

Goa Governor pressurised to go against her wish: Congress leader

Panaji, March 19 : Congress Secretary Girish Chodankar on Sunday said he had the feeling that Goa Governor Mridula Sinha was pressurised to act against her wish.

"She seems to be a very innocent lady, a renowned writer. She has a lot of literature to her credit. She is an idealistic character. I have full respect for her. I am feeling she has been pressurised to do something against her own wish," Chodankar told the media here. He said: "She will resign of her own volition, because she is grappling with her conscience over her decision on March 12 to invite the Bharatiya Janata Party to form the new government in Goa, which was against her wish."

"When our delegation met her (this week), we observed her body language. She made no eye contact with any of our leaders. I felt she is now talking to her conscience. I was feeling very sorry for her," he said.

"... she could resign on her own because she has gone against her wish and she has done what she did not want to do," the Congress leader said. Chodankar also made fun of the state BJP leadership for a defamation case filed against him for claiming that the BJP had paid Rs 1,000 crore to non-Congress MLAs to lure them. "The BJP was defeated in the February 4 elections. This shows they have no fame in Goa. If they have no fame, how can they be defamed," he said. Sinha, 74, is a noted litterateur with a number of short story collections and novels to her credit.

She was accused by the Congress of constitutional impropriety after she invited the Bharatiya Janata Party to form the government in the coastal state, even though the Congress emerged as the single largest party with 17 seats.

Four Haryana cops injured in clash with Jats

Chandigarh, March 19 : Four police officials, including a Deputy Superintendent of Police, were injured on Sunday in Fatehabad district in Haryana when Delhi-bound Jat community protesters clashed with them.

The police force was trying to stop them from moving towards Delhi. The clash took place on the Sirsa-Hisar-Delhi highway

when the protesters, who were on tractor-trolleys, were stopped.

Police used force, including tear gas, as the protesters pelted them with stones.

Authorities in Haryana have imposed a ban on movement of tractor-trolleys in districts bordering Delhi to foil a call given by Jat leaders to lay siege to Delhi and hold a protest outside Parliament.

Mohsin Raza lone Muslim face in Yogi ministry

Lucknow, March 19 : Mohsin Raza, a former Ranji Trophy player, was sworn in on Sunday as a minister of state in the new BJP government in Uttar Pradesh.

He is the lone Muslim face in the Yogi Adityanath-led government. Raza is not a member of the state assembly. He is a spokesman of the BJP.

Maurya, Sharma take oath as Deputy CMs

Lucknow, March 19 : Phoolpur MP Keshav Prasad Maurya was on Sunday sworn in as one of the two Deputy Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh.

Maurya, who is also the

state Bharatiya Janata Party chief, took oath immediately after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Lucknow Mayor Dinesh Sharma was also sworn in as a Deputy Chief Minister.

Jat stir put on hold, Parliament march called off

New Delhi, March 19 : The Jat agitation that threatened to cripple normal life in Delhi on Monday has been postponed, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Jat leader Yashpal Malik announced here on Sunday.

The decision followed several rounds of parleys in Delhi between the government and prominent Jat leaders spearheading the community's agitation in neighbouring Haryana.

The Jat community, which is demanding reservation in government jobs and educational institutions, among other things, resumed their agitation on January 29.

Apart from Khattar, Union Ministers Birender Singh and P.P. Chaudhary -- both Jats -- threw their weight from the government's side to persuade the Jat leaders to postpone their agitation in support of their demands and grievances.

Khattar said both sides have reached a consensus on five points, including



initiation of the process of reservation for the Jats in central government jobs, reconsideration of cases lodged against Jat agitators since 2010 and permanent jobs to next-of-kin of those killed and those maimed during the 2016 February agitation in Haryana.

Besides, the government will also give monetary compensation to the injured and institute probe against officers accused of high-handedness during the Jat stir, he said.

"All this will be done in a

time-bound manner. Our government is committed to the welfare of the Jats," the Chief Minister said.

Malik said the Jats will not undertake the proposed march to Parliament on Monday.

However, he said, token dharmas at some places in Haryana would continue for the time being. Khattar, who was to visit Lucknow to attend the swearing-in of Yogi Adityanath as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh on Sunday, called off his visit to be available for par-

leys with Jat leaders in his state.

The protest call had set alarm bells ringing in Delhi as Parliament is in session. There were apprehensions that normal life would be severely hit in the national capital, apart from the fact that students were to sit for board exams on Monday.

