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Opp berates PM for Sarab analogy

Cong seeks apology, accuses Modi of stooping to new low; Akhilesh too hits back

PNS ■ MEERUT/NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi invented a controversial acronym — sarab — for the Opposition coalition in Uttar Pradesh at his election rally in Meerut to launch a scathing attack on the Samajwadi Party, the RLD and the BSP that have come together to take on the BJP.

A furious Congress demanded his apology and accused him of stooping to a new low.

"Sapa (Samajwadi Party) ka 'sa', RLD ka 'Ra' aur Baspa (BSP) ka 'ba', matlab 'sarab'. (Take the 'Sa' of Samajwadi Party, 'Ra' or Rashtriya Lok Dal and 'Ba' of Bahujan Samaj Party.) PM Modi said to a large public gathering as he launched his campaign in Uttar Pradesh for the Lok Sabha election.

"For UP's good health and for India's future, should you not stay away from sarab? Sapa, RLD, Baspa, ye 'sarab' apko barbaad kar degi (this sarab will destroy you)," the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being garlanded by party leaders during 'Vijay Sankalp Rally' in Meerut on Thursday PTI

Prime Minister said. Barely had he finished speaking, the Congress addressed a Press conference

condemning Modi for likening three political parties to "sarab" or liquor. "Does this kind of talk befit a Prime Minister? You are calling three political parties sarab? Is this the way a PM talks? Can the people accept this," Congress

spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala said. "Take back your words and apologise to 130 crore people, or the nation and Uttar Pradesh will never forgive you," he added.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, however, tweeted that the PM confused "sarab (mirage)" and "sharab (liquor)" because of the teleprompter. "Teleprompters exposed how those who promote hate don't know difference between 'sarab' and 'sharab'; 'Sarab' means mirage which the BJP has been showing for the last five years," Akhilesh said.

Describing the PM as "drama king" and "flop film actor", Surjewala said despite his party's differences with Mayawati, he addressed her as "ji" and this is "Indian culture".

Hitting out at Rahul Gandhi's theatre jibe over PM Modi's address to the nation after India's successful testing of anti-satellite missile on Wednesday, Modi said, "When

I was speaking about A-SAT (anti-satellite missile), some intelligent people got confused. They thought that I was speaking about sets used in theatres. "They got confused A-SAT with set used in theatres. Whether we should cry or laugh at their intellect for confusing space mission with theatre," Modi said.

In a veiled attack to the Opposition, Modi said he will give clear "hisaab" of all that his Government did. He said, "Chowkidar hoon bhai, hisaab hoga, sabka hoga, baari baari se hoga."

Lambasting the Opposition while keeping the focus on a strong Government, Modi said that his Government had shown the courage to conduct a surgical strike in all spheres — land, sky and space. The contest is between a "decisive Government and an indecisive past," Modi said a day after announcing that India had demonstrated anti-satellite missile capability by shooting down a live satellite.

Azad's seat, Pappu bone of Cong-RJD contention in Bihar



Jan Adhikar Party chief Rajesh Ranjan, aka Pappu Yadav, being offered sweet by his wife and Congress MP Ranjeeta Ranjan as he leaves his house to file nomination for Madhepura seat on Thursday PTI

Both parties insist on Darbhanga; Tejashwi, Manjhi rush to Patna

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

Days after a unanimous announcement by all the stakeholders of Bihar Mahagathbandhan, the RJD and the Congress on Thursday entered into a fresh round of sparring over two Lok Sabha seats. The development forced RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and HAM leader Jitendra Manjhi to cancel their election campaigns in the State and rush to Patna, while Bihar Congress leaders flew to Delhi to brief party high command of the "arm-twisting" by the RJD.

In the centre of the row is Congress' insistence on fielding from Darbhanga sitting local MP and former test cricketer Kirti Azad, who recently joined the Congress after resigning from the BJP.

The two parties are also at loggerheads over RJD's threat

not to back Congress MP Ranjeeta Ranjan from Supaul after her husband, Pappu Yadav, filed nomination from Madhepura as an independent candidate against veteran Sharad Yadav, who is contesting on a RJD ticket.

The RJD has staked claim to both the Darbhanga and Madhepura seats due to sizeable numbers of Muslims and Yadav votes.

Sources said the matter may be resolved amicably by Friday morning and Kirti may be fielded from either Valmiki Nagar or West Champaran. However, it is not clear what could both the parties do to persuade Pappu Yadav to withdraw from the race.

While the RJD has been playing the master in the grand alliance, several Congress leaders of Bihar claimed the party was "not getting a fair deal" in the seat-sharing arrangement and urged the high command to step in before it was too late.

Congress sources said the crisis aggravated to a level that the RJD and the Congress almost decided to part ways, however, a communication was established between Congress leaders with RJD supremo Lalu Prasad currently serving a jail term to defuse the situation.

CAPSULE

SHOTGUN MEETS RAHUL, LIKELY TO JOIN CONGRESS

New Delhi: Actor-politician Shatrughan Sinha, who is all set to quit the BJP, met Rahul Gandhi here on Thursday and is likely to join the Congress on April 6. P5

TEJ PRATAP QUILTS AS RJD STUDENTS WING MENTOR

Patna: RJD leader Tej Pratap Yadav, the elder son of party president Lalu Prasad, on Thursday resigned as the 'sanrakshak' (mentor) of the party's students wing.

SUSPENDED AAP MP KHALSA JOINS BJP

New Delhi: Sitting MP from Punjab Harinder Singh Khalsa, who was suspended from the AAP, joined the BJP on Thursday. Fatehgarh Sahib MP Khalsa joined the party in the presence of Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

BJP ALLEGES CORRUPTION IN DELHI WAQF BOARD

New Delhi: The BJP on Thursday alleged corruption in the Delhi Waqf Board and accused its chairman and AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan of handing over Waqf properties worth over ₹100 crore to unauthorised persons without following due process, a charge denied by the latter.

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Nyay will remonetise what Modi demonetised: Rahul

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said the "Nyay" scheme will remonetise what the Prime Minister demonetised and asserted that his party's anti-poverty programme has thrown the BJP into total disarray.

In an exclusive interview to PTI ahead of the 17th general election beginning April 11, Rahul said the Nyay scheme has the twin objectives of giving money to the 20 per cent poorest families in India and remonetising the economy "damaged" by demonetisation.

"What the PM has done over the past five years is to remove all money from the economy with failed policies like demonetisation and a

poorly executed Gabbar Singh Tax (GST). Informal sectors have been badly hit.

"The aim of the 'Nyay' scheme is two-fold. First is to guarantee a minimum income to the bottom 20 per cent families. The second is to remonetise the economy that has been demonetised by Modiji," Rahul said.

The Congress chief said there is a reason why the party christened the scheme Nyay, which translates to justice in Hindi. "There is another aspect to calling the scheme 'Nyay'. Why have we chosen to call this scheme 'Justice'? Because over the last five years, Mr Narendra Modi has simply snatched from poor and given nothing back.

"He has taken away from



the farmers, he has snatched from the small and medium businesses, he's taken away from the unemployed youth, he has extinguished the savings of

mothers and sisters of this country. We want to return to India's deprived sections what Modiji has snatched from them," he said.

Gambhir crisis for Lekhi

BJP may pick ex-cricketer, dump sitting New Delhi MP

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

As the BJP leadership is brainstorming to select candidates for seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, the leadership is in two minds whether to give ticket to incumbent Member of Parliament Meenakshi Lekhi or to field new candidate from the New Delhi Lok Sabha constituency.

Among the frontrunner for ticket, former cricketer Gautam Gambhir has emerged as a popular contender with backing of senior party leaders for the New Delhi constituen-



cy, a seat having political significance as it was represented by BJP veterans like Lal Krishna Advani and late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in the past.

According to reliable party insiders, Gambhir's entry into the BJP has further changed the equation. BJP vice president and Delhi BJP in-charge Shayam Jaju and Monika Arora are other contenders.

The cricketer reportedly

has been meeting various Residential Welfare Associations (RWAs) in the New Delhi constituency to strengthen his case.

BJP watchers said Gambhir chance of getting ticket has brightened after his name was included in the fresh list of 31 probable candidates for the Lok Sabha elections by the Delhi BJP. Sources in BJP said the party workers have expressed displeasure with the

functioning of Lekhi.

Also, with the AAP and the Congress attacking the BJP for the sealing drive, sources said, the BJP leadership might replace Lekhi with a new face in order to beat anti-incumbency and woo local traders as well as party workers who have accused the sitting BJP MP of being inaccessible.

Various trading bodies are upset with Lekhi citing unresolved problems like congestion and parking issue. Sealing drive by the Municipal Corporations on the order of Supreme Court appointed Environment Pollution Control Authority have only added to woes of the traders in Hauz Khas, Greater Kailash, Defence Colony, Lajpat Nagar, Green Park and South Extension.

Popular markets like Khan Market, Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar come under New Delhi constituency and party fears that the issue of sealing could upset their appecart.

US pushes draft in UNSC on Azhar, China gets jitters

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS/ WASHINGTON

Stepping up the international pressure to designate Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, the US, supported by France and the UK, has directly moved a draft resolution in the UN Security Council to blacklist the Pakistan-based terror group's chief.

Two weeks after China put a hold on a proposal to list Azhar under the 1267 al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the Council, the US circulated the draft resolution to the powerful 15-nation Council to blacklist the leader of the terror group and subject him to a travel ban, an assets freeze and

an arms embargo.

UN sources told PTI that this is the "first time" the US, the UK and France have moved a draft resolution directly in the Security Council to designate Azhar as terrorist. Unlike a listing proposal, which is generally under a 10-day no objection period, the draft resolution is not under any no-objection provision.

Reacting to Washington's move, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang in Beijing said, "This is not in line with resolution of the issue through dialogue and negotiations. This has reduced the authority of the Committee as a main anti-terrorism body of the UNSC and this is not conducive to the solidarity and

The world cannot afford China's shameful hypocrisy toward Muslims. On one hand, China abuses more than a million Muslims at home, but on the other it protects violent Islamic terrorist groups from sanctions at the UN — US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo



only complicates the issue."

"We urge the US to act cautiously and avoid forcefully moving forward this draft resolution," Geng said.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made an apparent reference to China

blocking the proposal when he said Wednesday that China abuses over a million Muslims at home, but "protects" violent Islamic terror groups from UN sanctions.

Sources in New York said that the draft resolution will be

discussed informally and then it goes to the Council. However, it is not yet decided by when a vote would be held on the draft resolution, during when it could again face a veto by China, which has in the past blocked bids to blacklist Azhar.

Sources said the draft resolution would condemn "in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly suicide bombing" on February 14 in Jammu & Kashmir's Pulwama district that killed 40 CRPF personnel.

In New Delhi, sources said, they were aware that a draft has been initiated for consideration of Council members to list Azhar in the sanctions regime as part of global efforts to fight against terrorism.

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HC: Appoint 600 contract pharmacists in 3 mths

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The high court of Uttarakhand has directed the state government to appoint 600 pharmacists on contract in a period of three months. Hearing on the petition filed in the matter, the single bench of justice Manoj Tiwari directed the State Government to hold talks with the Central Government and completing the appointment process in the next three months, ascertain appointment letters to the pharmacists.

During the previous hearing on the petition, the high court had directed the State to clarify the position regarding appointment of pharmacists on contract. In response, the State submitted on Thursday that the recruitment advertisement regarding the pharmacists had not been cancelled by the state. Talks were being held with the Centre regarding the fulfillment of recruitment procedure standards.

According to the case details, Pauri resident Manoj Tripathi had filed a petition in



2017 stating that during 2016, the state government had issued a recruitment advertisement for 600 posts of pharmacists on contract. Thousands of candidates eligible for the posts had applied in response to the advertisement. In the past, the State Government had told the court that the selection process would be completed soon. On this basis, the court had disposed of the petition. However, as the State Government did not move ahead with the selection process, Roshan Kumar from Pauri had filed a second petition in the case. In his petition, Kumar had stated that the

Government was going to cancel the recruitment advertisement and not take the recruitment process forward. The petitioner state that this was akin to playing with the future of the applicants. During the hearing, the counsel for the petitioner also informed the court that in the past the State government had stated in the past that it was proceeding with the recruitment process but this was not done. Taking serious cognisance of the matter, the high court single bench gave the State Government three month time to expedite the procedure for appointment of pharmacists on contract.

HC stays tender process for chopper service to Badri-Kedar

PNS ■ NAINITAL

Ordering a stay on the tender process for helicopter service to Badrinath and Kedarnath till further orders, the high court of Uttarakhand has given the State government to submit its response within two weeks.

According to the case details, RD Group from Dehradun had filed a petition stating that after disaster experienced in the state, the government had granted permission to 14 helicopter service provider enterprises to build helipads in order to facilitate transportation to Badrinath and Kedarnath. These companies built 14 helipads while the government also constructed four helipads. During 2016 the State had issued a government order prohibiting the operation of more than six helicopters at a time in the Mandakini valley from the safety point of view. It had also been decided



that permission would not be granted for construction of new helipad in the future. However, after the issuance of this order, four companies reportedly built four new helipads. The district magistrate had complained to the government regarding this but no action was taken by the government, the petitioner alleged. Further, on February 5, 2019, the state government invited tenders from companies for operation of helicopter services to Badrinath and Kedarnath.

However, on February 16, the civil aviation secretary reportedly made amendments to provide backdoor entry in the process to the four companies which had reportedly constructed helipads after the government order against it. The tender process has been challenged by the petitioner in the high court. After hearing the petition, the single bench of justice Alok Singh ordered a stay on the tender process and sought a response from the State Government within two weeks.

Sangats start departing from Doon, people throng Jhanda Mela

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Even as people continued to throng the Jhanda Mela, groups of devotees (Sangats) began to return to their respective hometowns.



People visit stalls set up as part of Jhanda Mela. Pioneer photo

After celebrating the raising of the new flag (Jhanda) at the Durbar Sahib followed by the Nagar Parikrama, the Sangats started departing on Thursday. The groups of devotees met the Mahant Devendra Das, seeking his blessing before departing from Dehradun.

A number of people from Dehradun also visited the holy place and the Jhanda Mela on Thursday. Expressing his views on the occasion, the Mahant Devendra Das said, "Sangat expressed affinity and love towards the citizens of

Dehradun. Every year devotees not only from India but from all around the world reach Dehradun to attend this auspicious occasion.

It is the love of the people of the city who welcome the Sangat in such a way that devotees reach Dehradun every year. I thank the people of the city as it is due to their cooperation that the event was held successfully. I also want to thank all the citizens again for welcoming the Sangats with so much love. I wish that Shri Guru Ram Rai ji blesses us all," he added.

Guv attends convocation at IIM Kashipur

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya participated in the seventh convocation of Indian Institute of Management (IIM) at Kashipur on Thursday. Congratulating the students on the occasion, the governor said that education has many purposes. But, simply ensuring a good career or working in multi national companies should not be the only purpose of education. Institutes like IIM should promote the research work for the welfare of the society also, she added. The governor also presented medals and degrees to the students on the occasion.

Expressing her views on the occasion, Maurya said that Uttarakhand is a land of opportunities. Educational institutes of international repute along with qualitative human resources are available in the state. The state also has a good growth rate. She further said

that Uttarakhand can achieve big targets of development with the help of expertise of the institutes like the IIM.

Maurya also stressed on the need for joint efforts involving the technical expertise of GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology along with the management expertise of IIM Kashipur to develop a new business model for the agriculture sector in the state. Elaborating the importance of medicinal herbs and horticultural products in the mountainous regions of the State, the governor said that scientific



farming and integrated management of international level is needed in this context. She further said that equal opportunity for women in campus placement is first step towards gender equality. Later companies should provide them with opportunities to grow along with equal rights in decision making process. There should

not be any sort of discrimination between male and female personnel. The governor said that a happy and prosperous India should be the aim of every student. The nation needs not only smart and capable managers but also leadership dedicated to progress of the nation, added Maurya.

Congress rebels become 'Chowkidar'

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

With leaders and supporters of various parties shifting sides, the Congress suffered another setback when its former party president from Roorkee rural, Satyapal joined Bharatiya Janata Party. Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Satyapal said, "I like the nationalistic spirit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and I liked his policies so I joined the BJP." He added that Congress had no policy for the country and the nationalism of BJP is praiseworthy so from today "even I am Chowkidar".

The local Mahila wing head of the Congress, Kiran Singh also joined BJP along with Desh Raj Pradhan, Ram Kumar, Satendra Verma, Saurabh Choudhary and others. They were greeted by the sitting MP and BJP candidate from Haridwar constituency, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', cabinet minister Madan Kaushik



and MLA Swami Yateeshwaranand at a hotel here. Meanwhile, local Congress leader Sanjay Agarwal said that Satyapal had joined BJP without any information to the Congress leadership. The reason for him changing over to the BJP was not known to

the Congress, added Agarwal. Later, at the inauguration of his election office, Nishank said that the Congress rebels had held various senior positions in their political career had now chosen to be 'Chowkidars' of the country by joining BJP. He said that BJP

will surely win on all five Lok Sabha seats in the state including Haridwar seat and the vision to make Narendra Modi the PM again shall be materialised. He opined that Modi was messiah for the poor people and was working to make India a super power.

Panel formed for screening adverts

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

As per the directives laid down by the Election Commission of India, for any political advertisement on the print, electronic or social media, prior permission will be needed from district level media certification and monitoring committee. Any such advertisement or promotional material needs to be verified by the committee before making it public.

In a statement issued by the Haridwar district election officer it was stated that during the Lok Sabha elections, media certification and monitoring committee (MCMC) has been formed for verification and authorisation before final publishing and telecast of any political advertisement in television, radio channels, audio visual networks, cinema halls, social media, e-papers.

district election officer and district magistrate Deepak Rawat said that all independent candidates and registered political parties are informed that for all advertisements and promotional news, they must take prior consent certificate. This directive for this consent has been given as per the directives of Supreme Court of India that any cable television operator or TV channel will not display any promotional material which is not as per the Constitutional laws and which is likely to hurt the sentiments of someone. Any such material which instigates to crime, or is anti-social, targeting any particular caste, race or creed shall not be allowed. The advertisement must be as per model code of

conduct. Rawat further said, "Those media enterprises having head office in Uttarakhand must submit two copies of advertisement in Hindi and English in digital (CD) form to the office. The advertisement can be printed or broadcast only after due consent within 24 hours. If the media certification and monitoring committee raises an objection, that would be full and final. Any violation in implementation of the decision by MCMC will be liable to face action."



AARDO delegation visits USAC

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

An eight member delegation from the African Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) visited the Uttarakhand Space Application Centre here on Thursday. Delegation members from countries including Palestine, Oman, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Taiwan and Malaysia visited USAC as part of an ongoing training

programme facilitated by the Indian Agricultural Statistics Research Institute. On Thursday, the delegation was informed about the uses of remote sensing and geographic information system (GIS).

The USAC director professor MPS Bishr made a presentation of the various works being undertaken by the centre. He informed them about the use of remote sensing and GIS in agriculture, horticulture,



disaster management, land-

use, land-cover and other aspects. He also informed the visitors about the uses of space technology in various spheres. USAC scientists Priyadarshi Upadhyay and Divya Uniyal informed the

AARDO delegation about the method used by USAC to calculate crop area and forecast yield before harvest through the use of remote sensing and GIS. They informed that presently the centre is using this method to provide the said information related to six different crops. In addition to this, the area covered by horticulture in seven districts of the state has also been calculated by the centre.

Temperature set to rise from April 1

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The temperature is set to rise in the state from the end of this month. Though there is also the possibility of light rain in various parts of the state during this time, the average temperature in Uttarakhand is expected to start rising noticeably from April 1.

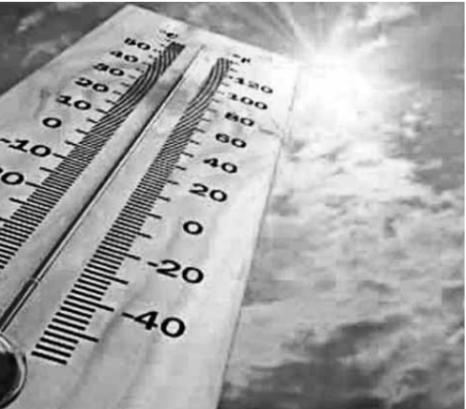
As per data provided by the State Meteorological Centre, in the middle of March, the temperature recorded indicated a rise. The average maximum temperature recorded from March 21 till now is 31.5 degree Celsius and the minimum temperature recorded was 16 degree Celsius.

Explaining further, the director of the State Meteorological Centre, Bikram Singh said, "Yes, we have recorded a rise in temperature after March 21 in the state. It is a start and as per our observations, the temperature will rise more by March 29 and 30. However, there is also the possibility of light rainfall in a

majority of places of Uttarakhand by March 30 or 31. This may lower the temperature a little bit."

The meteorological centre director further said, "From April 1 the temperature will rise three or four degree Celsius above normal in the state. In the plain areas, the temperature will rise three to four degrees while in the mountains the temperature will rise by four to five degrees."

Asked whether the rise in temperature can be viewed as the advent of summer he said, "No it cannot be said that it marks the arrival of summer. The rise in the temperature in



the middle week of March and April is normal. One or two-degree rise does not signify this. We are still recording maximum temperature which is around 30 degree Celsius while after April 1 or 2 the temperature is likely to increase and touch nearly 33 to 34

degree Celsius. When the maximum temperature will be recorded near 35 degree Celsius then only can we say that the temperature has actually risen considerably compared to the recent past. The possibility of recording such temperature rise is likely by May."

Sky to remain clear on Friday

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Meteorological Centre has forecast a clear sky for Dehradun and rest of the state on Friday. The sky is to remain mainly clear to partly cloudy. Dry weather is likely to prevail in the state.

