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HORROR HAS POTENTIAL: EMRAAN 13 VIVACITY

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 for 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 "safron 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

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



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

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 Bhargav 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.

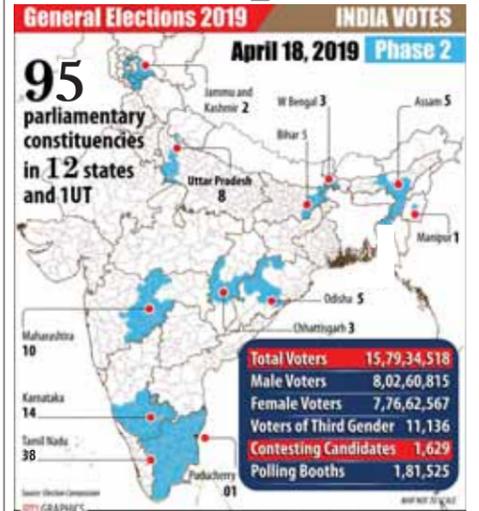
Born in Bhind district of Madhya Pradesh, Sadhvi has had a long association with the Sangh Parivar. A post-graduate in history, she worked with the RSS student wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and Durga Vahini, women's wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

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.

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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, Jai 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 repre-

sented by the AIADMK, following recovery of huge amount of cash allegedly from an associate of a DMK leader.

The EC also announced postponement of polling in Tripura (East) Lok Sabha seat to the third phase on April 23, saying the prevailing law and order situation there is not conducive for free and fair polls.

The stake is high for the AIADMK which had swept the polls in 2014 and has gone from one internal crisis to another after the death of its supreme leader J Jayalalitha. The party has formed a strong alliance with PMK and DMKD 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.

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50 killed as rain lashes Raj, MP, Guj

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 50 people died and several others injured due to unseasonal rain, dust storm and lightning in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. It has caused damage to property, wheat crops, mango, and potatoes and vegetables in north, central parts of the country.

It is estimated that properties and crops worth several hundred crores have been damaged. Several cattle were also killed in rain-related incidents.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), unseasonal rain, thunderstorm, lightning and high speed wind were caused by active Western Disturbance (WD) over eastern Iran that is moving towards east-northeastwards across Afghanistan, Pakistan and northwest India.

According to IMD, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Bihar, Gangetic West Bengal and Delhi-NCR on Wednesday witnessed squall (wind speed reaching 60-70 kilometres per hour) accompanied with hail and lightning.

The IMD has issued an amber-coloured warning for parts of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab,



A woman tries to prevent rainwater from entering her house during heavy rain at Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district on Wednesday PTI

Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Bihar. An amber colour warning indicates that authorities have to remain alert for any weather-related exigency. The situation is expected to remain the same in the next two-three days in North-East and southern parts of the country.

As per IMD, Kerala, Telangana, Sikkim, Karnataka, Assam, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh and Puducherry may witness rain, thunderstorm with gusty wind on Thursday, while West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala,

Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, and Odisha are likely to get rain and thunderstorm on Friday.

Several parts of north and central India have been witnessing thunderstorms, dust storms, lightning and heavy rain since Sunday.

According to reports, Rajasthan witnessed the maximum casualties with 21 people killed in overnight rain-related incidents followed by Madhya Pradesh where 15 were killed. 10 people were killed in Gujarat, three were killed in Maharashtra.

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi took to twitter in the morning to express anguish over the loss of lives in the rain in Gujarat and announced relief. Soon afterwards Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath hit out at the Prime Minister, accusing him of being concerned only about his home State Gujarat.

The PMO in a tweet later said, "PM @narendramodi has expressed grief at loss of lives due to unseasonal rain and storms in MP, Rajasthan, Manipur & various parts of the country".

"An ex gratia of ₹2 lakh each for the next of kin of those who lost their lives due to unseasonal rain & storms in MP, Rajasthan, Manipur & various parts of the country has been approved from the PM's National Relief Fund. ₹50,000 each for the injured has also been approved," the PMO said.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh said the Government is closely monitoring the situation in rain-hit areas and is ready to provide all possible assistance to States affected by rain and thunderstorm. Officials of the Agriculture Ministry said the assessment of loss of crops is being carried out.

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Shower cools Delhi; weather comfort to last today, says Met

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhiites woke up to a pleasant Wednesday morning, with the temperature dropping following overnight rain and gusty winds. The maximum temperature settled at 29.5 degrees Celsius, seven notches below the season's average, while the minimum temperature was recorded at 19.0 degrees Celsius, three notches below the normal, a Met department official said.

The Met office has forecast overcast skies for Thursday along with the possibility of light rain and thundershowers. "The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to hover at 33 and 18 degrees Celsius respectively," the Met said.

The humidity oscillated between 82 and 54 per cent. The Safdarjung observatory, recording of which is considered the official figure for Delhi, received 1 mm rain till 8.30 am after which it recorded traces of rainfall till 5.30 pm.



Rain clouds fill the sky in New Delhi on Wednesday AP

Porcupine snatched from jaws of death in JNU

New Delhi: An Indian Crested Porcupine was rescued by Wildlife SOS after it was hit by a vehicle in Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi on Tuesday night. The porcupine sustained injuries to its hind legs and is currently under observation. Wasim Akram, Deputy Director-Special Projects, Wildlife SOS, said, "We are thankful to JNU students for taking quick action that helped save the animal's life."

PNS

Joy of Flying grounded

In red, Jet Airways suspends all ops as banks refuse to grant bailout fund

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Teetering for over four months due to cash-drought, Jet Airways, flying for over 25 years, on Wednesday said its last flight will takeoff on Wednesday night, after its lenders refused to offer a ₹400-crore lifeline.

"With immediate effect, we are compelled to cancel all our international and domestic flights. The last flight will operate today," Jet Airways informed the exchanges.

The airline said the decision follows the lenders refusing to offer a lifeline.

"Since no emergency fund-



ing from the lenders or any other source is forthcoming, the airline will not be able to pay for fuel or other critical services to keep the operations going... And has decided to go ahead with temporary suspension of operations," it said.

The last flight of the airline, left the Amritsar airport at 10.30pm for New Delhi.

After a board meeting on Tuesday, the management had authorised chief executive Vinay Dube to make one last

appeal to the lenders for an emergency ₹400 crore funding, and if not the demand is not met, take a final call on the future of the airline on Wednesday.

AAP rejects 'only Delhi' offer as Cong refuses to share Haryana

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After a fresh round of discussion for the Congress-AAP alliance in Delhi and neighbouring States of Haryana and Punjab, the Aam Admi Party (AAP) on Wednesday said the Congress has refused to form an alliance in Haryana and thus the party does "not want a tie-up only in Delhi".

While AAP leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh said alliance talks between the AAP and the Congress was called off following disagreement over tie-up in Haryana, senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who was part of the discussion on Wednesday, presented a defensive statement and said as par-

liamentarians they keep meeting and declined to state anything about the meeting.

Alliance talks between AAP and Congress has been called off following disagreement over tie-up in Haryana and Delhi. The Congress has refused to form an alliance in Haryana, and we do not want a tie-up only in Delhi," said Sanjay Singh, who earlier held a meeting with Azad following the fresh rounds of expression by party chiefs — Rahul Gandhi of the Congress and Arvind Kejriwal of the AAP.

On his part, Azad said he was not aware of any alliances, particularly in Haryana of which he is also incharge. "Who is doing the alliance? As for Haryana there no such talks," said Azad.

When asked about AAP leader Sanjay Singh meeting him, Azad said as Member of Parliament we keep meeting each other so nothing new should be read about. Both Azad and Singh are members of the Rajya Sabha.

When specifically asked in the Press conference about the Congress-AAP alliance for Delhi Lok Sabha seats, Azad said he is not aware as he is not the AICC incharge of Delhi.

In very defensive answer about alliances, Azad said the Congress is always open to alliances as the party has done it in Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Jammu & Kashmir.

According to the sources, Singh proposed 6:3:1 seat sharing in Haryana in which



'Alliance talks between AAP and Congress has been called off following disagreement'

Congress would fight from six seats, while the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) would field its candidates for three seats and one candidate would be fielded by the AAP.

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CAPSULE

NAMO TV TO FOLLOW SILENCE PERIOD: EC
New Delhi: NaMo TV, sponsored by the BJP, cannot display 'election matter' during the silence period prescribed in the electoral law in a particular phase of the poll, the Election Commission has concluded.

MARKETS	
SENSEX	39,275.64 (+369.80)
NIFTY	11,787.20 (+96.80)
GOLD	31,520.00 (-28.00)
SILVER	37,374.00 (+111.00)
WEATHER	
MAX	27.0°C
MIN	15.0°C
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Sudden drop in temp may flare viral infection

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A drop of nearly 12 degrees Celsius in the maximum temperature has brought back the chill in the air and has pushed the people to wear take out the woollen clothes which they had packed with the onset of summers. The sudden decrease in temperature has also raised the chances of viral and other diseases.

Apart from this there is a big difference in the maximum and minimum temperature these days and this diurnal difference in temperature which can cause the people to fall prey to the viral infections. The Physicians of the associated hospital of Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) acknowledge that the more of patients suffering from viral fever and common cold visited the OPD of the hospital on Wednesday.