Earlier on Sunday, Delhi Metro announced it will suspend services to Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and close 12 important stations from Sunday night. These were Rajiv Chowk, Patel Chowk, Central Secretariat, Udyog Bhavan, Lok Kalyan Marg, Janpath, Mandi House, Barakhamba Road, R.K. Ashram Marg, Pragati Maidan, Khan Market and Shivaji Stadium. According to a Delhi Metro Rail Corporation official, the 12 stations in central Delhi were to be shut from 8 p.m. on Sunday till further notice. But interchange facility was to be made available at the relevant stations.

AJSU opposes Domicile Policy, wants higher quota for backwards

Ranchi, March 19 : The BJP's ruling alliance partner in Jharkhand, AJSU has opposed the Domicile Policy, amendments in two land acts and demanded hike in the reservation quota for the backward community.

The All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) made the demands at its three-day annual convention which concluded here on Sunday.

"The party rejects the amendment in the two land acts and opposes the Domicile Policy in the current format. The party also demands that the reservation of the backward community should be increased from 14 to 27 per cent in the state," Deo Sharan Bhagat, AJSU spokesperson, told reporters here.

He added that the party wanted the state government to work for the welfare of the peo-

ple. "But we are not with the state government on amendment of the land acts and Domicile Policy," he said.

Raghuraj Das-led government last year brought much awaited Domicile Policy and amended the two land acts -- Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act (CNT) and Santhal Pargana Act (SPT).

"The purpose of creation of the state has not been fulfilled. The aspiration of the people is development not amendment in the land acts," AJSU President Sudesh Mahto said.

At the convention, the party leaders demanded that 27 per cent reservation be provided in the state to the backward community. The leaders said that backwards constitute more than 50 per cent population of the state but they get only 14 per cent reservation.

Adityanath will soon become face of development: Naidu

New Delhi, March 19 : Yogi Adityanath, sworn in as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, will lead the state on the development path and prove skeptics wrong, BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu said on Sunday.

"I am confident Yogiji will soon become the face of development in Uttar Pradesh. He has been a fighter for the people's cause. He has declared that 'Lok Kalyan Sankalp Patra' of the BJP manifesto is his agenda," Naidu wrote on Facebook.

"Unfortunately that some opponents, communalists are trying to portray him as a rubble-rouser and fringe personality. They should go through his parliamentary debates. Those reveal his seasoned thinking on various issues of governance," Naidu said.

Describing Adityanath as a politician and committed to help the downtrodden, Naidu said it was "unfair" to attribute caste to him. "People of all communities are celebrating his appointment," he said.



Referring to criminal charges against Adityanath, including attempt to murder and rioting, the central minister claimed the cases were political.

"He is so humble he requested me to spare party seniors as his

deputies. Normally people don't want deputies as they fear competition," Naidu said, referring to Uttar Pradesh BJP chief Keshav Prasad Maurya and Lucknow Mayor Dinesh Sharma who were sworn in as Deputy Chief Ministers.

INTERNATIONAL

G20 nations bows to US pressure, drop free trade pledge

Berlin, March 19 : The world's biggest economies have dropped a long-standing public endorsement of free trade at their first meeting with the US President Donald Trump's administration.

Finance Ministers and central bank Governors from the G-20 group of leading economies, including the US, China, Mexico, Germany and India, held two days of tough talking in the German town of Baden-Baden.

The formal statement issued after the meeting on Saturday contained only a bland reference to "working to strengthen the contribution of trade to our economies", CNN reported.

Conspicuous by its absence was the phrase "we will resist all forms of protectionism" that was contained in the communique from the last meeting of the group in China in July 2016.

It also did not contain a pledge to finance efforts to combat climate change, Efe news said.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, however, downplayed the content of the statement.

"This is my first G20, so what was in the past communique is not necessarily relevant from my standpoint," Mnuchin said.

In a press conference

afterward, he described the meeting as extremely productive and stressed that Trump's administration believed in free trade.

However, he added that it was good for the US as long as it was balanced.

He said the US, which since Trump took office has withdrawn from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and called for the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) to be renegotiated, was looking to enter into trade deals that

are a "win-win" situation for the parties involved.

The Finance Minister of host Germany, Wolfgang Schauble, said for his part that the negotiations were very difficult but that a door had been left open for future talks.

