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No GST relief for automobiles, biscuits

"This was a long and productive meeting with many issues that had been awaiting resolution, having been resolved," said Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who chaired the Council meet.

The GST rate on hotel rooms with tariffs above ₹7,500 per day, which is presently 28%, has been reduced to 18%, while the tax on rooms with a transaction value of ₹1001 to ₹7,500 per day will be 12%, down from 18% currently. Similarly, the rate on outdoor catering

services in premises other than hotels with a daily tariff of ₹7,501 or more, has been reduced from 18% at present (with input tax credits) to 5% without these credits.

The tax on caffeinated beverages has been raised from 18% to 28% with an additional compensation cess of 12%, in a bid to deter their consumption. While this brings the tax on such beverages on par with aerated drinks, the Council has decided to disallow firms that make the latter from joining the Composition scheme.

'Draft rules to regulate social media ready'

After recording the submission, the judges, in a lighter vein, said they hoped the Central government would take the same stand before the Supreme Court, which was seized of a plea by Facebook to transfer the case.

Passing interim orders on August 20, the Supreme Court had restrained the High Court from passing any "effective order" in the case.

Additional Government Pleader E. Manoharan told the Division Bench that the State government had filed an application to get the Supreme Court's interim order vacated and that it had been listed for hearing on September 24. Deciding to await its outcome, the Bench adjourned its hearing to October 1.

During the hearing, senior counsel M.S. Krishnan, representing Twitter, urged the court to replace 'Twitter Inclusive', which runs the operations in the U.S. alone, with 'Twitter International Company', which manages the business of the social media giant across the world but for the U.S., in the list of respondents to the case. The judges accepted the request.

J&K panel to probe illegal detention of children

The petition referred to the "illegal detention of children in Kashmir as reported in the media and seeking judicial intervention in the matter". It wanted the court to direct the government to file a status report and order the Juvenile Justice Committee to monitor incidents of detention.

"With regard to the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, there have been certain reports specific to children, which describe violations of very different kinds, ranging in seriousness from potential loss of life and liberty of the child to being emotion-

ally and intellectually drawn into the conflict," it said. The plea submitted that the reports were serious enough to merit judicial review of the situation and enforce and monitor certain immediate corrective action.

"The areas of concern as gleaned from reportage in mainstream newspapers are thus: the first pertains to illegal [if temporary] detention [and in some cases beatings] of young boys by security forces. The second concerns serious injuries and deaths of children, deliberate or accidental," it said.

Two-year-old killed as ambulance hits truck

The officer said Mr. Pal claimed that he told the ambulance driver that he looked sleepy, but the latter insisted he wasn't.

DCP Singh said a case has been registered and police teams are looking for the truck driver. "According to the ambulance driver and eyewitnesses, the truck was stopped by a transport enforcement team suddenly after crossing the DND toll. After the accident, both the truck driver and the enforcement team fled the spot,"

he said.

The officer said the truck was perhaps stopped in the middle of the road by the transport officials. "The ambulance driver applied the brakes but could not arrest the vehicle's speed," the officer said. An employee of the private ambulance service said Sunil hailed from Kanpur and was staying in a rented house in Noida. He is survived by his wife and children, who live in Kanpur. The family has been informed, the police said.

Shah holds North Zonal Council meeting

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHANDIGARH

The 29th Northern Zonal Council meeting here on Friday saw member States deliberating on issues such as drug addiction, water sharing, rehabilitation of dam oustees and hurdles to the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who presided over the meeting, said that decisions taken by consensus would strengthen the federal structure of the country. He urged the CMs to ensure regular monitoring of cases related to narcotics, POCSO Act and murders.

Rahul links tax cuts to Modi's U.S. visit

'Amazing what PM is ready to do for a stock market bump ahead of tour... no event can hide the reality'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress and the two major Left parties have slammed the corporate tax cuts announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday.

Linking it to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the United States, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said the move was aimed at pushing up the stock market ahead of Mr. Modi's tour to the U.S., where he is expected to meet many foreign investors.

Mr. Gandhi tweeted, "Amazing what PM is ready to do for a stock market bump during his #HowdyIndianEconomy jamboree. At +1.4 Lakh crore Rs the Houston event is the world's most expensive event, ever! But, no event can hide the reality of the economic mess 'HowdyModi' has driven India into."

At a press conference, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said the move also indicated the government's "lack of confidence or a vote of no-confidence in its own Budget proposals" that was passed by Parliament recently.

The Congress asked if the ₹1.45 lakh crore of revenue that the government was willing to forego from corporates would be recovered from the salaried and common people in the form of higher taxes and cess.

