

WB Govt trying to end Gorkhaland movement: Bimal Gurung to SC



NEW DELHI, DEC 5 /-/- Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) leader Bimal Gurung today alleged in the Supreme Court that the West Bengal government was trying to 'effectively end' the movement for a separate Gorkhaland by implicating its members in false cases. Gurung's counsel claimed before a bench of Justices A K Sikri and Ashok Bhushan that the state was proceeding in a "biased manner" against GJM members and there was an environment of "constant fear" in Darjeeling due to this. Senior advocate P S Patwalia, representing Gurung, sought an investigation by an independent

agency in the cases lodged against the party members as also in their alleged extra-judicial killings by the police, maintaining that a fair probe was not expected from the state. "We cannot expect a fair investigation. It is persecution. So probe by an independent agency is required," he said. However, senior counsel A M Singhi, appearing for West Bengal Police, said there were dangerous consequences of what the GJM leader was arguing before the apex court as there was a situation of public disorder. During the hearing, Patwalia raised the issue of alleged violation of

human rights and extra-judicial killings by state police and referred to a number of such purported cases. He claimed that a GJM supporter was shot dead by West Bengal Police in Sikkim and a case has been lodged against the police officials there. "GJM leaders are arrested in false cases," he said, adding "they are trying to effectively end the movement". There is an environment of constant fear in the Darjeeling region as the police is looking for GJM members. State is proceeding in a biased manner," he claimed.

Patwalia said the state cannot act like this as the movement for separate statehood was going on for long and the issue which Gurung has raised before the top court was of fair trial and fair investigation of these cases. The arguments remained inconclusive and would continue on December 8. Gurung had earlier told the apex court that main flashpoint of confrontation was that the GJM had opposed

the state government's move to make Bengali language mandatory in the schools in West Bengal. The state police had maintained that Gurung was absconding, not cooperating in the probe of cases lodged against him and playing "blatant politics", claiming that Gurung was facing trial in 23 cases and several other criminal cases were lodged against him. It had alleged that several serious incidents had taken place under Gurung's leadership, including the killing of a 26-year-old police official during the recent Gorkhaland agitation. The police has sought

vacation of the court's November 20 order restraining him from taking any coercive step against Gurung, who is seeking a probe by NIA or CBI in the killings of several Gorkhaland activists during the recent agitation. The GJM central committee had recently suspended Gurung for six months and appointed Binay Tamang as the party's new president. (PTI)

Junaid lynching: HC stays trial proceedings of Faridabad court

CHANDIGARH, DEC 5 /-/- The Punjab and Haryana High Court today stayed the trial proceedings in the alleged lynching of 17-year-old Junaid Khan, who was stabbed to death on a train in June. A Division bench of the high court also issued a notice of motion to the Haryana government and the CBI on his family's plea seeking a probe by the central agency into the matter. "The high court today stayed the trial proceedings of the court in Faridabad," said Arshdeep Singh Cheema, the counsel for Khan's father Jalaluddin. The plea for a CBI probe into the killing of Junaid Khan came up for hearing

before the division bench comprising Justices Mahesh Grover and Raj Shekhar Attri. Khan's father had last week challenged the November 27 judgement of a single bench that dismissed the petition seeking a CBI probe into the alleged lynching by filing an appeal.

The high court single bench had said, "during the course of the hearing, the complainant has not been able to show that there are serious flaws in the investigation, which would lead to the conclusion that the same is shoddy or tainted. Besides, there is nothing to show that the incident has

any national or international ramifications. It is, thus, not a fit case to exercise extraordinary power to hand over the investigation to the CBI", the high court single bench had said.

While seeking a probe by the CBI, the appeal filed through advocate Cheema mentions "the true nature of the crime has been subjected to a cover up. The conduct of the named accused and others as a lynching mob has been concealed. It has been projected as if the occurrence were sudden without any element of perpetrators having acted as in conspiracy or an unlawful assembly". The case will now come up for

hearing on January 11. Cheema said, Jalaluddin, through his counsel, had earlier filed the petition on October 26, seeking a probe by an independent agency, such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), in the lynching case. The petitioner also had demanded a stay on the trial in a Faridabad court.

Khan, who had boarded a Mathura-bound train from Delhi, was allegedly stabbed to death when he, along with his brothers and cousins, was returning home to Khandawali village after shopping for Eid in Delhi in June. His body was dumped near Asoti village in Faridabad district. (PTI)

Help those left behind: President Kovind to students

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 /-/- President Ram Nath Kovind today urged students to help the marginalised as they set targets for the future and said it was their duty to repay society. Addressing the 83rd convocation of Agra University, Kovind said students who graduated today would be deciding on their targets. "Whatever target you set, you must strive hard to achieve it. Along with your progress, you must take along people who are left behind," he said. Kovind said the university had an illustrious history of nine decades and had produced presidents, prime ministers and other stalwarts. "He urged the students to see the convocation not as the end of a journey but the commencement of a new phase of responsibility and learning," a statement from Rashtrapati Bhavan said today. Kovind referred to the many people who had contributed to their education - from family and teachers to those in government and society, the statement said. They help give students an opportunity that millions in the country were unable to get, he said. "Therefore, it is the duty of the graduating students to pay back to society in some way, and work for the cause of humanity," he said. The president expressed confidence that the university would continue to play a meaningful role in preparing younger generations for the challenges of the 21st century. (PTI)

