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Split in GJM was inevitable as we opposed the party supremo's policy: Anit

HM Correspondent

Kalimpong, Oct 10: Anit Thapa, vice-chairman of the recently formed Board of Administrators (BoA) by the state government to run the Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA) was in Kalimpong today to garner public support. This was Anit's first visit to Kalimpong since the indefinite shutdown in the hills was lifted after 104 days during which factions have emerged in the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) between its supremo Bimal Gurung and the ousted duo Binay Tamang and Anit Thapa. A bipartite meeting is scheduled to be held on Oct 16 and demand for a tripartite talk on Gorkhaland would be raised in the meeting said Thapa addressing media persons today here at the Delo tourist lodge. Thapa claimed of having always being in support of Gorkhaland statehood demand but said that the split in GJM was inevitable



as the duo (Tamang-Thapa) opposed the policy of GJM (read Gurung led party). Reacting to the allegations against the duo of compromising with the separate statehood demand by accepting the second term of GTA, Thapa claimed that the GJM supremo had already accepted the second tenure of the interim administrative setup in the year 2013 after first resigning as the GTA chief only to immediately accept the post again. "We were

in jail and were not consulted regarding the acceptance of the setup once again," Thapa claimed. "The term of GTA was over and we thought of serving the people through the GTA. We are here not to talk of GTA but to clarify allegations being levelled against us. Furthermore, the GJM was formed with a belief that the party would pursue the demand of separate statehood, but Gurung too accepted the GTA then setting the core issue

aside. Nobody opposed Gurung then but we are being blamed now just because we are trying to oppose the way the sentiment of the people had been taken lightly and played with. We are here just to issue clarification on our stance," he added. Gorkhaland needs proper strategy and it is not something which is to be raked up whenever there emerges a congregation, said Thapa alluding to Gurung's raking up of the separate statehood issue in

front of public gatherings though he didn't directly name the GJM supremo.

"Every time he (read Gurung) played with the emotion of people in the name of Gorkhaland. One should not pronounce the term Gorkhaland as soon as they see the crowd; it requires a proper strategy to fight for Gorkhaland. But here the agitation was done randomly without proper outcome" he added. Interestingly, Thapa said it is not necessary that only politicians should raise the separate statehood issue. "It is not necessary that politicians should raise the demand of Gorkhaland; any learned people can come so that it becomes easy to have talks with the government and make them understand about our long pending demand" Thapa said.

Meanwhile, BoA chairman Binay Tamang is scheduled to visit Kalimpong Wednesday and address the public here at Delo.

Tamang at helm, Bengal Hills fund flows

Kolkata, Oct 10: Rebel GJM leader Binay Tamang's reviving the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA) — which had slipped into a coma during the three-month indefinite strike in the Hills — and the switching of loyalties by GJM councillors to the Tamang camp in Darjeeling and Kurseong municipalities, have removed bottlenecks in fund flow from Nabanna to the Hills.

Bengal chief secretary Moly De held a high-level meeting at the state secretariat with all department heads on Monday to take stock of stalled projects and gave directions to release funds for 13 projects under the public works department, 10 under public health engineering, and MGNREGS under panchayats.

According to secretariat sources, the initial fund flow won't be less than Rs 300 crore. Acting GTA chairman Tamang is eyeing these funds to push development in the Hills and win hearts to thwart

extremist groups from gaining entry into Darjeeling by playing on the sentiments of people.

Getting a whiff of the development at Nabanna, the Trinamool party office at Judge Bazar in Darjeeling returned to activity, months after party activists had come down from the Hills and take shelter in Siliguri. Trinamool Hills president Rajen Mukhia said the support he got was beyond his expectations. "I was informed about the party activity over phone, but I did not believe it at first. So I came today to see for myself and I am happy our supporters are still with us despite the hardship they had to face during the agitation," he said.

Mukhia added that after Diwali, he would head to Kolkata to meet the party high command, including the CM, to discuss future political programmes in the Hills. "The three-month strike didn't yield anything for the Hills. We (Trinamool) were targeted and hounded out of the Hills. GJM activists burnt down and vandalized homes of our leaders and

supporters. I will meet the chief minister and persuade her to provide some kind of compensation to supporters and leaders whose homes were torched and vandalized. Most of our supporters had to live in Siliguri during the strike out of fear," he said.

With winds of change blowing in the Hills, BJP state Mahila Morcha president Locket Chatterjee came clear on Gorkhaland, spelling out her party's stand that has kept Darjeeling's BJP MP and minister S S Ahluwalia away from the Hills.

