

AT A GLANCE

10% DA hike for state employees

KOLKATA: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today announced a 10 per cent hike in Dearness Allowance to state government employees that will be effective from January next year. This was today announced by chief Mamata Banerjee at a media meet at Nabanna. A notification issued by the state Finance Department later said whole time employees drawing up to Rs 80,000 salary per month would draw DA at the rate of 75 per cent with effect from January 1, 2016. There would also be an adhoc increase in the existing wages of daily wage workers under the government with effect from January 1, 2016, the notification further said.

Rahul poser to Modi on note ban

NEW DELHI: With 50 days since demonetisation, Rahul Gandhi today targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi by posing five questions including the amount of black money recovered since November 8 and the number of jobs lost due to the demonetisation decision. The Congress president took to Twitter asking the Prime Minister as to whom he had consulted before taking the decision and wondered as to why were "experts, economists and RBI not consulted".

US expels 35 Russian officials

WASHINGTON: In apparent retaliatory action against alleged Russian hacking during the US presidential election, President Barack Obama today slapped a series of sanctions against Russia and expelled 35 Russian officials. "All American officials are alarmed by Russia's actions," Obama said in a statement yesterday as he ordered a number of expulsions in response to the Russian government's alleged aggressive harassment of US officials and cyber operations targeting the US election.

PM on Aadhar-based payments

NEW DELHI: In significant push towards a less-cash economy Prime Minister Narendra Modi today announced starting a biometric payment system using Aadhar platform within two weeks even as he exhorted citizens to adopt digital currency from the new year. After cash payments and e-wallets, payments through the new system can be made by just a thumb impression after the bank account is linked with Aadhar gateway, he said at a DigiDhan Mela, an event organised to celebrate the success of digital currency push.

Mamata demands Modi's replacement : CPM, Cong ask why the delay in probe?

KOLKATA, DEC 30 /-/ Demanding that the prime minister should apologise and resign taking responsibility for his "failure" on demonetisation, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today dared the Centre to arrest all the TMC MPs, charging Modi government of pursuing "vendetta politics". "Prime Minister Narendra Modi should immediately step down taking responsibility for his failure to give relief to the people even after 50 days of demonetisation," she told a press conference at the state secretariat.

Furious over the arrest of her party MP Tapas Pal for his alleged involvement in the Rose Valley chit fund scam, the Trinamool Congress supremo said, "He (Modi) can arrest all of our MPs. I do not care. This is nothing but vendetta politics. We will continue with our protest (against demonetisation)." "I came to know that they (CBI) have arrested one of our MPs. It is only because of our protest against 'notebandi' that

Knives out in SP as father expels son
Party stares at split as Mulayam ousts Akhilesh, Ramgopal for 6 years

LUCKNOW, DEC 30 /-/ In a tough action, SP supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav today expelled his son and Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav as well as general secretary Ramgopal Yadav from the party for six years for "gross indiscipline", a decision that will lead to a political crisis in Uttar Pradesh. Making the announcement at a press conference here, Mulayam said the new Chief Minister will be chosen by the Samajwadi Party.

Flanked by brother Shivalp Yadav, who has been at loggerheads with the chief minister, Mulayam had taken the action against Akhilesh and Ramgopal to save the party which he had built through hard efforts. "We have to save the party. The party convene first. That is why we are expelling both Akhilesh and Ramgopal," Mulayam said. He explained that the decision was taken after Ramgopal, in his capacity as general secretary, called an emergency meeting of the party on January 1 and Akhilesh "supported" it. Ramgopal called the meeting after a show cause notice was issued to him and Akhilesh by Mulayam for releasing a list of candidates, parallel to the one issued officially by Mulayam. "How can he (Akhilesh) release the list when the party has declared its candidates?" Both Akhilesh and Ramgopal want to finish the party. I will not let it happen. I have built this party through hard work," Mulayam said.

