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Rahul regrets misquoting SC

But Cong president repeats 'Chowkidar chor' hai in Amethi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI / AMETHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday expressed regret in the Supreme Court over his remarks attributing certain comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the basis of a recent order of the top court in the Rafale deal case, but wasted no time in repeating his "Chowkidar chor" jibe against the PM in Amethi.

Rahul expressed "regret" in the Supreme Court for claiming SC had justified his "Chowkidar chor" allegation in its order. He said the comment was made in the "heat of political campaigning".

The apex court on April 15 had given a categorical clarification that in its Rafale verdict there was no occasion for it to make a mention of the contemptuous observation that "chowkidar Narendra Modi chor hai" as has been attributed to it by Rahul. The court had directed Rahul to give his explanation on April 22 on a petition filed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi seeking criminal contempt action against him for his remarks. It is scheduled to hear Lekhi's petition on



Congress president Rahul Gandhi addresses an election campaign meeting at Tilote in his parliamentary constituency Amethi on Monday. PTI

Tuesday. Rahul, who filed an affidavit in response to the apex

court's order, said his statement was "purely political" and was made to counter the "misin-

formation campaign" being led by senior BJP functionaries as well as the Government that the December 14 last year judgment gave a "clean chit" to the Modi Government on the Rafale deal.

He also referred to a media interview by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in which he had said that the apex court had given a clean chit to the Government in the Rafale deal. He maintained that there was no "slightest intention" to "instigate" anything regarding the Supreme Court proceedings in any manner as he holds the top court in the highest esteem.

Clarifying further, Rahul said he had made the statement after filing his nomination paper on April 10 without "having seen or read the order" of the apex court passed on that day relating to the admissibility of certain documents related to the Rafale case in the review petition.

However, on the issue of slogan "Chowkidar chor hai", Rahul in his affidavit reaffirmed his stand and belief and that of his party that Rafale deal is a "tainted transaction" and a "gross and brazen abuse

of executive power and a leading example of the corruption of the BJP Government led by Prime Minister Modi, which deserves to be investigated thoroughly by a Joint Parliamentary Committee and proceeded against thereafter".

Away from the SC proceedings, Rahul once again raked up his often-repeated poll theme of alleged corruption in the Rafale deal and exhorted people to ask the Prime Minister what he got in return for benefiting Anil Ambani with ₹30,000 crore in the fighter jet deal.

Making the PMS 'Main bhi chowkidar' campaign, Rahul said, "When his (Modi's) theft was caught in the Rafale deal he says 'tum sab chowkidar hai'."

Addressing an election rally in his parliamentary constituency here, Rahul said, "When the PM comes and makes false claims, just ask him why he gave ₹30,000 crores to Ambani and what Ambani did for him in return... Soon after the Congress comes to power after the Lok Sabha elections, an enquiry would be instituted in the Rafale deal and the truth will be before everyone."

Ph-III test for Shah, Rahul, MSY clan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All 26 constituencies of Gujarat and 20 constituencies will go to polls on Tuesday in the third phase of Lok Sabha polls for 116 seats spread over 14 States.

BJP president Amit Shah, Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav as well as several Union Ministers and senior Opposition leaders are contesting the Tuesday poll.

The polling in Tripura East constituency, which was earlier scheduled for April 18, will be held in this phase, as also in a part of the Anantnag Lok Sabha seat in Jammu and Kashmir, where election is being held in three phases.

This phase is seen crucial for the NDA, which won 66 of the 116 seats in 2014 and BJP made a clean sweep of winning all the 26 seats of Gujarat. The Congress and its alliance partners won 27, and the rest went to other opposition parties and Independents.

Besides all seats of Gujarat (26) and Kerala, four seats in Assam, five of Bihar, seven of Chhattisgarh, 14 each of Karnataka and Maharashtra, six of Odisha, 10 of Uttar Pradesh, five of West Bengal, two each of Goa, and one each of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Tripura will go to polls on Tuesday.

While the Congress is hoping to make dent in the BJP tally in Gujarat after the grand old party put up an impressive show in the 2017 assembly polls, Congress

hopes to cash in on the resentment of the patidars and rural-urban divide to win at least five to six seats in the State.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have made repeated pleas to the voters to make sure that the Congress didn't open its account from the state. While Shah, who replaced LK Advani as the party nominee from Gandhinagar, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Jawsantinn Bhabhor, is the BJP nominee from Dahod seat.

About 18.56 crore voters are eligible for voting in this phase and the Election Commission has set up 2.10 lakh polling booths/stations and has made elaborate security arrangements.

In the first two phases, election was held to 91 and 96 seats on April 11 and April 18 respectively. Elections are being held in seven phases and with the completion of the third phase, the election process will be completed in southern states.

The Congress also hopes to improve its tally in Kerala, where the cadre is galvanised by Rahul Gandhi's decision to contest from Wayanad besides his traditional Amethi.

While the fight is between the traditional rivals UDF and LDF, the BJP has also aggressively campaigned in the hope of opening its account in the southern state by capitalising on the Sabarimala shrine women entry issue.

Sheila faces Manoj; Gambhir challenge for Atishi, Lovely



Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari with party leaders Vijay Gooli, Vijendra Gupta, actor-dancer Sapna Chaudhary during a roadshow before filing his nomination papers from North East Delhi Lok Sabha constituency in New Delhi on Monday. Ranjan Dixit / Pioneer

Udit Raj revolts, Lekhi retained; Maken picked for New Delhi

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

With the Congress announcing its list of six candidates for the general elections on Monday, the North-East Delhi seat appears to be set for a humdrum of contest between Delhi Congress president and three-term Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and sitting MP Udit Raj has raised the banner of revolt as he feels that the party has not been fair to him. Former Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer Udit Raj

has been fielded from New Delhi seat, Delhi Congress working president Rajesh Liothia from North West seat, Mahabul Mishra from West Delhi, five-term Lok Sabha MP JP Agarwal from Chandni Chowk and former Delhi Minister Arvind Singh Lovely will test waters from the East Delhi constituency.

Meanwhile, the BJP has decided to field sitting MP Meenakshi Lekhi from the New Delhi seat and former Indian cricketer Gautam Gambhir from the East Delhi seat.

The party did not declare the name of its candidate for the North West constituency. Sitting MP Udit Raj has raised the banner of revolt as he feels that the party has not been fair to him. Former Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer Udit Raj

posted a series of tweets on Monday to express his concern as the BJP has not declared his candidature.

Udit held a Press conference later in the evening to air his grievance and asked the party leadership to come clean on his nomination from North West Lok Sabha seat. He took the names of senior party leaders including BJP president Amit Shah and Home Minister Rajnath Singh and claimed that he was promised re-nomination.

An accused in 2008 popular Punjab singer Hans Raj Hans from the North West seat and announcement to this regard is likely to be made by Tuesday morning as both the party president and the Prime Minister were not in the national Capital.



A Sri Lankan woman living near St. Anthony's shrine runs for safety with her infant after police found explosive devices in a parked vehicle in Colombo on Monday. AP

SL fears Thowheed got foreign terror aid

7 of its fideyen carried out Easter blasts, 87 bomb detonators found at bus station

PTI/AGENCIES ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Government on Monday accused a previously little-known Islamist outfit called the National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) of having carried out the Easter Sunday attacks, and said an international terror group might have been behind the atrocities, the worst in the country's history.

However, neither the NTJ, nor any other group, has admitted carrying out the wave of bombings which tore through the island nation, killing 290 people and injuring nearly 500 others.

Seven suicide bombers of the NTJ carried out a series of devastating blasts, authorities said on Monday. As many as 87 bomb detonators were found on Monday at a bus station in Colombo, police said.

Police have so far arrested 24 people — mostly members of NTJ — in connection with

the blasts that also killed eight Indian nationals.

Police said that 9 out of the 24 arrested for involvement in the blasts were ordered to be remanded by the Colombo magistrate's court till May 6.

Government's spokesman Rajitha Senarathne said NTJ is suspected of plotting the blasts that struck three churches when the Easter Sunday mass were in progress and three five-star hotels.

"All suicide bombers involved in the blasts are believed to be Sri Lankan nationals," said Senarathne, who is also the Health Minister.

Speaking at a press conference here, Senarathne said the Government was investigating whether the group had "international links to them," he added.

"The conditional state of emergency" in force since Monday midnight would target terrorism and would not limit freedom of expression, said a statement from the President's media unit. "These will be limited to counter terrorism regulations. This is being done to allow the police and the three forces to ensure public security."

The Government has also declared Tuesday as a national day of mourning.

Police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said that 24 arrested suspects have been transferred into the custody of the Criminal Investigations Department for further investigations. President Sirisena has appointed a three-member committee, to conduct investigations. The committee will submit its report to him within two weeks.

Health Minister Senarathne said the Chief of National Intelligence agencies had warned the Inspector General of Police (IGP) regarding the probable attacks before April 11.

"On April 4, international intelligence agencies had warned of these attacks. The IGP was informed on April 9," he said.

He demanded resignation of police chief Pujith Jayasundera in view of the major security lapse.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said that an investigation must be launched as to why intelligence reports of the attack was not taken seriously. Rauff Hakeem, a Government minister and the leader of the main Muslim party — Sri Lanka Muslim Congress — said that it was lamentable that no preventive action had been taken despite the inputs.

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Pragya files nomination amid chanting of mantras by priests

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

amidst chanting of mantras (Shasti Vachan) by 11 priests, BJP's candidate in Bhopal Sadhvi Pragya Thakur submitted her nomination papers here on Monday, a day ahead of her schedule.

Earlier, the BJP had announced that Thakur would file her nomination on April 23, but due to an auspicious occasion (shubh muhurat), Pragya decided to submit her papers on Monday only.

Pragya filed her nomination papers at district returning officer's office amid chanting of mantras by 11 priests and pujan.

Sitting MP from Bhopal Alok Sanjay and other BJP leaders were present on the occasion. The sadhvi would however complete remaining formalities of nomination on Tuesday and would also lead a procession on Tuesday.

Later, she also visited different areas seeking aids from her followers. The firebrand sadhvi who had rocked the polls with her explosive statements in last few days is not more restraint in terms of her remarks.

To a query posed by media persons over her remarks of calling the election a Dharmayuddh and statements on Babri demolition and



BJP candidate for Bhopal Lok Sabha constituency Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur collects funds during an election campaign in Govindnagar State Assembly constituency for Lok Sabha polls in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Hemant Karkare, she declined to comment. But she said that she was forced to file nomination on Monday due to the

shubh muhurat and would complete formalities on Tuesday. On the two Election Commission (EC) notices slapped on her over her remarks, the sadhvi said her legal team has replied to these notices and she won't say anything further.

On the collection of donation from followers, she said she was a sadhvi and was receiving bhiksha for her election campaign. The sadhvi who had landed in trouble over

her contentious remarks on Hemant Karkare and Babri demolition, was summoned by the BJP top brass to party office in Bhopal on Sunday and was cautioned against her unrestrained comments.

Sources said BJP may field Malegona blasts case, Sadhvi was picked up by the BJP as Bhopal candidate after senior leaders including Uma Bhatti and Shivraj Singh Chouhan have backed her candidature from Bhopal.

However Sadhvi's stinging comments had put the BJP in tight spot. Congress candidate Digvijaya Singh had submitted his nomination on Saturday.

FIR filed against Sadhvi over Babri Masjid remark

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

On the directives of District Returning Officer (DRO) Sudama Khade, an FIR was registered on Monday against BJP Lok Sabha candidate Pragya Thakur over her contentious remarks in connection to Babri mosque demolition. The DRO after going through the reply of Pragya,

found that it was not satisfactory and thus adjudged that the remarks breached the model election code of conduct.

The officer had earlier issued a notice to Thakur and had sought a reply on the matter. Not finding the reply satisfactory, the officer has directed Assistant Returning Officer to lodge an FIR against the BJP candidate.

Thakur speaking to media persons on Saturday had boasted her involvement in Babri mosque demolition and added it was a matter of pride for her.

Earlier, she had received an EC notice in connection to her remarks on late Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare. Sadhvi has invited massive criticism for her remarks nationally.

'Do and Learn' prog to begin from April 24

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The educational programme 'Do and Learn' organised by Indra Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya will begin from April 24. The programme is being organised with an aim to introduce participants to various arts of the country.

This year, training will be provided in Traditional Gond Painting (From April 24 to May 1, 2019); Place-Introductory Gallery, TH Open Air Exhibition, IGRMS, Bhil Painting (May 2 to 9, 2019); Place-Introductory Gallery, TH Open Air Exhibition, IGRMS, Sawara Painting of Odisha (May 10 to 17, 2019); Place-Introductory Gallery, TH Open Air Exhibition, IGRMS, Clay Art of Manipur (May 18 to 25, 2019); Place-Modelling Workshop, IGRMS, Clay Modelling (May 26 to June 2, 2019); Place-Modelling Workshop,

UNDER THIS PROGRAMME, ALL THE REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE TRADITIONAL GOND PAINTING PROGRAM STARTING FROM APRIL 24 WILL BE GIVEN TRAINING BY GOND PAINTER RAM SINGH

IGRMS), Tribal Jewelry Making of Bhil tribes (June 3 to 10, 2019); Place-Introductory Gallery, TH Open Air Exhibition, IGRMS), Maandne Painting of Meena Tribes of Rajasthan (May 12 to 9, 2019); Place-Introductory Gallery, TH Open Air Exhibition, IGRMS) and Digital Photography (May 20 to 27, 2019; Place-Museum Premises).

Under this programme, all the registered participants who are participating in the

traditional Gond painting program starting from April 24 will be given training by Gond painter, Ram Singh.

Children from the age group of 8 to 14 years can participate in the programme. The registration form for this programme could be obtained from gate no 1 IGRMS, by paying ₹10 from April 20. The registration fee is ₹250. Participants will be selected on first come first get basis. For further information contact on 0755-2526555 or 2526548.

Seven gamblers arrested, 1Lakh cash seized

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Gandhi Nagar police has arrested seven gamblers and seized ₹1 lakh cash from their possession on Monday. The gamblers were nabbed from BDA Colony. Police said that acting on a tip off, a house in BDA Quarters was raided and arrested the seven playing gambling and seized ₹1.16 lakh cash from their possession.

Police received information that gamblers, with big bets, are gambling and on the receipt of the information, a house in Shahid Bhagat Singh Colony of BDA was raided.

Police said that in the raid, the gamblers were found gambling. The raid was conducted after receiving information of suspicious activities for the past few days and based on the tip off a raid was conducted and around ₹1.16 lakh cash were recovered from their possession.

The nabbed gamblers were identified as Mohan Agrawal, Mithun Agrawal, Gyan Singh Bhadraji, Mukesh Gupta, Sonu Prajapati, Diwakar Gupta and Navin Agrawal. Police said that few of the nabbed accused do not hold past crime records and are involved in businesses. In the raid, apart from the cash, police have recovered mobile phones and transactions worth lakhs of rupees. The police have registered a case under Gambling Act and started further investigation.

Meanwhile, Shahpura police has nabbed a man transporting liquor illegally from Indra Nagar and seized liquor worth ₹19,000 on Sunday. There were 320 bottles of country made wine. The man was identified as Rameshwar Dhakad.

The police have registered a case under section 34 of the Excise Act and started further investigation.

International Earth Day

Poster making competition organised with full fervour



STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhopal and Madhya Pradesh Tiger Foundation Society, Bhopal, jointly organised a Poster Making Competition on the occasion of International Earth Day on April 22.

This competition was organised in two categories- School and Open. Students from class 8 to 10 participated in School Category and all age group participated in Open Category. The theme of the school category was "Protect our species" and the theme of Open category were "Save nature & nature will protect for buying grocery at around 10 pm. The search for the two accused has been started.

future" and "Little known but important species".

A total of 98 students of class 8 to 10 from Sharda Vidya Mandir, Bhopal; MSB Educational Institute, Bhopal, Army Public School, Bhopal, IES Public School, Bhopal, Hema Higher Secondary School, Bhopal; Sardar Patel Public School, Misrod, Bhopal, DPSC, Shihore; Govt Subhash Excellence School, Bhopal, Arvind School, Bhopal; Bal Bhawan School, Bhopal; Kendriya Vidyalaya No.-2, Sagar Public School, Bhopal; Carmel Convent School, Bhopal, St Joseph Co-ed, Arera Colony, Bhopal, St Xevior Co-ed School, Bhopal, Pragya School, Kolar Road, Bhopal and Umang Welfare Society, Bhopal par-

ticipated in School Category and 81 participants participated in Open Category.

Participation certificates were provided to participants on the same day after the competition and prizes will be distributed on forthcoming World Environment Day- 2019.

During the programme Scientist-in-Charge of museum Manoj Kumar Sharma, Rajnish Kumar Singh, Deputy Forest Conservator, Forest Department, Madhya Pradesh and Jayesh from Madhya Pradesh Tiger Foundation Society, Bhopal were present.

Sushil Kumar Chourey, Stenographer-II (Hindi) was the Coordinator of the programme.

34-year-old man attacked by miscreants with sharp-edged weapons

The victim had opposed lewd comments on his wife by the accused

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 34-year-old man was attacked by miscreants with sharp-edged weapons after he opposed passing lewd comment on his wife at Kavdas Colony under Gautam Nagar

police station late in the evening on Sunday.

According to the police, the victim, Jitendra Ahirwar, was attacked by miscreant Vishnu with a sharp-edged weapon. The injured victim was rushed to a nearby hospital where he

was reportedly stable.

In the initial investigation, it was found that Jitendra's wife and his niece were sitting outside his house when the accused teased his wife by passing lewd comment which she opposed but the accused entered into verbal spate and when Jitendra was informed by his niece, he came out of the house but the accused continued to fight and rushed towards his house to bring a sharp-edged weapon and stabbed Jitendra in his chest and in a bid

to save himself, the victim also sustained injuries in his hand and went unconscious.

The victim lodged a complaint with Gautam Nagar police and based on the complaint and after the preliminary investigation, the police have registered a case under section 307 of the IPC and have started further investigation. The accused is yet to be arrested.

Crime record of the accused would be investigated. The accused and the victim work as labour. The family and

friends of the accused would be questioned to determine the whereabouts of the absconding accused.

Meanwhile, a19-year-old girl was molested by two miscreants at Gandhi Nagar in the night on Sunday. The victim was molested when she had gone out to bring grocery from a nearby shop. Police have booked Saurabh and Sunil for molesting victim who had gone for buying grocery at around 10 pm. The search for the two accused has been started.

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6. PAN Card
7. Smart Card (Issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour)
8. MNREGA Job Card
9. Health Insurance Smart Card (Issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour)
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PHASE III

APRIL

23

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'Love Ek Tarfa' staged

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

When someone falls in love but, what if it is one sided love? The pain of one sided love was showcased in a Hindi play 'Love Ek Tarfa'. The play was staged at Shaheed Bhavan Auditorium on Monday.

The play marked the conclusion of three-day theatre fest Samantar Theatre Festival. The fest was all about plays which showcase the reality of society and an individual's life.

The Hindi play Love Ek Tarfa which was staged on Monday. Directed by Adarsh Sharma, the play was brilliantly performed by the artists of Trikarshi Theatre Troupe Bhopal.

Displaying the ups and down in love life, the pain, the happiness and all of those emotions, a person feels being in love, the play also highlighted the dark truth of society.

It is said that love is one of the best feeling a person can ever have, but what if this feeling turns out to be nightmare. Or what if this feeling brings out the bad instead of good from a person?

Director Adarsh Sharma raising the question, portrayed the grief and pain of one sided



A scene from the play 'Ek Tarfa Pyar' staged at Shaheed Bhavan on Monday marking the last day of Samantar Theatre Fest. Pioneer Photo

love brilliantly.

The play surrounds the life of a young boy. This young boy falls in love with a pretty and beautiful girl. He tries his best to impress her and at last they became friends. He believes that

friendship is just one step towards

love. But, contradicting his believes, she friend zoned him.

It was not less than a nightmare for him. The rest of the story narrated about how he overcame the pain of Love Ek

Tarfa.

Beautifully designed, the play was splendidly performed by the artists. Giving away the message it had, the play was enjoyed by the audience a lot.

Set at the rustic backdrop of historical shopping hub of

Bagh Utsav-2019 enralls shoppers at Gauhar Mahal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The shopaholics of the city are enjoying shopping of Bagh prints at the 'Bagh Utsav 2019'. Apart from traditional dress materials, the Bagh Utsav is captivating the interest of buyers for Bagh print on linen cloth.

Notably, for the first time the organizers have brought a colourful collection of bagh prints on linen. Usually, the bagh prints are available on cotton dresses, but this time not only the designs are attractive, but those who love linen material have a choice too.

The bagh utsav is evoking a good response by the Bhopalites as it exhibits the rarest collection in bagh prints. Looking into the wonderful response from the Bhopalites, the fair is extended for three more days. The exhibition cum sale will now conclude on Thursday.

Set at the rustic backdrop of historical shopping hub of

the city Gauhar Mahal the exhibition cum sale is adorned with beautiful bagh printed dresses, bed spreads and more. The vibrant colours like maroon, red, sea green, ocean blue are available at the exhibition.

While informing about the exhibition cum sale, organiser Umar Farrukh Khatri said, "This year we have received an overwhelming response by the Bhopalites and it is a tremendous experience. People are more interested in buying the cotton wears and the newly introduced bagh on linen material."

Talking about the work they do on bagh prints, he said, "The specialty of our work which makes it different from others is that we hardly repeat the designs. Besides, we try and print bagh on almost all kinds of dress materials including Maheshwari and Chanderi."

The buyers are attracted to the different motifs printed over dress materials.

IN BRIEF

7,859 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED TILL APRIL 21: CEO

Bhopal: Chief Electoral Officer VL Kantha Rao has informed that 7,859 complaints were received between January 01, 2019 and April 21 and out of these complaints, 7,470 complaints have already been redressed. Rao further informed that 651 complaints were received online from the common man and out of these complaints 618 have already been redressed. Similarly, 4,573 complaints were received at District Level Contact Centers and 4,396 complaints have been resolved. Total 534 complaints were received through the National Contact Centre of the Election Commission of India and out of these complaints 516 have been redressed. Likewise, 2,101 complaints were received through State Level Contact Centre and out of these, 1,938 complaints have been redressed.

AIR AMBULANCE AVAILABLE FOR SECURITY PERSONNEL

Bhopal: Arrangement of an ambulance has been made by the Election Commission of India to provide prompt medical facility and safe exit to security personnel and election workers, in case an emergency situation arises while performing the election duty. Air ambulance will be available in Jabalpur during the first phase of voting on April 28-29.

40,955 NBW ISSUED TILL APRIL 21: CEO

Bhopal: Chief Electoral Officer VL Kantha Rao said that since the implementation of Model Code of Conduct on March 10, 2019, 40,955 non-bailable warrants have been issued for law and security arrangement in the state till April 21, 2019. During this period, 2.61 lakh warrants were deposited in the police stations. According to vulnerability mapping, one lakh 07 vulnerable areas were identified. Potential 5,634 anti-social elements have been identified and prohibitory action has been taken in 5,307 cases. 12,728 criminal polling booths have been identified in the state.

STATE LEVEL MEDIA CERTIFICATION PANEL GETS 71 ADS

Bhopal: Chief Electoral Officer VL Kantha Rao said that the State Level Media Certification Committee has received 71 advertisements for pre-certification for Lok Sabha elections. The committee has given permission for pre-certification of 52 advertisements. These include 39 videos and 13 audio advertisements. The committee has not granted permission for the transmission of 15 advertisements. The committee has received 8 appeals.

SPL CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED FOR DUPLICATE VOTER ID

Bhopal: Chief Electoral Officer VL Kantha Rao informed that in order to provide duplicate voter identity cards to voters eligible in Lok Sabha elections, a special campaign was launched in all the districts from March 23 to April 8, 2019. During the total 6.16 lakh applications were received. Of these voter identity cards of 6.04 lakh applications have been prepared. Action on the remaining 11,744 applications is in progress. Duplicate voter IDs and new voter IDs for the 1st and 2nd phase of Parliamentary constituencies have been distributed in the State. The IDs for the 3rd and 4th phase will be distributed by April 30.

43 STUDENTS OF SISTEC QUALIFY FOR 'GOOGLE CODE JAM'

Bhopal: As many as 43 students of Sagar Institute of Science and Technology (SISTec), Department of Computer Science & Engineering have qualified in 'Google Code Jam 2019'. Google Code Jam is a prestigious international competition of Google USA for software professionals in which 70000 professionals participated worldwide this year. It is organized to identify top engineering talent for potential of employment at Google. Participants as competitors work their way through a series of online algorithmic puzzles to earn a chance to win the championship title and a prize of \$ 15,000. Siddharth Sudhir Kumar Agrawal, Managing Director, Sagar Group, Dr. Keshwendra Chaudhary, Principal, SISTec, Gauri Nagesh and Dr. Deshmukh, Principal, SISTec, Ratibad congratulated the students for their selection in qualifying round and appreciated the efforts of faculties for intensive lab based trainings.

6th phase polls: 118 nomination papers of 84 candidates received



An NRI Alok Kumar, contesting from Bhopal constituency as an Independent candidate submits his nomination papers here on Monday. Pioneer photo

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

For the 6th phase election under Lok Sabha Elections-2019, 118 nomination papers of 84 candidates have been received so far. On the first day for the 7th phase elections, 3 candidates submitted 3 nomination papers.

In the 6th phase, 8 out of total 29 parliamentary constituencies that is Morena, Bhind (SC), Gwalior, Guna, Sagar, Vidisha, Bhopal and Rajgarh are included. From the April 16 date of notification till date, 19 nominations of 11 candidates of Morena, 7 of 10 candidates from Bhind (SC), 15 for 22 candidates in Gwalior, 9 for 12 in Guna, 7 of 7 candidates in Sagar, 9 of 12 candidates in Vidisha, 19 of 16 candidates in Bhopal and 17 nominations of 10 candidates in Rajgarh have been received out of these parliamentary constituencies.

Today, on the fourth day, 12 nominations of 6 candidates in Morena parliamentary constituency, 6 of 9 candidates in Bhind (SC), 8 nom-

inations of 11 candidates in Gwalior, 2 of 2 candidates in Guna, 7 of 7 in Sagar, 2 of 5 candidates in Vidisha, 12 nominations of 12 candidates in Bhopal and 8 nomination papers of 5 candidates in Rajgarh have been received. The notification was issued today for the 7th phase election under Lok Sabha Elections-2019. In this phase, 8 out of total 29 parliamentary seats in the state will go to poll. These include Dewas (SC), Ujjain (SC), Mandasaur, Ratlam (ST), Dhar (ST), Indore, Khargone (ST) and Khandwa. On the first day of presenting the nomination papers, three nomination papers of 3 candidates were received for the Indore parliamentary constituency.

