



OSAKA, ZVEREV CRASH OUT OF MIAMI MASTERS 16 SPORT

# CWC call on AAP ties today

## Cong to strategise its campaign in Opp-ruled States, give manifesto final shape

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
The Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Monday is likely to take the final call on AAP Congress alliance in the national Capital and also strategise on how to run the party's campaigns in Opposition-ruled States like West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh without annoying its prospective post-poll allies.  
Sources said the Congress leadership will also give a final shape to the party's manifesto which may include among others populist programmes like employment guarantee schemes, loan waivers to farmers, and welfare schemes for youth and women voters.  
The CWC, which is the apex body of the grand old party, will also discuss possible strategies for the party in the General Elections. Sources said there could be gag orders to certain leaders as

some of the comments and barbs by party's senior leaders gave opportunities to ruling parties to embarrass the Congress. The Congress leaders will discuss pros and cons of aligning with the AAP. While the opinion within the Congress is divided on this issue, NCP Chief Sharad Pawar is actively involved in getting the two parties together.  
The issue has divided Delhi Congress unit between two camps — one led by former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and another by former Union Minister Ajay Maken and AICC Delhi incharge PC Chacko. Sources said the AAP, which wrested power from Congress four years ago, is keen to take on BJP in an alliance with the Congress despite conflicting utterances by senior leaders of both the parties. Delhi has seven Lok Sabha seats, all represented by BJP now.



The other issue that the party may discuss was the nature of campaign to be run by in Opposition-run States. The need to do this was felt after Rahul Gandhi's vitriolic attack on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during his



poll campaign in Malda. The party manifesto for the Lok Sabha election is being framed by a committee headed by P Chidambaram, which has some other members too. The Congress has already launched an exercise to involve

people from different sections of society and held several rounds of consultations with them across the country, to include their views in the manifesto. It has also launched an online portal to seek views and expectations of people from the grand old party ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. The top party leaders have promised to make the manifesto a comprehensive document that will include views of all sections.  
"The contents of the manifesto will be discussed at the CWC to be chaired by Congress president Rahul. Top Congress leaders, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Ahmed Patel, AK Antony, Ghulam Nabi Azad, P Chidambaram, Mallikarjun Kharge, Ambika Soni and Anand Sharma, will be present at the meeting," said AICC leader.

Former Chief Ministers Siddharamaiah, Oomen Chandy, Tarun Gogoi and Harish Rawat will attend the meeting. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Jyotiraditya Scindia who took charge last month as AICC general secretary UP east and UP west respectively, will also be present.  
The party also released its ninth list of 10 candidates for the Lok Sabha elections, fielding former Finance Minister P Chidambaram's son Karti Chidambaram from Sivaganga in Tamil Nadu. Karti is facing trial in corruption cases, including the INX media money laundering case. Former NCP leader Tariq Anwar was nominated by the party for the Katihar Lok Sabha seat in Bihar, which he currently represents. The party also fielded its former general secretary BK Hariprasad from the Bangalore South constituency in Karnataka.

# BJP kick-starts UP poll campaign, invokes Pulwama



BJP national president Amit Shah being garlanded, along with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, during an election rally ahead of Lok Sabha elections 2019 in Agra on Sunday. PTI

Shah, Rajnath, Yogi hold Vijay Sankalp rallies across State  
**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
The Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday began its Lok Sabha campaign in a big way in Uttar Pradesh with senior party leaders, including party chief Amit Shah, holding Vijay Sankalp rallies across the State invoking nationalism in the context of Modi Government response to the Pulwama terror attack.  
Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh addressed a rally in Lucknow from where he is seeking re-election, while Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressed a gathering in Saharanpur, the constituency that will go to polls in first phase on April 11. Another Union Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi addressed a meeting in Rampur.  
"In this election Opposition is defaming the valour of Indian Army. This is not acceptable to the people of this country. The people will teach a bitter lesson to the political parties who are raising questions about Pulwama attacks and subsequent Indian action," Shah said while addressing a rally in Agra.  
Incidentally, all the top leaders of the BJP referred to Pulwama attack and Pakistan in their addresses. Rajnath too accused some Opposition parties for questioning Armed forces in the wake of the IAF air strike inside Pakistan after Pulwama terror attack.  
"Some leaders are asking how many people were killed in that attack. This is questioning as if whether air strike had actually happened or not," he said. Yogi even equated one of the candidates in Saharanpur as damaad (son-in-law) of Azhar Masood and asked people to defeat the candidates who talk the language of terrorists.  
Uttar Pradesh, a home to 22 crore people, sends maximum 80 MPs to the Lok Sabha. In 2014 election party, with its ally Apna Dal, 73 seats were won with the BJP bagging 71 constituencies. This year the party has set a target to win 74 seats.

## CAPSULE

**SAPNA CLAIMS SHE HASN'T JOINED CONG**  
**New Delhi:** Within hours of Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Raj Babbar welcoming her into the party fold, Harayani singer-Sapna Chaudhary on Sunday claimed she has not joined the Congress and accused it of using her old pictures with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

**CONGRESS FIELDS KC FROM SIVANGANGA**  
**New Delhi:** The Congress on Sunday released its ninth list of 10 candidates for the Lok Sabha elections, fielding former Finance Minister P Chidambaram's son Karti from Sivaganga in Tamil Nadu. Karti Chidambaram is facing trial in corruption cases, including the INX media money laundering case.

**11 TN FISHERMEN HELD BY SRI LANKAN NAVY**  
**Rameswaram:** Eleven fishermen from Tamil Nadu have been arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing near Neduntheivu in the island nation's waters, an official said here on Sunday.

**IT IS FOR ADVANI TO CLEAR THE MIST: UMA**  
**New Delhi:** BJP leader and Union Minister Uma Bhatnagar on Sunday said it is for LK Advani to clear the "mist", after the veteran leader was not named as a party candidate for the Lok Sabha elections.

**JAWAN MARTYRED IN CEASEFIRE VIOLATION**  
**Jammu:** A soldier was martyred on Sunday when Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire by targeting forward posts and villages with heavy calibre weapons and rockets along the LOC in Jammu & Kashmir's Poonch and Rajouri districts.

**LS POLLS: EC ORDERS 26L BOTTLES OF INDELIBLE INK**  
**New Delhi:** Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, the EC has ordered 26 lakh indelible ink bottles worth ₹33 crore.

# 2 Hindu girls kidnapped, converted, married in Pak

## War of words between Swaraj, Pak Min ensues on Twitter



Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has ordered a probe into the matter. Responding to Swaraj's tweet, Chaudhary said, "Maam its

**Pakistan's internal issue and (be) rest assured it's not Modi's India where minorities are subjugated, it's Imran Khan's Naya Pak where white colour of our flag is equally dearer to us.**  
"I hope you'll act with same diligence when it comes to rights of Indian minorities," he said.  
Swaraj, in her response to Chaudhary, said she had only asked for a report from the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad about the kidnapping and forced conversion of two minor Hindu girls to Islam.  
"This was enough to make you jittery. This only shows your guilty conscience," she said.

# Akhilesh to fight from Azamgarh, MSY among SP star campaigners

**PTI ■ LUCKNOW**  
Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav will contest from Azamgarh. In the party seat in Uttar Pradesh, which was represented by his father Mulayam Singh Yadav.  
While the 79-year-old SP patriarch will contest from a safe seat, the party on Sunday made a volte face and included its founder Mulayam Singh Yadav's name in its list of "star campaigners", a day after bringing him out of it. Also, the SP announced that senior leader Azam Khan will contest from Rampur.  
The list released by senior SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav included the names of party



chief Akhilesh, Azam, Dimple Yadav and Jaya Bachchan among others, besides Ram Gopal Yadav himself.  
At present, the SP patriarch represents Azamgarh constituency. He had represented Mainpuri three times earlier in 1996, 2004 and 2009.

# 264 bustards block Ratlam-Vadodara NH

**ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI**  
Central environmental **A**Japanel has spiked the National Highway Authority of India's proposal to construct the Rs 1078.40-crore 211-km-long eight-lane road (newly declared NH 148N) connecting Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam district to Vadodara in Gujarat. It said the road may threaten the habitat of the highly endangered Lesser Floricans in the adjoining Salina Khamor Wildlife Sanctuary in Ratlam district.  
In a meeting held recently, the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union Environment Ministry sought detailed information on the impact of the project on the smallest aggro-grassland bustard which are in the danger of becoming extinct within India. The last census in 2017 had put

their number to just 264. This variety of bustard is found in the four States — Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra.  
The proposed project is a part of Delhi-Mumbai Expressway under Bharatmala Pariyojana as per the guidelines of the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways. The length of the proposed alignment is 31 km which is located within 10 km radius from the boundary of Salina Khamor Wildlife Sanctuary.  
Curiously, while deliberating the proposed project at its recent meeting the EAC members found that plans pertaining to air, water, noise and soil quality monitoring locations along the proposed alignment were not submitted. Also, even though the proposed alignment was located within 10 km Salina Khamor Wildlife

Sanctuary, in the Environment Impact Assessment report (EIA)/Environment Management Programme (EMP) report, details of sanctuary, flora and fauna and conservation plan were not included. The EAC consultant of the project is M/s Enviro Infra Solutions Pvt Ltd, Ghaziabad.  
The EAC also noted that the land acquisition for the proposed alignment was approximately 336.72 ha out of which 41.82 is forest land. Approximately 2,438 number of trees are likely to be cut.  
For want of requisite information, the panel deferred its nod to the project and sought cumulative impacts of the project activities on the habitat of wildlife, such as lesser Florian, direct loss of habitat at intersection locations particularly on account of damage to the existing vegetation due to construction activities and transport and degradation of habitat quality due to construction activities and construction camps, and human use of water resources.

# NAVEEN HOLDS FIRST POLL CAMPAIGN RALLY BJD to sweep all 21 Lok Sabha seats, says Naveen

## 'Party to play key role in making Govt at Centre'



**PNS ■ NAYAGARH**

Chief Minister and Biju **C**hijana Dal (BJD) supremo Naveen Patnaik is confident that his party will sweep the Lok Sabha polls in the State by winning all 21 seats.  
"The BJD will win 21 Lok Sabha seats in the upcoming elections and there will be no place for other political parties in the State," asserted Patnaik during his first election campaign rally in Nayagarh district on Sunday.  
He said the BJD would have a "key role" in formation of the next Government at the Centre as no national party would get a majority.  
Hitting out at the BJP for the Centre's negligence and step-motherly attitude towards Odisha over several key issues, Patnaik alleged that the Centre has ignored the State's interest in the Mahanadi water sharing dispute and in case of the

Andhra Pradesh Polavaram irrigation project. Centre supported Andhra Pradesh and Chattisgarh in the Polavaram and Mahanadi cases, respectively, sidelining the interests of Odisha," said he, adding that BJD has also remained neglected by the Centre in the banking and telecommunication sectors.  
Patnaik remarked that while heads of political parties control everything when coming to power, the 4.5 crore people of Odisha hold the remote control of the State's administration and are the high command in distribution of power. He also targeted the Centre on the Special Category State issue. "We have been fighting for Special State Category to Odisha. It was promised by the BJP during the 2014 elections. After forming Government at Centre, the party forgot it. Is not it the Centre's negligence?"  
Patnaik claimed that the BJD has given importance to the people in distribution of tickets for the upcoming polls. "I have nominated Pramila Bisoi from Mission Shakti as the candidature for Aska Lok Sabha seat," he said, asking the gathering with his style "Apana Mane Khushi ta?...Mu bu bahut khushi."  
"The Biju Janata Dal is the only party in India that has given 33% reservation to women for Lok Sabha polls," he pointed out.  
He said his Government has provided loan to women at zero-per cent interest under the Mission Shakti programme as part of women empowerment.  
Speaking about the KALLA scheme, Patnaik said lakhs of farmers have been benefited under this most popular programme for the agriculture sector.

# 9% CRPF men suffer from obesity, diabetes

**RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI**  
In a shocking revelation **T**about the health of the CRPF personnel, over nine per cent of the total strength of the world's largest paramilitary force is sick and placed under low medical category (LMC).  
Out of a total strength of 2,43,000 men in CRPF under the command of Force's chief Director General RR Bhatnagar, as many as 22, 120 personnel are placed in the low medical category, according to official data.  
Of the 22,120 LMC cases, 85 per cent of the figure consists pure medical cases implying diseases such as hypertension, obesity and diabetes. The remaining 15 per cent are mostly accident/incident related LMC cases.



Bhatnagar is reportedly opposed to enhancing the retirement age from 57 years to 60 years and has advocated a status quo in the superannuation of the personnel up to the rank of Commandant, said a

force who are already stressed due to continuous deployment in hard areas," the official said.  
The paramilitary has cited LMC cases as a reason not to enhance the retirement age to 57 to 60 years. While BfS has an LMC of 5.5 per cent, the ITBP has 6 per cent sick personnel, the Intelligence official said quoting from the minutes of the meeting held at the Home Ministry for enhancing the retirement age.  
The Home Ministry is holding consultations with the paramilitary leadership to enhance the retirement age from 57 to 60 years following a directive from the Delhi High Court that had in an order issued on January 31 this year to make the retirement age uniform for all the ranks to 60 years. Two rounds of

meetings have been held at the North Block in this connection under the chairmanship of Additional Secretary (Police) in the Home Ministry Praveen Kumar Srivastava.  
At present, the retirement age is 57 years from the rank of Constable up to the rank of Commandant.  
However, if an officer is promoted to the rank of Deputy Inspector General, he or she is eligible to retire at the age of 60 years.  
During the meeting held by Srivastava, Additional Director General (Personnel) of CRPF Atul Karwal said that the number of LMC personnel will increase significantly if the retirement age is increased to 60 years as 2.5 per cent LMC cases increase in proportion with the increase in age of the personnel.

# Dissent crops up in BJP post ticket distribution

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Dissent started to come to fore soon after ticket distribution in Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP unit on Sunday. Though the party denied tickets to five sitting MPs, yet it seems to have missed the trick on some other seats as well. Rebellion crept in within hours in party Sidhi unit where district head Kantidev Singh accusing the party of ignoring workers reportedly resigned along with at least half a dozen office bearers.

The anguished party faction is opposing re-nomination of MP Reeti Pathak claiming the ticket should have been assigned to Singrauli district which is part of the Lok Sabha seat.

Opposition that started well before of Tikamgarh MP Virendra Khatik's nomination continued after the MP was named party candidate yet

## Name of former Union Minister Sartaj Singh was making rounds ahead of actual declaration

again on Saturday. Former MLA RD Prajapati who was seeking the Lok Sabha ticket from Tikamgarh was written a letter to BJP president Amit Shah and also left for New Delhi to register protest before party high command. Khatik a native of Sagar district is being dubbed as an outsider in Tikamgarh.

Dissent is also brewing in Morena sitting MP Anoop Mishra, nephew of late PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee has been denied ticket and was replaced by Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar who represents

Gwalior seat.

Mishra's hopes of a nomination from Gwalior are dashed as the party has included names of former MP minister Maya Singh, Mayor Vivek Narayan Shejwalkar and Ved Prakash Sharma among probables for the Gwalior seat.

Congress is sitting comfortable comparatively as dissent only has been reported from Hoshangabad against nomination of Shaileendra Diwan, son of former Congress minister Chandrabhan Singh Diwan. Shaileendra's candidature is being opposed for being outsider for Hoshangabad, though he hails to Narsinghpur, part of Hoshangabad Lok Sabha seat.

Locals, however, claimed the constituency is dominated by OBC and Congress has meticulously chosen Diwan. Name of former Union Minister Sartaj Singh was making rounds ahead of actual declaration.

# 'Hast Shilp Mela 2019' at Gauhar Mahal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Handloom and handicraft fair 'Hast Shilp Mela 2019' is being organised at historic shopping stop Gauhar Mahal. The handloom and handicraft is being organised by Handloom and Handicraft Development.

The craft bazaar began on Saturday that would continue till March 30. The handloom and handicraft fair attracted a huge crowd and is lauded by art lovers on the very second day of the fair. A huge footfall was noticed here on Sunday.

This craft mela is all about handloom material and people of Bhopal explored the various vibrant colours of India. Gauhar Mahal is furnished with the cultures of Gujarat, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan,

Madhya Pradesh, Banaras, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

All the vendors have brought a different range of colours, designs, sizes and qualities. Showcasing the beautiful and unique collection of outfits, jewellery and decorative pieces the exhibition is captivating the attention of Bhopalites. The women loves to adorn her with wonderful and trendy clothing, this exhibition cum sale has it all.

The people are shopping with great fervor and usually a heavy crowd is noticed in the evenings. Especially the ladies of the city are more captivated towards the fair as it has got different versions of female stuff. The city of lakes got embellished with different traditions and cultures of the country under one roof.



Ex-Students of Government Maital Vigyan Mahavidyalaya (VVM) at Holi Milan programme organised in the college in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo



Gold and Silver winner Indian players of rowing boat event along with Bronze medal winner from Nigeria at a prize distribution ceremony during Open International Canoe Sprint Competition organised at Upper Lake in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

# Swami Vivekanand Library gets new collection

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A New collection of books suggested by members of Swami Vivekananda Library was released on Sunday.

The library releases such a collection once for a month to its members. Like every time, collections of books suggested by members was also displayed this time. This Collection was packed with a total of 30 books put on display.

Swami Vivekananda Library Manager Yatish Bhatle said that he is a member of the library who can suggest his favorite book, write the names of the register books, or suggest suggestions on the email.

The book does not find a book supplier, the library also purchases it online. Collections of books suggested by members will be displayed on Sunday.

Some books include The



Representational image

Begum by Deepa Agarwal, Tourism in Khajuraho by Ayub Khan. Unbound by P Chidambaram, Jugad 3.0 by Simona Ahuja, The Verdict Decoding Indian Elections by Pranoy Roy, Adi Shankaracharya by Pawan Kumar Verma, Word Power by Subhash Jain, History Quiz suggested by members is 30. Launched a new feature for members of the library. If that book is not in the library, then members can suggest that book. This library will be the same as the Library members include the suggestion book. That's when the books of the members are included in the library collection. The information given by the member who has suggested the information is given by phone or email to the members.

Yatish Bhatle said that these books will be displayed on Sunday. Members can reserve these and issue to the members next Saturday. At the same time, the collection of International DVD will be organized on next Sunday.

Every Sunday in the library there are new books / DVD releases and this collection has included English books.

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# 28-yr-old robbed of mobile phone

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 28-year-old youth was assaulted and robbed of his mobile phone by two bike-borne miscreants at MP Nagar zone under MP Nagar police station area late in the night on Saturday.

Police said that the victim Rajkumar Thakur was robbed while he was on his way to home and before he could reach bus stop to board bus he was attacked and robbed by two bike borne miscreants.

The victim in his complaint stated that the two miscreants obstructed his way and escaped with mobile phone over which he was talking.

Based on the complaint after the preliminary investigation the police have registered a case under section 392 of the IPC and started search for the accused.

The victim works at a

printing press in MP Nagar Zone 1 and after the work he was on his way to home and after covering little distance he received a call after which he picked the call and continued to move forward but unaware of the bike borne miscreants he was robbed of his mobile phone.

Police suspects that the miscreants would be those visiting liquor shops in the nearby area and targeted those who they found in deserted area and moving while talking over mobile phone.

The victim lives at 12 no stop in Habiganj area and was walking towards bus stop after work when he was targeted by the miscreants.

During the further investigation police would search for details of miscreants in the footages of CCTV cameras installed in the area, said police.

# Two injured as car turns turtle

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Two persons including a woman were injured after a car turned turtle at VIP road under Koh-e-Fiza police station area in the morning on Sunday.

Police said that a husband and a wife had a narrow escape when the car in which they were travelling turned turtle after hitting a boundary wall at VIP road. The husband who was driving the car lost control over the car and which led to the accident. The car was damaged badly but the passengers escaped with minor injuries.

The driver identified as Mohammad Ali along with his wife was travelling from Reighat to Lalghati Chouraha after visiting a doctor in Habiganj area. Mohammad Ali is a resident of C-Block in Regalia Heights Koh-e-Fiza.

In the initial investigation police have found that the couple was travelling in silver colour Tata Indigo car bearing registration number MH05-BJ-2338 and when it reached near Marigold marriage garden, Ali who was driving the car lost control and it overturned and rammmed in the boundary wall of the marriage garden which was probably due to high speed.

After receiving the information FRV Dial 100 police reached the spot and reached the spot and took the couple to Hamidia hospital where the couple was discharged after providing treatment. The man suffered injuries on his elbow and face where as wife escaped with minor injuries on hands and shoulder.

Police said that the driver told that a speeding car disturbed him and he lost sight and later his car rammmed into boundary wall.

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Noted poet Nareesh Nirbhik in Indian Army from Rajasthan recites poetries at a programme to pay homage to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

# 'Diary of a Young Girl' by Anne Frank read at literature reading session

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The literature lovers of the city had an overwhelming session in the Continue to Turn Pages Read Aloud Session.

The session was organised on Sunday at Chinar Park. The session was organised by Learner Parco Bhopal. It is a youth led group of literature lovers. The participants read the book 'The Diary of a Young Girl' by Anne Frank.

The Diary of a Young Girl, also known as The Diary of Anne Frank, is a book of the writings from the Dutch language diary kept by Anne Frank while she was in hiding for two years with her family during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. The family was apprehended in 1944, and Anne Frank died of typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945.

The diary was retrieved by Miep Gies, who gave it to Anne's father, Otto Frank, the family's only known survivor, just after the war was over. The diary has since been published in more than 60 languages.

During the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, Anne Frank received a blank diary as one of her presents on June 12, 1942, her 13th birthday.

According to the Anne Frank House, the red, checkered autograph book which Anne used as her diary was actually not a surprise, since she had chosen it the day before with her father when browsing a bookstore near her home. She began to write in it on June 14, 1942, two days later.



Teams in action during K-4Mix 500M final in International Canoe Championship at Upper Lake in Bhopal Sunday

# 'Holi Milan samaroh' celebrated with zest

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A Holi Milan Samaroh was organised on Sunday where the citizens played holi with zest. Holi, the festival of colours was celebrated with a bang in the city of lakes. The Bhopalites enjoyed this day enthusiastically with family and friends.

The event was organised by Raunak Cultural and Social Society. The organiser Mukul Tripathi said that amongst various festivals celebrated in the country, Holi is one of the most significant and ancient festival. It is the spring festival celebrated with great pleasure and enthusiasm.

Where there was the aroma of gujiya that were capturing the people's attention on



Representational image

the other hand youngsters where there were the splashes of gulaal.

The youngsters enjoyed the ceremony whole heartedly. The event began with actual Phoolon ki Holi. The eve

was vibrant mix of colourful tradition, cultural music and dance. The visitors also participated in the act and enjoyed the eve with the lot of ecstasy.

The participants showcased their hidden talents through Traditional Dance performances based on Holi theme. Girls and Children enjoyed dancing, relished their favourite food and festival Sweet, Gujiya, and celebrated the festival with a lot of joy and fervor. People enjoyed coming together by forgetting personal differences and celebrated the spirit of universal brotherhood. People were encouraged to play safe Holi with or without flower petals. It was indeed a wonderful experience for the inmates, he added.

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# LS polls: Cong fields Digvijay from Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In a list released during mid-Night, the Congress announced candidature of nine aspirants including the most talked about Digvijay Singh from Bhopal. The grand old party has named 38 candidates in the first list.

The list of nine includes three women including Minakshi Natrajan, a close aide of Congress president Rahul Gandhi, from Mandasaur, Kavita Singh from Khajuraho and Pramila Singh, the former BJP MLA, from tribal dominated Shahdol.