The senior Physician of Doon hospital, Dr Harish Basera told *The Pioneer* that sudden drop in temperature would cause problems to the patients of asthma and allergy. He disclosed that such weather causes an increase of 15-20 percent in the number of viral fever cases. The Physician said that people especially elderly should wear woollen clothes during morning and evenings to avoid catching cold. "The children and old aged are particularly more susceptible for catching cold in this transitional phase of season. It is recommended that after exercise one should be little careful and avoid immediate contact with cold air," he said.

The physicians advice that cold water and drinks should be avoided by the people during this time of the year and once infected with cold the people should immediately consult the doctor. Many people tend to switch on the fans during the day time which according to the doctors should be avoided.

Common cold is the most common disease among humans with an average adult getting two to three infections in a year. The prevalence of this disease is more in children and old people as their immunity is low. The symptoms of the disease are sore throat, running nose, sneezing and fever.

Recent weather activity not abrupt but part of pre monsoon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With the rise in temperature recorded from mid March the weather activity has taken a turn recently in various parts of the state. Though marked as abrupt change in weather by general observers, the officials of the State Meteorological Centre state that the changed weather activity is a routine feature of pre monsoon season which is quite normal. Further, the agriculture in the state may experience a bit adverse effect though the hail and squall recorded from the various places of the state are normal. Adding further in this scientist B Rohit Thapliyal of the State meteorological centre said, "The hail and squall activity in the state or even the rainfall activity is not high but a normal pre monsoon activity."

Talking more about the damages



by the recent weather activity to agriculture he said, "It is true that the squall and hail if recorded above normal can cause damage to the standing crops and fruits too as this is the flowering season. However, the squall or hails received so far in various places of the state are normal. It is likely that crops may have suffered serious damage in some places. In this season the farmers use hail net to protect their crops from the hail."

Giving information about the warning given to specific areas with considerable agriculture in the state he said, "We give warning for the whole state. The farming types in plains and mountains region are different but a majority of places in the state have agricultural activity so no different warning is given by us. However, the farmers of any specific area rich in agriculture are given guidance accordingly."

GGIC Jwalapur enrolls 260 girl students



PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Thirteen year old Samira is all smiles on joining school after her primary education was over in Rishikul government school number 28. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign is achieving results in government school for girls in Jwalapur where the number of seats for girl students has been enhanced to 260 in comparison to 224 seats till last academic session. In just four days, the inter college admitted 260 girl students announcing admissions closed after the same.

Notably against 120 allotted seats, last year the college had admitted 224 girl students, but this year it has been increased to 260. The college principal felicitated the parents of the girls who took admission in class VI. Speaking to *The Pioneer*, principal of college GGIC Poonam Rana said, "We had launched awareness campaigns in the township of Jwalapur announcing admission of girl students on first come first serve basis. The positive results were seen in the first four days of admission announcement. There is no other junior high school in the area of Jwalapur, and most of the parents do not

wish to send their girls far for studying. With public schools being unapproachable on account of high fees, GGIC is the only accessible inter college in the area. The inter-college principal said that three sections of class VI are being run for the past few years. This year new rooms have been constructed under district programme, new students shall be accommodated in the same. However the shortage of teachers is a perennial issue with more than half a dozen posts of teachers of subjects including Biology, English, PT, Hindi and Sanskrit vacant.

U'khand to get new equipment to strengthen fire & emergency services

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In order to strengthen the Fire and Emergency services of the country, The Central Government has chosen few states including Uttarakhand for procurement of new equipment under Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project (UDRP) with the help of World Bank. The Dehradun Chief Fire Officer said that the state will probably acquire the equipment by June this year. Dehradun CFO Sandeep Kumar Rana said, "To strengthen fire and emergency services and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) the equipment are being provided. The proposal has been sent to them, the budget will be sanctioned by World Bank and administration. Our estimation of these equipments is of about Rs 16 crore."



When asked about the time period in which state will acquire these equipment he said, "It is highly probable that will procure these equipment by June this year." The said equipment will come under seven categories including breathing apparatus, victim location cameras, under water cameras, thermal imaging camera, fire protection suits, basic search and rescue equipment which include rope launchers, sleeping bags and

lastly multipurpose fire vehicle. It is pertinent to mention here that Uttarakhand at present has 33 fire stations and three units with 11 more units ready to be set up. The new units will be located at Tyuni and Lal Tappar in Dehradun, Ghansali in Tehri, Puroala in Uttarkashi, Gairsain and Badrinath in Chamoli, Bhagwanpur in Haridwar, Bazpur in Uddham Singh Nagar, Didihat in Pithoragarh, Srinagar and Thailsain in Pauri. About 970 fire fighters are giving services day and night in the state, though as per the sources about 400 posts of fire fighters are still vacant in the state. It is also worth mentioning that from April 14 to 20 National Fire Service week is being observed, during which various awareness programmes are being organised in the state.

Rain, thunderstorm likely in many places today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Even as rain was experienced in various parts of the State on Wednesday, the State meteorological centre has forecast light rainfall on Thursday too. The meteorological centre has stated that light to moderate rain and thunderstorm are very likely to occur in the majority of places of the state today. The provisional state capital is also likely to experience rain and thunderstorm activity today. The maximum and minimum temperatures in the city are likely to be about 27 degree Celsius and 15 degree Celsius respectively. Meanwhile the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded at various places of the state on Wednesday were 25.1 degree Celsius and 17.4 degree Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 28.3 degree Celsius and 18.8 degree Celsius in Pantnagar, 10.6 degree Celsius

in 7.4 degree Celsius in Mukteshwar and 14 degree Celsius and 9.8 degree Celsius respectively in New Tehri. The recent weather activity in Dehradun and elsewhere in the State has provided relief to the public from the rising level of mercury. The maximum temperature in the city has dropped about 12 degrees in a duration of four days. As per the State Meteorological Centre data the maximum temperature recorded in Dehradun on April 14 was



35 degree Celsius which rose to 37 degree Celsius on April 15. After rainfall activity in the city on April 16, the maximum tem-

perature dropped to 25.4 degree Celsius and then to 25.1 degree Celsius recorded on April 17. Similarly, other places in

the state have also registered a marked drop in the maximum temperature during a period of four days.

Gathering of poets & poetry lovers held in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

An informal evening attended by poets and poetry lovers of Dehradun was held at Books N More (BNM) to revive the "baithhak" culture of the Doon valley where Sahityik Baithhaks used to be held regularly at various places including Town Hall, Parade Ground and at the residences of many scholars. The gathering was open to all who wished to participate. Doon School's senior faculty member MH Farooqui conducted the poetry evening throwing light on the history of writers and writing in the valley - recalling his earlier years in the valley when informal and interactive gatherings were an important feature in the town. Every day there used to be gatherings of friends over cups of tea at various restaurants in the valley and this was known as the "Addebaazi" culture. Popular addas included Janta, Tip-Top and El Fiesta. People met and exchanged views on art, literature and other subjects and this acted as a kind of anti-stress therapy. It was a healthy trend which has almost faded away now. Free expression of one's feelings and beliefs was an important part of the Addebaazi tradition in the valley.

Farooqui remembered having heard great poets like Jigar Moradabadi, Harivansh Rai Bachchan and Gopal Das Neeraj and said that there was hardly any Hindi or Urdu poet who had not recited in the valley one time or another. There used to be all-night mushairas attended by Doonites enthusiastically. He said that poets, especially young poets, could spell hope for the world. Doon's poets Atul Pundir, Pratibha Katiyar and Jaskiran Chopra recited their poetry at the gathering amid the cosy ambience of BNM which is a book lovers' book store in the heart of Doon valley. Pundir recited a few poems from his book "Itni si Toh Baat Hai" while Jaskiran read out some nazms and ghazals from here recent collection titled Mera Shehar. Her poetry took people back to the erstwhile beauty of the valley. Pratibha Katiyar recited poems that had her unique creative stamp of romance and deep meaning. Her use of symbols and command over Hindi make her writings very special. Doon's young poet Kunal Uniyal also recited from his book "Main Tula Hun". The youngest poet in the gathering was Vibhor Dwivedi who read out his poems in English which lamented the loss of a



world of nature and beauty. He called himself a "Himalayan child" as he was brought up in Darjeeling and belongs to Uttarakhand. Doon's senior Urdu poet Nadeem Burney regaled the select audience with his memories of old times in Dehradun and recited his ghazals and nazms. Members of the audience shared their views and experiences at the gathering. Among these, memories of the old days of Doon were prominent. The poets shared with the audience the story of their poetic journey.

Among the gathering were noted English writer Pradeep Singh, connoisseur of poetry and art Sheikh Amir Ahmed, Anil Aggarwal, group captain (retd) PK Rai and Deepti Rai and many other lovers of literature. Pradeep Singh said that literary mapping could be done and people could get to know through this about all authors living in the region. It could be linked to the state's tourism. The evening was meant, in a way, to go back to the informal interaction that lay at the heart of the old baithhaks of the valley. BNM's Ashish Narayan Sharma also recalled the addebaazi days of Doon and appreciated the readings of the poets. Farooqui gave the message that people should buy books of poetry in order to encourage poets and the creation of poetry. "It is disheartening to hear that poetry does not sell," he said. Many memories of various people jostled each other as the evening progressed. The two-hour meet saw many turn emotional and this created a warmth and camaraderie that seemed to be the main feeling at this gathering. So poetry and emotions, that go hand in hand, made the evening a memorable one both for the poets and the audience.

