

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು
PAPER CLIPPINGS

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ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: *Other state matters*

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: *The Hindu*

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE *24/4/20*

Kerala puts new libel law on hold

24. 2011
We will seek debate on amendment: CM

We are not intending to implement the amended Act. A detailed discussion will be held in the Assembly and further steps will be taken after hearing views from various quarters

PINARAYI VIJAYAN, Kerala Chief Minister



It is unfortunate that the Governor gave his assent to the amendment Act, which curtails media freedom
MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN, Kerala Congress chief

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government on Monday decided not to put into immediate effect an ordinance that sought to empower the police to prosecute persons disseminating defamatory content.

Announcing the rollback, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said various quarters had aired scepticism about the recent revision to the Kerala Police Act, 2011. Hence, the government had decided not to implement the ordinance signed into law by Kerala Governor Arif Muhammad Khan last week.

Alternatively, the government would seek a consensus by placing the amendment for debate in the Assembly, he said.

The decision came after Mr. Vijayan held discussions with members of the CPI(M) State secretariat and the Left Democratic Front (LDF).

Earlier, CPI(M) general se-

cretary Sitaram Yechury indicated in New Delhi that the Kerala government would "reconsider" the implementation of the contentious amendment.

The LDF and the government had come under criticism from opposition parties, journalists and civil rights activists for promulgating a "black law" that threatened free speech and the freedom of the press.

LDF convener and CPI(M) acting State secretary A. Vijayaraghavan said concerns raised by progressive persons had prompted the rethink. The misuse of social media as a potent vehicle for slander targeting women, children and families had necessitated the law, he said. However, the scope of potential abuse of the law prompted its abandonment.

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Kerala puts new libel law on hold

Arch rivals Congress and BJP found themselves on the same page opposing the newly introduced Section 118 A of the Act.

The amendment proposed a three-year prison term and a fine of up to ₹10,000 for those convicted of producing, publishing or disseminating derogatory content through any means of communication to intimidate, insult or defame any person.

Opposition parties pointed out the law did not restrict itself to curbing "vile and inhumane social media posts against women and children" alone, as claimed

by Mr. Vijayan repeatedly. Instead, the ordinance stopped short of limiting the law to social media and left the amendment open to broad and subjective interpretation by the police.

At a stroke, the amendment brought the conventional media and also the whole gamut of social media posts and online commentary under its ambit.

It also conceivably granted the police untrammelled authority to examine published and broadcast content and register cases on their own and even in the absence of a specific complaint, the opposition said