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Pearl city to host country's first WTO executive council meeting

HYDERABAD, July 7: The Executive Council of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) will meet here for the first time in India from July eight and focus on transforming the organisation into a specialised agency of the United Nations (UN).

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy would inaugurate the council's 73rd session, in which representatives of 30 nations would take part, Tourism Minister J Geeta reddy told newsmen here yesterday.

About 100 delegates, including WTO Secretary General Francesco Frangialli, would attend in the Executive Council.

The participants for the council include Tourism Minister, Vice-Ministers, State Secretaries and heads of Tourism Department from member countries like Angola, Bulgaria, Brazil, Cameroon, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia.

Dr Geeta reddy said apart from the regular administrative matters, the agenda would include follow up on the transformation of the organisation into a specialised agency of the UN. This focuses on the twin objective of sustainable tourism and poverty alleviation, to increase their potential synergies and contribute more to sustainable developments in the least developed and developing countries.

The two-day session would be followed by a seminar on 'destination marketing' on July ten, which would be chaired by Union Minister of State for Tourism Renuka Chowdhary and the WTO General Secretary.

WTO representative Ms Dominique, who was also present, said her organisation and Andhra Pradesh tourism had prepared a development and management plan as part of their consultancy services for the state. The thrust in the management plan was given on product development, infrastructure development, human resource development and management, marketing, investment, economics and institutional structure.

This is the first time that the executive council is meeting in India, she said adding that the previous edition was held at Beijing in China. (UNI)



Ministers not dropped for charges against them: Gogoi

GUWAHATI, July 7: Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi today said no minister in his cabinet was dropped in the recent downsizing due to any criminal and corruption charges against them or for 'inefficiency'.

"There is no prima facie case against any member of my earlier Council of Ministers and as such the question of dropping them due to charges was absolutely baseless," Gogoi told reporters here.

The Chief Minister said there is bound to be a little dissatisfaction against the downsizing but there is nothing against anybody and it was "only a question of accommodation".

"I want to make it clear that all members of my earlier ministry are capable and extremely efficient. It was very difficult for me to bring down the number to 19 from 35," he said.

He said the decision to drop the 16 ministers to bring the strength to 19 as stipulated by the Constitution was purely decided by the party high command and if the ministers have any complaint "they are welcome to approach the high command".

The Chief Minister said he will deal firmly with the bandh calls given by Congress supporters in some places against the dropping of some ministers as this was against the culture of the party.

Congress supporters have called bandh today in Hojai, represented by former Agriculture Minister Dr Ardhendu Dey, Sapekhati, represented by former PWD

Minister Sarat Barkatoky and former Power Minister Devanand Konwar's constituency Thowra.

"Any defiance against the decision of downsizing will amount to defying the high command," Gogoi added.

Gogoi said he has written to both Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi to increase the strength of the ministry in the region to at least 20 per cent of the total strength of the House from the present 15 per cent.

"North east has diverse population, linguistic groups, tribes, sub-tribes and tea community and all sections have their hopes and aspirations. I will be grateful if a constitutional amendment was brought to help adequate representation of all sections in the Council of Ministers," Gogoi said.

The Chief Minister dropped 16 ministers of the earlier ministry which included five cabinet ministers — Sarat Barkatoky, Devanand Konwar, Dr Ardhendu Dey, Bhubaneswar Kalita and Pankaj Bora.

The remaining eleven ministers who were dropped were holding state ranks including one with independent charge. (PTI)



What the budget holds?

NEW DELHI, July 7: Will the first budget of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Governments, to be presented by Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram in the Lok Sabha tomorrow, meet the high expectations of the market, the farm sector, the industry, the salaried class and the vast sections of the poor, all in one go?

Certain signals are around as to what the budget holds for various groups.

For individuals, the speculation is that taxable income will be at Rs one lakh higher tax breaks are expected for mutual funds turnover tax could replace capital gains tax and there could be different provident fund rates. The rich are mentally prepared to pay education cess. The Congress-led Government is under pressure from its own party members to raise the floor level for income tax to Rs 1,00,000 from the current level of Rs 50,000 to satisfy the urban middle class. This section switched over its support to the new ruling alliance in the April-May Lok Sabha elections.

The Congressmen's plea is that raising the floor limit will reduce paperwork and the amount involved would be niggardly in terms of monetary giveaways.

