



# THE ECHO OF INDIA



**L B Rai elected 4th time chairman of Mirik Municipality**  
SILIGURI, MAY 29 /-/- Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) former chief Subash Ghoshing's regent L B Rai who remained three times chairman of Mirik Municipality during Ghoshing's regime was once again elected for the same post today. Rai became the first from Mirik to become fourth time chairman of the municipality after Trinamool Congress won six out of nine seats in the recently concluded election. Rai along with other five winning candidates took oath on Monday in the presence of state sports and youth development minister Arup Biswas and state tourism minister Gautam Deb. This was the historic event for Trinamool Congress as the municipality was dominated earlier by either GNLF or GJM. (EOIC)

**Speaker urges TMC members to question state govt**  
KOLKATA, MAY 29 /-/- West Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee today urged Trinamool Congress (TMC) members to not only praise the government, but also question it during an Assembly session for effective functioning of the government. In his thanksgiving speech at the concluding day of the session, Banerjee said that he was particularly happy at the TMC members questioning ministers and making them uncomfortable. The Speaker said that this was required for the effective functioning of

government and added that their job is not just praising the government. As the Opposition Left Front and the Congress MLAs boycott the House since morning today, Banerjee said it was their duty to stay present in the Assembly and have been sent as people's representatives. Banerjee said that the Opposition has a role to play in preserving the democratic character of the Assembly and staying outside the House was not desired, so they should return. The Speaker also said that the number of questions raised by the Opposition should increase.



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Chief minister Mamata Banerjee displaying the logo of West Bengal at a press conference at Nabanna-Shyamal Maitra

## State opposes Centre's move to ban cattle sale for slaughter, to move SC

**SABYASACHI BANDOPADHYAY**  
KOLKATA, MAY 29 /-/- The West Bengal government today joined those of Kerala and Karnataka to oppose the central government's move to ban sale of cattle for the purpose of slaughter as it said it would move the Supreme Court against the ban. The decision was conveyed by chief minister Mamata Banerjee who said it was another instance of the Centre's blatant encroachment in the powers of the state. On May 23 the Union environment ministry had notified the stringent 'Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Regulation of Livestock Markets) Rules, 2017' under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. Through this notification the Environment Ministry banned the sale of cattle in cattle markets for the purpose of slaughter. Both

and unethical. We will challenge it in the constitution bench (of the Supreme Court). We are consulting our advocate general and other legal experts." Mamata said at a media conference at Nabanna. Officials of the department of animal resource development (ARD) of the state government however said, "We are looking at all papers to find out how to get out of the situation." "We are studying the notification and other constitutional provisions regarding this. It's a central government notification and before defying it we will have to look at all aspects of it," a senior official of the state government told Echo of India. She also criticized cow vigilantes saying they were creating mayhem in the name of protecting cows. "Even those who are carrying cows for milk are not spared. This is unacceptable," the chief minister said, adding all secular political parties should unite in this regard. Mamata also referred to the way red beacons from vehicles were ordered to be removed by the central government. "They sent an order overnight. It is arbitrary. We need badges for travelling along highways. We have written to the Central government for approval," the chief minister said. Meanwhile the state BJP criticized Mamata for allegedly sticking to the path of minority appeasement. "The chief minister follows the instructions of fundamentalists. Let her go to the court. It will be decided there," Rahul Sinha, BJP general secretary, told Echo of India.

## Mamata designs logo for state

West Bengal will now have a logo which will be used in all official stationery and other requisite places, chief minister Mamata Banerjee today said at a media conference at Nabanna. The logo which has been designed by Mamata herself has been approved by a committee set up by the government. She also said that the next cabinet meeting of the state government would be held at Darjeeling. "But we will ensure that no tourist is disturbed for the meeting," Mamata said.

Asked to comment on her recent meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the PCJ chief said: "I don't agree with what she told the media after coming out of the meeting. Mamata claimed that she had urged the Prime Minister to release funds for the state's development. But if she is so serious about development, she shouldn't have skipped the NITI Aayog meeting. She also ignored the Inter State Council meeting and the Srinagar meeting of the GST Council. On the Presidential election and