ON LOK SABHA RESULTS

PCC president fate hinges

BETTER PERFORMANCE OF CONGRESS IN THESE CRUCIAL ELECTIONS WOULD RAISE THE STATURE OF PRITAM SINGH WITHIN THE PARTY WHILE A SEVERE BATTERING LIKE IN THE 2014 LOK SABHA ELECTION COULD EVEN LEAD TO HIS REPLACEMENT



PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The performance of the Congress candidates in the Lok Sabha elections would have a definite bearing on the political fate of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief Pritam Singh. Better performance of the party in these crucial elections would raise the stature of PCC President within the party while severe battering like the 2014 Lok Sabha election could even lead to his replacement. Singh who is pitted in a tough electoral battle against Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah of BJP from Tehri Lok Sabha constituency would also be keenly observing the performance of other four candidates as PCC chief as the result of Tehri.

Political observers opine that if Pritam Singh is able to wrest Tehri Lok Sabha which has proved to be a citadel of the erstwhile ruling family of Garhwal then he would emerge

stronger in the party. They further point out that in case the congress is able to score over BJP in these elections than Pritam would become the tallest leader of the party in the state. However a debacle in these polls would give his detractors a big stick to browbeat him and they would demand his replacement from the post of PCC President.

It is pertinent to mention here that Pritam Singh was appointed as PCC chief in May 2017 after the severe drubbing the party faced at the hands of BJP in the assembly elections in the state. In these two years, Singh was able to rejuvenate the party and in the

elections of urban local bodies held last year, the congress party performed reasonably well. However in last two years Pritam Singh was not able to select his new team in the PCC.

In these two years, Singh continued to work with the old PCC team that was chosen during the time when Kishore Upadhyay was PCC President. When contacted, Singh said that the Congress party would register victory in all the five Lok Sabha seats in the state. On new PCC, he said that the list is ready and its announcement would be made soon after the election process in the country is over.

CM to campaign in Rajasthan on April 19-20

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

While teams of Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and office bearers from Uttarakhand have left to campaign in West Bengal and Chhattisgarh, chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat will be campaigning in Rajasthan on April 19 and 20.

The BJP state media in-charge Devendra Bhasin informed that after the recent conclusion of polling in Uttarakhand for the Lok Sabha election, the chief minister and other senior leaders of the party are going to other states to participate in the election campaign for the party. The chief minister Trivendra Singh

Rawat will be campaigning at Jaipur in Rajasthan on April 19 and 20. Teams of BJP leaders and office bearers from Uttarakhand have already left for Chhattisgarh and West Bengal while the lists of leaders and office bearers for other states are being finalised, added Bhasin.

It is pertinent to mention here that while eight party leaders from Uttarakhand are participating in the election campaign in Chhattisgarh, 21 are participating in the campaign in West Bengal.

State minister Dhan Singh Rawat, MLA Mahendra Bhatt, state cooperative bank chairman Dan Singh Rawat, MLA Mukesh Koli, district

Panchayat member Gajpal Barthwal, cooperative bank chairman Narendra Manas, former district head Vinod Suyal and former district head Mahavir Kukreti were listed for campaign in Chhattisgarh.

On the other hand, the 21 leaders and office bearers listed for campaign in West Bengal include the Union minister of State for Textiles, Ajay Tamta, party's state vice president Raju Bhandari, state general secretary Gajraj Singh Bisht, party's state minister Kuldeep Kumar, State office in-charge Pushkar Singh Kala, state head of party's SC cell Rajesh Kumar, former MLA Rajesh Juwantha and others.

SCPCR chairperson inspects GDMC Hospital, pulls up staff



Usha Negi's temper flared up in the NICU ward when she saw that the milk was being served to the newborn in plastic utensils

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The chairperson of State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), Usha Negi conducted a surprise inspection of the female wing of the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital on Wednesday. In her visit she inspected wards, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and the labour ward.

Apparently angry at the arrangements, the SCPCR chairperson gave severe dressing down to the staff members.

In the NICU ward the temper of Negi got flared up when she saw that the milk was being served to the newborn in the plastic utensils.

It is worth mentioning here that during her previous visit to the hospital on March 21, Negi had directed the GDMC hospital authorities to change the plastic utensils in the NICU ward.

To prepare the milk, the hospital staff uses a microwave cooking machine in which the milk and water is warmed in plastic utensils.

During her previous visit, the

Woman accuses GDMC hospital of apathy

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Exposing the dismal conditions and apathetic attitude of the doctors and other staff members of the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital once again, a poor woman suffering from bleeding caused by a contraceptive Copper Intra Uterine Device (IUD) has alleged that doctors are not treating her despite her worsening condition.

This 27 year old woman, a resident of Kuthal Gate area said that after the birth of her twins in the year 2014, the doctor implanted the Copper T (IUD) without her consent. Her husband, Dharmendra Kumar, a daily wage earner said that his wife started having bleeding due to this device last month. Showing the

hospital's registration slip and Atal Ayushman Card, Kumar said, "I along with my ailing wife have made numerous visits to the hospital in the last twenty days but the doctors are not paying any heed. My wife is in pain but the doctors are not listening. I am a poor labourer and don't have money to take her to any private hospital."

Incidentally when this couple was narrating its woes to the media persons, the chairperson of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR), Usha Negi was inspecting the female wing of the GDMC hospital.

After listening to the problem of the woman, Negi herself took the woman to the doctor on duty. After this, the treatment of the woman started and the IUD which was troubling her was removed.

SCPCR chairperson had said that since plastic cooking wares are not good for health and the milk is being given to newborn babies, the plastic utensils should be changed.

However the hospital authorities apparently paid no heed to the orders of SCPCR. On the day Negi registered her strong objection to the Medical Superintendent (MS) of the hospital Dr K K Tamta who was present on the occasion.

She asked the reason behind the hospital not following the orders of the SCPCR.

Interestingly Dr Tamta claimed that the new utensils were purchased by the hospital but the staff is not using them.

Later talking to the media persons, Negi said that apart from inspecting the hospital, her objective was to know about the condition of the destitute and men-

tally challenged woman and her baby who was admitted in the hospital by some civil society members in advanced stage of pregnancy.

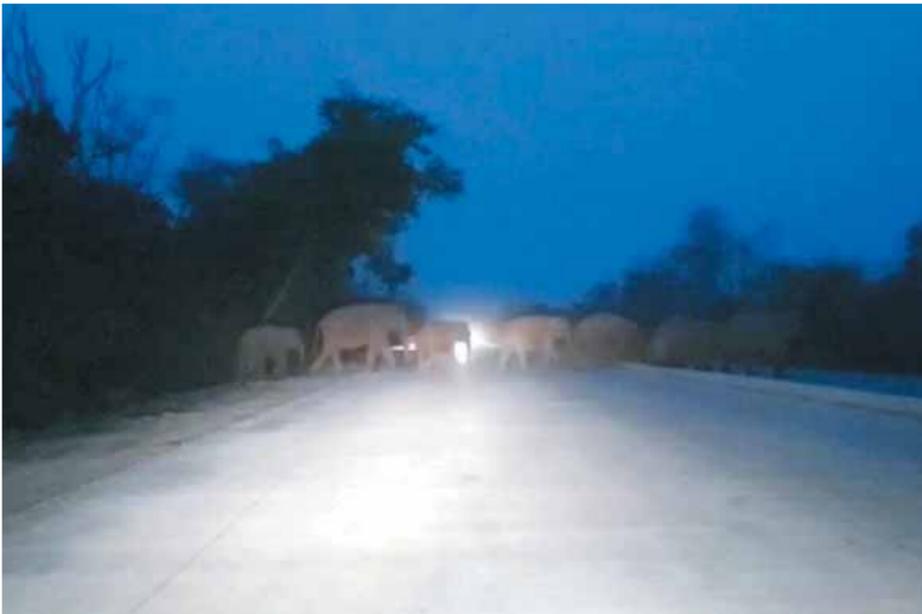
This woman had delivered a baby in the hospital. Negi said that the woman and her baby have been discharged from the hospital and sent to the Nari Niketan.

On the issue of delay in arrival of the DNA report which would ascertain the parentage issue of two children (A boy and girl), Negi said that she has questioned the hospital administration on the inordinate delay in arrival of the DNA report.

In this case, two families are staking claim on a baby boy.

The family which is having the baby girl is contacting the SCPCR and asking for the DNA test report.

Jumbo herd reaches Pantnagar university



Blocked corridors continue to affect wildlife movements

PNS ■ HALDWANI

With elephant corridors in the state getting blocked due to various factors, the movement of pachyderms is being adversely affected for some years now. With the advent of warmer days, the elephants are now moving around

in search of water, which also ends up bringing them close to or even inside human settlements. Such a scene was witnessed in the GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology late on Tuesday evening.

Late in the evening, a herd of about a dozen elephants came out of the jungle and was moving around on the main road. Due to this, vehicular traffic on the Rudrapur-Lalkuan bypass was stalled for quite some time. The herd of pachyderms came out from the Tanda forest area and moved towards the university campus in search of water. The jumbos stayed in the university campus for quite some time and returned to the

jungle after having their fill of water.

