

Nation

'MCI panel members aided tainted ex-chief to become WMA prez-elect'

NEW DELHI: The Chief Vigilance Officer of the Medical Council of India (MCI) has found three ethics committee members guilty of providing wrong information about scam-tainted former MCI president Ketan Desai to the World Medical Association, paving the way for the latter to become WMA chief next year.

The CVO not only recommended action against the three doctors — Ajay Kumar,

Sudipto Roy and Vinay Agarwal — but also suggested referring the matter to the health ministry. But two months after he made the suggestions to MCI president Jayashree Mehta, there is no action on the part of the health ministry. In fact, Union health minister J P Nadda was seen seated next to Desai at a conference in Ahmedabad in the last week of December.

Desai will become the president-elect of WMA in October,

2015 and president in 2016. His name was recommended to the WMA by the Indian Medical Association — country's largest body of doctors — which Desai used to head between 2001 and 2003.

The WMA claims Desai's name was considered after MCI and IMA member Kumar — an old associate of Desai — provided documentary evidence suggesting criminal charges against Desai were dropped.



Ketan Desai

Citing an April 22, 2014 letter of the Central Bureau of Investigation, Kumar claimed 6 out of 8 cases have been closed against Desai and there are no charges against him in one case and the trial court proceedings have been stayed by the Supreme Court in another case. Kumar, Roy and Agarwal

accompanied Desai to the WMA meeting in Durban in October.

Contradicting Kumar's claims, the MCI vigilance officer K H K Jethi said that the MCI president should inform the WMA that two CBI cases are still pending and presently Desai is on bail in the main CBI trap case. He also sought action against the trio. The MCI president is believed to be a close associate of Desai.

"A baleful attempt has been

made by senior IMA officials, some of whom are also occupying top positions in the newly formed MCI, to restore public image of disgraced ex-MCI president Ketan Desai, and to obstruct the course of justice by making him president-elect of WMA through blatant lies and misleading information," said Kunal Saha, a US-based doctor, who heads a NGO named People for Better Treatment.

"In the original case, CBI

filed a closure report on the corresponding case on disproportionate assets in 2012, which was accepted by the CBI Court. Without a DA case, where is the proof of corruption? His registration which was suspended following his arrest was revoked by the MCI Board of Governors in December 2013," K K Agarwal, the incumbent Secretary General (Elect) of IMA told *Deccan Herald*.

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SC to do away with printed causerslists

NEW DELHI, DHNS: In a salutary move, the Supreme Court has decided to stop the practice of distributing printed causerslists (statements of cases listed before courts) and save Rs 1 crore annually. The amount, thus, saved would be used for setting up a creche to help women lawyers.

A new-elected executive committee of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) recently met with Chief Justice of India Justice H L Dattu, who informed them about the decision to discontinue the practice from February 1. "We have been assured that the causerslists would be updated on the Supreme Court's website in time and will also be e-mailed to all members of the SCBA, who are desirous of getting the causerslists on e-mail," stated a circular issued by the SCBA, hailing the decision.

However, the SCBA decided to keep printed form of the causerslists for convenience of the members at libraries, Bar room and lounge. Those advocates still keen to get a printed copy of the causerslists could get it after paying a quarterly fees of Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000.

Govt told to disclose Cabinet note on NJAC Act

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Central Information Commission (CIC) has ordered the Union government to disclose the Cabinet note and other documents relating to the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act to an information seeker under the Right to Information Act.

The transparency panel held that once the bill was presented in Parliament, it could not be exempted from disclosure.

Acting on Lucknow-based S N Shukla's plea, Information Commissioner M Shridhar Acharyulu said such documents could not be held as secret. The NJAC Act, as passed by Parliament and ratified by over 15 states, got the President's assent recently. It replaced the two-decade-old collegium system of appointment of judges in high courts and the Supreme Court.

Shukla has sought from the Law Ministry a copy of the NJAC bill as cleared by the Cabinet in 2013, along with the Cabinet note. The ministry maintained that the bill, as presented last year in Rajya Sabha, had not attained finality, and in the meantime the government had also changed, so there was no point disclosing the details.

Congress workers want Priyanka for party prez

LUCKNOW, DHNS: Barely days before the Congress Working Committee meeting in Delhi, demands for Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's installation as party leader have surfaced again in Uttar Pradesh with cadres saying she alone could revive the party.

