

ECHO WORLD

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CRPF personnel on arrival at Agartala railway station ahead of Tripura Assembly election on Saturday.

Bengal tops DIPP's Business Reforms Action Plan 2017

KOLKATA, JAN 13 /-/- West Bengal currently tops the list of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion's (DIPP) Business Reforms Action Plan (BRAP) 2017, comprising 36 states and Union Territories (UT). The eastern state's 'implementation scorecard' stood at 86.18 per cent, the same as neighbouring Jharkhand, followed by Gujarat at 82.38 per cent, according to DIPP data. The development comes as a shot in the arm for West Bengal, days before it hosts the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS). The rankings, however, are based on implementation only and scores of feedback evaluation issued by DIPP said. In 2017, there were 103 new set of reforms (out of 405) focusing on central inspection system, online land allotment system, single-window system for granting construction permits, and registration under Inter-State Migrant Workmen (REGCS) Act, 1979 among others, it said. BRAP 2017 also includes two new sectors - healthcare and hospitality. In 2016, West Bengal was at 15th position in the BRAP rankings.

AT A GLANCE

Army jawan killed in Pak firing along LoC
JAMMU: An Army jawan was today killed in unprovoked firing by Pakistani troops along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, the Army said. Pakistan Army troops initiated unprovoked firing on Indian posts from across the border in the Sunderbani sector, prompting the Indian troops guarding the LoC to retaliate strongly and effectively, an Army spokesman said. Lance Naik Yogesh Muralidhar Bhadane, 22, from Khalane village of Dibrugarh district in Maharashtra, was critically injured in the firing and later succumbed to his injuries. Bhadane is survived by his wife.

Mamata greets people on Lohri

KOLKATA: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee today greeted people on the occasion of Lohri. "Wishing good health, happiness and prosperity to all my Punjabi brothers and sisters on the occasion of Lohri," Mamata wrote on her Twitter handle this morning. Lohri is a popular festival celebrated by Sikhs and Hindus, who welcome the beginning of longer days and the sun's journey to the northern hemisphere.

Supreme Court row: There is no crisis, says Justice Gogoi, Justice Joseph sees no need for outside intervention

KOLKATA/KOCHI, JAN 13 /-/- Justice Ranjan Gogoi, one of the four senior Supreme Court judges who virtually revolted against the country's Chief Justice over "selective" case allocation and certain judicial orders, today said "there is no crisis". "There is no crisis," Justice Gogoi told PTI on the sidelines of a programme, when asked about the way forward to resolve the crisis. Asked whether their act had amounted to a violation of discipline, he refused to comment, saying: "I have to catch a flight to Lucknow. I cannot talk." The senior apex court judge was here to attend the eastern regional meet of the state legal services authorities. Meanwhile, in Kochi, Justice Kurian Joseph, one of the four senior Supreme Court judges who virtually revolted against the country's Chief

Justice over "selective" case allocation and certain judicial orders, today said there was no need for outside intervention to solve the problem. A day after he and the three other judges took the unprecedented step of addressing a press conference, Justice Joseph expressed confidence that the issues raised by them would be resolved. "An issue was raised. Those concerned have listened to it. Such actions would not occur in future. So (I) believe that the issue has been settled," he told reporters here when asked about ways to sort out the issues raised by them. "There is no need for outside intervention to solve the matter because it is a matter (that) occurred within an institution. Necessary steps would be taken by the institution itself to sort it out," Justice Joseph said, when asked if outside intervention was required to solve the matter. The mat-

ter was not brought to the attention of the President of India as he has no constitutional responsibility over the Supreme Court or the judges of the apex court, Justice Joseph said. Justice Joseph said there was no constitutional lapse from the part of CJI but convention, practice and procedure has to be followed while carrying out his responsibility. "We just brought that matter to his attention," he said on the sidelines of the silver jubilee celebrations of the Syro-Malabar Church at Kakkanaad near here. Justice Joseph said the judges acted solely in the interest of judiciary and justice. "As some of you suggested it was a step for correction. The issue will end with the correction," he said. Earlier, he rejected suggestions that they had violated discipline and expressed the hope that their action will bring in more

transparency in the administration of the Supreme Court. "I stood up for justice and judiciary. That is what we did here seeking his reaction on Friday's development. Nothing beyond that," Justice Joseph

said in Malayalam when local television news channels approached him at his ancestral home in Kalady near here seeking his reaction on Friday's development.

BCI forms 7-member team to meet SC judges barring top 5

Urges political parties not to politicise issue

NEW DELHI, JAN 13 /-/- The Bar Council of India (BCI) today formed a seven-member team to meet all judges of the Supreme Court, barring the five senior most judges, to discuss the present crisis in the apex court. It passed a resolution saying no political party or leaders should take undue advantage of the situation arising out of the press conference by four senior Supreme Court judges. BCI chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra said that the apex bar body has formed the seven-member team to meet all judges of the Supreme Court barring the five senior most judges to discuss the present crisis. A day after four senior judges of the Supreme Court mounted a virtual revolt against the country's chief justice, the BCI said today the matter should be resolved at the earliest.

