

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan arrive at the airport in Hong Kong, China, ahead of celebrations marking the city's handover from British to Chinese rule

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Army Chief takes stock of situation in Sikkim

GANGTOK/NEW DELHI, JUNE 29 /-/- Army Chief Gen. Bipin Rawat today visited formation headquarters of the force in North Sikkim and was briefed by top commanders about the tense security situation in the face of the face-off between Indian troops and Chinese military over a disputed area. Rawat, on a two-day visit, was apprised about the tense situation on the border at the Army's 17 Mountain Division even as China, hardening its position on the stand-off, warned that the Indian Army should learn "historical lessons", in an oblique reference to the 1962 war. The Army Chief also visited areas under the 17 Mountain Division, tasked to guard the Sino-India border in the Sikkim sector, and took stock of various operational aspects. "Gen Rawat was briefed about the operational matters," an official source said. The genesis of the flashpoint was China's attempts to build a road at strategically key area of Donglung, the linking of which to the Sikkim-Bhutan-Tibet tri-junction could give China a major military bridge over India. The Indian Army had blocked construction of the road by China in Donglung, a disputed territory between China and Bhutan. Of the 3,488-km-long India-China border from Jammu and Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh, a 220-km section falls in Sikkim. Official sources said China had removed an old bunker of the Indian Army in Donglung by using a bulldozer after the Indian side refused to accede to its request, which triggered the face-off. Referring to Gen. Rawat's comments earlier this month that India is ready for a "two-and-a-half front war", the Chinese military today rejected the remarks as "extremely irresponsible" asking him to "stop clamouring for war".

Don't skip GST launch, Jaitley appeals to Oppn

■ Move comes after Cong and Left parties decide to boycott event

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29 /-/- Union finance minister Arun Jaitley today appealed to Congress and Left parties to reconsider their decision to boycott the GST launch event, saying the landmark indirect tax reform was a result of joint decisions and they cannot run away from it now. Urging the Opposition parties to "display broad shoulders", he said they should not "disassociate" from the decision they were a party to. "The GST, which will unify a dozen states and Central levies to weave India into one market, is the biggest tax reform since the Independence, the finance minister told newsmen here. First Trinamool Congress and today Congress and Left parties decided to boycott the midnight function in protest against the way GST is being implemented, adversely impacting small and medium enterprises. Hundreds of decisions on GST including rules as also the tax rates were taken by consensus in the GST Council which comprises of not just the Centre but also representatives of all states run by different political parties, he said. "I can say this with-out fear of contradiction that there has never been this kind of exercise, of this kind of political consultation and political consensus in bringing the GST," he said. Jaitley said a party to such consultation and decision making process must also accept that GST is not just a decision of the central government but an equal decision of 31 states and UTs. "They must now display broad shoulders and own up this decision. Symbolic boycotts are not an evidence of any kind of disassociation from these decisions," he said. The government, he said, remains committed to GST as any other reform process because it believes that this is probably the single most important taxation reform in 90 years. "And I am sure it will prove beneficial for both the economy and the country itself," he said. "I hope every political party will reconsider and revisit its decision and be a party to the launch of a massive reform to which they have been themselves privy to." Every government has been equal participant in the decision and no one can through a symbolic political gesture disassociate with it, "GST, he said, is in the national interest. "Every political party should have the courage to own up a reform for which they have voted for." Jaitley hoped that the parties which have decided not to participate in the inaugural function will reconsider their positions. The government, he said, is committed to economic reforms. "We will continue to do economic reforms and our approach has been that we discuss with every political party and state government (on these reforms) and then decide," he said.

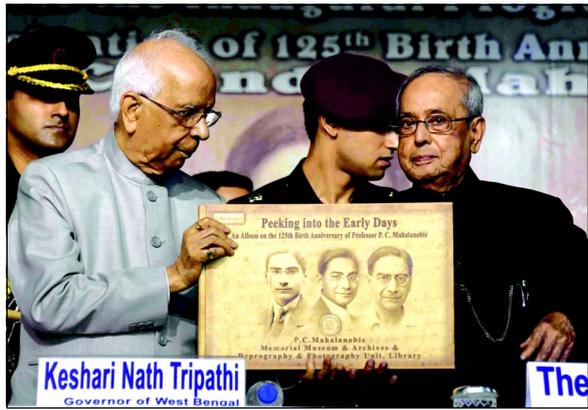


Arun Jaitley, Union Finance Minister, speaking at a press conference.

