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HDK releases 'BSY bribe' audio clip

Drags Modi & Shah's Names Into Op Lotus

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Karnataka chief minister H D Kumaraswamy on Friday released an audio clip, purportedly of state BJP chief BS Yeddyurappa offering a JD(S) MLA as son Rs 10 crore and a ministerial berth for his father if he could convince the latter to resign and contest a bypoll on a BJP ticket.

The clip contained an alleged conversation between Yeddyurappa, Devadurga BJP MLA Shivanagouda Naik and Sharanagouda, son of JD(S) MLA from Gurumitkal, Naganagouda Kandakur, at a government guest house in Devadurga in Raichur district late on Thursday night. In the 10-minute clip, Yeddyurappa is also purportedly heard telling Sharanagouda, "There are already 10-12 Congress and JD(S) MLAs in Mumbai... K Sudhakara (Congress



MLA) joined us yesterday (Wednesday). After the assembly on Friday another two will go to Mumbai. If you come, the number will touch 15. It's a matter of four days... Our government will come (to power) and your father will become a minister."

Naik is heard telling Sharanagouda that BJP leaders had "booked the Speaker of the assembly" by paying Rs 50 crore to accept the resignations of ruling party MLAs without creating trouble. He also claimed that BJP president Amit Shah will "manage courts and judges" in the event of him being disqualified. "It would not have happened without (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi's knowledge," Kumaraswamy alleged.

'Our govt will come and your father will become a minister,' BSY is purportedly heard telling BJP MLA Sharanagouda, son of a JD(S) MLA, in the audio clip

Sharanagouda, who was also present with Kumaraswamy, said he wanted to expose BJP's 'Operation Lotus'. "BJP leaders have been putting pressure on me and my father to get him to switch sides," he said.

Yeddyurappa has rubbished the charge, saying the clip was "fake" and "doctored". "I will retire from politics if it is proved that the voice on the audio clip is mine," he said, adding that Kumaraswamy is a cinema man and can create such audio clips with voice overs of others. He also dismissed allegations that he and BJP were trying to woo ruling party MLAs. "We have nothing to do with the dissendance within the Congress," he said.

State Cong to take legal action against 4 rebels

Bengaluru: The ruling Congress in Karnataka on Friday decided to take legal action against its four 'rebel' legislators for defying the party whip to attend the 10-day budget session of the assembly and skipping its legislature party meeting in Bengaluru.

The four legislators are Ramesh Jarkiholi (Gokak), Mahesh Kumathalli (Athani), Umesh Jadhav (Chincholi) and B Nagendra (Ballari).

Though the four MLAs responded to the second notice Congress legislature party (CLP) leader Siddaramaiah served on them on Thursday for skipping the first two days of the ongoing session since Wednesday, the former Congress CM said the unanimous opinion of the CLP was for legal action under the anti-defection law. "All the four have written to me informing of their inability to attend the ongoing session till February 15.

Complaint against BSY for 'Op Lotus'

Bengaluru-based advocate has filed a complaint against BS Yeddyurappa and CN Ashwaththananarayana, BJP MLA from Malleswaram, accusing them of being involved in Operation Lotus. In his complaint filed on Friday, SLN Murthy stated Yeddyurappa and his MLAs are not allowing some legislators of the ruling coalition to take part in assembly proceedings. However, Vidhana Soudha police refused to register an FIR "as the complaint does not contain any such information". TNN

"Jharkiholi replied he had a wedding to attend, Kumathalli said he was unwell, Jadhav explained he was preoccupied and Nagendra that he was held up with personal work," Siddaramaiah said. IANS

Curbs on protests in Assam as black flags greet Modi

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Guwahati: Prohibitory orders were imposed in the entire Guwahati city for an indefinite period as Prime Minister Narendra Modi faced angry protests from anti-Citizenship Bill agitators when he arrived here on a two-day visit of the north-east on Friday evening.

Security was further tightened after All Assam Students' Union (Aasu) and Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti

PM inaugurates HC bench in Bengal, Didi cries foul, P 12

announced they would burn the PM's effigies and hoist black flags across the state on Saturday when Modi addresses a public rally at Changsari on Guwahati's outskirts.

Tai Ahom students have called a 12-hour Assam bandh on Saturday while Tripura Students' Federation has given a call for boycotting Modi when he visits Agartala on Saturday.

Despite a light drizzle, groups of Aasu activists waved black flags and shouted anti-Modi slogans as the PM's convoy passed by their office to reach Raj Bhavan. In a swift



All Assam Students' Union activists show black flags to PM Modi in Guwahati on Friday to protest against the Citizenship Amendment Bill

action, police locked the gates of the Aasu office and confined the demonstrators within its premises. They also barricaded the Aasu office with bamboos. Just across the street opposite the Aasu office, BJP activists, mostly women, had gathered with party flags to welcome the PM.

