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'99% OF BANNED 1000, 500 RUPEE NOTES RETURNED'

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Hill parties divided on continuing shutdown

DARJEELING, AUG 30 /--/ Sharp differences have emerged among various hills parties and the GJM on whether to continue the shutdown in the hills which entered its 77th day today over the demand for a separate Gorkhaland state.

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee held talks with political parties of the Darjeeling hills at the state secretariat in Kolkata on Tuesday and requested them to withdraw the indefinite shutdown. But the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, which is spearheading the shutdown, had said a decision would be taken at the party's central committee meeting after discussion in the Gorkhaland Movement Coordination Committee (GMCC).

On Tuesday night, GJM supremo Bimal Gurung had said in an audio message that there is no question of withdrawing the shutdown until and unless talks begin on the issue of a separate state. "There is no question of calling off the shutdown until and unless the state government begins dialogue on the one point agenda of Gorkhaland. So many people have died. We have some duties and responsibilities towards the people of Darjeeling," Gurung had said. "If the state did not agree to discuss the issue of Gorkhaland, then the hill parties should have walked out. We will inform about our stand after discussing the matter in our central committee," he had said. A senior member of GMCC told news agency PTI today on condition of anonymity that members of GMCC are divided on whether to withdraw the shutdown as many hill parties feel that the two- and-half-month-long shutdown has not borne any fruit. "What use is the shutdown when we have achieved nothing in these 77 days of it? This weapon (of shutdown) is not working as it has been used on so many occasions", he said. The GJM took out rallies in various parts of the hills during the day demanding restoration of Internet services, which remain suspended in the hills since June 18 and an immediate withdrawal of police forces from Darjeeling. Some political party activists dressed in traditional Nepali attire also took out rallies and raised slogans in support of Gorkhaland. GJM activists and NGOs were seen distributing foods among the local people like other days as food supply has been severely hit by the prolonged shutdown.

Oppn attacks RBI, Centre after report on return of demonetised notes

India can't forgive Modi govt for 'anti-national' act: CPM

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ Former Union finance minister P Chidambaram today used Reserve Bank of India figures to lash out at it, saying one per cent of the demonetised notes not coming back to the apex bank was a "shame on RBI". Chidambaram also questioned the Narendra Modi government whether its demonetisation decision was designed to convert black money into white. The Congress said government utterly failed and 104 innocent lives were lost during the exercise and demanded an apology from the prime minister. "99% notes legally exchanged! Was demonetisation a scheme designed to convert black money into white," the former finance minister said on Twitter. He also said that the economists behind the demonetisation move "deserve Nobel prize" as the RBI gained Rs 16,000 crore, but lost Rs 21,000 crore in printing new notes. "Rs 16000 cr out of demonetised notes of Rs 1544,000 cr did not come back to RBI. That is 1%. Shame on RBI, which 'recommended' demonetisation. "RBI 'gained' Rs 16000 crore, but 'lost' Rs 21000 crore in printing new notes! The economists deserve Nobel Prize," he said in a series of tweets. All but 1.4 per cent of the old Rs 1,000 notes have come back into the banking system post demonetisation, the RBI said in its annual report for 2016-17. Out of 632.6 crore pieces of Rs 1,000 currency notes in circulation, 8.9 crore have not been returned post the note ban last November, it said. The Union government had on November 8, banned old Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in an attempt to weed out black money in the country. The old notes were allowed to be deposited in banks, with unusual deposits coming under income tax scrutiny. Congress in-charge of communication department Randeep Surjewala said demonetisation is nothing but a "disaster" in which 104 innocent people were killed while 'corrupt' made 'windfall gains'. Surjewala also said that the demonetisation scam not only dented institutional sanctity of the RBI, but also credibility of India abroad and demanded an apology from the prime minister. "Utterly failed #Demonetisation is nothing but a disaster in which 104 innocent people were killed while 'Corrupt' made 'Windfall Gains'. "Demonetisation Scam,not only dented institutional sanctity of RBI,but also credibility of India abroad.PM should apologise to the nation," he said in a series of tweets. He also said: "Rewind: Modiji's obfuscation exposed once again. On Ind. Day, PM claimed to have unearthed Rs 3 Lakh crore black money post demonetisation." The CPM today launched a stinging attack on the Centre over demonetisation, saying India can "never forgive" the Modi government for the "anti-national act", which allegedly hit the country's economy. CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury said this after the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) annual report for 2016-17 today revealed that all but 1.4 per cent of the scrapped Rs 1,000 notes have returned to the banking system. Taking to Twitter, Yechury sought to know the aim of the move, implementation of which allegedly saw 100 deaths even as the poor "suffered the most" because of it. He also reiterated that demonetisation's stated objectives of combating corruption, black money, counterfeit currency and terrorism have all "fallen flat". "99.9% of the notes back in the banking system. 100s died in queues. The poor suffered the most. All this for what? "Lives & livelihoods lost, the Economy got a shock, workers lost their jobs. India can never forgive Modi govt for this anti-national act," Yechury tweeted.

