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HORROR HAS POTENTIAL: EMRAAN 13 VIVACITY

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BJP pits Pragya against Digvijay

Bhopal battle set to catch nation's eye

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Setting the stage for an epic battle in Bhopal, the BJP on Wednesday fielded Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, facing trial in Malegaon blast case, in Lok Sabha elections, against Congress heavyweight and former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh.

Out on bail, Sadhvi joined the BJP only hours before the party announced her name as its candidate from Bhopal. This is being seen as a clear attempt by the BJP to bring the Hindutva plank at the centre stage of polls in the State, where the BJP had won 27 out of 29 seats in 2014 LS polls.

"I will contest the election from Bhopal and win. Former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is with me," Sadhvi said after emerging out of the BJP office at Bhopal.

In a way, the face-off between Digvijay and Sadhvi will also be seen as a battle between the hardcore Hindutva represented by the likes of Sadhvi and equally dyed-in-the-wool "secularism" propagated by the likes of Digvijay.

At a rally in Odisha, BJP president Amit Shah on Wednesday described Digvijay as the "creator" of "saffron terror" phrase. The BJP has decided to take the matter to the



Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur arrives at the Madhya Pradesh BJP headquarters in Bhopal on Wednesday PTI



Digvijay Singh participates in a religious procession on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti in Bhopal on Wednesday PTI

people's court by fielding Sadhvi against Digvijay, he said, accusing the Congress of defaming India by coining terms like "Hindu terror" and "saffron terror".

Referring to the acquittal of

several accused, including Swami Aseemanand, in Samjhauta Express blast case, Shah attacked the Congress and said people of Bhopal will punish Digvijay and Congress president Rahul Gandhi.

A senior BJP leader said the party decided to field Sadhvi, who joined the party hours before her candidature was announced, against Digvijay as the latter has been one of the most visible "anti-

Hindutva" faces of the Congress.

Also being a high-profile seat as the Madhya Pradesh capital, it can help rally support for the BJP across the State and even outside, he added.

Digvijay has been a bitter critic of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), the ideological guide of the BJP, and had allegedly linked it to the 2008 Mumbai terror attack carried out by Pakistani terrorists.

The BJP also decided to field KP Yadav from Guna, a seat held by senior Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia who is contesting from there.

The BJP has named Raj Bahadur Singh and Ramakant Bhargava as its nominees from Sagar and Vidisha respectively.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had won from Vidisha in 2014 but she is not fighting polls this time due to health reasons.

Born in Bhand district of Madhya Pradesh, Sadhvi has had a long association with the Sangh Parivar. A post-graduate in history, she worked with the RSS student wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and Durga Vahini, women's wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

Arrested in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, she was given a clean chit by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), but the trial court refused to discharge her from the case.

The court dropped the charges under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) against her, and she is now being tried under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. She was granted bail by the Bombay High Court in 2017.

ADMK, BJP stakes high in 2nd phase

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The second phase of Lok Sabha polls for 95 seats will decide the fate of several stalwarts, including Union Ministers Jitendra Singh, Jual Oram, Sadananda Gowda and Pon Radhakrishnan, former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda and DMK's Dayanidhi Maran, A Raja and Kanimozhi. Altogether 1,600-odd contestants are in the fray from 11 States and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

Thirty eight of the 39 Lok Sabha seats in Tamil Nadu will go to polls and bypolls will be held in 18 Assembly constituencies. The Election Commission cancelled the polling in Vellore Lok Sabha seat, which is currently represented by the AIADMK, following recovery of huge amount of cash allegedly from an associate of a DMK leader.

The party has formed a strong alliance with PMK and DMDK to take on the might of DMK-Cong-Left alliance, which is expected to win at least two third of the 39 seats, as per various opinion polls.

The presence of TTV Dinakaran's AAMK could hurt the AIADMK prospects on many seats as he is fighting for the legacy of Jayalalithaa.

PHASE II VOTING TODAY

Naveen, Narasingha, KV among 244 MLA aspirants

35 MP nominees include Jual, Prasanna, Kalikesh, Sangeeta, Pramila

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Over 76.93 lakh voters will decide the fates of 35 Lok Sabha and 244 Assembly candidates in the second phase of polls to be held on Thursday in five Parliamentary constituencies and 35 Assembly segments under them in the State.

This phase of election bears significance as many high-profile politicians, including BJD supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, are in the fray. Patnaik is contesting from two Assembly seats, one from his old Hinjili constituency in Ganjam district and another from Bijepur in Bargarh district.

Similarly, Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly Narasingha Mishra, Ministers Sushant Singh and Snehangini Chhuria, sitting MLA Naba Kishore Das and BJD Legislature Party Leader KV Singh Deo will have their fates set in this phase.

Senior MP aspirants like BJD candidate and Union Minister Jual Oram and Congress nominee and MLA George Tirkey from Sundargarh LS seat, BJD candidate and Rajya Sabha member Prasanna Acharya from Bargarh LS seat, BJD candidate and sitting MP Kalikesh Singh

Do and former MP Singita Singh Deo from Balangir LS and BJD candidate and Rajya Sabha member Achyuta Samanta and BJD candidate and former MP Kharabela Swain will face voting in the phase.

All eyes are now on BJD Aska candidate Pramila Bisoi as she has been specially chosen by party supremo Naveen Patnaik for her contribution in empowering women through self-help groups.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP National President Amit Shah, AICC Chief Rahul Gandhi, BJD Supremo Naveen Patnaik and large number of high-profile leaders of major political parties undertook whirlwind tours and campaigned for their respective candidates in these five LS segments.

Further, as many as five women candidates in five Lok Sabha constituencies and 25 women in 35 Assembly seats are contesting polls this phase.

A total of 76,93,123 voters, including, 6,22,744 first-time voters, have been enrolled to cast votes through 9,117 polling stations.

There are 3,701 critical booths and 35 booths would be fully managed by women polling staffs.

Centre neglected Keonjhar: Naveen

Also hits campaign trail in Cuttack
Odisha will be No.1 if BJP voted to power: Shah

PNS ■ KEONJHAR/ CUTTACK/ ATHAGARH

Even as BJP national president Amit Shah on Wednesday again urged Odisha people to end the BJD rule by voting for a BJP Government in the State, BJD supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik slammed the Central Government by citing some specific instances of its neglect towards the State.

Addressing an election meeting in Keonjhar, Patnaik

said the construction of National Highway-520 in the region is yet to be completed due to the Centre's indifference towards the State.

He also stated that the Railways has been earning hundreds of crores of rupees from Keonjhar district but is not giving importance to spread of railway network in the area. On the other hand, the Railways has been investing this revenue in Jharkhand, he said.

BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday made a whirlwind visit to the three Assembly constituencies of Barabati-Cuttack, Choudwar-Cuttack and Cuttack Sadar that come under the Cuttack Parliamentary seat.

Perched on a specially-designed bus he is using for the



BJD supremo Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday made a whirlwind visit to the three Assembly constituencies of Barabati-Cuttack, Choudwar-Cuttack and Cuttack Sadar that come under the Cuttack Parliamentary seat

campaigning this time, Patnaik moved on the main roads of the city crisscrossing its way through the three segments.

After his election rallies in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts, Patnaik reached Cuttack in the afternoon. At the bus terminus at Badambadi, he addressed a crowd urging it to

vote for the BJD candidates both in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

Later in the evening, Amit Shah took part in a road show canvassing support for his party's candidates.

Earlier, Shah along with Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan attended an election meeting at Narsinghpur and appealed to voters to elect BJP candidates for both Parliament and State Assembly so that Odisha emerges as number 1 State in the country.

Shah alleged that BJD leaders are involved in the chit fund scam. If the BJP comes to power in the State, the tainted leaders would be brought to book within 90 days, he said.

BBSR remains hottest for 2nd day

Two die of sunstroke in State in 3 days

BHUBANESWAR: State capital Bhubaneswar continued to be the hottest place in the State again on Wednesday recording a maximum day temperature of 41.7 degrees Celsius.

The city recorded 43.7 degree on Tuesday. According to the IMD, the mercury soared above 40 degrees in seven stations on Wednesday.

Angul recorded 41.1 degree followed by Sundargarh with 40 degree, Bhawanipatna 40 degree, Titlagarh 41 degree, Malkangiri 40.5 degree and Sonepur 40 degree. But coastal parts of the State experienced a slight respite. Cuttack recorded 39.4 degree, Paradip 32.4 degree, Baleswar 34 degree, Gopalpur 32.1 degree and Puri 33.4 degree.

The weather office pre-

dicted that the maximum day temperature across the State is likely to fall by 2 to 3 degree in the next two or three days.

A youth on Wednesday died of suspected sunstroke in Bhadrak district.

The deceased identified as Indrajit Rout was rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) where he was pronounced dead. The 33-year-old hailed from Arjunpur village under Dhamnagar block in the district.

This is the second death reported due to suspected sunstroke within a span of just three days. An elderly person has died of suspected sunstroke in Puri district on Monday. The deceased had gone to the Tarana gram panchayat office under Astaranga block in Puri to collect his old age pension. He suffered sunstroke in the office premises and died.

PNS

Maoists gun down poll official in K'mal

CM expresses grief

PNS ■ PHULBANI

A few hours after Maoists torched a polling vehicle while it was going on an election duty in Mungunipadar of Kandhamal district, a woman poll supervisor, Sanjukta Dugal,

was shot dead by Maoists at Bandapada under the Gochhapada police station in the district on Wednesday.

Sources said that when the polling party miraculously escaped a landmine blast in a forest, the rebels opened indiscriminate fire at the vehicle.

But Dugal was injured in her head when the Maoists

opened fire at the vehicle. She was rushed to a hospital, but doctors declared her brought dead. Four other officials, who were also in the vehicle, escaped unhurt.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed deep grief over the killing of Dugal.

Taking to Twitter, Patnaik also expressed heartfelt con-

dolences to the bereaved family and prayer for the departed soul.

DGP in-charge BK Sharma said additional forces were rushed to the area and steps were being taken to ensure that polling is done peacefully in the district on Thursday.

Related story on Maoist violence on Page 2

Maoists torch poll officials' vehicle in K'mal

Security heightened in extremist-infested areas
PNS ■ PHULBANI

Even as a hardcore Maoist, Bharat Kanhar, carrying cash reward of ₹1 lakh on his head, surrendered before the Kandhamal SP on Tuesday, a group of Red rebels set fire to a vehicle carrying election officials on Wednesday near Mungunipadar under the Phiringia police station in Kandhamal district.

against carrying out poll duties and forced them to alight from the vehicle. The incident took place in the morning when the officials were heading towards a booth located at Mungunipadar. But all the officials were reportedly safe.

Later, reports said security forces carried out combing operations in the area after getting information about the incident.

Police beefed up security in the State, particularly in the Maoist-affected regions, for smooth conduct of the second phase of polling scheduled on



Thursday. Briefing on the security arrangements in various Maoist-dominated regions of the State, Western Range DIG Kabita Jalan said that as per guidelines of the Election Commission of India, polling booths have been categorised as sensitive and critical and the scaling of security deployment has been done in those booths accordingly. Jalan informed that Central Armed Police

Force (CAPF) personnel have been deployed in sensitive booths. Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Special Operations Group (SOG) and District Volunteer Force (DVF) personnel have been asked to intensify anti-Maoist operations in the extremist-infested areas of the constituencies going to polls. Flag marches were also being organised to create awareness to maintain peace. "We have held discussions with our neighbouring States regarding security issues on the borders. They have engaged anti-Maoist forces in

their borders and we have also deployed CRPF and other forces like DVF and SOG in the nearby bordering areas to prevent any kind of untoward incidents. The security procedure would remain in force till the conclusion of the elections," said the DIG.

"Mobile parties and patrolling vehicles have been engaged for the security of polling parties and voters. We have also deployed striking forces in some sensitive zones so that immediate action can be taken in emergency situations," added Jalan.

INBRIEF

BIJU REMEMBERED ON DEATH ANNIV
Bhubaneswar: Rich tributes were paid to former Chief Minister Biju



Patnaik across the State on his 22nd death anniversary on Wednesday. Remembering the legendary politician, political leaders cutting across party lines paid tributes to Patnaik and recalled his contribution in building modern Odisha. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik paid homage to the freedom fighter, who was also his father. Stating that people of the State are always inspired by the ideologies of Bijuababu, Patnaik asserted that he is committed to serve the State.

CONFER BHARAT RATNA ON BIJU BABU: U SAMMILANI



Bhubaneswar: The Utkal Sammilani observed the 22nd death anniversary of legendary Biju Patnaik and paid floral tributes at his statue at the Biju Patnaik Park here on Wednesday. Sammilani Mancheswar branch president Dillip Dashsharma, presiding over the programme, demanded conferment of Bharat Ratna on Bijuababu. Sammilani Mancheswar branch VP Sital Chandra Mohanty, secretary Govind Chandra Subudhi, Shiv Prasad Mishra, Khetra Mohan Nayak, Maheswar Biswal, Akhaya Jethi, Siddhartha Sekhar Gadnayak and Niranjan Jena also paid tributes to Bijuababu.

VOTING TRAINING CAMP FOR PWDS HELD IN RD VARSITY
Bhubaneswar: A voting training camp for persons with disabilities (PWds) was organised by the Khordha district administration at the Rama Devi Women's University here on Wednesday. The election officer of Khordha spoke about the importance of casting votes and sensitised the PwD students about the new voting machines. The students were also given training through a demo machine. PG Council Chairman Dr Sarita Supkar encouraged the students to cast their votes in the elections.

BLOOD DONATION CAMP MARKS ODIA NEW YEAR
Bhubaneswar: The Nutan Jeevan Trust in association with the



Commissionerate Police, Red Cross and 'Blood Donors are Life Savers' organised a blood donation camp here on the occasion of Odia New Year on Sunday. Padma Shri awardee D Prakash Rao, ACP Lalatendu Mohanty and Central Red Cross' Dr Chandrika Prasad Dash also spoke. As many as 51 units of blood were collected. Red Cross life members Laxman Swain, Deepak Choudhury, Arun Das, Deepak Pradhan, Nutan Jeevan Trust members Pradyumn Bal, Rajesh Beura, Narayan Gauda, Munalal Agrawal and Niranjan Praharaj were present.

SIBANI IS MISS TRADITIONAL

Bhubaneswar: Sibani Mishra was crowned as Miss Traditional in the Mumbai Inter-College Competition held recently. Representing Odisha, Mishra took attention of the judges by presenting Odisha's culture, tradition and food in the truest way.

BJD nominee Mitra holds huge roadshow in Khordha

Cine stars woo voters
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While the third-phase polling is nearing, BJD Khordha Assembly candidate Jyotindra Nath (Jitu) Mitra has intensified his campaigning from panchayat to municipality levels.



Parida and Jyotismita Samal (Lina) and TV actor Chandan were the main attraction. Raimohan urged voters to vote for Mitra and help in making Naveen Patnaik Chief Minister for the fifth time.

BJP district vice-president Bibhu Prasad Sahu and town president Dillip Kumar Hota joined hands with Mitra. Among others, BJD district

Gunrunner held; arms, ammo seized in city

Arms procured from Munger in Bihar
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A Commissionerate police special squad on Wednesday busted a clandestine arms racket and arrested a gunrunner from the Old Station Bazaar area under the Laxmisagar police station. The accused was identified as Sangram Nath alias Badal, a

resident of Bhimatangi Housing Board Colony under the Airfield police station here. Police seized three 9mm pistols and a country made gun, magazines and some bullets from his possession.

Police said they were tipped off about the habitual offender arriving here by the Howrah-Chennai Express. A trap was laid and Sangram was arrested with the arms and ammunition. The accused has several cases registered against him in various police stations here, added a police official.

The accused used to procure illegal firearms from Bihar's Munger district for ₹14,000 or ₹15,000 and sell those for ₹30,000 to buyers in Bhubaneswar, Puri and Khordha, police said.

BJP workers allege attack by BJD activists

NINE INJURED
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Nine BJP workers were injured after being attacked allegedly by their BJD counterparts near the Mangala slum at Niladri Vihar of the city on Wednesday.

A complaint was lodged by the BJP activists at the Chandrasekharpur police station alleging that they were attacked by BJD workers. The incident happened while the saffron party workers were campaigning for BJP's Bhubaneswar North MLA candidate Aparajita Mohanty. Sources said BJP Bhubaneswar district general secretary Sushant Sabat and

The incident happened while the saffron party workers were campaigning for BJP's Bhubaneswar North MLA candidate Aparajita Mohanty

Chandrasekharpur Mandal leader Manasi Manjari Ray Padhi sustained critical injuries in the attack. Earlier on Friday last, the BJP had alleged that its Bhubaneswar Central MLA candidate Jagannath Pradhan was attacked by BJD supporters during a party rally in Unit-8.

BJP doing cheap politics for power: Niranjan

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Pradesh Congress Committee president Niranjan Patnaik on Wednesday refuted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charge that the Congress doesn't hesitate to divide the country to grab power.

The Independence and kept the country united thereafter. The entire country knows this Congress history," said Patnaik. The PCC chief ridiculed the PM's charge, saying his party BJP is going to any extent to come to the power. "The BJP has formed Government in Goa and Manipur despite lacking adequate number. This shows how the BJP is doing cheap politics to grab power," said Patnaik. He alleged that the BJP is changing its ideology everyday to grab power and Modi is fooling people telling lies only.

Customs staff takes bribe from air passenger

GST authorities order probe
PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A Customs official at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) here has landed himself in a soup after an air passenger accused him of forcefully demanding bribe. Sources said a native of Tamil Nadu, Kuppuswamy Nagarajan, had arrived at the airport from Bangkok by an AirAsia flight on Tuesday. Reportedly, Nagarajan was intercepted by a Customs offi-

cial, who allegedly forced him to pay a bribe of ₹5,000 for carrying gold even though he produced all the valid documents.

The passenger confronted the officer when he denied handing him a receipt of the documents. It was only after CISF personnel interfered that the Customs official returned the money to Nagarajan.

Later, GST Additional Commissioner Santosh Mohanty directed for a detailed probe and said stringent action would be taken if the concerned official is found guilty.

Dutee in soup after campaigning for polls

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Ace sprinter Dutee Chand has landed in a controversy for allegedly campaigning for BJD Kandhamal Lok Sabha candidate Achyuta Samanta despite her being an ambassador of the Election Commission of India (ECI)

It is alleged that Chand has violated the model code of conduct by seeking votes for the MP candidate through a post in her Facebook profile.

A complaint in this regard was lodged against her with the State Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) on Wednesday.



It is alleged that Chand has violated the model code of conduct by seeking votes for the MP candidate through a post in her Facebook profile

CEO Surendra Kumar said that being an ambassador of the ECI, involvement in campaigning for poll candidates is not fair. The matter is being investigated and her social media account would be verified, he added.

Big question whether BJP will get its way in Odisha



BISWARAJ PATNAIK

BC. Elections were first conceptualised to choose the best among contenders for power. Thus, elections had become popular in ancient Greece and Rome across the Medieval period to select emperors and the Pope.

In India, during the Vedic period, chieftains or Rajas were apparently elected by ordinary subjects in a 'ballot box' procedure. The modern 'election' we witness didn't emerge until the beginning of the 17th Century when the idea of representative government took hold in North America and Europe.

Early elections in the United Kingdom and the United States were dominated by landed or ruling class males only as females were considered inferior humans. However by 1920, all Western European and North American democracies had incorporated the universal adult male suffrage system into their Constitutions, except Switzerland. Wisdom dawned upon modern democracies had incorporated the universal adult male suffrage system into their Constitutions, except Switzerland. Wisdom dawned upon modern democracies and many countries began to include women's suffrage to.

In the 70-odd years since India's Independence, elections have slowly and steadily become so significant that they generate more excitement among people than most cherished religious festivals like Dussehra or Deewali. Election season means bustling activities that keep politicians and unemployed youths on their toes.

Unfortunately, the election season of 2019 is likely to be the first one to witness serious challenges to the country's inclusive political culture. According to political experts, if the Hindu Nationalist government, led by the BJP secures another emphatic mandate, the country will move dangerously close to becoming a majoritarian state. A decisive victory would give the BJP huge hegemonic control over all the state institutions, the media and public discourse.

This would further undermine the integrity and autonomy of different arms of the state, including the judiciary, public watchdogs and, more importantly, state-run educational institutions.

Amid waning public sup-

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

port for the government, caused by economic failures, the BJP has recently taken a series of steps to accentuate India's growing religious polarisation to secure a victory not by convincing Indians that it will implement a strong social, economic and political agenda but by fomenting the Hindu majority's prejudices against Muslims and convincing them to vote along religious lines. In 2014, Modi was voted into office for two reasons.

First, anti-incumbent sentiment against the Congress-led coalition government was rampant, mainly as a result of corruption accusations and a downward drift in governance; second, Modi managed to raise Indians' hopes about the country's future by making a number of ambitious promises. Despite his controversial past concerning the 2002 Gujarat riots, Modi succeeded in presenting himself as a messiah of development throughout the election campaign.

Once in power, however, he moved away from the

reformist image he created for himself. He did follow through some of his campaign promises such as starting pro-poor economic schemes and innovative programmes, but mostly he used sectarian, Hindu-nationalist dog whistles to consolidate his power. As a result, Muslims became open targets for discrimination.

The Modi government's tacit promotion of sectarian politics resulted in what is identified as 'Middle India', a burgeoning demographic block of urban middle-classes who are socially liberal but economically conservative.

They had backed Modi in 2014 only because they believed he had given up divisive politics and committed to economic policies to help everyone prosper.

However, only a couple of months into his reign, 'Middle India' realised that Modi is no unifying reformer. Modi repeatedly turned a blind eye on attacks by fringe groups on religious minorities, according to data from 'IndiaSpend',

which tracks news about violence in English-language media, reports religious-based hate-crimes mostly involving Muslims as targets.

Modi seems to believe that firing up Hindu-nationalist sentiments would give him an electoral advantage. Probably, the sectarian politics has done some magic among the wider Hindu communities. The 2017 landslide victory in India's most populous State Uttar Pradesh bears testimony to this fact.

Fortunately however, divisive methods stopped yielding political dividends for the BJP from the autumn of 2017 and Modi's when personal popularity started declining.

All said and done there is also a bright side to Modi's efforts. The corporate world has found his policies better than those in place since long. The ET Magazine had recently reached out to over 130 CEOs of mixed genres -- startups and investors (33%) and services (21%) forming the biggest block. 95 of these guys had responded seriously with revealing views. A majority of them, 60% of the CEOs con-

sider Modi's five years as good and yielding.

Ardent readers too responded online; 73% of them rate the Modi tenure as impressive. 36% of the corporate guys and 13% of readers, respectively, rate it just average. The infrastructure push and the effective branding of India have touched the hearts of the gullible masses, mostly the rightwing youth groups who go by what they see, not by what's been happening really on the development domains.

The government's most terrible failure, unemployment, has been condemned by 35% of CEOs and 41% of readers who consider it as the most unforgivable letdown. India is known now as the world's youngest country where unemployment and un-employability have reached huge crisis proportions. 26% CEOs attribute the gross failure to the rising communal discord while 38% of readers believe it is farm distress that has caused the disastrous situation.

More amusingly, pollsters and sephologists have begun going wrong in the recent times only because trends are

weird, varied and so widely different depending on regions, aspirations of the people and, above all, their perception of good governance.

Odisha is a State where the BJD is known as an enigmatically invincible party which has made BJP stars bite dust even during the horrific 'Modi wave'. Though there is talk of a BJP undercurrent, precision weighing indicates the BJP will take a beating more because there is big conspiracy within the fold. Besides, no saffron hero has been projected as the CM face. So, the prospects of the BJP doing wonders in Odisha are virtually marred quite at the outset.

The Modi-Shah duo, heavily backed by superb poll strategists, may not be able to move or shake masses in Odisha. Hopefully, the terrible rumours are all rumours only without even an iota of truth. As the BJP is struggling more fiercely than before, the BJD biggies are having a relaxing time, their worries diminishing by the day.

(The writer is a core member of Transparency International, Odisha)

PATNA, TELKOI, K'JHAR SEATS
BJD young faces encounter challenge from BJP Congress yet to consolidate position

MALAY MOHAPATRA ■ KEONJHAR

The change of new faces in Patna, Keonjhar and Telkoi Assembly seats by the BJD has been crucial to retain the seats. In the last two terms, the BJD won all the three seats by good margins of votes.

This time, Patna BJD MLA Hrusikesh Naik, Keonjhar Sadar MLA Abhiram Naik and Telkoi MLA Bedabyas Nayak have been dropped and new young faces have been given tickets.

Jagannath Naik, son of former MLA Kanhu Naik is the new BJD candidate for Patna. Madhab Sardar, a former MP, is the BJD candidate for Keonjhar Sadar while Premananda Nayak who was the BJD MLA in 2009 has been repeated to contest from Telkoi this time. Patna Telkoi and Keonjhar are reserved for ST seats and senior leader Badri Narayan Patra has been playing an important role in selection

of candidates and monitoring the election scenario.

The sitting BJD MLAs have done little in their constituencies for which they have failed to win the trust of the voters. The BJP's position on the other hand has been better this time in the constituencies as the party has strengthened its hold in the three seats in the last four years. Bhawani Nayak of BJP is contesting from Patna for the second time, while Mohan Majhi from BJP is contesting the Keonjhar sadar seat for the fifth time. Mohan has won Keonjhar seat twice. Dhanurjay Sidhu, former Champua MLA, is the BJP candidate from Telkoi.

The Congress has also fielded new faces like Binod Bihari Naik for Patna, Prashant Kumar Dalei for Telkoi and Bidyadhar Dehury for Keonjhar Sadar, but they have failed to create any impact in their respective constituency within a short period of time. BJP national leaders like Arun

Singh, Amit Shah, Dharmendra Pradhan and all State leaders have focused on these seats by campaigning for their candidates.

The BJP has announced Re-1 subsidized rations scheme, another medical college, a steel plant and action against mining and chit fund mafia if they come to power again. Naveen Patnaik with his star campaigners is also backing their candidates but no national Congress leaders have been seen so far in the district. Hence, the fight in the three constituencies is left between the BJD and BJP.

The KALIA scheme, Ama Gaon Ama Vikas, PEETHA Yojana and other welfare schemes introduced by the Naveen Patnaik Government may lure voters in the BJD's support.

The ongoing medical college and other mega infrastructural developments during the BJD Government will also go in favour of the BJD.

Cong confident of winning Anandpur Assembly seat As factionalism grips BJP, BJD

MALAY MOHAPATRA ■ KEONJHAR

Former PCC president and AICC leader Jayadev Jena has been contesting from Anandpur Assembly seat on Congress ticket since 1980.

He retained the MLA seat for three consecutive times and was rewarded with a Ministry during the Congress regime.

But after the BJD-BJP alliance in 2000, the seat went to the hands of BJP and later to BJD after the alliance broke in 2009. It was Mayadhar Jena of BJP who defeated Jayadev in 2000 and Bhagirathi Sethy from BJD trounced Jayadev in 2009. In 2014, Mayadhar joined the BJD to contest as the party candidate and won the election with 82,520 votes.

Bhagirathi joined BJP and when he was declared as the party candidate from BJP he suddenly joined BJD after he learnt that Mayadhar is not getting the ticket. In this candidate reshuffling, Bhagirathi is the BJD candidate while Alok Sethy from BJP is contesting for the second time. Jayadev as usual is the



Congress candidate and has remained in second position in last two elections.

Since Jayadev is contesting the polls for the 8th time, he knows his voters much more than other candidates.

Apart from his pocket votes, the factionalism in BJD and BJP may help him to emerge with a divided -and- rule strategy. He has also won this seat four times and the anti-incumbency vote of ruling BJD is expected to go in favour of Jayadev, he asserts.

BJP candidate Alok hopes to win with the positive response of people in favour of Modi, while Bhagirathi of BJD hopes to cash in on Naveen charisma.

With both senior Congress leaders Niranjan Patnaik, Jayadev hailing from Keonjhar district, Anandpur seat is the only hope for the Congress. Hatadih and Anandpur blocks comprise the Anandpur Assembly segment where voters are politically sensitive.

CHAMPUA ASSEMBLY POLL
BJD embarks on door-to-door campaign



RAJENDRA K SAHU ■ CHAMPUA

While the elections for the Champua Assembly constituency are slated to be held on April 23, different political parties have already started their campaign to attract the voters to their side to win the elections.

After a consecutive two-time victory by the Independent candidate, it was hoped by many that BJP might win the Champua seat this time in the absence of heavyweight leaders like Sanatan Mahakud, sitting Champua MLA, and Kushi Apart, aspirant for BJD ticket. But the problem with BJP is Shreemanta Kumar Tripathi, BJP rebel candidate will divert maximum BJP's votes in his favour and win for Murali Manohar Sharma, BJP nominee, who is depending more on the Modi wave, might not be so easy.

The propaganda of Congress doesn't match with that of BJP and BJD but its candidate Jadumani Barik is hopeful of winning the election battle by taking to his side the support of disgruntled BJD and BJP voters.

But Minakshi Mahanta of BJD who is a protégé of Sana Mahakud is not only propagating different welfare schemes of CM Naveen Patnaik but also has started door-to-door campaign to win the sympathy of voters.

On Tuesday, she along with Zila Parishad Members and other PRI members met the voters personally in Zone-28 and claimed to complete the rest of the area within the next few days.

As straight fight expected between BJD, Congress

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR

Under the changing political scenario, Bhograi Assembly constituency may witness an interesting poll contest.

A total of eight candidates belonging to different political parties and independents are in fray.

Bhograi seat: It's again Das Vs Das

This Assembly segment bordering West Bengal assumes significance as it is represented by Higher Education and Industries Minister Ananta Das.

Das is seeking mandate for the fourth time in a row. He is representing the segment since 2004 from BJD.

The three major political parties, BJD, BJP and Congress, have fielded Ananta Das, Ansuman Mohanty and

Satyasiba Das respectively. But in all probabilities, the contest would be straight between Ananta Das and Satyasiba Das, a scribe turned politician.

In the last elections, the fight was between two Dases and Ananta had won by a margin of around 20,000 over Satyasiba.

Bhograihas 50 panchayats. While the total polling in 2014 was around 1.53 lakh, Ananta had polled 50.11 per

cent and got 76,761 votes, Satyasiba with over 37 percent secured 57,249 votes.

