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SUDAN PROTEST LEADERS TO UNVEIL CIVILIAN RULING BODY

**NATION 8**  
CAMPAIGNING FOR LARGEST PHASE ENDS

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# On Easter, violence resurrects in Lanka

215 killed in 8 blasts; 3 Indians, 30 other foreigners among dead

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A string of eight devastating blasts, including suicide attacks, struck churches and luxury hotels frequented by foreigners in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, killing 215 people, including three Indians and an American, and shattering a decade of peace in the island nation since the end of the brutal civil war with the LTTE.

The blasts — one of the deadliest attacks in the country's history — targeted St Anthony's Church in Colombo, St Sebastian's Church in the western coastal town of Negombo and Zion Church in the eastern town of Batticaloa around 8.45 am (local time) as the Easter Sunday mass were in progress, police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said.

Explosions were reported from three five-star hotels — the Shangri-La, the Cinnamon Grand and the Kingsbury in Colombo.

Gunasekera confirmed 207 deaths. However, the News 1st channel said that 215 people have died in the blasts.

Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Kishu Gomes said 33 foreign nationals have been killed in the coordinated attacks believed to be carried out by a single group. Director of the National Hospital Dr Anil Jasinghe identified 12 of the 33 foreign nationals, which include three Indians, two Chinese and one each from Poland, Denmark, Japan, Pakistan, America, Morocco and Bangladesh.

Around 500 people, including Indians, were injured in the attacks.

No group has claimed responsibility for Sunday's attacks. However, most of the deadly attacks in the past in Sri Lanka were carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which ran a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in 2009 after the Sri Lankan Army killed its supreme leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Briefing reporters, Gunasekera said the police was not able to confirm at the moment if they were all suicide attacks. He, however, said that one of the blasts at the



Dead bodies of victims lie inside St Sebastian's Church damaged in blast in Negombo, north of Colombo, on Sunday

Katuwapitiya (Negombo) church has signs of being what looked like a suicide attack.

An unnamed official said a suicide bomber blew himself up at the restaurant of the Cinnamon Grand hotel.

Gunasekera said that 66 bodies were kept at the National Hospital while 260 injured were receiving treatment there and 104 bodies were placed at the Negombo Hospital and 100 injured were receiving treatment at the Hospital.

Later in the day, a powerful blast in the capital's southern suburb near the Colombo Zoo killed two persons, Gunasekera said.

When a police team entered a house in the Colombo north suburb of Orugodawatta to conduct a search, a suicide bomber blew

himself up causing a concrete floor of a two-storey building to crash on them, killing three policemen in the eighth blast, police said.

Soon after the eighth blast, the Government imposed curfew with immediate effect. The curfew will be in force indefinitely until further notice, officials said.

State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene said seven persons had been arrested in connection with the blasts. "We believe these were coordinated attacks, and one group was behind them," he said.

President Maithripala Sirisena has appealed for calm. "I have been shocked by this totally unexpected incidents. The security forces have been asked to take all action necessary," Sirisena said.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe termed the blasts as "cowardly attacks" and said his Government is working to "contain the situation."

"I call upon all Sri Lankans during this tragic time to remain united and strong... The government is taking immediate steps to contain this situation," he tweeted.

Security has been intensified around the religious places across the capital. The government has temporarily blocked all social media platforms.

"Horrible scenes. I saw many body parts strewn all over," said Harsha de Silva, Sri Lanka's Minister of Economic Reforms and Public Distribution.

The Indian High Commission in Colombo said

that it was closely monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka.

"We are closely monitoring the situation. Indian citizens in need of assistance or help and for seeking clarification may call the following numbers : +94777903082 +94112422788 +94112422789," the High Commission tweeted.

"In addition to the numbers given, Indian citizens in need of assistance or help and for seeking clarification may also call the following numbers +94777902082 +94772234176," it said.

The first blasts were reported at St Anthony's church in Colombo and St Sebastian's Church in Negombo just outside the capital.

"A bomb attack to our church, please come and help if your family members are

there," read a post in English on the Facebook page of the St Sebastian's Church.

Images circulated on social media showed severely damaged St Sebastian's church, with a shattered ceiling and blood on the pews.

The riot police and the Special Task Force, extra police security has been deployed around the Bandaranaik International Airport, state-run Daily News reported.

All state Universities have been closed until further notice.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said all Easter masses in the Colombo District have been cancelled. Former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, under whose leadership the Lankan Army crushed the LTTE, termed the attack as "barbaric."

## Modi condemns attack, offers help; Sushma in touch

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Condemning the "cold-blooded and pre-planned barbaric acts" in Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and offered the southern neighbour all possible help and assistance to deal with the situation.

"Strongly condemn the horrific blasts in Sri Lanka. There is no place for such barbarism in our region," Modi tweeted.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said, "Indian High Commission in Colombo has conveyed that National Hospital has informed them about the death of three Indians."

Their names are Lakshmi, Narayan Chandrasekhar and Ramesh, Sushma said adding details are being ascertained.

Sushma tweeted, "I conveyed to the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka that India is ready to provide all humanitarian assistance. We are ready to despatch medical teams."

Sushma said, "In all eight bomb blasts have taken place — one more in a guest house in Dehiwela near Colombo and another in a housing colony in Dematagoda in Colombo."

In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said there can be no justification for any act of terror and called for concerted global action to effectively deal with the menace, including cross-border terrorism.

## Lanka blocks FB, Instagram to curb canards

Colombo: The Sri Lankan Government on Sunday blocked social media platforms like the Facebook and Instagram to prevent the spread of false news reports after a series of blasts killed 215 people. The Presidential Secretariat said the decision to block social media was taken in reaction to false news reports spreading on social media. Meanwhile, Facebook has activated its Crisis Response tool for the blasts, CNN reported. PTI

## Trump goofs up, tweets 138 million dead

Washington: US President Donald Trump yet again committed a faux pas on Sunday as he erroneously tweeted "138 million people" were killed in a string of blasts in Sri Lanka. "Heartfelt condolences from the people of the US to the people of Sri Lanka on the horrible terrorist attacks on churches and hotels that have killed at least 138 million people. We stand ready to help!" Trump said in a tweet which was taken down after more than 20 minutes. PTI

## Fidayeen queued at hotel buffet before 'going off'

Colombo: The suicide bomber waited patiently in a queue for the Easter Sunday breakfast buffet at Sri Lanka's Cinnamon Grand hotel before setting off explosives strapped to his back. Carrying a plate, the man, who had registered at the hotel the night before as Mohamed Azzam Mohamed, was just about to be served when he set off his devastating strike in the packed restaurant, a manager at the Sri Lanka hotel said. "There was utter chaos," said the manager, who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity. AFP

## CAPSULE

**7 KILLED IN STAMPEDE IN TAMIL NADU TEMPLE**  
Tiruchirappalli: A stampede during a local temple festival killed seven devotees and injured ten others near Thuraiyur, about 45 km from here, on Sunday, police said.

**CAMPAIGNING FOR PH-3 OF LS POLLS ENDS**  
New Delhi: Campaigning for the third phase of polling scheduled for April 23 in 116 parliamentary constituencies ended on Sunday with top leaders making a last-gasp effort to sway voters in favour of their respective parties.

**7 KILLED IN MISHAP ON AGRA-LUCKNOW E-WAY**  
Mainpuri: A private bus on its way to Varanasi from Delhi rammed into a truck on the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, killing seven passengers and injuring 34 others, police said Sunday.

# Can Bhupesh Baghel change Congress fortune?

Analysts say that parliamentary polls in State could also be viewed as a referendum on CM Baghel's popularity and his Govt's welfare works since party came to power in December last year

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

The high voltage election campaign for Chhattisgarh's remaining seven seats ended on Sunday and State's ruling Congress and the main Opposition BJP are all set to prove its dominance in the mineral-rich State.

The resurgent Congress is expected to perform well though the party had won just one out of the total 11 seats in 2014 and 2009 general elections. But political analysts have given Congress the edge over the BJP in 2019 as party's popularity is on the rise and the BJP has not yet recovered from shock defeat in

November 2018 Assembly elections.

Analysts say that parliamentary polls in the State could also be viewed as a referendum on Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel's popularity and his Government's welfare works since the party came to power in December last year.

Congress victory in Chhattisgarh will help Baghel consolidate his position in party at national level.

A total of 123 candidates are in the fray in seven Lok Sabha seats— Raipur, Durg, Bilaspur, Korba, Janjgir-Champa (SC), Surguja (ST) and Raigarh (ST) — that will go to polls in the third phase, State

chief electoral officer (CEO) Subrat Sahoo said.

Raipur and Bilaspur seats have the maximum 25 candidates each, followed by Durg-21, Jangir-Champa - 15, Raigarh -14, Korba-13 and Surguja-10.

Total 1,27,13,816 voters, including 64,16,252 men, 62,96,992 women and 572 members of third gender, are eligible to exercise their franchise in the third phase for which 15,408 polling booths have been set up.

Voting for total 11 Lok Sabha seats in the State was scheduled in three phases. The Naxal-hit Bastar (ST) constituency went to polls in the



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel holds a roadshow on Sunday in Raipur

Pioneer photo

first phase on April 11, while voting in three other seats — Rajanandgaon, Kanker (ST) and Mahasamund — was held in the second phase on April 18.

In the 2004, 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha polls held after the formation of Chhattisgarh, the BJP won 10 out of the 11 seats all the three times.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president Amit Shah and Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh campaigned for the saffron party in the third phase.

Congress president Rahul Gandhi, party leader Navjot Singh Sidhu and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel also held rallies in support of their party candidates.

Gandhi did not campaign for the first two phases, in which Baghel mainly led the canvassing for his party.

Continued on Page 4

# Surgical strikes Commander slams Pragma

## Congress makes public its report on national security

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant General DS Hooda (retired), who oversaw the cross-border surgical strikes in September 2016 as the former Northern Command chief of the Army, has condemned the Malegaon blast case accused Pragma Thakur's comments that 26/11 hero Hemant Karkare had died at the hands of terrorists after she "cursed" him.

"Yes, it hurts. Any martyr, police or Army, he must get all respect. These utterances are not good," Lt General Hooda said at an event where he released a report that he had prepared on the country's national security.

Pragma has filed her nominations as a BJP candidate to contest Bhopal Lok Sabha seat against the Congress heavy-weight Digvijay Singh. For the past few days she has raised a political storm with a string of controversial comments.

"I had told him (Hemant Karkare) you will be finished, and he was killed by terrorists in less than two months," Pragma Thakur said. The Election Commission has issued a second notice to her over another controversial



Lieutenant General (retired) DS Hooda, Congress leaders P Chidambaram and Jairam Ramesh release Congress plan on national security during a Press conference at AICC headquarters in New Delhi on Sunday

comment on the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.

Hooda has been tasked by Congress to prepare a report of country's security aspect which he released on Sunday in the presence of senior Congress leaders P Chidambaram and Jairam Ramesh. On the occasion Hooda said the issue of national security was important but it would be "completely wrong" to say that it was dom-

inating the poll narrative.

"As far as politics or raising questions over cross-border strikes are concerned, I think when senior military officers come and say you know this operation has been done, I think that should be the end of it. Unfortunately, the whole debate keeps dragging on and it comes up in various forums, and that's why the military tends to get drawn into politi-

cal debates. I think that's not correct," said Hooda.

Explaining the significance of the report prepared by him, Hooda said, "India is doing well diplomatically but there should be a permanent seat in the UNSC (United Nations Security Council)."

"As an Army chap I always remain apolitical. I don't want to get dragged into a political debate," he said, adding he will

only answer on the national security document.

Congress said the top three issues affecting the people were unemployment, farm distress and the security of people. "The number one issue remains unemployment. The number two issue is farm distress and the number three issue is security of various sections of the people, women, Dalits, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, forest dwellers, journalists, academicians, NGOs," Chidambaram said briefing the media.

Asked whether this report, which has been made public during the Lok Sabha elections, is meant to change the narrative on national security, he said, "National security is an important aspect of the narrative. But to say that it is dominating the narrative is completely wrong."

He said the Congress and its president Rahul Gandhi has been speaking about jobs, farm, distress and security of different sections of people every day during campaigning. Chidambaram said the report is a broad outline of how to approach the issue of national security.

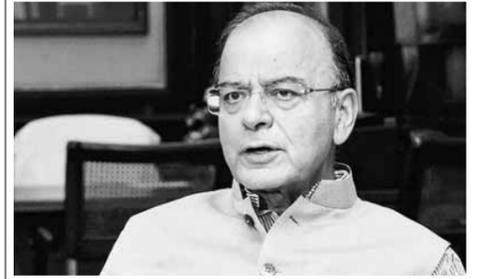
"We have taken several

features of Lt Gen D S Hooda's plan (in the manifesto). These ideas will be implemented when we form our government. Our approach is not ad hoc, our approach is not impulsive. It is after a careful study and deliberation and necessary measures will be taken. Our interest is to protect India's national security," Chidambaram who was Home Minister in UPA-II said.

Hooda, while presenting the report, said there are five pillars of national security in the report. Assuring India its "rightful place" in global affairs, securing India's neighbourhood, peaceful resolution of internal conflicts like Jammu & Kashmir issue and ensuring "Jan Suraksha", the main goal of national security of protecting the people, he said.

"The fifth and final pillar of national security is strengthening our capabilities. We have drafted the report based on a roadmap for enhancing our hard power. Keeping in view the nature of future war fighting, there is a need to build up capabilities and ensure adequate budgetary support is available to the three services," said Hooda.

# It's time to stand up with judiciary: Jaitley



BY ARUN JAITLEY

## The pivotal position of the Chief Justice of India

The incident of a junior ex-lady employee of the Supreme Court making harassment charges against the Chief Justice of India has acquired a disproportionate magnitude. Such complaints, when they are made in the ordinary course of any administrative functioning, are referred to the appropriate Committee. However, when the complainant distributes copies of her representation to other Judges of the Supreme Court and the media in order to sensationalise her allegations, it ceases to be routine. When four digital media organisations with an unparalleled track record of 'institutional disruption' send similar questionnaires to the Chief Justice of India, there is obviously something more than what meets the eye.

India has always taken pride in its independent judiciary. Judges decide cases which deal with life of the common man as also the most powerful commercial and political interests. A judge is not in a popularity race. He owes his commitment only to law, justice and fairness. A judge is neither to follow the ballot box nor is he to be swayed by the times. His judgement pleases us at times and leaves us unhappy on many occasions. But that is the reality of the system which we have learned to live with. The Chief Justice of India is the first amongst the equals in the Supreme Court. He is the head of the judicial institutions. He is both the 'Master of the Roster' and the 'Head of the Collegium' which makes binding recommendations for the appointment of judges. His integrity, ethics, scholarship and fairness reflect the image of India's judiciary. He lives by example. For both the Chief Justice and the judicial institutions, credibility and respect are essential. Once the 'Iqbal' of judiciary is destroyed, the institution itself will crumble.

The assault on the institution It was in the decade of 1970s that we witnessed suppression of courts and transfer of High Court Judges. This was coupled with appointment of politically and ideologically inclined judges in courts. The 1982 judgement in the first judges case, the appointment of politically affiliated judges continued in several High Courts. This process substantially stopped after the 1993 judgement in the second judges case.

The last few years have witnessed the consolidation of 'institution destabilizers' in a major way. Many of these destabilizers represent Left or ultra-Left views. They have no electoral base or popular support. However, they still have a disproportionate presence in the media and the academia. When ousted for mainstream media, they have taken refuge in the digital and social media. They continue to believe in the old Marxian philosophy of 'wrecking the system from within'. They use free speech to destroy the judicial institution. This section has found a convenient ally in a small but vocal section of the Bar. This section exploits the judicial refrain of excessively using the power of contempt. However, they themselves have no hesitation in contemptuous behaviour themselves. They go public against individual judges, including the Chief Justice, when they fail to get a favourable order. They carry on social media campaigns against judges who write judgements adverse to them. They have little regard for truth but masquerade as protectors of public interest. Their behaviour in courts is offensive both to the Bench and their opponents. They threaten walkouts if judges are in disagreement. Even though most of them subscribe to fringe ideologies and ideas, it is regrettable that

a section of the Members of the Bar affiliated to the Congress Party tend to join them. Frequent attempts are made to get some Parliamentarians to sign Motion of Impeachment against judges and even the Chief Justice on unsustainable grounds. What has always puzzled me is the Congress lending support to such fringe campaigns.

The power of contempt is intended to protect the dignity of the Court. However, the power of contempt is rarely and sparingly used. Ordinarily, courts tend to ignore contemptuous criticism. Courts are willing to accept a criticism of judgements because that aids the process of legal evolution. The liberal attitude of the Courts has emboldened the 'institution disruptors'. At the end of the day, they get away because of the magnanimity and the compassion of judges.

Independent judiciary and free media are both essential for a vibrant democracy. Both have to live with each other. In order to co-exist, both must respect the respective rights of each of these institutions. One cannot take upon itself the task of destroying the other. Ever since 1950, every judgement of the Supreme Court relating to Article 19(1)(a) has favoured the strengthening of free speech. The reverse is not true. Mainstream print media conventionally had greater editorial control. The ability to dissect facts and take a balanced view was much higher. But of late, the rat race for grabbing eyeballs or viewership has begun. For the 'institutional disruptors' there are no red lines.

The history of the last several year shows that cases after cases have witnessed facts being manufactured and twisted. This falsehood found support in a section in the media. Upon deeper analysis most of them were found to be factually incorrect. Facts were manufactured. The same 'gang' was behind this campaign.

The present case A Judge is continuously judged every day by the Bar and the stakeholders in the course of his personal and judicial conduct. Every time he makes a comment or writes a judgement, every word is scrutinised. In terms of personal decency, values, ethics and integrity, the present Chief Justice of India is extremely well regarded. Even when critics disagree with his judicial view, his value system has never been questioned. Lending shoulder to completely unverified allegations coming from a disgruntled person with a not-so-glorious track record is aiding the process of destabilisation of the institution of the Chief Justice of India.

India has witnessed a series of attacks by the 'institution disruptors' against judges who are unwilling to agree with them. It may not be an exaggeration to say that today both in Court and by creating an environment outside, a mass-intimidation of Judges is on. Some lawyers have used intimidatory behaviour as a tactic to expand their practise. Intimidation and discrediting are important weapons in the hands of these people. Reputation is an integral part of a person's fundamental right to live with dignity. An intimidated judge can fear consequences of a possible view that he is taking. It is, therefore, essential that all well-meaning persons stand with the judicial institution when destabilizers get ready for an assault.

Since the case relating to this is pending in judicial side before the Bench of a Court, we should leave it to the wisdom of the Court as to how they intend to deal with it. But let it be remembered that this is not the first case of the 'institutional destabilizers' nor will it be the last. If those who peddle falsehood to destroy the institution are not dealt with in an exemplary manner, this trend will only accelerate.

# Top Navy Commanders to review preparedness in maritime domain

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of heightened tension between India and Pakistan post Pulwama incident in February this year, the Navy commanders will take stock of the operational preparedness of the force during the three-day conference here starting on Tuesday next. The top echelon will also review progress made on various issues discussed during the last such meeting held six months back. The commanders meet every six months for brainstorming and discussing matters pertaining to the service.

Giving details of the issues likely to come up during the forthcoming meeting, officials said here on Sunday the conference assumes greater significance in the backdrop of Pulwama associated events that have brought country's defence under sharper focus and will provide the higher naval leadership a forum to discuss the emerging challenges in the maritime domain and fine tune the strategies for responding to the evolving geo-strategic environment.

The conference is the apex forum within the Service for interaction between the Naval Commanders. The Navy Chief with the Commanders-in-Chief, will review major operational, materiel, logistics, human resources, training and administrative activities undertaken during the previous six months and deliberate upon

the course to be steered in the ensuing six months.

The Navy is operationally deployed as per its doctrine of mission based deployment and has further increased vigil in the strategically important Indian Ocean region besides Arabian Sea after the Pulwama incident. Forty Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were killed in a suicide attack on February 16. India retaliated by launching air strikes on February 26 destroying Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) training centre in Balakot, Pakistan.

The Pakistan Air Force hit back the next day and tried to target military installations in Rajouri sector. In the ensuing aerial battle, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman flying a MIG-21 downed a Pakistan F-16.

However, the Indian pilot's plane was hit by Pakistan air defence and he was captured by Pakistan Army after his parachute landed in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).

He returned to India two days later. Since then the IAF has increased vigil all along the western sector facing Pakistan while the Army is alert along the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir and the international borders.

Meanwhile, navy officials also said Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to address the Naval Commanders on the opening day and interact with them. The conference also serves as

a platform for institutionalised interaction of Naval Commanders with senior government officials.

Interaction with Chiefs of Indian Army and Indian Air Force during the conference would be utilised to analyse the operational environment, deliberate on Tri-Service synergy and readiness to deter and neutralise threats aimed at the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The themes of 'Functional Reorganisation of Indian Navy towards improving Operational Efficiency' and 'Optimal Manning' will form the core of discussions towards finalising long term road map for the service.

Discussions are planned on acquisition of new capabilities, harnessing niche technologies like 'Big Data Analytics' and 'Artificial Intelligence' for solutions in the domains of naval combat, convergence of networks and information, logistics, administration and equipment health monitoring for sustained operations.

In keeping with the expectation of the Indian Navy being the net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and first responder to any crisis, the forum will also deliberate upon the lessons learnt from the recently concluded humanitarian and disaster response operations by the Navy and various other maritime security initiatives, they said.