After scrutiny a total of 110 candidates are in the electoral fray for election in 7 parliamentary constituencies in the 5th phase in State.

Out of these, there are 14 candidates in Tikamgarh (SC), 15 in Damoh, 17 in Khajuraho, 21 in Satna, 23 in Rewa, 11 in Hoshangabad and 9 in Betul.



BJP candidate for Bhopal Lok Sabha constituency Sadhvi Prayaga Singh Thakur comes out after filing her nomination paper at district collector office in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer Photo

MPSEB takes action against 492 negligent employees and officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Joint efforts by energy department and power distribution companies have reduced significantly the problem of power tripping in the State.

The MPSEB has taken action against 492 employees and officials who were negligent and involved in irregularities in supplying power.

for power tripping by using wires in the power supply lines.

In Schore and Bhopal districts FIR has been registered against two persons each and in Rajgarh and Hoshangabad districts FIR has been registered against one person each.

Additional Chief Secretary Energy IPC Kesari said that due to thundery activities and storm and other natural disturbances on April 16- 10387, on April 17- 6167, on April 18 -2186, on April 19-1639 and on April 20- 1500 power tripping cases were reported in the

state.

On April 16 during the power tripping across all the feeders 14443 hours of power supply was interrupted while on April 20 the power supply was interrupted for 894 hours.

The demand for power is gradually increasing. The maximum power demand in the month of April 2017-18 was 8177 MW which increased to 8434 in the year 2018-19 and in the year 2019-20 the demand peaked to 9443 on April 21 which was catered for at MPSEB.

JAYS declares its candidates for two seats

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Posing a threat to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the tribal outfit-Jai Adivasi Yuva Shakti (JAYS) joins the fray by declaring its candidates in tribal dominated two constituencies.

JAYS which has certain followers in the tribal pockets of Malwa-Nimar region was in touch with both the BJP and the Congress for four seats but none offered them a convincing response so they decided to field their own candidates.

Screening committee of JAYS - a progressive youths organisation of tribals, met at Dhar on Sunday and named Mahendra Kannauj from Dhar and Kamleshwar Dodiya from Ratlam-Jhabua seat. Organisation candidate Bhusin Pendram has been fielded by Gondwana Gantantra Party from Betul and JAYS would extend support.

The organisation is still indecisive on candidature from Khargone seat and a decision is likely in a couple of days, said Antim Mujalde, a senior functionary of JAYS.

He claimed JAYS had contributed in formation of Congress Government last year in MP and wanted the party to field four of its members but the grand old party never offered a convincing reply.

The candidates announced however are different from those finalised by the national convener.

Dr Alawa who is an MLA from Manawar in Dhar could not be reached for comments on the matter.

Earlier, Alawa had clarified that his organisation was seeking four tickets for tribal youths.

Drawing competition held to observe World Earth Day at RSC

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The students of the State Institute of Education observed the World Earth Day here on Monday at Regional Science Centre, Bhopal. A drawing competition was organised to observe the day at center's premises.

Notably, the World Earth Day is observed every year on April 22 that focuses on the environmental changes and other evils harming the planet Earth. Earth Day is celebrated to proclaim that the human beings are very much concerned about the rapid deterioration of the environment and relative aspects.

This year internationally it is observed on theme 'Protect Our Species'.

To observe this day as a grand event, the Regional Science Centre, Bhopal circle organised a drawing competition. Notably, in the competition children from various schools participated.

The students painted their perceptions on paper about

saving the planet Earth from pollution and other damages.

The competition was divided into three categories Primary school that included classes from first to fourth, next category Middle school included students from the classes fifth to eighth and the last category High school included classes ninth to twelfth. The topic for all the categories was the theme of World Earth Day.

The children wonderfully depicted the dangers harming the planet and also the uniqueness of the planet was showcased through the variations of colours.

The Drawing Contest was followed by a Popular Science Lecture in which around 150 students took part. The popular lecture was delivered by Prof. Suchitra Banerjee from Institute for Excellence in Higher Education, Bhopal.

In her address Banerjee elaborated the extinct, endemic and endangered species with special emphasis on our biodiversity.



Renowned art critic Vinay Upadhyay was felicitated with KN Panikar Memorial Award at Itshkar Theatre Fest. He was felicitated by Director of MPS Alok Chatterjee and writer Santosh Chaudhary at Ravindra Bhawan on Monday. Pioneer Photo

MPSD students to present 'Mann Ki Trishna' today

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The students of Madhya Pradesh School of Drama (MPSD) are all set to present the Mann Ki Trishna before the Bhopalites. As the MPSD students learn something new at the beginning of the session, this time they will be presenting the 'Mann Ki Trishna' on Tuesday.

Manoj Nair, the director of Shadow Group is here to teach the students of MPSD about Jataka Tales. The special lectures by Manoj Nair began with the students of batch 2018-19. It is to be noted that the workshop conducted by Nair that continued till Monday. The final rehearsals for the play were held here on Monday. The MPSD students will present the Mann Ki Trishna on Tuesday at MPSD Auditorium.

During the entire work-

shop, the students were taught about the folk tradition and how to present the character on stage with efficiency. Not only this, but during the workshop, the students were given information on different dance forms. The final rehearsals of the play were held with a lot of enthusiasm at MPSD.

It is to be noted that the Jataka tales are a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of Gautama Buddha in both human and animal form. The future Buddha may appear as a king, an outcast, a god, an elephant but, in whatever form, he exhibits some virtue that the tale thereby inculcates.

Often, Jataka tales include an extensive cast of characters who interact and get into various kinds of trouble whereupon the Buddha character intervenes to resolve all the problems and bring about a

happy ending.

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25-year-old youth commits suicide

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 25-year-old man committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling at his Ghora Nakkas residence under Hanumanganji police station area late in the night on Sunday.

The deceased, Sunny Panthi, was found hanging with the ceiling and was rushed to nearby hospital where he was declared dead. The deceased had returned to his house from a wedding function at Shiv Nagar.

In the initial investigation, police found that the deceased along with his family had gone to attend a wedding ceremony at Shiv Nagar. After that, the deceased returned from the ceremony without family members and committed suicide.

The family members returned late in the night and found him hanging. Police has not found any suicide note. The deceased used to work at a cosmetic shop and was married few months ago. The reason behind the suicide would be investigated.

Police today was sent for the post-mortem and a case under section 174 of the CrPC was lodged.

Meanwhile, a 25-year-old woman committed suicide by setting herself ablaze at Singarghoshi under Koh-e-Fiza police station area on Sunday.

Police said that the deceased Laxmi Yadav was rushed to hospital after she sustained burn injuries where she died during treatment. Body was sent for the post mortem and a case under section 174 of the CrPC was registered.

Youth in Cong rally puts Digvijaya in awkward situation

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Congress candidate in Bhopal Digvijaya Singh faced some awkward moments during an election rally in Bhopal on Monday when a youth reached the stage and started lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi right beside Singh. The Congress leaders immediately pushed away the youth from the stage.

The incident was witnessed when Singh was addressing a public rally at Eentkheedi area on Bhopal outskirts.

As the former Madhya Pradesh chief minister referred PM Modi slaming him on his promises on black money, he asked, "They used to say the black money would return, everyone would receive ₹15 lakh in bank account, so how many of you have received ₹15 lakh in your accounts, questioned Singh.

As many did not respond, to the surprise of Singh a youth raised his hand in the air.

Smiling, Singh asked the youth to come on to the stage and offer his introduction and details of bank accounts saying they would offer him a public welcome as he had received ₹15 lakh in the account.

As the youth reached the stage, Singh handed the mike over to him and in no time the youth in his 20s started speak-

ing on surgical strike saying, "Modji carried out surgical strike and eliminated terrorists."

Before the youth could say anything further, Singh quickly snatched the mike away from him and a Congress leader got hold of the youth and pushed him away from the stage in a flash.

An upset Singh shouted, "You are talking about surgical strike, did you get the money?" In the next moment, Singh controlled his temper and smilingly said, "See, he is a big liar. Modi is also a liar and his followers are liars too," said Singh.

However, the party workers kept surrounded the youth for around 15 minutes and he was not allowed to leave. Singh continued his address but kept going back to the youth making a mockery of his claims.

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MP: 1.19 crore voters will vote in State's second phase

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In the fifth phase of Lok Sabha Election-2019 (State's second phase), a total of 1.19 crore voters will exercise their right to vote. Of them, 18,822 service voters will use their vote through postal ballot. During the second phase, voting process will be held in total 15,240 centres.

Total 16.47 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in Parliamentary constituency 06 - Tikamgarh (SC) out of which 42,208 new voters are from 18-19 age group. There are total 2,062 polling stations in this parliamentary area. A total of 17.68 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in parliamentary constituency 07 - Damoh, which includes 51,534 new voters of the 18-19 age group. There are total 2,295 polling stations in this parliamentary area.

A total of 18.42 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in parliamentary constituency 08-Khajuraho, which includes 57,974 new voters of the 18-19 age group. There are total 2,279 polling stations in this parliamentary area.

A total of 15.75 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in parliamentary constituency 09-

Satna, which includes 46 thousand 829 new voters of the 18-19 age group. There are total 1,986 polling stations in this parliamentary area. A total of 16.79 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in parliamentary constituency 10- Rewa, which includes 44,005 new voters of the 18-19 age group. There are total 2,013 polling stations in this parliamentary area.

A total of 17.06 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in parliamentary constituency 17-Hoshangabad, which includes 47,403 new voters of the 18-19 age group. There are total 2,250 polling stations in this parliamentary area.

A total of 17.37 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in parliamentary constituency 29-Betul, which includes 55,525 new voters of the 18-19 age group. There are total 2,355 polling stations in this parliamentary area.

A total of 17.06 lakh voters will exercise their franchise in Parliamentary constituency 17-Hoshangabad



Students display posters at a poster making competition as a part of voter awareness campaign at Motilal Vidyasaheb Mahavidyalaya (MVM) in Bhopal on Monday

Pioneer photo

Dynasty politics rules the roost in Haryana

NISHU MAHAJAN ■ CHANDIGARH

lood is thicker than water". The influential political families in Jalandhar-Haryana are swearing by this dictum in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

Cutting across political spectrum, the family lines remain a dominant factor in Haryana this election. The young generation of three famed Lals of Haryana—Devi Lal, Bhajan Lal and Bansilal—who served as Chief

Minister of Haryana, are shugging it out in the general elections to preserve their political legacy.

In Haryana, five of the 10 Lok Sabha constituencies have at least one member of a political family contesting in the polls. And, be it BJP, Congress, Indian National Lok Dal or Jannayak Janta Party, all major political players have given ticket to a slew of dynasts to take on their rivals in the election.

In fact, political dynasties in Haryana are not a new phe-

nomemon and this time also, sons of three political heavyweights have been handed out tickets to make poll debut.

Hisar is one unique Lok Sabha constituency, which is witnessing the "mother of all poll dynasties" with three political dynasties in the fray. These included the outgoing MP and JJP nominee Dushyant Chautala and political greenhorn-BJP nominee, IAS Briendra Singh and Congress candidate Bhavya Bisnoi.

2019 to be Cong, and Capt's last election in Punjab: Sukhbir

PNS ■ JALANDHAR

Lambasting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "highly irresponsible statement" on India's nuclear arsenal, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Monday appealed to the people to support the Congress party's 'jung' for protecting the future of the nation, which the BJP-led government at the Centre had plunged into a state of ruin and devastation.

Kick-starting the process of filing of nominations by the Congress candidates in the State from Jalandhar, where he accompanied Punjab Congress candidate Santokh Singh Chaudhary to file nomination papers at the District Administrative Complex, the Chief Minister told media persons that the Prime Minister's threat to trigger a nuclear war, clear-

Capt dubs PM's nuke remark 'highly irresponsible'

PNS ■ JALANDHAR

ly as a tool to be re-elected, was highly responsible. "This is a jung (war) for the future of the nation. We are fighting a party that made tall promises but failed to deliver on even a single one of them," the Chief Minister said while addressing a public meeting in Chaudhary's favour at the PUDA grounds after filing the nominations.

Capt Amarinder lashed out at the BJP for ruining the nation with its anti-people policies, such as demonetization, Goods and Services Tax (GST) etc. Every day, army and paramilitary personnel are dying in the line of duty, and yet the Prime Minister has the audacity to take credit for their actions, he added.

The Chief Minister came down heavily on the BJP for giving a ticket to Sadhvi Prayaga, who has been opening around making divi-

sive and hate speeches, and stand and work towards mit-

ting the problem of the people.

The Congress in Punjab, he pointed out, was continuously working for the betterment of the people and working for upliftment of all sections of the society.

He cited the examples of farm loan waiver for 10.25 lakh marginal and small farmers, as well as landless labourers, and the facilitation of youth to get employment/self-employment as part of his government's flag-

ship 'Ghar Ghar Rozgar aur

Pointing out that unemployment rate was at an all-time high, Capt Amarinder ridiculed Modi's promise of 'achche din', saying that "achche din us din aayenge jis din enna da bhog payega" (good days will come only when their rule is brought to an end)

insulting the men in uniform. "Such people are deliberately being given tickets by BJP in order to divide the people of India," he said, asserting that the people would not allow the ruling party to destroy the nation's peaceful fabric to promote their petty political interests.

The government's job is to ensure the welfare of the people, not divide them, said Capt Amarinder, adding that the government must under-

standing the problem of the people. Unfortunately, the government cannot give jobs to everyone and was trying, therefore, to get more and more industry and private enterprise into the state for the creation of employment opportunities, the Chief Minister said.

He indicated the establishment of an industrial circle in Jalandhar to bring in new industries and promote further industrial development.

Akalis playing into ISI hands by sabotaging sacrilege probe: Tewari

PNS ■ ROPAR

Congress candidate from Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Chandrapur Sahib Manish Tewari on Monday alleged that the Akali Dal leaders were playing into the hands of Pakistan and its notorious intelligence agency, ISI,

the Press Programme organized by the Ropar Press Club, said that the Akalis were misinforming the Election Commission of India by complaining against the officers involved in investigation.

"The Bargadi sacrilege was the handiwork of those who wanted to get the officers removed from the investigations and getting the details of the sacrilege," he asked.

Questioning the locus standi of the Akali candidate Prem Singh Chandumajra in describing him as an "outsider", Tewari said: "Let Mr Chandumajra explain whether he

nothing to his credit that he could claim he had done during the last five years as an MP, he is trying to divert the issue," he said.

At the same time, Tewari challenged Chandumajra to debate as whose contribution towards Punjab was greater. "I am a third generation Punjabi who has been involved with politics starting from my grandfather Sardar Tirath Singh Guram, who was a Minister, my father Prof Vishwanath Tewari who was an eminent Punjabi scholar and writer and an MP and now myself," he said, while asking Chandumajra to tell Punjabis what was his role in Punjab when his father (Prof Tewari) was fighting to save Punjabiyat and in the process, laid down his life.

On the occasion, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) spokesperson Satbir Singh Ahluwalia also joined the Congress.

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Women cover themselves from scorching heat in Bhopal on Monday

Pioneer Photo

JJP fields Digvijay Chautala from Sonipat constituency

NISHU MAHAJAN ■ CHANDIGARH

A day after Congress sprang a surprise announcing candidature of former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda from Sonipat parliamentary constituency, Jannayak Janta Party has fielded Digvijay Chautala, a fourth generation politician from the Chautala clan from the constituency.

announced three more candidates for the general election. The candidates included Digvijay Chautala from Sonipat, Jai Bhagwan Sharma from Kurukshetra and Mehmoood Khan from Gurugram.

Founded by Ajay Chautala, father of Digvijay Chautala, the JJP is contesting on seven seats while the AAP is contesting on three seats in the state.

Digvijay, 27, will be taking on Congress veteran Bhupinder Singh Hooda, who is more than double his age and the outgoing MP and BJP's nominee

with two Jats including Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Digvijay Chautala and a Brahmin candidate in the fray, Sonipat will be witnessing a fierce three-cornered electoral battle this time.

Notably, Hooda who was hopeful of retaining Jat dominated Sonipat and Rohtak seats in 2014 had lost Sonipat due to anti-incumbency factor coupled with the Modi wave.

Meanwhile, the JJP has fielded Mehmoood Khan, who retired as global leader of Unilever Innovation Process

Development, from Gurugram, and former Zila Parishad member Jat Bhagwan Sharma alias DD Sharma from Kurukshetra. The lone Muslim candidate from Gurugram, Mehmoood Khan is pitted against the BJP's nominee and Union Minister Rao Inderjit Singh and Congress Captain Ajay Yadav.

A day before, the AAP-JJP had announced the candidature of AAP state chief Naveen Jalandhar from Faridabad. Ishhind is considered a confidant of AAP national chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Coast Guard on alert after Easter blasts in Lanka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of the serial blasts in Sri Lanka on Sunday, the Indian Coast Guard has intensified patrolling to prevent terrorists responsible for the deadly act from escaping from there and sneaking into India through the sea route. The precautionary step was taken on Sunday itself after the enormity of the situation became clear and more fast patrol boats besides surveillance planes and helicopters were deployed.

Maintaining high alert, the Coast Guard has mounted round the clock vigil all along the Indian maritime boundary with Sri Lanka to thwart any attempt by the terrorists to avoid the security dragnet in Sri Lanka and infiltrate into India through sea, officials said here on Monday. They also said all ships from Coast Guard stations at Tuticorin, Mandapam and Karaikal were pressed into service for heightened surveillance along the sensitive sea lanes. Medium range maritime surveillance aircraft were providing aerial support to the ships in an effort to detect any hostile movement and alert the patrol boats for interception. Vigil was increased soon after Sri Lanka said a local extremist group National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) may be responsible for the blasts

which claimed nearly 290 lives. Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena declared a nationwide emergency on Monday. The preventive measure in India was also taken to avoid a repeat of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks in 2008 when Pakistani terrorists managed to reach the metropolis through sea and launch a series of attacks in which 166 people were killed. There were concerns that terrorists escaping from Sri Lanka

may try to engineer terror attacks in India, sources said. Keeping this in view, security was ramped up around all defence and other vital installations including naval bases in coastal region, they said. Moreover, all the stake holders in coastal security including the local police increased patrolling at all landing points in the coastal region especially in Tamil Nadu and deployed security pickets to prevent infiltration.



India alerted Colombo 2 weeks ago of terror attack

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Over two weeks before the deadly suicide bombings in Sri Lanka, India had alerted Colombo of possible terror hits at churches and preliminary findings suggest the slain suicide bomber and chief of the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ) Hashim alias Zabran Hashim had attempted to carry out blast at the Indian embassy and at the US embassy earlier this month. However, given the tight security at the two embassies, the bomber decided to hit three luxury hotels and two major churches taking a toll of over 200 and injuring about 500 others.

Following the inputs of the impending terror strike, the Lankan police had also issued an alert to the effect but could not assess the magnitude of the problem that was in the making. Initial assessments here suggest the serial suicide bombings in and around Colombo were essentially an outcome of Islamist versus Buddhist conflict.

Hashim is said to have undergone treatment earlier for mental illness and wanted to become a social worker in 2011. However, Hashim joined religious groups like the Sri Lanka Thowheed Jamat and subsequently got in touch with the ISIS especially those based in the UAE and went on to become the chief of Khorasan

Sri Lanka of ISIS. Estimates here suggest Hashim has a follower base of nearly 400 radicals and the attack on the churches could be a tactical ploy to deflect attention of the aggrieved Buddhists against the Muslims who are lesser in number in the island nation than the former, sources said. Pakistan's covert agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Colombo might have provided facilitation for logistics supplies to Hashim through its operatives like the 26/11 attacker Yayaab and its humanitarian assistance arm Jamat-ud-Dawah that has been present in Sri Lanka since the 2005 tsunami. The JUD had purchased a number of orphans for the purpose of radicalization from Sri Lanka and other countries hit by tsunami. The terror targets which included three luxury hotels-Shangri-La, Kingsbury and Cinnamon Grand-and St Anthony Church Zion Church and St Sebastian church were identified after the failed bids at the Indian and American missions in Colombo.

Blasts could have TN repercussions: Security experts

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The repercussions of Sunday's serial blasts in Colombo that claimed more than 200 lives could have a major effect in Tamil Nadu, according to intelligence and security experts in the State. Thowheed Jamath, an Islamic terrorist organisation, the name of which is linked to the serial blasts in Sri Lanka, has a strong presence in Tamil Nadu. The open sea between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka offers immense scope to the volunteers of this organisation to shift from one place to another. It is an open secret in Tamil Nadu that all anti-national and extremist organisations work in unison. The fact that Thowheed

Jamath is a name which causes fear and terror in the minds of the people was made known by the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Jayalalitha herself while speaking to reporters in January 2013. "There are more than 7.5 lakh active Thowheed Jamath activists in Tamil Nadu," Jayalalitha had told a Press meet specially convened by her to explain the reasons behind banning Viswaroopam, a Tamil movie produced by Kamal Haasan. About 24 Islamic organisations had expressed their opposition to the release of the movie because they alleged that the film contained anti-Islam references and they wanted such scenes to be deleted from the film.

Of the scenes were not deleted, the organisations, led by Thowheed Jamath had threatened to stage demonstrations in front of the 524 theatres where the movie was to be released. "We need 56, 440 policemen to ensure security and law and order in these theatres on a round-the-clock basis and hence we decided to effect the ban in the movie under Section 144 of the IPC," Jayalalitha had told during the press briefing. She said she was very much worried about the law and order situation at that time as there were many instances of throwing of petrol bombs and vandalising film theatres. But the frequent shuffling and transfer of intelligence officials (both in State and Central

services) is coming in the way of tracking the real activities of Thowheed Jamath which are shrouded in mysteries, according to insiders in these departments. Since then the strength of Thowheed Jamath has increased manifold in Tamil Nadu. Though the organisation is not visibly active in the State, it is very much present in areas of conflict between caste Hindus and Dalits. The Thowheed Jamath is actively propagating Islam among the Dalits by distributing the Holy books and religious literature. A status report prepared by a Chennai based intelligence think tank for the union home ministry has this to tell about the state of affairs in Tamil Nadu.

IN SHORT

LOKPAL TO WORK FROM 5-STAR LUXURY HOTEL

New Delhi: The country's first Lokpal, the anti-corruption ombudsman, will work from the five-star luxury hotel, The Ashok, in Delhi. The Lokpal chairperson P.C Ghose, all of its eight members and support staff are being allocated space in the hotel premises.

SC REFUSES TO ENTERTAIN PLEA ON BRIBING IN POLLS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea which alleged that people were being bribed on a massive scale for the Lok Sabha polls in Tamil Nadu. A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said it was not inclined to hear the matter since the elections in the state were already over.

NGO AROH CELEBRATES WORLD EARTH DAY

New Delhi: NGO AROH Foundation celebrated World Earth Day by organising seminars, rallies and competitions in schools and villages in different States. Neelam Gupta, president AROH Foundation said, "World Earth Day is a day in which millions of people across the globe participate to accelerate work towards conservation and sustainability."

PMS'S COPTER ROW: OFFICER SENT BACK TO KARNATAKA

New Delhi: The Election Commission general observer, Mohammed Mohsin (1996-batch IAS officer), who was suspended for checking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's helicopter in Odisha's Sambalpur in violation of norms for dealing with SPG protectees, has been sent back to Karnataka.

SC SEEKS REPLY OVER RESTRICTION ON TRAFFIC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and Jammu & Kashmir on a plea seeking quashing of an order which restricts civilian traffic two days a week on the national highway (NH) stretch from Udhampur to Baramulla for movement of security forces.

Explain why infiltration, casualties highest under BJP Govt: PC to Jaitley

New Delhi: After Arun Jaitley criticised him for his recent remarks on Pakistan, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram Monday hit back saying that the Union minister must explain why infiltration, the number of infiltrators and casualties last year were highest under the BJP government. Slamming former Union minister P Chidambaram's statement that "India must 'change its behaviour' towards Pakistan, Jaitley said, "Why Mr. P Chidambaram is siding with Pakistan by asking India to change its behaviour? Should we remain victim of terrorism & not do anything?" PTI

BJP says Rahul 'liar of first order' after he expresses regret in SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the BJP demanded an apology from Rahul Gandhi and called him "liar of the first order" in public opinion after the Congress president expressed regret in the Lok Sabha, the Congress on Monday over his remarks in connection with the Rafale judgment, the main opposition party described the saffron interpretation as "blasphemous" amounting to a criminal contempt of court proceedings even as it insisted "ek hi chowkidar chor hai".

Addressing a press conference here, BJP spokesperson G.V.L. Narasimha Rao said, "Today, by filing an affidavit in the honourable SC, Rahul Gandhi accepted that he had lied on his allegations against PM Modi," he said adding, "This was an attempt by Rahul Gandhi to manufacture a lie and create a controversy in the Rafale deal... He should apologise to the people of this country," he said adding, "In public opinion, Rahul Gandhi is a liar of the first order". Stating that Rahul stands



guilty in the "court of public opinion", Rao added that all Congress cadres across the country hang their heads in shame that their leader has been blatantly lying on the Rafale jet deal. While senior BJP leader and union defence minister Nirjala Sitaraman said the Congress leader's lie has given a big hit to his credibility in the public eye, BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi said Rahul expressing "regret" over his remarks on Rafale verdict was an "admission of his guilt" and "wrong-doing" by him. It was Lekhi who had filed the criminal contempt petition against him.

The Congress, however, said it did not agree with BJP's interpretation of Rahul's regret as submitted with the apex court. "Issue is sub-judice, stop passing verdict today! We reiterate - ek hi chowkidar chor hai (only one watchman is a thief)", said Congress' chief spokesperson "Randeep Surjewala. Surjewala hit out at the BJP saying, "Fakery has no boundaries. Lies no limitations, BJP's blasphemous misrepresentation of Rahul ji's reply to the SC is itself a criminal contempt of court proceedings."

EC submits detailed report on Modi biopic to Supreme Court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Monday submitted its detailed report to the Supreme Court on the biopic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi took the EC's report on Modi's biopic and asked the poll panel to supply a copy of the report to the producer of the movie. The bench, which also comprised justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjay Khanna, has now fixed the plea of producers challenging the EC's ban on the movie for hearing on Friday 26.

The apex court had on April 15 directed the Election Commission to re-examine its earlier order and take an informed decision on banning the biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi after watching the full movie. Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for film producers who have challenged the EC's ban on the biopic's release till the current general elections are over, had told the

top court that the poll panel has taken the decision after watching the promo, and not the entire movie. EC's counsel Amit Sharma had said that the entire movie was not available and a decision to ban the release was taken after watching the trailer.

