

Days after journalist's arrest, TN Raj Bhavan slams media for 'yellow journalism', denies Governor's links with Nirmala Devi

Agency
New Delhi Oct 12,

Following backlash over the arrest of weekly magazine Nakkeeran's editor, R Gopal, the governor's office on Friday issued a statement denying all the allegations made in the reports, and explained what forced the filing of a police complaint against him and others. An FIR had been filed against the magazine's editor for reports it published linking Governor Banwarilal Purohit and Raj Bhavan to a university sex scandal. The statement maintained that "Nirmala Devi has never entered Raj Bhavan in the last one year and she does not have any acquaintance with the Honourable Governor or the Secretary to the Governor or any of the Officers working in the Raj Bhawan". The statement added that the Governor had never visited the university guest house when he was invited there for the Mother Theresa University Convocation, which was being held in the Madurai Kamaraj University. "He has at no point of time stayed in the guest house," the statement said. The Nakkeeran editor's arrest came after a series of reports alleged the role of the governor and his officers, and that the main accused in the university sex scandal had visited them.

"The Secretary to the Honourable Governor did not even accompany him on any visit to the Madurai Kamaraj University. It can only be a deep sense of hatred towards goodness and truth that could have driven any journalist to have written the articles in the manner they appeared in the Nakkeeran," the statement said. A Nakkeeran report had mentioned the alleged role of Governor Purohit's secretary, R Rajagopal, a senior IAS officer in Tamil Nadu.

The main accused in the alleged university sex scandal, Devi, was arrested in April. The arrest came after an audio clip of her purported conversation with female students went viral on social media in which she was heard asking her students to "adjust" with some "top officials" by giving them sexual favours to get marks and money. Opposition parties in Tamil Nadu have demanded the resignation of Governor Purohit.

The Raj Bhavan statement termed the Nakkeeran reports a "kind of yellow journalism", and said, "It is a matter of regret that such utter falsehood and this kind of yellow journalism is being supported by respectable people who, it appears, are not aware of the facts."

"It is with great consternation and a feeling of concern directed by public good that this press release is being

issued today. India is a nation with a great culture and Tamil Nadu is particularly marked out by history for the great philosophical leadership that it has enjoyed over the centuries from Thiruvalluvar to Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. Hence it is to be asserted without a doubt that the people of the state will stand by the side of righteousness, truth and goodness," the statement said.

"There is only absolute falsehood and not a shred of truthfulness in the links attributed to the Honourable Governor or the Raj Bhavan to the issue concerning a College Assistant Professor of Aruppukottai known by the name of Nirmala Devi. The statement given by her before the police will itself bear out the truth."

"This being the case, it is a matter of humour to hear people say that press freedom is being threatened on the count of action, being taken under the law after much patience and tolerance to stop a slanderous, vulgar and cowardice way of attacking the first citizen of the state," the statement said.

The statement added that every issue has its limits and that Raj Bhavan had maintained a dignified silence for more than six months after the issue came to light, since the matter was under investigation and subsequently placed before a

court. "It was indeed shocking to see a resurfacing of yellow journalism in an issue of the magazine Nakkeeran in late September after the charge sheets had been filed and all investigation completed. Those who claim to be engaged in investigative journalism have not even bothered to verify the actual statement given by Nirmala Devi before the police. The height of casualness and cowardice in journalistic ethics had been reached with the publishing of the article," the statement said.

Referring to a number of personalities – from poet Subramania Bharathi to Abi Abdul Kalam – who "have done this state proud by their thoughts, deeds, speeches and writings", the statement said, "It is to be understood that no action even bordering on the excessive use of state power will be initiated or supported by Raj Bhavan. Having been hurt by the continuous baseless slander, a complaint has been given under the law."

The statement said that in a democracy there can be a healthy exchange of ideas, but no threats – direct or indirect – on a constitutional authority will be tolerated.

"The Raj Bhavan can and will never be cowed down by actions aimed at hurting the dignity of the High Office," said the statement.