Most salaried people in any case invest in saving bonds to ensure that their first Rs one lakh income is free of taxes. By making this easier, the Government actually will be encouraging higher spending levels by middle-class taxpayers.

It has indeed become something of a consensus that lower rates of taxation, a broad tax base and simpler rules is the desirable policy package.

As far as the services are concerned, there is likely to be widening of the tax net. Everything could cost more.

The good news for the corporates is that there is likely to be a package for the small scale industry lower customs duties on import of equipment and rationalisation of excise levies on power equipment.

At the same time, the market expectation is that there is not likely to be any big relief on taxes and duty drawbacks.

Experts say the Government is likely to continue with the current peak rate of 20 per cent while moving towards a single-slab customs duty in the next few years.

To afford at least a temporary tariff shield to India inc, it will continue to have differential slabs of duty for this year on raw materials, intermediates and finished goods. It also wants import tariffs on most 'universal intermediaries' such as non-ferrous metals, plastics and rubber to be half the peak rate.

However, north block is clear that any tariff wall will be temporary as global imperatives will force India to slash customs duties.

Besides, global trade pacts enjoin member states to bring down tariff walls. India will need to slash customs duties in the coming years as it is trying to join various free trade and preferential trade pacts.

The economic survey presented today in Parliament too stresses the need for lower customs duties to make industry competitive.

Major revenue generation measures are expected in the budget to fund commitments made towards programmes for the Common Minimum Programme and lower receipts on account of slowdown in the disinvestment programme.

It is pertinent to point out that former Finance Minister Jawant Singh had taken credit of Rs 16,000 crore from disinvestment. Mr Chidambaram will have to significantly reduce the target in view of the changed priorities of the Government.

According to informed sources, the cumulative effect of the two could be as high as Rs 30,000 crore, which could take the fiscal deficit up by one percentage point.

As per the fiscal responsibility and Budget Management Bill, which has been notified, the fiscal deficit cannot exceed 4.4 per cent of the GDP in 2004-05, which clearly indicates that the Government will have to garner huge resources to neutralise the impact of additional spending and lower revenue receipts from disinvestment.

Tax experts have been arguing that the Finance Minister will have to identify new sources of revenue generation which could include further widening of the tax base, such as bringing in new services under the tax net as well as measures to reduce expenditure.

The stagnancy in the revenue-GDP ratio presents the Finance Minister limited options to experiment with, says Dr Ashwini Mahajan, reader in economics at PG DAV College of Delhi University.

Says Prof J D Agarwal, Director of the New Delhi-based Indian Institute of Finance, expenditure compression could come through subsidy rationalisation and pruning various small expenditures. There is also a case for transferring various centrally sponsored schemes to the states to avoid unnecessary expenditure.

Dr Agarwal says the Finance Minister's revenue mobilising capacity is also constrained by the fact that he is budgeting only for seven months of the current financial year.

A special package for the farmers has already been announced and the National Employment Guranatee Act is to be legislated to provide employment for 100 days in a year to at least one able bodied person in each rural household.

Special packages for farm workers, health insurance for poor families and small scale industry are on the cards.

The budget for 2004-05 is to be presented in the background of a favourable

economic environment. The unprecedented GDP growth of 8.2 per cent recorded during 2003-04 has brought hopes of a double digit growth within the realm of possibility. The forecast of a normal monsoon this year has also buoyed sentiments and raised the possibility of high growth rate during the first year of the UPA rule. The sustainability of the high GDP growth will depend upon the signals that the budget will send out. (UNI)



Bhatts' Dy CM post to be decided by Sonia: Amarinder

CHANDIGARH, July 7: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh today said that the decision on retaining Rajinder Kaur Bhattal as deputy Chief Minister in the state depended on the Congress president Sonia Gandhi.

Talking informally to reporters after the swearing in of three Cabinet Ministers and two Ministers of State (MoS), Singh said that Bhattal, however, had been retained as a Cabinet Minister in the women's quota even though the performance of the party was bad in her Assembly segment during the recent Lok Sabha election.

Bhattal was absent at the swearing-in-ceremony held in the Punjab Raj Bhawan here. "Nothing serious", Singh said when a reporter sought to have his comments on the absence of Bhattal. All the ministers have been retained or inducted on the basis of performance in the Lok Sabha poll, on being women and caste and area consideration, the Chief Minister added.