Pramila, wife of former Umaria district collector Amarpal Singh, had deserted BJP after being denied ticket ahead of assembly polls and had joined Congress. Her can-



Umaria collector Amarpal Singh was transferred presumably to avoid code of conduct issues once Pramila was named a Congress nominee.

Meanwhile, Digvijaya Singh's nomination from Bhopal has caused sizable flutter and seen as a move to wrest prestigious Bhopal seat from BJP which is holding on to it since 1989.

It is also seen as a political test for Singh who is known to be a wily politician and in the past had decimated his opponents in and outside Congress. By fielding him from Bhopal the Congress has put him in a tricky situation as during his tenure in power the two-time CM had severed relations with Government staffers and the BJP also holds four out of seven assembly seats in Bhopal.

# BJP may field ex-CM Shivraj Singh from Bhopal

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

After the Congress has nominated former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Digvijay Singh, from Bhopal Lok Sabha seat, the BJP is chalking out a fresh strategy to retain its bastion of the last three decades.

Bhopal has been strong bastion of the BJP, but in the recently held assembly elections, out of eight assembly segments, the Congress has wrested three. Besides, in remaining five, the BJP witnessed less margins.

Bhopal constituency is spread over eight assembly segments, namely Berasia, Bhopal Uttar, Narela, Bhopal Dakshin-Paschim, Bhopal Madhya, Govindpura, Huzur and Sehere. The BJP has been holding this seat since 1989.

Officially, the BJP leaders

**Bhopal constituency is spread over eight assembly segments, namely Berasia, Bhopal Uttar, Narela, Bhopal Dakshin-Paschim, Bhopal Madhya, Govindpura, Huzur and Sehere. The BJP has been holding this seat since 1989**

has dismissed that Digvijay could pose any challenge to the party in the constituency. However, in the present situation, the BJP is working on a different strategy over selection of candidates.

According to rumours in political circles, former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan

might be in reckoning as a contestant, as Muslim voters in the constituency view him as a moderate saffron leader.

While talking to media persons on Sunday, State BJP president Rakesh Singh said that he cannot say anything right now. BJP's central leadership would decide the candidate, he added.

Whether former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan would be fielded from Bhopal, he said, the central leadership will decide whether to field him in Lok Sabha polls or not. Notably, Chouhan has already expressed his willingness not to contest the election.

He claimed that Digvijay would surely lose the election. He is not that figure who can win elections, he added. Factually, the Congress had last won the Bhopal seat in 1984.

# 'It's make or break election for Digvijay'

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Many in both Congress and the BJP believe the Chief Minister Kamal Nath has put former Chief Minister Digvijay Singh on a sticky wicket and it could be a make or break election for Singh, considered the most crafted politician among his contemporaries.

Singh according to sources wanted to either contest from home town Raghogarh or Indore, where he started his early life. However, the party avoided his nomination from Indore as even his close aides backedtracked to extend support.

In Hoshangabad, the

Congress had tossed up a surprise while naming Shalendra Diwan, an OBC face and son form minister from Digvijay Singh cabinet Chandrabhan Singh Diwan. Name of former BJP leader and ex-union minister Sartaj Singh was also in contention for a Congress ticket.

The Congress party though avoided naming candidates from the two seats it held in 2014 — Guna and Chhindwara, suggesting that some surprise was in store from the two seats. Scindia the Guna MP is said to be shifting base to some other seat while CM Kamal Nath would vacate the seat for contesting Assembly poll.



CA Mayank Agrawal, Chairman Bhopal branch, addressing National conference organized by Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) at Samvay Bhawan in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

# 27-yr-old found dead in Tarawali area

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 27-year-old Raigarh resident was found murdered in Tarawali area under Berasia police station area on Sunday morning; deceased was shot twice in the head and the chest, said police.

Police were informed by locals after spotting a man and on the receipt of the information a team rushed to the spot and found that empty cartridges of 315 bore gun near the body.

The Berasia SHO SN Pandey said that possibly the deceased was killed somewhere else and body was dumped in the area as in the investigation it has not been found that someone had heard sound of opening fire. The details of the murder would be revealed after receiving the post mortem report. In the initial investiga-

tion the deceased was identified as Vikram Singh Yadav of Biora Raigarh. The deceased went missing after he asked for Rs 1000 from his elder brother Hemraj in Raigarh which was on Saturday and later he was found murdered on Sunday in Tarawali area. Police are investigating the reason of deceased's moving to Tarawali with consent or after being killed.

The deceased asked for money from his brother as he wanted to bring back his wife who was staying with her parents for the past five months in Khajuri village. Eitkchedi she was annoyed of excessive liquor drinking habit of the deceased.

The body was sent for the post mortem after the preliminary investigation. The police have registered a case under section 302 of the IPC and started further investigation.

# Mhow residents surprised over shifting of tehsil office

PNB ■ MHOW

The residents of Mhow town are surprised over the decision over shifting of the tehsil office to the extreme corner of Mhow which is in Mhowgaon at the end of Mhow tehsil geographical area.

The new Tehsil building in Mhowgaon will be around 50 kilometers from Choral, Gwalu, Gajinda and Sandal village tribal belt village area in the east Sherpur, Nayapura, Durjanpura and Sehad in the west Pigdamber, Panda, Navda in the north and Kalikray, Gokalyakund, Kaneriy and Kaparkhedha villages in the south.

The interesting fact is that

**THE JUDICIAL COURT, GOVERNMENT MADHYA BHARAT HOSPITAL, PWD OFFICE, IRRIGATION OFFICE MPEB OFFICE CANTONMENT BOARD OFFICE AND MHOW REST HOUSE ARE SITUATED IN MHOW TOWN**

the present Tehsil office building which is located at the centre of Mhow town is well connected with the four-lanes from all these villages and

public transportation is easily available.

The judicial court, Government Madhya Bharat hospital, PWD office, Irrigation office MPEB office cantonment board office and Mhow rest house are situated in Mhow town.

The villagers coming to Mhow can visit Mhow court, MPEB office, Government hospital, Red Cross hospital, Cantonment Board hospital and Tehsil office and can also do its market purchase as most of the market cloth market, grocery market, utensils market and more than 100 doctors clinic, pathology labs the prominent government and private school all are located in Mhow town.

# 40-yr-old held for poisoning 2 sons

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Gunga police has on Sunday nabbed a 40-year-old man who poisoned his two sons and consumed poison to commit suicide in the evening on Saturday.

Gunga police swung into action after a woman informed that her two sons have been poisoned by her husband and he had also consumed poison. Police team rushed to the spot and took the victims to Hamidia and Kamla Nehru hospital where their condition was reportedly stable.

The accused Karan Singh Lodhi poisoned his two children and consumed poison after he left with his two children Kartik (4) and Mohit (3) and was taken to hospital and later in the investigation Karan's wife Preeti revealed the details.

A complaint was lodged by Preeti Lodhi stating that her husband Karan Singh Lodhi came to take her to Gujarat where he works and she requested to leave after 2-3 days Karan took her children and later poisoned them and tried to commit suicide by consuming poisonous substance. Police have registered case under sections 307 and 309 of the IPC.

After Karan was discharged he was arrested by Gunga police and have started further investigation.

Meanwhile Misrod police have nabbed a 48-year-old man who was absconding for long in cheque bounce case in the night on Saturday.

# School uniform scam: Former collector, district manager booked

PNB ■ SHIVPURI

The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Madhya Pradesh has booked former Collector Shilpa Gupta and District Manager of Livelihood Mission in school uniform scam worth ₹6.40 crore; school uniform of 2.40 lakh students of primary and middle school were to be procured but irregularities were found in the procurement.

According to AIG (EOW) Navin Choudhary, the complaint has been registered after the investigation based on the application submitted by Advocate Rajiv Sharma of Ashok Vihar Colony. In the complaint it was stated that the then Collector of Shivpuri, Shilpa Gupta, Livelihood Mission's District Manager, Arvind Bhargava and others have colluded to gain from the

purchase order of ₹14.40 crore. In the purchase and distribution of school uniforms in the Government schools in the year 2018-19 irregularities were found which were around ₹6.40 crore.

For the further investigation the SP EOW Bhopal has forwarded complaint number 31/2019 to SP Gwalior. The EOW has given instructions to SP Gwalior to ensure action within the time limit.

The complainant has claimed that a Budget of ₹14.40

crores was allocated from the State Education Center for the distribution of 2.40 lakh uniform to school children in Shivpuri district through Self Help Groups and was facilitated by Livelihood Mission by September 15, 2018, but in the purchase of these uniforms but the then Mission Director and Shivpuri Collector Shilpa Gupta and State Livelihood Mission's District Manager Arvind Bhargava have not ensured timely distribution and not followed specifications of the Bureau of Indian Standards and these officials colluded for corruption of ₹6.40 crore. In the present scenario after the end of the academic session, delivery of uniforms has not been ensured, which is in itself a serious negligence and corruption is itself.



City Quazi Syed Mushtaq Ali Nadvi participate in 'Quraan' lucky draw system for the selection of pilgrims for free stay in 'Ruba' at Makkah in Saudi Arabia ahead of their Hajj journey, at historical Moti Masjid in Bhopal. Pioneer photo



Women activists of Association of Convent Ex-Students (ACES) participate in a women's car rally on the theme to save girl child and empowerment of women during Women's Day celebration in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

# AIIMS BHOPAL

# Biosafety Level 3 TB laboratory inaugurated

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhopal here on Sunday inaugurated the level 3 biosafety laboratory (BSL-3) for TB and viral infections.

This facility becomes first in central India and in this laboratory the scientists can handle all microorganisms which are labelled risk group 3 such as live HIV, SARS, Influenza, and Zika virus, Plague, bacteria, Mycobacterium tuberculosis (all forms including MDR and XDR-TB), to name a few. The facility was dedicated to the AIIMS by Prof Balram Bhargava, Secretary, Department of Health Research and Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, Government of India.

This facility was funded by the Department of Health Research, Government of India with a total cost of 5 crore. Prof Bhargava said that a dozen BSL-3 are present in the country



and this facility inaugurated today at AIIMS, Bhopal is the first BSL-3 Lab in all the AIIMS of India. He elaborated

that this service will cater for TB and other viral infections to include Zika virus, HIV, SARS etc. in the very

heart of the country, Bhopal. The Director & CEO, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhopal - Dr Sarman Singh said that this facility will be a resource for the whole region of central India and AIIMS Bhopal will be able to handle outbreaks of such infectious diseases in the region and other parts of the country, if needed. While celebrating the world TB day, the AIIMS started the day with 5.7 km "Run for TB" early in the morning, in which 200 students and other volunteers took part.

Speaking on the occasion of inauguration, of TB symposium, Chief Guest of the function, the DG-ICMR, Dr Balram Bhargava, highlighted that during the past 70 years after independence, India has not only done phenomenally well in mobile & IT, green revolution and white revolution but also in health care and Sarman industry. He said that we are lacking in emergency medicine and in universal health coverage. He requested that the

young generation today should focus on these two frontiers and should do dedicated services for this. He further emphasised about the 198 countries have signed the agreement that they will eradicate tuberculosis by 2030 and Prime Minister have targeted it to be achieved by 2025 which is an ambitious role the percentage of decrease of prevalence of tuberculosis is 1.5 % per year and we need to be at least 5% per year to meet that target of 2030.

Dr Arneet Arora, Dean (Academics) presented an overview on TB Symposium to include the challenges of TB, the implications TB has on the society etc. The Medical Superintendent, Dr Manisha Srivastava elaborated on TB Care at AIIMS, Bhopal and highlighted the excellent services set-up by AIIMS, Bhopal for the tuberculosis in Bhopal. Dr Shashank Purwar, the organising secretary and Acting Head, Department of Microbiology gave vote of thank.

# Gangman averts rail mishap in Rourkela

PNS ■ ROURKELA

An alert gangman saved the lives of many passengers boarded on the Tatanagar-Alleppey Express train from a serious mishap here on Sunday.

The train that was coming from Rourkela escaped from an accident after the gangman Ram Sreya Das raised an alarm after detecting a crack on the railway track near K cabin at Bondamunda Diesel Colony here.

Sources said that the gangman rushed to the railway track with red flag, following which the driver stopped the train before meeting a major accident.

The train moved after the railway engineers repaired the tracks. Sources said that permanent repair work was underway by the railways.



# Capital Day fest from Apr 13; Guv to be chief guest

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The first preparatory meeting for the upcoming 71st Capital Foundation Day celebration and related cultural festivals was held by the Capital Day Celebration Committee here recently.

Bhubaneswar Additional Collector Arun Kumar Behera presided over the meeting where representatives from various educational institutions and Government and private organisations attended. It was decided that the Capital Foundation Day would be observed amid much pomp and gaiety for three days from April 13 to 15.

Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal has been requested to take salutes in a parade at the Capital Memorial in front of the State Assembly and grace the celebration as chief guest.

Committee president senior journalist Pradosh Patnaik delivered a welcome



address and urged all to provide cooperation for smooth conduct of the day. Vice-president Pradyumna Mohanty informed about the scheduled programmes.

All Government and private offices in the city would be decked up with colourful lights during the three days, he said.

Among others, Khordha District Education Officer Brundaban Satpathy, Mihir Sethy of the Regional Education Directorate, RTO-II PK Mohanty, RTO-II Sanjay Behera, Bhubaneswar DIPPRO Lalitendu Mohapatra, ACP Traffic Dr Kishore Kumar

Painigrahi, Primary Education Director Dr Abhay Kumar Mallick, ACP Armed Bhabani Prasad Jena, City Health Officer Dr Lalatendu Nayak, Higher Education Deputy Director Shrimayee Senapati, BDA's Saroj Kumar Patra and BMC Deputy Commissioner Shyamsundar Sethi were present.

# Lovebirds marry sans caste barrier in Odisha

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Jhana Ranjan Mohapatra of Hindu Brahminical background married on Wednesday her lover Salma Ruksar (26), girl of a Muslim family of Nimapara in Puri, in the most unconventional way, that is, by exchange of garlands.

For reasons of social security, the couple had to elope on March 17. After having lived for three days, the couple reached AMOFOI with relevant age documents where their marriage was solemnized. Mohapatra is also a native of Nimapara.

He is a graduate and a businessman by profession.

Similarly, two other couples Hrushikesh Sahani (27) and Smita Pradhan, (24), a Kandha under Raikha police limits of Kandhamal and Aman Sharma of Brahmin community, (24) and Shruti Agrawal, (20) of Marwar community of Khetrajpur,



Sambalpur town, also had love marriages without dowry and priests.

**For reasons of security, the couple had to elope on March 17. After having lived for three days, the couple reached AMOFOI with relevant age documents where their marriage was solemnized. Mohapatra is also a native of Nimapara**

AMOFOI secretary B Ramchandra administered the oath of marriage to the three couples while Swapna Bijayini presided over the functions. The couples have pledged to go in for a one-child family.

# Amway launches #EatHardEatSmart

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Amway India has launched #EatHardEatSmart campaign to promote and support the benefits of balanced nutritional intake for a healthy lifestyle recently. Based on the concept of right and optimum nutrition, the campaign focuses on addressing the nutritional gaps that may arise since the regular diet may not be a balanced one. The resulting shortage in required amount of daily nutrition by the body can be managed through appropriate supplementation.

As a part of the campaign, the company would launch series of initiatives to further educate Amway direct sellers and consumers on the need of the daily requirement of nutrition in their regular diet.



Launching the campaign, Amway India chief marketing officer Sundip Shah said, "With the campaign, we are creating an awareness on the importance of protein, essential nutrients, vitamins, minerals and omega-3 in regular diet."

# Meet on PCPNDT Act discusses issues

Officials from 10 States join

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A two-day regional review on "Effective Implementation of Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994" was organised here by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which deliberated on the issues raised by the States and on the compliance of Supreme Court direction.

The State Appropriate Authorities, State Nodal Officers and the District Appropriate Authorities from

more than 10 States attended the workshop which began here on Monday.

Director PNDT MOHFW Vidushi Chaturvedi, Mission Director (NHM) Odisha, Shalini Pandit, Mission Director NHM and State Appropriate Authority Jharkhand, Kripanand Jha, Director, Social Welfare, WCD and MS Reghu G and Gender Consultant, MOHFW Ifat Hamid reviewed the implementation status of the PCPNDT Act in the States. Notably the Supreme Court in VHAP Vs UOI case took stock of the implementation of PCPNDT Act and directed all the States for strict implementation of the law, including restitution of all the statutory bodies, like the State Supervisory Board and the

State Appropriate Authorities, close review of court cases filed under the Act and tracking the sex ratio at birth for monitoring the problem.

Further, in Sabu George Vs Yahoo, Google, Microsoft and UOI it was directed to monitor the violations of the PCPNDT Act by the Yahoo, Google and other search engines by the designated nodal agencies and forward the same to the respective search engines for compliance in a time bound manner.

Pandit also shared a copy of "Compilation of important judgments pertaining to PCPNDT Act" published by the Odisha Judicial Academy, Cuttack, with the team from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

# BJD misusing Speaker's powers: BJP

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Commenting on the cancellation of membership of five BJD MLAs in view of their quitting the party without prior notices, the BJP on Sunday alleged that the ruling party is misusing powers of the Assembly Speaker.

"It is very disappointing that the Speaker terminated the membership of five BJD MLAs, who joined the BJP recently, on a petition of Government Chief Whip Amar Satpathy. The Speaker's move indicates about the BJD's fear of loss in polls only," alleged BJP State vice-president and spokesperson

Pitambar Archarya.

Acharya wanted to know why four NCP MLAs, who had joined the BJD in 2012 after a midnight coup against Naveen Patnaik, were not annulled by Speaker Amat then, despite a petition, similar to one filed by NCP State president Utkal Keshari Parida.

He alleged that the BJD using powers of the Speaker for its own interest. He also wanted to know why members of MLA Naba Kishore Das and Sundargh MLA Jogesh Singh were not terminated even as they quit Congress and joined the BJD.

# Ranjan, Menaka now BJP BBSR VPs

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

On the recommendation of BJP Bhubaneswar district president Harekrushna Khuntia, Ranjan Nayak and Menaka Parida were nominated as vice-presidents of the district unit. Partha Sarathi Tripathy as secretary and Prasanjit Mallick as OBC Morcha vice-president.

This was informed by district secretary Sangram Keshari Nayak through a release.

# Heat wave preparedness meet held in Odisha city

Stress on drinking water, electricity

PNS ■ JAGATSINGHPUR

A meeting was held on heat wave preparedness here last week.

DRDA Project Director Braja Gopal Acharya chaired the meeting attended by civil officials, CDMO, executive engineers, RWSS, irrigation, electricity and RD, apart from BDOs and Tehsildars.

The meeting emphasized on supplying uninterrupted water and electricity during the summer and immediate repairing of the defunct tube wells and water supply projects, coming under Basudha scheme.

Speaking at the meeting, Executive Engineer RWSS Chita Ranjan Mohanty

informed that out of 13,807 tube wells as many as 13,774 tube-wells have been functioning across the district. 86 villages coming under water scarcity areas in Ersama, Baikuda and Kujanga blocks are being provided with water through tanker supply which will continue till end of summer.

A toll free helpline number 1916 has been released enabling the general public on lodging complaint pertaining water crisis. The District Headquarters Hospital authority was asked to start special ward for heat wave patients, while the Education department was directed to look after the water and electricity supply in schools.

# Vidya Bhavan observes Shaheed Diwas



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Students of the Bhavan Centre for Communication and Management (BCCM) under the aegis of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bhubaneswar observed a Shaheed Diwas and

paid tributes to martyrs of the Pulwama attack here on Saturday. DG Dr RP Sharma, CRPE IG Bitul Kumar, BCCM chairman Major General BK Mohapatra, BCCM DG Dr SK Tamotia, senior director Lt Col PK Sahu and director cul-

ture Bibha Rani Tamotia attended as guests. The wives of two martyrs of Odisha, Prashanta Kumar Sahoo and Manoj Kumar Behera, were given a token gratitude of Rs one lakh each. Besides, kin of two Odia mar-

tyrs, Jawan Pradip Kumar Panda and Sipoy Bijoy Kumar, were also given a token of Rs one lakh each. A cultural programme on patriotic songs was also performed by reputed artists of Odisha.

# Mahagathbandhan is 'Mahamilavat': Jayant

PNS ■ JAMSHEDPUR

Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Jayant Sinha, on Sunday said that the Union Government has opened doors of opportunity in Jharkhand and people will give a befitting reply to opposition's divisive policies in the Lok Sabha election.

He was addressing BJP workers at the party's 'Vijay Sankalp' programme at Michael John auditorium in Bistupur. Sinha said the opposition parties are power mongers and they have united against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Calling the Mahagathbandhan as 'Mahamilavat', Sinha said, "The opposition parties have entered an alliance out of fear of Modi, but the people of the country will give them a befitting reply."

He also motivated the workers to get ready for next election. He deliberated minutely on issues pertaining to the strengthening of the booth committees.

Sinha highlighted development projects, undertaken by the Central Government, in Jharkhand, including the multi-purpose Konar dam in his home district Hazaribagh. He claimed that the India's first Prime Minister Pt Jawaharlal Nehru had visited Hazaribagh 64 years ago for the multi-purpose project, but it was only after Modi came to power that the dam saw the light of the day.

He added that the demand for an airport in Dalbhumgarh remained unfulfilled for decades but the Modi



Government recently laid its foundation.

"The new airport will also generate employment. More and more people will benefit from it," he Sinha said.

He hailed the relentless effort of local BJP MP Bidyut Baran Mahato, who will contest the election from Jamshepur parliamentary seat for the second term. Sinha said the NDA has opened bank accounts for poor people, constructed toilets, and distributed LPG gas connections, all in a span of 60 months.

He said that the BJP workers are determined to bring a complete major-

ity in the Centre again under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and asked the party members to inform the voters that if Congress comes to power that the country would witness anarchy like situation.

Sinha also motivated the workers to get ready for polling. He deliberated minutely on issues pertaining to the strengthening of the booth committees. Jharkhand is set for a four-phase Lok Sabha election for 14 constituencies on April 29, May 6, 12 and 19.

# Social media on tight EC leash during LS polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As the countdown to the 2019 general elections begins, the Election Commission (EC) has directed chief electoral officers of all States and Union Territories (UTs) to appoint nodal officers to check misuse of social media and intimate it by March 25. Besides, the Commission has also appointed Dilip K Verma Secretary, Sayyid Rehashmi Deputy Director Arun Kumar Palani, Deputy Director as nodal officers to look into misuse of social media during polls.

Political parties use social media platforms as well as friendly websites to trumpet their 'achievements' while discrediting their rivals by spreading canards and untruths during polls.

In its communiqués to the States and Union Territories, the EC also stated that cases of

violation of Model Code of Conduct on social media pertaining to the concerned States and UTs will immediately be intimated to the grievance officer of the concerned social media platforms.

The States and UTs will also intimate to the Commission's grievance officer and intimate it by March 25. Besides, the Commission has also appointed Dilip K Verma Secretary, Sayyid Rehashmi Deputy Director Arun Kumar Palani, Deputy Director as nodal officers to look into misuse of social media during polls.

The EC has decided that in case any violation of model code of conduct or any other Commission's instructions or court's order related to poll matters is observed on social media platform, the same shall be forwarded to the grievance officers appointed by the



social media platforms viz Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp. In its communiqués to States and UTs, the EC said that the provisions of the Model Code of Conduct and related instructions of the Commission issued from time

to time shall also apply to the content being posted on the internet including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube by candidates and political parties.

