

Kerala moves SC against Governor again

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

The Kerala government on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court for the second time against Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, accusing him of trying to "defeat the rights of the people" of the State by indefinitely sitting on several crucial Bills, especially those addressing post-COVID public health concerns.

The State, represented by advocate C.K. Sasi, said the arbitrary show of lack of urgency by the Governor violated the fundamental right to life of the people of Kerala.

"The conduct of the Governor in keeping Bills pending for long and indefinite periods of time is manifestly arbitrary and also violates Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution. Additionally, it defeats the rights of the peo-



Arif Mohammed Khan

ple of the State of Kerala under Article 21 (right to life) of the Constitution, by denying them the benefits

of welfare legislation enacted by the State Assembly," the State said.

The 461-page special leave petition appeals a Kerala High Court judgment delivered on November 30 last year, which refused to fix a time limit for the Governor to deal with Bills presented to him under Article 200 of the Constitution.

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† Kerala moves SC against Governor once again

The State government submitted that the first proviso to Article 200, which governs the conduct of the Governor, mandates immediate consideration and action when a Bill is presented to him for assent. The Governor can either declare his assent to the Bill, return it with a message to the House or refer it to the President. However, the Article requires the Governor to act "as soon as possible", that is within a reasonable time.

The State said eight key Bills were currently pending with the Governor. Some of these Bills have been held back for over two years.

Senior advocate K.K. Venugopal, appearing in the case for the State, recently had informed the Supreme Court that the Governor continued to be unfazed even after it had moved the top court against him.

"The Governor appears to be of the view that granting assent or otherwise dealing with Bills is a matter entrusted to him in his absolute discretion, to decide whenever he pleases. This is a complete subversion of the Constitution," the petition said.

Besides Kerala, other non-BJP-ruled States have also approached the Supreme Court against their Governors for "unreasonably" delaying the passing of crucial Bills into law.

Brazil will give continuity to India's Presidency of G-20, says Ambassador

As India's G-20 Presidency comes to close, Prime Minister Modi to host Voice of Global South Summit and G-20 Summit virtually on November 17 and 22; Brazil will host G-20 in 2024, and the COP30 Climate Change Summit in 2025, and hopes to work closely with partners like India, Indonesia

Subhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

As India prepares to end its G-20 presidency this month with two separate virtual summits to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Brazil hopes to give "continuity" to New Delhi's priorities, its Ambassador said.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has sent out invitations for the two summits – the Second Voice of Global South Summit to be held on November 17, and the G-20 Virtual Summit to be held on November 22.

The MEA is still awaiting confirmations from many of the leaders of the two sets of countries. Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who will take over the G-20 presidency, has confirmed his attendance at both, and hopes to take forward the focus on the Global South and develop-

ing world, said Brazilian Ambassador Kenneth Felix Haczynski da Nobrega.

Multilateral system

"We see the Brazilian presidency as giving continuity to the Indian presidency, in ensuring that the interests and challenges of the Global South will be an important part of the G-20 agenda," Mr. Haczynski da Nobrega, who presented his credentials shortly before the G-20 summit in Delhi, told *The Hindu*.

While Mr. Modi did the formal handover of the G-20 "gavel" to Brazilian President Mr. Lula at the end of the summit on September 10, India's G-20 presidency will only end this month.

"The Brazilian G-20 presidency will seek its own special emphasis on fighting hunger and poverty, bringing the idea of sustainable development centre stage to the climate change debate, and will



The Brazilian G-20

presidency will seek its own special emphasis on fighting hunger and poverty, bringing the idea of sustainable development centre stage... will continue to push for the reform of the multilateral system

KENNETH FELIX HACZYNSKI DA NOBREGA
Brazilian Ambassador

continue to push for the reform of the multilateral system," Mr. Haczynski da Nobrega added.

Similar goals

While Brazil may have a different emphasis on some issues, the Ambassador said, its goals and targets were similar to India's as members of the developing world, and partners in groupings like BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa), IBSA (India-

Brazil-South Africa), and the G-4 grouping (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan) that support each other for UN Security Council membership.

Brazil is presently the host of IBSA, will host G-20 in 2024, and the COP30 Climate Change Summit in 2025, and hopes to work closely with partners like India, South Africa and Indonesia, all developing countries that are part of the "extended troika" or

group that is hosting successive summits of the G-20.