# Richest, poorest candidates in Lok Sabha elections 2019

## With assets worth ₹9, Shrivenkateshwar is poorest candidate contesting from Bijapur in Karnataka

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Shrivenkateshwar Mahaswamiji who is contesting from Bijapur in Karnataka on a Hindustan Janata Party ticket has assets worth ₹9 and his immovable assets are nil. He is followed by Sreejith PR, an independent from Wayanad, has assets worth ₹12. Johnson Vasant Kolhapure contesting as an independent from the Pune seat is third on the list. He has declared assets worth ₹207. There are 11 candidates who have declared zero assets in their poll affidavits.

Vasanthakumar H, a Congress candidate from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu is the richest among all the candidates contesting in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections. His total assets are more than ₹417 crore. He is followed by Uday Singh of the Congress from Purnia in Bihar at ₹341 crore and DK Suresh from the same party from Bengaluru South in Karnataka at ₹338 crore.

According to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), JP Ladakbbhai of Bahujan Mukti Party, B Vansabbhai Khulaf of Bhartiya Tribal Party, HR Bhanabhai of Navsarjan Bharat Party, Shankar Jadhav of Bhartiya Peoples Party, DS Khatarabhai, MS Khanagoudar, Suresh Kumar, Tawar Vijay Jagan, NS

Vasanthakumar H, a Congress candidate from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu is the richest among all the candidates contesting in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections. His total assets are more than ₹417 crore

Ramjan, AR Shaikh and RB Mahapure (all Independent) have declared zero assets in their affidavits. All of them have neither movable nor immovable assets in their name or in their spouse name.

ADR report also says Suhas Popat Gajarmal, who is contesting from Pune on the Rashtriya Janasakti Party, has assets worth ₹771. RK Mishra who is contesting from Puri, on a ticket of CPI(M) Red Star, has assets ₹1,000. Sharad Bhamre, a candidate from Jalgaon has assets worth ₹1,500. An independent candidate Aswathi Rajappan of Ernakulam, has declared assets worth ₹2,026.

ADR also says the richest candidate is Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Kunwar Devendra Singh Yadav with assets worth ₹204 crore in the second phase of the Lok Sabha polls. Yadav is contesting the elections from Etah in Uttar Pradesh. He is followed by Bhonsle Shrimant Chhatrapati Udayanraje Pratapsinh Maharaj contesting on a Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) ticket from Satara

is second on the list. He has assets worth ₹199 crore. Praveen Singh Aron, with assets worth ₹147 crore is third on the list. He is contesting on a Congress ticket from Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh.

The ADR report says that there are 392 candidates in the fray with assets worth more than Rs one crore. There are 392 (25 per cent) candidates who have assets worth ₹1 crore and more. Among the major parties 81 (84 per cent) out of 97 candidates from BJP, 74 (82 per cent) out of 90 candidates from INC, 9 (90 per cent) out of 10 candidates from SP, 10 (53 per cent) candidates from CPI(M), 12 (13 per cent) candidates from BSP, 9 (41 per cent) candidates from SHS and 7 (70 per cent) out of 10 candidates from NCP have declared assets worth more than ₹1 crore.

There are 392 (25 per cent) candidates who have assets worth ₹1 crore and more. Among the major parties 81 (84 per cent) out of 97 candidates from BJP, 74 (82 per cent) out of 90 candidates from INC, 9 (90 per cent) out of 10 candidates from SP, 10 (53 per cent) candidates from CPI(M), 12 (13 per cent) candidates from BSP, 9 (41 per cent) candidates from SHS and 7 (70 per cent) out of 10 candidates from NCP have declared assets worth more than ₹1 crore.

# Protections sought for otters as online trade booms

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Worried over the booming online illegal trade of two species of otters — the Asian small-clawed otter and the smooth-coated otter — India along with Bangladesh, Nepal and Philippines are seeking complete ban on all international commercial trade in the water loving mammals for their protection.

The four Asian nations have moved a proposal in this regard at the forthcoming 18th Conference of the Parties (COP18) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to be held in Sri Lanka in May, 2019.

Currently, both the species are listed on Appendix II of CITES, which allows regulated international trade. If the CITES members approve the proposal, these carnivores, whose number is dwindling owing to habitat loss and increasing online trade for pets in various countries, would be transferred to Appendix I, banning all global commercial trade.

More than two-thirds of all the CITES Parties in attendance must vote to adopt the pro-

posals for the ban to take effect. CITES is an international agreement between governments that sets regulations on the trade in wild animals and plants.

Both species of the otters are currently listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List but wildlife activists warn that growing online demand will put further pressure on the species in the wild.

In fact, recent investigations by TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, has revealed that their populations have declined by more than 30 percent largely due to destruction of their habitat and exploitation for the global trade in otter skins and pet trade.

Nobody knows exactly how many Asian small-clawed otters or smooth-coated otters are left in India and Southeast Asia, but the general consensus is that numbers are declining. Overall, there are 13 species of otter, all listed in the IUCN Red List which live in Europe, Asia, Africa, North, Central and South America: Eurasian otters, smooth-coated otters, Asian small-clawed otters, hairy-nosed otters, sea otters, North American river otters, neotropical otters, giant

## ILLEGAL OTTER TRADE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

### SOUTHEAST ASIA IS HOME TO FOUR SPECIES OF OTTERS



otters, Southern river otters, marine otters, African clawless otters, Congo clawless otters and spotted-necked otters.

In the past 35 years, seizure records reveal that otters are traded in around 15 Asian countries, the majority being in China, India, and Nepal. However, in recent years, there have been a growing number of seizures of "live otters" in Southeast Asia which suggest-

ed an emerging trend of otters being caught for the commercial pet trade in this region.

A TRAFFIC report released last year revealed all. Researchers found 560 advertisements for up to 1,189 otters over a four-month period in 2018. In addition, the report found that 59 live otters, most of which were juveniles, were seized by officials from 2015-2017. From 2015 to 2017, four

Southeast Asian countries confiscated 59 otters in 13 seizures, most of them in Thailand and Indonesia where commercial breeding may be taking place, the group said, with at least 32 seized en route from Thailand to Japan.

According to the International Otter Survival Fund, the mother otter is often killed by poachers so they can capture the cubs.

"Chances of survival for newborn otters in the trade appear to be low; this is reflected from the juvenile otters which that offered at a higher price as a result of increased survival chance.

However, the much higher volume of newborn pups supplied in the trade indicates that otters are indiscriminately extracted from the wild, even as a newborn, despite the risk of death.

"While each trader individually sells a small number of otters each time, the overall volume of the trade itself is significant, raising concerns for the wild populations of smooth-coated otter and Asian small-clawed otter" noted a report titled "Illegal pet trade on social media as an emerging impediment to the conservation of Asian otters species," published in the December 2018 edition of Journal of Asia-Pacific Biodiversity.

"Weak national laws hinder enforcement action and widespread trade in otters online throws the survival of remaining wild populations in Southeast Asia into question," said a regional TRAFFIC official, Kanitha Krishnasamy in the report.

# No arms, mobile phones allowed at polling centres

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

As part of security arrangement for holding free and fair polls in third phase on April 23, Election Commission of India has issued directive banning the entry into the polling centre with any arms and mobile phones.

The presiding officers have been also directed not to allow entry of any unauthorized person inside the polling booth.

The guidelines state that cell phone, cordless phone or wireless sets are not allowed inside the polling booths. The polling agent of political parties or candidates is not allowed to send the slip in any condition outside the polling centre

**Even security personnel will not be allowed to enter the polling centre. Z-plus category person's security personnel have to enter in normal dress and they should not display the arms in any condition.**

citing the status of polling.

The presiding officers through security personnel deputed should ensure that no elector enters the polling booth with any arm.

The Presiding officer has to ensure that EVM, control unit and VVPAT machines should not be kept on ground.

Only presiding officer, candidate, agent appointed by candidate or party, authorized officer of Election Commission, authorized media personnel, observers and micro-observers, person accompanying blind electors, mother/father with minor child are allowed to enter the polling centres.

Even security personnel will not be allowed to enter the polling centre. Z-plus category person's security personnel have to enter in normal dress and they should not display the arms in any condition.

## EC suspends govt official

RAIGARH: Jashpur district electoral officer and collector Nilesh Kshirsagar has suspended Kunkuri Revenue Inspector Arvind Kumar Sahu and issued notices to several others for failing to videograph a controversial speech of Congress candidate at a rally. Reports said that Congress candidate Laljeet Singh Rathia made a personal remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a public rally and the officials who were tasked to videograph the rally failed to adhere to their job.

The action was taken after the speech of the Congress candidate went viral on social media. Kshirsagar also issued show cause notice to Sub-divisional Magistrate (SDM), Janpad Chief Executive Officer and Naib Tehsildhar for not conducting the videography of the rally.

# Webcasting at 425 polling centres in Raipur district

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Webcasting will be done at 425 polling centres of Raipur district which includes 175 sensitive polling centres.

The total sensitive polling centres in district are 344. To monitor the polling in Raipur district, as many as 291 micro-observers have been appointed, who are central government officers and employees. They will provide report based on 39 points.

According to Raipur District Electoral Officer and Returning Officer Dr Basavaraju S, in all the sensitive polling centres, the deployment of paramilitary forces, district police, home guards and special police officers which include kotwar and forest guards, will be made.

Raipur DEO states that Raipur Lok

Sabha constituency has 9 assembly constituencies with 21,11,104 lakh electors.

They are Baloda Bazar, Bhatapara, Dharsiwa, Raipur Rural, Raipur City West, Raipur City North, Raipur City South, Arang and Abhanpur.

The men electors are 10,71,921, women electors are 10,38,889, transgender electors is 297, differently able are 11,936 and service voters are 634.

A total of 2583 postal ballot have been issued. All the officials and employees deputed in election duty have been issued 7030 'Election Duty Certificate' (EDC).

Raipur has 2329 polling centre and 14 auxiliary polling centres. The number of all women polling centres is 44, model polling centre is 46 and differently able polling centres are 10.

# Two Maoists killed in Bijapur gun battle

STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

Two Maoist insurgents were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in the insurgency-hit Bijapur district police said here on Sunday.

The skirmish took place at around 8 am in forest of Pamed police station area when a joint team of the special anti-Naxal Greyhounds unit of Telangana and Chhattisgarh police was out on an anti-naxal operation along the inter-state border, state's Deputy Inspector General (anti-naxal operations) Sundarraj said.

Acting on specific intelligence, a team of the Greyhounds and Chhattisgarh Police's Special

**When the security forces were cordoning off the forests of Pamed, the gun-battle broke out.**

Task Force (STF) and district force had launched operations along the inter-state border, around 500 km from Raipur, he said.

When the security forces were cordoning off the forests of Pamed, the gun-battle broke out.

"After gun fell silent, bodies of two ultras were recovered from the spot," Sundarraj informed.

A few weapons were also recovered from the spot but more details are awaited as the search operation was still underway in the area.

# BJP alleges 'hawala' deal against Congress



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

BJP has raised the allegations on Sunday against Congress that it is linked to the recovery of Rs 1.50 crore and a currency counting machine in a house raided by the Income Tax department at Shailendra Nagar.

BJP spokesperson Sanjay Shrivastava while interacting with media persons said, the amount is connected to liquor lobby and the house is linked to it. The diary recovered from it mentions about Rs 358 crore and it is linked to 'Hawala'.

He alleged that liquor without

excise duty is being kept in the liquor shops and the sale is taking place sans billing. The excise department has become conduit for election funds.

BJP spokesperson said, "We had urged the Election Commission to monitor the CM residence, residences of ministers, CM's residence at Bhilai and other Congress leaders' residences. It is a critical situation. Congress in its election manifesto had promised total prohibition. But, Congress is trying to purchase democracy through money received from liquor."

# 15 Maoists shun violence in Bastar

BIJAPUR: Fifteen Maoists including a woman Naxal carrying a reward of Rs one lakh on her, shun violence and surrendered before police with arms in Bijapur, police said here on Sunday. They surrendered ultras have been identified as Raju Wacham (25), Sukku Pallo (25), Ova Ram Wacham (45), Raju Ram Wacham (24), Rainu Wacham (33), Sukku Wacham (40) s/o Kirwa Wacham, Banjaram Gota (35), Sukku Wacham (40) s/o Jogi Wacham, Budhri Telam (25), Mandi Telam (29), Vadde Shankar (27), Irpe Wacham (24), Jurri Pallo (25), Sunita Wacham (25) and Jimmo Wacham (25), Bijapur Superintendent of Police Gowardhan Thakur told reporters. Those surrendered included nine men and six women Maoists. Three men have been surrendered with arms. The woman naxal identified as Irpe Wacham is commander of Naxal Chetna Natya Mandali (CNM) and carried reward of Rs one lakh on her head. All the surrendered Maoists will be provided facilities under the surrender and rehabilitation policy of state government, Thakur said while adding immediate assistance of Rs 10,000 was also provided to each of the surrendered Maoists.

# Baghel terms Sadhvi Pragya 'habitual criminal'



STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Citing reports that BJP candidate for Bhopal seat Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur was accused of stabbing a youth here in Chhattisgarh 19 years ago, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday termed her as 'habitual criminal'.

Talking to media persons here, he said that he had enquired

about her and was apprised that she used to live here in Chhattisgarh with her brother in law around 19 years ago and was involved in fights over petty issue.

He further said "the victim of stabbing himself narrated me and later on I also confirmed it with the villagers and found it true that Sadhvi Pragya was involved in stabbing incidents here"

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PHIR EK BAAR

MODI SARKAR

Modi Once More

Every vote counts

Vote for the Lotus, Vote for BJP

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# EC issues notification, candidates file nominations in Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The poll panel will set the ball rolling for the crucial May 19 Lok Sabha election in Punjab on Monday by the issuing the notification and starting with the process of filing nominations for 13 parliamentary constituencies.

Election in Punjab will be held in the seventh and the last phase on May 19 for which the candidates can file their nominations from April 22 till April 29, while the last day for scrutiny of nominations will be April 30, and last date for withdrawal of candidature is May 2.

Along with Punjab, other states that go to polls on May 19 will be Bihar for eight parliamentary constituencies, Jharkhand for three, Madhya Pradesh for eight, West Bengal for nine, one for Chandigarh, 13 for Uttar Pradesh, and four for Himachal Pradesh.

Unlike before, Punjab, this time, would witness a multi-cornered contest with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), SAD (Taksali), Punjab Democratic Alliance (PDA) comprising six parties, also entering the electoral field besides the traditional Congress and SAD-BJP.

As of now, the Congress, AAP, and PDA have announced its candidates for all 13 seats, while SAD is yet to declare its candidates for two of the 10 seats its contests in alliance with the BJP — which is yet to disclose the names of its two of the total three candidates.

SAD is yet to announce its candidates for the two crucial seats of Bathinda and Ferozepur, while BJP is keeping its cards close to chest for Hoshiarpur and Gurdaspur seats. For Bathinda, SAD is likely to retain its sitting MP and

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upcoming elections would be filed in the office of respective returning officers situated in District Administrative Complex from 11 am to 3 pm from April 22-29, 2019, excluding April 27 (Saturday) and April 28 (Sunday)," he said.

He said that nomination papers are to be filed with the respective Deputy Commissioners, who are the Returning Officers for these constituencies — Gurdaspur DC for Gurdaspur, Amritsar DC for Amritsar, Tarn Taran DC for Khadoor Sahib, Jalandhar DC for Jalandhar (SC), Hoshiarpur DC for Hoshiarpur (SC), Rupnagar DC for Sri Anandpur Sahib, Ludhiana DC for Ludhiana, Fatehgarh Sahib DC for Fatehgarh Sahib (SC), Faridkot DC for Faridkot (SC), Ferozepur DC for Ferozepur, Bathinda DC for Bathinda, Sangrur DC for Sangrur,

Patiala DC for Patiala parliamentary constituencies.

Dr Raju said that in order to qualify for a parliamentary (Lok Sabha) seat, a candidate should be registered as an elector for any parliamentary constituency. To satisfy the concerned Returning Officer on this point, candidates should produce a certified copy of the relevant entry of the electoral roll in force.

He said that there are total 2,03,74,375 registered voters in the State for these elections, out of which 1,07,54,157 male, 96,19,711 female, 507 third genders, 68,551 PWD voters and 1,00,285 service voters.

There are 23,213 polling stations on 14,460 polling locations from which 249 booths are identified as critical, 719 as sensitive, and 509 as hyper sensitive. A total of 12,002 polling booths will be covered under web casting on the polling day.

**THE NOMINATIONS FOR THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS WOULD BE FILED IN THE OFFICE OF RESPECTIVE RETURNING OFFICERS SITUATED IN DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX FROM 11 AM TO 3 PM FROM APRIL 22-29, 2019, EXCLUDING APRIL 27 (SATURDAY) AND APRIL 28**

Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal, while from Ferozepur, the party may field its president Sukhbir Badal to give the much needed boost to the party's poll campaign. Two out of the four SAD MPs have parted ways, with Ferozepur MP Sher Singh Ghubaya seeking re-election

on the Congress ticket, Khadoor Sahib MP Ranjit Singh Brahmputra floating his own outfit — SAD (Taksali). While Brahmputra has decided against contesting elections, his party has fielded two candidates — Punjab Vidhan Sabha's former deputy speaker Bir Devinder Singh

from Sri Anandpur Sahib, and advocate Rajdev Singh Khalsa from Sangrur. It had fielded former Indian Army chief General JJ Singh but withdrew his candidature in the favour of PDA's joint candidate Bibi Paramjit Kaur Khalsa. The state Chief Electoral

Officer (CEO) Dr S Karuna Raju on Sunday said that as per schedule, the filing of nomination papers for the upcoming Lok Sabha 2019 elections would start with issuance of notification on April 22 (Monday), and would continue till April 29 (Monday). "The nominations for the

## 7 killed in stampede during temple ceremony in TN

**Tiruchirappalli:** A stampede during a local temple festival killed seven devotees and injured ten others near Thuraiyur, about 45 km from here, on Sunday, police said.

The tragedy occurred when hundreds of people gathered for the 'padikas' (temple coin) distribution ceremony, held as part of annual 'Chithira Pournami' festival, at the 'Karuppasamy' (a rural deity) temple in Muthiampalayam village.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami expressed anguish over the loss of lives in the incident.

While Modi announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the families of the victims, Palaniswami ordered a solatium of Rs one lakh each and Rs 50,000 to the injured.

The stampede occurred when the priest started distributing the coins and a section of devotees surged forward to col-

## PM expresses anguish over loss of lives in Trichy stampede

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday expressed anguish over the loss of lives in a stampede at a temple in Trichy and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the families of the victims.

Seven devotees were killed and 10 others injured in the stampede at Karuppasamy Temple in Muthiampalayam village in Trichy. The tragedy hit the village

lect them, police said. Seven people, including four women, died on the spot while ten others were seriously injured and have been hospitalised, they said. Distribution of the coins is the main event of the festival, which draws a large number of devotees from in and around the

when hundreds of devotees had gathered at the temple to offer puja on 'Chitra Poornima'.

"Saddened by the loss of lives due to the stampede at a temple in Thuraiyur, Trichy. My condolences to the families of those who passed away and prayers with the injured," he tweeted.

He said all possible help is being extended by the authorities. **PTI**

village. Devotees believe keeping the temple coins at home in their cash box will bring prosperity.

A temple official, on condition of anonymity, said there was no effort to control the crowd nor was there enough security personnel to bring the situation under control. **IANS**

## BJP trying to destroy India's diversity with their 'divisive politics': Capt

**Kharar:** Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh Sunday lambasted the BJP for allegedly trying to destroy India's unique strength of diversity with their 'divisive politics'.

"The BJP is trying to destroy India's unique strength of diversity with their divisive politics," he said.

Amarinder denied being soft on the Badals and asserted that he would not spare anyone found guilty, as per law, of any crime against the people of his state. "Even if Prakash Singh Badal is found guilty, he will be punished," said the Chief Minister, but reiterated that he would follow the due process of law in accordance with constitutional norms.

"They (Badals) will have to face the consequences of their actions, if found responsible," he added. "I believe in the Constitution and the rule

of law, and am totally against politics of vendetta..." he said.

He was referring to former Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal's earlier comment this year that his successor's (Amarinder Singh) only aim was to put him behind bars.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) patriarch was then reacting to the chief minister's address in the Punjab Assembly in February where he vowed to punish those guilty of the "horrendous" 2015 sacrilege incidents in the state.

Badal had earlier termed the Special Investigation Team formed to probe sacrilege and police firing incidents in 2015 and Justice Ranjit Singh Commission set up by the Congress government as a "drama" and asserted: "Amarinder's only goal is to put me in jail." **PTI**



Participants during Cycle Ride for Democracy, a voter awareness campaign, at Iqbal Maidan in Bhopal, on Sunday **PTI**

## On Easter...

**From Page 1**  
"I call upon all Sri Lankans during this tragic time to remain united and strong... The government is taking immediate steps to contain this situation," he tweeted.

Security has been intensified around the religious places across the capital. The government has temporarily blocked all social media platforms.

"Horrible scenes. I saw many body parts strewn all over," said Harsha de Silva, Sri Lanka's Minister of Economic Reforms and Public Distribution.

The Indian High Commission in Colombo said that it was closely monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka. "We are closely monitoring the situation. Indian citizens in need of assistance or help and for seeking clarification may call the following numbers: +94777903082 +94112422788 +94112422789," the High Commission tweeted.

"In addition to the numbers given, Indian citizens in need of assistance or help and for seeking clarification may also call the following numbers +94777902082 +94772234176," it said.

The first blasts were reported at St Anthony's church in Colombo and St Sebastian's Church in Negombo just outside the capital. "A bomb attack to our church, please come and help if your family members are there," read a post in English on the Facebook page of the St Sebastian's Church.

Images circulated on social media showed severely damaged St Sebastian's church, with a shattered ceiling and blood on the pews.

The riot police and the Special Task Force, extra police security has been deployed around the Bandaranaik International Airport, state-run Daily News reported.