## Elected TMC candidates fail to attend swearing-in ceremony

**EOI CORRESPONDENT**  
DARJEELING, MAY 29 /-/- For the TMC, Mirik has become the focal point because evident today with the party's elected candidates from Darjeeling and Kurseong failing to turn up for the oath taking ceremony in the respective civic body today. All the candidates were instead asked to attend the swearing-in at Mirik where senior TMC ministers were present. The TMC created history by being the first mainstream political party to form the board in Mirik. Out of the nine wards, the TMC won six seats while the Gorkha Jannukti Morcha only got three. In Darjeeling the TMC managed to win only from ward 31, while in Kurseong the party bagged three seats (wards 11, 12 and 15). However TMC leaders from the hills chose to down-play the obvious absence of its winning candidates in the swearing-in ceremony in the two civic bodies. "It was a conscious effort on our part to skip the oath taking ceremony in Darjeeling and Kurseong. All our party candidates were asked to attend the ceremony in Mirik municipality," said N.B. Khawas, the hills TMC working president when asked for his view. The TMC leader reasoned that elected candidates could take oath on other days in presence of the sub-divisional officer. "It is just a matter of receiving a certificate which can be done in the SDO office. There is nothing much to be read (on the absence)," Khawas said. Darjeeling SDO, Avik Chatterjee, too, responded with similar sentiments. "There is provision in the Municipality act for elected candidates to take oath and receive certificates on other days in the SDO office. But this can be done only within sixty days. In fact, today even a GJM candidate from ward 13 did not attend the oath taking ceremony," he said. In Mirik, state ministers Aroop Biswas (PWD) and Gautam Deb (tourism) were present for the oath taking ceremony which was held in the premises of the Mirik municipality. Soon after, the TMC ministers also participated in a victory rally organized by local TMC leaders. Biswas said chief minister Mamata Banerjee would visit Mirik to announce development projects. "We will keep the promises that we made before the election. Our chief minister will be coming to Mirik to announce development projects," the PWD minister said. The three elected GJM candidates, escorted by slogan shouting supporters attended the oath taking ceremony. Pradhan was also the municipal-ity chairman and MLA under the GNLF before he switched over to GJM. "My immediate priority will be to make Darjeeling better and beautiful. I will approach the state government and also the hill council body to implement new projects and also to upgrade Darjeeling municipality into a corporation," he said. In the Kurseong municipality which is also formed by the GJM party, elected candidates Krishna Limbu and Brigen Gurung were made the chairman and vice chairman, respectively. The swearing-in ceremony for the Kalimpong municipality which is formed by the GJM will take place on Wednesday, government sources said.

## Barter system still prevails at Lohagarh along Indo-Nepal border



**PRASHANT ACHARYA**  
LOHAGARH (INDO-NEPAL BORDER), MAY 29 /-/- The barter system which has remained only in the history books school syllabus is still in trend at Lohagarh under Mirik block and along Indo-Nepal border among the people of Jhapa district of Nepal and Darjeeling district. Though the money has dominated the barter market but for the people residing along the borders of two nation exchange of goods for goods is still viable. There is no transaction of cash in barter system people come up with their home made produce and exchange it for the need. The people of Baundanga, Mechidjanga, Patapur, Chirwa, Firing and other parts of eastern Nepal enter Lohagarh, Chenga, Panighatta and Naxalbari of Darjeeling district, that falls under Mirik block, with food medicinal plants and other home made products to exchange them for necessary items. Mankumar Sharma, 95 years old resident of Lohagarh said that the trend has carried on since long back when she was a child. People from Nepal crossed the Mechi River with bas and baskets full of green vegetables, fruits, brooms, dairy products and other organic foods to exchange with kerosene oil, salt, flour (Atta), candle, tea and other necessary items that are unavailable in their areas. Ramesh Gurung of Patapur, East Nepal visits Lohagarh every Sunday with green vegetables, curd, ghee and hen's eggs. He visits some houses that have faith on business and then exchange it with kerosene oil, tea and flour. He said: "I am a poor farmer and there is a crisis of kerosene oil in our place because of which we often have to spend nights in utter darkness. The Nepal government has failed to provide cent percent electrification in the hills." Uma Deuja from Baundanga had also come to Lohagarh with a bundle of brooms which is grown at her field to exchange with any item which is in crisis at Nepal. She said, "Products like kerosene oil, salt, sugar, and many other is the main crisis in our place." Raj Basu, convener of Association for Conservation of Tourism (ACT) said, "We should preserve the trend as it not only remains in the history of the world and simultaneously boost tourism as large number of foreign and domestic tourists will visit the place on historical aspect."

## NDA govt, TMC regime making 'baseless' claims on their success : Adhir

State Cong to strengthen district committees before next year's panchayat polls

**DEBANJAN MUKHERJEE**  
KOLKATA, MAY 29 /-/- West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president Adhir Chowdhury today dubbed the NDA government at the Centre and the Trinamool Congress regime in the state as two sides of a coin. Addressing newsmen here, Chowdhury said: "We have seen very recently that the NDA government is celebrating the completion of its third year in the office. Similarly the Trinamool government here is also celebrating completion of its first year of its second term in power. Both the governments are beating their drums loudly but their repeated claims of success do not carry conviction, the state sound hollow. The state government has failed to promote industry and generate employment. The farmers are going through their worst time. This holds true for also the NDA government at the Centre". Attacking the state government over the recent 'fake doctor' issue, the state sound chief said: "We don't get to know about recruitment of genuine doc-



West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee president Adhir Chowdhury at a press conference at Bidhan Bhaban—EOI Photo

Mamata Banerjee's meeting with Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Chowdhury said: "Not only Mamata but top leaders of so many other Opposition parties had attended that meeting, such meeting took place during the note ban period also. But that can't justify inference to the effect

that an understanding between the TMC and the Congress on a national issue prevents the PCC from protesting misrule of the state government". He informed that the high command would decide on the sixth candidate from the state for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections and added that he has not suggested any name for the vacancy that would occur. Chowdhury also informed that the state Congress would organise a protest rally in front of Shahid Minar on July 12 where issues, such as, deterioration in law and order situation, rampant corruption, and the rise of FCIN would be highlighted. "Congress will keep fighting on its own strength. I had a meeting with senior leaders today and when it has been decided to set up district-level committees before next year's panchayat polls and leadership change, where necessary, would be effected. Chowdhury said that the Congress party does not support the way party leaders in Kerala have slaughtered cow in to protest the Centre's recent imposition of ban on sale of cattle in markets for slaughter.

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