During the G-20 Summit in Delhi in September, India was able to forge a breakthrough joint statement from the group, deeply divided over the Ukraine war, after a joint proposal by India-Indonesia-Brazil-South Africa was offered to other members as an ultimatum a day before the Summit.

Global solidarity

The proposal, that dropped critical references to Russia, but retained language against the war in Ukraine was seen as a rare moment of global solidarity during the Indian presidency.

Ahead of the Virtual G-20 summit on November 22, officials have made it clear that while the new issue of the Israel-Gaza conflict is likely to overshadow some of the proceedings, India does not plan any

joint statement or major outcomes from the summit. Instead, the Prime Minister's Office which is overseeing planning for the two summits wants them to focus on implementation and delivery of the agreements and declarations made during the Voice of Global South Summit in January 2023 and G-20 Summit in September.

Fostering cooperation

"[Officials] highlighted the government's commitment to ensuring the successful implementation of the Leaders' Declaration and its dedication to fostering global cooperation in development and welfare," the Press Information Bureau announced in a readout of a meeting taken by the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, P.K. Mishra, where he was briefed by Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra about preparations for the two summits.

G-7 meet appeals for humanitarian pauses in Gaza

Foreign Ministers who met in Tokyo seek the release of hostages and a return to a 'broader peace process,' offer to draw up long-term solutions

Reuters
TOKYO

G-7 Foreign Ministers on Wednesday called for humanitarian pauses in the Israel-Hamas war to let aid in and help the release of hostages and sought a return to a "broader peace process", as Israeli forces continue to strike the Gaza Strip.

Winding up a two-day meeting in Tokyo, the Group of Seven wealthy nations said in a joint statement that Israel had the right to defend itself, while underscoring the need to protect civilians and to comply with international humanitarian law.

"The G7 members are committed to ... prepare sustainable long-term solutions for Gaza and a return to a broader peace process in line with the internationally agreed parameters," the statement said.

"... We support humanitarian pauses and corridors to facilitate urgently needed assistance, civilian movement and the release of hostages."

The Ministers shared



The meet emphasised on protecting civilians as Palestinians flee to the southern Gaza Strip to escape Israeli strikes. AP

the view that "a two-state solution... remains the only path to a just, lasting, and secure peace".

It was only the second joint statement from the G-7 since gunmen from the Palestinian militant group Hamas sparked the conflict with an October 7 attack on southern Israel, killing 1,400 people and taking some 240 hostages. The Israeli bombardment of Gaza has since killed more than 10,000 Palestinians, around 40% of them children.

"I believe it's important that the G7 was able to put out its first unified message

as a statement regarding a humanitarian pause... in terms of the responsibility the G7 has towards the international community," Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa told reporters.

Asked whether all G-7 members were calling for humanitarian pauses or whether some favoured a full ceasefire, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said there was "real unity" among the bloc.

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G-7 meet appeals for humanitarian pauses

The communique also reiterated G-7 support for Ukraine in its war with Russia, highlighted the need for engagement with China and condemned North Korea's missile tests and arms transfers to Russia.

The G-7 comprises Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.S., with the EU also taking part in the summit.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel would consider "tactical little pauses" but, alongside its close ally the U.S. and other Western countries, has rejected calls for a ceasefire that it says would allow Hamas to regroup.

The G-7 had appeared to struggle to agree on a firm, united approach to the war, raising questions over its relevance as a force to tackle major crises.

The only other G-7 statement came after a meeting of its Finance Ministers on October 12 and amounted to a few, brief sentences. Other group members have issued joint statements.

Long-term plan

On Tuesday, the Ministers also discussed what happens after the Gaza conflict recedes and how to revitalise peace efforts in the West Asia, Japan said in a statement.

Israel has been vague about its long-term plans for Gaza. In some of the first direct comments on the subject, Mr. Netanyahu said this week that Israel would seek to have security responsibility for Gaza "for an indefinite period".

But Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen told the *Wall Street Journal* that Israel wanted the territory to be under an international coalition, including the U.S., EU and Muslim-majority countries, or administered by Gaza political leaders.

Mr. Blinken told reporters following the G-7 meetings that Gaza could not be under Hamas or Israeli control.

"We don't see a reoccupation and what I've heard from Israeli leaders is that they have no intent to reoccupy Gaza," he said.