"Can the experimental Prime Minister and the greenhorn Finance Minister tell the nation as to where will the resources to compensate the revenue loss of ₹1,45,000 crore come from? Will they come by taxing the common man and the farmer in shape of taxes on petrol, diesel, electricity and

other household products" asked Mr. Surjewala.

"Will they use their own tested model of bleeding the profit making PSUs like the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) as they did in the case of the RBI by divesting it of ₹1.76 lakh crore to fill up the resource gap in this year's budget?", he said.

Mr. Surjewala asserted that almost the entire Budget proposals presented by the Finance Minister and approved by Parliament "have either been rejected or amended or rolled back over last one month".

"Does it not mean a near total rejection of its own budget and budgetary proposals by this government reflecting the greenhorn attitude to tackling the economic crisis," he asked.

'Salaried class ignored'

Mr. Surjewala also questioned why the salaried class and lower income groups have not been given tax relief as that would have helped in increasing consumption and purchasing power.

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau, in a statement, said such measures cannot bring a turnaround in the current economic situation. "What is needed is a large dose of public investment to create employment and increase people's purchasing power. The government is pursuing the exact opposite, which is nothing else but loot of Indian money for private corporate benefit and speculative profit," the statement said.

CPI general secretary D. Raja said the move followed the government's pattern of pro-corporate policies. "This government's approach is to please corporate houses and serve their interests alone," he said.



Battle lines drawn: Youth Congress workers staging a protest in New Delhi on Friday against the unemployment rate and the economic slowdown. *SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Left parties to hold joint protest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Five Left parties will hold a joint protest from October 10 to 16 across the nation against the "deepening economic crisis" and "growing unemployment."

The Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (ML), the All India Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party announced this on Friday at the end of a joint convention.

"The Modi government in the past months has provided a relief of over ₹2.25 lakh crore to the rich but has shied away from helping the farmers who are forced to commit suicide due to farming sector distress," CPI(M) general secre-

tary Sitaram Yechury said. He said while people were suffering due to layoffs and slowdown in the auto sector, the Modi government was resorting to communal polarisation and divisive politics to divert the attention. Mr. Yechury said that only the Left parties could stand up to the political right and the fascist.

'Bad situation'

"The situation is very bad and lives of people are on the verge of destruction. Unemployment is at its highest level in the last 50 years, industries and businesses are ruined and suffering from job losses, agriculture sector is the worst hit with farmers forced to commit suicide," he added. CPI general secretary D.

Raja said the government needed to clarify as to which direction it was leading the country to. "The economy is in a shambles. Instead of retrieving it from this deep crisis, the RSS-BJP combine has plunged the country into a political-social crisis," Mr. Raja said, referring to withdrawal of Article 370, mob lynchings and the National Register of Citizens exercise in Assam.

In a joint resolution, the parties have placed seven demands. These include minimum wages of ₹18,000 per month, increased public investment to generate jobs, withdrawing 100 per cent FDI in defence and coal sectors and extending the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme from 100 to 200 days.

Will not allow NRC in Bengal, says Mamata

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA

A day after meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said the National Register of Citizens (NRC) "would never take place in Bengal."

"Can I produce evidence of the birth of my parents? Then how many ordinary people can produce such certificates?" she asked. Ms Banerjee came under attack from the CPI(M) and the Congress for allegedly "not discussing Bengal NRC" with Mr. Shah.

"We have not discussed it as we will never allow NRC in Bengal," she said. However, she asked the residents of Bengal to "ensure that their names are added to the voter list."

"There is absolutely no reason to get depressed or to develop some fear psychosis, I am your gatekeeper... as long as I am alive no one can touch anyone in Bengal," she said.

BJP set to finalise sharing of seats with Shiv Sena

Party is clear it is the dominant partner in the 'Mahayuthi'

NISTULA HEBBAR
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hopes to finalise seat sharing arrangements with the Shiv Sena by September 22 or the upcoming weekend, ahead of the Assembly polls in Maharashtra, but is clear that the question of just who is the dominant partner has been settled in its favour.

Senior party sources told *The Hindu* that the alliance with the Shiv Sena, called the 'Mahayuthi', was very much on, but that the seats (number and specific areas) were still being hammered out between the two parties.

Before the two parties had parted ways just before the 2014 Assembly election (later coming together to be partners in the Devendra Fadnavis government), the seat-sharing arrangement was heavily loaded in favour of the Shiv Sena, which con-



Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis with Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray.

tested 169 seats, while the BJP contested 119 seats. By the time 2014 rolled around, the BJP, cresting on the Modi wave, wanted a renegotiation on a more realistic assessment of the ground situation.

Talks broke down in October 2014, and the two parted ways. The BJP and the Shiv Sena came back together after a period of being apart.