Notification for last phase of LS polls issued

New Delhi: The EC on Monday issued the notification for the seventh and last phase of the Lok Sabha elections in which 59 constituencies spread across eight states and union territories will go for polls. While the first phase of election was held on April 11, the last phase will be held on May 19. So far, two phases have taken place, while the third phase of polling is on Tuesday. All the 13 seats of Punjab, four in Himachal Pradesh and one in Chandigarh will go for polls in a single phase on May 19. PNS

Ex-deputy EC appointed special observer for Tripura

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former deputy election commissioner Vinod Zutshi was on Monday appointed as special observer for Tripura where the Lok Sabha polls to one of the seats was postponed in view of the law and order situation. On Tuesday last, the Election Commission had postponed

polling in the Tripura (East) Lok Sabha seat to the third phase on April 23 (Tuesday) from April 18, saying the prevailing law and order situation there is not conducive for holding free and fair polls. EC sources said, the Commission has issued orders appointing Zutshi as special observer for Tripura. "Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be filing his nomination later this week and given his track record as a Member of Parliament and Prime Minister, Varanasi will be looking forward to welcoming him," BJP spokesperson Nalin Kohli said. Modi represents Varanasi in the Parliament. The city of temples votes on May 19. PTI

Modi to file nomination on April 26

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will file his nomination from Varanasi on April 26 and will be accompanied by the party's top brass, including BJP national president Amit Shah on April 26. Chief Ministers of NDA-ruled states and BJP allies are expected to attend the event, party sources said. Modi will file the nomination papers from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on April 26, they said, adding a road show will be held there on April 25. Various leaders of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), including Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, are slated to attend the road show, the sources said.

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Apex court issues notice to Irani on Nirupam's plea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to Union Minister Smriti Irani that pertains to two cross defamation complaints filed by Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam and the BJP leader against each other. In one case, the Delhi High Court had quashed the summons issued to Irani in a defamation complaint filed against her by Nirupam. The High Court had set aside the Delhi High Court order that directed Nirupam seeking to set aside the summons issued against him in a cross defamation complaint filed by Irani.

The High Court, on December 19 last year, had said the case against Nirupam will continue. On Monday, a Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi issued the notice to Irani on two appeals filed by Nirupam.

The Congress leader had challenged a magistrate court's March 11, 2013 order summoning him in Irani's defamation complaint against her. He had also sought quashing of the January 1, 2013 complaint filed by Irani. In her plea, Irani had sought quashing of the summons issued to her by a trial court on June 6, 2014. She had also sought quashing of the complaint filed by Nirupam.

SC directs Madras HC to decide TikTok plea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Madras High Court to decide on April 24 a plea of TikTok app seeking vacating of its ban order. A Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said if the Madras High Court fails to decide on the plea of TikTok app then its ban order will stand vacated. The apex court had earlier refused to stay the Madras High Court order that directed the Centre to ban the "TikTok" app over concerns about access to pornographic content through it. Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for the Chinese company ByteDance, had told the top court earlier that there were over billion downloads of the mobile app and ex-parte orders were passed by the Madras High Court of the Madras High Court.

He had said the court did not even issue notice in the matter and an order was passed without hearing them. The High Court had on April 3 directed the Centre to ban the "false fabricated and pornographic" "TikTok" as it voiced concern over "pornographic and inappropriate content" being made available through such apps.

2 lawyers' bodies of SC disapprove of CJ's handling of allegations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two lawyers' bodies of the Supreme Court on Monday disapproved of the manner in which Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi dealt with the sexual harassment allegations against him, calling it "procedural impropriety" and "violation" of procedures. As the apex court reassembled after the weekend recess in the backdrop of the stunning allegations by a former court staffer, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association (SCAORA) urged the Full Court to take all such necessary steps as may be required in law to deal with the charges. The allegations cropped up against Justice Gogoi on Saturday prompting him to convene an urgent extraordinary hearing by a three-member bench headed by him during which he asserted that the charges against him were "unbelievable".

The allegations by the woman, who had worked at Justice Gogoi's home office in Delhi, dates back to October last year, days after he was appointed the CJ. After an emergent meeting of the executive committee, the SCBA said in a statement that without prejudice to any enquiry which may be initiated the full court should call all the materials and facts with

But apex court Employees Welfare Association comes out in CJ's support

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



"The Supreme Court Employees Welfare Association on behalf of all the employees strongly condemns the false, fabricated and baseless allegations against Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi," it said. The SCAORA, which is a body of lawyers comprising advocates empowered by the apex court to file pleadings on behalf of parties in the top court, sought immediate appointment of a committee headed by full court of the apex court to impartially investigate and inquire into the allegations and give an independent finding. "Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association expresses its deep reservation against procedural impropriety shown by Justice Ranjan Gogoi in the suo motu proceedings held on April 20 in the issue relating to allegations of sexual harassment against Justice Ranjan Gogoi," by an ex-Supreme Court employee," the SCAORA resolution said. "It is therefore resolved that the SCAORA strongly disapproves the manner in which the complaint was dealt with and seeks enquiry and action in the above matter," it added. Justice Gogoi said during the Saturday hearing that the allegations were part of a concerted effort to "weaken" or "deactivate" the CJ's office. The CJ also said he would not stoop too low to deny them.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Terror returns

Sri Lanka has enjoyed a tremendous peace dividend. This momentum shouldn't be lost after the Easter attacks



First things first, any attack on a house of worship, no matter which religion's, by someone who claims to be a religious supremacist is not an attack by an individual who believes in God. It is an act by a cowardly individual who does not believe in any ideology of humanity. Whether those strikes happen in Varanasi, Christchurch or as it happened this past Sunday, in Colombo. These blasts shattered the peace of the last decade in the island nation, a peace achieved after a two-decade civil war that cost thousands of

lives, including those of 1,200 Indian soldiers between 1987-1990 who were part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), an unmitigated disaster of our foreign policy and military intelligence, likened by some as India's Vietnam. A hard-handed and brutal approach by the Sri Lankan military wiped out the Tamil separatists in the north of the country, who had through several high-profile terrorist targets, killed hundreds of civilians and completely devastated the nation's economy. But following their rout, the country has enjoyed a huge peace dividend with rapid economic progress as well as a revival of the tourism sector.

However, there is little doubt that Sri Lanka, like India and many other countries, has underlying religious tensions. These have only accelerated over the past few years with the rise of fundamentalist forces such as the Islamic State as well as religious fundamentalism in South and South-East Asia. While this attack is a symptom of this rising wave of fundamentalism, it is strange that the killers targeted the Christians in the nation, since neither the Tamil separatists nor the Sinhala majority ever zeroed in on them during the civil war. But Sri Lanka's really small Muslim population on its eastern seaboard was singled out by both Tamil and Sinhalese forces. There have been rising tensions between Sinhalese Buddhists and Muslims for some time now. Though Buddhism is seen as a religion that advises mindfulness and the Middle Path, fact is the Sinhalese have, like their counterparts in Thailand and Myanmar, linked it to issues of identity and they justify violence when they are under threat. With the Tamil issue gone, these people have latched on to Islamic fundamentalism as the new threat. This is something for the government of Ranil Wickremesinghe to address, although with polls scheduled later this year, the situation could easily degenerate. It is also important for India to help Sri Lanka with intelligence and information at this time. The scale and coordination of the attacks make it obvious that a small band of terrorists could not have pulled this off without support from forces abroad. It is likely that some of the executors could have an Indian connection, which means India itself should be on guard to ensure that violence does not spread to its mainland or that the island doesn't become a festering launchpad. Most importantly, it is important that Sri Lanka's bountiful years of peace are not brought to an end. These terrorists clearly wanted to send not just a message of religious fundamentalism but also one that punctured the nation's burgeoning tourism economy with scare-mongering. They wanted to make a splash. They must fail.

A matter of honour

Whatever the allegations against the CJI, a due process needs to be followed to expose the truth. For every citizen's sake



Social activist Swarni Agnivesh summed up the controversy over sexual misconduct allegations against the Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi with a rounded statement embodying what the judiciary, facing a crisis of confidence, should do. "The maturity, authenticity and stature of the Supreme Court will be tested on how this crisis is weathered and how the majesty of law is upheld without fear or favour," he said. For there is a gathering cloud of judgements swirling around the case already, one that has

to be dispelled convincingly. Is this another attack on an institution, as has been suggested by the CJI himself, to deactivate a position that is tasked with fair dissemination of justice on the eve of crucial rulings that can have a cascading consequence on polity, not too favourably may be for certain political parties? Is this a motivated attack, using the old trope of blackmail by a victimised woman, on a man who has been largely known for his personal decency for the most part of his judicial career and is looking to bow out with the same grace? Or is it a coup attempt for moments that are unrecorded in the legal chambers? Is some vested interest taking advantage of the fact that there is no legal framework within the top court's rulebook whereby a CJI could be investigated on allegations such as these, his removal being only possible through parliamentary impeachment? Finally, in the age of #MeToo, this charge by a junior staff against the topmost office-bearer at the workplace ought to be dealt with high standards of objectivity and due process so that working women demanding justifiable rights are not trivialised anymore or subjected to innuendos of "I told you so." For the sake of all women out there, if the accuser is guilty of fabrication, coercion and mala fide intent, she should be booked, too. And for the highest court, which has been guaranteeing women's rights, it becomes imperative its highest office-bearer be seen as acting justly in matters concerning women employees.

Gogoi has already been in the public eye for joining three of his colleagues in the collegium last year for questioning the process of case allocations by the office of the then CJI and the independence of the institution. He risked his elevation by taking a public stand on the internal workings of the court, something which many believe should not have played out in the public space. Which is why he cannot afford a similar public jury verdict on the propriety of handling another delicate matter. Already some experts are saying that the CJI might have just hastily launched his defence through a suo moto hearing. Assuming he is right, a knee-jerk reaction only raises more questions and doubts. In the absence of a credible mechanism, the woman had no option but to appeal to the Justices of the Supreme Court to create a Special Inquiry Committee comprising retired judges. Besides, the top court's "In-House Procedure" lays out the process to deal with allegations of sexual harassment, instructing an inquiry committee to take cognisance of complaints and initiate proceedings only after giving notices to the respondent (the CJI in this case) and the complainant (the woman). However, this is yet to happen. Neither did the CJI's special hearing in court include the complainant, though remarks were passed about her and her faulty legal record. So this impugnation that the allegations were a proxy war against the judiciary would look one-sided without meaning to be so. In the end, the Supreme Court is the country's most honourable institution, upholder of Constitutional morality and a protector of the citizen's rights. And if it is indeed under attack, then its justices should set an example why one should never attempt to defile it. If not, then they need to restore faith in its infallibility in a manner that there is no room for doubt.

Money rules the roost

Although muscle power has been brought under control, electoral spending has reached monstrous proportions. The Election Commission must come face-to-face with this reality



A SURYA PRAKASH

Although the use of muscle power to capture booths and intimidate voters belonging to vulnerable social groups has drastically come down in recent years, the percentage of candidates with criminal records still remains a matter of concern. But the bigger worry is money power. During a recent tour of some constituencies in Karnataka, this writer heard from political leaders and those in the know that in most constituencies, candidates have to spend upwards of ₹20 crore to be in the reckoning. There was also near unanimity that some candidates in the old Mysore area had spent over ₹100 crore! With top contenders in every Lok Sabha seat spending phenomenal sums of money, the democratic process is now out-of-bounds for an average citizen.

The National Election Watch (NEW) and the Association for Democratic Rights (ADR) have been providing detailed analysis of the information provided by candidates in their sworn affidavits while filing their nominations. Their analysis of the 521 members of the outgoing Lok Sabha, based on their affidavits, should be a matter of deep concern.

The NEW-ADR analysis found that 174 of the 521 MPs had declared that criminal cases were pending against them, constituting one-third of the Lok Sabha. Further, among them, 106 MPs (20 per cent) were facing serious criminal cases like murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping and communal disharmony among others. Thirty-five per cent of the MPs belonging to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and 16 per cent of the Congress and AIADMK MPs in the outgoing Lok Sabha have criminal backgrounds. However, the Shiv Sena topped the list with 83 per cent of this party's MPs having criminal records.

As regards the financial muscle of candidates, the survey showed that of the 521 sitting MPs, 430 (83 per cent) were crorepatitis in 2014 and they had average assets of ₹14.72 crore. Eighty-seven per cent of the BJP MPs are crorepatitis, as against 82 per cent in the Congress and 78 per cent in the AIADMK. The average asset of BJP MPs was ₹12 crore, while that of Congress MPs was ₹15.47 crore.

A recent report by NEW-ADR, after examining the affidavits of candidates in the fray in the first two phases of the current Lok Sabha election, is revealing. Out of the 2,923 candidates, the NEW-ADR analysis of 2,856 affidavits shows that 464 had criminal records, constituting 16 per cent of the total. Of them, 313 candidates have serious criminal cases. As regards the net worth of candidates, 824 of them — 29 per cent — are crorepatitis and they have, on an average, assets of over ₹5 crore. But this is the average of 2,856 candidates. The net worth of successful



candidates will be much, much higher when you look at the amount of money being spent in each constituency.

A comparison of criminal records of outgoing MPs and candidates in this election shows that the new House will have its share of such individuals. Although statistically speaking, criminal record of candidates in the present election is lower than that of successful candidates in 2014, one must remember that the winnability of candidates with criminal records is higher than those who come with a clean slate. Therefore, we must await the results and see what percentage of the members of the new Lok Sabha have criminal cases pending against them.

What do we do with the fact that one-third of our MPs have criminal records and 20 per cent of them are facing serious criminal cases like murder, attempt to murder and kidnapping? This needs to be reversed and the best way to do it is to bar all those, against whom serious criminal charges have been framed in a court of law, from contesting elections until they are acquitted. In order to prevent vindictive prosecution, the courts must dispose

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WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE FACT THAT ONE-THIRD OF OUR MPs HAVE CRIMINAL RECORDS AND 20 PER CENT OF THEM ARE FACING SERIOUS CRIMINAL CASES? THIS NEEDS TO BE REVERSED AND THE BEST WAY TO DO IT IS TO BAR ALL THOSE, AGAINST WHOM SERIOUS CRIMINAL CHARGES HAVE BEEN FRAMED, FROM CONTESTING ELECTIONS UNTIL THEY ARE ACQUITTED
 ”

of these cases on a priority basis as recommended by the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution, which was headed by former Chief Justice of India, MN Venkatchaliah.

Five decades ago, there would be large scale violence during elections in the country. States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh were notorious for booth capturing. Prominent candidates in the fray would have their own armed gangs to disrupt polling in booths which were not favourable to them. The gangs would open fire, chase away election officials and electors, capture the booths and burn the paper ballots. This is now a thing of the past.

But the other big issue — money power — has reached monstrous proportions. Although muscle power has been brought under control, spending in elections has gone completely out of control and the Election Commission appears to be totally helpless despite huge deployment of observers and seizure of cash, gold, liquor and drugs meant for bribing voters. In the first two phases of this election, the Election Commission already seized close to ₹700 crore in cash, liquor worth ₹218 crore

and drugs and narcotics worth ₹1,152 crore. They have also seized gold and precious metals worth over ₹500 crore. Although this is unprecedented, it is still the tip of the iceberg.

Having travelled in some States and heard reports of voter bribing, one can safely say that although the Election Commission has raised the permissible expenditure in a Lok Sabha constituency in larger States to ₹70 lakh, the spending is upwards of ₹20 crore per candidate. Thus, if we have two main contenders for each of the 543 elected seats in the Lok Sabha, the candidates and their parties would have splurged over ₹20,000 crores, mostly to bribe voters in this election.

With feudal, caste-based political families loaded with such huge, ill-gotten resources playing the game, democracy is becoming a no-entry zone for an average citizen. The Election Commission must come face-to-face with this reality and find ways to stop the bribing of voters. Failing which, democracy will be reduced to an absolute farce.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. Views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

Whatever we do, we have to make Pakistan change its behaviour. That means we must also change our behaviour towards it.

Congress leader — P Chidambaram

Getting into an unknown and uncharted territory today. Doing something I have never done before. Excited and nervous both.

Actor — Akshay Kumar

Common interests far outweigh differences between China and India. Both sides should sustain the positive momentum of sound and steady relationship.

Chinese Foreign Minister — Wang Yi

I will be very happy if Muslim brothers vote for me. But even if you don't, no problem at all. You can still come to me for your work.

BJP MP — Varun Gandhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Congress revolt

Sir — Priyanka Chaturvedi's exit is definitely a loss to the Congress. However, she could have given those she had grievances against another chance to express their standpoint. The party leadership could have ensured this. Further, she should have waited to see further developments without quitting the party in a huff. The fact that she rushed to join the Shiv Sena soon after leaving the Congress is shocking. People have lost faith in her and will consider the entire episode a pre-planned farce.

Shalini Gerald
 Chennai

Stand firm on terror

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "On Easter, violence resurges in Lanka" (April 22). A series of explosions in churches and hotels in Sri Lanka during an Easter Sunday by suicide bombers linked to a Muslim organisation, Jamaat, has shaken the conscience of the world. Since it was a well-planned attack, it is disappointing that despite the intelligence having alerted the Government about the

Regional parties must bury the hatchet

This refers to the editorial, "A Mulayam transition" (April 22). Initially, when the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) announced a poll pact to fight Lok Sabha elections, speculation was rife that Mulayam Singh Yadav might not have agreed to this formula due to the old animosity between him and Mayawati. But Mayawati and Mulayam Singh Yadav turned the tables by not only sharing the stage at a historic rally in Maninpur but also helping pranks on each other. It seems both have come very far from the guest house episode days.

Indeed, the need of the hour is for the alliance to put forth a united face and wage a coordinated fight against the ruling party to stand a chance of reaping maximum seats from the largest State of the nation. After the Karnataka State elections — where an unprecedented alliance between the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) was forged — the way regional party leaders came together to join hands, it was assumed that



the mahagathabandhan would be a pan-Indian affair. But only SP-BSP have walked the talk. On the other hand, the Congress has not shown any pragmatic approach. If Mulayam and Mayawati can join hands, it's not impossible for other regional leaders to forget past differences. They should move on with changed ground realities.

Bal Govind
 Noida

songs in this movie were written as well as composed by Satyajit Ray himself. Ray got many awards for the best music direction for this film. One of these songs, "Kotari Rongo Dekhi Duniyay" (the world is full of wonders), was sung by Amar Pal. Amar means immortal in Bengali. Indeed, his voice has immortalised the powerful words of Ray in this song.

Sujit De
 Kolkata

Restore the judiciary

Sir — It is regretful that the sanctity of the highest court of the land has been under threat since the last five years. Earlier, it was an unprecedented January 2018 revolt by four sitting judges of the Supreme Court and now, the CJI has been accused of sexual harassment by a former woman staffer. The incident highlights the fact that even the office of the CJI can easily be tarnished. A thorough investigation is the need of the hour.

Ravi
 via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Versatile singer

Sir — Amar Pal, the renowned folk singer, passed away at the age of 98. He was the first folk musician, whose song was broadcast over the All India Radio in 1951. I will always remember him for the songs he sang in one of Satyajit Ray's legendary films, *Hirak Rajar Deshe*. All the 12

FIRST COLUMN

'Orwellian' state of an island nation

There are several harrowing facets to Brunei's administration that resemble a backslide into archaic intolerance. The new stoning law is one among them



PRASHANT SINGH MEGHNA SHARMA

In his book, *1984*, George Orwell narrated a claustrophobic tale of a dystopian and totalitarian society through the eyes of his protagonist Winston Smith. Though the book was written over 70 years ago, it seems more relevant today than ever. No wonder, the sales of this book has seen a significant surge around the world lately. Renewed interest in dystopian literature has emerged primarily because it serves to remind us to look out for the signs around us that have the potential to bring out the fictional hell into the real world. Early this month, Brunei, a small island state, became the centre of attention as it introduced a Shariah law at the national level that makes gay sex and adultery punishable by stoning to death. The Sultan of Brunei had announced these changes in 2014 but amendments came into effect only this year. Since these changes go against the decades of progress made under the international human rights law, this move has drawn fierce condemnation from the global community. The Human Rights Watch has characterised this law to be "barbaric to the core." Regardless of growing international pressure from all quarters, including the UN, the country has no plans to halt the implementation of these laws. In this context, the themes discussed by Orwell have regained relevance, courtesy the totalitarian regime of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

The ministry of love in Brunei: The Sultan's aim is to transform Brunei into the same 'Orwellian' state as described in *1984*. It isn't surprising, therefore, that he described these amendments as a "great achievement." Parallels do not, however, end here. The "big brother" in Brunei exercises complete authority over public and private life of the individual. Sexual autonomy is not the only sphere of private life that is controlled here. The same penal punishment is also provided for adultery, abortion and alcohol consumption. The harsh forms of punishment, apart from death stoning, include amputation of limbs and flogging. While homosexuality is being decriminalised in several nations, Brunei has managed to enter the league of those states that consider it to be a capital offence. The state of Brunei or rather, the monarch of Brunei, has not just retained death penalty but ensured that it is provided in the most cruel and vicious way — death by stoning.

Thought control: Another major theme from *1984*, which has found a second wave in Brunei, is thought control. While the recent amendments have generated outrage across the international level, the people of Brunei are strangely silent about the entire episode. The Sultan has managed to firm up the media and its right to free speech. Thus, any medium through which such criticism can be manifested is curbed. Quratul-Ain Baidul, in *Brunei Times*, said that although there is no censorship body in Brunei, the extent of self-censorship is such that everybody is afraid of oversteering their line. Journalists have become mere stenographers at the hands of the Government. While traditional media has ceded space for dissent, critics have turned to the Internet and social media. Anticipating these changes, the Government has planned to regulate online speech as well. The imposition of the current penal code was also preceded by a warning that online critics will be dealt with harshly once it is implemented.

Much like the 'Orwellian' state of Oceania, Brunei's Sultan insists on presenting his own reality. While the Sultan "does not expect other people to accept and agree with it, but it would suffice if they just respect the nation in the same way that it also respects them." The recent changes giving effect to harsh penalties are part of the Sultan's effort to impose conservative Islam in the country based on the restrictive interpretations of Shariah. Amnesty Journal reported that the proposed amendment seeks to impose further restrictions on women, like making it mandatory for them to stay at their guardian's house till marriage.

There are many other harrowing facets to Brunei's administration that resemble the 'Orwellian' state. The Government also arrogated the power to ban any religious practice it considers 'deviant' to Shariah principles. It does not allow workers to strike or participate in collective bargaining. Child marriage over 14 years of age is allowed. No civil society organisation in Brunei is allowed to raise concerns about human rights violations. As per the Human Rights Report 2018 released by the US Government, every humanitarian organisation here is required to work directly under the Government. Similar to the Orwellian dictator, the big brother, Hassanal Bolkiah has sweeping powers and continues to rule Brunei since 1961. Unfortunately, there is no end in sight. He has been able to assuage discontent among people with free healthcare and education, zero taxes and free housing. For the sake of the people in Brunei, one can only hope that this backslide into archaic intolerance doesn't go unnoticed and the bleakness of the Sultan's dystopia gets exposed.

(Prashant Singh is research fellow and Meghna Sharma is research intern at the Centre for Human Rights Studies, OP Jindal Global University)

EVERY OTHER DAY PAKISTAN USED TO GIVE NUCLEAR THREATS. WHAT DO WE HAVE? HAVE WE KEPT IT FOR 'DIWALI'?

—PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

POINT COUNTERPOINT



PRIME MINISTER'S BOASTFUL CLAIMS OF BEING READY FOR A NUCLEAR ATTACK ON PAKISTAN IS UNCALLED FOR AND NOT IN NATION'S INTEREST. —SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER ANAND SHARMA

No outsiders in Kerala

The Congress and the CPI(M) pretend to be arch rivals in the State even as they work together at the Centre. They alternate power in the State to keep a third entity out



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Every election in Kerala, whether it is to the Lok Sabha or the State Legislature, brings to mind the famous play *Ezhu Rathrikal* (Seven Nights), directed by Kaladi Gopi in 1963. *Ezhu Rathrikal* must have been the first play in Malayalam that was based on the lives of the marginalised and oppressed sections of society. The play is set in a street-side bus shelter that is home to a group of beggars, roadside vendors and anti-social elements. The central character of the play is Pazhanam Varkey, a professional beggar. "Pazhanam" is the Malayalam word for "poison." One, therefore, need not elaborate about his character.

Varkey's style of begging is unique and that's the reason behind the success of the character. Even 50 years after its first show, the play and Varkey remain engraved in the minds of theatre buffs in the State. Varkey wears a scapular that has two pendants. One is a crucifix and the other is that of Lord Krishna. When Varkey goes to Christian houses, he wears the scapular in such a way that the crucifix is visible to the people. Whenever he goes to the house of Hindus, he displays the locket with Lord Krishna.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) is the new Varkey of Kerala because of the twin roles played by it in and outside the State. While in Kerala, the CPI (M) considers the Congress to be its main enemy, outside the State, it mingles freely with the latter. The CPI(M) is, perhaps, the best defender of the Congress, especially the Nehru-Gandhi clan, when reports of scams featuring the family members surface in the public domain.

But why is that both parties pretend as if they are at loggerheads and that, too, for the consumption of the public? Since the formation of Kerala in 1956, by merging the old princely States of Travancore, Kochi and parts of the Madras province, the political centrifuge has been mobilised by two fronts led by the Congress and the communists. Supporting characters differ, depending on the political wind blowing across the State. But the two fronts, known in modern parlance by the names of the United Democratic Front (UDF), led by the Congress and the Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by the CPI(M), are the central characters.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or its previous avatar, the Jan Sangh, were never a force to reckon with in this State that has a split religious demography. The State consists of nearly 51 per cent Hindus, 26 per cent Muslims and 23 per cent Christians. Without active support from the minority communities, no front can win any election in Kerala.

