



THE ECHO OF INDIA

DAILY FROM KOLKATA • PORT BLAIR • SILIGURI

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VOL. XIII ISSUE NO 301

PAGES 12

KOLKATA • MONDAY • OCTOBER 16, 2017

Rs 1.50

Gorkhaimpasse

Tamang urges WB gov to initiate tripartite talks

KOLKATA, OCT 15/-/Expelled GJM leader and chairman of Board of Administrators (BoA) for Darjeeling, Binay Tamang today met West



Bengal Governor K N Tripathi, and requested him to talk to the Centre to initiate tripartite talks to solve the impasse.

He also apprised the governor of recovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition on Friday. "We apprised the governor about the situation in Darjeeling, recovery of arms and the slow restoration of peace there," Tamang told news media after the meeting at the Rajbhavan. He said today's meeting with Tripathi was a "courtesy call" after he was made the chairman of the BoA by the West Bengal government. Tamang said he had urged the governor to apprise the situation to the Centre. "We have told him that we are willing to talk to the Centre on the Darjeeling issue. The Centre must intervene as soon as possible and call us for talks on all the pending issues, including Gorkhland. "We have also apprised the governor that since 2015 there had been no tripartite talks involving the GTA," he added. Describing the location of Darjeeling as "strategic" owing to its international borders with Nepal and Bhutan, Tamang said discussions should be held quickly keeping in mind the sensitivity of the place, and the fire incident at Patlebas village in the early hours of the day, he demanded the police conduct a proper investigation and that no innocent persons be arrested. Tamang along with party league and BoA vice chairman Anit Thapa had met Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday. The leaders along with three GJM MLAs will meet her again at the state secretariat tomorrow. "On Friday, we had met her (Banerjee) as representatives of GTA, not on behalf of the party (GJM). Tomorrow we will go and meet the CM as representatives of the GJM," he said. The Mamata Banerjee government had last month formed a nine-member board of administrators instead of the Gorkhland Territorial Administration (GTA) to look into the development works in the Darjeeling and Kalimpong hills. (PTI)

India carried out structural reform at the right time: Jaitley

WASHINGTON, OCT 15/-/India carried out key structural reforms at the right time - when the growth rate was high - and it will serve the country well in the days to come. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said on Sunday. Some of the key reforms, including demonetisation and the GST, were carried out keeping in mind their long-term benefits to the country's economy and as a result India's growth rate is now headed for a higher trajectory, he said. "When the world was growing at two-and-a-half per cent, India was the fastest-growing major economy in the world. That was a time to really fix the roof. You don't have to wait for a downward slide in order to do it," Jaitley told a group of Indian reporters at a news conference here. "I think, this was just the right time to bring about structural changes," he said. The finance minister took a shot at his critics who claim that demonetisation has hurt the Indian economy - at least in the short-run. "The fundamental question is: Does India continue to indefinitely be a cash dominated economy? To say it's a very risky proposition, it will have adverse

consequences for a quarter or two, so let's not attempt it? Can India say, you will have de-stocking, so let's not attempt a GST?," the finance minister asked. Among his critics were several leaders from the opposition Congress party. Jaitley said the BJP simply did what the Congress couldn't while they were in power "Attacking or ending this black money was never a priority for the Congress. So their concern (about demonetisation) is natural. And GST was a Congress move. But since (the Congress) party is an opportunist party, it is opposing it," he said. "Populism is what we did not indulge in. We could have let people live in a cash dominated economy and let India continue to have a shadow economy and have everyone really prosper on that basis. (But) we struck a blow to that kind of an economy. That's not populism. That was the right economic policy to follow," he said. The Indian government has, however, received support from top leaders of the IMF and the World Bank who have called the slowness in recent Indian growth rate "an aberration" and a short-