Diplomats in Washington, the United Nations, the West Asia and beyond have also started weighing the options. Discussions include the deployment of a multinational force to post-conflict Gaza, an interim Palestinian-led administration that would exclude Hamas politicians, a stopgap security and governance role for neighbouring Arab states and temporary U.N. supervision of the territory, Reuters reported this month.

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Reviewing freedom

Steps to end malicious reviews should not lead to curbs on film criticism

An ongoing case before the Kerala High Court on restricting negative reviews of films in the first few days of their release constitutes an interesting as well as challenging free speech issue. The court has taken on the task of distinguishing genuine film criticism from attempts to destroy a movie's prospects of success through malicious comments, or by threatening to post negative reviews with a view to extorting money. It appears that the court is aware of the implications of any move to restrict or curb disparaging reviews for free speech and freedom of expression, but it remains to be seen how it will be able to balance the commercial interests of film-makers and the freedom of reviewers. Film director Mubeen Rauf had approached the court for a direction to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry and the State Information Technology Department, among others, to ensure that social media influencers and film reviewing vloggers do not publish any reviews of his film *Aromalinte Adyathe Pranayam* in social media for at least seven days from the date of its release. Remarks and observations made so far in interlocutory orders suggest that the court's focus is mainly on those who either post anonymously or vloggers with unknown credentials who trash films within hours of their release with apparently malicious intent, and do not threaten the freedom of film reviewers with acknowledged expertise and experience.

In an order on October 25, Justice Devan Ramachandran directed that "a close watch on the online platforms shall be maintained, to ensure that anonymous *mala fide* content is not allowed to circulate; and necessary action under the provisions of the "IT Act" [Information Technology Act] shall be taken and implemented scrupulously without delay". Interestingly, the order also notes that apparently due to the very pendency of these proceedings, the film made by the petitioner had a good run at the box office as it was spared "review bombing", the term that has gained currency for the phenomenon of deliberate spoiling of a film's prospects. The Union government is expected to file its response soon, but a word of caution will be in order. The court's observation in its latest order that the freedom of those involved in making a film should not be sacrificed at the altar of the "unbridled freedom of expression" of those acting under the impression that they are not governed by any parameters or regulations should not lead to a verdict either curbing the freedom to critically analyse a film or an attempt to restrict the art of criticism. After all, making and reviewing a film are both two aspects of the same right to free speech.



India's first AI-focused tech business incubator unveiled

India's first AI-focused technology business incubator, 'AI Venture Factory', was unveiled by State Minister for MSMEs T. M. Anabarasam, and Archana Patnaik, Secretary to Government for MSMEs, at St. Joseph's Group of Institutions in Chennai on Wednesday. The incubator offers extensive support to start-ups, encompassing seed funding, research, and grant allocations, access to seasoned mentors, strategy refinement for potential clients, and the broadening of global reach. This initiative is led by HaiVE, an AI service platform that is designed to nurture emerging AI-driven ventures within the campus, a press release said. B. Babu Manoharan, St. Joseph's College of Engineering Chairman, and S. Aravind Ramesh, MLA of Sholinganallur Constituency, took part in the event.

Poll timing

The extension of free rice should not have been announced at election rally

The Union government's move to extend the free foodgrains scheme for the next five years is welcome as it will continue to provide food security to large sections of vulnerable people. Based on National Food Security Act (NFSA) entitlements, the scheme, the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), benefits about 80.4 crore people, under the categories of Antyodaya Anna Yojana (poorest of the poor) and priority households. They will continue to receive five kg of rice or wheat or coarse grains a person every month. The provision of free foodgrains was introduced at the all-India level during the COVID-19 pandemic, though in vogue in States such as Tamil Nadu. At the time, the entitlements of NFSA beneficiaries were doubled and the nomenclature of PMGKAY was affixed. Between April 2020 and December 2022, 1,015 lakh tonnes were distributed at a subsidy of ₹3.45 lakh crore. At the end of 2022, the Centre announced free grains under the normal entitlements to States and Union Territories for a year while discontinuing the enhanced entitlement.

