'WILL GIVE OPINION ONLY IF BCCI ASKS FOR IT'

'CONG WILL NOT RECONSIDER GST LAUNCH BOYCOTT'

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Page-12

Page-7

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Oppn unrelenting, Centre waits to hit GST gong

■ 'Half-baked' launch a 'self-promotional spectacle': Rahul ■ 'Inspector Raj' is back: Mamata

NEW DELHI, JUNE 30 /--/ Union minister M Venkaiah Naidu today appealed to the Opposition Congress to join the midnight launch event of landmark tax reform GST and not to spoil the aura of this solemn occasion for "silly reasons". Naidu claimed that the Congress is objecting to the launch at the Central Hall of Parliament as it has not been able to accept that Narendra Modi has been elected as Prime Minister of India. He, however, asked the Congress to reconsider its decision to boycott the ceremony. "This is a political decision taken by the Congress party and its friends for political reason. They alone will be able to explain the reason," the Union minister said at an Aaj Tak Conclave on GST when asked about the Congress boycott.

The BJP leader said it looks "really silly and childish" on the part of the Congress to boycott as it has been part of the GST process over the years. "What is there to object... They are objecting to function of the day," he said, while appealing to opposition parties, particularly the Congress, to join this combined effort. "Its a culmination of effort made by all of us. Let us join launching of this programme. It is not a celebration. It is an introduction of revolutionary taxation transformation. Please join the same," he said. "It is a solemn occasion. We will have great revolutionary taxation transformation. That was a national integration and this is economic integration. This is the launching of the function, that's all," Naidu added. "Their question is why mid-night. This government works 24X7," he said, adding that this government does not believe in event management and the Congress was doing this for the last 50 years. Earlier today, Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi today dubbed the GST implementation as a "tamasha" (gimmick) and said the tax reform measure was being rushed through in a "half-baked" manner as a "self-promotional spectacle". Rahul, who is currently abroad on a holiday hit out at the government, accusing it of being "insensitive". "A reform that holds great potential is being rushed through in a half-baked way with a self-promotional spectacle #GSTTamasha (sic)," he said on Twitter. The Congress leader said India deserved a GST roll-out that did not put crores of its ordinary citizens, small businesses and traders through tremendous pain and anxiety. Slamming the Modi government over the GST roll out at midnight tonight, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee today said it would bring back the dreaded "Inspector Raj".

In a scathing attack on the Centre, Mamata said the GST rules would lead to harassment of small traders and businesses. "At the stroke of midnight on 14th August, 1947, India won her freedom. Now, at the midnight of 30th June, 2017, freedom and democracy stand to face grave danger," she said in a Facebook post. Mamata, a strong critic of BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, said: "I am shocked to find that the GST rules contain a rather draconian arrest clause which can lead to major harassment of businesses, particularly the small and medium, with some sections even being non-bailable too". "The mockery of Inspector Raj is back," she said on the social networking site.

Mixed reaction to trade bandh in state

KOLKATA, JUNE 30 /--/ A trade bandh call by Bhartiya Udyog Vyapar Mandal (BUVM) against the Goods and Services Tax (GST) roll out from July 1 has evoked mixed reaction. Impact was visible in shops of Burrabazar, Asia's biggest wholesale market and the city's prominent retail hub New Market, as they kept their shutters down. There were reports of many retail stores remaining closed in various parts of the city and state. "The bandh is in protest against the procedures and provisions of GST, which will be effective from July 1," an official of the Federation of West Bengal Trade Associations said. He said response on the bandh was mixed in the districts. General secretary of Forum of Traders Organisation of Paschimbanga (FTOP) Rabindranath Koley said out of 46 KMC markets in the city, only four remained closed. KMC markets in south Kolkata did not witness any impact of the bandh. We had appealed shop keepers not to participate in shutdown, Koley said. Partial response to the bandh was observed in Malda, Dinajpur, Krishnagar, Siliguri and Nadia. Some traders were against GST, while some demanded simplification of laws, rules, penal provisions and reduction of compliance burden. Chamber of Textile Trade and Industry (COTTI) president Arun Bhuwalka said they are observing a bandh today. COTTI has already observed a three-day strike till June 29 against GST imposition.