Social media platforms and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)

- Political parties use social media platforms as well as friendly websites to trumpet their 'achievements' while discrediting their rivals by spreading canards and untruths during polls
- The Election Commission (EC) has directed chief electoral officers of all States and Union Territories (UTs) to appoint nodal officer to check misuse of social media and intimate it by March 25
- The poll panel has also appointed Dilip K Verma Secretary, Sayyid Rehashmi Deputy Director Arun Kumar Palani, Deputy Director as nodal officers to look into misuse of social media during polls
- Social media platforms and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) early this week presented a "Voluntary Code of Ethics for the General Election 2019" to the EC
- The platforms and the Commission have developed a notification mechanism by which the electoral body can notify them of potential violations under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, and on other matters

early this week presented a "Voluntary Code of Ethics for the General Election 2019" to the EC. "This code will become effective and will enter into force on March 20, 2019," they said in a statement, adding that it would remain operational

during the election. The code's purpose is to identify measures that the platforms can take to increase confidence in the electoral process. It is also to safeguard against misuse that vitiates the "free and fair character" of the Lok Sabha polls.

According to the code, the platforms will endeavour to, "where appropriate and keeping in mind the principle of freedom of expression," deploy appropriate policies and processes to facilitate access to information on electoral matters. Campaigns will be organised to create awareness, including on electoral laws and other instructions from the Election Commission of India (EC).

The platforms and the Commission have developed a notification mechanism by which the electoral body can notify them of potential violations under Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act, and on other matters.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched his #MainBhiChowkidaar campaign on Twitter, to counter the Congress' narrative of #ChowkidaarChorHai. The

Congress, on the other hand, has taken to social media to constantly attack the Central Government for lack of jobs, the alleged scam in the Rafale deal, demonetisation, GST implementation and farmers' distress.

The #ChowkidaarChorHai campaign was launched by the Congress to attack Modi and the Centre over Rafale deal.

During the five States Assembly elections last year the dissemination of fake information through social media was reportedly a major influencing factor. The political parties had formed thousands of WhatsApp groups ahead of the polls. Though WhatsApp has now limited the number of forwards by an individual user to five, there is still scope for its misuse. Besides social media platforms, motivated websites can play ample mischief and mislead the electorate.

## EC orders 26L bottles of indelible ink

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission (EC) has ordered 26 lakh indelible ink bottles worth ₹33 crore. The seven-phase election will begin on April 11 and conclude on May 19. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the poll panel had bought 21.5 lakh phials, 4.5 lakh less than this year. The semi-permanent ink is applied to the forefinger of electors to prevent them from voting more than once under rules mandated by the EC. The indelible ink was formulated as a deterrent against voting twice. The stain lasts several days before starting to fade.



Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd, a Government of Karnataka undertaking, is the only authorised manufacturer of indelible ink for the EC. Managing Director, Mysore Paints, Chandrashekar Doddamani said that the company has received an order for 26 lakh phials of ink from the EC. "The expected turnover is approximately ₹33

crore," he said. The order, Doddamani said, is higher than the last general elections by 4.5 lakh phials. In this election, nearly 90 crore people are eligible to cast their votes for which the EC will set up nearly 10 lakh polling stations across the country.

In 1962, the Election Commission, in collaboration

with the Law Ministry, National Physical Laboratory and National Research Development Corporation, had made an agreement with Mysore Paints for supply of indelible ink for Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. Since then, it has been supplying the ink for elections in India.

A bottle of indelible ink

**Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd, a Govt of Karnataka undertaking, is the only authorised manufacturer of indelible ink for the EC. Managing Director, Mysore Paints, said that the company has received an order for 26 lakh phials of 10cc each from the poll panel**

customers exchanging defunct currency notes to check suspicious deposits. Grappling with the unending queues and frayed tempers in banks and to check operation of syndicates after the note ban, the government had introduced the system of marking customers exchanging defunct currency notes with indelible ink.

## Centre enhances VIP cover of UP Dy CMs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has sanctioned an upgraded and fresh VIP security cover to the two Deputy Chief Ministers of the BJP-led Government in Uttar Pradesh in view of possible threats to them during the ongoing Lok Sabha polls, officials said.

They said while the existing central paramilitary commandos contingent of Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya has been enhanced to an all-India level, another Deputy CM of the State, Dinesh Sharma, has been accorded a similar paraphernalia, afresh.



The "Y+" cover has about 3-4 commands who are armed with sophisticated rifles like AK-47s and possess mobile armour gaddets.

The two UP politicians are expected to traverse the length and breadth of the country during the Lok Sabha polls, that will see its first polling day on April 11, and hence the cover has been sanctioned, they said.

A report prepared by central security agencies formed the basis of this security

upgrade for the two, they said. The two were appointed Deputy CMs of the Uttar Pradesh in 2017 when BJP came to power and Yogi Adityanath was made the CM. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has a dedicated VIP security wing and it guards as many as 76 personalities in the country including BJP president Amit Shah.

The force has four battalions, comprising over 4,000 personnel, for this task.

## Taxmen told to step up vigilance to curb illegal flow of currency, liquor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has asked its field officers to step up vigilance in order to check illegal movement of currency, liquor and gold in the run up to general elections beginning April 11.

It has also asked the tax officers to share intelligence and seizure information with other Government agencies on real-time basis. The CBIC's instructions follow a multi-departmental meeting called by the Election Commission earlier in the month on sharing of intelligence with a view to checking illegal activities.

In its instructions, the CBIC said, "All out efforts should be made to detect and seize illicit currency, liquor, gold, FICN (Fake Indian Currency Note), NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances), and other contraband items. Strict vigil should be maintained on domestic as well as cross border movement of vehicles, trains, and private chartered flights as well as commercial flights."

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General elections for the 17th Lok Sabha will be held in seven phases beginning April 11 and will continue till May 19. Counting of votes will take place on May 23.

It said the field formations and officers should be duly sensitised to step up the preventive vigilance mechanism to rule out illicit movement of currency and commodities and conduct effective checking and surveillance during the election period to curb illegal activities.

"Intelligence units under your jurisdiction may be directed to gather information and develop intelligence to effectively accomplish this task. Mobile squads and special teams may be constituted to target sensitive areas, commodities and suspicious entities," the CBIC said, adding that information should be shared with the board on a daily basis.

It said coordinated efforts on the part of different government agencies is required and hence it is imperative that intelligence and detection/seizure information be shared with other agencies on a real-time basis. Close coordination has to be maintained with election authorities as well, it added.

The EC, in its multi-departmental meeting had underlined the need for greater coordination among different Government agencies to keep a tab on expenditure incurred by candidates and political parties.

## BJP announces names of nine more Lok Sabha candidates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday released a list of its nine more Lok Sabha election candidates, taking the total number of names announced by it to 306. Six candidates are for Chhattisgarh and one each for Meghalaya, Maharashtra and Telangana. The party had earlier announced that none of its nine sitting Lok Sabha members from Chhattisgarh will be fielded in the polls, a move aimed at any perceived anti-incumbency they may have after the saffron party suffered a big defeat to the Congress in the assembly polls.

Putting to rest speculation on whether former Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh will be fielded from his home constituency Rajnandgaon or not, the BJP named Santosh Pandey its candidate from the seat.

It has fielded Jyoti Nand Dube from Bilaspur, Vijay Bahgul from Durg and Sunil Soni from Raipur in the State.

## CPI fields Kanhaiya from Begusarai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former JNU students' union leader Kanhaiya Kumar will contest from Begusarai Lok Sabha seat in Bihar as the CPI nominee. Begusarai has been Left stronghold for decades, but the RJD-led Opposition alliance refused to accommodate CPI in the mahagathbandhan.

"Kanhaiya Kumar will be our candidate from Begusarai seat. CPI(ML) has pledged their support to us too," senior CPI leader D Raja said. Candidates for two more seats are yet to be finalized by the central leadership, he added.

As part of the seat-sharing pact of the mahagathbandhan, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation (CPI-ML), the biggest Left party in Bihar, got one seat from the Rashtriya Janata Dal's (RJD) share of 20.

In Begusarai, Kumar will be pitted against the BJP's Giriraj Singh.

An influential upper caste Bhumihar leader, the Union minister has been shifted from his Nawada seat. The mahagathbandhan is yet to announce its candidate, but there is speculation that the



JNU Students Union former president Kanhaiya Kumar addresses a Press conference ahead of Lok Sabha Election 2019 in Patna on Sunday

RJD will repeat Tanveer Hasan as its nominee.

The presence of Kanhaiya will give nightmare to Giriraj Singh who would have to ensure that firebrand student leader, who has been visiting

this constituency for the last one year, does not cut into the Bhumihar vote bank. Both Kanhaiya and Giriraj belong to the same Bhumihar caste.

Kumar came into limelight after the 2016 Jawaharlal

## India cut TB deaths among HIV+ people by 84% ahead of target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India achieved 84 per cent reduction in tuberculosis (TB) deaths among people living with HIV by 2017, three years ahead of the target, said a report by The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

A report released last week showed that India is among the five low or middle income countries — Eritrea (83 per cent), Djibouti (78 per cent), Malawi (78 per cent) and Togo (75 per cent) — that achieved or exceeded the target of a 75 per cent reduction in TB deaths among people living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), by 2017, three years ahead of the 2020 target.

According to the World Health Organisation, globally, TB deaths among people living with HIV have fallen by 42 per cent since 2010, from 5,20,000 down to 3,00,000 in 2017.

"TB should be a disease of the past. It has been treatable and preventable for decades. Years of neglecting the rights of the world's poor to basic health care, food and shelter have let TB take hold and allowed resistance to build," Michel Sidibe, Executive Director of UNAIDS, said in a statement.

TB is the top infectious killer worldwide, claiming around 4,400 lives a day.

It also remains the leading cause of death among people living with HIV, causing one in three AIDS-related deaths. In



According to the World Health Organisation, globally, TB deaths among people living with HIV have fallen by 42 per cent since 2010, from 5,20,000 down to 3,00,000 in 2017.

2017, 1.6 million people died from TB, including around three lakh people living with HIV.

People living with HIV are especially at risk. There is still a chance for many countries to meet the target, but we have to act now if we are to end TB and AIDS," Sidibe said.

The report also showed that between 2010 and 2017, in around 40 countries the number of TB deaths among people living with HIV rose.

Integrating TB and HIV

services, using community-based approaches to find, diagnose and treat the missing cases can help countries reduce the death rates, the UN health body suggested.

Meanwhile, Union Health Secretary of India, Preeti Sudan at an event here stressed on the importance of more sensitive and responsive doctors, paramedics, frontline health workers and community partners, while dealing with TB patients.

According to the Ministry, India is now closest ever to covering all TB cases with 21.5 lakh new TB patients notified in 2018. With the aim of universal access to free diagnostics and treatment services, path breaking policy changes have been introduced; universal

drug susceptibility testing has been rolled out and shorter and newer treatment regimen has been expanded countrywide.

"India is moving towards an injection free regimen. Private sector engagement has been elevated as one of the highest priorities with strengthened regulatory measures, collaborative incentives and scale up of successful Patient Provider Support Agency (PPSA) interventions which led to a 35% increase in TB notification from the private sector. The Nikshay Poshan Yojana has benefited 15 lakh TB patients for nutrition support with Rs. 240 cores disbursed as DBT since April 2018," said the Ministry in a statement.

Nehru University sedition controversy.

The student leader, accused of raising anti-India slogans on the varsity campus with nine others, has been charged with sedition by the Delhi Police.

PAPER WITH PASSION

# India firm on terror

Boycotting Pak National Day and banning JKLF show the government's 'zero tolerance' template is here to stay



With its boycott of the Pakistan National Day celebrations in Delhi, on the ground that the Hurriyat leaders were invited there, the government has sent out a strong message that its security paradigm with our western neighbour was not just a Pulwama-specific counter-measure but had been reset for all time to come. And with its ban on the separatist outfit Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), the Government reminded that there would be "zero tolerance" to the terror machinery of its promoters in the Valley. So though past invita-

tions to the Hurriyat have gone unchallenged diplomatically, henceforth any attempt by the Pakistan High Commission or Pakistan's leadership to engage with its leaders will not be overlooked. Its terse message came on a day when militants killed a 12-year-old boy whom they held hostage to instill fear among locals and disorient them further. India's stand is loud and clear, that its single-minded pursuit now would be to go after the terrorist networks hosted by Pakistan, take demonstrable action with on-ground proof and get diplomatic support from around the world and the region, which are equally afflicted with this brand of proxy warfare. It also made known that it had not been cowed down by China's technical hold on the UN proposal to designate Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. Instead, it would flush out threats as they emerged, now that it has an operational template post-Balakot strikes, one that doesn't challenge the nuclear threshold and lies low on the escalation pyramid. Of course, in keeping with the goodwill that India has earned in graduating its fight against terror to a global mission, Prime Minister Modi showed that he was keeping diplomacy alive by sending a congratulatory message to his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan on the latter's National Day, saying it was time that people of the sub-continent "work together... in an atmosphere free of terror and violence." While driving home the point of terror subtly, he made sure that Khan would not walk away with the optics of making all the right noises, which he attempted duplicitously during Balakot and opening of the Kartarpur corridor. Khan, too, didn't lie and seeing that the message was not tweeted by Modi, he let the world know and showed he was big-hearted enough to share the good wishes from a neighbour. But not before playing the same theme song of resuming dialogue to "resolve all issues, especially the central issue of Kashmir." In other words, there was no overture of resolving terrorism before talks, apart from the cosmetic crackdown on some terrorist organisations to avoid being blacklisted by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Pakistan must realise that its intransigence and coercion won't work anymore before India's monolithic response and determined self-preservation efforts against exported terror. For while it works for Pakistan to keep terrorism alive and festering, India is in no mood to be a victim and has now adopted a result-oriented, muscular approach.

There can be no dramatic change in Pakistan's policy of nurturing a terror factory which helps it keep its bargaining chip in the region. Then there is China, its all-weather friend, which humours it for its own sustenance as an economic imperialist in the region courtesy the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and immunity from *jihadi* terror in its Muslim-majority provinces. So it sent the People's Liberation Army Air Force Bayi Aerobatic team to the National Day celebrations to help Pakistan avoid international embarrassment at a time when India clearly has the tide of opinion in its favour post-Pulwama. And in Delhi, with most diplomats thinning out following India's boycott, the Chinese embassy got its own personnel as "guests." However, post-Pulwama, even China cannot justify its selfish interests in the face of world censure on terror. And it wants to dehyphenate its economic interests in India from diplomacy, failing yet again to get Delhi on board for its transnational Belt and Road Initiative. It hasn't told Pakistan yet its status on the technical hold on Azhar but is gauging what it would lose if it allows it to lapse. India has forced a new scenario post-Pulwama. Question is to what extent will it impact its two neighbours to come out with an evolved response than stereotypes.

# Batting for the BJP

Gambhir joins a long line of Indian cricketers who took up politics but rarely have the biggest names followed suit



The 'will he, won't he' drama surrounding Gautam Gambhir and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) finally came to a conclusion with the former Indian cricket opener joining the saffron party formally. While Gambhir has not commented on whether he will stand for the elections or not, it is almost certain that he took the jump after being assured of a Lok Sabha ticket, most likely from Delhi, the State he represented in cricket. Several Indian cricketers and sports persons have taken the plunge into politics, notably BJP rebel and member of the 1983 World Cup winning team Kirti Azad and Punjab Minister Navjot Singh Sidhu but despite his undoubted success, Gambhir's mentor from Delhi and superstar Virender Sehwag, who was also being chased by the BJP, gave politics a pass. It is strange that the biggest superstars of Indian cricket over the past three decades have never formally entered politics. While Sachin Tendulkar did join as a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, he did so as an apolitical appointment and his performance as a legislator left much to be desired. Others like Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev, Rahul Dravid and despite the speculation, Saurav Ganguly, have all eschewed politics. Many of them rightly fear that their legendary cricket careers will be coloured by party ideologies and while Ganguly has entered cricket administration and Dravid the coaching set-up, politics is not their thing even though both of them would win their first elections handily.

There is a common joke doing the rounds in Chennai, where Tamil voters are looking for another iconic leader, that Mahendra Singh Dhoni will win by a landslide given his massive popularity in the southern metropolis and State where he captains the local Indian Premier League team. This is not a wrong conclusion, and across the world popular sports persons have instant political recognition. But few have made the shift from sports to politics successfully as many sports persons jump into politics in a hurry and without planning out either their political message or their ambitions. One hopes that Gambhir is able to avoid those pitfalls and has a proper vision for his constituents if he gets nominated for a Lok Sabha seat. Fame and fortune might bring you recognition but it doesn't assure political success. The field of politics is extremely different from the sports field.

ABHIJIT BHATTACHARYYA

If I remember rightly, it was Thursday, March 25, 1971, and my MA (History) final exam was round the corner. We in India then had the audible, omnipresent, omnipresent and ubiquitous *All India Radio* but no electronic vision. Hence, hearing the evening radio news and reading the morning newspaper were my childhood addictions, exam or no exam. My father — an extraordinary scholar of income tax law, English, Bengali and Sanskrit languages, Astrology (including charting a horoscope) and Economics, and a celebrity senior civil servant of the federal Government of India, who was originally born in and hailed from 2 Toynbee Circular Road, Tikatoli, Dhaka, (then East Pakistan) — was not the type to disturb his son for radio news during exam season. That day I, too, seemed to have something else in mind for emperor Ashoka and Buddhism as a possible question for my paper.

Nevertheless, there suddenly came a stentorian voice from our C-II 17 Wellesley Road, New Delhi — "110003 radio room: Come immediately" was the two-word command. Usually serene, serious yet ever-smiling, my father suddenly lit upon hearing the *All India Radio* news that the charismatic Bengali leader, widely respected and revered as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, had given a clarion call to the people of (then) East Pakistan, firing the first salvo at the West Pakistani Punjabi-speaking military junta from Dhaka's Ramna Maidan: "*Aamigo share shakti koto zamang re toma daboyga maadita parmanon* (You oppressive rulers, you will never be able to suppress we seven-and-a-half crore Bengali people)." We instantly felt the electrifying effect and potential tremor, almost after 24 years of Partition days, in the "radio room" of the Hindu Bengali refugee in Luttwens zone of New Delhi.

Thereafter, things moved at a high speed. Owing to his professionalism, probity and spottless past, my father was one of the two Bengali-speaking senior civil servants, whose residence was identified by the Government of India as an "informal meeting point, should the need have arisen. My MA exam ended on Saturday, May 15, 1971, and results were out on Monday, July 05, 1971. I was happy with my result but was happier owing to the fast unfolding scenario of a possible emancipation of an enlightened and inherently simple Bengali-speaking people with whom we were so close in heart, mind and thought and shared history, geography, culture, language and tradition.

Soon, however, came Wednesday, August 18, 1971, the appointed date for an "informal meeting," closely coordinated by Shri Ashok Ray, the then Joint Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, and other organisations of the State. Commencing at 5.30 pm and ending at around midnight, it was a party, a reunion of sorts, high on feeling and emotion, love, tears of joy, passion, fraternity and feasting. It was a gathering of 150 people of whom at least 80 were from the land of

# Lessons from memory

It is worthwhile to recall an unforgettable side view of the moving procession of history, resulting in the crumbling of the old order and the birth of a new nation in our vicinity



Bangabandhu, including Janab Tajudin Ahmed. Half of them had escaped, God only knew how. At least two families had driven down in their 'Made in Japan' Nissan and Toyota cars, which were a rare commodity in India of 1971.

The outcome of the meeting was essentially a commitment to do everything necessary. The Government and the people of India were one with the Bengalis under Bangabandhu. All present in the meeting had the same goal, in different ways, irrespective of their nationality and ethnicity. I vividly recall one spontaneous and repeated slogan, "*Joy Bangla*", reverberating through the hot, humid night of that August day in 1971.

Two more meetings subsequently took place in two different places in Delhi, which I could not attend owing to my preparation for competitive exams. As things were heating up, I travelled to spend the winter with my maternal aunts in Asansol and Calcutta (as it was known then). My stay in Asansol lasted for five days as war broke out on Friday, December 3, 1971. I took a train the next day, December 4, 1971, for Calcutta. The three-hour journey was an experience by itself as the train moved with all lights off in the chair car. Howrah station was pitch dark but packed

with passengers, police and Railway personnel. Home guards were extra vigilant, navigating all and sundry and the half-an-hour road to Alipore residence of my aunt took two hours like a Delhi-Calcutta flight as I reached at 11 pm. The following day I dived with my frantic attempt to catch up with Major General Bishwa Nath Sirkar (whom I had known before) in Fort William, Headquarters of the Eastern Army Command. Maj General Sirkar, a Second World War veteran, who saw action on several fronts, was an armoured corps officer par excellence (belonging to Central India Horse). Being a strict disciplinarian, with frugal habits and exemplary probity, he never sought publicity and was never flashy. The Major General was handpicked overnight (rather plucked) by Army Chief Sam Manekshaw and transferred from the post of Military Secretary to a newly-created post in the Eastern Command Calcutta, exclusively for cooperation with the Mukti Bahini. Consequently, whereas the world today knows who did what in 1971, hardly anyone can either remember or recall his invaluable contribution to/in the liberation movement of Bengalis in the East and the role he played in the actual combat of the

14-day war. After the 1971 war, Sirkar became Lieutenant General but resigned after a serious difference of opinion with the then Defence Minister of India. He had several years of service left at the time of his premature departure. I remain eternally grateful to that great soldier and noble soul for helping me to "see the front" for two days after Sunday, December 12, 1971, when the writings were already on the wall. After a resounding firing to deter me from "seeing is believing", the gentleman in the General relented and "put me on" to Corps II, operating from Krishnanagar. The rest, as they say, is history. At the age of 23, I had a remarkable, unforgettable side view of the moving procession of history, resulting in the crumbling of the old (disorder) and the birth of a new nation, not in the distant horizon but in our vicinity. Between 1947 and 1971 came alive two nations: The first under bondage; the second as an uncaged bird with the unrestricted horizon of thought and action as its domain.

(The writer is a former college lecturer and civil servant. Now a researcher, columnist, alumnus of National Defence College of India, advocate, Delhi High Court and Supreme Court and author)

# SOUND BITE

Goons of Hitler used to beat and kill innocent people. Later, police used to file complaints against the victims. *Modiji* is also doing the same.



Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal

I was shocked to find my name on the poster of PM Narendra Modi. I have not written any songs for it.



Lyricalist —Javed Akhtar

China has to think what signal it is sending to the world by putting a hold in the UN on a proposal to list Masood Azhar as a global terrorist.



Former foreign secretary —S Jaishankar

If Rahul Gandhi is a *Shiva avatar*, then he should be given poison, then I will worship him.



BJP MLA —Kamal Patel

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Fake news menace

Sir — This refers to the article, "Credibility at stake" (March 23) by Ajoy Kumar. The Election Commission (EC) move to put in place measures to curb fake news and misinformation on social media platforms sounds very nice but implementation of these guidelines still remains a task at hand.

Further, the EC has not made clarifications about specific provisions for those who violate the rules. It is known, with elections approaching, the menace of fake news is at an all-time high. In fact, it poses grave challenges to the democratic matrix of a country. Certainly, with the general elections approaching, this issue needs immediate attention and a permanent solution, too.