This time the number of voters is around 2.20 lakhs. It is believed that the contest would be close and keen between Ananta and Satyasiba.

Both the parties as well as their candidates are leaving no stone unturned to woo the voters and convert their support into votes.

Although Ananta's oppo-

nents are asking votes in their support stating his old age and falling health, Ananta is playing development card during his tenure.

The BJP which has comparatively lesser presence in Bhograi than BJD and Congress has changed its candidate in the nick of moment before closing of nomination filing.

While initially ticket was given to Manas Mohanty yet he

INBRIEF

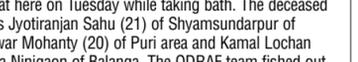
GIRL CHILD RESCUED BY PALLAHARA POLICE
Pallahara: An unidentified two-year-old girl was rescued from the Pallahara Bazar by police on Wednesday. Being informed by some volunteers, Pallahara PS IIC Gyan Ranjan Samal went to the spot and took the child to the police station. Police enquired about the girl's address and identification but failed. So, now the child will remain at the police station for two days until her identification. Otherwise, the child would be sent to the Child Home, Angul said the IIC.



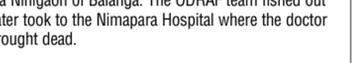
3 STUDENTS DROWN IN KUSABHADRA IN NIMAPARA
Nimapara: Three students drowned in the Kusabhadrha river at Dhirapur Bali Ghat here on Tuesday while taking bath. The deceased were identified as Jyotiranjana Sahu (21) of Shyamundarpur of Nimapara, Tejeswar Mohanty (20) of Puri area and Kamal Lochan Jena (16) of Bada Ninigaon of Balanga. The ODRAF team fished out the bodies and later took to the Nimapara Hospital where the doctor declared them brought dead.



VEDANTA OBSERVES FIRE SERVICE WEEK
Jharsuguda: The Vedanta Ltd, Jharsuguda observed the 76th National Fire Service Week from April 8 to 15 in the plant premises here. During the week different activities such as fire prevention training and awareness programme, Agnimitra Mela, fire service sports activities, quizzes, olympiads, drawing and slogan competitions were conducted. The all-women fire fighting squad of Vedanta 'Agnivahini' conducted a fire prevention and safety training programme for nearly 100 students of the DAV Public School, Jharsuguda. More than 600 employees and associate partners took part in the weeklong celebration.



JSPL OBSERVES FIRE SERVICE WEEK
Angul: The Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) began observing the National Fire Service Week at its plant here from April 14. The JSPL Fire and Safety department is holding awareness and training programmes for staffs and school students in its surrounding areas. On the inaugural day, JSPL ED (Maintenance) Suresh Kumar and EVP



Campaigning on top gear in Pallahara POLLS ON APRIL 23

PNS ■ PALLAHARA

Campaigning of Congress, BJD, BJP and independent candidates has picked up pace in Pallahara for the April 23 elections.

The BJD camp is however confused due to groupism and non-cooperation among workers. Senior workers of BJD have been silent due to want of coordination. There are 10 contestants for the Pallahara seat and the fight would most likely be among the BJD, BJP and Congress.

In the election, the Congress and BJD party have nominated fresh candidates. But the BJP has continued its old candidate Ashok Mohanty.

Pallahara block chairperson got the ticket in last moment in the BJD as sitting MLA Mahes Sahu was shifted to Dhenkanal Lok Sabha seat. The veteran leaders who were aspirants are therefore disappointed in the BJD camp. Now they are the main rivals of BJD.

Congress candidate Subrat Garnayak is a known face in the area.

Bolagarh Trahi Ashram set ablaze

PNS ■ KHORDHA

The Trahi Achyuta Ashram located at Giridharipur under Bolagarh block's Aarikama GP in Khordha district was set on fire by some unknown miscreants on Tuesday night. All Puja items and daily-use articles were reduced to ashes in the blaze.

On being informed, Fire Services personnel reached the village and extinguished the fire.

According to reports, the ashram had been built with villagers' support 10 years back. However, a group of villagers had been opposing it and had even threatened of dire consequences.

In this regard, an FIR had



According to reports, the ashram had been built with villagers' support 10 years back. However, a group of villagers had been opposing it and had even threatened with dire consequences

been lodged at the Bankoi police outpost.

Later the matter was resolved through discussion.

Following the incident, it is suspected that opponents set fire to the ashram at the behest of political persons.

AT DSBM
Meet on contemporary trade issues held

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A seminar on 'Contemporary Issues in Trade and Commerce' was organised at the DAV School of Business Management (DSBM) here.

Chief guest JSL director S Upadhyay said innovation is the key word to every success. He laid stress on the concept that challenges always come with opportunities.

Power of digitisation, Industry 4.0, competition in global market, employability skills, entrepreneurship, etc., are the various dimensions that must be addressed by the institutions and young minds, he said.

Guest of honour B-One Solutions commercial director Rajen Padhi's discourse commenced with a vivid analysis of trade and



commerce followed by a history of globalisation with special focus on Indian context.

Abhijeet Rath, Ipsa Baliyarsingh, Rachita Nayak and Padmaja Kar delivered their presentations on various prospective of trade and commerce both in Odisha and India.

DSBM president Madan Mohan Panda congratulated the participating teams for analysing all the points minutely and coming up with viable solutions.

DSBM Principal Dr DN Mishra, in his welcome address, urged the students to acquire employability skills, which is the need of the job market and to cater to the need of corporate expectations.

Jayashree Swain and Anshuman Mohanty coordinated the event.

IN NABARANGPUR
Cong worker found dead in forest
Murder suspected

PNS ■ NABARANGPUR

A dead body of a Congress worker was found from the Kusumapani forest in Nabarangpur district on Wednesday morning.

The deceased, identified as Abhijit Mandal of Goudasahi village under Jhariaigan block in the district, had been missing since April 9, according to a complaint lodged by Abhijit's father at the Jhariaigan police station on April 10.

According to reports, Abhijit had told his mother that he was going to Jhariaigan to join an election rally of his party. However, he didn't return home.

It is now suspected that he was murdered. Police have started investigations.

ILLEGAL WATER, LAND CESS
Keonjhar villagers threaten to boycott polls

As admn appears nonchalant for years

PNS ■ CHAMPUA

Around 1,700 voters of Silisuan village under Gopinathpur panchayat of Sadar Assembly constituency in Keonjhar district have decided to boycott the elections to be held on April 23 in protest against the apathetic attitude of the administration towards their genuine grievances.

Sources revealed that the

farmers of Silisuan village were cultivating their agricultural land being irrigated by water of the Macchikandana irrigation projects - a brain-child of Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanja the then benevolent king of princely State of Keonjhar under British rule.

It is said that the king had built an embankment over the Macchikandana river by joining the two mountains.

It is further said that the king had sanctioned a sum of ₹15,00,000 to be spent from his treasury for the projects. While doing so he had a twin purpose in his mind: 1) to supply drinking water to the

Keonjhar town situated just below the mountains and channelise the rest of the water to the agricultural land of the villages by the side of the town.

Accordingly, a vast tract of agricultural land of Silisuan and the surrounding villages were irrigated and the farmers were living a sound life by producing double crops from the land generation after generation.

However, problem started after 2005 when the canals were dumped with mud extracted during the expansion work of NH-215 running by the side of the canal and since then supply of water to

the lands has been disrupted and virtually stopped for lack of repairing of the damaged canal and the Revenue department has been collecting the water tax without providing water to the land. In this regard sources revealed that the villagers have been approaching the Collector after Collector and even local MLA and Ministers with their genuine problem but to little effect.

This time, after the villagers met the present Collector Ashish Thakre, with the issue, one officer of the rank of ABDO and an Assistant Engineer had visited their village but there is no further

progress beyond this. Their specific demand is that the Government should stop the collection of water tax till water is not supplied to their land, but the story of their woes didn't end here.

Sources further revealed that some irrigated land had been acquired by the Government for the Jagpura-Banspani railway line and as per rules, tax should be collected from the tenant in whose name the land was acquired but the villagers are still paying the tax even after the land had been sold to the Railways as the Tehsildar Keonjhar has not changed the

name of owners of the land from the Government records till now.

Being fed up with inaction of the district administration, the villagers have decided to refrain from voting to high light their grievances.

In her statement to The Pioneer, Gopinathpur sarpanch Pushpanjali Murmu said, "Instances are there where one vote decided the loss and win of a candidate in elections and makes or mars a Government. If the district administration remains silent in defiance of the large numbers of voters, then they will teach a lesson to the ruling party."

FIRE SERVICE WEEK OBSERVED AT NTPC KANIHA

Talcher: The NTPC Kaniha is now observing the Fire Service Week here from April 14. NTPC CGM Ramesh Babu V attended the inaugural day as chief guest and paid floral tributes to martyrs and the martyre's column. Senior officers of the management, DC (CISF), Assistant Commandant (Fire), Assistant Commandant (Plant) and CISF personnel held a two-minute silence. Banners on fire safety are being displayed and leaflets are being distributed among employees and general public. Lecture and demonstration of first-aid fire fighting appliances and fire prevention are being organised at different locations.



1-INDIA FAMILY MART OPENS STORE IN KHORDHA

Bhubaneswar: The Delhi-based Nysaa Retail Private Limited, which operates fashion stores named "1-India Family Mart", on Wednesday announced the launch a store at Khordha. The upcoming store will be a one-stop-shop for innovative and affordable fresh fashion apparels and general merchandise. The 1-India Family Mart new store is giving away scratch and win shopping coupons of minimum Rs 50 and maximum of Rs 2,000 on shopping of Rs 1,000. Co-founder and COO Ravinder Singh launched the store.



Recording of castes at official level protested

Social bodies demand reservation lifted for sake of equality

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The Youth for Equality in association with the India against Reservation, the Akhil Bharatiya Samanata Manch and many other like-minded organisations held a protest meeting here against maintaining records of castes, categories and communities of citizens at all Government levels and in official documents. The demonstration was organised on the occasion of the Odia New Year, Vishuba Sankranti and BR Ambedkar Jayanti.

“To prevent stigma of casteism in the society, changes have to be made at Government levels first,” said India against Reservation president Prafulla Kumar Sarangi. Sarangi lamented saying that records of castes, categories and communities are being maintained at Government levels even as nobody in urban areas bothers about these aspects. “The venom of casteism is being spread by way of implementation of caste-based reservation,” Sarangi alleged. Sarangi demanded that

Government should stop recording about castes, categories and communities in official document. Youth for Equality convener General Dinabandhu Sarangi proposed a vote of thanks. Among others, Debabrata Nayak, Jnanaranjan Dash, Subhranshu Shekhar Satapathy, Gadadhara Panigrahy, Soubhagya Kumar Das, Prashant Mohapatra, Rabiranjana Mohapatra, Subhrajit Sahu and social worker Sipra Chakraborty participated in the demonstration.

NOU holds 3-day yoga meet for PG students

PNS ■ BARIAPADA

The Department of Yoga and Naturopathy of the North Orissa University (NOU), Baripada, recently organised a three-day workshop on research methodology and communication skills for postgraduate students of naturopathy and yogic sciences. The workshop was organised to train students in undertaking research and dissertation work in yoga and naturopathy and above all develop students as efficient yoga researchers and trainers. The university invited Prof Kamala Kanta Dash, a social science researcher, yoga educator and media commentator for the purpose. He used sev-



eral national and local case studies to demonstrate the utility of modern research methodology and highlighted

how ancient Indian research methodologies can complement the modern methods.

Yoga instructor Susmita Si welcomed the guest with bouquet and Department In-charge Assistant

Professor Jitendra Parida introduced the guest and explained the objective and utility of the workshop.

Athagarh admn gears up for April 23 polls

PNS ■ ATHAGARH

In the Athagarh and Badamba Assembly seats, poll preparedness by the local administration is going on in full swing. Returning Officer cum Sub-Collector of Athagarh Amiya Kumar Sahoo is monitoring the preparation and handling the candidates and poll officials simultaneously. For Athagarh segment, 254 booths and for Badamba 290 booths have been fixed for third phase elections scheduled to be held on April 23. EVMs and VVPATs have already been commissioned for both the Assembly constituencies and Parliamentary parts. The two Assembly segments are coming under Cuttack Lok Sabha seat. Flying Squads in four numbers, Static Surveillance Team in three

numbers and VST in two numbers for each Assembly segment have been formed to monitor the guidelines of the EC. Candidates have been asked to submit their expenditure report on April 18 and 21 with the Assistant Expenditure Officer engaged for the purpose. A polling party is consisting of a Presiding Officer, five Polling officers and a security personnel. These officials for all the 254 booths of Athagarh and 290 booths of Badamba have already taken training and would be dispersed on April 21, said Returning Officer Sahoo. General Observers Anand Rao Bishnu Patil and AV Kalaria have been appointed by the Election Commission for these segments. SDPO Alok Ranjan Ray has categorized the booths as to which are sensitive, hyper sensitive or general.

Jumbos wreak havoc in Gajapati

PNS ■ PARALAKHEMUNDI

A herd of six elephants wreaked havoc in several villages in Gajapati district on the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border on Tuesday night. According to sources, the pachy-

derms from the neighbouring State were spotted venturing in the bordering area creating havoc among the villagers. The herd comprised three male elephants, a female one and two cubs. Paralakhemundi Forest Ranger N Narasingh said that the herd went away to the Andhra Pradesh jungle. While the residents of nearby villages are in a state of panic, Forest Department officials are on alert in order to avoid any man-animal conflict, added Narasingh. He also said that they would take all measures to protect both the elephants and the local residents.



Papu to make a comeback as 'Chulbul Pandey'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Comedian and actor Catwa Prakash Satpathy, popularly known as Papu Pompom, who had taken a break from Bollywood due to his illness, is all set to stage a comeback. He would be seen as 'Chulbul Pandey', a police character, in a flick titled 'Mu Chulbul Pandey'. The film is expected to be an action comedy with Papu playing the lead role. This would be the actor's first film, in which he would play the lead role following his recovery from sickness. The film is being directed by Sudhakar Vasant and the music is by Abhijit Mazumdar. The movie is likely to release during the Raja festival, sources said.



Notably, Papu had been admitted to the AIIMS New Delhi after suffering from pancreatic disease in May 2018. On July 10 last year, he returned to Odisha. Moreover, the actor's death rumours had surfaced on social media while he was under constant medication for a while following his treatment at the AIIMS.

PWDs to manage 4 model booths in JSpur

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

The district administration will set up four model booths especially for Persons with Disabilities [PwDs] two each in Jagatsinghpur headquarters and Paradip port town for the upcoming elections, informed Collector cum district election officer G Poonam Tapas Kumar while briefing mediapersons over poll arrangements on Wednesday. The Collector said that the polling stations would be handled by the staff who are physically challenged themselves. Such special polling booths will be provided with electricity connection, fan, disabled friendly toilet, drinking water facility, ramp and wheel chairs. However two pink booths will set up in Jagatsinghpur municipal area for women. The employees for the booths too



would be women. However three model booths will be established in each block headquarters for the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in Jagatsinghpur district, these booths aim to make voting comfortable and attract more

voters, will have air coolers, to beat the April heat, waiting lounges, proper basic amenities, first aid kits, fire extinguishers as well as toilet. Women, PwDs, senior citizens will be given priority to vote at model booths, Collector Tapas Kumar informed. Moreover 525 vehicles to ferry physically challenged voters including senior citizens to polling booths, volunteers below 18 years age from NCC and scout have been recruited to help the PwDs. Similarly, micro observer and videographer will be deployed in model booths and pink booths, the Collector informed. As many as 1,400 women employees will be deployed in elections. Meanwhile, these women have been undergoing training phase wise, Kumar stated.

Punjab CM Amarinder distances from Sidhu's remarks on Muslim voters

Chandigarh: A day after the cricketer-turned politician Navjot Singh Sidhu stoked a controversy by making a communal appeal to Muslim voters urging them to vote for Congress in order to defeat Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh on Wednesday distanced himself from his party colleague and state Cabinet Minister's controversial vote appeal. Capt Amarinder, in an informal chat with the media, said: "See, now this issue has reached the Election Commission. Let us see what's the decision. The fact is that we are one country and there are plenty of religions, castes and all of us are Indians, this is the attitude of Congress party."

Sidhu, while addressing a rally in Bihar's Purnia a day before, had targeted Asaduddin Owaisi for seeking Muslim votes, after which he called out the "64 percent Muslim population" in the region to vote to remove the government-led by Prime Minister Modi. "Muslim brother, people like Owaisi want to win by dividing the Muslim vote here. 64 percent is your (Muslim) population is in majority here and if you will get together and cast your votes, then Modi will be finished," Sidhu had said in a public rally in Purnia on Tuesday. District authorities in Katihar have lodged an FIR against the Congress party's star campaigner Sidhu for his remarks in which he allegedly warned the Muslim communi-

ty that efforts were on to divide their votes in Bihar. Hours later, Sidhu also justified his statement saying that he "was not trying to divide anyone. Was only saying that Muslims need to unite against PM Modi who doesn't have their best interests at heart". The Model Code of Conduct, currently in motion, bars political leaders from making any communal comments in run up to 2019 elections. However, polarising speeches, seeking votes on religious terms, have emerged significantly during the campaigning with top leaders like BSP supremo Mayawati, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Union Minister Maneka Gandhi coming under the Election Commission's radar. **PNS**

Union Minister Birender Singh and wife seek votes for son

PNS ■ JIND

Launching the election campaign for his son Brijendra Singh, Union Steel Minister and Rajya Sabha MP Birender Singh on Wednesday said that he is passing on the baton to his son and the people of the state should extend the same support to his son that they gave him all these years. "The people of Jind should be proud of the fact that the candidate for the Hissar Lok Sabha seat, Brijendra Singh, is selected by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah," said Birender Singh while addressing a rally near the Kapas Mandi here. Brijendra, 46, who will be making his poll debut, launched his election campaign from Uchana Kalan on Wednesday. His mother, Prem Lata, who is a BJP MLA in Haryana from the Uchana Kalan assembly constituency was also present at the rally. After getting the BJP ticket to contest from Hissar Lok Sabha seat, the Haryana cadre IAS Brijendra has already sought voluntary retirement

from service and submitted his papers to the Haryana chief secretary. Seeking votes for his son, Birender Singh, a prominent Jat leader on Wednesday said that the maximum margin of win should be from Uchana segment out of the nine segments forming part of Hissar Lok Sabha seat because the segment is their ancestral area. Birender Singh said that he fought political battle for the betterment of the area for 47 years. Now, Brijendra Singh will carry forward the mission to work for the betterment of the area, the Union Minister said while adding that the people should extend the same support to his son that they gave him all these years. He said that the thought process of the youth has to be taken forward. The country today needs a change which only the youth can bring, he said. The Union Minister said that the voters of the country are aware that the future of the country is safe in the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who alone can ensure prosperity in the country and secu-

urity for the nation. He said that his son was the personal choice of the Prime Minister and the BJP chief for the Hissar Lok Sabha constituency. Not only the people of Uchana, but of entire constituency should be proud that Brijendra has been selected by Modi and Shah, he said adding that voters must ensure that the BJP gets the Hissar seat with maximum margin. While addressing the gathering, Brijendra said that his father will be charioteer of his political Rath. He said that he was taking the first step in politics from his native place. I was not aware that my father would have to pay a heavy price by submitting resignations from his posts on me taking the first step in politics, Brijendra said. "While in service as an IAS officer I would have offended many due to official constraints. But there, my responsibility was towards laws and to work within the framework of the rules and regulations, he said adding that but now he had entered politics to serve all with full humility and dedication.

INLD names six candidates, one sitting MP and five first-timers

NISHU MAHAJAN ■ CHANDIGARH

The Indian National Lok Dal, which appears to be in a catch-22 situation in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, has retained its sitting MP from Sirsa and fielded five new faces in the polls. The party on Wednesday announced six candidates for general elections in Haryana, which goes to polling on May 12. Facing an uphill task to turn the tide in its favor this election, the INLD has fielded party's sitting MP Charanjeet Singh Rori from Sirsa constituency, known as Chautala's bastion. The state party president Ashok Arora and senior leader Rampal Majra will meet the party supremo to finalize the name of other four party candidates, Abhay said. With party's dwindling political fortunes, several sitting MLAs and senior INLD leaders have reportedly refused to contest Lok Sabha polls forcing it to field new faces in the elections. Notably, the INLD, which was fighting the 2014 Lok Sabha polls with its back to the wall after the conviction of party chief OP Chautala and

The party has fielded Rampal Balmiki from Ambala constituency (reserved). Balmika had served as deputy mayor in Yamunanagar Municipal Corporation, he said. Other candidates included Dharambir Padha from Karnal, Surrender Chhikara from Sonapat, Suresh Koth from Hisar and Mahendra Singh Chauhan from Faridabad. The candidates for Gurugram, Rohtak, Kurukshetra and Bhiwani-Mahendragarh seats will be announced on Friday after holding discussion with party chief OP Chautala. The state party president Ashok Arora and senior leader Rampal Majra will meet the party supremo to finalize the name of other four party candidates, Abhay said. With party's dwindling political fortunes, several sitting MLAs and senior INLD leaders have reportedly refused to contest Lok Sabha polls forcing it to field new faces in the elections. Notably, the INLD, which was fighting the 2014 Lok Sabha polls with its back to the wall after the conviction of party chief OP Chautala and

INLD, the main opposition party in Haryana, would be fighting for its survival in the state after a split. It now comes out with five new faces to challenge BJP, Congress and its offshoot JJP his son Ajay Singh Chautala in JBT teachers' recruitment case, had managed to secure Sirsa and Hisar seats. Sirsa, one of the two reserved Lok Sabha constituencies in Haryana is known as the bastion of Chautalas. INLD's Sikh candidate Rori had trounced Congress' Ashok Tanwar by more than 1.15 lakh votes in last general elections. An aggressive campaign by INLD in its bastion and sympathy over conviction of its two top leaders had worked for the party in 2014 polls but this election, the party faces a tough task to retain Hisar seat and its citadel-Sirsa. Sirsa is a Dalit dominated seat with more than 7 lakh Dalit voters, over 3.4 lakh Punjabi and Sikh voters and around 3.34 lakh Jat voters. This time again, INLD's Rori will face Congress state party chief Ashok Tanwar in the

electoral battle while the BJP has fielded former IRS officer Sunita Duggal in Sirsa. In the last general elections, top leaders of Punjab's Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) — former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal and SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal — having family ties with Chautalas, had also backed INLD's Sikh candidate in Sirsa and campaigned for him but this time, the SAD has announced support to BJP candidates in Haryana. On the other hand, Hisar is represented by Jannayak Janta Party leader and OP Chautala's grandson Dushyant Chautala, who is likely to contest again from this seat. After the split in INLD and formation of its splinter group Jannayak Janta Party, the INLD has remained on the back foot and will be battling for its existence in the Lok Sabha polls. Abhay Chautala had recently lost the position of Leader of opposition in Haryana Assembly with two of INLD's MLAs joining the BJP and the party's strength coming down to 15 MLAs in the 90 member House, lesser than Congress' 17 MLAs. The INLD had earlier this year also faced a humiliating defeat in Jind

bypoll, with its candidate finishing at fifth spot and could not even save his security deposit. When asked about the Jannayak Janta Party and Aam Aadmi Party alliance in Haryana, Abhay Chautala reiterated that the alliance is not formed on political reasons but to ensure that INLD chief OP Chautala stays in Delhi's Tihar jail and does not come out. The AAP led Delhi Government and JJP have hatched a conspiracy to ensure that Chautala Sabha is not allowed to get parole, he added. Further commenting on AAP-JJP and BJP-SAD alliance in Haryana, Abhay attacked the alliance partners on the issue of Sutlej Yamuna Link canal. Both AAP and SAD are against the construction of SYL canal so JJP and BJP should make their stand clear on the SYL canal issue, he added. Notably, a multi-cornered contest is expected on all 10 parliamentary seats in the state with BJP, Congress, INLD, JJP, AAP, LSP-BSP in the fray. Failed to forge an alliance with any political party for Lok Sabha polls, the INLD is compelled to go it alone on all 10 seats in Haryana.

Gehlot in soup over comment on Prez



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday landed in a huge controversy after its senior leader and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said Ram Nath Kovind was made the President of India because of caste considerations.

While the BJP called the comment "anti-Dalit, anti-poor and anti-constitutional" and demanded an apology and strong action, Gehlot said it was unfortunate that his comments during a Press conference have been misquoted by a few media houses. Gehlot told reporters that ahead of the 2017 Assembly elections in Gujarat, the BJP was worried about its chances of forming the Government and the choice of Presidential candidate was made with votes in mind.

"People even say that Ram Nath Kovind was made

action against him. "It is very unfortunate that Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, a senior Congress leader who himself is on a constitutional post made casteist remark against the President, who is the custodian of the Constitution," BJP spokesperson GVL Narasimha Rao said.

"A very low attack by the Congress against the highest constitutional functionary in this country," the BJP said at a press conference held in Delhi within hours of Gehlot's self goal.

"Is the Congress against a person who comes from a poor background and belongs to the Dalit community? President Kovind is a highly accomplished individual. This is a condemnable statement. We expect apology and strong action," the BJP's GVL Narasimha Rao said. Rao said the remark showed "anti-Dalit" mindset of the Congress.

Seeking to damage control following an outrage, Gehlot said: "I have the greatest regards for the President of India, and personally for Ramnathji whom I have met in person and highly impressed with his simplicity and humbleness," Gehlot said in his clarification after the outrage.

The Chief Minister's Office said it was not Gehlot's personal opinion, he was quoting from an article he had read.

EC forms high-level committee to review biopic on PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Following the directions of the Supreme Court, the Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday set up a high-level committee to review the biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and furnish its recommendation by April 18. For its part, the BJP wrote a letter to the EC over a biopic allegedly being made on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and demanded the Commission to review the movie before its release in a similar way the biopic of Modi was reviewed.

"This is to draw your attention to the news in the media that a biopic allegedly of Mamata Banerjee will be released on May 3, 2019 [named Baghini]," the BJP said in the letter.

According to EC, senior Deputy Election Commissioner Umesh Sinha, Deputy Election Commissioners Sandeep Saxena and Chandra Bhushan Kumar, Senior Principal Secretary KF Wilfred, Director General Dhirendra Ojha and Delhi Chief Electoral Officer Ranbir Singh will be the member of the committee which will review the Modi biopic. The EC has asked the producers of the film to arrange for a screening for a committee set up for the purpose.

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Commission to watch the full biopic on Modi and take an informed decision on banning its pan India release by April 19. A bench headed

NaMo TV will have to follow silence period as per model code: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) has made it clear that the NaMo TV will have to comply with the 48-hour 'election silence period' ahead of every phase of voting. "Live coverage

of the People Act "prohibits" display of any "election matter" by means of "cinematograph, television or other similar apparatus", 48 hours before the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in a particular constituency.

This phase is called the 'silence period' as it allows a voter to make up his or her mind on whom to vote without being influenced by political campaigning. Section 126 is not applicable on the print media.

The direction, sources said, was issued to bring clarity on the applicability of 'silence period' on NaMo TV.

On Thursday last week, the EC had concluded that since NaMo TV is sponsored by the BJP, all recorded programmes displayed on the platform should be pre-certified by media certification and monitoring committee of Delhi and all political publicity contents being displayed without pre-certification should be removed immediately.

After the Congress filed a complaint with the poll panel about the channel disturbing the level playing field, the EC had asked the Delhi CEO to file a report on the issue.

Earlier, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting told the poll panel that it was an advertising platform that did not require a license from the ministry. The Delhi CEO had approved the logo of NaMo TV, which the BJP said is part of the NaMo App that it owns, but did not "certify" the content as it contained the old speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



The Modi biopic, starring Vivek Oberoi and directed by Omung Kumar, tells the story of PM Modi's rise to power from his humble beginnings. Acting on the complaints of political parties, including the Congress, the poll panel had asserted that any biopic material with the potential to disturb the level playing field should not be displayed in areas where Model Code of Conduct was in force.

On the other hand, the biopic on West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee "Baaghini" is being released on May 3. The EC has asked for a report from West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer over the biopic. "BJP requests the Election Commission of India and its representative in West Bengal the CEO to review the said biopic before release, on similar lines that was done by the EC in the case of another biopic depicting Narendra Modi," the letter read.

can be done on NaMo TV but any pre-recorded content cannot be streamed for 48 hours before the polling date under the 'silence period' stipulated in the electoral law", the EC said.

The EC has asked the chief electoral officer of Delhi to ensure that its directions are followed in each of the remaining six phases of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The EC has also said that all expenditure incurred on programmes and advertisements on NaMo TV should be identified appropriately and attributed to candidates or political parties.

The directions were issued to the Delhi CEO as he is the nodal officer to pre-certify political content in TV channels and similar platforms which are beamed nationally. He has also been provided with a committee specifically for the purpose, a source aware of the development said.

Bhim Army chief's U-turn, says will support gathbandhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Having asserted to contest against Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi, Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad on Wednesday made a U turn saying his outfit will support the SP-BSP alliance so that the Dalit votes remain intact to defeat the BJP.

Chandrashekhar's remarks comes a few days after Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati termed him a BJP agent and accused him of dividing Dalit votes.

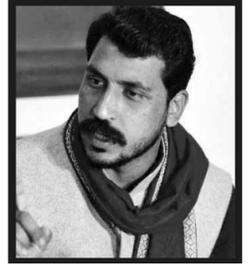
The Dalit group's founder also said the Bhim Army will support the SP-BSP alliance if it fields Satish Chandra Mishra, Mayawati's general secretary and Brahmin face of the BSP, from the Varanasi seat.

Earlier, the Bhim Army chief had accused Mishra of misleading Mayawati and conspiring against the Dalit group.

"I have decided not to contest from Varanasi because I do not want that my decision should strengthen the BJP or Modi in anyway. We all want to defeat the BJP," he said.

On Mayawati's criticism of him, he said, "Our own people are calling us agents of the BJP, but I still want her to become prime minister."

At an event to mark BR Ambedkar Jayanti in Madhya



Pradesh's Mhow on April 14, he had said that the Bhim Army and not Mayawati was the "real well-wisher" of Dalits.

Chandrashekhar said that if the SP-BSP alliance fielded Mishra from Varanasi, they will also be able to get some upper caste votes.

