

Police register UAPA case against Maoist team that visited Aralam

The Hindu Bureau
KANNUR

The Aralam police have registered a case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against an alleged 11-member Maoist gang that staged a demonstration with guns in Keezhpally Vietnam of Aralam grama panchayat in Kerala.

Nine of the gang members were identified by the Kerala Police's anti-Maoist force Thunderbolts. It has intensified efforts to identify two others, including a woman, who were said to be part of the gang.

The police have registered a case against them under the Arms Act and the UAPA for organising demonstrations with weapons and spreading Maoist ideology.

A five-member gang led by C.P. Moidheen, who had arrived in the region earlier, and four others — Andhra native Kavita, Vikram-gowda, Manoj, and Suresh — have been identified. To identify the other two members, the police collected information from shopkeepers and others.

Residents told the police that all the members wielded guns.

The group returned after putting up posters, which read that "Aralam farm workers are not slaves, they are the owners of the farm, Aralam farms belong to tribals".

The poster was attributed to CPI Maoist Kabani Area Samiti.

Karnataka CM urges Centre to make amendments to drought manual

Siddaramaiah says different parameters are needed to declare drought in 14 agro-climatic zones in State in light of the dire situation caused by erratic conditions propelled by climate change; he asks Centre to align manual with SDRF/NDRF norms

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has written to the Union government to bring changes to the Manual for Drought Management, 2016 (updated in 2020) for the declaration of drought by the States.

He said it was necessary to have different parameters to declare drought in 14 agro-climatic zones in Karnataka in light of the dire situation caused by erratic weather conditions propelled by climate



Despite drought-like conditions in several taluks, we have not been able to meet the existing parameters for declaring drought

SIDDARAMAIAH
Karnataka Chief Minister

change. In the current southwest monsoon season, he said, Karnataka had received 234 mm of rainfall as against the normal 336 mm, registering a 34% deficiency. This is against the backdrop of the

delayed arrival of the monsoon and a deficiency of 56% in June. "Throughout this season, rainfall distribution and intensity have been erratic. Despite drought-like conditions in several taluks, we have not

been able to meet the existing parameters for declaring drought. This is resulting in leaving farmers without critical support such as input subsidy required in the event of failure to commence sowing operations/mid-season crop failure after sowing due to weak rains," he said in a letter to Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar.

"The current one-size-fits-all approach to drought declaration is not capturing the variations in different regions. It is important to develop

region-specific criteria that consider local ecological factors, water availability, and agricultural practices," he said.

Pointing out the current manual that integrates meteorological, agricultural, and hydrological drought, Mr. Siddaramaiah said that the erratic distribution of monsoons should be factored in. He urged the Centre to align the norms in the manual with the SDRF/NDRF norms, and synchronise the timeline of crop insurance disbursement with input subsidy (relief assistance).

Varanasi's boatmen fear backwash from water taxi plan



Around 1,300 boats are operated for religious and spiritual tourism purposes across the 84 ghats of Varanasi. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Harishchandra Bind, 33, is busy these days, as dozens of traditional boatmen visit his office at the Maa Ganga Nishadraj Seva Samiti at the Dashashwamedh ghat daily to discuss their future amid the surge of tourists arriving in Varanasi.

"The boatmen's income has been not increasing, despite the rising inflation. Amid this, the Varanasi Municipal Corporation has initiated plans to bring water taxis to ferry tourists between the ghats. The tender for water taxis is again being opened this week, and boatmen worried about their future come to meet us asking for its implications," said Mr. Bind, secretary of the samiti, an organisation representing the boatmen community in Varanasi.

With over 70 million people visiting the city in 2022, the government is looking for new ways to cater to the needs of the tourism sector, leading to apprehensions among the 5,000-odd traditional boatmen in Varanasi. Most of them hail from the Nishad, Kewat, and Manjhi

castes, belonging to the Other Backward Class or Scheduled Caste communities traditionally employed in ferrying visitors at the Ganga ghats. Though they have earned their livelihoods in this way for ages, they have not benefited much from the recent tourism boom.

A survey conducted by two researchers from the Economics Department of DAV Postgraduate College in Varanasi found that taxi and boat drivers have only seen a 20% hike in their income in recent years amid rapidly developing religious tourism facilities along the Kashi Vishwanath corridor. These boatmen operate roughly 1,300 boats for religious and spiritual tourism purposes across the 84 ghats of Varanasi.

Their rising apprehension stems from what they term "betrayal" when cruise ships were introduced five years ago. "When we protested, the administration asked for three months' time and promised to operate it outside the city limits. Now four cruise ships are sailing off the ghats," said Pramod Manjhi, a boatman.

Mallannasagar oustees stage protest, seek compensation

The Hindu Bureau
SIDDIPIPET

A large number of oustees of the Mallannasagar project held a protest on the Rajiv Rahadari at Sangailpally crossroads in Telangana on Sunday.

They blocked the road, raised slogans against the government for not paying them compensation.