Leaders who favour Priyanka say that it would be the best "birthday gift" to her on Monday. Posters bearing demand for Priyanka's leadership have come up in Allahabad. The posters, put up by Congress leaders Shresh Chandra Dubey and Haseeb Ahmed, asked the high command not to "give heed" to Digvijay's suggestions that Rahul be made party president. Former UP Congress secretary Dubey and a former office bearer Ahmed have asked Rahul to "gift" Priyanka the party presidency on her birthday. "Give your sister the post of president of the party as gift on her birthday in order to revive the party," the posters say.

Congress leaders in Lucknow refuse to comment on the issue.

Greenpeace activist barred from UK visit

Pillai was to talk on how mining in MP threatens the rights of forest dwellers

NEW DELHI: Greenpeace activist Priya Pillai was on Sunday denied permission to fly to London, where she was scheduled to address British parliamentarians on the violation of the rights of forest communities in central India due to coal mining.

Despite having a valid passport and visa, Pillai was not permitted by the immigration officials to board the 6:15 am Indian Airlines flight to the British capital, without offering a reason.

The officials informed her that she is banned from leaving India though there are no criminal convictions against her. Her passport was stamped with the word: Offload. "They (immigration officials) told the airlines (Indian Airlines) to remove my baggage and told me that I cannot board as my name figures in a government database. They did not tell me what the database is and did not give me anything in writing," Pillai told *Deccan Herald*.

Greenpeace, an internationally known non-governmental organisation, shot off letters to the Union Ministry of Home



Priya Pillai's passport with the 'offload' stamp.

and External Affairs and the Airport Authority of India seeking to know the reason why Pillai was prevented from leaving. There was no response from the government so far.

Pillai has been invited by the British MPs to talk about her campaign with the local communities in Mahan, Madhya Pradesh, where a proposed coal mining project led by Essar, a London-based company, threatens to uproot the lives and livelihoods of the forest and the community which lives there. The

talk is slated on January 14. "I am shocked and saddened that the government has managed yet again to run roughshod over people working to protect democratic rights in the country," Pillai said in a statement.

Asserting that she represented the forest community members of Mahan, the Delhi-based activist said, "I was scheduled to tell their story on how the Indian government and Essar, a foreign registered billionaire corporation, are trampling their rights and existence that have been guaranteed by none other than the constitution of India."

Allocation of Mahan coal block in Singrauli Madhya Pradesh to Essar and Hindalco in 2006 is one of the controversial decisions in the coal scam case, which is being heard by the Supreme Court. Activists alleged that more than 50,000 people from 54 villages are being removed from the Mahan region.

This is the second time a Greenpeace employee encountered problems. In September, 2014, Greenpeace campaigner, Ben Hargreaves — a UK national — was refused entry to India, despite having a valid visa. **DH News Service**



HIGH SECURITY: Police personnel outside the residence of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

Tharoor reaches Delhi to join probe

Police to quiz his aides, hotel staff first

NEW DELHI, PTI: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Sunday returned to the national capital, saying it is his duty to cooperate in the investigation into the death of his wife Sunanda Pushkar.

The Delhi Police, however, said it will not question him as of now. "It is my duty to cooperate with the police investigation and not to undermine the probe in any way," said Tharoor while heading back to Delhi on a flight from Kochi after a fortnight-long stay for Ayurveda treatment at Guruvayur.

A police official on Sunday said they were not going to ques-



Congress MP Shashi Tharoor arrives at his residence in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

tion Tharoor for now as they want to first examine all other people related to the case and look into the available evidence. "As of now we have no business with him. We would like to question his aides and others including the hotel staff. We would like to collate all the available material relevant to the case and then take a decision on the issue of examining him," he said.

Another official associated with the probe said that in a couple of days, they will move "letter rogatory" in a local court under sections of CrPC for sending viscera samples to a foreign lab in the US or UK to determine the nature and quantity of the poison which caused her death. "A letter rogatory or a letter of request is a formal request from a court to a foreign court for some type of judicial assistance. The Indian court will request the court of the country where the viscera has to be tested to get it tested in their lab. After tests, the lab will send the report to their court which would be routed to our court," he said.

This procedure will ensure that the test reports have legal sanctity and they are admissible in court, he added.

Tharoor, who arrived at the IGI airport here late in the afternoon, did not speak to media persons present there, and went straight to his house in Lodhi Estate in central Delhi.

On the flight, a television channel reporter fired a volley of questions at Tharoor which included whether he had any problem with the probe so far or whether he was satisfied with the probe. He was also asked about the manner in which his domestic help was grilled, but Tharoor refused to respond to most of the questions.