Interestingly, the CPI(M)'s vote bank is the powerful Ezhava community, the society which gave birth to Sree Narayana Guru, the most revolutionary social reformer of the 20th Century. It was his teachings and uncompromising stance that led to the eradication of social evils like untouchability and marginalisation of the oppressed classes in the State. He could inspire the people to agitate for the right to walk along the roads leading to the temples which ultimately culminated in the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936. At one stage, the communists had hijacked the agitation launched by the Guru and,

WHAT MAKES THE 2019 LOK SABHA ELECTION IN KERALA UNIQUE IS A SERIES OF REPORTS ABOUT THE BJP-LED NDA OPENING ITS ACCOUNT. THE SABARIMALA AGITATION AND THE CPI(M)'S ACTIONS, TARGETING HINDU PLACES OF WORSHIP AND INSULTING THE ACHARYAS, HAVE HURT HINDUS AND HAS RESULTED IN THE POLARISATION OF THE COMMUNITY. ONE MUST NOT BE SURPRISED IF THE BJP WINS ONE OR TWO SEATS



thus, they could mobilise the Ezhava community under the communist flag. Over the years, however, the CPI(M) has lost its proletarian image and become a party promoting group capitalists. It also ensures that the State does not progress an inch, economically or socially. The much-hyped Kerala model of development has ended in a disaster. The last six months have seen more than 40 farmers committing suicide because of the debt trap they have fallen into following crop failure. And the Marxist Government has done nothing to revive the fortunes of either the farmers or the marginal entrepreneurs. Three small entrepreneurs based in Kollam, too, committed suicide because they could not withstand the harassment of their party bosses.

"Though there is a change of guard in Thiruvananthapuram every five years, what generally happens is that the CPI(M) and Congress-led fronts alternate between themselves. The two parties do not provide space for a third alternative because they know it well that their relevance will be lost the moment a third party finds space here. Hence, all elections in the State have followed a match-fixing arrangement between the Congress and the Marxist." Though the two may act as if they are arch rivals, both have an unseen umbilical chord between them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi exposed the same while he addressed a public rally at the State capital recently. He said, "It is *kusti* in Kerala and *dositi* in New Delhi. The CPI(M) and the Congress are the two faces of the same coin."

Whenever there is a remote possibility of the BJP winning a seat in the State, the CPI(M) transfers its share of votes en masse to the Congress. This has been happening with active connivance of the local media. P Narayanan, octogenarian journalist, reminisces how *Mathrubhumi*, a leading Malayalam daily, violated media ethics during the Assembly election held in 1960. "There was a big speculation that TN Bharathan, the Jana Sangh candidate from Guruvayur, would romp home because of the excellent work he had done to save the Manathala Temple from miscreants. But on the day of polling, *Mathrubhumi* came out with a banner headline proclaiming that Jan Sangh supporters would vote for the Congress. This upset the party workers. This has been the style of Kerala media since then," said Narayanan.

What makes the 2019 Lok Sabha election in Kerala unique is a series of reports about the BJP-led NDA opening its account in this State. The Sabarimala agitation and the CPI(M)'s actions, targeting Hindu places of worship and insulting the *acharyas*, have hurt Hindus and has resulted in the polarisation of the community. So it is advantage BJP in two or three constituencies of the State. Congress chief Rahul Gandhi will definitely win from Wayanad because the LDF has fielded a "decoy" candidate against him as part of a game of match-fixing between the CPI(M) and the Congress. The Marxists want the Congress to win the 2019 Lok Sabha election and that's about it. Card-holding members of the CPI(M) had the audacity to ask this writer to vote for Benny Banman, the

Congress candidate from Chalakkudy. The comrades want to ensure that the Congress candidate is elected with a big majority though the CPI(M) has fielded a cine actor, Innocent Vareed Thekkethala, in the constituency. TP Sankumar, former Chief of Kerala police, articulated the Hindu angst: "It is time the majority community, too, gets the same rights and freedom that is enjoyed by the minorities. Sabarimala is the beginning. The next in line is Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in the State capital." Kerala is the only State that issues monthly pension to widows belonging to minority communities. Social benefits should be all inclusive.

More than 4,000 people, who took part in the Sabarimala agitation, are still in jail under various charges that are non-bailable offences. KP Sasikala, the frail looking leader of the Hindu United Forum, has 475 criminal cases slapped against her, including that of murder, attempt to murder, stone-pelting and other such criminal offences. These things have happened even as those, who chopped off the right hand of Prof Joseph, are out. This Friday saw the Marxists publicly silencing the chanting of God's name at a temple in the capital city because the Chief Minister does not like it. Varkey would beg in Kerala displaying one-half of the scapular featuring the crucifix. He can show the other half with Lord Krishna's pendant while in New Delhi and the rest of India.

Kerala goes to the polls today to elect 20 members of the Lok Sabha.
(The writer is Special Correspondent, The Pioneer)

The bottom line on free electricity

For a State where agriculture is largely based on ground water, provision for round-the-clock power supply may not be the best policy. Instead, the Telangana Government's scheme has led to increasing farm distress. Alternatives such as recharging wells, water harvesting and conservation must be explored



JIN KATHRINE FOSLI A AMARENDER REDDY

Sattiah, a farmer in Shivampet village of Medak district in Andhra Pradesh, dug another borewell to save his standing crop from drought as his existing borewell had dried up in January. Like his previous one, the new alternative, too, failed and he incurred huge losses. Studies conducted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the World Bank prove that groundwater-irrigated farms have twice the crop productivity as compared to rain-fed farms. However, groundwater must not be over-exploited as it is a natural resource with limited availability.

In this context, is the Telangana Government's scheme to provide round-the-clock power supply to 2.3 million farmers for free just another populist policy? Or is it a predominantly agricultural

State's desperate response to climate change? Or will it really help the farmers in the long run? Similar policies have been launched in many other States, including Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Maharashtra since the late 1970s.

Never mind the answer, more power does not equal more water in the long run. Water being a limited resource, free electricity for agriculture can lead to over-exploitation, failed investments and worse still, borewell failures rather than making this scarce resource cheaper. Depletion of groundwater levels to 1,000 feet and more has been reported in some drought-prone areas due to excessive digging of borewells. The Telangana Government's move to provide 24x7 free electricity to farmers is lopsided and neglects other water sources such as farm ponds and village tanks. Complementary water sources and recharging systems are left to dry up, rather than being maintained. In the current situation, every farmer must fend for himself, in contrast to the traditional systems which usually required cooperation, whether voluntary or forced through regulation.

Due to the geology of our States such as Telangana, which have underlying hard

rock formations, farmers are competing in a game they cannot win. According to figures from the Central Ground Water Board, farmers are not likely to hit major water-bearing fractures below 100-110 m. Groundwater levels had already sunk beyond that level in many places due to extensive well drillings when the 24x7 free electricity policy was implemented.

Besides poor and erratic rains, over-exploitation of water without sustainable recharge options has led to a decline in groundwater levels in villages. The unfortunate outcome is the diminishing of the common resource base, losses on investments, crop failures and possibly, drinking water shortage. As of today, about 31 per cent of blocks in India are at a semi-critical, critical or over-exploited stage in terms of groundwater exploitation.

Fiscal costs to the Government: The central electricity authority, which announced the details of the progress of various States in the power sector for the year 2017-18, observed that Telangana secured the first place in the country in power consumption and per capita power consumption. The free electricity scheme was introduced with an aim to reduce farm distress but has in turn financially dis-

tressed the discoms. Distribution companies were already heavily in debt when the 24-hour free electricity scheme was introduced from December 31, 2017. With groundwater table declining, electricity use is bound to increase because of the extra power needed to pump water from deeper levels.

Discoms all around the country are adversely affected by subsidies such as free electricity. This is one of the factors that contributes to the widening gap between income and cost of supply, according to the Central Electricity Authority. One can even say that falling groundwater levels lead to higher levels of debt for electricity companies or levels of expenditure that are hard to recover.

Electricity consumption for agriculture in Telangana amounted to 29 per cent of the total consumption in 2016. The same sector contributed only three per cent to the revenues for the electricity board. Still, there has been no policy shift to bridge the gap between electricity consumption and revenue generation. There are many other options that are more viable, environmentally and economically, such as construction of farm ponds, reviving village tanks and promoting micro-irrigation systems.

Look for alternatives: While the policy has been around too short to draw any definite conclusions, on their own account, farmers must shift their cropping patterns to sowing water-intensive crops such as paddy. This is not to say that it is a sustainable policy or that the farmers' response is viable. High informal debts due to investments in digging borewells was one of the causes for farm distress. Although free electricity contributes to reduced input costs, it does little to address the risks and losses faced by farmers. There is a need to strengthen institutions where farmers can acquire low-risk formal loans and facilitate viable payment conditions.

Farmers need information and education on which crops they should opt for in water-scarce conditions. They should be given incentives to grow suitable variants. Instead of blindly digging borewells on farmers' fields, they must be given assistance by hydrologists or technical experts. Many farmers also hold the opinion that instead of a 24-hour electricity, about five hours of uninterrupted electricity are enough to pump water for crops. Promoting groundwater recharging structures like farm ponds and village tanks,

which reduces risk of borewell failures, is another alternative that can be explored. In an attempt to discourage over-exploitation of groundwater and ensure a more robust regulatory mechanism in the country, the Government has proposed to slap for the first time a Water Conservation Fee (WCF) on extraction by all users of groundwater in the country, barring the armed forces, farmers and individual households.

There are questions that are hard to address for State politicians but should be addressed at the national level. Faced with the consequences of climate change and disintegration of the rural resource base, how can farmers and the landless rural population make a living in a sector dependent on monsoon rains, frequent failures of rains, prolonged dry spells, lack of water and decreasing hopes of livelihood? Should these forces be left to live their own lives? Without any concerted effort, the common rural inhabitant will drift like a splint in the open seas tossed by the forces of climate change, market fluctuations and shifting policy regimes.

(A Amarender Reddy is Principal Scientist, Agricultural Economics, ICAR and Jin Kathrine Fosli is with the University of Oslo)

TOP CANDIDATES

ASSAM DHUBRI Maulana Badruddin Ajmal, AIUDF vs Abu Taher Bepari, Congress	GOA NORTH GOA Shirpad Yesso Naik, BJP vs CJ Chavda, Chodankar, Congress	KARNATAKA KALABURGI Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress vs Umesh Jadhav, BJP	KERALA JANABURGI Rajul Gandhi, Congress vs Thushar Vellappally, BJP ally Bharath Dharma Jana Sena vs PP Suneer, LDF	MAHARASHTRA BARANATH Supriya Sule, NCP vs Kanchan Rahul Kul, BJP	UTTAR PRADESH MANPURI Mulyam Singh Yadav, SP vs Prem Singh Shukya, BJP	WEST BENGAL JANPUR Madhu Khatri, BJP vs Abhijit Mukherjee, Congress vs Khallur Rehman, TMC
BIHAR MADHEPURA Sharad Yadav, LJD (RJD alliance) vs Pappu Yadav, Jan Adhikar Party vs Dinesh Chandra Yadav, JD(U)	GUJARAT GANDHINAGAR Anil Shah, BJP vs CJ Chavda, Congress	UTTARA KANNADA Anarath Kumar Hegde, BJP vs Anand Asnotkar, JD(S)	TRIPURAVANANTHAPURAM Shashi Tharoor, Congress vs Kummangan Rajasekharan, BJP vs D Divakaran, LDF	RAJIODI Anant Geste, Shiv Sena vs Sunil Tatkare, NCP	RAMPUR Jaya Prada, BJP vs Azam Khan, SP	MALDAHA UTTAR Khagen Murmu, BJP vs Isha Khan Chowdhury, Congress vs Mausam Noor, TMC
CHHATTISGARH DURG Vijay Baghel, BJP vs Pratima Chandrakar, Congress	J&K ANANTNAG Mehbooba Mufti, PDP vs Ghulam Ahmad Mir, Congress vs Hasnain Masoodi, NC	SHIMOGA BY Raghavendra, BJP vs Madhu Bangarappa, Congress	ODISHA Puri Sambit Patra, BJP vs Satya Prakash Nayak, Congress vs Pinaki Misra, BJD	RAJIODI Shivpal Singh Yadav, Samajwadi Party Lohia vs Chandrasen Jadin, BJP vs Akshay Yadav, SP	MUNSHIBAD Humayun Kabir, BJP vs Abu Hena, Congress vs Janab Abu Taher Khan, TMC	

Buses to ferry 206 voters of Guj village bound by river, sea

Vadodara: A small hamlet boomed by Narmada river and Arabian Sea in Gujarat's Bharuch, where villagers previously used boats to reach their polling booth to cast votes, will this time be provided buses, a senior BJP official said. Alibet, part of Bharuch Lok Sabha seat, has 206 voters whose polling booth is almost 65 kilometres away in Vagra tehsil in the district, around 80 kilometres from here. This year, the water level in the Narmada river is low and using a boat would not have been possible, the official said. **PTI**

Anantnag Lok Sabha Constituency Electoral Performance 2014 Winner: PDP Mehboba Mufti Runners-up: JKN Mirza Mehboob Beg	Gandhinagar Lok Sabha Constituency Gujarat Electoral Performance 2014 Winner: BJP Lal Krishna Advani Runners-up: Cong Kiranbai Ishwarbhai Patel	Gulbarga Lok Sabha Constituency Maharashtra Electoral Performance 2014 Winner: Cong Mallikarjun Kharge Runners-up: BJP Revunak Belarnagi	Jangipur Lok Sabha Constituency West Bengal Electoral Performance 2014 Winner: Cong Abhijit Mukherjee Runners-up: CPM Muzaffar Hossain	Madhepura Lok Sabha Constituency Bihar Electoral Performance 2014 Winner: RJD Pappu Yadav Runners-up: JDU Sharad Yadav	Pilibhit Lok Sabha Constituency Uttar Pradesh Electoral Performance 2014 Winner: BJP Meneka Gandhi Runners-up: SP Budhes Verma	Shimoga Lok Sabha Constituency Karnataka By-Election Result 2018 Winner: B.Y. Raghavendra Runners-up: JD(S) Madhu Bangarappa	Thiruvananthapuram Lok Sabha Constituency Kerala Electoral Performance 2014 Winner: Cong Shashi Tharoor Runners-up: BJP O. Rajagopal
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Saurashtra to be real test for BJP

Ahmedabad: With memories of the 2017 Assembly polls fresh in mind, the Saurashtra region, which has seven Lok Sabha seats, will be the real test for the ruling BJP when balloting is held in Gujarat tomorrow. The region, which used to be a BJP bastion since 1995, gave jitters to the ruling party in the Assembly polls held just over 17 months back, as it lost 14 of the 35 seats it had won from among the total 54 seats in the region in the 2012 Assembly elections. In those polls, the Congress had doubled its tally to 32 seats from 16 it had won in the previous elections. Because of the reverses in this region in the December 2017 Assembly polls, the ruling BJP had come close to losing power in the state for the first time in three decades. In the 182-member Assembly, the party won 99 seats, just 7 more than the simple majority and 16 less than the previous time. The key reasons for this reversal were farm distress, unemployment and adverse impacts of twin blows of demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST) on the small scale and medium scale industry as well as the trading class. The Congress kept harping on these issues which are still very much alive. Besides this, firebrand youth leader Hardik Patel's massive agitation for reservations to his Patidar (or Patel) community made a huge impact in Saurashtra which has sizeable population of the Patidar community. And now Hardik Patel is in the Congress. Clearly cognizant of this, the BJP pulled out all stops in Saurashtra this time, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself holding as many as seven rallies in this region only. Electoral performance of the BJP in Gujarat is a personal prestige issue for Modi who was the CM of the State for three consecutive terms before he became the PM. **IANS**

JAYA-AZAM RAMPUR POTBOILER

Abuses, insults, melodrama galore in electoral battle

Rampur: "Am I a nachne wali, am I an amrapali," BJP candidate Jaya Prada asked at a rally, her question referencing SP leader's Azam Khan's derogatory remarks about her as a dancing girl and testimony to how the electoral contest here has become more about personal insults than anything else. The crowd at the public meeting in Mat Khera village responded to her posers with a loud "no" and the actor-turned-politician went on to narrate the harassment she faced from the SP veterans' "khaki underwear" jibe. The contest between the one time buddies and now arch rivals was always expected to be fierce but the saga of acrimony took an ugly turn with the SP veterans' "khaki underwear" jibe. Rampur, which goes to the polls on Tuesday, was propelled into the national spotlight with the furor that the insults and the political discourse has since centred on just that. While Jaya Prada has been reminding the public about it in every meeting, Khan has played the victim card after the Election Commission's 72-hour campaign ban was imposed on him. As Jaya Prada turned this election into a fight for women's dignity, Khan gave it a religious colour with speeches seemingly intended to appeal to Muslims. **PTI**

Why 2nd phase of elections is crucial for BJP

Kestur Vasuki ■ BENGALURU

The second phase of elections is a crucial test for the BJP in Karnataka. Mumbai and Hyderabad Karnataka will go to the polls in the second phase on April 23. Riding on a Modi wave the BJP bets big on 14 seats in these areas, a space the saffron party thinks it can do well. They are in a process of consolidating votes against the united might of the Congress and the JDs. For the first time the BJP is facing the challenge of two forces, one is a vokkaliga (Gowda) party and second one is the secular Congress. It means Congress leader Siddaramaiah and Kumaraswamy are betting big to lure minorities (politics of AHINDA) and other communities in the name of secularism to take on and break the BJP's vote bank, the Lingayats. Congress hopes to win the united force and Rahul Gandhi and Deve Gowda, break the supremacy of the "communal party BJP" in the northern districts of the State. The 14 parliamentary constituencies which are going to polls are Chikkodi, Belgaum, Bagalkot, Bijapur (SC), Gulbarga (SC), Raichur (ST), Bidar, Koppal, Bellary (ST), Haveri, Dharwad, Uttara Kannada, Davanagere and Shivmogga, where BJP is hopeful of maintaining the lead. The PM Narendra Modi being the mascot of the party has campaigned many times in the name of Rashtrवाद. He also raked up the dynasty politics and politics of "gath-bandhan". Amit Shah, SM Krishna, Deve Gowda, Kumaraswamy, Siddaramaiah DK Shivakumar and host of other leaders are campaigning there as last leg of elections which will play a crucial role in national politics and government formation. While BJP hopes for "agali baar Modi sarkar" and Congress with "mahagathbandhan" pitching for "Make Rahul the next prime minister". With Deve Gowda's acumen in politics Karnataka became a platform for opposition unity. With political permutations and combinations Gowda hopes to play a major role in the next Government formation. The BJP is contesting all 14 seats, while the Congress in 11 seats and JD(S) in 3. In 2014 general elections, BJP had won 11 seats and Congress remained 3, with none going to JD(S). Congress is contesting in Chikkodi, Belgaum, Bagalkot, Gulbarga (SC), Raichur (ST), Bidar, Koppal, Bellary (ST), Haveri, Dharwad and Davanagere. The JD-S is contesting from Bijapur (SC), Shivmogga and Uttara Kannada. **PTI**

UP to decide fate of four members of Mulyam's clan

Lucknow: The third phase of polling for ten Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh will decide the electoral fate of four members of the SP patron Mulyam Singh Yadav's clan besides those of senior party leader Azam Khan and film actor and BJP candidate Jaya Prada. The polling for the third phase is to be held on April 23 for ten Lok Sabha seats in the Rohilkhand region of the state along with 105 other seats across 13 other States. The BJP, which had won seven out of the ten seats in this region in 2014, has a huge stake in this phase in Uttar Pradesh as the area is considered a SP stronghold as three of the total five members of the Yadav family had won from this region despite a Modi wave in the last elections. The three Yadav family members who are seeking re-election respectively from Mainpuri, Badam and Firozabad in this phase are Samajwadi Party founder Mulyam Singh Yadav and his two nephews, Dharmaendra Yadav and Akshay Yadav. Pitted against Akshay Yadav, son of Mulyam Singh Yadav's cousin Ram Gopal Yadav, is another brother of the party patriarch, Shivpal Yadav, who has fallen out with SP president Akhilesh Yadav, and fighting from Firozabad after founding a new political outfit, Pragatishesh Samajwadi Party (Lohia). In 2014, Mulyam Singh had won both the Mainpuri and Azamgarh seats, but had vacated the first one, which was won by his another family member Tej Pratap Singh in the subsequent by-election. The electoral fortunes of senior SP leader Azam Khan will also be decided in this phase from Rampur which witnessed a new low in campaigning this time. Known for his controversial statements, Azam Khan made an "indecent" remark, targeting his BJP opponent Jaya Prada in Rampur by allegedly speculating on the colour of her underwear and attracting the saffron party wrath. Besides that of the National Commission for Women. The other political heavyweights, whose fate are in the poll balance in the third phase of elections here, include Union minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar, who is fighting from Bareilly and BJP's Varun Gandhi from Pilibhit. **PTI**



A woman gets her hair styled for voter awareness in Ahmedabad on Monday. **PTI**



Election officials along with security personnel travel by tractor to reach a polling station, at Hajo in Kamrup district of Assam, on Monday. **PTI**

Wayanad hogs limelight in poll season, courtesy Rahul Gandhi as people feel that they suffer due to the anti-farmer policies of both the Congress and the BJP governments at the Centre. There is no Congress wave in Wayanad. The Congress or its leader Rahul Gandhi have no specific plans for addressing their problems. Farmers are on the verge of suicide due to the wrong policies of the Governments led by the Congress and the BJP, Prasad, a former MLA, told PTI. What Rahul is seeking is a lifelong relationship with the people of Wayanad, Chandrasekharan said, referring to the Congress president's speech at an election rally at Sulthan Batherly Assembly segment on April 17. "I just don't want to have a relationship of just few months. I want a lifelong relationship with you. I want the sisters of Wayanad to say that I am like their brother, the fathers and mothers to say that I am their son," Rahul had said. Wayanad has significant Muslim and Christian populations.

CAPF in 92% booth in all 5 seats of Bengal

Saugar Sengupta ■ KOLKATA

As an uneasy lull prevailed ahead of the third phase of polling for five Lok Sabha constituencies in Bengal the Election Commission made a massive bandobast covering more than 92 per cent of booths by Central Armed Police Forces leaving the remaining about 8 per cent to be manned by State armed police. The lathi-wielding policemen have been asked to remain at least 200 metre away from the booths, sources said. The fate of 61 candidates would be decided on Monday as five constituencies of Balurghat, North Malda, South Malda, Jangipur, Murshidabad go for polls. Traditionally a Congress belt with the Left place in the second slot things tended to have changed in the past couple of years with both the TMC and the BJP having come up in a big way replacing the two traditional outfits. About 80,23,000 electorate will decide the fate of the 61 candidates. About 324 companies of CAPF will be deployed for the five constituencies, Additional CEO Sanjay Basu said. As of now Balurghat has the sitting TMC MP in Arpita Ghosh while former Congress MP and now a TMC candidate Mausam Benazir Noor is contesting from North Malda. Her uncle and outgoing MP AH Khan Chowdhury is contesting against TMC's Muazzam Hussein and BJP's Srirupa Chowdhury. Noor is pitted against her own cousin and Congress candidate Isha Khan Chowdhury and BJP's Khagen Murmu, a vocal former CPI(M) MLA.

Wayanad hogs limelight in poll season, courtesy Rahul Gandhi

Wayanad: All eyes are on the Wayanad parliamentary constituency on the slopes of the Western Ghats in Kerala, chosen by Congress chief Rahul Gandhi to seek people's mandate, besides his family bastion Amethi in Uttar Pradesh. He is facing CPI's PP Suneer fielded by Kerala's ruling LDF in the April 23 election on the soil of legendary king Pazhassi Raja who fought a guerrilla war against British colonialists. The NDA has fielded Thushar Vellappally of Bharat Dharma Jana Sena (BDJS) from the constituency comprising seven assembly segments in Wayanad, Malappuram and Kozhikode districts. The Wayanad seat, which was created in 2009, shares its borders with the Nilgiris of Tamil Nadu and the Mysuru region of Karnataka. It is predominantly rural and of its seven assembly segments, three are in Wayanad district, three in Malappuram and one in Kozhikode district. Two Assembly segments in the constituency — Sulthan Batherly and Mananthavady — are reserved for tribals who constitute around 18 per cent of the Wayanad's population. Vandoor in Malappuram district is reserved for Scheduled Caste. Female voters are more in number compared to male voters in the Lok Sabha seat which has a total of 13,57,819 electors. There are 6,84,807 females, there are 6,73,011 male voters. While the electorate is 11,796, there is only one third gender elector in the constituency. Out of the 13,57,819 voters, 2,951 are overseas electors. Senior Congress leader MI Shanavas, who died last year, had been winning the seat ever since the constituency was carved out in 2009. He had trounced CPI's M Rahmatullah by over 1.5 lakh votes in 2009 and defeated CPI leader Sathyan Mokeri by a margin of 20,000 votes in 2014. Political analysts say Wayanad, a bastion of Congress-led UDF, is a seat for Gandhi. According to them, the one thing that matters is the winning margin. Senior Congress leader and INTUC state president R Chandrasekharan, who campaigned for his party chief in Wayanad, said Gandhi's candidature has given a new dimension to the constituency. His vision is upliftment of people dependent on farm, labour and rural sectors. "People have faith in Gandhi. Many of them are small and marginal farmers, who grow mostly hill produce and coffee, in Wayanad. Gandhi understands their problems due to the fall in prices of agriculture produce and crop loss caused by natural disasters and extreme weather events," Chandrasekharan told PTI. CPI(M) leader P Krishna Prasad, who is campaigning for Left's candidate Suneer, said it is not going to be easy for

PM: Have taken strong action against terrorists

PTI ■ UDAIPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said his Government had taken strong action against terrorism and that the Congress does not understand the importance of the issue because of its "narrow mindset".

"Modi is taking action against terrorism. Modi is hitting them in their homes," the prime minister said, in an election rally here. He said national security is "very much" the issue of Lok Sabha elections, but the Congress, due to its "narrow mindset", does not understand this.

"Congress and its mahamilitavadi (wordplay on mahagathabandhan) say Modi should not talk about national security and terrorism in elections. Someone else may get deceived but not Modi," he said. It is okay if issues like national security are not highlighted in local elections, but in Lok Sabha polls it is very much an important issue, Modi said.

"They (opposition) have narrow mindset. Even after 60 years, they do not understand what the issues of the country are. They are roaming around the country with five-six words, Modi said.

Targeting Congress leaders for asking for evidences of surgical strikes, Modi said the "sabot gang" has put the country down, but people have now given the Opposition "saboot" (evidence) in the initial phases of polling in the country. "Will you be trusting 'saboot'?"

(soldiers) or those who demand 'saboot', he asked.

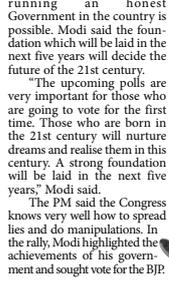
The Prime Minister targeted the previous UPA Government, saying that it pressured the banks to give loans to "its millionaire friends, but our Government gave loans to the poor, tribals and youths under the MUDRA scheme".

"Now, if someone has fled abroad, either he will have to return or he will be extradited just like Michel 'mama' of Naamdars. If any rich does not return money taken as loans from bank, then he will not be able to sleep comfortably," he said, referring to British-national Christian Michel, alleged middleman in the August-Westland VIP chopper case who was arrested after his extradition from Dubai.