All state Universities have been closed until further notice.

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said all Easter masses in the Colombo District have been cancelled.

Former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, under whose leadership the Lankan Army crushed the LTTE, termed the attack as "barbaric"

## Pragya gets 2nd EC notice in 24 hrs, now over...

**From Page 1**  
Thakur had earlier faced flak for claiming that former chief of Mumbai's Anti-Terrorist Squad Hemant Karkare, who had died in action during the 26/11 terror attacks, lost his life because she had "cursed him".

Addressing party workers in Bhopal, Thakur broke down while narrating the alleged custodial torture inflicted on her after she was arrested in connection with 2008 blast case, in which six persons had died and over 100 were injured.

She came down heavily on the late ATS chief, who was awarded the Ashok Chakra for his bravery in facing the Mumbai terror attack, and alleged that she was tortured and abused by him in ways that were "unbearable".

Thakur claimed he used to endlessly haunt her with his daunting questions, to which she had no answers as she was "innocent all along". She said she cursed Karkare for the alleged threats, torture and miserable treatment in custody. "Maine kaha that tera sar-

vanash hoga (I cursed him that he would be finished)," she said.

Referring to sutak, an auspicious period of one month and a half according to Hindu tradition which starts after death or birth of anyone in family, she said that the holy period started on the day she landed in jail and ended the day Karkare was slain by terrorists. "Inauspicious period started for Hemant Karkare when I was arrested. Exactly 45 days later he was killed and that was the end of the inauspicious period," she said.

## Want to take on Modi if allowed...

**From Page 1**  
Termining the ongoing Lok Sabha elections as no ordinary polls, Priyanka asked people to vote for saving the country from "narrow minded ideology" as she accused the NDA Government of undermining democracy and suppressing dissent.

Earlier Priyanka visited the family of CRPF jawan VV Vasanthkumar who was martyred in the Pulwama terror attack.

## Two-day meet concludes at BVM School in Nainital

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The two-day Jim Corbett-Pandit GB Pant symposium concluded in the Birla Vidya Mandir school in Nainital on the weekend.

The principal of Lawrence School, Sanawar (Himachal Pradesh), Vinay Pande was the chief guest of the seminar. Addressing the students on the occasion, Pande stressed on the importance of hard work for achieving the target set. Students from a total of 13 schools also participated in various competitive events held during the

**The winners of these competitions were also presented awards at the conclusion of the event**

two-day event. The winners of these competitions were also presented awards at the conclusion of the event.

In the quiz competition, the VK Birla Centre for Education, Pune secured the first position followed by Birla Vidya Mandir, Nainital and Sainik School Ghodakhal at second and third positions respectively.

In the creative writing competition, Scindia Kanya Vidyalaya, Gwalior came first followed by Birla Vidya Mandir and Mayo College Girls School, Ajmer came second and third respectively.

In the date competition, the best entry and best speaker award was won by Springdale Public School, Pusa Road while best block and tackle award was presented to Birla Vidya Mandir. Speaking at the conclusion, the school principal Anil Sharma commended all the students for participating in the competitions.

## DMRC creates space for bicycles at stations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In order to encourage last mile connectivity and use of environment friendly mode of transport such as bicycles among the metro users, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has created permanent space for bicycle parking at its Metro stations. Currently, the facility is at about 18 parking lots at different stations across Delhi Metro network.

These stations are located in Line number 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8. The stations are Seelampur, Shahdara, Welcome, Rithala, Saket, Arjanagar, Chattarpur, Dwarka Mor, Dwarka, Dwarka Sec21 Mundka, Nangloi, Peeragarhi, Tughlakabad, Badarpur, Sarita Vihar and Okhla Bird Sanctuary.

"The main aim behind this initiative is to encourage use of bicycles and propagate environment friendly transportations among the metro commuters for covering smaller distances. Besides, these parking will help the safety of the cycles and will help as last mile connectivity. Permanent parking lots at Nawada, Uttam Nagar and Vishwavidyalaya Metro stations have also been identified for permanent bicycle stands which will be installed within few days," said an official of DMRC.



Officials of DMRC also added that the this facility will be further extended to more stations in a phased manner.

The DMRC is further operating 20 bicycle sharing service stands (through operators) covering 19 stations across its network.

With the recent expansion of Metro network, 13 more stations have been identified for

this bicycle sharing service which will be functional in few weeks, they said.

Delhi metro is currently spread on a network of about 373 Km with 271 stations across the National Capital and the nearby regional areas such as Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Bahadurgarh and Haryana.

## G'gram gets more flyover, underpass projects

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

In an effort to decongest the traffic flow in Gurugram, new flyovers and underpasses will be constructed in Gurugram. The district has been given more flyover and underpass projects.

"The sites where construction work is likely to soon start are at Hero Hoda Chowk to Northern Peripheral Road (NPR), Near HUDA City Center Metro Station. Apart from these, Foot Over Bridges (FOBs) will be constructed at Mahavir Chowk, flyover at Gurudwara Road and Kadipur Chowk to help pedestrians cross roads safely.

Once operational, the FOBs will reduce the number of jay walkers who crowd the already slow moving traffic", an official said.

Recently some projects were formally commissioned for commuters which included the newly built eight-lane Hero Honda Chowk Flyover, two-lane Underpass from Chaudhary Bhaktawar Singh road towards Delhi near Rajiv Chowk, four-lane Maharana Pratap Flyover on Mehrauli-Gurugram road, Underpasses



Meanwhile, HUDA City Centre which has been beset with perennial traffic woes as haphazardly parked autos outside the Metro station is set for a facelift.

The State Government has decided to modify the HUDA City Center Metro Station junction. The Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA) and GMDA will jointly construct an FOB and an underpass at this junction so as to facilitate the people.

Apart from this, the authorities are also planning to construct a flyover or underpass near Atul Kataria Chowk to tackle traffic load on Old Delhi Road. The road will have six lanes from Mahavir Chowk to Palam Vihar curve, after which it will be widened as per available space.

"The construction of these projects is expected to smoothen traffic flow to a great extent in Gurugram. These projects were also demanded by the several residents in the city," he said.

# Pope denounces Easter slaughter in Lanka attack

AFP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis denounced the "cruel violence" of the Easter Sunday slaughter of Christians and foreigners in Sri Lanka as he celebrated the most joyful moment on the Christian liturgical calendar by lamenting the bloodshed and political violence afflicting many parts of the world.

Francis skipped his homily during Easter Mass but delivered his traditional "Urbi et Orbi" (To the city and the world) speech highlighting conflicts in the Mideast, Africa and the Americas and demanding that political leaders put aside their differences and work instead for peace.

"May the one who gives us his peace end the roar of arms, both in areas of conflict and in our cities, and inspire the leaders of nations to work for an end to the arms race and the troubling spread of weaponry, especially in the economically more advanced countries," Francis said from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica overlooking the flower-decked square below.

In a special appeal at the



Pope Francis holds a candle as he presides over a solemn Easter vigil ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Saturday

end, Francis lamented the "grave attacks" on Sri Lankan hotels and churches, which occurred just as the Christian faithful were celebrating Easter Mass that marks the resurrection of Christ following his crucifixion.

"I want to express my loving closeness to the Christian community, targeted while they were gathered in prayer, and all the victims of such cruel violence," Francis said. "I entrust to the Lord all those who were tragically killed and pray for the injured and all those who are suffering as a result of this dramatic event."

More than 130 people were killed and hundreds wounded following near-simultaneous blasts at three Sri Lankan churches and three hotels frequented by foreigners. In his roundup of global conflicts, Francis warned that the world was increasingly becoming resigned to the ongoing conflict in Syria. He called for a "renewed commitment for a political solution" that would respond to Syrians' need for freedom, peace and justice and allow for millions of refugees to return home.

At least 207 people were killed Sunday in a series of eight devastating bomb blasts, which ripped through hotels and churches where Christians were celebrating Easter. "I pray that God grants patience to the families of the casualties and recovery to the injured," added Sheikh Tayeb. Al-Azhar frequently denounces jihadist movements and regularly reaches out to the Christian faith.

In February, Pope Francis and Sheikh Tayeb signed a document on "human fraternity for world peace," hailed by the Vatican as an "important step forward in the dialogue between Christians and Muslims".

## Egypt's Al-Azhar condemns 'terrorist' attacks

AFP ■ CAIRO

Egypt's Al-Azhar, the Sunni Muslim world's foremost religious institution, on Sunday condemned "terrorist" attacks in Sri Lanka against hotels and churches celebrating Easter that killed more than 200 people. "I cannot imagine a human being could target the peaceful on their celebration day," said Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the institution's grand imam. "Those terrorists' perverted disposition goes against the teachings of all religions," he said in comments published on Al-Azhar's Twitter account.

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## Pak condemns explosions in churches, hotels

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan condemned terror attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday that killed 160 people and injured over 450.

The blasts targeted St Anthony's Church in Colombo, St Sebastian's Church in the western coastal town of Negombo and another church in the eastern town of Batticaloa around 8.45 am. (local time) as the Easter Sunday mass were in progress.

Three explosions were reported from the five-star hotels — the Shangri-La, the Cinnamon Grand and the Kingsbury.

Foreigners and locals who were injured in hotel blasts were admitted to the Colombo General Hospital.

Foreign Office spokesman Dr Mohammad Faisal said on

social media that Pakistan stands with the people of Sri Lanka.

"Pakistan condemns explosions and terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka at Churches & Hotels, that have led to numerous casualties and immense loss. People and Government of Pakistan stand by people and Government of Sri Lanka at this moment of tragedy and against terror," he said in a tweet.

Prime Minister Imran Khan also strongly condemned the barbaric attacks.

"Strongly condemn the horrific terrorist attack in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday resulting in precious lives lost & hundreds injured. My profound condolences go to our Sri Lankan brethren. Pakistan stands in complete solidarity with Sri Lanka in their hour of grief," he tweeted.

## Putin condemns bombings

AP ■ COLOMBO

Russian President Vladimir Putin has denounced a series of attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka as "cruel and cynical".

In a telegram of condolences sent to his Sri Lankan counterpart, the Russian leader said Moscow remains a "reliable partner of Sri Lanka in the fight against international terrorism."

He added that the Russians "share the grief of the relatives of those killed and wish a quick recovery to all those who were wounded" after the Easter Sunday blasts that killed at least 138 people.

Putin voiced confidence that "the perpetrators and the masterminds of such a cruel and cynical crime committed amid the Easter festivities will take the punishment they deserve."

## GLOBE TROTTER

### KING RESTORES CITIZENSHIP OF 551 BAHRAINI

Dubai: King Hamad has ordered that the citizenship of 551 Bahrainis revoked by courts be restored, official media said Sunday, days after a senior UN official expressed concern about the punishment.

### 2 INDIANS ARRESTED IN NEPAL FOR SMUGGLING

Kathmandu: Two Indian nationals were arrested in Nepal on Sunday for allegedly trying to smuggle over 50 kilograms of cannabis to India, police said.

### QUEEN ELIZABETH II TURNS 93 ON EASTER SUNDAY

London: Queen Elizabeth II is celebrating her 93rd birthday, which this year coincides with Easter Sunday. The queen is marking Easter by attending a service with other senior royals at St. George's Chapel on the grounds of Windsor Castle.

## Theresa May condemns 'appalling' church attacks

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Theresa May Sunday condemned the "truly appalling" multiple blasts at churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter, killing over 160 people, including at least nine foreigners.

Six near-simultaneous and coordinated explosions rocked three churches and three five-star hotels frequented by tourists as the Easter Sunday mass were in progress.



"The acts of violence against churches and hotels in Sri Lanka are truly appalling, and my deepest sympathies go out to all of those affected at this

tragic time," prime minister May said in a statement on Twitter.

"We must stand together to make sure that no one should ever have to practise their faith in fear," she said.

The statement came soon after she called for the UK to stand up for religious freedom in her annual message to mark Easter.

No group has claimed responsibility for Sunday's attacks.

However, most of the deadly attacks in the past in Sri Lanka were carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which ran a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in 2009 after the Sri Lankan Army killed its supreme leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. No group has claimed responsibility for Sunday's attacks.



Sri Lankan Army soldiers secure the area around St. Anthony Shrine after a blast in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Sunday

## Iraq condemns to death 4 IS members repatriated from Syria

AFP ■ BAGHDAD

Iraq's judiciary condemned to death four Islamic State group members on Sunday, the first known sentence for hundreds of Iraqi jihadists repatriated in recent months from neighbouring Syria.

In early April, Iraq's specialised terrorism courts began preparing cases against nearly 900 Iraqis accused of joining IS.

They had been caught in Syria by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), an alliance of Kurdish and Arab fighters, and transferred to Iraqi authorities. On Sunday, the judiciary said it had tried four Iraqis "accused of belonging to Daesh (IS) and carrying out crimes against innocent civilians in order to destabilise Iraq and Syria."

## US special envoy for Afghan peace visits Kabul

IANS ■ KABUL

US special envoy for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad visited the Afghan capital and exchanged views with the country's leadership, the media reported on Tuesday. As part of his multi-nation trip to facilitate intra-Afghan peace talks, Khalilzad arrived in Kabul on Monday and immediately started meeting Afghan officials, Daily Outlook Afghanistan reported.

Khalilzad, the Afghanistan-born US veteran diplomat, met President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and several other politicians. Afghan Presidential Palace in a short statement released here on Tuesday said that President Ghani and Khalilzad exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan and the ongoing



peace process and added that the outcome of the peace talks would be shared with the people. The Taliban has so far rejected to sit on negotiating table with the Afghan government, saying the militant group won't talk to Kabul administration in the presence of foreign military forces in the country. Khalilzad, who ended his fifth round of marathon talks with the Taliban representatives in Doha a couple of weeks ago and resumed his peace mission on March 25 with visit to London and Brussels, is expected to visit Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Jordan and Qatar after ending his meetings with Afghan leaders.

## ISIS claims deadly attack on Afghan ministry

AFP ■ BEIRUT

The Islamic State group Sunday claimed responsibility for an attack that killed 10 people and trapped around 2,000 for hours inside the communications ministry in the Afghan capital the previous day.

Four IS jihadists detonated explosives near the ministry, then entered and "battled Afghan security forces with machine guns and hand grenades for numerous hours," the group said in a statement on its social media channels.

The attack in central Kabul killed seven civilians and three members of the security forces, the interior ministry said on Sunday, in a new toll after three people died of their wounds.

AFP journalists heard one big blast around 11:40 am (07:10 GMT), followed by sporadic gunfire for hours afterwards.

By about 5:00 pm (12:30 GMT), the interior ministry declared the assault over.

## Sudan protest leaders to unveil civilian ruling body

AFP ■ KHARTOUM

Sudanese protest leaders were preparing Sunday to unveil a civilian council that they want to take power from military rulers, who have resisted calls to step down despite mass demonstrations.

Thousands of protesters gathered outside the army headquarters in central Khartoum ahead of the announcement, an AFP correspondent reported, a day after the two sides pledged to hold more talks.

On Friday the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), which was at the forefront of the protest campaign that toppled longtime president Omar al-Bashir this month, said it would announce the civilian council at 1700 GMT.

It has invited foreign diplomats and journalists to attend the event at the rally site.

"We are waiting for the announcement today," Romaysaa Omar, one of the protesters at the sit-in area, told

AFP. "All Sudanese people are in favour of the council to be announced by the SPA."

Whistling and waving Sudanese flags, dozens of demonstrators were sitting on a bridge at the site, rhythmically banging stones against metal.

"We will stay at the site until all our demands are met," said Al-Baraa Yousef, another demonstrator.

On Saturday, protest leaders and the military rulers held talks about a power handover and agreed to continue discussions.

"We clarified our main demand, which is the transfer of power to civilian authorities," Siddiq Yousef, a senior member of the Alliance for Freedom and Change, the umbrella group leading the protest movement, told state television after Saturday's talks.

"We agreed to continue negotiations to reach a solution that satisfies both the sides, so that the transfer of power will happen in a peaceful way."

On Saturday Ahmed al-

Rabia, a senior member of SPA, said it was possible that the unveiling of the council could be delayed.

"If (the military council) are willing to negotiate, then there is a chance that tomorrow's announcement could be postponed," he said.

But on Sunday he confirmed that it would go ahead as planned.

"There will be a press conference today at the said time at the protest site," he told AFP, without offering details.

Since Bashir was ousted on April 11 by the army in response to months of mass street protests, the military rulers have resisted calls to transfer power to a civilian body.

"What we want from them is a timetable to hand over power, so things don't drag on," said Rabia.

He said mounting pressure from the street and from the international community was expected to make the military council cede power in "two to three weeks".

## Comic poised to take over Presidency in Ukraine vote

AFP ■ KIEV

Ukrainians went to polls Sunday in the second round of an extraordinary election with a comedian who plays a president on TV expected to win in a stunning rebuke to the political establishment.

Forty-one-year-old Volodymyr Zelensky's bid to lead the country of 45 million people was initially dismissed as a joke when he announced his candidacy on New Year's Eve.

But now all opinion polls suggest incumbent President Petro Poroshenko is heading for defeat amid widespread anger over poverty, corruption and war.

Zelensky's victory is expected to open a new chapter in the history of a country that has gone through two popular uprisings in two decades and is mired in a five-year conflict with sepa-

ratists in the east. Polling stations opened at 0500 GMT as voters from Ukrainian-speaking regions in the west to Russian-speaking regions in the war-torn east went to cast their ballots.

Speaking outside a polling booth in the capital Kiev, Galyna, 81, said she voted for Zelensky.

"Because I am against Poroshenko," said the pensioner who refused to give her last name.

Zelensky has tapped into widespread frustration over graft, poverty and a conflict with separatists that has claimed some 13,000 lives.

But others doubted whether the consummate showman would be able to take on the country's vested interests, negotiate with the likes of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and stand up to Russia's Vladimir Putin.

## Afghan SC extends Ghani's term until delayed elections

AFP ■ KABUL

Afghanistan's supreme court has extended the term of President Ashraf Ghani until delayed elections take place, an official said Sunday, resolving for now the question of what would happen after his term expires on May 22.

Presidential elections were initially slated for April 20, but Afghan poll officials were unprepared for a new nationwide vote so soon after October parliamentary elections.

With some final results from that election still pending, the presidential poll was delayed until July 20, then pushed back again until September 28.

Ariana News published a statement from the court saying it "has extended the service term of President Ghani until the re-election of a new president".

"The supreme court understands the financial, secu-

**'THE SUPREME COURT UNDERSTANDS THE FINANCIAL, SECURITY AND LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ELECTION COMMISSION'**

urity and logistical challenges faced by the election commission."

While the court did not make the statement public, Faraidoon Khwazoon, the deputy spokesman to Afghan chief executive Abdullah Abdullah, confirmed the document to AFP, noting that Abdullah's term had also been extended.

"Yes, the supreme court has made its decision, based on the constitution, on the extension

of the service term of the president," Khwazoon said, adding the extension would last "until the re-election of the new president". Ghani's office could not immediately be reached for comment.

The delayed elections come as the United States tries to negotiate a peace deal with the Taliban, and some had speculated the polls were being deliberately stalled to create more space for those talks.

Opposition politicians and presidential contenders had called for an interim Government to fill the gap between Ghani's mandate expiring and the presidential elections.

The supreme court said it was asking "presidential candidates to respect the delay in the presidential elections".

Ghani was elected in 2014 in a closely contested poll that was mired by allegations of fraud and that saw him lead a power-sharing Government.

## US withdrawal from Afghanistan focus of next talks: Taliban

AFP ■ DOHA

Upcoming talks between the Taliban and the United States will focus on the timetable for pulling all foreign forces from Afghanistan, according to a senior Taliban member.

In an interview with AFP, the Taliban's political spokesman Suhail Shaheen said previous negotiations with Washington saw the two sides agree to a total withdrawal, with only the details needing to be fleshed out.

"In our last round of talks with the US side, we agreed with them on withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan," Shaheen said late Saturday in Doha.

In return for a withdrawal, he said the Taliban have committed to preventing terror

groups using Afghanistan as a safe haven or for launching attacks on other countries.

"But still there are some details to be discussed, and this discussion will take place in our next round of talks and that is about (the) timetable of the withdrawal of forces from the country and other details," Shaheen said.

The next round of talks is expected to take place in Doha in the coming weeks, but no dates have been formally announced.

US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who is leading the talks for Washington, said after the latest round ended that "real strides" had been made, but he insisted no agreement was reached on when the US and other countries might leave Afghanistan.

## Harris' campaign focuses on black colleges for support

AP ■ ORANGEBURG (US)

California Sen Kamala Harris has described her experience as a student at a historically black college as "one of the most important aspects" of her life. Now, her Democratic presidential campaign is using that experience to connect with voters.

Not only is she one of only two black candidates in a field that's expected to grow to more than 20 candidates, she's also the only candidate who attended a historically black college or university, commonly called an HBCU.

And she's the first major-party candidate to have graduated from an HBCU — Washington's Howard University — since Jesse Jackson ran for president in the 1980s.

To be sure, she is not the only candidate focusing on such institutions. Massachusetts Sen

Elizabeth Warren, New York Sen Kirsten Gillibrand and former Texas Rep Beto O'Rourke have campaigned at historically black colleges. So has the other black candidate in the 2020 race, New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker.

At a CNN town hall last month in Orangeburg, home to two of South Carolina's HBCUs, Booker noted that his parents and grandparents were educated at historically black institutions and that "the majority of black doctors, black lawyers, black generals are produced by HBCUs."

But Harris's campaign has visited more historically black colleges than any candidate, and she is burnishing her personal ties to this community, and not just to current students.

"Presidential candidates are recognising HBCUs as a political and cultural center for the broader black community," said Aimee Allison, the founder

of the political network She The People, which plans a candidate forum Wednesday at Texas Southern University, a historically black college.