He had earlier attacked Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav "for giving promotion to officers who inflicted atrocities on dalits".

"His (Akhilesh) father says in Parliament that he wants Modi to become prime minister again. They are agents of the BJP, not me. They call me an agent for questioning them. Yes, I am an agent of B R Ambedkar... If my own people were not in my way, I would have shown you (Akhilesh) that if we can vote you to power, we can pull you down too," he had said.

Cong: Modi Govt protecting those involved in DeMo scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday accused the Modi Government of "protecting" those involved in illegal exchange of money post-demonetisation by not ordering a probe into video tapes released by the party even as it put forth another set of clips showing people involved in the "loot" claiming proximity to the powers-that-be.

Simultaneously, the party also accused the Centre of targeting opposition leaders by using agencies like the Income Tax department and Enforcement Directorate. It said the people of India will give a befitting reply to the BJP in these elections.

Senior party leader Kapil Sibal asked why the "chowkidar" (the watchman) was "asleep" when all this happened. He alleged the absence of any investigation into the videos given as "proof" indicated that "those involved in this loot are being protected". Prime Minister often refers to himself as "chowkidar" (the watchman) emphasising his tough stand on corruption.

"It now appears that the decision to demonetise may have helped criminals to monetise by looting the treasury and the poor," Sibal claimed. Those who have collaborated with corruption cannot pretend to be clean, he told a press conference, where he played the

WHY THE CHOWKIDAR WAS ASLEEP WHEN ALL THIS HAPPENED, ALLEGED KAPIL SIBAL

fresh videos purportedly showing how huge amount of money was exchanged in connivance with bank officials and some others close to the people in power.

He, however, did not authenticate the videos and there was no immediate comment available from the BJP or the government. The party released similar videos on March 26 and April 9.

Sibal alleged that in the April 9 "expose", the party had indicated the alleged involvement of one Rahul Ratharekar, a field assistant, and sought to prove his identity through his identity card, which was seen in the videos released that day.

He claimed that soon after the videos were released on April 9, the Cabinet Secretariat issued a statement claiming that "Rahul Ratharekar had been a Constable level employee of the Cabinet Secretariat but was dismissed in June, 2017 (after 5 years of service) on suspicion of his role in exchange of old currency notes, post-

demonetisation".

"This statement clearly demonstrates that the expose made on the scam, as reflected in the videos shown on March 26, 2019 and April 9, 2019, is genuine and the events seen in the video reflect the manner in which these exchanges took place. "The involvement of government functionaries, bankers and state authorities clearly demonstrate a conspiracy to loot the treasury in a manner never seen before," he alleged.

When asked about the IT and ED raids, Sibal claimed that BJP is "flooded" with money and yet authorities are targeting the Opposition which is facing a cash "drought". "We all know that if any party is flooded with money, it is the BJP. The opposition is going through a drought period. And who is being targeted, those who are suffering from drought and those who are flooded are not being targeted. That's the beauty of Indian democracy and this government," Sibal said.

Election officials had Tuesday held searches at the residence of DMK leader Kanimozhi in Tuticorin in south Tamil Nadu from where she is contesting. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala alleged that motivated I-T raids is the only tool left with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said the people can see through this.

LS elections: 41K para forces will be deployed in Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A contingent of 41 battalions (41,000 personnel) of Central paramilitary forces will be deployed in West Bengal for the conduct of the Parliamentary polls in West Bengal for the remaining 40 seats in six phases.

The polls for two seats were held in the first phase on April 11. For three seats, it will be held on Thursday in the second phase. The significant deployment comes in the backdrop of reports of violence in the past elections, officials said, adding the number of the forces is the maximum to have been deployed in the State.

The State has a total of 42 Parliamentary constituencies and elections are being held in a staggered manner in seven phases.

Elections to two constituencies was held in phase one on April 11 with 8,400 paramilitary men on the ground for conduct of the polls in Coochbehar and Alipurduar, while three seats will go to polls on Thursday in the second phase. The state will have seven-phased polls with the elections ending on May 19.

For polls in three seats of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Raiganj on Thursday, as many



as 19,400 personnel are deployed for the conduct of free and fair polls.

The idea behind significant deployment of Central forces is 85 to 90 per cent of the polling booths in the State are covered by the paramilitary forces to check any incident of voter intimidation, booth attack or looting of EVMs as was witnessed the panchayat polls held in the State last year and the Assembly polls in 2016.

In view of the past trends, a number of polling booths have been declared sensitive from the standpoint of possible violence and suspicion of distribution of poll inducements, officials said.

About 2.7 lakh Central paramilitary forces are being mobilized for the conduct of Lok Sabha polls that began on April 11 and will end on May 19. The counting of votes is scheduled for May 23.

Congress leader Chaturvedi miffed over reinstating 'lumpens' in party

New Delhi: A day before the second phase of elections, Congress faced an embarrassment from within as a senior spokesperson took to social media to criticise the party leadership. Congress national spokesperson Priyanka Chaturvedi on Wednesday expressed her displeasure after her party decided to reinstate eight leaders who had allegedly "threatened" her at a press conference in Mathura recently.

"Deeply saddened that lumpen goons get preference in the party over those who have given their sweat and blood," Chaturvedi said while retweeting the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee letter suspending action against the accused. The leaders, who reportedly made a ruckus out of the press briefing, were reinstated by Congress General Secretary in charge of Western UP Jyotiraditya Scindia on the grounds of apology tendered.

"Having faced bricks and abuse across board for the party but yet those who threatened me within the party getting away with not even a rap on their knuckles is unfortunate," she said.

The UPCC letter, mentioned Chaturvedi's complaint about "undignified behaviour" by eight leaders at press conference regarding Rafale deal. In the letter, the eight leaders were told not to do anything in the near future that will tarnish the party's image.

Twitter takes down Yogi's controversial tweet on EC's request

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two tweets by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with communal overtones have been taken down by Twitter following a directive from the Election Commission. The tweets posted on April 5 had referred to the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) as a "green virus".

The IUML had moved the commission against the tweets and had urged it to block Adityanath's twitter account.

"The tweets have been removed from the timeline of the Twitter account of the UP CM," an official said.

A message in place of the tweets reads, "This Tweet from @myogiadityanath was withheld in India in response to a legal demand."

The development comes after the EC Monday imposed a 72-hour campaigning ban on the chief minister for making communal remarks at a recent election meeting in Meerut.

Experts brainstorm outcome of Sea Vigil exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All the stakeholders in maritime security including the Indian Navy and several other agencies conducted a brainstorming exercise over the outcome of the 'Sea Vigil' exercise — the first-of-its-kind multi-agency drill covering the entire 7,516 km-long Indian coastline and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

The debriefing was held on Tuesday after the Sea Vigil drill was conducted on January 22 and 23 in which 13 coastal States and Union Territories along with all maritime agencies participated to check the efficacy of maritime security and surveillance in the seas.

Nearly 150 ships, 40 aircraft and a number of other strategic assets of the Navy and Coast Guard were part of the exercise which, according to

the Navy, was "unprecedented" in its scale and size. Navy officials said here on Wednesday the debriefing on the exercise was held on Tuesday during which significant results achieved in the course of the two-day drill were deliberated upon.

The debriefing was chaired by Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Murlidhar Sadashiv Pawar, and was attended by top functionaries of the Navy, Indian Coast Guard and concerned union ministries, agencies and representatives of the coastal states.

"He complimented the strong inter-agency coordination and interoperability achieved during the exercise and reiterated the need for flexibility and agility to deal with security challenges," Navy Spokesperson Captain DK Sharma said here.

Ex-Kolkata CP: I was targeted by CBI in chit fund scam

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar alleged in the Supreme Court that he was targeted by CBI in the Saradha Chit fund case due to "mala fide intent" and "conflict of interest" of former interim CBI director M Nageshwara Rao as his family members were under the scanner post-demonetisation.

Kumar alleged that post demonetisation in November 2016, investigation was initiated into some shell companies that prima facie were involved in receiving huge deposits and a FIR was registered.

During the probe of shell companies, role of one firm Agela Mercantiles Pvt Ltd came under the scanner for collecting money from public unauthorisedly, he said, alleging that during further investigation of the case names of wife and daughter of Rao have come to light and the matter is being further probed.

"The mala fide intent of the petitioner/CBI herein especially in light of the fact that February 3, 2019, a Sunday, was the last day in office of the interim CBI Director, is writ large on account of the conflict of interest, in the instant matter," Kumar said in his 89-page affidavit.

It said that after the demonetisation, on receipt of information, the West Bengal Police initiated investigation into some shell companies that prima facie appeared to be actively involved in a scam, wherein these companies were receiving huge sums of deposits.

"Taking due cognizance, a FIR was registered in this regard, being Bowbazar...Dated January 27, 2017. That, during the investigation into the said case, role of one company, namely Agela Mercantiles Pvt Ltd (AMPL) came under the scanner in connection with various dubious transactions and also for collecting money deposits from the public unauthorisedly," it said.



Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Portuguese Minister for National Defence João Gomes Cravinho at South Block in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

FARM DISTRESS, DEVELOPMENT, NATIONALISM TAKE LEAD

Western Uttar Pradesh will be a test case in the second phase of the general elections on April 18 when polling will be held for 95 Lok Sabha seats. There are serious farmers issues at stake there, yet they could be subsumed by the discourse on nationalism. Across the country, there are other constituencies where farm distress will be a factor, like the Marathwada region, or backward Raiganj in West Bengal, where agrarian crisis is a reality. The question in Srinagar will be about keeping the separatists at bay. In the 2017 by-elections, which former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah won, the voting percentage was an abysmal 7.2 per cent, the lowest ever recorded till then for a Lok Sabha election. The big story will be in Tamil Nadu — polls to all Lok Sabha seats will be held in a single phase. Right now, it is a bipolar election — between the AIADMK and DMK. The subtext will be provided by the election results — to see whether either the UPA or the NDA has been able to get a toehold in the State

FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE KEY CONSTITUENCIES THAT WILL GO TO POLLS TODAY

MAHARASHTRA	UTTAR PRADESH	TAMIL NADU	KARNATAKA	BIHAR
MANDED SITTING MP: Ashok Shankarrao Chavan, Congress KEY CANDIDATES: Ashok Chavan (Congress), Chikhalikar Pratap Govindrao (BJP), Abdul Samad (Samajwadi Party) MAIN ISSUES: This is an economically backward portion in the Marathwada region, where farm distress and water scarcity are main issues. Even though this is not a reserved constituency, the Scheduled Castes population has a significant vote base	BULANDSHAHR SITTING MP: Bhola Singh, BJP KEY CANDIDATES: Bhola Singh (BJP) and Yogesh Verma (BSP), candidate for the SP-BSP-RLD, and Bansil Lal Pahadia (Congress) MAIN ISSUES: This is a reserved constituency for the SCs. Farm-related issues have a major role here. Bulandshahr is also a communally sensitive area and a campaign that focuses on this could find takers among voters	KARUR SITTING MP: M Thambi Durai, AIADMK KEY CANDIDATES: M Thambi Durai (AIADMK) and S Jothimani (Congress) MAIN ISSUES: This is a textile hub but suffers from poor industrial development and an absence of good road connectivity. Industrial pollution is caused by textile dyeing units. Problems are added by water scarcity	BANGALORE NORTH SITTING MP: DV Sadananda Gowda, BJP KEY CANDIDATES: DV Sadananda Gowda (BJP) and Krishna Byre Gowda (Congress) MAIN ISSUES: Development issues take centre stage in this constituency with a large number of electors — infrastructure, public transport, sanitation and drinking water. The issue of job opportunities is also likely to play a part in the election	PURNEA SITTING MP: Santosh Kumar Kushwaha, JD(U) KEY CANDIDATES: Santosh Kumar Kushwaha JD(U) and Uday Singh alias Pappu Singh (Congress), who is the candidate for the Congress-RJD combine in Bihar MAIN ISSUES: Issues of development could be overshadowed by caste and nationalism issues. The contest could see clash between Hindutva politics of BJP and Muslim-Yadav vote bank of the Congress-RJD candidate, who is a Rajput
AMRAVATI SITTING MP: Anandrao Adsul, Shiv Sena KEY CANDIDATES: Anandrao Adsul (Shiv Sena) and Navneet Kaur Rana (Yuva Swabhiman Party), supported by the Congress-NCP alliance MAIN ISSUES: Farm distress, farmers' suicides and water scarcity. This is a reserved constituency in which Buddhist Dalits wield significant influence	MATHURA SITTING MP: Hema Malini, BJP KEY CANDIDATES: Hema Malini (BJP), Narendra Singh (RLD) candidate for the SP-BSP-RLD and Mahesh Pathak (Congress) MAIN ISSUES: The strong nationalistic narrative associated with the Government of PM Narendra Modi finds resonance in this constituency. It got a fillip following the Balakot air strike. However, that does not overshadow issues related to farmers — the problems of the sugar mills are well known	SRINAGAR SITTING MP: Farooq Abdullah, National Conference KEY CANDIDATES: Farooq Abdullah (National Conference), Sheikh Khalid Jehangir (BJP) and Agha Syed Mohsin (PDP) MAIN ISSUES: The issue on test here will be democracy and India. A bypoll in 2017 had registered a mere 7.2% voter turnout to elect Farooq Abdullah, lowest ever for an election	HASSAN SITTING MP: HD Deve Gowda, JD(S) KEY CANDIDATES: Prajwal Revanna (JDS) and A Manju (BJP) MAIN ISSUES: BJP candidate A Manju joined the BJP from the Congress party recently which makes the contest interesting. The constituency is dominated by Vokkaligas, who will be looking for support from other communities. Hassan is located along the Cauvery basin and is rich in cash crops. Naturally, the politics of the region is also determined by water availability	WEST BENGAL RAIGANJ SITTING MP: Mohammad Salim, CPI(M) KEY CANDIDATES: Mohammad Salim (CPM), Deboshree Chaudhury (BJP), Deepa Dasmunshi (Congress) and Kanaialal Agarwal (TMC) MAIN ISSUES: It has nearly 50% Muslim population and there is possibility of communal polarisation. However, Salim is keen to keep political discourse on development and agrarian issues

Drought trouble for BJP-Sena

TN RAGHUNTHWA ■ MUMBAI

With absolutely no wave in the air and severe drought conditions spelling trouble for the ruling Sena-BJP alliance, the Opposition Congress-NCP alliance smells a real opportunity to improve vastly upon its miserable 2014 tally of two in the second phase of polls for 10 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra scheduled for Thursday.

Like in the case of seven constituencies of eastern Maharashtra that went to polls a week ago, the ten poll-bound constituencies — six of which fall in Marathwada, three in Vidarbha region and one in western Maharashtra — have been reeling under one of worst agrarian crises that the state has witnessed in recent decades, a situation that has made matters very difficult for the ruling saffron alliance.

Though it attempted to ease the farmers' distress through its Rs 34,022 crore loan waiver scheme, the BJP-led saffron alliance has lost the perception battle against the Opposition which has made agrarian crisis a major issue in the polls. No wonder that there are not many takers for chief minister Devendra Fadnis' claim that the saffron alliance government has waived farm loans amounting to nearly Rs 24,000 crore and benefitting 51 lakh farmers (out of the total 89 lakh beneficiaries).

Notwithstanding the claims that the Maharashtra government has extended relief to the affected farmers, the suicides by farmers are continuing unabated in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions. More than 300 debt-trapped farmers have committed



suicide during the three months of the current year. With the Modi magic not working on ground and anti-incumbency factor weighing it down, the BJP and Shiv Sena — which had collectively won eight out of ten seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls — are struggling to retain its hold in more than half the poll-bound constituencies.

On the contrary, the Congress — which had picked up the only two seats it had won in the 2014 polls in Maharashtra from Marathwada — and the NCP — which had bagged all its four seats from western Maharashtra in the previous polls — are showing signs of making a recovery this time around. The constituencies that are going to polls on Thursday are: Hingoli, Nanded, Parbhani, Beed, Osmanabad, Latur (SC), all from Marathwada, Buldhana, Akola, Amravati (SC), all from Vidarbha and Solapur (SC), which is in western Maharashtra.

The main contests are between the BJP-Sena combine and Opposition Congress-NCP in a majority of the constituencies. In a few of the constituencies like Akola, Osmanabad and Solapur, the Dalit-Muslim front of Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) are threatening to cut into the tra-

B Chavan's son-in-law and Ashokrao's brother-in-law Bhaskarrao Khatgaonkar has represented the constituency thrice (1998, 1999 and 2009). In 2014 LS polls, Chavan romped home comfortably.

Pritam Munde, daughter of late senior BJP leader Gopinath Munde, is re-contesting the polls on a BJP ticket from Munde's home constituency of Beed against the NCP's Bajrang Sonawane.

The contest in Beed has become a prestigious battle between Pritam's sister and a minister in Maharashtra Cabinet Pankaja Munde and her cousin and leader of the Maharashtra Legislative Council Dhananjay Munde of the NCP. Dhanjay had rebelled against his late uncle Gopinath Munde and joined the NCP when the latter was still alive.

In the politically significant constituency of Osmanabad in Marathwada, NCP's Ranajagjit Singh P Patil is taking on his cousin and Shiv Sena nominee Omraje Nimbalkar.

Ranajagjit Singh is the son of Maharashtra's senior former minister and Sharad Pawar's close confidant Padamsinh Patil. Padamsinh is one of the nine accused others in the much-discussed murder case of 2006 in which Congress leader Pawanraje Nimbalkar and his driver Samad Abdul Wahid Kazi at Kalamboli, near Panvel, were shot dead on February 3, 2006.

In Amravati, four-time Sena MP Anandrao V. Adsul is pitted against South Indian actress Navneet Kaur Rana of the Yuva Swabhiman Party (YSP), supported by the Congress-NCP led Mahagathbandhan.

FACTFILE — PHASE II

States/UTs: 12
Lok Sabha seats: 95

Total voters: 15.52 crore
Male voters: 7.89 crore
Female voters: 7.63 crore
Third gender voters: 11,030

Polling stations: 1,76,441
Total contestants: 1,611

State/UT	Seats polling	Voters	Candidates	Polling stations
Jammu & Kashmir	2/6	29,60,027	24	4,426
Bihar	5/40	85,52,274	68	8,644
Assam	5/14	69,10,592	50	8,992
Manipur	1/2	9,28,626	11	1,300
West Bengal	3/42	49,32,346	42	5,390
Odisha	5/21	76,93,123	35	9,117
Chhattisgarh	3/11	48,95,719	36	6,484
Uttar Pradesh	8/80	1,40,76,635	85	16,162
Maharashtra	10/48	1,85,46,036	179	20,321
Karnataka	14/28	2,63,38,277	241	30,410
Tamil Nadu*	38/39	5,84,42,767	822	64,225
Puducherry	1/1	9,73,161	18	970

*Election to Vellore seat in Tamil Nadu cancelled due to huge cash recovery linked to a candidate. Election to Tripura East seat deferred to Apr 23 over law and order concerns. Information in the graphic has been reconciled accordingly. Source: PIB

Note: Simultaneous voting for corresponding Assembly segments of Odisha Lok Sabha seats polling in Phase-II. KBK Pollgraphics

TOP CANDIDATES

TAMIL NADU THOOTHUKUDI Kanimozhi Karunanidhi (DMK) and Tamilisai Sounderrarajan (BJP)	UTTAR PRADESH MATHURA Hema Malini (BJP), Mahesh Pathak (Congress), Kunwar Narendra Singh (RLD)	BIHAR KATIHAR Tariq Anwar (Congress) and Dulal Chandra Goswami (JDU)	MAHARASHTRA AKOLA Sanjay Dhotre (BJP), Hidayat Patel (Congress) and Prakash Ambedkar (Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi)
NILGIRIS (SC): A Raja (DMK) and M Thiagarajan (AIADMK)	FATEPUR SIKRI: Raj Chahar (BJP), Raj Babbar (Cong), Guddu Pandit (BSP)	ASSAM SILCHAR Sushmita Dev (Congress), Rajdeep Roy (BJP), Nazia Yasmin Mazumdar (NPP)	LATUR Manchindra Gunwantrao Kamat (Congress), Sudhakar Tukaram Shrangare (BJP)
SIVAGANGA Karti P Chidambaram (Congress) and H Raja (BJP)	AGRA (RESERVED) SP Singh Baghel (BJP), Preeta Harit (Congress), Manoj Soni (BSP)	JAMMU & KASHMIR UDHAMPUR Dr Jitendra Singh (BJP), Vikramaditya Singh (Congress), Choudhary Lal Singh (Dogra Swabhiman Sangathan)	BEED Pritam Gopinathrao Munde (BJP), Bajrang Manoharrao Sonwane (NCP)
CHENNAI CENTRAL Dhayanidhi Maran (DMK), Sam Paul (PMK) and KKSM Dehlan Baqavi (SDPI)	ALIGARH Satish Gautam (BJP), Bijendra Singh (Congress), Ajit Balyan (BSP)	MAHARASHTRA MANDED Ashok Chavan (Congress), Prataprao Patil Chikhalikar (BJP)	SOLAPUR Jai Siddheshwar Shivacharya Swami (BJP), Sushilkumar Shinde (Congress)

CAPF IN 80% BOOTHS, BUT WB VOTERS WANT MORE

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Voters on Wednesday asked for cent per cent CAPF coverage of polling booths even as Bengal prepared for second phase of elections for three parliamentary constituencies of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Raiganj on Thursday amid tight security ambobast.

In an apparent bid to avoid electoral violence like in the first phase the Commission has appointed senior IAS officer Ajay V Nayak as the Special Observer. He will work in tandem with Special Police Observer Vivek Dubey.

The ECI has requisitioned 195 companies of Central forces for the three constituencies out of which 64 companies will alone be used for Raiganj witnessing a four-cornered contest featuring outgoing MP of CPI(M) Md Salim, Congress' Deepa Dasmunshi, TMC KL Agarwal and BJP's Supriyo Sarkar.

Darjeeling which also has a history of political violence will be manned by 69 companies of CAPF whereas Jalpaiguri will get 52 companies of central forces, EC sources said. Out of 69 companies of Darjeeling seat 31 companies will be deployed at Darjeeling, 29 companies at Siliguri and 9 company at Kalimpong.

Police Observer said about 80 per cent of the booths would be manned by the CAPF while the armed State police will handle the remaining booths.

TAMIL NADU VOTERS TO DECIDE PALANISWAMY'S FATE TODAY

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

More than 5.86 crore voters spread across 38 Lok Sabha constituencies in Tamil Nadu will march to the polling booths on Thursday to cast their votes to elect 38 lawmakers who would represent them for the next five years.

Though there are 39 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State, the President of India heeding the request of the Election Commission of India rescinded the election from Vellore following large scale seizure of cash from the resi-

dence and business premises of the DMK candidate Kathir Anand. The date for the new election from Vellore would be announced afterwards.

Along with the 38 Members of Parliament, electorate in 18 Assembly constituencies will elect their legislators to fill the vacancy caused by disqualification of some of the AIADMK MLAs by the Speaker. Though there are 22 vacancies in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, election for the remaining four seats would be held on May 29. The results of all the elections would

be announced on May 23. The high decibel campaign for the Lok Sabha and 18 Assembly by-election came to an end on Tuesday evening. Four more Assembly constituencies in the State would elect their representatives on May 19 as the Election Commission could declare the schedule to these constituencies only after getting clearance from the Madras High Court which was hearing petitions with respect to these constituencies.

Hence a total of 22 by-elections are being held in Tamil Nadu. What is unique about the bye-election is that if the DMK manages to win 21 of the 22 seats, then there would be a change of Government in Tamil Nadu. The DMK alliance has 97 members as of now and requires 21 seats to unseat the AIADMK Government which has only 113 members (excluding the Speaker). M K Stalin, the DMK chief has been claiming from day one onwards that his party would win all the 22 seats. If Edappadi Palaniswamy's AIADMK wins five seats, he would get the absolute majority but it would be advisable if

he has at least 130 MLAs for smooth sailing in the House.

The April 18 election in Tamil Nadu would go down in history as the most fiercely fought poll. By Tuesday evening, when it was time for switching off microphones and loud speakers, Stalin raked up the refusal by Edappadi Palaniswamy administration to intern his father M Karunanidhi at the Marina Beach. It was at the instance of the Madras High Court which overruled the Opposition from the AIADMK-led Government that

Karunanidhi could be buried in Marina Beach though there are no rules which mandate that a former chief minister should be buried at Marina Beach.

While the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance began the campaign much earlier and with a clear advantage over the AIADMK-led front, the latter picked up momentum and caught up with the rivals. Though two more parties, AMMK of TTV Dhinakaran and MNM of film star Kamal Haasan are also in race, it is widely believed that they would end up as 'also ran'.

Vellore election: HC upholds ECI's decision

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The Madras High Court in Wednesday upheld the decision of the Election Commission rescinding the Lok Sabha election from the Vellore parliamentary constituency in Tamil Nadu. A Division Bench consisting of Justices S Manikumar and Subramaniam Prasad dismissed the petitions filed by AC Shanmugham, the AIADMK candidate and an independent candidate seeking an order from the court for quashing the Election Commission's decision. President Ram Nath Kovind rescinded the Vellore Lok Sabha election on Tuesday. The judges said the EC which has the power to issue notification for conducting elections, also has the power to recommend for cancellation if it has arrived at the view that it is necessary to halt the election.

States with a highest number of WOMEN CANDIDATES ELECTED	
West Bengal 12	Uttar Pradesh 13
Madhya Pradesh 5	
Gujarat 5	
Odisha 4	Tamil Nadu 4

Didn't fall prey to Pak: Modi

All PM does is tell lies: RaGa

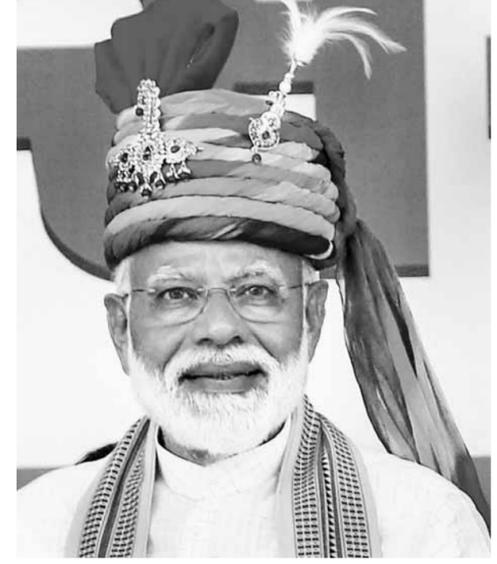
PTI ■ SURENDRANAGAR/HIMMATNAGAR/ANAND
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said he did not fall prey to Pakistan's nuclear blackmail, because India has the "mother of nuclear bombs".

Addressing three poll rallies in his home State, Modi also claimed that the then UPA Government arrested BJP president Amit Shah and some police officers in Gujarat to topple the State Government then headed by him.

replied in the positive. "Today is Mahavir Jayanti, the day to observe peace. But when shall we have peace? Will anyone listen to a weak man making an appeal for peace or to the warning of a strong man who can flex his muscles? Only the peace appeal of a strong man will be respected, not that of a weak person," Modi said.



Congress president Rahul Gandhi offers prayers at Thirunelli Temple in Wayanad district on Wednesday PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally at Himmatnagar in Sabarkantha district, on Wednesday PTI

At a campaign rally at Surendranagar, Modi referred to the surgical strikes and air strikes by India inside Pakistan in response to terrorist attacks in Uri and Pulwama. "Earlier, terrorists from Pakistan would come here and go back after conducting an attack. Pakistan would threaten us, saying it has the nuclear bomb and will press the button (if India retaliated). "We have nuclear of nuclear bombs (the mother of nuclear bombs). I decided to tell them, do whatever you want to do (but we will retaliate)," the Prime Minister said.

Earlier, speaking at a poll rally in Himmatnagar, Modi said the then UPA Government arrested BJP president Amit Shah and some police officers in Gujarat to topple the state Government then headed by him. Modi also said this election will decide if nationalist forces will rule the country or those who want to help the "tukde tukde gang" by scrapping secession law. "From 2004 to 2014, there was a 'remote control government' and you know who was in control. In those 10 years, those sitting in Delhi tried to damage the interest of Gujarat and acted as if the state is not in India," Modi said.

Defeat Gabbar Singh PM: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA
Asking the voters to shun the Congress and the Left for their RSS links Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday appealed to the voters to send maximum number of Trinamool Congress MPs to Parliament "so that Bengal takes the lead in forming a Government in Delhi" by removing the "Gabbar Singh of a Prime Minister."

huge rally at Kandi in Murshidabad which has three parliamentary constituencies traditionally dominated by the Congress and the Left.

Slamming NCP chief Sharad Pawar for raising questions about his family, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday took a vicious dig at Pawar for "serving" only one special (Nehru-Gandhi) family from Delhi for some many decades.

Attacking Narendra Modi for disturbing the peace of the country in his bid to divide votes, Banerjee said "Modi Babu thinks that he is the most powerful person in the country. In his lust for power he has set one community against the other and has divided India as never before. If he is not defeated this time then he will demolish the democratic set up of the country once and for all."

Attacking the Prime Minister for trying to suppress voice of Opposition she said "whenever anyone raises his voice against the Prime Minister officers of Income Tax and Enforcement Directorate are sent to his house... See what they are doing against Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh, Kumarswamy in Karnataka and MK Stalin in Tamil Nadu."

Addressing a public rally in Solapur, Modi said he had been at the receiving end of abuses from Opposition leaders. "Despite that, I have been sincerely working for progress of nation and empowerment of poor people.



OLA TO OFFER FREE RIDES FOR DISABLED VOTERS

Bengaluru: Cab aggregator Ola on Wednesday said it would provide free rides to persons with disabilities (PWD) to the polling booths in association with the Election authorities in a bid to increase voter participation in the Lok Sabha Elections in Karnataka. The company said it has partnered with the office of the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer and others, including the civic bodies in various cities in this regard. As a part of the free service, Ola has assigned 270 cabs to the election commission which will be made available to ferry PWD voters to polling booths, a release said Wednesday.

It was this habit of clubbing the opposition to silence with the help of central agencies that the people would not take kindly. "The BJP will be defeated for this haughtiness of theirs." Attacking the Congress for having been a "stooge of the CPI(M) all these years," she said.