PM Modi, Arun Jaitley, Dharmendra Pradhan meet, discuss rising fuel prices

Agency
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Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

On October 4, the Centre announced a cut of Rs 2.50 per litre of petrol and diesel and urged states to match the reduction, official sources Friday confirmed that another meeting on fuel prices was being held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and

Centre's cut in fuel prices so that the total price cut would be Rs 5.00 per litre. The decision to cut excise duty by Rs 1.50 per litre, Jaitley said, would cost the Centre Rs 10,500 crore this financial year. He, however, emphasised that the government remained committed to meeting the fiscal deficit target of 3.3 per cent of the GDP for this financial year.

Youth must join politics for public service, not gains: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar

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In a veiled attack on the opposition RJD, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has said youth, these days, enter politics by virtue of their family background to "serve their own interests". Addressing a congregation organized by the students' wing of Janata Dal (United), of which he is the national president, Kumar on Thursday urged young men and women to enter politics for "seva" (service) and not "meva" (self).

"Mahatma Gandhi had spoken about seven social sins, one of

future of the nation and therefore need to keep Bapu's lesson in mind. Politics should be done for seva, not meva," the chief minister said.

On several occasions in the past, Kumar had charged Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) president Lalu Prasad and his son Tejashwi Yadav of "pursuing politics for personal gains". He also termed the opposition party a "family political asset".

"There has been deterioration in the quality of public discourse as people enter politics not by virtue of their aptitude but family backgrounds. They end up serving their own interests instead of serving the society

and the country," Kumar said without mentioning any party or leader by name.

The CM, on the occasion, also spoke about efforts made by his government for improving the standards of education. He announced that "Patliputra School of Economics", inspired by London School of Economics, would be set up at the Aryabhatta Knowledge University here.

Underscoring the various steps taken by his government to increase enrollment of girls in school, Kumar also assured the youth that he would continue his fight to eradicate social evils of child marriage and dowry from the society.

.....British Council and NEC sign MoU

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The MoU will work towards improving English communication of State civil servants, developing capacity-building initiatives in State Governments, supporting improvements in the teaching of Mathematics and Science, capacity-building programmes for faculty and senior administrators of higher education institutions and it will seek to increase student and academic mobility, for all 8 states of the region.

The British Council has worked continuously with the various states from the North East, the most recent example being Mr. Alan Gemmell's meeting with Hon'ble Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Mr Pema Khandu, to discuss British Council's support in the state's English

language teacher education, skills development for young people, and greater collaboration with the UK in arts and culture, last month. Also, British Council presented London-based musician Nuby Garcia at this year's Ziro Festival of Music in Arunachal Pradesh. In 2016, British Council presented two leading bands from the UK at the NH7 Weekender festival in Shillong.

British Council had provided technical support to the Asian Development Bank-funded 'Supporting Human Capital Development in Meghalaya initiative' of the state government to enhance the employability of its youth. Earlier this year, British Council launched Mix the

City Northeast which gave 14 musicians access to an international platform and audience. To strengthen employability and promote gender inclusion, British Council had launched Premier Skills Guwahati earlier this year, in which UK Premier League coaches trained 48 football coaches from the Northeast, including a coach from Meghalaya. British Council initiative Crafting Futures gives artisans from the Northeast access to national platform, Lakme Fashion Week. In the sphere of education, British Council works with the Sikkim government in the primary school sector; and has offered scholarships to 6 women from the North East to pursue higher studies in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

Alan Gemmell OBE, Director of the British Council in India, said, "We've been inspired every day of the last 70 years by the artists, students, scientists and policy makers we've worked with in India and the North East. Our work in the last two years has started to make a difference – we created Mix the Cities Northeast, put the Himalayan Poppy as the central attraction of our *India: A Billion Dreams* garden at the Chelsea Flower Show, presented a brilliant musician at Ziro Festival of Music and we have trained 48 football coaches from all eight states, including Sikkim. I am very proud to have led our strategy to engage on scale, sustainably and consistently with this very special part of India, responding the vision that the Chief Ministers and the Prime Minister have about the Northeast. This year we want to inspire young people from the Northeast and India to build a relationship with the UK for the next 70 years. By signing a MoU with the NEC, we are able to make an impact across eight states simultaneously, and I hope it will enable more young people to realise their aspirations in education, skill development and arts and culture."

