



President Ram Nath Kovind inspecting a guard of honour on his arrival at Bhopal Airport in Madhya Pradesh on Friday.

ECHO WORLD

AT A GLANCE

Pakallows Kulbhushan to meet wife

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan today said it will allow convicted Indian death row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav to meet his wife, months after India had requested Islamabad to grant a visa to his mother on humanitarian grounds. "The Government of Pakistan has decided to arrange a meeting of Com-



mander Kulbhushan Jadhav with his wife, in Pakistan, purely on humanitarian grounds, Foreign Office spokesperson Mohammad Faisal said in a statement. "A Note Verbal to this effect has been sent to the Indian High Commission in Islamabad, today," he said. Jadhav was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court in April on charges of espionage and terrorism. The International Court of Justice in May halted his execution on India's appeal.

USP praises India's growth

DANANG: US President Donald Trump today praised India's "astounding" growth after it opened its economy and also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he has been working successfully to bring the vast country and its people together. Speaking at a gathering of CEOs on the sidelines of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit here in Vietnam, Trump said that countries outside of the grouping were also making "great strides in this chapter for the Indo-Pacific." He pointed out that India was celebrating the 70th anniversary of its independence and highlighted that the country was a sovereign democracy with a population of 1.3 billion as well as the largest democracy in the world.

India, China border talks next month?

BELING: India and China are expected to hold the next round of talks on border issues as well as on other bilateral topics next month, the first between the two countries after Chinese President Xi Jinping began his second term as the chief of the ruling Communist party. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said here today that the 20th round of the India-China Special Representatives border talks as well as the Russia, India and China (RIC) Foreign Ministers meeting will be held in "due course". She declined to give a schedule of both the meetings.

Think-tank's advice to India

WASHINGTON: A think-tank, The South Asia Centre of Washington-based Atlantic Council, has observed in its report that India should set up forward bases to advise Armies of neighbouring nations, build special forces and enhance joint maritime patrols in the Indian Ocean to meet security challenges.

TMC is now a 'limited company': Mukul

He was its MD a few days back, Partha hits back

SABYASACHI BANDOOPADHYAY

KOLKATA, NOV 10 /-/- He came, he saw and he fired salvos with all gusto at the party he co-founded with its chairperson Mamata Banerjee.

In his first address at a public rally at Rani Rashmoni Road in Kolkata after he switched to BJP, former No.2 Trinamool Congress (TMC) Mukul Roy raised some severe allegations against the TMC, even saying Biswa Bangla, the concept chief minister Mamata Banerjee devised to sell Bengal and its products at home and abroad and which was a government enterprise, was actually a private company headed by Mamata's nephew and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee. Chief minister Mamata Banerjee referred to the issue at her address at the inauguration of 23rd film festival saying Biswa Bangla was a concept that glorified Bengal. "If Bengal makes its mark, The world will bow before it," Mamata said. Prompt rejoinder came from the state government too with Home Secretary Atri Bhattacharya saying that Roy's allegations were wrong. "The design and logo of Biswa Bangla were made by the chief

minister and she has allowed the state government to use it. All other allegations of Shri Mukul Roy are false," Bhattacharya said at Nabanna.

Roy, made the allegations at the BJP rally which was quite well attended, unlike earlier BJP rallies held in the city, raising suspicions that it was Roy who brought so many of his people at the rally. Other speakers at the rally included party state president Dilip Ghosh, national secretary in charge of West Bengal Kallash Vijayabargya, Rahul Sinha to name a few. In fact Mamata and her nephew were the centre of attack of the former union minister with Roy dubbing the TMC as a Limited Company owned by the duo.

"The TMC could not fulfil the promises it gave before it came to power... Mamata has changed a lot, the party has now become a limited company," Roy said at the rally.

Partha Chatterjee, TMC secretary general and state minister for education hit back. "He is a traitor... and he was the managing director of the company he was talking of, just a few days back," Chatterjee said. Roy fired more salvos at Abhishek Banerjee, the TMC MP who actually stood in the way

of his becoming the heir apparent to Mamata Banerjee, saying the young MP was also the head of Jago Bangla, the organ of TMC.

He also alleged that all operations that ran the campaigns of the TMC were controlled by Abhishek. Here too Chatterjee hit back saying if Roy could prove what he said about Jago Bangla, he would quit politics. Roy also said Mamata was no longer the person she used to be 10 years back. "I still remember 10 years back, when people were being killed in Mandagram and Singur, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was busy inaugurating a film festival. Today also when people are dying from dengue, Mamata Banerjee is busy inaugurating film festival", Roy said amidst widespread applause. At Netaji Indoor Stadium where the film festival was inaugurated, Mamata, without taking the name of his former close aide said, "No body should play politics with the film festival. We will organise all kinds of festivals... there is nothing wrong in it."

Meanwhile Mukul Roy said "badla noi, badal chai" (No revenge but change) was the slogan Mamata gave before the 2011 Assembly

polls, but now the police was detaining political leaders for opposing the TMC government.

"We want democracy in Bengal. I have every right to have political freedom," he said. Roy said former chief minister Jyoti Basu used to go for foreign trips on the pretext of bringing in investment and now Mamata was doing the same thing. "Her entourage is much bigger than that of Jyoti Basu," he said, adding that no industrialist worth the name has come to West Bengal to invest. "An industrialist is not a BJP supporter whom you bring with help of the police," Roy said. Roy accused a senior state cabinet minister of taking favours from chit fund companies. He alleged that the minister was the president of a Durga puja organising committee which took advertisements from chit fund companies and described those entities as corporate partners. Chatterjee said workers and supporters of TMC were all united and no difference between you and me exists among them. "Roy was the leader who indulged into horse trading... People have thrown those leaders into garbage who had left the party. Roy will face the same fate," Chatterjee said.