He said that the induction of 10 Parliamentary Secretaries (PS) later in the afternoon has been postponed as he has to rush to Delhi as per directions of Sonia Gandhi who has summoned all Congress Chief Ministers for some meeting.

On a question that having 10 PSS would defeat the purpose of limiting the size of the ministry to 15 per cent of the Assembly and also that austerity would not be there, Singh said there was nothing wrong in it (induction of 10 PSS).

He said that first timers would be taken in as PSS and attached with the 18 ministers who have to look after 49 departments. "They (PS) also need to learn", he added. More.

Singh said that the induction of 10 legislators as PSS "does not defeat the austerity steps".

He said that he would decide on the portfolios after his return from Delhi and added that it was his prerogative to allot portfolios. "In my mind it is not to disturb the portfolios of the retained ministers who could be given more departments," he added.

Singh said that a State Assembly, which is not been prorogued after its recent budget session, would be convened for a day before July 15 to discuss the SYL canal issue in view of directions of the Supreme Court for its early completion to carry Haryana's share of Ravi Beas water. (PTI)



Multiplicity of authorities has to be done away with: Dikshit

NEW DELHI, July 7: Describing "multiplicity of authorities" as the biggest hurdle in the way of Delhi becoming a world-class city, Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit today said the national capital region had to be developed to reduce the pressure on the city's civic infrastructure.

"There is an enormous multiplicity of authorities in Delhi and very often one wing does not know what the other is doing... Either this has to be done away with or a coordination mechanism set up to ensure that all of them work in a coordinated way

for faster growth," she said addressing a conference on `Delhi 2010: vision for a model state' organised by Confederation of Indian Industry.

Dikshit said though Delhi Police was responsible for security of citizens and regulation of traffic, it came under the control of Union Home Ministry.

"The local Government has no legal sanction to interfere in their work and many times, the Centre and State may have opposing parties and ideologies," she said.

Emphasising that Delhi was "nowhere near" international cities in terms of development, Dikshit said the solution was to "do away" with multiplicity of authorities and she had already taken up the matter as it was important to ensure speedy development of the capital's infrastructure before Common Wealth Games in 2010.

"2010 will be a great opportunity and a watershed for us and it may also lead to Delhi hosting 2016 Olympic Games. But for that we have to simplify the administrative laws," she said.

In a lighter vein, Dikshit said Delhi should "also be made a little less attractive" for outsiders so that pressure on its civic infrastructure was reduced.

"Ten to 12 lakh people come to work in Delhi every day from nearby towns... You can't blame or stop them but we have to strongly demand development of ncr areas by building infrastructure such as colleges and hospitals," she said.

Terming housing for the low income group to be a priority for her Government, Dikshit said absence of accomodation costing between Rs one to two lakh was responsible for the mushrooming of unauthorised colonies in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Vice Chairman Madhukar Gupta said the agency would come out with its internal draft on Delhi master plan 2021 by October this year.

The final draft would be notified after consulting all stakeholders in the capital's Development, he added.

DDA was also working on a hybrid land pooling policy and had recently cleared three policy of New Delhi Municipal Corporation on multi-level parking facilities, Gupta said.

With land that could be used for residential and commercial purposes rapidly shrinking, "mixed use had become imperative," he said adding DDA was also "revisiting" norms for use of land by schools, budget hotels and hospitals.

CII Delhi State Council chairman and managing director of real estate consulting firm CB Richard Ellis, Anshuman magazine, said "the complete statehood for Delhi is long overdue and must be given at the earliest". (PTI)



Enforce user charges, evolve regulatory framework for competition: ES

NEW DELHI, July 7: The pre-budget economic survey today asked Government to enforce user charges and evolve a regulatory framework that fosters competition for attracting investment in infrastructure creation for a stronger economic growth.

"As is well known, enormous financial investments are required to bring India's infrastructure upto world standards. For these investments to come about, a sound policy framework is required, which emphasises sound enforcement of user charges, transparency and high quality regulation," the survey for 2003-04, tabled

in Parliament said.

Infrastructure investment, it said, can potentially have a strong impact on GDP growth, both through improved production of infrastructure services and through its impact on demand side of the economy.

Given the fiscal constraints of Government, private sector should be roped in for creation of infrastructure like roads, ports, airports, urban utilities and power generation.

"Once sound policies fall into place, flow of investment will improve," it said.

Lack of adequate infrastructure has not only been constraining the growth performance of the economy, it has also induced significant costs in terms of welfare loss.