The maximum and minimum temperature for Dehradun are likely to be around 32 degree Celsius and 16 degree Celsius.

Meanwhile, the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded at various places of the state on Thursday were 31.4 degree Celsius and 15.6 degree Celsius in Dehradun, 31.5 degree Celsius and 14.9 degree Celsius in Pantnagar, 21.5 degree Celsius and nine degree Celsius in Mukteshwar and 21.4 degree Celsius and 11 degree Celsius in New Tehri respectively.

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385905000075	Preeti Rani	160105000305	Saubhagya Tandon	Branch Name: Rudrapur	
Branch Name: Haridwar			160105001130	Raj Kumar	053305002129
023905003967	Sandeep Kumar Bhatia	160105001368	Naseer Husain	Branch Name: Rudrapur-U.S.Nagar	
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PM accuses Cong of duping people for decades



Candid Notes

By Gajendra Singh Negi

RICHIE RICHES

A cursory look on the declaration of assets made by our beloved Netas during filing of nomination papers for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections shows that there could be a doubt or two about their willingness and capacity to serve society, a pledge they repeat with monotonous regularity. However, when it comes to their personal fortunes they appear to have a 'Midas touch' in everything they do. The affidavit of the State president of the ruling outfit submitted with the election commission shows that his personal wealth has swelled by more than Rs one crore in the last two years; a feat which could send any professional financial planner worth his salt scurrying for cover. Not to be left behind, the assets of the state chief of the opposition party surged by more than Rs 1.25 crore though his annual income showed some downfall. The other contestants of major political parties which included two former chief ministers and a serving member of upper house of parliament are also very affluent. It would be prudent if our Netas could add another dimension in their enterprise to serve the nation by narrating their inspirational 'rags to riches' story to the students of business schools.

ISSUELESS ELECTION

Though both the major political parties of Uttarakhand have fielded the presidents of their state units, two former chief ministers, sitting members of Lok Sabha and one Rajya Sabha MP as candidates for the Lok Sabha elections, it is depressing to note that basic issues of public interests are gravely missing from political discourse. The election campaign which is growing shriller as the April 11-- the voting day in the Himalayan state is drawing near-- is solely revolving around persona of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It appears that Congress has fallen to the game plan of BJP to make these elections Modi centric as its leaders are busy attacking Prime Minister and responding to the pro Modi crescendo generated by the saffron party. With statements like 'Forget who the candidate is, Vote for Modi' and 'Modi is contesting in all the seats' forming the crux of BJP's game plan which at the moment appears electorally correct for the party, the Congress should strive hard to shift focus on issues of common man.

HIGH ON HAWALA

As the crucial Lok Sabha elections are coming closer, the Babus who are part of the gargantuan election machinery are busy poring themselves as all spruced up for ensuring free and fair elections. These officials are consistently claiming that they are keeping a close watch on the flow of cash, liquor and suspicious bank transactions. Targets are given from top to the departments like police and excise for making catches of cash and liquor to hammer home the point that the election machinery is smoothly functioning. However barring few cases involving petty amounts-- when compared with the magnitude of money involved in elections-- these agencies have failed miserably. It is common knowledge that parallel systems of money transfer like Hawala and not banks are used by the politicians to make transactions in their endeavour to win elections and the fact remains that the officials seldom make a crackdown on this trade to cleanse the electoral system, which is the case this time too.

'5 BJP MPs from State failed miserably'

Launching an attack on all five sitting BJP Members of Parliament (MP) from Uttarakhand, the Chief Spokesperson of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC), Mathura Dut Joshi has said that they have failed miserably in raising the issues related to Uttarakhand in the parliament. Addressing media persons at the state party office on Thursday, he said that people of the state had sent BJP candidates to parliament from all the five Lok Sabha seats but all of them have failed completely. Joshi said that the MP from Nainital- Udhm Singh Nagar constituency, Bhagat Singh Koshyari raised only 10 questions during five years in parliament while the Tehri MP, Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah asked 33 questions. Similarly Almora-Pithoragarh MP Ajay Tamta asked 69 questions, Garhwal MP Major General B C Khanduri (Rtd) raised 104 questions and Haridwar MP Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' asked 389 questions in parliament during their entire term of five years. He said that top BJP leaders of the state are now trying to mislead the people of Uttarakhand again by using the name of Modi. Terming the five year tenure of Narendra Modi at centre as lacklustre, the Congress leader said that price rise and unemployment has reached to its peak. He said that the decisions like implementation of GST and enforcement of demonetization has given hardship to the people. Joshi said that recent incident in which mining mafia assaulted police personnel in a police post under the patronage provided by the education minister of state underlines the condition of law and order in Uttarakhand. He said that both the union and state governments have done nothing but to mislead the people but the people of the state have understood the game plan of the BJP and are determined to teach it a lesson this time. Joshi said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his speech at Rudrapur on Thursday didn't touch even a single burning issue of Uttarakhand. "His speech today reminded people the false promises he made during the campaign for the Lok Sabha elections of 2014," he said.

Modi engages mammoth crowd in Rudrapur

OP AGNIHOTRI ■ RUDRAPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a scathing attack on the Congress party calling it a party of liars which has duped various sections of society for decades.

Addressing thousands of people gathered at Rudrapur in Udhm Singh Nagar here on Thursday, the prime minister connected with the masses and addressed specific issues to state how the nation and Uttarakhand had progressed during the five years of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance government at the centre.

Greeting the public in the Kumaoni language while starting his address, he said that the results of the 2019 elections are clearly visible in this 'mini-India'. He said, "Uttarakhand is like a beautiful definition of India. It has the Ganga-Yamuna rivers and including Badrinath and Kedarnath, the Char Dham shrines. I add a fifth Dham- Sainik Dham in description of this state which also has Indian Military Academy, Rashtriya Indian Military College, Garhwal, Kumaon and Gorkha regiments."

Engaging the public in his trademark style, he asked whether it was right to question the courage of the brave army men after the surgical strike. He further said, "The opposition says I should not talk of air-strikes but shouldn't national security be an issue? I am not afraid of the terrorists because such fear is the culture of the Congress. Was it right to question the air-force after we sent the killed terrorists in their own home? Will you forgive those who disrespect our armed forces? The servicemen had for long been demanding One Rank One Pension and the Congress claimed it had made a provision of Rs 500 crore for this. We have already provided Rs 35,000 crore for this. For four generations the Congress had been using the slogan of

Modi woos ex-servicemen with 'Sainik Dham'

WHY KHANDURI WAS REMOVED FROM PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE, ANGRY CONGRESS RETORTS

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In an apparent eye on the voters of armed forces personnel, ex-servicemen and their family members, Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to Uttarakhand as 'Sainik Dham'. Amid thundering applause of the big crowd which had gathered, the PM said that apart from four Dhams, I add fifth Dham in Uttarakhand which is 'Sainik Dham'. Experts believe that Modi has played a master stroke by this statement and it would surely sway the ex-servicemen voters in the favour of BJP. It is pertinent to mention here that Congress President Rahul Gandhi during his recent Dehradun visit had visited the families of three martyrs who sacrificed their lives in and after Pulwama attack.

Similarly, defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while attending a programme to felicitate war widows made it a point to touch feet of the war widows.

Political observers link the Modi's 'Fifth Dham' statement as an extension of the race among the political parties to woo the ex-servicemen voters. In its election campaign in Uttarakhand, the BJP leaders are highlighting the surgical strike and recent air strikes on

Garibi Hatao and now again they are using it. This shows the mentality, lies and failure of the Congress."

Earlier, he said that the BJP is moving ahead on the issue of development.

He said that when the Congress was in power in

Uttarakhand maintains traditional link with forces

Uttarakhand has rich tradition of sending its youth to serve in the armed forces of the country.

A rough estimate put the number of armed forces veterans and Veer Naris (widows of armed forces personnel) at 1.70 lakhs similarly the state is home to about thirty thousand retired paramilitary forces personnel. Similarly, an estimated 1.50 lakh personnel belonging to the state are serving in different wings of armed forces of the country.

The inclination to serve in armed forces of the country is so high in this predominantly mountainous state that almost every family has someone who is in armed forces.

NUMBER OF EX-SERVICEMEN AND VEER NARIS

SN	DISTRICT	NUMBER
1	PAURI	30104
2	DEHRADUN	28689
3	PITHORAGARH	24690
4	NAINITAL	14075
5	CHAMOLI	14745
6	BAGESHWAR	11440
7	TEHRI	6592
8	HARIDWAR	5366
9	CHAMPAWAT	4669
10	RUDRAPRAYAG	4899
11	UDHAM SINGH NAGAR	9238
12	UTTARKASHI	1033
13	CHAMPAWAT	4669
TOTAL		169519

the targets inside Pakistan as major achievements of Modi government. Its leaders are also reminding that it was BJP which fulfilled long standing demand of One Rank One Pension (OROP) of ex-servicemen. Meanwhile the Opposition Congress party has reacted sharply to Modi's 'Fifth Dham' statement. The spokesperson of the state con-

gress Garima Dasauni asked that if PM has so much respect for the army personnel then why Major General B C Khanduri (rtd) was unceremoniously removed from the post of Chairperson of parliamentary committee on defence. She said that banners and posters of Khanduri were nowhere to be seen during rally of Modi in Rudrapur.

Uttarakhand there was a spate of scams. "Who forced the youth to migrate from the mountains? In seven decades, who kept most of the villages here without roads? During the first three years of our government at the Centre, the Congress hampered our devel-

opmental efforts in this state.

The then chief minister was busy attending the Delhi Durbar where the focus was on ensuring employment for the berozgar of one particular family. They were not bothered about the state. The culture of the Congress deteriorated con-

Dassauni: Modi should have mentioned about scams during BJP rule

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Taking exception to the Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's jibe on Congress during his rally at Rudrapur in Udhm Singh Nagar on Thursday in which he termed it as a party of scams, the state unit of Congress party has said that PM should also have mentioned the string of scams which occurred during the BJP regime in state.

The spokesperson of the state Congress Garima Dassauni said that PM should have thrown light on Kedarnath reconstruction scam, liquor scam, mining scam, Sitigra, mango orchard scam, Selaqui IT Park land allotment scam, hydropower project scam, zinger seed scam,

polyhouse scam, NH-74 scam, rice scam, SHDCUL and Stamps scam during his speech. She said that the people of the state have made up their mind for a change and it would get reflected when the results of the elections of are declared. Continuing her assault on BJP, Dasauni said that thankfully Prime Minister Narendra Modi didn't forget the name of the BJP candidate while addressing people in Rudrapur like BJP leader Thaaar Chand Gehlot did while addressing a public meeting at Karanpur in Dehradun recently.

She claimed that in this meeting Gehlot said that though he doesn't remember the name of BJP candidate you should vote for Narendra Modi.

Administration denied permission for 'Mai Bhi Berozgar' protest: Cong

The Youth Congress has charged the state government for trying to suppress its 'Mai Bhi Berozgar' (I am also unemployed) programme which was to launch from Thursday under the direction of BJP.

The chief spokesperson of Youth Congress Vikas Negi said that a permission was sought from the state administration to organise the protest programme but it was not granted.

He alleged that the administration acted under the pressure of BJP to suppress democracy. Negi said that the Youth Congress would not get bogged down by such tactics and would continue its programme.

Earlier, CM Trivendra Singh Rawat said that the previous CM and Congress candidate from the constituency-Harish Rawat was one of the most corrupt CMs of the state. On the other hand, the BJP had fielded Bhatt who had risen from poverty through hard-work and was taintless. He also appreciated the Central Government for providing developmental package of more than ₹1,00,000 crore to the State.

Voters give mixed opinion about 'NOTA'

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Voters in the State's provisional state capital Dehradun have mixed opinion about None Of The Above (NOTA) option. Some voters state that NOTA is a powerful expression of disagreement with the parties contesting for power. On the other hand, some voters believe that using this option is a waste of vote.

This correspondent asked various voters about their opinions and the importance of NOTA for them.

The voters had a mixed opinion regarding the use and importance of NOTA.

While some opined that the option provides the power to their opinion of candidates, others stated that NOTA is a waste of vote because in any condition one political party is going to be in power. Rather than using NOTA one should choose the best among the contesting candidates, they said.

College student Jyoti Rautela said, "I think NOTA gives us the power to express the opinion that any of the candidates fielded by any political party is not worthy of getting elected to office. It is of major importance which gives us



the power to tell the truth as we see it." Another voter, Rahul Patwal opined, "In my opinion, NOTA is an opportunity to show my disappointment towards political parties or the candidate getting nominated to contest the poll. I strongly disagree with the opinion that it amounts to wasting a vote because it is our right. Also, NOTA should be taken seriously by the election machin-



ery and the political parties as it is not just a 'no' but an expression that means more work and development is needed in our country." Parul said, "I think NOTA gives me the power to say that I don't find potential in any of the candidates contesting in the election. I think it is very important that the real value of the NOTA option is taken seriously by the political



parties. This should be considered as pressure by the parties to grow more and develop more like a party and govern the country in a better way." Rajendra Singh a shopkeeper said, "I think NOTA is a waste of vote. You vote for any party or not, one political party and their candidates will be elected. The party that secures maximum votes in the elections will be elected to office. It is



better to choose the best party and vote for it so that the better option is elected to office," he opined. Anshu Khetan said, "I think NOTA is a waste of a precious vote. I agree with the point that this option expresses the disappointment of the voters with the political parties. However, in any case, one political party will be elected. Everyone should



analyse before deciding to vote like researching about past manifesto of the party and whether they were able to fulfill their promises or not, achievements of the party and other aspects. If anyone is voting for a candidate then voters can research more about work done by the leader who has filed nomination in the elections."

'Girl child our pride' meet held in N'garh



Declining ratio, continued foeticide decried

PNS ■ BHAPUR (NAYAGARH)

The Gania Unnayan Committee, Nayagarh in association with the District Health Committee organised a district-level event 'Our girl, our prided' here on Wednesday.

Gania Unnayan Committee president and social activist Usha Patnaik presiding over the programme expressed concern over the decreasing ratio of girls in the district. There were 851 females compared to 1,000 males in the district.

Nayagarh CDMO Dr Shwetakumar Mahapatra, Dr Suresh Chandra Mishra, Lalita Mishra, Swadesh Mishra and Arun Kumar Mohanty attended as guests.

The speakers mentioned that in 2006 the female infanticide rate in the district was highest in the State and both the Government and non-government organisations took many steps to check it. But it is highly unfortunate that the situation is still alarming.

On the occasion, the speakers and participants took oath to sensitise the public to check female infanticide and minor girl marriage.

Odisha Red Cross champions in nat'l training



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Red Cross Society Odisha State branch participated in the national Youth Red Cross training camp held at Hampi in Karnataka from March 23 to 27 under the guidance of State branch secretary Major Dr Kalpana Das.

The Odisha branch bagged first prizes in four of six events which first AID practical performance, cultural performance, ethnic wear performance and power point presentation of different activities held in the State.

The branch was awarded as

champion in the camp. Laxman Swain, Kishore Ghadei, Rashmi Ranjan Swain, Jasobanta Patra, Khambeswar Ghadai, Trilochan Dandasena, Jitendra Naik, Deepak Kumar Patra, Dibya Ranjan Thakur, Hemanta Naik and Raju Kumar were the participants.

THE ODISHA BRANCH BAGGED FIRST PRIZES IN FOUR OF SIX EVENTS

Samal gets Nat'l Lalitakala Award



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

They received the awards from Goa Governor Drudula Sinha

Dhaul College of Art and Crafts Principal Chandan Kumar Samal and artist Jaya Jena have been conferred with the Jatiya Lalitakala Akademi awards for the stone sculpture titled 'The Construction'.

They received the awards from Goa Governor Drudula Sinha at a special programme held in the Sir JJ School of Art premises in Mumbai recently.

Samal's sculpture 'Human Thinking' made of granite stone was highly lauded. Earlier, Samal and Jen had received the award for the sculpture titled 'Prakruti' in 2007.

Ex-Jajpur MP Jena quits BJD

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Jajpur MP Mohan Jena on Thursday quit the BJD expressing resentment over ticket allotment for the forthcoming polls.

Jena resigned from the primary membership of the BJD by sending a letter to party supremo and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

"I have been ignored by the party and they have not included me in any events or activities organised in these years. In fact, I have not even been offered a mere chair at CM's events. The party is being controlled by an IAS officer and has no concern for the State," Jena told reporters, who was denied a ticket this year.

Notably, the BJD has nominated Sharmistha Sethi as its candidate for the Jajpur Lok Sabha seat this time.

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Mock drill on radiological emergency held



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A mega mock exercise on the radiological emergency was conducted at the Esplanade Mall, Rasulgurh Square here on Thursday.

Following an explosion at the entrance of Esplanade, fire and police control room were informed immediately by the mall authorities. Shortly PCR Van/MRDS (Mobile Radiation Detection System) arrived and declared the presence of radiation at the incident site.

Accordingly the information passed to State Emergency Operation Control Room (SEOC). The service of NDRF was requisitioned. In the meantime, teams of Odisha Fire Services, ODRAF, Civil Defence, Red Cross and NGOs reached the site. On reaching the spot, the NDRF demarcated the area into hot and warm zones. Victims on the incident site were removed and sent for higher medical care after first aid. Thereafter, the area was decontaminated and declared safe. The mock exercise was conducted from 9.30 am till 10.20 am.

Senior Commandant Jacob Kispotta, Deputy Commandant BK Das, Assistant Commandant GS Patel, of the 03 Bn NDRF Mundali and OSDMA CGM PK Nayak participated, among others.

AAP MP Khalsa joins BJP, may contest from Amritsar

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Am Aadmi Party's "suspended" MP from Fatehgarh Sahib Harinder

Singh Khalsa on Thursday became the part of the saffron brigade. Struggling to find a

suitable candidate for the crucial Amritsar Lok Sabha seat, the BJP may field its new Sikh face from the holy city.

Khalsa, who won the Fatehgarh Sahib seat in 2014 general elections routing traditional parties, was suspended from the party's primary membership by AAP in 2015 for "anti-party activities", and initiated disciplinary proceedings against him.

He joined the saffron party in the presence of Union Ministers Arun Jaitley, Hardeep Puri and the party's general secretary (organisation) Ram Lal. Notably, BJP is considering

to add star power to its election campaign in Amritsar by fielding actress Poonam Dhillon or Indian cricketer Harbhajan Singh. However, after receiving adverse reports, BJP has reportedly dropped Dhillon's name from the list.

Besides, name of Union Minister and party's Sikh MP Hardip Puri was also doing rounds for the seat.

As the cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu was winning the prestigious Amritsar seat for BJP, the party is finding it tough to find his replacement. During previous general polls, BJP laid its bet on

the party stalwart Arun Jaitley but lost to Congress veteran Capt Amarinder Singh.

In 2017 bye-election, BJP fielded its Sikh leader Rajinder Mohan Singh Chhina, who also lost to Congress' Gurjit Singh Aujla.

Now, to win back the seat, BJP is looking for a strong panthic leader to represent the constituency, and Khalsa fits the prerequisites for the same.

A former Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, Khalsa resigned in protest against the 1984 Operation Blue Star. At that time, he was posted in Norway.

As the Congress government filed some cases against him, he stayed in Norway, running an eating joint and working as a postman there.

He returned to India in 1990, after being assured that the cases against him would be dropped.

Later, he served as the chairman of Punjab Human Rights Organisation, an NGO that highlighted the "excesses committed by the state government during the anti-insurgency operations", and as secretary of the Shromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC).

Prize in letter writing completion to encourage voters registration

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A letter writing completion is being organized in Haryana to encourage the youth to get their names registered in the electoral rolls ahead of polling day on May 12 in Haryana.

The winners of the competition will get Rs 31,000 as first prize and Rs 21,000 as second prize. Similarly, two prizes of Rs 11,000 each will be given under the third prize. Apart from this, 30 prizes of Rs 500-500 will be given as consolation prizes.

"The last date for sending letters for the competition is April 30. The last date for getting the name registered in voters' list is April 12," said a spokesman of the office of chief electoral officer, Haryana.

The spokesman said that the youth who are in the age group of 18 to 25 years as on January 1, 2019 and who have got registered their names in the electoral rolls before sending the letter, can participate in the competition.

The letter have to be addressed to the chief electoral officer, Haryana and will have to express his or her opinion regarding the importance of getting registered in the voting list and also, the importance of exercising their franchise in Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

The participants would also have to take a pledge that they will cast their vote in Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, which should reflect in their letter. The letter should be brief and well-documented. The contestant has to write his letter on a postcard or on inland letter, and below it, the contestant will have to mention his name, address, name of the assembly constituency, number, part number of voter list and voter number, the spokesman added.

EVMS CAN'T BE TAMPERED: HRY CEO

Haryana Chief Electoral Officer, Rajeev Ranjan on Thursday reiterated that the electronic voting machine (EVM) is technically completely secure and nobody could hack or tamper it.

"There is a doubt in the minds of the people that software of EVM could be changed or hacked. But it is completely impossible to do this as there is no connectivity of any kind in the EVM," he said adding that connectivity is required to hack any device.

