

2-day plenary meeting of NEC: HM dislikes media presence in meet

Shillong, July 10.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh did not want the presence of media persons at the two-day NEC meeting, which began in the city on Monday, and asked reporters to go out soon after he arrived at the venue.

"Media persons, you can go out now," he told the journalists who were invited to cover the event in the congested hall at the Convention Centre.

However, according to the press pass issued by the Meghalaya Information and Public Relations, the holder of the pass was permitted to cover the visit of the union minister on Monday and Tuesday.

Even the NEC public relations head Manas Ranjan Mahapatra in his invitation to the media on Sunday had said, "You may cover the speeches of Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister and Jitendra Singh, Minister, Development of North Eastern Region at the



Convention Centre from 2.05 pm to 2.25 pm."

On the contrary, the media persons were asked to sit in a nearby room and copies of the speech of the home minister were delivered to them later. When contacted, an official source said the NEC did not coordinate in advance to ensure that media persons cover the meeting.

Furious media persons pointed out that if it was a secretive meeting, they should not have been invited at all.

"This is like inviting a person to a house and the host asking him or her to leave immediately," they pointed out the irony.

However, an NEC official put the blame on the state

government and the police, who, however, denied any role in arranging the meeting as it was an NEC event and the state government and the police were only facilitators. Adding to the woes was a congested hall arranged for the meeting attended by chief ministers and governors of all the Northeastern states, officers of NEC and the state governments. The auditorium which was used by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had attended the 2016 plenary meeting of NEC in Shillong, was not preferred by NEC thereby leading to discomfort from many quarters.

There were murmurs in the hall that it was suffocating as there was no space to move and since it was a sunny day, the visitors were not comfortable unlike other days.

Except Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, the chief ministers of several states who came out of the hall at various intervals did not want to speak to the media. (Courtesy: Shillong Times)

Apex Court agrees for listing of pleas against 'nikah-halala', polygamy

Agency New Delhi, July 10,

Supreme Court today agreed to consider listing of a bunch of petitions challenging the practices of polygamy and 'nikah halala' among Muslims. A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra considered the submissions of senior advocate V Shekhar that the petitions be listed before a five-judge constitution bench for final adjudication.

Appearing for one of the

Delhi-based petitioners Sameena Begum, lawyer Shekhar and Ashwini Upadhyay, alleged that she was threatened and asked to withdraw her petition challenging 'nikah halala' and polygamy among Muslims. The bench, meanwhile, allowed Additional Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, to file a response to the petition on the issue. The petition, filed by the Delhi-based woman, has said that by virtue of the Muslim Personal Law and Section 494 of the IPC (marrying again

during lifetime of husband or wife) was rendered inapplicable to Muslims and no married woman from the community has the avenue of filing a complaint against her husband for the offence of bigamy.

Nikah-halala is a practice intended to curb the incidence of divorce under which a man cannot remarry his former wife without her having to go through the process of marrying someone else, consummating it, getting divorced and observing a separation period called 'iddat' before coming back to him.

SC agrees to hear next week Delhi govt's pleas over exercise of its power

Agency New Delhi, July 10

The Supreme Court today agreed to hear next week appeals of the Delhi government relating to the scope of its various powers in view of the recent verdict by a Constitution bench that held that the Lieutenant Governor has no independent power to take decisions.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra had recently laid down broad parameters for the governance of the national capital, which has witnessed a power struggle between the Centre and Delhi government since the Aam Aadmi Party came to power in 2014.

The bench had clarified that issues regarding various notifications issued by the Delhi government in exercise of its administrative and legislative powers would be dealt separately by an appropriate smaller bench.

The bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices AM Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud considered the submission of the Delhi government that even after the verdict the stalemate over the issue of public services was continuing and that needed to be dealt with by an appropriate bench. "It will be listed sometime in next week," the bench told lawyer Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi

government. The apex court had in its July 4 ruling, vindicated Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has long accused the LG of preventing his government from functioning properly. It had said that barring three issues of public order, police and land, the Delhi government has the power to legislate and govern on other issues.

There were two LGs — incumbent Anil Bajaj and his predecessor Najeeb Jung — with whom Kejriwal was at loggerheads, accusing them of preventing the functioning of his government at the behest of the Centre.

Trump names Kavanaugh as nominee for next supreme court justice

Agency Washington, Jul 10

US President Donald Trump today nominated conservative Brett Kavanaugh as the Supreme Court Judge to succeed Justice Anthony Kennedy, triggering an epic partisan war over the court's future as Democrats vowed to oppose his choice.

Trump picked Justice Kavanaugh from an original list of 25 judges, which also included prominent Indian-American judge Amul Thapar. Announcing Kavanaugh's nomination, Trump described the 53-year-old from Maryland, currently a judge in the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, as one with "impeccable credentials and one of the finest legal minds of our times".

Kavanaugh's nomination needs to be confirmed by the Senate, which is bitterly divided over party lines.

Justice Kennedy, 81, had announced his retirement on June 27 after serving the federal judiciary for 43 years. "Tonight it is my honour and privilege to announce that I will nominate Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the United States Supreme Court," Trump said.

"Judge Kavanaugh has impeccable credentials, unsurpassed qualifications, and a proven commitment to equal justice under the law.

Throughout legal circles, he is considered a judge's judge, a true thought leader among his peers," he said.

Trump said Kavanaugh was an incredibly qualified nominee who deserved a swift confirmation and robust bipartisan support. Prior to becoming a judge, he served in the George W Bush administration, first as an associate counsel and then senior associate counsel, and subsequently as assistant to the president and the staff secretary.

While the Republican leadership hailed Trump's choice, Democrats vowed to oppose his nomination.

