

Indian Christians resent Australian ads featuring Hindu, Christian gods to 'sell' meat

New Delhi, Sep 11 : The Catholic Secular Forum (CSF) on Monday raised strong objections to a new Australian advertising campaign featuring revered Hindu and Christian gods and other mythical figures to 'sell' its red meat and meat products.

CSF Founder-General Secretary Joseph Dias said the latest advertising campaign by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) is "bad in taste and offensive to all" and sought boycott of MLA and a ban of their products.

The advertisements feature the elephant-headed God, Lord Ganesha, revered in India, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Thor, Zeus and others seated at a table enjoying what is a sumptuous non-vegetarian feast.

The ads have reportedly made an oblique reference to Prophet Mohammed, who is not pictured but is heard excusing himself from

the party through a mobile phone call since he has to pick-up a child from daycare.

What has hurt Christians is that the caricature of Jesus Christ who performs what is termed as a 'reverse miracle' by turning wine into water so a Grecian goddess, who is a 'designated driver' can drive home safely, Dias said.

"We have written to Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj to take note of these 'insensitive advertisements' and raise the issue with the top authorities in Australia immediately. We also demand that MLA Chairman Michele Allan and MD Richard Norton withdraw the ads and tender an apology," Dias told IANS.

Besides writing to Sushma Swaraj, the CSF has shot off emails to Australian Deputy High Commissioner in Mumbai Martin Huber, Indian High Commissioner to

Australia Harinder Sidhu and other top officials raising serious objections to the MLA campaign.

"The CSF has always protested against commercial exploitation of religious figures for profit, irrespective of which religion the figures belong to.

The MLA ads have hurt not only followers of different faiths, but atheists and agnostics all over," Dias pointed out.

He termed the campaign as 'culturally insensitive' to vegans and communities like Hindus, Jains or Buddhists and said Lord Ganesha is a vegetarian and meat is never offered to him, as depicted in the MLA ads.

Dias warned that unless MLA yanks off the offensive ad campaign and apologises, the global Catholic community would be compelled to boycott

its products as "there are many alternatives available worldwide".

BJP slaps legal notice on Guha for linking RSS with Gauri Lankesh murder

New Delhi, Sep 11 : The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday slapped a legal notice on author Ramchandra Guha for allegedly linking the Sangh Parivar with the murder of journalist Gauri Lankesh, and asked him to apologise publicly for the same.

The legal notice, sent by Karunakar Khasale, state Secretary of Karnataka BJP's Yuva Morcha, said that Guha, in an interview to a news portal on September 6, mentioned Sangh Parivar in connection with Lankesh's murder.

"It is very likely that her murderers came from the same Sangh Parivar from which the murderers of Dabholkar, Pansare and Kalburgi came," the notice quoted Guha as saying in the interview to Scroll.in.

"You have alleged that the perpetrators of the said crimes belong to our client's organisation...As on today, the investigations into the said incidents are still in progress and have not yet concluded. No trial has taken place against any person, much less any conviction.

"Under such circumstances, without any basis or proof, you have given false and mischie-



vous statements clearly calculated to defame our client's organisation and its members," the notice read.

It asked Guha to "categorically and clearly apologise publicly" for making such allegations "within three days from the date of receipt of this notice", adding that the organisation (RSS) to which "you impute criminal motives, is a

group of highly reputed and well regarded national organisations". While the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) is the world's largest voluntary socio-cultural organisation involved in humanitarian and service activities around the world, the BJP is the world's largest democratic political party, currently in power in the Union government," it said.

The notice said that if Guha fails to apologise, the BJP would be would be "constrained to initiate" civil and criminal prosecution against him.

Senior journalist Gauri Lankesh was shot dead by yet unidentified assailants at her residence in Bengaluru on September 5. She was known for her strong views against right wing Hindutva politics.

SC reject Sahara's plea for lifting attachment, stopping auction of Aamby Valley

New Delhi, Sep 11 : The Supreme Court on Monday rejected a plea by Sahara Group urging it to lift attachment of its Aamby Vally project and permit it to enter into agreement with Royal Partners Investment Fund

for selling it 26 per cent stakes in it for \$1.6 billion.