Prez welcomes GST; thanks PM, FM for its implementation

EOI CORRESPONDENT

KOLKATA, JUNE 29 /-/- President Pranab Mukherjee who today welcomed the introduction of Goods and Services Tax (GST) from July 1 thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union finance minister Arun Jaitley for the reforms for the 130 crore people in the country. The President who was in Kolkata today said this while addressing a Global Summit organised by the Institute of Cost Accountants of India. "With different kinds of taxes in the country, consumer had to pay 30 to 40 per cent more on the cost of production of goods or services. From the days of Yashwantrao Sinha who was finance minister in Vajpayee government to my days in Finance Ministry before I assumed the office of President we tried to have the GST. I introduced in 2011 a Constitutional Amendment Bill to facilitate the GST. But it could not go through," the President said. He also said that though there were bearing transaction costs on human resources, material resources and even financial resources on having multiple taxes in the country GST could not be imposed on the people. "We have delayed to change with consent. To get people along with us, to accommodate various opinions in democratic process," he said. The President also said how after 30 years of a fragile coalition government 65 per cent of 90 million people in the country exercised their franchise to do away with coalition government. Meanwhile Union minister of state for finance and corporate affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal who was present at the event said that trial runs of the GST Network, which provided the technology backbone for the new tax regime - had been successfully carried out and all the mandatory tests had been done. "We have carried



President Pranab Mukherjee at the birth anniversary celebration of Professor P. C. Mahalanobis at ISI, Kolkata

out the GSTN trial runs. The software has undergone all the mandatory tests," Meghwal told newsmen on the sidelines of the event. Meghwal further added that return filing under GST will be simpler. "The return to be filed on the 10th of every month will be the main one. Subsequent ones will be generated automatically," he said. Asked about West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's objections and TMC's boycotting of the mid-night launch programme Meghwal said the party and its MPs had supported the tax reform in

Parliament. "I have nothing to say about TMC and Banerjee boycotting GST launch. The roll out happens as scheduled. But yes, Bengal will benefit the most from the new tax regime as it is a destination-based tax," he added. For the President, this was perhaps a special visit to the City of Joy. "This may be my last visit to Kolkata in my capacity as the president of the Republic of India," he said. Mukherjee, who has lived here and also made several visits to the city as the president, as a minister and an MP, was here to inaugurate celebrations of

the 125th birth anniversary of P C Mahalanobis at the Indian Statistical Institute here. He expressed happiness at having received an opportunity to address "mighty minds" in the form of teachers, researchers and students during the function at a time when he was nearing completion of his tenure. Mukherjee said "dogmatism and rigidity" of mind were the most obstructive forces for progress and development and one should accept ideas with an open mind and then analyse them to find solutions to problems.

Killing people in name of cow protection unacceptable: PM

No fear or insecurity among minorities, says Naqvi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visiting Sabarmati Ashram, in Ahmedabad on Thursday

AHMEDABAD, JUNE 29 /-/- Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said killing of people in the name of cow protection is not acceptable, remarks that came amid a spurt of attacks by cow vigilantes and a wave of protests. Delivering a speech to mark the centenary of the Sabarmati ashram here and 150th birth anniversary of Shrimad Rajchandraji, a guru to Mahatma Gandhi, Modi said unleashing violence against others in the name of cow protection is unacceptable. This is not something Mahatma Gandhi would approve, he said. "Let's all work together. Let's create the India of Mahatma Gandhi's dreams. Let's create an India our freedom fighters would be proud of," the Prime Minister said. "No person in this nation has the right to take the law in his or her own hands," he said. The Prime Minister's remarks came against the backdrop of growing incidents of cow vigilantism. A Muslim youth was last week killed on board a Mathura-bound train by people who taunted his family and repeatedly called them "anti-nationals" and "beef eaters". "Violence never has and never will solve any problem. As a society, there is no place for violence," Modi said. Thousands of people across the country had on Wednesday taken to the streets in a citizens' protest named 'Not in My Name' against the recent incidents of mob killings. Holding placards that

read: "Break the Silence", "No Place for Islamophobia" and "Shed Hate not Blood" among others, the protesters had said they had gathered to send out a message that there is a need to unite for a cause. Meanwhile, amid reports of alleged lynching incidents targeted at minorities, Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi today said there was no atmosphere of fear or insecurity prevailing among the community. Naqvi said some forces wanted an "agenda of destruction" to dominate the Centre's "agenda of development" and action was being taken against them. The Union minister of state for minority affairs and parliamentary affairs, however, said such incidents (of lynching) cannot be justified and appropriate steps will be taken against the perpetrators, while reiterating that the government was committed to its development plank. "I do not think there is fear or insecurity among minorities. But whatever incidents are taking place, be it small or big, be it a criminal conspiracy, in no way it is justified. Action should be taken as per law against them," he said after attending the 70th meeting of Central Waqf Council here. Three Union minister's response came in the wake of a 17-year-old boy being stabbed to death when he along with his brothers was returning home to Khandawli village in Ballabgarh after shopping for Eid in Delhi on Thursday. Thousands of people across the country had yesterday taken to the streets in a citizens' protest named 'Not in My Name' against the recent incidents of mob killings.