TEMPORARY CANCELLATION / DIVERSION / PARTIAL CANCELLATION / REGULATION / RE-SCHEDULING OF TRAINS DUE TO TRAFFIC BLOCK

In order to strengthen the infrastructure and to enhance safety standards, Ambala Division of Northern Railway shall take Mega Traffic Block for 17.15 hrs. on 30/31.03.2019 to undertake the work of regirdering of Bridge No. 219 between Saharanpur-Tapri Stations on Saharanpur-Delhi Section, Consequently the following trains will temporarily be affected as under:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No.	Train Name	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
54540	Ambala Cantt. Jn. - Hazrat Nizamuddin Express	on 30.03.2019
54539	Hazrat Nizamuddin Jn. - Ambala Cantt. Express	on 31.03.2019
64557	Delhi Jn. - Saharanpur Express	on 30.03.2019

DIVERSION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Train Name	Diversion Route	Date of passing
14522 Ambala Cantt. - Delhi Express	Diverted via Dudia	on 30.03.2019
14682 Jalandhar City - New Delhi Express	Diverted via Dudia	on 30.03.2019
04402 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Anand Vihar Terminus Express	Diverted via Dudia	on 30.03.2019
14318 Dehradun Jn. - Indore Express	Diverted via Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019
12018 Dehradun Jn. - New Delhi Express	Diverted via Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019
19020 Dehradun Jn. - Bandra Terminus Exp.	Diverted via Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019
54472 Rishikesh Jn. - Delhi Express	Diverted via Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019
54476 Haridwar Jn. - Delhi Express	Diverted via Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019

PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No. & Name	Train Partially Cancelled Between Stations	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
14512 Saharanpur Jn. - Allahabad Express	Saharanpur - Meerut City	on 30.03.2019
64562 Ambala Cantt. Jn. - Delhi Express	Saharanpur - Delhi	on 30.03.2019
64561 Delhi Jn. - Ambala Cantt. Express	Delhi - Saharanpur	on 31.03.2019
54304 Kalka Jn. - Delhi Express	Ambala - Delhi	on 30.03.2019
54542 Ambala Cant Jn. - Meerut City Express	Saharanpur - Meerut City	on 30.03.2019
74021 Delhi Jn. - Saharanpur Express	Tapri Jn. - Saharanpur	on 30.03.2019
74024 Saharanpur Jn. - Delhi Express	Saharanpur Jn. - Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019
51912 Saharanpur Jn. - Delhi Express	Saharanpur Jn. - Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019
51908 Saharanpur Jn. - Shamli Express	Saharanpur Jn. - Tapri Jn.	on 30.03.2019

REGULATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Regulation of Trains at Station
18238 Amritsar Jn. - Bilaspur Express	Train will be Regulated for 30 minutes on 30.03.2019 on Ambala Cantt. Jn.
14631 Dehradun Jn. - Amritsar Express	Train will be Regulated for 30 minutes on 30.03.2019 on Moradabad Jn.
13151 Kolkata Jn. - Jammu Tawi Express	Train will be Regulated for 60 minutes on 29.03.2019 on Moradabad Jn.
54471 Delhi Jn. - Rishikesh Express	Train will be Regulated for 90 minutes on 30.03.2019 on Delhi Jn.
54473 Delhi Jn. - Saharanpur Express	Train will be Regulated for 60 minutes on 30.03.2019 on Delhi Jn.
64565 Moradabad Jn. - Saharanpur Express	Train will be Regulated for 40 minutes on 30.03.2019 on Moradabad Jn.

RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Rescheduled of Trains
12238 Jammu Tawi - Varanasi Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from Jammu Tawi at 16:00 hrs. instead of 14:00 hrs. (120 minutes late) on 30.03.19
12232 Chandigarh Jn. - Lucknow Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from Chandigarh at 22:10 hrs. instead of 21:10 hrs. (60 minutes late) on 30.03.19

Note:- For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Chander Mohan keen to contest from Karnal on Cong ticket

NISHU MAHAJAN ■ CHANDIGARH

Former Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Chander Mohan, who hogged the limelight for giving up his political career, family and religion for love in 2008, is keen on contesting the ensuing Lok Sabha polls on a Congress ticket from Karnal parliamentary seat.

Once known as Chand Mohammad, husband of late Fiza Mohammad alias Anuradha Bali, Chander Mohan is looking to make a strong comeback in the state politics by entering the electoral fray in Lok Sabha polls.

"If the Congress party restores its faith in me, I am interested in contesting from Karnal Lok Sabha constituen-

cy," says Chander Mohan, while talking to *The Pioneer*.

Chander Mohan, the elder son of three-time former Haryana CM Bhajan Lal, had served as Deputy Chief Minister during Bhopinder Singh Hooda's first term as Chief Minister of Haryana.

In his last election outing, Chander Mohan had lost in 2014 assembly polls from Nalwa constituency, which was his first political venture outside Kalka. He was earlier elected to the Haryana Assembly from Kalka constituency, adjoining Chandigarh, in a 1993 by-election and again in 1996, 2000 and 2005.

Reacting to the reports that he has staked his claim on Congress' ticket from Hisar parliamentary seat, from where his younger brother Kuldeep Bishnoi is seen as a frontrunner as party candidate, Chander Mohan says, "No, this is not true. I am interested to contest from Karnal."

Karnal being Chief Minister Manohar Lal's home turf is likely to witness a prestige political battle in the parliamentary polls. Karnal is represented by Manohar Lal in the State Assembly and BJP is likely to field a political heavyweight to retain this seat won by BJP's Ashwini Kumar Chopra in 2014 polls.

In Congress, former Speaker and Ganaur MLA Kuldeep Sharma is learnt to have sought a ticket for his son from Karnal seat.

Caste equations have always played a key role in this constituency with Brahmin community playing the predominant role and electing nine Brahmin candidates out of 12 elections in Karnal since 1976.

Chander Mohan, a Brahmin himself had attempted to contest from Karnal in 2014 Lok Sabha polls but had to withdraw his candidature, only a day after he was nominated as Haryana Janhit Congress candidate for the constituency.

Interestingly, the Karnal seat was left by the BJP for its alliance partner HJC in 2014 Lok Sabha polls but after the controversy surrounding

In his last election outing, Chander Mohan had lost in 2014 assembly polls from Nalwa constituency, which was his first political venture outside Kalka. He was earlier elected to the Haryana Assembly from Kalka constituency, adjoining Chandigarh, in a 1993 by-election and again in 1996, 2000 and 2005

Chander Mohan, the HJC had opted to take the Sirsa Lok Sabha seat instead and the BJP had immediately announced Ashwini Chopra as its candidate for Karnal. HJC had in 2016 merged into the Congress.

Chander Mohan's father Bhajan Lal had won the Karnal seat in 1998 elections and had also faced defeat for the first time in his political career in 1999 elections from the same seat.

As the Congress gears up to take on BJP and other political parties on 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana, Chander Mohan says that the party is in a strong position and will win on all seats in the state.

He also hits out at BJP Government at the Centre and in Haryana for their poor performance during their tenure.

"The BJP has done nothing during its tenure in Haryana and at the Centre. They (BJP) were zero," the former Deputy CM says.

Article 35A Constitutionally vulnerable: Jaitley

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley on Thursday said Article 35A, which restricts non-permanent residents and those outside the Jammu & Kashmir to buy property in the State, was "surreptitiously" included by a presidential notification in the Constitution in 1954 and is "constitutionally vulnerable".

The BJP leader who is also chairman of party's campaign committee said the article was also hampering economic development of the State.

The Jammu & Kashmir is currently under President's rule after BJP pulled the plug on the coalition Government in the militancy infected border State.

In a blog, Jaitley said the seven-decade history of the State of Jammu & Kashmir

confronts changing India with several questions.

"Was the Nehruvian course, which the State had embarked, a historical blunder or was it the correct course to follow? Most Indians today believe that it is the former.

"Does our policy today have to be guided by that erroneous vision or an out of box thinking which is in consonance with ground reality?" Jaitley wondered.

The senior BJP leader and in-charge of the party's campaign committee for general elections said Article 35A was "surreptitiously" included by a presidential notification in the Constitution in 1954.

Article 35A, he said, was neither a part of the original Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly, nor did



it come as a Constitutional Amendment under Article 368 of the Constitution which requires an approval by two-

third majority of both Houses of Parliament. "It came as a presidential notification and is a surreptitious executive insertion in the Constitution."

Jaitley further said the Article gives the right to the State Government to discriminate between two State citizens living in the State on the basis of declaring some as permanent residents while leaving out

In a blog, Jaitley said the seven-decade history of the State confronts changing India with several questions. Was the Nehruvian course, which the State had embarked, a historical blunder or was it the correct course to follow? Most Indians today believe that it is the former

Does our policy today have to be guided by that erroneous vision or an out of box thinking which is in consonance with ground reality?" Jaitley wondered

Article 35A was "surreptitiously" included by a presidential notification in the Constitution in 1954

Article 35A, he said, was neither a part of the original Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly, nor did it come as a Constitutional Amendment under Article 368 of the Constitution which requires an approval by two-third majority of both Houses of Parliament. "It came as a presidential notification and is a surreptitious executive insertion in the Constitution."

Article 35A, which is constitutionally vulnerable, is used as a political shield by many but it hurt the citizen of the State the most. It denied them a booming economy, economic activity and jobs," Jaitley said

resources and its ability to raise more has been crippled by Article 35A.

No investor is willing to set up an industry, hotel, private educational institutions or private hospitals since he can neither buy land or property nor can his executives do so, he said.

"Article 35A, which is constitutionally vulnerable, is used as a political shield by many but it hurt the common citizen of the State the most. It denied them a booming economy, economic activity and jobs," Jaitley said.

The Minister added that the present Government has decided that the rule of law in the interest of the people of Kashmir valley and the larger interest of India must equally apply to Jammu & Kashmir.

the others.

It also discriminates between permanent residents of the State and all other Indian citizens living elsewhere, he added.

"Lakhs of Indian citizens in Jammu & Kashmir vote in Lok Sabha elections but not in Assembly, municipal or Panchayat polls. Their children cannot get Government jobs. They cannot own property and their children cannot get admitted to Governmental institutions.

"The same applies to those who live elsewhere in the country. The heirs of ladies married outside the state are disinherited from owing or inheriting property," the Minister added.

He said the State does not have adequate financial

Modi biopic: Vivek, Sandeep appear before election panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bollywood actor Vivek Oberoi and producer of film "PM Narendra Modi", Sandeep Singh on Thursday met the Election Commission (EC) after complaints were filed over the release of the upcoming movie "Prime Minister Narendra Modi" the biopic on the life of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and ban of its trailer in light of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) being in force ahead of the Lok Sabha election. The duo had discussions with the poll officials on the release date of the Modi's biopic which is set to release on April 5, merely a week before the first phase of Lok Sabha elections on April 11.



The Model Code of Conduct came into effect from March 10 across the State on the day when the Election Commission announced the dates for elections which are scheduled to begin from April 11, while the results are to be announced on May 23

biopic on PM Modi starring Vivek Oberoi and produced by Sandip Ssingh — alleging that the film violates the model code of conduct ahead of the Lok Sabha 2019 elections.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting with the Election Commission officers in New Delhi, senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal not only targeted the BJP party, but also the makers (Producer Sandip Ssingh) and actors (Vivek Oberoi) of the PM Modi biopic saying that the film is a "corrupt practice" and "launch of the film is motivated" ahead of the General Elections.

A delegation of the CPI and the CPI(M) on Tuesday met Election Commission officials and demanded that release of the film based on the life of Prime Minister Narendra Modi be deferred, claiming it to be a "propaganda material".

CPI's D Raja and CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Nilotpal Basu met the poll panel officials on March 25 and also pointed out serious law and order situations in Tripura and West Bengal.

The Model Code of Conduct came into effect from March 10 across the State on the day when the Election Commission announced the dates for elections which are scheduled to begin from April 11, while the results are to be announced on May 23.

Directed by Omung Kumar, the biopic on India's incumbent Prime Minister - Narendra Modi - features Vivek Oberoi and Boman Irani in pivotal roles. Prior, it was expected to release on April 12, but given the elections were due to begin a day earlier, the release was preponed to April 5.

notice to the makers of the biopic after it felt that the film was allegedly violating the Model Code of Conduct. On 20 March, East Delhi Returning Officer K Mahesh, suo motu, issued notices to the production house and music company behind the film, and two leading newspapers for publishing advertisements of the biopic.

Congress and the CPM had complained to the commission about the film's release, saying it's being done with political intent. Senior Congress leaders including Kapil Sibal had held a meeting with the Election Commission on Monday demanding to postpone the release of the film "PM Narendra Modi" — the

film is a "corrupt practice" and "launch of the film is motivated" ahead of the General Elections.

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Shatrughan meets Rahul, likely to join Cong on April 6

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha MP Shatrughan Sinha on Thursday ended speculation over his joining the Congress after meeting party president Rahul Gandhi and both sides announced that the BJP rebel will induct himself in Congress next week. Sources said that the joining which was to happen on Thursday itself had to be delayed due to revival of the tension within the RJD and Congress in the Bihar mahagathbandhan.

After meeting Rahul Gandhi, Sinha announced he will join the Congress. "Joining will happen soon, we will give you a positive news during Navaratri. I will join Congress now," Sinha said talking to media later. AICC incharge of Bihar Shaktisinh Gohil tweeted that Sinha will join the party on April 6.

Sources said that Sinha's joining was marred by the immediate friction between the two major grand alliance partners while RJD complaining that Sinha could have been even RJD's bet. Sinha, Congress and RJD finally decided to abort the move to join and buy peace for sometime.

"RJD was said to be keen on having Sinha as its candidate from Patna Sahib constituency. Sinha and RJD supreme Lalu Prasad share a cordial relation. But the Congress has always contested the Patna Sahib seat whenever it allied with the RJD in Bihar.

So, the party wanted to field Sinha on its own symbol. This tug-of-war had apparently caused the delay in decision of Sinha joining the grand old party," said a senior Congress leader.

Sinha is a two-time sitting BJP MP from Patna Lok Sabha



Rahul Gandhi meets BJP MP Shatrughan Sinha in New Delhi on Thursday PTI

seat and has been critical of the Narendra Modi Government for past couple of years. He has been sidelined in the BJP, which replaced him with Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad as the Lok Sabha candidate from Patna Sahib constituency.

On Wednesday, Bihar Congress election campaign committee chairman Akhilesh Prasad Singh had said that

Shatrughan Sinha would join the party "in New Delhi on March 28 at 11.30 am". Sinha had also announced that Sinha will be the Congress candidate from Patna Sahib.

On his part, Sinha praised Rahul Gandhi after he promised to implement a minimum income guarantee scheme if the Congress is voted to power in the Lok Sabha polls.

SC to hear on April 8 pleas challenging 10% quota to EWS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would hear on April 8 a batch of petitions challenging the Centre's decision to grant 10 per cent reservation in jobs as well as admissions to educational institutions to economically weaker sections across all classes.

A Bench comprising Justices SA Bobde and SA Nazeer said it would also deal with the contentions raised by some of the petitioners who have said that the matter was required to be adjudicated upon by a Constitution Bench.

At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, sought an adjournment saying he and Attorney General KK Venugopal were appearing in a matter on Thursday before a Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi.

"I am on my legs before the Constitution Bench. Please accommodate me," he told the Bench.

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for one of the petitioners, referred to the apex court's last order passed in the matter on March 11 and said the issue of whether these pleas should be referred to a Constitution Bench should be considered. PTI

EC issues notification for phase-3 of LS polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The process of filing nominations for the third phase of Lok Sabha election involving five out of 40 seats scheduled on April 23 in 115 seats spread across 14 States. The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday issued a notification for phase three Lok Sabha polls.

All seats in Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, and Puducherry will go for polling in this phase. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal will head for voting in all the seven phases of the general elections.

According to the Election Commission, the parliamentary constituencies going to polls in the third phase in Uttar Pradesh include Moradabad, Rampur, Sambhal, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etah, Badaun, Aonla, Bareilly and Pilibhit.

Jhunjharpur, Supaul Araria, Madhepura Khagaria in Bihar and Surguja (ST), Raigarh (ST)

Janjgir-Champa (SC), Korba, Bilaspur, Durg and Raipur in Chhattisgarh will head for voting in the third phase.

The Anantnag seat in Jammu & Kashmir will also go for polls in this phase. While the nominations begin on Thursday, the last date for filing of filing papers is April 4 and scrutiny of nominations will be held on April 5. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is April 8, the notification said.

The election will pit the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance against mostly different Opposition groupings in various States, including Congress, the Left and regional forces who are continuing to work out a grand alliance to minimise a division of votes against the saffron party.

The BJP has worked out a seat-sharing formula with some new allies and several old partners. However, the Opposition parties are yet to do so in several States.

83% MPs crorepatris, says ADR report

33 per cent of sitting MPs have criminal cases against them

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 83 per cent of 521 sitting MPs are "crorepatris" and 33 per cent of them have criminal cases against them. The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), has compiled the report after analysing self-sworn affidavits of the 521 MPs out of 543 members elected to the Lok Sabha in the 2014 elections. "Out of the 521 Sitting MPs analysed, 430 (83 pc) are

crorepatris. While 227 of them are from BJP, 37 are from Congress, 29 from AIADMK, among others," the report said. The average assets per sitting MP for Lok Sabha 2014 elections are ₹14.72 crore.

While 32 sitting MPs have declared more than ₹50 crore worth of assets, only two sitting MPs have declared assets less than worth ₹5 lakh. At least 33 per cent sitting MPs have declared criminal cases against them in the affidavits.

"While 106 of them have declared serious criminal cases including cases related to murder, attempt to murder, communal disharmony, kidnap-

ing and crimes against women, 10 sitting MPs have declared cases related to murder. Out of these, 4 sitting MPs are from BJP, 1 MP from INC, NCP, LJP, RJD, Swabhimani Paksha each and one MP is an Independent," the report said.

"14 sitting MPs have declared cases of attempt to murder. Out of these, eight sitting MPs are from BJP and one MP each from INC, AITC, NCP, RJD, Shiv Sena and Swabhimani Paksha. 14 sitting MPs declared cases related to causing communal disharmony. Out of them, 10 sitting MPs are from BJP and 1 MP from TRS, PMK, All

India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen and AIUDF each," it added.

In another report on performances of the MPs, the ADR said that seven MPs from Delhi had the highest average attendance and on an average, they attended 289 out of the 312 sittings. On an average, MPs asked 251 questions and attended 221 out of the 312 sittings. Two MPs from Nagaland attended 88 sittings on an average, the lowest in the last five years. Among political parties, the maximum number of questions were asked by 18 Shiv Sena MPs, each of them on an average asking 639 questions.

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After giving clearance wildlife board rejects railway line through Melghat Tiger Reserve

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two years after giving nod to the conversion of the Akola-Khandawa railway line, passing through the heart of Maharashtra's Melghat Tiger Reserve, from metre gauge to broad gauge, the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) has recently asked the railways to look for alternate route.

The move follows after the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) as well as the Dehradun based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in a meeting in February 2019 of the high-level wildlife panel headed by Union Environment Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan which is responsible for framing India's policy and strategy for wildlife conservation, opposed the proposal.

They asserted that the upgradation of the track will fragment the tiger habitat given that of the 35 km long railway lines which falls inside the Tiger Reserve and proposed to be upgraded, 18 km pass through the core area, thus having serious impact on the rich flora and fauna of the region.

The NTCA recommended that the only feasible mitigation is 'avoidance' of the broadening of gauge through the



area of tiger reserve and options for the alternate routes/alignments bypassing the tiger reserve should be taken up by the railway authorities.

As per the minutes of the Standing Committee of the NBWL, NTCA Member Secretary Anup Nayak pointed out that "alternate alignment surveyed by the railways which bypasses the tiger reserve can facilitate greater economic development of the region by connecting the near-by 29 villages and large population living in the area.

"After discussions, the Standing Committee recommended to return the proposal to the Maharashtra Government with request to review the proposal in the light of the recommendations of the NTCA and WII," said the minutes of the meeting.

The members also noted that two applications were filed before the Central Empowered Committee against the approval of the upgradation of the track.

Spread over an area of 1,673 sq km, the Melghat Tiger Reserve, which is home to about 50 tigers is connected northwards to Satpada forests.

In 2017, the Standing committee of the NBWL had approved the proposal subject to the mitigation measures recommended by the NTCA and WII.

However, wildlife activists had slammed the move with some of them even approaching the Supreme Court led Centrally Empowered committee (CEC) against the railway plan arguing that it should be shot down as it will endanger the tigers besides other wildlife in the region.

Probe panel reveals irregularities at Safdarjung Hospital's Sports Injury centre

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Central Health Ministry probe panel set up to audit the country's top Sports Injury Centre at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi has found huge irregularities in its functioning — ranging from violation in procurement of equipments and facilities, financial mismanagement to serious discrepancies in appointments of healthcare professionals.

The panel after submitting an interim report to the Union Health Ministry on October 2018 which said that "available records and evidence, prima-facie, indicate collusion of SIC with some suppliers thereby

causing loss to the patients and public exchequer," has recently submitted yet another extensive 62 pages report in the matter.

The Ministry in September last year had set up a seven-member panel, headed by Joint Secretary Rajeev Manjhi, to take up the special audit of SIC's functioning in various areas ranging from equipments and facilities for operation theatres to their procurement and maintenance.

Both the reports have recommended a detailed probe into the matter in view of "blatant violation of CVCs instructions and has sought immediate action against those respon-

sible for irregularities." The matter is now under the scanner of Union Health Minister JP Nadda. When contacted, Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan said appropriate action will be taken in the matter.

The huge gross irregularities have also pointed needle of suspicion towards the then director of the SIC, Dr Deepak Chaudhary.

Intriguingly, the Ministry in December 2018 had issued a notice to Dr Chaudhary too for "taking up a commercial assignment with a private hospital without prior permission from the Government". Sources said that pending reply, the Ministry has put on hold his

request for voluntary retirement from Dr RML Hospital which he had joined after serving several years in the SIC. The probe panel in its interim report said "On scrutiny of the files pertaining to procurement of equipments and facilities for operation theatre and physiotherapy units of the SIC, it has been observed that there are blatant violations of general financial rules (GFRs) and the procedures adopted are repugnant to CVC instructions.