Exhorting the people to vote for a "stable" and "strong" government, Modi said: "In 2014, you gave me a full majority and I could work with full strength to take firm decisions and work for public welfare. You have witnessed how I ran the country past five years."

PM TO ADDRESS 2 RALLIES TODAY IN KARNATAKA

Bengaluru: As 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka go to polls Thursday, the focus has shifted to the second phase next week with leaders hitting the campaign trail in the northern belt of the state. Of the 28 Lok Sabha seats in the state, fourteen in the northern parts will go to polls on April 23 in the second phase. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address rallies in Bagalkot and Chikodi Lok Sabha constituencies on Thursday. Congress President Rahul Gandhi is set to campaign in Raichur and Chikodi segments a day later.

BJP wants TMC leaders to be jailed for Bangla actor in rally

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Not happy with mere cancellation of the business visa of Bangladeshi cine star Firdaus for taking part in an election rally favouring Raiganj TMC candidate Kanhaia Lal Agarwal, the BJP on Wednesday upped the ante against the facilitators of the incident demanding "exemplary punishment — if possible incarceration and even cancellation of the candidature — against those who flouted the visa rules and used the foreign actor for electoral purpose."

influence a particular community in the elections," said BJP leader GVL Narsimha Rao.

TMC leader and outgoing Serampore MP Kalyan Banerjee however said he had "no information of any electoral law that debars foreign citizens in taking part in election rallies."

SP CHIEF TO FILE PAPERS TODAY

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will file his nomination papers from Azamgarh Lok Sabha constituency on Thursday. Before filing his papers, Akhilesh Yadav will hold a roadshow along with some senior leaders of the alliance partners in Azamgarh. SP spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said in Lucknow on Wednesday that after filing of the nomination papers, the alliance partners would address a rally at Bithauli. Polling in Azamgarh will be held in the sixth phase on May 12. By choosing to contest from Azamgarh, Akhilesh has changed his constituency for a third time. Earlier, he had won the parliamentary elections from Kannauj and Firozabad.

Bengal BJP vice president JP Majumdar said "it is not enough to send the actor back or cancelling his visa. The BJP also wants the people who used him by flouting the visa rules to be jailed and if possible the candidature of the candidate concerned cancelled."

Elsewhere, the BJP and the CPI(M) launched another complaint against a TMC MLA from Chakdaha, Jharna Ghosh for "inciting her party men to chase away the CRPF with broom sticks."

JP Majumdar quoted Ghosh citing a video footage "telling her party women to chase away the CRPF with brooms as 'during a battle no rule but only victory matters'

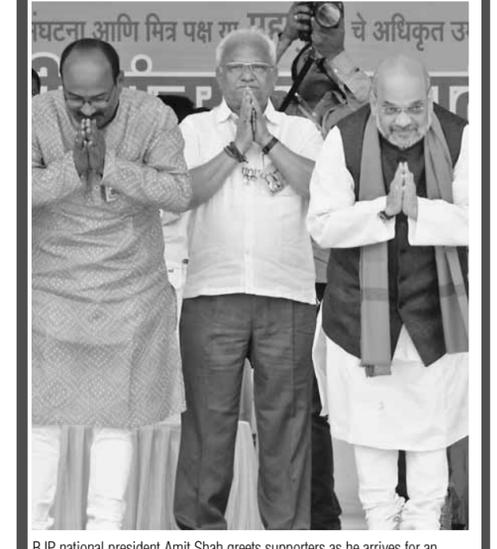
Yogi visits Dalit's house for lunch

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath continued to send out subtle political messages on the second day of his three-day curbs on campaigning in the ongoing Lok Sabha election by visiting a Dalit's home for lunch and meeting triple talaq victims in Ayodhya on Wednesday.

When the Chief Minister asked whether she was afraid of coming there, the girl said where was the fear when Yogiji was there. She even sang a song, much to the amusement of the Chief Minister.

Later, Yogi went to nearby Ashrafi Bhawan on foot and spoke to the people standing in the by-lanes. He also spoke to students and enquired about their studies.



BJP national president Amit Shah greets supporters as he arrives for an election rally for Lok Sabha polls, at Tasagaon in Sangli, on Wednesday PTI

god paying them a visit. "We did not have enough to offer. The Chief Minister had roti and sabzi and later took gur (jaggery) and water," she said. Savitri told reporters that the Chief Minister was pained at the condition of her house and offered help to get it repaired.

Before lunch, Yogi met a six-year-old girl, Neha Soni, and took her on his lap after which the girl came up with several innocent questions.

When the Chief Minister asked whether she was afraid of coming there, the girl said where was the fear when Yogiji was there. She even sang a song, much to the amusement of the Chief Minister.

Wayanad/Alathur: Launching a blistering attack on Narendra Modi, Congress Chief Rahul Gandhi said all that the Prime Minister "does is tell lies and steal from the poor people."

decided by the people and not by Modi or the RSS chief. In three rallies in Wayanad, he tore into BJP-led NDA Government and said the saffron party was only interested in imposing its ideology on people of the country. "Who is Mohan Bhagwat to teach us about culture and history? Kerala should be run by the people of Kerala. This is same sentiment in State after State," he said, addressing a rally in Wayanad.

Rahul, who addressed three election rallies in his Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, spread over the districts of Wayanad, Malappuram and Kozhikode and campaigned in Thiruthal in Palakkad district, attacked Modi and RSS and touched on corruption.

Taking a jibe at Modi, Rahul said he was not here to tell his 'Mann Ki Baat', but understand the various difficulties, including the night travel ban, man-animal conflicts and lack of medical facilities being faced by the people here. "I understand there are complex problems here. There are man-animal conflicts. There is a conflict between development and environment. I want to see a solution. I don't believe in imposing a solution. I believe in the wisdom and intellectual of our people in resolving such issues," Rahul said. "I am not like the Prime Minister. I am not going to make false promises and tell you I will give you two crore jobs or Rs 15 lakh in bank accounts or that I will give farmers whatever they want. I am not going to lie to you. Because I respect your intelligence, your wisdom," he added.

"All the PM does is tell lies and steal from the poor people. Six airports were given to his friend Adani on the day the Pulwama attack took place. And he (Modi) says they are fighting black money. Modi said demonetisation was to fight black money, but it destroyed the Indian economy. Fifty lakh people lost their jobs after demonetisation," the Congress chief said while winding off his campaign at Thiruthal on Wednesday.

He also said poor farmers who took meagre loans of around Rs 20,000 were behind bars for non-repayment while the rich who availed loans over Rs 35,000 crore were walking free. Continuing his tirade against Modi and the RSS, the Congress president said issues of Kerala should be

All praise for Wayanad, the second constituency from where Rahul is contesting for which he was attacked by Modi and BJP, Gandhi said he wanted to represent the remote district as the "beautiful place" symbolises different ideas and cultures.

Addressing a rally in Nagpur last week, BJP presi-

Under Cong, poverty of its leaders was eradicated: Gadkari

Panaji: Senior BJP leader Nitin Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Wednesday said four generations of the Nehru-Gandhi family have promised to eradicate poverty without success.

Priyanka pose no threat to Modi: Naqvi

Mumbai: Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Wednesday said Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra poses no threat to Prime Minister Narendra Modi even if she contests against him from Varanasi Lok Sabha seat.

Only the poverty of Congress leaders was alleviated in the process, he quipped, addressing BJP workers in Mandrem Assembly constituency in Goa.

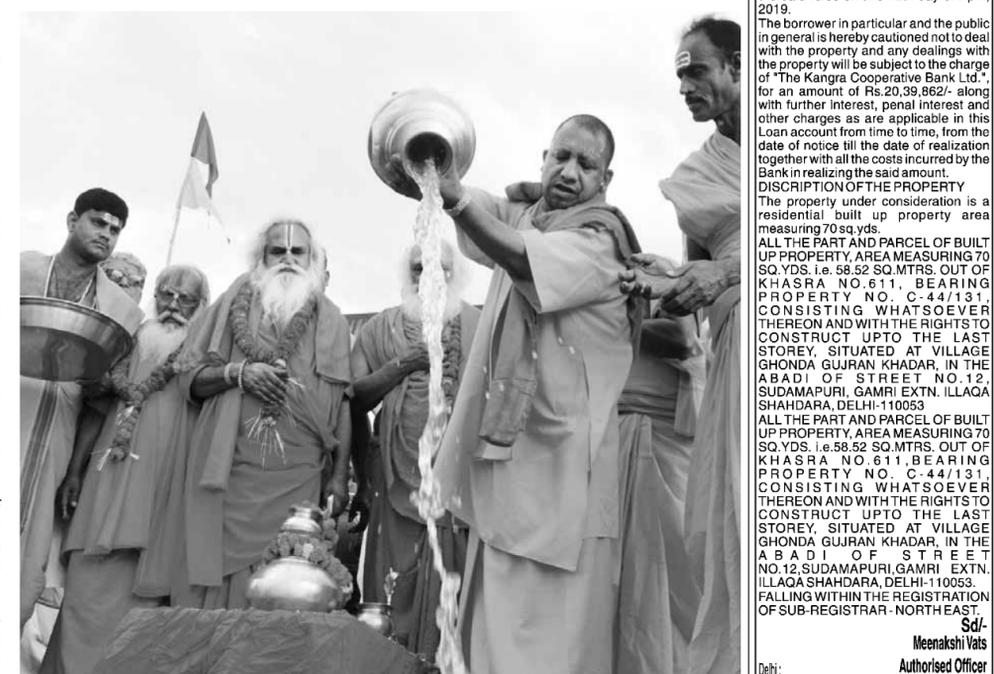
He also criticised Congress president Rahul Gandhi for creating a "fake narrative" against the BJP. "Someone is going to be there in the fray (from Varanasi). But Priyanka does not pose any challenge to Modi. The so-called 'mahagathbandhan' (grand alliance) is already falling apart..." Naqvi said.

A by-election will be held in Mandrem on April 23. The Union minister said that Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first PM, fought elections on the plank of poverty eradication. "But people remained poor... Later Indira Gandhi fought the elections on the same issue but she too could do nothing," Gadkari said.

"I am not even sure how many parties will contest against Modi in Varanasi, but the outcome is not going to be different. Modi will definitely win the seat," the BJP leader added.

Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister and Sonia Gandhi when she became Congress president repeated the same 'Garibi Hatao' slogan, he said. "In the current election, the great grandson of Nehru (Rahul Gandhi) is contesting on the same plank of Garibi Hatao (eradicate poverty)," he said. PTI

There has been a speculation that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra may take on Modi from Varanasi seat. She formally entered politics and was appointed the Congress general secretary for eastern Uttar Pradesh in February. PTI



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath performs rituals on the banks of Sarayu, in Ayodhya on Wednesday PTI

THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Jangpuri, New Delhi-110 058
Ph: 011-26611041, 26611042, 26611043, 26611044, 26611045, 26611046, 26611047, 26611048, 26611049, 26611050
Website: www.kangrabank.com

APPENDIX IV
[See rule 8 (1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)

The undersigned being the authorized representative of The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd., C-29 Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi-110058, having its registered office at 1916, Chuna Mandi, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice dated 21-09-2017 calling upon the borrower Sh. Ravinder Kumar Sharma, R/o H. No. C-44/131, Street No. 12, Sudampuri, Gamri Extn. Delhi-53 also at Sh. Ravinder Kumar Sharma, S/o Sh. Gashwer Prasad Sharma, J-7/61, Gali No. 17, West Ghonda, Delhi-53 and calling upon the mortgagee Smt. Krishna Devi, W/o Sh. Gashwer Prasad Sharma, R/o H. No. C-44/131, Street No. 12, Sudampuri, Gamri Extn. Delhi-53, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.20,39,862/- (Rupees Twenty Lakhs Thirty Nine Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty Two only) along with further interest, penal interest and other charges as are applicable in this Loan account from time to time, from the date of the notice till the date of payment, within 60 days from the date of receipt of the notice.

The above mentioned borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 9 of the said rules on this 12th day of April, 2019.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of The Kangra Cooperative Bank Ltd., for an amount of Rs.20,39,862/- along with further interest, penal interest and other charges as are applicable in this Loan account from time to time, from the date of notice till the date of realization together with all the costs incurred by the Bank in realizing the said amount.

DISCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY
The property under consideration is a residential built up property area measuring 70 sq.yds.

ALL THE PART AND PARCEL OF BUILT UP PROPERTY, AREA MEASURING 70 SQ.YDS. I.E. 58.52 SQ.MTRS. OUT OF KHASRA NO. 611, BEARING PROPERTY NO. C-44/131, CONSISTING WHATSOEVER THEREON AND WITH THE RIGHTS TO CONSTRUCT UP TO THE LAST STOREY, SITUATED AT VILLAGE GHONDA GUJAN KHADAR, IN THE ABA DI OF STREET NO.12, SUDAMPURI, GAMRI EXTN. ILLAQA SHAHDARA, DELHI-110053.

ALL THE PART AND PARCEL OF BUILT UP PROPERTY, AREA MEASURING 70 SQ.YDS. I.E. 58.52 SQ.MTRS. OUT OF KHASRA NO. 611, BEARING PROPERTY NO. C-44/131, CONSISTING WHATSOEVER THEREON AND WITH THE RIGHTS TO CONSTRUCT UP TO THE LAST STOREY, SITUATED AT VILLAGE GHONDA GUJAN KHADAR, IN THE ABA DI OF STREET NO.12, SUDAMPURI, GAMRI EXTN. ILLAQA SHAHDARA, DELHI-110053.

FALLING WITHIN THE REGISTRATION OF SUB-REGISTRAR - NORTH EAST, Delhi.

Sd/-
Meenakshi Vats
Authorised Officer

Delhi: 12-34-2019 The Kangra Co-Operative Bank Ltd.
Head Off: C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Jangpuri, New Delhi-110 058

PAPER WITH PASSION

Women's right to pray

SC admits plea on allowing women inside all mosques, citing its Sabarimala ruling on gender parity at faith shrines



All religions are free of gender bias except that rituals and customs associated with their practice have been set by patriarchal orders that have now acquired the solidity of established tradition. And much as shrine trusts try to legitimise the male monopoly as ordained by divinity, fact is seclusionist practices, probably necessitated by their context in the historical timeline, need to change as dynamism is at the core of all religions. For if god created woman to equalise Creation itself, there's no reason why she should be denied the right to worship and pray. Of course, it is tricky business, especially when it comes to jurisprudence on cultural practices related to religion. This is one of the reasons why the Supreme Court used the precedent of its ruling on Sabarimala to hear a plea seeking the unhindered access of Muslim women to all mosques across the country. The petitioners argued that the *Quran* "does not differentiate between man and woman. It speaks only about the faithful. But Islam has become a religion in which women are being oppressed." When it comes to Islam, its own theologians insist that the Prophet believed in the equality of women and allowed them in mosques. Both genders have the equal right to offer prayers at the Kaabah in Mecca. At the time of the Prophet Mohammed, Muslim women participated in wars, worked as nurses and doctors, owned and operated businesses and were actively involved in public religious life, according to Muslim women's rights activist Naish Hasan. Yet it is the Muslim leadership's misogynist interpretations of the *Quran* and *Hadith* that have a hegemonic hold on authenticity. Any confinement in later years may have been necessitated to protect women from abuse of war and crusades but has now been conveniently codified by radical sects and self-proclaimed groups to stifle reform detrimental to their interests. But women are a valid constituency in the socio-political matrix of our times and are now claiming their religious rights in the public space. So though the apex court argued that a mosque is a non-State entity and the fundamental right to equality could, therefore, be invoked against the State, not against individuals, the petitioners argued mosques do get substantial grants from States. By that logic they are subject to the jurisdictions of courts as they are maintained with public money. And worshippers are as much entitled to personal and religious freedoms as enshrined in the Constitution for citizens. At present, women are allowed to offer prayers at mosques under the Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid denominations but are barred from others.

Though the top court took up the public interest plea against the back-drop of Sabarimala, fact is that the Bombay High Court had ruled much earlier in favour of women that let them enter the mosque at Haji Ali. This happened after sustained campaigns. Sadly, the real purpose of these rulings, to ensure that divinity is gender-neutral and equally accessible, has got lost in the sea of rampant politicking and votebank politics. Be it the shrines of Shani Shingnapur, Sabarimala or Haji Ali, women have always had to negotiate their divine right through the legal route. And such battles will end up messy till we effect a mindset change, one where we see the man-woman balance or the *prakriti-purush* narrative as part of a universal natural order than as part of the limited human domain. The Supreme Court knows this best when it allowed women of all ages to enter the shrine of the celibate Lord Ayappa. A clutch of women devotees and the powerful Nair community claimed that Kerala has one of the highest development indices for women and those of reproductive age stay away to honour the "eternal celibate" status of Lord Ayappa and his asceticism. Though they may have no rationale to explain why their god should not be universal and be selective instead, fact is this cultural marker is now a rallying point, strong enough to gather political traction. What then is most important? A gender-neutral and informed approach to scholarship of texts as well as unity of all affected women's groups, be it Hindu, Muslim or others, to challenge the obnoxious.

The cuckoo clock

Banning Tik Tok won't stop the spread of pornography, frankly nothing may



When the first camera-enabled phones came out, the Nokia 7650 in fact, a senior journalist mentioned that we have opened a Pandora's Box by giving easy access to photography and videography devices in the hands of everyone. Without the slight control of a film processing shop, the world changed. Today mobile phones sell on the basis of how good and powerful their selfie cameras are. And smartphone cameras have changed the way we communicate with each other and even consume media. Many media houses are talking about a pivot to 'Mo-Jo' meaning mobile journalism.

But like with any technology, the ability to misuse also arose very quickly. A famous video of a Delhi schoolgirl involved in a sex act made headlines across the country back in 2002, and that was just the start of the garbage heap. The advent of the hand-held computers that we call smartphones today made matters worse. Because while they enabled the rise of applications that allow people to share anything and everything, people literally shared anything and everything. In the Philippines and to an extent across South Asia, young girls and boys are exploited and made to perform using such apps, which keep the identities of the abusers completely secret. It is alleged that the Tik Tok application was one of those apps that allowed sexual exploitation to take place very openly and instances have emerged of young women and clearly underage girls performing using this application. But banning this is not the solution, many other messaging and sharing applications have similar privacy issues and short of banning smartphones, nobody can really control such content from spreading. So stopping Tik Tok is like lighting a coil to prevent mosquito bites, it might temporarily solve the problem but is not a long-term solution. Once the Pandora's Box had been opened, it could not be shut again, and this is the same here. What we can do is better educate young children to raise their voices if they are being abused. And also have far better vigil of the digital environment. Policing is inadequate in the physical world but that is no excuse to not be better prepared online. Banning is not the only solution.

The Easter question

Determining Easter's placement has been a subject of major controversy in the past. Ironically, it was this row that triggered the reform of the Julian calendar in 1582



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

This time, Easter has tested the patience of its believers, almost to the limit. It usually happens exactly one month after the Spring Equinox. The festival shifts irregularly in the compass of 35 days, ranging from March 22 to April 25. But this shift is not akin to that of a Hindu festival, say Holi or Ram Navami. All Hindu festivals follow a pendulum-like trajectory while shifting as per the lunar *tithi* year-on-year.

The Easter is reckoned according to three factors — Spring Equinox (March 21), full moon and day of the week (Sunday). It is the principal movable feast in the Christian liturgical calendar. Notwithstanding its irregularity, future Easter dates could be predicted hundreds of years in advance, algorithmically. However, determining its placement has been subject to major controversy in the past. Ironically, it was this controversy that triggered the reform of the Julian calendar in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII.

Easter celebrates the supernatural Resurrection of Jesus Christ after his mortal death on the Cross. While the Resurrection is in the domain of belief, his death may be a historical event. There must have been a date for it as per the Julian solar calendar, applicable throughout the Roman world then. The Romans were the masters of Israel-Judea during the lifetime of Christ. Though Jesus was crucified according to the orders of a Roman Governor viz, Pontius Pilate, the date of his crucifixion was either not recorded as per the Julian calendar or at any rate not available to us. In fact, it was never available to the Church, which led to a lot of kite-flying.

But evidence in the Gospel shows that Jesus was crucified around the Passover feast of the Jews. The Jews celebrate the Passover feast — in remembrance of their deliverance from Egyptian captivity by Moses — on the 14th day of the month of Nisan of the Hebrew calendar. Each month of the Hebrew calendar begins on the morrow of the new moon (which is actually no-moon or *amavasya*), the 14th day would be full moon. On that day, every Jewish family eats the ritually slaughtered and roasted Passover lamb. Jesus had occasionally likened himself to a lamb in the Gospel. His martyrdom coinciding with the Passover feast carries a religious analogy. His last supper is believed to be the Passover feast meal.

The Jewish calendar is lunisolar, which means an intercalary month is added (as in the case of *Vikram Samvat* in India) to keep it abreast of seasons. The Nisan is a spring month. But in ancient times, intercalation was not done through any algorithm but by an arbitrary decision taken by the Jewish grand assembly viz, Sanhedrin, based in Jerusalem. Sanhedrin was in existence till the destruction of ancient Israel in 70 AD. Thus, a day cannot be transposed from the old Jewish calendar to Julian Calendar with reliability.



One good way of determining Easter for the Church was to consult the Hebrew calendar itself. This was exactly what the early Eastern churches, which were in closer communication with the Jews, did. Thus, they celebrated the Easter feast on full moon on the month of Nisan, regardless of other factors. But for the Western churches, headquartered in Rome, the day of the week was equally important. The concept of the week, as a grid of seven days, was incorporated into the Julian calendar by the Church. The week is astronomically an arbitrary concept and ancient Romans were ignorant of it. The Roman Church emphasised the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday, which is celebrated every week in the form of a Sunday mass. Thus, Easter must be held on no other day expect Sunday. Since the Gospel says he rose from the day on the third day he was crucified, Friday became his day of crucifixion. This is called "Good Friday."

During the first century AD, the churches in the East and the West mutually tolerated, celebrating Easter on different days. But towards the end of the century, there was a heated exchange among correspondences on the subject between Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus and Victory, the bishop of Rome (equivalent to Pope). Victor sternly severed the whole Eastern Church from being in communion with the

Roman Church. This was indeed the beginning of a split in the Church into Western and Eastern domains, which was completed a thousand years later in 1054 AD. The Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 AD ruled that Easter should be celebrated on Sunday, following the full moon, following the Equinox.

If the full moon happens to coincide with the Equinox as it happened this year or previously in 1981, one will have to wait for the ensuing full moon to apply the formula. But if the full moon occurred even a day later (provided it is not as late in the week as of Saturday) the Easter could be marked on that very Sunday. But in the latter case, the full moon should occur latest by Friday. This because Good Friday has to precede the Easter.

The Equinoxes and Solstices together form the four pillars of the tropical calendar inaugurated by Julius Caesar in 44 BC. These astronomical phenomena were known to the ancient Greek astronomers long before. But Caesar made it an integral part of the Western calendar, though it was not necessary that the year or month should begin from those points. In innovating quadruple leap year, Caesar had assumed the length of a tropical year to be 365 days and six hours; whereas in reality, it was 11 minutes shorter (365 days five hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds). The surplus 1¼ minutes remaining unadjusted

led to the Julian year overshooting the natural year by three days in the course of four centuries. Thus, by the time of the Nicaean Council in 325 AD, the Spring Equinox had shifted from original March 24 to March 21.

But in the absence of a corrective mechanism, the Equinox shifted to March 11 over the next 12 centuries. The Church might not have bothered itself with Equinox but for determining the Easter. How Equinoxes and Solstices had shifted over age is pithily described in a letter written by French theologian and astronomer Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly (1350-1425) to Pope (now regarded as Anti-Pope) John XXIII Baldassare Cossa in 1411.

Pierre d'Ailly's ambitious plan to reform the Julian calendar could not be taken up at the Ecumenical Council at Rome in 1412 nor at the Council of Constance in 1414-18. But it created a tempo which culminated in the Gregorian reform of the calendar in 1582. By cancelling 10 days from the calendar in 1582, the Spring Equinox was restored to March 21 as in days in Nicaean Council in 325 AD. Pope Gregory XIII wanted a fixed date for Easter, like Christmas, a demand that continued to be echoed till the 20th century by various stalwarts. This, however, has not come about.

(The writer is an independent researcher)

“ONE GOOD WAY OF DETERMINING THE EASTER FOR THE CHURCH WAS TO CONSULT THE HEBREW CALENDAR ITSELF. THIS WAS EXACTLY WHAT THE EARLY EASTERN CHURCHES, WHICH WERE IN CLOSER COMMUNICATION WITH THE JEWS, DID. THUS, THEY CELEBRATED THE EASTER FEAST ON FULL MOON ON THE MONTH OF NISAN, REGARDLESS OF OTHER FACTORS”

SOUNDBITE

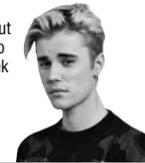
Priyanka Gandhi will be seen the way India sees a thief's wife. She will have no impact on the outcome of Lok Sabha polls.

Union Minister
—Uma Bharti



I think I have to start talking to you guys about this new song and video I'm putting out this week because I'm so excited.

Singer
—Justin Bieber



On the issue of listing Azhar, China's position remains unchanged. The matter is moving towards the direction of settlement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman
—Lu Kang



Sidhu's remote lies in Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's hands. He keeps getting guidelines from there and acts accordingly.

Haryana Minister
—Anil Vij



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Find the truth

Sir — The Supreme Court has been just in allowing the use of the three leaked 'classified' documents as evidence in the Rafale review case, dismissing the Government's objections. The monumental efforts put forth by Yashwant Sinha, Arun Shourie, Prashant Bhusan and N Ram to expose the murky Rafale deal deserve accolades.

One hopes that the Supreme Court will soon bring the case to its logical end after the recently procured evidence, shedding light on the wilful defaults in the surreptitious deal, is examined. Culprits must be brought to book.

Tharcicus S Fernando
Chennai

Uphold sanctity of polls

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "EC's test of faith" (April 17). Following a severe stricture on the Election Commission (EC) by a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, the electoral body was forced to take a flurry of actions, leading

EC must be uniform, not impose selective curbs

This refers to the editorial, "EC's test of faith" (April 17). Thankfully, the Election Commission (EC) "woke up to its powers", to borrow the Supreme Court's phrase. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had called the Indian Army "Modi's *sena*", referred to Muslims as a "green virus" and bragged "If they have Ali, we have Bajrangbali". Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati had appealed to the Muslims to vote for the SP-BSP alliance and not allow the Congress to split their votes. Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan had referred to "khaki underwear" to emphasise Jaya Prada's allegiance to the RSS. And Maneka Gandhi had threatened the Muslims to either vote for her or risk losing their rights to benefits.

While the EC acted against all the above mentioned leaders for their remarks, it found nothing wrong with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "majority, minority" comment in context of Rahul Gandhi contesting from Wayanad and his "impassioned plea" to first-time vot-



ers to vote for the Pulwama martyrs. As a constitutional body entrusted with the task of conducting free and fair polls, the EC must outgrow its awe of the Prime Minister and stop its selective and differential treatment of leaders. It must consider all leaders impartially and without bias.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

it to issuing gag orders on some senior leaders, including Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan and BJP leader Maneka Gandhi.

Earlier, the EC had cut a sorry figure when it came to bell the cat and rein in political parties who flexed their muscles. The court reminded the EC of the powers vested in it by the

Constitution and reprimanded it severely for failing to discharge its duties.

Some leaders have regularly been violating the model code of conduct and were also on a spree of spitting hate speeches. Sadly, the EC failed to act and remained a mute spectator to such incidents. Now, the Supreme Court has done well to strengthen the EC to ensure just

and fair election.

The general election in our country is touted to be the largest democratic process in the world and every citizen must feel proud that he/she is somebody who has played a role in deciding who should head the new Government at the Centre. In this process, the EC is the custodian to oversee that "just and fair election" takes place. The

country does not need a semblance of just and fair election, but a real 'just and fair' election in every sense must take place and a real Government out of the will of the people must come to take the country forward. In this regard, the role of the EC is greater than what it playing now.

TK Nandanam
Kochi

Complimenting EC

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "EC's test of faith" (April 17). It is shameful that the Supreme Court had to step in to remind the Election Commission (EC) about its constitutional powers. But it is encouraging that after being pulled up by the top court, the EC did take action against four errant political leaders who had made some shocking and divisive statements. The EC may be a toothless tiger but it deserves credit for having taken swift action against these leaders.

Sarita
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

In Dante's footsteps

A new book chronicles a hi-tech Hell, which is very different from what one finds in the sacred texts, and echoes our times



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Charles Patterson's recently published novel, *In Dante's Footsteps: My Journey to Hell: A Modern Divine Comedy*, unfolds at two levels. At one, it is a set of intertwined narratives about the life of a young man, Thomas Aaron Reed III, who becomes a priest, leaves priesthood, journeys to Hell and returns. At another, it is an exploration of human conduct, values, emotions and aspects of morality.

The narratives unfold, smoothly and elegantly, around several themes. One of them is Thomas's relationship with his parents and another with Father Edward Tyler, who taught him Latin in school and accounted for his deep and abiding interest in Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, became his adviser and conveyed to him the invitation to travel to Hell under a newly-launched visitor's programme. The third is his reluctant entry into priesthood in deference to the expectations of his family; his father was a clergyman, his maternal grandfather a Bishop and paternal grandfather the dean of a theological seminary. An account of his life as a parish priest in north Connecticut and his departure from there on leave of absence to study theology in New York follows. Next comes the narrative about his life in the Big Apple, renunciation of priesthood and return to lay life as the writer of publicity material for an insurance company. Intermittently throughout, there are references to his relationship with Beatrice, his college girlfriend, who goes off his life and marries someone else, but is re-united with him on his return from Hell.

The most striking subject, of course, is his visit to Hell and back. Thomas does not get to see the "pure" Hell, the terrible place where doers of evil spend their days in suffering, and which is covered in thick mist. His tour is confined to what is called the administrative area, the tech room and the purgatories. There are besides visits to his father, conversations with Edward, meetings with God, referred to as the "Chief" by the spirits administering Hell and Satan, and his trial by the Crusaders, a bigoted lot to whom almost everybody else is a heretic, and escape therefrom.