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—P Chidambaram

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—Sitaram Yechury

AT A GLANCE

1 arrested for blast outside Kalimpong PS

DARJEELING, AUG 30 /--/ One person was arrested today for his alleged involvement in the August 19 bomb blast outside the Kalimpong police station killing a civic volunteer and injuring two others. "We have arrested one person from Kalimpong today in the early morning. He was involved in the blast outside Kalimpong police station," a senior police official said. GJM chief Bimal Gurung and a few other GJM leaders were booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) following the grenade blast. An indefinite shutdown is on in the hills since June 15 over the demand of a separate state of Gorkhaland.

290 children died at BRD Hospital

GORAKHPUR: A total of 290 children have died in the Baba Raghav Das Medical College here in the month of August, of whom 213 died in the neo-natal ICU and 77 in the encephalitis ward, principal P K Singh said. There have been 1,250 deaths since January this year at the hospital, especially in encephalitis, infant and children's wards, he said. Giving a breakup of the causalities at the medical college, Singh said 37 children died on August 27 and 28, of which 26 died in the neo-natal ICU (NICU) and 11 in encephalitis ward.

A man balances himself as he walks on a wall at a water-logged neighbourhood in Mumbai ——Reuters

SC to hear a batch of pleas on Aadhaar matter in Nov

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ The Supreme Court today said it would hear a batch of petitions on Aadhaar-related matters in November after the Centre informed that it will extend till December 31 the deadline to furnish Aaadhar to avail benefits of social welfare schemes. A bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra said there was no urgency to hear the matter after Attorney General K K Venugopal told the bench that the Centre will extend the September 30th deadline. Senior advocate Shyam Divan, representing various petitioners, mentioned the matter before the bench, also comprising Justices Amitava Roy and A M Khanwilkar and sought early hearing on the batch of petitions which have also challenged the Centre's move to make Aadhaar mandatory for availing benefits of of various social welfare schemes. When Divan referred to the deadline of September 30, Venugopal said, "We (Centre) will extend it to December 31". "The urgency is not there. It will be listed in the first week of November," the bench said. A three-judge bench had on July 7 said that all issues arising out of Aadhaar should finally be decided by a larger bench. Later on July 12, the apex court said that its five-judge Constitution Bench will hear matters relating to Aadhaar, including the aspect of right to privacy.

State finally succeeds in getting the missing IT brand to set up shop

RABINDRA NATH SINHA

KOLKATA, AUG 30 /--/ The West Bengal government's quiet efforts to get the missing brand in the IT sector set up shop in the state have finally proved fruitful. Much to the government's relief, Infosys has agreed to establish its presence in the state, seven years after it was allotted land by previous Left Front government at Rajarhat; that too without SEZ (special economic zone) status. The IT giant, next only to TCS in stature in the sector, has in the process accepted the state government's position it won't agree to SEZ status but, all the same, see to it that the company was not in a disadvantageous position because of the denial of SEZ status. Thus, the company got sufficient indications that the incentives the state would extend to it would ultimately compare favourably with benefits that accrue from SEZ status. In this context, it is worth mentioning that tax holiday available to SEZ units for 10 years is due to expire on March 31, 2019 and at this state it cannot be stated with certainty that the Centre would extend the benefit beyond March 31, 2019, although it goes without saying that the IT sector would make all-out efforts to retain the incentive. Having got an assurance from the West Bengal government that the package of incentives it would offer would take care of the project's viability aspect, Infosys must have found that it would not make sense to stick to the SEZ status demand. Currently, Infosys has a limited presence in the vast eastern region – its only development centre is located at Bhubaneswar. Naturally, it will have a larger presence in the region when the West Bengal development centre comes up at Rajarhat's 50-acre land for which it had paid Rs 75 crore (at the rate of Rs 1.5 crore per acre). The company has indicated that it would set up the project in phases, which would help create about 1,000 jobs. It would submit its plan of action to the state government soon after the process of registration of land is gone through. The company would invest Rs 100 crore. For West Bengal's chief minister Mamata Banerjee, the decision of the Infosys management provides a strong reason to rejoice and feel optimistic about the outcome of her administration's efforts to attract job-generating investments in industrial ventures. The fact of Infosys giving up its insistence on SEZ status is bound to be taken note of by other entrepreneurs.