Allison said that holding events at these schools is an "essential part of a long-term strategy to build trust and relationships" with black voters.

Harris's focus on historically black colleges could be particularly important in South Carolina, home to eight HBCUs. Black voters are vital to success for Democratic primary candidates anxious to win the South's first primary.

In Orangeburg, Harris's town hall Saturday night was moderated by Bakari Sellers, a former South Carolina state representative who recently endorsed her campaign.

Turning to a group of South Carolina State students seated on bleachers, Harris talked briefly about the value of attending a historically black institution.

## A Mulayam transition

The SP and BSP chiefs shared a dais in Mainpuri making for a historic moment but can they stall national parties?



One may call it opportunistic but when is politics anything but? One may have doubted the possibilities of the *mahagathbandhan* but this is one alliance in Uttar Pradesh (UP) that has subsumed the hostilities, rivalries and egos of its partners to wage a counter *dharm yudh*, that of the oppressed, the backwards and Dalits, against the ruling *raj* of the privileged Thakurs. Or their representative arrogance in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). So it is that Samajwadi Party (SP) founder Mulayam Singh Yadav finally shared

the stage with Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati in his bastion of Mainpuri at a joint election rally to appeal to their loyal voters to cast their ballot en bloc, end the rule of the BJP at the Centre and secure their say in the 17th Lok Sabha. You could also call it a revival of a proven formula, whereby Mulayam Singh Yadav and BSP founder Kanshi Ram had held back the BJP's temple surge almost 26 years ago. And the bypolls at Gorakhpur and Phulpur have also proved that vote transference to each other could work on the ground.

In fact, it was Mayawati's idea to go to Yadav strongholds and seek the Dalit votes for the combine. She even went so far as to justify the SP-BSP pact by quoting the backdrop of mutual alienation that caused the collapse of the alliance government in the State and led to SP legislators attacking her in a guest house on June 2, 1995. She plucked the thorn out of the flesh once and for all, saying she had forgiven that episode simply because "hard decisions" needed to be taken in the interest of the people and the party's movement, given the present situation. She couldn't have been further from the truth. Without an MP and just a handful of MLAs in the Assembly, her prized Dalit-Muslim formula is in shreds, the minority vote being completely appropriated by the SP and to some extent the Congress. Even her Dalit vote is drifting to other parties depending on their ability to negotiate on the community's behalf. More so, the Dalit component itself is split between the achievers or the creamy layer and those that are languishing below every known index. Her past tie-up with BJP has only helped the bigger party appear as an umbrella deliverer than the BSP's own inclusion attempts of all castes. So overlooking a past hurt by a known frenemy is a little price to pay if Mayawati wants to be relevant both nationally and at the State level. Hence, she certified Mulayam as the bonafide leader of the OBCs and attacked both the BJP and Congress. As for the SP, now being helmed by the younger Akhilesh Yadav, it realises that with a resurgent Congress focussing more on the UP Assembly elections of 2022 than the national polls, it cannot sit easy on existing loyalties of the MY (Muslim-Yadav) factor. Particularly given Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi's aggressive outreach to the Most Backward Classes (MBCs) and Dalits, too. It has to hold the State if it wants to negotiate nationally. And so it is imperative for both SP and BSP to make a difference through the 80 seats in UP. Nobody understands this better than Mulayam himself, who despite criticising the alliance earlier, made amends by publicly acknowledging Mayawati. He even expressed gratitude towards the BSP chief for supporting him in his political journey and asked his constituents to "respect her", clearly an appeal to SP voters to unquestionably support the BSP wherever its candidates have been fielded in the Yadav strongholds, elections for which are due in the next phase. By coming out, he also settled the debate on which side he is on, his son Akhilesh and not his brother Shivalp. He even asked an SP leader, who had bent to touch his feet, to accord the same respect to Mayawati seated next to him. But the final masterstroke was his announcement that this would be his last electoral outing, thereby setting off a sympathy wave of sorts that could seal the SP-BSP votebank. Historic it was. But can they make history again?

## No belt but tighter ties

Bilateral relations will not be derailed by India's refusal to be part of BRI. China needs India's market



In China's Foreign Ministry offices in Beijing's Chaoyang District, there are many departments, including a few that deal with Chinese history, looking at historical treaties that predecessor states of the People's Republic of China signed, whether it was the Qing dynasty or in Tibet. From historical border treaties and surrendering of land to demands for restitution from nations like Japan that colonised it, everything China does today has some sort of historical context. Few other foreign affairs ministries in any other nation

have similarly dedicated units. And after China successfully enforced the treaty that the Qing dynasty had with the British over Hong Kong, they have become even more aggressive on this front under President Xi Jinping. The modern People's Republic of China wants to return being the Middle Kingdom, a land between heaven and earth which has dominion over the rest of the planet. And while the ancient Middle Kingdom was built by conquest, the new one will be built on replicating history and by spending money. Thus the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive series of infrastructure projects, including building ports, high-speed railways and airports across the world, is funded by China and built by the Chinese. Huge, expensive projects such as Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka and the Lahore Metro have led to massive public debts in both nations. The BRI may not state this explicitly, but the subtext is one of Chinese economic conquest of nations and their resources aided by corrupt politicians.

But China has always had one painful neighbour, one from whom it has been separated by a massive Himalayan barrier. A neighbour with whom it has had cultural exchanges — after all Buddhism and martial arts were gifts from it — but geography has always meant that population exchanges and war, other than in modern times, have been limited. This has meant that there has always been an underlying distrust of each other in Beijing and New Delhi. But is the Indian government's disapproval of the BRI just one of a jealous neighbour? That's untrue. India knows that it has lost out to China economically over the past decade and it sees China's BRI for what it is, an unbridled attempt at colonisation by economic means. Yet, India realises it has to live with China considering its investments here are extensive and we have become a major market for Chinese products. Our eastern neighbour's interests are best served by a economically rising India in the medium-term because it will be forced to buy more Chinese products. Hence all talk of another Wuhan and sharing bilateral concerns. Yet, India's next government should continue to be wary of China, which like a dragon has a forked tongue. It wants to keep India militarily weak and will continue to fund global terrorism through Pakistan. While the new Indian government should engage with China from a new perspective, it should remember that the latter considers everybody below it, including people beyond the mountains.

# opinion

## Goodbye Jet Airways?

As the airline unravels, it has begun to emerge that several aspects of the business were rotten to the core. These are the reminiscences of a frequent flyer



KUSHAN MITRA

Many of us have been watching the Jet Airways bankruptcy saga with a lot of sorrow. Do not get me wrong — Jet Airways was bled dry by its promoters and management with all sorts of sweetheart deals and, thus, at a level deserved its fate because as the skeletons tumble out of the closet, it has become apparent that some aspects of the airline were a ponzi scheme. But when 22,000 people lose their jobs, you can't help but feel a tinge of helplessness. Many of Jet's more experienced pilots, cabin crew and engineers will find jobs in India's growing aviation industry. But the collapse of two airlines in the space of five years with boatloads of debt, as well as the life-support that Air India is on, makes one wonder just how sustainable the Indian aviation sector is.

This is an issue that the next Government will have to debate upon. While the collapse of Jet and the subsequent reduction of capacity will ironically make things better for many airlines, allowing them some amount of pricing power, it will make things pricier for the consumer. Successive Governments have long milked the Indian aviation sector with high fuel taxes, landing charges and airport fees while not allowing Indian carriers to operate on more lucrative foreign routes. At the same time, it opened up India to foreign start-up airlines to feed off the riches of the Indian market, something particularly apparent with Arabian and South-East Asian carriers being given a free run in India. The Indian Government should realise that a healthy aviation sector generates and promotes domestic and inbound tourism. This leads to an overall boost of the entire economy.

Jet Airways' promoters and management, even with their sweetheart deals, were, however, keen on keeping the good times going, quite unlike the erstwhile King of Good Times, whom they had seen off. At the start of Jet Airways' silver jubilee year, the fact that the airline would not even survive 12 months was the last thing on everyone's mind. But the signs of trouble were apparent for anyone willing to open their blinkers and see: The airline was in deep financial turmoil, unable to clear salaries of pilots and cabin crew. Now, it is almost certain that the story is over, leaving several banks, led by the State-owned State Bank of India holding the can, which means ultimately, the Indian taxpayer will pick up a large part of the bill.

The fact is that until Jet Airways' lenders can quickly find a resolution, its revival is almost certainly off the cards. Other airlines are already buzzing around the airline's body as it lies comatose with some aircraft and assets like slots still in its possession. But the slots will not stay



forever as airports have a "use it or lose it" system and aircraft have to be regularly maintained. Most of Jet Airways' aircraft belong to leasing companies and they also won't hang around forever with their assets gathering dust. Many aircraft are, in fact, being taken away or being offered to other airlines. Until a rescue happens soon, and soon pretty much means before the end of this month, the plug would effectively have been pulled. As one airline executive muttered, "It would be easier to put a billion dollars in starting a new airline rather than buying Jet Airways."

But I will always have some fond memories of the airline. I distinctly remember my first flight on Jet Airways, I was in Class XI and was travelling to Mumbai with a theatre production back in 1996. It was a then brand-new Boeing 737-300 aircraft. Many other airlines that had started in the aftermath of the Government opening up the aviation sector to private carriers, were using older, often much older aircraft, such as first-generation jet aircraft like the Boeing 707. Many used second and third-hand Boeing 737-200 aircraft. Jet used rel-

“THE SIGNS OF TROUBLE WERE APPARENT: THE AIRLINE WAS IN DEEP FINANCIAL TURMOIL, UNABLE TO CLEAR SALARIES. BUT NOW, IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT THE STORY IS OVER, LEAVING SEVERAL BANKS, LED BY STATE-OWNED SBI HOLDING THE CAN, WHICH MEANS ULTIMATELY, THE INDIAN TAXPAYER WILL PICK UP A SUBSTANTIAL BILL”

atively new and modern planes like the 300 and 400 series of the Boeing 737. Their air-hostesses spoke well and the entire experience was like a breath of fresh air after decades of Indian Airlines' domination of the domestic aviation space.

Over the years, I must have flown with Jet Airways hundreds of times on the Delhi-Mumbai sector itself. I was a loyal frequent-flyer and often went out of my way to fly with Jet, and yes, like with every other airline, service standards did drop over the years. There have been several times that service standards on the ground and in the air have been wanting. I have also had cabin crew who have had a "I am better than you" attitude and I have had cabin crew that have gone out of their way to help. When you fly hundreds of times with an airline over the years, there will be some bad experiences along with some superb ones but most of the time, Jet was good. May be that is why, as a frequent flyer, you start getting the first hints that things are not all great, as service standards, including in-flight service, started to drop. Jet clearly could not compete with the likes of low-cost carriers like

IndiGo which run a very tight ship and cost controls. And with huge amounts of debt thanks to an ill-advised acquisition of Air Sahara, Jet had swallowed the poison pill to keep Vijay Mallya's Kingfisher from operating lucrative international routes. This in turn forced Mallya to spend an incredible amount of money to buy Air Deccan, which was quick-acting poison for Kingfisher. But the debt and the complex nature of the Air Sahara acquisition without an unified operating certificate has cost Jet this day.

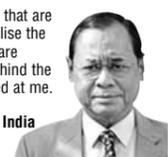
I did not believe that a flight I took on February 25 between Lucknow and Delhi onboard a ATR-72 aircraft would be my last with the airline. One can still hold out some hope for the airline's revival but having seen similar 'temporary suspensions' becoming permanent, I would like to thank the airline for all the memories. While I am upset about losing my miles, I do wish all the employees of Jet Airways well and believe that most of them will find jobs even in this difficult economic environment. It was a good quarter-century long ride!

(The writer is Managing Editor, The Pioneer)

## SOUNDBITE

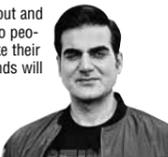
There are forces that are trying to destabilise the judiciary. There are bigger forces behind the allegations hurled at me.

Chief Justice of India —Ranjan Gogoi



Things don't work out and it's only fair that two people who want to take their life in their own hands will take that decision.

Actor —Arbaaz Khan



The Indian side has its concerns. We understand that and that is why we have stated that the BRI is only an economic initiative and does not target any third country.

China's Foreign Minister —Wang Yi



I am not a patch on Indira Gandhi. The sense of public service that she had, I also have the same and my brother also has it.

Congress leader —Priyanka Gandhi



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Save aviation sector

Sir — The suspension of operations of the cash-starved Jet Airways is disheartening and a big setback for the Indian aviation industry at a time when it has emerged as one of the fastest growing globally. Further, the aviation sector largely remains untapped with huge growth opportunities, considering that air transport is still expensive for a majority of the country's population. It is against this backdrop of capacity-reduction that Jet's decision to stop all operations, at least temporarily, may see airfares spiral further in the short term.

If indeed Jet is able to survive and gets a credible investor, it will be in the interest of thousands of employees and travellers, who will otherwise see a massive capacity shortage, leading to a tremendous increase in airfares. Jet's story has also raised serious questions as to why the domestic airline industry is proving to be so perilous for enterprises. The Government needs to do some re-thinking as to why over half-a-dozen of airlines have fallen by the wayside in the last decade or so. The airlines, too, must take a comprehensive

### Why no bar on tainted candidates?

Setting the stage for an epic battle in Bhopal, Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, the woman facing trial in the Malegaon blast case, was fielded by the BJP to defeat the Congress' candidate Digvijaya Singh in the Lok Sabha elections. Sadhvi joined the BJP only hours before the party announced her name as its candidate from Bhopal. This makes it clear that the BJP is hell-bent to create an electoral candidate out of a key terror suspect. Agreed, Sadhvi is not the first person to contest in an election despite facing serious charges. Nor will she be the last one. But it appears that the BJP's sole aim is to strengthen its Hindutva narrative.

There is no denying the fact that India has always been a secular country and it is the vibrant and dynamic aspect of being secular that has always won it a unique position in the entire world. Our country is revered and respected for that. But it is ironic that Indian laws do not bar those facing criminal charges from contesting the elections. Only those who have been



convicted or those who entail a sentence of at least two years are not allowed to contest the polls. Ideally, the candidates should themselves not contest. Many Union Ministers have quit their posts when charges against them have been framed. This should be the case with the selection of candidates, too.

TK Nandanani Chennai

look at their plight.  
 Ramesh G Jethwani  
 Bengaluru

### Stoking controversy

Sir — Literally cocking a snook at the law and the judicial process, the BJP has set an unhealthy precedent in not only inducting Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur into

the party but also making her its candidate in Bhopal against Congress leader Digvijaya Singh. Out on bail for the past two years, Pragya Singh Thakur was discharged by a court of charges under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime (MCOCA) in the 2008 Malegaon blast case. Still, even if she is innocent, given the magnitude of the charges, the BJP could have

avoided making her its candidate in Bhopal. Interestingly, BJP leader Subramanian Swamy has gone to the extent of saying that the charges against the candidate are in the "final stages of being dismissed," as if her acquittal is a foregone conclusion. Having picked a controversial nominee, the BJP can no longer take the moral high ground. So sharp is the polari-

sation in Indian society today that communities will vote for alleged terrorists — as long as they believe that terrorism is being committed on behalf of their own.

JS Acharya Hyderabad

### Influencing voters

Sir — As the national election is in progress, it is disappointing that political leaders have been playing religious and caste cards to attract voters. A common misconception among them is that they have absolute freedom over the content of their speeches. Despite laws that prohibit speeches of certain kinds and the procedure thereof, they have been unmindful and have been gleefully violating the Model Code of Conduct.

Spreading hate speeches and intruding privacy of others will in no way strengthen society. It is a travesty that with such a mindset, the issues faced by the citizens get overlooked.

Ramachandran Nair Malappuram

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## FIRST COLUMN

## Bottlenecks in better healthcare

Timely training of primary-level doctors can help face the scourge of non-communicable disease that threatens the country and its citizens today



SAVITHA KUTTAN

As India aspires to achieve the status of an economic superpower, the country needs to maintain good health of its vast population. In addition, when the health aspect comes into play, the role of doctors becomes all the more important. The ailing primary healthcare set-up in India has failed to keep pace with latest developments, thereby increasing the load on tertiary centre. Initially, the primary healthcare system was seen as a guard against preventing the burden of diseases to an advanced stage and to get preventive and cost-effective treatment. However, gradually, that role became redundant with the lack of trained and qualified physicians. Hence, the entire burden fell on hospitals in cities and urban areas.

According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) 2018 data, non-communicable diseases kill 41 million people each year globally. The WHO statistics further revealed that 15 million people aged between 30 and 69 years die due to non-communicable diseases every year. And most of these premature deaths occur in low and middle income countries, who focus more on treating infectious diseases and remain ignorant of non-communicable diseases. A major hurdle in tackling them is the lack of trained physicians at the primary healthcare level where diseases can be prevented and detected early and patients can be given timely treatment. Major kinds of non-communicable diseases responsible for early deaths include heart attacks and stroke, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, asthma and diabetes.

**Upgrade knowledge of primary healthcare doctors:** Rural physicians play a key role in the initial emergency situations. It has been repeatedly suggested that primary healthcare doctors should receive basic training in providing emergency care in communities who reside far away from regional support services. Also, with diseases evolving constantly, doctors in the rural health set-up are unable to cope with the patients' expectations as they remain unequipped to treat new diseases due to insufficient knowledge or training. There is a dire need to train rural physicians. Further, early detection of diseases causing epidemics, especially non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension, will be of help. Timely re-education and training of doctors will also help in reducing the burden of patients on Tier-I and Tier-II hospitals.

**Online doctor training:** As technology advances in the medical field, a lot of other options can be explored to train physicians in remote and rural areas. For doctors having little time to venture out, if information is made available to them on their fingertips, it can help train them. This apart, organising regular seminars and workshops can be useful.

With technology touching the sky, upgradation of knowledge has become a reality for doctors through cloud-based technology where specialists share their know-how about latest developments in medical research and drugs invention. Most of these tutorials provide free access to content where doctors can grasp content either through their smartphones or other internet-linked devices. This online exercise is beneficial in a way that it helps doctors hone their skills to provide better healthcare. The process of training doctors online serves the purpose of improved healthcare across the country.

**Incentivise primary healthcare doctors:** Most doctors, both private and Government, avoid working in non-urban centres citing lack of medical infrastructure, safety and sanitation issues. Though the Government has made several efforts to ensure doctors work in rural areas, there has been little success. Instead of adopting coercive measures, focus should be on recruiting doctors and incentivising them with both monetary benefits and improved working conditions. Such measures will go a long way in encouraging them to work in rural areas and retrain themselves to better serve the rural communities.

**Primary-level doctors:** In the Government's flagship health insurance scheme, Ayushman Bharat, stress was laid on primary health centres. The Government plans to upgrade Primary Health Centres (PHC) into Health and Wellness Centres (HWC). However, the lack of sufficient health-related infrastructure at PHCs may not drive the Government's well-thought programme. For this mammoth insurance scheme to succeed, the Government must make efforts to re-educate and upskill doctors at the primary level. For this purpose, the Government can tie up with private players who may be willing to help retrain physicians. It is now time for the Government to rope in private players so that our doctors can provide quality and affordable healthcare to our vast population.

(The writer is CEO of a leading healthcare organisation)

MULAYAM SINGH/JIS NOT A FAKE SERVANT LIKE PRIME MINISTER MODI. HE IS A POLITICIAN WHO HAS SWORN THAT HE WILL CONTINUE WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE.  
—BSP LEADER MAYAWATI

## POINTCOUNTERPOINT



PEOPLE OF UTTAR PRADESH HAVE REJECTED CASTE-BASED POLITICS. SP AND BSP ARE WORKING AGAINST EACH OTHER'S INTERESTS.  
—UNION MINISTER PIYUSH GOYAL

# Life after elections

Regardless of which party forms the Government at the Centre, there should be no room for complacency. It will have to hit the ground running and focus on the economy's growth



BINDU DALMIA

By the end of May, a newly-elected Government, constituting the 17th Lok Sabha, will firmly be in place. While it's a challenge to predict the electoral outcomes of India's heterogeneous democracy, taking an average of the recently-declared, pre-electoral opinion polls makes it clear that the BJP still retains some momentum. The most significant takeaway from Phase-I of the elections was the absence of anti-incumbency undercurrents, which is what differentiates 2019 from 2004.

According to survey projections, Prime Minister Modi appears to be the front-runner for a next term with an average of 272 seats for the NDA versus 141 for the Congress +. The only speculation is about the margin of victory. The pro-incumbency calculus is broadly based on expectations of a less than anticipated loss for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, despite the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party's (SP-BSP) overwhelming arithmetic; a pro-Modi popularity ratings bias in the recently lost Hindi heartland States of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan as also in Bihar, Delhi and the stronghold of Gujarat. The BJP is also expected to increase its footprint a bit in the eastern bastions of Mamata Banerjee's West Bengal and Naveen Patnaik's Odisha.

As momentum for the elections picks pace, what is increasingly evident is that of the 31 per cent of the middle class, who were disillusioned due to demonetisation and who voted for the BJP in 2014, a sizeable section of the aspirational and burgeoning lot seems to be coming back to the incumbent yet again — a pattern discernible across caste barriers. Perhaps because of a lack of a leadership alternative. Further, the BJP has strategised on energising three key demographics it hopes to gain from: First-time voters, the start-up universe and women. Although women do not vote *en bloc*, on-ground delivery of the Government's welfare schemes has found resounding resonance among them.

Regardless of which dispensation comes to power, for the first 100 days, the next Government will not have the luxury of the fable "honeymoon period" and will have to hit the ground running. This because of the World Economic Outlook's forecast of a slowdown in economic activity in 2019 for 70 per cent of the world economy, which includes India. Consequently, the global slowdown as also the revival of growth within the country needs recalibration in order to expand the economy and use the resources sustainably for poverty alleviation.

