

No more cable-cutting, curtain falls on controversial crusade

Power Dept directed to suspend cutting of internet or TV cables till further orders; Shetye says he will follow the order as govt servant

Team Herald

PANJIM: The government on Thursday directed the Electricity Department to ensure that cutting, dismantling or disconnecting of cables providing internet services or television cable services was kept in abeyance till further orders.

The order can be seen as a rejection of the activism of department employee Kashinath Shetye, who had led a team on a cable-cutting spree in end February, sparking an internet blackout across Goa and leaving important institutions like banks and hospitals crippled.

Shetye had said of his drive: "I will not succumb to pressure from anyone. Either the cables have to go,

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"I being a government servant will have to follow the order. The government has issued an order not to cut the cables. I will file an affidavit in the matter in which I have been made party and I will mention that we are yet to receive Rs 110 crore due to us. Now, even if the pole is fully damaged, we are not allowed to touch the pole. But they (the cable operators and internet service providers) are being allowed to touch and reinstall their cables on our poles"

— Kashinath Shetye, Executive Engineer of Electricity Department

cut the cables. I will file an affidavit in the matter in which I have been made the party and I will mention that we are yet to receive Rs 110 crore due to us. Now, even if the pole is fully damaged, we are not allowed to touch the pole. But they (the cable operators and internet service providers) on the other hand are being allowed to touch and reinstall their cables on our poles. You can ask the competent authorities who have taken this decision as to why this is being allowed."

Following the government order, Chief Electrical Engineer (CEE) Stephen Fernandes spoke to media person.

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or Kashinath has to go." This is not the first time that the government has clipped the Electricity Department Executive Engineer's wings, as the Department had ap-

pointed two nodal officers for North and South Goa to replace Shetye right after the cable-cutting fiasco.

Reacting to Thursday's government directive, She-

tye said, "I being a government servant will have to follow the order. I am not in a position to speak against the order. The government has issued an order not to

Trump buffets India with steep 27% tariffs; Delhi is studying 'implications'

PTI, WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI: US President Donald Trump slapped universal duties on all countries exporting goods to the US and additional steep levies on countries like India, potentially impacting sales of products from shrimp to steel in the world's biggest economy.

The US imposed a steep 27% tariff on all goods, barring pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, energy and certain minerals not available in the United States, that are imported from India, calling the country the "worst offenders" of unfair trade practices.

Export of products such as shrimp, carpet, medical devices and gold jewellery to the US will be impacted. On the other hand, exports of electronics, textiles, and pharma will get an edge over its competitor countries.

Exemption of energy from the tariffs would also mean that India can continue to export fuels like gasoil and gasoline to the US.

The goods that were exempted from the tariffs made up for just over 25 per cent of the

total exports from India to the US.

The Indian government reacted cautiously, saying it is "carefully examining the implications" of the announcements and will also study opportunities that may arise due to this new development in the US trade policy.

Trump announced the imposition of additional ad valorem duties ranging from 10% to 50% on imports from all trading partners. The base-line duty of 10 per cent will be effective on India from April 5 and an additional 27 per cent from April 9.

The 27 per cent duty would be over and above any existing levy that Indian products entering the US may currently attract.

Though the move is expected to impact India's exports of certain goods to the US, experts say that India is better-placed than its competitors, including Bangladesh (37%), China (54%), Vietnam (46%) and Thailand (36%).

Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on about 60 countries.

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"To the extent that the US has applied tariffs on other countries also, and India is competing with producers from those countries, the overall effect will be smaller than if the tariffs had been applied only on India - since US consumers will not be able to substitute away to non-tariffed producers"

— Raghuram Rajan, former RBI Governor

"We are exporting (goods) worth about \$74 billion to them (US) and the export balance in our favour is about \$45 billion. It's not a small amount. If that goes down significantly, naturally, it will affect our economy a bit"

— Shashi Tharoor, Cong MP

"Their friendship (Trump and PM Modi) and the way they hug and talk shows that America (Trump) is a businessman. Aur wo humara customer phas gaya (And our customer got trapped)"

— Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress president



Donald Trump slapped universal duties on all countries exporting goods to the US



Raghuram Rajan, former RBI Governor



Shashi Tharoor, Cong MP



Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress president

Gaude told to maintain decorum: Damu Naik

Alliance controversy: BJP chief's statement comes after meeting MGP President

Team Herald

PANJIM: A few days after Minister Govind Gaude waded into the MGP-BJP alliance controversy, BJP state President Damodar 'Damu' Naik said on Thursday that Gaude had been told not to make statements that might have an adverse political impact.

"He (Gaude) has been told not to make such statements. We have told him to maintain discipline and decorum in the party. We will brief the party high command and appropriate action may be taken," Naik told O Herald.

His statement assumes

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— Damu Naik, BJP Goa President

significance since he met MGP President Deepak Dhavalikar during the day. Both claimed it was a "courtesy visit", but after a week of hectic parleys that spanned the State and national Capitals, Thursday's meeting can hardly be writ-

ten off as a casual catch-up. Speaking to the media, Dhavalikar later said, "I had not met Naik for the last few days. We held discussions and decided to work together. All is well."