We must learn from international experiences. For instance, in 2017, the German Parliament had voted in favour of a law that included the provision to levy fines of up to 50 million Euros from popular social media companies such as Facebook and YouTube if they fail to remove hateful posts in a time-bound

## Grounding of Boeing is good for people's safety

The international aviation industry is facing a turmoil in the wake of several nations banning the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft. The Lion Air Flight Boeing 610 that crashed into the sea off Jakarta, had a defective Angle of Attack (AoA) sensors, which feed important information to the computer of the plane to stabilise the flight's nose with the wind flow. The software manufacturing the Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS) acting on the AoA.

The March 10 Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 crash that killed 157 people has raised serious questions over the Boeing 737 Max 8 jets. The Ethiopian flight, too, was plagued by a defective AoA and came down within minutes of take-off. The relation between the autopilot and MCAS has been a subject of discussion among aviation experts. It meant the pilots were not fully conversant with the system. Many countries possessing Boeing 737 flights in their fleet have grounded all such planes, India being one among them. Amidst the ban spree, newly produced Boeing Max 737 have been confined to the factories. Few countries have



demand compensation from the Boeing 737 Max company for the losses incurred as a result of the flights being grounded, including SpiceJet of India. Legal action is contemplated by the dead passengers' kith and kin against the Boeing Max. Notwithstanding the huge loss of revenue to Boeing, it is clear that the 737 Max cannot fly unless the flaws are corrected.

Ganapathi Bhat Akola

Her appearance in a *burqa* to express solidarity with the beleaguered Muslims sent a stern message that her heart beat for all, irrespective of their religion and culture. We, in this country, can't help but compare her *fiqh* to that of our rulers after the Hyderabad attack in Pulwama.

Haridasan Rajan Kozhikode

## Shun archaic system

Sir — Most political parties have announced their first list of candidates for the upcoming elections. The Election Commission (EC) has over the years been successful in bringing out effective and necessary electoral reforms. However, as far as nomination and withdrawal of candidates go, the EC still accepts submissions in paper form only. Despite digitalisation having replaced many paper-based formalities, it is ironic that the EC still adopts the archaic paper-based system to accept nominations from election candidates.

Varun SD Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Why we love Ardern

Sir — This refers to the article, "Mass murder most foul" (March 21) by Hiranmay Karlekar. A city named after the apostle of love, the merciful Jesus Christ, Christchurch, begged for mercy before the 'White supremacist Christian fundamentalist-racists' for minutes that didn't seem to

end. However, New Zealand's immediate response to the March 15 killings was exemplary, particularly the firm, sensitive and compassionate approach displayed by its Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. Ardern exhibited a rare resolve in steady the downcast nation. A visibly upset but resolute and empathetic Ardern wasted no time in reaching out to the minorities and reassure them.

**FIRST COLUMN**

**World's leading demagogue**

Trump has his border wall and anti-Muslim immigration controls. Modi has Muslims both within India's borders and beyond. Erdogan just has New Zealanders to build a constituency



GWYNNE DYER

You can keep your Viktor Orbán, your Benjamin Netanyahu, your pathetic Boris Johnson. As for US President Donald Trump, he's really an icon of democracy, just slightly shop-soiled. The coveted title of World's Leading Demagogue has just gone to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. He may look like an ageing, disappointed post office clerk, passed over for promotion too many times, but he can take an ignorant remark from halfway around the planet and inflate it into an existential threat to Turkey's future. He's desperately trying to rally support for his Justice and Development Party (AK party) in the local elections due at the end of this month, so what better theme than the threat of an invasion by New Zealand?

"Your grandparents came here," he warned the savage New Zealand hordes, "and they returned in caskets. Have no doubt that we will send you back like your grandfathers." Erdogan had already warmed the crowd up by showing them footage of the massacre of New Zealand Muslims in their mosques by Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant, so they cheered that line. He was speaking at a rally commemorating the Ottoman empire's victory over British and allied troops who landed at Gallipoli, 200 km southwest of Istanbul, in 1915. ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand) troops played a big part in that First World War battle, which is one of the founding myths of modern Turkish nationalism.

So Erdogan's audience would not necessarily have giggled when he defiantly warned the evil New Zealanders: "We have been here for a thousand years and will be here until the apocalypse, God willing. You will not turn Istanbul into Constantinople." There he stood, metaphorical sword in hand, turning back the New Zealand neo-Crusaders single-handed, and the world heavyweight title for demagoguery was his. First, a couple of giggling details. Istanbul IS Constantinople; the name hasn't changed. 'Istanbul' is just the Turkish pronunciation of the old Greek popular name for the city, 'Stamboul' (The Turkish language does not like words to start with two consonants).

Second, the Turks have not been here for a thousand years. They conquered the city in 1453, five-hundred-and-some years ago. Before that it was Christian for rather more than a thousand years. But you don't want to get caught up in the details when you're holding a flaming sword.

And third, I have never met anybody in Europe who wants it 'back'. It would be as ridiculous as somebody in the Muslim world wanting Granada or Seville back.

Oh, wait a minute. I have met Muslims who want Granada and Seville back. They force us to be the Islamist persecutor, but there is a quite widespread conviction in the Arab world that the original 7th century conquests, that gave Muslims control of half of the then-Christian world, were legitimate, whereas the 12th century European counter-offensive that tried to take some of them back (the Crusades) was illegitimate aggression. It was really just the ebb and flow of empires, with religion mostly as cover. The Muslims (or at least the Ottoman Turks) were on the offensive again by the 15th century, almost reaching Vienna by 1688. Then the tide turned again and the British empire was almost at the gates of Istanbul in 1915. Nothing to get excited about — and now it's over.

It really is over. Legally, it has not been permissible to change borders by force since the UN Charter was written in 1945, and in fact few have changed. Militarily, modern technologies and methods of political mobilisation have made it ruinously expensive to sustain the long-term occupation of people who do not want to be occupied. So I think it will be hard for New Zealand to reconquer Istanbul even if it wants to. Turkey is safe. But the old tribal brutalities are still there to be pushed, and there are plenty of populist demagogues willing to push them.

Trump has his border wall ('criminal' Mexicans) and his anti-Muslim immigration controls ('terrorist' Muslims). Orban has the Jews (the enemy within Hungary's borders) and Muslim refugees (the enemy without). Narendra Modi, now in election mode, has Muslims both within India's borders (cow-killers) and beyond them (Pakistani nukes and terrorists). And Erdogan just has New Zealanders. Must try harder.

(The writer's new book is *Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work*)

THOSE PARTIES THAT FALSELY CLAIM TO BE DR LOHIA'S FOLLOWERS ARE DESPERATE TO FORM AN OPPORTUNISTIC ALLIANCE WITH THE SAME CONGRESS.

—PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**



THE BJP TRIES TO CO-OPT GANDHI, BHAGAT SINGH, SARDAR PATEL, AMBEDKAR AND LOHIA, BUT FOLLOWS PEOPLE WHO THESE LEADERS OPOSED. —FORMER UTTAR PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER AKHILESH YADAV

**Blazing bastions of India**

Rae Bareilly and Amethi, the home ground of the Congress, have remained high on the agenda for political parties, who continue to field heavyweights to no avail



SAT PAL

Undoubtedly, there are many well-known dynastic bastions in our country but the electoral turf of Rae Bareilly and Amethi have remained the centre of attraction for politically conscious people and the common man alike. Since the State of Uttar Pradesh has been electing a maximum of 80 MPs to the Lower House of Parliament, ie Lok Sabha, the State is being considered of paramount importance. So are the two above stated parliamentary constituencies.

Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency has been a stronghold of the Congress, which won 16 out of the 19 elections here, including two bypolls since 1952, the first general election in the country. The constituency came into limelight as Congress candidate Feroze Gandhi, husband of Indira Gandhi and son-in-law of the first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, emerged victorious twice in 1952 and 1958. In due course, he came to be known as the best parliamentarian. He passed away on September 8, 1960, but the constituency remained with the Congress till the 1971 general election and thereafter, too, with a few breaks.

Feroze's wife and the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi selected this constituency to become an elected member of Lok Sabha after her elevation to the highest executive post of the country. She first contested in 1967 and then in 1971. By opting for this constituency, she converted it to a prized bastion which continues to be the same. Indira's relatives Arun Nehru and Sheila Kaul won the seat, both twice, a confidante and family friend Satish Sharma once and daughter-in-law Sonia Gandhi triumphed four times in 2004, 2006 bypoll, 2009 and the 2014 general election. This performance sheet, of course, suffices to substantiate the constituency as a proven dynastic bastion.

It is known to most politically conscious people that socialist leader Raj Narain kicked horns with Indira Gandhi in Rae Bareilly constituency in 1971 and 1977 but the real surprising candidate was Gwalior's Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia, who challenged Indira Gandhi from this constituency in the 1980 general election. As the Janata Party nominee, she was defeated by a margin of 1,73,654 votes. This was the only loss faced by the Rajmata whereas she won all elections of Lok Sabha and Assembly in her State of Madhya Pradesh as Jana Sangh and earlier a Congress candidate. People in Rae Bareilly believed that the Rajmata was prompted to contest against Indira Gandhi to take revenge of the ill-treatment meted out to her in jail during Emergency.

Raj Narain was first elected as the candidate of the then grand alliance of Jana Sangh, Lok Dal, Congress Organisation and Samyukt Socialist Party to engage Indira Gandhi in her comfort zone and create a difficult situation for her. Raj Narain lost with a margin of 1,12,810 votes in 1971 and challenged her election in the Allahabad High Court, accusing her of misuse of official machinery. Justice Jagmohanlal Sinha unseated Indira Gandhi and barred her from holding any post and contest any elec-



tion for a period of six years on June 24, 1975, which resulted in the imposition of internal emergency in the country on June 26, 1975 and a crackdown against almost all Opposition leaders, who were put behind bars.

This so-called unprecedented Constitutional misuse brought all Opposition leaders on a single platform. After the Emergency by Indira Gandhi was lifted on March 21, 1977, the general elections were a contest between the Congress, led by Indira Gandhi and the newly-formed amalgamation of all parties, Janata Party, headed by Morarji Desai and inspired by Loknayak Jai Prakash Narayan. The results brought a new regime at the Centre. The Janata Party secured an absolute majority to unseat the Indira-led Congress, embarrassing her as it got the minimum ever seats in the Lok Sabha.

Raj Narain defeated her with a margin of 55,202 votes and he became the Union Health Minister though the Government could not last long due to factionalism and differences. The 1977 general election results highlighted the division of the regional narrative, the Janata Party dominant in the north, the Congress winning seats in the south. Of course, the chunky vote in the north led to the formation of the first non-Congress Government at the Centre.

Another surprising candidate, fielded by the Lok Dal in 1984 in this constituency, was the widow of Bhimrao Ambedkar, his second wife Savita, a Saraswati Brahmin. She had completed her MBBS in 1937 and married Ambedkar on April 15, 1948. Both Ambedkar and Savita converted to Buddhism at Nagpur on April 14, 1956. The couple lived in Delhi at Alipur Road. She used to take care of the ailing Ambedkar, who expired on December

6, 1956. After his death, Savita, known as Maishab, had been feeling lonely, hence she shifted to a farmhouse in Mehrauli.

The Congress was keen to send her to Rajya Sabha but it is learned that she declined the offer. She, however, accepted Bharat Ratna on behalf of her late husband on April 14, 1990, from President R Venkatraman. It is yet to be understood how and why she agreed to contest an election from Rae Bareilly as she had earlier declined an offer for Rajya Sabha membership. But Savita Ambedkar was defeated by Arun Nehru with a margin of 2,57,553 votes.

As for the Amethi parliamentary constituency, close to Rai Bareilly, it came into existence in 1967 and remained a stronghold of the Congress as the party emerged victorious in 13 parliamentary elections out of 15, including two bypolls since 1967. It is still known as a pocketborough of the party nurtured by the Gandhis. It has been represented by Sanjay Gandhi once, Rajiv Gandhi four times, Sonia Gandhi once, Satish Sharma, a family friend of Rajiv Gandhi, twice and Rahul Gandhi thrice whereas Janata Dal nominee Ravinder Pratap Singh wrested this seat in 1977 and Sanjay Singh, coming from royal family and a BJP nominee, won from this seat in 1998 though he is at present with the Congress. Hence, this constituency is also a dynastic bastion.

In this constituency, two surprising candidates contested against Congress nominees in the 1984 and 1989 Lok Sabha elections. Indira Gandhi's daughter-in-law, Maneka Gandhi, contested as an independent candidate against the oldest son of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi in 1984. During election campaign, she was targeted for being a Sikh and a number of slogans were coined with vicious

intention. She lost with a margin of 3,08,878 votes. She was never defeated again in her electoral ventures and has been chosen seven times to the Lok Sabha from Pilibhit and Aonla as an Independent, Janata Dal and BJP candidate from 1989 to the 2014 parliamentary elections. Maneka continued to be a Minister in the Cabinet of three Prime Ministers. She formed Sanjay Vichar Manch immediately after the accidental death of her husband Sanjay Gandhi, which secured victories in Andhra Pradesh.

Another surprising candidate, Raj Mohan Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and C Rajagopalachari and son of Devidas Gandhi, was fielded by the then Prime Minister VP Singh as Janata Dal candidate against Rajiv Gandhi in this constituency in 1989. Raj Mohan Gandhi is an intellectual, well-educated and a well-known scholar. It is beyond anybody's imagination why a person like him was made a scapegoat. He lost with a margin of 2, 02,132 votes. After 15 years, he was once again offered a ticket by the Aam Aadmi Party to contest from the East Delhi parliamentary constituency in 2014 against BJP nominee Mahesh Giri. He lost with a margin of 1,90,463 votes.

Nobody was sure whether he was a surprising or willing candidate. The only consolation for Raj Mohan Gandhi in politics has been that he served as a Rajya Sabha member during 1990-1992 when VP Singh ruled the country. Despite party affiliations, Rajmohan Gandhi, who had been long associated with the *Hindustan Times*, would have contributed in the interest of the nation had he been given another chance to enter the Rajya Sabha. In the end, men and women of stature were compromised for just a poster value.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

**Silent voter will make the right choice**

The 2019 Lok Sabha election is not bereft of issues. Economic reforms, unemployment and farm crisis feature sharply this poll season. Only a change in the political scenario can make a difference. The churning will help reshape the future



SHIVAJI SARKAR

It's not an easy election for the voters, irrespective of who the parties give or deny tickets to even as voters toy between emotions and realities. They are wondering whether they should vote for emotions or keep in mind the problems faced by them. The choice is not easy to make. On the one hand, India's economic data is puzzling, on the other, preferences of the electorate are not static. Issues are there at hand but the Opposition is unable to articulate them and the ruling combine is carrying out a vociferous campaign. True, there is a dynamic person in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who defies all Opposition logic, but there is also an emerging leadership, not so much in the *mahagathbandhan* — a

grand alliance of regional parties — but in the gradual rise of the Congress and its two leaders, Priyanka Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, who are the new soft faces of politics. The duo is trying to touch the core voter base with old linkages of region, caste and communities.

They are nudging the voters to rethink and have a look at financial, job and other such statistics. They are marching towards a gradual rise of votes for their party across the country. The Congress now has a Government or is part of the Government in five States — Punjab, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh — with 21 per cent of the population, up from two States with seven per cent population in 2017.

Meanwhile, the BJP has been watching every step of the Congress. They feel that the grand old party has only to gain in major States like Uttar Pradesh, an old Congress bastion, where it still has sympathisers. There is also an apprehension that Priyanka's "Ganga yatra" may impact the voters' minds as she embraces outsiders.

Figures, however, are telling and much of it have come from draft reports of parliamentary committees, NSSO and CAG. On issues of defence, too, the handling of the situation in the parlia-

mentary committee has not been deft. The Government is careful to not fall into the trap. The CAG pointed out to huge off-budget financing of about ₹4 lakh crore in 2016-17. It said it could pose a fiscal risk in the long term in case the entity that raises the funds fails to meet debt servicing. The jobs data row has led to post statisticians quitting their job. As official figures of NSSO, considered reliable, were not available, the not-so-firm figures of a private organisation, CMIE, got credence. The CMIE said that around 31 million unemployed Indians are seeking jobs, the highest since October 2016.

Then there are also figures of a decline in male (earlier it was female) labour force participation. Data from the NSSO's Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18 shows employed males at 28.6 crore in 2017-18, against 30.4 crore in 2011-12. This indicates that fewer males were employed in 2017-18. This saw a decline even in rural areas.

In India, the unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force. Unemployment rate in India increased to 6.10 per cent in 2018 from 5.52 per cent in 2017. The World Bank reported it in the latest report. Overall, labour force participation dropped in 2017. Such figures are always discomforting for any Government, particularly when elections are around the corner. The Government is now coming out with figures of Mudra loans. However, the banks believe loans are adding to non-performing assets (NPAs) and are reluctant to profit it.

Is there a discontent? Apparently, it is not being noticed. The BJP's charisma is covering it up but this hype can be deceptive as voters remain silent. This does not mean people are not aware of the problems. The cash dole — once a strict no-no for the BJP — of ₹6,000 a year to the farmers is a mixed bag. Farmers from western Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra want that the sugar mills must not sit over their dues of about ₹25,000 crore. The Government should pay it. This they consider is renegeing on the promise of doubling their income. No one, however, denies that the cash dole is a relief post-demonetisation.

So is the Congress connecting with the rural masses? It is trying hard but its worker base is weak as it's reach. It is sending messages and holding on to people's issues and sometimes playing up emotive ones. The cow is holy for the BJP and is not so holy for the Congress, Samajwadi Party or the Bahujan Samaj Party when it comes to Uttar Pradesh. Cow vigilantism and a check on smuggling to Bangladesh have added to the woes of farmers in this State and elsewhere. The Opposition, therefore, silently taking out a campaign to counter *ganu-mita* politics. Castes that used to collect and dispose of the carcasses are refraining from doing it, thus widening social tensions. It is also carrying out an emotional campaign against the BJP, which had promised to protect the cow. Further, rice-growing areas are facing another danger. As the rupee appreciates and the Government takes credit for it, the move has cost us rice exports. Rising prices are affecting the volume of Indian trade in Africa. All of this points to an all-out impending battle, the churning of which will help reshape the future.



**VOTE MARCH: A FORCE FOR GOOD**

The June 2016 referendum was not meant to be a full stop in a conversation about politics in Britain. The People's Vote march will show that a higher ideal of democracy exists — that everyone can participate in shaping their life. Like the online petition to revoke Article 50 and cancel Brexit, the march will demonstrate that May cannot defeat the public; that voters have a will and opinions of their own. (The Guardian editorial)

(The writer is a senior journalist)

BJP-SHIV SENA LAUNCHES JOINT CAMPAIGN

It is not 56-party grand alliance but a 56-inch chest that is needed to govern country: Maha CM Devendra Fadnavis



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Shiv Sena Chief Uddhav Thackeray during a rally in Kolhapur on Sunday

It is not 56-party grand alliance but a 56-inch chest that is needed to govern country: Maha CM Devendra Fadnavis

Minister or a Prime Minister. BJP and Shiv Sena are ideologically aligned parties. We are proud that we are Hindutva parties. Our Hindutva is not a narrow ideology. Our Hindutva transcends all barriers region, language etc. Ours is an alliance that takes along all people who love this country," the Chief Minister said.

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It is not for becoming either a Chief Minister or a Prime Minister. BJP and Shiv Sena are ideologically aligned parties. We are proud that we are Hindutva parties. Our Hindutva is not a narrow ideology. Our Hindutva transcends all barriers region, language etc. Ours is an alliance that takes along all people who love this country

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS

card of governance in the state for four and a half years. You will get to see that we have accomplished during the last four and a half years more than what you could do during year-15 year rule.

Slamming the Opposition parties for demanding proof of casualties in the IAF's air strikes on terror camps in Pakistan, Fadnavis said: "The Opposition parties have no concern for our defence forces. They have concern for Pakistan.... Our IAF diminished the terror camps in Pakistan. Unlike in the past, it is our political leadership at the Centre that gave a go-ahead to our defence forces to carry out air attack on the terror camps in Pakistan."

Mamata's nephew attacks BJP for 'vendetta politics'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Tinamoon Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee on Sunday hit strongly back at the BJP Government for maligning his name by falsely implicating his wife in an alleged gold smuggling case at Netaji Subhas International Airport in Kolkata.



let them show even 2 gram that costs Rs 7,000 in the market I will leave politics," Banerjee said who is also the nephew of Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said asking "is this being done because I am the only person who have filed a suit against BJP president Amit Shah?"

the tele media Banerjee had also filed a police complaint stating how his wife was harassed by the customs authorities at the airport while she was returning from Bangkok.

Jagan a ganja plant in Tulsi garden, says Chandrababu

IANS ■ KADAPA (ANDHRA PRADESH)

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday termed YSR Congress Party chief YS Jaganmohan Reddy a "ganja plant," as the words during campaigning by major contenders for next month's Assembly elections intensified.

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PRIYANKA DOESN'T KNOW MEANING OF CHOWKIDAR

Muzaffarnagar, newly-appointed BJP vice-president Usha Bharti on Sunday hit out Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for the latter's remarks that 'chowkidars' (watchmen) of the saffron party were working only for the rich people. Bharti said Vadra did not know the meaning of 'chowkidar'.



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Minority community upset with Cong leaders: Bishops write to High Command

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Though the Congress had successfully negotiated with the DMK and walked away with nine Lok Sabha seats from where the party would field its candidates for the upcoming elections, the non-inclusion of minority communities in the list has upset the spiritual and community leadership in the State.

Christian community and this has caused heart burning among some sections. Interestingly, the Bishop Council of Tamil Nadu had issued a communique during the 2016 Assembly election asking the laity not to vote for the BJP or the alliance in which the Hindu party was a constituent.

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RJD, Congress announce candidates for five LS seats for 2nd phase polls in Bihar

Patna: The RJD and the Congress, partners in the opposition Grand Alliance, Sunday announced the names of candidates for five Lok Sabha seats going to the second phase of polls in Bihar on April 18.

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YSR Congress president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy addresses an election campaign in Guntur on Sunday

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Modi doesn't need PM's chair, chair needs him, says Maurya

IANS ■ LUCKNOW

Asserting that Narendra Modi remains the first choice for the post of Prime Minister, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said that Modi does not need the chair, but it is the chair that needs him.

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PROBE ORDERED AGAINST CONG CANDIDATE IN ASSAM

Guwahati: An enquiry has been ordered against Congress candidate for Karimganj Lok Sabha constituency, Swarup Das, for alleged forgery of his caste certificate. The Karimganj seat is reserved for Scheduled Caste and will go to polls in the second phase on April 18.

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PM INSPIRES PEOPLE TO VOTE

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday appealed to prominent personalities from different fields to inspire people to vote in the Lok Sabha elections. As part of his '#VoteKar' campaign on Twitter, the Prime Minister urged personalities from the fields of sports, entertainment, and media to create increased voter awareness.

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POST-CHAVAN TAPE ROW

Congress replaces Chandrapur candidate

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After the audio tape controversy involving Maharashtra Congress president Ashok Chavan, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) on Sunday replaced Vinayak Bhangade with Suresh alias Balu Dhanorkar, a former Shiv Sena MLA, as its official candidate from Chandrapur Lok Sabha constituency in eastern Maharashtra.

A day after an audio tape in which Chavan is heard telling a party activist from Chandrapur that he was not getting his due within the party planned resign from his post as the State Congress chief, the AICC apparently took cognisance of the former Chief Minister's grievance and replaced Bhangade with Dhanorkar as the party candidate from Chandrapur.

Dhanorkar, who had been elected as a Shiv Sena MLA from Bhadravati-Warora Assembly constituency, resigned from the Sena and joined the Congress recently in the hope that he would be given a ticket to contest the Lok Sabha polls. He had been lobbying for the Congress ticket.