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Punjabi University: Patiala MP Dharamvir Gandhi meets protesting students, backs demand for 24-hr girls' hostel

Agency
Chandigarh Oct 12,

Patiala MP Dharamvir Gandhi met the protesting students at Punjabi University, Patiala, on Thursday and extended his support, saying that though he "believed" in the demand for 24-hour open girls' hostels, there should be parity in hostel timings for boys and girls as of now. His support came two days after violence erupted on the campus in which 10 students were injured and hospitalised.

"I went there to intervene because the situation is quite explosive. There should be no gender discrimination on the basis of hostel timings and the authorities should focus on parity of timings," he said.

While girls' hostels are shut after 8 pm, the main gates of the boys' hostels close after 11.30 pm. Although the boys can enter or exit through a smaller gate, they are not allowed to take their two-wheelers out. The main gates open once again at 4 am. Jasmeet, a leader of PSU Lalkaar, said, "There's no

attendance system for us. We can go in and out as we like. Only the main gate shuts at 11.30 pm. We can bring in anyone, there's no checking too."

The university authorities have cited security reasons for imposing curfew on girls' hostels, but Dr Gandhi said in an ideal world, the country should be safe for women. "But the university and the society that governs it are still suspended in a semi-feudal and medieval mindset. Maybe, in 20 to 30 years, this will not even be a question. I have vouched for time parity at hostels as that will be more appropriate at this juncture," he stated. The MP also said that he had spoken to the Vice-Chancellor to hold discussions with the students as the atmosphere right now was harmful to the academic environment of the university.

"The tension among students is unhealthy. This is the only university in Malwa region and it'll be sad if the V-C fails to control the situation. There are some elements who want to suppress the movement, those who are believers of

old and medieval patriarchal values," he pointed out.

Dr. Gandhi slammed the reason of lack of security given by the authorities, stating they had failed to hold a proper dialogue or negotiation with the students. "They should provide an atmosphere and tame bad elements instead of taming women. Even the V-C wants to normalise the situation and I have urged him to hold negotiations rather than ignore the situation."

The MP further stated that more than anything else, women should be allowed to pursue their academics without restrictions. "They've come here on merit too, paid the same fees; so why should they be locked up after 8 pm? If they want to use the labs or the library till 3 am, they should be allowed to do that," insisted Dr.Gandhi.

On Day 24 of the protest by Left-leaning organisations, students held discussions with the authorities that remained inconclusive after they demanded the resignation of Provost Dr.Nishan Singh. The Left parties had invited 25 members of the Bharatiya Kisan Union Dakonda who have extended their support to the movement. But the Students Association of Punjab (SAP) that is opposing the protests blocked the main gate of the university and demanded that they should be barred from entering the campus as they were outsiders. Police was called to

disperse the crowd and normalise the situation.

The protesting students said they were giving a call to student groups and non-campus organisations to join hands and form an "anti-goondagardi" front. A teachers' body called Teachers for Intervention also extended its support to the protesters and said that the violence on the campus could have been avoided had it been handled with "greater administrative competence and human empathy".

"There are times when the person leading an institution is called upon to demonstrate necessary administrative acumen, moral imagination, and intellectual leadership and to build an atmosphere of trust and dialogue. We are yet to see a credible demonstration of these in the management of the current crisis. We expect the Vice-Chancellor to provide the required leadership with clarity, objectivity, courage, and commitment, failing which various members of the university community may continue to be targeted by violent, lawless elements," they said in a press release.

They also added that there was "no place for any violence – physical, verbal or gestural – in society, much less in places dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge". The statement was signed by convener Dr.Surjit Singh, who has supported the movement from the beginning, and co-convener Dr.Rajesh Sharma.

Surname Correction

I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that my surname Koijam has been wrongly recorded as Akoijam and that my real surname is Koijam and that my name should be Koijam Rajesh Singh and not Akoijam Rajesh Singh.

Sd/-

Koijam Rajesh Singh
s/o K (Late) Ibohal Singh
Mongangei Mayai leikai