He added that the final communique contained language that was not very concrete but which reflected the economies' shared commitment to fair trade, as demanded by the US, and rejection of currency

manipulation.

Trump has accused two G20 members, China and Japan, of currency manipulation, while one of his top trade advisers has leveled the same complaint against Germany.

Given the opposition from the US and Saudi Arabia, the G20's communique also differed from its 2016 statement in that no reference was made to the members' readiness to finance the battle against climate change.

Chinese President meets US Secretary of State

Beijing, March 19 : Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday met visiting US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, saying cooperation is the only "right" choice for both countries.

"There are important development opportunities resulting from China-US ties," said Xi at the meeting in the Great Hall of People in Beijing.

Xi said he had maintained sound communications with his US counterpart Donald Trump through telephone calls and messages and they had agreed that the two countries could be good partners, Xinhua news agency reported.

To advance China-US ties in a healthy and steady manner, both sides, Xi said, could "enhance exchanges at high level and various levels; expand cooperation in bilateral, regional and global fields; and properly address and manage sensitive issues".

Xi suggested that the two countries increase strategic trust and mutual understanding, review bilateral ties from long-term and strategic perspectives and expand fields of cooperation for win-win outcomes.

"The two countries should also enhance coordination on regional hotspot issues, respect each other's core interests

and major concerns and encourage friendly exchanges between the two peoples."

Xi also extended welcome to President Trump for a visit to China.

Tillerson said the US was "ready to develop relations with China based on the principle of no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation".

After visiting Japan and South Korea in his first visit to Asia as the chief US diplomat, Tillerson arrived in China on Saturday, where he met his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, and State Councillor Yang Jiechi, in Beijing on Saturday.

Trump picks Conway's husband for key justice post

Washington, March 19 : Donald Trump has selected White House adviser Kellyanne Conway's husband to head the civil division of the Justice Department, placing him in charge of the Presidents travel ban and lawsuits, a media report said.

George T. Conway III, 53, would lead the division of about 1,000 lawyers, handling issues like national security and consumer protection and enforcing federal programmes and the actions of the President himself, The New York Times report said on Saturday.

However, the decision was not immediately con-

firmed either by the White House or the Justice Department

If confirmed, George T. Conway III would immediately be in charge of representing Trump in the legal challenges - which are widely expected to reach the Supreme Court - over his executive order barring people from six predominantly Muslim countries from entering the US.

The White House narrowed the directive after its original version was blocked last month by judges who said it did not advance national security interests and violated the due process rights of law-

ful permanent residents, people holding visas and refugees.

Last week, two other federal judges -- one in Hawaii and one in Maryland -- moved to block the revised order, suggesting that it probably constituted religious discrimination.

George T. Conway III would also oversee Trump's defence in a pending lawsuit charging him with violations of the US Constitution's Emoluments Clause, which bans federal office-holders from accepting gifts or payments from foreign governments because of the profits his

hotels and resorts receive from foreign officials who are customers, The New York Times said in the report.

George T. Conway III had been a contender for the job of solicitor general for the Trump administration, but the President announced this month that the job would go to Noel J. Francisco.

He is a partner at the New York City firm of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz and specialises in securities, contract and antitrust litigation, as well as mergers and acquisitions, according to his biography on the firm's website.

Beijing's last coal-fired power plant suspends operations

Beijing, March 19 : Beijing's last coal-fired power plant suspended operations paving the way for the capital to become China's first city with all its power plants fuelled by clean energy.

The Huangneng Beijing Thermal Power Plant was built and put into operation in June 1999. It has five coal-fired units with a total

installed capacity of 845,000 kw and heating capacity of 26 million square metres, Xinhua news agency reported.

Du Chengzhang, General Manager of the plant, said on Saturday that it is an efficient and environmental friendly plant with advanced emission treatment equipment.

The plant has provided

important support to the stable operation of Beijing's electric power system and the heat-supply system.

After the suspension, about 1.76 million tonnes of coal, 91 tonnes of sulfur dioxide and 285 tonnes of nitrogen oxide emissions will be cut annually.

According to a clean air plan by Beijing from 2013

to 2017, the city will build four gas thermal power centres.

Three other plants which used to consume over 6.8 million tonnes of coal each year were closed in 2014 and 2015.

Beijing has 27 power plants, all fuelled by clean energy with a total installed capacity of 11.3 million kw.