Thomas's description of the parts of Hell he sees is very different from what one finds in the sacred texts of various religions, myths and epics. It is a happening place. A conference of tall eminences from all ages — from Socrates to Karl Marx — was going on during Thomas's visit. It is computer-age Hell. The Tech Room, the hub for communications within Hell and without, has an array of computers and electronic surveillance and communication equipment, and every visitor has to be "logged-in." The Crusaders can photograph and record everything happening on earth on video and have an "electronic sub-verbal monitor that picks up both thoughts and voices."

There are helicopters (called Beetles) for travel and the Satan appears "wearing jeans, boots, a lavender shirt and a brown felt cowboy hat." Nor is he the discernably fork-tongued evil described by the biblical texts. He argues persuasively and says that the difference between him and God is that while he is a realist, God is an idealist. The essence of realism, he holds, lies in the saying, "might is right." It is might that, while causing wars, crimes and violence, has also triggered the massive material progress that civilisation made through the exercise of power, which is at the core of might.

Here we are at the heartland of morality which, in turn, is at the core of the other issues the novel explores — human conduct, values, emotions and divine judgement. Can progress justify the wars that have devastated lives and lands, the Holocaust, the sustained subjugation of women and the savage treatment of all non-human living beings throughout the ages? There is doubtless punishment in the hereafter. Child and animal abusers, for example, go to "Pure Hell" "Wall-to-Wall" as do bystanders who watch and do nothing. Nevertheless, the world as it is, is moving more in the direction of material progress rather than frowning upon greed, crime, violence, celebrating power and turning its face against compassion.

In this sense, Satan is right in claiming before Thomas and Rachel, another visitor from earth, that he is winning and God is losing out. God himself recognises this and tells Thomas that he is sad and depressed. He, along with his companion Naomi, has left Heaven, which has become a very lonely place for dearth of people making it and come to live in a cave in the region of the purgatories. Yet, he tells Thomas, he has not given up hope as there are still many good, courageous and caring people doing their best to make the world more just and compassionate.

Compassion is at the heart of Patterson's concerns and an important part of it encompasses all non-human living beings. This has been most tellingly underlined in his landmark work *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and The Holocausts*. It is very clearly manifest in the book under review. To cite just one example, on a hoarding in the purgatories is written, "As long as men kill animals, they will kill each other." (Hippocrates). Rarely have truer words been written.

(The writer is Consultant Editor, The Pioneer, and an author)

THE NDA PICKED RAM NATH KOVIND OVER LK ADVANI AS ITS NOMINEE FOR THE PRESIDENT'S POST BECAUSE OF HIS CASTE. —RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT

POINT COUNTERPOINT



IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT GEHLOT MADE A CASTEIST REMARK AGAINST THE PRESIDENT, WHO IS THE CUSTODIAN OF THE CONSTITUTION. —BJP SPOKESPERSON GVL NARSIMHA RAO

History speaks for itself

It's time for the voters to inform themselves of the INC's past and realise that it never really came around to re-modelling itself from being colonised subjects of the British, says **B DEEPANJALI**

By now, it's common knowledge that Mahatma Gandhi, without whom the call for independence from British rule would never have reached the Indian masses, had wanted the Indian National Congress (INC) to be disbanded after independence. That it was a party of the British and the Indian English-educated elite was clear to him and he knew that this was not what "freedom" truly meant. The purpose of INC as envisaged was to achieve independence from British Raj and to not hand over the country to them on a platter. Gandhiji was clear that the INC needed to be disbanded after the British left India. But what he wanted did not happen. He increasingly became disillusioned after independence. After his assassination, pressure to have a truly representational democracy took a backseat and the corrupt cronyism of the INC held sway.

Gandhiji was indeed right about INC. It did not quite truly understand what nationalism was. It still does not and does not even seem to care about it. As the 2019 election campaign is in full swing right now, we can see how the grand old party relentlessly disparages the nation, fails to stand by our brave armed forces and even scoffs the country's phenomenal achievements — Mission Shakti and the testing of the first anti-satellite missile system that made us the fourth nation in the world to have this critical defence capability are a few examples. With 70 years of independence, we are now a witness to some of the most negative statements against the nation by INC members. So much so that today, even those Indians, who were supportive of the Congress, are stunned at the lows the party has taken.

In no other democratic country does the Opposition party ridicule the nation's achievements or take sides with the enemy country — when its soldiers have been massacred by terrorists like in Pulwama — as in India. For, their opposition is to the ruling party and never to their nation. The INC's behaviour as an Opposition party will be unthinkable say in Britain or the US where leaders' loyalty to their country remains unquestioned — it defines who they are as a people.

So, why is it that in India we have a party like INC, whose statements, like the one doubting the Balakot strikes, sound like they are the same as the ones made by politicians in Pakistan? Why is it that the leading Opposition party is unable to distinguish between the nation and the ruling party and spares no opportunity to belittle the country? It's, therefore, worth asking: Does this disconnect with the country have much deeper roots, going back to the formation of the INC itself?

INC still not rooted in India: The party was founded in 1885 by AO Hume, a British imperial civil service officer. But did the party ask for complete independence soon after it was formed? No. It was only after 44 years of its formation that the INC demanded *poorna swarajya* for India in December 1929. Until then, all that it meekly asked the British was a dominion status for the country. And who were the party's members? They were a part of the British elite — those Indians who were educated in England and who held wealth and social standing. The formation of the INC can itself be seen as a smart move by the British to maintain a sense of stability, badly shaken as they were by the First War of Independence or what they called the Mutiny of 1857. It is an undeniable fact that early members of the INC looked up to British education and governance as means to achieving a "stable India." There are documented references to past Indian presidents of INC eulogising the British Raj and one of its presidents, Pandit Bishan Narayan Dar,



even said that British rule in India was the "greatest gift of providence to his race."

Point to be noted here is that nowhere does the INC website mention about Hume. History of this party is one that was never actually rooted in India's cultural identity as a basis for nationhood. This is a deeper theme in itself.

In the historical context, recent public pronouncements by INC members, who have alarmed many Indians and provided fodder dangerously enough to Pakistan, bears reference to the party's history. The INC was indeed so cosy with the British that its prominent members failed to create a national identity that could resonate in its being — either before or after independence. The ones, who stood for a stronger and more assertive tone in demanding legitimate rights for the people, were staunch nationalists but were deemed as "extremists." And this is well-known *viz*, the divisions between the "moderates" and the "extremists" in the INC.

The firebrand, who gave the first clarion call for *swarajya* before Gandhiji, was Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who said, "Swarajya is my birthright and I shall have it" in 1906. This call came at a time when the INC was led by the moderates (which was true for its first 20 years of existence, working only on policy changes through administrative means). INC's top leaders didn't really want to let go off the British rule as they thought of it as being beneficial to the nation. This can be seen in the stated position of several INC presidents of the early days.

What is INC's position on nationalism? The party has never come to terms with what its position on India as a nation is and what it means to be an Indian. This could be because like many Indians believe, there was no armed struggle by its members to achieve independence, no suffering and no pain. It was, in fact, the armed resistance by the Indian National Army (INA), led by Netaji Subhash Chandra

Bose, that pushed the British to the wall and raised the daunting prospect of an outright mutiny — the INAs contribution to India's independence is undeniable. The sacrifices made by INA soldiers are, however, not what we think about in the common narrative of India's independence.

Unlike other nations, India did not really win a war and defeat foreign forces to reclaim its sovereignty. So, post-independence, the INC captured national consciousness by means of educational propaganda that highlighted the party's role in the freedom struggle when the fact remains that none of the prominent leaders from INC lost their lives to gain independence. The great sons of India, who sacrificed their lives like Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Chandrashekhar Azad and Khudiram Bose, were not talked about in the public domain. Instead, India's freedom from the British was and is still showcased as being an INC affair, failing to highlight the internal struggles within the party in its early days with the "moderates" toeing the British line of administrative reform and discussions and "extremists" demanding freedom from foreign rule before Gandhiji came to India and led the struggle. Needless to say, these "extremists," or assertive nationalists, didn't really make it big in INC as time went on after independence.

This then is the problem with INC: It never believed in the main pillars that define a country — a unified core cultural identity and military strength that builds a nation. This is why when quite naturally all Indians would feel a swell of pride on the achievements of the military, Congressmen don't. The INC's disparaging stand on the brave and impactful Balakot strike by the Indian Air Force even disturbed former party leaders like Tom Vadakkan, who spoke about it later when he was asked as to why he decided to join the BJP.

A disconnect with India: With no clear

policy except for mentions like secularism, the party members' lack of national pride remained obfuscated from public knowledge all these decades except for the occasional mention of 1971 and Bangladesh (of course, it didn't explain why 90,000 PoWs had to be returned to Pakistan to keep aflame the fire of hatred against India in them as free Pakistanis and go on to spawn anti-India terrorism). The truth of the INC — as a party still comprising the English-speaking elite, scoffing at all that is anti-theoretical to its understanding — is being exposed now. All of this reveals a well-entrenched disconnect with Indian ethos and pride of the people.

In the 10 years of UPA rule, there was nothing much to feel proud about but much to be disheartened about, including the cowardly silence by the Congress' powers-that-be in Delhi after the horrendous Mumbai 26/11 attacks. But after losing power in 2014, party leaders have maintained a unified stance to run down India's significant achievements.

Since the last five years, India has touched significant highs on defence and technology fronts, something it had not pursued in its years in governance. So its principal strategy is to attack Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Given its origin, it is difficult for the INC to internalise the idea of India, the nation, its pride, its spirit and its civilisational sanctity. For it, poll time means reviving divisive agenda and let's not forget that the divide and rule policy worked well for the British, who inspired and founded the INC anyway. And so this saga endures. It is time for the voters to inform themselves of the history of the INC and realise that it never really came around to re-modelling itself from its British past as colonised subjects. And any party, which chooses to ally with the INC now, is also standing by the same credo of perpetuating that legacy.

(The writer is a social activist)

Gradual death of a geological marvel

It is baffling that the Aravallis, which were once a contiguous range, had to pay a heavy price due to human activities like mining. The range today has blunted, desertified and needs protection. The judiciary must intervene



KOTA SRIRAJ

The might of the mountain ranges is almost mythical. These natural formations have not only shaped history and topography but have also played a pivotal role in conserving the ecology. These once formidable ranges — be it the Western Ghats along the south-western coast of India or the Aravallis in the North — have existed unchallenged throughout the history of time. But the reign of supremacy for these colossal wonders seems to be waning thanks to deteriorating environmental and worsening climate conditions. The negative role played by mankind is unfortunately expediting the end of these marvels of nature.

The Aravalli mountain range is one of the oldest in the world. It

extends across more than 693 kms from Gujarat to Delhi (through Rajasthan and Haryana). The Aravallis, with their vast landscape and biological diversity, have shaped India's northern landscape in more ways than one.

They guide the monsoon clouds and act as a groundwater recharge zone. Thus, they are important for long-term ecological security of Indian cities. The Aravallis also help in preventing long-term desertification. They act as a barrier against the wind, carrying sand from the Thar Desert and prevent it from entering the Delhi-NCR region.

Greenery associated with this mountain range has been replaced with dry and dusty shrub-like environment. This is due to the mountain range being subjected to decades of abuse and threats from mining activities and large-scale real estate developments. The degradation of the Aravallis has led to a decline in wildlife habitat, thus adding to the animal-human conflict. The revival of the Aravallis has become almost an uphill



task, thanks to the many problems associated with it and the continuous intervention of humans. The situation has been exacerbated due to a decline in rainfall in the past few decades, which has led to the depletion of the groundwater table.

As the Aravallis paid the price of being close to human habitations, human intervention sadly did not stop at deforestation of the mountains. The real estate lobby and the mining mafia started eyeing the geological wealth of the mountain ranges. Political protection and apathy of the authorities further compromised the

already delicate condition of the range. And it's not that only the terrain has been affected. People and communities, who were dependent on the Aravallis, are now faced with an uncertain future. Further, large-scale mining with dynamites blowing up huge tracts of granite rocks caused relentless vibrations and tremors that led to the permanent displacement of many bird species that were native to the area.

Prosperity of a region is directly proportionate to the concern and care shown by the local people towards their natural assets and resources. This

is exactly the problem with conservation initiatives for the Aravallis as the people as also the officials have not realised the potential of natural marvel that they have at their disposal. They could only decipher the economic value of the range. As a result, this amazing creation of nature with all its unique flora and fauna was taken for granted and exploitation started to finish off large stretches.

To make matters worse, the Haryana Government recently passed an amendment in the Punjab Land and Preservation Act, a law that was drafted by the British in 1900. With a change in the law, it is now being feared that large areas of the Aravalli forest area, that were earlier protected, will now face the risk of being used for development purposes. But the Haryana Government defended the Act by stating that even though the protection of forests was its priority, the present scenario also required changes to be done, especially at a time when the State has to progress ahead.

This is shocking as the authori-

ties admit that the State's progress must happen at the cost of ecology and the environment.

There is no way to undo the damage done to the Aravalli range. Humans have exacted a terrible price from nature. The sad thing is that all of this is happening under the supervision of State authorities. Mining mafia trucks ply day-in and day-out, carrying loads of stone extracted from the quarries deep within the Aravallis.

In the midst of these dreary and grim conditions, all hope is not lost. The judiciary of India is playing a vanguard role by taking up critical issues pertaining to the well-being of the country and environment is certainly one of them. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has intervened many times to ensure that the environment is safe. In matters pertaining to the Aravallis, too, the judiciary must intervene. This alone can stop the otherwise certain doom and death for the much-fabled Aravalli ranges.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



NOTRE DAME MUST BE A WARNING

The pain of witnessing the destruction of Notre Dame must be a goad to us all and a reminder of our obligation to protect what we have inherited and to pass it on in good condition to those who come after us. The estate is a known fire risk, and it is now high time our legislators decanted to temporary premises to allow the buildings to be made safe.

(The Independent editorial)

DGCA issues IndiGo show-cause notice

Aviation regulator issues notice over P&W engines woes, orders safety audit

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Cracking the whip on budget carrier IndiGo over the issue of faulty Pratt & Whitney engines, aviation regulator DGCA has served show-cause notices to its chief operating officer and engineering head, sources close to the development said on Wednesday.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is also carrying out a special safety audit of the carrier as it has found issues in "operations and engineering of the country's largest airline," an official source said.

While IndiGo confirmed the receipt of show-cause notices and the safety audit, DGCA chief BS Bhullar said the regulator carries out detailed audit of all airlines at

least once a year. He, however, did not comment on the show-cause notice saying, "we conduct detailed audits of all airlines at least once a year. IndiGo's audit is this month, and another airline's is in June. Every audit involves some action."

"The DGCA has issued a show-cause notice last week to IndiGo's chief operating officer

these engines, manufactured by the US firm, since their induction three years ago.

"We confirm that there is currently a DGCA audit on IndiGo which is combined with the annual main base audit. We have received a limited number of show cause notices," IndiGo said in a statement to PTI.

The airline also said it has



Wolfgang Prock-Schauer and engineering head SC Gupta over the Pratt & Whitney engines issues," the source said.

"The regulator is also conducting a special safety audit of the airline after coming across issues in its operations and engineering," he said.

IndiGo and GoAir, which have Pratt & Whitney-powered Airbus A320 Neo planes, have been facing problems with

responded accordingly and it can only comment on this matter after it has discussions with the regulator on the matter but refused to comment on the reasons for the audit.

"We can confirm that our operations are run in more stringent ways as prescribed by regulatory framework. As this is an ongoing audit we can only comment after the process is over," the airline added.

FMCG growth to slow down at 11-12% in 2019: Nielsen

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is likely to grow at a slower pace at 11-12 percent in 2019, almost 2 percent lower than that in 2018, says a report.

The industry is also expected to grow at 12-13 percent during the April to June quarter of the calendar year 2019, according to Nielsen.

"In line with the FMCG growth forecast for Q1 2019 at 13.6 percent, this sector grew at 13.6 percent. We are witnessing a softening of growth by 1-2 percent sequentially every quarter leading to healthy double digit growth in the first half of the year followed by a high single digit growth in the second half of the year," Nielsen said.

Nielsen maintained that the FMCG industry growth outlook will be in the range of 11-12 percent in 2019, almost 2 percent lower than that in 2018.

The volume growth which peaked in 2018 to 11 percent is expected to be healthy but lower at 8.5-9.5 percent in FY19, it added.

It noted that the 13.6 percent growth in first quarter is slightly lower than the last quarter of 2018 (-2.3 percent



from the previous quarter).

"Similar sentiments are witnessed in the economy with a 6.6 percent GDP growth in the December quarter of 2018 against an expected 6.8 percent. Inflationary pressure is also seen mounting in recent months from 2 percent in January 2019 to 2.9 percent in March 2019," it added.

"While slight drop is witnessed in urban growth, there is a significant softening of growth trends in rural which is dampening the overall FMCG industry growth from third quarter of 2018 to first quarter of 2019.

Historically, rural has grown 3-5 percent points faster than urban and the recent slowdown in rural growth has brought the growth closer to the urban growth.

"The overall drop witnessed in rural growth is majorly driven by slow down in packaged food category," it noted.

NCLAT seeks Anil Ambani's reply on HSBC Daisy's contempt plea

Non-payment of dues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The NCLAT has sought a response from Reliance Group Chairman Anil Ambani within 10 days over a contempt plea filed against him and other officials by the minority shareholders alleging non-payment of dues by one of its group firms.

An NCLAT bench headed by Chairman Justice S J Mukhopadhyaya said he would like to hear Ambani and other respondents over the contempt petition filed by HSBC Daisy Investments (Mauritius) and some other minority shareholders of the company over alleged breach of undertaking for payment by group firm Reliance Infratel.

"We intend to hear the learned counsel appearing on behalf of the contemptor-respondents (Anil Ambani and others)," the bench said.

"They may file short reply within ten days. Rejoinder, if any, may be filed by the appellants within a week thereof," it added.

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has directed that the matter be listed on May 20, 2019 for admission.

HSBC Daisy moved the appellate tribunal over alleged default of payment of ₹230 crore by Reliance Infratel.

During the proceedings, counsel appearing for HSBC Daisy submitted that the order



passed by NCLAT on June 29, 2018 amounts to an undertaking given by the parties in a consent decree over payment of ₹230 crore and a breach of such undertaking amounts to Contempt of Court.

As per the consent terms of the agreement between Reliance Infratel, HSBC Daisy and others, recorded by the NCLAT in its order dated June 26, 2018, the Anil Ambani-owned firm was to pay the amount in the next six months.

The six-month period has come to an end following which HSBC Daisy and other nine minority shareholders holding 4.26 per cent stake in Reliance Infratel filed the contempt plea.

Earlier, on January 2, NCLAT had disposed of the contempt plea filed by HSBC Daisy on technical grounds.

However, the tribunal had given it the liberty to withdraw

its plea to approach again with its contempt plea against the officials of Reliance Infratel.

HSBC Daisy and other minority investors of Reliance Infratel had moved National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Mumbai alleging oppression and mismanagement after the company had allegedly not taken their consent for selling the tower and fibre assets.

NCLT in March 2018 halted the sales process, following which Reliance Infratel moved NCLAT challenging the order.

Later, on June 29, Reliance Infratel and its minority shareholder, HSBC Daisy submitted final consent terms of their settlement before NCLAT over the sale of tower and fibre assets.

Following this, the appellate tribunal had disposed of the appeal filed by Reliance Infratel.

India travel spend expected to grow by 13% to \$136

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian traveller has come of age, spending approximately \$94 billion in 2018, on approximately 2 billion domestic and international trips, helping the Indian travel and tourism industry achieve unprecedented scale. The momentum is expected to continue and the industry will grow at a 13 percent CAGR to \$136 billion by 2021, according to a new report titled, 'How Does India Travel', released by Bain & Company and Google India today.

The report outlines, how India as a market spends on travel, the influence of online channels in their purchasing journey and potential growth opportunities for travel busi-

nesses up until 2021.

Deep diving into the \$136 billion spending, the report cites a 12 percent growth in transportation (\$50 billion), as well as a 13 percent growth in lodging (\$21 billion) and consumption. This includes spending on shopping, recreation and food, which are set to grow at 13 percent (\$65 billion) over the next three years. Additionally, as more people come online, smartphone penetration will continue to improve and the use of digital payments goes up, with the report estimating that Indian travellers will spend an additional \$24 billion on online travel bookings over the next three years, a growth from 25 percent in 2018 to 35 percent in 2021.

Sebi bars Siyaram Development and Construction, 8 directors from securities markets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has barred Bengaluru-based Siyaram Development and Construction Ltd and its eight directors for at least four years from the securities market for illegally raising funds.

Besides, the regulator directed the entities to refund the money collected by the company along with 15 per cent interest.

Based on a complaint by an investor regarding non-payment of maturity amount of his investment, Sebi conducted a probe to ascertain whether the firm had made any public issue without complying with the relevant provisions of Sebi and the Companies Act.

During the probe, the regulator found that the firm

had allotted secured redeemable debentures (SRDs) between financial years 2010-11 and 2012-13 and raised at least ₹4.22 crore from more than 49 allottees.

The number of allottees and the amount of money raised during the said period could be more, Sebi said.

Moreover, the firm created a charge for an amount of ₹70 crore and appointed Kalpana Guha as its debenture trustee.

As the number of allottees was more than 49, it was deemed to be a public issue and required a compulsory listing on a recognised stock exchange.

Further, the company was required to file a prospectus, among others, which it failed to do, Sebi said in an order on Tuesday.

Protectionism doesn't really help preserve jobs: Rajan

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

Protectionism does not really help preserve jobs and offers little defence against the job-destroying effects of automation and Artificial Intelligence, Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan has said, asserting that industrial and developing nations cannot afford to ignore the democratic reaction from those left behind by globalisation and technological change.

Delivering the keynote address at the 2019 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development at the UN Headquarters on Monday, Rajan said the open liberal democratic market system that brought the world enormous prosperity in the six decades or so after the second World War is now under attack.

"Interestingly the critics are not the usual radical academics or leftist leaders, instead they come from some of the most prosperous nations in

the world. These are nations that have benefited tremendously from the open world order," he said.

Rajan, the Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, said, "We know that protectionism does not really help preserve jobs. In this competitive world, jobs gained by a country in the protected sector are often lost in other sectors that are now rendered uncompetitive because they pay higher prices for inputs."

He added that protectionism offers "little defence" against the job destroying effects of automation and Artificial Intelligence, which often are the larger source of job losses.

"The only guarantee against redundancy is to help the workforce stay ahead through constant retraining. As populations age in industrial countries, more of them will become reliant on foreign

demand from younger countries outside, especially developing countries and emerging markets to boost growth," he said.

"Is it wise to block imports today from the very countries you will have to export to in the future? Probably not," he said.

Rajan said that while nations recognise the cost of protectionism, it is true that "we cannot afford to ignore the democratic reaction from those left behind by globalisation and technological change. This should be true both of industrial, countries and developing countries. We have to pay more attention to those left behind."

He added that if concerns of these people are to be addressed while preserving an open world, "we should start by recognising that the globalisation of trade and investment flows has disempowered people and their communities."

The ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development

follow-up (FFD Forum) is an annual platform to promote consensus among key stakeholders on financing for sustainable development. Ministers, senior UN officials, high-level finance officials, civil society, business representatives and local authorities, are meeting at UN Headquarters for the four-day FFD Forum, which will run from April 15 to 18.

Rajan told the audience at the forum that there is a need to preserve a world open to trade and investment but "we need to keep democratic support in order to do it."

"I would argue that we must follow the principle of subsidiarity much more strictly going forward. Decisions should be taken at the lowest level consistent with effective governance. These decisions must be taken with an idea of cooperation, they must be taken responsibly given the spillovers both to the country as well as to the rest of the world," he said.

FORM G - INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST	
(Under Regulation 36A (1) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India) (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016	
RELEVANT PARTICULARS	
1 Name of the corporate debtor	Piyush Shelters India Pvt Ltd
2 Date of incorporation of corporate debtor	05-06-2006
3 Authority under which corporate debtor is incorporated / registered	Registrar of Companies - Kanpur
4 Corporate identity number / limited liability identification number of corporate debtor	U40108UP2006PTC031945
5 Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of corporate debtor :	Regd office: 396, WK Road, Chippi Tank, Near Bachna Park, Meerut UP 250002 IN Other office: 1st Floor, Piyush Global I, Plot No. -5, YMCA CHOWK NH-2, Main Mathura Road Faidabad 121005 HR
6 Insolvency commencement date of the corporate debtor	03-12-2018 As per the order of Hon'ble NCLT Allahabad Bench in the matter of CP (IB) No 322/ALD/2018
7 Date of invitation of expression of interest	18-04-2019
8 Eligibility for resolution applicants under section 25(2)(h) of the Code is available at:	The information can be sought from: sgdgupta@gmail.com Eligibility Criteria (The Resolution Applicant(s)), jointly or singly, should have a net worth of not less than INR 20.00 Crores and turn-over from Real-Estate business Operations of not less than INR 31.00 crores as per the audited accounts/Practising CA Certificate as on 31-03-2018 or 31-03-2019 Can be sought from Resolution Professional at: sgdgupta@gmail.com
9 Forms of ineligibility applicable under section 25A are available at:	
10 Last date for receipt of expression of interest	02-05-2019
11 Date of issue of provisional list of prospective resolution applicants	12-05-2019
12 Last date for submission of objections to provisional list	17-05-2019
13 Date of issue of final list of prospective resolution applicants	27-05-2019
14 Date of issue of information memorandum, evaluation matrix and request for resolution plans to prospective resolution applicants	17-05-2019
15 Manner of obtaining request for resolution plan, evaluation matrix, information memorandum and further information	The information can be sought from Resolution Professional at sgdgupta@gmail.com The said information shall be shared to all the prospective resolution applicants eligible under Regulations 36B(1) of CIRP Regulations, 2016 and on receipt of confidentiality undertaking under section 29(2) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
16 Last date for submission of resolution plans	16-06-2019
17 Manner of submitting resolution plans to resolution professional	By Regd/speed post/courier/hand delivery of hard copy and soft copy in a pen Drive protected by Password in two separate Sealed envelopes both contained in a separate sealed envelope
18 Estimated date for submission of resolution plan to the Adjudicating Authority for approval	30-06-2019
19 Name and registration number of the resolution professional	Swami Deen Gupta IBBI/IPA/003/IP-N000132/2017-18/11458
20 Name, Address and e-mail of the resolution professional, as registered with the Board	Swami Deen Gupta 2/64,Vishesh Khand Gombi Nagar Lucknow-226010. sgdgupta@gmail.com
21 Address and email to be used for correspondence with the resolution professional	2/64,Vishesh Khand Gombi Nagar Lucknow-226010. sgdgupta@gmail.com
22 Further Details are available at or with	Can be sought from Resolution Professional at sgdgupta@gmail.com
23 Date of publication of Form G	18-04-2019

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum-II

Tender Notice no. 6-S/01/Tender/2019-20 Dt. : 09.04.2019 Refurbishment of 75 ICF type AC Coaches was published for & on behalf of President of India acting through Chief Workshop Manager / Jagadhri W/Shop & the date of opening of tender is dt. 01.05.2019. Corrigendum-II is being issued for modified Tender Document. Corrigendum-II for the same has been created on website: www.ireps.gov.in. 1165/2019

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Indraprastha Gas Limited ("IGL") has issued a Letter of Intent for setting up of CNG Station at the site located at following location and to be operated by following Operator having received such Application from the Operator, and conducting due diligence and following due process.

S.No.	Name of applicant	Address of proposed station	Measurement (In Sq. mtrs)
1	Divye Ratna Dixit	KH # 46/1,17,24,29, 49/4 Palla Bakhtawarpur Rd Village Bakoli Delhi 110036. Near PC Farm	3000

However, if any person has any objection or claim regarding the setting up of CNG Station at the said site, kindly contact within 07 days from the publication of this notice, with the relevant and appropriate proof to substantiate the objection/claim, failing which, it shall be deemed that there is no objection/claim for the setting of CNG Station at the said site.

Contact Address:
IGL Bhawan, Plot No. 4, Community Center, R.K. Puram Sector - 9, 4th Floor, New Delhi - 110022
iglnp@gmail.com

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General public is hereby informed that a Boy namely **Manav Chauhan S/o Sh. Pramod Chauhan, R/o H.No. 408/5 AL, Gali No. 29, Nai Basti, Anand Parbat, Delhi, Age : 14 yrs. 3 months, Height : 5'5", Complexion : Fair, Face : Long, Built : Normal, ID Mark : Flower Tattoo on Right Hand of Thumb, Wearing : Yellow Colour Half Sleeve T-shirt and Blue Colour Jeans, has been missing / kidnapped since 07.04.2019 at 12:00 pm from the area of PS. Anand Parbat. In this regard a case FIR No. 73/19 dated 08.04.2019 u/s 363 IPC has been registered at PS. Anand Parbat, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local Police to trace out the missing / kidnapped Boy but no clue has come to light so far. if anyone have any information about this missing / kidnapped boy please inform undersigned. Website: http://cbi.nic.in, Email: cbc@cbi.gov.in, Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641, Fax: 011-24368639**

SHO
PS. Anand Parbat, Delhi
Ph.: 011-28762468, 28764807

DP/6195/CD/19.

25 WTO members may come out with declaration on critical issues in May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The meeting of 25 WTO member countries on May 13-14 here is expected to come out with a declaration on critical issues including 'special and differential treatment' for developing nations and impasse over the appointment of members to the appellate body of dispute settlement, sources said.

The other issues that could figure in the meeting include

fishery subsidies and public stockholding in agriculture, they said.

India has convened a meeting of 25 developing member nations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on May 13-14 here.

The meet assumes significance as several countries are raising questions over the relevance of the Geneva-based global trade body. Many countries are also taking protectionist measures, impacting global trade.



Shaji John, Chief General Manager of NLC India Ltd, has assumed office as the Director (Power) of NLC India Ltd on Wednesday. Hailing from Muvattupuzha in Ernakulam district of Kerala, he earned his mechanical engineering degree at MA College of Engineering, Kolthamangalam, affiliated to Kerala University, during the year 1987. He holds an M Tech degree also in Thermal Engineering from College of Engineering, Anna University, Guindy, Chennai (1991)

Govt invites initial bids for strategic sale of IMPCL

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has invited initial bids for selling its entire stake in Indian Medicines Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd (IMPCL).