Addressing a district women's wing meeting at Berhampore party office, Chatterjee said: "We believe Kashmir is the crown of India. Likewise, Darjeeling is the crown of Bengal. Darjeeling is inseparable from Bengal."

Later, speaking to reporters, she said a tripartite meeting was the only way to find a lasting solution to the problem and claimed this was the reason why Bengal BJP president Dilip Ghosh was keeping in touch with GJM president Bimal Gurung.

BJP irked at SEC's sanitary certification directive for candidates

Gangtok, Oct 10: The State Chapter of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has expressed its astonishment over the State Election Commission's notification of making 'Sanitation Certificate' mandatory for all the Ward and Zilla Panchayat candidates for the upcoming Panchayat Election scheduled to be held on November 3.

The party in its press release maintained that the notification brought after the declaration of the Panchayat Polls has added unnecessary harassment to the contesting candidates, many of whom could not get the certificate on time.

"Sikkim has already received the Nirmal Rajya Award in 2008, for being the first Open Defecation Free State (ODS). But to our surprise, even today there are thousands of household without a proper toilet.

The State in its 2008 report had claimed to be the first Open Defecation Free State (ODS). If the same stands to be true, then what is the need of a sanitation certificate?" questioned the release.

The party further dared the state government to either accept that it had given wrong information to the central government or do self introspection before making any public claims, the party in its press communicate has dared.

Allow people to pay bill in installment or face protest: JAP



Nisha Chettri

Kalimpong, Oct 10: Jan Andolan Party (JAP) has threatened to gherao offices of electricity, telephone and other departments if hill consumers are not provided options of easy installment payment of bills. Just few days into lifting of the indefinite shutdown after 104 days demanding separate statehood, hill people are now in a quandary as to how to pay the accrued hefty bills of last three months. Electricity and telephone departments including educational institutions etc. are asking consumers to pay bills for the strike period in lump sum with no option of easy installment payment. JAP supremo Dr. Harka Bahadur Chettri opines that the over three-month

long total shutdown quadrupled the problems of hill populace draining out whatever money saved or taken in loan for various purposes by the masses.

Now people here have started receiving accrued bills to be paid in lump sum from various departments including educational institutions.

People here have been talking about the agitation which they opine of having failed miserably shattering the hopes of common people. But things hovering in the midst of the seemingly return of normalcy in the hills are the 'bills' which are to be paid in totality at a single go.

Besides, the hill employees have not received their salary for the three-month shutdown period and paying the school fee of their wards including other bills at a go is a matter of uphill financial burden for parents.

"The electricity department has been sending bills for the three-month period warning that the connection would be severed if the bill is not paid and the same is with the telephone bill. In addition to this, schools have been demanding payment of fees (along

with session fees) for the shutdown period when life in the hills was totally paralyzed. Some of the aggrieved families are in such dire straits that they had to break their fixed-deposits to clear the school fees and other bills" said Dr Chettri addressing a press conference today here at the JAP office. "We have decided to send our delegations to talk to the officers of concerned departments and request them to allow 'easy installment' facility to clear the dues," Chettri added. He also informed that few people who had taken loan from Bandhan Bank for agriculture purpose had approached him seeking help citing that they were not able to utilize their money for the required purpose as the money had to be spent fetching groceries and everyday basic consumption items during shutdowns. "Taking note of such situation, the concerned authorities should consider allowing farmers to repay their loans in easy installment. The land revenue and insurance companies should also understand the situation.

People bought cars taking loans from finance

companies. The obvious idea was to earn by ferrying passengers and repay the loan on installment basis which considering the three-month long shutdown is next to impossible for them to make the lump sum payment for the period. Owing to non-payment, the finance companies may confiscate few cars which would be an unwarranted situation," the JAP supremo rued adding that all concerned departments ranging from electricity, telephone, educational and financial institutions should empathize and provide easy installment payment facilities to the aggrieved consumers. "These aggrieved people are not defaulters; it is just that the three-month long shutdown paralyzed life in totality and clearing the accrued bills now in lump sum at a go is next to impossible for the masses. The concerned departments should empathize, understand the ground situation and act sensibly. If not, the JAP will have no option other than holding protest demonstrations in front of the concerned departmental offices," he added.

Pakistan rakes up Kashmir again at UN but India ignores taunt

United National, Oct 10: Pakistan has again tried to sneak the Kashmir issue into a General Assembly debate with no relevance to the topic, but India took the high road refusing to be drawn into a "distraction" from the agenda set for the meeting.

Pakistan's Permanent Representative Maleeha Lodhi devoted a significant part of her speech to Kashmir at the committee dealing with decolonisation on Monday.

