

Vigilance probe ordered against Oommen Chandy in solar scam

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, OCT 11 /-/- The Kerala government today ordered a vigilance probe against former chief minister Oommen Chandy in connection with the multi-crore solar scam.

A decision in this regard was taken on the basis of the findings of the Justice G Sivaraman Commission, which had probed the scam and had last month submitted its report to the government, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan today said. The report will be placed before the state Assembly within three months, Vijayan told newsmen here after a cabinet meeting. Chandy directly and through four of his former office staff Jikkumon Joseph, Tenny Joppen, Salim Raj and Kuruvilla had allegedly taken bribe from

Saritha S Nair, who had floated a solar company, and on that basis a case will be registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act, Vijayan said. The Kerala government also decided to conduct Vigilance and SIT probe against Chandy's former office staff. A criminal case will be registered and investigation by SIT will be held against former Home minister, Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan, who allegedly tried to destroy the evidence and influenced police personnel to help the former chief minister. An inquiry will also be launched against former power minister, Aravindan Mohammed, who allegedly helped the solar company, chief minister said. Two former Congress MLAs- Benny Behanan and Thampanoor have also been brought under the ambit

of the probe.

The government had also sought legal opinion of the Advocate General and Director General of Prosecutions (DGP) into the commission's findings following which it was decided to launch proceedings against them. The state government has also resolved to initiate probe against IGP K Padmakumar and DYSP K Harikrishnan who allegedly destroyed evidence. Vigilance case will be registered and inquiry held into a letter by Saritha Nair in which she has levelled allegations of rape and sexual exploitation against senior IGP leaders, including MPs and MLAs. The commission was appointed by the previous Oommen Chandy government after allegations surfaced about duping of several people of crores of rupees

by Saritha Nair and Biju Radhakrishnan by offering solar panel solutions. The CPM-led LDF, then in opposition, had launched an agitation following reports about Saritha's links with the office of the chief minister.

Several politicians, including then chief minister Chandy, were among those examined by the commission. Chandy's former gunman Salim Raj, his former personal staff member Jikkumon had also been examined, after Saritha, the prime accused, deposed before the panel.

Chandy had maintained that the charges against him and his office were "politically motivated" and had denied any wrongdoing. Set up in October, 2013, the commission had held 353 sittings, examined 214 witnesses and 972 documents.

Gujarat HC quashes PIL challenging Ambardi lion safari proposal

AHMEDABAD, OCT 11 /-/- The Gujarat High Court today dismissed a PIL challenging the state government's Ambardi lion safari proposal for tourists in and around the 400 hectares of fenced area on the eastern side of the Gir National Park.

A division bench of Chief Justice R Subhash Reddy and Justice V M Pancholi dismissed the PIL filed by environmentalist Biren Pandya, saying that the state government has complied with all conditions and secured required permissions. The High Court said the proposal for the safari was made in 2005, and in 2006, the central government had given recognition, or in-principle approval for the same. It said that even the physical infrastructure for the safari, like fencing, is in place. The PIL had sought the court's direction to the government to set aside the plan to convert the forest area into a lion safari, as it will damage the eco-sensitive zone.

The environmentalist had contended in the petition that the government's proposal had received not only from the technical committee of the

Central Zoo Authority, and this cannot be construed as a final nod as the committee is not empowered for the same. During the course of hearing, the state government had submitted before the court that it had received the final permission to start the lion safari at Ambardi from the ministry concerned, and produced an official document regarding the same, dated June 19. It had said that a newly appointed technical committee of the ministry environment and forest (MoEF) had given a go-ahead to the project and a final order regarding this was passed on June 19 this year by the ministry.

The park aims to take the tourist load off the existing Gir National Park. It will have three zoo-bred lions for public viewing in the forest environment. The forest department has also received permission to house two lionesses and a lion in the park for public viewing. As per the latest census carried out by the state forest department in 2015, Gujarat is home to 523 Asiatic lions in the Gir forest and other areas in Junagadh, Gir Somnath, Amreli and Bhavnagar districts.

Rs 6 lakh stolen from rural bank in Chhattisgarh

RAIGARH, OCT 11 /-/- Unidentified burglars stole about Rs 6 lakh from a branch of the Chhattisgarh Rajya Gramin Bank in Raigarh district, police said today. The burglars entered the bank, located in Dharanjagarh area, late last night from rear side by breaking door locks and decamped with Rs 5.95,161 in cash kept in a locker. Dharanjagarh sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) Neha Verma said. The burglars used a gas cutter to open the locker, she added. The crime was detected when the bank opened at 10 am, she said, adding no guard was deputed at the facility. Based on a complaint of the bank manager, a case has been registered, the officer said, adding further probe was on.



A craftman giving final touch to the idols of Goddess Laxmi and Lord Ganesh, ahead of the Diwali Festival in Jaipur on Wednesday.