The Terai central forest division sub divisional officer Navin Chandra Pant said that presently there is adequate water in the forest. However, as part of their daily movements, the elephants often come out of the forests. There are various water holes, small rivers and nullahs with adequate water in the Tanda forest area, he added.

It is pertinent to mention here that the elephant corridor used to be free for movement of pachyderms and other wildlife in the Terai central, Terai east and Haldwani forest divisions in the past. However, factors like rapidly rising encroachments and constructions of the ITBP

and Indian Oil Corporation on the elephant corridor in Lalkuan have blocked the movement of pachyderms on this corridor. Having lost their traditional route, the elephants increased their movement towards rural areas where they end up eating and damaging crops in the farms.

If sources are to be believed, the absence of a notification on the elephant corridor has led to continued uncertainty regarding the elephant corridor. It is also worth mentioning here that wildlife experts have been warning for long that failure to ensure corridors free for the movement of elephants would exacerbate human-elephant conflict in the coming years.

4 including 3 cops sent to judicial custody

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Four accused including three suspended policemen were presented in the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) Punit Kumar on Wednesday in a case which saw three policemen seizing cash (according to complainant) from a property dealer Anurodh Panwar under the pretext of checks and seizure for model code of conduct.

The accused have been sent to 14 day judicial custody. Director General (DG) law and order, Ashok Kumar said, "The accused have been sent to 14 day judicial custody. If required, we will request for their remand again."

When asked about the money allegedly looted he said, "It is still uncertain what was inside the bag. The com-

Four accused including Anupam Sharma, suspended sub inspector Dinesh Negi and two constables in this high profile case were arrested by Special Task Force (STF) on Tuesday night under various sections of the Indian Penal Code

plainant himself said that he did not check inside the bag. However, the investigation is still going on."

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Special Task Force (STF) Rishim Aggarwal said that the four were arrested on the basis of technical evidence.

The STF will be working on the leads secured from contradictory statements made by the accused during interrogation.

The investigation is underway and further evidence collection and related aspects are being looked into, she said. Four accused includ-

ing Anupam Sharma, suspended sub inspector Dinesh Negi and two constables in this high profile case were arrested by Special Task Force (STF) on Tuesday night under various sections of the Indian Penal Code. The STF has booked the accused under section 341 (wrongful restraint), section 365 (kidnapping) section 170 (impersonating a public servant), section 392 (robbery) and section 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC.

It is pertinent to mention here that Suspended Sub Inspector Dinesh Negi with two constables seized a bag reportedly containing cash from the complainant property dealer Anurodh Panwar on the night of April 4 using the SUV of Garhwal Inspector General (IG) Ajay Rautela. Though, what was inside the bag in question is still uncertain.

Sati Kund faces neglect despite HC orders

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Site of archaeological and religious importance, the historical Sati Kund located in Kankhal has for long been suffering from neglect.

Following high court orders last year in June, some hope had arisen that the sacred pond would regain its original form.

With the initiative taken by district administration, water supply was replenished in the pond (Kund) but due to lack of maintenance and proper water drainage system, it has again become a site in need of attention with mosquitoes and stink arising from the pond. Notably, following a PIL by

a Nainital resident, the court had ordered the state government to remove encroachments from the Sati Kund area and restore it back to its original form.

The dried up pond was again filled with water with supply facilitated from the Ganga canal but with no provision to clean the pond and drain out stale water, has become a source of stench affecting even the surrounding residential area.

A layer of scum covers the pond these days.

Sati Kund is a holy pond named after Sati-Lord Shiva's first consort- located in Jagjeetpur area of Kankhal on Haridwar -Laksar road, some



four kilometres away from the main city of Haridwar. Sati Kund is actually the site of the Yagna Kund, the sacrificial fire

pit where the goddess Sati committed self immolation. It is believed that Sati committed self immolation in the wake of

the insulting demeanor of her father, king Daksha Prajapati towards lord Shiva.

Daksha had organised a

massive Yagna but did not invite his son-in-law Shiva which upset Sati.

Speaking to The Pioneer, the Haridwar-Roorkee Development Authority secretary KK Mishra said, "The Sati Kund will be inspected and arrangements will be made for the exit of water. We will be writing a letter to the department concerned for its regular cleaning."

About two decades ago, there used to be a pond at Sati Kund where devotees used to come to have holy dip but now the place has been destroyed with the sewer water getting collected in the area. Last year, the high court has ordered restoration of the entire Sati

Kund area while hearing a public interest litigation.

Earlier too attempts have been made to restore the site following complaints of the locals but the state government has failed to ensure the needful. Elements of the land mafia too had encroached on the land surrounding the Sati Kund area. During Ardh Kumbh mela of 2016, boring work was started for water replenishment but it was stopped halfway leaving the pond dry.

Speaking to this correspondent, principal of Mahila Vidyalaya Sati Kund, Jagjeetpur, Veena Shastri said, "Almost 15 years ago, there used to be a pond at Sati Kund where the devotees took

holy dip and performed worship. Water from a rivulet was supplied to this pond. Later the pond dried up and Kund lost its form. Many attempts were made to beautify the place but in vain."

A local resident, Satish Kumar said that Sati Kund is mentioned in the Hindu scriptures but some decades ago, the water in the pond dried up. A priest at Sati Kund temple Pushpraj Sharma says that earlier sewer water was getting collected in the pond. After repeated complaints, the pond was cleaned by the Municipal Corporation and now in rainy season, when the drains swell up, the overflowing waste water ends up in the pond.

Rallies continue to disrupt traffic in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The procession organised on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti once again caused traffic congestion in parts of Dehradun on Wednesday. Even with extra force on the route, traffic was jam-packed during the time of procession.

While deputy inspector general and Traffic directorate director Kewal Khurana had recently reiterated that processions or rallies will not be allowed on the main roads during peak hours, citizens again had to face traffic related problems on the busy route of Saharanpur Road.

However, Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Prakash Chandra Arya said he had no knowledge of any such congestion.

The procession which started from Jain Dharmshala passed through Aadhath Bazaar, Saharanpur Chowk, Jhanda Bazaar, Bhandari Chowk, Moti Bazaar, Paltan Bazaar, Darshan Lal Chowk, Dispensary Road, Dhamawala Bazaar, Raja Road, Maharaja Agrasen Chowk and

While deputy inspector general and Traffic directorate director Kewal Khurana had recently reiterated that processions or rallies will not be allowed on the main roads during peak hours, citizens again had to face traffic related problems on the busy route of Saharanpur Road

ended at Jain Dharmshala. During this procession, the traffic on several nearby routes was diverted due to which citizens travelling to and from Dehradun Railway station among other destinations, had to face considerable inconvenience.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Traffic Directorate director has taken a stand in the past too against taking out of rallies and processions on main roads especially during peak hours.

Despite this, the authorities concerned seem helpless to effectively address this issue even as citizens continue to suffer from traffic congestion which appears to have become a routine feature of the provisional state capital.

Shah promises to end BJD's babu raj in Odisha

Bhubaneswar: Bharatiya Janata Party President Amit Shah on Wednesday said the BJP would end the "babu raj" in Odisha if it came to power in the state.

Democracy has collapsed in Odisha. Under (Chief Minister) Naveen Babu, MPs and MLAs stand as servants, while the babus (bureaucrats) run the state," Shah said at an election rally in Dhenkanal. "Bring the BJP government in the state if you want to end this babu raj," he said.

Claiming that 35 per cent people in Odisha were yet to get safe drinking water despite Naveen Patnaik being in power for 20 years, the BJP chief promised to provide piped drinking water, pucca houses and electricity to every household by 2022. He also criticised the BJD government for not implementing the Ayushman Bharat Yojana. "The BJP government has launched Ayushman Bharat scheme to give 50 crore people free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh. But Naveen Babu did not implement the scheme due to the fear of Modi," said Shah. The BJP chief also accused the BJD leaders of protecting scammers who had looted the hard-earned money of the poor via the chit fund scam. **IANS**

50 killed as rain lashes Raj, MP, Guj

From page 1

According to Rajasthan Relief Secretary Ashutosh AT Pednekar, 21 people died due to unseasonal rain. "4 deaths were reported in Jhalawar, Udaipur and Jaipur each, two each in Jalore and Bundi and one each in Baran, Rajsamand, Bhilwara, Alwar and Hanumangarh, Pednekar said. Compensation of Rs 4 lakh each has been announced to the families of victims. Rain claimed three lives each in Indore, Dhar and Shajapur, two in Ratlam and one each in Alirajpur, Raigarh, Sehore and Chhindwara districts in Madhya Pradesh.

In Ahmedabad, Gujarat Government's director of relief G B Manglpara, told PTI that at least 10 people have died in the rain and dust storm reported from various areas including districts in North Gujarat and Saurashtra region. Also, a portion of a tent erected for Prime Minister Modi's rally in Himmatnagar town of North Gujarat was also damaged in the dust storm, an official earlier said.

Farmers of these States have suffered a lot due to unseasonal rain and thunderstorm and high wind speed that damaged their crops wheat, mango, potatoes and other vegetables. "Due to thunderstorm and gusty wind, the mango crop which at this time of year is about 80 gm to 150 gm in size, have been dropped. This will mean a loss of crop. Moreover, cloudy weather and unseasonal rain also increase the risk of the crop getting pest infested and diseased," said a farmer.