IMPCL is engaged in manufacture and supply of 'ayurvedic' and 'unani' medicines and is under the Ministry of AYUSH.

The Government holds 98.11 per cent stake in IMPCL and the rest 1.89 per cent is held by Uttarakhand Government PSU Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd.

The Government has come out with a "global invitation" for Expression of Interest for the proposed strategic disinvestment of its entire stake in IMPCL.

Mallya laments 'airline karma' in message for Jet Airways

PTI ■ LONDON

Embattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya on Wednesday took to social media once again, this time to express his solidarity with Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal and repeat his own offer to repay all the money he owes to India's public sector banks.

The 63-year-old, fighting his extradition to India on charges of fraud and money laundering amounting to an alleged ₹9,000 crores, claims private airlines were discriminated against by the Indian Government, which bailed out state-owned Air India but did not assist his own Kingfisher Airlines and now Jet Airways.

Pine Labs inks definitive agreement to acquire Qwikcilver for \$110 mn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

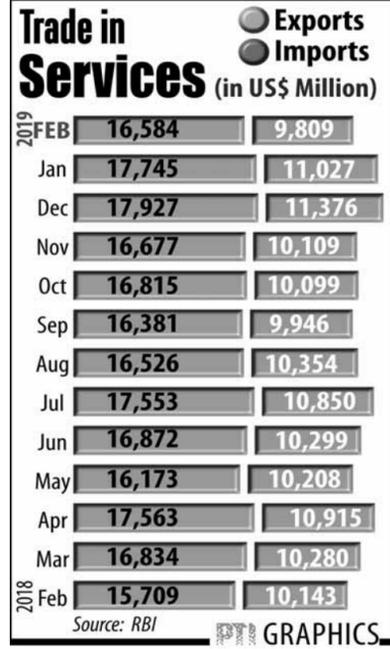
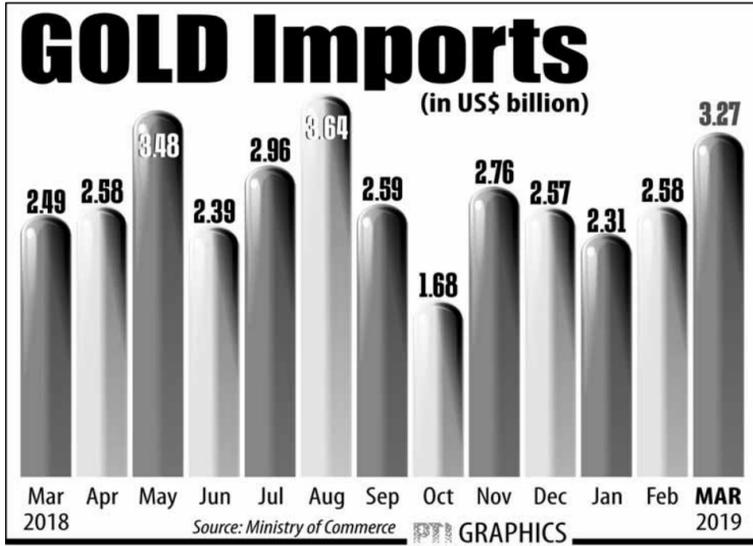
Pine Labs on Wednesday announced that it has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Bangalore-based gift card solutions provider, Qwikcilver, for \$110 million, subject to closing conditions. The transaction has been funded from the company's cash reserves and additional

funding from existing investors.

Pine Labs processes annualized payments of \$20 billion. This acquisition will bring together the strengths of Pine Labs' merchant-focused and Qwikcilver's brand-focused software-as-a-service (SaaS) technology platforms, and augment their Indian and international market reach.

TOPPERS

Scheme	NAV	1Yr %	Scheme	NAV	1Yr %	Scheme	NAV	1Yr %	Scheme	NAV	1Yr %
Kotak India EQ Contra Fund(G)	53.23	7.58	Fund(G)			IDFC Multi Cap Fund-Reg(G)	94.01	-0.64	Equity Fund-Reg(G) Invesco India		
Reliance US Equity Opp Fund(G)	15.25	23.24	Sundaram Fin Serv Opp Fund(G)	41.46	7.55	Axis Midcap Fund(G)	36.44	3.35	Infrastructure Fund(G)		
ICICI Pru US Bluechip Equity Fund(G)	27.6	20.95	UTI Equity Fund-Reg(G)	145.41	7.44	DSP Equity Fund-Reg(G)	39.46	3.32	UTI LT Adv Fund-III(G)	13.99	-6.18
DHFL Pramerica Global Equity Opp Fund(G)	18.58	20.34	Canara Rob Consumer Trends Fund-Reg(G)	39.44	7.23	SBI Tax Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	24.49	3.24	L&T Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	135.86	-6.7
Franklin India Feeder - Franklin U.S. Opportunities Fund(G)	31.16	18.47	Franklin India Bluechip Fund(G)	476.65	7.09	HDFC Capital Builder Value Fund(G)	303.78	3.19	L&T Large and Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	47.4	-6.74
Tata Digital India Fund-Reg(G)	15.07	18.25	Mirae Asset Great Consumer Fund-Reg(G)	35.27	7.03	ICICI Pru Bharat Consumption Fund-1-(G)	10.36	3.19	Aditya Birla SL Dividend Yield Fund(G)	161.6	-7.02
SBI Technology Opp Fund-Reg(G)	65.56	16.76	DHFL Pramerica Large Cap Fund-2-Reg(G)	12.73	6.95	JM Tax Gain Fund(G)	17.18	3.17	UTI LT Adv Fund-IV(G)	10.73	-7.08
Tata Index Fund-Sensex Plan(G)	96.37	15.37	Franklin Build India Fund(G)	43.07	6.92	SBI Magnum TaxGain'93-Reg(G)	146.59	3.11	Invesco India Multicap Fund(G)	47.55	-7.24
HDFC Index Fund-Sensex(G)	347.16	15.33	UTI Mastershare-Reg(G)	124.42	6.85	Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	14.87	3	IDFC Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	37.02	-7.35
SBI Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	18.08	14.5	HDFC Growth Opp Fund-Reg(G)	115.67	6.72	ICICI Pru Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	329.18	2.95	SBI PSU Fund-Reg(G)	10.46	-7.64
Reliance Index Fund - Sensex Plan(G)	19.29	14.45	Aditya Birla SL Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	29.55	6.72	Axis Focused 25 Fund(G)	27.71	2.82	BNP Paribas Mid Cap Fund(G)	31.67	-7.73
Franklin India Technology Fund(G)	164.55	14.17	ICICI Pru Bluechip Fund(G)	42.81	6.63	Sundaram Value Fund-II-Reg(G)	16.25	2.82	Aditya Birla SL Midcap Fund(G)	290.87	-7.79
Sundaram World Brand Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	15.13	14.09	Edelweiss Large Cap Fund(G)	35.83	6.61	DSP Focus Fund-Reg(G)	23.35	2.73	IDBI Midcap Fund(G)	10.99	-8.03
Sundaram World Brand Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)	15.31	14.04	UTI Banking and Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	102.71	6.56	Invesco India Contra Fund(G)	48.61	2.7	Sundaram Infra Advantage Fund(G)	33.02	-8.2
Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-A(G)	21.17	14	Principal Focused Multicap Fund(G)	64.69	6.5	Tata India Tax Savings Fund-Reg(G)	18.19	2.67	Canara Rob Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	45.24	-8.38
ICICI Pru Technology Fund(G)	59.14	13.36	Kotak Bluechip Fund(G)	236.96	6.5	DHFL Pramerica	14.46	2.63	Kotak Infra & Eco Reform Fund(G)	20.22	-8.53
HDFC Top 100 Fund(G)	503.58	13.32						IDFC Sterling Value Fund-Reg(G)	52.26	-8.71	
Aditya Birla SL Global Real Estate Fund(G)	19.56	13.31									
UTI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	76.69	13.09									
IDFC Nifty Fund-Reg(G)	24.28	12.98									
HDFC Index Fund-NIFTY 50 Plan(G)	106.9	12.94									
Tata Index Fund-Nifty Plan(G)	70.96	12.88									
SBI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	100.96	12.54									
DSP US Flexible Equity Fund-Reg(G)	24.98	12.49									
Reliance Index Fund - Nifty Plan(G)	19.68	12.26									
ICICI Pru Nifty Index Fund(G)	113.48	12.22									
Aditya Birla SL Index Fund-Reg(G)	115.25	12.05									
Franklin India Index Fund-NSE Nifty(G)	93.09	12	Reliance Capital Builder Fund-II-B(G)	13.28	6.44	LT Equity Fund-Reg(G)					
ICICI Pru Banking & Fin Serv Fund(G)	66.48	11.94	Tata Large Cap Fund(G)	220.37	6.26	SBI Magnum Multicap Fund-Reg(G)	49.07	2.61			
IDBI Nifty Index Fund(G)	21.69	11.89	Aditya Birla SL Focused Equity Fund(G)	59.96	6.1	Reliance Value Fund(G)	75.16	2.5			
Reliance Large Cap Fund(G)	35.85	11.86	Equity Fund(G)			JM Value Fund(G)	32.86	2.46			
Aditya Birla SL Digital India Fund(G)	53.39	11.51	Reliance Close Ended Equity Fund-II-A(G)	18.78	6	JM Multicap Fund(G)	31.33	2.44			
Baroda Banking & Fin Serv Fund(G)	23.33	11.47	Edelweiss Emerging Markets Opp Eq. Offshore Fund-Reg(G)	13.03	5.9	Motilal Oswal Focused 25 Fund-Reg(G)	21.83	2.4			
Kotak US Equity Fund(G)	16.69	11.18	Aditya Birla SL Frontline Equity Fund(G)	228.5	5.82	SBI BlueChip Fund-Reg(G)	39.7	2.4			
Mirae Asset India Equity Fund-Reg(G)	51.76	11.13	IDFC Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	32.64	5.63	UTI LT Equity Fund (Tax Saving)-Reg(G)	88.73	2.38			
HDFC Equity Fund(G)	681.48	10.41	UTI Dividend Yield Fund-Reg(G)	66.24	5.59	Aditya Birla SL CEF-Global Agri-Reg(G)	23.41	2.3			
Axis Bluechip Fund(G)	28.66	10.02	DHFL Pramerica Large Cap Fund(G)	168.76	5.53	DHFL Pramerica Tax Plan(G)	31.37	2.22			
Tata Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	18.81	9.92	BNP Paribas Large Cap Fund(G)	88.45	5.49	Invesco India Feeder - Invesco Global Equity Income Fund(G)	12.92	2.11			
SBI Magnum Equity ESG Fund-Reg(G)	105.6	9.77	Tata India Pharma & Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	9.2	5.34	SBI Tax advantage Fund-II(G)	35.68	2.07			
Mirae Asset Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	17.86	9.45	UTI Value Opp Fund-Reg(G)	62.35	5.25	Edelweiss Gr China Reg(G)	28.44	2.06			
Invesco India Financial Services Fund(G)	57.42	9.31	DSP World Agriculture Fund-Reg(G)	16.18	5.19	Reliance Quant Fund(G)	25.97	2.01			
Canara Rob Equity Diver Fund-Reg(G)	135.25	9.28	L&T India Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	27.4	5.16	UTI Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	86.27	1.99			
ICICI Pru Growth Fund-1(DP)	11.37	9.22	Franklin India Equity Fund(G)	608.84	5.04	Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-B(G)	18.74	1.98			
ICICI Pru Global Stable Equity Fund(G)	15.06	9.21	Franklin India Taxshield(G)	578.07	4.98	Franklin India Opportunities Fund(G)	75.5	1.97			
Canara Rob Bluechip Equity Fund-Reg(G)	24.96	9.19	Invesco India Largecap Fund(G)	29.02	4.95	Reliance Focused Equity Fund(G)	48.21	1.94			
Parag Parikh Long Term Equity Fund-Reg(G)	25.21	9.18	DSP Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	48.72	4.95	Reliance Japan Equity Fund(G)	12.77	1.79			
ICICI Pru FMCG Fund(G)	245.57	9.05	Sundaram Large and Mid Cap Fund(G)	34.88	4.9	Franklin Asian Equity Fund(G)	22.75	1.78			
Sundaram Select Focus(G)	180.96	9.03	SBI Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	143.7	4.89	DSP World Energy Fund-Reg(G)	13.44	1.71			
Canara Rob Equity Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	65.82	8.99	ICICI Pru Value Fund-8(D)	10.78	4.15	BNP Paribas Long Term Equity Fund(G)	38.19	1.68			
Franklin India Focused Equity Fund(G)	42	8.96	Axis Long Term Equity Fund(G)	44.64	4.13	DSP Equity Opportunities Fund-Reg(G)	223.17	1.62			
ICICI Pru Growth Fund-2(DP)	12.1	8.91	DSP Global Allocation Fund-Reg(G)	12.11	4.08	Franklin India Equity Advantage Fund(G)	81.13	1.41			
ICICI Pru Multicap Fund(G)	299.35	8.72	Kotak Equity Opp Fund(G)	121.07	4.44	Principal Nifty 100 Equal Weight Fund(G)	73.87	1.36			
ICICI Pru LT Equity Fund (Tax Saving)(G)	385.41	8.68	ICICI Pru Value Fund-8(D)	10.78	4.15	Aditya Birla SL Tax Relief '96(G)	32.15	1.32			
ICICI Pru Focused Equity Fund(G)	30.85	8.63	Axis Long Term Equity Fund(G)	44.64	4.13	Edelweiss Multi-Cap Fund-Reg(G)	14.69	1.15			
Reliance Banking Fund(G)	287.36	8.4	DSP Global Allocation Fund-Reg(G)	12.11	4.08	IDBI India Top 100 Equity Fund(G)	24.05	1.05			
Axis Multicap Fund-Reg(G)	11.46	8.32	DSP Top 100 Equity Fund-Reg(G)	209.97	4	ICICI Pru R.I.G.H.T Fund(G)	43.52	0.81			
Kotak Standard Multicap Fund(G)	35.79	8.26	Invesco India Tax Plan(G)	51.43	3.92	DHFL Pramerica Diversified Equity Fund-Reg(G)	13.41	0.68			
Reliance Pharma Fund(G)	153.69	8.19	DSP World Mining Fund-Reg(G)	8.62	3.91	Sundaram Global Advt(G)	17.14	0.38			
Kotak Tax Saver Scheme(G)	44.47	8.1	Principal Dividend Yield Fund(G)	54.26	3.53	Canara Rob Emerg Equities Fund-Reg(G)	94.85	0.38			
Mirae Asset Emerging Bluechip-Reg(G)	53.92	8.08	HDFC TaxSaver(G)	531.6	3.51	SBI Healthcare Opp Fund-Reg(G)	121.89	0.33			
JM Core 11 Fund(G)	9.43	8.02	Tata Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	203.38	3.48	Invesco India Midcap Fund(G)	49.32	0.26			
ICICI Pru Value Fund-15(G)	11.08	7.78	Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)	13.85	3.48	Edelweiss Large & Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	31.32	0.26			
Baroda Large Cap Fund(G)	14.68	7.62	ICICI Pru Value Discovery Fund(G)	147.81	3.44	Reliance Growth Fund(G)	1134.39	-0.14			
Reliance Multi Cap Fund(G)	99.89	7.59	Aditya Birla SL MNC Fund(G)	783.11	3.43	Tata Mid Cap Growth Fund(G)	140.18	-0.16			
			ICICI Pru Value Fund-9(G)	12.66	3.43	SBI LT Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	13.56	-0.21			
			Aditya Birla SL Equity Fund(G)	741.02	3.38	ICICI Pru Infrastructure Fund(G)	52.31	-0.55			
			Invesco India Growth Opp	34.65	3.37	UTI MNC Fund-Reg(G)	195.92	-0.57			

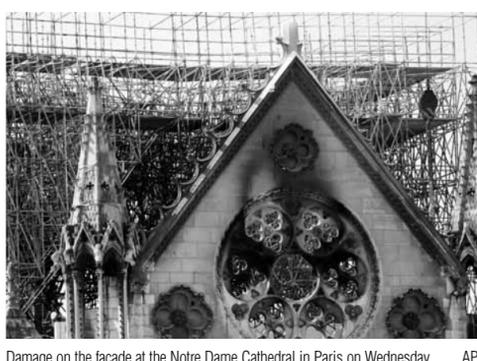


Kotak Global Emerging Mkt Fund(G)	15.55	-9.04
Aditya Birla SL Mfg. Equity Fund-Reg(G)	13.15	-9.06
DHFL Pramerica Midcap Opp Fund-Reg(G)	18.38	-9.19
Franklin India Smaller Cos Fund(G)	55.08	-9.2
SBI Magnum MidCap Fund-Reg(G)	74.97	-9.21
SBI Magnum Comma Fund-Reg(G)	36.09	-9.23
L&T Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	16.04	-9.28
Sundaram Mid Cap Fund(G)	470.9	-9.55
L&T Business Cycle Fund-Reg(G)	15.33	-9.94
SBI Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	52.37	-10.53
Aditya Birla SL Infrastructure Fund(G)	32.67	-10.57
Reliance Small Cap Fund(G)	40.63	-10.83
Kotak Small Cap Fund(G)	72.25	-10.85
Edelweiss Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	26.71	-10.86
HDFC Infrastructure Fund(G)	17.25	-11.75
ICICI Pru Smallcap Fund(G)	25.21	-11.79
Baroda Mid-cap Fund(G)	9.01	-11.84
UTI Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	100.92	-12.06
L&T Emerging Businesses Fund-Reg(G)	24.81	-12.07
Kotak World Gold Fund(G)	7.8	-12.42
IDBI Small Cap Fund(G)	9.56	-12.77
Reliance Power & Infra Fund(G)	100.2	-12.86
Aditya Birla SL Small Cap Fund(G)	35.57	-14.74
DSP Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	56.12	-15.29
Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series X-Reg(G)	13.97	-15.76
IDFC Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	15.34	-16.48
Aditya Birla SL Emerging Leaders Fund-4-Reg(G)	14.95	-16.9
Aditya Birla SL Pure Value Fund(G)	52.01	-18.13
Aditya Birla SL Emerging Leaders Fund-7-Reg(G)	12.94	-18.51
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)	8.95	-19.31
Sundaram Small Cap Fund(G)	83.89	-20.36
Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr IV-Reg(G)	9.18	-20.5

UNESCO experts offer help to reconstruct Notre Dame

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

Two-thirds of the largely medieval roof of the famed Notre Dame cathedral in Paris have "gone" after the devastating fire, but UN cultural experts are standing by to offer help in rebuilding the iconic structure, UNESCO World Heritage Centre Director Mechtild Rossler said.



Damage on the facade at the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on Wednesday AP

Rössler, who visited the site Tuesday, told UN News that the cathedral is a universal symbol and the centre of France and its devastation has left people across nations shocked.

She described seeing people praying outside the stricken symbol of the city and the nation, still trying to take in the scale of the disaster. "I saw many, many people going from the Metro, to the site of Notre Dame, and I have to say many are still in a state of shock, because it's not only the Christian community, it's a building for all of us," she said.

investigate the stability of the stonework and potential damage to stained glass windows, echoing a statement by the UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, in which she announced that a "rapid damage assessment" would be carried out as soon as possible with the authorities.

After visiting the site of Notre Dame on Monday night, Azoulay said "we are all heart-broken."

The Cathedral is part of the World Heritage site officially known as "Paris, Banks of the Seine", inscribed on the World

Heritage List, in 1991. "Notre Dame represents a historically, architecturally, and spiritually, outstanding universal heritage. It is also a monument of literary heritage, a place that is unique in our collective imagination," said the UNESCO chief, adding that the inferno which engulfed the cathedral, but appears to have left the medieval stonework intact, "reminds us of the power of heritage that connects us to one another."

We are receiving messages of support from all over the world.

Indonesia's 'everyman' leader on track to beat firebrand ex-general

AFP ■ JAKARTA

Indonesia's Joko Widodo was on track to be re-elected leader of the world's third-biggest democracy with pollsters giving him a wide lead over rival Prabowo Subianto, a firebrand ex-general, hours after voting closed Wednesday across the 17,000-island archipelago.

While official results are not due until next month, a series of so-called "quick counts" by pollsters showed Widodo holding a strong lead with around 55 per cent of the vote to Subianto's 44 per cent. The vote officially ended at 1:00 pm (0600 GMT) in Sumatra, although some of the 800,000 polling stations across the volcano-dotted nation remained open late due to delays and long queues.

From the jungles of Borneo to the slums of Jakarta, Wednesday saw millions of Indonesians cast their ballots in one of the world's biggest exercises in democracy. Horses, elephants, motorbikes, boats and planes were pressed into service to get ballot boxes out across the vast country that is home to hundreds of ethnic groups and languages.

More than 190 million voters

were asked to choose between the incumbent Widodo, lauded for his infrastructure driven economic push, and his fiery nationalist rival, who has strong ties to the country's three-decade Suharto dictatorship.

The call to prayer had rang out as voting began at first light in restive Papua province in the east.

Almost 90 per cent of the population of the 4,800 kilometre-long country are Muslim.

The campaign was punctuated by bitter mudslinging and a slew of fake news online -- much directed at the presidential contenders.

Leading in pre-vote polls, President Joko Widodo, 57, pointed to his ambitious drive to build much-needed roads, airports and other infrastructure across Southeast Asia's largest economy. But Widodo, a political outsider with an everyman personality when he swept to victory in 2014, has seen his rights record criticised owing to an uptick in discriminatory attacks on religious and other minorities, including a small LGBT community, as Islamic hardliners become more vocal in public life.

China claims Azhar issue at UNSC headed for settlement; says no Apr 23 deadline

PTI ■ BEIJING

China Wednesday dismissed reports that the US, the UK and France have served an ultimatum to Beijing to lift its "technical hold" by April 23 on branding Pakistan-based JeM chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist by the UN but claimed the vexed issue was "moving towards settlement."

After the Pulwama attack, a fresh proposal to designate Azhar under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council was moved by France, the US and the UK.

However, China, a close ally of Pakistan, blocked the bid by putting a "technical hold" on the proposal. Following this, the US backed by the UK and France moved directly to UN Security Council (UNSC) to blacklist Azhar. China, a veto-wielding member of the UNSC, opposed the move, saying the issue should be resolved at the 1267 Committee itself which also functioned under the top UN body.

Reacting to reports that the three countries have fixed April 23 as a deadline for China to lift its technical hold in the 1267

Committee or else they would press for a discussion on the issue at the UNSC itself, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said, "I don't know where you get such information."

He said both the UNSC and its subsidiary body 1267 Committee have clear rules and procedures.

"You need to get clarification from the sources about where you get such information. China's position is very clear. This issue should be resolved through cooperation. We don't believe that any efforts without the consensus of members will achieve a satisfying result," he said.

"On the issue of listing Azhar, China's position remains unchanged. We also stay in communication with relevant parties. The matter is moving towards the direction of settlement," he said.

"The relevant parties are forcing new resolution through the UN Security Council. We firmly oppose that. In fact, the relevant discussion in UNSC, most member expressed wish that this issue should be discussed within the 1267 Committee and they don't hope to bypass it to handle the issue," he said.

GLOBE TROTTER

2 WOMEN ELECTED TO QATAR MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
Doha: Two women won seats on Qatar's 29-member municipal council, the Gulf emirate's sole elected body, the elections committee said on Wednesday. Sheikha al-Jafri and Fatima al-Kuwari retained the seats they had won in 2015.

6 KILLED IN LIBYA CAPITAL AS UN DEBATES CEASEFIRE
Tripoli: Rocket fire on the Libyan capital Tripoli, which the UN-recognised Government blamed on military strongman Khalifa Haftar, killed six people ahead of a Security Council meeting on Wednesday over a ceasefire.

NEARLY 300 HELD AT LONDON CLIMATE PROTESTS
London: Nearly 300 people have been arrested in ongoing climate change protests in London that brought parts of the British capital to a standstill, police said Tuesday.

PALESTINIAN PM ACCUSES US OF 'FINANCIAL WAR'
Ramallah (West Bank): The new Palestinian Prime Minister accused the United States of declaring "financial war" on his people and said an American peace plan purported to be in the works will be "born dead".

Sudan's Bashir moved to prison as protesters rally

AFP ■ KHARTOUM

Sudan's military rulers have transferred ousted president Omar al-Bashir to prison, a family source said Wednesday, as demonstrators keep up their sit-in outside the army complex calling for a swift transfer to civilian government.

Following the dramatic end to Bashir's rule of three decades last week, he was moved late Tuesday "to Kober prison in Khartoum", the source said without revealing

his name for security reasons.

Witnesses near the prison in north Khartoum said there was a heavy deployment of soldiers and members of a paramilitary group outside.

The 75-year-old's whereabouts have been unknown since a military takeover on Thursday, when the country's new rulers said he was being held "in a secure place".

The detention of Bashir has failed to pacify protesters, who launched anti-government demonstrations in December and have for days been camped out in front of Khartoum's army headquarters.

Sudan's military rulers have made some concessions to protesters, including the sacking Tuesday of prosecutor general Omer Ahmed Mohamed, but demonstrators fear their uprising could be hijacked.

"We faced tear gas, many of us were jailed. We have

been shot and many have died.

All this because we said what we wanted to," protester Fadia Khalaf told AFP.

Officials say at least 65 people have been killed in protest-related violence since December, with some of those killed immortalised in a Khartoum mural.

While there have been scenes of celebration -- with demonstrators singing and waving their national flag -- the protest site has grown more tense amid concerns the army will try to clear the sit-in with force.

"Now we fear that our revolution could be stolen, which is why we are keeping our ground here. We are staying here until our demands are met," said Khalaf.

Earlier this week witnesses said several army vehicles had surrounded the area and that troops were removing the barricades which demonstrators had put up as a security

measure.

On taking power on Thursday the army said a military council would run the country for two years, sparking an immediate backlash from protest leaders who have issued a series of demands.

Just a day later former defence minister General Awad Ibn Ouf stepped down as council chief, sparking jubilation on the streets of Khartoum.

His successor General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan oversaw weekend talks with political parties, which failed to make headway.

Sudan's foreign minister has said Burhan is "committed to having a complete civilian government" and has called on other nations to back the council. The military rulers dispatched an envoy to the African Union's headquarters in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, but the regional bloc threatened to suspend Sudan over the coup.

UN finds torture, ill-treatment in Afghan prisons

AP ■ KABUL

A UN report says around a third of all conflict-related detainees in Afghanistan report being subjected to torture or ill-treatment.

UN officials interviewed a total of 618 detainees held in 77 facilities across the country between January 2017 and December 2018. The alleged torture included suffocation, electric shocks, pulling of genitals and suspension from ceilings.

The UN mission to Afghanistan and the U.N. Human Rights Office released the joint report on Wednesday.

The US-backed Afghan government is holding thousands of detainees, many of them captured as part of the ongoing war with the Taliban.

Trump vetoes bill to end US support for Saudi-led Yemen war

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Tuesday vetoed a resolution from Congress directing him to end US support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen, the second such move of his presidency.

The resolution was a harsh bipartisan rebuke to Trump that took the historic step of curtailing a president's war-making powers -- a step he condemned in a statement announcing his veto.

"This resolution is an unnecessary, dangerous attempt to weaken my constitutional authorities, endangering the lives of American citizens and brave service members, both today and in the future," Trump said.

The veto was the second of his presidency, after he overrode a congressional resolution

that aimed to reverse the border emergency he declared in order to secure more funding for his wall between the United States and Mexico in March.

Vetoing the measure is an "effective green light for the war strategy that has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis to continue," said International Rescue Committee president and CEO David Miliband.

"Yemen is at a breaking point with 10 million people on the brink of famine. There are as many as 100 civilian casualties per week, and Yemenis are more likely to be killed at home than in any other structure," Trump argued that US support for the bloody war between the Saudi-backed Yemeni government and Iran-aligned Huthi rebels was necessary for a variety of reasons,

"first and foremost" to "protect the safety of the more than 80,000 Americans who reside in certain coalition countries." These countries "have been subject to Huthi attacks from Yemen," he said, referring to drone and missile strikes the Saudi-led coalition has either claimed were intercepted or denied altogether.

The president also said the resolution would "harm the foreign policy of the United States" and "harm our bilateral relationships."

And it would "negatively affect our ongoing efforts to prevent civilian casualties and prevent the spread of terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and ISIS, and embolden Iran's malign activities in Yemen," Trump said, referring to two Sunni Muslim militant groups and his Shiite bete noire.

THE KANGRA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LTD.
C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110 058
Ph: 011-25611041, 25611042, 25611043, 25611044
Website: www.kangrabank.com

APPENDIX IV
[See rule 8 (1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)

The undersigned being the authorized officer of The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd., C-29 Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janak Puri, New Delhi-110058, having its registered office at 1916, Chuna Mandi, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of the Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice dated 10-08-2018 calling upon the borrower Smt. Deepali Arora, W/o. Sh. Pawan Arora, R/o. H.No.182/3, third floor, gali no.3, Govindpuri, New Delhi-19 and calling upon the mortgagor Sh. Gumanshu Arora, S/o. Sh. Pawan Arora, R/o. H.No.182/3, third floor, gali no.3, Govindpuri, New Delhi-19, and also calling upon the mortgagor Sh. Dishant Arora, S/o. Sh. Pawan Arora, R/o. H.No.182/3, third floor, gali no.3, Govindpuri, New Delhi-19, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 10,45,777/- (Rupees Ten Lakhs forty five thousand seven hundred and seventy seven only) along with further interest, penal interest and other charges as are applicable in this Loan account from time to time, from the date of the notice till the date of payment, with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the notice. The above mentioned borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 9 of the said rules on this 26th day of March 2019. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of "The Kangra Co-operative Bank Ltd.", for an amount of Rs. 10,45,777/- along with further interest, penal interest and other charges as are applicable in this Loan account from time to time, from the date of notice till the date of realization together with all the costs incurred by the Bank in realizing the said amount.

'US seeks to extend detention of some asylum seekers'

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump's administration has issued an order that could keep some asylum seekers in jail for months or years as they wait for their cases to be heard, The New York Times reported Tuesday.

The order from Attorney General Bill Barr directs immigration judges to no longer allow asylum seekers who are apprehended after entering the country illegally to post bail, the newspaper said. The order -- which will not go into effect for 90 days -- does not affect those who apply for asylum at a legal port of entry, the Times reported. The move was quickly condemned by the American Civil Liberties Union rights organization, which vowed to chal-

lenge it in court.