Asked why he had questioned the viscera samples being sent abroad for further tests, Tharoor said he had not. "Yes (I have written a letter) but not with that point in it. I don't release confidential correspondence," he said.



Haji Yaqoob Qureshi

Prize money to arrest Qureshi announced

LUCKNOW, DHNS: Several organisations have announced prize money for the person who nabs absconding Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Haji Yaqoob Qureshi, who offered Rs 51 crore reward for terrorists who attacked a French magazine.

Shiv Sena has announced that it will give Rs 1 lakh to the person who punishes Qureshi with 'ten shoe lashes'. "Qureshi's remarks have shocked the humanity...he deserves to be punished", said Sena leader Yogendra Sharma.

Sharma, who is the district unit president of the Sena in Muzaffarnagar, said that leaders like Qureshi must be put behind bars immediately. A saffron outfit has also announced a reward of Rs 100 crore for nabbing Qureshi, who has been absconding after the police registered a case against him for his remarks at Meerut a few days ago.

A senior Uttar Pradesh police official has also announced a reward of Rs 20,000 to the police team which would arrest Qureshi. Thakur, an IPS officer, said that he would personally reward the police team.

Qureshi has been booked for inciting hatred and making inflammatory statement. "Those who insult religion and Prophet cannot be pardoned under any circumstances," Qureshi had said offering a reward of Rs 51 crore to the attackers.

Isro-Saarc satellite to be a communication vehicle

NEW DELHI: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has decided the Saarc satellite would be a communication-cum-meteorology satellite to aid the neighbouring countries with their need for satellite transponders for communication and weather forecasting.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had mooted the idea of a Saarc satellite almost six months ago.

"It would be a communication satellite and Indian industry would be roped in for making it," reliable Isro sources told *Deccan Herald*. The satellite's configuration would be similar to the INSAT series satellites that had dual purpose. The launch is likely in 2016.

While visiting Isro in June, Modi proposed the idea of a Saarc satellite. Its genesis, however, was in an alert from the external intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing that warned the government about the Chinese plan of boosting space cooperation in

India's neighbourhood. In the last three years, Beijing launched two satellites from Sri Lanka and Pakistan and signed an agreement for a third launch.

In November 2012, the China Great Wall Industry Corporation (CGWIC) ferried a five-tonne communication satellite from a Sri Lankan private firm SupremeSAT (Supreme SAT-1) to the orbit. Former president Mahinda Rajapaksa's son Rohita, played a key role in developing the satellite as he is the technical director of the firm.

The same Sri Lankan company in 2013 signed a \$215 million agreement with the CGWIC to launch a second satellite, Supreme Sat-II in 2017. The CGWIC also launched Pakistan's first communication satellite PakSat-1R from its Xichang base in Sichuan province in 2011.

At the Saarc summit in Kathmandu in November, 2014 Modi said India's Saarc satellite would be launched by Decem-

ber, 2016 (Saarc day). "We will also host a conference in India for all South Asian partners next year, to strengthen our collective ability to apply space technology in economic development and governance," he said.

Though Isro's commercial arm, Antrix Corporation signed agreements with many countries to launch lighter satellites with PSLV, there are barely any discussions within Saarc, where only India and Pakistan have satellites.

As Isro does not have a reliable indigenous launch vehicle to ferry heavy 3-5 tonne class satellites (GSAT) to the geosynchronous orbit at an elevation of 36,000 km, the space agency sends its own communication satellites using the French ArianeSpace rockets. The Saarc satellite would benefit education, tele-medicine, disaster response, resource management, weather forecasting and communication sectors. **DH News Service**

Rajapaksa attempted 'coup' to cling to power

Rajapaksa, from Page 1

"We appreciate the straightforwardness of the army commander, inspector general of police and the commissioner of elections," Senaratne said, adding "they stood to uphold the democratic traditions for free and fair election".

"Inspector General Illangakoon was very vocal and did not want to be party to this coup. The army chief also stood by the police. The attorney general warned Rajapaksa that there will be dangerous consequences," Samarawera said.

There was no immediate comment from the military. Rajapaksa's spokesman denied the claims as baseless. "There was no such attempt at all," said Mohan Samaranyake. "In fact, at 3:30 am on January 9 when the counting was still under way, the president made an assessment and decided what the results would be," Samaranyake was quoted as saying by BBC.