Police had banned movement of people and vehicles along the stretch between

the Aasu office and Raj Bhavan, a largely residential area, that runs alongside the Brahmaputra.

Looking unruffled, PM Modi smiled and waved to the protesting students from inside his car.

Elsewhere in the city, AGP workers staged a march with torches but were stopped by police as they came closer to the PM's route.

ED questions Chidambaram in INX case

New Delhi: A day after his son Karti was interrogated by the Enforcement Directorate, former finance minister P Chidambaram appeared before the agency on Friday and was questioned in connection with the INX Media money laundering case.

This was the third time since December the former FM was questioned in the INX Media case. He has also been questioned multiple times in another case related to FDI approval to Aircel-Maxis. Sources said he has been evasive so far, though the agency claimed to have produced some specific transaction details linked to his son and companies associated with him. TNN

7 COPS DIE IN J&K AVALANCHE; 9 RESCUED IN HP



Even as policemen, helped by villagers, found bodies of seven colleagues who were buried in an avalanche in Kulgam (above) on Thursday, nine more people were buried in two avalanches in Lahaul and Spiti on Friday as the season's heaviest snowfall crippled life in Himachal Pradesh, with even lower areas like Mandi witnessing snowfall after three decades. All the nine who were buried were rescued successfully

Jadhav case 'proof' coming on Feb 19: Pak

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Islamabad: Pakistan foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Friday that Islamabad would present evidence in the case of detained Indian national Kulbhushan Jadhav in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on February 19.

Speaking at a reception in the UK, Qureshi said his country's legal team would present its stance in the case. The FM added that Jadhav had already confessed that he was involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan.

Last year, the ICJ had decided to hold public hearings in the Jadhav case from February 18 to February 21.

Citing 'inaccuracies' in book, Manmohan skips its launch

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New Delhi: Veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar's latest book

release turned into another battleground for Congress and BJP with former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh skipping the launch citing inaccuracies in Nayar's reportage of his tenure as PM, and Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri claiming Cong-

ress was defining "democracy in narrowly local and parochial terms as emanating only from one family".

Singh referred to a chapter in Nayar's book, 'On Leaders and Icons from Jinnah to Modi', dealing with his tenure as PM, in which Nayar claimed government files were sent to UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi's house. "This statement is not true and Kuldeep

did not check with me about its truth. In this background I would find it embarrassing to attend the book release function," Singh said in his letter, read out on Friday by Nayar's son and Supreme Court advocate, Rajeev Nayar.

Puri, however, accused Congress of attacking the very democratic institutions it was waging war to protect and said the only "organised, comprehensive onslaught on civil liberties" was during the Emergency period in 1975.



Manmohan Singh

Once obscure pilgrimage site now hogs global spotlight Hampi stands on more than the pillars miscreants pulled down

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Hubballi: Along a distance of 12 km eastwards from the city of Hospet in Karnataka, local residents have a term for what lies at the end of the journey: 'haalu Hampi'. It means 'ruined Hampi'. For generations, the 14th century capital of the Vijayanagara Empire, with extraordinary architectural and historical treasures, had been just a place of ruin and desolation. But 30 years after it saw a revival in tourism, Hampi is now the focus of global attention, with the New York Times recently placing it second in the list of must-visit places in the world.

On March 1, 2018, under the Centre's regional air connectivity scheme UDAN, flights started from Bengaluru to Ballari, from where Hampi is 62 km away. This is expected to increase connectivity to the monument complex. But all this - and an international profile - has not come easily for Hampi.

The site is vast, spread over 41 sq km, containing more than 1,800 buildings, markets, fortifications, ponds and temples, with a history of settlement going back to the Mauryan Empire. Ashokan rock edicts have been found at Nittur and Udegolam, near the city complex. In 1565, a coalition of Muslim sultans defeated Vijayanagara and sacked the city. It was only in 1856 that it was re-discovered, by Alexander Greenlaw of the East India Company.

In later years, Hampi became mainly a pilgrimage site for the people of the region. The only other visitors were those familiar with the history of the place, and there were little employment opportunities for anybody.

"When I was young, the only time my parents could earn well was during festivals. We could get about Rs 2,000 during these times - a lot of money in the 1980s. The rest of the year, it was a hand-to-mouth existence," said A Krishnam Raju, whose parents emigrated to Hampi to sell incense sticks.