"Our Constitution does not allow the government to lock up asylum seekers without basic due process. We'll see the administration in court. Again," the ACLU tweeted.

Trump has staked his presidency on his insistence that the United States is being overrun by migrants and asylum seekers.

But opponents, mostly in the Democratic Party, say his push for building more walls on the Mexican border and his almost daily denunciations of migrants as dangerous criminals incites racial hatred.

The president declared an emergency to bypass Congress and unlock funds for his controversial wall project, and has also deployed troops to the border with Mexico.

Iran Minister briefs Erdogan on Assad meeting

AFP ■ ISTANBUL

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday met with Iran's foreign minister, who arrived in Ankara to brief him on his meeting with Syria's President Bashar al-Assad.

Turkey supports Syrian opposition rebels and Iran backs Assad in Syria's long war, but the two sides have been expanding contacts amid international efforts to end the fighting.

Kazakhstan will host a fresh round of Syria talks on April 25-26 in its capital, recently renamed from Astana to Nur-Sultan.

"I had a long interview with Bashar al-Assad. I will be giving details of these discussions to Mr. Erdogan," Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pose for photos before a meeting at presidential palace in Ankara, Turkey on Wednesday AP

reporters in translated comments.

Ankara broke ties with Damascus in 2011 after the start of the Syrian war, and Erdogan has in the past described Assad as an

Facing arrest, Peru ex-president Garcia shoots himself

AFP ■ LIMA

Peru's former president Alan Garcia shot himself in the head at his home on Wednesday as police were about to arrest him in a sprawling corruption case, his lawyer and hospital officials said.

The 69-year-old Garcia was undergoing emergency surgery for "a bullet wound to his head" at the Casimiro Ulloa Emergency Hospital in Lima, the hospital said. Peru's Health Minister Zulema Tomas said Garcia was in "very serious and critical" condition.

"We've had to resuscitate him three times. He's had three cardiac arrests," said Tomas.

"He is in a delicate condition and the prognosis is reserved," added the health ministry, which

said the bullet went straight through Garcia's head.

The attempted arrest took place at 6:30 a.m. (1130 GMT) at Garcia's home in the posh Miraflores neighborhood of Lima. "This morning there was a regrettable accident: the president took the decision to shoot himself," Erasmo Reyna, Garcia's lawyer, told reporters outside the hospital.

Garcia, who was president from 1985-90 and again from 2006-11, is suspected of having taken bribes from Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht in return for large-scale public works contracts.

In November he sought refuge in the Uruguayan Embassy and applied for asylum but he left the next month after it was denied.

Astronomers also think that examining the composition of asteroids will help to understand how the solar system was formed.

"These objects are intrinsically interesting because some are thought to be as old as the original material that made up the solar system," Mainzer said.

She is now keen to leverage advances in camera technology to aid in the search for NEOs.

"We are proposing to NASA a new telescope, the Near-Earth Object Camera (NEOCam), to do a much more comprehensive job of mapping asteroid locations and measuring their sizes," Mainzer said.

14 members of an Afghan family killed in Pakistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

Fourteen members of an Afghan family, including women and children, were killed in a road accident when the vehicle they were travelling in collided head on with a truck on the Karachi-Quetta highway here.

Six family members were injured in the accident that took place on Tuesday after the driver of the truck coming from the opposite direction lost control of the vehicle near Mastung on the highway. The final rites of the deceased were held on Wednesday.

An official of the Edhi Welfare Trust said the deceased belonged to an extended family that resided in Karachi and were Afghans who were going to Qila Abdullah in Baluchistan for the funeral of a relative when they met with the accident.

"Nine people had died on the spot after the accident while five others passed away later in hospital," he said. Earlier in July last year, 20 people including women had lost their lives after their vehicle fell down off the road near Mastung on the highway.

NASA's new way to defend Earth from asteroids

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

NASA scientists have found a simple yet ingenious way to spot tiny near-Earth objects (NEOs) early as they hurtle towards the planet, an advance that may aid the efforts to prevent dangerous impacts.

The Chelyabinsk meteor, which was a mere 17-20 metres across, caused extensive ground damage and numerous injuries when it exploded on impact with Earth's atmosphere in February 2013.

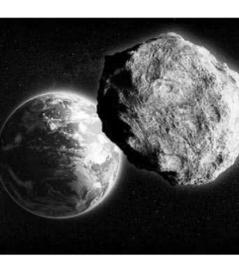
"If we find an object only a few days from impact, it greatly limits our choices, so in our search efforts we have focused on finding NEOs when they are away from Earth, providing the maximum amount of time and opening up a

wider range of mitigation possibilities," said Amy Mainzer from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

However, it is a difficult task -- like spotting a lump of coal in the night's sky, Mainzer said.

"NEOs are intrinsically faint because they are mostly really small and far away from us in space," she said in a statement.

"Add to this the fact that some of them are as dark as printer toner, and trying to spot them against the black of space is very hard," Mainzer said.



Asteroids and comets are warmed by the sun and so glow brightly at thermal wavelengths (infrared), making them easier to spot with the Near-Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (NEOWISE) telescope.

Instead of using visible light to spot incoming objects, Mainzer's team at JPL/Caltech has leveraged a characteristic signature of NEOs -- their heat.

Asteroids and comets are warmed by the sun and so glow brightly at thermal wavelengths (infrared), making them easier to spot with the Near-Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (NEOWISE) telescope.

"With the NEOWISE mission we can spot objects regardless of their surface colour, and use it to measure their sizes and other surface properties," Mainzer said.

Discovering NEO surface properties provides an insight into how big the objects are and what they are made of, both critical details in mounting a defensive strategy against an Earth-threatening NEO, researchers said.

For instance, one defensive strategy is to physically "nudge" an NEO away from an Earth impact trajectory, they said.

However, to calculate the energy required for that nudge, details of NEO mass, and therefore size and composition, are necessary.

"We are proposing to NASA a new telescope, the Near-Earth Object Camera (NEOCam), to do a much more comprehensive job of mapping asteroid locations and measuring their sizes," Mainzer said.

Trend Blazer

Sidharth's next on forced marriages

Actor **SIDHARTH MALHOTRA**, who has wrapped up shooting his upcoming film *Jabriya Jodi*, said the romantic comedy film is based on *Pakadwa Vivah* (forced marriage), which is rampant in Bihar.

Sidharth said, "We have been shooting since last year. We created a lot of things of Patna in Lucknow. I think I haven't played this kind of role earlier in my career and for Parineeti also, it's a different world and role. We are really excited for the film."

He is glad to have collaborated with Parineeti Chopra again after *Hasee Toh Phasee*.



'For me, it is not about nationality or colour, but about identity. Is there something which you can put in your character that is uniquely you and that your people will identify with? It is less about roles and more about characteristics.'

After nearly three years, **EMRAAN HASHMI** has signed a horror film *Ezra*, which is the Hindi remake of a Malayalam horror film.

Emraan said, "Horror is a genre with immense potential. A well-made horror film will always draw audiences in huge numbers to cinema halls. With *Ezra*, we hope to push the boundaries further and give the audience an experience that they will never forget. I'm happy to be associating with Kumarji (Mangat Pathak) and Abhishek (Pathak) on this film and with Jay (Krishnan) at the helm of things all I can say is be prepared for one hell of a spooky ride."



Turner thought about suicide

Game of Thrones star **SOPHIE TURNER** said that she used to think about suicide a lot after being branded fat and a bad actress.

Turner, who is in therapy and medication, also credited her fiancé Joe Jonas with helping her through depression, admitting "when someone tells you they love you every day it makes you love yourself."

She said that she first began having mental health issues when she was 17, explaining that living at her parents' home while she worked and her friends and brothers were away at university, was a triggering factor.

"I've suffered with depression for six years now. The toughest part for me is getting out of bed and the house. Learning to love yourself is the biggest challenge," she said.



AMAZING GRACE

While comparisons with Chandramukhi are inevitable, actor **MADHURI DIXIT** tells **SAIMI SATTAR** that it is the treatment of Bahaar Begum in *Kalank* which sets it apart

As soon as the teasers of *Kalank* came out, the comparisons between Madhuri Dixit's portrayal of Chandramukhi in *Devdas* and Bahaar Begum in the new film became inevitable. However, Madhuri feels that while the appearance might be similar, in grain, they are different women. "Bahaar Begum is a very reticent person. She is an introvert and is emotionally scarred because of a past tragedy which has made her what she is. She is silent, yet conveys a lot through her eyes. As compared to her, Chandramukhi wore her heart on her sleeve. Her love for Devdas was there for everyone to see. She could go all out and sing *Maar Daala*," says the actor, who criticises say, "lit up the screen in every frame" in her newest outing.

Madhuri, known for her dancing prowess, reunites with Sanjay Dutt in *Kalank*, to whom she was rumoured to be romantically linked in her younger days. But she values the co-star bit. Besides, she stepped into the shoes of Sridevi who was supposed to essay the role before her tragic death. She says, "There was an emotional context to taking up the role. They were about to start and then things went haywire. Karan (Johar) is a friend and I decided to help them."

The film talks about 'Eternal Love' and Madhuri believes that it does exist. "I am a romantic person and I do believe it exists as whether you find it or not is your journey. There was a dialogue in *Dil To Pagal Hai* where I said *Kahin na kahin, koi na koi mere liye banaya gaya hai... aur kabhi na kabhi main usse zaroor milungi*. And I used to believe in that and I did meet Ram (Shriram Madhav Nene). He is my soulmate," she says.

The film also stars younger actors Varun Dhawan, Alia Bhatt, Sonakshi Sinha and Aditya Roy Kapur and she says, "The characters are complicated as their lives are not straight and each of their paths is interwoven with the others. All characters have a lot of angst and regrets. They are all grey and that is what makes the story interesting."

She is all praise for the four with whom she has worked this time around. "They are very professional. They are always on time. They learn their lines and work hard."

While the youngsters often imbibe the nuances of acting from her, there are tricks that they have taught her. "You see a new side to everything with them. It is wonderful to see this generation which is not only acting in movies but has a presence on the social media. There are so many different things that they do. You get to learn from them and they get to learn from us. So we inspire each other. It is a symbiotic relationship. There is a lot of synergy," she says and as someone, who too has signed up on various platforms, goes on to add, "I enjoy social media as it is a great tool to connect directly to fans. One can voice anything that has happened or if you have been misquoted, you can reach out to your fans directly through Twitter. You can share things whenever you want to."

Not just the stars, but even the way that the film industry functions has changed drastically since the time she made her debut in *Abodh* in 1984 and ruled the silver screen during the



'MEN PERCEIVE WOMEN IN A DIFFERENT WAY. EARLIER, IT WAS A VERY PATRIARCHAL, MALE-DOMINATED VIEW THAT WAS PUT OUT IN FILMS. THE THOUGHT PROCESS OF THIS GENERATION IS VERY DIFFERENT WHICH IS REFLECTED IN THE SCRIPTS'

greater part of the nineties. Madhuri saw both commercial and critical success and received six Filmfare Awards, which she topped up with a Padma Shri in 2008. She says, "Films are made professionally now. When I was doing a film like *Tezaab*, the only women that we saw on the sets were the co-stars, hairdressers and me. There were only two women directors, Sai Paranjypte and Aparna Sen. Women could only be hairdressers and not make-up artists as men blocked their entry and made sure that they were confined to one role. However, when I walk on to the sets today, there seem to be women everywhere. There is no concept of you can do this and you can't. Every department has women."

This is also reflected in the kind of stories that are now being told. With more women writers, there are characters with more flesh and blood. "Men perceive women in a different way. Earlier, it was very patriarchal, male-dominated view

that was put out in the films. Women are no longer caricatures. They are not victims or avengers. They are roles and characters. The thought process of this generation is very different and this is reflected in the scripts. Otherwise, you wouldn't have a *Badhaai Ho*, *Gulaab Gang* or *Dedh Ishqiya*," says the actor who proved her acting chops with a film like *Mrityudand* (1997) by Prakash Jha. She also famously served as a muse for painter MF Husain who made *Gaja Gamini* (2000) starring her.

So, would she say that it is a better time for women like Alia to be in the films as there are more roles for women? "Why just them?," she asks and adds, "It's a great time for me as well. The audience has matured and wants to see different kinds of subjects. In *Andhadhun*, Tabu's character is so different from the usual."

Clearly, there is a lot more on the anvil from the actress.

Photo: Pankaj Kumar



War of words

KANGANA RANAUT's tirade against **ALIA BHATT** wasn't enough. Her sister **RANGOLI CHANDEL** joined in as did actors **SONI RAZDAN** and **RANDEEP HOODA**

If actress Kangana Ranaut's tirade against Alia Bhatt wasn't enough, the former's sister Rangoli Chandel entered the 'war of words' zone, as did the *Raazi* actress' mother Soni Razdan and co-actor Randeep Hooda.

Kangana has been calling out Alia since earlier this year for not supporting her film *Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi*, and had claimed this was all a part of a "strange sort of racket" in a section of the film industry. She had also called Alia a product of Karan Johar's "nepotistic gang."

Ever since, Kangana has made several references regarding Alia, the latest being over her "mediocre" performance in the otherwise widely lauded *Gully Boy*.

But Alia said, "I respect Kangana's work a lot and I respect her opinion. If she feels a particular way she must have reason to feel that way. I would rather remember how much she had praised me after watching *Raazi*. And I'd just like to focus on my work. Maybe she will appreciate me again if I work hard enough."

The controversy took a different turn with Kangana's sister hitting out at Alia and her mother Soni Razdan, calling them "non Indians who are living off this land, using and abusing its people and its resources, lying about intolerance and spreading hatred."

"Time to think about their agenda and not to get carried away with their provocations," Rangoli had written on social media recently, referring to an article about the mother-daughter duo's British passports.

Soni finally broke her silence over the issue. In a now-deleted tweet, she wrote, "Mahesh Bhatt is the man who has given her a break... She goes on to attack his wife and daughter over and over again. What is left to be said then about abusing and hatred I wonder. Apart from character of course. Agenda. What's hers?"

Rangoli had a response soon after. "Dear Soniji, Mahesh Bhatt never gave her a break, Anurag Basu did. Mahesh Bhattji works as a creative director in his brother's production house. Please note that he doesn't own that production house. After *Woh Lamhe*, when Kangana refused to do a film written by him called *Dhokha*, where he wanted her to play a suicide bomber, he got so upset that he not only shouted at her in his office, but later when she went for *Woh Lamhe* preview to a theatre, he threw a *chappal* (slipper) on her. He didn't allow her to see her own film. She cried the whole night, and she was just 19 years old."

Alia's *Highway* co-star Randeep Hooda also stepped in, saying, "Dearest Alia, I'm so glad you are not letting the opinions of very occasional actors and chronic victims affect you and your work. Kudos to you for your continued efforts to outdo yourself."

But Rangoli retorted saying Randeep has been pushed to come forward in Alia's support as the "nepotism gang" didn't have the courage. She even called him a "permanent failure."



WORLD HERITAGE DAY



Preserve the past

The dictionary defines heritage as 'features belonging to the culture of a particular society, such as traditions, languages, or buildings, that were created in the past and still have historical importance'. So when one talks in terms of places, the United Nations has selected some which can be considered as humanity's most significant locations. These cover patches which range from historical icons like Venetian Lagoon to the Imperial Palace in Beijing and the Chartres Cathedral. This World Heritage Day, here is a list of some of mankind's highest achievements as well as natural wonders which should feature on every traveller's wishlist.

CHINA
With 52 noteworthy sites, China ranks second in UNESCO's World Heritage List. The Imperial Palace of the Qing Dynasty consists of 114 buildings constructed between the years 1625-26 and 1783. It contains an important library and testifies to the foundation of the last dynasty that ruled China before it expanded its power to the center of the country and

moved the capital to Beijing. This palace then became auxiliary to the Imperial Palace in Beijing. This architectural edifice offers important historical testimony to the history of the Qing Dynasty and to the cultural traditions of the Manchu and other tribes in the north of China.

ITALY
Italy is home to 53 UNESCO world heritage sites, which is more than any other country. Apart from these must-sees, it also has the largest number of cultural sites that one must experience. Celebrated throughout the world for its singular beauty, Venice and its lagoon were added

to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1987.

INDIA
World Heritage sites aren't simply ancient stones. UNESCO's list also includes natural wonders — the Kaziranga National Park, situated in Assam. It is one of the last areas in eastern India which

is undisturbed by a human presence. It is inhabited by more than 2,000 rhinos and is home to a large breeding population of elephants, wild water buffaloes and swamp deer.

FRANCE
France boasts of 41 heritage sites preserved under the

UNESCO. Though it had more than 1.3 million visitors each year, after the devastating fire, Chartres Cathedral or Notre Dame is now off the list of visitors for six years — the time that it will take to rebuild. Admire it from afar or better still take part in the process of rebuilding by contributing to the national fund set up by the French government for the purpose.

SPAIN
Spain is home to a staggering 45 UNESCO sites, third in number only to Italy and China. Mérida, a model Roman city was established in 25 BC and according to UNESCO is a "remarkable example of a Roman city built according to all the Roman urban design rules." From an Amphitheatre to an intricate water supply system, the city offers a glimpse into the ancient past. Apart from this, another must-visit place is the Toledo — situated in central Spain. This city of three cultures was added to the UNESCO list for its extensive history spanning 2,000 years, as well as for its many years of co-existence among Jewish, Christian and Muslim groups, earning it the nickname City of three cultures. Synagogues, mosques and churches are some of the popular sites.

TEE OFF IN THAILAND

The Tourism Authority of the country has introduced the Thai Golf Passport as a travel loyalty programme to create a seamless experience for Indian golfers

From pristine sandy beaches to lush jungles, bustling busy cities and traditional villages, Michelin-starred menus to roadside noodle stalls, historic Buddhist temples to 21st century skyscrapers, Thailand could be truly amazing. The country also has world-class golf facilities.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand, New Delhi, has introduced a FAM trip to Thailand to explore the various possible ways to make 'Thai Golf Passport' a success and an exciting golf travel loyalty programme for those who pursue the sport avidly. The highlight of the event would be the Thai New Year — The Songkran Festival.

There are more than 200 golf courses around the country, by the sea, mountains, lakes, in the cities and even besides its airports. From Phuket to Bangkok and Pattaya, there are golf courses to suit different preferences.

Anil Dev, managing director, Golf Plus Monthly said, "When it comes to golf tourism, there is no destination which comes close to Thailand. The Thai Golf Pass is a unique programme that pushes players to experience the sport in this paradise. The programme has been appreciated by the golfing community in India as well as the various partners of the programme."

Besides networking with the golf suppliers, the delegates can experience the hospitality of the Zign Hotel in Pattaya and Centre Point Sukhumvit 10; the teeing off at the Chee Chan Golf Resort and Pattana Golf Club freezing tour of ice sculptures at the frost magical ice of Siam.

Rishi Tomar, chief operating officer, SLW Golf Management said, "The initiative was launched in India to offer Indian golfers a seamless experience in Thailand."

He added, "A number of quality service providers like Thai Airways, Cox & Kings, Callaway and other golf courses, resorts and hotels have come together to partner this initiative."

Isra Stapanaseth, director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, said, "I would like to congratulate all the partners of Thai Golf Pass



Anil Dev and his team for the success of the project. With 'Amazing Thailand', golf paradise with more than 250 international standard golf courses, professional caddies, warm hospitality, wellness, food and entertainment, we look forward to Indian golfers being a part of this loyalty programme and experience services."

Commenting on the initiative's success, Chitransh Bakhshi, business head, Golf Holidays, Cox & Kings said, "We believe in providing quality service to our customers and this initiative will also help in

validating this claim. We are proud to be associated with Tourism Authority of Thailand and this first-ever golf travel loyalty program."

Rajan Sehgal, president, Indian Golf Travel Association, said that golfing in Thailand is memorable. He said, "The programme is unique to India. While hotels and airlines have loyalty programmes, this will be a first of its kind where a country will be executing something like this. With well-maintained courses, professionalism, high connectivity and great hospitality, golfing in Thailand has always been a great

experience for me."

Adding to that, Meraj Shah, writer and producer, Wion Traveller, said, "I have been to Thailand for golfing many a times. I've played in Hua Hin, Pattaya, Phuket, Khao Yai, Chiang Mai, to name a few places. I couldn't be happier heading back to the same places. It's my favourite country to visit — for the golf, its food and beaches and its nightlife."

With NokScoot Airlines providing direct flights from Delhi to Bangkok, travel has become smooth and hassle-free.

Yodchai Sudhidhanakul, chief executive officer, NokScoot Airlines, said, "NokScoot has recently launched direct flights from Delhi to Bangkok, offering high service standards at affordable prices. We

hope to welcome more golfers from India to enjoy the world-class courses which the country has to offer, along with the famous Thai hospitality."

The programme will also give 'Amazing' rewards on redemption of loyalty points. With the fully-automatic and user-friendly online programme, it aims to bring all the suppliers under one platform.

The activities that began from December 2018 has the following focus points — To integrate their website with their travel partner websites; To host promotional events in India with three of them in Thailand; To increase the number of loyalty partners to 200, To increase membership base to cover 5,000 golfers.

Women must be revered



India has inherited a rich Vedic cultural legacy from its glorious past. It is also a well-known fact that all the *rishi-munis* and *yogis* accept Vedas as their soul. Rishi Kashyap after studying Vedas continuously for 300 years expressed his views that their knowledge is endless and eternal. So, it shall not be out of place to mention that women have always enjoyed high respect from the society in the Vedic period.

We must not forget the invaluable lesson from Atharvaveda mantra — *Stree Hee Brahma Bahuvith* — which means that women have been given the title of Brahma. Even Yajñey considered woman as Brahma as she always gives Vedic advice to everyone.

If we delve deep into our history, especially of Vedic age, we discover various names like Sita, Ansuviya, Madalsa, Savitri, Bhamati, Katyayani, Lopamudra, King Janak's *acharya* Gargi and Kunti, who through their devotion, dedication and deep knowledge of Vedas enlightened mankind. There are numerous quotes in our scriptures including that the *Devta* always experiences divine pleasure and gives blessings to those who respect women.

A child owes a lot to his/her mother because she is the one who nurtures him/her from the beginning. Her teachings hold much more importance than even the teacher in the school. She is the moral builder, that is why we eulogise her by saying, "*Matri Devo Bhava*" i.e. mother constitutes the bright future of the child.

The veteran warrior and wise man of *Mahabharat*, Bhisma Pitamah is respected even today because his mother Ganga, gave him the right kind of education from the beginning. It was she who persuaded Guru Parshuram, the greatest teacher in weaponry and warfare at that time to teach him the skills of fighting. For the knowledge of scriptures, she sent Bhisma Pitamah to Brihaspati, the biggest scholar of Vedas at that time. Thus he became not only a good warrior but also a great scholar and spiritualist. The credit goes to none else but to his mother.

Women, after the *Mahabharat* period, due to the lack of knowledge of Vedas, have been mistreated and abused. By not educating them in the Vedas, we are depriving the country of the ability to be stronger.

There is the story of extreme

sacrifice by a wife for her ascetic husband. Once, there lived a philosopher, Vachaspati Mishra, who was married in his childhood. He forgot his wife as he was meditating intensely. After the death of her parents, the girl attained puberty and went to his ashram in the hope of a happy married life. Finding Vachaspati deeply engrossed in meditation, she decided not to disturb him. She started managing the affairs of the ashram and serving the *rishi* day in and day out. With the passage of time, she crossed the age of 75. One day when Vachaspati was busy writing a book in the light of an oil lamp, the flame started flickering. Seeing that the oil was finished, she tried to pour in some to replenish it. It was a moonlit night and the gleam fell on her face. He was surprised to see her and asked her who she was. The woman tried to make him remember their marriage during their childhood. When he came to know this, he felt ashamed that he could not look after his wife rather she was left to manage the affairs of his ashram. The aged *rishi* slowly started moving towards his wife to embrace her. Immediately she moved back and said that by serving him for several years, she had experienced the divine pleasure of maintaining Brahmacharya, so she should be allowed to remain so. The *rishi* stopped and went towards his seat. He asked her name. She replied that it was Bhamati. By then the *rishi* had completed his spiritual book based on Vedas but he was yet to give it a title and named it Bhamati.

Sometimes I wonder why the birth of a girl is not welcomed. Whereas Vedas preach that a daughter is a lamp and enlightens two houses — one of her parents' and the second of her husband's like *maa Sita*.

So, a family must rejoice at the birth of a daughter considering her as a pure blessing, harbinger of good fortune and glory to the family. As quoted above, woman is "Brahma", so a creator must be revered.

(The author, Swami Ram Swarup Yogacharya is the chief editor of *Ved Ishvareeya Vani*, a bi-annual magazine.)

Seven Indians in the 100 most reputable people list



The Reputation Management Consultancy in its Reputation Poll International announced the 2019 list of the 100 most reputable persons on earth.

The list features personalities from various sectors like entertainment, politics, religion, education, philanthropy, business, politics, etc., from 44 countries and recognises leaders who have discharged their duties and maintained a high level of credibility, and have kept exemplary reputation for public emulation.

Looking at the statistics, the USA had the largest share of reputed personalities in the list with a representation of 38 females, 61 males and 1 couple. According to the age, the oldest reputable person in the list is Queen Elizabeth II, 92, whereas, the youngest being Pakistani activist Malala Yuzafzai, 21.

The list features seven Indian personalities, five males and two females — Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Indian business magnate Mukesh Ambani, CEO of Google Sundar Pichai, Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, Writer Robin Sharma, Founder of All Ladies League Dr Harbeen Arora, and Bio-Chemist Priyanka Joshi

THE LIST FEATURES PM NARENDRA MODI, MUKESH AMBANI, CEO OF GOOGLE SUNDAR PICHAI, NOBEL LAUREATE KAILASH SATYARTHI, WRITER ROBIN SHARMA, FOUNDER OF ALL LADIES LEAGUE DR HARBEEN ARORA, AND BIO-CHEMIST PRIYANKA JOSHI

motivational speaker Robin Sharma, founder and global chairperson of All Ladies League (ALL) and Women Economic Forum (WEF) Dr Harbeen Arora, and Bio-chemist Priyanka Joshi.

The list also features influential international personalities like Dalai Lama, Michael Bloomberg, Tim Cook, Michelle Obama, Xi Jinping, Pope Francis, Warren Buffet and Ismail Ahmed. There are also actors and persons from the entertainment industry like Ed Sheeran, Emma Watson, Nicole Kidman and John Legend.



Himalayan Heights Motorcycle Expedition reaches Karakoram Pass

The 11-member 'Himalayan Heights Motorcycle Expedition', flagged off from Karu in Leh on April 7, traversed the challenging terrain of eastern Ladakh, across the Chang La pass. The expedition reached the mighty Karakoram pass situated at an altitude of 18,176 feet on the Karakoram range on Tuesday.

The joint expedition comprises six Indian Army personnel from the Army Service Corps, four from Royal Enfield and one from the Himalayan Motorsports Association. The Fire & Fury Corps and the expedition is celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas, that marked the victory of the Indian armed forces over Pakistan in 1999.

With temperatures as low as -40 degrees Celsius, the feat is unprecedented over haz-

ardous and unforgiving terrains. In freezing winds, it is a remarkable tribute to the immortal courage and bravery of the Indian army. In a rare gesture of encouragement for the expedition members, Lt Gen YK Joshi, general officer commanding, Fire & Fury Corps reached the Karakoram pass to meet and motivate the riders.

Speaking on the occasion, Lt Gen YK Joshi lauded the efforts of the team, especially the two women officers from the army service corps and the woman member of the Royal Enfield team who "proved equal in strength, skill and spirit to the other members."

The expedition salutes the victory of the Indian army during the Kargil war of 1999. They aim to "remember, rejoice and renew" their spirit of fortitude, bravery and adventure.

NHPC follows Ambedkar vision



Hydroelectric power generation company, NHPC celebrated the 128th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr B R Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and social reformer.

Balraj Joshi, chairman and managing director of NHPC along with N K Jain, director (personnel), and Janardan Choudhary, director (Technical), graced the occasion.

Joshi described the life of Dr Ambedkar as a "shining example for others to follow." He highlighted his role in the country's development and in laying down one of the most descriptive Constitutions in the world. A special highlight of evenings was a talk on *Manava ka Uthhan* by Bodhisattva Bhante Dr Karunashil Rahulji.

A documentary highlighting the life and contributions of Dr Ambedkar was also screened during the event. Other attendees of the event were office-bearers of NHPC, SC/ST employee welfare association and OBC association.

CLW commemorates Ambedkar's birth anniversary

The 128th birth anniversary of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar was observed in Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) administrative office.

Ram Prakash, Ravij Seth, B K Singh, S P Marandi along with senior officers and other members of SC/ST association garlanded the portrait of Dr Ambedkar and paid the tribute.

S P Marandi recalled the efforts of Dr Ambedkar on upliftment of socially downtrodden people and their rights in society. Sanjiv Kumar delivered a speech on political contribution of Ambedkar from national freedom struggle to strengthening of Indian democracy.



Praveen Mishra, general manager of CLW also expressed his respect to

Dr Bhim Rao and stressed upon to follow the path shown by him.



A waiting hall was built by POSOCO in Safdarjung Hospital under CSR, for the use of patients and their attendants visiting the hospital for treatment. The hall was jointly inaugurated by Dr Sunil Gupta, medical superintendent and chairman and managing director of POSOCO, K V S Baba on April 12. Among others, P K Agrawal, director (MO), Meenakshi Davar, director (HR), Ranjan Kumar Srivastava, director (Fin), and other senior officers of POSOCO were also present at the event.

N F Railway celebrated the 64th railway week



N K Prasad, general manager inaugurated the programme

The N F Railway celebrated the 64th railway week with proper gaiety and merriment at Rang Bhawan, Maligaon.

N K Prasad, general manager of the construction organisation, who was the chief guest, gave away prizes to the awardees and also addressed to the congregation comprising of officers, staff and N F Railway fraternity.