So what would a new government prioritise? Some of the big themes include continuing the impetus for infrastructure and housing, both of which are the biggest job aggregators; facilitating an entrepreneurial workforce that fosters self-employment and is a proxy for formal job creation; and ensuring targeted delivery of social sector schemes like Ayushman Bharat and the farm income support scheme, PM-KISAN, by funding in a fiscally responsible manner, without burdening the middle classes with high taxes.

A quasi-universal income support scheme necessitates setting aside one per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for a few years. This will also speed up rural consumer



demand as 60 per cent of the households account for over 25 per cent of the consumption. As 12 crore farmer families are expected to benefit from the expanded coverage of the PM-KISAN scheme — which in the next phase will include tenant farmers — it requires the creation of a database to identify the beneficiaries as also better digital mapping and titling of land records.

Essentially, India needs economic growth which is "organic", one that can only happen by enlarging the economic pie, as compared to interim measures that artificially boost incomes at the bottom of the social pyramid through expansive welfarism. Organic growth can happen broadly through:

- Maintaining fiscal prudence.
- Continuing efforts at increasing the taxpayer base, which will yield revenue for nation-building, yet lowering corporate tax to facilitate Capex spend and job creation.
- Boosting the share of the manufacturing sector in the economy to 25 per cent by 2022 from the current 17 per cent.
- Improving access to reasonably priced capital in order to service the credit requirements of MSMEs.
- Continuing with the ambitious investment target of ₹100 lakh crore to expand the highways, railways and airports. This is expected to create 25-30 lakh crore jobs.
- Accentuating the pace of structural and market-based reforms, including trade liberalisation, digitisation of land records, lowering the cost of land acquisition to hasten infrastructural development.
- Hastening the process of privatisation, especially of Air India and MTNL.
- Reducing the debt load of 34 power plants amounting to ₹1,80,000 crore as 40 per cent of their output is not paid for. This has increased State utility losses and has become part of the banks' bad loan portfolio.
- Streamlining bureaucracy, reinforcing the

Reserve Bank of India's autonomy.

■ Restoring the credibility of Central institutions like the Economic Offences Wing, the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate should be another priority. Investigative efficiency of economic offences by Central agencies is vital for higher conviction rate to punish wilful offenders.

Further, in the next leg of the "Housing for all by 2022" scheme, there is a need to ease funding for low-cost housing for both builders and buyers. This will allow for greater access to institutional finance and relax the eligibility criteria for loans to consumers on lines of the proposed "rental-cum-ownership basis". This because as the Government targets to build 29 million housing units in rural areas and 12 million units in urban areas, most buyers lack collateral. The construction sector needs acceleration as it holds the potential of the highest job-creating coefficient after the unremunerative agricultural sector.

There's little room for complacency despite the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank certifying that India is the fastest growing economy, averaging at 7.5 per cent. We need a "job-full" growth of 10 per cent year-on-year successively in order to avert a demographic disaster. In order to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of bridging inequality and mainstreaming the disadvantaged communities by 2030, the Government as well as the private sector will have to work closely to infuse resources on projects that pose the biggest investment opportunities to modernise India and accelerate the growth of human development.

"Jobs are human capital" and the creation of better paying jobs is the only way to avert a demographic disaster. The self-employed are a fall-back segment of job seekers, who mostly opt to begin their career by running small street stalls as a second-option to earn

a livelihood. Entrepreneurs and self-employed are now a sizeable base who have grown since the last three years to 48 million. Promoting mass entrepreneurship needs policy improvement to ease seed capital funding, providing collateral-free loans and erasing regulatory requirements.

Further, as improved human capital stems from higher literacy, there is an urgent need to double outlays in education and improve the human capital quotient if India has to grow in double digits. India's mobile data is the cheapest in the world and had an estimated 566 million internet users as of December 2018, out of which rural users comprised 250 million. Here in lies the biggest opportunity for transformation in education through distant-learning and e-commerce job-creation. Another avenue for job-creation that has lagged behind is the export sector. India has an opportunity to plug the vacuum created by relocation of production sites outside China by eliminating superfluous regulations that lower competitiveness and make India a more attractive investment destination for producing goods for exports.

India is currently a \$2.5 trillion economy and by 2030, it is anticipated that its national income will touch \$7 trillion. As a key driver of growth and jobs, urbanisation holds another vital key for expanding the economy. "Given India's commitment to the 2030 development agenda, we will need to build 700 to 900 million square metres of urban space annually. This will mean 70 per cent new jobs will be created in and around cities."

While Modi has firmly laid the groundwork on strong foundations for an anticipated re-run of office, huge challenges lies ahead. If handled with surgical precision, a prosperous India @75 could be well within striking range.

(The writer is an author, columnist and Chairperson for the National Committee of Financial Inclusion at Niti Aayog)

## Secure development with conservation

Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district, where forest officials have been running a centre to train tribal youth for livelihood, is one example that needs to be replicated across the country. The Government should rope in the forest department for tribal development



VK BAHUGUNA

Bureaucracy is a tool for governance and implementation of decisions as per the law and conventions set by the rulers. It functions in a systematic manner and if it performs its duty honestly and efficiently, it can become an agent of change for the welfare of the people. However, the bureaucracy is severely criticised all over the world for creating logjam, being insensitive to public feelings, breeding red-tapism, setting up a roadblock for innovation and running after those who dare innovate. In a country as diverse as India, where challenges faced by its people are immense, the success of any Government programme depends on the commitment and efficiency of its administration.

But as always, there are some change-mongers, whose enterprise, zeal and innovation bring resilience, long-term credibility and, hence, faith in the system. In the midst of failed Government schemes, there are people who, with their sheer perseverance and hard work, have rewritten laws of governance. In this column, this writer will discuss one such example of forest conservation and tribal development reviewed by him recently when he visited some tribal areas in the hinterland of Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district.

This area is home to dry teak forests and many tribal communities live in and around the forests. The Kol, Koru, Sahariya and Baiga tribals have registered the highest population. A large number of forest villages were created during the British period for the execution of forestry works and people over here were deprived of even basic civic amenities. However, the situation changed after the Forest Rights Act, 2006. This writer visited the Chattu-Pattu and Bangda villages, inhabited by the Koru and Gond tribals, around 70 km away from Khandwa last month and got a chance

to speak to the tribals, who are beneficiaries of the various income-generation activities launched by the forest department here so that they can lead a decent livelihood. It was reassuring to see that irrigation facilities had promoted wheat and vegetable cultivation but sadly, millets were fast vanishing.

The most noteworthy aspect was the creation of a skill development centre at Anwlia in 2010, for which funds were generated from the tribal-sub plan of the State and the Union Government pitched in as well. It was the innovative thinking of former Divisional Forest Officer SS Rawat, currently overseeing this centre as the Chief Conservator of Khandwa circle, and the staff that led to the establishment of this centre. The skill development centre was created through a public-private partnership with help from an NGO, Self Employment Education Society (SEES) and with bare minimum investment. The centre focussed on the advantage of the location of the Khandwa town on the main railway track from where all trains going to major South Indian cities like Bengaluru passed. The centre had

trained over a thousand youths belonging to Koru and other tribes till June 2016. Around 600 boys were trained for security guards, data entry jobs and driving vehicles.

Further, 450 girls were skilled in cloth stitching, tribal art and beauty parlour jobs. Training happens for a duration of three months for each trade in a batch of 35 and covers personality development, too. After the completion of the training, placement services are activated by the centre. SEES was paid ₹8,000 per candidate for training.

It was heartening to learn that out of the 450 trained girls, 176 are working at a textile company in Bengaluru and others have taken up independent work in nearby places. One of the girls, who had come home from Bengaluru for Holi, was present with her baby during my visit and she informed me that they are provided safe accommodation, dining, crèche facilities and a good salary of more than ₹8,500 during their initial appointment. Another textile producer in Mandideep near Bhopal recruited 450 boys as security guards. Those, who were trained in driving, are on their own and self-employed.

This innovative example of the use of forest department to train the tribal youth for livelihood was executed through the NGO. However, the infrastructure for training, including the building, was arranged separately by the forest department. A cost-benefit analysis will make for a nice model that can be replicated for not only employment generation for the tribals but also for reducing their dependence on the forest and land-based resources. Success has come very silently, without blowing the trumpet, but the district administration of Khandwa must take cue from this and help this centre grow as a model for employment-generation by adding up more trade and providing financial support. It should focus more on animal resources and horticulture development and the creation of infrastructure for primary sector. The centre needs fresh infusion of funds.

Equally, the forest department must submit a comprehensive project before the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, that covers the entire State with site-specific mod-

ules. CAMPA funds can also be tied up. In a nutshell, the implementation of such modules sends out a larger message to our planners to reshape developmental programmes by inter-linking conservation of forests with income-generation and growth of primary sector activities through infusion of technology. Emphasis of forest management should be on conserving the forests, soil moisture and bio-diversity and making people less dependent on forests through such activities that ultimately not only lead to better livelihood but can help in climate change mitigation and adaptation on broader scale by covering the entire landscape.

It will also assimilate the tribal youth in the mainstream society where they will enrich it with their culture, language, art and music. It is in this light that the recommendations of the National Commission on Scheduled Tribes that the Indian Forest Service should be entrusted with tribal development must be seen. It's time that the Government takes a call considering the future of the country.

(The writer is a retired civil servant)



## FOREIGN EYE



## SMARTPHONE CAN WAIT

When the phone is not demanding that we pay attention to others performance, it seems to demand that we perform our own emotions rather than experience them. We must put our phone down and leave it there a while. Grab the world with both hands instead and get them dirty: garden, make something, or cook a meal; eat without photographing it first. Lose yourself in the present around you. (The Guardian editorial)

| STATES/UTs                    | CONSTITUENCY   |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Assam (4 seats)               | Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Barpeta, Gauhati  |
| Bihar (5 seats)               | Jhanjharpur, Supaul, Araria, Madhepura, Khagaria   |
| Chhattisgarh (7 seats)        | Sarguja, Raigarh, Janjgir-Champa, Korba, Bilaspur, Durg, Raipur  |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli (1 seat) | Dadra & Nagar Haveli   |
| Daman & Diu (1 seat)          | Daman & Diu  |
| Gujarat (26 seats)            | Kachchh, Banaskantha, Patan, Mahesana, Sabarkantha, Gandhinagar, Ahmedabad East, Ahmedabad West, Surendranagar, Rajkot, Porbandar, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Amreli, Bhavnagar, Anand, Kheda, Panchmahal, Dahod, Vadodra, Chhota Udaipur, Bharuch, Bardoli, Surat, Navsari, Valsad |
| Goa (2)                       | North Goa, South Goa   |
| Jammu & Kashmir (1 seat)      | Anantnag   |
| Karnataka (14 seats)          | Chikkodi, Belgaum, Bagalkot, Bijapur, Gulbarga, Raichur, Bidar, Koppal, Bellary, Haveri, Dharwad, Uttara Kannada, Davanagere, Shimoga  |
| Kerala (20 seats)             | Kasaragod, Kannur, Vadakara, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Ponnani, Palakkad, Alathur, Thrissur, Chalakudy, Ernakulam, Idukki, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Mavelikkara, Pathanamthitta, Kollam, Attingal, Thiruvananthapuram  |
| Maharashtra (14 seats)        | Jalgaon, Raver, Jalna, Aurangabad, Raigad, Pune, Baramati, Ahmednagar, Madha, Sangli, Satara, Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg, Kolhapur, Hatkanangle  |
| Odisha (6 seats)              | Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Cuttack, Puri, Bhubaneswar   |
| Tripura (2 seat)              | Tripura East   |
| Uttar Pradesh (10 seats)      | Moradabad, Rampur, Sambhal, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etah, Badaun, Aonla, Bareilly, Pilibhit   |
| West Bengal (5 seats)         | Balurghat, Maldaha Uttar, Maldaha Dakshin, Jangipur, Murshidabad   |

QUOTE-UNQUOTE



I've not come here as a politician who is going to tell you what to do or what I think. I'm not here to tell you my 'Mann ki baat', I'm here to understand what is inside your heart  
RAHUL GANDHI IN WAYANAD



Pak troops were in our custody. A big area of Pakistan was also captured by Indian forces during 1971 war but the Congress Government lost it on table in Shimla agreement and they were released  
NARENDRA MODI

# CAMPAIGNING FOR LARGEST PHASE ENDS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Campaigning for the third phase of polling in 116 parliamentary constituencies on April 23 ended on Sunday with top leaders making a last-gasp effort to sway voters in favour of their respective parties. Polling will be held in the 116 seats, spread across 15 States and Union Territories. All seats in Gujarat (26), Kerala (20), Goa (2), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (1) and Daman and Diu (1) go to polls in the third of the seven-phase election. Besides, polling will be held

in four seats in Assam, five in Bihar, seven in Chhattisgarh, one in Jammu & Kashmir, 14 in Karnataka, 14 in Maharashtra, six in Odisha, 10 in Uttar Pradesh, five in West Bengal and one Tripura. Election to Tripura East Lok Sabha constituency — which was deferred due to security reasons — will be held in this phase. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief Amit Shah, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and a host of Union ministers among other candidates for their party candidates in the past few days,

undertaking whirlwind tours of constituencies. Among the key contestants in the fray are BJP chief Amit Shah (Gandhinagar, Gujarat), Congress president Rahul Gandhi (Wayanad, Kerala), and Samajwadi Party patron Mulayam Singh Yadav (Mainpuri, UP). In Pathanamthitta, the key candidates are BJP's K Surendran, CPM's Veena George and Congress' Anto Anthony. During campaigning in Gujarat, the two principal parties — the BJP and the

Congress exchanged acrimonious barbs, with leaders from both groups exuding confidence of a good showing. The BJP had swept all 26 seats in the State in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls. In Maharashtra, the prominent seats in the third phase include Jalna, where State BJP president Raosaheb Danveis in the fray against Vilas Autade of the Congress, and Baramati, where Supriya Sule, the daughter of NCP chief Sharad Pawar, is contesting against BJP's Kanchan Kul. Another keenly watched

seat will be Ahmednagar where Sujay Vikhe Patil is the BJP's nominee. He is the son of Congress veteran and Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil. Sujay Vikhe Patil joined the BJP in the run-up to the polls, after the NCP refused to vacate the Ahmednagar seat for the Congress. He is now pitted against NCP's Sangram Jagtap. Key constituencies in Karnataka to be watched out for during the polls include Gulbarga, where Mallikarjun Kharge is pitted against Umesh Jadhav, who ahead of polls

joined the BJP quitting Congress and as MLA; and Shimoga, where former chief Minister Yeddyurappa's son BY Raghavendra is pitted against another former Chief Minister S Bangarappa's son Madhu Bangarappa. In 14 constituencies that will go to the polls in the second phase on April 23, the BJP is contesting all the seats. The Congress and JD(S) that are facing the polls in alliance have fielded their candidates in 12 and two constituencies respectively. The BJP has a huge stake in this phase in

Uttar Pradesh with the party having won seven out of the ten seats in the region in 2014, leaving three for the Samajwadi Party, but facing a tough challenge from SP-BSP-RLD combine here. The campaigning for the phase witnessed a new low with SP leader Azam Khan making an "indecent" remark, targeting his opponent Jaya Prada in Rampur by allegedly speculating on the colour of her underwear and attracting the saffron party's wrath, besides that of the National Commission for Women. Khan, who also faced

a 72-hour ban by the Election Commission of India on his campaigning after making the underwear jibe, was among the three other leaders, including Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and BSP supreme Mayawati, who faced the poll panel's wrath for making "provocative" speeches. The political heavyweights, whose fate will be decided in the third phase of elections here, include Mulayam Singh Yadav, Union Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar, who is fighting from Bareilly and BJP's Varun Gandhi from Pilibhit.

## 2 sons of ex-CMs fight in Shivamogga

KESTUR VASUKI ■ BENGALURU

In the second phase of Karnataka elections on April 23 Shivamogga lok sabha constituency is in the news as two sons of former Chief Ministers are fighting their crucial battle. BY Raghavendra — son of BJP's lingayat strong man BS Yeddyurappa — and Madhu Bangarappa — son of former Chief Minister S Bangarappa from the JDS — are in the fray. Madhu Bangarappa who was defeated in the bypoll held few months back by a small margin is the united candidate of the Congress and the JDS in this constituency. It was in 2014 BS Yeddyurappa won against Manjunath Bhandari of the Congress by a very big margin of over 3,50,000 votes. In 2018 Assembly polls BJP won seven of the eight segments. Shivamogga Lok Sabha constituency, one of the high-profile constituencies in the State, is likely to witness a high-voltage electoral battle BY Raghavendra and Madhu Bangarappa — in a gap of just six months. It is also the fight between AHINDA (Minorities and Backward classes) of Siddaramaiah and the dominant community of Lingayat of

Yeddyurappa. This Malnad constituency has been the stronghold of BJP and also the home town of Yeddyurappa since 2004. JDS candidate Madhu Bangarappa had lost to Raghavendra in the November 2018 by-election by a margin of 52,148 votes in a constituency comprising over 14.3 lakh electorates. It's a neck-to-neck fight and the JDs-Congress combines leaving no stone untouched to trounce the BJP. But Yeddyurappa and BJP is also betting big on to take on Madhu Bangarappa. RSS and BJP are working hard to keep the seat to defeat Madhu Bangarappa. The caste and polarisation is the key factor in deciding the fate of these heavy weights. With the help of the politically dominant Lingayat community, to which Yeddyurappa and Raghavendra belong, the BJP hopes to outsmart Madhu, who belongs to the backward Idiga (toddy tapper) community. Experts say the coming together of the Congress and the JDS will lead to the consolidation of secular, backward and minority votes against the BJP. It's not about any ideology but in a way direct fight between Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi.

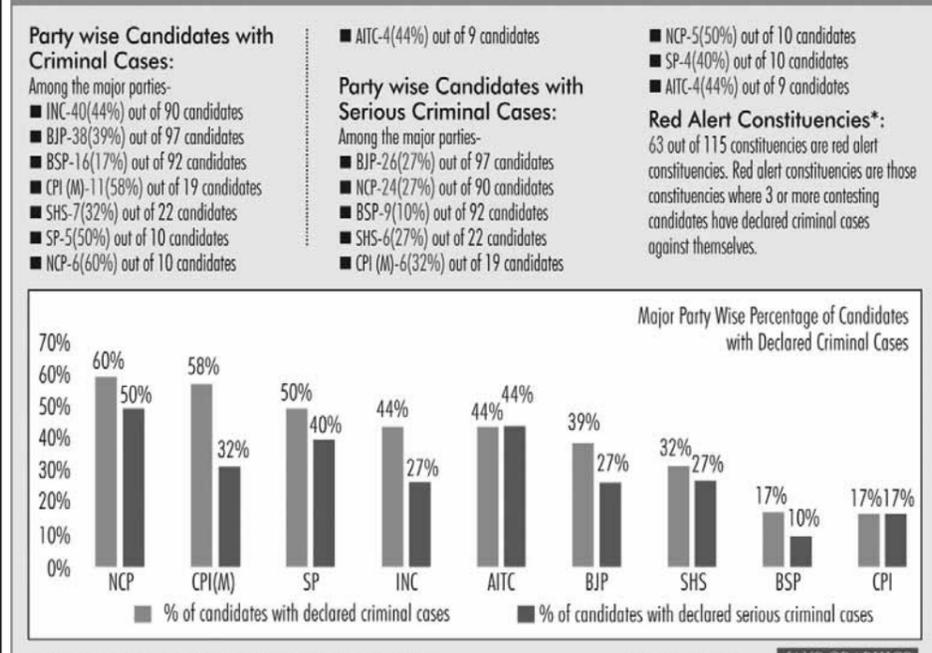


BJP Guwahati Lok Sabha candidate Queen Ojha and party Batadrava legislator Angoorlata Deka ride a scooter during an election campaign for the Lok Sabha polls, in Guwahati, on Sunday



National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah interacts with party supporters during an election rally for the Lok Sabha polls, in Anantnag on Sunday

### PHASE-III: MAJOR PARTY WISE CANDIDATES WITH DECLARED CRIMINAL CASES



**Lok Sabha Polls 2019 Phase-III**

**Profile of Candidates**

- Seats in Phase-III: 115\*
- Total candidates: 1,612
- Candidates analysed: 1,594
- Date of poll: April 23

**Educational Background**

- Illiterate: 23
- Literate: 57
- 5th Pass: 74
- 8th Pass: 172
- 10th Pass: 297
- 12th Pass: 245
- Graduate: 279
- Graduate Professional: 164
- Postgraduate: 213
- Doctorate: 25
- Others: 42
- Not given: 3

**Age Group**

- 25-30 years: 137
- 31-40 years: 425
- 41-50 years: 431
- 51-60 years: 329
- 61-70 years: 225
- 71-80 years: 40
- 81-100 years: 3
- Not given: 4

\* Does not include Tripura East seat, polling for which was deferred from April 18 to April 23  
Source: Association for Democratic Reforms KBK Pollgraphics



## POLL BATTLE ENTERS YADAV LAND

**Lucknow:** As the Lok Sabha election enters its third phase in Uttar Pradesh, the battle is now taking place in Yadav land with the prestige and stature of the Mulayam Singh Yadav clan on test. The phase will also decide the course that the battle in the Yadav family will take in future. The Samajwadi Party had contested only three out of the 16 seats that went to polls in the first two phases in the state, but in the third phase, is contesting nine out of the 10 seats that will see voting on April 23. The Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance looks rather formidable in this phase, given the caste equations and the Bharatiya Janata Party may face an uphill

task on many of these seats. The seats in this phase include Samajwadi Party strongholds like Badaun, Sambhal, Mainpuri, Ferozabad, and Rampur as well as Aonla, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Etah and Moradabad. One of the safest seats for the SP is Mainpuri where party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav is the candidate. It was in Mainpuri two days ago that Mulayam Singh shared the stage with BSP President Mayawati, burying the hostilities of the past two and a half decades. There are no guesses for the result in Mainpuri where Mulayam Singh remains the tallest and most popular leader. He was elected from Mainpuri in 2014 as well as Azamgarh but

had chose to retain the latter. In Badaun, Samajwadi Party's Dharmendra Yadav is locked in a straight fight with Salim Iqbal Shervani of the Congress. The four lakh Muslim and nine lakh OBC votes in this constituency could tilt the scales in favour of the SP. BJP's Sanghmitra Maurya is, meanwhile, embroiled in a controversy after her video asking her supporters to cast fake votes went viral. In Ferozabad, the war is between uncle Shivpal Yadav and nephew Akshay Yadav and there is certainly no camaraderie in the air. This is a real battle between Yadav leaders and Shivpal Yadav



enjoys an advantage because he is familiar with the organization at the ground level. The SP is also hopeful of winning the Sambhal seat where the party has again fielded Shafiqur Rehman Barq who had lost the seat by just 5,000-odd votes in 2014. Rampur, meanwhile, is witnessing its worst-ever election campaign with BJP's Jaya Prada and SP's Mohamamd Azam Khan calling each other unprintable names. Jaya Prada, with tears flowing down

her cheeks, is trying to earn the sympathy votes from the people while Azam Khan is playing the victim card to make it to the winning post. In Pilibhit, BJP MP Varun Gandhi is pitted against SP's Hemraj Varma and in Moradabad, BJP's Sarvesh Singh is being challenged by young poet Imran Pratagarhi. The BJP appears strong in both the constituencies. In Bareilly, veteran BJP MP Santosh Gangwar is seeking his eighth term and his challenger is Praveen Aron of Congress. In Etah, Rajvir Singh, son of Rajasthan Governor and former Uttar Pradesh CM Kalyan Singh, is seeking a second term. He is pitted against SP's Devendra Yadav. IANS

**BAREILLY बरेली**

**GST, note ban hit popular trades, but not poll issues**

**PTI ■ BAREILLY**

Jhumka, "surma", "maanija" and "baans" — the four specialty trades of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh were hit by demonetisation and the Goods and Service Tax (GST), leading to closure of some businesses but are far from being a Lok Sabha poll issues. Two of the most significant economic policy decisions of the Narendra Modi government, the overnight scrapping of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes in 2016 and the launch of GST in 2017 that subsumed all other taxes, did not bring the expected respite to traders, locals said. There are around 450 registered jewellers here with an estimated daily business of Rs 15 crore to Rs 20 crore, Sudesh Agarwal, president of the Bareilly Sarafa Committee, claimed. "There were obvious problems after the note ban, as did some cane traders in the city also referred to as 'Baans Bareilly'." Bareilly is home to one of the finest "surma" manufacturers in the country but some marginal operators shut shop in the after-effect of the note ban, as did some cane traders in the city also referred to as "Baans Bareilly".