Seeking the lifting of attachment and halt to the court ordered auction of Aamby Valley, Sahara told the bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra, Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice

A.K.Sikri that it has already sold its two hotels in New York.

However, the court said that if Sahara group was able to fructify deal with the Royal Partners Investment Fund and deposit the amount with

the court, then it would pass appropriate orders to that effect.

On April 16, the top court had asked the Bombay High Court's official liquidator to evaluate and auction the Aamby Valley property of

the Sahara Group. In his report on its worth, the liquidator had said that its market value is Rs 37,390 crore and the fair value is Rs 43,000 crore.

Senior counsel Kapil Sibal, appearing for Sahara, said that in lieu of \$1.6 billion, the de Royal Partners Investment Fund would get 26 per cent stake in Aamby Valley. Declining to entertain the plea by Sahara group's two companies — Sahara India Real Estate Corporation Ltd and Sahara Housing Finance Corporation Ltd, the court in order said: "However, if the applicant enters into any negotiations and Royal Partners Investment Fund deposits the amount before this Court, appropriate order shall be passed on the next date of hearing."

The court also directed Subrata Roy to present in the court on next date of hearing.

The court rejected

Sahara's plea even though Sibal told the court that since last hearing of the matter, the group has deposited about Rs 530 crore and sought time till November 11 to pay the balance of Rs 966 crore.

Urging the court to consider their plea for 60 days time to deposit Rs 966 crore for which Sahara had given the advance cheques, Sibal said that of Rs 24,000 crore that Sahara had to deposit in SEBI—Sahara Refund Account, they have already deposited Rs 16,000 crore. He said in last one year, Sahara has deposited Rs 4,000 crore.

He told the bench to contrast this with those who after taking 40—80,000 crore from the bank were seeking their restructuring.

The court, in the last hearing of the matter on July 25, had directed Sahara group to deposit Rs 1500 crore by September 11.

Convict in Kush Kataria

murder case killed in jail brawl

New Delhi, Sep 11 : A convict undergoing a triple life-term in the sensational kidnap and murder of an eight-year-old son of an industrialist, was killed in a jail brawl with a co-inmate inside Nagpur Central Jail on Monday, a police official said.

According to police official Virendrasingh Thakur of Nagpur Control, the incident occurred around 7.15 a.m. when the victim Aayush Nirmal Pugaliya was attacked on the head and throat with a broken floor tile -- he later succumbed to the injuries.

A 25-year-old inmate, Sooraj V. Kotnake, undergoing a life-term for murder, has been arrested in connection with the killing by the Dhantoli police, Thakur said.

The motive behind the killing is tentatively believed to be previous enmity between Pugaliya and Kotnake, and further investigations are underway. Pugaliya, along with at least two accomplices, was arrested for the kidnap and murder of Kush Kataria, the eight-year-old son of a local industrialist and 'Masala King' Prashant Kataria of the well-known brand Suruchi Spices Pvt. Ltd.

The little boy, Kush, was playing outside their home in the posh Vardhaman Nagar, on October 11, 2011, from where he was abducted and killed after a single ransom money call was made that evening.

In the ransom call, the kidnapers demanded Rs 20 million (Rs 2 crore) for his release, but they later apparently panicked and killed the boy.

They dumped his body in a water tank near an under-construction building in Kalamna area of the city. The police found the body on October 15, four days after the kidnapping.

Ryan murder: Three school trustees seek anticipatory transit bail

New Delhi, Sep 11 : The trustees of the Ryan International Schools on Monday filed an application in the Bombay High Court seeking anticipatory transit bail to move an appropriate court in Haryana in a seven-year-old's death at their Gurugram school, official sources said here.

Augustine F. Pinto and his wife Grace Pinto, trustees of the St Xaviers Education Trust that manages the Ryan International Schools, have sought the bail.

"Yes, the trust's lawyers have moved an application for an anticipatory transit bail to enable them to go to Haryana and file an application before an appropriate court for relief," said an official connected to one of the schools in Mumbai, who declined to be identified. The matter

is likely to come up for hearing before the High Court on Tuesday, the official added.