On the flip side, the way in which the latest move is sought to be implemented raises questions. At an election rally last week in Durg, Chhattisgarh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the announcement, which should be viewed as a violation of the model code of conduct as Mr. Modi used his official position to talk about the extension of the scheme (due to lapse at the end of next month). There was no urgency on his part to have made the announcement then, and in an election rally, especially when there was sufficient time to do so even after the declaration of results, scheduled for December 3. The purpose seems to have been to impress voters, and reap political dividends. There is a view linking the PMGKAY's previous avatar to the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the 2022 Assembly election in Uttar Pradesh. Even the Congress, which criticised the announcement as an "indication of the continuing economic distress and growing inequalities," did not find anything amiss. The scheme is meant for the entire country and not just the five States facing elections – they account for roughly 17% of the total beneficiaries. On the fiscal front, the extension may not cause serious problems as the food subsidy bill is about 7.5% of the revenue receipts of the Union government. On an average, the economic cost of rice and wheat grew by 5.7% annually over the last seven years. Also, the extension will cost about ₹15,000 crore more each year, which is manageable. However, governments, Centre and States, should ensure the elimination of leakages in the Public Distribution System so that the benefits of the extension go to the deserving.

World will overshoot 2030 fossil fuel limit by twice over: report

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Notwithstanding the global consensus among countries that fossil fuel emissions must be eliminated, a new report says that many governments plan to produce twice as much fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and 69% more than that would be consistent with 2 degrees Celsius.

This comes in the backdrop of 151 governments having pledged to achieve Net-Zero emissions – or no net emissions from 2050-2070. The latest forecasts suggest that despite promises by governments made as part of the 2015 Paris Agreement that global coal, oil, and gas demand will peak this decade, even without new policies, their forecasts would lead to an increase in global coal production until 2030, and in global oil and gas production until at least 2050, creating an ever-widening fossil fuel production gap over time.

COP Summit in Dubai

Later this month, at least 190 countries are expected to convene in Dubai, for the annual Conference of

the Parties, to thrash out timelines to abate fossil fuel emissions, accelerate the adoption of renewable energy and pay vulnerable countries to help them weather the effects of global warming.

The Production Gap Report was released on Wednesday. It is prepared by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Climate Analytics, E3G, International Institute for Sustainable Development and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to assess governments' planned and projected production of coal, oil, and gas against global levels consistent with the Paris Agreement's temperature goal.

The report analyses emissions trends for 20 major fossil-fuel-producing countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the UAE, the U.K., and the U.S. "We find that many governments are promoting fossil gas as an essential 'transition' fuel but with no apparent plans to transition away from it later," said SEI's Ploy Achakulwisut, a lead author on the report.

'RBI may cut rates in 2024-25 if food inflation is tamed'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings expects the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to cut interest rates in 2024-25 if food inflation and the monsoon don't play spoilsport next year, and believes India would stick to its indicated fiscal glide path till 2026 despite the extension of the free food grain scheme by adjusting other spends.

The rating major, which expects India's GDP to grow 6% this year and 6.9% the next two years, said the country's economic growth shines brightly among its BBB- to A-rated peers in the Asia-Pacific region, but higher rates pose a fiscal headwind.

Indian government bond yields, which have historically been higher than its peers, still remain high and put additional pressure on the cost of funding the country's large debt stock, it noted. "While growth supports market confidence and revenue generation, rates dynamics will be an additional determinant of India's debt trajectory over the next few years," the firm said in a note on Asia-Pacific Credit Outlook for 2024.

Vishrut Rana, senior economist, Asia-Pacific at S&P Global said monetary policy is likely to be a key economic theme through 2024, in the backdrop of the 'higher for longer' interest rates in the U.S.

In India's case, headline inflationary pressures are likely to remain controlled



over the next several months and that means there is room for the central bank to consider normalising monetary policy, though the central bank is likely to keep one eye on financial stability and the other on exchange rates and capital flow stability amid tight global conditions.

'Swing factor'

"Having said that, we do expect that interest rates will be lower in the next fiscal year. The RBI is likely to proceed to cut interest rates, while inflationary pressures remain under control," Mr. Rana said, adding that food inflation will always remain the "swing factor" for India. "As long as we see normal monsoons next year, interest rates are likely to be headed lower," he concluded.

On the extension of the free foodgrains scheme for five more years and concerns that more freebies could be announced ahead of the general elections, possibly denting India's fiscal health, the rating firm's sovereign ratings director Andrew Wood said they may not have a major impact in the medium-term.