Bhadrawati-Warora Assembly constituency is one of the Chandrapur Lok Sabha constituency.

However, Bhangade's nomination as a Congress candidate from Chandrapur came as a nasty surprise to Dhanorkar's supporters.

Bhangade's nomination had sparked protests within the local party workers and there was a vociferous clamour for his replacement with Dhanorkar.

An embarrassed Chavan

Bhadrawati-Warora Assembly constituency is one of the Chandrapur Lok Sabha constituency

However, Bhangade's nomination as a Congress candidate from Chandrapur came as a nasty surprise to Dhanorkar's supporters

An embarrassed Chavan had on Saturday dismissed speculation about his impending resignation as the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president, after an audio tape in which he is heard telling a party worker that "No one is listening to me. I am planning to resign" had gone viral in the State

In the mobile conversation, the caller had voiced resentment over the nomination of Vinayak Bhangade as a Congress candidate for the Chandrapur Lok Sabha seat and said that the party cadres were opposed to Bhangade's candidature

had on Saturday dismissed speculation about his impending resignation as the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee president, after an audio tape in which he is heard telling a party worker that "No one is listening to me. I am planning to resign" had gone viral in the State

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Chavan had suggested to the caller that he should speak to Mukul Wasik, who was "calling the shots" in the selection of candidates for the state. "But Mukul Wasik is no one in front of you," the caller had said

At one stage, Chavan was heard saying, "I have also informed the party. Nobody is listening to me. I am planning

Ex-Sena MLA Dhanorkar is new candidate, Chavan re-nominated as candidate from Nanded

Chavan, who was incidentally one of the two Congress candidates (out of 26 candidates) elected to Lok Sabha in 2014 polls from Maharashtra in the face of a fierce Modi wave, has been wanting that his wife Ameeta to contest from his home constituency of Nanded in Maharashtra region. Ameeta Chavan had won the Bhokhar seat in Nanded district in the 2014 Assembly polls.

However, the Congress — in its list released on Saturday night — named Chavan as its candidate from Nanded — a nomination that came as a surprise to the former CM.

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

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

In a related development, the Congress on Sunday named four Lok Sabha candidates for eastern Maharashtra — Hridayat Patel (Akola), Kishor Uttamrao Gajbihiye (Ramtet-SC), Suresh Dhanorkar (in place of Vinayak Bhangade from Chandrapur), Subhash Wankhede (Hingoli).

Chavan, however, admitted that there were certain issues relating to the nomination of a candidate for Chandrapur. "But, it is our internal matter and I would not like to discuss it publicly," he said.

Meanwhile, the Congress has re-nominated Chavan as its candidate from his home Lok Sabha constituency of Nanded in Maharashtra.



Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar, Congress leader and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraaj Chavan, former Sikkim Governor Shrinivas Patil, Republican Party president Jogendra Kawade, Swabhimani Shekari Sanghataha chief Raju Shetti, NCP leader Ramraje Naik Nimbalkar, NCP candidate from Satara Lok Sabha Constituency Udaynaraje Bhoshe being garlanded during the Lok Sabha election campaign rally in Karat, on Sunday

Cong 'banking on lies', might win polls in Pak: Ram Madhav

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

BJP national general secretary Ram Madhav Sunday said the Congress might win an election in Pakistan if it contests from there as the opposition party is "banking on lies" and the neighbouring country.

Addressing a press conference here, Madhav also claimed that the statements of the Congress leaders are retweeted more by the people of Pakistan than their counterparts in India.

"Their comments are more retweeted and publicised by the people of the neighbouring country than our own. The Congress might win an election in Pakistan if it contests from there. This is the condition of our main Opposition party,"



the BJP leader said.

"The Congress does not have any issue to really take on our Government, our leader and our party. It is banking on lies and Pakistan," the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said.

Pointing out that the Congress is fighting a "clueless battle", Madhav said, "Nobody in the country is understanding what it wants to say and in which direction it wants to take the country. The people are also not understanding if the Congress is fighting for India or Pakistan."

Alleging that the Congress leaders are "doubting" the credentials of the Indian Army, the

senior BJP leader said the opposition party was not only questioning the success of the BJP-led government, but also making "derogatory remarks" about the Army.

"When asked about the allegation of former Karnataka chief minister BS Yeddyurappa allegedly paying a bribe of Rs 1,800 crore to top BJP leaders, Madhav said, "It is bogus news...the Congress has no issue today to confront us and it is only banking on lies."

"And when was it distributed? In 2011. Was Congress party sleeping then when they were in government? The slip was accessed from the house of a Congress leader," he added.

"On the contrary, some good cartoons are being made on the Congress. All these negative campaigns of the Congress are useful for making good memes and cartoons in social media. Other than that, there is no impact on the public," he added.

BJP will win Amethi: Goyal

PTI ■ BAREILLY

Railways Minister Piyush Goyal exuded confidence on Sunday that the Bharatiya Janata Party would win the Amethi Lok Sabha seat, which is represented by Congress chief Rahul Gandhi.

"In the past five years, notable work has been done in every sector. The BJP will win more seats as compared to the previous election. The BJP will also win Amethi — the traditional seat of the Congress," Goyal said at the party's vijay sankalp sabha" here.

The Union Minister attacked Gandhi over reports that the Congress leader might also contest from Wayanad in Kerala. "He (Rahul) is running away from UP. Far from UP, he is going to Kerala and will contest the elections from there. Smriti Irani will register a massive win from Amethi," Goyal said.

Priyanka's influence 'bound to grow' in party in long term, says Tharoor

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Though Uttar Pradesh is her 'karm-bhoomi' for now, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's influence in the Congress is "bound to grow" in the long term, party leader Shashi Tharoor said here. Priyanka, 47, was appointed AICC general secretary of Eastern Uttar Pradesh on January 23 this year, marking her formal entry into politics. The party is hoping that the move will boost its prospects in the politically crucial state which sends 80 MPs to Lok Sabha.

"She (Priyanka) is a very impressive lady, who speaks well, speaks with confidence, idiomatic and fluent Hindi. She is very comfortable in public gaze and reminds a lot



of people of her grandmother," Tharoor said when asked about Priyanka Gandhi's formal plunge into politics.

"That's on the very upbeat side. Perhaps more modestly one should say, she is at the moment general secretary for one-half of Uttar Pradesh. And that's going to be her karmabhoomi. "That's where she will

be working in the immediate prospect. But in long term I think her influence in the party is bound to grow and her popularity among the people has already been established," Tharoor told PTI in an exclusive interview.

Priyanka recently launched the party's polls campaign in eastern UP with her three-day 'Ganga yatra' on boat, where she reached out to voters residing along the banks of the holy river.

On the poll alliances of the Congress in various states, Tharoor said it varies from State-to-State. "Each state has got a different logic. We have possible alliance with some parties in some states and are fighting against them in another state," he said. PTI



Union Home Minister and BJP candidate from Lucknow Lok Sabha seat Rajnath Singh being garlanded in Lucknow on Sunday

Treatment meted out to Advani 'shameful', people will give befitting reply: Shatrughan Sinha

PATNA

Actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha, the sitting BJP MP from Patna Sahib who has been denied a ticket by the party this time, has accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of treating party patriarch LK Advani in a "painful" and "shameful" manner.

In a series of tweets on Saturday, Sinha claimed that the BJP's decision to not give ticket to Advani, the sitting MP from Gandhinagar, and to field party president Amit Shah from the seat "has not gone down well" with many people.

"Sirji... It is worrisome, painful and according to some even shameful... That which your people have done was the most expected and awaited... Orchestrating the departure of a

most respected friend, philosopher, guide, father figure and ultimate leader of the party, Shri LK Advani from the political arena/election," Sinha tweeted.

Advani has served as Union Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. He was also the national president of the BJP more than once. He is often credited with helping the party create a national footprint within a decade of its formation through active participation in the Ayodhya movement.

In another tweet, Sinha deplored "the replacement of Mr Advani by none other than the man who is also the president of the party and whose image or personality is no match nor even a patch on him". PTI

Temperatures soar in Kerala, 2 die of suspected sunburn

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

At least two persons have died of suspected sunburn in Kerala in the last two days even as the weathermen have warned that the maximum temperature was likely to be two to three degrees above normal in 11 districts in the next two days.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department, maximum temperature was very likely to be above normal by 2 to 3 degrees celsius in 11 districts, including Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Palakkad and Kannur, till March 26.

A 42-year-old man from nearby Parassala died Sunday, while a 60-year-old man was found in kannur with sun burns. Though there were sunburns on their bodies, only a post-mortem would reveal the actual cause of death, health department sources said.

An RSP worker in Kollam, who was campaigning for sitting MP NK Premachandran, suffered grave injuries during a fire in his house as well as his son's. He was evacuated to nearest field

Strong retaliatory action against Pakistan Army

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a strong 'retaliatory' strike Indian army is learnt to have inflicted heavy casualties and 'flattened' several bunkers and 'strategic structures' of Pakistan army along the line of control in Poonch and Achnoor sectors in the last 24 hours.

Following these punitive strikes tensions escalated further in the region.

In the heavy exchange of fire, an Indian Army jawan also received critical injuries late Saturday evening and later he succumbed in the nearest field hospital in Poonch on Sunday. In the last one week three Indian soldiers have sustained martyrdom in Sunderbani and Poonch sectors.

Ground reports claimed Pakistan army used heavy calibre of weapons and fired rockets to target Indian positions. In response, the Indian Army too inflicted heavy damage and casualties to Pakistan army.

Defence PRO in Jammu, Lt-Col Devender Anand said, "Grenadier Hari Bhakar received grave injuries during Cease Fire Violation on 23 Mar 19 in Poonch Sector. He was evacuated to nearest Field



Hospital for immediate medical treatment but later attained

Martyred jawan's body reaches Rajasthan

PTI ■ JAIPUR

The body of grenadier Hari Bhakar, who was killed in a ceasefire violation along the LoC in Jammu & Kashmir by Pakistani troops, reached here on Sunday and will be taken to his native village in Nagaur by road.

Bhakar was part of the 4 Grenadiers Regiment. The soldier was injured in the cross-border firing around 4 am on Sunday and was immediately taken to the nearest field hospital, where he succumbed to injuries, officials said. His last rites will be performed on Monday. Pakistani forces opened fire on the Shalpur and Kerni areas in Jammu & Kashmir's Poonch district around 5.30 pm on Saturday and it continued intermittently through the night, officials said.

11 TN fishermen held by Sri Lankan Navy

RAMESWARAM

Eleven fishermen from Tamil Nadu have been arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly fishing near Neeuntehuve in the island nation's waters, an official said here on Sunday.

The fishermen, hailing from Rameswaram, have been taken to Karainagar island, located around 20 km from Jaffna, Tamil Nadu Fisheries

Department Assistant Director Yuvaraj said.

Two boats belonging to the fishermen were seized, he said. Sri Lankan Navy personnel have allegedly damaged over 50 fishing nets and seized GPS equipment from them, Yuvaraj added.

The incident forced fishermen in more than 500 boats to return without fishing, the official said.

Reacting to the incident,

the leader of Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) S Ramadoss, who has forged an alliance with the AIADMK-BJP combine to contest the April 18 Lok Sabha polls in Tamil Nadu, said the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government would create a separate ministry for the welfare of fishermen.

"In order to ensure that such incidents (action on

Indian fishermen by Lanka) do not recur and to retrieve the Katchatheevu islet, the NDA will take steps to form a separate ministry for the welfare of the fishermen community," Ramadoss said in a statement.

He urged the central government to raise the matter with Sri Lanka for ensuring the release of the arrested fishermen. PTI

Focus on 'blue economy' will boost growth: V-P

PTI ■ PANAJI

Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday said a focused approach in areas such as minerals and energy from oceans can help India become third largest economy in next 10-15 years.

Addressing scientists at the CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography near here, he said that at the same time, further degradation of marine ecosystems should be prevented.

"I strongly feel that focused approach in some of the areas such as minerals and energy from oceans can make India a global leader and serve our national goals," Naidu said.



Women participate during 'Basant Utsav' celebration in Guwahati on Sunday

# Sebi seeks powers to inspect firms' records

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With an aim to thwart financial frauds, regulator Sebi has sought powers to conduct inspection of books of accounts of listed companies for contravention of any securities law and also to take direct action against the fraudsters.

Besides, Sebi has proposed a heavy penalty for altering, destroying, mutilating, concealing or falsifying records, documents or other tangible objects with an intent to obstruct, impede or influence a legal investigation.

At present, Sebi is empowered to conduct such inspections in case of violations relating to insider trading and fraudulent or unfair trade practices.

However, the regulator has now asked the government that its power to undertake inspection of books at listed companies should be for contravention of any securities laws without limiting it to violations relating to one or two regulations, a senior official said.

The Sebi Act empowers the regulator to conduct inspection of any book, register or other documents and records of any listed company if it has reasonable grounds to believe that the company has been indulging in insider trading or fraudulent and unfair trade practices relating to securities markets.

In its new proposal, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has asked the

Government to broaden this power to all cases where the regulator suspects a violation of any securities law.

Sebi has also proposed that any disgorgement order for recovery of illegal gains should be applicable to all joint actors, without making it conditional on the gains or averted losses of the violators.

In another amendment to the Sebi Act, the regulator has sought to replace the term 'material or non-public information' with 'unpublished price sensitive information' to bring in greater consistency of legal phrases used for insider trading laws.

Also, the penalty for insider or trading violations is currently imposed on those dealing in securities "on the basis" of material or non-public information, which the regulator has suggested changing to "while in possession".

Regarding the additional penalty, Sebi is of the view that there is a need to create an obligation on an individual not to destroy, mutilate, conceal or falsify the records to hamper investigation and therefore all such acts should be treated as 'fraudulent' and actionable under the securities laws.

Such acts would lead to a minimum penalty of Rs 1 lakh, which may extend to Rs 10 crore or three times the amount of profit made from such an act, whichever is higher.

In another proposed amendment, Sebi has said no person should employ or assist in employing any device, scheme or artifice to manipu-

late books of accounts or financial statements of a listed company to directly or indirectly manipulate the share price, or to hide the diversion, siphon off the funds or assets or earnings of a listed firm or a proposed-to-be-listed company.

Sebi is of the view that it should be empowered to take direct action against perpetrators of financial frauds as such acts that have adverse impact on not only the shareholders of the company but also impact the confidence of investors in the securities markets.

The primary responsibility of monitoring or supervision of books of accounts of companies is with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs under the Companies Act. However, Sebi has suggested that it should also be given powers to take direct action in case of fraud committed by manipulating books of accounts or of financial statements at listed companies.

Such acts typically are aimed at manipulating the share price, hiding fund diversions, misutilising the public issue proceeds or siphoning off the proceeds, assets or earnings of a listed company.

The proposed amendment has been made as per a recommendation of the Fair Market Conduct Committee, constituted by the regulator.

Officials said the final decision on the proposed changes would be taken only after taking into account the views of the Finance Ministry and also of the Corporate Affairs Ministry in a few cases.

# Karnataka Govt nixes suspension of Ola cabs licence



PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka Government on Sunday revoked the suspension on mobile application-based taxi aggregator Ola Cabs after it agreed to pay a fine for the operation of bike taxis 'illegally'.

The cabs would resume service from Monday. The State Government had on March 22 suspended the licence of Ola Cabs for the next six months with immediate effect saying that it was running bike taxis without permission.

The suspension was lifted after the executives of Ola Cabs had a detailed discussion with State Chief secretary T M Vijay Bhaskar and other senior officials.

Speaking to PTI, minister for social welfare Priyanka Kharge said, Ola Cabs officials met the officials of state trans-

port department, including the chief secretary, and the issue was sorted out.

To a question when the services would resume, the minister said the suspension has been revoked and the cab operator can resume service from March 25.

Asked why action was not taken against the other bike taxi services, which are similar to Ola Bike, Kharge said, Probably nobody had brought it to the notice of the Government.

Earlier, Kharge had tweeted, "Ola Cabs will run their business as usual from tomorrow. However there is an urgent need for policies to catch up with new technologies and also industries too should work closer with the Government to help evolve policies for innovations."

Ola Cabs refused to comment on the matter.

# FPIs invest ₹38,211 cr in Mar on improved global liquidity



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have poured in a net amount of ₹38,211 crore in the domestic capital markets in March so far, mainly on account of improved global liquidity.

In February, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) had put in a net amount of ₹11,182 crore in the capital markets — both debt and equity.

Analysts attributed the increase in infusion to a shift in stance on monetary policy outlook by various central banks globally.

According to depository data, foreign investors

pumped in a net sum of ₹27,424.18 crore in equities, while the debt market saw a net infusion of ₹10,787.02 crore during March 1-22 — taking the total to ₹38,211.20 crore.

As per Harsh Jain, chief operating officer of Groww, the cooling of US-China trade war and no hike in interest rates by the US Fed has made India attractive to FPIs. Other factors like stable crude oil prices have also helped.

After a shaky start this year, FPIs have made a "confident comeback" into the Indian equity markets, noted Himanshu Srivastava, senior

analyst manager research at Morningstar Investment Adviser India.

In January, the US Fed announced a pause in rate hike, followed by China and European Central Bank providing stimulus for their economy. This bolstered the risk-on sentiments, resulting in foreign funds taking a U-turn and to make their way back into emerging markets like India, Srivastava said.

Improvement in the country's macro outlook as well as expectations of formation of a stable government post elections has improved India's prospects, he added.

# M&A deal value drops 34% to \$1.24 bn in Feb

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The value of merger and acquisition deals in February slumped 34 per cent to \$1.24 billion compared to the year-ago period, according to a report.

Leading consultancy Grant Thornton's report showed that number of M&A transactions last month rose marginally to 44 last month, whereas the same was at 40 in February 2018.

In February last year, the total value of M&A transactions had touched \$1.9 billion. "While February 2019 recorded same number of deals valued and estimated at over \$100 million as witnessed in February 2018, the high valued deals totalling to only \$9.9 billion compared to \$1.5 billion in February 2018," it said.

Pankaj Chopda, Director, Grant Thornton India LLP,

said the shortening of the run-up period to the national elections will only deepen the wait and watch approach in the deal environment in the short term and much is expected post the results of the general elections.

Regarding last month, he noted that M&A transactions were dominated by cross-border transactions as against a mix of cross-border and merger transactions in the same period a year ago.

"The month of February recorded the highest volumes in seven months, demonstrating the strong urge to expand outside local territory surpassing global headwinds," he added.

# US to host Chinese trade delegation

AP ■ WEST PALM BEACH

The US will host a delegation from China led by Vice Premier Liu He early next month, following a trip by US officials to China in an effort to improve trade relations, the White House said on Saturday.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said President Donald Trump is sending US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to Beijing starting next week, joined by deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish and other senior Trump administration officials.

Vice Premier Liu He and other Chinese officials meet with officials in Washington starting April 3, Sanders said.

The trade dispute began last year after the US made several complaints, including that China was using US trade secrets and was forcing companies to give them technology to access its market.

Trump imposed tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese imports, about half what the United States buys from that country. China retaliated with tariffs



on about \$110 billion of US items.

China's commerce minister had previously said Lighthizer and Mnuchin would be in China on Thursday and Friday for the eighth round of trade negotiations.

The scheduled talks suggest the two sides believe they can make at least some progress.

Trump said Thursday at the White House that, "Talks with China are going very well."

Administration officials say they speak with their Chinese counterparts on a nearly daily basis.

Business lobbyists say that a key sticking point is what type of enforcement mechanism will be included in the agree-

ment.

The Trump administration, they say, wants to have the option to impose tariffs on Chinese goods if China doesn't abide by the terms of the pact.

The US also wants China to promise not to retaliate against those tariffs.

Still, business groups say the talks are making progress.

# Distribution, product innovation key drivers for growth: Thomas Cook India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Travel services firm Thomas Cook India is betting big on enhancing distribution with special focus on tier-II and III cities and product innovation to drive growth, a top company official said.

The company currently offers services like foreign exchange, corporate travel, leisure travel, insurance, visa and passport services and e-business.

The firm's strategy includes a two-pronged initiative of enhanced distribution for increased penetration into viable source markets coupled with product innovation to target high potential emerging segments like regional tours, ladies first, theme park holidays and millennials, Thomas Cook India Chairman and MD Madhavan Menon told PTI.

The enhanced distribution is with special focus on tier-II and tier-III cities, he said.

"Technology will continue to drive our initiatives and empower our customers both external and internal..."

Highlighting the importance of small towns and cities as turning points in growth, he said: "Regional India tier-II and III cities and towns are emerging as strong power-drivers in our growth story across our travel and foreign exchange businesses and will continue to form a key focus area to catalyse under-leverage potential."

Besides setting up company-owned branches, foray into such opportune markets will also include the quick turn-around that enables franchisee to establish our presence and catering to local demand, he added.

"Our unique regional tours launched to leverage the high potential regional and tier-II and III markets are seeing strong demand due to inclusions of a local 'son-of-the-soil' Thomas Cook Tour Manager to create guid-

ance/reassurance, local food on tour to add the comfort of home-cooked food, and brochures in local languages," Menon said.

From a foreign exchange business perspective, while the retail segment will be significant for future growth, the company will continue to focus on the increasing card penetration as Indian consumers move towards digital money, he said.

"We also envisage benefits accruing from the progressive turnaround of our international inbound businesses (DMS - Destination Management Specialist companies), domestic and e-business," Menon said.

When asked if the company was looking for more acquisitions going forward, Menon said: "Yes, we have had at least one acquisition a year over the last few years. And while there is no acquisition currently on the table, we are open to exploring opportunities as and when they may arise."

# DoT asks State Govts not to disconnect BSNL, MTNL electricity connections

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecommunications has asked State Governments not to disconnect electricity connections of State-owned BSNL and MTNL on account of pending dues as they are providing strategic services for the upcoming elections, sources said.

BSNL has already cleared 90 per cent of its power dues and is expected to clear the rest in the next 15-20 days.

"A letter from the Department of Telecom has been sent to state chief secretaries requesting them to avoid disruption in MTNL and BSNL electricity connections because it is providing strategic support to state machineries for managing elections," an official told PTI.

When contacted, BSNL Chairman and Managing Director Anupam Shrivastava said, "We have cleared 90 per cent of the dues for electricity

connections. Now around ₹250 crore is left, which will be cleared in next 15-20 days. There were some disconnections that took place but all of them have been restored now."

MTNL Chairman and Managing Director P K Purwar said, "MTNL has no pending electricity dues. All payments are up to date till February-end."

Both BSNL and MTNL were unable to pay salaries to their employees for the month of February.

The Government released pending dues of ₹171 crore to cash-strapped MTNL for paying February salaries while BSNL has cleared salary dues of around ₹850 crore from its internal accruals.

# Malaysia threatens EU fighter jet boycott over palm oil

AFP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Malaysia may retaliate against an EU plan to curb palm oil use by purchasing new fighter jets from China instead of European arms companies, its leader said on Sunday.

The Southeast Asian country is the world's second largest palm oil producer after neighbouring Indonesia, and recently threatened to challenge the bloc's plan to phase out its use in biofuels at the World Trade Organisation.

Both Malaysia and Indonesia have been at loggerheads with EU lawmakers over the crop's cultivation, which has caused rampant deforestation and destruction of wildlife.

In his strongest statement yet on the proposed curbs, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said his country could look elsewhere to upgrade its ageing air force fleet of Russian Mig-29 fighter



planes — in effect abandoning plans to purchase France's Rafale jet or the Eurofighter Typhoon.

"If they keep on taking action against us, we will think of buying airplanes from China or any other country," he was quoted as saying by the official Bernama news agency.

