



VP Sanu @VP\_Sanu
Some of the major BJP candidates in Kerala for the upcoming Lok Sabha election are: 1) The owner of Asianet News, 2) Former National office bearer of the Congress Party, 3) The Congress candidate who ran against Pinarayi Vijayan in the last legislative assembly election.

Pettah child abductor habitual offender: Cops

Ayroom native Hassan Kutty, who was nabbed on Sunday, abducted child after observing the area for half an hour

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @TPuram

THE person who took the police for a ride for a fortnight after having abducted and abandoned a two-year-old girl child belonging to a Bihari migrant couple from Pettah in Thiruvananthapuram has been arrested.

Hassan Kutty alias Kabeer — belonging to Ayroom and residing at Navaikulam in Thiruvananthapuram district — was arrested on Sunday from Chinakada in Kollam by the special shadow team headed by Thiruvananthapuram deputy commissioner of police (law and order and traffic) P Nidhin-

raj. Thiruvananthapuram City police commissioner C H Nagaraju said Kabeer, in his early 50s, is a habitual offender involved in multiple POCSO cases, house breaks, autorickshaw thefts and waylaying.

Kabeer abducted the child on February 19 after he was released from the Kollam jail on January 12 in a POCSO case. He was jailed after he had harassed an 11-year-old girl belonging to Ayroom; luring her by offering sweets. After reaching the capital city by train, he got down at Pettah railway station and walked towards the place where the Bihari couple was camping.



Kabeer, with his head covered, being taken to police vehicle

The probe team led by Nidhinraj got the lead after searching hundreds of CCTV clips. One visual showed the culprit walking away by covering himself with a blanket after abandoning the child in a pit in the thicket near the railway track at Kochuveli. She was traced 19 hours after the abduction, and there were no injuries. Nagaraju said Kabeer abducted the child after observing the area for half an hour with the intention of harming her.

"The child was abducted in her sleep around 10.30am. When she woke up crying, Kabeer covered her mouth, and in the melee, she lost conscious-

ness. Fearing the child had died, he abandoned her the same night. Kabeer is an illiterate wanderer who doesn't have a permanent address and uses an old mobile phone. He does not have mental issues but clearly has a criminal mentality," Nagaraju said.

When arrested, Kabeer was wearing the same shirt and footwear that he had worn on the day of the crime. During the interrogation by ADGP M R Ajith Kumar at the Thiruvananthapuram City police commissioner's office, Kabeer confessed that he had gone to Palani after committing the crime.

PC: Pinarayi, Vellappally, Tushar did not want me to contest from P'Thitta

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Pathanamthitta

STIRRING emotions within the NDA, former M.L.A P C George — who joined the BJP recently but failed to get a Lok Sabha ticket — alleged on Sunday that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, SNDP Yogam general secretary Vellappally Natesan and the latter's son Thushar Vellappally did not want him to contest from Pathanamthitta.

"I could have won the seat. Pinarayi Vijayan didn't want me not to contest. Vellappally Natesan also acted against me," he told reporters in Kottayam.

Irritated by George's statements against Thushar, the BJS leadership raised the issue with the BJP national leadership. BJS is a major ally of the NDA in Kerala.

George said NDA's Pathanamthitta candidate Anil Antony has no local connections in Kerala.

"He was in Delhi for a long time as a Congress media campaigner. He joined BJP only recently and is not really famous in Kerala," he said.

After joining the BJP, George was active in Pathanamthitta and was rumoured to be the NDA candidate there.

'Move to discard veterans may hit BJP's prospects'

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K S SREEJITH @TPuram

"TRUE, George lacks credibility. But that doesn't matter. He could have attracted all communities. A section of the Christian community is disappointed (over Anil's candidature) and this may reflect in Thrissur as well," a Christian leader from Pathanamthitta said. Leaders fear the move to discard all veteran leaders will hit the BJP's prospects in a state where it is keen to open its account. Moreover, the current state leadership was totally sidelined and kept in the dark on the list. Among the state leaders, only M T Ramesh (Kozhikode) found a place on the panel.

Questions are being raised about candidature in Kasaragod too. "The party could have fielded P K Krishnadas or a leader who has the backing of the majority community there," a BJP state committee member said. "In the name of giving seats to women you can't select candidate from management quota," he said.