ADMK, BJP stakes high in 2nd phase

From page 1

The presence of TTV Dinakaran's AAMK could hurt the AIADMK prospects on many seats as he is fighting for the legacy of Jayalalitha. These Lok Sabha elections in Tamil Nadu are the first ever after the demise of Dravidian stalwarts J Jayalalitha of AIADMK and M Karunanidhi of the DMK.

The fledgling Makkal Needhi Maiam will make its debut in the polls. The BJP had 27 of the 94 seats at stake in the second phase in the last Lok Sabha polls. The Congress had won 12 of these seats in 2014, the Shiv Sena and the BJD 4 each, the JD(S) and the RJD two each and the AIUDF, the NCP, the JD(U), the PDP, the AINRC, the PMK, the CPI(M) and the TMC one seat each.

Besides Tamil Nadu, polling will also be held in 14 seats in Karnataka, 10 in Maharashtra, eight in Uttar Pradesh, five each in Assam, Bihar and Odisha, three each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, two in Jammu & Kashmir and one seat each in Manipur and Puducherry. Elections will also be held in 35 Assembly constituencies in Odisha.

Other prominent candidates in fray include Congress leaders Verappa Moily and Raj Babbar, National Conference president Feroz Abdullah and BJP's Hema Malini. In Odisha, Chief Minister and BJD president Naveen Patnaik is contesting from his home turf Hinjili in Ganjam district and Bijepur in Bargarh. Among others, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Oram of the BJP, BJD's Rajya Sabha

MPs Prasanna Acharya and Achyut Samant, BJP nominee and three-time MP Kharabela Swain are in the fray this time.

Even though security was heightened, Maoists gunned down a polling officer in Kandhamal district of Odisha on Wednesday when she was leading a team of poll personnel to a booth in Phulbani Assembly segment.

It is a high-stake battle for the ruling Congress-JD(S) alliance in Karnataka as any adverse result is likely to have an impact on the longevity of the coalition Government in the State. The BJP is determined to improve its tally compared to last time riding on the Modi wave.

A total of 179 candidates are in the fray in Maharashtra in the 10 constituencies spread in parts of Vidarbha and Marathwada regions. Former Chief Ministers Ashok Chavan and Sushilkumar Shinde of Congress are contesting from Nanded and Solapur seats respectively.

Cinestars Hema Malini and Raj Babbar are among the 85 candidates from Uttar Pradesh, whose electoral fate will be decided on Thursday. The eight Lok Sabha seats, where polling is scheduled to be held, were won by the BJP in 2014.

In Jammu & Kashmir, authorities have deployed over 80 companies for election duty in the twin constituencies of Srinagar and Udhampur. Thursday's polling in Srinagar will be keenly watched within and outside Kashmir as the constituency recorded an all-time low of 7.2 per cent voter turnout in the 2017 by-election, marred by violence on polling day that

left nine people dead and scores of others injured.

Fate of 68 candidates will be decided in Bihar by 86.01 lakh voters across Bhagalpur, Banka, Kishanganj, Katihar and Purnea Lok Sabha constituencies.

Five seats in Assam will see polling on Thursday and one seat in Manipur. The past few days have seen hectic campaigning by top leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief Amit Shah, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and a host of Union Ministers.

There was lot of drama during electioneering as several leaders like Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Union Minister Maneka Gandhi, BSP chief Mayawati and SP leader Azam Khan made controversial remarks, prompting the Election Commission to bar them from campaigning for varying periods over violations of the moral code of conduct.

In West Bengal, the EC has deployed 194 companies of Central forces in the three constituencies going to polls to cover 80 per cent of the 5,390 booths for free and fair polling.

The fight for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Puducherry is expected to be mainly between the ruling Congress, which has put up former Speaker V Vaithilingam and the Opposition AINRC's K Narayanasamy.

The Lok Sabha polls are being held in seven phases for 543 seats on April 11, April 18, April 23, April 29, May 6, May 12 and May 19, and counting will be on May 23.

Another EC notice to HP BJP chief over Rahul remarks

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh BJP chief Satpal Singh Satti on Wednesday got another notice from the Election Commission over his "inflammatory remarks" against Congress President Rahul Gandhi.

The poll panel gave him 48 hours to respond to the notice saying prima facie he is guilty of violating the Model Code of Conduct, citing his taunting remarks against Gandhi over his bachelorhood.

A day earlier, a criminal case was registered against Satti for using a slur against Gandhi while campaigning.

The Election Commission also issued notice to him seeking his reply within 24 hours. Satti targeted Gandhi and his family at a public meeting in Nalagrah's Ramashehar town in Solan district on April 13.

Responding to Gandhi's "chowkidar chor hai" taunt aimed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said that the Congress chief and the entire Gandhi family are "thieves".

Satti has been booked under the Indian Penal Code's Section 294 (obscene acts and songs).

Facing flak for his remarks against a religious sect in Punjab, Satti also expressed regret.

Asking the political parties to exercise restraint, BJP leader and Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur said: "We should not use unparliamentary language against any individual.

This should be restrained not only by our party leaders but by leaders of all political parties."

Polling to Himachal Pradesh's four Lok Sabha seats will be held in the last phase of the polls on May 19.

HP CM demands ban on Rahul's poll campaigning

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday demanded ban on poll campaigning by Congress President Rahul Gandhi alleging that his repeated "chowkidar chor hai" jibe alluding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi was violative of the model code of conduct.

After the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) submitted a memorandum to the Chief Election Commissioner, Thakur said, "Rahul Gandhi is indulging in mudslinging against the Prime Minister. Calling the Prime Minister a thief is an insult to the 130 crore people of India."



"Not only that, to give his words credibility, Gandhi made a reckless effort to misuse the name of the Supreme Court, which on BJP's contempt petition clarified that it hadn't made any comment against the Prime Minister. All this is too dangerous for the democracy," Thakur said.

The Chief Minister said Gandhi himself was accused of scams worth thousands of crore. "Rahul Gandhi, his mother Sonia Gandhi, brother-in-law Robert Vadra and several other national level Congress leaders are out on bail in various cases. Such tainted politicians have no moral right to call the Prime Minister a thief," he said.

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 address-

ing 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.

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 security 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.

Seeking support of the people he said that the relationship would not be of five years, but it would be lifelong.

Later, while talking to the media, Brijendra said that he will be filing his nomination on April 20.

I wanted to join politics from a long time but wanted to make my own identity first. Hence, I served as an IAS for about 21 years, he added.

Notably, 1998 batch IAS officer Brijendra will make his political debut in the Lok Sabha polls from Hissar constituency, which his father had won in 1984 by defeating former Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala.

His father, Birender Singh is the grandson of Sir Chhotu Ram, one of the tallest Jat and farmer leaders of pre-Partition era. Birender had joined the BJP in 2014 after ending his four-decade old association with the Congress following differences with then Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

After his son was given ticket to contest the polls, Birender Singh had on Sunday offered to resign from the cabinet and from Rajya Sabha.

Capt distances from Sidhu's remarks on Muslim voters

PNS ■ 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 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 per cent 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 per cent 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 community 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.

BJP pits Pragya against Digvijay

From page 1

Six people were killed and over 100 injured when a bomb went off near a mosque in Malegaon in north Maharashtra, on September 29, 2008. According to the prosecution, it was the handiwork of a Hindu extremist group.

The BJP has been holding Bhopal Lok Sabha seat, where about 4.5 lakh of the 18 lakh voters are Muslim, since 1989. In the 2018 Assembly elections, the Congress won three out of the eight Assembly segments in the Bhopal Lok Sabha constituency, and in the remaining segments the BJP's victory margin decreased.

AAP rejects...

From page 1

But the Congress proposed a 7:2:1 seat-sharing formula in which seven Congress candidates, two JJP candidates and one AAP candidate would contest the polls, the sources added.

A day earlier a meeting was also held at Kejriwal's residence during which senior AAP leaders Manish Sisodia, Gopal Rai, Sanjay Singh and Satyendra Kumar Jain were present.

Following the meeting, the party said it is ready to have further

discussion with the Congress and had appointed a representative to take the matter forward. The AAP has appointed Singh to hold the alliance talks. AAP sources said if the Congress wants alliance only in Delhi then it has to be in the 5:2 ratios and if an alliance is sealed for Delhi and Haryana then the ratio can be 4:3 in the national Capital and 6:3:1 in Haryana. "Party president Rahul has made it pretty clear that an alliance can be formed just in Delhi in a ratio of 4:3," said a senior Congress leader of Delhi unit in response to a question on alliance.

INLD NAMES SIX CANDIDATES

One sitting MP, 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 Charanjit Singh Rori from Sirsa constituency, known as Chautala's bastion.

The party had won two seats including Sirsa and Hisar out of 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana in last general elections 2014.

Chautala, INLD secretary general on Wednesday while announcing party candidates for six parliamentary seats said, "After holding discus-

sions with party leaders and workers, the INLD has reposed its faith on Charanjit Singh Rori, who had won the Sirsa seat in 2014 polls. Rori will be fielded from Sirsa constituency again."