Modi's words sound hollow, says Oppn

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29 /-/- Opposition leaders on Thursday questioned the sincerity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks against cow vigilantism, saying little has changed despite his earlier warnings. Modi, speaking at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on Thursday, said that killings in the name of cow are unacceptable and that nobody has the right to take law in their hands. "The Prime Minister should ask himself as to who has created this atmosphere of lawlessness in the country. Pro forma condemnations are not enough. The Prime Minister must reaffirm that he believes in the founding values of the Indian state," Congress spokesperson and former Union Minister Manish Tewari told a news agency. Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Gopalakrishna Gandhi, in a sarcasm-laced remark, said the "presence of Gandhiji's living spirit in Sabarmati Ashram" must have affected Modi. "What he has said is absolutely right, but it should be followed by very strong action on the ground. All the perpetrators (of hate crimes) have to be caught and prosecuted and the public's confidence in (law and order) has to be revived," Gandhi said. Ruing that the "state has been complicit in murders in the cow's name", Gandhi hoped that Modi's statement should be the beginning of a change. Janata Dal United (JD-U) spokesman K.C. Tyagi said he does not see any substance in the Prime Minister's remarks. "I don't think the Prime Minister's so-called warning to cow vigilantes has any meaning. The Prime Minister has spoken on cow vigilantism earlier too, but it has had little impact on the ground. In fact, every time he issues such advisory to gau rakshaks (cow vigilantes), the incidents of violence in the name of cow go up," Tyagi told newsmen.

Cowvigilantes lynch man in Jharkhand

KOLKATA: In a rerun of the mayhem that has been unleashed by cow vigilantes across the country, a 50-year-old man Alimuddin was today lynched by irate mob who suspected he had purchased beef from the market at Ramgarh town in Jharkhand. The mob also burnt the car he was travelling. Incidentally just today Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the acts of cow vigilantes saying it was against principle of non-violence.

Mamata slams Centre on Air India issue, GST rollout

PURBA BURDWAN, JUNE 29 /-/- Chief minister Mamata Banerjee today criticised the Narendra Modi-led Union government for trying to 'privatise' the national carrier Air India and introduce GST in a "hurried manner, saying "We do not support this". "They (Centre) are trying to sell Air India entirely. Air India is the nation's pride. We don't support this," Mamata

said at a public meeting here. The Union cabinet had on Wednesday cleared disinvestment of the beleaguered national airline in India, which has floundered amid stiff competition from no-frills rivals and reported at least seven years of losses. "The Centre is also trying to shift the Tea Board of India headquarters from Kolkata," she claimed. In a veiled but obvious refer-

ence to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she alleged: "Attempts are being made to throttle democracy. There is dictatorship in the country. They think they will rule forever". "If anyone raises voice of protest, central agencies like IT and CBI are unleashed. Even Media is not spared. But I am not afraid of it. We are with the people," she said. "No one was protesting against policies of the

Centre due to fear. But someone has to bell the cat. I will do it", she added. The chief minister also slammed the Centre for introducing GST hurriedly. "We were in favour of GST. But they have changed many things in the medicine, they have imposed tax. We have requested them not to implement it in a hurried manner. But they did not pay heed to it," she said.

They (Centre) are trying to sell Air India entirely. Air India is the nation's pride. We don't support this



AT A GLANCE

Vice-Presidential poll on Aug 5

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission of India (ECI) today announced the dates and full schedule for holding election for the post of vice president. Making an announcement, CEC Nasim Zaidi said, "Last date of filing nominations is July 18 and polls will be held on August 5." "Results will also be declared on August 5," the CEC said in a press conference.

Pak summons Indian diplomat

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan today summoned India's acting Deputy High Commissioner over the alleged ceasefire violation by Indian troops in Kashmir which it claimed to have killed a civilian. Foreign Office (FO) spokesman said in a statement that Indian forces resorted to firing in Nikial Sector yesterday, resulting in the death of a 22-year-old civilian Abdul Wahab of Dorthilla village. Four other civilians were injured.