He said the NDA Government has showed that running an honest Government in the country is possible. Modi said the foundation which will be laid in the next five years will decide the future of the 21st century.

"The upcoming polls are very important for those who are going to vote for the first time. Those who are born in the 21st century will nurture dreams and realise them in this century. A strong foundation will be laid in the next five years," Modi said.

The PM said the Congress knows very well how to spread lies and do manipulations. In the rally, Modi highlighted the achievements of his government and sought vote for the BJP.



Shah, Mamata in war of words over NRC, rigging

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ ULUBERIA

Mamata Banerjee and Amit Shah engaged in a ruthless war of words former accusing the latter of manipulating the elections by communally dividing the electorate and the latter hitting out saying she was running a Government of the mafias in Bengal devouring whatever democracy that was left by the Left regime.

Addressing rallies at Uluberia in Howrah and Burdwan Shah said, "Mamata did TMC's stands for Tolabai (extortion) Mafia raj and Chit fund scam," adding if BJP returned to power it would "send all the perpetrators of the chit fund to jail in 90 days time".

Reminding Banerjee of the strong actions taken by the Election Commission in 2009 and 2011 that eventually catapulted TMC to power, Shah said "when the EC acts against your goons you feel hurt but when it took against the goons of the earlier regime that helped you ride to power you were happy".

The Chief Minister has strongly reacted to ECI Special Observer Ajay Nayak's statements that Bengal resembled a situation in which Bihar was 15 years ago adding the law and order machinery was "completely collapsed in the State".

Bengal, it is about establishing democracy," Shah said adding "It's high time people stood against TMC's misuse. This election is not only the election for a Government in Delhi but this election is also an election for the people of Bengal".

On the Citizenship Amendment Bill Shah said if his party came to power for the second time it would invoke the National Register of Citizens throughout India. "I can assure you that the NRC will be implemented not only in Bengal, but all over the country if we come to power again," adding however the "refugees will be safe because they will be given citizenship".

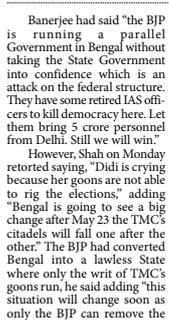
Coming back hard on the BJP President Banerjee said "in Bengal the BJP has joined hands with the Congress and the Left but the people have understood their intentions and they will defeat all of them. The TMC will win all the 42 out of 42 seats," Banerjee said daring Shah to invoke NRC in the State.

They implemented NRC in Assam, "then they were telling that they will invoke it in Bengal and now they are telling that they will do it in all over the country. I will never let that happen because all Indians are equals and have democratic rights protected by the Constitution. I will not let them destroy the constitution."

"This is why I am telling that BJP is a dangerous party and if they come back to power they will take away all your rights, make the citizens of this country foreigners like they have done in Assam."

Banerjee had said "the BJP is running a parallel Government in Bengal without taking the State Government into confidence which is an attack on the federal structure. They have some retired IAS officers to kill democracy here. Let them bring 5 crore personnel from Delhi. Still we will win".

However, Shah on Monday retorted saying, "Didi is crying because her goons are not able to rig the elections," adding "Bengal is going to see a big change after May 23 the TMC's citadels will fall one after the other." The BJP had converted Bengal into a lawless State where only the writ of TMC's goons run, he said adding "this situation will change soon, only the BJP can remove the



Rahul: Ask PM what he got in return for helping Ambani

PTI ■ AMETHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Monday exhorted the people to ask Prime Minister Narendra Modi what he received in return for "giving" Anil Ambani Rs 30,000 crore under the Rafale deal.

Addressing a poll meeting in his parliamentary constituency here, Rahul said, "When the Prime Minister comes and makes false claims, ask him one question. Why has he given Rs 30,000 crore to Ambani and what has Ambani done in return for him?"

Speaking in Tiloi area, he said, "Soon after the Congress comes to power after the Lok Sabha polls, a probe will be held in the Rafale deal and the truth will be before every-

one...What ex-French President Francois Hollande said and what is in the French defence files will come out. Only two persons' names will come out, first Anil Ambani and second Narendra Modi".

Asking if anyone has seen chowkidar in front of a farmer or labourer's house, he said for the past some time, every farmer has been forced to do 'chowkidari' of his agriculture field. "Modiji had stated that he does not want to be a prime minister but a chowkidar. When his chest has been caught in the Rafale deal, he says 'hum sab chowkidar hain', he claimed.

Rahul also hit out the PM over the Goods and Services Tax, saying when the 'Gabbar Singh Tax' was imposed, the money was taken from people and it went to thieves and overseas. "The moment money went out of your pockets, you stopped purchasing and the factories closed down, leading to unemployment."

In every 24 hours, 27,000 youths lose their jobs... This is the work of chowkidar," he claimed.

The Congress president said after 2019, 33 per cent women will be seen in legislature and Government jobs. He promised that recruitment will be initiated for 22 lakh vacant posts and 10 lakh youths will get jobs in Panchayats.

Rahul said after coming to power, the Congress will see to it that all the people who have been harassed in the past five years are compensated.

Addressing an election meeting in Barabanki earlier, he said the Congress will take historic decisions for farmers and bring a separate budget for them. Campaigning for party candidate "Annu Pruthi", he alleged that Modi ran a Government which helped just 15 people in the last five years.

It also took a sudden decision on demonetisation and made the entire country stand in queues, the Congress president alleged.

"The BJP conducted surgical strikes on poor people of the country, while we will conduct surgical strikes on poverty. If the Congress is voted to power, it will give 22 lakh jobs to youngsters," he said addressing an election meeting in Prashedpur in Rae Bareilly.

Rahul also claimed that 'chowkidar' has meted out injustice to the people of Amethi and Rae Bareilly.

Later, the Congress president told reporters, "If Prime Minister Narendra Modi sits for a face-to-face conversation for 15 minutes, everything will be clear."



Amethi: Dubbing the BJP's Amethi candidate Smriti Irani as an "outsider", Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Monday accused her of distributing shoes in order to insult Rahul Gandhi and said the people in the Congress chief's Lok Sabha constituency are not beggars.

Interacting with the voters in this key parliamentary constituency, the Congress general secretary in-charge of eastern Uttar Pradesh said the people of Amethi and Rae Bareilly have self-respect and they do not beg from anyone.

"If anyone has to beg, it is them (BJP), who will beg for your votes," a visibly agitated Priyanka told the voters in the presence of reporters at a 'nukkad sabha'.

She also slammed "outsider" Irani for distributing shoes in Amethi. "She (Irani) thinks she can insult Rahul Gandhi by doing this," Priyanka said, adding that the Union minister was in fact insulting the people of Amethi.

The people of Amethi are very sensible. You all know who was going to open a food park in Amethi and the fact that it has not been opened till now. The food park would have benefited five lakh farmers in Amethi and Rae Bareilly," she said.

Union Textiles Minister Irani had lost against Rahul Gandhi from Amethi in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. Five years later, she is again hoping to breach the Gandhi family bastion.



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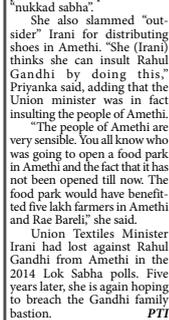
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DEORA RAKES UP SAWANT'S CRIMINAL CASES
The Congress' Mumbai South Lok Sabha candidate Milind Deora on Monday referred to criminal charges against his opponent and sitting Shiv Sena MP Anand Sawant and asked voters if they wanted to be represented by a person with such a record. Pointing to Sawant's affidavit, Deora said there are 13 criminal charges against the Shiv Sena leader and demanded that the sitting MP explain if he tried to "abuse and misuse" his influence in the Maharashtra Government to get the cases withdrawn. According to Deora's affidavit, there is no criminal case pending against him.

PM, ADVANI TO VOTE TODAY IN AHMEDABAD
Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Arun Jaitley and BJP patriarch LK Advani are among top leaders who will vote Tuesday in Gujarat, which will have a single phase polling for its 26 Lok Sabha seats. The BJP in a release here said all its key leaders, including Modi and Advani — who are registered voters in Gujarat — will exercise their franchise in morning hours. The PM, who is expected to land in Ahmedabad on Monday night, will cast his vote at a booth set up inside a school in the Ranip area of the city, which falls under the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency, it said.

RAHUL'S NOMINATION FOR AMETHI FOUND VALID
The Amethi returning officer (RO) on Monday set aside objections on Congress president Rahul Gandhi's nomination papers for the seat and held the document valid, after scrutinising allegations of discrepancies over citizenship and other issues. After hearing Gandhi's counsel, Returning Officer Ram Manohar Misra declared his nomination papers for the Amethi Lok Sabha seat as valid.

SECURITY BEEFED AHEAD OF POLLS IN MAHARASHTRA
Security has been beefed up in Maharashtra for the 16th phase of Lok Sabha elections for 14 constituencies, scheduled to be held on Tuesday. Besides local police, companies of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), personnel from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and those from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are also roped in to ensure that no untoward incident takes place, a police official said Monday.

NC, PDP LEADERS PLAYING EMOTIONAL CARD: BJP
BJP leader Kavinder Gupta on Monday accused the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party of playing emotional card to seek votes instead of focussing on development and maintaining peace in Jammu & Kashmir. The former Deputy Chief Minister also alleged the two regional parties are "targeting" security forces to please Hurriyat and Pakistan.

CLASH BETWEEN SUPPORTERS, VILLAGERS: FIRS LODGED
Cross FIRs were lodged on Monday in connection with an incident of clash between supporters of CPI candidate from Bihar's Begusarai seat Kanahaya Kumar and a group of locals, police said. Two complaints have been lodged by both sides at Gadhupur police station about Sunday's clash, which erupted after the former JNU students' union president was shown black flags at Koray village here during a roadshow.

FATMI WITHDRAWS NOMINATION FOR MADHUBANI
Former Union Minister Mohd Ali Ashraf Fatmi, who had quit BJP and had entered the fray from Madhubani Lok Sabha seat on a BSP ticket, on Monday withdrew his nomination citing the refusal of rebel Congress nominee Shakesh Ahmed to do so and apprehending a split in votes benefiting the BJP candidate. "I took the decision (to withdraw) based on the feedback by my close supporters on whose insistence I had filed nomination papers. It was observed that the reluctance of Ahmed to withdraw would have led to votes getting split between us. This would have helped the BJP," Fatmi told PTI-Bhusha over phone.

LAND ACQUISITION WORRIES FARMERS IN GUJARAT
Standing in his sugarcane farm in Navsari's Sadlav village with his arms stretched wide apart, Pinakinbhai Patel explains that in 3.5 kilometers of his "fertile land", three major infrastructure projects have been planned. "Right through this land, the Bharamtal road project will pass. One kilometer to the left (the Vadodra-Mumbai) expressway will be constructed and 2.5 kilometers to the right, the bullet train will pass," he said. "Out of the 16 acres of my land, Government takes seven acres for the Bharamtal project, but it is offering only four times the 'janti rate', which is way lower than the market rate," he added. "Janti rate" is the minimum price of the land notified by the Gujarat Government for a particular area. Months ahead of the polls, the BJP-led Gujarat government suspended the land survey for the Bharamtal project — a centrally-sponsored scheme to construct 83,677 km of highways across India, in January.



Mayawati: Why EC not cancelling BJP 'gem' Pragma Thakur's nomination

LUCKNOW: BSP president Mayawati on Monday questioned why the Election Commission was not cancelling the nomination of Pragma Singh Thakur, the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from Bhopal, despite the "BJP ratna" issuing controversial statements.

"Malegaoon blast case accused and BJP candidate from Bhopal Sadvi Pragma is claiming that she is contesting a dharm yuddh. This is the real face of BJP/RSS which is being exposed continuously. But why is the Commission only issuing notices and not cancelling the nomination of BJP ratna (gem) Pragma? Mayawati tweeted.

"If the Election Commission is not able to work in an impartial manner to the satisfaction of people despite severe criticism in the media, it is an issue of grave concern for democracy and no one else but BJP and PM Modi, who are surrounded by serious electoral allegations." PTI

Tough electoral battle in picturesque Ladakh

IANS ■ SRINAGAR

The electoral battle in the Ladakh Lok Sabha seat of Jammu & Kashmir has become interesting for poll watchers, but tough for contestants.

The constituency, spread over Leh and Kargil districts, is geographically one of the largest and population-wise one of the smallest in the country. Being one of the remotest areas of the country, the Ladakh division has its own issues, dissimilar to the Valley or the Jammu division.

Politically, Ladakh has always been closer to New Delhi than to Srinagar or Jammu, the two administrative capitals of J&K. It has faced no separatist movement, even as the Valley continues to remain in the throes of an unabated violence.

For over four months, from the middle of December to the end of April, each year, Ladakh remains emotionally and economically cut off from the rest of the state as snow in the Zojilpa Pass area snaps its only

surface link.

Of the 1,56,888 voters (85,763 in Kargil and 71,125 in Leh districts), 79,432 are men and 77,456 are women. They will vote on May 6 in the last phase of the five-phase parliamentary elections.

The nomination papers of Jamyang Tsering Namgyal (BJP), Rigzin Spalbar (Congress) and four Independents — Haji Asgar Ali Karbala, Sajjad Hussain, Kacho Muhammad Feruz and Asgar Ali — were found valid in

scrutiny on Saturday.

But the contest is largely among the BJP, the Congress and the independent Sajjad Hussain. The regional National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) have not filed candidacies in Hussain's support.

Traditionally, Buddhists and Muslims vote on different lines. With the Buddhists votes likely to be divided between Namgyal and Spalbar, both Buddhists from Leh, the NC and the PDP plan to consolidate Kargil votes

behind Hussain.

Hussain also has the backing of Kargil's powerful religious organisation, Islamia School. However, what's thrown a spanner into the NCP-PDP plan is the presence of Karbala, former Congress MLA from Kargil, as Independent.

Karbala deserted the Congress after he was denied ticket. He is being backed by influential Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust. Hectic efforts are on to persuade him to withdraw from the contest on Monday, the last date for withdrawal of nomination papers in the constituency.

Ladakh's long-standing demand for grant of divisional status was fulfilled during the current Presidential rule in the state. Because of this Prime Minister Narendra Modi is quite popular among Buddhists and this will weigh in favour of Hussain.

Also, the chief executive of the powerful Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PHE, GROUND WATER DIVN., BAGH ALI MARDAN NOWSHERA, SRINAGAR KASHMIR

GIST OF E-Tender
NIT No: PHE/GWDS 01/1of 04/19 Dated 19-04-2019

For and on behalf of Governor of Jammu and Kashmir State, e-tenders are invited in O2Cover System for Construction of Exploratory Test Bore Well and Construction of Production Tube Well for successful exploration at the following localities/site from registered water well contractor/contractors as per the details given in tender document.

S.No.1. Site: Construction of Production Tube Well at WSS Zadoora, Pulwama.

Cost of Tender Document:- Rs.1000/-

Cost of EMD :- Rs. 40,000/-

Time of completion :- 30 Days

Validity of Rates :- 180 Days

Major Head:-NRDWP

Critical Dates / Information

1. Publishing Date :- 20-04-2019
2. Document Downloading (Start Date) :- 20-04-2019(09:00 A.M)
3. Document Downloading (Last Date) :- 20-04-2019(04:00 P.M)
4. On Line Document Submission Start Date :- 20-04-2019(09:00 A.M)
5. On Line Document Submission Last Date :- 30-04-2019 (4:00 P.M)
6. Date of opening of Tender :- 01-05-2019at (11:00 A.M)
7. Tender Receiving Authority :- Executive Engineer PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar.
8. Document Downloading Cost :- Rs.1000/- (one thousand only) for each well (Non-refundable) in the shape of Treasury Challan/receipt deposited to Account Head 0215 in favour of Executive Engineer PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar (at Saddar Treasury Srinagar) on account of (The firm shall specify the name of work for which apply)
9. Earnest Money: for an amount shown in Gist of NIT against each well tender in the shape of CDR/IFR pledged to Executive Engineer PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar 190011.
10. Bid Validity Period :- 90 Days
11. Time of completion: Thirty days from the date of issuance of letter of intent/ allotment order.

DIPK-NB-299/19
Dated: 22.04.2019

Sd.
Executive Engineer

Iran sanctions: India lines up alternative

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India, the second biggest buyer of Iranian oil, has lined up alternate sources to make up for the likely shortfall in supplies after the US decided not to give waiver from its sanctions for buying oil from the Persian Gulf nation.

The Trump administration Monday decided not to renew waiver that let countries like India buy Iranian oil without facing US sanctions.

"Our crude sources are wide. We have alternate sources lined up to make up for any shortfall," a top source said.

US President Donald Trump last year withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and revived a range of sanctions against the Persian Gulf nation. It, however, granted a six-month waiver from sanctions to eight countries—China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece, but with a condition that they would reduce their purchases of Iranian oil.

India, which is the second biggest purchaser of Iranian oil after China, had agreed to restrict its monthly purchase to 1.25 million tonne or 15 million tonne in a year (300,000 barrels per day), down from 22.6 million tonne (452,000 barrels per day) bought in 2017-18 financial year.

"We have optional volumes (over and above the term contracts) from a num-

ber of supplier which we can exercise to make up for any shortfall from Iran," the source said. "We can also go to the spot (or current) market to source crude."

As far as Indian oil is concerned, supplies will not be a problem. We have already lined up alternate sources," he said adding the impact of the US decision may reflect on global oil prices which may temporarily go up.

The six-month waiver granted by the US to eight countries was to expire on May 2. IOU has the option to take 0.7 million tonne of crude oil from Mexico on top of its committed purchase of 0.7 million tonne during the year. From Saudi Arabia, it has an optional volume of 2 million tonne on top of a term contract of 5.6 million tonne.

Similarly, it has optional volumes of 1.5 million tonne from Kuwait and another 1 million tonne from the UAE.

"We have all the supplies tied up and I think globally but it is difficult to say what the impact will be on price," the source added.

The price of Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose as much as 3.3 per cent to USD 74.31 a barrel on Monday, the highest intra-day level in almost six months.

"We have all the supplies tied up to over USD 85 a barrel and it fell to near USD 50 after the US administration unexpectedly granted the waivers. US sanctions on Iran's

buyers snap back next month that will block the US financial system for importers.

India, the world's third-biggest oil consumer, meets more than 80 per cent of its oil needs through imports. Iran in 2017-18 was its third-largest supplier after Iraq and Saudi Arabia and meets about 10 per cent of total needs.

US President Trump in May withdrew from the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran, re-imposing economic sanctions against the Persian Gulf nation. Some sanctions took effect from August 6, while those affecting the oil and banking sectors were to start from November 5, 2018. A six-month waiver was granted that was to expire on May 2.

Iran was India's second biggest supplier of crude oil after Saudi Arabia till 2010-11 but Western sanctions over its suspected nuclear programme relegated it to the seventh spot in the subsequent years. In 2013-14 and 2014-15, India bought 11 million tonne and 10.95 million tonne, respectively from it.

Sourcing from Iran increased to 12.7 million tonne in 2015-16, giving it the sixth spot. In the following year, the Iranian supplies jumped to 27.2 million tonne to catapult it to the third spot.

Iranian oil is a lucrative buy for refiners as the Persian Gulf nation provides 60 days of credit for purchases, terms not available from suppliers of substitute crudes — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Nigeria and the US.

Trump decides not to grant waiver to India

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In a move that could have implications on India's energy security, US President Donald Trump on Monday decided not to grant sanctions exemptions to any oil customers of Iran, further squeezing Tehran's top export commodity.

"President Donald J. Trump has decided not to reissue Significant Reduction Exceptions (SREs) when they expire in early May. This decision is intended to bring Iran's oil exports to zero, denying the regime its principal source of revenue," White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said.

The US move which is seen as an escalation of President Trump administration's "maximum pressure" on Iran comes after it last year gave temporary 180-day waiver to eight countries, including India, China, Turkey and Japan among others.

As a result of this decision all countries including India would have to bring down their import of oil from Iran by May



global demand is met as all Iranian oil is removed from the market," she said.

In a statement, Sanders said the Trump Administration and its allies are determined to sustain and expand the maximum economic pressure campaign against Iran to end the regime's destabilising activity threatening the United States, its partners and allies, and security in the Middle East.

2. Greece, Italy, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have already heavily reduced their oil imports from Iran.

Iran is India's third-largest oil supplier behind Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Iran supplied 18.4 million tonnes of crude oil during April 2017 and January 2018 (first 10 months of 2017-18 fiscal).

The US, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, three of the world's great energy producers, along with its friends and allies, are committed to ensuring that global oil markets remain adequately supplied, Sanders said.

"We have agreed to take timely action to assure that

decision to eliminate all SREs follows the designation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation, demonstrating the US' commitment to disrupting Iran's terror network and changing the regime's malign behaviour. We welcome the support of our friends and allies for this effort," Sanders said.

China and India are currently the largest importers of Iranian oil. If they don't go along with Trump's demands, that could cause tensions in both bilateral relationships and spill over into other issues, like trade, the Washington Post reported.

Ghosh hit with fresh charge in Japan

AFP ■ TOKYO

Japanese authorities on Monday hit former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn with a fresh charge of aggravated breach of trust, the fourth formal indictment against the auto sector tycoon.

Public broadcaster NHK and local news agency Jiji Press reported that prosecutors filed the new indictment that paves the way for his legal team to apply for bail.

The 65-year-old strenuously denies all allegations against him and insists they have been cooked up in a "plot" by Nissan executives wary of his plans to bring the Japanese car giant closer to its French partner Renault.

Prosecutors are looking into allegations that Ghosn funnelled funds from Nissan to a dealership in the Middle East and siphoned off around five million dollars for his personal use.

Ghosn has already won bail once before — but under strict conditions such as agreeing not to leave the country and living under surveillance.

The rollercoaster case of the executive, once revered in Japan for saving Nissan from the brink of bankruptcy, has gripped the business world and shone a spotlight on the Japanese legal system that has come in for some criticism especially from abroad.

Japan's justice allows authorities to keep suspects in custody for prolonged periods

and trials almost always result in a conviction — sparking outrage from outside the country.

When Ghosn last won bail, he walked out of the detention centre in front of the world's media dressed like a Japanese labourer with a cap and a face mask in an apparent attempt to give reporters the slip.

Japan's Supreme Court has already rejected appeals by Ghosn's lawyers against his prolonged detention.

His wife Carole has also been questioned by prosecutors in Tokyo.

She has also denied any wrongdoing and been active in the media in recent days, writing an opinion piece in the Washington Post calling on US President Donald Trump to lean on Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe to allow her husband to obtain bail.

Ghosn's lawyers have expressed reservations that he will receive a fair trial as 99 per cent of all cases that come to trial end in a conviction.

The executive has gone from a life of luxury and private jets as he ran three huge car companies to a small cell.

Nissan says an internal investigation has uncovered "substantial evidence of blatantly unethical conduct" by the former boss.

He has already been stripped of his position on the board at Nissan and resigned from the head of Renault and the three-way alliance the two companies share with Mitsubishi Motors.

Industry delegation calls on RBI Govt, discusses steps for MSMEs, NBFCs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A delegation led by PHD Chamber President Rajeev Talwar met RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das here on Monday and discussed concerns over the growth of MSMEs, NBFCs, affordable housing and the real estate sector.

The chamber in its submission has also sought further cut in the repo rate in the coming quarters.

"PHD Chamber in its submission has urged RBI to increase the limit for classifying over dues of MSMEs to 180 days from the current level of 90 days as working capital cycle of MSMEs keeps prolonging due to delays in reali-

sation of their bills/receivables," said Talwar.

It has also requested that at least one year period should be considered for eligibility of MSMEs' stressed and NPA accounts under the restructuring scheme.

All such accounts which turned into defaulters or became NPAs after January 1, 2018 should be covered under the policy of RBI for being eligible for restructuring, said Sanjay Agarwal, Vice President, PHD Chamber.

The industry body said that infrastructure financing should ideally be carried out by specialist players like Infrastructure Finance Companies (IFCs).

Domestic air passenger volume crosses 171 m in FY19, up 14.25%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Domestic air passenger volume grew 14.25 per cent to 171.25 million RPT in FY19, up 14.25 per cent from 150 million RPT in FY18, according to the data from the DGCA.

In FY18, the passenger volume had dipped at a higher 18.3 per cent to 146.84 million RPT, 146.84 million.

However, the March numbers came as a shocker to the airline industry as the traffic though continued to grow in green but almost flat at 0.14 per cent to 11.59 million passengers up from 11.58 million a year ago, largely due to the huge capacity reduction at Jet Airways in the month, show data released by the DGCA Monday.

The cumulative traffic of domestic carriers stood at 171.25 million for the full year to March 2019, registering a growth of 14.25 per cent.

Budget carrier IndiGo continued to be the largest player with a market share of 46.9 per cent ferrying 54 lakh passengers during the month, while its closest rival SpiceJet was a distant second with 13.6 per cent traffic pie as its ferried 15.81 lakh passengers in the reporting month.

The flat growth in traffic is a setback for the industry which had been clipping at over 20 per cent for more than four years in a row.

Significantly, betting on the double-digits growth in the past four years, the government in its vision document

released this January, has pegged the traffic volume to 1.1 billion by 2040.

Jet Airways, once the second largest airline after non-flying IndiGo, lost as much as nearly half of the market share at 5.37 per cent during March as against 10 per cent in the same period last fiscal, according to the data.

Together with subsidiary JetLite, consolidated traffic of the now non-functional carrier was 6.71 lakh passengers in the month, whereas in the same period last year it had flown 15 lakh passengers.

Significantly, national carrier Air India, which has a number of aircraft on ground for quite some time now, had the 'dubious distinction' of cancelling the most number of flights at 8.94 per cent of its scheduled departures followed by JetLite and new entrant Star Air, as per the data.

The national carrier, however, managed to get the third spot after IndiGo and SpiceJet in passenger volume, carrying 15.19 lakh passengers with a market share of 13.1 per cent in March.

The passenger load factor in the month has shown falling trend compared to February due to the end of the vacation period.

SpiceJet continues to clock the highest average seat occupancy at 93 per cent while smaller rival GoAir topped the on-time performance chart for the sixth consecutive month in March at 95.2 per cent.

Air India, on the other hand, was forced to pay the highest amount of ₹119.37 lakh of ₹159.88 lakh for denied boarding.

Jet employees appeal to Govt to bail out airline

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Around 100 staff members of the ailing Jet Airways on Monday staged a demonstration here, urging the Government to intervene and bail out the airline.

Jet Airways had on April 17 announced temporary suspension of operations after it failed to receive emergency funds from lenders, leaving about 23,000 employees to face a bleak future.

