

Stir For Separate Vidarbha State

Nagpur: (IANS) Several political groups and social organisations participated in a two-day sit-in agitation here to press the demand for a separate Vidarbha state.

The initiative has been taken by Congress MP Vilas Muttemwar who led around 2000 people at the peaceful sit-in (dharna) before a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Variety Square in the heart of the city. The agitators have demanded that along with the recently-approved proposal for a Telangana state, the central government should also “favorably” consider the 50-year-old demand for a separate Vidarbha state.

This, they said, would save the region - worst-hit by a spate of farmland suicides in the past decade - from “dying”. Among the prominent groups which have joined the two-day stir is Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS) which appealed to all political parties to support the demand for a separate state.

“Congress president Sonia Gandhi should consider the apathy shown to the people of this region in the past 50 years, which now has slid to among the most backward regions in the country though it falls in the most advanced state of India,” VJAS chief Kishor Tiwari said.

In a letter to the Congress president last week, Muttemwar said that even the erstwhile British rulers recommended a separate Vidarbha way back in 1888.

Five Cops Suspended For Partying With Dons

Mumbai: (IANS) The Maharashtra government has ordered suspension of the five policemen caught partying with mafia dons in a private gymkhana club last week, a top official said Sunday.

The suspension follows a recommendation made by Mumbai Police Commissioner D. Shivanandan Saturday to the state government.

The police gathered sufficient evidence in the matter to merit recommending the suspension of the policemen, said the official.

Based on the recommendations of the city police chief, Chief Minister Ashok Chavan late Saturday ordered the suspension of the officers pending a departmental inquiry against them, the official told IANS.

The controversial party Christmas eve was thrown at a private gymkhana club in Chembur, a north-east Mumbai suburb in which the policemen were seen on video footage, drinking, dancing, eating and making merry with the mafia dons present there.

The gathering was ostensibly to celebrate the acquittal and release of D.K. Rao, a mafia don belonging to the Chhota Rajan gang, from 31 serious cases earlier last year.

The officers who were present at the party reportedly include: DCP Vishwas Salve, Assistant Commissioner of Police Prakash Wani, Senior Police Inspector R.S. Khakale, Crime Branch Inspector S. Khalatkar and assistant sub-inspector T. Salunkhe.

Video-clips of the party, telecast by Mumbai TV channels, showed them celebrating joyfully with the mafiosi even as a huge contingent of cops maintained law and order all over the city on Christmas eve. Also said to be present at the party were other mafia-linked persons like Farid Tanasha and Sunil Potdar. A special guest was none other than Sujata Nikhalje, wife of don Chhota Rajan Nikhalje, who is addressed as ‘Nani’ by her husband’s henchmen.

Thousands Gather For Telangana Meet At Osmania

Hyderabad: (IANS) Thousands of students from various parts of Telangana gathered at the Osmania University here to demand that the central government immediately initiate the process for granting statehood to the region.

In what was seen as the biggest show of strength by Telangana supporters since the movement gathered steam a month ago, thousands of students from Hyderabad and nine other districts of the region gathered at the sprawling university campus.

Armed with the court permission to hold the meeting after police denied it, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of students mobilised thousands of students from various parts of the region for “vidyarthi garjana” (students’ roar). The meeting began at 4 p.m. under the tight vigil of hundreds of policemen and personnel of paramilitary forces, who allowed students into the university campus only after establishing their identity.

The campus reverberated with the slogans of “Jai Telangana” as the JAC went all out to make the event a grand success.

Before the meeting began, dozens of folk singers performed on the stage set against the backdrop of the majestic Arts College building.

There were loud cheers as the balladeers through their songs in the traditional Telangana style underlined the need for Telangana state and highlighted the injustice meted out to the region by successive rulers from Andhra.



JAC leaders alleged that thousands of students could not reach Hyderabad as police stopped them in various towns despite court orders allowing the JAC to hold the meeting.

Though the Andhra Pradesh High Court Saturday allowed the JAC to hold its meeting at the campus with certain conditions, police stopped vehicles carrying students in various districts.

Vishnuvardhan's Death Marks End Of An Era

Bangalore: (IANS) The sudden death of Kannada movie icon Vishnuvardhan has devastated millions of Kannadigas around the world. Well-known cricketer Anil Kumble, a big fan of the late actor, described his demise as a most devastating loss.