"I had made Akhilesh the Chief Minister with much fanfare," he added. With regard to the emergency meeting called by Ramgopal on Sunday, Mulayam said only the party president has the power to convene such a meeting. "The party cannot run on Akhilesh's whims," Mulayam said. He said Ramgopal has not only indulged in indiscipline but is causing a big harm to the party. "As of now we have expelled him, but we will take further action against him," he party chief asserted. Pouring scorn on Ramgopal, Mulayam said he has "ruined" the finishing career of Akhilesh who "does not understand". Earlier, with SP staring at a possible split due to open rebellion by Akhilesh Yadav, party supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav has called a meeting tomorrow of all those allotted tickets by him even as the Chief Minister's camp remained adamant on contesting against the official candidates of the party. Hectic attempts were said to be underway today by Mulayam to avert a split after the crisis reached a flash point late last night when Akhilesh "circulated" his own list of 235 candidates for the upcoming Assembly elections, parallel to the party's official list of 393 nominees. Mulayam has convened a meeting here tomorrow of the 393 candidates who have been allotted tickets by him. Uttar Pradesh Assembly has 403 seats. Party insiders see the meeting with immense significance as the SP chief was



who have been allotted tickets by him. Uttar Pradesh Assembly has 403 seats. Party insiders see the meeting with immense significance as the SP chief was likely gauge the sentiments of the candidates and conduct a fresh review of the list amid fears that the battle for control in SP left the party cadres divided and highly confused at grassroots level. This morning, Shivalp Yadav, the warring uncle of Akhilesh, met his brother Mulayam for nearly an hour but it was not immediately known what transpired at the meeting. Shivpal did not answer questions of reporters waiting outside. Mulayam's residence. (PTI)



The site after a coal mine collapsed near Lalmatia, Godda, about 400 kms northeast of Ranchi district in Jharkhand

Mine caves in at Lalmatia colliery in J'khand; 10 miners killed

GODDA (JHARKHAND), DEC 30 /-/ Ten miners were killed and some others feared trapped following cave-in at Lalmatia open cast coal mine at Rajmahal area of Eastern Coalfields Ltd (ECL) on Thursday night. "CMD, ECL, has reported that a total of nine bodies of workers have been recovered from the accident site so far," a coal ministry statement said on Friday, adding two injured persons were undergoing treatment.

R R Mishra, officiating CMD of ECL, a Coal India arm, said that the mishap occurred at around 7.30 PM last night when excavators were working there following which rescue operations were launched immediately. Director General of Mines Safety and senior officials were there to supervise the rescue operation, Mishra said. The statement said all 10 equipments excavators and dump trucks had been recovered. An inquiry has been ordered by the Director General of Mines Safety and a high-level committee of experts has been constituted by Coal India to investigate the causes of the accident. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Coal Minister Piyush Goyal, Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das and other leaders expressed grief over the loss of lives. Das said an assistance of Rs two lakh will be given to the families of the miners who died in the accident while ECL also announced an ex-gratia compensation of Rs five lakh each to these families, in addition to the amount to be paid under the Workmen's Compensation Act. The PM said Jharkhand Government and Coal Minister Piyush Goyal were "working to restore normalcy". The National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) was engaged for rescue & relief operations. "Saddened by the loss of lives at a mine in Jharkhand,

TMC MP Tapas pal in CBI net; Political vendetta, cries CM
Law caught up with Pal, Says BJP; junks CM's charge

KOLKATA, DEC 30 /-/ TMC MP Tapas Pal was today arrested by CBI for his alleged involvement in Rose Valley Chit Fund scam, drawing angry condemnation from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who called it "political vendetta" by the Centre over the party's opposition to demonetisation. BJP on its part said that finally law has caught up with Pal and that CBI is following the process of law even as it asked Banerjee not to give a political twist by questioning the timing and calling it political vendetta. "We have arrested Tapas Pal for his alleged involvement in the Rose Valley Chit Fund scam. We had placed a few questions before him and he could not give any proper reply over the amount of money he had taken and on what basis," a senior CBI official said. "Pal was interrogated for four hours. As he failed to give proper reply to any of the questions on his appointment as director to one of the Rose Valley companies or his involvement in the firm investing in bengali film industry, the CBI decided to arrest him," the official said. The probe agency is likely to take the Lok Sabha MP from West Bengal to Bhubaneswar for further questioning. CBI had issued summons to Pal on December 27 in connection with the alleged scam, which is one of the cases of the chit fund scams being probed by the investigating agency. He was asked to appear before the agency at its office in Salt Lake today. "They (Centre) can arrest all of us. This is nothing but vendetta politics," Mamata said reacting to Pal's arrest. Strongly reacting to the arrest, Trinamool Congress (TMC) said BJP was resorting to "political atrocities" against those opposed to demonetisation. "So now political atrocities

