**TRIBUNE**

**Social Issue**

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**Quick exit in Kerala**

If there is one thing that the ruling Left Democratic Front in Kerala cannot afford, it is tolerance of corruption and nepotism.

* The resignation of E.P. Jayarajan as Industries Minister, following charges of nepotism, brought to a quick end what could have turned out to be a major political embarrassment for Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.
* After having come to power attacking the Congress-led United Democratic Front over a string of scandals, Mr. Vijayan could not allow himself to be seen as endorsing acts of indiscretion by his Minister — especially since Mr. Jayarajan is from Kannur, the same district as Mr. Vijayan, and is considered a loyalist.
* Once it became clear that Mr. Jayarajan had favoured his relatives in appointments to State public sector undertakings, he stood politically isolated within the party. Indeed, it was not only the national leadership of the CPI(M), but Mr. Vijayan as well who was keen on containing the controversy in its nascence.
* Even before the meeting of the State Secretariat of the party discussed the issue, the Chief Minister said, in a post on his Facebook page, that the Chief Secretary had been asked to probe allegations of nepotism.
* Also, the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau decided to initiate a ‘quick verification’ of the charges. Mr. Jayarajan’s defence was more in the nature of an explanation: that he was being targeted for acting against corruption in the industries department.
* Letting the issue to fester would have resulted in criticism from within the CPI(M) as well as the opposition. The party’s decision to ask Mr. Jayarajan to quit eventually seemed no more than a formality.
* The CPI(M) would like to contrast the quick, quiet exit of Mr. Jayarajan with the reluctance of UDF ministers to step down in the face of inquiries instituted against them. That it had to deal with one of its own ministers, and not a member of an allied party, helped in the speedy resolution of the issue
* In the bar bribery case, in which Kerala Congress (M) leader K.M. Mani was involved, the UDF could not act without risking the stability of the coalition. Mr. Jayarajan’s exit is no serious loss to the administration. If anything, he had been an embarrassment on at least two previous occasions.
* First, in a faux pas, when asked to give his comments on the death of Muhammad Ali, he described the boxing icon as a Kerala sportsman. On another occasion, he took on long jumper Anju Bobby George, who was then heading the Kerala Sports Council, questioning the concessions extended to her by the previous government. Ms. George accused him of insulting her, and resigned. In asking Mr. Jayarajan to go, the CPI (M) had nothing to lose, and a lot to hold on to.