PIL in HC for better public transport to curb air pollution

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 /-/- A PIL was today moved in the Delhi High Court to release and utilise public funds to augment public transport in order to curb the hazardous level of air pollution in the national capital. The plea, which also sought subsidised metro fare, came up for hearing before a bench of Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Hari Shankar, which said a similar issue was pending for consideration before it. He sought enforcing of the right to life guaranteed under the Constitution. The PIL said that Delhi NCR was in a grave crisis and a state of environmental emergency. Yet the central and state governments were playing blame-game and passing the buck to each other for non-performance of their statutory function to provide clean environment and afford quality from worsening and deteriorating health. He sought enforcing of the right to life guaranteed under the Constitution. The PIL said that Delhi NCR was in a grave crisis and a state of environmental emergency. Yet the central and state governments were playing blame-game and passing the buck to each other for non-performance of their statutory function to provide clean environment and afford quality from worsening and deteriorating health. He sought enforcing of the right to life guaranteed under the Constitution. (PTI)



Police rehearsing for the forthcoming police raising day at Ridge Madain, in Shimla

Special Urdu bulletin by AIR to counter 'distorted' news aired from other countries

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 /-/- A special Urdu news bulletin on the subcontinent has been introduced by the All India Radio (AIR) to present India's point of view in the "right perspective" in the wake of "distorted" news emanating from other countries, the public broadcaster said here. The AIR's External Services Division (ESD) has begun airing the 10-minute bulletin "Khabrein Bari-e-sagheer se" (News from the subcontinent), at 11 pm daily from December

3. "In the face of distorted news often emanating from some countries inimical to India's interest and also from outside the region, this special news bulletin is designed to put India's points of view in the right perspective to the listeners in the subcontinent and also to the world at large," the AIR said in a release. This initiative is also in sync with the present government's "neighbourhood first policy," it added. It said the western media often

presents news emanating from the subcontinent in a way which is not keeping with the "ethos and realities" of the region. "The region has a 'domain' knowledge. This special news bulletin shall help in overcoming such aberrations also," it said. The radio service has a huge following in Pakistan, countries in the gulf region and western Uttar Pradesh. The service is also live streamed to the entire world via the internet and also through

two mobile applications - airworldservice and allindiadiolive. The ED's 'Akashvani' service will also carry a special news bulletin for 15 minutes daily which has become popular among listeners in Bangladesh and the large Indian and Bangladeshi diaspora living elsewhere in the world, the release said. The bulletins also carry developmental news and success stories regarding common concerns and issues, it added. (PTI)

Hazare announces protest against Centre on March 23



Social activist Anna Hazare addressing a press conference on the Lokpal and Lokayuktas issue, in New Delhi.

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 /-/- Upset over the non-appointment of Lokpal for the last four years, anti-graft activist Anna Hazare today announced a protest against the government on March 23, observed as the Martyrs' Day, next year. Addressing a press conference here, the octogenarian accused the BJP-led central government of not being serious about fighting corruption. He said the recent amendments in the Lokpal Act, which removed a clause that made public servants declaring their assets compulsory, reflected the government's intention in fighting graft. Hazare added that the government was using the pretext that Lokpal could not be appointed as there was no Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and asserted that it could at least appoint the Lokayuktas in the BJP-ruled states. Hazare announcing a protest against the government in the capital brings back the memories of his 2011 agitation against the then Congress-led UPA government. His protest and hunger strike then had gripped the minds of millions. Facing graft charges, the Congress was decimated in the 2014 general election. Hazare said he had written over 30 letters to the NDA government, but received no response, and wondered whether there was any "ego" involved in not responding to his letters, which questioned the non-appointment of Lokpal. The 80-year-old activist also attacked the Centre over the death of farmers. He said the government had failed to honour its promise of implementing the Swaminathan Commission report and that the farmers would get 50 per cent more money over their investments in cultivation. "Since 1985, 12 lakh farmers have committed suicide in the country and the governments have shown no sensitivity towards them. There is a huge gap between the prime minister's words and acts," Hazare said. (PTI)