term one. Jaitley said the positive responses and statements about the Indian economy by the world leaders had "increased the confidence of India". There is a global appreciation of the fact that India has the capacity and courage to carry out structural reforms like demonetisation and GST," he said. Jaitley said the upgraded global growth projections should be a further help to India's own growth rate. "Now that you have the global economy also improving, and that's the mood that I've seen at the IMF Bank this time - the IMF's own projection for a world economy this year is 3.6 per cent and next years is 3.7 per cent - the global tailwinds will also give better impetus to domestic growth," said Jaitley. "I think, we should be looking forward to a much higher growth trajectory (for India) in the days to come," he said. Responding to a question on the next phase of reform, Jaitley said the government would now focus on large-scale investment in the infrastructure sector and rural area. "The government is working in that area," he said. (PTI)



President Ram Nath Kovind meeting children of Dr Kalam Sandesh Vahini Vission 2020, where travelling by bus from Rameswaram to Rashtrapati Bhawan on Sunday

FIRE AT PATLEBAS Houses of Gurung loyalists destroyed

KOLKATA/DARJEELING, OCT 15/-/A major fire broke out this morning in Gurung's village at Patlebas in the restive Darjeeling hills, destroying several houses, many of which belonged to the loyalists, police said. The police claimed that the houses were set ablaze by Gurung's supporters to wipe out evidence. The Gurung supporters, on the other hand, claimed it was the handiwork of the GJM faction loyal to Binay Tamang. Restrictions have been imposed on entry to the village, a Gurung stronghold, and police are conducting raids in the area. Gurung has been on the run since August after the West Bengal government lodged cases against him under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for his alleged

involvement in several bomb blasts in Darjeeling and adjoining areas. Additional Director General of Police Siddhanta Gupta said the state police had asked its Sikkim counterpart to intimate them about anyone entering the north-eastern state from Bengal with injuries. A West Bengal police sub-



inspector was shot dead and four policemen were injured in a gun battle between the police and Gurung's supporters near Patlebas on Friday. A few GJM supporters too received injuries in the firing. The police had gone to the area looking for Gurung, following a specific information that the GJM supremo and those loyal to him were hiding there. (PTI)

US must decide appropriately on visa policy: FM on H-1B

WASHINGTON, OCT 15/-/Asserting that Indian IT professionals coming to America on H-1B visa are not illegal economic immigrants, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has said that the US must decide appropriately while taking a decision on the issue.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations. It is the most sought after by Indian IT professionals. "Those coming from India on H-1B visas are high value professionals, who contribute immensely to the US economy. They are not illegal economic immigrants, about whom there is concern in the US. They come here legally," Jaitley said. Jaitley said he raised this issue in his meetings with US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. Indian IT professionals deserve a different treatment, said the minister who is here to attend the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. "We conveyed our concerns to the US," he said in response to a question. "These are very high quality, highly trained professionals. They've contributed immensely to the US economy. They add value to the US economy. Therefore, when the US decides its visa policy they must decide it in relation to these people appropriately," Jaitley said. Indian technology companies depend on the H-1B visas to hire tens of thousands of employees each year for their US operations. The US market accounts for about 60 per cent of the revenue of the Indian IT industry. (PTI)

China delays Railways' ambitious high speed train project

NEW DELHI, OCT 15/-/An ambitious high speed train project in south India has been delayed after China railways, that completed a feasibility study a year ago, did not respond to the ministry's communication. "The Chinese company submitted the final report in November 2016 and after that the Chinese team has suggested a face-to-face interaction. No date has been fixed from their side," said the note prepared by the Mobility Directorate. On the reason

for the delay the brief states - "lack of response" from Chinese railways. The brief also states that the feasibility study by the China Railway Eryuan Engineering Group Co Ltd (CREC) was submitted to the Railway Board in November 2016 and after that the Chinese company had sought meetings with officials of the Board. However, officials say that the Board



has been unable to get in touch with officials of CREC despite repeated communications sent to them via mails in the last six months. "We have even tried to get in touch with them through their Embassy here, but we are yet to hear from them," said an official. The ministry officials said that it was the standoff between the two countries in Bhutan's Doklam area between June 16 and August 28 this year that seems to have derailed the project. "The study began in 2014 and they submitted the report in 2016. The entire cost was borne by them. In fact they have shown so much interest in collaborating with us for other projects as well, so we think that it was the standoff that must have raised doubts," said a senior rail official. An email to the Chinese Embassy by the PTI on the issue did not elicit any response. 80 kmph to 160 kmph.