# Warned Pak before pilot's return: PM

PTI ■ PATAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he had warned Pakistan of consequences if it did not return Indian Air Force pilot Abhinandan Varthaman.

Addressing a poll rally at Patan in Gujarat, he asserted his government's commitment towards national security and said whether the Prime Minister's chair remains or not, he has decided that either he will be alive or the terrorists.

He also took a jibe at NCP leader Sharad Pawar, saying if he is unaware of his next move, then how can Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan gauge what he will do.

Modi urged the people of Gujarat to help the BJP win all 26 Lok Sabha seats in his home state, where polling will be held on Tuesday, and said if it does not happen, then there will be discussions on TV over it on the day of vote counting.

Following the air strike at Balakot terror camp in Pakistan, there was a dogfight between Indian and Pakistani fighter planes on February 27 in which the IAF wing commander was captured by the neighbouring country and released on the night of March 1.

He said after Abhinandan was caught, opposition started seeking a reply from him. "We held a press conference and warned Pakistan that if anything happened to our pilot, you will keep telling the world what Modi did to you."

"A senior American official said on the second day that Modi has kept 12 missiles ready and might attack and the situation will deteriorate. Pakistan announced return of the pilot, or else it was going to be a qatal ki raat," he said.

"This was said by America, I have nothing to say about this now, I will speak about it when the time will come," he said.

"The (PM's) chair remains or goes, I have decided that either I be alive or terrorists will remain alive," he said.

He said the air strike at terror camps in Pakistan was something people expected from him. "When Pulwama happened, what did the country expect Modi to do? Would you, would the country have pardoned me had I done what the Manmohan Singh Government did after 26/11," he asked.

The country wanted something to be done, he said, adding that he had announced giving a



free hand to the military. "They (Pakistan) made tight arrangements, but being the disciple of Lord Hanuman, our people conducted air strike and their story was over," he said.

Hitting out at the Opposition parties, he said the Balakot strike made them uncomfortable. "Pakistan was

repeatedly saying India bombed us, but people here were questioning if this was India's Balakot. They were proved false," he said.

Accusing the Congress of questioning the bravery of India's military force and doubting its action, he said, "Does any Congress leader ask

"A senior American official said on the second day that Modi has kept 12 missiles ready and might attack and the situation will deteriorate. Pakistan announced return of the pilot, or else it was going to be a qatal ki raat

"When Pulwama happened, what did the country expect Modi to do? Would you, would the country have pardoned me had I done what the Manmohan Singh Government did after 26/11

"Pakistan made tight arrangements, but being the disciple of Lord Hanuman, our people conducted air strike and their story was over

for air strike proof? They have got the message to stop asking because people are getting angry. After the first and second phases of polls, they have forgotten to ask?"

He also took a swipe at Pawar, who on Saturday said he was "terribly afraid" as to what Modi, who once called the NCP chief his mentor in politics, would do next. "Sharad Pawar says I don't know what will Modi do. If he is unaware of what Modi will do tomorrow, how will Imran Khan know?" he said.

He also attacked the Congress for not providing howitzers to the Army since 1985 and said his government has arranged for artillery manufacturing at three factories in the country, one being at Hazira in Gujarat which manufactures K-9 Vajra Howitzer.

# Vote for saving country from narrow-minded ideology: Priyanka

**Kalpetta (Wayanad):** Terming the ongoing Lok Sabha elections as no ordinary polls, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Sunday asked people to vote for saving the country from "narrow minded ideology" as she accused the NDA Government of undermining democracy and suppressing dissent.

In an interaction with media here after visiting the family of CRPF jawan VV Vasanthkumar martyred in the Pulwama terror attack, she said Congress was not contesting the polls for power but for the larger idea of the country and to strengthen the forces of democracy.

"This election is to save the country that we all love, the country that we all believe in. The country in which all of us are equal, in which all of us are free to express ourselves, our religion, our ways of eating, our ways of living," she said.

Priyanka Gandhi, who has been campaigning for her brother and Congress president Rahul Gandhi contesting the polls from Wayanad constituency in Kerala besides in his traditional Amethi seat, appealed to the electorate in the state to vote for Congress for the bigger cause.

"I appeal to you to vote for our alliance as we are fighting for a much greater thing. We are not fighting just to gain power. We are fighting for a much bigger thing in this election," the AICC general secretary in-charge of Eastern Uttar



Pradesh said. She claimed that suddenly people were not free to express themselves. "Suddenly people are afraid. The institutions that are to protect the rights of the people are undermined. Democracy is being undermined and we must all realise that this is no ordinary election," Priyanka said.

The Congress leader, who did not name either the BJP or the NDA or Prime Minister Narendra Modi throughout her interaction, asked the people to save the country from a government which she said feared criticism.

"Save the country in which rules are being imposed on us by a narrow minded ideology, where only one kind of thinking prevails. Save the country in which there is a government that is afraid of criticism, which wants to suppress you when you raise your voice. So when you cast your vote you must think of this. A larger idea of our country," she added.

Priyanka spent about half-an-hour at Vasanthkumar's house and consoled the grieving family. PTI

# India's nuclear weapons not for 'Diwali', asserts PM

**Barmer:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is no longer afraid of Pakistan's nuclear threats as today it is among world powers with capability to carry out nuclear attacks across land, water, and air. He said, "The NDA Government has instilled fear in the minds and hearts of terrorists. We hit terrorists getting right into their homes. Now India is no more afraid of Pakistan threats."

"There was a time when Pakistan used to threaten India every second day saying 'We have the nuclear button, we have the nuclear button', which was also reported by our media. "Then what do we have? Is it (India's nuclear arsenal) for Diwali?" he asked as the crowd applauded and started chanting his name.

Attacking the Congress and other Opposition parties, he said, "We forced Pakistan to beg around the world. You

think that I did what was right, but Congress and its allies think it was not right. "They think terrorism and national security is just not issue to discuss. They think that Modi should not talk of Indian honour and valour. Why? Am I here to attend a Bhajan Mandali (hymn singing session)?"

Citing his Government's record on terrorism, particularly the Balakot air strike following the Pulwama attack on February 14 that left 40 CRPF men dead, he mocked the Opposition's response.

"We went into their (terrorists') homes to attack them and they (Congress) are asking for proof. As we hit terrorists, pains were felt in their hearts." Modi also accused the Congress of losing the upper hand after the 1971 war with Pakistan by surrendering the opportunity at the Shimla Round Table Conference and

giving back the land it had won as well returning 90,000 captured Pakistanis soldiers.

"At that time, the Kashmir problem could have been discussed and resolved. However, the Congress government bowed to the world pressure and did not discuss anything significant. Had Modi been there, he would never have lost this opportunity," he said.

"There is one more reason why Congress doesn't want to talk on national security," he added. He also accused of Congress of indulging in the AgustaWestland VVIP helicopter scam.

"With Michael mama (alleged middleman Christian Michael), they looted honest people's income. However, as you had elected a 'mazboot' Government, we contacted France for Rafale (fighter jets), leaving aside Congress agents. These aircraft will soon be seen in Indian skies," he said. IANS

# Chunaavi memes take social media by storm

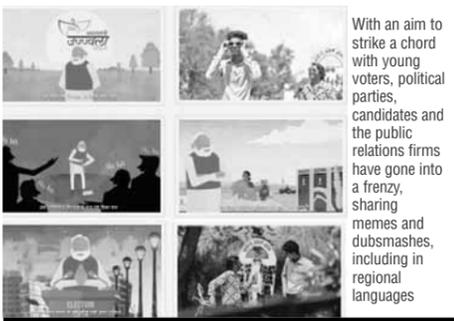
**New Delhi:** With an aim to strike a chord with young voters, political parties, candidates and the public relations firms have gone into a frenzy, sharing memes and dubs-mashes, including in regional languages, across social media platforms. From Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "achche din" and "Mai Bhi Chawkidar" campaign and his reverse archery skills to Rahul Gandhi's "Aaloo Daalo Sona niklega" — everything new and old is being refreshed, recycled and reused as memes and dubs-mashes on social media in the election season.

For example, a dubs-mash "Jai Hind" explains how Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to keep going the right path despite people mocking his decisions.

Another hilarious pro-Congress video sells "Bhakt ka Chashma", which shows development while there is none, covering issues such as unemployment, farmer distress, housing and health.

A pro-BJP video comes up with an answer to this, saying forget "Bhakt ka Chashma" video and give vote to the BJP and it has fulfilled all the promises made.

Since Game Of Thrones (GoT) Season 8 has been trending, the Congress party shared and circulated a creative replacing the villain "Night King" of the epic fantasy by Modi. The Election Commission also used the millennial-favourite "Winter is coming" phrase from Game of Thrones to raise voter aware-



ness on Twitter.

"Election Commission using various memes from popular series and movies is really creative and young voters must get up and vote," tweeted a user. While political memes are comical or satirical representation of social issues, the app Dubs-mash that was very popular in 2014-16 lets users choose audio recordings and record a video of themselves dubbing over that piece of audio.

Earlier this week, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) President and former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav shared an old 17-second Dubs-mash video of himself mouthing Modi's catch phrase from his 2014 election campaign promising "achche din".

The dubs-mash video is captioned: "Must mein lelo 15 lakh, acche din aur jumla". The video gathered over 1,800 comments, 2,700 re-tweets as well as 14,000 likes on Twitter. Yadav's clip surfaced old tweets with #Dubs-mash on the

micro-blogging site which trended for a while. "What do you call when Rahul Gandhi make dubs-mash video? Dubs-mash," read a tweet from a user. After the trailer release of the "PM Narendra Modi" biopic, memes and clips surrounding Modi narrating "Ma mai sanyasi bab na chahta hu (mother, I want to become a monk)" became one of the most enacted monologue on social media.

Dubbed clippings of chunaavi parodies and rap battles have also been doing the rounds on social media. Catch phrases and dialogues from popular TV series are also being reworked as fun and catchy election content for party campaigns and promotions.

The controversial Chinese app TikTok which has now been blocked in the country is full of memes and dubs-mashes. "TikTok is banned, not Rahul Gandhi; the show must go on, so also the entertainment. #TikTok," a tweet read. IANS

# AI, social media regulation find prominence in poll manifestos

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

Going by the poll manifestos published by major political parties, the use of digital technology is likely to get a boost under the new Government that will come to power after the Lok Sabha election results on May 23.

While most political parties have promised greater implementation of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data and Blockchain technologies to drive the growth of the economy, some have also assured punishment for those who misuse digital and social media.

The BJP, which pushed digital transactions in a major way during its five-year rule ending this year, said it would further increase the ongoing incentives to expand digital transactions if voted to power again.

The BJP said it would create a new data-sharing framework that builds on the success of 'Jan Dhan' and Aadhaar platforms while ensuring data privacy and security. "With this scheme, we will ensure that every Indian has access to banking facilities within a radius of 5 km," the BJP manifesto said.

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government led by the BJP faced severe criticism from the Opposition for the use of Aadhaar biometric identification system in distribution of benefits to the people. They followed up the criticism in their manifestos as well.

While the Congress promised an amendment to the Aadhaar Act in order to restrict its use, the Communist Party of

India (Marxist) said it would push for scrapping of the use of Aadhaar and biometrics for all social welfare measures if voted to power.

The Congress manifesto even devoted a section on 'Digital Rights of Every Citizen' to affirm "its belief that every Indian shall enjoy digital rights and freely access the digital world." From promising access to all persons to high-quality Internet at affordable rates, to passing a law to protect the personal data of all persons and uphold the right to privacy, the Congress is promising the common man quite a lot of digital benefits.

"We will establish a National Mission focused on sunrise technologies such as Big Data, Machine Learning, Internet of Things, 3-D Printing and Manufacturing, and Knowledge Networks," read the Congress manifesto.

The BJP manifesto promises a "Science Mission" with two submissions, focused on Artificial Intelligence and robotic research. The BJP's 'Sankalp Patra' also puts a lot of emphasis on using technology for helping farmers and improving agricultural output.

"We will enable development of young agri-scientists to take advantage of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Blockchain technology, Big Data analytics etc. for more predictive and profitable precision agriculture," the BJP said.

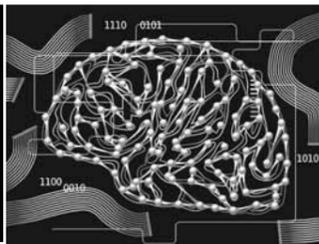
While adoption of digital technologies has increased dramatically over the years, the poll manifestos of the political parties also suggest that stricter regulations for social media could be in the offing.

The Congress, which was earlier linked to hundreds of fake Facebook pages and accounts, said it would pass regulations to stop the spread of fake news and hate speech and punish those who misuse digital and social media.

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) went a step ahead and stated that if voted to power, it will urge the Union government to bring in a law to prevent all types of social media from publishing any kind of obscene content.

The poll manifestos suggest that irrespective of the parties that could come to power for the next five year, there will be no halt in the digital journey that the country has embarked on.

Going by the poll manifestos published by major political parties, the use of digital technology is likely to get a boost under the new Government that will come to power after the Lok Sabha election results on May 23



## POLICE CASE AGAINST DEORA FOR POLL CODE VIOLATION

A case was filed against the Congress' Mumbai South Lok Sabha candidate Milind Deora at Lokmanya Tilak Marg police station here on the direction of the Election Commission for violation of the model code of conduct, an official said on Sunday. Deora, while campaigning in Zaveri Bazar area on April 4, had made an appeal to the Jain community to not vote for the Shiv Sena as it had hurt their religious sentiments earlier.

## TAHSILDAR SUSPENDED FOR ENTERING RECORDS ROOM

The election authorities on Sunday ordered the suspension of a woman Tahsildar here for violating the election code by entering a storage room, where polling records were kept. The suspension order was issued by the Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral officer Satyabrata Sahoo after a detailed inquiry was conducted into the incident. The enquiry was ordered following a complaint given by the CPI(M) candidate in Madurai Lok Sabha seat, S Venkatesan Saturday, alleging that an unidentified person had entered the strong room, where EVMs had been stored and taken a copy of some documents.

## REPOLL RECOMMENDED IN 10 TN POLLING STATIONS: CEO

Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo on Sunday said he has recommended to the Election Commission to conduct repolling in 10 polling stations in the State. The top election official told reporters here that after a perusal of reports of authorities including those from the general observers and presiding officers, repoll has been recommended for the consideration of the EC.

## BJP WANTS TO POISON LALU, ALLEGES RABRI DEVI

Former Bihar Chief Minister and RJD national vice-president Rabri Devi has accused the BJP of hatching a conspiracy to poison her husband and party supremo Lalu Prasad, a charge dismissed by the saffron party as "baseless". Prasad, who has been serving jail term in a Ranchi prison following his conviction in fodder scam cases, is currently undergoing treatment for multiple ailments at the Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences in Jharkhand capital.

## UDDHAV ASKS OPP TO DECLARE PM CANDIDATE

Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday challenged the Opposition to announce their Prime Ministerial nominee. Addressing a rally at Satara in western Maharashtra, Thackeray also took a dig at the sitting NCP MP Udayanraje Bhosale who is in the fray against Sena's Narendra Patil. "Before challenging the BJP-Sena alliance, the Opposition should decide their candidate for the post of prime minister," the Sena chief said.



Gujarati film actor Pranjal Bhatt campaigns for Bharatiya Janata Party during an election campaign rally in Surat on Sunday PTI

# It's uncle vs nephew in UP's 'Suhagnagari'

PTI ■ FIROZABAD

Rajveer.

Firozabad earned the sobriquet 'Suhagnagari' as its bangles bound families in matrimonial alliances, but this election season the Uttar Pradesh town is witnessing a prestige battle between two members of a family — Samajwadi Party's Akshay Yadav and his estranged uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav.

As the protracted family feud plays out in the open, the voters in this industrial town, however, seem glued to the national political narrative rather than local issues.

Sensing division of core voters of the Samajwadi Party, the BJP has smelled victory and trusted an ayurvedic doctor, Chandra Sen Jadon, with a ticket from here.

There are over 17.85 lakh voters who will be decide the fate of six candidates — sitting MP Akshay Yadav from SP, his uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav from Pragatishil Samajwadi Party (Lohia), Jadon from BJP, Upendra Singh Rajput from Bhartiya Kisan Parivartan Party and Independents Chaudhary Basheer and

the constituency votes on April 23. In the last Assembly elections in 2017, the BJP had recorded victory in four of the five constituencies under the Firozabad parliamentary seat dominated by voters of other backward classes. The SP-BSP-RLD alliance gives an edge to Akshay Yadav, the son of SP Rajya Sabha MP Ram Gopal Yadav, with core voters of Samajwadi Party and BSP joining hands making him a potent force. Other backward classes, scheduled castes and Muslim reportedly constitute over 70 per cent of total voters.

But the road is not likely to be easy as his estranged uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav, known for his organisation skills, who had quit Samajwadi Party and launched his own outfit, is likely to make a substantial dent in the SP base because of his appeal among ground-level workers.



# Air India Express mulls leasing some Jet Airways' Boeing 737s

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Air India Express, the international budget arm of Air India, is examining the possibility of leasing some Boeing 737 aircraft of grounded carrier Jet Airways, which are parked at different airports due to non-payment, through a firm decision is yet to be taken, a top company official said Sunday.

Before halting operations temporarily mid-last week due to severe cash-drought, the private carrier was forced to ground 69 planes owing to non-payment of rentals to lessors.

Later, on April 16, it grounded the rest of the planes in its fleet, when it decided to temporarily suspend all its domestic and international services.

Air India Express parent, Air India, is already discussing a proposal to lease five of Jet Airways wide-body planes, Boeing 777s.

"We are looking at leasing (B737 of Jet Airways) aircraft but there is no firm decision on this issue so far. As a matter-of-fact, there are a lot of other things that have to be looked at, like slots, sectors and timings, among others," Air India Express chief executive officer Shyam K Sunder told PTI over phone from Kochi, the airline's headquarter.

When asked about the number of planes that his airline could induct from Jet Airways, he said, "We don't have a target number."

Air India Express, has its operations largely out of Kerala to the Gulf and South-east Asia. Besides, it also operates some flights to these regions from North and Western India as well as on some domestic routes.

It has a fleet of 25 Boeing 737 planes, of which 17 are owned and rest 18 are on lease. The now out-of-operations, Jet Airways also has B737s in the fleet.

Shyam Sunder also said the airline plans to recruit 50 commanders from Jet Airways, of which 20 have already been hired.

"We have already recruited a lot of pilots. We have about 20 of them already, all from Jet Airways as at present only Jet pilots are available in the market. Our intention is hire up to 50 pilots. So we will be inducting another 25-30 pilots going forward," he said.

