "I want to announce that we will utilise that money in making all the college campuses WiFi-enabled. We will also spend that money to set up e-libraries and digital classrooms across the state," he said.(PTI)

NDMC zone issue: BJP councillors, mayor to gherao CM House

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ BJP councillors of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation will gherao the residence of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on August 16 if the city government does not notify the new zonal boundaries of the NDMC in next two days, mayor Preety Agarwal today said. At a press conference held at her office here, she alleged that the AAP government was "deliberately delaying" the process to "let the BJP-led NDMC fail" in discharging its duties and thus to "malign its (NDMC's) image". "All our work and projects hinge on standing committee, which has not been constituted as the new zonal redrawing has not been notified. Our revenue generation means have been blocked because of this indecision. On top of that the government has not given us any reaction or response as to changes needed in our proposal," she said. Agarwal said she herself has met Kejriwal and Delhi Urban Development minister Satyendar Jain and NDMC Commissioner against Jain today, but their response is "muted". "If the government does not notify it within next two days, we will gherao the houses of CM and the Delhi UD minister," she said. Asked, if the NDMC will go to court if a resolution is not reached, she said, "No." "We thought over it, and it was decided that going to court would only complicate the matter instead of resolving it," Agarwal said. The NDMC currently has six zones--Narela, Civil Lines, Rohini, City, Sadar Paharganj and Karol Bagh. After reorganisation, Keshav Puram will emerge as a new zone while Sadar Paharganj and City would be amalgamated into one City zone. "We have proposed the move thinking it will evenly distribute the areas and would also facilitate in the work of officials," the mayor claimed. The number of zones will, therefore, effectively remain the same, but the wards will be evenly distributed, she said.(PTI)

BJP protests over police action on Gaddi community members

DHARAMSALA (HP), AUG 12 /--/ The BJP unit of Himachal Pradesh today hit out at Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh over the alleged police action on members of Gaddi community during a protest here. In a joint statement issued by state BJP spokesman Hemanshu Mishra and media-in-charge Rakesh Sharma, the saffron party asked the chief minister to apologise to the people of the community.

BJP leader Kishan Kapoor, a member of the community, had on Wednesday along with his supporters tried to stop the chief minister's convoy here over the alleged remarks against the Gaddi community. A clash ensued and three persons were injured. The protesters have alleged that they were lathicharged by the police.

"The chief minister gives baseless statements now and then to be in limelight. By making derogatory statements against the Gaddi community, Virbhadra Singh has given an inappropriate message to youths of the state," the BJP statement said.

Set up coordinating body for upkeep of heritage: L-G to DDA

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ Delhi Lt Governor Anil Baijal today inspected some heritage sites inside the Mehrauli Archaeological Park and directed the DDA to set up a coordinating body whereby all stakeholders can work in tandem on protection and upkeep of monuments. Located in south Delhi near the iconic Qutub Minar, the park complex houses sites dating back to the 15th and 16th century.

Baijal visited Jamali Kamali Tomb, Quli Khan's Tomb, Rajon Ki Baoli, among other sites inside the park and stressed the place had a huge potential to be developed into a tourist landmark in Delhi. He said there was a need for a coherent development and maintenance plan of the entire park and directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to set up a coordinating mechanism which would have representatives from all stakeholders, a senior official of the Raj Niwas said. "Such a body must then come up with a comprehensive time-bound action plan by October-end that covers the entire spectrum of protection, restoration and maintenance works," Baijal was quoted as saying in a statement by the Raj Niwas. The Lt Governor also interacted with some people who had come for a walk.

They apprised him of "cases of encroachment" inside the park, after which he (LG) asked agencies concerned to take strict action as per law, the official said. Baijal during his visit in the morning, was accompanied by the DDA's Vice Chairman, Principal Commissioner (Horticulture), Chief Engineer (South Zone); the district magistrate of South Delhi and officials of the ASI and INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Culture).

The Lt Governor also asked the DDA to provide basic civic amenities for walkers and visitors at the earliest. The archaeological park, spread over 100 acres, has about 80 monuments.

In April 2015, the Delhi High Court had directed the DDA and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to secure and free from encroachment the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, saying if nothing was done, the encroachers could take over the nearby Qutub Minar as well. The 12th century towering minaret, one of the three World Heritage Sites in Delhi, is renowned for its architectural grandeur and inscriptions.(PTI)