The party has fielded Rampal Balmiki from Ambala constituency (reserved). Balmiki had served as deputy mayor in Yamunanagar Municipal Corporation, he said.

Other candidates included Dharambir Padha from Karnal, Surender 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 supreme to finalize the name of other four party candidates, Abhay said.

With party's dwindling political fortunes, several sit-

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

ting 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 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.

एसजेवीएन लिमिटेड
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CORRIGENDUM-I
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SAVE ENERGY FOR BENEFIT OF SELF AND NATION

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

President considering the Gujarat assembly elections in 2017. I was reading an article. He (Prime Minister Narendra Modi) was afraid that he was not going to form the government in Gujarat. BJP chief Amit Shah might have given him suggestion after which it was decided to make Ram Nath Kovind the president," Gehlot had said.

"(Lal Krishna) Advani was left out though he had to become the President. People of the country had expectation that he (Advani) will get the honour which he deserved but was deprived. Though it is BJP's internal issue, I am discussing it because I read an article," the Rajasthan chief minister added.

Besides demanding an apology from Gehlot, the BJP urged the Election Commission to take cognisance of the matter and take

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 Narsimha 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 Narsimha Rao said. Rao said the remark showed "anti-Dalit" mindset of the Congress.

Seeking to damage control following a 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 head-

ed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi also directed the poll panel to submit its decision to the court in a sealed cover and said it will consider the matter on April 22.



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.

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.

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 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 brickbats 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 has been 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.

The ban came into force from Tuesday morning.

"If the Congress, the SP and the BSP have faith in Ali, then we too have faith in Bajrang Bali," Adityanath had said at the rally, attracting the ire of the EC.

He had also been making the "green virus" remark at election rallies across Uttar Pradesh.

Social networking platforms Twitter, WhatsApp and Facebook had removed more than 500 posts, advertisements, accounts and other objectionable content found to be violating the model code of conduct (MCC), following directions from the EC, between April 10 and 11.

"Facebook - 468 posts were reported and removed. The posts included violations of MCC and voter misinformation. One post from Karnataka, two posts from Assam and the remaining from Telangana. 32 ads active in Telangana were removed," the EC had said on April 11.

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 foothold in the State

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

MAHARASHTRA	UTTAR PRADESH	TAMIL NADU	KARNATAKA	BIHAR
NANDED 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 Jothamani (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 Swabhimani 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	JAMMU & KASHMIR 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 (CPI(M)), 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 the 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-ridden farmers have committed



ted 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-

ditional Congress-NCP votes.

At stake are the reputations of senior leader and former Union Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde (Solapur), former chief minister Asho Chavan of the Congress Ashok Chavan (Nanded) and late BJP leader Gopinath Munde's daughter Pritam Munde (Beed).

Shinde, who suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of Sharad Bansode of the BJP by a massive margin of 1,49,784 votes, is taking on BJP's Mahaswami Jaisiddheshwar Shivacharya and Bharip Bahujan Mahasangh leader Prakash Ambedkar, who is also contesting from his home constituency of Akola.

Chavan, who was incidentally one of the two Congress candidates (out of its 26 candidates) elected to Lok Sabha in 2014 polls from Maharashtra in the face of a fierce Modi wave, is seeking re-election against BJP's Pratap Patil-Chikhalikar in his home constituency of Nanded in Marathwada region.

Barring four terms, Nanded has been under the control of the Congress since 1952. While late S B Chavan represented the constituency twice (1980 and 1984), Ashok Chavan himself was elected to Lok Sabha once in a by-election in 1987, following the resignation of his father. Late S

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.

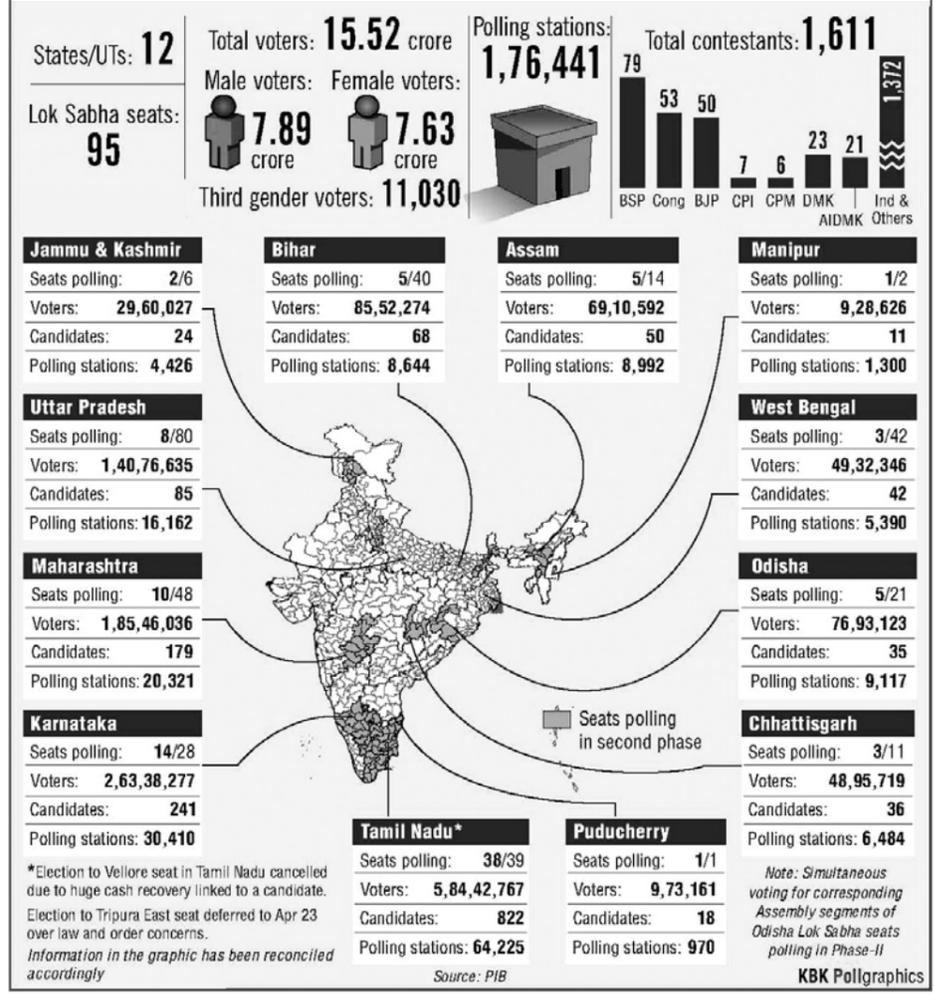
The contest in Beed has become a prestigious battle between Pritam's sister and a minister in Maharashtra Cabinet Pankaja Munde and her cousin and leader of the Maharashtra Legislative Council Dhananjay Munde of the NCP. Dhananjay had rebelled against his late uncle Gopinath Munde and joined the NCP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

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

Ranajagit 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 Swabhimani Party (YSP), supported by the Congress-NCP led Mahagathbandhan.

FACTFILE — PHASE II



TOP CANDIDATES

TAMIL NADU THOOTHUKKUDI Kanimozhi Karunanidhi (DMK) and Tamilsai Sounderrarajan (BJP)	UTTAR PRADESH MATHURA Hema Malini (BJP), Mahesh Pathak (Congress), Kunwar Narendra Singh (RLD)	BIHAR KATHAR Tariq Anwar (Congress) and Dulal Chandra Goswami (JD(U))	MAHARASHTRA AKOLA Sanjay Dhore (BJP), Hidayat Patel (Congress) and Prakash Ambedkar (Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi)
NILGIRIS (SC): A Raja (DMK) and M Thiagarajan (AIADMK)	FATEHPUR SIKRI: Raj Chahar (BJP), Raj Babbar (Cong), Guddu Pandit (BSP)	ASSAM SILCHAR Sushmita Dev (Congress), Rajdeep Roy (BJP), Nazia Yasmin Mazumdar (NPP)	LATUR Machindra Gunwantrao Kamat (Congress), Sudhakar Tukaram Shrangare (BJP)
SIVAGANGA Karti P Chidambaram (Congress) and H Raja (BJP)	AGRA (RESERVED) SP Singh Baghel (BJP), Preeti Harit (Congress), Manoj Soni (BSP)	JAMMU & KASHMIR UDHAMPUR Dr Jitendra Singh (BJP), Vikramaditya Singh (Congress), Choudhary Lal Singh (Dogra Swabhimani Sangathan)	MANDED Ashok Chavan (Congress), Prataprao Patil Chikhalikar (BJP)
CHENNAI CENTRAL Dhayanidhi Maran (DMK), Sam Paul (PMK) and KKSM Dehlan Baqavi (SDPI)	ALIGARH Satish Gautam (BJP), Bijendra Singh (Congress), Ajit Balyan (BSP)		

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 threepariamentary constituencies of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Raiganj on Thursday amid tight security bandobast.

Ajay V Nayak as the Special Observer. He will work in tandem with Special Police Officer 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 for 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 law makers who would represent them for the next five years.

Though there are 39 Lok Sabha constituencies in the State, the President of India heading 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, electorates 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.

Didn't fall prey to Pak: Modi

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 ral-



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

lies 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.

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 will use 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.