"With regard to usefulness and usability of the equipment with almost similar functions have been proposed to be procured twice by furnishing a cer-

tificate that the said equipments are being procured not as replacement or additional but as a first-time procurement. Frequent purchases have been resorted to for certain equipments such as arthroscopy 30 and 70 degrees, and camera etc.

"It is surprising that these equipments have been condemned even during the manufacturer's warranty period. ...many equipments are not in working conditions. There is no clarity with regard to CAMC/AMC.... It has also been observed that Director, SIC indentured some expensive equipments for procurement projecting quite high usability, whereas the same are being uti-

lized much below the projected usability of the equipment ie even less than 10 per cent, thus suggesting intractuous expenditure for extraneous considerations," further said the report.

The panel has also suspected nexus between SIC, SFH and M/S Mahajan Imaging, a private diagnostic player. "The centre (SIC) made recommendations by concealing some vital information which resulted in extending favour to M/Mahajan Imaging by relaxing the terms of agreement and to neutralize substantial amount of penalty accruing to the Government, which could have been

imposed because of violation of the terms of the contract and the decision in this regard has been taken at the level of Director (SIC) and MS Safdarjung Hospital. Besides there is no system in place to monitor the free cases as agreed..." notes the report.

Also, "...there is no rationalized purchase procedure followed by procurement of implants in SIC. Documents made available to the panel evidently indicate of a nexus between SIC and a particular supplier who has been supplying almost 90 per cent of implants at exorbitant rates.

"The records suggests that the provisions of the GFRs have

been twisted ...while a close scrutiny of the operation theatre records reveal that disproportionately large number of surgeries were performed by using implants of certain makes (Deputy and Arthrex).

The final 62 pages report too has recommended further detailed investigation in view of "blatant violations of GFRs/CVCs instructions" and large scale irregularities.

"The Indenting officer (HOD) may be made personally accountable for submitting false indents," said the report even as it has sought annual audit of the high-value equipments and devices among others.

Modi attacks Cong, NC, PDP

Holds them responsible for current J&K situation



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated with a photo of Vaishno Devi shrine during a public rally ahead of Lok Sabha elections, at Dumri village near Jammu on Thursday

The whole country is talking in one voice and these Congress people are talking in a different voice. Do you accept this language of Congress? Of PDP? of NC? Pakistan applauds their language
NARENDRA MODI

and Pakistan”.

He said even those parties who ruled the State of Jammu & Kashmir for many years are doing the same. Commenting on the language of opposition, Modi said that Pakistan applauds such voice.

“The whole country is talking in one voice and these Congress people are talking in a different voice. Do you accept this language of Congress? Of PDP? of NC? Pakistan applauds their language,” said Modi.

Further escalating its sharp attack on the Opposition, Modi said, “What is beyond comprehension is Congress’ attitude. Is it the same Congress that Sardar Patel was a part of? Is it the same Congress that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was a part of, and fought for India’s independence,” Modi asked.

Modi said, if you monitor social media and TV channels in Pakistan, terrorists and their handlers are all praying to get rid of ‘Chowkidar’ and victory of ‘mahilavati alliance’ in Lok Sabha polls. In his 35 minute speech Prime Minister also presented a comprehensive report card of his government before the electorate and sought another term to carry forward the journey on road to prosperity.

**MOHIT KANDHARI ■
AKHNOOR, JAMMU**

Bolstering Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) election campaign on two Lok Sabha seats from Jammu region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched a ‘blistering’ attack on three rival political parties — the Congress, the National Conference (NC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and held them responsible for the current situation in Jammu & Kashmir.

Prime Minister accused the Congress and its policy makers for not according top priority to the issues of National Security and striking ‘discordant’ notes against the wishes of the countrymen at a crucial juncture.

He also pointed fingers towards the Congress party for taking support of two Kashmir-based regional parties for its own survival in the

electoral fray in Jammu ignoring the statements and stand taken by the leaders of these parties in Kashmir valley.

The Congress had earlier fielded joint candidates, from Jammu-Poonch and Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat, after stitching a tactical alliance with the NC to defeat the BJP. The PDP has also extended support to the two Congress candidates in Jammu province.

Before kick-starting his election campaign, Prime Minister Modi remembered party stalwart Prem Nath Dogra and saluted members of the Dogra community. He also greeted them in chaste ‘Dogri’ language amid thundering applause.

“I am happy that when I have set out to reach out to the people of this country ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, I came to Jammu first”, Modi said.

Addressing a mammoth

election rally in the border belt of Akhnoor Prime Minister said, “Congress, NC & PDP are responsible for the problems Jammu & Kashmir faces today. It is because of them that Kashmiri Pandits faced so much trouble. Terrorism took roots in the State. Sadly, national security is not a priority for them, they only care about power and their dynastic politics”.

He said “leaders of these three political parties in the state are losing their sleep following complete crackdown by the security agencies on terrorist organisations and their sympathisers in the State.

Referring to Balakote strikes on terror factories active in Pakistan, Modi said, “ever since India demonstrated its capacity to destroy terror infrastructure deep inside Pakistan one after the other senior congress leaders are speaking against the national interest and giving clean chits to terrorists

BJP sells Ram but fails on Mandir agenda: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In an apparent bid to hit the BJP where it hurts the most Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday questioned the saffron outfit’s failure to keep its promises particularly the one on Ram Temple at Ayodhya.

Mounting a blistering attack on the BJP for dividing India in the name of religion and in the name of Lord Ram but failing to proceed a single step towards constructing the Ram Temple in Ayodhya the Bengal Chief Minister on Wednesday said “when the election comes you (BJP) go about selling Ram’s name for votes. But after the elections you forget your promises”.

Comparing her achievements in restoring places of worship to their lost glories Banerjee said “Despite making tall promises before the elections you (BJP) have failed to construct a Ram Temple in five years but here. I have renovated a whole lot of places of worship — providing added facilities in — Dakshineswar, Belur Math, Tara Peeth Furfura Sharief Mamata BANERJEE



Despite making tall promises before the elections you (BJP) have failed to construct a Ram Temple in five years but here. I have renovated a whole lot of places of worship — providing added facilities in — Dakshineswar, Belur Math, Tara Peeth Furfura Sharief Mamata BANERJEE

all communities. Citing how the people of Bihar, UP, Rajasthan, Gujarat and other places feel “more than at home in Bengal,” she said the situation in those places were not the same.

“You will not find lynching in Bengal like it happens in other places,” she said attacking the BJP leaders for accusing of stopping Durga Puja celebra-

tions in her State. “Can these people say anything about the real symbolism behind Durga or Kali or do they remember the mantras (of the Mother Goddess)? I am sure they don’t. But I do though I do not sell about my religion.”

Banerjee who once again assured the nation that GST will be reviewed and demonetisation will be investigated said how the BJP was driving a wedge in the Indian society by setting one community against the other and how they are dividing India to rule the country.

“We will not divide the country but we will review GST, probe demonetisation” and double MNREGA days to ensure increased employment, Banerjee said.

The Chief Minister who had earlier disapproved of the Prime Minister’s announcement of India’s path-breaking progress in the anti-satellite warfare instead of the DRDO chief said, “the BJP is adopting all kinds of mean ways to gain votes.”

She had earlier attacked Finance Minister Arun Jaitley who accused her of demeaning India’s Defence programmes. “Jaitley ji is an educated man, a good looking man but how can he say like that? He said that I am criticising India’s nuclear and other programmes. Why should I do so? I only objected to the announcement made by the Prime Minister. This should have been done by the DRDO chief,” she said.

Kerala BJP: We’ll raise Sabarimala during campaign

Thiruvananthapuram: BJP Kerala unit chief PS Sreedharan Pillai on Thursday said the party will raise the Sabarimala issue over women’s entry and the alleged harassment suffered by the Lord Ayyappa devotees during the campaign in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

If the law permits the Centre to intervene in the matter, the BJP would take all possible steps to bring a new legislation to protect the temple’s customs and traditions, the leader said in a statement here.

“Each BJP candidate has the right to raise the issue of assault on Lord Ayyappa devotees in Sabarimala and the attempts to destroy their faith during the campaign in a peaceful manner,” he said. Pillai’s statement came hours after his reported remarks that the BJP will not use Sabarimala as campaign issue in the LS polls triggered a controversy.

A section of the media reported that his statement was contradictory to the stand taken by K Surendran, the BJP-NDA’s candidate in Pathanamthitta (where the Sabarimala temple is located), who had made it clear that the Sabarimala row would be one of the major campaign issues.

“I have never said anywhere that Sabarimala issue would not be raised during our election campaigns. The NDA candidate in Pathanamthitta and the party cadre there have every right to raise the issue during campaigns in accordance with the law,” he said. PTI

Don’t need certificate of patriotism: Priyanka



Rae Bareilly: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Thursday said she has been given the key task of strengthening her party in the Uttar Pradesh — even beyond the Lok Sabha elections — and ensure it comes back to power in the 2022 Assembly polls.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra meets various delegations and groups at a guest house, in Rae Bareilly, on Thursday

Hitting out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Priyanka, who is the Congress’ eastern Uttar Pradesh in charge, also said her party which fought for freedom does not need a “certificate of patriotism” from those who sought to apologise

to the then British rulers.

Addressing block presidents, booth workers and the members of gram panchayat and zila panchayat of the party in Rae Bareilly, the constituency of her mother and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, she said: “I have been given the task to strengthen the party in the state. And I will ensure that the party comes to power in the State in 2022.”

“And once the Government is formed in Uttar Pradesh, I can ensure that we are not

going to be defeated for next 10-15 years on the basis of the development works.”

Priyanka Gandhi had made the same point at her programme near Gauriganj in Amethi — the constituency of her brother and Congress President Rahul Gandhi — on Wednesday night.

“Are you preparing for the elections? I am not talking about 2019, but 2022,” she asked the workers, indicating the reason for her appointment

In Amethi, Priyanka avoids getting weighed in ‘laddoos’

Amethi: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra wriggled herself out of her party workers demand to get herself weighed in ‘laddoos’, making the local leader who had planned the event to sit on the scales instead. After day-long meetings with partymen in her brother Rahul Gandhi’s Parliamentary constituency on Wednesday, Priyanka Gandhi arrived at the residence of local leader Fateh Bahadur around midnight, where the host had the weighing scales ready.

She, however, turned down the request by her party workers to sit on them against ‘laddoos’ and instead got the host to sit on them, much to the amusement of onlookers.

She also got a promise from the partymen to work harder not just for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections but also for the 2022 Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh. PTI

in the party’s long-term strategy in the State.

“And we do not need certificate of nationalism from anyone who never participated in the freedom struggle and who wrote letter to the Britishers seeking apology,” she said. IANS

Bihar BJP president fails to pacify rebel

Gets mobbed, heckled by their supporters

PTI ■ KATIHAR/PATNA

Bihar BJP president BNityanand Rai was on Thursday mobbed and heckled by supporters of a party rebel, who has filed his nomination as an Independent candidate from Katihar Lok Sabha constituency notwithstanding the seat going to alliance partner JD(U) headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

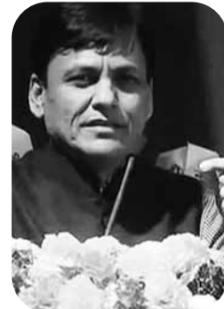
Rai called on BJP MLC Ashok Kumar Agarwal at his residence and spent over two hours trying to persuade him to withdraw his nomination in favor of the JD(U) candidate Dulal Chandra Goswami, who would seek to wrest the seat for NDA from Tariq Anwar of the Congress.

The BJP had won the seat three times on the trot in 1999, 2004 and 2009 with support of the JD(U). In 2014, when Nitish Kumar went it alone, the three-time BJP MP Nikhil Kumar Choudhary finished the runner-up while Anwar then with Sharad Pawars NCP and a several-term MP from Katihar, won after a gap of more than a decade.

The JD(U)’s Ram Prakash Mahto had finished third with just over one lakh votes, way behind the BJP candidate, who polled nearly 3.16 lakhs. However, the seat went to the JD(U) this time after the party return to the NDA as the alliance had to make many adjustments to accommodate the Chief Ministers party.

However, when Rai emerged from Agarwal’s house here, he found himself surrounded by hundreds of the MLCs supporters who had kept shouting slogans outside during the period the state unit chief remained inside.

As Rai tried to get inside his vehicle, he had to jostle with the agitators who were quelled



by the police before he could depart. Later, Agarwal made his intentions clear when he defiantly said *roothne manaane ka daur khatm hua* (the time for sulking and cajoling is over). Besides Katihar, the BJP is also faced with the embarrassment of rebellion by its leader in another constituency Banka where former MP Putul Kumari has filed her nomination as an Independent.

On Wednesday, State vice-president and in-charge of party headquarters Daves Kumar had shot off missiles to the rebel candidates to withdraw their nominations and warned them of disciplinary action.

Putul Kumari had made her electoral debut in 2010 as an Independent candidate and won in the bypoll that was necessitated by the death of her husband Digvijay Singh, who had served as a minister in governments headed by VP Singh and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Singh had pulled off a stunning victory in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls when the former JD(U) leader won the seat fighting as an Independent after falling out with Nitish Kumar even though the elections were swept by the NDA which bagged 32 out of 40 seats in the State.



LAKSHMAN SETH JOINS CONG, TO CONTEST FROM TAMLUK

Kolkata: Former CPI(M) MP Lakshman Seth on Thursday joined the Congress along with his supporters, WBPC president Somen Mitra said. He said Seth has been nominated by the Congress to contest the Lok Sabha election from his home turf of Tamluk constituency. Seth had won thrice from Tamluk when he was in the CPI-M but was expelled from the party in March 2014 for anti party activities.

443 IN FRAY FOR T; PAPER BALLOT IN NIZAMABAD

Hyderabad: Sticking to their guns, over 170 farmers remained in the fray in the Nizamabad Lok Sabha constituency from where Chief Minister K Chandrababai Rao’s daughter K Kavitha is seeking re-election with withdrawal of nominations coming to an end on Thursday. The Election Commission said polls in Nizamabad would be conducted through paper ballot as there are 185 valid candidates. Election officials said 60 nominations were withdrawn out of the 503 valid nominations. A total of 443 candidates remained in the fray with Nizamabad topping the list with 185 candidates, a top state Election Commission official said.

ULFA FACTION DENIES POLL BOYCOTT, BUT NOT TO VOTE

Guwahati: The Ulfa faction negotiating peace with the Central Government will refrain from voting in the Lok Sabha polls, said Ulfa general secretary Anup Chetia on Thursday. However, the outfit will not boycott the polls as reported in a section of media. “There is no question of boycotting the Lok Sabha polls,” he said.

KANHAIYA RAISES ₹25 LAKH BY CROWDFUNDING

Patna: The crowdfunding campaign of former JNU student leader Kanhaiya Kumar, contesting as the CPI candidate from the Begusarai Lok Sabha seat in Bihar, appears to have become a hit. In just two days, Kanhaiya Kumar has raised over ₹25 lakh, CPI leader Satyanarayan Singh said on Thursday. Kanhaiya Kumar launched a crowdfunding campaign in partnership with OurDemocracy, a platform to collect money to contest the elections.

‘MODI HAI TO MUMKIN HAI’: SENA ON MISSILE LAUNCH

Mumbai: Hailing India’s successful anti-satellite missile test, the Shiv Sena Thursday said it was possible because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi being at the helm of affairs in the country. Modi on Wednesday announced India demonstrated the anti-satellite missile capability by shooting down a live satellite, describing it as a “rare” achievement that puts the country in an exclusive club of space super powers. Praising the country’s achievement, the Sena, in an editorial in party mouthpiece ‘Saamana’, said, “Modi hai to mumkin hai...On land and in space.” “Till yesterday, India was a nuclear power...(former) prime ministers — from Indira Gandhi to Atal Bihari Vajpayee — worked very hard for the purpose. However, during Modi’s tenure we have become a space super-power. It has all been done by our scientists,” it said.

ACTIVISTS TO CONTEST AGAINST PM, RAHUL

Hyderabad: A group of activists from Nalgonda in Telangana and Prakasam in Andhra Pradesh are planning to contest against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress chief Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha elections with a view to highlighting issues of fluoride-hit areas in these regions. Jalagam Sudheer, a US-returned software professional and native of Nalgonda district, said they have decided to file nominations from Varanasi and Amethi from where Modi and Gandhi are contesting.

Electioneering hits new low in UP

LEADERS RESORT TO PERSONAL ATTACKS

Lucknow: With electioneering for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls gaining steam in Uttar Pradesh, political leaders are increasingly resorting to personal attacks on their adversaries. If the maverick BJP MLA from Bairia, Surendra Singh hit the headlines for his remarks against BSP supreme Mayawati, Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister Shrikant Sharma hit a new low by making indecent comments on Congress chief Rahul Gandhi.

The Bairia MLA had said Mayawati gets facials done and her hair coloured even though she is 60-years-old. He also reportedly made offensive remarks against UPA chair-

person Sonia Gandhi and Haryana singer-dancer Sapna Chaudhary, evoking widespread criticism from political parties and social media users.

A media agency quoted him as saying that both Sonia Gandhi and Sapna Chaudhary used to work as dancers. “Rahul’s mother (Sonia Gandhi) was also in the same profession in Italy and his father made her his own. He (Rahul Gandhi) should also take the family tradition forward and make Sapna his own,” the MLA said. The BJP legislator, who is known for his controversial

statements, had earlier termed Rahul and his sister Priyanka “Ravana and Shurpanakha”, and accused Mayawati of “murdering” a woman’s dignity by join-

SP LEADER MAKES SEXIST REMARKS AGAINST JAYA PRADA GETS RAP FROM NCW, AKHILESH

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav directed party workers not to make indecent comments against women after the National Commission for Women pulled up a party leader for allegedly making sexist remarks against actor-turned-politician Jaya Prada. SP Sambhal district

president Firoz Khan had allegedly said Jaya Prada would “enthral the people of Rampur with her ghungaroes and thumkas”. In a short video clip, Khan is heard saying “Rampur ki shaamein rangeen ho jaayengi ab jab chunavi mahual chalega (Rampur’s evenings will turn colourful this election season)”, seemingly referring to Jaya Prada, who recently joined the BJP. PTI

a “coward and impotent”. The comments triggered a war of words between the two parties as well as on social media platform. PTI



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Telugu Desam party chief Chandrababu Naidu during a public rally, ahead of Lok Sabha elections in Vijayawada on Thursday

SP declares 5 more candidates

MLA Puja Pal to contest from Unnao

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party on Thursday declared five more candidates for Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh, taking the total number of it candidates declared so far to 27.

The list includes the names of former MLA Puja Pal from Unnao and one candidate from Madhya Pradesh. The party had earlier declared a list of 23 candidates, including one from

Madhya Pradesh. Beside Pal, former SP Minister Bhagwat Sharan Gangwar was given ticket from Bareilly, Nasir Quereshi from Moradabad, Shyam Sunder Singh Yadav from Jhansi and Nathuni Prasad Kushwaha from Kushinagar.

The surprise inclusion in the list is Bahujan Samaj Party leader Raju Pal's widow Puja Pal. Raju Pal was shot dead in daylight by Atiq Ahmad in Allahabad. Later the BSP fielded Puja Pal and she won the 2012 Assembly poll comfortably but lost in the 2017

Assembly election. This time, Puja has been pitted against Sakshi Maharaj, the sitting MP of Bharatiya Janata Party from Unnao, and former Congress MP Annu Tandon.

"Puja Pal is 'Gaderia' by caste and since Unnao has a sizeable population of Lodhi and Mallah, she seems to be a good bet," a senior SP leader said. On the other hand, former MLA from Nawabganj (Bareilly) and a minister in Akhilesh Yadav government, Bhagwat Sharan Singh Gangwar has been fielded from Bareilly.

The inclusion of Nathuni Prasad Kushwaha's name in the SP list also came as a surprise. Kushwaha, a veteran SP leader, contested five elections — three Assembly and two parliamentary — but lost all. He will be pitted against RPN Singh of Congress and Vijay Dubey of BJP from Kushinagar in east UP. The BJP has denied ticket



to its sitting MP Rajesh Pandey from Kushinagar this time and has replaced him with Vijay Dubey.

The SP has also fielded turncoat Naser Quereshi from Moradabad. He contested two Assembly elections on BSP ticket in 2012 (Moradabad Dehat) and 2017 (Kaanth) but lost both. In 2018, he joined the SP and was selected as alliance candidate from Moradabad.

In Jhansi, the SP has fielded Shyam Sunder Singh Yadav, who had joined the SP after leaving the BJP.

The SP is contesting the general election in alliance with BSP and would contest on 37 seats, while the BSP would field candidates from 38 seats. Rashtriya Lok Dal, the third partner of the alliance, has been given three seats.

SP patron Mulayam Singh Yadav is contesting from Mainpuri, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav from Azamgarh, his wife Dimple Yadav from Kannauj, Dharmendra Yadav from Budaun, Akshay Yadav from Ferozabad and Mohammad Azam Khan from Rampur.

SP manifesto is likely to be out in April 1st week

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party is likely to release its manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls, promising jobs and setting up of a youth commission, in the first week of April. As SP's alliance partner Bahujan Samaj Party does not have a tradition to release a manifesto, Akhilesh Yadav will be free to announce his party's poll promises. The BJP and Congress will also release their manifestos soon.

The SP manifesto is likely to be pro-youth, with the promise to bring a national youth employment job guarantee bill, compulsory job for every youth and setting up of a youth commission.

The manifesto will also focus on larger role to be played by regional parties in the country, particularly in the

post-poll scenario. A senior SP leader said in Lucknow on Thursday that at a time when rising unemployment was a big issue, the party planned to catch the imagination of youths, specially in the state, by promising to enact legislation on national youth employment job guarantee.