"Things changed from 1990 onwards. Now there are at least 100 members of 30 families related to me in the hospitality industry here," Raju, who owns a restaurant, added.

In 1988, UNESCO declared Hampi a world heritage site, which led to a boost in the number and type of tourist arrivals. By then, Dutch artist Robert Geesink had been living in the area for nearly two decades,

Photo: Shivashankar Banagar



tourist site in the country in the recent past, but problems remain. A video which was widely circulated online at the beginning of February showed some youths toppling reconstructed pillars near a Vishnu temple. Locals have alleged that lax protection of the sites by ASI is to blame. A team of archaeologists, police officers and district administration officials have surveyed the damage and recommended that the ASI increase the number of CCTV cameras in the complex and tighten security arrangements.

Locals have other issues as well with the manner in which the site is administered. "Hampi was protected by local residents much before ASI was formed. Now citing ASI norms and alleging illegal activities, authorities are trying to evict us," said M Swati Singh of Hampi gram panchayat, which includes 73 individual households and claims ownership of Virupaksha temple, a protected monument. Villagers have gone to court against the move.

In other cases, experts have expressed objections. Fencing has been erected around many sites and monuments. "This looks odd and diminishes the look of heritage sites. There is a stone wall near a site called Queen's Bath. If you put up fencing between connected sites, it throws away context and meaning," said Vasudevan CS, professor of ancient history and archaeology, Karnataka University at Hampi.

Why MP's promise of 70% jobs to locals will fail

Kamal Nath's plans ignore enforcement hassles faced elsewhere

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The Kamal Nath-led Congress government in Madhya Pradesh announced 70% reservation for locals in industries shortly after taking office. Across the country, such quotas have been introduced from time to time, but they have mostly remained on paper, mainly due to the reluctance of industries to carry out the policy and also because of an absence of enforcement mechanisms on the part of state governments.

In the past, industries have been hesitant - and understandably so - to dilute their hiring standards to meet a state's job quota criteria. Chief minister Kamal Nath will have to do a delicate balancing act to ensure that investors still find it lucrative to do business in MP while meeting the quota criteria. During the previous BJP rule of 15 years, similar hurdles had compelled the full-majority government to bend norms to the demands of industries - the 50% job promise remaining on paper. Still, investment didn't flow.

"I personally welcome the provision for quota. We tried to implement 50% quota during our government but did not enforce it as a part of our industrial policy to bring investments. There were some hurdles related to skilled and technical manpower," former state finance minister Jayant Malaiya told TOI.

Most industrialists suggest that those seeking jobs must have passed at least Class XII, but the quality of job-seekers is a problem. "We are aware of the standard of education in MP. There is an urgent need to improve it," said higher education minister Jeetu Patwari.

Maharashtra in 2008 introduced 80% reservation for locals in industries that seek state incentives and tax subsidies. For industries that do not take incentives, this is still an indicative law.

Officials from the industries department of the state did not share data for the number of jobs created and those held by locals, but said the reservation policy didn't take off.

According to them, there is no mechanism to check whether the stipulated quota of locals has been recruited. "We only check the number of employees from the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) accounts that a company opens. There is no way to find out how many of them are locals or from other states," said a senior official.

He added that sometimes companies have been forced to hire 'outsiders' because of the lack of skill sets among local

applicants for a particular job. "For sectors like chemical technology, textile and bio-technology, local employees are hard to find," he explained.