Parents agitate against fee hike in private city school

KOLKATA, AUG 30 /--/ Guardians of students of B D Memorial School at Narendrapur in the southern extreme of the city agitated since yesterday over an alleged steep fee hike despite promise by the school authorities not to do so.

A section of the guardians blocked traffic on the main road in front of the school demanding rollback of the hike. They had also similarly demonstrated on Tuesday, the police said. The demonstrators were later persuaded to withdraw the blockade following talks with the school administration, the police said.

The father of a student of class eight in the CBSE-affiliated B D Memorial School, said, "The authorities suddenly asked for additional payment of Rs 18,000 as development fee for September in the Secondary section." Principal B Chowdhury said the parents had been informed about the fee hike beforehand and the hike was meant to better facilities. The hike consisted of tuition fees, expenses for multimedia and others to provide students quality education and the parents had been informed beforehand about the hike. However, the school authorities will sit with the guardians to discuss the matter soon, the principal said. The institution is one of the three B D Memorial branches in the city.

Hurricane victim's mom gets early morning call

JAIPUR: Dr Suman Bhatia was home when the phone rang early on Sunday morning. It was a call from a US hospital, with a message that shook the Jaipur lecturer's world. Her son, Nikhil, who studied in the United States, was in the hospital, she was told. He had been rescued from a lake hit by Hurricane Harvey in Texas on Saturday but was in a critical condition. Bhatia left for the US as soon as she could. "But he did not survive," Nikhil s cousin, Kushal Bhatia, told news agency PTI.

Pak creating hurdles in bringing Dawood back to India to face law: Union home secy

NEW DELHI, AUG 30 /--/ Underworld don Dawood Ibrahim is in Pakistan and Islamabad is creating hurdles in getting him back to India to face the law here, Union home secretary Rajiv Mehrishi said today.

Mehrishi added that the government was taking all required action so that the key accused in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts could be brought back to India. "Dawood Ibrahim is in Pakistan. That country has given him shelter. That country is also putting hurdles in bringing him back to India to face the law." Mehrishi further said the 'attitude' of Pakistan was not in conformity with international law and it was working against India in Ibrahim's case. "Whatever action is required, we are taking. We will get him. The process is on. But the attitude of the Pakistan government is not in conformity with the international law. Pakistan is working against India. The legal process is on. We will get him at an opportune time," he told news agency PTI. Ibrahim is the main accused in the 1993 serial bomb blasts case in Mumbai in which around 260 people were killed.

He fled India post the bombings. In April, Home Minister Rajnath Singh had stated there was no doubt that Ibrahim was still in Pakistan. During the last 10 years, India has sent several dossiers to Pakistan in this regard, naming Ibrahim as the accused in the Mumbai blasts case. India has for long been advocating an extradition treaty between SAARC countries in order to ensure quick action against those involved in terrorist activities. Meanwhile earlier this month Dawood was the only 'Indian national' on an updated list of financial sanctions released by the UK, which had also listed 21 aliases for the fugitive underworld don.

The mafia boss appears on the UK Treasury department's 'Consolidated List of Financial Sanctions Targets in the UK', with three recorded addresses in Pakistan. His place of birth is recorded as Kher, Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, and his nationality is listed as 'Indian' with a recorded Indian passport which was subsequently revoked by the government of India. It then goes on to list a string of Indian and Pakistani passports acquired by him and misused.

the attitude of the Pakistan government is not in conformity with the international law. Pakistan is working against India. The legal process is on. We will get him at an opportune time

——Rajiv Mehrishi

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