But the premier said he was not "declaring war" on the EU as his country needed goods from the bloc, many members

of which are among Malaysia's top trading partners.

Mahathir's remarks come ahead of a five-day international defence exhibition starting Monday on the resort island of Langkawi, where representatives of global weapons manufacturers have gathered.

Any EU palm oil curbs could seriously hurt farmers who represent an important voter base in both Malaysia and Indonesia.



NEPAL POLICE RESCUES 84 CHILD LABOURERS

Kathmandu: As many as 84 child labourers were rescued by Nepal Police from various parts of Rolpa district, an NGO said here on Sunday. The children aged below 16 were working at brick kilns, hotels and restaurants and transport firms, according to the Rolpa unit of the NGO, Save the Children.

4 BURIED IN SWISS ALPINE AVALANCHE
Bern: Swiss police say four people are missing after being buried in an avalanche high in the Alps in the southwest of the country. Valais canton (State) police said Sunday on Twitter that the four were hit by the morning avalanche at 2,800 meters (9,200 feet) altitude in the Bovernie area near the borders with France and Italy.

BLAST KILLS 8 CHILDREN IN SUDAN
Cairo: Sudanese officials say eight children are killed in an explosion near a military facility where they were searching for scrap metal to resell.

# NZ to hold national remembrance for Christchurch next Friday

AFP ■ CHRISTCHURCH

New Zealand will hold a national remembrance service on March 29 for the victims of the Christchurch mosque massacre and their families, the prime minister's office announced on Sunday. The interfaith service will take place in Christchurch two weeks after an Australian white supremacist shot and killed 50 Muslims who had arrived for Friday prayers at two mosques in the city on March 15.

"The national remembrance service provides an opportunity for Cantabrians (Christchurch-area residents), New Zealanders and people all around the world to come together as one to honour the victims of the terrorist attack," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said in a statement. "In the week since the unprecedented terror attack there has been an outpouring of grief and love in our country. The service will be a chance to once again show that New Zealanders are compassionate, inclusive and diverse, and that we will protect those values."

The slaughter has rocked the normally laid-back country and prompted horror worldwide, heightened by the gunman's cold-blooded livestreaming of the massacre.

Since then, New Zealanders have responded with an outpouring of support for the country's small Muslim community. The attack also left dozens of people injured, some critically. Brenton Tarrant, a 28-year-old Australian, was arrested within minutes of the massacre and has been charged with murder.

# May faces pressure to step down

AP ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Theresa May faces growing pressure from within her own party either to resign or to set a date for stepping down as a way to build support for her Brexit agreement with the European Union, British media reported Sunday.

Senior Conservative Party figures were urging May to recognize her weakened political position and leave the prime minister's post. However, there was no indication from Downing Street a resignation was near.

Some of the party's key supporters of a "hard" Brexit that would see Britain leave the EU even without a withdrawal deal in place planned to meet with May Sunday afternoon at Chequers, the prime minister's country residence.

May thus far has been unable to generate enough support in Parliament for the deal her government and the EU reached late last year.

Lawmakers voted down the Brexit plan twice, and May has raised the possibility of bringing it back a third time if enough legislators appear willing to switch their votes.

Treasury chief Philip Hammond said Sunday that senior party members plotting to remove May were being "self-indulgent." He said a change of leadership would not provide a solution to the U.K.'s political deadlock on Brexit.

"We've got to address the question of what type of Brexit is acceptable to Parliament, what type of way forward Parliament can agree with that we can avoid what would be an economic catastrophe of a no-deal exit and also what would be a very big challenge to confidence in our political system if we didn't exit at all," Hammond said.

Cabinet Office Minister David Lidington, mentioned as a possible caretaker prime minister should May be ousted, said Sunday that talk of a Cabinet

## BREXIT



revolt was far-fetched speculation.

The Cabinet is focused on the best way to get May's withdrawal plan passed in the House of Commons, Lidington said.

The U.K.'s departure from the EU was set to take place on March 29, but the absence of an approved divorce agreement prompted May last week to ask the leaders of the 27 remaining member nations for a postponement. The leaders rejected May's

request to extend the deadline until June 30. Instead, they agreed to delay Brexit until May 22, on the eve of EU Parliament elections, if the prime minister can persuade Parliament to endorse the twice-rejected agreement.

If she is unable to rally support for the withdrawal agreement, the European leaders said Britain only has until April 12 to choose between leaving the EU without a divorce deal and a radically new path, such as revoking the decision to leave the bloc or calling another voter referendum on Brexit.

Parliament may take a series of votes this week to determine what proposals, if any, could command majority support.

Conservative Party legislators urged Freeman Tuesday Saturday night that the U.K. needs a new leader if the Brexit process is to move forward.

"I'm afraid it's all over for the PM. She's done her best. But across the country you can see

the anger. Everyone feels betrayed," Freeman tweeted. "This can't go on. We need a new PM who can reach out and build some sort of coalition for a Plan B."

Under Conservative Party rules, May cannot face a formal leadership challenge from within her own party until December because she survived one three months ago. But she may be persuaded that her position is untenable if Cabinet ministers and other senior party members desert her.

Her bid for fresh support for her withdrawal plan has so far failed to win backing from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party, which usually provides crucial votes for May's minority government.

She also faces pressure from groups demanding a second Brexit referendum. Huge crowds turned out Saturday for an anti-Brexit protest march in London. Organizers claimed more than 1 million people attended.

# Polls close in Thailand's first general election since 2014 coup

AFP ■ BANGKOK

Thailand began the nail-biting wait late on Sunday to see whether the ruling junta will return to power as a civilian government, or if pro-democracy parties can triumph against the odds, as polls closed in the country's first general election since a 2014 coup.

The Election Commission estimated 80 per cent of voters had turned out at schools, temples and government offices across the nation, their enthusiasm fired by years of denied democracy.

Sunday's crunch vote was overshadowed by a cryptic last-minute warning from King Maha Vajiralongkorn to support "good" leaders to prevent "chaos."

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy and the palace is nominally above politics. But the institution retains unsalable powers and is insulated from criticism by a harsh

royal defamation law. The election pits a royalist junta and allies against the election-winning machine of billionaire ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra and an unpredictable wave of millions of first-time voters.

Party politics remains bitter, yet divided despite the junta's pledge to rescue it from a decade-long treadmill of protests and coups.

Politicians across the spectrum fear a stalemate under election rules, written by the junta, which limit the chances of any single party emerging with a comfortable parliamentary majority.

There are 51 million eligible voters and more than seven million first-timers aged 18-25. The day was framed by the palace statement, which added further intrigue to an election that has repeatedly threatened to tip into chaos before a single ballot was cast. It reiterated comments by late king Bhumibol Adulyadej from 1996 calling for people to "support good people to govern the society and control the bad people" to prevent them "creating chaos."

employee Pattrapong Wachivongpat at a Bangkok polling station.

Fears of the potential for foul play ricocheted across social media in a reflection of the lingering mistrust between rival political camps, in a country which last held a general election in 2011.

"That people come to vote because they want change," said Somkid, 64, giving only one name, as he waited outside the headquarters of the Pheu Thai party. "If there is any rigging there will be protests."

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# Pak PM orders probe into forced conversion, marriages of 2 teenage Hindu girls

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday ordered a probe into reports of abduction, forced conversion and underage marriages of two teenage Hindu girls in Sindh province and to take immediate steps for their recovery, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said.

The two girls, Ravena (13) and Reena (15), were allegedly kidnapped by a group of "influential" men from their home in Ghotki district in Sindh on the eve of Holi. Soon after the kidnapping, a video went viral in which the girls were purportedly seen solemnising the Nikah (marriage) of the two girls, triggering a nationwide outrage.

In a separate video, the minor girls can be seen saying that they accepted Islam of their own free will.

In a Twitter post in Urdu on Sunday, Information Minister Chaudhry said that the prime minister has asked the Sindh chief minister to look into reports that the girls in question have been taken to Rahim Yar Khan in Punjab. Chaudhry said the prime minister has also ordered the Sindh and Punjab governments to devise a joint action plan in light of the incident, and to take concrete steps to prevent such incidents from happening again. "The minorities in Pakistan make up the white of our flag and all of our flag's colours are precious to us. Protection of our flag is our duty," he said. On Saturday, Chaudhry said that the government had taken notice of reports of the forced conversion and underage marriages of the two girls. Meanwhile, Minister of State for Inter-Sectoral Affairs (ISAF) Idris has directed IG Police Sindh to probe and submit report on abduction of two Hindu girls at the earliest. PTI

# Macron looks to galvanise EU on China as Xi visits France

AFP ■ PARIS

Chinese President Xi Jinping heads to the French Riviera on Sunday for the final leg of his European tour, as France's Emmanuel Macron looks to forge a united European front to contend with China's global ambitions.

Xi's trip will begin in the Mediterranean city of Nice and a stop in the nearby principality of Monaco before face-to-face talks with Macron.

On Monday, the two leaders head to Paris for the official state visit, marking 55 years since Charles de Gaulle broke ranks with the West to establish diplomatic relations with the Communist nation.

A series of cooperation deals on nuclear power, aerospace and clean energy initiatives, some involving joint contracts, are expected to be signed.

But Xi's visit poses a particular challenge for Macron,

who wants to deepen EU ties with China while also pushing back against Beijing's growing clout.

Europe's distrust of Huawei, which is poised to become the dominant player in next-generation telecom networks worldwide, is emblematic of the increasingly rocky relationship.

"We have a lot to do together in terms of climate action, in terms of multilateralism, but we also have to defend our own interests," Macron said in Brussels on Thursday.

He has lauded the EU's "awakening" to the challenges posed by China, which the bloc now labels a "rival" despite becoming Europe's biggest trading partner.

"The reality is that the world has changed significantly — China is not the country it once was, and we are dealing with a very major partner," a Macron aide said ahead

of Xi's visit.

On Tuesday, Macron and Xi will be joined by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and EU Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker to explore "points of convergence" ahead of an EU-China summit in Brussels next month. Xi arrives in France from Italy, which has angered its EU partners by formally joining China's "new Silk Road" initiative for a string of maritimes, rail and road connections aimed at expanding Chinese trade.

Macron is expected to press his call for increased "reciprocity" regarding market access to China, in particular Beijing's demands that foreign companies hand over vital technological know-how in order to invest in the country.

"If we're going to talk about a new Silk Road, then it must be one that goes in both directions," Finance Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told BFM television on Friday.

# Strong 6.1 magnitude quake jolts eastern Indonesia

AFP ■ JAKARTA

A 6.1-magnitude earthquake hit off the coast of North Maluku province in eastern Indonesia Sunday, US seismologists said, but no tsunami warning was issued.

The quake was 150 kilometers (92 miles) east of the coastal town of Ternate at a depth of 37 kilometres, according to the US Geological Survey. The quake was felt in Ternate but residents were unharmed, a local said.

"I was watching TV when the earthquake suddenly happened, the jolt was quite strong but thankfully it was quick so there was no panic," Ternate resident Budi Nugroho told AFP.

Officials are still assessing the quake's impact but there

were no immediate reports of casualties.

"We are still checking to see if there's any damage," said Rahmat Triyono, head of Indonesian weather agency BKM's earthquake and tsunami division.

Indonesia experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," where tectonic plates collide.

Last September, a 7.5-magnitude quake and a subsequent tsunami in Palu on Sulawesi island killed more than 2,200, with a thousand more declared missing.

On boxing day December 26, 2004, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake struck Aceh province, causing a tsunami and killing more than 170,000 in Indonesia.

# Norway airlifts passengers off cruise ship caught in storm

AFP ■ OSLO

Rescuers were working Sunday to airlift more than 1,300 passengers and crew off a cruise ship after it ran into trouble in rough seas off the Norwegian coast.

The Viking Sky lost power and started making slow headway at two to three knots off the dangerous, rocky coast and a tug would help it towards the port of Molde, about 500 kilometres northwest of Oslo, officials said.

Five helicopters were scrambled along with coastguard and other rescue vessels. Two tugs were reportedly closing in on Viking Sky.

The vessel's cables are being set up by the tugs' southern Norway's rescue centre said on Twitter.

had managed to restart three of his four engines.

Authorities said 397 of the 1,372 people on board had so far been taken off by helicopter, with each chopper able to take 15-20 people per trip.

Police said 17 people had been taken to hospital. The vessel was making slow headway at two to three knots off the dangerous, rocky coast and a tug would help it towards the port of Molde, about 500 kilometres northwest of Oslo, officials said.

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Dramatic footage of the ordeal showed furniture and plants sliding round the lurching vessel as parts of the ceiling came down. Dozens of passengers wearing life jackets were seated around waiting to get off the vessel.

"We're still waiting for the helicopter to get out," says Ryan Flynn who was shooting one of the videos. "This is taking very long." The airlift was continuing, emergency services spokesman Per Joid said.

"I have never seen anything so frightening," said one of the passengers who was rescued, Janet Jacob. "I started to pray. I prayed for the safety of everyone on board," she told the NRK television channel.

The helicopter trip was terrifying. The winds were like a tornado," she added.

# Death toll from central Mali massacre up to 134, says UN

AP ■ BAMAKO

The death toll from a massacre in a central Malian village rose to 134 dead, the UN said, as new video emerged Sunday showing victims strewn on the ground amid the burning remains of their homes.

An ethnic Dogon militia already blamed for scores of attacks in central Mali over the past year attacked an ethnic Peuhl village just before dawn on Saturday.

Among the victims in Ogoxogou were pregnant women, small children and the elderly, according to a Peuhl group known as Tablat Pulaaku.

Graphic video obtained by The Associated Press shows the aftermath of Saturday's attack, with many victims buried inside their homes.

covered with a piece of fabric, and at one point an ID card is shown covered with blood.

In the capital of Bamako, visiting UN Security Council President Francois Delattre, condemned the killings as an "unspeakable attack" late Saturday.

At least 55 people were wounded and the UN mission in Mali said it was "working to ensure the wounded were evacuated." New York, the UN secretary-general condemned the attack and called on the Malian authorities to swiftly investigate it and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Islamic extremists were ousted from urban centers in northern Mali during a 2013 French-led military operation.

The jihadists scattered throughout the rural areas, regrouped and began launching numerous attacks against

the Malian military and the UN mission. Since 2015, extremism has edged all the way to central Mali where it has exacerbated tensions between the Dogon and Peuhl groups.

Members of the Dogon group accuse the Peuhls of supporting these jihadists linked to violent groups in the country's north and beyond.

Peuhls have in turn accused the Dogon of supporting the Malian army in its effort to stamp out extremism. In December, Human Rights Watch had warned that "militia killings of civilians in central and northern Mali are spiralling out of control."

The group said the ethnic Dogon militia known as Dan Na Ambassador and its leader had been linked to many of the atrocities and called for Malian authorities to prosecute the perpetrators.

# UK mother urges thief to return dead daughter's lock of hair

PTI ■ LONDON

A mother in the UK has urged a thief to return a stolen lock of hair which she said was all she had left of her dead two-year-old daughter.

Kirsty Baldwin's daughter Ellie Louise died six years ago of bronchial pneumonia and she had kept the hair in her handbag, which was stolen at a motorway service station in Greater Manchester, the BBC reported.

The bag was taken from her car by the thief in front of her and the robbery had "devastated" the family. Baldwin, 35, from the Newcastle area, was robbed Wednesday by what she described as an "unkempt" man.

She said he opened the passenger door before she could lock it and grabbed the handbag.

The bag contained a tablet computer, a large amount of Euros in cash, a purse containing the lock of her daughter's blonde hair laminated on a card, the BBC reported.

Baldwin said the lock of hair was "all we had left of her".

"She added: "Please, if anyone finds the lock shown in the picture, please do the right thing and hand it in to your nearest police station. Thank you."

A police official of Greater Manchester Police said, "A robbery in any circumstance is particularly distressing but Kirsty and her family have been left devastated."

# Over 500 mn years old fossil trove unearthed in China

PTI ■ BEIJING

Scientists in China have discovered a "stunning" trove of well-preserved thousands of fossils estimated to be about 518 million years old on a river bank in the country's central Hubei province.

The fossils are particularly unusual because the soft-bodied remains of many creatures, including their skin, eyes, and internal organs, have been "exquisitely" well preserved.

Paleontologists have called the findings "mind-blowing" especially because more than half the fossils are previously undiscovered species, the BBC reported.

The fossils, known as the Qingjiang biota, were collected near Danshui river in Hubei province. More than 20,000 specimens were collected, and a total

of 4,351 have been analysed so far, including worms, jellyfish, sea anemones and algae.

They will become a "very important source in the study of the early origins of creatures," one of the fieldwork leaders, Prof Xingliang Zhang from China's Northwest University, told the BBC.

The discovery is particularly remarkable because "the majority of creatures are soft-bodied organisms like jellyfish and worms that normally stand no chance of becoming fossilised," Prof Robert Gaines, a geologist who also took part in the study, said.

The majority of fossils tend to be of hard-bodied animals, as harder substances, like bones, are less likely to rot and decompose.

The Qingjiang biota must have been "rapidly buried in sediment" due to a storm, in order

for soft tissues to be so well preserved, Prof Zhang said.

Scientists are especially excited by the jellyfish and sea anemone fossils, which Prof Gaines described as "unlike anything I have ever seen. Their sheer abundance and their diversity of forms is stunning."

Meanwhile, paleontologist Allison Daley, who was not part of the study but wrote an accompanying analysis in Science, told BBC's Science in Action programme the find was one of the most significant in the last 100 years.

"It blew my mind when I'd get to witness the discovery of such an incredible site. For the first time we're seeing preservation of jellyfish - [when] you think of jellyfish today, they're so soft-bodied, so delicate, but they've preserved unbelievably well at this site."

# RUSSELL steals thunder from Warner

# Pantastic show

West Indian all-rounder smashes 19-ball 49 to help KKR pull out sensational 6 wicket win against Sunrisers

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Andre Russell smashed an explosive 49 to spoil David Warner's scintillating IPL comeback as Kolkata Knight Riders pulled off a dramatic six-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad, here Sunday.

Needing 53 runs from last three overs, the powerful Jamaican changed the course of the match with his big-hitting against Siddharth Kaul, creaming off 19 runs from the 18th over.

He retained the strike by taking a smart single and continued his assault on Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who too bled 21 runs in the penultimate over as KKR sealed the 182-run chase with two balls to spare.

Russell hammered four sixes and an equal number of boundaries in run sequence that read 6-6-1-4-1-4-6-4-0-6-1. Youngster Shubman Gill (18 not out) completed the formalities with two sixes off Shakib-Al-Hasan.

Promoted to open with Chris Lynn, Nitish Rana made full use of the opportunity and kept them in the hunt with a 47-ball 68.

But he departed shortly after a 12-minute interruption caused by tower lights failure.

The momentum slowly shifted in favour of SRH but Russell in a meter of minutes changed the complexion of the match.

Earlier, Warner made a stupendous comeback with a scintillating 85, helping his side reach a challenging 181/2.

Putting behind the embarrassing ball tampering scandal, that kept him out last year, the Aussie smashed three sixes and nine boundaries in his 53-ball knock.

India World Cup probable Vijay Shankar also made a fine return to the Orange Army with a quick-fire unbeaten 24-ball 40 (2x4, 2x6) fol-



**RUSSELL HAMMERED FOUR SIXES AND AN EQUAL NUMBER OF BOUNDARIES IN RUN SEQUENCE THAT READ 6-6-1-4-1-4-6-4-0-6-1. YOUNGSTER SHUBMAN GILL (18 NOT OUT) COMPLETED THE FORMALITIES WITH TWO SIXES OFF SHAKIB-AL-HASAN**

lowing Warner's exit in the 16th over. Warner's 77th IPL fifty also made him the first cricketer in IPL to have most 50-plus scores (40) ahead of

Virat Kohli (38) as the Aussie also has three centuries.

Jonny Bairstow complemented Warner well by giving him the max-



imum strike as the duo raced to 100-mark in 10.5 overs in their massive 118-run opening partnership.

Having opted to bowl, the otherwise disciplined KKR attack looked clueless against the rampaging Warner who was let off twice while on scores of 21 and 68 by Robin Uthappa and skipper Dinesh Karthik respectively.

Karthik's captaincy was over-defensive and lost the review to Warner early in the second over, while SRH made full use of the DRS by overturning a decision against Bairstow.

There was no looking back for Warner who batted as if he was never out of action and pierced the gaps at ease with successive boundaries against Piyush Chawla and Sunil Narine to unsettle the otherwise disciplined KKR spinners.

Warner brought his fifty with a six against Andre Russell and then went on to smack India frontline spinner Kuldeep Yadav for his second six.

Such was the Warner assault that four of the regular KKR bowlers including the frontline spin duo of Sunil Narine (0/29 in three overs) and Kuldeep (0/18 in 2 overs) did not even bowl their full quota of four overs.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rishabh Pant blazed away to an unbeaten 27-ball 78 and powered Delhi Capitals to a mammoth 213 for six against Mumbai Indians in their Indian Premier League opener here Sunday.

Pant raced to his half century in 18 balls, hitting seven towering sixes and as many fours at the Wankhede Stadium, which looked too small for the Delhi dazzler.

Just 21, Pant smashed the world's best fast bowler, Jasprit Bumrah, for a few sixes as well.

Pant, playing his natural game, mercilessly punished the Mumbai bowlers after South African Colin Ingram (47 off 32 balls 7x4, 1x6) and Shikhar Dhawan (43 off 36 balls; 4x4; 1x6) pulled the visitors out of the rubble and laid the foundation of a big total with their 83-run stand for the third wicket.

The young wicketkeeper was brutal on Hardik Pandya, whom he hammered for two sixes and a four in the 16th over to start the destruction and then spared none. He struck two sixes and a four off debutant Rasikh Salam in the 19th over.

Pant was also brutal on death overs specialist Bumrah. Rahul Tewatia complimented the stumper with 19 not out.

Earlier, the duo of Dhawan and Ingram rallied the Delhi innings after they lost two quick wickets — Prithvi Shaw (7) and skipper Shreyas Iyer (16) inside the first four overs — and also took the Mumbai attack to cleaners.

Ingram upped the ante in the eighth over slashing Hardik for a four and then a six.

But Ben Cutting gave Mumbai the much-needed breakthrough as he removed Ingram, who was caught by Hardik in the 13 over. Dhawan also threw his wicket away as Delhi slumped from 112 for two to 131 for four.

But then it was the Pant show and he left no chance for Rasikh, who got his cap from former India pacer Zaheer Khan, is the youngest player to make the debut for Mumbai



**JK's Rasikh Salam makes IPL debut**

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Young right-arm medium pacer Rasikh Salam became only the second player from Jammu and Kashmir to play in the Indian Premier League.

Salam, 17, turned up for Mumbai Indians in their lung-eater against Delhi Capitals at the Wankhede Stadium here Sunday and also opened the bowling for the hosts.

Rasikh, who got his cap from former India pacer Zaheer Khan, is the youngest player to make the debut for Mumbai

Indians, who hails from Kulgaam district, was picked up by Mumbai Indians for his base price of Rs 20 lakh.

Parvez Rasool, an off-break bowler, was the first one from the northern state, to play in the cash-rich tournament. Rasool represented two IPL teams — Pune Warriors India and Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Another player from Jammu and Kashmir, Manzoor Dar was picked up by IPL franchise Kings XI Punjab last year, but did not feature in any game.



## Comeback won't be easy for Smith: Ashwin

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Steve Smith would still be a bit rusty and Kings XI Punjab would try to exploit it to their advantage, says skipper Ravichandran Ashwin, who also reckons that it won't be easy comeback journey for the Australian.