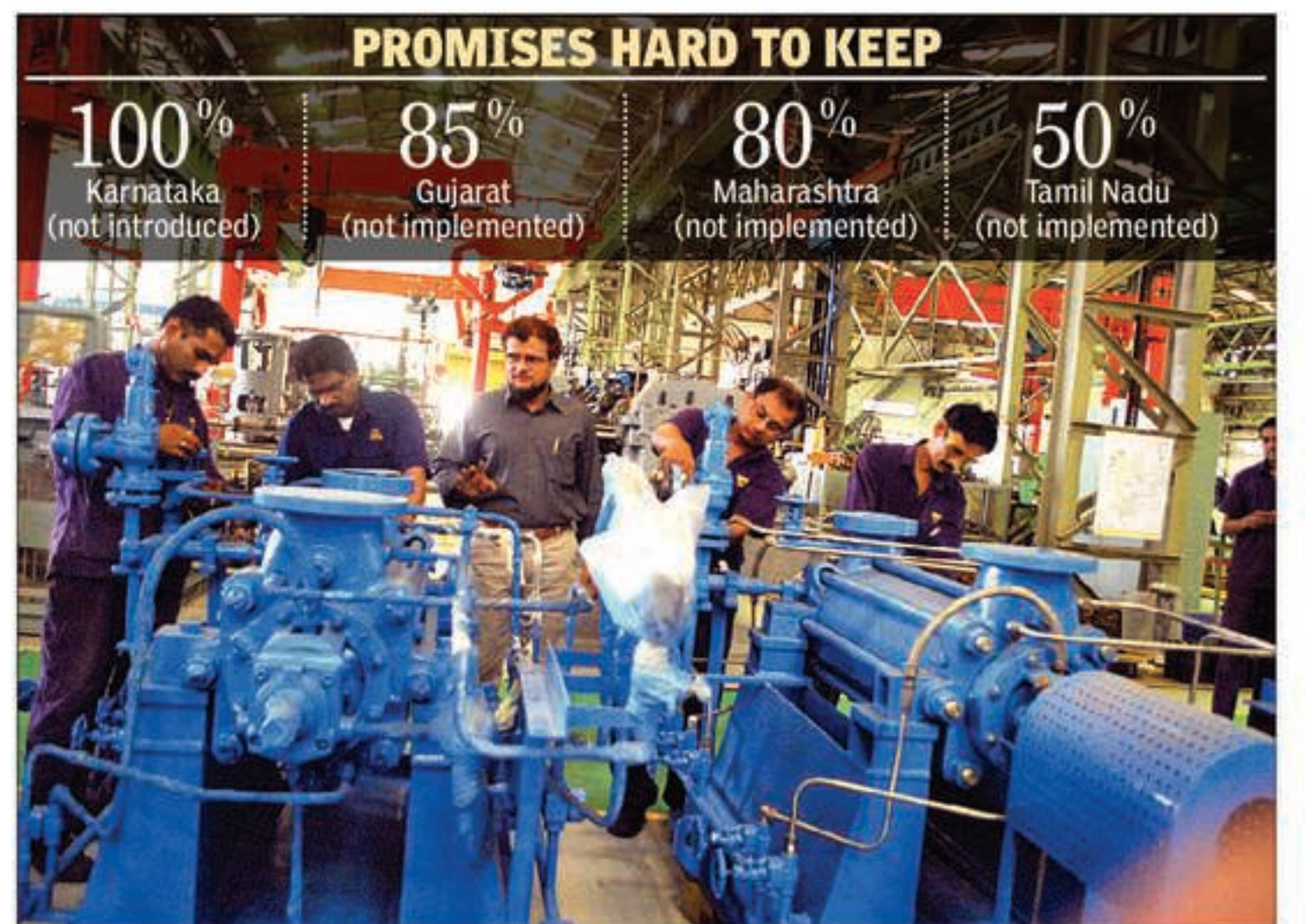
The Gujarat story is no different. It introduced 85% reservation for locals as far back as 1995. The policy was never enforced, either in the private or public sectors. A significant number of workers in the ceramic, construction, textile, diamond and services sector come from Bihar, UP, West Bengal, Odisha and elsewhere.

Labour and employment minister Dilip Thakor said, "The idea of bringing a legislation for reserving jobs for locals was dropped as it was legally challenging and not implemented anywhere in India."

industrialised state, had on January 5 promised that the government would ensure at least 50% reservation of jobs for residents of the state.

"We did not make it mandatory but ... we have a clause which mentions that priority must be given to locals during recruitment. There is no fixed percentage for the companies to follow," said a senior industry department official.

Industry bodies do not think much of these announcements. "These are political statements and are impractical in terms of implementation. Companies investing in a state recruit people based on skills to ensure good profits. Companies do not go by caste or creed, nor do they see which state one is from," said Assocham secre-



In Karnataka, the government on December 2016 had planned to provide Kannadigas 100% reservation in mainly blue-collar jobs in private sector industries, except infotech and biotech. Early in 2018, the law department vetoed the idea on legal grounds, referring to articles 14 (right to equality) and article 16 (right to equal opportunity).

Later in January 2018, then advocate general (AG) Madhusudan R Naik said the government could suggest to the private sector to give "preference" to Kannadigas but could not force it to fall in line. The matter has not been raised since.

Meanwhile, MC Sampath, industries minister of Tamil Nadu, another highly

talent pool. But that's for white collared jobs. When it comes to labour participation in industrial activity, capital has always flowed to places where workforce is available in plenty. While there is no command or order to recruit locals, some industries, like textile in Tirupur or the Sivakasi fireworks hub, have always opted for locals. But that's mostly due to availability of cheap labour.

(With reports from Rajendra Sharma in Bhopal, Kapil Dave and Melwyn Thomas in Ahmedabad, Bhavika Jain in Mumbai, Sandeep Moudgal in Bengaluru, B Sivakumar in Chennai)