"In this legislation, the party will make the promise of providing jobs to all those youths who are registered in employment exchanges within six months time," he said.

Besides, the youth commission will be constituted on lines of the existing minority or women's commissions. But this commission will comprise youths from universities and civil societies. It will advise the government on formulating policies for the youths," the leader said.

Shah slams Cong over illegal immigration in Assam, lauds Modi for avenging soldiers

Kaliabor/Teok: BJP chief Amit Shah on Thursday accused the previous Congress Government in Assam of settling illegal immigrants in the State, as he applauded the Narendra Modi Government for securing the country's frontiers and avenging Indian soldiers killed by Pakistan-backed terror groups.

Addressing election rallies in the state, Shah asserted, let alone infiltrators "not even a bird" will be allowed to enter Assam illegally if the BJP secures

a second term at the Centre. He said only Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP can ensure security of the country and not the Congress or its president Rahul Gandhi. "In his five years in office, Modi brought in a lot of development. But most of all he ensured the security of the country and its borders. Under his leadership, India avenged the blood of our soldiers killed in Uri and Pulwama attacks by Pakistan-based terror elements," Shah told election rallies in Kaliabor and Teok.

The BJP president claimed the way the world viewed India underwent a drastic change under Modi. Shah insisted that India under Modi was only the third nation after the US and Israel to take swift revenge for the spilling of their soldiers' blood by enemies. He criticised the Congress party for demanding proof of the damage caused by the Indian Air Force's Balakot air strike inside Pakistan in the wake of the killing of 44 CRPF personnel in Pulwama.

"Should we avenge our fallen soldiers or not? The Congress party cannot protect the country's borders. If we want to protect India's borders, then only Narendra Modi and BJP can do that," Shah said.

BSP, SP strike seat-sharing deal for Maharashtra

BSP TO CONTEST 44, SP TO FIELD 4 CANDIDATES

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Having decided to fight all the 48 Lok Sabha polls in Maharashtra as a third front, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party will contest 44 seats and four seats respectively in the State.

Thirteen days ahead of the first phase of the four-phased polls in the state, the BSP and SP on Thursday announced the seat-sharing pact between them. Under the pact, the Samajwadi Party will contest Mumbai north-west, Dhule, Nanded and Beed seats.

Of the 44 seats that it is contesting in the State, the BSP will release its first list of 19 seats.

The seats for which the BSP it has named candidates include: Bhandara-Gondia, Chandrapur, Ramtek, Nagpur, Washim, Amravati, Buldhana, Hingoli, Akolam, Parbhani, Osmanabad, Latur and Solapur.

Mayawati will launch the BSP-SP launch in Maharashtra at a rally in Nagpur on April 4. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav is expected to attend the rally.

Both the BSP and SP do not have the following in Maharashtra that they can influence the Lok Sabha poll outcome. For instance, the BSP had contested all the 48 Lok Sabha polls in the state. The Mayawati-led party polled a pathetic 2.61 per cent — which 2.22 per cent votes less than the votes it had polled in the 2009 Lok Sabha polls.

Jitin Prasada hints at contesting poll from Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even as suspense continues over the name of Congress candidate from Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency, former Union Minister and party candidate from Dhaurahra parliamentary seat, Jitin Prasada, has hinted at contesting from Lucknow instead of Dhaurahra.

Prasada, who was on his way to the state capital via Sitapur on Thursday, was stopped by Congress workers who wanted him to contest from Dhaurahra. "My body may be present in Lucknow but my soul will always be in Dhaurahra. Give me some time, I am standing at a political cross-roads. I am going to Lucknow and will decide what I have to do," said Prasada as he addressed Congress workers at Kanshiram Colony in Sitapur.



Jitin Prasada reached his Lawrence Terrace house in Lucknow in the evening and held a meeting with his supporters over the future strategy. Earlier, there were rumours that Jitin Prasada was joining the BJP after reports emerged of his being unhappy with alleged pressure from the party leadership to change his seat from Dhaurahra to Lucknow. However, he rubbished the speculation.

Prasada was a Union Minister in the UPA Government and is presently an invitee member of the Congress Working Committee.

As per sources, the Congress is likely to field him from Lucknow for a direct fight with Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh. The sources said Congress general secretary incharge of eastern UP, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, came up with the idea of shifting Prasada from his present constituency after the former

Minister reportedly conveyed his reservation over fighting from Dhaurahra. Prasada, a Brahmin, hails from a prominent political family of Shahjahanpur. His father, late Jitendra Prasada, was a Congress stalwart and had even contested the party presidential election against Sonia Gandhi.

Jitin Prasada won his first Lok Sabha election from Shahjahanpur in 2004. In 2009, he shifted to the newly-formed Dhaurahra constituency and won but in 2014, he lost to the BJP. Dhaurahra is one of the 80 Lok Sabha constituencies in UP that will go to polls in the fourth phase. While the Congress has declared Prasada as its official candidate from Dhaurahra, reliable sources close to the leader said the party now wanted to shift him to Lucknow.

'Sidelined' Tej quits RJD student wing

Patna: Upset over being sidelined in the party and the family, Tej Pratap Yadav, elder son of RJD chief Lalu Prasad, on Thursday resigned as patron of the RJD student wing ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, dealing a blow to Bihar's main Opposition party.



"I am resigning as patron of RJD student wing. Those who think I am naive are mistaken," tweeted Tej Pratap Yadav, a former Bihar Health Minister who has been having simmering disputes with his younger brother and the more active Tejashwi Yadav.

Tej Pratap Yadav added that he knew who wields what kind of influence in party affairs. The resignation comes in the absence of Lalu Prasad, who is undergoing treatment at a Government hospital in Ranchi after being convicted in fodder scam cases.

Tejashwi Yadav has reportedly told his aides that he was pained because his request to accommodate two of his supporters as candidates in the Sheohar and Jehanabad Lok Sabha seats was rejected.

RJD leaders close to him say he is not happy the way Tejashwi Yadav has been given command of the party and with the latter's style of functioning. Tejashwi Yadav is the Leader of Opposition in the Bihar Assembly.

"In last six months, Tej Pratap had time and again pointed out how he was sidelined in the party" by Tejashwi Yadav, a former Deputy Chief Minister.



BJP president Amit Shah being felicitated during an election rally ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, in Nagaon, on Thursday

CPMMANIFESTO Proposes curbing of mass surveillance

New Delhi: The CPI(M) on Thursday proposed curbing of mass surveillance, statutory minimum wage of not less than ₹18,000 per month and checking monopolies over telecom and internet service platforms in its manifesto for the coming Lok Sabha elections.

This is the first time when the Left party has mentioned digital rights of citizens in its manifesto. The CPI(M) said it would recognise digital infrastructure as public infrastructure and stop mass surveillance by State agencies under section 69 of the IT Act.

"There should be clear provisions and judicial supervision of any surveillance that violates citizens privacy. Enact data privacy laws that protect the people against appropriate



CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury with party leaders Prakash Karat, Brinda Karat release party's manifesto in on Thursday

tion/misuse of users private data for commercial use," said CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury while releasing the manifesto along with Polit Bureau members Brinda Karat, Prakash Karat and Nitlopal Basu.

He said the party would curb monopoly of some telecom majors. The manifesto also proposed the scrapping of the use of Aadhaar and biometrics for all social welfare

measures, repeal/amend the National Security Act, section 499 of IPC (relating to defamation) and Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA).

In the declaration, the party also proposed alternative policy platform under which it called for protection of the secular principle and democratic rights enshrined in the Constitution and enforcement of farmers' right to sell their produce at minimum support price.

"Our main aim is to defeat the BJP, increase the strength of the CPI(M) and the Left in Parliament and form an alternative secular Government," Yechury said.

The left party said the pension system would enable senior citizens to live with dignity.

Huge cash seized before polls: EC removes special police observer

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

A day after Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee questioned propriety of appointing a Special Police Observer for Bengal who had earlier been seen attending an RSS programme in uniform, the Election Commission of India on Wednesday replaced the senior IPS officer with a new one.

Though the ECI would not provide reasons it removed former Director General of BSF KK Sharma as the Special Police Observer for Bengal. Vivek Dubey 1981 batch IPS officer will supervise the Lok Sabha election in the State in place of Sharma, Additional Chief Electoral Officer Sanjay Basu said.

He quoted "specific orders" from the ECI but said no spe-

cific reason had been offered for the new move. Banerjee had on Wednesday cited photographs showing how in 2018 Sharma had joined an RSS-sponsored programme in police uniform.

Apart from police observers the ECI has also appointed 44 expenditure observers to monitor the spending of various political parties, sources said.

Meanwhile, the Kolkata Police on Thursday recovered Rs 35 lakh from a person at Brabourne Road in North Kolkata. Identified as PK Sharma from Odisha the accused was taken into custody. The Thursday's recovery takes the total recovery of unexplained cash to about 11 crore in the past two weeks; highest ever in Bengal, sources said.

It's bullock cart of BJP vs e-ricks of Trinamool

Kolkata: Lok Sabha candidates in West Bengal's Birbhum district are seeking to exploit all modes of transport to attract attention. While one candidate chose bullock cart, another decided to drive an e-rickshaw.

Actor-turned-politician Satabdi Roy, seeking to retain the Birbhum Lok Sabha seat she had won for the Trinamool Congress in 2009 and 2014, was seen riding an e-rickshaw all by herself while campaigning in villages of the Rampurhaat locality.

Roy, clad in a pink saree and donning sunglasses, also participated in a tribal dance with the women folk of the locality. Not to be outdone, her BJP rival Dutt Kumar Mondal rode a bullock cart to interact with the people of another Panchayat area. The Birbhum constituency will go to polls on April 29 in the fourth of the seven-phased Lok Sabha election in the State.



BJP ropes in Bhojpuri actors to woo voters

Mumbai: The BJP is banking on the popularity of some of Bhojpuri film industry's biggest stars to see it through a clutch of Lok Sabha seats in eastern Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

The saffron outfit is tapping film stars Ravi Kishan, singer-actor Dinesh Lal Yadav alias 'Nirahua' and Pawan Singh and they are expected to contest elections from seats in eastern UP and West Bengal, which have Bhojpuri voters, party insiders said.

Singh is already in the BJP, while Yadav joined the party on Wednesday in Lucknow in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified person about 42 years of age whose name, residence and family is unknown, was found dead at Bus Stand of 910, Paschim Vihar, Delhi, on 21.03.19 at 09:57 a.m. In this regard a vide has been registered with DD No: 21-A, dated 21.03.19 at P.S. Paschim Vihar West, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to identify the deceased person but no clue has come to light so far.

The description of the UIDB is as under:
Sex: Male, Age: About 42 years, Height: approx. 5'7", Complexion: Shallow, Id mark: 2 receipt of SGM Hospital, Mangol Puri dated 20.03.2019 in his pant pocket as per his name is Sunil @ Gura, Wearing: Green & White colour Dharidar Half T-Shirt and Grey colour Pant.

If anyone has any information about his relatives, kindly inform the SHO/ Paschim Vihar West, Delhi.

SHO
P.S. Paschim Vihar West, Delhi
Ph.: 011- 25268394, 25280979

DP/2080/OD/19



SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that one girl **Manisha Kumari**, D/o: Subedar Pranjapati, R/o: H. No. 02, Gali No. 4, D-Block, Jai Vihar, Near Fauji Farm House, Baprola, Delhi, **Age: 15 Years, Height: 4'10", Complexion: Fair, Face: Long, Wearing: Linedar Chackdar Shirt-Grey Salwar and Black Chappal in feet (School Uniform)** has been missing/kidnapped since 11.03.2019 from the area of P.S. Ranhola, Delhi. In this regard FIR No. 169/19 u/s 363 IPC, dated 11.03.2019 has been lodged at P.S. Ranhola, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing/kidnapped girl but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing/ kidnapped girl please inform the undersigned.

SHO
E-Mail ID: cbc@cbi.gov.in PS, Ranhola, Delhi,
Ph.: 011-28363001, 28363002
Fax: 011-24368639 & 28363003
DP/2049/OD/19

SEARCH FOR MISSING

General Public is hereby informed that one girl **Manisha Kumari**, D/o: Subedar Pranjapati, R/o: H. No. B-235, Gautam Colony, Narela, Delhi, **Age: 19 Years, Height: 5'4", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Wearing: Yellow Colour Kurta & Cream Colour Lower and Red Colour Chappal in feet** has been missing from the area of P.S. Narela, Delhi since 12.09.2018. In this regard DD No. 63-A, Dated 12.09.2018 has been lodged at P.S. Narela, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone have any information about this missing girl please inform the undersigned.

SHO
E-Mail ID: cbc@cbi.gov.in PS, Narela,
Ph.: 011-27282350, 27280435
Fax: 011-24368639 & 27280435
DP/2432/RD/19

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unknown dead body was found behind the wall of Azadpur Railway Flyover, Delhi, dated 01.06.2015. In this regard a FIR/DD No. 691/15 dated 01.06.2015, has been lodged at P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi.

The Description of the dead body is given as under: **Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Sex: Male, Age: 18-20 years, Height: 5'5", Face: Long, Built: Thin, Complexion: Shallow, Wearing: Green, White Strips Shirt and Blue Colour Jeans.**

Sincere efforts have been made by the local Police to trace out the dead person but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone having any information about this dead person, please inform undersigned.

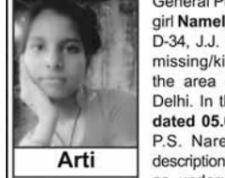
SHO
P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi,
Ph. No. 011-27497179, 08750870226

DP/8815/NW/19

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General Public is hereby informed that one girl **Manisha Kumari**, D/o: Netram, R/o: H. No. D-34, J.J. Colony, Bawana, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 02.01.2019 from the area of P.S. Narela Industrial Area, Delhi. In this regard a case DD No. 42-A dated 05.01.2019 has been registered at P.S. Narela Industrial Area Delhi. The description of the missing / kidnapped girl is as under: **Age: 18.5 years, Height: 5', Face: Long, Complexion: Fair, Wearing: Pink Colour Frock & Salwar, Yellow Colour Sweater, White Colour Chunnii with Black Colour Chappal in feet.** Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following

Website: http://cbi.nic.in
E-mail Id - cbc@cbi.gov.in SHO
Ph.: 011-24368638, 24368641 PS Narela Industrial Area, Delhi
Fax No. 011-24368639 Ph.: 011- 27280435, 27282350
DP/2417/RD/19 8750870324



US move on Azhar

By introducing a resolution in the UN to designate Jaish chief as a global terrorist, it is forcing China's hand



The United States is in no mood to let up on global terrorism, particularly miffed by China's intransigence in the UN in proscribing Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar, who has attacked many of its strategic interests in the region, India included, particularly after the Pulwama massacre. So disregarding a Chinese hold on a similar move earlier, the US has moved a new resolution that would designate Azhar a global terrorist, subjecting him to an arms embargo, travel ban and an asset freeze. In short, choke his operations. France and the UK are backing it too. This persistent US-led determination at the UN has clearly pushed Beijing to the wall, which has to either live with global isolation as a tacit backer of terrorism or be ready to sign off on a sanction blacklisting Azhar. So quite predictably, it accused the US of undermining the authority of the UN anti-terrorism committee by "forcefully moving" a resolution in the UNSC.

Though the US has the tricky issue of aligning its strategic objectives with the compulsions of Pakistan, it has always taken a muscular approach to the latter's hosting a terror network, plucking out Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden no less for attacks on its own soil. But then Pulwama was not only the worst terrorist attack in Kashmir, it also topped a series of destabilising attacks by the Jaish in the region, particularly in Afghanistan. And though India did smash Jaish bases deep inside Pakistan through surgical strikes, the latter's use of American F-16s for counterstrikes in violation of agreed doctrines clearly upset the US further. Now that its demarches have yielded only a token response from Pakistan, which has been emboldened in no small measure by China, the US is on the offensive. In fact, soon after the Chinese "no", it has been rallying support from other countries to buttonhole Pakistan on Jaish. Privately, it did try to work out a middle ground with China, on the language designating Azhar, to a version more acceptable to the latter. China was seemingly more willing this time round to work out a compromise. This despite its *quid pro quo* with Pakistan with the singular aim of insuring itself from the Islamic State spreading to its Muslim majority provinces and attacks on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). But this resolution means the US is now breathing down on China, even indicating the possibility of an open vote. Instead of consensus, that resolution only needs nine votes in favour and no vetoes by China, Russia, the US, France or Britain to pass. It was not immediately clear when the draft resolution to designate Azhar could be put to a vote. If the resolution wasn't enough, the US mounted a pincer attack on China with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denouncing what has been well-known for so long, China's "shameful hypocrisy" over its treatment of Muslims as he met a former prisoner, who recounted abuses as part of Beijing's widespread detention. "The world cannot afford China's shameful hypocrisy toward Muslims. On the one hand, China abuses more than a million Muslims at home, on the other, it protects violent Islamic terrorist groups from sanctions at the UN," he said. According to international human rights groups, China has confiscated religious books from Uighurs and forced them to inhumanities, like forcing them to drink alcohol and eat pork, the consumption of which is forbidden by Islam. China has, of course, denied this, saying it was running training centres as part of a fight against Islamic extremism. Human rights abuse again puts China under an international lens of suspicion. Getting Chinese support to designate Azhar as a global terrorist, at the UN, in any format, would be no mean achievement and particularly be a salve for an outraged India, which has been at the worst receiving end of the Jaish attacks. Question is will the US push China to the brink, given their recent acrimony over trade tariffs?

The need for reform

Electoral bonds are slightly better than hazy ways of campaign fund-raising but more transparency is needed



One of the most contentious issues across most democratic nations is one of "Campaign Finance Reform." Elections cost money to win, there are huge teams of volunteers and workers, who need to be paid and fed at the cost of running advertisements. Even paying for small nitty-gritties such as food and water add up. Given that political campaigns often start months, even years ahead of the elections, campaigning has become a semi-permanent state of mind for most large political

parties that wish to stay relevant even if they are in power, particularly if they are part of the Opposition and aspire to a comeback. In 2017, claiming that they wished to improve the method of political funding in India, the Narendra Modi Government introduced the electoral bond system that allowed almost anyone to buy bonds of varying amounts that would be transferred directly to a party's account. The buyer could remain anonymous. The Election Commission (EC) had expressed reservations back then as had smaller political parties. They claimed that this could lead to unchecked foreign funding of Indian political parties, is a no-no for the Representation of People's Act and the concept of anonymity would lead to unchecked corporate funding of elections. With large companies spared the need to identify which political party they donated to, this could potentially lead to an indirect influence on policy as well as a huge bias in favour of the party in power. That became evident when the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) garnered the lion's share of electoral bonds over the past few years.

The main purpose for which electoral bonds were introduced — the need to remove ambiguous sources of money coming into the electoral process as well as hordes of cash — has really not been achieved. In raids across the country on the eve of elections, massive cash treasure troves were found. This coupled with the EC's frankly ridiculous limits of electoral spending — the sum allowed in the 2019 General Elections is just ₹70 lakh per candidate, which as anyone, who has fought an election, will tell you is a sum that would have fallen short in the 1999 General Election, let alone 2019 — has led to this situation. More realistic spending limits of around ₹5 crore per Lok Sabha constituency coupled with full disclosure of corporate donations should be the way forward. While individual donations up to ₹10 lakh could remain to be anonymous, what with small donations becoming the bedrock of participative democracy in the United States, companies must make it clear which political party's pockets they are lining. This would ensure a more equitable process of donations with everyone getting a share of the pie and not leading to the ruling party hogging it all. Besides, the people should know who is funding what.

opinion

Contextualising terror

The deft statesmanship of New Zealand is in sharp contrast to India's response on Pulwama that failed to unite the populace and instead deflected the issue to political positions



PRAFULL GORADIA

The Indian sub-continent is a wounded region that has been subjected to dangerous contextualising of terror that is ultimately tantamount to "justification of terrorism." The adage, "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" has been used and abused by both terror groups and roguish states, whose stated policy distinguishes between "good" and "bad" terrorists. Repeated warnings to desist from such categorisation — as the same inevitably backfires — is personified by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's routine posting of the figure of 75,000 Pakistani casualties and an economic cost of \$123 billion to the state, owing to its ostensible fight against terrorism.

Obviously, the Pakistani state has not come clean on its own track record of duplicity and insincerity on terror, with the then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's prophetic warning that "snakes in the backyard would not just bite the neighbours." The tact of selectively legitimising and deliberately contextualising some terror organisations as "freedom fighters" or "defenders of the faith" comes with accompanying risks of these morphing and mutating into Frankenstein monsters and turning upon its progenitors. The fact is that Pakistan is witnessing a breakdown in its social structures, economic health and political future by pandering to regressive "contexts" to justify its interferences across the Durand Line in the Afghan region, across the Line of Control in India as also across its Iranian border.

An unwarranted and insensitive contextualising of a terror act was recently made by an Australian Senator, Fraser Anning, following the horrific massacre of at least 50 lives at Christchurch in New Zealand, which literally resulted with an egg on his face. The Senator had incredulously stated, "The real cause of bloodshed on New Zealand streets today is the immigration programme, which allowed Muslim fanatics to migrate to the country in the first place." While his statement was squarely lambasted by the political leadership in specific and society in general, in both his native Australia and New Zealand — the age-old practice of "contextualising" terror, that further divides and polarises societies, was in full display. In stark contrast was the deft statesmanship, empathy and sensitivity shown by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern in handling the post-attack narrative by unambiguously designating the incident as a "terrorist attack", resulting in a more corrective and reformative step as opposed to the vacuous "contextualising", as was done by the Australian Senator.