The sudden move by the high-profile Pinto couple — Augustine, a former Sheriff of Mumbai and Grace, close to the top-ranking Bharatiya Janata Party echelons — came amidst reports that a Haryana Police team was expected to reach here and question them and other trustees.

However, the names and whereabouts of the other trustees of the St Xaviers Educational Trust — registered as a Public Charitable Trust in Maharashtra in the early 1980s — are not known and it is not clear whether they would be implicated in the case.

Despite repeated attempts by IANS, the besieged Pintos and their

lawyers were not available for comments in the matter.

The fast-paced developments came in the wake of the brutal murder of a minor student, Pradhuman Thakur, on September 8, in the Ryan International School in Bhondsi on Sohna Road in Haryana's Gurugram, which has since snowballed into a national issue concerning private schools.

Meanwhile, shaken by the incident, parents associations of at least half-a-dozen Ryan International Schools in Mumbai and elsewhere are planning to raise the issue of their children's safety with the managements. Also on Monday, the Supreme Court issued notice to the Centre, the CBI, the Haryana government, the CBSE and the HRD ministry on the child's death.

INTERNATIONAL

Rohingya insurgent group declares temporary ceasefire

Nay Pyi Taw, Sep 11 : After more than two weeks of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state, the insurgent group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has declared a "temporary cessation of offensive military operations" for a one-month period to enable aid groups to respond to the "humanitarian crisis".

The ceasefire would begin on Sunday until October 9, the statement said late Saturday night.

ARSA's statement urged humanitarian aid to all victims of the crisis "irrespective of their ethnic or religious background".

It also called on the Myanmar government to cease all military offensive operations and participate

in assisting the victims.

At least 290,000 ethnic Rohingyas have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh since August 25 after escaping violence in Rakhine, according to the latest UN figures.

Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights for Myanmar, on Friday said that at least 1,000 people were killed in the violence over the past two weeks, though she said that figure is "very likely an underestimate", CNN reported.

However, the Myanmar government said that only 421 people have died.

The Rohingyas are considered to be among the world's most persecuted people. The predominantly Buddhist Myanmar con-

siders them Bangladeshi but Bangladesh says they are from Myanmar, CNN reported. Rohingya militants killed 12 security officers in border post attacks, according to state media. In response, the military intensified "clearance operations", driving thousands of people from their homes. Satellite photos released by Human Rights Watch show entire villages torched to the ground in clashes between Myanmar's armed forces and local militants.

In northern Rakhine state there are reports of at least another 30,000 Rohingyas trapped in hilly terrain without basic supplies of food, water or medicine, according to activists.

China court releases video of Taiwanese activist confessing to subversion

Beijing, Sep 11 : A Taiwanese activist on trial in China confessed on Monday to attempting to subvert the Beijing government, according to videos of his hearing released by Chinese authorities, although his wife refused to recognise the court's authority.

Lee Ming-che, a community college teacher known for his pro-democracy and rights activism, went missing on a trip to mainland China in March. China's authorities later confirmed that he was being investigated on suspicion of damaging national security.

Lee said he accepted the charge of subversion and expressed regret in videos of his comments released on social media by the Yueyang City Intermediate People's Court in central Hunan province.

"I spread some attacks, theories that maliciously attacked and defamed China's government, the Chinese Communist Party and China's current political system, and I incited the subversion of state power," Lee said, referring to comments written in an instant messaging group.

Taiwan's presidential office said in a news briefing on Monday afternoon that the government is engaged in an "all-out effort to assist Mr. Lee Ming-che's family."

"His relief is our top priority. The position of this government has been very clear. Mr. Lee is one of our citizens," an office spokesman said, adding: "We'll do everything in our power to ensure his safe return."

Tropical Storm Irma floods northern Florida cities after hammering south

Miami, Sep 11 : Downgraded from a hurricane to a tropical storm, Irma flooded several northern Florida cities with heavy rain and a high storm surge on Monday as it headed out of the state after cutting power to millions and ripping roofs off homes.

Irma, once ranked as one of the most powerful hurricanes recorded in the Atlantic, hit a wide swath of Florida over the past day, first making landfall on the Florida Keys archipelago and then coming ashore south of Naples before heading up the west coast.