In a nut-shell GM spoke to the gathering about achievement done in the previous year, ongoing projects

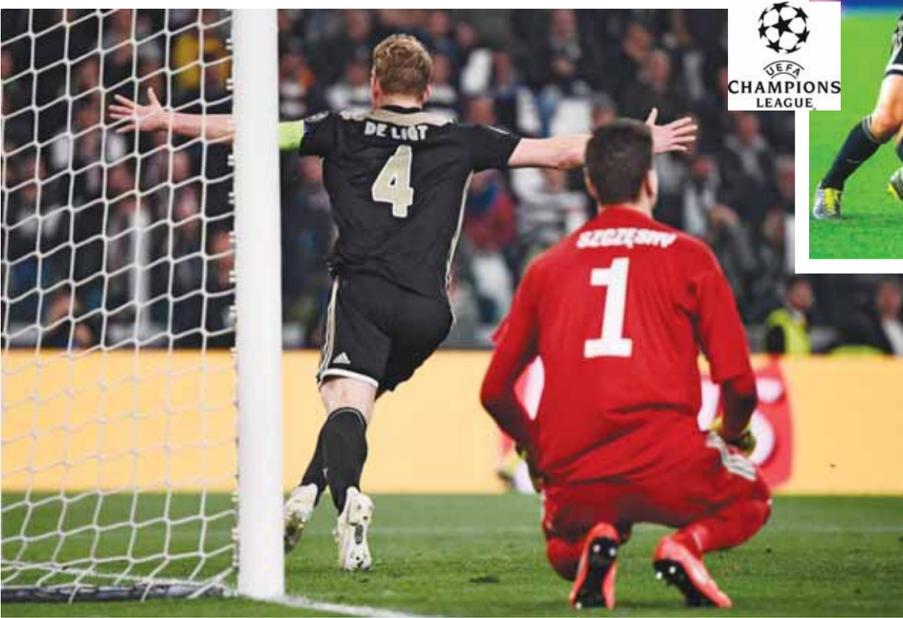
and also future projects to be undertaken.

A K Yadav, chief administrative officer cited last year's record breaking performance completion of Bogibeel Bridge Project in particular which was inaugurated by the PM on December 25, 2018.

A group cash prize was also awarded to the staff whose dedicated services made possible to complete India's longest Rail-cum-Road Bridge and Asia's 2nd longest Bogibeel Bridge Project.

DE LIGHT-FUL

Ajax captain scores via header to help young Amsterdam side beat Juventus 2-1 (3-2) and enter Champions League semis



Matthijs de Ligt celebrates past Juve goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny after scoring his side's second goal AP

AFP ■ TURIN

Ajax stunned Juventus to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the first time since 1997 as Matthijs de Ligt's thumping second-half header secured a 2-1 second-leg victory in the last eight in Turin on Tuesday.

Cristiano Ronaldo, bidding for his sixth Champions League title, scored a 28th-minute header to put Juve ahead after a 1-1 first-leg draw, but Donny van de Beek levelled for Ajax before half-time.

Teenage centre-back De Ligt struck midway through the second period, though, to seal a 3-2 aggregate win and set up a last-four clash with either Manchester City or Tottenham.

The young Dutch side had already eliminated three-time defending champions Real Madrid en route to the quarters, overturning a 2-1 home defeat against the Spanish side with a memorable 4-1 victory at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Juventus had been looking to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the third time in the past five seasons.

But Ronaldo, who scored an away goal last week with a diving header in Amsterdam, was Juve's only weapon against the impressive Dutch side.

The 34-year-old was signed for 100 million euros (\$117 million) last summer from Real Madrid in a bid to win the European trophy for the first time since 1996, when they beat Ajax in the final.

"Ajax deserved to qualify," said Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri.

JUVE FORCED TO RESHUFFLE

Allegri had been forced to reshuffle his side because of injuries, with Paulo Dybala returning in place of the injured Mario Mandzukic, while captain Giorgio Chiellini was also sidelined.

Ajax's defence took a hit when Noussair Mazraoui, who had replaced the suspended Nicolas Tagliafico, limped off on 11 minutes with an ankle injury, with Daley Sinkgraven coming on.

Ajax goalkeeper Andre Onana dived to keep out a scorching Dybala half-volley in the 20th minute.

But Ronaldo latched onto a Miralem Pjanic corner with a downward header that left Onana with no chance.

It was the Portugal star's 126th Champions League goal and sixth of this campaign, having now scored in his past six European games against Ajax, netting nine goals in total.

But Van de Beek soon silenced the cheers of the home crowd when he controlled a wayward Hakim Ziyech shot six minutes later, rolling the ball past Szczesny to cancel out Juventus' away goal and make it 2-2 on aggregate.

Teenage striker Moise Kean replaced Dybala after the break, but it was the Dutch who turned on the style, with only Szczesny's reflexes keeping Juventus in the tie.

The Polish keeper denied Ziyech from close range with one hand, and minutes later tipped Van de Beek's curling effort

TUESDAY'S VICTORY MEANS AJAX HAVE PLAYED 16 GAMES IN THIS SEASON'S COMPETITION, LOSING ONLY ONCE, AT HOME TO DEFENDING CHAMPIONS REAL MADRID IN THE LAST ROUND. THEY RESPONDED WITH A MEMORABLE 4-1 SECOND-LEG VICTORY AT THE SANTIAGO BERNABEU

BERNABEU



Ajax players celebrate after quarter final win AP

"It's an incredible evening for Ajax and its players and also for Dutch football. Once again we eliminated the favourites."

—ERIK TEN HAG



"It's bizarre, it's not normal. I have no words for it. We have shown once again that we are very strong and that we can make it difficult for large teams."

—MATTHIJS DE LIGT



"In the first half they were slightly better and deserved to take the lead. But apart from the first five minutes of the second half, we dominated after the break and were well worth our victory. In fact, we probably should have won by more."

—FRENKIE DE JONG



over the bar. The Juventus back-line struggled with the pace of the Dutch team with Pjanic doing well to deny Ziyech a tap-in.

But Ten Hag's side's incessant pressure paid off with 19-year-old skipper De Ligt towering above Alex Sandro and Daniele Rugani to head home Lasse Schone's corner on 67 minutes.

Ziyech looked as if he had fired a third past Szczesny, but his goal was ruled offside after a VAR check.

And the Dutch visitors held on, with Ronaldo unable to make a difference after his incredible hat-trick had pulled Juventus into the quarter-finals in the last-16 win over Atletico Madrid.

Four-time winners Ajax won their third consecutive title in 1973 at the expense of Juventus, and last lifted the trophy in 1995, with their last semi-final appearance ending in defeat by Juve 22 years ago.

Juventus now turn their focus back to Serie A where they can win an eighth consecutive title on Saturday.



Lionel Messi celebrates with teammate Philippe Coutinho after scoring his second goal against Man Utd UCL/Twitter

Mess(i)merised

AFP ■ BARCELONA

Lionel Messi pounced on two Manchester United mistakes to score twice and end their hopes of another comeback at Camp Nou as Barcelona breezed into the Champions League semi-finals on Tuesday.

After an excellent start, United were undone twice in four minutes by Messi, who first nicked the ball off the care-less Ashley Young and then watched as a weak shot from distance squirmed underneath David de Gea.

Philippe Coutinho, in perhaps his best performance of the season, added a third with a curling effort into the top corner and by the end, an out-classed United might have been relieved the score was not more traumatic than 3-0, 4-0 on aggregate.

A dizzying opening spell, in which Marcus Rashford had hit the crossbar, was long-forgotten, even if it could offer Barca's next opponents some encouragement.

Liverpool, who take a 2-0 lead to Porto on Wednesday, are now the most likely obstacle between them and their first Champions League final since they last won this tournament in 2015.

Instead, United's pair of early errors made this another night about Messi and ensured any faint hopes of repeating the comeback against Paris Saint-Germain, or even the famous 1999 rescue act against Bayern Munich, on this same pitch, were dashed.

Messi now has his 109th and 110th Champions League goals and, potentially, three extra matches to reduce the gap on Cristiano Ronaldo's 126, after Juventus were dumped out by Ajax. Barcelona's fans celebrated that too.

They could have hardly have asked for a better start.

"We put on a spectacle. But we came out cold and looked nervous in the first five minutes. We cannot come out like that in a Champions League match. Five bad minutes can knock you out."

—LIONEL MESSI

"You can plan as many tactics as you like. But if you give him (Messi) time and space, he will score."

—OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJAER

"We have had five difficult minutes because they started strong. But then there were another 85 minutes where we were not too bad."

—ERNESTO VALVERDE

United were brilliant for eight minutes and could have been ahead within 30 seconds as Rashford raced onto a curving Paul Pogba pass and toed away a shot, which Marc-Andre ter Stegen bravely left to graze his own crossbar.

MAGIC MESSI

Barca were flustered, so much so the crowd even cheered with relief when Arthur Melo played his team's first convincing pass.

Then, Barcelona had their own eight-minute flurry as United almost conceded a penalty, ruled out after Fred took the ball before bringing down Ivan Rakitic, and then did concede, twice, to Messi.

Both could have been avoided, even if Young's turn on the edge of his own box was punished in devastating fashion. Young lunged in to atone for his mistake but Messi skipped away from him, poked it through Fred's legs and then whipped the ball into corner. The second was simpler.

Fred and Scott McTominay closed in on Coutinho and the ball spilled out to Messi, whose dribbling shot with his right foot should have drawn a routine save. Instead, De Gea let it squirm under his body for 2-0.

Pogba lashed out at the increasingly influential Arthur and Barca could have had a third before half-time, De Gea scrambling across to save on the line when Sergi Roberto should have finished.

Messi could have had his hat-trick too after Suarez found him with a superb cutback and there was an almost comical sequence in the second half when Leo played with his United chasers before finally being bundled over by McTominay.

Rashford might have made it interesting if he had controlled Pogba's ball over the top but Barcelona were in exhibition mode, helped by a vintage Coutinho curler after he had cut inside from the left.

Messi even attempted a bicycle kick and there were celebrations from the home fans when news went round that Ajax had taken the lead in Turin. They believe this is their year.



Bancroft hits 151 on Durham ODI debut

AFP ■ LONDON

Cameron Bancroft hit an unbeaten 151 on his one-day debut for Durham as the disgraced Australia batsman started to repay the English county's faith in him.

Bancroft was banned for nine months after being caught in the Australia ball-tampering scandal during their tour to South Africa last year.

The 'sandpaper-gate' incident during the Newlands Test against South Africa also led to Bancroft's Australia team-mates Steve Smith and David Warner receiving year-long suspensions.

After returning in Australia's Big Bash League in December, and playing a role in the back end of Western Australia's current Sheffield Shield campaign, Bancroft has joined up with Durham with a view to making Australia's Ashes squad.

Durham, now under a new Australian director of cricket in Marcus North, attracted criticism in some quarters when they recruited Bancroft.

But the 26-year-old was controversially appointed Durham captain and, making his maiden limited overs appearance, Bancroft piled up the runs in their One-Day Cup clash with Northamptonshire at Chester-le-Street on Wednesday.

Bancroft, who played in the 2017-18 Ashes, plundered five sixes and eight fours in a 188-minute stay at the crease. He and Michael Richardson put on 208 for the fourth-wicket before the latter was ousted in the final over.

Durham went on to score 342 for five from their 50 overs.

Nadal steamrolls to opening Monte Carlo win

AFP ■ MONTE CARLO

Rafael Nadal charged out of the blocks on Wednesday to hammer Roberto Bautista Agut 6-1, 6-1 in his opening match at the Monte Carlo Masters.

The 11-time champion showed no sign of the knee problems which forced him to quit ahead of an Indian Wells semi-final against Roger Federer a month ago.

The 32-year-old had expressed pre-tournament caution regarding the health of his knee — a worry which appeared to be groundless after a 76-minute masterclass.

Nadal collected the opening five games of the afternoon in 17 minutes as he set the tone for another dominant display in the principality.

He was equally in control during the second set, where he saved three break points in the fourth game and two more in the sixth.

"It was a great start, it's good to be back here," the 17-time Grand Slam winner said. "I've had some great moments on this court, I really enjoy playing here."

"It's not easy to come back from injury, I had to do a lot of mental work as well to be prepared."

"I tried to play solid, dominate with my forehand when I had the chance."



Rafael Nadal returns a shot during his first round clash against Bautista Agut ATP/Twitter

Nadal improved his incredible record here to 69-4 as he takes aim at a fourth consecutive title at the event.

Third seed Alexander Zverev rediscovered traces of his best form with a 6-1, 6-4 defeat of Felix Auger-Aliassime.

The German, locally based, reached the third round as he tamed the 18-year-old who broke through for a Miami semi-final last month.

UPBEAT ZVEREV

The 21-year-old Zverev played the semi-finals in Monte Carlo a year ago but has yet to hit his stride this season.

That may be starting to change. Canadian Auger-Aliassime has made a fast rise in the rankings from 175 a year ago to his



current position of 33rd. Zverev swept the opening set in 30 minutes but had to get through a series of three straight breaks of serve between him and his opponent before finally advancing in 78 minutes.

The third seed broke six times and will next face Italy's Fabio Fognini, who reached the third round when French opponent Gilles Simon was unable to play their match due to back problems.

Greek sixth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas moved ahead, defeating Mikhail Kukushkin 6-3, 7-5.

Britain's Cameron Norrie defeated Marton Fucsovics of Hungary 7-6 (7/3), 6-3, while Pierre-Hugues Herbert stunned 2018 finalist and fifth seed Kei Nishikori 7-5, 6-4.

OBLAK SIGNS NEW ATLETICO CONTRACT



Jan Oblak trains during practice session ATM

AFP ■ MADRID

Atletico Madrid goalkeeper Jan Oblak has signed a new contract until 2023, the club announced on Wednesday.

Oblak's commitment comes as a boost to Atletico, with the 26-year-old establishing himself as one of the world's finest goalkeepers since joining the club in 2014.

"Jan Oblak has extended his con-

tract with Atletico Madrid until June 30, 2023," a club statement read.

"The Slovenian player has signed his new contract that commits him to our club for four more seasons."

Oblak's previous contract contained a release clause of 100 million euros, which is likely to have been increased, rather than removed, in his new deal. According to reports in the Spanish press, the adjusted release clause will be 120 million euros.

Injured Neuer dismisses retirement rumours, eyes return

AFP ■ MUNICH

Injured Bayern Munich goalkeeper Manuel Neuer on Wednesday quashed rumours of his imminent retirement and says he wants to return in time to face RB Leipzig at the penultimate day of the Bundesliga season.

"It is difficult to say when I will be back but I think Leipzig is a realistic target," he said at a press conference, with league leaders Bayern away to third-placed Leipzig on May 5.

Neuer, 33, was substituted off during Bayern's 4-1 win over Fortuna Dusseldorf last Sunday after aggravating a recurring calf injury.



The Bayern shot-stopper insists he is taking this latest setback in his stride after twice breaking a bone in his foot in 2017.

"I was out for a whole year last season when I broke my metatarsal and I was on crutches for a long time," he said.

"When you are out for that long, your body has to adapt so you expect to have smaller muscle injuries afterwards."

Neuer had a relentless struggle with injury in recent years, and after the club announced that he would give a press conference on Wednesday, there was some speculation that he might be about to end his

career. "We smiled about that," Neuer admitted when asked about the rumours.

The Bayern shot-stopper insists he is taking this latest setback in his stride after twice breaking a bone in his foot in 2017.

"I was out for a whole year last season when I broke my metatarsal and I was on crutches for a long time," he said.

Neuer has had a relentless struggle with injury in recent years, and after the club announced that he would give a press conference on Wednesday, there was some speculation that he might be about to end his

career. "I actually expected to have a muscle injury earlier this season."

Neuer said he knew instinctively that he had suffered a muscle fibre tear when he pulled up during the Dusseldorf game.

The Bayern goalkeeper praised his understudy Sven Ulreich and wants to support the team in the coming weeks.

"Even if I can't play I want to be around the team," he said. Bayern face back-to-back games against in-form Werder Bremen in the next week. They host Bremen in the league on Saturday before travelling north for a German Cup semi-final tie on Tuesday. Neuer described both games as "finals" and warned his teammates not to underestimate Bremen, who currently sit seventh in the Bundesliga.

LEADERBOARD

RUNS	400	David Warner (SRH)
WICKETS	17	Kagiso Rabada (DC)
6S	402	ARCHER IS ONE PLAYER IN OUR TEAM WHO HAS DELIVERED IN EVERY GAME. HE HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONAL
4S	918	— PADDY UPTON

IPL 2019



Ponting surprised at 'X-factor' Pant's exclusion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Australian great Ricky Ponting on Wednesday expressed surprise at Rishabh Pant's exclusion from India's World Cup squad, saying he could have been the X factor in the playing eleven.

Ponting met Pant on Monday night, hours after the India squad was announced with Dinesh Karthik being preferred over the 21-year-old for the reserve wicketkeeper's slot.

"Yes I was surprised when he was left out of the Indian squad. I thought he would be in and he would be in the starting eleven. I thought someone like him batting at four or five could have been that X factor and the difference between India and the other teams," said the Delhi Capitals head coach.

Ponting had nothing but words of encouragement for the star Delhi Capitals player.

"One thing we know about Indian cricket that there is a lot of depth around in batting and this time Rishabh has missed out. Knowing what he is like and the talent he has, I would be surprised if he doesn't play in at least three world cups before his career is over.

"I had a quick chat with him. He seems to have taken it pretty well. There is no doubt that he is disappointed, he would have loved to be in that squad but the thing he still has to remember is, potentially he will get the opportunity to play in three to four World Cups.

"What is negative thing for the Indian team is positive for Delhi capitals. Really happy that the decision has been made and he can focus on the back half of the tournament."

Pant at times has been criticised for throwing away a good start. Asked if that could be the reason selectors did not pick Pant, Ponting said: "I don't know the selection criteria. Don't know why he is not being picked. I don't know why the other guys have been picked ahead of him. To be honest it is none of my business.

"Though I don't think he is impatient, he is a very smart player. I think he sums up situations and conditions really well. But they obviously have their reasons for not picking him and I am not going to comment on that.

"I actually think he missing out you will see a different player in the IPL. His determination will shine through and I am sure he will score heavily in the back half of the tournament," he said.

Sunrisers restrict Mahi-less Chennai to 132-5

CSK batsmen fail to find boundaries and score just 52 runs in last 10 overs



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad bowled a snagging line and length to restrict Chennai Super Kings to 132 for five in their Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday.

Leading the side in the absence of Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who was rested for the game because of back spasm, Suresh Raina opted to bat after the coin landed in his favour. But the decision did not work wonders for the visitors as the Sunrisers bowlers produced a disciplined effort to pick up five wickets for 22 runs.

Opener Faf du Plessis top-scored with a 31-ball 45 and added 79 runs for the opening wicket with Shane Watson (31). CSK did not have much to cheer about after that as the hosts made a remarkable comeback. Ignored for the World Cup, Ambati Rayudu remained not out on 25 off 21 balls.

While leg-spinner Rashed Khan was the most successful



bowler with economical figures of 2/17 in four overs, seamers Bhuvneshwar Kumar (0/21) and Khaleel Ahmed (1/22) were also miserly.

It was a quite beginning for CSK as Bhuvneshwar conceded his only run in the opening over. Complementing his senior pace partner, Khaleel also bowled a tight first over, giving away only three

runs. In a manner least convincing, CSK found their first boundary when Watson's thick edge went flying over the slip cordon. Du Plessis drove Khaleel over his head for a boundary in the fourth over, a proper cricketing shot this time around, and CSK followed that with a flurry of fours and sixes.

While Watson found the fence four times, Du Plessis hit two maximums to up the ante at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium.

Having added 79 runs in just under 10 overs, Watson was bowled by left-arm spinner Shabbaz Nadeem, giving the home fans something to cheer about after a prolonged wait.

The Australia's dismissal triggered a collapse, from which the Super Kings struggled to recover.

BACK SPASM RULES OUT MS

Struggling with back spasm, Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni was on Wednesday rested for their IPL clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad, the first time he is not leading the yellow brigade since 2010.

Suresh Raina was handed over the captaincy for the away game at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium.

"Dhoni wanted to take some rest, he'll be back in the next game," Raina said at the toss.

The decision to rest the veteran was a precautionary measure.

The two-time World Cup winning captain had suffered the injury against Kolkata Knight Riders and after that game, Dhoni had said, "It's a little tight right now but hopefully, it will get better".

Ahead of the match, Dhoni was seen warming up by playing some football before Raina walked out for the toss.

This is only the fourth time Dhoni is not playing for Chennai Super Kings in the cash-rich league.

Dhoni has been in good form for Chennai Super Kings in the 2019 IPL, leading the team's run chart with 230 runs from eight matches, including two fifties.

CSK, who have won seven out of their eight matches in this Indian Premier League so far, need another win to secure a play-off berth.

Capitals eye home gains against MI



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rishabh Pant will be in focus after his fiercely-debated World Cup exclusion when a buoyant Delhi Capitals aim to replicate its stellar away form at home against the Mumbai Indians here at Feroz Shah Kotla on Thursday.

Pant has been mum on being ignored for the World Cup in favour of Dinesh Karthik and it would be interesting to see how the 21-year-old's bat responds to the disappointment.

With 10 points from eight games, both teams are on course to make the play-offs. While that counts as familiar territory for three-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians, Capitals are in the middle of a remarkable resurgence, having not finished in the top-four since 2012.

The celebrated duo of head coach Ricky Ponting and mentor Sourav Ganguly has managed to instill belief in the team members and that is visible on the field. The team now seems to believe that it can win the title after a long spell as the perennial underachiever of the competition.

The South African pace combine of Kagiso Rabada and Chris Morris have delivered for the team. Even in the previous game against Sunrisers Hyderabad, the two pacers shared seven wickets to fashion an unlikely win for Capitals who successfully defended 155 by bowling out the hosts for 116.

West Indies pacer Keemo Paul too has come to the party in the last two games by picking

Live on Star Sports 1 & 2	HEAD TO HEAD
DC VS MI	M 23
NEW DELHI	DC 12
THURSDAY 18:00 PM	MI 11

up five wickets. The batting unit, led by captain Shreyas Iyer, is also hitting its strides with Dhawan back among the runs following a few quiet games.

His opening partner is due for a big knock after making little impact in the last five games. But the centre of attention will be Pant, who will be playing his first game after missing out on a World Cup spot, a decision that has divided opinions.

The focus will also be on the Kotla pitch which has already copped criticism for its sluggish nature. Ponting had described it as the "worst possible" track for the home team after a loss earlier in the tournament.

Apart from the super over game against KKR, the other two matches here have been low-scoring affairs with the home team ending on the wrong side of the result on both occasions.

Like Capitals, Mumbai is also getting better with each game and look a more potent outfit with the return of Lasith Malinga. Hardik Pandya is also firing on all cylinders.

Capitals got the better of Mumbai Indians at Wankhede earlier in the competition, so expect the Rohit Sharma-led squad to come back harder at Kotla.

Karunaratne to lead SL

AFP ■ COLOMBO

Veteran pacer Lasith Malinga was sacked as ODI skipper with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) on Wednesday naming Test captain Dimuth Karunaratne to lead the country at the 50 over World cup in England beginning May 30.

The World cup squad will be announced on Thursday, SLC said.

"Karunaratne's appointment was ratified by the Minister of Telecommunications, Foreign Employment and Sports Honourable Harin Fernando," Sri Lanka Cricket said in a release.

31-year-old Karunaratne, who didn't play a single ODI since the 2015 World Cup, has only featured in 17 ODIs and averages 15.83 with a high score of 60.



He will replace Malinga, who had captained the team during the 0-5 loss to South Africa in the ODI series.

Malinga, who led Sri Lanka to a World T20 trophy in 2014, had personal disagreements with the team management and certain senior players, which also soured his stint as captain.

Karunaratne, a Test opener, forced himself into the ODI captaincy following his success in the Test arena. He led Sri Lanka

to a historic 2-0 Test triumph in South Africa and made Sri Lanka the only Asian side to win a Test series in South Africa.

The other option was Angelo Mathews, who has been Sri Lanka's ODI captain in two separate stints before. But Mathews is said to have declined the offer to captain citing his disagreements with coach Chandika Hathurusinghe.

The news will come as a blow for Malinga, who had played a domestic match in Kandy, only 14 hours after playing an IPL match for his franchise Mumbai Indians in Mumbai, earlier this month.

Apart from Malinga and Mathews, Sri Lanka had also tried Dinesh Chandimal and Thisara Perera to lead the side at various stages over the past two years since the retirement of Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene in 2014.

Pant, Rayudu named India's standbys for WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Young wicket-keeper Rishabh Pant and veteran batsman Ambati Rayudu were on Wednesday named among the standbys for India's World Cup squad, reigniting their dashed hopes of making the trip to the UK in case an injury setback hits the side.

Speedster Navdeep Saini also found a place in the list of three back-ups for the mega-event starting on May 30.

With the ICC doing away with the practice of letting countries announce a probables' list before the final squad, the BCCI also has the option of including anyone apart from these three but it is unlikely to happen.

"Just like ICC Champions Trophy, we have three standbys. Rishabh Pant and Ambati Rayudu are the first and second standbys while Saini is the bowler in the list. So if anyone gets injured, as per requirement, one of the three will

be going," a senior BCCI official said on Wednesday.

While Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan and Deepak Chahar will be travelling with the team purely as net bowlers, they can also be drafted in if the management feels so.

"Khaleel, Avesh and Deepak are not designated standbys. In case of bowlers, that possibility is there but when it comes purely to batsmen, it will be either Rishabh or Rayudu," the official said.

In other developments, there will be no Yo-Yo Test for the World Cup-bound players as the IPL is going to end only on May 12, just a few days before India head to the UK.

"The players are already in the middle of a gruelling T20 season. Once the IPL ends, they will need recovery time.

"It's not like that there is a gap between two series and you are having a test. If you are tired, the results may vary," the official explained.



Pak to name WC squad with two reserves

PTI ■ KARACHI

Battling concerns over the form and fitness of some of their players, the Pakistan selection committee headed by Inzamam-ul-Haq has decided to announce the World Cup squad on Thursday with two reserves.

The selection committee has decided to utilise the five-match one-day series against England and some side matches as the barometer for making changes in the 15-member World Cup squad, if required, by the deadline of 23rd May.

"The selectors after consulting head coach, Mickey Arthur have more or less decided on the 15-member World Cup squad and two reserves who will be on the flight to England for the World Cup and before that play at the one-day series against England and some side matches," said a source close to the selectors on Wednesday.

"The concerns are over the fitness of left arm spin allrounder, Imad Wasim, the present form of experienced left arm pacer, Muhammad Aamir and a debate on who will be the reserve opener in the World Cup.

The source said Imad would be picked in the squad with the other left-arm spin allrounder Muhammad Nawaz among the reserves so that if Imad is unable to be 100 percent fit before the World Cup he can be replaced.

Muhammad Aamir managed to snap five wickets in his last 14 ODIs and the source said selectors and team management have some reservations over the form of the experienced pacer.

"Fakhar, Imam, Haris, Babar Azam, Shoaib Malik, Muhammad Hafeez, Muhammad Rizwan, Sarfaraz Ahmed (Capt), Shadab Khan, Faheem Ashraf, Junaid Khan, Emad Wasim, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Muhammad Aamir are certain selections while for the one slot the toss up is between Abid Ali and hard-hitting middle order batsman, Asif Ali.

"The reserve players will include Muhammad Nawaz and Muhammad Hasnain."

Archer given chance to stake WC claim

AFP ■ LONDON

England chief selector Ed Smith is confident the call-up of uncapped all-rounder Jofra Archer will have no adverse affect on team morale in the run-up to the World Cup.

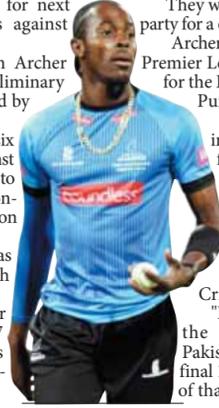
Rising star Archer was included on Wednesday in a 17-man squad for next month's one-day internationals against Ireland and Pakistan.

The dynamic Barbados-born Archer was left out of the 15-man preliminary World Cup squad also announced by tournament hosts England.

But he could have as many as six one-day internationals — one against Ireland and five against Pakistan — to stake his claim before England confirm their final World Cup squad on May 23.

Sussex pacer Archer, 24, has an English father and holds a British passport.

He completed a three-year qualification period on March 17 after the England and Wales Cricket Board changed its residency rules.



Under the previous system, he would not have been eligible until the winter of 2022 after a seven-year residency.

Archer and another Barbados-born Sussex player Chris Jordan were both added to the 15-man squad that played a one-day series in the West Indies earlier this year.

They were also included in the 14-strong party for a one-off Twenty20 against Pakistan. Archer has been impressing in the Indian Premier League, where he took three for 15 for the Rajasthan Royals against Kings XI Punjab on Tuesday.

"The selection panel has been impressed with Jofra Archer's performances in domestic and franchise cricket," said Smith. "He is a very talented and exciting cricketer."

"In line with ICC regulations, we have to name a preliminary squad of 15 for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup before April 23. "However, all 17 players named in the Royal London ODIs against Pakistan can stake a claim to be in the final 15-man squad, finalised at the end of that series."

SHASTRI TELLS EXCLUDED BUNCH NOT TO LOSE HEART

PTI ■ DUBAI

India coach Ravi Shastri on Wednesday said he would have preferred a 16-member World Cup squad instead of the mandated 15 and urged those who missed out to "not lose heart".

India on Monday announced a 15-strong squad for the mega-event, starting May 30, and the omissions of young keeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and veteran Ambati Rayudu triggered a debate on the choices made by the selectors.

Shastri steered clear of commenting on the furore.

"I don't get involved in selection. If we have any opinion, we let the captain know," Shastri was quoted as saying by the 'Sport360' website.

"When you only have 15 to pick, there is bound to be someone or the other who misses out, which is very unfortunate. I would have preferred 16 players. We had mentioned to the ICC that in a tournament that long, 16 players makes sense. But the dictat was 15," he added.

Shastri said those who missed the final 15 should look ahead as opportunity can knock anytime.

"They (who missed out) shouldn't lose heart. It's a funny game. There could be injuries. So you never know when you could be called up," he said.

When pressed on Vijay Shankar's selection for the No 4 slot months after captain Virat Kohli declared Rayudu as the front-runner for the position, Shastri said the spot remains a flexible one.

"Total flexibility (on No 4 position) depending on conditions, opposition. I would say the top three... but after that you can be very flexible," he said.