"It is widely recognized that a simple reliance on competitive markets is unlikely to produce efficient outcomes in infrastructure, a sector with pronounced 'public goods' characteristics of 'non-rivalness' and non-excludability," the survey said.

The survey said the Government policy on spectrum allocation is going to be a major factor which will shape the future of the telecom industry. "The electromagnetic spectrum which is a scarce natural resource, essential for mobile communication, needs to be allocated in ways that maximise its utilisation and economic value."

The pre-budget document was critical of user charges in the postal system covering only 78.3 per cent of costs, and the presence of a significant subsidy element.

In road sector, it said "the major questions that need to be addressed are about a shift in focus from inaugurating roads to comprehensive corridor management, which can maximise the velocity and throughput of highways."

Calling for fresh set of institutional innovations and organisational structures, the survey prescribed high efficiency in tolling, maintenance, enforcement against encroachment and customer facilities on the road.

The Central focus of policy in the ports, it said, must remain maximisation of intra-port and inter-port competition. "There is a need to continually benchmark Indian ports against the best ports worldwide, such as Colombo, Singapore or Hong Kong, and continue to engage in policy efforts so as to attain prices per container of port services which are the lowest in the world."

The strategy for urban infrastructure reform should be to empower local Governments to take economic and service delivery decisions. "The existing schemes need to be consolidated and rationalised into a system of capital grants to local Governments, to support institutional reform and poverty targeting. (PTI)



Joshi lists four dangerous steps taken by UPA Govt

BHOPAL, July 7: Former HRD Minister Murli Manohar Joshi today termed as "dangerous" four steps which the UPA Government had taken, including change of Governors and revision of syllabus to, conform to their ideology.

Talking to reporters here Dr Joshi said if the same yardstick was applied then even the Chief Justice, the Chief Election Commissioner and the opposition face a threat of removal.

"I am not in favour of changing Governor and strongly believe that removal of

Governor before the stipulated time was against the basic tenet of democracy" he said.

Maintaining that the Governor's post was constitutional, Mr Joshi said a Governor acted as a strong bridge between the Centre and State.

Replying to the allegation that even during the NDA Government's tenure, the Uttar Pradesh Governor appointed by United Front Government had resigned, Dr Joshi said "Mr Bhandari had resigned voluntarily and this should not be the precedent".

"If this is serving as a precedent then the Government is showing nothing but fascism".

Mr Joshi said the NDA Government had not removed any Governor on the lines of ideology.

Dr Joshi said the UPA Government was commercialising the higher and technical education by drifting it away from common man's reach and added that communism based changes were pernicious for the nation.

"I had kept the proposal of foreign investment in the education sector in abeyance but now the Centre has allowed the same, which was improper".

Observing that the IIMs were surplus with Rs 45 crore he said reports were saying that it could give education even without any fees. "Why has the IIM fees been raised from Rs 30,000 to Rs 1.5 lakh"

Dr Joshi said the present Government wanted to change the saffronisation of the syllabus. "We changed some ill references to the deities and great personalities and castes of this country and taught Sarvadharmasambhav and moral values but will the UPA Government revert back to the old wrong references", Dr Joshi questioned.

"The present Government does not have constructive vision and there should be an open debate on this issue of syllabus ", he added.

Reminiscing from the excerpts of Ravidra Nath Tagore's speech in 1903 at Shantiniketan he said "history should be taught in such a manner that students are able to see their own country".

"How can the Government bring out the syllabus of West Bengal, which has a very brief mention of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, revolutionaries as terrorists, Lenin as an inspirational source for Independence and Mahatma Gandhi goes without reference".

Replying to a question Dr Joshi said "education should not be divided on the lines of minority and majority but all should be treated equally in the mainstream"

Dr Joshi said the attempts to abolish POTA and going back to the 1848 resolution of United Nations on the Kashmir issue were the other two dangerous steps which the UPA Government was taking.

Referring to the case of Ishrat, Dr Joshi said the investigation by Maharashtra, Kashmir and Gujarat Police had established that she had terrorist links.

Observing that the NDA Government had opened channels of communication with Pakistan and had drafted the Lahore declaration he said "the UPA Government was reverting to the 1948 United Nations resolution".