Naidu's decision to disqualify Sharad Yadav, Ali Anwar casts a shadow: Yechury

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 /-/- Vice President and Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu's decision to disqualify rebel JD(U) leaders Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar from the upper house "casts a shadow", CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said today. Yechury also questioned the "mind-boggling" speed with which the decision was taken. "Like Caesar's wife, the Rajya Sabha Chairman's decision must be above questioning, but the disqualification of Rajya Sabha MPs Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar casts a shadow," Yechury tweeted. He also questioned the urgency shown by the chairman. "The petition was filed on September 2 and the decision is out on December 4. The speed is mind-boggling. Similar cases are pending in Lok Sabha for over a year. So political affiliation is the only thing that matters?" the Left leader asked. Sharad Yadav and Ali Anwar were disqualified from the Rajya Sabha on Monday night. Naidu said in his communication that both leaders seemed to be Rajya Sabha members with immediate effect. He agreed to the JD(U)'s contention that the two senior leaders had voluntarily given up their membership by defying their party's directives and attending events of opposition parties. (PTI)

River connectivity needed similar to power grids: Gadkari

NEW DELHI, DEC 5 /-/- Union Minister Nitin Gadkari today pitched for river connectivity on the lines of power grids for better water conservation, according to an official statement. Gadkari, who is in charge of Ministry of Water Resources, said that availability of water is not a problem in the country, but people need to learn to manage and conserve it. He said the government's plan to double the income of farmers by 2022 cannot be achieved sans proper water management. The minister stressed that enhancing drip and pipe irrigation will reduce wastage of water and will be cost effective for farmers. He also said that river connectivity programme can reduce water crisis in "critical areas" of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana and Maharashtra. Gadkari made the remarks while addressing the second edition of India Water Impact Summit-2017 here. Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation Uma Bharti, who also attended the event, said that apart from the government programme, the willingness of the common man is important to achieve the goal of "aviral and nirmal Ganga" (clean Ganga and unfettered flow in it). Bharti said that there has been a lot of talk about clean Ganga and that it was "time for action and results" now. Bharti, who held the portfolio of water resources before Gadkari took charge of the ministry earlier this year, said she wants to see all the projects related to Clean Ganga to be initiated fully by October 2018.

Srinagar, Jammu, Leh, Gulmard record coldest night of season

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, DEC 5 /-/- Srinagar and Jammu recorded their coldest night this winter with the mercury in Jammu and Kashmir plummeting further today as Leh and Banihal recorded sub-zero temperatures, the MeT office said. The minimum temperature in the state's winter capital Jammu was 7.4 and in Srinagar, the summer capital, was minus 3.9 degrees Celsius. Srinagar city had yesterday recorded a low of minus 3.7 degrees Celsius and Jammu 8.7, the MeT said, adding that Leh recorded a low of minus 10.5 degrees Celsius and Banihal minus 0.9 degrees Celsius. Night temperatures across the Kashmir division, including the Ladakh region, stayed below the freezing point last night, a MeT official said. Leh in the Ladakh region recorded a low of minus 10.5 degrees Celsius last night, against minus 12 degrees Celsius recorded the previous night, the official said. He said that the mercury is likely to drop further as the weather would remain mainly dry over the next few days. The mercury in

Qazigund in south Kashmir settled at a low of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, slight down from minus 2.9 the previous night, he said adding Kokernag town recorded a low of minus 1.4 degrees Celsius, slightly down from minus 0.9 degrees Celsius yesterday. Kupwara town in north Kashmir registered a low of minus 3.2 degrees Celsius, down from the previous night's minus 2.8 degrees Celsius, he said. Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 4.5 degrees Celsius, 1.5 degrees down from the previous night, the official said. He said Pahalgam registered a decrease of over two degrees in the night temperature as the minimum there settled at minus 4.4 degrees Celsius compared to the previous night's minus 4.1 degrees Celsius. In Jammu, Katra, which is the base camp for pilgrims visiting the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, recorded a minimum temperature of 8.2 degrees Celsius against the previous night's 8.8 degrees Celsius, the MeT said. Bhabarwah town in Doda district recorded 1 degrees Celsius. (PTI)

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U'khand govt DPR to clean Ganga being studied: German Mission

DEHRADUN, DEC 5 /-/- The German Mission has said that a DPR worth Rs 920 crore prepared by the Uttarakhand government to clean the Ganga river was being studied and a decision would be taken on it soon. A German delegation led by Deputy Chief of Mission Jasper Wieck conveyed this to the Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Utpal Kumar Singh after holding detailed discussions on the subject, an official release said here yesterday. The German Mission assured the chief secretary that the by the German Agency for International Technical Co-operation would offer technological and financial assistance in making the river clean. Holding detailed discussions on the state government's DPR, the mission

same, wherever possible for attaining pristine status of river Ganga," it said. The agreement will be based on "Indo-German Knowledge Exchange" and practical experience on strategic river basin management issues, effective data management system and public engagement, it said. The project will closely cooperate with other national and international initiatives including Indo-German bilateral projects like Support to National Urban Sanitation Policy (SNUSP) and Sustainable Environment-friendly Industrial Production (SEIP). The duration of the project is three years, from 2016 to 2018, and German contribution will be the tune of Rs 22.5 crore, it said. (PTI)

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Eleven Kerala fishermen rescued by INS Jamuna and INS Nireekshak, being brought by INS Kalpeni in Kochi on Tuesday.