In India, too, expected apologists of terror across the border and some within, lend immediate "context" and "credence" to any terror attack by willy-nilly justifying the same on the pretext of the need to "introspect why it happened?" Terrorism is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that breeds and survives



on popular legitimacy of its actions among the aggrieved communities and the other stakeholders — this psychosocial "oxygen" is the key determinant for its sustenance. It is this spirit of unequivocal delegitimation that was invoked by Ardern when she spoke about the terrorist in a deliberately nameless way by stating, "He may have sought notoriety but we in New Zealand will give him nothing. Not even his name."

This handling was very different from the terror attack in Pulwama in India, where spotlight on the "perpetrator" was ensured by the cynical political manipulation of the same, a 24-hour media blitzkrieg covering the sublime-to-the-ridiculous theories and the unashamed "sharing" of true and manufactured content on the social media.

Somehow, under the garb of various "contexts", the Pulwama terror act did not unite the entirety of populace for its sheer brutality and inhumanity but deflected the issue into unnecessary divides of political positions, pro-and-anti-nationalism and ended up polarising the masses even more.

A similar frenzy was instrumental in elevating Burhan Wani into a cult-like phenomenon with a complex process of cognitive accommodation,

claims-and-counter-claims and societal assimilations.

It is important to recognise that the maximum "context-setting" of terrorism is done by foreign powers who have vested interest in the disruption of normalcy, national politicians with a hovering electoral calculator and finally the TRP-driven media (mainstream and social) that ignites popular passions to ensure that the requisite "fuel" for terror justifications persists.

China's patent realpolitik approach in defending Pakistan, and by that extent, Jem chief Masood Azhar on the floor of the United Nations, is a classic case of a foreign power affording a context of "technicality" in vetoing the symbolic step that could have named and shamed Islamabad, which brazenly chooses to side with those who use violence in the name of faith.

Even fringe support, applause or "context" is sufficient for the terror industry — it is imperative that no platform for contextualising of terror is allowed in the aftermath of any terror attack. Speaking about Pakistan's support for terrorism, UN Secretary-General António Guterres had specifically said that "no political reason...no cause, no grievance" could justify it. Former US President George Bush in his address to the joint session of Congress on September 20,

2001, had famously exhorted on the double-speak on terrorism, "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."

This nudge had led to some temporary course-correction in Islamabad — with Pakistan purportedly joining the global "war on terror" — but the subsequent reversal to its patent contextual support to the terror industry led to its coming under the international scanner — take for example the ongoing Financial Action Task Force (FATF) proceedings — and reached its pinnacle of opprobrium when Osama bin Laden was "taken out" from the military garrison town of Abbottabad.

Similarly, Pakistan refuses to abandon its basic instinct of contextualising and interfering in the affairs of its neighbours, much to the chagrin of Kabul, Tehran and Delhi. Proverbial chickens are coming home to roost as the Pakistani establishment now plays the "martyr card" on terrorism after years of contextual support based on a flawed interpretation of history, co-religionist and "freedom struggle" as it expectedly backfired, giving an invaluable lesson to all apologists of terror-contextualising.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author)

FRINGE SUPPORT, BE IT AS APPLAUSE OR 'CONTEXT', IS SUFFICIENT FOR THE TERROR INDUSTRY TO CLAIM LEGITIMACY — IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT NO PLATFORM FOR CONTEXTUALISATION OF TERROR IS ALLOWED IN THE AFTERMATH OF ANY TERROR ATTACK

SOUNDBITE

Are you (party workers) preparing for the elections? I am not talking about 2019, but 2022.



Congress general secretary —Prynanka Gandhi Vadra

Sanjay Bhansali gave me a brief narration of *Padmaavat* and offered the film to me. He offered me a song in Ram-Leela.



Actor —Kangana Ranaut

The US must act cautiously and avoid forcefully moving forward a draft resolution in the UN to blacklist Masood Azhar.



Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman —Geng Shuang

Modiji you have crossed all limits of indecency by calling political parties in a democratic system as 'sarak' (alcohol). No statesman has ever fallen so low.



Congress spokesperson —Randeep Surjewala

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Successful launch

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Space superpower" (March 29). Having successfully test-fired an anti-satellite missile, India has joined the elite space league comprising the US, Russia and China. Mission Shakti is the result of nine years of hard work by our scientists. By shooting down a low earth orbit satellite, the mission has been declared successful. India has rightly assured the international community that it would not misuse this new capability.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Uphold spirit of game

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Between spirit and rules" (March 28). R Ashwin's "Mankading" of Jos Buttler during an Indian Premier League match between Punjab and Rajasthan has stirred up a controversy. The cricket fraternity and fans stand divided on the "Mankading" incident. However, it must be understood that Ashwin just followed the rule

book of cricket and his call was completely legal. He did not do anything wrong. If experts are so much depressed by his action, then the rule of "Mankad" should be removed from the law books. But until the removal of the clause, all must enjoy one of the most watched sports around the world with passion.

Navneet Seth
Dhuri

Mission Shakti sets deterrence barrier

This refers to the editorial, "Space superpower" (March 29). For one hour or so, citizens were kept in suspense and fright. And then came the Prime Minister's announcement that India had successfully test-fired an Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Missile and joined the hitherto three-member exclusive and elite club of space powers. However, in the absence of any immediate external threat, people were not that excited over the success of Mission Shakti.

The question whether we could not have done without contributing to the weaponisation or militarisation of space went unasked. Technology-driven space wars are a recipe for the annihilation of the whole human race. Some commentators stressed that India shot down its own low-orbit satellite 'Leo' in less than three minutes from Kalam Island off the Odisha coast in the Bay of Bengal without realising that it was a test that was carried out. Shooting down the satellite of any other country would have been an 'act of war'. Further, no



enemy satellite has been ever shot down in real warfare by any one of three powers — the US, Russia and China — in possession of the anti-satellite weapon. Reassuringly, the Prime Minister made it amply clear that India's newly-acquired capability to destroy satellites was not aimed at any one country as such.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

regime, the Pulwama terror attack and the subsequent air strike in Balakot gave the latter a chance to uplift its sagging image. Further, while the BJP has announced a slew of pre-poll alliances, the grand alliance has been more interested in forming state-specific partnerships. In the end, it is the electorate who will play the role of a king-maker.

Azhar A Khan
Rampur

Where is the rulebook?

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Between spirit and rules" (March 28). After Ashwin's "Mankaded" dismissal of Jos Buttler, much talk has erupted about the true spirit of the game. If the rule is against the game's true spirit then why was it included at all? Nowadays, batsmen take advantage of being out of the crease even before a ball is delivered. It's time to include "Mankaded" as the 11th type of dismissal in ICC laws.

PK Suresh
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Stand up to the power brokers

Will the *Main Bhi Chowkidar* campaign bring the citizens closer to Ambedkar's vision or be reduced to a political *jumla*, asks
SRIKANT MANAS KALA

The 'Main Bhi Chowkidar' blitzkrieg has stamped the Opposition to the extent that the *Chowkidar Chor Hai* sloganeering has found its equal match. With Prime Minister Modi's address to watchmen across the country, the narrative being spearheaded by the Congress, and actively peddled by other Opposition parties, has become a new theme song. This strategic event was not just aimed at garnering favourable optics — synchronised as it was with a strong action against Nirav Modi — or to successfully dismantle the counter-narrative being pushed by the *Chowkidar Chor Hai* campaign. Even in the short-term, the tactical manoeuvre had far deeper objectives. But perhaps like most of Modi's strategies, the *Main Bhi Chowkidar* crusade has been inspired by a far-sighted vision that lies beyond the ideological realm and has the potential to trigger a socio-political metamorphosis. The campaign is counterpoised against conventional power structures, undermining and even subverting them, one self-proclaimed *Chowkidar* at a time. For if everyone becomes a *Chowkidar*, little room will remain for traditional power brokers.

These *thekeedaars* or contractors operate within a semi-feudal societal structure, which treats the common citizens, especially the marginalised, as powerless serfs. In such socio-political structures, the individual is disenfranchised and a collective is identified as the fundamental unit of power. More often than not, such collectives are artificial, authoritarian and have very low avenues for upward mobility. As a result, a few influential people monopolise power, authority and control. What's worse is that they suspend individual rights within these collectives to question their authority, depriving him/her the fundamental right as enshrined in the Constitution. A prime example is the almost tyrannical hereditary power succession in most political parties in our country, which is meekly accepted by their constituents, party workers and the voter base alike.

Perhaps the *Main Bhi Chowkidar* campaign is aimed at taking the dictatorship of collectives head-on and challenging it through the ideals of individualism. BR Ambedkar had envisioned an India of empowered individuals, who could think for themselves and the fellow citizen, who would question authoritarianism of the state and the feudal power brokers alike. The not-so-conspicuous idea behind Modi's campaign is to project individualism as a counter to corrupt traditional collectivism in the long-term. Apart from the social goal of liberating an individual from the tyranny of collectivism, the BJP also stands to benefit politically. The primary challenge, real or perceived, to the party and its allies is the *en masse* voting patterns among various demographic sections. On the flip side, core constituents of the BJP tend to vote, based on temporal interests and personal opinions. They rally and coalesce only when there is a predominant *leher*, whether of Hindutva or of popular leaders. This clearly does not work in the BJP's favour, statistically speaking.

This vote-bank politics is facilitated and perpetuated by religious, political power brokers and their enforcers, who succeed in coaxing, cajoling and coercing the voter to indulge in group-think and adopt a group-view. Such top-down enforcement of ideological and political view points is artificial and is often not in the best interest of the voter or other parties. A businessman from a minority section will benefit from labour reforms and cheaper credit and may naturally be inclined to vote for the BJP as there is an alignment of interests. However, indoctrination and psycho-social coercion through false narratives, that trigger irrational fear, often succeed in taking precedence over individual political interests and viewpoints. This phenomenon is clearly an impediment and an anathema to the ethos of democratic politics.

The BJP has clearly made some inroads on this front, be it in Gujarat and arguably even in Uttar Pradesh through a bottom-up, individual-centric strategy, of which *Main Bhi Chowkidar* campaign can be a shining example. Political mobilisation is a group phenomenon, so individuals will have to be brought together on a political platform, motivated by individual interests and on their own terms. This will ensure that the identity of an individual is not subsumed or overridden by the consequent group. The future of the BJP lies in successfully countering the traditional socio-religious collectivistic politics and creating more political space for individual rights and opinions. The party must look towards Gen Z, especially first-time voters and the *Main Bhi Chowkidar* campaign may play a significant role in increasing the party's influence. Much will depend on whether it is relegated to a tactical political battle or grows into a movement that enables every citizen to become an empowered and conscious *Chowkidar*.

To enable this campaign to truly transcend the political landscape and pervade the larger social spectrum, it will also require the BJP to gradually steer away from hard Hindutva as it is in itself an overarching collective narrative. For individualistic socio-political thought to permeate the political sub-conscious of the masses, religious affiliations will have to be resigned to the private space. Otherwise, the very idea of awakening individual political consciousness will lie betrayed. The only acceptable 'collective' that can co-exist with and sustain the *Main Bhi Chowkidar* campaign is the collective of all citizens, despite their diversity.

(The writer is a researcher)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

DID THE YOUTH GET EMPLOYMENT? DID THE FARMERS RECEIVE ANY HELP? LIKE MODI, MAMATA BANERJEE MAKES FAKE PROMISES AND LIES TO THE PEOPLE.

—CONGRESS CHIEF RAHUL GANDHI



A SMALL KID HAD SAID SOMETHING. HE SAID WHATEVER HE WISHED TO TELL. I WILL NOT MAKE ANY COMMENT ON IT.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE

The dream of a *Vishwa Guru*

Swami Vivekananda, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo showed how international relationships could indeed be given a sound cultural knowledge and spiritual base to strengthen their moral basis



JS RAJPUT

In times of rapid globalisation, open market, technological advancements and climate change, the world is getting more and more complex day-by-day. The situation is accentuated by insecurity, apprehensions, distrust and violence that confront practically every nation. Further, there was never so much competition among nations as it is at present. Indians understand these issues very well in the context of the perpetual state of aggression created by Pakistan against it.

Our country has done astonishingly well in creating global goodwill during the last five years as was evident from the support we got for the genuine and effective response to the Pulwama massacre, which was a massive and unprecedented act in the history of post-independent India. The strategy of renewing and refreshing past relationships has proved its worth beyond doubt. However, this cannot be an occasion to become sluggish. Instead, we must realise that much more needs to be done to sustain the international goodwill we earned and seriously delineate the elements required to further strengthen this bond. There are several areas of cooperation like trade and commerce, investment and production, collaborations in technology, transfer and the like but there are also long-term strategic imperatives that remain unmatched in giving soft-power dividends.

For ages, India has gone through this experience from its Asian neighbours, particularly the Southeast Asian segment. Indeed, we are proud of our past glory and its acceptance beyond sea shores. To cultivate new international relationships even with old friendly nations, one must realise the importance of acquaintance with history, culture and heritage on both sides. These play a significant role in furthering mutual understanding and refreshing cultural and emotional bonds. This familiarity is an essential support to comprehend the current situation and visualise its import in the emerging context. Strategic readiness in current times requires comprehension of 'the pace of change' in pragmatic terms. Common wisdom will be to learn from history, draw inspiration from it, know the present, and reshape it for a better future for the generations to come.

India is fortunate to have an unimpeachable and exemplary legacy of mutual relationships with the East Asian region. What has sustained this mutuality for ages? It cannot just be trade and commerce alone; though they remain a very strong cementing factor. We have to only delineate the essence of mutually constructive partnerships both in the past and the present. Initiatives like the 'Act East' policy deserve appreciation and strengthening, besides a constant vigil on elements who may be apprehensive about these developments.

Rabindranath Tagore had mentioned in one of his lectures that "it was often alleged that Asia will never progress as it has turned its face backward." This acquisition has been proved wrong by Japan, China and India. Equally, if not more effectively, the South-East Asia region has proved it wrong. All nations have moved ahead without either disregard for their past or ignoring new knowledge. People of this region are not perpetually lost in the sweet slumber of the glory of the



past; oblivious to the need to move ahead in times and with times. Probably realising this, Mahatma Gandhi had indicated that he would keep the windows and doors of his house open for fresh air — of ideas and knowledge — but refused to be blown off his feet by any. It is one thing to be proud of one's history, culture, tradition of knowledge, growth, scriptures and literature but it is also necessary to examine whether all of this alone is sufficient for the times ahead?

Present international relationships require a very sensitive recall of the past and a realisation that these are the times of "equality of partnerships", which must be dexterously harmonised and sustained. There are unique features in every culture, region, religion and civilisation. When dealing with Asian countries, one is often tempted to recall how Indian influence has reached far and beyond the sea shores, without any bloodshed and coercion. It was not part of any conquest or converting people to one preferred religion or "salvaging the souls of the savages" but an organised, respectful and mutually beneficial interaction and exchange of ideas and knowledge among equals. Trade and commerce featured prominently and strengthened bonds with the international community. Knowledge exchange brought people together in rather close bonds that went beyond the mundane requirements of human existence.

This makes one understand how scholarship, knowledge and wisdom can be exchanged to benefit both the interacting parties, lead to better and higher comprehension of humanity, happiness and harnessing respectfully the bounties of nature. In knowledge exchange, one can benefit only when both sides are respectful to each other, none is obsessed with being the giver, but are ready to accept knowledge and wisdom from the other side as well. The wisdom of the East does not belong just to one country of the region ie, India. One would be uncomfortable if in any reference to the glorious past of ours and its vast spread beyond the Indian borders, it is presented as everything

flowing from "us" and being received by "them."

Take for example, Indonesia or Thailand. One can say that these nations have far better comprehension of the need to sustain cultural continuity than we Indians. In Thailand, Ram, Ram Lila and Ayodhya enjoy respect at a level as is not — repeat not — being extended by a large number of Indians. The manner in which Indonesians have sustained and refined their culture presents much to be learnt by Indians. The *Gita* and *Yoga* could earn respect all around the globe but in India, one cannot include even a couple of *shlokas* — fully and totally secular — in the school text books.

Who are culturally more advanced? Are we ready to learn from others? Or are we too happy with our dream of becoming a *Vishwa Guru* again? In recollecting, refreshing and re-envisioning India's relationship with Asian countries, the first caution is to forget the psyche of being the giver, being the *Vishwa Guru*. This concept — when devoid of the connected responsibility to set our own house in order — can create negative vibes among other people. We must not accept that knowledge, both secular and temporal, has been created and discovered in all parts of the globe — time, measure and magnitude can differ. Ancient Indians had really toiled hard on the terrain of knowledge quest and earned respect from all over. Are we doing the same now? This aspect should be paramount in present-day considerations.

A strife-torn world today must be looking towards India, conscious of its unique historical standing as a nation that had learnt to live together with every conceivable diversity, like that of ethnicity, language, religion and culture. The West is now facing problems arising out of a necessity to learn to live together with diversities. These have reached their doorsteps because of globalisation, ease of mobility in seeking greener pastures and have also forced migrations in search of security and livelihood. If India was still high on its record of social cohesion and religious amity, on adherence to joint family systems and social security,

on basing its democracy on values defined by Gandhi and the spirit of freedom struggle, these nations would have flocked to India to learn more.

Deeply satisfied, they declare India as their guru without the latter itself making a claim. If we were a learning hub and had ancient higher learning institutions like Nalanda, Taxila and Vikramshila among others, the continuity of our *gurudom* would have been unchallenged. India needs to become a great global learning hub. Swami Vivekananda presented India's past glory to the world, the values it had adhered to in the past and the concern it had shown towards the welfare of all without any discrimination. Vivekananda received global acclaim and admiration. He knew that this alone was not sufficient. He established the Ramakrishna Mission worldwide. Yes, you have to create institutions that prepare the people and give them true education. Let them comprehend that "education is the perfection already in man."

Tagore had predicted that "India is destined to be the teacher of the world." He did not travel the globe to declare that India would be the *Vishwa Guru*. Instead, he established institutions that had all the ingredients of a *gurukul* and every feature of a modern-day international knowledge hub. Similarly, this aspect was elaborated by Sri Aurobindo. He predicted that "India will be the moral leader of the world." He established the Auroville Ashram in Pondicherry. All of these examples must give us an idea of how international relationships can indeed be given a sound cultural knowledge and spiritual base, to strengthen the moral basis of relationships. It was the continuity of this moral tradition that Gandhi included "commerce without morality" and "wealth without work" among the seven social sins that he published in 1925. Incidentally, it also included "knowledge without character." India needs to relearn, and create knowledge hubs of its own.

(The writer is the Indian Representative on the Executive Board of UNESCO)

Pitting one hatred against another

Many sections of society and even the intelligentsia are willing to buy into the victimhood claims of extremist groups and act as their apologists



NADEEM PARACHA

During my last trip to the US in 2018, I noticed that the current affairs sections of almost all major book stores in the American cities that I visited carried quite a few titles on 'White power populism'. Most of these books were alarming in their content and tone. This was a stark contrast to what one often found on the same shelves some five years ago. Most of them used to be stacked with books on 'Islamic' fundamentalism and terrorism. The content of these books, too, had been largely alarming in nature, written as warnings about a phenomenon which was already tearing many Muslim countries apart and threatening Western societies.

After facing numerous terrorist

attacks, death tolls and socio-political fissures triggered by extremist assaults on civilians and security personnel, most Muslim countries eventually came round to challenge the grave existentialist threat and attacks posed by extremists. These states did this through some unprecedented military operations and related political and judicial manoeuvres. But whereas the situation in the most affected countries — such as Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Algeria — was gradually brought under control and major extremist outfits were taken out, the situation in other affected countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, Nigeria and, to a certain extent, Mauritania, is still somewhat precarious.

In his 1992 book, *The Failure of Political Islam*, the French political scientist and author Olivier Roy wrote that the more coherent ideologies formed from the 1940s onwards and derived from the writings of radical Islamic scholars such as Rashid Rida, Hassan Al-Banna, Abul Ala Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, Ruholla Khomeini and Hasan

Al-Tarabi all peaked in the late 1970s and across the 1980s.

They contributed in the engineering of what came to be known as "political Islam", which advocated the formation of "Islamic states" through both conventional as well as revolutionary political means. But according to Roy, as this strand of political Islam reached a crescendo — especially during the 'Afghan jihad' against Soviet forces in Afghanistan — there was also its fragmentation and eventual decline. Roy wrote that after the Soviet forces were forced to pull out of Afghanistan, emboldened 'Islamists', who had fought in Afghanistan, then attempted to create 'Islamic' revolutions in their own countries.

As the State in their respective countries pushed back, however, the Islamists retaliated with violence through terrorism. Roy wrote that from being a coherently defined ideology, political Islam took a more anarchic and even nihilistic turn. Roy predicted that this force would burn out in its own fire and fury. Interestingly, he was writing this in 1992, nine years before the

tragic 9/11 attacks in New York. But if we trace the rise and relative decline of extremist terror in countries such as Pakistan, Algeria, Turkey and Egypt, we can see much of Roy's thesis coming true.

The outfits behind extremist terror in these countries were entirely nihilistic. They enforced their presence through three main stratagems: (1) seeding fear through extreme terror; (2) using various criminal activities to financially supplement themselves; and (3) manipulating non-militant personnel in the media, religious circles and even within the State and Government so that they could rationalise this terror in the mainstream as an outcome of economic issues and 'lack of Islam' in the workings of the State.

But as German academic Markus Daehsel wrote in his book, *The Politics of Self-Expression*, the post-9/11 terror groups had lost interest in the theory of 20th century political Islam and were more interested in filling a personal emotional void; even though they explained their acts (and their

nihilistic violence) as a global war against 'infidels'. Indeed, once they began to become engulfed by their own fires and nihilistic impulses, the state moved in to push them out.