"In the past our people would weep, go around the world saying Pakistan did this, did that... It is now Pakistan's turn to weep. "Didn't our jawans kill them by entering their houses? Shall we not kill them by entering their houses? Shall we not take revenge for our martyred soldiers?" he asked the large crowd which

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.

He also alleged that the Congress spoke ill of the armed forces. "You must have seen how the character of the Congress party has changed in this election. The way the Congress spreads lies, and questions the country's military, saying its seniors are street goons, the Air Force chief is a liar... If you say something like this, will it not make Pakistan happy?" he said.

Modi also slammed the Congress for seeking proof of action against terrorists. "When

we conducted surgical strike, Congress questioned us. When we conducted air strike, it asked for proof. Do you (Congress) trust your own sons or Pakistan's rhetoric?" the PM 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 sedition 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.

All PM does is tell lies: RaGa



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

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."

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

"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 were 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 Thiruthala on Wednesday.

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-

dent Amit Shah had chided Rahul for selecting his second seat in north Kerala, saying "when a procession is taken out there, it is difficult to make out whether it is India or Pakistan."

Shah was referring to the IUMLS green flags during Rahul Gandhi's roadshow in Wayanad on April 4 after filing his papers. Rahul also said the saffron party was arrogant and believed that they can re-define Indian history.

"Only the Indian people can define, decide about the country. It does not matter that Uttar Pradesh is much bigger than Nagaland. The voice of all Indians matter. This is the fight that is taking place. Why do these people want to define India? The entire goal to re-define India is to steal from India. The entire idea is to create two Indias. One India for the Ambanis, Adanis, Nirav Modis, Mehul Chokies, Vijay Mallays and one for others," Rahul said lashing out at the PM.

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

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.

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.

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".

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."



Equating the Prime Minister with as dreaded a person as Gabbar Singh of Sholay fame Banerjee said "today whenever the people hear of his name they think that Gabbar Singh has come. He scares everybody into submission like the Bargis (the Maratha invaders of Bengal of early 17th century) used to do." Banerjee was addressing a

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

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, Kumaraswamy in Karnataka and MK Stalin in Tamil Nadu."

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.

Modi: Pawar serves only one family

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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.

"You (Pawar) are elder to me. You have a right to say whatever you want to. Pawar can say anything as per his understanding and values. But, let me tell you that the life that Modi is leading is based on the inspirations of various families. I have been inspired by the family traditions of the greats like Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Rajguru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Veer Savarkar and others," Modi said.

Modi said the NCP chief would have learned more about family traditions if the latter had taken inspiration from late Y B Chavan whom Pawar considered his "mentor". "I know it is beyond your capacity to lead the life of Modi. But, please learn from the families of those who sacrificed their lives to the country."

"But your model is a special family (Nehru-Gandhi) from Delhi. You have learned things only from them and you have been serving only that family," Modi said.

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.

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."

"The country needs a strong Government, not a 'major' (helpless) one. Only the BJP can provide a strong government not the Congress-NCP alliance... Even in your villages, you want a tough cop, not a 'dheela-dhaala' (weak and loose) policeman. The same is required for running such a vast country, we need a strong leader," Modi said.

poll snippets

OLA TO OFFER FREE RIDES FOR DISABLED VOTERS

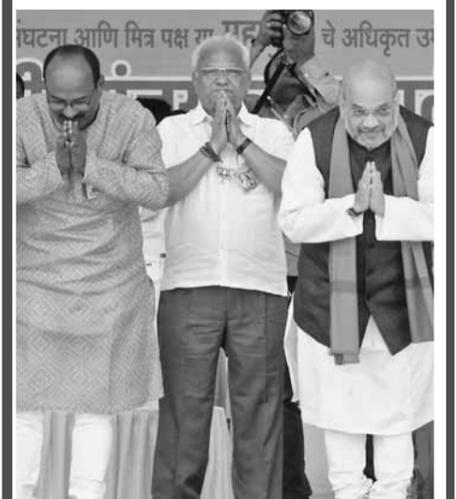
Bengaluru: Cab aggregator Ola on Wednesday said it would provide free rides to persons with disabilities (PWD) to the polling booths in association with the Election authorities in a bid to increase voter participation in the Lok Sabha Elections in Karnataka. The company said it has partnered with the 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.

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 Chikkodi Lok Sabha constituencies on Thursday. Congress President Rahul Gandhi is set to campaign in Raichur and Chikkodi segments a day later.

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.



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

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 Bangladesh 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."

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."

The saffron leadership had launched a formal complaint with the Election Commission even as its leaders from Delhi questioned Mamata Banerjee's secular credentials. "This is the way she is trying to send communal signal to the electorate by bringing Bangladesh stars to

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."

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 curf 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.

Yogi offered prayers at Hanumanagarhi temple and recited Hanuman Chalisa. In the evening, he went for darshan of Ram Lalla and then took part in aarti on the banks of the Saryu river.

The Chief Minister started his Ayodhya sojourn by visiting the house of Mahavir, a Dalit, at Suthati Malin Basti and had food with the family members.

Mahavir's wife Savitri said that the visit of the Chief Minister to their house was like

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 Yogi 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.



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, Parkna Road, Jangpukur, New Delhi-110 058
Ph: 011-25611041, 25611042, 25611043, Telex: 011-25611044
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, Parkna Road, Jangpukur, 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, S/o Sh. Gashwar Prasad Sharma, R/o H.No. C-44/131, Street No. 12, Sudamapuri, Gauri Extn. Delhi-53 also at Sh. Ravinder Kumar Sharma, S/o Sh. Gashwar Prasad Sharma, J-17/61, Gali No. 17, West Ghonda, Delhi-53 and calling upon the mortgagor Smt. Krishna Devi, W/o Sh. Gashwar Prasad Sharma, No. 21, C-29, Community Centre, No. 12, Sudamapuri, Gauri 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, with 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 generally 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 Co-operative 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.

DESCRIPTION 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 WHAT SOEVER THEREON AND WITH THE RIGHTS TO CONSTRUCT UP TO THE LAST STOREY, SITUATED AT VILLAGE GHONDA GUJAN KHADAR, IN THE A B A D I O F STREET NO.12, SUDAMAPURI, Gauri 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 WHAT SOEVER THEREON AND WITH THE RIGHTS TO CONSTRUCT UP TO THE LAST STOREY, SITUATED AT VILLAGE GHONDA GUJAN KHADAR, IN THE A B A D I O F STREET NO.12, SUDAMAPURI, Gauri Extn. ILLAQA SHAHDARA, DELHI-110053.
FALLING WITHIN THE REGISTRATION OF SUB-REGISTRAR-NORTH EAST.

Sd/-
Meenakshi Vats
Authorised Officer
Dated: 12-04-2019 The Kangra Co-Operative Bank Ltd.
Head Off: C-29, Community Centre, Parkna Road, Jangpukur, New Delhi-110 058

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 backdrop 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.

opinion

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 seven days, 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 except 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

“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”

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 11¼ 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 (John XXIII 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)

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.

Tharcus 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

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 Nandanani
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)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

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



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

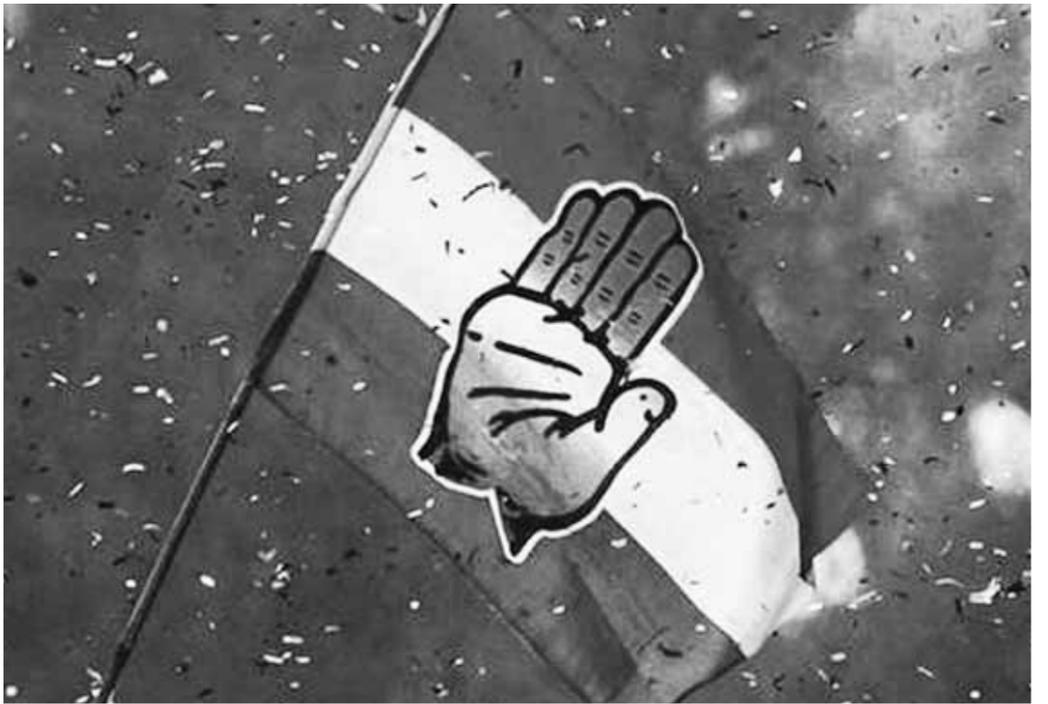
By now, it's common knowledge that Mahatma Gandhi, without whom the call for independence from British rule would never have reached the Indian masses, had wanted the Indian National Congress (INC) to be disbanded after independence. That it was a party of the British and the Indian English-educated 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 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 INA's 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, has 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)