"We have unanimously decided to form a seven-member delegation of the council who will meet honourable Judges of the Supreme Court. We want that the matter be resolved at the earliest," Manan Kumar Mishra, chairman, BCI said. "As far as MOP is concerned, it must be finalised at the earliest in a proper manner. We will write a letter to the govt for the same but it is not that big a matter to be brought in public," he added. Mishra further said: "We've given an opportunity to Rahul Gandhi and political parties to talk about the matter. It's unfortunate. On behalf of Bar Council of India, I request him and other political parties to not politicise the matter. Prime Minister and Union Law Minister should ensure that it is judiciary's internal matter and the government won't be interfering in the matter and we appreciate the government's stand," according to news agency ANI. Meanwhile, former Supreme Court judge N Santosh Hegde today "wholly" condemned the action of four senior Judges in going public over internal matters of the judiciary, saying it affected the reputation of the institution and may amount to contempt of court. Questioning their action, Justice Hegde said internal matters of the judiciary should not have been brought to the public for discussion, because neither the public, nor the government or the executive can give any relief to them. "I wholly condemn the press meet yesterday held by the four judges of the Supreme Court. My complaint is these things should not have been publicly discussed, consequent to which the reputation of the judiciary has been affected," he told news agency PTI. Justice Hegde, a former Lokayukta of Karnataka, said their action would not benefit anybody other than drawing public attention. He said institutions like the judiciary survive on the confidence of the people. "Once the confidence of the people is lost, the institution will be useless," he said. Agreeing that the judges' intention was to bring the matter out of the system, he disapproved of their approach as it would set a new precedent where judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court would start bringing their differences into the public domain. On whether their action was liable for impeachment, the former apex court judge said he does not want to go to that extent, though he felt it can be possible, given the fact that a Calcutta High Court judge was impeached for contempt of court. (PTI)

Answer why 'special messenger' was sent to CJI: Cong to PM

NEW DELHI, JAN 13 /-/- Latching onto media reports that the Prime Minister's principal sec-



etary turned up at the chief justice of India's residence, the Congress today said Prime Minister Narendra Modi must answer as to why a "special messenger" was sent to the Chief Justice of India (CJI). TV visuals showed Prime Minister's principal secretary Nripendra Mishra driving to the residence of CJI Dipak Mishra. However, the gates were not opened and after waiting for a while, he left. The development came a day after four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court virtually revolted against the CJI, raising questions over "selective" case allocation. After the TV visuals were aired, the Congress was quick to criticise the government. "As PM's principal secretary, Nripendra Mishra visits CJI's residence at 5, Krishna Menon Marg; PM must answer the reason for sending this special messenger to Chief Justice of India," Congress's chief spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala tweeted. Terming the concerns raised by the four judges as "unprecedented and sensitive", the Congress had yesterday demanded a probe into the issues flagged. On the other hand, the BJP had charged the Congress with "politicising the internal matters" of the judiciary.

Pawan Hans chopper crashes off Mumbai coast, 4 bodies found



Rescue operation on at Mumbai coast after Pawan Hans chopper crashed there

MUMBAI, JAN 13 /-/- A Pawan Hans helicopter with seven persons on-board, including five Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) officers and two pilots, crashed off the Mumbai coast minutes after it took off for the state-owned company's oil installation in the Arabian sea. So far, four bodies have been recovered, ONGC said in a statement to PTI. Search operation is on for other missing persons. The Pawan Hans helicopter, with five ONGC officers, including three of the level of Deputy General Managers, went missing around 10.40 am today. ONGC, Coast Guard and Navy pressed helicopters and speed boats as soon as the information of the chopper going missing was received at the Juhu helibase. ONGC has key oil and gas fields off the Mumbai coast and Pawan Hans helicopters routinely ferry company employees and officers to the oil installations that are situated as far as 160 kilometres from the coastline. The field in the offshore include Mumbai High, the nation's largest oil field and Bassein fields, the largest gas field. The helicopter crash is not the first accident in