Stalin urges TN govt to reduce taxes on petroleum products

CHENNAI, OCT 11 /-/- Opposition DMK today slammed the "oppressive taxation" on petrol and diesel and urged the Tamil Nadu government to reduce taxes on these products to benefit the common man.

DMK working president and Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly, M K Stalin, asked chief minister K Palaniswami to take a cue from Gujarat and Maharashtra in this regard. The two BJP-ruled states had on Tuesday reduced Value Added Tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel, resulting in them getting cheaper. They had effected the changes after Union finance minister Arun Jaitley had recently written to states asking them to reduce taxes on these. The Centre had recently brought down excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 2 per litre. Stalin recalled that the M Karunanidhi-led DMK

government had in the past reduced taxes on petrol and diesel in the state during certain rate revisions of the products.

"People are struggling hard due to the oppressive taxation on petrol and diesel which has led to prices of petrol to hover around Rs 70.96 and diesel at Rs 60.04 (in Chennai)," he said.

It was the government's duty to 'ease this pain' which people faced, he added.

"Hence, I insist this (AIAMDK) government to follow the actions initiated by Gujarat and Maharashtra and transfer the benefit to people by reducing the taxes," Stalin said.



He said daily revision of prices of petrol and diesel due to the "central BJP government's dynamic pricing policy has proved to be a huge burden, especially for the poor and middle class sections of the population." (PTI)

Violent protest in Srinagar over braid chopping incidents

SRINAGAR, OCT 11 /-/- A protest against the rising braid chopping incidents in Kashmir today turned violent in a village in the city as protestors pelleted stones on law enforcing agencies, the police said.

Residents of Batamalo area staged a protest against the alleged inaction of police against braid choppers following a fresh attack in the locality early this morning, police sources said. They said the protestors turned violent when they were asked to disperse by police and started pelting stones. Police used force to disperse the protestors, the sources added. Although the protestors have been chased away, the market in the area has shut down in protest against the fresh attack.

The braid chopping incidents have created a fear psychosis among residents of Kashmir, particularly women, as the culprits have been carrying out their attacks regularly. Another braid chopping incident was reported from Bandi area of Uri today where hair of an 18-year-old girl was chopped by miscreants when she had gone to a washroom outside her home in the early hours.

3 arrested on charge of selling, possessing beef in Chhattisgarh

Raipur, Oct 11 /-/- Three persons have been arrested for allegedly selling and possessing beef in Chhattisgarh's Jashpur district, the police said.

Two alleged beef traders - Sarfaraz Hussain (30) and Gulab Mahli (27) -- and a local buyer of the meat, Pascal Minj (40), were nabbed on Tuesday from Nandutoli Kuruma village in Jashpur, located around 400 kms from here. Narayanpur police's station house officer (SHO) Anita Prabha Minj told news agency PTI today. The traders had brought about 80 kgs of beef in their van from Bandega village in the neighbouring Sundargarh district of Odisha to allegedly sell it in the bordering villages, Minj said. The meat was packed in plastic bags of one kg each and kept in a big drum, the police official said. Upon noticing their suspicious activities, some villagers intercepted them and after finding the meat in their vehicle, they informed the police, she said.

"During interrogation, the duo admitted to have brought the banned meat for trading," the SHO said. Later, based on their statements, the police searched the house of Pascal Minj, whom they had sold the beef, and the meat was recovered from there, she said. The seized meat was then immediately sent for inspection to a local veterinary lab which confirmed that it was beef, the SHO said. The three persons were subsequently arrested and booked under relevant sections of the Chhattisgarh Agricultural Cattle Preservation Act 2004, she said. They were produced in a local court which remanded them in judicial custody, the police official added.

The slaughter of cow, buffalo, bull, bullock and calf and possession of their meat is banned in Chhattisgarh. The transport of these animals to other states for slaughter is also banned.

BJP Yuva Morcha files complaint against Ramachandra Guha for Sangh comments

BENGALURU, OCT 11 /-/- The BJP Yuva Morcha has filed a complaint seeking criminal proceedings against noted historian Ramachandra Guha for his allegations linking the killing of activist-journalist Gauri Lankesh with the Sangh Parivar.

It accused Guha of making "baseless" allegations against the Sangh Parivar organisations to tarnish their image, create a wrong perception in the minds of the public, and "cause provocation with intention to cause violence". The complaint was filed by Sankeerth Thady, secretary of BJP Yuva Morcha, Bengaluru city, at the Malleshwaram police station on Tuesday.

On September 11, the Yuva Morcha had slapped a legal notice on Guha seeking an unconditional apology for linking the Sangh Parivar with the killing of Gauri Lankesh. Following the notice Guha had tweeted: "In India today, independent writers and journalists are harassed, persecuted, and even killed. But we shall not be silenced."