The spotlight will be on Smith when Rajasthan Royals' clash with Punjab on Monday. "We all know he is a quality player and must have worked and prepared hard during the break but comebacks are not easy. He must have put a lot of efforts for a comeback mentally. I am sure he would look to perform and on the other hand we would look to take advantage of his rustiness," said Ashwin.

Ashwin himself is struggling to make a comeback to the Indian side and is likely to miss the World Cup but with Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravindra Jadeja doing a nice job with the white ball.

Asked if he feels, he is still in reckoning for a spot in India's World Cup squad, he was a tad irritated.

"I can't answer the question. Selectors have to answer that. But as far as I am concerned I have played two World Cups. If I deserve and I am selected I would love to play," he said.

Punjab coach Mike Hesson said big-hitting West Indian that Gayle is huge player for his team.

"The way he batted in the last series against quality bowlers and took on the spinners shows that he still is a formidable force. He is an asset on the field and in the dressing room where he helps youngsters grow," said Hesson.

## Up Next Royals start campaign against Punjab

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Australian batsman Steve Smith will embark on a redemption journey when Rajasthan Royals open their campaign against Kings XI Punjab in the 12th edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL), here Monday.

Smith was handed a one-year ban along with his then deputy David Warner exactly a year ago for their roles in the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa.

Smith was last seen in action in a couple of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) matches late last year before an elbow injury ruled him out of the tournament. The ban was limited to state and international fixtures only and not domestic or club cricket.

The IPL will be the actual start of his long road to redemption and Smith would be looking to make the most of it ahead of the World Cup, starting May 30 in England.

Smith, though, is yet to recover fully from his elbow injury and may take a little time to get into the groove.

With Smith in their ranks, the Royals have one of the best teams this season led by Ajinkya Rahane and they would be eager to capitalise on the home advantage tomorrow. British all-rounder Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler are assets to the team but they will not be available after April 25 as per England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) dictate because of the World Cup, and Rajasthan would be keen to win enough matches by then.

Stokes will once again be the key in both batting and



### LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Rajasthan Royals defeated Kings XI Punjab by 15 runs at Jaipur
- Kings XI Punjab beat Rajasthan Royals by six wickets at Indore

### FOR THE RECORD

- Ajinkya Rahane is the highest run-getter for Rajasthan Royals. The right hand batsman has scored 2417 runs at 34.52 in 89 innings of 86 matches since 2011.
- Ravichandran Ashwin claimed 10 wickets at 41.00 in 14 matches for Kings XI Punjab in the first season last year.

Head to Head

RR	vs	KKXIP
M 17		R 6
W 10		L 7

MONDAY 18:00 PM

Kulkarni, Jofra Archer, Ish Sodhi and few others give variety and options to Royals for different conditions

Ravichandran Ashwin-led Punjab side would rely heavily on their openers Chris Gayle and KL Rahul to provide them a fiery start and if swashbuckling West Indian opener happens to be in his elements, the Kings XI may be able to draw the first blood.

Skippers Ashwin would be desperate to prove that he can still make a difference in this format. With Mohammed Shami, Andrew Tye and Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Punjab's bowling looks pretty strong.

## No one complains when so many runs are scored: Harbhajan

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The slowness of the Chepauk track might be attracting a lot of criticism but veteran off-spinner Harbhajan Singh said while the wicket was difficult to bat, it was not unplayable.

Rival captains Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Virat Kohli expressed their disappointment over the wicket after the opening match of the Indian Premier League turned out to be damp squib on Saturday night.

After Royal Challengers Bangalore got bundled out for 70 in 17.1 overs, Chennai Super Kings achieved the target in 17.4 overs, winning by seven wickets.

"See, it was a difficult pitch to bat on but it wasn't like it was unplayable. We're so used to watching matches on good wickets where no one complains when people score 170-180. But if it spins or seams a little, everyone has a problem, saying why is this happening?"

Harbhajan said at the post match press conference.

"No one has a problem with why so many runs are being made. So people actually forget that the bowler also has a job in cricket. Batsmen should struggle once in a while so that they understand that it should be a battle of bat and ball. In some places, yes, they played those rash shots as well. It was not that this was a 70 runs wicket. You'll get at least 120 if you apply yourself."

The 38-year-old admitted that he and his team were surprised at the amount of turn they got from the pitch. "It was a wicket where it was holding a bit. We honestly didn't expect it to turn so much as it did today. We played a practice match



here and the wicket was a good one. We would have preferred to play on a wicket that wouldn't spin as much as this did. Hopefully it would be better hereafter."

Harbhajan, who did not have a great season in the 2018 edition of the IPL, said it was nice to be on the winning side and contributing to the team's cause.

"It is nice to be on the winning side and contributing, especially taking the wickets of Virat (Kohli), AB (de Villiers) and Moeen (Ali)... Top-order batters. This is the kind of performance that is expected from me, being the senior bowler in the side."

"Though people might think that I am old but the experience is something I have gained over the years, which no one can take away from me. I am glad to contribute to the win," said the CSK tweaker.

Meanwhile, RCB assistant coach Vikram Solanki said the pitch was far from ideal for batting. "I don't think we played well enough and CSK were by far the better side. We were surprised by spin and lack of pace and it spun far more than we thought. It was probably not an ideal pitch as it was not an even contest. You need an opportunity to score as well," he said.

# vivacity

KANGANA TO  
PLAY THALAIVI  
JAYALALITHAA  
-P 14



## HERE'S HOW TO DEAL WITH SEXUAL HARASSMENT



Dealing with harassment situations can be daunting, but a little preparation and technique can go a long way to make you more confident and skilful.

We often see couples at every picnic spots trying to get too close and for which they always search for isolated places. This can be a little dangerous for these individuals as they are out of the other people sight and seeing which the whole group of men get chance to take advantage of such situations when nobody is around. Since the man alone gets physically weak in front of them, in such case the woman is sexually and brutally harassed. So, you should be searching for places with some people around to prevent these kind of incidents.

Being able to fend off an attacker may save your life. At the very least, consider arming yourself with pepper spray. There isn't a 'best' way, or even a right or wrong way, to respond to every street molestation situation. You must be the judge and act accordingly, keeping your safety as your first priority. At times, no response is the best response. Let the situation determine the response that is right for you.

This may be a gloomy piece of advice, but keeping a serious expression on your face can often be a useful shield against harassment. In places where male-female eye contact can be interpreted as flirtation, an aura of business

announces very clearly that you are off limits.

Often the first signal from a street harasser will be auditory, such as shouting obscenities, or trying to gain your attention in some way in order to approach you. A good way to avoid this is to have headphones on your ears. Your attention is crucial to someone wanting to interact with you, and if it is obvious that you are unable to hear what they're saying they will usually stop. If you are wearing headphones that are actually playing music, however, this may potentially cause problems, as some women have reported being attacked because they were unable to hear the person's approach.

If you are travelling alone without any male escort then it is better you avoid travelling in a crowded bus which specially consists of male passengers. Try to take a taxi or cab to travel to the place you want. And if you are travelling through train or metro then only travel in the ladies compartment. Cheap men always try to take advantage of such situation when you are alone so better take safety measure to avoid any kind of awkward incidents.

If you find yourself in a situation where your harasser is following you and refuses to go away, one way to get them off your back is to slip into a nearby place of business, such as an internet shop or hotel. If the harasser seems dangerous,



**This may be a gloomy piece of advice, but keeping a serious expression on your face can often be a useful shield against harassment. In places where male-female eye contact can be interpreted as flirtation, an aura of business announces very clearly that you are off limits**

you may have someone inside call the police. Otherwise you can wait inside until they have disappeared.

Look your harasser in the eye and denounce their behaviour with a strong, clear voice, showing your assertiveness

that is harassment' or 'Do not stare at me like that, that is harassment' or something similar. You can also say 'that is not OK!' or 'don't speak to me like that!' Try out different phrases and see what feels natural to you. The important thing is that you aren't apologetic in your response. Understanding molestation isn't just unwanted grabbing or touching in public, it may include vulgar gestures or noises, shouting obscenities, whistling or leering. In India, there are laws against sexual harassment. Find out what they are and how you can use them against the harasser.

Often girls go out alone for works or some other purpose. But molesters /teasers are always in this chance to take due advantage of the situation. So as far as possible either stay in groups or have some elder male with you. You feel safe in groups as being an individual girl you become an easy target of molesters. Have male friends in the group if possible whenever hanging out in public places as it will help to reduce any risky incidents.

Once you've given him your piece of mind, keep moving. Harassers don't deserve the pleasure of your company.

In spite of being a girl, many at times you go loud in public. You should always keep in mind that wherever you are you should be well behaved. Do not try to grab any unknown boys attention through your attitude. Even if you are in

group having fun do not be loud or involve in any fights with others as that may lead to girls being getting molested by the other group male members for revenge purpose. This shuts down your image along with your dignity. So just be decent and calm in public places.

Carrying small safety weapons with you not only makes you feel safe but will even help to avoid any kind of harassing situation. Whenever you feel that somebody is trying to touch you or unnecessarily trying to get close to you just take out the bottle and spray it in his eyes and showing the knife can make the people around you aware of the situation and can come for your help. Such kinds of techniques act as a part of self defense and which will not only make the teasers learn a lesson but will also give some strength to the other girls for future of how they can protect themselves and fight against the harassers.

Gone are the days or, it is time to bid goodbye to the days of rigid gendered normative structures that ask women to remain petite, quiet and fragile. It is the need of the hour for women to come out of their shells and be strong and bold. Remember that if you get scared, then the perpetrator of the crime think of you as a weakling and would get more courage to hurt you and assault you. Instead, if you are a strong and bold woman who knows how to resist, no matter what the physical strength is, it will alarm your attacker and startle him, giving you more strength in return.

**Trend**  
*Slazer*

**Kangana to play Jayalalithaa**

Actress **KANGANA RANAUT**, last seen on screen in *Manikarnika*, will be playing late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **J. Jayalalithaa** in the forthcoming multilingual biopic *Thalaivi*, its makers have announced.

On Kangana's birthday on Saturday, it was officially announced that she has been roped in to play Jayalalithaa.

*Thalaivi* will start rolling from April. "When producer Vishnu Induri approached me with the offer, I felt a sense of responsibility more than excitement. This was a story of an achiever; a story of one woman who fought for her place in a male-dominated world. It was meant to be told with honesty. The stature of this leader and her courage inspired me to say yes," said Vijay.



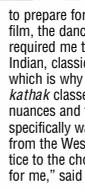
**'Being half Kashmiri, it's always special to shoot there and be with the locals. They are very warm people, hospitable and genteel, and always welcoming. When Ashvin first sent me the script, I was immediately drawn to it. It's so refreshing to see a filmmaker writing a story about Kashmir's reality.'**

—Soni Razdan



**Actress VAANI KAPOOR** is currently shooting her next *Shamshera* opposite **Ranbir Kapoor**. In the film, directed by Karan Malhotra, Vaani will play

the character of the most sought-after travelling performer from India. The actress has been learning *kathak* for a few months now to prepare for the role. "For the film, the dance sequences required me to have a very Indian, classical body language, which is why I started taking *kathak* classes to learn the nuances and the grace. Karan specifically wanted me to break from the Western style to do justice to the choreography being set for me," said Vaani.



**Cardi B to sue bloggers**

Rapper **CARDI B** is suing bloggers for claiming she is a "prostitute with herpes." Cardi filed the lawsuit against Latasha K, who has a blog called 'UnWineWithTashak'. She's angry about 23 videos that Tasha posted over the last 14 months.

According to the suit, Tasha posted a video saying Cardi's baby might be born with intellectual disabilities. The inference seems to be Cardi was doing drugs that would harm then-born Kulture. She's also suing Stormie Ebony Jones, who posted a video in September accusing Cardi of doing cocaine and prostitution.



Actress **NEHA SARGAM**, who plays Anarkali in director Feroze Khan's *Mughal-E-Azam*, tells **CHAHAK MITTAL** that women have always retaliated, no matter the end result or the era that they come from

**SIXTY YEARS ON... WHAT'S CHANGED?**

When one talks of grandeur of epic proportions in the Hindi film industry, the name *Mughal-E-Azam* cannot fail to make an appearance. The 1960 film chronicling the love story of Prince Salim and a court dancer, Anarkali, is remembered for the seemingly-real *sheesh mahal* (palace of mirrors), the offscreen romance which had turned sour between the lead pair of Dilip Kumar and Madhubala, iconic dialogues and more. The film's commentary on the reality of a society ridden with taboos and hierarchical differences continues to cast a spell and fascinate the current audience even today.

Director Feroze Khan adapted it to stage and the Broadway-style musical has got such a rousing response that it has made a comeback. Actress Neha Sargam, who essays the role of Anarkali, says, "The script was modified according to the current context, especially in terms of women and personal relationships."

She believes that every era has had its own share of challenges and revelations. "There have been different sets of challenges for both men and women in each era. However, there are certain things which continue to be common and have only evolved. For instance, even though the restrictions on women have been abundant, yet they have always tried to get up and create their own space, irrespective of the era. In the play, driven by social norms of gender and hierarchy, even though Anarkali looks like a free woman, she does it in every possible way to take a stand. She stands up for herself in difficult times. It doesn't matter whether she wins or not. In

any way, she is a powerful woman," she says. This Anarkali wouldn't let her self-esteem be destroyed or taken for granted.

This is the way, Neha believes, Anarkali's character can connect with today's and every generation's woman who has always tried to retaliate, no matter the consequences or end result. "Our director has brought it out with a feminist approach, keeping in mind the woman of today's era, who is ever-evolving," says she.

The actress describes one of the scenes to highlight this aspect — where Salim tightly slaps Anarkali — "The scene was very regressive and according to the norms of the time, nobody questioned it. However, today, it means a lot. In the film, Dilip Kumar had actually slapped Madhubala hard. In the play, the script has been modified and now Salim doesn't slap

her, rather just pushes her away," she says that such small gestures often influence the audience in a huge way which sometimes go unnoticed.

Talking about present relationships and parental acceptance, she says there is still a large population who might not happily accept the person their daughter or son brings home. She says, "The story highly resonates with the current youth, who still, to some extent, struggle to get their parents' consents before marrying someone of their choice. Be it any criteria — caste, class or religious differences, homosexuality — parents do take these elements into account before giving their approval. They may have progressed but are not completely over it."

She laughs and says that to show the audience what should have been done, one can't change the plot. After all, "of course,

Akbar won't suddenly accept Anarkali instead of bricking her up in a wall. The story will always be the same."

The actress, who has been a part of daily soaps since a long time now, says she feels fortunate to have bagged the role of Anarkali, since this is the first time she is doing theatre. Narrating the story, she says, "I had received a mail from Mukesh Chhabra, Casting Company in June last year. However, it somehow landed in the spam. Later, I received calls from the company for the same. They told me that they were trying to contact me since a long time as they were looking for a singer as well as an actor. So, in the play, I am singing, dancing and acting live. Initially, I was confused since I had never been a part of theatre before and always had stage

fright." However, it turned out to be a great learning experience for her as she also had to practise and learn Urdu to rehearse the play's dialogues.

She tells us that even though a play's script has to be followed in a certain way, which is challenging, "the director wanted us to express ourselves and our characters in our own way. I should react the way I would react but with a touch of Anarkali's style."

Around 700 costumes were factored by designer Manish Malhotra for the play's crew of 200-300 people. The play, she tells us, was not going to come back to the city after it was first staged in November-December 2018 but is back on popular demand. Starting from April 6, the play would mark its 175th show.

**TECH TALK**

**Somebody left the window open**

Facebook left millions of passwords readable by employees, stored on internal servers, for years

Facebook left hundreds of millions of user passwords readable by its employees for years, the company acknowledged after a security researcher exposed the lapse.

By storing passwords in readable plain text, Facebook violated fundamental computer-security practices. Those call for organisations and websites to save passwords in a scrambled form that makes it almost impossible to recover the original text.

"There is no valid reason why anyone in an organisation, especially the size of Facebook, needs to have access to users' passwords in plain text," said cybersecurity expert Andrei Barysevich.

Facebook said there is no evidence its employees abused access to this data. But thousands of employees could have searched them. The company said the passwords were stored on internal company servers, where no outsiders could access them. Even so, some privacy experts suggested that users change their Facebook passwords.

The incident reveals yet another huge and basic oversight at a company that insists it is a responsible guardian for the personal data of its 2.3 billion users worldwide.

A security blog said Facebook may have left the passwords of some 600 million Facebook users vulnerable. In a blog post, Facebook said it will likely notify "hundreds of millions" of Facebook Lite users, millions of Facebook users and tens of thousands of Instagram users that their passwords were stored in plain text.

Facebook Lite is a version designed for people with older phones or low-speed internet connections. It is used primarily in developing countries.

Last week, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg touted a new "privacy-focused vision" for the social network that would emphasise private communication over public sharing. The company wants to encourage small groups of people to carry on encrypted conversations that neither Facebook nor any other outsider can read.

The fact that the company couldn't manage to do something as simple as encrypting passwords, however, raises questions about its ability to manage more complex encryption issues — such as messaging — flawlessly.

Facebook said it discovered the problem in January. But security researcher Brian Krebs wrote that in some cases the passwords had been



stored in plain text since 2012. Facebook Lite launched in 2015 and Facebook bought Instagram in 2012.

The problem, according to Facebook, wasn't due to a single bug. During a routine review in January, it say, it found that the plain text passwords were unintentionally captured and stored in its internal storage systems. This happened in a variety of circumstances — for example, when an app crashed and the resulting crash log included a captured password.

But Alex Holden, the founder of Hold Security, said Facebook's explanation is not an excuse for sloppy security practices that allowed so many passwords to be exposed internally.

Barysevich said he could not recall any major company caught leaving so many passwords exposed. He said he's seen a number of instances where such smaller organisations made such information readily available — not just to programmers but also to customer support teams.

Security analyst Troy Hunt, who runs a data breach website, said the situation may be embarrassing for Facebook but not dangerous unless an adversary gained access to the passwords. Facebook has had major breaches, most recently in September

when attackers accessed some 29 million accounts.

Jake Williams, president of Rendition Infosec, said storing passwords in plain text is "unfortunately more common than most of the industry talks about" and tends to happen when developers are trying to rid a system of bugs.

He said the Facebook blog post suggests storing passwords in plain text may have been "a sanctioned practice" although he said it also possible a "rogue development team" was to blame.

Hunt and Krebs both likened Facebook's failure to similar stumbles last year on a far smaller scale at Twitter and GitHub. The latter is a site where developers store code and track projects. In those cases, software bugs were blamed for accidentally storing plain text passwords in internal logs.

Facebook's normal procedure for passwords is to store them encoded, the company noted in its blog post.

That's good to know, although Facebook engineers apparently added code that defeated the safeguard, said security researcher Bob Graham. "They have all the proper locks on the doors, but somebody left the window open," he said.

**WEBBED**

**YEH CRAZY DIL**



Just like most other young couples, after being together for over two years, Aadar (25) and Koyal (26) amicably end their relationship over wanting different things from life. But, if only break ups were that simple. Koyal gets involved in a complicated rebound relationship with her co-worker Jiten, while Aadar explores something new about himself with every new tinder date he goes on. Just as they begin to move on, life happens. A series of unexpected adventures, confusing situations and messy circumstances involving their past arise in front of them.

Starring Zoa Morani, Aadeb Rais, the series is now streaming on MX Player.

**THE HIGHWAYMEN**



Two steely former Texas Rangers Frank Hamer and Maney Gault join forces to try and capture notorious outlaws and infamous criminals, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow in this crime drama based on real events.

Starring Kevin Costner, Woody Harrelson, Kathy Bates, the thriller film releases on Netflix on March 29.

**THE LEGEND OF COCAINE ISLAND**



The documentary film follows Rodney Hyden on his journey to follow up an urban legend and find \$2 million in cash supposedly buried in the Caribbean. Hyden is a businessman from South Florida who set out to discover the money after losing all his wealth in the recession. It is an urban legend about a duffel bag of cocaine buried in the Caribbean leads a misfit band to hatch a nutball plan to find it in this comic documentary.

Directed by Theo Love, the film will release on Netflix on March 29.



The ongoing erosion along Beki river in Barpeta district of Assam. The hungry tides of the river continue to erode the banks almost throughout the year.



Rahima Khatun of Majidbhita Char (sandbar) and some other women in western Assam's Barpeta district cleaning the dried Mati Mah (Urad Bean) in an open field.

# DOES MONSOON REALLY USHER IN HAPPINESS?

ANUP SHARMA studies the challenges faced by women living in the Char areas of Assam, which remain under flood water for at least five months every year

Monsoon is setting in and Rahima Khatun is worried. The rainy months normally usher in happiness for many in agrarian Assam. For tens of thousands like Rahima, who live on Chars or riverine sandbars, they signal a tough time.

A resident of Majidbhita Char in western Assam's Barpeta district, Rahima is one of the victims of climate change that has impacted the sandbars and people living on them. At the mercy of nature, Char-dwellers like her are living a nomadic life, shifting from one eroded sandbar to another that could be eaten up by the river in the near future.

There is no denying the fact that the lives of Rahima and others like her largely depend on monsoon rains. However, it also becomes a nightmare for the women living on the Char, most of which lacks proper sanitation and where open defecation is not a choice but a compulsion. The monsoon and floods are always worrying for people like us, particularly the women. I have been living in the Char

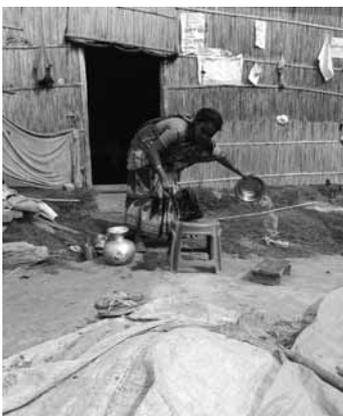
areas since my birth and I have seen the girls and women suffering during the flood season. They have to go outside their houses before dawn to isolated places to defecate and clean up," said the 70-year-old Rahima.

The Char areas of Assam remain under flood water at least five months in a calendar year, with three months of high water level. Floods make it difficult to commute from one place to another on foot and small country boats remain the only option.

Going to secluded places to defecate before the sunrise can often be risky for the women.

I lost my seven-month-old son during a flood two years ago. Our house was under knee-deep water when I left in a boat to relieve myself the morning he died. My baby and my husband were sleeping on the bed when I had gone out. But the baby was missing when I returned. His inert body was found in the water," Eliza Begum, Rahima's neighbour at Majidbhita, said as she broke into tears.

The baby had rolled down from the bed while her husband was sleeping.



Eliza Begum in the backyard of her house. Eliza had lost her seven-month-old son during floods in 2016.

"I cannot blame my husband or anyone else for my baby's death. It was perhaps Allah's wish. I had to go out rowing a boat in the darkness because we, women, have to finish our ablutions before it is daylight," Eliza added.

Floods claim babies and women, Rahima said. "Drowning is one reason. Some die of hygiene-related diseases. A few women lost their lives after having been bitten by snakes," she said.

Three to four waves of floods affect millions of people in most of Assam's 33 districts. The data with the state government says floods from June-August 2018 killed more than 80 people, including minors, and affected more than 30 lakh people. The floods also damaged crops on large swathes of land.

The Char dwellers invariably bear the brunt of floods. Though sandbars have been prone to flooding and erosion, the pace has increased in recent years. Hydrologists attribute this to climate change.

Most of some 2.5 million

people living on Chars (according to the 2003 Socio-Economic Survey by the Char Area Development Department) in the state have learnt to live with floods. But lack of adequate attention by the government has made their life tougher.

