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## Pinarayi weathers no-trust vote, slams Opposition

LDF defeats no-confidence motion by 87 votes to 40

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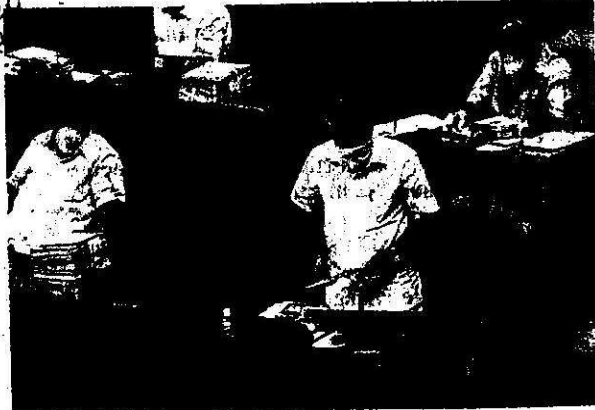
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan predictably weathered a no-confidence vote against his government in the Assembly on Monday.

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) rallied behind Mr. Vijayan. It defeated the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) by 87 votes to 40.

The UDF appeared diminished on the floor of the House after two MLAs aligned to the José K. Mani faction of the Kerala Congress (M) stayed away from the voting.

The 11-hour marathon debate saw the opposing fronts wrangle bitterly over a range of political hot potato talking points centred on the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala hovered over the alleged corruption at the CMO. He said



**Marathon debate:** Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan speaking at the Assembly session. •SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

a cabal of corrupt bureaucrats and gold smugglers had held sway in the CMO since 2016. They had circumvented the due process of governance to earn kickbacks. At least three Central agencies were at Mr. Vijayan's doorstep.

He said Mr. Vijayan was at a loss to explain how Swapna Suresh, the second accused in the gold smuggling case, came to represent the

CMO in the government's interactions with the UAE.

"The Chief Minister has to clarify whether he colluded with Swapna and his former Principal Secretary M. Sivasankar or was beguiled by them. Either way, Mr. Vijayan has lost the right to continue in office," he said.

Mr. Vijayan's reply to the debate was simultaneously a progress card on governance and a strong indictment of the Opposition.