President Pranab Mukherjee delivering the speech at the function at Rabindra Sadan

State asks for 10 companies of CRPF for Darjeeling

EOI CORRESPONDENT

Kolkata, June 30 /--/ As the indefinite shutdown of the Hills called by the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) entered its 16th day today, the state government today demanded 10 companies of CRPF from the central government to control the situation in Darjeeling.

This was today announced by DGP state police Surajit Purokayastha at a media conference at Nabanna. The DGP who also announced that DG Home Guard Raj Kanojia was being sent to the hills to monitor the situation and take necessary measures to control the situation also said that the state government would take stern action against those who indulge into criminal activities like violence, arson and loot. ``We will not tolerate anything that creates disturbance in the hills," the DGP said. The top police official also said that the state government would award Rs 2.5 lakh to the next of kin of Aniket Chhetri, the truck driver who died because of violence in Darjeeling.

Meanwhile the DGP also used the occasion to announce the setting up of a new commissionerate for Chandarnagar the headquarters of which will be set up at Chinsurih. He also said that while Pijush Pandey will be the first Commissioner, Sukesh Jain, IPS officer of 2005 batch will be SP Hooghly (rural). The West Bengal government today told the Calcutta High Court that it urgently needed additional Central Armed Police Force to tackle disturbances in the hills. "We had made a requisition for 30 companies of CAPF, but have got only 11 companies from the Centre," state Advocate General Kishore Dutta told a division bench of acting Chief Justice Nishita Mhatre and Justice T Chakraborty. "We urgently need at least 15 to 20 companies (an addition of four to nine companies to the present deployment) in Darjeeling and Kalimpong," Dutta told the bench.

AT A GLANCE

KKVenugopal to be new AG

NEW DELHI: Senior advocate K K Venugopal's name has been cleared for appointment as the Attorney General for India, following the decision of Mukul Rohatgi to step down as the top law officer. A decision to appoint the 86-year-old veteran lawyer as the successor of Rohatgi was discussed before the departure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a visit to the US, Netherlands and Portugal. Sources said that "Venugopal had a meeting with Modi before his departure for a three-nation tour".

Moloy De new chief secy, Atri to take over home

Kolkata: State home secretary Moloy De, a 1985 batch IAS officer today took over as chief secretary in place of Basudev Banerjee who retired. De has been replaced by Atri Bhattacharya, a 1987 batch IAS officer who has been the principal secretary of the department of Information and culture. In another reshuffle the state government has recruited Anil Verma as the new health secretary while R S Shukla, the present incumbent, has become the new higher education secretary.

Prez roots for tolerance, saying it helps society move forward

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JUNE 30 /--/ Probably on his last visit to Kolkata before he demits office, President Pranab Mukherjee today stressed the importance of tolerance in society saying in a democracy it is one virtue that enriches the society and helps in its progress. The President made this comment while delivering his speech at the inaugural ceremony of the bi-centenary celebrations of the publication of Bengali newspapers and magazines organised by Press Club, Kolkata at Rabindra Sadan in Kolkata. ``In a democracy there is a variety of opinions and views and it is important to put importance on all of them. That is a mark of improvement of the society. In fact the more a society accommodates free thinking and variety of opinions, the more it enriches itself," the President said. His words gain importance in a situation when cow vigilantes are creating mayhem across the country and there are allegations of attempts of extreme views being imposed on others who do not subscribe to them. Mukherjee, while recounting the progress of newspapers, said it was social media now which had made a tremendous impact in the society, and that internet had become the greatest discovery of man in recent times. ``First it was print media and then it has progressed to electronic media and now it is the age of social media which is making a tremendous impact in the society. It has another side too but I don't want to go into it. The reality is social media has now become all-pervading," Mukherjee said. The President might have kept in his mind the use of widespread use of twitters, blogs and facebook by all politicians for spreading their messages and responses to developments. He also said that politics and the press have an intertwined relation and that neither of the two can live without the other. ``Politicians and media people are like water and fish. At different times various political leaders have used the media for spreading their messages. And this tradition is still going on," the President said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting the Textiles India 2017 Exhibition in Gandhinagar on Friday.