This evening, the employees, dressed in their uniforms, staged the demonstration at Town Hall in the heart of the city.

Holding placard, they raised slogans like 'Save our families, save Jet Airways', 'Don't make us cry, give a chance to fly' and 'Humko Tum Na Dhoka Do, Udne ka ek Mauka Do' (Don't ditch us, give a chance to fly).

"We pay loads of tax. Don't get us under the Axe" and "We have dependents to feed, please don't let our 9W bleed" read the



messages in some of the placards.

Millind Paradkar, an engineer with Jet Airways, urged the government to infuse some funds to keep Jet Airways afloat.

"We want the government to infuse some funds instead of our aeroplanes being taken over by other airlines and being flown over by them," Paradkar told PTI.

He said there were rumours that somebody has shown willingness to take over Jet Airways, but the employees have no information who that is.

"The Government has to be transparent. Presently

Jet Airways shares trim early losses; close over 6% lower

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Jet Airways, which has shut down operations temporarily, continued to fall for the third day in a row Monday, closing over 6 per cent lower.

The scrip nosedived 19.34 per cent to ₹132.20 — its 52-week low — during the day on BSE. However, at close of trade it recovered most of its sharp early losses. It closed the day at ₹154.60, 5.67 per cent lower.

At the NSE, shares plunged 6.15 per cent to close at ₹154.70.

In terms of traded volume, 56.19 lakh shares were traded on the BSE and over five crore shares on the NSE during the day.

In three days, the scrip has plummeted 40.4 per cent.

Running into debt of more than ₹8,500 crore, Jet Airways has shut down operations temporarily after lenders decided against extending emergency funds to its survival.

Cash-starved Jet Airways, which has around 23,000 employees, has delayed payment of salaries to the employees, including pilots.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
 File No.: 22AC/993/Unfiled Parking 2018/19. Tc: Date: 18 April, 2019
QUOTATION NOTICE
 The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/Chg., Northern Railway, New Delhi invites sealed Quotations for the allotment of Access Control Rights, which includes 3 per cent drop lines for passengers at New Delhi Railway Station (Ajmer Gate Side) of Delhi Division on Quotation basis for 3 months or till the finalization of tender, whichever is earlier, to be opened on 30.04.2019, details is as under:

S	Railway Station	Qty	Type of Pkg.	Access Control Rights (3 months)	Estimate No.	Estimate Value (₹)	Estimate % of Total
1	New Delhi Railway Station (Ajmer Gate Side) (NCRLS)	A-1	Access Control Rights of 3 months	15,96,875	32,000		

*Applicable Taxes will be extra.
 In addition to above Reserve price, GST as applicable on cost (Presently @ 18%) and TCS @ 2% as applicable over the license fees has to be paid by parking contractor.
 Date and Time for submission of Quotation :- up to 15:00 Hrs. on 30.04.2019 to be open immediately.
 For more information and obtaining Quotation forms, interested bidders may contact to the Office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/Coaching, DRB Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi from 22.04.2019 to 29.04.2019, days between 10:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs and on 30.04.2019 Up to 13:00 hrs. The draft submitted for Earnest Money deposit should be in favour of "Senior Divisional Finance Manager Northern Railway, New Delhi" and must be prepared from the bidders own bank account and in case found otherwise/ false, Railway Administration shall be at liberty to initiate any action, including termination as deemed fit at a later date.
 Relevant information is also available on the official Web site of Railways: www.indianrailways.gov.in 1177/19
 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

SEARCH FOR KIDNAPPED GIRLS

General public is hereby informed that these girls namely 1. Nisha @ Hunno and 2. Saniya both D/O Late Samsuddin R/o H.No. 1080, Gali No. 36, Jafraabad, Delhi

1. Nisha @ Hunno : Age : About 16 years 10 months, Height : 5' 7"
 Face : Round, Build : Normal, Complexion : Wheatish.
 2. Saniya : Age : About 8 years, Height : 4'1", Face : Round, Build : Normal, Complexion : Wheatish, has been kidnapped since 28.12.2016 from their house. In this regard FIR No. 490/16 dated 29.12.2016 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at P.S. Jafraabad, Delhi.

Saniya Any person having any information or clue about these kidnapped girls may kindly inform to the following:-
 E-mail: clc@cbl.gov.in
 Website: <http://cbl.nic.in>
 Fax: 24366839
 Tel.: 24366838/24366841

SHO - P.S. Jafraabad, Delhi
 Tel. No. : 011-22560192
 22560192

P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi
 Ph.: 011-27495198, 27497179

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male Age: 25 years, Complexion: Black, Height: 5'7", Face: Oval, Built: Thin, ID Mark: Old Cut Mark Over Right Eye Brow, was wearing Blue Jeans and White Shirt and Black Shoes, was found dead in bushes near Wall of Park of AC-Block, Near Azadpur Flyover, PS Shalimar Bagh, Delhi at 07:55 Hrs. In this regard a FIR No. 195/19, dated 20.04.2019, has been registered at P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO
 P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi
 Ph.: 011-27495198, 27497179

Finmin asks all departments to conduct review of Govt guarantee, submit details by Apr 30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has asked all departments to undertake a review of government guarantees given by respective ministries to their CPSEs or entities.

The review should undertake aspects like the discharge of repayment obligations or interest obligations as per terms

of the loan agreement and covenants and conditions met, the Finance Ministry said in an office memorandum.

Besides, the details of CPSEs or entities due guarantee fee paid on time to the government should also be submitted.

The Finance Ministry has extended date for submission of these details to April 30 from

April 10.

Guarantees are contingent liabilities have the potential to impact the financial performance of the Government.

In another circular, the ministry said FRBM Rules stipulates that Government cannot guarantee more than 0.5 per cent of the GDP of the respective financial year to CPSE/entities.

GAIL emerges as highest bidder for IL&FS wind power plants

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Debt-laden Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) Monday said GAIL (India) has emerged as the highest bidder for its seven operating wind power plants.

The bidding process to undertake a review of these assets having 12 sites spread across seven states was launched in November last year.

"Gail's offer of approxi-

mately ₹4,800 crore for 100 percent enterprise value contemplates no hair-cut to the debt of the SPVs, aggregating to nearly ₹3,700 crore," the company said in a release.

These wind power assets have a total generation capacity of 874 MW.

The bidding was approved by the committee of creditors of IL&FS Wind Energy (IWEL), majority owner of the SPVs, it said.

SENIORS GIVE CALL FOR ROAD & TYRE SAFETY

NEW DELHI: Members of Dignity Foundation, an NGO helping senior citizens live a life of dignity, took a pledge to spread the message of Road & Tyre Safety. Senior citizens from Delhi NCR region assembled at Bipin Chandra Pal Auditorium holding placards on tyre/road safety and enlisting themselves as ambassadors of road and tyre safety.

India VIX jumps to 3-year high on election concern, high crude

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The India Volatility Index shot up to a three-year high of 24.05 on Monday, amid rising uncertainty over the new government formation and soaring crude oil prices.

The India VIX, the fear gauge for domestic equities, rose 5.76 per cent to settle at 24.05, after an intra-day high of 24.56.

"Crude and election uncertainties is pushing the India VIX up," IIFL Co-promoter and MD R Venkataraman told PTI.

Besides the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, market sentiment was hit as macroeconomic worries resurfaced, following reports that the US will end sanctions waiver on Iranian oil imports, analysts said.

Global benchmark Brent crude climbed to a multi-month high of \$73.81 per barrel, a 2.56 per cent rise.

Sri Lanka's Christians afraid to attend church

AFP ■ COLOMBO

Members of Sri Lanka's Christian minority have been left afraid to go to church after deadly attacks that hit Easter services, killing nearly 300 and stoking fears of communal violence.

"Some people might be afraid to go to church now. At this moment I have no idea what to say," Father Lour Fernando told AFP by St Sebastian's in Negombo, one of three churches targeted Sunday.

"We have to remain strong and keep going to church and keep praying. We can't stop," Ranjan Christopher Fernando, a 55-year-old taxi driver from Negombo, said he was nervous about attending church after the attacks, which killed his friends' 11-year-old son.

"Tonight we (my family) will all go to church to pray for the victims," he said.

"Of course I feel afraid... but we have to go to church, we have to pray for the injured to get well soon." The suicide bomb attacks were the worst atrocity in Sri Lanka since the country's 37-year conflict with Tamil rebels ended a decade ago.

Sri Lanka's Christians, who make up just seven percent of the 21-million population, had been largely spared the worst of



Sri Lankans living near St. Anthony's shrine run for safety after police found explosive devices in a vehicle, seen behind before it exploded in Sri Lanka

the country's violence, including recent tensions between right-wing Buddhists and Muslims.

"We never thought we would ever be targeted. We never thought we would need protection," said a priest in the grounds of St Sebastian.

But others said there had been warnings, and documents seen by AFP showed the country's police chief had issued an alert on April 11 that warned a radical Muslim group planned to hit "prominent churches."

The government said Monday it believed the National Thowtheeth Jamiaeth was behind the attacks.

A pastor at People's Church in Colombo, who declined to be

named, said police had told churches last week that they should brace for possible "incidents" and stay vigilant.

"We increased security at our church last week. We have also been checking vehicles coming into the church premises," he said.

On Easter Sunday, a bomb blast ripped through St. Sebastian's, one of a half-dozen coordinated attacks on churches and high-end hotels that killed nearly 300 people.

At least 110 were killed at St. Sebastian's, said Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, making it the day's most deadly bombing.

Charles Fernando, 32, who was among the neighbourhood residents walking between houses, pointed to a home where he said nearly everyone had been killed or injured.

"We had war for 30 years but there were no bomb blasts in Negombo," he said.

Buddhist monks visit bombed church

'WE DON'T HAVE ANY ANGER' AGAINST OTHER RELIGIONS: LANKAN MONKS

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A small group of monks in saffron robes visited the bombed St Anthony's Church

here on Monday and said they do not have any anger or ill will towards anyone of any other religion in the Buddhist majority nation. The Buddhist monks visited the historic Catholic church located at Kochchikade, a day after a suicide bomber reportedly triggered a huge blast, killing many worshippers who had gathered for the Easter Sunday morning mass.

Venerable Prof Pitigala Vijitha Thero was visited by

Anthony's Shrine said he was "extremely saddened and grieved" by the incident.

"Since the (civil) war, people belonging to all religions and faiths had been co-existing and living together in unity and harmony. This is not something that anyone could have anticipated," he told the BBC.

He said he condemned the attacks, but "we don't have any anger or ill will towards anyone of any other religion."

"I pray that peace prevails - not only in this country, but in the whole world," he said.

Sri Lanka is a country of great religious diversity that crosses ethnic lines, and the monks' presence at the church was a sign of this, CNN commented.

Sunday's attacks are the deadliest seen in Sri Lanka since the end of the country's civil war in 2009. The civil war ended with the defeat of the Tamil

Tigers, who had fought for 26 years for an independent homeland for the minority ethnic Tamils. The war is thought to have killed between 70,000 and 80,000 people.

The nation has seen some sporadic violence since. In March 2018, a state of emergency was declared after hard-line members of the majority Buddhist Sinhala community attacked mosques and Muslim-owned properties.

Relatives endure grim screening to identify dead at Colombo morgue

AFP ■ COLOMBO

Some hid their eyes as gruesome images of victims from Sri Lanka's Easter massacre were projected on to a screen in front of distraught relatives at a Colombo morgue on Monday.

The pictures of some of the 290 dead are disturbing, with faces battered and bodies missing limbs. A Roman Catholic priest and a Buddhist counterpart waited in the corner of the courtyard to identify when one of scores of people in the audience recognised a mother, brother or child.

Many of the dead from attacks on three churches and

three luxury hotels have been taken to the government morgue and people queued in the heat to get into the heart-wrenching identification slideshow. Eighteen bodies were released on Monday morning after relatives recognised a victim from the gruesome images shown in a corner of the morgue courtyard.

Identification is painstaking, physically and emotionally. Many badly mutilated bodies will only be identified with the DNA of relatives, officials said.

Janaka Shakthi, 28, father of an 18-month-old son, sat in shock outside the building waiting for the body of his wife to be handed over.



Three of the four children of Danish business tycoon, Anders Holch Povlsen, who is allegedly the Nordic country's richest man and a major private landowner in Britain have died in the Sri Lanka bombings on Sunday

A Catholic town at the center of Sri Lanka's deadly attacks

PTI ■ NEGOMBO

The seaside Sri Lankan fishing town of Negombo has long been called "Little Rome," a reference to its abundance of churches and its place at the center of the

country's small Catholic community.

On Monday, it was a town in mourning. Small white flags flew in house after house near St. Sebastian's Church, a sign that someone who lived there had

died. Groups of people visited, praying their respects.

A bomb blast ripped through St. Sebastian's, one of a half-dozen coordinated attacks on churches and high-end hotels that killed nearly 300 people.

At least 110 were killed at St. Sebastian's, said Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, making it the day's most deadly bombing.

Charles Fernando, 32, who was among the neighbourhood residents walking between houses, pointed to a home where he said nearly everyone had been killed or injured.

"We had war for 30 years but there were no bomb blasts in Negombo," he said.

Pompeo vows fight on 'Islamic radical terrorism' after Sri Lanka attacks

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo vowed on Monday that the United States will keep fighting "radical Islamic terrorism" after devastating attacks in Sri Lanka that targeted churches and hotels on Easter.

"Radical Islamic terrorism remains a threat. We are continuing to do real work against these evil human beings," Pompeo told reporters.

"This is America's fight, too," added Pompeo, who said he had spoken by telephone with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe.

US, Canada issue travel advisories to citizens travelling to Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The US and Canada have issued travel advisories to their citizens seeking to visit Sri Lanka, citing threats of terrorism, a day after the calm of Easter Sunday was shattered by gruesome bombings targeting the country's churches and hotels that killed at least 290 people.

According to advisories, travellers should exercise a high degree of caution in Sri Lanka due to the current security situation.

The US Embassy said terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, local government facilities, hotels,

clubs, restaurants, places of worship, parks, major sporting and cultural events, educational institutions, airports and other public areas.

The US citizens travelling to or residing in Sri Lanka were advised to enrol in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) in order to receive the latest security updates, the Sunday Times reported.

The situation remains volatile in Sri Lanka after eight explosions rocked churches and luxury hotels, killing up to 290 people, including six Indians, and with over 500 sustaining injuries.

The Canadian government also issued a travel advisory to its nationals.

"The decision to travel is your choice and you are responsible for your personal safety abroad," the advisory said.

"We take the safety and security of Canadians abroad very seriously and provide credible and timely information in our Travel Advice to enable you to make well-informed decisions regarding your travel abroad," it said.

The death toll Monday sharply rose to 290, including six Indians, from the blasts - the worst terror attack in the country's history.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but police on Monday arrested 24 people and declined to give further details.

GLOBE TROTTER

BUS CRASH KILLS AT LEAST 17 IN BOLIVIA

La Paz (Bolivia): Bolivian police say a bus has crashed head-on with another vehicle and ploughed down a deep ravine, killing 17 people, leaving 15 others injured.

TRUMP: CONGRESS CAN'T IMPEACH HIM

Washington: President Donald Trump said Monday that Congress "can't impeach" him over the findings of the Mueller report into Russian election meddling and his attempts to hamper the investigation.

BUILDINGS COLLAPSE IN PHILIPPINE QUAKE, 5 DIE

Manila: Five people were killed when at least two buildings collapsed as a strong earthquake rocked the northern Philippines, a local official said. Three bodies have been pulled out of a collapsed building in the town of Foras, while an old woman and her grandchild were crushed to death by another building in the town of Lubao, provincial governor Lilia Pineda told ABS-CBN television.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unknown male, Age about 65 years, Height 5'2", Complexion Wheatish, Oval Face, Weak Build, White Hair, Wearing Red colour T-shirt, white colour coat and blue colour check nikkhar was found at Shantivan Red Light Bus Stand, Daryaganj, Delhi on 15.04.19. In this regard a DD No. 16-A dated 15.04.19 U/S 174 Cr.Pc has been lodged at PS Daryaganj, Delhi. The dead body has been preserved for Identification at Maulana Azad Medical College mortuary for 72 hours.

Any person having any information or clue about this case may kindly inform to the undersigned.

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, PHE, GROUND WATER DIVN, BAGH ALI MARDAAAN NOWSHERA, SRINAGAR KASHMIR

GIST OF E-Tender NIT No: PHE/GWDS 03 of 04/ 2019 Dated 22-04-2019

For and on behalf of Governor of Jammu and Kashmir State, e-tenders are invited for the job detailed below in two cover system from registered Contractors:-

S.No1. Description of Job :- Unloading, Stacking Handling/Re-handling/Head Load of the Departmental material e 125mm dia pipes/Handi pump sets in the Divisional office Stores at Nowsheera Srinagar.

Cost of Tender Document :- Rs. 200/- Cost of EMD :- Rs. 3600/- Validity of Rates :- 180 Days Critical Dates/Information.

- 1. Publishing Date :- 23-04-2019 2. Document Downloading Start Date :- 23-04-2019(09:00 A.M) 3. Document Downloading Last Date :- 02-04-2019(04:00 P.M) 4. On Line Document Submission Start Date :- 23-04-2019(09:00 A.M) 5. On Line Document Submission Last Date :- 02-05-2019 up to (4:00 P.M) 6. Date of opening of Tender :- 03-05-2019 at (11:00 A.M) 7. Tender Receiving Authority :- Executive Engineer PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar. 8. Document Cost :- Rs 200/- (Two Hundred only) for each well (Non-Refundable) in the shape of Treasury Challan/receipt deposited to Account Head 0215 in favour of Executive Engineer PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar (at Saddar Treasury Srinagar) 9. Earnest Money: for an amount shown in Gist of NIT against the job in the shape of CDR/FRD pledged to Executive Engineer PHE Ground Water Division Srinagar 190011. 10. Bid Validity Period: 180 Days DPK-NB-300/19 Dated: 22.04.2019

Trump lawyer attacks Mueller report

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump's top lawyer on Sunday attacked Democratic emails that were hacked by Russian operatives and disseminated by WikiLeaks in 2016 to hurt Trump presidential rival Hillary Clinton.

Rudy Giuliani mounted a combative defense of the president in Sunday talk show appearances that took aim at Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigators, the evidence they amassed and the witnesses they cited.

The former New York mayor heaped special scorn on Senator Mitt Romney, a former Republican presidential candidate who said Friday he was "sickened" by the report's findings and "appalled" that Trump's election campaign "welcomed help from Russia."

What a hypocrite. What a hypocrite. Any candidate in the whole world in America would take information," Giuliani said of Romney on CNN's "State of the Union."

He was referring to Democratic emails that were hacked by Russian operatives and disseminated by WikiLeaks in 2016 to hurt Trump presidential rival Hillary Clinton.

Giuliani added, "Does the information turn out to be false, by the way? The information that was gleaned and disseminated, every newspaper printed it."

Trump publicly encouraged Russia and WikiLeaks while top campaign officials, including his son and son-in-law, met in Trump Tower with a Russian prosecutor during Clinton.

"There is nothing wrong with taking information from the Russians. It depends on where it came from," Giuliani said, adding that as a lawyer he would have advised against it.

"This didn't become an international scandal because of immorality. It became an international scandal because the president was accused of violating the law falsely," he said.

His comments echoed Trump, who mocked Romney on Twitter Sunday, after lashing out Friday at the "bullshit" Mueller report. The president was in Palm Beach, Florida where he attended Easter services.

The special counsel's 22-month-long investigation concluded that Trump and his team did not collude with the Russian effort to sway the elections in his favour.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male Age: Approx. 40 years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'10", Build: Slender, Face: Round, ID Mark: Divanshi/Rivanshi Tattoo on Left Hand & OM Tattoo on Right Hand, wearing white colour shirt (Tailor Denizen) & Black colour Jeans Pant (Recruit) and chappal in feet, was found unconscious at DBG Road Near Central Bank, Pahar Ganj, Delhi. Doctor declared him dead vide M.L.No. 75144/19 in LHM/C Hospital, New Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 12PPS/ST, dated 18.04.2019, has been lodged at P.S. Pahar Ganj, New Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO P.S. Pahar Ganj, New Delhi Ph.: 011-23520787, 23524746

MISSING/KIDNAPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl, Name: Priyanka, D/o: Virender, R/o: H.No. 227, Gali No.-01, Basti Bakner, Narela, Delhi has been missing/kidnaped since 01.04.2019 from the area of P.S. Narela, Delhi. In this regard, a Case Vides DD No. 94-A Dated 01.04.2019, has been registered at P.S. Narela, Delhi. Investigations has been carried out but despite best efforts, the girl could not be traced.

The description of the missing/kidnaped girl is as under: Name: Priyanka, D/o: Virender, R/o: H.No. 227, Gali No.-01, Basti Bakner, Narela, Delhi, Age: 20 years, Height: 4'10" feet, Face Round, Complexion: Wheatish, Wearing: Yellow Colour suit & Salwar with Churmi and Blue Colour Chappal in feet. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnaped girl, then please inform P.S. Narela, Delhi.

email: ccbi.gov.in Fax: No.011-24368639, 24368641 P.S. Narela, Delhi Ph.: 011-27282350, 27285319

AXIS BANK

Real Estate Centre, Delhi: Lower Ground Floor and Upper Ground Floor, Haryana House, K.G. Marg, Delhi 110001. Also at Axis Bank Ltd. Axis Bank House, Tower 2, 2nd Floor, 14, Sector 18, Gurgaon, Haryana, India. Axis City Centre, New Khand-1, Indraprastha, Okhla/Okhla-II, Delhi 110025. Axis Bank City Centre, New Khand-1, Indraprastha, Okhla/Okhla-II, Delhi 110025. Axis Bank City Centre, New Khand-1, Indraprastha, Okhla/Okhla-II, Delhi 110025. Axis Bank City Centre, New Khand-1, Indraprastha, Okhla/Okhla-II, Delhi 110025. Axis Bank City Centre, New Khand-1, Indraprastha, Okhla/Okhla-II, Delhi 110025.

POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER RAJAS/EA/ACT/2002 The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under the Sanctioning, Authorization of Financial Institutions and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(1) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, hereby notice that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him here under Section 13(1) of the said Act read with Rule 9 of the said Rules on the date mentioned herein.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of female Age: Approx. 70 years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 4'10", was wearing Red Saree, Cream Blouse and Bare feet, was found near Kali Mata Mandir, Outer Ring Road, Pitam Pura, Delhi at 08:05 AM. In this regard a FIR No. 387/19 u/s 279/304-A IPC, dated 12.04.2019, has been registered at P.S. Mangol Puri, New Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO P.S. Mangol Puri, New Delhi Ph.: 011-27921168, 27922186

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that one unidentified dead body of male Age: Approx. 40 years, Complexion: Shallow, Height: 5'10", Build: Slender, Face: Round, ID Mark: Divanshi/Rivanshi Tattoo on Left Hand & OM Tattoo on Right Hand, wearing white colour shirt (Tailor Denizen) & Black colour Jeans Pant (Recruit) and chappal in feet, was found unconscious at DBG Road Near Central Bank, Pahar Ganj, Delhi. Doctor declared him dead vide M.L.No. 75144/19 in LHM/C Hospital, New Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 12PPS/ST, dated 18.04.2019, has been lodged at P.S. Pahar Ganj, New Delhi.

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO P.S. Pahar Ganj, New Delhi Ph.: 011-23520787, 23524746

DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, DELHI 4TH FLOOR, JEWAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

(Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure) PROCLAMATION OF SALE NOTICE

The under mentioned Property will be sold through Auction on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" for recovery of dues, in the matter of ICICI BANK LTD vs DPL BUILDERS/SPVT LTD AND ANR. No. 799/2018 & LA.No. 549/19

1. Description of Property: Make: Land Rover Freelander 2 SE. Reg. No. DL-24-42. Manuf. Year: 2015. Km: 1.15 Lakh Reserve Price: Rs. 12,60,000 EMD: Rs. 1,26,000 2. Date and Time of Auction: 30.04.2019

3. Auction Venue: RdhI Godara Road, Katerina Chowk, Sector 17, Sukhrai Con Behind A Force Station, Gurgaon 4. Name of the Auctioneer: Shankar Kapoor Mob No: 9650193259

Terms of Sale The particulars of the said asset proposed to be sold have been stated in the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned bidders shall be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the respective vehicle by way of pay order/ Demand Draft payable at Delhi and in favour of ICICI Bank Ltd. Successful highest bidder shall have to deposit balance amount within 5 days from the approval/sharing with them.

In Case of failure to deposit the amount as mentioned above, the amount of Earnest Money deposited shall be forfeited. Interested participants are requested to participate 20 April 2019 for physical auction or call Bank Manager Shankar Kapoor

Gomathi wins India's first Gold in Asian Athletics C'ships

Marimuthu runs supreme in women's 800m to win yellow metal; Shivpal wins Silver in Javelin

PTI ■ DOHA

Unheralded Gomathi Marimuthu gave India its first Gold medal in the women's 800m race as the country added four medals on the second day of the Asian Athletics Championships here on Monday.

The 30-year-old Gomathi clocked a personal best time of 2 minute 02.70 seconds in the half mile event to win a surprise Gold for India.

Shivpal Singh then added a Silver in men's javelin throw by sending the spear to a distance of 86.23m, his personal best. In the process, the 23-year-old Shivpal also booked a berth for the World Championships to be held at the same venue in September-October as he crossed the qualifying mark of 83m.

Jabir Madari Palliyalil and Saritaben Gayakwad bagged a Bronze each in men's and women's 400m hurdles respectively to swell the Indian medal tally.

With the four medals on Monday, India's medal tally stood at 1 Gold, 3 Silver and 5 Bronze. India had won 2 Silver and 3 Bronze on the first day on Sunday.



India's Gomathi Marimuthu, left, competes in the women's 800-meters race final; Jabir Madari Palliyalil celebrates with his national flag after winning the bronze medal in the men's 400-meters hurdles; Saritaben Laxmanbhai Gayakwad rests after racing in the women's 400-meters hurdles final



Jabir Madari Palliyalil celebrates with his national flag after winning the bronze medal in the men's 400-meters hurdles; Saritaben Laxmanbhai Gayakwad rests after racing in the women's 400-meters hurdles final

Sprinter Dutee Chand also shared some of the limelight as she smashed her own national record in 100m dash for the second time in two days.

The first Indian medal of the second day came from 24-year-old Gayakwad who clocked 57.22 seconds to

finish third in women's 400m hurdles, behind Vietnam's Quach The Lan (56.10) and Bahrain's Aminat Yusuf Jamal (56.39).