In another tweet, he said: "Atal Bihari Vajpayee said the answer to a book or article can only be another book or article. But we no longer live in Vajpayee's India." The complainant quoted the historian as saying: "It is very likely that her (Gauri Lankesh) murderers came from the same Sangh Parivar from which the murderers of

Dabholkar, Pansare and Kalburgi came", in an interview to a news website. "The direct allegations, insinuations and innuendoes are deliberately made by Mr Ramachandra Guha and with full knowledge of imputing criminal conduct," the complaint read. Pointing out that investigation was ongoing into the killings, it said the charges amount to illegal interference in the course of justice and is also a grave offence.

Gauri Lankesh, known to be an anti-establishment voice with strident anti-right wing views, was shot dead by unknown assailants at her home here on the night of September 5. (PTI)



Social activist Anna Hazare addressing the activists of Nawirman Kisan Sangathan during the launch of nation wide movement to demand farmers rights on the birth anniversary of Loknayak Jay Prakash Narayan in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Country needs PM who works, says Mayawati

LUCKNOW, OCT 11 /-/- BSP supremo Mayawati today slammed BJP president Amit Shah for claiming that Narendra Modi was a "Prime Minister who speaks" and said what the country needs is a "Prime Minister who works". Mayawati also accused the prime minister for making one-sided statements and "using government media and resources for himself". In a statement here, she said the BJP chief had done a favour to the country by accepting the harsh reality that Narendra Modi is a prime minister who speaks. But the people and opposition parties think the country urgently needs a Prime Minister who works, she added. The BJP president had on Tuesday hit out at Congress vice president Rahul Gandhi for questioning what the BJP had done during its rule, and said it had "given a prime minister who speaks".

The former UP chief minister said in her statement that official power is being misused to gag the opposition's voice, independence and uprightness, "yet BJP says they have given a prime minister who speaks". She also alleged that the Uttar Pradesh government functions on the same pattern as the Centre. "Law and order and crime situation in the state is going bad to worse," the BSP supremo said. (PTI)

2J&K cops held for supplying ammunition to militants

SRINAGAR, OCT 11 /-/- Two Jammu and Kashmir constables were arrested today for allegedly supplying ammunition to the Hizbul Mujahideen, busting an "unholy nexus" between the militant group and the police, a top official said.

Constables Shabir Ahmad Malik and Nazir Ahmed Najar had allegedly supplied nearly 40 rounds of ammunition for the AK series of rifles to overground workers of the Hizbul Mujahideen militant group in south and central Kashmir, police said. They were arrested along with two others allegedly affiliated with the group. Director General of Police (DGP) S P Vaid complimented the police personnel responsible for busting an "unholy nexus" between policemen and militants. "We have zero per cent tolerance for such acts and we will ensure stricter and a quick punishment for the guilty," Vaid said. The DGP added that "the internal in-house surveillance mechanism of the state police is strong and no such activity can escape the eyes of the law".

Giving details, police said one person identified as Adil Ahmad Negroo was a "close associate of active militant Waseem Wagay of Hizbul Mujahideen" and was arrested at Ramnagri in Shopian in south Kashmir. Police recovered 20 rounds of AK ammunition from his possession. During sustained interrogation, the accused named another accomplice, Mudasir Ahmad Mir, who was also picked up. When questioned, the duo named constable Shabir Ahmad Malik, posted at Ganderbal, from whom they had brought 20 rounds of ammunition, a police official said.

Malik was immediately picked up and subjected to intense questioning after which he named another constable, Nazir Ahmad Najar, posted at district police lines of Shopian. Malik claimed that Najar supplied him with 40 live rounds of ammunition for sale to militant groups, police said. (PTI)

17 prisons in UP to have solar power back-up units

LUCKNOW, OCT 11 /-/- The Uttar Pradesh government will install solar power back-up units in 17 prisons of the state to strengthen their security systems and ensure functioning of mobile phone jammers.

The state government has approved Rs 10.82 crore for this project, an official statement stated. "For successful operation of mobile phone jammers, solar energy-based power back-up units will be installed in the jails. Rs 10.82 crore has been approved for the project. And, the request for Rs 4.32 crore as an advance to PEC Limited has also been approved," said the release issued by the UP government's jail administration and reforms

department. The Project and Equipment Corporation of India Limited (PEC Limited) is an enterprise under the Union ministry of commerce and industry. In June this year, the Uttar Pradesh Police had written to the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECL), asking it ensure that the jammers installed in the state prisons are able to block 4G mobile telecommunication signals as well. Officials said that in the coming years 70 jails in UP will have the 4G jamming mechanism in place. While around a dozen jails have jammers installed on their premises and the process is on to install some more but these are able to block only the second (2G) or the third generation (3G) wireless mobile phones.