Discounts on drugs for cancer, dialysis

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kochi

IN A FIRST, Consumerfed-run Neethi Medicals will offer discounts on cancer and dialysis medicines from April 1.

Already, the store was selling medicines at a discount of 14% to 60%. This will go up to 70% from next month, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in Kochi during the 25th year celebrations of Neethi Medicals.

"Cancer and dialysis medicines will be made available to patients at the lowest price through Neethi stores," he said.

Launched in 1999, Neethi Medicals began with 100 stores. In 25 years, it expanded to 1,760 stores and 12 medical warehouses. Pinarayi also launched four new projects on the occasion. They include manufacturing and supply of generic medicines and a scheme to provide surgical equipment to health centres in local bodies.

"The new initiatives can empower the sector. Earlier, medicines were sold at stores at maximum retail price. With the launch of Neethi Medicals, even private stores have reduced prices of medicines. This has benefited people," said Pinarayi.

By denying pay, staff are being pushed to seeking alms: Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @TPuram

COMING down heavily on the state government for delaying salaries and pensions, Congress state chief K Sudhakaran said while the CM and ministers receive their pay on the first of every month, teachers, government servants and pensioners are being pushed to seeking alms.

The financial mess the state finds itself is the result of the government's unrestrained extravagance, he alleged, highlighting

Secretariat council protest from today

The Secretariat Action Council will hold an indefinite protest from 11am on Monday in protest against the denial of salaries and pensions.

that pensions and salaries have been in arrears for six months.

"Nearly 50 lakh people have been affected by non-payment of salaries and pensions and the sole culprit is the Left government.

Timely payment of salaries and pensions is important for a vibrant economy. Their denial impacts every sector. Due to this, current and past employees struggle to access even basic needs, including medicines and treatment," Sudhakaran added.

Taking a dig at the government, AICC general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal said this is the first time that government salaries and pensions have been delayed and credit should go to all those running the show.

Revanth to accompany PM during visit

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Hyderabad/Adilabad

TELANGANA CM A Revanth Reddy will receive Prime Minister Narendra Modi and accompany him to official programmes during his visit to the state from Monday.

The PM is scheduled to lay foundation stones and inaugurate various developmental works, estimated to cost ₹56,000 crore, in Adilabad on Monday.

They include the newly electrified railway line from Ambari to Adilabad and Pipalkhuti.

Cafe blast probe will be handed to NIA if needed: Siddu

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Chikkamagaluru/Bengaluru

KARNATAKA Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said the Bengaluru cafe blast case will be handed over to NIA, if necessary.

Disclosing this to reporters in Chikkamagaluru, he said that his government has taken the case very seriously and all efforts will

be made to bring those behind it to book.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara said in Bengaluru that the investigating officers have gathered important clues and the accused in the cafe blast case will be arrested soon.

He said the cafe blast and Man-

galuru cooker explosion cases have similarities. The NIA might have an idea of which terrorist outfit might be involved in the cafe blast.

Reacting to Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil's remark that the cafe blast is a "silly incident", Siddaramaiah said it is definitely not silly and people's safety

is his government's top priority.

Criticising Leader of Opposition R Ashoka for his statement that the image of Bengaluru has changed from "Brand Bengaluru" to "Bomb Bengaluru", the CM said four blasts, including the one near the BJP office at Malleswaram in Bengaluru, took place during the saffron party's rule in 2008.

SSLC exams begin today, 4.25 lakh to appear

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @TPuram

OVER 4.27 lakh students will appear for the SSLC exam beginning on Monday. The exam will be held across 2,971 centres, including 2,955 centres in the state, nine in Lakshadweep and seven in the Gulf region.

General Education Minister V Sivankutty, on Sunday, told reporters that all arrangements have been made for a smooth conduct of the examination which will be on till March 25.

The minister said the distribution of 1.43 crore text books for classes 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, for the next academic year, will begin on March 12. This will include textbooks in English, Malayalam, Tamil and Kannada.

The printing of 2.09 crore text books, based on the revised curriculum for classes 1, 3, 7, and 9, will be completed in the first week of May. These sets of textbooks will be distributed before May 10, Sivankutty said.

Samagra Shiksha Kerala (SSK) will conduct 'Padanolsavam' in schools at the end of the academic year for students to demonstrate their learning outcomes in front of parents and the general public.

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