State BJP to engage its traders cell to counter CM's charge

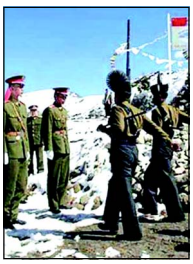
KOLKATA, JUNE 30 /--/The West Bengal wing of BJP has decided to engage members of their traders cell and other frontal organizations to raise awareness-cum-training programme on Goods and Services Tax (GST)among small and medium traders of the state. The decision comes in the backdrop of BJP facing flak from Opposition especially Congress and Trinamool Congress over the roll out of GST from July 1. "There is lot of confusion among traders regarding what will be the actual rate of tax, how much will be the difference from the previous tax slabs. "So we have decided that we will organise small workshops in association with various traders organisation to raise awareness about GST and benefits this system will bring for the traders," a senior state BJP leader said. The state BJP leadership feels that such workshops will also be utilised to counter chief minister Mamata Banerjee's charge regarding GST. "Resource persons would enlighten the participants about the GST and also give answers to their queries. Apart from this we will also tell the traders not to pay heed to what TMC and Congress are saying. They are spreading canards just like they did during demonetisation," the BJP leader said.

China ready for 'meaningful dialogue' with India on condition of troop withdrawal

Kailash Mansarovar yatra through Nathu La cancelled

BEIJING, JUNE 30 /--/ China today said the diplomatic channels with India are "unimpeded" for talks over the stand-off in the Sikkim sector but for any "meaningful dialogue" the Indian troops must withdraw from the Doklam area over which Beijing has "indisputable sovereignty". "The diplomatic channels for the communication between Chinese and Indian sides remained unimpeded," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang told media briefing here.

Lu said the Indian troops "trespassed" the recognised delineated boundary between China and India on June 18. This is the first time China came out the with precise date about Indian troops entering the disputed Doklam area (referred by China as Donglong) near Sikkim allegedly to stop Chinese troops from constructing a road. "So the most pressing issue should be the withdrawal of troops into the Indian territory. So it is the pre-condition for any meaningful dialogue," he said when asked whether any talks were going on between the two countries over the issue. Lu said in additions to the photographs of alleged Indian "incursion" into Donglong area, the Chinese foreign ministry will also upload a map on its website to provide a "better understanding of the reality". The foreign ministry spokesperson also refuted Bhutan's allegation that Chinese troops' attempts to build the road violated the 1988 and 1999 agreements to maintain peace and tranquilly. He said China has "indisputable sovereignty over the Donklam area." He claimed that the Doklam area was under Chinese administration from emperor Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty of China established in 1636. Meanwhile, the Kailash Mansarovar yatra through Nathu La in Sikkim has been cancelled, an official said today. The decision comes in the wake of a face-off between Indian and Chinese troops over a disputed area along the Sino-Indian border. The move will come as a disappointment to the 400 devotees who were hoping to visit the high altitude area, believed to be the abode of Lord Shiva, following an arduous trek along the Nathu La route. Though the yatra through Nathu La in Sikkim will not take place this year, pilgrims travelling through the Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand will continue as scheduled, the government official said. Eight batches, each comprising around 50 pilgrims, were scheduled to have taken the Nathu La route to Mansarovar in Tibet. The first batch was to have crossed over to China through Nathu La on June 20 and the last batch on July 31. It would have taken a batch 21 days to complete the pilgrimage. China had issued visas for first two batches and applications for the other pilgrims were put on hold because of the tension along the border.



India expresses concern over road construction in Doklam by China

NEW DELHI, JUNE 30 /--/ The Union government today expressed deep concern over China constructing a road in the disputed Doklam area near Sikkim, and said it had conveyed to Beijing that such an action would represent a significant change of status quo with "serious" security implications for India. India's reaction follows a face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in the area, prompting Beijing to take a tough stance and demand withdrawal of Indian troops from the Sikkim sector as a precondition for "meaningful dialogue" to resolve the situation. Beijing had also accused India of being a "third-party" to the China-Bhutan dispute. Reacting to China's contention, the ministry of external affairs (MEA) said it was essential that all parties concerned display utmost restraint and abide by their respective bilateral understandings not to change the status quo unilaterally. It was also important that the consensus reached between India and China through the Special Representatives process was scrupulously respected by both sides, the ministry added.

"India is deeply concerned at the recent Chinese actions and has conveyed to the Chinese government that such construction would represent a significant change of status quo with serious security implications for India," MEA asserted in a press release. The ministry also narrated the sequence of events since June 16 when a People's Liberation Army (PLA) construction party entered the Doklam area and attempted to construct a road.