Rose Valley ponzy scam

against those opposed to Note Bandi and with the movement. We will fight it out," TMC national spokesperson Derek O'Brien said claiming that the party and its leaders were being targeted by BJP-led NDA government at the Centre for protesting against note ban. "What about BJP MP and Union Minister who performed for Rose Valley and was associated with them? Are you arresting him tonight or tomorrow?" asked O'Brien without naming anyone in a series of tweet messages following Pal's arrest by CBI this afternoon. "Many film stars, directors, sports persons are brand ambassadors. So what next? Those from BJP (sic) who are brand ambassadors will also be? Right?", O'Brien, who is TMC's leader in Rajya Sabha, said. Pal's arrest incidentally comes on the 60th day of demonetisation of high value currency notes. "Finally, law has caught up with TMC MP Tapas Pal. CBI is following the process of law and Mamata ji should not give a political twist by questioning timing and calling it political vendetta. We have seen in past that she tried to web a conspiracy theory of plane crash and army coup but nobody bought them," BJP National Secretary Siddharth Nath Singh said. Singh, who is also the party's in-charge for the state, said the TMC chief should know that "sins" of her rule are being exposed by the law now. "Why your (TMC) leaders are involved in all chit fund scams? Sins of her misrule are being challenged by the law of land and she must accept arrest of Tapas Pal," he said in Delhi. Earlier, Strongly reacting to the arrest of the Lok Sabha MP Tapas Pal by CBI for his alleged involvement in the Rose Valley Chit Fund Scam, Trinamool Congress today said BJP was resorting to



Tapas Pal at CGO complex

"political atrocities" against those opposed to demonetisation. "So now political atrocities against those opposed to Note Bandi and with the movement. We will fight it out," TMC national spokesperson Derek O'Brien said claiming that the party and its leaders were being targeted by BJP-led NDA government at the Centre for protesting against demonetisation. "What about BJP MP and Union Minister who performed for Rose Valley and was associated with them? Are you arresting him tonight or tomorrow?" asked O'Brien without naming anyone in a series of tweet messages following Pal's arrest by CBI this afternoon. "Many film stars, directors, sports persons are brand ambassadors. So what next? (PTI)



Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressing a press conference at Nabanna in Kolkata on Friday.

Mamata blames riot in Dhulagarh, denies social media

KOLKATA, DEC 30 /-/ Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today denied any incident of rioting at Dhulagarh in Howrah district and alleged that "wrong information" was being given on social media. "In the last 15 days, social media is running wrong information on an incident which did not take place at all," Banerjee said at a programme here, in an apparent reference to reports of violence in Dhulagarh, which is barely 20 km from the state secretariat. "In order to break a news one must not act irresponsibly. If something has really happened then you have every right to report but I think a field survey must be conducted," she stated. Her remarks came even as a senior government official had said yesterday that strict actions were taken against those involved in the Dhulagarh violence and the process of giving compensation to the affected had started. The state government, Banerjee said today, is the first to help a family when their home is damaged or they are affected. "If there is an accident, we immediately take steps to help the family... We do it on humanitarian grounds but we do not do any publicity." It was learnt from sources that the state government was paying compensation of around Rs 35,000 to families whose houses were damaged in the incident. District police said inhabitants are wary of returning to their homes at Dhulagarh.

actors are brand ambassadors of companies. I do not want to show disrespect to anyone, but Amitabh Bachchan too is the brand ambassador of Gujarat and Shah Rukh Khan is the brand ambassador of Bengal," she said. Banerjee referred to Sahara group, which too is under the lens, unwondered if the central agencies were "sleeping" at that point of time. Continuing her tirade against Modi, the chief minister said either someone else in the BJP should take over as the prime minister or a "national government" (comprising all the parties) should govern the country till the next general election. "The country has never witnessed such a situation even during the British rule or Emergency," she added. Meanwhile the Congress said more will skeletons will tumble out of the cupboard now if investigation was done properly. "There will be more arrests when the investigation progresses," Mannan said.