The alliance between the two parties had been thrown off-kilter after Chief Minister Pramod Sawant asserted BJP's claim over the Priol and Mandrem Assembly seats, both MGP strongholds. Gaude, who has no love lost for the Dhavalikar brothers, waded in soon after this, proclaiming that the CM's statements gave him the strength of "10 elephants".

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IAF orders inquiry into fighter jet crash in Guj

PTI, AHMEDABAD: The Indian Air Force has ordered an inquiry into a Jaguar fighter jet crash at a village near Jamnagar IAF station in Gujarat in which one of the pilots was killed and another suffered injuries.

In a statement on Thursday morning, the IAF said the pilots, who were on a night mission, experienced a "technical malfunction" in the aircraft before the crash on Wednesday night.

"An IAF Jaguar two-seater aircraft airborne from Jamnagar airfield crashed during a night mission.

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ASSESSING CROP HEALTH



A farmer inspects his wheat crop in a field on the outskirts of Amritsar, Thursday. The Trump administration's 26% tariff will have impact on India's agriculture, machinery, pharma, electrical and chemical sectors

Centre tables Waqf Bill in Rajya Sabha

Says legislation won't snatch Muslims' rights; Opposition members wear black as a mark of protest

PTI, NEW DELHI: Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju on Thursday rejected the Opposition's allegations that the rights of Muslims were being snatched away.

While tabling the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the Rajya Sabha, he also clarified that the "inclusive" legislation aims to empower Muslim women and protect the rights of all Muslim sects.

Some of the Opposition MPs in the Upper House

BILL HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH RELIGION: MINISTER

■ Rijju emphasised that the bill aims to usher in transparency, accountability and efficiency in the management of Waqf properties

■ Asserted only a Muslim can become a 'Waqif'

■ Said the question of the majority of members on the Central Waqf Council being non-Muslims does not arise

■ Claimed the proposed legislation has nothing to do with religion, but deals only with properties

were wearing black as a mark of protest against the bill.

The Lok Sabha passed

the bill with a 288-232 vote in the early hours of Thursday after over 12 hours of debate.

In the Rajya Sabha, Rijju emphasised that the bill aims to usher in transparency, accountability and efficiency in the management of Waqf properties, asserting that only a Muslim can become a 'Waqif' and said the question of the majority of members on the Central Waqf Council being non-Muslims does not arise.

Tabling the bill in the Upper House, which was examined and redrafted by a Joint Parliamentary

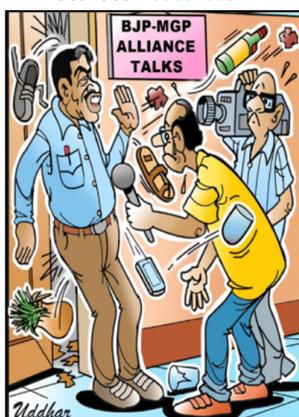
Committee (JPC), Rijju said the proposed legislation has nothing to do with religion, but deals only with properties.

The minister informed the House that there were 4.9 lakh Waqf properties in 2004, which have now increased to 8.72 lakh.

Seeking the Opposition's support to pass the bill, Rijju said it aims to accomplish the unfulfilled tasks of the previous governments.

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MAX. TEMP 35°C
MIN. TEMP 26.4°C
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There are no issues with the alliances; all is well!

Supreme Court refuses to relax ban on firecrackers in Delhi-NCR

Says pollution affects those working on the streets the most

PTI, NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to relax the ban imposed on the manufacture, storage and sale of firecrackers in Delhi-NCR noting air pollution levels had remained alarming for a considerable time.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said a large section of the population worked on streets and was the worst affected by pollution.

Not everybody can afford an air purifier at their residence or place of work to fight pollution, the bench said.

"Several orders passed by this court during the last six months

"Several orders passed by this court during the last six months bring on record the horrible situation with which prevailed in Delhi due to very high levels of air pollution...Right to health is an essential part of Article 21 of the Constitution so is the Right to live in a pollution free atmosphere. Unless the court was satisfied that the pollution due to the 'so-called' green crackers was bare minimum, there was no question of reconsidering the previous orders"

— Supreme Court

bring on record the horrible situation with which prevailed in Delhi due to very high levels of air pollution...Right to health is an essential part of Article 21 of the constitution so is the Right to live in a pollution free atmosphere," the court said.

Unless the court was satisfied that the pollution due to the "so-called" green crackers was bare minimum, there was no question of reconsidering the previous orders, it added.

The top court said the orders passed from time to time would indicate that the directions and ban on the use of firecrackers was warranted by an "extraordinary situation" created in Delhi.



Retirement fund body eases claim process

PTI, NEW DELHI: Retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) said applicants seeking withdrawal from provident funds online do not have to upload the image of a cancelled cheque and their bank accounts need not be verified by employers.

The move is expected to fast-track the claim settlement process for nearly eight crore members and ensure ease of doing business for employers.

At present, members of EPFO, while applying for withdrawal of funds from PF accounts online, need to upload an image of cheque

leaf or attested photocopy of the passbook of the bank account seeded with the UAN or PF number. The employers are also required to approve the bank account details of the applicant.

The EPFO has completely dispensed with the requirement of uploading an image of a cheque leaf or attested bank passbook while filing online claims, the labour ministry said in a statement. These two steps have been done away with to ensure 'ease of living' for EPF members and 'ease of doing business' for employers.

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