FOREIGN EYE



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



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

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

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 13-14 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 primarily 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 contemnor-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 -Karnpur
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, Chipki Tank, Near Bachha Park, Meerut UP 250002 IN Other office: 1st Floor, Piyush Global 1, Plot No. -5, YMCA CHOWK NH-2, Main Mathura Road, Faridabad, Haryana, India 131005 HR 03-12-2018 As per the order of Hon'ble NCLT Allahabad Bench in the matter of CP (IB) No 322/ALD/2018
6 Insolvency commencement date of the corporate debtor	18-04-2019
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@ibbi.gov.in Eligibility Criteria The Resolution Applicants, 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/Practicing CA Certificate as on 31-03-2018 or 31-03-2019. The information can be sought from: sgdgupta@ibbi.gov.in
9 Norms of ineligibility applicable under section 25A are available at:	02-05-2019
10 Last date for receipt of expression of interest	12-05-2019
11 Date of issue of provisional list of prospective resolution applicants	17-05-2019
12 Last date for submission of objections to provisional list	27-05-2019
13 Date of issue of final list of prospective resolution applicants	17-05-2019
14 Date of issue of information memorandum, evaluation matrix and request for resolution plans to prospective resolution applicants	The information can be sought from Resolution Professional at sgdgupta@ibbi.gov.in 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.
15 Manner of obtaining request for resolution plan, evaluation matrix, information memorandum and further information	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.
16 Last date for submission of resolution plans	30-06-2019
17 Manner of submitting resolution plans to resolution professional	30-06-2019
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/PA/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 Gomi Nagar Lucknow-226010. sgdgupta@ibbi.gov.in
21 Address and email to be used for correspondence with the resolution professional	2/64, Vishesh Khand Gomi Nagar Lucknow-226010. sgdgupta@ibbi.gov.in
22 Further Details are available at or with	Can be sought from Resolution Professional at sgdgupta@ibbi.gov.in
23 Date of publication of Form G	18-04-2019

Registration No. IBBI/PA/003/IP-N000132/2017-18/11458
Address: 2/64, Vishesh Khand Gomi Nagar Lucknow-226010.
E-mail ID: sgdgupta@ibbi.gov.in
For Piyush Shelters India Private Limited

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum-II

Tender Notice no. 6-S/01/Tender/2019-20 Dt. : 09.04.2019 Re/furbishment 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 Divit	KH # 4611, 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
iglnop@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: cic@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.

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 Qwikilver 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, Qwikilver, 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 Qwikilver's brand-focused software-as-a-service (SaaS) technology platforms, and augment their Indian and international market reach.



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, Kothamangalam, 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)

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 Mechthild Rosler said.

Rosler, 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. "Really, it's a universal symbol and it's the centre of France... I think this is really shocking people profoundly and they lost something that is part of their identity."

Rosler said that a team of UNESCO experts is on hand to



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

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 heartbroken."

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 is 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 rung 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 TROTTERING

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. Telex: 311-25611044 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 mortgagee 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 mortgagee 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 of mortgage loan of 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 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 28th 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.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY The property under consideration is a residential built up third floor without terrace rights), area measuring 65 sq. yds.

ALL THE PART AND PARCEL OF BUILT UP ENTIRE THIRD FLOOR (WITHOUT TERRACE RIGHTS), OF PROPERTY NO. 182, GALI NO. 3, MEASURING 65 SQ. YDS. OUT OF KHASRA NO. 703/91, SITUATED AT GOVINDPURI, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019.

ALL THE PART AND PARCEL OF BUILT UP ENTIRE THIRD FLOOR (WITHOUT TERRACE RIGHTS), OF PROPERTY NO. 182, GALI NO. 3, MEASURING 65 SQ. YDS. OUT OF KHASRA NO. 703/91, SITUATED AT GOVINDPURI, KALKAJI, NEW DELHI-110019. FALLING WITHIN THE REGISTRATION OF SUB-REGISTRAR-V.

Sd/- Meenakshi Vats Authorised Officer Dated: 26-03-2019 The Kangra Co-Operative Bank Ltd. Head Off. C-29, Community Centre, Pankha Road, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110 058, Phone No. 9013568418

'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.

14 members of an Afghan family killed in Pakistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

14 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

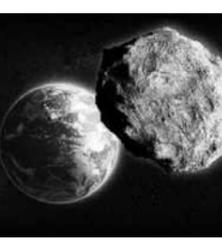
wider range of mitigation possibilities," said Amy Mainzer from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

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.

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 mis-

sion 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. 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.

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.'
—Vir Das



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 (Mangath 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 critics 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 *Abdhi* 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 Paranjpye 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 a 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."

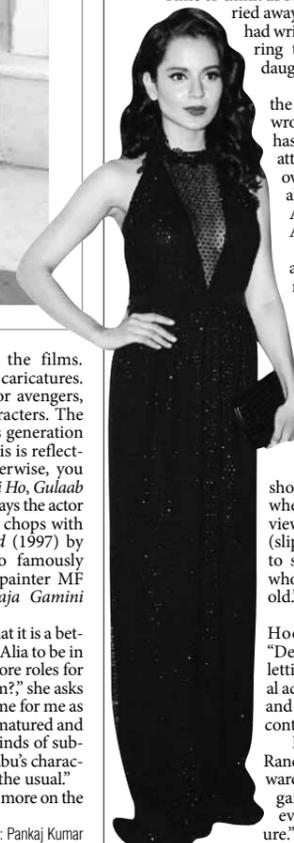
"Time to think about their agenda and not to get carried away with their provocations," Rangoli had written on social media recently, referring to an article about the mother-daughter duo's British passports.

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."
—IANS



WORLD HERITAGE DAY

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.

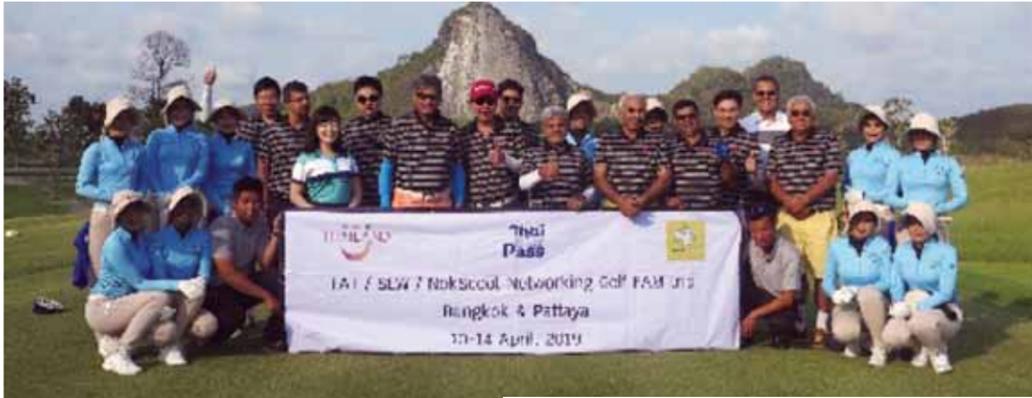
Anil Dev, managing director, Golf Plus Monthly said, "When it comes to golf tourism, there is no destination which comes close to Thailand. The Thai Golf Pass is a unique programme that pushes players to experience the sport in this paradise. The programme has been appreciated by the golfing community 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, Chitraranjan 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's 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 Atharvaved mantra — *Stree Hee Brahma Babhuvith* — which means that women have been given the title of Brahma. Even Yajyen 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, Ansuuya, 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. serve the mother because she gives birth and nurses the child and "*Mata Nirmatri Bhavati*" i.e. mother constitutes the bright future of the child.

The veteran warrior and wise man of *Mahabharat*, Bhishma 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 Bhishma 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.

sacrifice by a wife for her ascetic husband. Once, there lived a philosopher, Vachaspati Mishr, 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 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 *Manavta ka Utthan* by Bodhisattva Bhante Dr Karunashil Rahulji.

A documentary highlighting the life and contributions of Dr Ambedkar was also screened during the event. Other attendants 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 Saldarjung 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), Panjan 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



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 a 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 careless 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."

Bautista Agut has now lost to his Spanish countryman in all three of their meetings, while



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 on 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 Dueseldorf last Sunday after aggravating a recurring calf injury.

The knock sees him sidelined at a crucial phase of the season, with Bayern seeking to stay a point ahead of Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga title race and bidding to reach the German Cup final.



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. "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.

"When you are out for that long, your body has to adapt so you expect to have smaller muscle injuries afterwards."

"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 Dueseldorf 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 — PADDY UPTON
4S	918



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 nagging 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 spasms, 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 Rashid 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 just one 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 Shahbaz 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 8:00 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 slowish 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.

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 effect 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.



Pak to name WC squad with two reserves

PTI ■ KARACHI

Batting 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 per cent fit before the World Cup he can be replaced.

Muhammad Aamir managed to snap just 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, Emdad 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."