Dr Joshi said the Centre has reportedly agreed that Pakistan's satisfaction revolved around the satisfaction of people of Kashmir. "This notion is very dangerous", he added. (UNI)



An Indian girl's letter "moves" Musharraf

MANGALORE, July 7: A letter penned by a 15 year-old Indian student here has struck a chord in the heart of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf who has assured her to do his best to convert her dreams of cordial relations between the two neighbouring nations into reality.

The poem "symbiosis" written by Srishti Krishnamurthy, a tenth standard student of Kendriya Vidyalaya here, to Musharraf after the Indo-Pak cricket series has "touched the General's heart", Krishnamurthy, Principal of the school and father of Srishti told PTI.

Srishti, who never expected Musharraf to reply to her letter sent in the form of a poem which hopes for camaraderie between the two nations extending beyond sports, said she "is very excited as after all we share a soul."

Heartened by the fact that the cricket series has acted as a bridge between the two countries, the Pakistan President in his reply to Srishti has graciously acknowledged her high intellect and assured to do his best to convert her dreams into reality, Krishnamurthy said.

Describing her gesture as "thoughtful" the General in his reply said "I am glad that a young lady like you has felt so elated about it. Let me assure you, I will do my best to convert your dreams into reality."

Urging her to "keep up the good work", the President has also wished her "happiness and success in life", recounted her proud father.

This is not the first time that the young poetess penning poems since the age of five has won laurels. She has represented India in international poets' symposiums, he said. (PTI)

BJP assails Mufti on Amarnath devotees' issue

NEW DELHI, July 7: Assailing Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed for declaring that 'Shravan Purnima' for Amarnath pilgrims would be observed after July 15, BJP in Lok Sabha today said he was nobody to decide the date of religious festivals and sought immediate intervention by the Centre.

Raising the issue during zero hour, BJP chief whip Vijay Kumar Malhotra said thousands of pilgrims had already reached Amarnath as the date for 'Shravan Purnima' was fixed for July two and they were facing immense hardships at a height of 13,500 feet in the absence of any arrangement for them by the State Government.

"Government has not made any arrangement for their food. There is no security cover for them. Terrorists can strike them any moment," he said warning "if any incident takes place, both the State Government and the Union Government will be responsible."

Alleging that the pilgrims have been left to fend for themselves, Malhotra said the Chief Minister could not be allowed to indulge in religious discrimination and wanted to know whether Sayeed could decide the dates of various festivals including Eid and Deepawali.

He said even four ministers of the Mufti Government, belonging to Congress party, had resigned on the issue.

Defence Minister and leader of the House Pranab Mukherjee said the Government would respond but not instantaneously. (PTI)

No shortage of medicines at AIIMS, says Minister

NEW DELHI, Jul 7: The Government today denied there was shortage of life-saving medicines at the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences, saying there was a special arrangement for procuring such drugs and essential surgical instruments.

"As per the existing system of procurement, the Institute has an annual rate contract for supply of these items," Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare A Ramadoss told the Lok Sabha in reply to a question that referred to media reports about shortage of essential medicines at AIIMS.

He said, in accordance with the consumption pattern, supply orders were placed on the firms approved in the rate contract, adding AIIMS had not reported any problem in regard to payment to the suppliers.

Replying to a related question, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare P Lakshmi said it was because of the high reputation of the hospital that on an average every day 6000-7000 patients attended its OPD.

On the accommodation arrangements for patients coming from different parts of the country, Lakshmi said there were two 'Vishram Sadans' with capacities of 112 and 190 beds, respectively, and the construction of another with a 100-bed capacity was complete.

RML: Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital is being developed as a 'health promoting hospital' with WHO assistance, in which there would be an assessment of the health of the personnel, Lakshmi told the Lok Sabha.

One of the main features of the project, being undertaken on a pilot basis, would be to carry out health status and risk assessment of the health personnel at the hospital, the minister told the House in response to a query.

Health promoting activities would be initiated in the hospital for its employees initially and ultimately for the general public, she said, adding there was no proposal at present to include any other hospital in the project.

CGHS: To another question, she informed that eight special inspection teams have been constituted to monitor the functioning of CGHS dispensaries in the national capital.

The minister also reminded that there was an inbuilt mechanism in the CGHS to improve the working of its dispensaries by way of inspections, supervisions and guidance by senior officers.(PTI)

Joint exercise with US to continue: Naval Chief

KOLKATA, July 7: The joint exercise with the US and other countries would continue to find ways for strengthening Indian Navy, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Madhvendra Singh said here today.