Bangladesh steps up security at India border over Rohingya fears

DHAKA, OCT 15/-/Bangladesh has tightened security along its western border with India amid concern that hundreds of Rohingya Muslim refugees could be pushed into its territory, officials said today. Patrols have been stepped up along the frontier with India's West Bengal state, where border guards say they have been ordered in recent weeks to steer Rohingya into Bangladesh. "Faruk Hakim, an area commander of the Border Guard Bangladesh, said Rohingya could be seen gathering opposite the Puthkhal frontier post, where just a narrow river divides the two countries. "We have stepped up surveillance and patrols so that no Rohingya can be pushed into our territory," Lieutenant Colonel Hakim told AFP. Hakim said Rohingya communities inside India could be trying to reunite with their families in southeast Bangladesh, where more than half a million Rohingya refugees have arrived since August from Myanmar. An estimated 536,000 refugees have crossed since August 25, fleeing violence in western Myanmar described by the United Nations as ethnic cleansing. An Indian border guard in West Bengal told AFP that patrols had previously turned over about 100 Rohingya intercepted at the frontier to local police. "But now our directions are very clear, and that is to push all Rohingya into Bangladesh," he told AFP on condition of anonymity. We are trying to accomplish our task with active local support". Bangladesh already hosts at least 800,000 Rohingya, including those who fled earlier crackdowns in Myanmar, and does not want to accept any from India. (AFP)

HC castigates CBI on theory on Hemraj's murder

ALLAHABAD, OCT 15/-/The Allahabad High Court has castigated the CBI for its theory on the murder of domestic help Hemraj in the Aarushi murder case, saying it is an "impossible hypothesis" and "purely absurd". In its 273-page verdict acquitting denicist Nupur and Rajesh Talwar in the murder of their daughter Aarushi and Hemraj, it also said the prosecution "miserably failed" to prove that the "two wars had destroyed material evidence and added that the finding recorded to the contrary by the trial court could

not be maintained. Analysing the prosecution case, a division bench of justices B K Narayana and A K Mishra refused to agree with the submission of CBI lawyer Anurag Khanna that the conduct of the

"different persons react differently in a given situation" - Justices Narayana and Mishra made these observations last week while allowing the appeals of Nupur and Rajesh Talwar against a Ghaziabad CBI court verdict sentencing their life term for the murder of 14-year-old Aarushi and Hemraj. "The prosecution theory is that the appellants had hidden the dead body of Hemraj on the terrace of their flat is patently absurd and improbable...," the court said. It said this theory contemplated an "impossible hypothesis" that the body was hidden by the Talwars

on their terrace with the intention of disposing of it on getting a suitable opportunity. The court said the theory was based on the hypothesis that the Noida Police would not be able to find the body in the terrace on May 16, 2008 when Aarushi was found dead in her room in the Talwar residence by her parents with her throat slit. Hemraj's body was found the next day. The Central Bureau of Investigation had taken over the probe into the case from the Noida Police. Coming down heavily on the prosecution, the court said on careful evaluation of the evidence of four police personnel, it



transpired that the prosecution witnesses made material improvements in their evidence tendered during the trial. Their testimonies during the trial were conspicuous by their absence in their previous statements recorded under Section 161 Cr.P.C. (by the police), it said. The witnesses were the Superintendent of Police, Mahesh Kumar Mishra, Inspector Data Ram Naunaria and Sub Inspector Bachchoo Singh, the judges said, adding that Hemraj had stated in court that Rajesh Talwar was reluctant to identify the body of 45-year-old Hemraj.