It is remarkable how similar the trajectories of White power populism and the terrorism that it is inspiring, and of 'Islamic' extremism are. The narratives of 'Islamic' extremists are a combination of a superiority complex derived from an imagined (and largely a historical) Utopian past, and a besieged mindset — which explains the Muslims as victims of Western modernity and immorality. The narratives used by White supremacists, too, hark back to a past in which violent and destructive events, such as slavery in the US, apartheid in South Africa and rise of Nazism in Germany, are seen as Utopian epochs which were overturned by the Jews, liberals and communists. The supremacists believe this status quo was now being maintained by allowing non-White immigrants to settle on "White lands." So this narrative, too, combines a mythical and Utopian

memory of a past with a sense of modern-day victimhood.

Recently, many media and political commentators in the US have been urging their Government (and those in various European countries) to start treating violence by individual or collective White supremacists just as they have been doing the violence coming from 'jihadists'. Elena Pokalova, a professor of international security studies, wrote in *Foreign Policy in Focus* (November 2, 2018) that White far-right radicalisation needed to be addressed at the same level as Islamist radicalisation. In a 2018 article for the *New York Times*, author and socio-political commentator Janet Reitman wrote that despite the rising number of hate crimes and groups in the US, the country's law-enforcement agencies failed to detect their rise and influence. She wrote that this allowed the proliferation of extreme White supremacist ideas and related violence.

It can be said that the stage this strand of extremism is in the West (or the stage Hindu extremism is in

India) is what 'jihadist' extremism was in Pakistan some 15 years ago. It's a confusing stage in which many sections of society and even the intelligentsia are willing to buy into the victimhood claims of the extremist groups and even act as their apologists. As a result, the State and society spiral down in a flux of confusion and inaction, especially when politicians and influencers — who were once on the fringes of society — begin to cultivate and organise the growing extremist sentiments as a constituency.

Indeed, as Olivier Roy predicted, extreme ideas and groups eventually get engulfed by their own fires. But Western countries, now facing the spectre of White far-right violence, should not wait to address the problem. Before extremist ideas burn out, they leave behind a trail of death and destruction. Because, remember, before the State and Government of Pakistan finally decided to act against major terror groups, over 70,000 Pakistanis had already been killed in the nihilistic flames of the extremists.

(Courtesy: The Dawn)

5 PSU lenders get ₹21,428 cr from Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Five State-owned banks, including PNB, Bank of Baroda and Union Bank, on Thursday received shareholders' approval for capital infusion to the tune of ₹21,428 crore in lieu of preferential allotment of shares to the Government.

This capital infusion is for the current fiscal ending March 31, 2019.

Punjab National Bank (PNB) in a regulatory filing said that an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders was held on March 28 for obtaining shareholders' approval to issue and allot 80,20,63,535 equity shares at a premium of ₹71.66 per share amounting up to ₹5,908 crore on preferential basis to the Government.

Bank of Baroda said the Finance Ministry informed about its decision to infuse capital of ₹5,042 crore in the bank.

"The capital infusion will be by way of preferential allotment of equity shares (special securities/bonds) of the bank during 2018-19, as Government's investment," Bank of Baroda said.

Union Bank said: "The Committee of Directors for Raising of Capital Funds (CDRCF) of the bank at its meeting held on Thursday considered and approved the allotment of 52,15,62,658 equity shares at an issue price of ₹78.84 aggregating to ₹4,111.99 to Government in accordance with the applicable provisions."

The board of the Chennai-headquartered Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) in an extraordinary



general meeting decided to allot preferential shares to Government to get capital infusion of ₹3,806 crore.

"The Board for Issue of Equity Share Capital at its meeting held today has issued and allotted 269,54,67,422 equity shares at an issue price of Rs 14.12 per equity share (including premium of ₹4.12 per equity share) to Government by way of preferential allotment," IOB said.

With this allotment, the Government holding has increased from 89.39 per cent to 92.52 per cent in the bank, it added.

"This capital infusion will help the bank to shore up its capital adequacy requirements and enable the bank to build a robust loan book," R Subramaniakumar, MD & CEO, Indian Overseas Bank told PTI.

He also said that various initiatives have been taken by the bank for turnaround and there was a visible improvement in the bank's perfor-

mance as seen in the third quarter results.

Subramaniakumar hoped that the bank will be able to return to the black in the next fiscal year beginning April 1, 2019.

Earlier, the bank raised ₹261 crore to its share capital in January under Employee Stock Purchase Scheme (ESPS) in which as much as 92 per cent of the employees participated which resulted into over-subscription of bank stock.

"With this capital infusion and taking into account the capital raised through ESPS as well as sale of non core assets, CRAR (capital to risky asset ratio) will improve considerably," he said.

Central Bank of India allotted 68,72,48,322 equity shares at ₹37.25 aggregating upto ₹2,560 crore.

With this allotment, shareholding of Government has increased from 89.40 per cent to 91.20, Central Bank of India said.

'Nyay' scheme poses 'fiscal challenge' to India's economy: Panagariya

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Former NITI Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya has said the implementation of the Congress Party's ambitious 'Nyay' scheme not only poses a 'fiscal challenge' to India's economy but also has a "serious incentive problem".

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said that its minimum income guarantee scheme, Nyuntam Aay Yojana (Nyay) assures up to ₹72,000 a year or ₹6,000 a month income to 20 per cent of India's poorest families if the party is voted back to power in the Lok Sabha elections next month.

Panagariya, who served as the first vice chairman of NITI Aayog for two years from 2015 to 2017, told PTI that 'Nyay' is difficult to implement and unlikely to achieve its intended objective.

"It raises three major questions - the incentive compatibility issue, the fairness issue and fiscal challenge," Panagariya, an eminent Indian-American economist, said.

But Gandhi said the 'Nyay' scheme has the twin objectives of giving money to the 20 per cent poorest families and remonetising the economy damaged by the demonetisation in 2016.

Its aim is two-fold. First is to guarantee a minimum income to the bottom 20 per cent families. The second is to remonetise the economy that has been demonetised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gandhi told PTI.

Senior Congress leader and former finance minister P

Chidambaram on Wednesday said 'enough' economists and experts had been consulted and they broadly agreed that India has the capacity to implement the scheme.

Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has said the implementation of the scheme is possible, Chidambaram said. "Our calculation shows that it will not cross 2 per cent of the GDP, it will be 1.8 per cent of the GDP at any given point of time," he said.

Commenting on the scheme, Panagariya said the transfer is meant to be ₹6,000 per month per family to 50 million families and at the same time, it also guarantees an income of ₹12,000 per month to these families.

"What happens if one family has an income of only ₹4,000 and another ₹8,000 per month? Will the former then receive ₹8,000 and the latter ₹4,000 per month? If so, why should anyone with income below 12,000 do any work at all since their incomes will be ₹12,000 regardless of what they earn?" he asked.

Interpreted this way, "there is a serious incentive problem with the scheme", Panagariya asserted.

"If the scheme is meant to transfer flat ₹6,000 per month to identified families regardless of the family's earned income, you cannot deliver ₹12,000 per month to families earning less than ₹6,000," he asserted.

The programme, as announced by the Congress, guarantees ₹12,000 per month in income to the poor, which is ₹144,000 per year, he said, explaining the fairness issue.

ICICI Bank launches digital home loan products up to ₹1 cr for instant disbursal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector ICICI Bank on Thursday said it has launched two instant home loan products for up to ₹1 crore.

The instantaneous home loan facility enables customers to get final sanction letter for new home loans as well as for a top up loan in a fully-digital way, the bank said in a release.

'Instant Home Loan' enables pre-approved salaried customers of the bank to avail loans up to ₹1 crore for a tenure of up to 30 years (based on the age of the customer) using internet banking facility, ICICI Bank said.

'Insta Top Up Loan' helps existing home loan customers of the bank to avail the facility of topping up loan instantaneously upto ₹20 lakh for a tenure of up to 10 years in a paperless manner.

The facility helps the customers get the top up amount disbursed immediately in their account as compared to the industry practice of approving and disbursing a top up home loan in a few working days, the bank said.

"As a result of our continued endeavour, we have the largest mortgage portfolio among private sector banks in the country with the lowest delinquency levels. Instant home loan facilities are extensions of this same endeavour. These facilities will help new home buyers as well as the existing customers," ICICI Bank Executive Director Anup Bagchi said.

₹ plunges 42 paise to 69.30 USD on stronger dollar



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee slumped 42 paise to end at 69.30 against the US dollar on Thursday, its second straight session of decline, in line with other Asian currencies amid strengthening of the greenback.

Most Asian currencies struggled amid expectations of dovish monetary policy stance by central banks following a deteriorating global economic outlook.

At the Interbank Foreign Exchange (forex) market, the rupee opened weak at 69.04 and fell further to touch the day's low of 69.35.

It finally finished at 69.30 per dollar, down by 42 paise against its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee had weakened marginally by 2 paise to end at 68.88 against

the US dollar. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net buyers in the capital markets, putting in ₹1,481.11 crore Wednesday, as per provisional data.

Meanwhile, Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 1.08 per cent to trade at \$67.10 per barrel.

BSE benchmark Sensex zoomed over 400 points while the NSE Nifty reclaimed the 11,500 mark Thursday on robust buying in banking, finance, telecom and IT stocks.

The Financial Benchmark India Private Ltd (FBIL) set the reference rate for the rupee/dollar at 69.0038 and for rupee/euro at 77.6868.

The reference rate for rupee/British pound was fixed at 91.0280 and for rupee/100 Japanese yen at 62.69.

GDR manipulation: Sebi slaps ₹30 lakh penalty on Sybly Industries directors

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has slapped a total fine of ₹30 lakh on three directors of Sybly Industries in a matter related to manipulation in issuance of global depository receipts (GDRs).

The directors — Satya Prakash Mittal, Mahendra Kumar Gupta and Subodh Kumar Goel — have been fined for acting as party to the fraudulent scheme, Sebi said in three separate orders on Wednesday.

The orders came following a probe conducted by the regulator to investigate irregularities in the company's allotment of 1.51 million GDR amounting to \$6.99 million on the Luxembourg Stock Exchange in June 2008.

The entire 1.51 million GDR were subscribed by only one entity, Vintage FZE (now known as Alta Vista International FZE) upon obtaining loan from European American Investment Bank (EURAM).

Sebi noted that the three directors of the firm along with other directors in its board meeting in March 2008 passed a board resolution that authorised EURAM Bank to use Sybly's GDR proceeds as secu-

urity in connection with the loan. The board also authorised the firm's managing director and director Umesh Kumar Mittal, to sign any application, agreement, etc., as may be required by EURAM Bank.

Subsequently, a pledge agreement was signed between Sybly and EURAM Bank whereby Sybly pledged the GDR proceeds against the loan availed by Vintage FZE for subscribing to Sybly's GDR.

Sebi noted that Vintage would not have been able to subscribe the GDR issue had Sybly not given such security towards the loan taken by Vintage.

The orders further note that "the arrangement of loan and pledge agreement, which resulted in the subscription of GDR issue of Sybly was not disclosed to the stock exchange in a true and complete manner but was reported as misleading news to the stock exchange."

In similarly worded separate orders, Sebi said: "The Notice by approving the aforesaid board resolution in the board meeting held on March 31, 2008, and which subsequently led to execution of the pledge agreement... Has acted as a party to the fraudulent scheme."

Comm Min may impose duty on Chinese pneumatic tyres

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Commerce Ministry has recommended imposition of countervailing duty on Chinese tyres for buses and lorries, a move aimed at guarding domestic players from imports that are subsidised by the neighbouring country.

The Ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) in its findings after a probe has stated that imposition of definitive countervailing duty is required to offset subsidisation.

"The authority considers it necessary to recommend imposition of definitive countervailing duty on the imports of the subject goods (New Pneumatic Tyres for Buses and Lorries) from China," the DGTR has said in a notification.



It said since the product already attracts anti-dumping duty from China, the amount of countervailing duty to be imposed would be the difference between the quantum of specified countervailing and anti-dumping duty payable.

The finance ministry takes final call for imposition of the duty.

The directorate carried out the probe following complaints from the Automotive Tyre Manufacturer's Association. They have filed a petition on behalf of domestic producers of the duty on these imports.

The DGTR said the domestic industry has contended that China is providing countervailable subsidies to the producers and exporters of these tyres.

According to the petition of the association, subsidies by China are being provided by

them under different programmes such as grants, tax incentives, preferential lending, export financing and export credit, and equity support.

Imports of these tyres from China increased to 81,896 tonne in 2016-17 from 30,665 tonne in 2014-15.

Countervailing duty is a country-specific duty which is imposed to safeguard domestic industry against unfair trade subsidies provided by the local governments of the exporting nations.

India has already imposed countervailing duty as well as anti-dumping duties on various kinds of products from China, with which India has a huge trade deficit.

Trade deficit with China increased to \$63.12 billion in 2017-18 from \$51.11 billion in 2016-17.

India's goods, services export to touch about \$540 bn this fiscal: Prabhu

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise and services export would touch \$540-billion mark this fiscal, Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu said Thursday.

He said exports are growing at a healthy pace and shipments of goods would reach over \$330 billion.

Similarly, services exports would touch about \$200 billion, according to Prabhu.

In total, both "merchandise and services exports put together will reach about \$540 billion" by the end of this fiscal, the minister said here at a function.

During April-February 2018-19, the goods exports grew by 8.85 per cent to \$298.47 billion.

Talking about the stalled negotiations for a free trade agreement between India and European Union, the minister said India is keen to resume the talks.

"We are really keen to have this FTA with EU. India will work to find a workable deal," he said.

NTPC raises \$ 450 mn from international markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

NTPC Limited (NTPC), the largest power generating company in India, priced US\$ 450 million 5 Year bond offering in the international markets under its USD 6 billion Medium Term Note (MTN) Programme on 26th March 2019. NTPC's US\$ 6 billion MTN Programme was set up in 2006 and this issuance was the tenth offering under the Programme taking the cumulative amount raised under the MTN Programme to US\$ 4.30 billion.

Having updated the MTN Programme in December 2018, NTPC was

well positioned to take advantage of a supportive primary credit market and conducted comprehensive deal roadshow covering in Singapore, HongKong and London from 21st - 25th March 2019 to reach out to a wide range of fixed income global investors and to appraise them about companies' financials and its future plans. Based on the investors feedback, NTPC launched a USD 450 million senior, unsecured, fixed rate Reg-S 5 year bond transaction with an initial price guidance of Current 5Y US Treasuries yields (CTS) plus 185 bps area on 26th March 2019 (Asia open).

NORTHERN RAILWAY
2nd CORRIGENDUM
In reference to this office tender notice of even No. dated 01/03/19 & 15/03/19, an open tender notice on two packets system (Technical & Financial bid) for "Comprehensive Mechanized Cleaning of Coaches, Depot Premises and OBHS of Trains" based at DEE Depot for Four Years was issued and due for opening on 10/04/19. The same is cancelled on administrative ground.
No. 197-S/119/DRC-OBHS/DEE-18-II/MC-IV Dated March 26, 2019 955/2019
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
(SECTION 82 Cr.Pc.)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused female, **Kalpna @ Anita** W/o Ramesh Dass, R/o H.No. 196, Village Nawada, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No.138/11 u/s 420/34 IPC, PS Rani Bagh, Delhi**, and it has been returned to warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said accused female **Kalpna @ Anita**, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused female **Kalpna @ Anita**, has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused female **Kalpna @ Anita**, Under the **FIR No. 138/11 u/s 420/34 IPC, PS Rani Bagh, Delhi**, is required to appear before the court on or before **26.07.2019**.
By order
Ms Ekta Gauba,
Addl. Chief MM, (North-West),
Room No. 101, 1st floor
Rohini Courts, Delhi
DP/2062/OD/19

SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON
General public is hereby informed that the Person **Namely: Dador, S/o: Sh Panne Lal, R/o: Jhuggi Gaushala Road Double Fattak Kishan Ganj, New Delhi Age: 21 years, Height: 5', Complexion: Shallow, Face: Round, Build: Normal, Wearing: Brown Color Jeans Pant and Mix Color Shirt and Hawai Chappal**, has been missing since 18.03.2019 from the jurisdiction of PS. DBG Road, Delhi.
In this regard a DD No. 52A-, dated 22.03.2019 has been lodged at PS. DBG Road, Delhi.
Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this Person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this Person kindly inform to the following.
SHO
E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in P.S. DBG Road, Delhi.
Website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Ph. 011-23613252,
Fax: 011-24368639 23537374, 8750870429
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/6148/CD/19

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
(SEE SECTION 82 Cr.P.C.)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that **Narender @ Gurra S/o Naresh R/o N-673, Mangol Puri, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 367/11 U/s 457/380/411/34 IPC P.S. Mangol Puri, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused **Narender @ Gurra** can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused **Narender @ Gurra** have absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person **Narender @ Gurra** of **FIR No. 367/11 U/s 457/380/411/34 IPC P.S. Mangol Puri, Delhi** is required to appear before this court to answer the said complaint on or before dated **16.05.2019**.
By Order
Sh. Rakesh Kumar-II
DP/2068/OD/19
-(Court Matter) Metropolitan Magistrate (North-West)
Room No. 105, 1st Floor, Rohini Distt. Courts, Delhi

Business Corner

OH Pande has taken over as Director (Electrical) of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC). An officer of the 1984 batch of Indian Railway Service of Electrical Engineers, Pande was earlier working as Executive Director/Rolling Stock/Operation & Maintenance in DMRC.

Vivek Gupta has taken charge as Director (Raw Material & Logistics) of Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) on March 27. A civil engineer from NIT, Allahabad, Gupta joined SAIL in 1980.

Vellore Institute of Technology, Andhra Pradesh celebrated its Second University Day on a colourful note in Amaravati. The cultural performances of students enthralled the audience and the dignitaries.

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED
General Public is hereby informed that a girl namely **Farjana D/o Mohd. Masluddin Ansari, R/o C-744, J J Colony, Bawana, Delhi** has been missing / kidnapped since 14.09.2018 from the area of PS. Narela. In this regard a DD No. 56-A dated 16.09.2018 has been lodged at PS, Narela, Delhi.
The description of Missing/kidnapped girl is as under:
Name : Farjana, **Father's Name :** Mohd. Masluddin Ansari, **Age :** 20 years, **Height :** 4'7", **Face :** Long, **Complexion :** Fair, **Wearing :** Black Colour T-Shirt and Pink Colour Lower.
If anyone having any clue/information, kindly inform the undersigned.
Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
e-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph : 011-24368638, 24368641
SHO
P.S., Narela, Delhi
Ph : 011-27282350
DP/2434/RD/19 27280435

Sensex soars over 400 points; Nifty reclaims 11,500-mark

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Global equities were mixed amid a fall in bond yields, underscoring recession fears. The 30-share Sensex, after a positive start at 38,208.30, stayed in the green throughout the session, with buying pace gathering momentum towards the end. In the Sensex pack, gainers included HCL Tech, SBI, ITC, Bharti Airtel, Sun Pharma, Yes Bank, Axis Bank, TCS, Asian Paints, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance and Infosys, jumping up to 3.84%.

On the other hand, Tata Steel, ONGC, Bajaj Auto, PowerGrid, M&M and Hero MotoCorp fell up to 1.73%.

“Benchmark indices outperformed the broader indices on the expiry day supported by

banks and IT. Bank Nifty propelled to a new high in expectation of rate cut from RBI next week and recapitalisation of banks. Besides, the slide in India's 10-year bond yield further raised the possibility of rate cut.

“Global economic growth concerns and Fed's dovish view on rates will give a positive impetus to emerging markets like India,” said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

Except metal and power, all BSE sectoral indices finished with gains, led by realty, teck, IT, bank and finance.

On a net basis, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) bought shares worth ₹1,481.11 crore on Wednesday, and

domestic institutional investors (DIIs) were net buyers to the tune of ₹134.92 crore, provisional data available with the BSE showed.

The rupee, meanwhile, depreciated 11 paise against the US dollar to 68.99 (intra-day).

Elsewhere in Asia, Hong Kong's Hang Seng climbed 0.16% while Japan's Nikkei fell 1.61%, Shanghai Composite Index declined 0.92%, and Korea's Kospi slipped 0.82%.

In the Eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX gained 0.50% and Paris CAC 40 was up 0.35% in morning trade. London's FTSE 100 jumped 0.73%.

The benchmark Brent crude futures were trading lower by 0.37% at USD 67.58 per barrel.

W eyeing up to 20% sales from sustainable fabrics products in 18-24 months

New Delhi (PTI): Apparel brand W, a part of TCNS Clothing Co Ltd, is eyeing up to 20% of its revenue from sale of products made from sustainable fabrics in the next 18-24 months.

“Sustainability in fashion is a relatively newer concept. We are experimenting with different kind of sustainable fabrics. We expect revenue from products made from sustainable fabrics to double in the 18-24 months to 10-20% from about 5-10% at present,” TCNS Clothing Co managing director Anant Daga told PTI. The company on Thursday announced an exclusive partnership with Aditya Birla Group's Livaeco brand. Last year W had launched a new line of Harit Khadi products styled by the company. “These sustainable products are priced at a premi-

Infosys to acquire 75% stake in ABN AMRO Bank subsi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's second largest IT services firm Infosys on Thursday said it would acquire 75% stake in ABN AMRO Bank's wholly-owned subsidiary, Stater, for 127.5 million euros (about ₹989 crore). Both the companies have signed an agreement to this effect. Founded in 1997, Stater provides end-to-end mortgage administration services in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany.

As part of the deal, Infosys will acquire 75% of the shareholding in Stater, while ABN AMRO will continue to hold the remaining 25%, Infosys said in a statement. Infosys said the partnership was in alignment with its strategy to strengthen its mortgage servicing capabilities in Continental Europe.