Addressing mediapersons after commissioning "INS Betwa," the latest guided missile frigate built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), the Naval Chief said though the Indian Navy was progressing towards "cent per cent" self-reliance and indigenisation, there was no proposal for stopping such exercises.

"Indian Navy had conducted such an exercise with the US along the Malabar coast last year and is likely to have it again this year which will strengthen our motto of self-reliance," Admiral Singh said.

He said continuation of such exercises would boost the Indian Navy.

Referring to purchase of new ships from Russia, the Naval Chief said no order was placed for buying ships during the period of 1985 to 1995 and hence such deals with Russia were necessary to "bridge the gap."

He said to cope with the present world maritime doctrine, all old ships of Indian Navy would be phased out gradually. More uni adg ms rr ds1348 jmu 13 54 priority

Stressing on indigenisation of ship-building, the Naval Chief said there was an urgent need as it would not only make the Indian Navy self-reliant but also create employment opportunities in the country.

He said "INS Betwa," was eighty per cent indigenous and informed that 80 such warships were now under the possession of Indian Navy.

"Indian Navy has to transform from 'buyers navy' to 'builders navy' and the shipbuilding activities in the country should also be faster, cheaper and better," Admiral Singh maintained.

He also urged the corporate houses to participate in shipbuilding.

Talking about "Indian Maritime Doctrine," the Naval Chief observed that it has been made public to invite suggestions from the people for further advancement of indian navy.

"INS Betwa" is the modified version of earlier "Betwa," which served the Indian Navy for 31 years, during which she participated in the Indo-Pak conflict in 1971, liberation of Goa in 1961 and the operation cactus in male in 1998.

Built in 10 years in grse at a total cost of Rs 700 crore, the guided missile frigate has been designed with a sophisticated indigenous weapon and sensor suite to enhance the navy's future combat capability. (UNI)

Turmoil in NE after downsizing

GUWAHATI, July 7: The downsizing law took its first casualty in Arunachal Pradesh as political manoeuvring swept most of the north eastern states since last night.

The Arunachal Pradesh Assembly was dissolved, while Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi had to issue stern warning against defiance of the high command's order. The Governments in Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya are surviving on the mercy of the new anti-Defection Law. Tripura and Mizoram, however, have no problem.

The midnight drama saw dissolution of the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly two months before schedule.

According to latest report, maintaining their old habit, majority of the former BJP MLAs and ministers switched loyalties to the Congress as Chief Minister Gegong Apang failed to convince the sacked ministers.

The Congress today termed Governor V C Pandey's decision to dissolve the Assembly as 'unprecedented' and alleged that he had bypassed all democratic norms.

Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) spokesman Takam Sanjoy told UNI that a delegation of Congress legislators, including many BJP MLAs and a few unattached members led by Congress Legislature Party leader Mukut Mithi, called on the Governor later in the day asking him to review his decision on imposing President's rule in the state.

Mr Sanjoy said the opposition would protest the Governor's decision. "The Congress would also request the Centre to remove Mr Pandey for his biased and pro-BJP attitude," he remarked.

"Since the BJP-led Government was in minority, the Governor was not bound by its advice. However, by acting on its advice on dissolution of the Assembly he has exposed

his pro-BJP attitude," he said.

His action, without seeking the advice of the President or the Union Home Ministry was quite unprecedented, he alleged.

In Guwahati, Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi was besieged with bandhs in the constituencies from where the ministers were dropped.

"This is defiance of the high command's instruction. I have not decided it alone. I shall not tolerate this ridiculous behaviour of calling bandh against the removal of someone from the ministry," he said.

In Meghalaya former Home Minister R D Lyngdoh also vent his anger. While in Manipur and Nagaland, covert meetings were on in various groups amongst the jobless ministers. There have not been any formal statements from any of the dropped ministers.

The saving grace was the new anti-Defection Law, as all these states are used for political turmoil and complete change of dynamics of politics overnight. In Manipur 19 ministers were dropped while in Nagaland 21 lost the job. (UNI)



The screenshot shows a search bar with the title "Instant Love Alert" and a red heart icon. The search criteria are: "Find a" followed by a dropdown menu showing "Beautiful", radio buttons for "Girl" (selected) and "Guy", the word "in" followed by a dropdown menu showing "Minneapolis", the word "for" followed by a dropdown menu showing "Love", and a "Go!" button. There are also up and down arrow buttons on the right side of the search bar.

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