

Chabahar Port To Soon Become Operational

NEW DELHI: India hopes to fully operationalise the Chabahar Port in Iran soon, Shipping and Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Tuesday.

Following a meeting here with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Gadkari also told reporters that the Indian government has allowed an Iranian bank to open a branch in Mumbai to facilitate transactions related to the Chabahar Port.

"The Chabahar port is very important for us. We are working very hard on it. Some problems were there, but the Iranian government are also in the process to resolve all the issues as early as possible. I am confident that we will be in a position to start full function of Chabahar port at the earliest," Gadkari said.

He said the Reserve Bank of

India has given clearance to an Iranian bank to open a branch in Mumbai within three months.

"The government of India has given permission to an Iranian bank to open its branch in Mumbai. It is going to open within three months, and will be used for transactions" he said. "The two banks will facilitate transactions relating to operation of berths at Chabahar port," he added.

The Iranian Minister expressed the hope that "in spite of the illegal US sanctions", both India and Iran can cooperate further for the benefit of the people of the two countries and for the region.

The Shipping Ministry said on Monday that India has taken over the operations of a part of the Chabahar Port, which marks the first time it will be operating a port outside its territories.

Ayodhya Case Hearing On Jan 29

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday deferred the Ayodhya title dispute hearing to January 29, saying the five-judge bench to hear the case will be re-constituted as Justice U.U. Lalit has recused himself.

The batch of cross petitions are rooted in the 2010 Allahabad High Court judgement trifurcating the disputed site giving one each to Lord Lalla, Nirmohi Akhara and original Muslim litigant. The apex court decision came after senior counsel Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for one of the Muslim litigants, told the bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi that Justice Lalit in 1997 appeared for former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Kalyan Singh in one of the matters connected to the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute.

Singh is currently the Rajasthan Governor. While telling the bench that personally he had no objection to the presence of Justice Lalit on the bench hearing the challenge to the 2010 Allahabad High Court verdict, he left it Justice Lalit to take a call.

Justice Lalit conveyed to Chief Justice Gogoi and other members of the bench -- Justice S.A. Bobde, Justice N.V. Ramana, Justice D.Y. Chandrhad about his reluctance to continue on the bench and recused himself.

Noting that Dhavan said that he had no objection to Justice Lalit hearing the matter and had left it to him (Justice Lalit) to take the call, the court in its order today adjourned the hearing as Justice Lalit "expressed his disinclination to participate in the hearing any further."

Two-Day Protest By Unions



Trade Union members stage a demonstration on the second day of the two-day long nationwide strike called to protest against alleged "anti-labour, anti-people and anti-national policies" of the Narendra Modi-led Central Government, in Bengaluru on Jan 9, 2019. - IANS

NEW DELHI: The two-day nationwide strike called by central trade unions in protest against what they describe as the anti-worker policies and unilateral labour reforms evoked a mixed response on its second day on Wednesday, as witnessed on the previous day.

Public transport and banking services continued to remain disrupted on the second day of the strike in some states.

"Bank and insurance sector employees participated in the countrywide strike today (Wednesday) called by the central trade unions," All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA) General Secretary C.H. Venkatachalam told IANS.

The 10 unions which have given the strike call include the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) Hind Mazdoor Sabha, All India United Trade Union Centre- AIUTUC) Trade Union

Coordination Centre (TUCC) and Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA).

The BJP-backed Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) did not take part in the strike.

Normal life across Kerala was badly hit on Wednesday but by evening more and more shops and establishments opened. State-owned private buses and contract vehicles remained off the roads but pilgrims to the Sabarimala shrine were allowed to proceed from all places on a limited scale.

While banks were shut, attendances in state and central government offices marginally improved since Tuesday.

While attendance at the State Secretariat, was below 10 per cent, like on Tuesday, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his cabinet colleagues did not turn up at their offices.

All university examinations slated for Wednesday have been postponed and educational institutions were closed.

Instead, the strike remained

largely ineffective across West Bengal on its second day barring a few sporadic incidents of vandalism. Train services were briefly affected on the Sealdah-Lakshmikantapur Namkhana and Diamond Harbour sections of Eastern Railway as strike supporters threw banana leaves on overhead wires.

There was also no impact of the shutdown on the second day in Karnataka, with government offices and bus services functioning normally across the state. Government offices, hospitals, commercial establishments, bus and metro services in the state, however, remained largely unaffected.

State-run Karnataka State Road Transport Corp operated about 3,600 of its 4,100 bus services across the state. Bus services in Bengaluru, however, were fewer, with only 428 bus services plying across the city against the 4,100 scheduled, leading to a high demand for autos and ride-hailing services like Ola and Uber.

Security Beefed Up Ahead Of Verdict On Dera Chief

CHANDIGARH: Security has been beefed up in Rohtak and Sirsa towns in Haryana ahead of the judgment of a CBI court against Dera Sacha Sauda sect chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh in the murder case of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati.

The judgment is likely to be pronounced by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court in Panchkula, adjoining Chandigarh, on January 11.

The CBI court on Tuesday allowed the appearance of the sect chief from the Sunaria prison near Rohtak through video-conferencing in view of security concerns.

Police said that security has been increased around the sect's headquarters campus on the outskirts of Sirsa town, around 260 km from here. Sect followers were not being allowed to gather in big numbers ahead of the January 11 judgment.

Chhatrapati was shot at in October 2002 in Sirsa town. He died in November, after battling for life in a hospital for a few days. Khatta Singh, a former driver of the controversial sect chief, had earlier told the court that Ram Rahim had ordered the killing.

Ram Rahim is lodged in Sunaria jail near Rohtak following his conviction in two rape cases on August 25, 2017. The conviction had led to violence in Panchkula and Sirsa in Haryana, leaving 41 people dead and over 260 injured.

Mallya Declared 'Fugitive Economic Offender'

NEW DELHI: An Indian court has declared tycoon Vijay Mallya a "fugitive economic offender," a ruling that empowers authorities to confiscate his properties and other assets.

Judge M.S. Azmi's decision came less than a month after a British Court ruled that the 62-year-old Mallya should be extradited to India to face financial fraud allegations. Mallya remains free on bail in London and can appeal the ruling.

Mallya, who left India in 2016, is accused of money laundering and cheating Indian banks out of hundreds of millions of dollars. He was declared a fugitive economic offender under a new Indian law that applies to a person accused of financial fraud of over 1 billion rupees (\$14.2 million) and who has fled India to avoid prosecution.

Mallya, who in 1983 became chairman of an alcohol company once led by his father, was a leading figure among India's business elite. He launched Kingfisher Airlines and had an ownership stake in India's Formula One racing team.

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