Although the government of India launched the *Nirmal Bharat* and *Swacch Bharat Abhiyan*, and toilets are being made in remote areas of the state under this flagship scheme, the Char areas are yet to get the benefit.

Majidbhita has three villages — Majidbhita, Tepajuli and Bhergaon. We surveyed the government schemes in these villages and found that none were allotted even a single toilet each. Government schemes hardly reach those places. The Char dwellers seem to exist on rotating elections when leaders come seeking votes," said Jehidul Hussain, a member of a local NGO named Jhai Foundation.

(This article is written as part of the Climate Fellowship of the ASTEC, Assam.)

## Peace in time of war

Man doesn't realise that political power, without the capability to rule one's physical senses and the intent to use it for human good, leads to turmoil, says RAJGOBI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJJI



In present world many people consider survival and security as prime values. They argue that if a person does not survive, then what is the value that other things hold for him. In a similar vein, they further argue that if a person lives in a state of constant insecurity and fear, then where is the charm, joy, fun or zest in living? The quality of life of a man in fear is like that of a man in a state of suspended animation and it's not at all cherishable, reliable, enjoyable or valuable. On the other hand there are other people who question the contention of the former kind of people. The questions they raise are that 'What, after all, is the purpose of survival?' and 'What is the goal of life?' Further, they'd ask, 'What do we want to achieve by or while living?' They argue that the difference between a human being and an animal is narrowed down to zero if man also, like other animals, is concerned primarily and only about his physical survival. They feel that there should be some higher and nobler aim of human existence and that there should be something more worthy for humans to achieve. Arguing thus, they ask: If personal survival is the main value, then why do military men endanger their own lives or sacrifice their lives at the battle-front in order to keep intact the sovereignty of the nation? Again, why did the heroes of the Indian freedom struggle



happily embraced death for the sake of independence of their motherland? Why did kings in the olden times, give up their palaces and bodyguards and went to the forest-retreats in pursuit of truth, endangering their life, knowing well that there were carnivores there? With these questions in mind, they further argue that why should man fear if he has moral and spiritual strength and good relations with all the other beings? Because fear, they assert, arises from guilt-consciousness, suspicion or enmity. So, man should be free of the negative tendency or emotion, namely fear because one's survival should normally be an assured thing if one's actions are in harmony with other beings, with the environment and with the moral and physical laws. Each one of us must understand a fact that our life and death, or survival and happiness are governed by the law of *karma* and if it is good, why should we fear? Because death is inevitable; why should then we not sleep well night after night?

Today, what makes the world situation peaceless is that mankind has not yet been able to realise the truth that the factors, that lead nations to race for military superiority, build-up of weapons and subjugation of other people and their territories, are religious bigotry, scramble for power and revenge. Because of his lust for power, man cheats himself of happiness.

It is a pity that he easily forgets that the power of arms or money without the power to rule one's own mind is worse than evil. Also, man does not realise that the political power without the power to rule one's physical senses and the intent to use it for human good, leads to turmoil. Remember, lasting happiness of the human race depends not on power to dominate others but on his mastery over his demonic traits. So, the rub of the matter is that man needs to be reminded in an effective and workable manner that if he does not kill the demons of hate, anger and war through the weapons of love and universal brotherhood, the demons would continue to destroy mankind.

Have a question for you: When was the last time you paid attention to your body? In a world fraught with judgment about how we should look, it might have been long when you last caught your reflection. Or maybe you noticed a particular pain somewhere like your knee, back, or shoulder.

Too often, we only pay attention to our bodies when they're not behaving how we want them to. There's more information available to us by way of a natural, symbiotic connection to our bodies, where two-way communication is the key.

Our bodies communicate in energy — and that's your first language. The issue is, many of us aren't aware.

### Why don't we listen to our bodies?

In essence, we're out of practice. Think about your childhood — who decided what and when you ate? Was it ever okay to skip vegetables and head straight for the desserts? And what about now? How often do you eat just because it's dinner time? How often do you not eat because you're anxious about your weight?

The truth is, your body knows exactly what nourishment it requires and would enjoy at all times. It also knows what clothes it would like to wear and the activities it would like to do. In fact, it has awareness and a gentle insistence around everything that con-

## Are you listening to your body?

We often only pay attention to our bodies when they are not behaving the way we want them to. However, a regular two-way communication with it is the key, says DAIN HEER

cerns. In short, it has a point of view. Would you like to tune in to it?

**Step 1:** Recognise you're an infinite being. Your body is your vehicle for the lifetime while you, the being, are infinite. You each have your own awareness and points of view and you can exist together, in harmony.

**Try this:** Here's a quick exercise to help you get the distinction between your body (the vehicle) and you (the infinite being). Close your eyes, and expand your energy out into the room you're in. Reach the walls of the room, then go beyond them. Notice that if you choose to, you can go further. Expand 100 miles out in all directions. Notice how easy it is. Understand that you can circle the planet if you choose to. It's not your physical body that's expanding, it's your being.

### How infinite are you?

Another question — If a being can travel, so far in an instant and be that big, could it ever fit inside of a physi-



cal body?

**Step 2:** Recognise your body is conscious. Every plant, person, structure on the planet has consciousness — and your body is no exception. Your relationship with your body is deepened by asking questions from an open and present place. And then, listening.

**Try this:** Start with food. At breakfast, instead of auto-piloting your way to granola ask, "Body, what would you like to eat?" Then, be open, be present, and listen.

What do you sense? What are you picking up? Start to ask your body about everything that concerns it — food, clothes, movement, even the people it gets intimate with. Be patient. Like an old friend you haven't spoken to in a while, sometimes it takes time to rebuild your connection; sometimes it happens in a beat. An idea to play with — your body is a psychic receiver. If you'll forgive the comparison, your body is like a sponge. Why? Because it has the capacity to absorb the energies,

thoughts and judgments of everyone around it.

Furthermore, it has the capacity to try to heal the pain and suffering of everyone around it. This means when you experience pain, it might not be your pain. When you feel sad or angry or afraid, these may not be your feelings.

Now, this is a huge concept that goes beyond its scope, but I just want to invite you to play with it. Recognising that what you feel in your body may not be yours, paves the way for letting go of any solid energy that might be limiting you. For some people, this piece of information is world-shifting and comes as a huge relief, while also deepening their understanding of what a *spirit* their body is.

**Try this:** For any pain you experience in the next three days, question, "Body, who does this belong to?" You're not looking for conclusive answers. Just being open to the notion that what you're experiencing may not be yours and being willing to let anything go that doesn't belong to you, is a wonderful start. Your body is such a gift. Be with your body with total presence and with zero judgment. Take care of it. Get to know it better and enjoy breathing life back into your natural connection.

(The writer is the bestselling author of many self-help books.)

## Don't let yesterday take up too much of today. —Will Rogers

### HANDFUL OF NUTS DAILY CAN BOOST MEMORY

Eating a handful of nuts every day can improve mental health and memory skills by up to 60 per cent, finds a study.

The findings showed that consuming nuts for a long period of time could be the key to better cognitive health, improved thinking, reasoning and memory in older people.

"By eating more than 10 grams (or two teaspoons) of nuts per day older people could improve their cognitive function by up to 60 per cent — compared to those not eating nuts — effectively warding off what would normally be experienced as a natural two-year cognition decline," said lead researcher Ming Li from the University of South Australia.

The reason could be because peanuts have specific anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects that help reduce cognitive decline including dementia. They are also known to be high in healthy fats, protein and fibre with nutritional properties that can lower cholesterol.

### INDIA CUTS 84% TB DEATHS IN AIDS PATIENTS

India achieved 84 per cent reduction in tuberculosis deaths among people living with HIV in 2017 — three years ahead of the target, said a report by The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The report showed that India is among the five low or middle-income countries — Eritrea (83 per cent), Djibouti (78 per cent), Malawi (78 per cent) and Togo (75 per cent) — that achieved or exceeded the target of a 75 per cent reduction in TB deaths among people living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), by 2017, three years ahead of the 2020 target.

According to the WHO, globally, TB deaths among people living with HIV have fallen by 42 per cent since 2010, from 520,000 down to 300,000 in 2017. "TB should be a disease of the past. It has been treatable and preventable for decades. Years of neglecting the rights of the world's poor to basic health care, food and shelter have let TB take hold," said Michel Sidibe, Executive Director of UNAIDS.

### CHILDHOOD ABUSE WORSENS DEPRESSION LATER

Facing trauma in childhood can significantly change the structure of the brain, which may result in severe depression that could even be recurrent in adulthood, say researchers.

The results from MRI scan images suggest that both childhood maltreatment and recurring depression are associated with similar reductions in the surface area of the insular cortex, part of the brain that regulates emotion and self-awareness, said the study, published in the *Lancet Psychiatry* journal, which found childhood maltreatment one of the strongest risk factors for major depression in adulthood.

"Given the impact of the insular cortex on brain functions such as emotional awareness, it's possible that the changes we saw make patients less responsive to conventional treatments," said lead researcher Nils Opel, University of Munster, Germany.

The study included 110 patients aged 18 to 60 years. Of the 75 patients who experienced a relapse, 48 had experienced one additional episode, seven reported two episodes, and six experienced three episodes.

### MALE HORMONES IN WOMEN CAUSE BLINDNESS

Increased levels of hormone testosterone — male sex hormone — in women could cause a brain disorder that can lead to blindness, as per a study.

The study, led by the University of Birmingham, Britain, showed that excess testosterone leads to Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension (IIH) — high pressure in the brain — resulting in blindness and daily long-term headaches in women. The findings showed that women with IIH had raised levels of testosterone compared to those with obesity and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

The hormones were also found to be increased in the brain fluid of women with IIH. "These findings mark a key step forward. For the first time, we have found a pattern of androgen dysregulation that is unique to IIH and potentially a driver of abnormal brain pressure in people with the condition," said Alex Sinclair, researcher from the variety.

### DRINKING ORANGE JUICE DAILY IS HEALTHY

Drinking orange juice daily may cut your risk of deadly strokes by almost a quarter, suggests a study.

The study, published in the *British Journal of Nutrition*, showed that people who consumed the juice each day saw a reduction in the risk of a brain clot by 24 per cent. Further, the rates of heart disease were also reduced in regular drinkers, who were 12 to 13 per cent less likely to suffer with damaged arteries.

Fresh fruit juices have long been thought of as healthy. But consumers in recent years have been put off by warnings over their high sugar content.

The researchers noted that the health benefits in terms of stroke prevention could outweigh the risks from sugar content.

We found a favourable association with pure fruit juice consumption," said researchers from the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health.

# RAMOS PANEKA SEALS LA ROJA WIN

Real centre back scores winner from spot as Spain open Euro 2020 qualifying campaign with 2-1 win

AFP ■ MADRID

Sergio Ramos scored a second-half penalty to help Spain beat a spirited Norway 2-1 on Saturday in their opening Euro 2020 qualifier, while teenage striker Moise Kean netted in Italy's win over Finland.

Spain were not at their clinical best in Valencia, but got their Group F campaign off to a solid start despite Norway threatening an upset.

The 2010 World Cup winners have been unpredictable of late, having been dumped out by Russia in the last 16 of the World Cup and then missing out on the Nations League finals after a home loss to England.

"The team responded well to their equaliser. You always have the dream and aim of achieving something important," Ramos told Spanish television channel TVE.

"We're in a new stage with a coach who has a fantastic style of play. We'll take things game by game. We'll pick up more confidence from winning."

Coach Luis Enrique named an attacking line-up, with Marco Asensio, Alvaro Morata and Rodrigo all starting, and it was the latter who volleyed home the opener from Jordi Alba's cross in the 16th minute.

Winger Jesus Navas created several other early chances for his teammates on his first Spain appearance since March 2014, but Rodrigo headed over and Morata was denied by away goalkeeper Rune Jarstein.

Norway started to grow into the game and were handed a chance to draw level in the 65th minute when Inigo Martinez grabbed Bjorn Johnsen, and Bournemouth striker Joshua King stepped up to slot past David de Gea.

Spain wasted little time in getting their noses back in front, though, as Jarstein felled Morata to concede a 71st-minute penalty.

Centre-back Ramos stepped up and confidently dispatched a 'Paneka' spot-kick down the middle to score his 16th goal of the season for club and country.

## KEAN MAKES HIS MARK

Juventus youngster Kean, 19, became the youngest striker to start for Italy in more than two centuries as Roberto



**"I learn from Cristiano Ronaldo, in training, I steal his secrets. And always try to be ready and train regularly so that I'm prepared when the time comes. This is a beautiful evening, but I know that I still have so many records to beat and I intend to beat them."**

—MOISE KEAN

Mancini's men saw off Finland 2-0.

Italy got off to a flying start in Udine, as Nicolo Barella gave them a seventh-minute lead with his maiden international goal.

The 22-year-old Cagliari midfielder hammered home a low volley after a free-kick was only half-cleared by the Finnish defence.

The day belonged to Kean, though, as he slotted in the second with 16 minutes to play to mark his full debut in style.

"To become part of Azzurri history is an added incentive to keep working," said Kean.

"There are many goals ahead of me and my aim is to achieve them. I wanted to show that I deserved this chance from Mancini."

Italy are top of the early Group I standings ahead of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who edged out Armenia 2-1 as captain Edin Dzeko became the first player in their history to be capped 100 times.

The other game in the group saw Greece win 2-0 against Liechtenstein in Vaduz.

## IRELAND STRUGGLE

Earlier on Saturday, Mick McCarthy made an inauspicious start to his second stint in charge of the Republic of Ireland as his team laboured to a 1-0 victory over Gibraltar.

The 60-year-old McCarthy, who led Ireland to the 2002 World Cup last 16 before resigning later that year, was reappointed manager last November, replacing Martin O'Neill.

The result leaves Ireland second in the early Group D table behind Switzerland, who beat Georgia 2-0, but McCarthy will know he has plenty of work to do after seeing his men struggle to claim just their second win in 12 matches.

Elsewhere, World Cup quarter-finalists Sweden made a winning start in Group F as midfielders Robin Quaison and Viktor Claesson both scored in the space of seven first-half minutes in a 2-1 success over Romania.

## PANAMA SPOIL PAQUETA'S PARTY

AFP ■ LISBON

Brazil were held to a 1-1 draw against Panama in an international friendly played at Porto's Drago Stadium on Saturday.

AC Milan's Lucas Paqueta claimed his first international goal for the five-time World Cup winners before captain Adolfo Machado responded for the side in 76th place in the world rankings.

Injured Paris Saint-Germain forward Neymar watched the game from the stands as he recovers from a fractured right foot.

"The performance wasn't brilliant but it wasn't below par either," coach Tite said. "When we go to the Copa America we will make more accurate choices to be more efficient."

The Selecao opened the scoring just after the half-hour mark.

Midfielder Paqueta was on the end of a deep Casemiro cross to volley home at the back post.

Skipper Machado brought the teams level four minutes later.

Erick Davis' central free-kick found the centre-back near the penalty spot who lobbed his long-distance header over a stunned Ederson who appealed for offside.

Everton attacker Richarlison came close to bagging his side's second as his effort smashed the crossbar five minutes after the break.

Real Madrid's Casemiro had two chances to win the game for Tite's outfit with a header and a powerful shot with quarter of an hour remaining.

Both teams made a wave of substitutions in the closing moments and Eder Militao went close with an injury-time header.

Next for Brazil is Tuesday's friendly against the Czech Republic as they prepare to host this year's Copa America which starts on June 14.

## 'Neuer is class above ter Stegen'

AFP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich reserve goalkeeper Sven Ulreich has backed Manuel Neuer to defend his status as Germany's number one, saying that his team mate is 'better than Barcelona's Marc-Andre ter Stegen.'

"In Marc and Manuel, Germany have two very good goalkeepers, but I think Manuel is a class above," Ulreich told Sky.

Neuer will be in goal when Germany take on the Netherlands in their opening Euro 2020 qualifier, and Ulreich said that he should remain as first choice goalkeeper until the tournament next summer.

"He is just a brilliant keeper, and I think it does the team good to have such an experienced player between the posts," he said.

Ulreich kept goal for Bayern for much of last season while Neuer recovered from a series of foot injuries.

Since returning to full fitness last summer, Neuer, 32, has regained the number one shirt for both Bayern and Germany.

Yet in the national team, Neuer is under threat from 26-year-old Barcelona keeper ter Stegen.

"I want to apply pressure, and I want to push through a change in the number one spot," ter Stegen told DAZN earlier this month.

Having sent Neuer's Bayern team mates Mats



Hummels, Jerome Boateng and Thomas Mueller into international retirement as part of a transition to the younger generation, coach Joachim Low is under increasing pressure to promote ter Stegen.

"I hope the manager puts his trust in me for important games," ter Stegen told RTL after Germany's 1-1 draw with Serbia last Wednesday.

Last week, Low confirmed that Neuer will remain his number one, but said that ter Stegen is "world class" and would get chances to play in the year ahead.

"I think we are lucky to have two such great goalkeepers," said Germany and Real Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos on Saturday. "You can't really make the wrong decision when picking one or the other."

## Last-minute goal hurts India

PTI ■ IPOH

India's perennial problem of conceding goals at the fag end of a match hurt them again as Korea equalised in the final minute for a 1-1 draw in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup hockey tournament on Sunday.

India took the lead in the 28th minute through Mandeep Singh and looked set to earn their second consecutive win of the six-team tournament, but a defensive error led to Jonghyun Jang scoring from a penalty corner just 22 seconds from the final hooter.

The match was stopped in the fourth quarter due to heavy rains with around eight minutes left in the match.

India had defeated Japan 2-0 in their opening match on Saturday.

India made an attacking start with midfielder Vivek Sagar Prasad creating space inside the striking circle within the first minute but the Korean defenders held strong to avert an early goal.

The Koreans immediately launched a counter attack, entering India's circle, but defender Surender Kumar tackled well to clear the ball.

India got two more scoring opportunities but failed to convert them. A quick-thinking Mandeep Singh gave India their first penalty corner in the 10th minute with a good tackle in the baseline. The opportunity was, however, wasted due to poor execution as both sides could not score in the first quarter.

India won their second penalty corner in the initial minutes of the second quarter but the drag-flick was saved by

the Korean goalkeeper. The following minutes saw Korea execute the full-press to limit India's circle entries.

Though the tactic was good, they lost three players (Kim Hyeonjin, Jihun Yang and Lee Namyong) to green cards that reduced their strength to eight players. The situation was capitalised by India as they found easy gaps to make circle entry and the experienced Mandeep Singh struck the first goal for India in the 28th minute.

India kept a good structure, relied on strong defence with precise marking and constantly pushed the Korean defence to make forays into the striking circle.

Playing in rain after the third quarter began, a defensive error on India's part saw Korea being awarded their first penalty corner of the match. But India's rusher Amit Rohidas did well to ward off the danger and keep India's lead intact.

With a little over eight minutes remaining for the final hooter, the game was stopped due to rain. When play resumed, Korea put up an attacking front to win back-to-back penalty corners, but did not get any success.

With 53 seconds remaining, Korea won another penalty corner, but Jonghyun Jang's powerful drag-flick was brilliantly saved by India goalkeeper P R Sreejesh. A referral by Korea saw them being awarded another penalty corner and this time, Jang was on target to level the scores and snatch a draw for his side.

India will take on Malaysia on March 26, after a rest day on Monday.



## 'Indian shuttlers are dangerous opponents'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Aiming to secure his second title at the India Open, former world champion Viktor Axelsen on Sunday praised the current crop of Indian shuttlers, describing them as highly competitive and dangerous.

The former world No 1 from Denmark, who won silver at the All England Championship this month, starts firm favourite to win the India Open crown, a feat he achieved in 2017, after reaching three back-to-back summit clashes from 2015 to 2017.

"It is always really competitive, you have to always take care against them. I played Sameer at the All England, it was a tough match and it is always tough, they are always dangerous to face," Axelsen told reporters after a practice session at the IG stadium.

The Yonex-Sunrise India Open will have Kidambi Srikanth, Sameer Verma and B Sai Praneeth in the top half, while HS Prannoy starts in the bottom part of the draw, which also



features second seed Axelsen, who will receive the top billing following the withdrawal of top seed Shi Yuqi of China.

## YUFEI, SHI YUQI PULL OUT

Chinese top seeds Chen Yufei and Shi Yuqi on Sunday pulled out of the India Open on medical grounds, taking some sheen off the \$ 350,000 World Tour Super 500 tournament

beginning on Tuesday. Chen recently broke a five-year title drought for China at the All England Championship and Shi Yuqi is the defending champion.

With the top seeds withdrawing, India's PV Sindhu will receive the top billing and is firm favourite to lift the trophy for the second time after claiming the crown in 2017 and reaching the finals in the last edition.

## Osaka, Zverev stunned in Mimai; Serena withdraws

AFP ■ MIAMI

Naomi Osaka crashed out of the third round of the WTA and ATP Miami Open on Saturday as Hsieh Su-Wei exacted revenge for a painful Australian Open defeat with a 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-3 victory.

World number one Osaka had looked in little danger after winning the first set and moving a break ahead in the second.

But Taiwan's Hsieh, who was a set and 4-1 up in Melbourne earlier this year before losing to the Japanese star in the third round, battled superbly.

"This was a very emotional win for me," said Hsieh, whose 39 winners were one less than her opponent. "Any time you beat one of the top players it is amazing."

It wasn't the only shocker of the day, as Spanish veteran David Ferrer rallied to beat world number three Alexander Zverev 2-6, 7-5, 6-3 to reach the third round.

Ferrer, 36 and ranked 155th in the world, received a wild card into the tournament as he continues a limited schedule in a 2019 billed as his farewell tour.



Naomi Osaka reacts after losing point against Hsieh Su-Wei during the Miami Open clash. AP

straight early exit in succession after a third-round departure at Indian Wells.

Osaka was coming off a fourth-round exit at Indian Wells, but Hsieh's coach said her victory was

n't all that surprising.

"She has enough experience to stay strong and you saw that," French coach Frederic Aniere, who has worked with Hsieh for the last two years and is also her boyfriend,



said. "Yes it's huge, but for her it's not a big surprise."

## SERENA WITHDRAWS

The 33-year-old Hsieh will play Caroline Wozniacki in the fourth round of the women's draw, which now looks wide open following Osaka's defeat and former world number one Serena Williams's surprise exit with a left knee injury.

The American has completed just seven matches this year, withdrawing in Indian Wells with illness midway through a round of 32 match with Garbine Muguruzza.

There are surely doubts now that the 37-year-old can add to her tally of 23 Grand Slams, something which has so far proved beyond her

since returning last year after taking time out following the birth of her first child.

With Williams out, Wang Qiang, the 18th seed from China, advances to the fourth round on a walkover.

In the late game, unseeded Canadian Bianca Andreescu beat Angelique Kerber for the second time in a week 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, outlasting the German eighth seed in a two-hour, nine-minute three-setter.

The duo also met in the WTA Indian Wells final, with Andreescu winning 6-4, 3-6, 6-4.

Elsewhere, Roger Federer survived a scare but battled back from a set down to beat Radu Albot 4-6, 7-5, 6-3.

Albot posed plenty of problems for the 20-time Grand Slam winning legend, who took a while to get adjusted to the tournament's new Hard Rock Stadium venue.

But the Swiss star's class and experience eventually shone through, even though he was severely tested in his first ever meeting with the in-form Moldovan. Federer next faces 103rd-ranked Serbian Filip Krajinovic, who beat three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka 7-5, 2-6, 7-6 (7/5).