The AIE official, however, ruled out hiring of first officers at this stage, adding that the airline may look at it if there was any requirement for them in the future.

## Jet collapse: Privatisation not remedy, says AI union official

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Privatisation is not a remedy, which can make an airline profitable or efficient and shuttering of Jet Airways and Kingfisher is a case in point, a senior Air India employees union official said Sunday even as he urged the government to reconsider its plans to de-nationalise the flag carrier, which are currently on hold.

Supporting the 20,000 employees of the grounded Jet Airways, the union official said that the present policies of the government need to be relooked as they have only lead to a crisis in the industry and jobs of thousands of people are at stake.

Weighted down by huge debt, majorly from the public sector banks, Kingfisher went belly-up in 2012. Jet Airways, which has a debt of Rs 8,500 crore, mostly from the government-run banks, ceased operations last Wednesday due to paucity of cash.

The abrupt closure of Jet Airways opera-

tions for the time being has put jobs of its over 20,000 employees.

Moreover, as many as six airlines have closed down in the last five years.

"First it was Kingfisher which folded up, and now it's Jet Airways, which has stopped operations, albeit for the time being. The votaries of the privatisation, both in the government and outside, need to understand that denationalisation alone can't bring profitability and efficiency. Had it been so, the two private airlines would not have gone bust," said an Air Corporation Employees Union (ACEU) senior official.

Stating that the foremost reason for the current crisis in the aviation industry is the government's "reliance" on the private sector in achieving its ambitious Vision 2040, which has projected the country's air passenger traffic to grow to 1.1 billion per year by 2040, the union official said, "the industry is not doing well from the vision document point of view as the

growth is not sustainable, healthy and even".

Calling the government to reconsider its plans of privatising Air India, which are put on the backburner for the time-being, the ACEU official said even in the present crisis when Jet Airways passengers are stranded across airports globally, it is the national carrier which has come to the rescue of the passengers by announcing special fares for such passengers.

"The government can't expect such a gesture from private airlines," he said.

"If the present crisis is allowed to continue, it will lead to unprecedented crisis in the industry leading to more and more employees being thrown out of employment. A mere glance of problems indicate that there is something seriously wrong with the policy direction," he added.

There is also a need to put brakes on 'open sky policy' besides strict enforcement of bilateral to make the business of domestic companies, including of Air India, viable, he said.

## Jet employees present 'value' hiring proposition for airlines but may get lower pay offers: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Thousands of employees at now-shuttered Jet Airways might be staring at an uncertain future but other airlines will see "value" in hiring such experienced people even though they might end up getting relatively lower pay packets, according to HR experts.

Demand continues to outstrip talent supply in the Indian aviation sector, which is one of the fastest growing in the world.

Cash-starved Jet Airways, which has been flying for nearly 26 years, has around 23,000 employees, including contractual staff. It announced a temporary suspension of operations on April 17.

Experts observed that employees would

have been under stress at the airline for a while, though quite a few would have been hopeful of a turnaround of the carrier. Under the current circumstances, they might have to either shift base to Tier-II or Tier-III cities or accept job offers having lower compensation, they opined.

Staffing firm TeamLease Services Co-Founder and Executive Vice President Rituparna Chakraborty said that the aviation sector in India has immense potential and if one goes by the current equation, the supply of ground staff, crew and pilots are still low in comparison to the demand that exists.

"In my mind, other airlines will definitely see value in hiring the experienced and highly well-trained staff that Jet has currently,"

Chakraborty told PTI.

She also noted that there is a significant demand for core staff while non-specialised staff should look at an alternative industry for suitable functional roles.

The country's oldest private carrier, Jet Airways has a substantial number of employees who have put in more than two decades at the airline.

Executive search company GlobalHunt's Managing Director Sunil Goel said there has been a huge expansion in terms of new airports and connectivity in Tier-II and Tier-III cities through air transportation. So, there is a consistent demand for talent in the aviation sector, he added.

## India is not a tariff king: Experts

The country has the right to protect specific sectors under WTO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is not a 'tariff king' and it has all the right to take appropriate measures to protect the interest of specific sectors like agriculture, international trade experts have said. Rejecting the US allegation that India's import duties are one of the highest in the world, experts said that several developed countries and regions including Japan, South Korea, European Union, and America maintain "extremely high" tariffs primarily on agriculture products.

The US President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that India is a "tariff king" and imposes "tremendously high" import duties on American goods.

Biswajit Dhar, a professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University, said that the US allegations are completely unfounded.

"In fact, the US import duties on several of their products are quite high such as on tobacco it is about 350 per cent and 164 per cent on peanuts. They too maintain reasonably high duties," Dhar

said. Sharing similar views, Professor at Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) Rakesh Mohan Joshi said that the US allegations are not correct and in fact, they should rationalise their duty structure being a developed nation.

Trade Promotion Council of India Chairman Mohit Singla said that the assertion of the US is not factually correct.

He said that the allegation of Trump that India is a tariff king does not hold true and is unjustified.

"Like other nations, India has the right to take appropriate measures to protect its domestic interests in specific sectors and when it is deemed fit. Moreover, there are many countries which have much higher tariff as compared to India. Being a signatory and member of WTO, India remains committed to free, fair, and predictable trade," Singla added.

Geneva-based 164-member World Trade Organisation (WTO) is a multilateral body which frames global trade norms.

Singla claimed that countries like Japan levy 736 per cent duty on certain products; while Korea imposes 807 per cent on some goods.

Federation of Indian Exports Organisation (FIEO) said that product-specific high tariffs, like 150 per cent on

alcoholic beverages, 100 per cent on coffee, and 60-75 per cent on automobiles have made India a villain in the eyes of the US President.

However, many countries in the world including Japan, South Korea, the EU, the US maintain an extremely high tariff primarily on agriculture products, FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai said.

"India's average WTO bound tariff is 48.5 per cent while average applied tariff is 13.4 per cent. The wide gap between the two clearly shows that India is not a tariff king else it would have pushed the applied tariff very close to the bound rates," Sahai said.

While bound tariffs or duties refer to the ceiling, the applied tariff is the duty which is currently in place.

Another expert, who did not wish to be named, said that the US should not level any allegation of discrimination at tariff front vis-a-vis developing countries like India as America has emerged as one of the richest nations in the world with per capita income of about \$60,000 per annum.

"Repeated mention of India as a tariff king with cherry-picked examples like motorbikes and whiskey is disingenuous, as it conveniently ignores the overall tariff structure of the country, apart from India's developing status," the expert said.

He added that India has complied with all tariff commitments under the WTO and has made sincere efforts to reduce applied duties sumo to 13.7 per cent today over a period of time.

Recently, the US decided to withdraw incentives being provided to Indian exporters under the Generalized System of Preference (GSP) programme. However, India has stated that it would not impact domestic exporters as the benefits were only about \$190 million annually.

Despite the fact that India and the US were working on a trade package, the US decided to go ahead with its decision.

The package was covering all concerns related to bilateral trade with the US on sectors including medical devices, dairy products and agricultural goods. America also wants a cut on duties on certain ICT products.

According to sources, India was ready to address the US concerns regarding these sectors.

The bilateral trade between India and the US has increased to \$74.5 billion in 2017-18 from \$64.5 billion in 2016-17.

Although India has a trade surplus with the US, India is a thriving market for US defence firms, e-commerce and technology companies.

## Deposits in Jan Dhan accounts fast inching towards ₹1 lakh cr mark

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The total deposits in bank accounts opened under the Jan Dhan scheme, which was launched about five years ago by the Modi-Government, are set to cross ₹1 lakh crore soon.

The total balance in the Jan Dhan accounts, which has been steadily rising, was at ₹97,665.66 crore as on April 3, as per the latest government data.

The total number of Jan Dhan accounts have crossed 35.39 crore.

The deposits stood at ₹96,107.35 crore on March 27 and ₹95,382.14 crore in the week before.

More than 27.89 crore account holders have been issued the Rupy debit cards.

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) was launched on August 28, 2014 with an aim to provide universal access to banking facilities to all households.

Enthusied by the success of the scheme, the Government enhanced the accident insurance cover to ₹2 lakh from ₹1 lakh for new accounts opened after August 28, 2018.

The overdraft limit was also doubled to ₹10,000. The Government also shifted the focus on accounts from 'every household' to 'every unbanked adult'.

## India must complete reform process in next five years: Arvind Panagariya

PTI ■ NEW YORK

India must focus on growth of labour-intensive sectors to create decent jobs for the masses as well as give "serious thought" to privatising the public sector banks (PSBs), eminent economist Arvind Panagariya has said, emphasising that the reform process must be completed in the coming five years.

Panagariya, who had served as the first Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog from January 2015 to August 2017, was responding to a question on what the priorities should be of the Government that comes into power when India's mammoth and crucial general elections end next month.

"My personal view is that India must complete its reform process in the coming five years," Panagariya, Director at the Raj Centre on Indian Economic Policies at Columbia University, told PTI here.

The Deepak and Neera Raj Centre in The School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University provides research and expertise necessary to inform policy decisions, deliver increased prosperity, and define India's future role in the global economy.

Highlighting the priority areas, Panagariya said that India needs a clear focus on the growth of labour-intensive sec-

## Jet crisis: Lenders keen on non-IBC resolution in case bidding process fails

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As they explore ways to recover debt, lenders of Jet Airways are in favour of a resolution outside the insolvency law framework in case the ongoing bidding process fails to take off, sources said.

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

SBI, the lead lender of the seven-member consortium of domestic banks that have extended loans to the airline, has started the bidding process for stake sale in the carrier and clarity about potential bidders would emerge next month.

While lenders are "reasonably hopeful" of a successful bidding process, sources said banks are working on a plan B in case things don't progress as expected.

If the bidding process fails, lenders would favour a resolution for the debt-ridden Jet Airways outside the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) framework, sources said. Recovery on the basis of existing security and tangible assets would be a preferred option, they added.

Under the Code, the National Company Law

Tribunal's (NCLT) approval is required for initiating the process, wherein the resolution would be market-linked and time-bound.

Outside the NCLT would be a better option as far as plan B is concerned, sources said, adding that then banks would realise better value from the carrier's available assets, including assets owned by Jet Airways.

Four entities — Ethihad Airways, TPG Capital, Indigo Partners and National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) — are learnt to have shown interest in picking up stake in Jet Airways. The details of initial bidders are expected to be known on May 10.

As they wait for completion of the bidding process, the lenders are also looking at options to raise funds from the carrier's available assets, including utilising Jet Airways' 16 own planes.

On Friday, sources said that lenders have been proactive and cannot be blamed for the current situation at the airline. "They (lenders) have been actively engaging with the company for almost nine months ever since the airline started incurring cash losses and have been urging the management to come forward with a definite plan for resolution."

## US Cranberries partners with SheShines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US Cranberries recently partnered with SheShines, to celebrate womanhood and discuss latest wellness trends for women. Over 200 participants of the event were educated about the benefits of Cranberries, ranging from taste, health and wellbeing. The event hosted discussions around women's careers, life choices and wellness.

Fibre-rich, and free of both fat and cholesterol, Cranberries are fast emerging as one of India's favourite superfruits.

In Delhi alone, US Cranberries has registered a good growth in sales in 2018, majority of buyers being women.

"We are happy to witness great growth in consumption in Delhi and are grateful to be helping many residents in staying healthy" said, Michelle, Cranberry marketing committee.

## FPIs pour in ₹11,012 crore in April so far

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Overseas investors have pumped in a net sum of ₹11,012 crore into the Indian capital markets in April so far amid easing liquidity conditions globally.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) were net buyers for the previous two months as well, infusing a net amount of ₹11,182 crore in February and ₹45,981 crore in March 2019.

Prior to that, FPIs had pulled out a net ₹5,360 crore from the capital markets (both equity and debt) in January.

FPIs invested a net amount of ₹14,300.22 crore in equities during April 1-16, while pulling out a net ₹3,288.12 crore from the debt market, taking the total net investment to ₹11,012.10

crore for this month so far, depositories data showed.

Foreign investors have been on a buying spree in the Indian markets since February due to improvement in global liquidity which was triggered by a shift in stance on monetary policy outlook by various central banks globally, experts said.

On the domestic front, "the investors are looking bullish on the Indian markets, given the positive prospects of a stable Government" post elections, said Harsh Jain, COO at Groww.

"So, this year has witnessed foreign money flowing into the emerging markets and India is getting its share of the same. These factors continue to drive the flows into the Indian equity markets," he added.

## Hyundai mulls options for sourcing EV components in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

South Korean auto major SHyundai is looking at various options for sourcing electric vehicle (EV) components in India, including local manufacturing of battery parts, a top company official said.

The automaker, which is present in India through its wholly-owned subsidiary Hyundai Motor India Ltd (HMIL), said it is also looking for further clarity in Government policy to drive in hybrid models in the country.

"We are studying various options, not only us (HMIL) in India, but even Hyundai Motor Company (HMC) procurement division is looking at it," HMIL MD and CEO SS Kim told PTI when asked if the company plans to locally manufacture batteries for EVs.

The company's parent HMC is even contacting suppliers in India for battery components, he added. Hyundai plans to drive in

its first EV in a complete knock-down (CKD) form in the country this year. The vehicle would be assembled at Hyundai's Chennai-based manufacturing plant. With the Government pushing for local sourcing of EV components, Suzuki Motor Corp along with its partners is already in the process of constructing an automotive lithium-ion battery manufacturing plant at Hansalpur in Gujarat.

Tata Motors and Mahindra are also actively pursuing EV segment in the country.

Kim said Government support is critical to support growth of EVs in the personal mobility space.

"In many countries where the EVs are sold to private customers, they are supported by the Government in terms of subsidies... If OEMs need to push EV mobility, Government push is critical, so we are expecting some

more support," he added.

Under the FAME-II scheme with an outlay of Rs 10,000 crore, the government is primarily focusing on electrification of public transport.

When asked about launching hybrid vehicles in the country, Kim said the company will take a decision after further policy clarity on the segment from the Government.

"Once the hybrid policy and its framework is readied by the Government we will also plan our activity accordingly," he said.

On establishing a new factory, Kim said the installed capacity at the company's Chennai plant is currently enough to take care of the demand.

The company has added an additional capacity of 50,000 units, taking the total installed capacity at the plant to 7.5 lakh units per annum, he added.

## 205 railway projects report cost overrun of ₹2.21 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National transporter Indian Railways account for nearly three-fifths of 344 central sector projects that are facing huge cost overrun due to delay in implementation for various reasons.

Total cost overrun of 205 delayed railway projects is whopping ₹2.21 lakh crore, the latest flash report of the Statistics and Programme Implementation Ministry (MOSPI) for December 2018 showed.

The MOSPI monitors central sector projects involving an expenditure of ₹150 crore and above.

According to the report, the total original cost of these 205 projects was ₹1,68,116.34 crore up to December 2018. The total anticipated cost of these projects is estimated at ₹3,89,745.97 crore, which indicates overall cost escalation by 131.83 per cent.

The Ministry monitored 367 projects of Indian Railways in December 2018. The report stated that 94 of these projects reported time overrun or delay of one month to 324 months.

After the railways, the power sector reported the second highest incidence of overall cost overrun. Of the 95 projects monitored by the Ministry in the power sector, 40 reported cost overrun of ₹63,334.88 crore.

The total original cost of these 40 projects was ₹1,72,830.59 crore, which escalated to an anticipated cost of ₹2,36,165.47 crore.

The report stated that of the 95 power sector projects, 56 reported time overrun (delay) of two months to 147 months.

The third largest cost escalation was recorded in the road transport and highways sector where out of the 605 monitored projects, as many as 49 reported cost overrun.

# Fantastic 4 for Everton

Toffees humiliate Solskjaer's men as Utd lose 5 successive away games for first time since 1981

AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Olle Gunnar Solskjaer's problems since taking over as permanent Manchester United manager intensified with a humiliating 4-0 loss away to Everton on Sunday.

Defeat at Goodison Park — United's sixth in eight games — also dealt a huge blow to the Red Devils' hopes of playing in the Champions League next season.

Goals from Richarlison, Gylfi Sigurdsson, Lucas Digne and Theo Walcott inflicted the largest defeat on United since they lost by the same scoreline at Chelsea three years ago.

But, after starting his reign with eight consecutive victories, the best start ever made by a manager at the club, former United striker Solskjaer is now collecting some other, very unwanted, statistics.

This latest loss means United have now leaked 48 league goals, the most they've conceded in a season, since letting in 63 back in the 42-game 1978/79 campaign.

Sunday's loss also means United have conceded in 12 consecutive games for the first time since December 1998 while, under Solskjaer, the Reds have lost five consecutive away games for the first time in 38 years.

## SECOND BEST

United looked second best even before the hosts scored twice inside the opening half-hour, conceding a succession of corners from which Everton threatened.

It was another type of set-piece, a long throw-in by Digne, from which Everton took the lead after 12 minutes when the full-back launched the ball deep into the United area.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin helped the ball on with the flick of his head and Richarlison sent a spectacular scissor-kick finish flying past David de Gea.

After a humbling 3-0 Champions League exit at Barcelona in midweek, it was not the start



Solskjaer had been looking for. Everton soon made the situation worse for the visitors.

After 27 minutes, Everton cleared a United corner and immediately broke on the counter-attack, with winger Bernard playing a delightful ball inside to Idrissa Gueye.

He, in turn, released Sigurdsson who, with Nemanja Matic backing off, unleashed a magnificent 25-yard shot which bounced just in front of the diving de Gea on its way into the bottom corner.

Richarlison might have given Everton the lead even earlier. His 10th minute shot drew an amazing

reaction save from de Gea. From the rebound the Brazilian hurried his follow-up effort wide.

## BRILLIANTLY TIMED

With the recalled Romelu Lukaku booed every time he touched the ball by his former fans at Everton, United had little response to an impressive effort from the home side.

In between the goals, United star Paul Pogba's long diagonal pass freed Marcus Rashford who could only poke his effort over from a tight angle.

Everton effectively killed the



game in the 56th minute. De Gea punched clear a Sigurdsson corner to the unmarked Digne who sent a superb, first-time volley flying back past the United keeper from 20 yards.

Three minutes later, and from the same left wing, another Sigurdsson corner almost crept in at de Gea's near post before the Spaniard stuck out a boot to clear off his line.

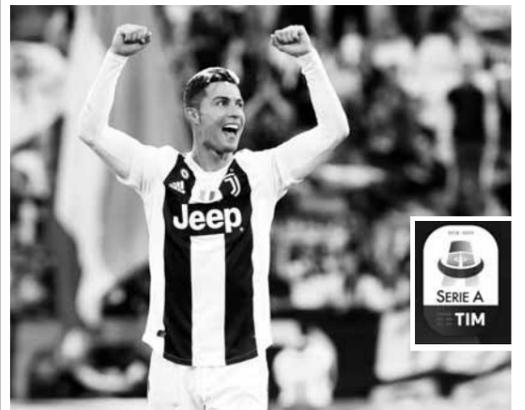
Even though Richarlison had limped off through injury, the agony was not over for United with the Brazilian's replacement Walcott continuing the rout in the 64th

minute. Sigurdsson again carved out the opening with a brilliantly-timed through ball which allowed the former England international the space to sprint into the area and beat the advancing de Gea.

Not until the 86th minute, and a comfortably saved Anthony Martial strike, did United have a shot on target.

Meanwhile Everton, who had not beaten a 'big six' rival in 25 attempts before last month, have now won consecutive home matches against Chelsea, Arsenal and United while keeping three clean sheets in the process.

# Ronaldo '1,000 percent' committed to Juventus



AFP ■ TURIN

Cristiano Ronaldo said he is staying "1,000 percent committed to Juventus next season as he claimed his first Serie A title and Juventus their eighth in a row on Saturday.

Massimiliano Allegri's side had needed just one more point for a 35th Scudetto and their latest triumph helped ease some of the pain of their shock Champions League exit at the Juventus Stadium to Ajax on Tuesday.

A come-from-behind 2-1 win over Fiorentina was enough to give them a 20-point lead on nearest rivals Napoli with five games to play.

Serbian defender Nikola Milenkovic put Fiorentina ahead after less than six minutes.

But Alex Sandro's diving header on 37 minutes and an own goal from Fiorentina defender German Pezzella after a Ronaldo cross in the 53rd minute sealed another title to ease their European disappointment.

"It was a great season and I adapted well. We won the Scudetto and the Italian Super Cup, which is not easy to achieve," said Ronaldo.

"It didn't go well in the

Champions League but next year is a new page, the fans all want it and so do we.

"I'm staying at Juve, 1,000 percent."

It was the 34-year-old's sixth domestic league title, having won three with Manchester United and two with Real Madrid, as he becomes the first player to win the Premier League, La Liga and Serie A.

Their eight straight title sees them overtake French club Lyon for the record of consecutive victories in the top five European leagues.

The day was a double celebration as Juventus' women's team won their second straight league title since being founded in 2017.

"I'm very happy because we've achieved an important goal," said Allegri, who becomes the first coach to win five consecutive Serie A titles.

He has six in total, having also won with AC Milan, one behind Giovanni Trapattoni, who has seven.

Juventus also equalled the record for the earliest the Italian title has been won, with five games to spare, achieved by Torino in 1948, Fiorentina in 1956 and Inter Milan in 2007.

## SINGLES

### SANCHES WANTS TO LEAVE BAYERN

MUNICH: One-time wonderkid Renato Sanches has repeated his desire to leave Bayern Munich after another year in which he has struggled to break into the first team. "I have to play more, five minutes are not enough," said Sanches, 21, after he was substituted onto the field in the 87th minute during Bayern's 1-0 win over Werder Bremen. "A loan would be an option. I just want to play, whether in England, Spain or Portugal," he said. Sanches joined Bayern as a teenager in 2016 and after a loan spell with Swansea City last year he has made only six starts in all competitions this term, and is now openly angling for a move away. "I am not happy here, I am working hard but not playing," he told Kicker magazine last month.