"Judge Kavanaugh should not be allowed anywhere near our nation's highest bench. Let's be clear: a vote for Kavanaugh would be a vote to rip health care from American families and deny women their constitutional right to make their own health care decisions," Democratic National Committee chair Tom Perez said.

"Brett Kavanaugh represents a fundamental threat to the promise of justice and equality, which is why I am announcing that I will oppose his nomination to the Supreme Court," said Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris. House Judiciary Committee Member Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal said Trump was taking "swipes at vulnerable communities and hardworking families with

every chance he gets".

"Brett Kavanaugh comes from a roster of extremists approved by right-wing organisations that are committed to pushing a regressive agenda. This appointment is the most momentous in a generation and it will affect historic decisions made for the next half century we can't let that time be defined by partisan rulings that hurt our communities and strip away our rights," Jayapal said. On the other hand, almost the entire Republican leadership stood solidly behind Trump on his nomination, including his bitter critic Senator John McCain.

"In selecting Judge Brett Kavanaugh to fill the vacancy left by Justice Kennedy, President Trump has chosen a nominee with impeccable credentials and a strong record of upholding the Constitution," McCain said in his endorsement of Trump's nominee.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Trump has made a superb choice.

Republican leaders firmly believe that Kavanaugh could be instrumental in pitching the ideological make-up of the court to the right and leaving a conservative imprint on the law for a generation. They also see the coming confirmation fight as a chance to galvanise their voters ahead of this year's midterm elections, where the

Republican party's 51-seat Senate majority is at risk.

Democrats are preparing for what they hope will be a prolonged showdown on Capitol Hill determined to rally in defence of Roe v Wade, the landmark abortion rights decision; LGBTQ rights; and same-sex marriage all areas of the law that they fear could be ruptured by the court.

A graduate of Yale College and Yale Law School, Kavanaugh clerked on the Supreme Court for Justice Kennedy, and for judges on the Third and Ninth Circuit Courts of Appeals.

"I am deeply honoured to fill his seat in the Supreme Court," said Judge Kavanaugh.

"My judicial philosophy is straightforward. A judge must be independent and must interpret the law, not make the law. A judge must interpret statutes as written and must interpret the Constitution as written, informed by history and tradition and precedent," he said.

Praising Trump, he said that throughout the process, he witnessed firsthand the President's appreciation for the vital role of the American judiciary.

2 terrorists injured in encounter with Sf in Shopian's Kundalan

Agency Srinagar, July 10

An encounter has been launched by the security forces on Tuesday to nab the terrorists in Kundalan area of Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian. As per latest reports, two terrorists have been injured.

The gunfight has also left two jawans injured. Five to six terrorists are believed to be holed up in a house in the Kundalan area. The evacuation of civilians from nearby houses are, meanwhile, being undertaken.

Another terrorist was gunned down on Monday in the forest area of Kupwara's Handwara. The encounter operation had

started on Sunday night.

In another unrelated incident, terrorists in Bandipora district killed a woman by slitting her throat. Police said that the terrorists barged into the house of Abdul Majid Dar, associated with Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), in Shahgunj village of Hajin area on Sunday night.

Over the last few days, the state has witnessed a spurt in terror activities.

These incidents come barely days after the body of Jammu and Kashmir police constable was found last Friday by locals of Kulgam's Pariwan. A resident of Vehil village in Shopian, Javid Ahmad Dar, was abducted from a local medical shop on Thursday.

Nigerian woman held for carrying drugs

Agency Kolkata, Jul 10

A Nigerian woman was arrested by sleuths of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) from the city airport following seizure of banned drugs from her possession, an officer of the agency said today.

David Blessing (30) was arrested by NCB (eastern region) sleuths following a seizure of 20 blots of LSD from her bag after she landed in a flight from Mumbai at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport here last night, he said.

After the LSD was seized, 12 gm of cocaine was taken out by the woman from her private parts, he said.

On grilling the Nigerian revealed that more contraband was concealed inside her body and she was unable to take out the same on her own.

"We took her to a nearby super speciality hospital where X-ray examination of her lower abdomen showed some concealment in her uterus and the same can be detected only through trans-vaginal USG," he said.

The woman was admitted to a hospital for further medical examination, the officer said adding that a probe into the matter had been initiated.

Tamilnadu Assembly passes Lok Ayuktha Bill

Agency Chennai, July 10,

Tamilnadu Assembly passed the Lok Ayuktha Bill today. State Administrative Reforms Minister D. Jayakumar introduced the Bill in the Assembly.

The Government has decided to establish Lokayukta to inquire into the allegations of corruption against public servants.

The act will be called as the Tamilnadu Lok Ayuktha Act 2018.

The Chairperson and the

members will be appointed by the State Governor on the recommendation of the selection Committee.

The Bill when enacted and brought into operation, would involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the State in the implementation of the Act.

Man held for making video of two nurses

Agency Gurgaon, July 10

A man was arrested for allegedly recording a video of two nurses while they were sleeping in their paying guest accommodation in sector-5 here, the police said today.

The incident occurred on the intervening night of July 2 and July 3 but was reported to the police yesterday. One of the victims, a 28-year-old nurse, approached the

sector-5A police station. The woman stated in her complaint that they were sleeping in their room and when they got up, they noticed a man standing near their window and making their video on his mobile phone, Gurgaon Police PRO Subhash Bokan said.

The man was living in the same paying guest (PG) accommodation as the women. "They raised an alarm but the accused managed to

escape. The next morning the women complained to the PG owner but he did not take action against the accused and let him continue living in his PG", Bokan added.

"We have arrested the accused from his PG and also booked the PG owner on the charge of criminal conspiracy. We have seized the phone of the accused. The accused claimed he deleted the video. A probe is underway," the officer added.