“I have grown up watching his films. I have been his ardent fan. It’s an end of an era,” said Kumble, summing up the emotions of his fans who considered him a role model.

Besides being a great star, Vishnu was also the most lovable human being in the Kannada film industry. People loved him so much that many who came to pay their last respects cried and fainted at the National College Grounds where his body was kept for ‘darshan’.

The Karnataka government has ordered a state funeral for the superstar. Elaborate police arrangements have been made for the procession which will be taken from the actor’s residence here to the Jayanagar Cosmopolitan Club grounds.

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa went to the actor’s residence early in the morning to pay his last respects and consoled the members his family, including his wife Bharathi.

Describing Vishnu as the greatest actor in the Kannada film industry, Yediyurappa said: “His death is an irreparable loss for the people of Karnataka and we should all try to follow in his footsteps to lead an ideal life.”

There was a spontaneous shutdown in several parts of the state, including cities like Mysore, Davanagere and Hubli. Shops were closed even in small towns like Haveri, Honnali and Turuvekere.

“Vishnuvardhan was deeply spiritual in the true traditions of Indian culture and it was a sea of

humanity that witnessed his last journey. Notwithstanding his huge popularity, Vishnu remained an icon for of his fans,” said minister Suresh Kumar.

Jayamala, president of Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce, who had acted with Vishnu in



many films, was in deep shock and described the actor’s death as the most tragic incident of 2009.

“A legend of the industry has passed away. The Kannada film Industry which has already suffered enough, now has to bear this great loss,” she said.

Vishnu was often described as an ambassador of the Kannada film industry as he had many friends outside the state. Many artists from the Tamil and Telugu film industry including Sharath Kumar, Radhika and well-known singer S.P. Balasubramaniam came down to Bangalore to pay their last respects.

He was an actor par excellence with a bounty of prestigious awards, including seven state awards

JAC leaders alleged that the police were violating court order by arresting students and using repressive measures to foil the meeting. In Warangal, police stopped vehicles carrying students of Kakatiya University to Hyderabad on the ground that the vehicles had no permission to ply.

The high court Saturday allowed the JAC to hold the meeting but barred political leaders and Maoists from addressing it.

The all-party JAC comprises of members from the ruling Congress, the opposition Telugu Desam Party, Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) and others.

The Osmania University has emerged as the nerve centre of the Telangana agitation which began Nov 29 when TRS chief K. Chandrasekhara Rao launched fast unto death, demanding statehood to Telangana.

The massive protests and Rao’s hunger strike forced the central government to announce on Dec 9 that the process for formation of the new state would be initiated.

However, following protests in Andhra and Rayalaseema regions, the government made a second statement Dec 23 underlining the need for wide-ranging consultations on the issue.

from the Karnataka state government and six Filmfare awards.

Vishnuvardhan showed his class as an actor in films like “Nagarahaavu”, “Bandhana”, “Nagarahole”, “Muththina Haara”, “Suryavamsha”, “Veerappa Nayaka”, “Yajamana”, “Aaptha Mithra” and “Sirivantha”.

He has acted in 199 films in five languages including four in Hindi - “Ek Aur Itihas”, where he was paired with Hema Malini and “Inspector Dhanush” in which Sangeeta Bijlani played the lead. He teamed up with Akshay Kumar in “Ashaant” and “Zaalim”.

He also acted with Tamil superstar Rajnikanth in “Vidudalai” and featured in other Tamil films including director K. Balachandar’s movie. Then he was seen in two Telugu films “Okkadu Chalu” and “Sangramam” and Malayalam movie “Kouravar”.

Vishnuvardhan was also known for his personal involvement in many charitable causes. He was a brand ambassador for Mysore’s Vikram Hospital and took responsibility of the treatment of rural children from humble backgrounds suffering from heart ailments.

He recently conducted a ‘padayatra’ to collect funds for the flood-affected people in the northern part of the state.

He had also adopted Melukote town in Mandya district.

Vishnuvardhan died of a heart attack early Wednesday. The actor died while he was being rushed to a hospital in Mysore. He leaves behind his wife Bharathi Vishnuvardhan, who is an actress, and two daughters, Keerthi and Chandana.

Vishnuvardhan, 60, was under medical observation at the Vikram Hospital in Mysore for many days. Doctors checked the actor thoroughly Tuesday evening and said he was in a good condition. But early Wednesday morning Vishnuvardhan complained of chest pain and died while being taken to hospital.