"What is interesting, of course, is that out of the total 288 Assembly seats [one

member is nominated to the Assembly, taking the total number to 289], the BJP and the Shiv Sena directly faced off against each other in 54 seats. The BJP won 32 of these seats and the Shiv Sena 22. So the question of who the dominant force in the Mahayuthi is, has been settled in the last elections," said a senior BJP leader.

"This is when the BJP had fought only on 260 seats and the Sena on 280," added the source.

The BJP had fought on 25 seats out of a total of 48 seats in the Lok Sabha election, and the Sena contesting 23 seats. The BJP's strike rate is better, too, with the party winning 23 of the seats; the Sena came in with 18 seats.

With all these numbers, the BJP is determined to settle the question of who can be seen as the big brother in the alliance in its favour, for some time to come.

No Minister will ever sign any file: Congress

Jairam Ramesh defends Chidambaram

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday claimed that "no Minister will ever sign a file" after what happened to P. Chidambaram in the INX Media corruption case and called the action against the former Finance Minister a "paramount example of political vendetta".

Addressing a press conference at the All India Congress Committee headquarters, former Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh accused the government of planning a conspiracy to "defame and character assassinate" Mr. Chidambaram in the INX Media case.

In the case, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has accused Mr. Chidambaram of taking a bribe from the promoters of the company, INX Media - Peter Mukherjee

and his wife, Indrani Mukherjee - to allow foreign investment in contravention of rules.

"Signed numerous files" "If this philosophy is adopted, I can tell you that very soon no Minister will ever sign a file," said Mr. Ramesh. "As a Minister for eight years, I have signed hundreds of files; sometimes I have disagreed with the files that have come to me and sometimes I have agreed. Where I have disagreed, I have given reasons for the disagreement and where I have agreed, I have simply signed."

"Now, if the penalty for signing a file - based on what has come to the Minister - is custody in Tihar jail, I can assure, no Minister will sign any file," he added.

Mr. Ramesh, however, refused to take any questions from reporters, stating that the matter was in court.

Ayodhya Bench to hear case till 5 p.m. on Sept. 23

CJI hopes to close hearings by Oct. 18

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

After urging lawyers to finish arguments by October 18, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi on Friday took the first step in the sprint to the finish line of the marathon Ayodhya appeals hearings by deciding to sit back after regular court hours on September 23.

Though the Bench wrapped up hearing by noon on Friday, the CJI informed lawyers that the judges would hear the case till 5 p.m. on the next date of hearing on Monday.

"We will take a 10-minute break before 4 p.m. and then sit till 5 p.m.," Chief Justice Gogoi addressed senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan,

who is arguing for the Sunni Wakf Board.

The CJI, who heads the five-judge Bench, is scheduled to retire on November 17. If the hearings are completed by October 18, the court would have a month to write the judgment in the over 70-year-old Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid title dispute.

The court has also scheduled Constitution Bench hearings in a batch of petitions challenging the August 5 notification reading down Article 370 of the Constitution. That hearing is expected to start from the first week of October. It is not known if any of the judges, including the CJI, would be a part of this Bench.

Single judge Bench to hear bail pleas

It will also look into appeals for transfer of cases from one High Court to another

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Chief Justice of India (CJI) can nominate a judge of the Supreme Court to urgently hear and decide petitions dealing with matters of bail, transfer of cases and any other category of cases notified by the CJI from time to time.

The court has notified the Supreme Court (Amendment) Rules of 2019, which expands the 'master of roster' authority of the CJI to hand-pick one of his colleagues to form a Single Bench.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), however, strongly objected to the amendment. In a resolution passed on Friday, it said the decision was taken without



The CJI can hand-pick one of his colleagues to form a Single Bench.

consulting the SCBA, which is a major stakeholder in the dispensation of justice in the court. The association urged the CJI to withdraw the amendment.

The decision is a departure from the Rules followed

till date. Under Order VI, Rule 1 of the Supreme Court Rules of 2013, a Bench should have a minimum of two judges. However, with the current amendment, the court would see a Single Judge Bench like in the High Courts.

The notification, issued on September 17, said the Single Judge Bench, nominated by the CJI, would hear appeals arising out of grant, dismissal or rejection of bail or anticipatory bail for offences punishable with imprisonment up to seven years. This Bench would also hear appeals filed under Section 406 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) for transfer of cases from one High Court to the other or one criminal court to another

to serve the "ends of justice". It would decide cases of transfer of an "urgent nature" applied under Section 25 of the CrPC.

Finally, the amended Rules give the CJI complete discretion to periodically notify the category of cases that could be heard and disposed of by the Single Judge Bench. The notification comes in the wake of the expansion of the Supreme Court. Its judicial strength has increased from 31 to 34. Two more courtrooms have been added to the court.

Further, the new notification allows advocates enrolled in any State Bar Council under the Advocates Act to argue a case in person directly without nod from the Registrar concerned.