

THE NEW INDIA EXPRESS

## Antony Ministry sworn in

Express News Service

Thiruvananthapuram, May 17: Witnessed by a shouting brigade of nearly 20,000 supporters, the eight-member UDF Ministry led by A K Antony was sworn in by Governor Sukhdev Singh Kang on the lawns of Raj Bhavan at 10.50 am on Thursday.

Followed by A K Antony, P K Kunhalikutty, K M Mani, K R Gowri, T M Jacob, Babu Divakaran, K B Ganesh Kumar and M V Ragahavan took the oath.

While Antony, JSS leader Gowri, CMP leader M V Ragahavan and Babu Divakaran of RSP took the solemn pledge, IJML leader P K Kunhalikutty, Kerala Congress (M) leader K M Mani,

Kerala Congress (Jacob) leader T M Jacob and Kerala Congress (B) representative K B Ganesh Kumar took the oath in the name of God. All of them took the oath in Malayalam.

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When all others signed in the official register after the swearing-in, Jacob registered his thumb imprint as his right hand was still in plaster.

Antony is taking over the reins of the State for the third time. He became the Chief Minister in 1977 and 1985, but was not a member of the House on both the occasions. Later, he contested by-elections and won

both. This is the first time when Antony becomes the Chief Minister after winning an election. He is the 18th Chief Minister of the State.

Babu Divakaran is the son of former Minister T K Divakaran and Ganesh Kumar is the son of KCBJ Legislature Party leader R Balakrishna Pillai who has been convicted in a couple of corruption cases and hence opted out of joining the Ministry.

Veteran Congress leader K Karunakaran, Karnataka Chief Minister S M Krishna, AICC observers Ghulam Nabi Azad and Motilal Vora were present on the occasion.

Many senior leaders of Congress and other UDF organisations could not get seats and watch the swearing-in ceremony as the Raj Bhavan premises were overcrowded right from early morning with the supporters and family members of leaders and minister-designates.

Leaders along with many MLAs, top bureaucrats, Ombudsmen and others had to sweat it out with the rest of the crowd. M Vijayakumar, T Sivarama Menon, Varkala Radhakrishnan and M A Baby were among those who represented the Opposition.

Antony is expected to expand his Cabinet by inducting 11 more ministers from Congress, the IJML and the Kerala Congress (M).

## Cong favours ties with CPM at national-level

New Delhi, May 17: The Congress today indicated that it would continue to maintain coordination with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the interest of its overall strategy at the national level despite the two parties contesting against each other in the recent assembly poll in Kerala and West Bengal.

Replying to questions by mediapersons here, chief spokesperson for AICC S Jaigal Reddy, MP, said the Congress considered the CPM a genuinely secular force.

He said that the BJP was a far greater threat to the nation. Despite ideological differences with the CPM, it was possible for the Congress to maintain relations with the CPM, he said.

On the reported remarks made by the CPM that it would

ion campaign. He also avoided making any "harsh comment" on the third force, saying it was against the BJP.

Expressing optimism about working with the CPM to fight the BJP, Reddy said the CPM was an ideologically oriented national party.

He also declined to comment on the reported remark made by former Union Minister A B A Ghani Khan Choudhury questioning the wisdom of forging an electoral alliance between the Congress and the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal. "I do not want to comment on the comment made by a senior Congress leader," he said.

He condemned the reported move to wind up the Liberhan Commission probing the Ayodhya demolition case by denying it further extension after June 30 under previous law.

unit given by a journalist Rochira Gupta who was present on the day when the disputed structure was demolished. According to the eye-witness, Advani and other BJP leaders had played a "proactive role" in the demolition. The Uttar Pradesh Government was reluctant to issue a fresh notification so that the case against Advani and other accused in the case could be continued. This was a "multi pronged conspiracy" to defend the accused, Reddy said.

Referring to the intention of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to expand his council of ministers, Reddy said Vajpayee was engaged in splitting other political parties to add to the strength of the NDA. He was offering ministerial berths for this purpose.

## Lyngdoh to be CEC, Tandon Commissioner

New Delhi, May 17: The Centre has decided to appoint J M Lyngdoh as the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) after the incumbent, M S Gill, completes his tenure.

Personnel Secretary B B Tandon will be appointed Election Commissioner in Lyngdoh's place.

Official sources said the appointment of Tandon, who will be the third election commissioner in the three-member body, will take effect from June 12, when Gill completes his five-year tenure as Chief Election Commissioner.

The other election commissioner is T S Krishnamurthy.

Lyngdoh becomes the first person from the North-East to occupy the constitutional post, the tenure of which is six years or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

Reacting to his elevation, Lyngdoh said...