His male counterpart Jabir then added a Bronze by running the third fastest men's 400m hurdles by an Indian as he clocked a per-

sonal best of 49.13 seconds. In the process, the 22-year-old Jabir joined national record holder Dharun Ayyasamy as the second Indian to qualify for the World Championships 400m hurdles event to be held at the same venue in September-October. The

World Championships qualifying mark is 49.30 seconds. Dharun, who set a new national record of 48.80 during the Federation Cup last month, missed this Asian Championships due to injury.

Pre-race favourite Abderrehman Samba of Qatar won Gold with a world leading time of 47.51 seconds. In the women's 100m dash, Dutee bettered her own national record of 11.28 seconds set on Sunday during the heats by clocking 11.26 seconds while winning her semifinal race on Monday. She is, however, yet to touch the World Championships qualification mark of 11.24.

However in the men's 400m, India suffered setbacks as defending champion Muhammad Anas and last edition silver winner Arokia Rajiv failed to win a medal.

Rajiv finished fourth with a personal best time of 45.37 seconds while Anas, who has been struggling after a leg injury in an accident last year, ended at eighth with a time of 46.10 seconds.

Hockey coach Reid asks players to put team first

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India's newly-appointed men's hockey chief coach Graham Reid on Monday took charge of the national camp and asked his players to put the team first in his maiden address to them.

Reid, who arrived in Bengaluru on April 20, got down to business on Monday, meeting players for the first time at the SAI Centre.

"The turf here is world class. I addressed the players when I arrived and expressed my expectations as one unit, one team and that we always need to put the team first," the 54-year-old Australian said.

"We also spoke about the importance of trust and communication and to make sure it is both ways," he said. Reid said the available talent in India makes him optimistic about the future.

"I am really glad that I also got to watch the 33 players from the Junior Core Group and being part of the National Trials this morning gives me a good sense of the talent that is available at the moment and it makes me feel very positive about the future," said Reid, a former player of the Australian national team.

Reid's first big assignment as chief coach will be the upcoming FIH Men's Series Finals in Bhubaneswar, starting June 6 where India will vie for top honours against Asian Games champions Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, South Africa, USA and Uzbekistan.

The Indian team will go for on an exposure tour to Perth, Australia between May 6 and May 18 where it will



play a four-match series against the Australian national team as part of their preparations for the FIH Men's Series Finals in Bhubaneswar.

"We extend a warm welcome to Graham Reid on his arrival to India. Many players in the senior team are already familiar with him due to his stint as coach during Hockey India League, Hockey India President Mohd Mustaque Ahmad.

The Australia tour will be an ideal ground for him to understand further about the team and their temperament and short comings ahead of the crucial FIH Men's Series Finals in Bhubaneswar.

We wish him the very best in his new role with the Indian Men's Hockey Team," he added.

Bajrang, Sakshi to lead India's challenge

PTI ■ XIAN

Olympic Bronze medalist Sakshi Malik and World No 1 Bajrang Punia will spearhead India's campaign at the Asian Wrestling Championships starting on Tuesday.

Besides Sakshi and Bajrang, Vinesh Phogat is another big name who would be vying for top honours during the mega-event.

Vinesh will hope to give a good account of herself in the women's 53kg — a relatively new weight category for her.

She had competed for the first time in that category at the UWW Dan Kolyo Nikola Petrov tournament in Bulgaria and had bagged a Silver medal.

In the same competition, Bajrang, who was competing in men's 65kg category, clinched a Gold. Sakshi, the Bronze winner at the Rio Olympics, also settled for a Silver in women's 63kg, while Pooja Dhanda won the yellow metal in women's 59kg category.

At the Asian Championships, Sakshi will go back to her 62kg category, while Navjot Kaur will represent India in women's 65kg.

Pooja Dhanda will fight in 57kg in this tournament. Asian Games Bronze medalist Divya Kakran will return to competitive wrestling having recovered from an ankle injury from India, who are expected to finish on the podium.

In men's freestyle, Praveen Rana (79kg) and Satyavrat Kadian (97kg) are other key wrestlers from India, who are expected to finish on the podium.

Kavinder stuns world champ, Panghal beats Dusmatov

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kavinder Singh Bisht (56kg) upstaged reigning world champion Kairat Yerallyev, while Amit Panghal (52kg) edged past familiar foe and Olympic champion Hasanboy Dusmatov, assuring themselves of medals at the Asian Boxing Championships in Bangkok on Monday.

In the women's draw, world Silver medalist Sonia Chahal (57kg) advanced to the last-four stage at the continental showcase.

Bisht clinched a split verdict over Yerallyev, who hails from Kazakhstan, in a high-intensity contest to assure himself of a

maiden Asian championship medal.

Panghal, who claimed a Bronze in the 2015 edition of the event, also secured a hard-fought 2-2 triumph over Dusmatov, the former world champion Uzbek he defeated to claim the Asian Games Gold just a few months ago.

Before that, the two boxers had also clashed in the world championship quarters where Dusmatov had emerged triumphant.

Sonia too fetched a similarly close victory over Korea's Jo Son Hwa.

Also making the semis was national champion Deepak Singh (49kg), who did not have to step inside the ring to fight for the spot



after Afghanistan's Ramish Rahmani gave him a walkover owing to injury.

However, world championship Bronze-medallist Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) bowed out of contention after a quarterfinal loss to reigning world champion Chen Nien-Chin of Taiwan.

In another women's bout, Seema Poonia (+81kg) lost to China's Yang Xiaoli 5-0, ending another disappointing international outing for her. Poonia had got a bye into the quarters.

In the last Indian bout of the day, Rohit Tokas (64kg) fought hard but could not avert a 2-3 loss to Mongolia's Chinzorig Baatarsukh in the quarterfinals.



Former foes unite to lead France into Fed Cup final

AFP ■ PARIS

France set up a Fed Cup final against Australia on Sunday when Caroline Garcia and Kristina Mladenovic, who once were barely on speaking terms, teamed-up to crown a 3-2 victory over Romania.

Former Roland Garros doubles champions Garcia and Mladenovic beat Simona Halep and Monica Niculescu 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 to secure the winning point and a final date against Australia in November.

"Victory was a diplomatic coup for France coach Julien Benneteau, who teamed up Garcia and Mladenovic for the first time in Fed Cup since 2016 after which the pair had a bitter falling out which led to a self-imposed Fed Cup exile for Garcia, her country's top player."

"Every match was incredible," said Benneteau. "I am so proud of them. It was always my intention to put them together — and it was not hard to do." Earlier on Sunday, French Open champion Halep won her second singles of the weekend, seeing off Garcia 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-4 for a 2-1 lead in the

semi-final. Veteran Pauline Parmentier then beat a hobbling Irina-Camela Begu 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 to pull France level.

In a tense deciding rubber, Halep, whose doubles ranking is in the 400s, committed a double fault to concede the break in the ninth game of the final set before Garcia held her nerve to serve out the victory.

"We prepared ourselves as best as we could, we had a good training session at the beginning of the week, and we were ready, maybe at the beginning we made some mistakes," said Garcia.

"We really made the effort from start to finish together, it was intense on the court from the first point of the weekend to the last. But it was a great weekend and we can really be proud."

France, who won the last of their two titles in 2003, will travel to Australia for the final.

Six-time champions Australia, whose most recent title was in 1974, reached a first final in 26 years by seeing off Belarus 3-2 in Brisbane in a tie also settled by a three-set deciding doubles rubber.

Mbappe flattens Monaco in title party

AFP ■ PARIS

Neymar joined the Paris Saint-Germain title party on Sunday when he made his first appearance since January as Kylian Mbappe swept aside Monaco with a hat-trick in a 3-1 win for the newly-crowned Ligue 1 champions.

Mbappe took his league tally for the season to 30 following his treble, which came just hours after PSG were crowned champions for the sixth time in seven years when closest challengers Lille dropped points.

Neymar's return at the start of the second half replacing Layvin Kurzawa is the cherry on the cake for Thomas Tuchel's side, who had been without the Brazilian superstar since January 23 with a right foot injury.

Edinson Cavani also returned to action as a second half substitute, having a late strike correctly ruled out for

offside, meaning that PSG's famed front three are back together following months apart.

Mbappe has thrived in the absence of his strike partners, and gave his side a 2-0 first-half lead with two ten minute, the first coming in the 15th minute and the second seven minutes before the break after a beautiful pass from Dani Alves.

The World Cup winner then put the three points beyond doubt when he tapped in Alves' long cross nine minutes after the break.

Alexander Golovin rolled home a consolation for the away side, who remain in trouble in 16th place and are only four points away from relegation play-off spot.

On Sunday afternoon Lille ended their challenge with a goalless draw at Toulouse that left them 16 points behind PSG with only five games to play and allowed capital club to cele-



brate the title after missing chances to seal it in their previous matches. The Parisians have struggled with key injuries in recent weeks and they lost Italian international midfielder Marco Verratti with what looks like a

knock to his left ankle. PSG took the field wearing a shirt with a large image of Notre-Dame replacing the usual sponsor's logo. 'Notre-Dame' replaced the player names on the back of the shirts. The iconic Paris cathedral was damaged in a spectacular blaze last Monday.

The club said that they would put a limited edition of the shirts on sale on line during the match for 100 euros each. The club said the money "will be donated to associations related to firefighters."

The club also posted a "Homage to Notre-Dame" video on their web site in which players praised the team-work of the Paris fire brigade and made a gesture that imitates part of the cathedral's facade.

The club said it was also using Sunday's game to thank the firefighters.

Davies sets top four target for Spurs

AFP ■ LONDON

Ben Davies has challenged Tottenham to win their last four Premier League games as they aim to get their top four push back on track against Brighton on Tuesday.

Mauricio Pochettino's side suffered a setback in their bid to repeat their league finish for a fifth straight season when they were beaten 1-0 at Manchester City at the weekend.

It was a frustrating end to a memorable week that saw Tottenham reach the Champions League semi-finals with a dramatic away goals success at City.

Aided by Arsenal's surprise loss to Crystal Palace on Sunday, Tottenham remain third, but they will drop to fourth if Chelsea defeat Burnley on Monday.

With the race to qualify for next season's Champions League heating up, Tottenham defender Davies knows his team has no margin for error in their remaining fixtures.

Davies believes only four successive victories will be enough to secure Tottenham's place in Europe's elite club competition.

"It's never easy to reflect but look, it's about kicking on and trying to win every game between now and the end of the season," Davies said.

"That's the target and it starts against Brighton on Tuesday."



Demanding Tottenham display a more predatory instinct in front of goal after missing a host of chances in the City defeat, Davies said: "It's always hard to see any positives straight after a defeat."

"We certainly created the chances but unfortunately we didn't take them this time."

"That's the difference between this game and Wednesday night, we were a bit more clinical."

Brighton are desperate for points as they battle to avoid relegation, but Davies hopes the feelgood factor from Tottenham's new stadium will continue to provide a welcome lift. Pochettino's men have



Sissoko likely to miss Ajax opener

AFP ■ LONDON

Tottenham Hotspur suffered a fresh blow to their Champions League hopes on Monday when Moussa Sissoko appeared to be ruled out of the first leg of their semi-final against Ajax.

The midfielder, one of Tottenham's outstanding players this season, suffered a groin injury in the return leg of the quarter-final tie at Manchester City and Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino believes he will not be fit for another two weeks.

That would rule Sissoko out of the north London club's home leg against Dutch giants Ajax on April 30, with Tottenham already missing South Korea star Son Heung-min through suspension.

Solis has been a key man for Spurs while England captain Harry Kane has been sidelined with an ankle injury.

"Moussa Sissoko is not going to be fit, maybe for the next two weeks, we hope he can recover before but I am not so optimistic," Pochettino said ahead of Tuesday's Premier League match at home to Brighton.

"Harry Winks we don't know because it is a problem that is one day very good, next day not very good, it is about assessing each day."

"We hope he will be available for Tuesday but we are not sure." There are also doubts over the fitness of France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, with Pochettino saying: "Lloris I hope yes, we are going to assess, we have a training session and we hope it is not a big issue, we hope he is going to be available."



WELL-MAINTAINED GARDEN IS HEALTHY GARDEN

The easiest way to limit disease in your garden is to avoid introducing it in the first place. Getting a disease with a new plant is not the kind of bonus that any of us wants. One of the hardest things to learn is what a healthy plant should look like, making it difficult to know if the one you want is sick, writes **TEAM VIVA**



A well-maintained garden is a healthy garden. Only a garden that is maintained produces edible fruits and vegetables as well as beautiful flowers. Maintaining the garden also improves the desirability of the property. A neglected garden produces weeds and fat garden pests. Depending on the weather and type of garden, watering will most likely be a daily activity once the plants are planted into the garden. During hot weather, plants may need to be watered more than once a day. Plants generally require about an inch of water every week and seedlings need more than plants. To reduce evaporation, water the soil directly, not the leaves. It is important to keep a log of when produce is planted, how often it is watered and harvest dates. This will be helpful when planting in future seasons by being able to look back and see what worked or what did not work. A log is useful if there are many people involved in caring for the garden. It will take the guess work out of whether or not it needs to be fertilised again, for example. The gar-

den log does not need to be complex. Plants are often watered until the soil looks moist on the surface, but that might not be enough. After watering, test the moisture of the soil by poking a finger about an inch into the soil. If the soil around the roots of the plant is still dry, make sure to water more. There are a number of tools available for watering the garden. Watering cans and garden hoses are the least expensive options, but they are more labor intensive and require close monitoring. Other options include drip irrigation and sprinkler systems. Successful gardening is based on using plants appropriate for your zone and site. If you set a shade-loving plant, like an azalea, in full sun, it will grow poorly and be easily attacked by diseases and insects. Plants have defenses similar to a human's immune system, which swing into action when plants are under attack from an insect or disease. If plants are under stress, they cannot react with full strength to fight off or recover from diseases. Stressed plants, therefore, are more likely to succumb to these afflictions.



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The easiest way to limit disease in your garden is to avoid introducing it in the first place. Getting a disease with a new plant is not the kind of bonus that any of us wants. One of the hardest things to learn

is what a healthy plant should look like, making it difficult to know if the one you want is sick. It is a good idea to collect a few books, magazines, and catalogs that show what a healthy specimen

looks like. Don't take home a plant with dead spots, rotted stems, or insects. These problems can easily spread to your healthy plants and are sometimes hard to get rid of once established. In addition to checking the tops of plants, always inspect the root quality. One does not often see customers doing this in a garden center, but it should be a common sight. Place your hand on the soil surface with the plant stem between your fingers. Gently invert the pot and shake the plant loose. You may have to tap the edge of the pot against a solid surface to loosen the roots from the pot. Roots should be firm, usually white, and spaced all over the root-ball. Dark or mushy roots are not a good sign. Even when the tops appear healthy, it's just a matter of time before a rotted root system kills a plant. Not all materials in a compost pile decompose at the same rate. Some materials may have degraded sufficiently to be put in the garden, while others have not. Thorough composting generates high temperatures for extended lengths of time, which actually kill any pathogens in the material. Infected plant debris that has not

undergone this process will reintroduce potential diseases into your garden. If you are not sure of the conditions of your compost pile, you should avoid using yard waste as much under sensitive plants and avoid including possibly infected debris in your pile. Insect damage to plants is much more than cosmetic. Viruses and bacteria often can only enter a plant through some sort of opening, and bug damage provides that. Some insects actually act as a transport for viruses, spreading them from one plant to the next. Aphids are one of the most common carriers, and thrips spread impatiens necrotic spot virus, which has become a serious problem for commercial producers over the past 10 years. Aster yellows (photo, right) is a disease carried by leaf-hoppers and has a huge range of host plants. Insect attacks are another way to put a plant under stress, rendering it less likely to fend off disease. Watering your garden is a good thing, but since many diseases need water just as much as plants do, how you go about it makes a big difference. Many pathogens in the soil and air need water to move, grow, and reproduce. To avoid giv-

ing these diseases an environment they love, choose watering methods that limit moisture on a plant's foliage. Soaker hoses and drip irrigation accomplish this. If you are watering by hand, hold the leaves out of the way as you water the roots. The most common leaf problems are exacerbated when leaves are wet, so overhead sprinkling is the least desirable option. If you choose this method, however, water at a time when the leaves will dry quickly but the roots still have time to absorb the moisture before it evaporates. Also remember that more isn't necessarily better when giving your plants a drink. Waterlogged soil or pots promotes some root-rotting fungi and can also suffocate roots, making them easy targets for the rotting fungi. Plants that are placed too closely together tend to grow poorly due to competition for light, water, and nutrients. These weak plants are more susceptible to attack. Diseases also sometimes spread when an infected leaf comes into contact with a healthy one, which is more likely when plants are next to each other.

Trend
Slazer

Farhan will be guest at UEFA

Actor Farhan Akhtar has bagged a seat among one of the special guests at the UEFA Champions League Finals, this year.

As UEFA's official guest from India, he will watch the finals and get a taste of the UEFA Champions League experience at the Metropolitano Stadium in Madrid, Spain on June 1.

Farhan is a football enthusiast and has often spoken about his passion for sports, especially football. The actor will be seen across the Sony Pictures Sports Network, showcasing his love for the tournament in the *My Reasons to Watch UEFA Champions League* on-air campaign.



'I feel Arshad (Warsi), as an actor, is quite understated. He is one of the best actors I've worked with. When it comes to comedy, he is one of the best in the country, for he improvises with every take. His spontaneity makes the scene so exciting and keeps you constantly on your toes. I had thoroughly enjoyed working with him in Ishqiya.'

—Vidya Balan



Actress **KATRINA KAIF** has been roped in for filmmaker **Rohit Shetty's** next, titled *Sooryavanshi* starring actor **Akshay Kumar**.

Akshay welcomed the actress.

"Welcome to our cop universe Katrina Kaif... Our *Sooryavanshi* girl," he wrote.

Filmmaker Karan Johar, who is bank rolling the film, shared a photograph of himself with Akshay, Katrina and Shetty, captioned the image, "Welcoming the *Sooryavanshi* girl on board. Releasing on Eid 2020!"

Akshay plays the role of Veer Suryavanshi, who was introduced as an Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) officer in a cameo in *Simmba*.



Nick, Priyanka celebrate Easter

Actor **NICK JONAS** and wife and actress **PRIYANKA CHOPRA JONAS** celebrated their first Easter after marriage.

The two celebrated Easter in Atlanta and shared photographs of their family time with mother, Denise Jonas on Instagram.

The couple can be seen with gift baskets in one photograph as Priyanka hugs her mother-in-law while Denise can be seen happily dancing in a video.

While Nick wrote: "Happy Easter to you and yours! From me and mine."

Priyanka captioned the image, "Happy Easter from ours to yours."

On the work front, Priyanka has wrapped up filming *The Sky is Pink*, directed by Shonali Bose.



It's important to look beyond men's personal accomplishments and see their fashion sense as well as the manner in which they are making informed choices and respecting the changing dynamics of women in the society. By **TEAM VIVA**

ARE YOU A MAN OF SUBSTANCE?

Whether it is style, fashion, fitness, travel, technology or personal space, men have more often than not taken a lead and in the bargain evolved manifold. Or so believes Karan Bhardwaj, co-founder of the India Men Show.

He pointed out that despite that there hasn't been a portal or space which talks about how men's lifestyle and personality has evolved over the years. The show was conceptualised keeping this aspect about technology, food, travel, way of living, fashion, luxury, fitness, entertainment and lifestyle in mind.

Karan said, "It was to provide some direction to the lifestyle industry and give them a new subject to work on. The show not just looked at how their personal choices have changed with time, but also defined the 'man of substance', who has evolved by accepting the current scenario and change in the society."

With so many campaigns against the harassment and injustice towards

'WE SHORTLISTED MEN FROM EVERY FIELD LIKE FASHION, TECHNOLOGY, HOSPITALITY, FITNESS AND MORE, WHO AREN'T CONTROVERSIAL OR HAVEN'T BEEN CHARGED OF ANY ACCUSATIONS UNDER THE #METOO CAMPAIGN. THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE SOCIETY IN A GREAT WAY'



women coming to the fore, the show questioned who after all is a "man of substance?" He added, "Even if the man is successful in his endeavours, he needs to be much more accepting of the changing roles and desires of women too. They need to be 'clean' enough to talk about society as whole. Hence, we shortlisted men from every field like fashion, technology, hospitality, fitness and more, who aren't controversial or haven't been charged of any accusations under the #MeToo campaign and respect humanity and feminism. Of course, they have contributed to the society in a great way."

Present at a panel discussion, talking about the changing trends in men's lifestyle in India, FDCI president Sunil Sethi said that a man shouldn't try to be just successful, rather be of value, quoting Albert Einstein. "If you are a man of value and ethics, you're a man of substance," he said, adding that "Achievers are not necessarily defined by clothes."

Talking about how the fashion sense in men has evolved, Sethi said that men haven't been adventurous in the past. However, today, they don't just

wear "smart suits, blacks and whites, but change colours to look attractive. They have a style of their own. Look at how they go to the gym and exercise religiously, their accessories and clothes have matching colours, making them appear like they do have a fashion sense."

Giving the example of Bollywood's King, Sethi said, "I recently attended an event, where Gauri Khan, wife of Shah Rukh Khan, told me that her husband would take two to three hours to get ready for an event. He pays attention to details like matching right coloured-tie with his shoes and suits. This sensibility has come with time in today's men."

With changing roles of both men and women today, the former's fashion choices have transformed as well. Men's fashion has evolved manifold whether it is formal suits, ties and pants or informal clothing and tracksuits.

From the fitness industry, "there can be no one better than Sangram Singh to talk about who a man of substance is," said Karan.

"Nothing is more fashionable than being fit. No matter what you wear or buy, the most important thing should be to keep yourself fit and healthy. When you are fit, your confidence grows by leaps and bounds," said Sangram at the panel. He recalls that there have been days when he was short on resources. "I didn't have good clothes. Today, I have reached this level because I was mentally tough. Discipline and moral values are important to succeed in life," said he.

The panel also saw Rajiv Makhi, the tech guru, who talked about how personal looks mattered in today's social media world. "I do make-up. I tell my children that they have a father who does indulge in make-up to enhance looks. So that they can brag about it rather than hide it. I think it is a great thing. For me, a 'man of substance' means the one who is unique and solid, learns through his life and teaches back." He added that in an age of social media, good looks matter a lot. "Instagram is the proof. There, you would realise people who feature in top trends are actually the ones who take care of their looks. So in today's time, it gives you instant attention," said Rajiv.

Karan added that not just looks or personal achievements, "it's about today's men, who are aware of their actions and are making informed choices towards the society and their evolution. It's indeed a brilliant shift and the show celebrated just that. They are not just investing smartly but also creating opportunities through multiple startups."

Real talent

While **ALIA BHATT** received the Best Actress award for *Raazi* again, **VINEET KUMAR** was given the Best Actor for *Mukkabaaz* at the Critics' Choice Film Awards

After her victory at the Filmfare and Zee Cine Awards this year for her notable performance as a spy in Meghna Gulzar's directorial *Raazi*, Alia Bhatt walked away with the Best Actress Award at the Critics' Choice Film Awards ceremony here.

Alia, who opted for a denim jumpsuit for the gala, took to Instagram to share her look for the ceremony that took place on Sunday.

Surekha Sikri, 74, was felicitated with Best Supporting Actress Award for her portrayal of a nagging grandmother in *Badhaai Ho*. While receiving the award, she got a standing ovation from the audience. Due to health reasons, she attended the event in a wheel chair. The presenters got off the stage to hand over the trophy to Surekha, who adorned a green sari.

Bollywood's first stuntwoman Reshma Pathan was honoured with the Extraordinary Achievement Award. Reshma is popularly known as the *Sholay* girl as she had played Hema Malini's body-double in the cult film.

In the Best Actor (Male) category, Vineet Kumar bagged the golden trophy for his role in *Mukkabaaz*. Sriram Raghavan received the Best Director Award for his thriller *Andhadhun*, which featured actors A y u s h m a n n Khurrana, Tabu and Radhika Apte.

After the win, Vineet took to Instagram to thank fans and the entire team of *Mukkabaaz*.

"This award means so much to me and everyone who has worked hard for *Mukkabaaz*. Thank you so much Anurag Kashyap (sir), Aananad L. Rai (sir), my co-actors all the boxers, my coaches and the entire team of *Mukkabaaz*," he wrote.

"And last but not least, all my friends and fans who have been pouring their love on me... Let



- Best Actor:** Vineet Singh for *Mukkabaaz*
- Best Actress:** Alia Bhatt for *Raazi*
- Best Director:** Sriram Raghavan for *Andhadhun*
- Best Supporting Actress:** Surekha Sikri for *Badhaai Ho!*
- Best song:** *Halla* from *Manmarziyaan*
- Best Film in Tamil:** *Pariyerum Perumal*
- Best Film in Malayalam:** *Ee Ma Ya*
- Best Film in Gujarati:** *Tatvamasi*
- Extraordinary Achievement Award:** Reshma Pathan

your love flow," he added.

Music composer Amit Trivedi also bagged the trophy for *Best Song* for *Halla* from *Manmarziyaan* that starred Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal and Abhishek Bachchan.

The gala was hosted by actress Neha Dhupia but it was superstar Shah Rukh Khan who turned out as the surprise guest of the evening and entertained the attendees with his humour and wit.

In the videos from the extravaganza that have surfaced online, SRK is seen speaking about the craft of cinema.

Celebrities like Zoya Akhtar, Jackie Shroff, Aditi Rao Hydari, Rasika Dugal and Richa Chadha were also present.

ON A SPANISH NOTE

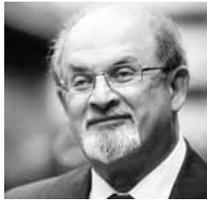
Writer **SALMAN RUSHDIE's** new novel is inspired by the classic *Don Quixote*

Spanish classic *Don Quixote*, which remains the most-translated book in the world after the Bible, has inspired a new novel by Man Booker Prize-winning author Salman Rushdie, publisher Penguin Random House India announced.

The publisher in a statement announced acquisition of the novel *Quichotte* which is expected to hit Indian stands in August.

Inspired by the classic by the sixteenth century writer Miguel de Cervantes, Rushdie's *Quichotte* is the story of "an ageing travelling salesman who falls in love with a TV star and sets off to drive across America on a quest to prove himself worthy of her hand".

The publisher said that the title's



tragicomic tale is one of a deranged time and deals, along with the way, with father-son relationships, sibling quarrels, racism, the

opioid crisis, cyber-spies and the end of the world.

Calling the book a perfect follow-on to the success of Rushdie's 2017 novel *The Golden House*, the publisher's Senior Commissioning Editor Manasi Saha announced that the author remains the master fabulist.