The minister in India's Permanent Mission, Srinivas Prasad, who spoke later, said in his scheduled speech, "We reject the efforts of the delegation of Pakistan to bring issues which have never been on the agenda of this Committee ever in its history."

"We consider it a diversion from the agenda and as a distraction not worthy of a response," Prasad added. Kashmir is not considered a colony or a non-self-governing territory by the UN.

"Even as all those who have taken the floor have focused on issues of these Non Self-Governing Territories, a solitary member State, as usual, has ventured to plough a lonely furrow contrary to the on-

ward march of history," Prasad added.

Lodhi said that UN's decolonisation agenda would remain "incomplete" without resolving the Kashmir issue. Pakistan came back again after Prasad's speech with Saima Sayed, a counsellor at Pakistan's UN Mission, harking back to the 1948 Security Council resolution on Kashmir while exercising Pakistan's right of reply.

India did not use its right to reply to Sayed.

This was Lodhi's second attempt this month to introduce Kashmir during a debate on topics without any relevance to it.

During a debate last week in the General Assembly on the UN's annual report, she said the surgical strikes carried out last year by India against terrorist hideouts in Pakistani-held territory never happened and asserted that New Delhi was trying to provoke her country by saying it took place. The surgical strike was in response to an attack on an Indian position in the Uri sector that killed 18 soldiers.

As Prasad pointed out, Pakistan has been "ploughing a lonely furrow" at the UN in trying to raise the Kashmir issue with no other

country taking note of it despite Lodhi bringing it up in forums where it has not relevance. India is adopting a tactic of reacting to Pakistan's taunts over Kashmir by either ridiculing them or ignoring them, rather than getting entangled in a debate giving it importance.

When Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi launched one of the most heated attacks in recent times on India during his address to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly last month, a First Secretary in India's Mission Eenam Gambhir, called Pakistan "Terroristan" in her reply. "The quest for a land of pure has actually produced 'the land of pure terror'."

Again last week, Gambhir dismissed Lodhi's statement on the surgical strike by saying: "My delegation does not wish to waste the precious time of this august assembly in further engaging with such distractions."

Lodhi's response to external affairs minister's speech last month at the General Assembly backfired when she held up the picture of an injured Palestinian child claiming she was from Kashmir.

NIA will 'fully choke' terrorists of foreign funding: Rajnath



New Delhi, Oct 10: Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the NIA will "fully choke" terrorists and separatists of foreign funding to curb terrorism that he described as a "curse for the civilised society".

The Minister said being an autonomous body, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had done its job well in its crackdown on terrorists and separatists.

"Some people say the NIA has partially succeeded in stopping foreign terror funding. But I will say the NIA will fully choke the foreign funding to terrorists in the country soon."

The Minister was referring to the terror funding case the NIA has filed against Kashmiri separatist leaders as well as JeM chief Hafiz Sayeed. At least eight separatist leaders have been arrested

since July.

Inaugurating the NIA headquarters at Lodhi Road here, Rajnath Singh said: "The NIA will bring down the morale of the terrorists and their funders."

He said terrorism acted as a hindrance to development. Lauding the work of the NIA for proving its credibility since its formation in 2008, Rajnath Singh said the conviction rate of the agency was over 90 per cent.

"As they carry the investigation in a professional way, there is no question mark on the investigation of the NIA."

Rajnath Singh said investigating terrorist activities was a tough job. "But with the help of scientific investigation, it has filed perfect chargesheets."

He hailed the NIA's role in curbing the menace of fake currency which he said acted as oxygen for terrorism.

He lauded the NIA's "good coordination" with central investigation agencies, anti-terror squads and police forces of state governments.

Congratulating the central forces, Rajnath Singh said: "I congratulate the central forces for neutralising terrorists day after

day."

He lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for bringing the international community on board on the issue of terrorism.

Meanwhile, NIA Director General Sharad Kumar said the agency had been able to bring back normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir by choking foreign terror funding.

He said of the 166 cases the agency had taken up for investigation, 62 pertained to jihadi terrorism, 25 to terrorist acts by Northeast insurgents, 41 of terror financing and fake currency, 12 involved Maoists and 24 cases related to miscellaneous terrorist acts.

He said the NIA had filed chargesheets in 28 cases with a success rate of 85 per cent and a conviction rate of over 90 per cent.

Kumar said: "In the last two years, the agency has registered 21 cases relating to ISIS and we have remained successful in terms of investigation."

"Earlier this year we registered a case of terror funding in the Kashmir Valley due to which we have been able to choke the terror funding and bring back normalcy in the state."