"Then he gave instructions to all secretaries about a smooth transfer of power... The politician who has made these remarks is in the habit of making baseless allegations," he said.

Senaratne, who is tipped to become health minister, had refused to specify whether Rajapaksa himself tried to contact the military chief or used his younger brother Gotabhaya, who was the then defence secretary. In the run-up to the January 8 polls, the opposition leaders had alleged that the military was deployed to disrupt the polls in the Tamil-dominated areas.

The military dismissed the allegations then.

Sirisena the new president received overwhelming Tamil support as voting was conducted peacefully in these areas.

BJP fears ordinances may bring deadlock in Parliament

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The BJP is worried about the spate of ordinances brought to unleash economic reforms getting stuck in Parliament during the February budget session.

Though the BJP had put the blame on the opposition saying that ordinances had to be brought due to "compulsions forced by the opposition's terror", party chief Amit Shah, while addressing the first rally to kick-start Delhi Assembly polls campaign on Saturday appealed to all parties not to stall ordinances in the Rajya Sabha where they have majority.

Shah, however, at the same time expressed government's resolve to stay committed to its development plank. "If opposition thinks they can restrict the development of the nation by hindering smooth functioning of Parliament, they are wrong," Shah told the gathering at Ramlila Maidan.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, though he did not refer to ordinances in his campaign speech, tried to take credit of bringing "vikaswad" politics in the country, which was different from caste and regional centric agenda of other parties.

When Parliament resumes late next month, the government will have to table bills to replace about eight ordinances

brought for increasing FDI cap in insurance sector, on coal block auctioning, mining, land acquisition policy and merging Person of Indian Origin (PIO) and Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) schemes.

There are differences of opinion within the government on this issue. At least three Central ministers, including M Venkaiah Naidu, are said to have opposed it on the grounds that Parliament route is better to avoid confrontation and widen trust deficit with non-National Democratic Alliance parties.

The Rajya Sabha remained paralysed as it demanded a statement by the prime minister on conversion issue which did not happen. The party wants to make political capital out of this issue painting opposition's obstruction as anti-development and anti-people.

Telecom Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad had recently defended the government's decision to bring ordinances. "We have to run the country. People have elected us to work. We are working. They are stopping us from work. You will not allow Parliament to function and not let the bills be passed. To run the nation, when we come out with a way through a constitutional ordinance, then they criticise us," Prasad had said.

PM vows easy biz rules for investors

Modi investors, from P1

Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and Poland Deputy Prime Minister Janusz Piechociński attended the inaugural ceremony, besides US Secretary of State John Kerry, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim. Senior ministers from Australia, Canada, Israel, the UK and the Netherlands led delegations from their countries.

Modi claimed his government had been able to change the "atmosphere of despair and uncertainty" in just seven months. "Since the first day, my

government has been actively working to revive the economy. My government is committed to create a policy environment that is predictable, transparent and fair," he said.

The prime minister listed out his government's recent endeavours — raising Foreign Direct Investment cap in defence, construction, railways, manufacturing of medical devices and insurance sectors; launch of the Jan Dhan Yojana for financial inclusion; the "Make in India" campaign to woo investors and spur manufacturing growth; easing and fast-tracking procedures for land acquisition; the Swachh Bharat Mission; Digital India; and re-

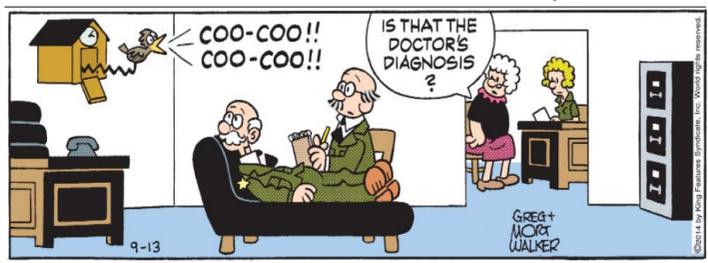
structuring the Planning Commission into the "NITI Aayog". "I have launched these initiatives in a campaign mode so they force us in the government to make faster corrections; they challenge us to do away with red tape and become proactive," he said.

Referring India as a "land of opportunities", Modi called for global investment in India. "There are immense possibilities for global investors in India. The process of development we are taking up is not incremental. We are planning to make a quantum leap," he said, adding: "It is not limited to one sector or region; it is truly unlimited." **DH News Service**



BEETLE BAILEY

By Mort Walker



GREG + MORT WALKER