### SHADAB RULED OUT OF ENGLAND SERIES

KARACHI: Pakistan's fast-rising leg-spinner Shadab Khan has been ruled out of next month's series against England with a virus, leaving him in doubt for the World Cup. The 20-year-old is a key wicket-taking option for Pakistan in the ten-team World Cup. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said the spinner will receive treatment in the UK. "Shadab's blood tests have revealed (a) virus and doctors have advised him a four week rest," it said in a statement. "Shadab is out of the five-match one-day series against England and a Twenty20 match (also against England)," it added. PCB announced another leg-spinner Yasir Shah as a replacement for Shadab in the one-day series. "Yasir has been named as replacement for upcoming one-day series and a Twenty20 international against England," said PCB.

### NO TEAM FAVOURITE TO WIN WC: MALIK

LAHORE: Senior Pakistan all-rounder Shoaib Malik believes no team is favourite to win the upcoming World Cup. "All the teams at the World Cup are strong and no team is favourite. Everyone has to struggle under the English conditions, where rainy weather may create problems for any team on a given day," the Dawn quoted Malik as saying on Saturday. The veteran cricketer has not been in great touch in the past year. Since the start of 2018, his performances with the bat have seen a dip. He has averaged 29.21 and scored at a strike rate of just 77.62. His overall record in England too is not good with an average of 13.63 from 23 innings with just one fifty-plus score.

### HALES TAKES BREAK FOR PERSONAL REASONS

LONDON: England batsman Alex Hales has gone on an indefinite break due to personal reasons, thus putting a question mark over his availability in the World Cup slated to begin from May 30. Hales, who has a white-ball only contract with Nottinghamshire, missed the club's opening Royal London Cup match against Lancashire. The club said that "no timetable has been set for his return". "Alex Hales has made himself unavailable for selection for personal reasons and no timetable has been set for his return to action," BBC quoted Nottinghamshire as saying in a statement. England players are set to meet up for a World Cup training camp next week, ahead of ODI's against Ireland and Pakistan.

### VIKAS, NEERAJ WINS IN PRO CIRCUIT

NEW YORK: Vikas Krishan remained unbeaten, while his close friend Neeraj Goyat also notched up a victory, rounding off a fine outing for Indian boxers in the professional circuit. Vikas claimed a unanimous verdict against American Noah Kidd in a six-round super welterweight bout at the iconic Madison Square Garden in New York. In Toronto, WBC Asia welterweight titleholder Neeraj also defeated Mexico's Carlos Lopez Marmolejo via a unanimous decision in a six-round contest at the Danforth Music Hall. Both the boxers have trained together in the past and are close to each other in the circuit. While Vikas is signed up with the legendary Bob Arum's Top Rank Promotions, Neeraj is handled by Lee Baxter Promotions. Agencies

# Benzema nets hat-trick against Bilbao



AFP ■ MADRID

Karim Benzema made it 30 goals for the season on Sunday as he led the way again for struggling Real Madrid with a hat-trick that shot his side to a 3-0 win over Athletic Bilbao.

Benzema has been one of the few bright sparks in an otherwise dreary campaign for the European champions and it was his second-half treble that proved the difference at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Victory moves Madrid four points behind Atletico in second, while Bilbao stay seventh, with their chances of sealing a spot in the Europa League dented. However Zinedine Zidane's side stay 13 points behind La Liga leaders Barcelona, who beat Real Sociedad 2-1 on Saturday.

Benzema's advance in the absence of Cristiano Ronaldo and surge since the reappointment of Zidane comes in stark contrast to Gareth Bale, who was whistled when introduced as a substitute here and frequently during his 20 minutes on the pitch.

For all the impatience of the home crowd, it was Bale who won the corner for Benzema's second and then teed up his team-mate's third in injury-time.

The 31-year-old has now claimed all of Madrid's last eight goals in La Liga, a run that includes five matches, while in his last seven games, he has scored 10.

It was from the counter-attack that Madrid scored as Toni Kroos was allowed to stroll forward unattended and feed Marco Asensio out wide. Asensio crossed for Benzema to head home.

The game was reduced to almost a walking pace around the hour, with the Madrid fans roused only to jeer the introduction of Bale, who came on with Isco, with 20 minutes left.

But it was his run in behind that won the corner for Benzema's second, another header, this time at the back post, before a comical mix-up in the Bilbao defence gifted him his hat-trick.

Iago Herrerin rushed out to intercept a speculative ball over the top but made a mess of his headed clearance, the ball falling to Bale to tee up Benzema, 30 yards out but with the goal open.

# Dortmund keep heat on Bayern

AFP ■ DORTMUND

Captain Marco Reus played through the pain barrier to inspire Borussia Dortmund to a 4-0 win over Freiburg on Sunday and keep them hot on the heels of Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich.

Reus picked up a knock to his knee under a heavy challenge from Freiburg's Janik Haberer in the second half, but fired Dortmund to victory with a goal and two assists to keep them a point behind Bayern.

Dortmund was under pressure to pick up three points after title rivals Bayern beat Werder Bremen 1-0 on Saturday.

Far from buckling under the pressure, however, Dortmund delivered one of their most confident performances in recent weeks to fight their way past Freiburg in a nail-biting title



race. A silky move in the box saw Dortmund take the lead 12 minutes in, with Raphael Guerreiro and Marco Reus linking up to provide Jadon Sancho with a tap-in.

Guerreiro, returning to action after two weeks out injured, then set up Reus for Dortmund's second eight minutes after half-time.

Lucien Favre's side then survived a handful of chances for Freiburg before a brutal counter-attack saw Reus set up Mario Goetze to make it 3-0.

Paco Alcacer completed a perfect afternoon for Dortmund, converting a late penalty after a Pascal Stenzel handball.

Dortmund face local rivals Schalke in the Ruhr derby next Saturday, before Bayern travel to take on Nuremberg the following day.

# PSG win sixth French title

AFP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain won the French Ligue 1 title for a sixth time in seven seasons on Sunday after second-placed Lille could only draw 0-0 at Toulouse.

Qatar-backed PSG are now 16 points ahead of Lille who have five games to play after a campaign which saw them only lose on three occasions in another dominant league campaign.

PSG now have eight French championships since their maiden victory in 1986 although they squandered



three earlier chances to secure this season's trophy by failing to beat Strasbourg, rivals Lille and Nantes in the

space of 10 days. Tuchel, in his first year as boss, has complained about not having enough players as

the world's most expensive footballer Neymar, Angel di Maria and Marquinhos have missed large parts of the season through injuries.

The German has had to call on youngsters Colin Dagba, Moussa Diaby and Christopher Nkunku to fill gaps but Kylian Mbappe has proved his 180 million-euro pricetag with 27 goals in 26 league appearances.

The Parisians host Monaco, later on Sunday with Neymar set to return from a foot problem which has kept him sidelined since January.

# Fognini- the master of Monte Carlo

AFP ■ MONTE CARLO

Italy's Fabio Fognini thrilled a crowd composed mainly of his countrymen as he defeated Dusan Lajovic 6-3, 6-4 to win the Monte Carlo Masters on Sunday.

The 13th seed based just 20 kilometres over the border in San Remo, became the first from Italy to lift a trophy here in 51 years, following on from Nicola Pietrangeli, who watched his record fall from the royal box at the Monte Carlo Country Club.

Pietrangeli won the trophy in the principality in 1961, 1967 and 1968.

He came to the court after the trophy ceremony to pose for pictures with his new tennis heir, who was following up his shock semi-final win over 11-time Monte Carlo champion Rafael Nadal. "I started the season rather badly, so



this is unbelievable. I'm very content with this victory, especially with all of the Italians here today," Fognini, 31, said. The 48th-ranked Serb Lajovic was playing in the first ATP final of his career and got to the title match without the loss of a set.

Fognini looked to be temporarily hampered as he limped momentarily after breaking Lajovic for 3-2 in the second after claiming the opening set in 44 minutes.

During a medical timeout, he was taped on his right thigh and a heel, but carried on without apparent problems as he finished the final on his second match point as Lajovic returned long.

The winner of his first Masters 1000 trophy came to the first major week of the pre-Roland Garros run-up with a 0-4 record on the clay, the surface he grew up on.

Among his victims this week was number three Alexander Zverev, and his stunning stunning 6-4, 6-2 victory over Nadal on Saturday to end the Spanish star's 25-set win streak in the principality.

# Aus enter first Fed Cup final since 1993

AFP ■ BRISBANE

Australia powered into its first Fed Cup final since 1993 on Sunday with Ashleigh Barty and Samantha Stosur clinching the deciding fifth rubber in Brisbane against Belarusian pair Victoria Azarenka and Aryna Sabalenka.

Their battling 7-5, 3-6, 6-2 win set up a title match against either France or Romania in November.

The tie was sent into the crucial doubles match after Azarenka crushed Stosur 6-1, 6-1 in the reverse singles, following Barty sweeping past Sabalenka 6-2, 6-2.



Belarus, a losing finalist in 2017, was scheduled to pit Lidziya Marozava and Vera Lapko against the Australian duo, who were playing together for the first time. But with so much on the line team captain Tatiana Poutchek opted instead

for the more accomplished pairing. But they fell short to give seven-time champions Australia a crack at their first title since last winning in 1974. Elsewhere, World number two Simona Halep battled back from a set down to defeat France's Caroline Garcia 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 6-4 and put Romania within touching distance of a first final appearance since 1973.

LEADERBOARD

|         |      |  |
|---------|------|--|
| RUNS    | 517  | David Warner (SRH)   |
| WICKETS | 21   | Kagiso Rabada (DC)   |
| 6S      | 485  | IPL IS ALL ABOUT STRINGING WINS TOGETHER AND WE NEED TO CATCH THE MOMENTUM NOW |
| 4S      | 1084 | — R ASHWIN   |

# IPL 2019



## 9 WICKET THUMPING

Bairstow and Warner's 4th 100 run opening stand help SRH beat KKR in just 15 overs



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Jonny Bairstow and David Warner continued their stellar run at the top as they powered Sunrisers Hyderabad to a nine-wicket win over struggling Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL encounter here on Sunday.

Chasing a target of 160, Warner struck 67 off 38 balls hitting three fours and five sixes while Englishman Bairstow punished the hapless KKR attack with seven boundaries and four maximums in his unbeaten knock of 80 off 43 balls.

The openers looked in command as the target was achieved in 15 overs largely due to their 131-run stand. This was KKR's fifth successive loss in the tournament.

This is the fourth time that the opening partnership of Warner and Bairstow paved the

**The openers looked in command as the target was achieved in 15 overs largely due to their 131-run stand. This was KKR's fifth successive loss in the tournament**

way for a Sunrisers victory this season. The duo had guided SRH to victories against Rajasthan Royals, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Delhi Capitals in similar fashion. KKR were sloppy in the field and ended up paying heavily for their mistakes. Bairstow was dropped twice, once on 5 by Cariappa off debutant Prithviraj's delivery in the second over and then again on 58

by Piyush Chawla off Sunil Narine.

The trio of spinners were the reason for KKR's downfall as Sunil Narine (0/34 in 4 overs), KC Cariappa (0/34 in 2 overs) and Piyush Chawla (0/38 in 3 overs) gave away 106 runs in nine overs.

Prithvi (1/29) got the only breakthrough for KKR dismissing the threatening Australian but it was a little too late as the hosts needed just 29 runs off 40 balls.

With Warner gone, Kane Williamson (8 off 9 balls) walked in but the captain had little to do with Bairstow hitting a four and two sixes to seal the victory.

With the win, Sunrisers Hyderabad jumped to the fourth spot with 10 points from nine matches while KKR remain on the sixth spot with eight points from 10 games.

Earlier, young left-arm

### KULDEEP DROPPED DUE TO POOR FORM: DK

**HYDERABAD:** He is expected to play a vital role in India's World Cup campaign but chinaman Kuldeep Yadav's slump prompted Kolkata Knight Riders team management to drop him from the playing XI against Sunrisers Hyderabad barely six weeks before the big event. The wrist spinner has only got four wickets in nine games at an economy rate of 8.66 and KKR dropped him in their 10th game even though his replacement, K C Cariappa, fared worse, giving away 34 runs in two overs. When asked about Kuldeep's absence from the playing XI, KKR skipper Dinesh Karthik made it clear that he was dropped owing to poor form. "A form issue with (Kuldeep) — as he couldn't stand up for us in the last game. We had to give him a break and get him back fresh."

However, despite his poor form, KKR's other spinners went for plenty and gave away a cumulative 106 runs in nine



overs. "Our bowling has been off colour in the tournament. Our fielding needs a lot of improvement too," said skipper Karthik, who is also under scanner due to his poor form and a controversial berth in the World Cup bound squad. "I think 160 was a par score on this wicket if we'd bowled well. I think they (Warner and Bairstow) batted really well but our fielding cost us. And after that dropped catch (off Prithviraj), he (Bairstow) came at us all guns blazing. A wicket of Bairstow would have felt better, feel for the guy (Yarra Prithviraj). We have been outplayed in this game," Karthik said. PTI

pacer Khaleel Ahmed grabbed three wickets in an impressive spell. The 21-year-old speedster removed Sunil Narine (25 off 7 balls), who was looking dangerous in his first spell and then came back to dismiss Shubman Gill (3) and Chris Lynn (51) in his corresponding spells to keep KKR in check.

Senior pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar returned with the figures of 2/35 while leg-spinner Rashid Khan (1/23) and seamer Sandeep Sharma (1/37) took a wicket apiece with the Sunrisers' bowlers making life difficult for the KKR batsmen.

For KKR, Lynn was the top-scored with a dogged 47-ball 51. Rinku Singh was the other notable contributor with a 25-ball 30.

Also Narine's blistering innings of 24 runs off eight balls was laced with three boundaries and two maximums.

With the wicket of Narine, the momentum shifted in SRH's favour. In Khaleel's next over, he dismissed Gill (3). Nitish Rana (11) and captain Dinesh Karthik (6) also returned to the dressing room in quick succession.

Rinku and Lynn shared a 51-run stand for the fifth wicket to stabilise the innings before Sandeep Sharma dismissed the 21-year-old Indian. Big-hitter Andre Russel scored 15 off 9 balls.

He hit two sixes off Kumar before the right-arm seamer dismissed the Jamaican in the penultimate over.

### Up Next

## DC look to continue momentum against Royals

PTI ■ JAIPUR

A win at home finally achieved after multiple losses, a confident Delhi Capitals will hope to keep the juggernaut rolling when they take on Rajasthan Royals in an away IPL encounter here on Monday.

Delhi have been doing better at away games rather than at their home ground but on Saturday night they managed to reverse that at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground with a five-wicket win over Kings XI Punjab, helping them remain on third spot in the points table.

Rajasthan Royals also won their match here on Saturday by the same margin against a formidable Mumbai Indians as Steve Smith celebrated his return at the helm with a captain's innings.

With both teams rejuvenated after their respective victories, it will be an interesting battle for one-upmanship come on Monday.

However, Rajasthan would be a bit more desperate than Delhi as they are languishing at the second last position in the points table with just three wins from nine outings.

Rajasthan would look to continue to capitalise on their home advantage under new captain Smith. But they would certainly miss their prolific opener Jos Buttler.

Anjkiya Rahane, who has been struggling with his form and also seemed to be out of ideas, was eventually stripped of captaincy and next he might also lose his opening slot to Rahul Tripathi.

Tripathi was impressive



during his 45-ball fifty against Kings XI Punjab, while Rahane was too slow in his 21-ball 26 as Rajasthan failed to chase down 182, finishing at 170/7.

With Smith back in form, and the youngsters like Sanju Samson and Riyan Parag coming good with the bat,

Delhi Capitals have a solid batting line up with a blend of experience and youth.

Senior opener Shikhar Dhawan laid the foundation with a fluent 56 of 41 balls and skipper Shreyas Iyer contributed with an unbeaten 58 off 49 balls to win their last game.

With Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw at the top and the likes of Rishabh Pant, Iyer and Colin Ingram to follow, Delhi would start as a confident batting unit.

Down the order, even Axar Patel is capable of accelerating the run-rate.

As far as bowling is concerned, Delhi Capitals heavily depend on Kagiso Rabada although they have variety in medium pacers Ishant Sharma, Sandeep Lamichhane and spinners Amit Mishra and Axar Patel.



PTI ■ BANGALORE

Parthiv Patel's attacking half-century and Moeen Ali's final flourish wasn't enough as Royal Challengers Bangalore put up a sub-par 161 for 7 against Chennai Super Kings in an IPL encounter on Sunday.

Parthiv smashed 53 off 37 balls but didn't get a lot of support from the other end until Moeen Ali used the long handle to hit 26 off 16 balls even as AB de Villiers (25 off 19 balls) and Akshdeep Nath (24 off 20 balls) delivered little after promising a lot.

Deepak Chahar (2/25 in 4 overs) was impressive as usual while Ravindra Jadeja's (2/29

## Parthiv, Moeen help RCB to 161

in 4 overs) twin breakthrough during partnership was also important in the context of the innings.

Dwayne Bravo (2/34 in 4 overs) also chipped in with a couple of wickets in the end.

Virat Kohli (9) hit a couple of boundaries before a thickish edge off a Chahar outswinger brought about his downfall. Mahendra Singh Dhoni took a nice catch behind the stumps.

However Parthiv and AB de Villiers (25 off 19 balls) added 47 runs in only 4.2 overs with the former South African skipper looking in

fine touch. De Villiers smashed Chahar over square leg while Parthiv also flicked Shardul Thakur (0/40 in 4 overs) for a couple of sixes.

Having picked 16 runs off the final Powerplay over, RCB looked in control before Jadeja induced De Villiers to go for a big shot only to be holed by Faf du Plessis at Long-off.

Parthiv was joined by the burly Akshdeep Nath (24, 20 balls), who hit a six off Jadeja, added 41 runs with his senior partner before being caught by Du Plessis at long-off Jadeja's bowling at the stroke of team's

100-run mark.

The baby-faced Parthiv, whose form has been inconsistent during the tournament so far, was ready to punish the loose balls on the day as he sent a Jadeja half-tracker soaring into the stands for his third six and hit Imran Tahir for a fourth one.

He reached his half-century by pulling Bravo in-front of square but was out off the very next ball. Parthiv's innings had two fours and four sixes.

Just when 150 was looking a bit dicey, Moeen hit five boundaries to take RCB past 160-run mark.

## MIRABAI MISSES BRONZE, JEREMY SMASHES YOUTH WR

PTI ■ NINGBO

Former world champion Mirabai Chanu produced her personal best but missed out on podium by a whisker, while Youth Olympics Gold medalist Jeremy Lalrinnunga went on a record-smashing spree at the Asian Weightlifting Championship here on Sunday.

The 24-year-old Mirabai lifted 86kg in snatch and a personal best of 113kg in clean and jerk for a total of 199kg in the women's 49kg event to finish on fourth position. Her earlier personal best total in 49kg was 192kg in the EGAT Cup in Thailand in February.

In a remarkable performance, 16-year-old Jeremy secured second place in group B of the 67kg men's event. During his record-smashing spree, he claimed three world marks.

Earlier in the day, Jhili Dalabehera opened India's medal account, claiming a Silver medal in the women's 45kg category. However, 45kg is not a Olympic weight category.

The points gathered from this event will come in handy when the final rankings for



2020 Tokyo Olympics are made next year.

Unfortunately Mirabai missed the Bronze as China's Zhang Rong with the same total of 199kg (88kg+111kg) finished third under new rules, which came into effect in 2017.

Under these rules, the competitor who has a lower clean and jerk result (that means higher snatch result) will be ranked higher in the classification of athletes for total lift.

The Gold medal went to Hou Zhihui of China who produced an effort of 208kg (92kg+116kg) while North Korea's Ri Song-gum clinched the Silver, lifting 200kg (86kg+114kg) in the Gold level Olympic qualifier.

Mirabai, however, picked up a Bronze in clean and jerk

while she was fourth in snatch. In World Championships and continental championships, medals are awarded separately for snatch, clean and jerk, and total lift. But in the Olympics, medals are awarded only for total lift.

This was Mirabai's second international competition in this category after the International Weightlifting Federation re-jigged the weight categories last year. She was earlier competing in 48kg.

Jeremy gave a power-packed performance, smashing the Youth World and Asian records in snatch, clean and jerk and total lift with an effort of 297kg (134kg+163kg) to be placed second in his group behind Pakistan's Talha Talib, who lifted 304kg

(140kg+164kg). The final standings for the men's 67kg event will be known after group A competition on Monday.

Jeremy, in fact, broke 15 records in total, combining national and international marks. He smashed six international records — three youth world and three youth Asian — and nine national records — three youth national, three junior national and three senior national.

The Mizoram weightlifter pulled off clean lifts in two of his three attempts in snatch (130kg, 134kg) to set a new youth world record. The earlier youth world record was also in Jeremy's name when he had lifted 131kg in the EGAT Cup in Thailand in February.

Jeremy then lifted more than double his body weight (157kg, 163kg) in two successful attempts in the clean and jerk, and in the process obliterated Kazakhstan weightlifter Saikhnan Taisuyev's youth world record of 161kg.

It was Jeremy's personal best and 9kg more than his 288kg youth world record effort in the EGAT cup, where he won the Silver medal.

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सरकारी नौकरियां मिलेंगी  
मार्च 2020 तक

जांच, इलाज और दवा

मिलेगी मुफ्त,  
सरकारी और सूचीबद्ध निजी अस्पतालों में

12 वीं तक शिक्षा मुफ्त

हर किसी को  
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छत्तीसगढ़ प्रदेश कांग्रेस कमेटी