ONGC's history. In August 2003, Mi-172 helicopter crashed off Mumbai coast killing 27 company persons and pilot on-board. "ONGC vessels and choppers along with the Coast Guard and Indian navy are combing the areas where the chopper has apparently crashed," the ONGC statement said. "Identification of the bodies is in progress." The chopper Dauphin N0 had gone missing after taking off from Juhu aerodrome at 10.30 am. The chopper, bearing registration number VT-PWA, was scheduled to land at the designated oil rig at Mumbai High at 11 am. Five employees of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and two pilots were on-board the chopper. The Navy said it had deployed its stealth frigate INS Teg for the search operation, while surveillance aircraft P8I was also pressed into service. The Coast Guard had also diverted its ships to search the missing chopper. A senior Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) official said that the aircraft accident investigation body AAIB will probe the Pawan Hans chopper crash. "Since it is a clear accident, this chopper crash will be added by the DGCA will extend all necessary help to the AAIB in conducting the probe. AAIB is the apex body which probes serious incidents and accidents involving aircraft registered in India and it comes under the civil aviation ministry. Minister of state for civil aviation Jayant Sinha expressed deep anguish over the loss of lives.

Yashwant asks ministers to 'get rid of fears' and speak up like SC judges

NEW DELHI, JAN 13 /-/- Firing a fresh salvo at the government, disgruntled BJP leader Yashwant Sinha today asked his party colleagues and ministers to "get rid of their fear" and "speak up for democracy" like the four Supreme Court judges who came out publicly against the chief justice.

The former Union minister referred to the comments of the four judges to claim that the prevailing atmosphere was like the Emergency in 1975-77 and voiced concern over short parliamentary sessions. If Parliament is compromised, the apex court is not in order, then democracy is threatened, he told reporters. Sinha said, "If four senior most Supreme Court judges say democracy is under threat, we have to take their words very seriously. Every citizen who feels for democracy should speak up. I will ask party (BJP) leaders and senior cabinet ministers to speak up. I will appeal to them to get rid of their fears and speak up," he said. The senior BJP leader, however, insisted that it was for the apex court to sort out the crisis after the four senior judges virtually revolted against the country's chief justice yesterday, raising questions on "selective" case allocation and certain judicial orders. Like the four Supreme Court judges, Sinha is also first among equals in the government and his cabinet colleagues should speak up, he said. Sinha, who has been a vocal critic of the Union government over issues like de-monetisation, GST and Kashmir, claimed that he was "personally aware of the fear in which members of the cabinet in this government are working, and that also is a threat to democracy". The BJP has in the past attributed Sinha's resignation to the government's to his being sidelined in the party with finance minister Arun Jaitley once dubbing him as a "job applicant at 80". Sinha was a cabinet minister in the first BJP-led NDA government and held finance and foreign affairs portfolios. In his press conference, Sinha also rejected suggestions that politicians should not wade into the judicial crisis, saying when four senior most SC judges have gone public, it was no longer an internal matter of the court and it was imperative for every concerned citizen to raise his voice. Political parties and Parliament should speak when four senior most judges had spoken about dangers to democracy, he said.



An elderly son pulling his wheel-chair bound nonagenarian mother after a dip in Holy Ganga at Sagar Island on Saturday.

Nearly 20 lakh devotees to take holy dip at Ganga Sagar today

SAGAR ISLAND, JAN 13 /-/- Nearly 20 lakh devotees from different corner of the country as well countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have gathered to take a holy dip at the confluence of river Ganga and Bay of Bengal on Makar Sankranti on Sunday. Last year around 15 lakh pilgrims had visited the Ganga Sagar. This year already

have crossed that mark and nearly 20,00,000 people are here. We have made all the arrangements for them so that they can have a memorable outing here. South 24 Parganas district magistrate Y. Ratnakara Rao told news agency PTI today. A thick blanket of security cover has been placed at the famous spot. The state government

has deployed around 3,000 policemen and also pressed into service seven drones to keep tabs on the security as well as the safety of pilgrims taking a holy dip on Sunday. In fact, for the first time the state government has equipped its officials with satellite phones to ensure uninterrupted connectivity during the Ganga Sagar Mela. "These satellite

phones will ensure that communication is not hampered even if there is an earthquake or a tsunami, among other things," another senior official of the state government said adding that 16 satellite phones has been given to the officers who will be on duty at critical locations. Essentially, the state government has come up with an innovative

Sagar Sanjog Scheme, for providing real-time information regarding the movement of transport facilities for people and vehicles too. The state government has also decided to cover over 100 km route from Babughat in Kolkata to the Sagar Island with 500 CCTV cameras for its security coverage for the grand annual fair. The state disaster manage-

ment department would be getting live feed from the mela area to help effectively monitor the proceedings there. As a part of the security arrangements, the state has also introduced a real-time monitoring system the Tirtha Sathi. "Using the Tirtha Sathi senior administrative and police officers will be able to watch live footages of all the transit and other crucial points, relayed via CCTV cameras, on their mobile phones," Rao said. Besides, 60 giant LED screens have been placed at different points through which pilgrims would be updated about the timings and fare tariffs of trains, buses and ferries, time timings as well as safety precautions. (PTI)