"In *Quichotte*, this rich epic of the immigrant experience in modern America, we are delighted to see that Rushdie is back — with his signature dazzling prose — to tell the tale of the here and now within the realm that all that could've been," she said.

The book will be published under Penguin's imprint Hamish Hamilton, which has many distinguished titles in literary fiction. —IANS

MC Sher on highway to heaven

Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* brought the growing hip-hop culture in India to the fore. While Ranveer Singh received glowing praise for his portrayal of Murad, a slum boy who uses rap as an outlet for his frustration, his mentor MC Sher played by Siddhant Chaturvedi came in for praise for his rapping skills.

Siddhant's fan-base has grown substantially since the release of the film. And now, according to a daily producer Ritesh Sidhwani and Zoya are planning a spin-off focused on MC Sher.

"The film is entirely based on Siddhant's character and traces MC Sher's journey to becoming a hero. This will also give the makers a chance to delve deeper into hip-hop culture and you can expect many engaging rap battles," says a source.

Gully Boy was inspired by Naazy, aka Naved Sheikh, who shot to fame with the song *Aagat*.

On a show, Siddhant also opened up about his first meeting with Zoya. "It was at a party. I was dancing to a Govinda song, *Tujko Mirchi Lagi Toh Main Kyu Karoon*. I was full-on and she saw me. Then the DJ played *Gallan Goodiyaan* from *Dil Dhadakne Do* and I went up



to her and danced with her. She was like, 'Hey, who are you?' And I said I was an actor on *Inside Edge*. She asked me to come and audition for *Gully Boy*," he said.

On the other hand, Zoya Akhtar too reacted to the success of her last directorial *Gully Boy* by saying that while making a film, a filmmaker shouldn't look at the end result and should enjoy the process of filmmaking.

Zoya started 2019 on a positive note as both her film and digital project *Made in Heaven* received a good response from the audience.

Talking about her forthcoming projects, Zoya said, "It's been a good start. We are working on *Made in Heaven* season 2. We are also working on another show. We are working on two feature films with two other directors and we are working on Reema's (Kagti) and my next film. It's action-packed writing happening right now."

Talking about the success of *Gully Boy*, which featured Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt in lead roles, Zoya said, "It feels good when it does well at the box office and when you have certain amount of critical appreciation. I feel you have to do something that you believe in and you have to do it as honestly and truthfully as you can and then, whatever happens, happens for the best. You can't look at the end result. You have to just enjoy the process."

—With inputs from IANS

THE POLLOCKIAN CANVAS

Artist SHRIDHAR IYER's paintings initiate in-depth conversations about spiritual leanings, says UMA NAIR

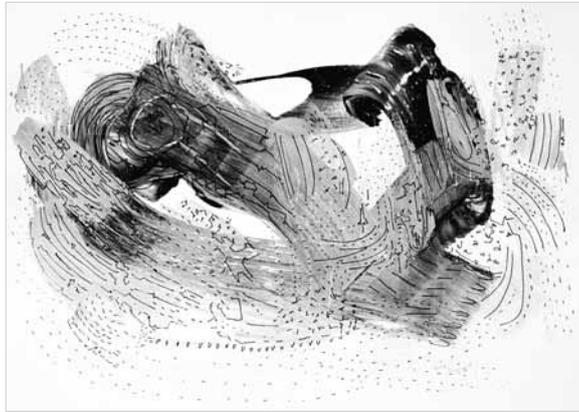
Tucked away in Hauz Khas village, Art Konsult has a series of abstract works by veteran artist Shridhar Iyer that is a lesson in the leanings and learnings of the abstract journey that unravels through time and tide. Over the years, Shridhar has projected himself as a pilgrim in search of the intangible. A silent vibration of a mantra emanates from his countenance and you think of discipline, simplicity and devout absorption that transcend the frontiers of experience to give us a moving moment.

His profile photographs on Facebook clearly unravel a quest for something that is not merely temporary but something that is ephemeral and indeed incandescent in its deeply textured terrain. His paintings are Pollockian canvases that are indeed not spectacularly beautiful but they are in-depth conversations about the spiritual leanings that are specifically cited within the compartments of his interior journey.

FLOATING TENDRILS

What meets the eye are lush-laced floating tendrils, which float toward and over each other but always in a swirl of grace, rising and falling through fields as if swirling down against an inky plane of deeper densities. The elegant tangerine and saffron shades create stunning contrast islands of tonality, even as the looped lines meet at the stark dividing lines that separate different realms.

In the subsequent paintings, that continue this motif, the swirls shapeshift. They become ethereal,



like curvilinear spirits that converge in flashing swirls, transforming again into streams of energy that rush through a colourful, charismatic world at once ordered yet uncannily infinite.

TRANSCENDENT JOURNEYS

Shridhar has over the years meditated upon his own poetically transcendent journeys characterising an inner spirit inspired by his own interactions on an inward journey of a higher plane. You can look at these abstractions and

know immediately that Shridhar is an artist who delves and delineates his own intuitive journey.

Here are a series of embedded thoughts that are made of narrow strips of fragile and pliant strokes that lay stretched in quadruple layers of warps and wets on the different layers of colour that appear and disappear, bringing up the lower levels to the top, sending it back down the brims of the canvas, bringing it up again in a different way so that it looks like the fiber lines are meshing, tangling,

and organically growing together. Before he takes them out of tension, they are aligned to certain gravitational forces that are unseen but hold them together in a lock in embrace that tangles in its minimal moorings.

ORDERED PROGRESSION

Whether you look at the colour tones or the looped linearities or the tiny textural nuances, you think of an ordered progression in which the inner being celebrates primeval, primordial chaos that is



RENDERED IN CRIMSON, AMORPHOUS BLUE, CANARY YELLOW AND MOSS GREEN, SHRIDHAR SUBTLY UNVEILS THE SYMBOLIC LEXICON OF THE MANTRAS THAT WE USE WHEN WE CHANT SANSKRIT PRAYERS

at once dulcet, distinct and deeply gravitas filled. These works, in an ordered progression, illustrate the birth of an inner world that is at once elusive as well as elegant in the many meanderings that it explores in terms of dimensions. Shridhar explores the dichotomies — heaven and earth, male and female, positive and negative — that structure our existence. He, in a subtle and silent way, also unveils the symbolic lexicon of the mantras that we use when we chant Sanskrit prayers and this is what he has continued to develop throughout his career as an abstractionist. You can sense the real and the rhythmic resonance that grows and flows. You can see the ever-shifting primordial vignettes of experience that evolve in these works — rendered in crimson, amorphous blue, canary yellow, and moss green. We can think of the unity of colour tones as much as we think of zones of

meditation that form in our inner meditative moments.

Spiral and swirl forms appear often — a potent symbol that Shridhar has been using again and again to suggest individual personal spiritual growth, progress, and evolution that resides within and without.

We can think of many things. Of the importance of the individual as a being held by the spirit of godliness within — held by use threads of conviction in an invisible realm of existence.

These works remind of the nirgun poetry of Kabir the mystic. Among the various collections of Kabir's poems, *Bijak* is considered the most authoritative by the members of Kabir Panth. The word, *Bijak* means a document by which a hidden treasure can be located. The compiler of the collection probably chose this word as a title for verses which were considered to reveal the hidden treasures of religious knowledge.

Ultimately, the abstractionist is one who conveys the spiritual world through his own paintings, and when these paintings are showcased in a space, it speaks like a temple that echoes the many mantras and prayers held within the folds of the works. This show is a must for students of the world of art in the capital city because it speaks at different levels about the why and wherefore of abstraction in a world that has been celebrating stray design and strokes of colour for abstraction when in reality, it belongs to the pedigree of experience and exploration over the years instead of the overnight bubble.

For Odisha's woman sculptor Nivedita Mishra, carving is nothing short of a meditative process. She is dedicated to carving and it connects her not just with the density and intensity of the granite blocks that she works upon but also the physicality and materiality of the smaller elements. Carving as sculptural practice holds a deep, ancient, global history and this connection between a vision for modern sculpture and methods of making has been employed for centuries, millennia even, across the globe and that makes her work appeal deeply to the common man.

SPEAKING STONES

Carving is not simply a method of making sculptures for NIVEDITA MISHRA, rather it is an articulation of a particular vision of the craft, says U NAIR

Inner spirit
"My connection with stone involves spirituality and reverence for the spirit that dwells within," says Nivedita as she puts together her series *Odyssey* at the Lalit Kala Akademi in a small cameo and goes on to add, "Stone is about people and their journeys. It has been on this earth much longer than man and for this reason it becomes our teacher. As a sculptor, I visualise what the stone wants to become and I strive to help it bloom. The granite blocks I use speak to me by their textures and grains. I look at the characteristics of the granite and then start carving."

Articulating an emotion
But when you look at her polished cylindrical series, you know that carving is not simply a method of making sculpture for her; it is an articulation of a particular vision of the sculptor's craft: it is also inextricably bound up with the articulation of an "aesthetic creed" for what she sees as a physical process of carving through simplicity. Her large work symbolise a cave with apertures that capture the sensations of carving temple portals with chisels, hammers and mallets from hard, as well as resistant material. There is a fascination and critical attention to the processes and concept of direct carving.

"I find strength, faith, and dignity through my heritage, yet I also find these same things in other cultures — I derive inspiration and motivation from them as well," says Nivedita as she runs her hands over her own carving of a triangular, templed cave.



Stones that speak

Her smaller clusters of work appear as if the earth has created itself into a cathedral of beautiful treasure stones in uncountable shapes and textures, each one stamped with its own rich familial and cultural history. No wonder so many of us pick up stones that speak to us and carry them home, placing them in special niches and treating them as our own personal discoveries. Each offers a puzzling mystery to explore; each tweaks our imagination, stimulates our curiosity and raises interesting questions. In the series that echo treasures and boxes and cavities, the set of four with lids



In her series, we see a direct reckoning of details and elements in the run of time. It is about the journey of man that Lord Tennyson speaks of in his poem, *The Brook*

are the finest in finesse and fervour.

In yet another pair, *You and Me*, we espie the grace of the cylindrical column that begins with the magic of the stone. We can imagine how she fills her studio with about many life-times worth of stones still waiting to be carved. It's the potential of each piece that brings her great joy. Every carving block is filled with a silent beauty calling for attention; every stone an invitation for creative expression that echoes the infinitude of man and woman as individuals, consorts, friends walking their own paths sometimes crossing sometimes melding.

Moulding triangular bases
In the cluster of stones with triangular bases we see the earthiness and the balance of vision and vitality. "I've always been inspired by the capacity of a block of stone," says Nivedita and adds, "I can create one-of-a-kind groups or single works and I like to create my own language when my hands touch each sculpture and work it from start to finish."

Most sculptors in history, created a maquette of a composition in a malleable material, made any adjustments desired, then either copied it in stone themselves or had it done by a craftsman. Many sculptors in history who have been credited with carving their stone works have never even picked up a chisel. The final stone version of their creations was carved by a craftsman, while the artist directed like a symphony conductor. But here we see a direct reckoning of elements and journeys in the run of time. Nivedita's series is about the odyssey of man that Lord Tennyson speaks of in his poem, *The Brook*: "For men may come and men may go! / But I go on forever."



Bengali bard leaves songs of soil

Legendary Bengali folk singer Amar Paul died at a state-run hospital on Saturday following a cerebral hemorrhage. Paul, 96, a widower, breathed his last around 5:30 pm at the SSKM Hospital.

Born on May 19, 1922 at Brahmanberia in undivided Bengal in an area now in Bangladesh, Paul took his first lessons in folk music from his mother Durgasundari Devi, and later learnt Hindustani classical music from Ustad Ayet Ali Khan. After shifting base to Kolkata, he joined All India Radio as a grade artist and began lending his voice to films.

His rendition of the song *Kotoi Ranga dekhi duniai* in Satyajit Ray's *Hirak Rajar Deshe* brought him instant fame. His songs in films directed by the likes of Debaki Kumar Bose and Rituparno Ghosh touched the hearts of the music lovers. The foremost urban exponent of the Bengali folk song today, Paul has performed extensively all over the state and attended seminars and workshops on folk music worldwide, while holding

concerts in Tokyo, Bangladesh and the United States in the course of a professional career exceeding 50 years. Numerous songs sung by Paul were issued in the form of gramophone records, audio-cassettes and CDs. He also published books on folk music such as *Banglur Loksangeet* and *Banglur Nadir Gaan*. A much feted man, he received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his contribution to folk music of West Bengal. He was honoured by the West Bengal State Academy of Dance, Music and Visual Arts, the Rabindra Bharati University, the Paachim Banga Sangeet Academy. He was also a recipient of the Lalan Puraskar for folk music conferred by the state government.

Condoling Paul's death, chief minister Mamata Banerjee said it was an irreparable loss to Bengali folk music, and recalled his popular songs like *Probhato Somoye Sachir Angina Majhe* and *Rai Jago Rai Jago*. —IANS

WATCH OUT

India International Centre presents screening of *And the Alley She White Washed in Light Blue*, a film by Nili Portugal, which takes us on an intimate journey to the Galilean *Kaballa*, holy city of Tzfat in Israel. This will be followed by a panel discussion. WHEN: April 23 TIME: 6:30 pm WHERE: C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium.



Cosmo Arts India Gallery presents *Cosmic Voyage*, a show by Indian masters and contemporary artists, that takes us on a journey through the galaxy of Indian art. TIME: 10 am to 6 pm WHEN: April 24 to 25 WHERE: Visual Arts Gallery, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road.

GAG Moderne presents Underground Talks, a series of conversations between artist Manish Pushkale and an eminent guest from the art scene every month to bring creative minds together and provoke conversations that matter. This month's Pushkale will be in conversation with designer and art curator, Rajni Sethi. WHEN: April 27 TIME: 5:30 pm WHERE: GAG Moderne, Sadhana Enclave, Panchsheel Park.



Art Magnum presents a solo exhibition of artworks by Goa-based artist Mohan Naik. The works are inspired from his immediate surroundings, an isolated village in South Goa, amidst nature. WHEN: April 24 to May 12 TIME: 11 am to 7:30 pm WHERE: 60/4, 2nd Floor, Yusuf Sarai, Indian Oil Complex, Aurobindo Marg.

Curated by Ina Puri, Art Alive Gallery presents *Clouds of Wings*, an exhibition of artworks by artist Venkat Raman Singh Shyam that celebrates life and the incandescent beauty of nature. WHEN: Till May 30 WHERE: Art Alive Gallery, S-221, Panchsheel Park.

LEADERBOARD

RUNS	517	David Warner (SRH)
WICKETS	23	Kagiso Rabada (DC)
6S	496	IF MS HAS A FEELING THAT HE'S GOING TO WIN IT THIS WAY, I'M GOING TO BACK HIM EVERY TIME
4S	1117	— STEPHEN FLEMING



105 NOT OUT

Rahane smashes 2nd IPL hundred to help Rajasthan Royals post 191-6 against DC

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Blending panache with power, Ajinkya Rahane roared back to form with a scintillating century and propelled Rajasthan Royals to 191 for six against Delhi Daredevils in the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

Rahane remained not out on 105 off 63 balls, decorating his knock with three sixes and 11 fours, while Steve Smith contributed 50 off 32 deliveries.

Asked to bat after Shreyas Iyer called correctly at the toss, Rahane spearheaded Rajasthan Royals' innings after getting a life on 16, the culprit being Ishant Sharma, who dropped a sitter at sort fine-leg. The drop hurt the visitors, but Delhi did well to prevent RR from going past 200.

Entering the game with over 650 runs against Delhi in the league, Rahane chose his favourite opponents to find form, and when he walked back to the dressing room, he had over 750 to his name.

To start with, Rahane drove Ishant through a crowded off-side field for a boundary, a shot that had his characteristic elegance written all over it.

Stripped of captaincy last week following a string of poor results, the 30-year-old went into attack mode and smashed Axar Patel for a six and a four at the Sawai Man Singh Stadium, which had a dash of pink.



Seeing the flight early, Rahane danced down the crowd to host's Axar ball over him and into the sightscreen.

Unfazed by the sight of pacer Kagiso Rabada steaming in, he smoked the South African's short of a length delivery down the ground for another maximum.

He reached his fifty by dispatching Chris Morris over the mid-wicket for a four and cele-

brated it with fist pumps. A flurry of boundaries followed as Rahane galloped along to bring up his second IPL hundred, the first coming seven years ago.

He raised his bat to acknowledge the applause from the crowd and his dugout that was as relieved as the batsman himself.

Meanwhile, Smith, who replaced Rahane as captain hours before the start of their last

match against Mumbai Indians, struck medium pacer Sherfane Rutherford for three consecutive boundaries to score his second successive half century of the season.

And even as Smith and Ben Stokes got out in quick succession, Rahane was going strong, swiftly hitting Morris for a boundary over mid-off. At the other end, Ashton Turner fell for a third golden duck.



BCCI shifts IPL final to Hyderabad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

he added.

The Indian Premier League final scheduled on May 12 was on Monday shifted from Chennai to Hyderabad after the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) failed to get requisite permission from the government to open the three closed stands.

While the Chennai Super Kings still have a chance to play Qualifier 1 at home if they finish among the top two teams in the league but the Eliminator (May 8) and Qualifier 2 (May 10) has been shifted to Visakhapatnam.

"We had to shift the matches from Chennai to Hyderabad after TNCA intimated us that they have not procured the requisite permission to open the three stands I, J and K," Committee of Administrators (CoA) chief Vinod Rai said on Monday.

"Since the gate sales of the knock-out matches is BCCI's prerogative, we had to take a call. We would be having two knock-out matches in Vizag,"

The three stands make up for more than 12,000 tickets and BCCI would have lost out on a few crores of gate money.

The stands have remained closed since 2012 save one international match between India and Pakistan when an exception was made. Asked if all the knock-out matches' ticket sales are BCCI's prerogative, why was Qualifier 1 allotted to Chennai, Rai reasoned: "CSK, by virtue of being defending champions, were allotted the Qualifier 1 and final. Now if they finish in top two, you cannot take away all the games. They deserve to get at least one of the knock-out games."

Hyderabad only got the final and not the Eliminator or Qualifier because of the general elections in the Cyber city on May 6, 8 and 10.

The first three-team mini women's IPL will be held from May 6-10 in Jaipur with a new team Velocity being added to the existing Trailblazers and Supernovas.



MI release players to manage workload

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai Indians have released all the players for four days to ensure that they relax, spend time with their families and return strong for the business end of the tournament. With the 2019 World Cup starting just after the 12th edition of the IPL, India skipper Virat Kohli had time and again spoken about the need for players to be smart and manage their workload well to stay fresh for the showpiece event.

The only team in the competition apart from Chennai to have three Indian players who will be headed to the World Cup — Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah — the MI franchise made the move keeping in mind the interest of the players and the need to keep them fresh not just for the second half of the IPL, but also for the World Cup.

As per the sources, the management decided to release the players after their game against Rajasthan Royals on April 20 and the players will reunite in Chennai on April 25 before the game against CSK.

"Players are the priority and the only instruction to the boys was that whatever you do, don't get anywhere near a bar or ball. They should unwind, relax, switch off and focus on enjoying the four-day break," the source said.

Asked if the move was aimed at keeping the Indian boys fresh for the World Cup, the source said: "Not just the likes of Rohit, Bumrah or Hardik.

We have the likes of Quinton de Kock, Lasith Malinga and other players as well who will be playing the World Cup. The idea is to manage their workload in such a manner that they can give it their best when they play in the showpiece event. While the foreign players have mostly gone to Chennai directly and are enjoying there with their families, the Indian players have headed home."

'SRH will badly miss Warner, Bairstow'

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

David Warner and Jonny Bairstow have been primarily guiding Sunrisers Hyderabad to victories in the ongoing IPL and captain Kane Williamson says the departure of the two openers will be a huge loss to the side.

With the ODI World Cup scheduled to start on May 30, the two prolific batsmen will be leaving the IPL mid-way owing to national duty.

Warner and Bairstow are currently sitting at the first and second spots respectively in the leading run-scorers' list in the IPL, and their formidable partnership at the top of the order has been the biggest reason behind Sunrisers' five wins this season so far.

Warner, the top-scorer this season with 517 runs at an average of 73.85 and a staggering strike rate of 148.56 from nine games including six half-centuries and a ton, will depart for Australia by the end of April.

Bairstow, who is at second position with 445 runs, including a century, from the same number of matches at a strike rate of 158.36, will leave for England after Tuesday's match.



PTI ■ CHENNAI

The wretched form of Chennai Super Kings' top three will be primary worry for Mahendra Singh Dhoni as Chennai Super Kings aims to arrest the mini-slide when they take on Sunrisers Hyderabad in an Indian Premier League encounter at Chepauck on Tuesday.

If CSK's problem is the non-performance of the top-order, Sunrisers Hyderabad's issues are that there are no performers in the middle-order with bulk of the runs being scored by openers David Warner (517 runs) and Jonny Bairstow (445 runs). A win will almost ensure a play-off berth for the defending champions, who lost back-to-back away matches against Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bangalore respectively.

While Dhoni's Herculean

Up Next CSK, SRH AIM TO SORT OUT BATTING WOES



MS Dhoni chats with Sunrisers players after SRH beat CSK on 17th April | IPL/Twitter

effort to pull off another miraculous chase has been the talking point, it is difficult not to shed light on the poor show of CSK's top three which is putting the skipper under unimaginable pressure.

Last season's hero Shane Watson (147 runs), Ambati Rayudu (192) and Suresh Raina (207) haven't lived up to expectations. The pressure has been entirely on Dhoni, who leads the charts with 314 runs and the batting unit needs to step up.

"The top three needs to

finish more matches," Dhoni said after CSK's one-run loss to RCB.

Back at its den after a schedule of away games, Dhoni's men will be slight favourites as it will be Bairstow's last game for the last year's runners-up as he heads back to England for World Cup preparations.

The Chepauck pitch has been sluggish in the games played so far and coach Stephen Fleming attributed it to being one of the reasons for top-order's poor show.

Never expected Dhoni to miss that last ball: Parthiv

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Parthiv Patel, the man whose direct hit gave Royal Challengers Bangalore an improbable one-run win over Chennai Super Kings, said he was left quite surprised when Mahendra Singh Dhoni missed hitting the last ball of the cliffhanger.

Patel wasn't expecting a marauding Dhoni to miss Umesh Yadav's slower delivery before his direct throw sealed it for the home team on Sunday. Dhoni scored 24 off the first five balls of the final over before missing the last ball. A scramble for one run ended in Parthiv's direct throw leaving Shardul Thakur short of his crease.

"We honestly wanted him (Dhoni) to hit through the off-side on the shorter side of the ground. If he had hit it on the leg-side, there were two runs because I don't think the way he runs, there was any chance of stopping those two," an elated Patel said at the post-match press conference.

"So we wanted (Umesh) to bowl slower and outside the off-stump and surprisingly he missed it. I wasn't expecting him to miss it but surprisingly he missed it," he said.

Patel said if Dhoni is around then 70 to 80 runs in the last five overs is always gettable at the Chinnaswamy. "Playing in Bangalore or Mumbai, you know that 70 runs in the last five overs is gettable. You need at least have 80-90 runs to get in last five overs to defend. So, we wanted to squeeze him.

"We wanted to bowl as many dot balls to him as possible, and put pressure on other batsmen because everybody knows how MS is. He wanted the game to go down to last three-four overs and he almost won the game," said Patel.

The wicketkeeper-batsman scored his second half-century of the season and said that coach Gary Kirsten's advice of choosing the correct bowlers was key to his success.

"Before the game started, I was talking to Gary and he said 'you don't have worry of anything you need to choose your bowlers' and that is exactly what I did," said Patel.

Good to be World Cup underdogs: Sarfraz

APP ■ LONDON

Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed said on Monday that being underdogs in next month's World Cup eases the pressure on his young team, who leave for the tournament this week.

Pakistan will play three warm-up matches before taking on joint hosts England in a five-match one-day series and a Twenty20.

The 1992 World Cup winners start their campaign against the West Indies in Nottingham on Tuesday.

Sarfraz will prefer his side to go into the tournament under the radar.

"Look, when we go as favourites, then it's a problem, but if we go as underdogs then other teams feel the danger, so I think being underdogs is good for us and eases the pressure," Sarfraz told a press conference in Lahore before they depart for England on Tuesday.

Sarfraz, 31, was among five key players rested for the white-wash ODI series defeat by Australia last month to freshen up



the squad before the competition. The high-voltage clash between arch-rivals Pakistan and India scheduled for Manchester on June 16 promises to be one of the most tense of the tournament.

But Sarfraz played down the hype, saying all games are important.

"For us all nine matches are important so we will take every match as a match against India," he said of Pakistan's bitter rivals —

who have won all six of their previous World Cup clashes.

But Pakistan took the Champions Trophy again in 2017 with a stunning 180-run victory in the final.

"We have beaten India in a bigger event recently so we will have that advantage," said Sarfraz.

"WE HAVE, WE WILL"

He said the theme of Pakistan's World Cup mission is

"we have, we will", citing the team's previous glories.

Along with the Champions Trophy two years ago, Pakistan won the 1992 World Cup and the 2009 World Twenty20.

"I think these are exciting times for Pakistan cricket and for the team," said Mickey Arthur, who took over as head coach in May 2016.

"We leave on a journey for which we have worked really hard," he said, adding that they have "a good team, both in talent and attitude".

"The initial theme is to qualify for the last four and take it from there, so I think we have the potential to certainly go all the way but before that we have to play very well," South African Arthur added.

Pakistan have named two extra players in their squad for the five-match one-day series against England, with paceman Mohammad Amir and batsman Asif Ali in addition to the 15 for the World Cup.

Hassan and Asghar named in Afghan WC squad

PTI ■ KABUL

Pacer Hamid Hassan and former captain Asghar Afghan were on Monday named in Afghanistan's 15-strong World Cup squad headlined by IPL stars Rashid Khan and Mohammad Nabi.

Gulbadin Naib will lead the side which also features Mohammad Shazad and spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman.

Afghan was removed as captain in all formats earlier this year. Hassan has been recalled after nearly a three-year hiatus. However, his fitness remains under scrutiny after he had been laid low by a thigh injury. The 31-year-old has represented Afghanistan in 32 ODIs with 56 wickets to his



credit.

"We selected the best squad considering factors such as experience, fitness, team balance, current form and conditions," chief selector, Dawlat Khan Ahmadzai said in a statement. Ahmadzai said the side will aim to play inspirational cricket during the tournament

which starts May 30 in the United Kingdom.

"The mission is to play inspirational cricket in the tournament; I know there are strong teams but we will do our level best to achieve our goals," he said. Iqram Alikhil, Karim Janat and Sayed Shirzad were named the three designated reserves by the committee.