Mukul Roy showing a file while attacking the TMC leadership during his first rally as BJP leader at Espinade - Arjit Ganguly

Largest GST rate cut exercise, 177 mass use items off 28% list

It's now time to claim credit in Gujarat campaign

RABINDRA NATH SINHA

KOLKATA, NOV 10 /-/- The largest-ever GST rate reduction exercise since the launch of the new indirect tax regime marks the outcome of the two-day, twenty-third meeting of the Goods and Services Tax Council which concluded in Guwahati today. What was in the realm of anticipation over the past two weeks has happened.

The discontent among business and consumers - the latter had to bear the brunt of dearer goods and services - was widespread. But, the impending Assembly elections in Gujarat where organised protests of traders and industry against the many irritants in the new indirect tax regime added to the Union government's concerns. This was evident on November 4 when speaking at a function in New Delhi Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed the hope that the Guwahati meeting of the GST Council would make all-out efforts to remove the irritants. This, in fact, marked an acknowledgement by the Prime Minister that there were many grievances in regard to rates, refunds and functioning of the GST Network.

It was also a hint to the finance ministry that the matter had assumed urgency and solutions had to be found. Before the Guwahati meeting, rates and related matters were revised, ensuring relief, in respect of 100-plus items. Now, today in Guwahati, in one stroke, rates have been reduced by the GST Council to 18 per cent from the peak rate of 28 per cent for as many as 177 mass use items. With this announcement, only 50 demerit and sin items now remain subject to the peak rate of 28 per cent. Apart from the huge revenue implications of today's reduction, the announcement includes a definite hint that in the long run further rate rationalisation had to be carried out. It is, however, difficult to see reason why cement and paints will continue to attract the peak rate of 28 per cent when the government is laying so much stress on housing, particularly low-cost housing. At the time of writing this piece, reaction of the trade and industry bodies, also as consumer organisations was not available. It will be interesting to see how the textiles and diamond trade in Gujarat reacts to today's decision. What can be said with certainty is that the BJP will claim during campaign in Gujarat that Modi led government has not applied his mind while rolling out GST and should be removed from his post. Sinha, who served as finance minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, said demonetisation has not achieved its goal of flushing black money out of the system. He also charged the current regime with resorting to lies on the



FM did not apply mind on GST, PM should remove him: Yashwant

Patna, Nov 10 /-/- Veteran BJP leader Yashwant Sinha today launched a fresh attack on the government, saying Union Finance minister Arun Jaitley had not applied his mind while rolling out GST and should be removed from his post. Sinha, who served as finance minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, said demonetisation has not achieved its goal of flushing black money out of the system. He also charged the current regime with resorting to lies on the

note ban and the new tax regime. "The finance minister did not apply his mind while rolling out the Goods and Services Tax and that's why he is tinkering with GST everyday..." Sinha told reporters on the sidelines of an event organised by former Bihar speaker Uday Narayan Choudhary on reservation. Jaitley, he added, has made a mess of GST. "The Prime Minister should bring a new finance minister. I am saying this with full responsibility," Sinha said.

23rd KIFF begins with screening of 'Yellow'

KOLKATA, NOV 10 /-/- Curtains were raised on the 23rd Kolkata International Film Festival began here today with the screening of Iranian film 'Yellow'. Altogether 143 films from India and abroad will be screened in the 8-day festival which was inaugurated at the packed Netaji Indoor Stadium. Megastars Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan and Kamal Haasan, besides British filmmaker Michael Winterbottom and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee were present at the inaugural function. The KIFF has become the landmark for showcasing best cinema across the world and he is happy to be back in a city which always holds special memories, Bachchan said. Bachchan, who delivered the main address on the inauguration, said the Rajesh Roshan composed 'Chukar mere man ko' song which was shot in the same Netaji Indoor Stadium, the festival inauguration venue, for the film Yaarana. Bengalis love music, from Tagore songs to Baul songs, he said describing how Bengali culture had influenced the music in Hindi film industry for ages. Acting legend Kamal Haasan said his heart swelled with pride to be considered family by the people of Kolkata. "Here film festival is not just a ritual, but it is a celebration, of what we love as



part of our lives. We belong to an august crowd like you that celebrates cinema every year in this way," he said. Shah Rukh Khan said "It is a wonderful feeling to come back to Kolkata and be with all of you and a big round of applause for you all for making this successful." In her concluding speech, chief minister Mamata Banerjee said the KIFF is the number one in the country in number of terms. It is number one in terms of public participation, in terms of films screened in the festival venue and theatres across the city, in terms of the size of the screen where the inaugural film is shown. Mamata said, "To the light hearted request by Bachchan to spare him from inaugurating the next edition of festival, she asked, "How can we organise the festival without Amitabh Bachchan?" Film maker Mahesh Bhatt, actor Raju, singer Kumar Sanu were also present on the stage along with a galaxy of Bengali film personalities including 23rd KIFF chairperson and veteran actor Sobhit Chatterjee.

In pic: Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan hugs chief minister Mamata Banerjee as Megastar Amitabh Bachchan looks on at the inauguration of 23rd KIFF at Netaji Indoor Stadium

-Shyamal Mitra