They accused the government of failing to solve their problems and asked it to pay them the remaining compensation and sanction houses. "People from submerged villages of Mallannasagar vacated their



Raising slogans: Ousteers of Mallannasagar project staging a protest in Telangana on Sunday. MOHD ARIF

houses trusting the government. But, three years had passed and some promises are yet to be fulfilled. No houses are being allotted to them and to escape al-

lotment of houses, they are being branded as non-locals," said D. Pratap Reddy, Sarpanch of Etigaddakishitapur, one of the submerged villages.

Telangana BJP leader quits, to rejoin Cong.

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

BJP Vikarabad leader and former Minister A. Chandrasekhar has quit the party. He is likely to return to the Congress in New Delhi on Friday.

Speaking to presspersons here on Sunday, Mr. Chandrasekhar said he had sent his resignation from party membership to BJP State president G. Kishan Reddy.

In his resignation letter, he alleged that the BJP leadership was not encouraging those who were working for the party's growth,

and the Union government had failed to stop the injustices done by the Telangana government. He said it was an indication that the BJP and the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) were in a tacit understanding.

He said the change of Bandi Sanjay from the party's stewardship just a few months before the Assembly election was unfathomable.

Telangana Congress president A. Revanth Reddy met the leader and invited him to join the party.

He is likely to join in the presence of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge.

THE HINDU

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S. Vincent
K.S. Antonysamy

The outcome of higher education has continuously impacted socio-economic and technological development in India. Has innovation helped India scale up to global standards? The implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the initiatives of the Government of Tamil Nadu towards skill development and entrepreneurial promotion might come to a reasonable rescue.

Looking back

Since independence, the Indian government has taken steps to enhance the quality of higher education and map its objectives and outcome. A number of education commissions and committees were constituted to review various aspects of higher education and suggest specific remediation to the identified issues and challenges. The University Education Commission (1948-49), under the chairmanship of S. Radhakrishnan, laid the foundation by emphasising the need to produce skilled technicians who would successfully operate various industries. The Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) insisted on the implementation of schemes with relation to educational and national development at all levels. Recently, the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA, 2013) emphasised the critical appraisal of higher educational plans

Create a knowledge society

Despite steady progress since independence, higher education institutes need to prioritise experimentation, research and discovery and establish a culture to achieve this.



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that would describe each state's strategy to address issues of equity access and excellence in higher education.

Despite a steady progress in the field of higher education, there has been a clear lack in the area of experimentation, innovations and discoveries in India. India's ranking in the patent filing is closely linked to the fund that the country is allocating for research and development. India's ranking in the patent filing is closely linked to the allocation for research and deve-

lopment. India's allocation of 0.7% of Gross Development Product (GDP) for R&D is comparatively lower than the U.S.'s 2.8%, China's 2.1%, Israel's 4.3% and Korea's 4.2%.

Another obstacle is the lack of engagement with the industry. Higher educational institutions are yet to find a connect with the industry through which they can experiment, pitch ideas and deploy them appropriately. The practices of academia and the requirements of the industry have not been completely

aligned. It is high time that industry-academia collaboration is strengthened to utilise research findings and innovate. However, what is pertinent here is the observation of Lanny Cohen, Innovation Officer

Promoting thought-provoking research as a pre-requisite for outstanding education will transform India into a vibrant knowledge society

of Cag Gemini, that organisations cannot just open innovation centres and expect an overnight transformation in their creative output. To achieve and sustain real change, higher education institutions are expected to create a research culture and innovation council where students are encouraged to experiment and push outcome-based ideas to the industry.

It is in this context that the NEP 2020 assumes importance with its thrust on developing a child's 'Crea-

tive Potential' based on higher-order cognitive capacities and to cultivate innovation and creativity in learners through industry-institution linkages and collaborative programme. In addition, promoting thought-provoking research as a pre-requisite for outstanding education will transform India into a vibrant knowledge society.

The NEP has prioritised research and innovation with financial commitment to academic research. The outcome is the creation of Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge sharing (DIKSHA), a national repository of high-quality resources on foundational literacy, numeracy, competency-based learning and education through innovative and experiential methods acquired using gamification and apps.

Strategies to succeed

The freedom to select Indian universities to set up campuses in other countries and initiate start-up incubation centres, technology development centres and centres in frontier of areas of research helps foster knowledge creation and innovation that will contribute to the growing national economy.

These expected benefits depend on the commitment of all stakeholders from bureaucrats to educationists. Interestingly, the Government of Tamil Nadu has launched the Naam Mudhalvan Scheme to provide free employment-linked skill development training to the youth and

the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Fellowship Programme (TNCMFP) to harness the energy and talent of young professionals to improve the governance processes. These innovative strategies in the areas of skill development and entrepreneurship are expected to boost a knowledge society that contributes to global education. Certainly, the key is the effort that both the central and state government have to continue to take for successful implementation and sustenance of these policies and schemes.

S. Vincent is former Member-Secretary, Tamil Nadu State Council for Science & Technology (TNSCST), Ministry of Higher Education, Government of Tamil Nadu and Dean of Research, Loyola College, Chennai. K.S. Antonysamy is Director, DDU Kaushal Kendra, Loyola College, Chennai.

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