Now a tropical storm with sustained winds of up to 70 miles per hour (110 km per hour), Irma

was located about 35 miles (56 km) west of Gainesville and headed up the Gulf Coast, the National Hurricane Center said at 8 a.m. ET (1200 GMT).

The Cuban government reported on Monday that 10 people had been killed after Irma battered the island's north coast with ferocious winds and 36-foot (11-meter) waves over the weekend. This raised the overall death toll from Irma's powerful rampage through the Caribbean to 38.

Northeastern Florida cities including Jacksonville were facing flash flooding, with the city's sheriff's office pulling residents from waist-deep water.

"Stay inside. Go up. Not

out," Jacksonville's website warned residents. "There is flooding throughout the city and more rain is expected. After what she called a terrifying night bunkered in her house in St. Petersburg, on Florida's Gulf Coast, with her children and extended family, Julie Hally emerged with relief on Monday. The winds had toppled some large tree branches and part of a fence, but her house was undamaged. "My heart just pounded out of my

chest the whole time," said Hally, 37. "You hear stuff hitting your roof. It honestly sounds like somebody is just whistling at your window the whole night. It's really scary."

Governor Rick Scott said he would travel later on Monday to the Florida Keys. Irma first came ashore at Cudjoe Key as a Category 4 hurricane with sustained winds of up to 130 mph (215 kph).

U.S. President Donald Trump in a ceremony at the Pentagon to remember the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks vowed a full response to Irma, as well as continued federal support for victims of Hurricane Harvey, which flooded Texas.

"These are storms of catastrophic severity and we are marshalling the full resources of the federal government to help our fellow Americans," Trump said. "When Americans are in need, Americans pull together and we are one country." The state's largest city, Miami, was spared the brunt of the storm but still saw heavy flooding. Utility crews were already on the streets there clearing downed trees and utility lines. All causeways leading to Miami Beach were closed by police.

U.N. Security Council to vote Monday on weakened North Korea sanctions - diplomats

Washington, Sep 11 : The U.N. Security Council is set to vote on Monday on a watered-down U.S.-drafted resolution to impose new sanctions on North Korea over its latest nuclear test, diplomats said, but it was unclear whether China and Russia would support it.

North Korea warned the United States that it would pay a "due price" for spearheading efforts for fresh sanctions for this month's nuclear test, which followed a series of test missile launches, all in defiance of U.N. sanctions. A U.S.-drafted resolution originally calling for an oil embargo on the North, a halt to its key exports of textiles and subjecting leader Kim Jong Un to a financial and travel ban have been weakened, apparently to placate Russia and China which both have veto powers, diplomats said. It no longer proposes blacklisting Kim and relaxes sanctions earlier proposed on oil and gas, a draft reviewed by Reuters shows. It still proposes a ban on textile exports. North

Korea was condemned globally for conducting its sixth nuclear test on Sept 3, which it said was of an advanced hydrogen bomb. NATO head Jens Stoltenberg said at the weekend that North Korea's "reckless behaviour", pursuing nuclear and missile programmes, was a global threat and required a global response. The tensions have weighed on global markets, but on Monday there was some relief among investors that North Korea did not conduct a further missile test this weekend when it celebrated its founding anniversary. Still, North Korea denounced efforts by Washington to impose new U.N.-backed sanctions against the country. The North's Foreign Ministry spokesman said the United States was "going frantic" to manipulate the Security Council over Pyongyang's nuclear test, which it said was part of "legitimate self-defensive measures." "In case the U.S. eventually does rig up the illegal and unlawful 'resolution' on harsher sanctions, the DPRK shall make

absolutely sure that the U.S. pays due price," the spokesman said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

DPRK stands for the North's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "The world will witness how the DPRK tames the U.S. gangsters by taking a series of actions tougher than they have ever envisaged," the unnamed spokesman said. "The DPRK has developed and perfected the super-powerful thermo-nuclear weapon as a means to deter the ever-increasing hostile moves and nuclear threat of the U.S. and defuse the danger of nuclear war looming over the Korean peninsula and the region."

South Korean President Moon Jae-in said last week during a visit to Russia that shutting off North Korea's supply of oil was inevitable this time to bring Pyongyang to talks and he called for Russian President Vladimir Putin's support.