The transaction is expected to close during the first quarter of fiscal 2020, subject to customary closing conditions, it added. “This transaction strengthens our approach to offer clients digital platforms and industry focused solutions. It brings together our complementary capabilities to enhance the value we offer to our financial services clients,” Infosys

president Mohit Joshi said. The current management team of Stater will continue to steer the company, Infosys added. “While mortgages are a key product for ABN AMRO, providing administrative mortgage services is not a core activity. That's why we are very pleased with Infosys as Stater's new majority shareholder.”

“ABN AMRO will keep a strategic interest of 25% and will continue to be an important client to Stater,” said Christian Bornfeld, member of the executive board of ABN AMRO. Infosys said mortgage services was a focus area for large corporations in the financial sector, given the importance of the asset on a bank's balance sheet.

In a regulatory filing, Infosys said it would have the rights of a majority shareholder as part of the terms of the shareholders' agreement. This includes the right to appoint majority of directors in the supervisory board, right to subscribe to new shares, right of first refusal in the event of transfer of shares, right to restrict amendment of articles, issuance, redemption and repurchase of shares, merger, demerger, bankruptcy or Liquidation among others, it added.

Sharma handed over the RTGS advice to Power Secretary AK Bhalla on Thursday to complete the acquisition. The money has been transferred into the government's account online.

The official further said the government's 52.63% equity in REC would be transferred in the name of the PFC by the

closing of the stock market on Thursday. PFC has raised money from Bank of Baroda, Life Insurance Corporation and State Bank of India, among others, to make the payment.

Earlier on March 20, PFC had inked a share purchase agreement to acquire 103.94 crore equity shares of ₹10 each of REC Ltd.

S&P downgrades Tata Motors, JLR credit rating

New Delhi (PTI): S&P Global Ratings has downgraded the credit rating of Tata Motors and its wholly-owned subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), citing weak profitability, Tata Motors said on Thursday. “We would like to inform that based on S&P Global Ratings, the credit rating of the company and Jaguar Land Rover Automotive Plc has been downgraded,” the company said in a regulatory filing. The rating agency cited weakness in profitability of JLR as the main reason for downgrading credit rating of Tata Motors and its British arm. S&P cut its rating on senior unsecured notes of JLR and Tata Motors to ‘B+’ from ‘BB-’.

PFC completes acquisition of REC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) on Thursday completed the acquisition of majority stake in REC Ltd. by transferring ₹14,500 crore to the government, an official said. The transaction has helped the government meet its divestment target of

₹80,000 crore for the current financial year. “The entire consideration of ₹14,500 crore for acquiring 52.63% equity of the Government of India in REC is paid by PFC through RTGS (real-time gross settlement) mode this morning,” the official told PTI. The official said PFC chairman and managing director Rajeev

Sharma handed over the RTGS advice to Power Secretary AK Bhalla on Thursday to complete the acquisition. The money has been transferred into the government's account online.

The official further said the government's 52.63% equity in REC would be transferred in the name of the PFC by the

closing of the stock market on Thursday. PFC has raised money from Bank of Baroda, Life Insurance Corporation and State Bank of India, among others, to make the payment.

Earlier on March 20, PFC had inked a share purchase agreement to acquire 103.94 crore equity shares of ₹10 each of REC Ltd.

BSE 500

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	11463.65	11588.50	11452.45	11570.00	127.60
IRULHSGFIN	753.00	823.35	753.00	818.00	69.00
ZEE	426.85	445.00	426.30	443.50	20.45
ADANIAPORTS	368.85	382.65	366.30	381.00	14.70
HCLTECH	1051.40	1088.35	1050.00	1085.00	41.80
UPL	905.90	935.95	896.40	934.00	32.10
SBN	310.10	339.65	309.05	319.20	10.40
ITC	294.10	302.00	293.00	301.00	7.90
HINDPRTCL	269.15	279.45	269.15	276.25	7.05
BHARTIARTL	322.60	333.00	317.75	330.80	8.30
YESBANK	270.65	277.70	268.30	275.10	6.50
SUNPHARMA	465.00	479.80	465.00	474.50	10.00
BFL	379.55	389.05	378.35	387.30	8.35
AXISBANK	761.10	787.65	757.15	775.80	16.50
ASIANPAINT	1473.50	1508.95	1473.50	1500.15	28.10
TCS	1980.00	2014.60	1972.80	2004.45	36.55
ITC	1120.00	1139.55	1111.45	1135.00	18.50
BAIFINANCE	2940.10	3000.00	2940.05	2993.00	47.75
LT	1371.00	1392.50	1364.00	1388.00	21.55
ICICIBANK	392.75	401.90	392.75	399.05	5.85
VEDL	177.00	178.95	175.65	177.95	2.50
MARUTI	6535.00	6625.00	6501.20	6609.80	91.80
INFY	730.00	745.00	730.00	739.10	9.40
HDFC	1917.00	1950.00	1912.05	1942.10	22.20
TECHM	770.00	782.00	768.05	772.85	9.90
RELIANCE	1350.25	1369.80	1342.80	1362.00	12.75
KOTAKBANK	1338.00	1352.00	1328.90	1344.95	12.10
COALINDIA	234.40	237.65	232.75	236.30	1.85
TATAMOTORS	169.00	171.00	167.50	170.90	1.95
GAIL	354.55	363.00	354.30	358.00	2.15
GRASIM	828.60	841.45	823.70	833.50	9.40
WIPRO	255.90	257.90	254.10	256.00	1.45
HINDUNILVR	1685.00	1692.00	1673.40	1689.85	9.05
IOC	162.00	164.10	160.35	162.25	8.90
INDUSINDBK	1812.50	1834.40	1777.15	1813.00	8.75
HDFCBANK	2298.80	2325.00	2287.85	2308.00	8.55
NTPC	137.50	139.35	135.10	137.10	0.10
CIPLA	525.30	532.55	522.30	525.60	0.10
ULTRACEMCO	3920.00	3968.00	3894.45	3900.00	-1.95
INFRAEEL	317.45	319.65	313.45	316.00	-2.20
BAJAJFINSV	6994.00	7022.70	6857.50	6970.00	-10.35
JSWSTEEL	286.00	290.00	284.00	286.85	-0.65
EICHERMOT	21024.00	21300.00	20781.05	20924.75	-49.40
HEROMOTOCO	2558.00	2558.00	2515.00	2530.00	-13.20
M&M	659.05	662.75	653.60	655.20	-4.80
BAJAJ-AUTO	2989.00	3020.45	2915.00	2954.00	-26.10
POWERGRID	200.00	200.00	196.45	197.50	-2.70
DREDDY	2774.70	2774.70	2708.00	2723.00	-42.05
ONGC	160.00	160.25	155.20	156.75	-3.35
TATASTEEL	514.40	516.45	504.80	505.00	-10.80
HINDALCO	206.95	208.30	201.55	203.10	-4.55

NIFTY 50

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
NIFTY 50	11463.65	11588.50	11452.45	11570.00	127.60
IRULHSGFIN	753.00	823.35	753.00	818.00	69.00
ZEE	426.85	445.00	426.30	443.50	20.45
ADANIAPORTS	368.85	382.65	366.30	381.00	14.70
HCLTECH	1051.40	1088.35	1050.00	1085.00	41.80
UPL	905.90	935.95	896.40	934.00	32.10
SBN	310.10	339.65	309.05	319.20	10.40
ITC	294.10	302.00	293.00	301.00	7.90
HINDPRTCL	269.15	279.45	269.15	276.25	7.05
BHARTIARTL	322.60	333.00	317.75	330.80	8.30
YESBANK	270.65	277.70	268.30	275.10	6.50
SUNPHARMA	465.00	479.80	465.00	474.50	10.00
BFL	379.55	389.05	378.35	387.30	8.35
AXISBANK	761.10	787.65	757.15	775.80	16.50
ASIANPAINT	1473.50	1508.95	1473.50	1500.15	28.10
TCS	1980.00	2014.60	1972.80	2004.45	36.55
ITC	1120.00	1139.55	1111.45	1135.00	18.50
BAIFINANCE	2940.10	3000.00	2940.05	2993.00	47.75
LT	1371.00	1392.50	1364.00	1388.00	21.55
ICICIBANK	392.75	401.90	392.75	399.05	5.85
VEDL	177.00	178.95	175.65	177.95	2.50
MARUTI	6535.00	6625.00	6501.20	6609.80	91.80
INFY	730.00	745.00	730.00	739.10	9.40
HDFC	1917.00	1950.00	1912.05	1942.10	22.20
TECHM	770.00	782.00	768.05	772.85	9.90
RELIANCE	1350.25	1369.80	1342.80	1362.00	12.75
KOTAKBANK	1338.00	1352.00	1328.90	1344.95	12.10
COALINDIA	234.40	237.65	232.75	236.30	1.85
TATAMOTORS	169.00	171.00	167.50	170.90	1.95
GAIL	354.55	363.00	354.30	358.00	2.15
GRASIM	828.60	841.45	823.70	833.50	9.40
WIPRO	255.90	257.90	254.10	256.00	1.45
HINDUNILVR	1685.00	1692.00	1673.40	1689.85	9.05
IOC	162.00	164.10	160.35	162.25	8.90
INDUSINDBK	1812.50	1834.40	1777.15	1813.00	8.75
HDFCBANK	2298.80	2325.00	2287.85	2308.00	8.55
NTPC	137.50	139.35	135.10	137.10	0.10
CIPLA	525.30	532.55	522.30	525.60	0.10
ULTRACEMCO	3920.00	3968.00	3894.45	3900.00	-1.95
INFRAEEL	317.45	319.65	313.45	316.00	-2.20
BAJAJFINSV	6994.00	7022.70	6857.50	6970.00	-10.35
JSWSTEEL	286.00	290.00	284.00	286.85	-0.65
EICHERMOT	21024.00	21300.00	20781.05	20924.75	-49.40
HEROMOTOCO	2558.00	2558.00	2515.00	2530.00	-13.20
M&M	659.05	662.75	653.60	655.20	-4.80
BAJAJ-AUTO	2989.00	3020.45	2915.00	2954.00	-26.10
POWERGRID	200.00	200.00	196.45	197.50	-2.70
DREDDY	2774.70	2774.70	2708.00	2723.00	-42.05
ONGC	160.00	160.25	155.20	156.75	-3.35
TATASTEEL	514.40	516.45	504.80	505.00	-10.80
HINDALCO	206.95	208.30	201.55	203.10	-4.55

BSE 500

SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE
BSE 500	11463.65	11588.50	11452.45	11570.00	127.60
IRULHSGFIN	753.00	823.35	753.00	818.00	69.00
ZEE	426.85	445.00	426.30	443.50	20.45
ADANIAPORTS	368.85	382.65	366.30	381.00	14.70
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BAIFINANCE	2940.10	3000.00	2940.05	2993.00	47.75
LT	1371.00	1392.5			

Troops in Venezuela 'for as long as needed': Russia

AFP ■ MOSCOW

Russia said on Thursday its troops will stay in Venezuela "for as long as needed", rejecting US President Donald Trump's demand that Russia remove its military from the crisis-stricken country.

Russia's weekend deployment of troops and equipment to bolster President Nicolas Maduro has ratcheted up already high international tensions over Venezuela while the Trump administration is pushing for regime change.

The Russian Foreign Ministry insisted Thursday the presence of its troops there did not pose a threat to anyone.

"They are involved in the implementation of agreements in the sphere of military and technical cooperation," said ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, adding they would remain in the country "for as long as needed." "Russia is not changing the balance of power in the region, Russia is not threatening anyone unlike citizens in Washington whom I have just quoted," she told reporters.

She was referring to Trump's comments that "Russia has to get out" of Venezuela as well as to statements by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Washington does not plan to negotiate with Maduro and wants to end Russia and Cuba's influence on Caracas.

The United States and more than 50 other countries recognise Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido as interim president while Russia, along with China, backs Maduro.

"Neither Russia nor Venezuela are provinces of the United States," Zakharova said. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has accused Washington of trying to "organise a coup d'etat" in the oil-producing nation.

Venezuela's military attaché in Moscow also said Thursday that Russian troops were in the country under an agreement on military and technical cooperation and not to carry out a military operation.

A Russian air force Antonov-124 cargo plane and a smaller Ilyushin Il-62 landed at the main airport outside Caracas on Saturday and offloaded around 100 troops

and tonnes of equipment.

"As for the presence of Russian specialists, we are talking about cooperation, military and technical cooperation," the attaché, Jose Rafael Torrealba Perez, was quoted as saying in translated comments by RIA Novosti state news agency.

"We are absolutely not talking about Russia's military presence to carry out military operations," he added. Venezuela's Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez is expected to visit Moscow in April as part of the cooperation between the two countries, the attaché said.

On Tuesday, Zakharova declared that Russia was "developing cooperation with Venezuela in strict accordance with the constitution of that country and with full respect for its legal norms".

"The presence of Russian specialists on Venezuelan territory is regulated by an agreement between the Russian and Venezuelan governments on military and technical cooperation that was signed in May, 2001," she said.

In 2011, Russia gave Venezuela a \$4 billion loan to buy Russian armaments.

UK Govt plans 3rd Brexit deal vote today

AFP ■ LONDON

Britain's Government said it intended to hold a third parliamentary vote on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal on Friday but was awaiting the go-ahead from House of Commons speaker.

"We recognise that any motion brought forward tomorrow will need to be compliant with the speaker's ruling and that discussion is ongoing," Andrea Leadsom, who represents the government in parliament, told MPs.

"A motion will be tabled just as soon as possible and obviously by later today," Leadsom said Thursday.

Commons Speaker John Bercow has previously blocked a third vote on the deal, invoking a 17th-century statute that prevents parliament from voting on the same thing again and again.

"The only way we ensure we leave in good time on May 22 is by approving the withdrawal agreement by 11:00 pm on March 29," she said.

Leadsom pointed out that EU leaders had granted an extension until May 22 "provided that the withdrawal agreement is approved by the House of Commons this week".

EU 'needs yes' on Brexit after UK MPs vote no

AFP ■ BRUSSELS

The EU on Thursday urged London to provide a way forward on Brexit, taking note that the British Parliament had failed to agree a fresh solution to the UK's divorce from the bloc.

"The European Commission takes note of the indicative votes in the House of Commons last night. This is part of an ongoing political process in the UK, which we fully respect," EU spokesman Margaritis Schinas said.

"We counted eight 'no's last night, now we need a 'yes' on the way forward," he added.

Schinas was referring to the parliament's unprecedented step on Tuesday of voting a choice of alternate solutions to the near-dead divorce deal May reached with Brussels after 17 months of talks.

But none of the eight options secured a majority and another vote has been set for Monday on some of the proposals. A proposal to hold a second referendum -- a popular idea with EU supporters -- came second while those promoting a cleaner break finished near the bottom.

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel told journalists in Brussels that without a solution from Britain, EU leaders would meet again on April 10 or 11 to discuss next steps.

EU leaders last week offered Britain a Brexit extension until May 22, but only on condition that parliament votes through the deal by Friday, the day Britain was originally scheduled to leave



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May stands to talk to lawmakers inside the House of Commons parliament in London Wednesday

GLOBE TROTTER

KAZAKHSTAN NEW PREZ TO VISIT RUSSIA FIRST

Almaty (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan's new president will visit ally Russia on his first foreign visit, his office said on Thursday, days after predecessor Nursultan Nazarbayev suddenly quit the post he held for three decades. Nazarbayev, who had ruled the energy-rich Central Asian nation since before it gained independence with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, announced his shock resignation in a televised address last week.

THREE DIE IN BULGARIA HOSPITAL FIRE

Sofia: Three patients died in a fire that engulfed a room in the men's ward of a psychiatric hospital in the central Bulgarian city of Plovdiv, officials said Thursday. "A fire erupted around midnight."

THAI EC FACES CRITICISM IN VOTE COUNT

Bangkok: Thailand's Election Commission held a sudden news conference Thursday to release full preliminary results of the country's recent general election, though some of the data was inconsistent, adding to concerns over the management of the nation's first poll since a military coup.

30 Guatemalans killed by truck: officials

AFP ■ GUATEMALA CITY

At least 30 indigenous Guatemalans were killed on Wednesday night when they were struck on a highway by a semi-trailer truck in the town of Nahuala in the country's west, rescue workers said. "Personnel from the Departmental Municipal Firefighters have counted at least 30 dead people at this point," spokesman Cecilio Chacaj told reporters.

The group had congregated at the site of a hit-and-run accident that had killed a resident of their neighborhood when they in turn were hit by the truck, Chacaj added.

Guatemala, a Central American country of some 16.5 million people, has a poor road safety record and traffic rules are frequently ignored.

Shooting in North China motivated by 'revenge': Police

AFP ■ BEIJING

A 44-year-old man who shot and killed five people in northern China earlier this week was motivated by revenge over "trivial matters" and targeted specific individuals, authorities said on Thursday.

The suspect was the deputy director of a local water plant, said the Kailu county government from Tongliao city in the Inner Mongolia region.

Citing local police, officials said the shooter, surnamed Liang, was driven by "conflicts created by trivial matters in work and life", without offering more details.

Police have seized the small calibre rifle used in the crime, said authorities on their official WeChat social media account.

The suspect was in police custody and an investigation was underway, they added. Kailu county police declined to comment.

The shooting, which took place on Monday, was a rare case of gun violence in China, where the Government tightly restricts ownership of firearms.

There are no official statistics on gun-related deaths. In November 2017, three people were shot dead and six others wounded in southern Guangdong province.

In January that same year, a high-ranking city official in the southwestern province of Sichuan burst into a government meeting and shot and wounded the mayor and city party secretary before killing himself.

15 killed as Somalia bomb hits restaurant at lunchtime

AFP ■ MOGADISHU

At least 15 people died when a bomb exploded on a busy street and ripped into a nearby restaurant in Somalia's capital on Thursday, medics said.

Security officials and witnesses reported bodies strewn on the ground as plumes of smoke rose high into the air after the bomb detonated on Mogadishu's Maka Al-Mukarama road, one of the seaside capital's main thoroughfares, an area busy with businesses and travellers.

It struck as people were eating lunch.

Abdulkadir Abdurahman Adan, director of the Aamin Ambulance service, said that 15 people had been killed, as well as several more wounded

from the blast scene — and more than 10 of them were already dead," Osman added. Ambulance workers rushed in to help take the wounded to hospital.

"I don't know whether they were dead or wounded, but I could see several people strewn in the street — some of them were motionless," said Suado Ahmed, another witness who was at the scene moments after the blast.

Teams of ambulance workers carried away those killed and wounded on stretchers, while volunteers also helped by using plastic sheeting to lift the bodies away.

The bombing is the latest in a recent string of blasts in Mogadishu, which has been hit regularly by Al-Shabaab attacks.

"I saw 16 people carried

19 killed in B'desh fire tragedy; rescue operations on

PTI ■ DHAKA

A massive fire engulfed a 22-storey building in Dhaka's posh Banani area on Thursday, killing at least 19 people, including a Sri Lankan national, and injuring 70 others, in the second major blaze to hit the Bangladeshi capital since last month.

The incident, which happened on Thursday afternoon in a building that houses several garment shops and internet service providers, left several people trapped inside as the blaze spread to two adjacent buildings.

"Until now we can tell you that the inferno killed 19 people, one of them being a Sri Lankan national. Seventy oth-

ers are wounded," a senior fire official told PTI.

At least six of the killed, including the Sri Lankan national, died after they jumped off from various floors of the high-rise building for safety.

"A Sri Lankan citizen identified as Niras Chandra, was declared dead at Kurmitola General Hospital. He fell off the building while trying to escape the fire," Kazi Shahhan Haque, officer-in-charge (OC) of Cantonment police station, was quoted as saying by the Dhaka Tribune.

Another person, who was yet to be identified by the authorities, was declared dead at Kurmitola General Hospital after he fell off the building while trying to escape the fire.

Netanyahu says prepared for 'comprehensive' Gaza operation

AFP ■ JERUSALEM

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Thursday Israel is prepared for a widespread military campaign in Gaza as tensions simmered following the latest flare-up -- but only after all other options were exhausted.

Netanyahu has been seeking to head off political pressure over Gaza ahead of April 9 elections, in which he faces a strong challenge from former military chief Benny Gantz.

"In recent days I gave

instructions to fortify forces, to add vehicles, to be prepared for a comprehensive campaign," he said during the inauguration of a new road in northern Israel.

The premier, who was speaking after visiting military forces on the Gaza border, noted however that a war would be the last option.

"All Israelis should know that if a comprehensive campaign is required, we will enter it strong and safe, after we have exhausted all other possibilities," said Netanyahu, who also serves as defence minister.

Palestinian militants had on Monday fired a long-distance rocket from the Gaza Strip, hitting a house north of Tel Aviv and wounding seven Israelis, triggering Israeli air strikes and further Palestinian fire at southern Israel.

Netanyahu beefed up the military presence near Gaza, but by Wednesday the fighting had abated after Hamas announced a ceasefire brokered by Egypt.

Israel has been carefully monitoring the situation on the Gaza border ahead of Saturday, which will mark a year



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks on a video from Israel to the 2019 American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) policy conference, at Washington Convention Center, in Washington

clashes began there. A demonstration on the day of the anniversary is expected to draw thousands of Palestinians.

A Hamas official said an Egyptian delegation met with the Islamist movement's leader Ismail Haniya in Gaza City on Wednesday night in further efforts to calm tensions.

The official said the delegation informed Hamas and its allies in Gaza that Israel had agreed to measures such as improving the electricity supply in the strip, which suffers from severe power shortages.

In exchange, Hamas would be expected to maintain calm at the weekly protests along the Gaza border, including during Saturday's anniversary.

Ocean heat hits record high: UN

AFP ■ GENEVA

Ocean heat hit a record high in 2018, the United Nations said Thursday, raising urgent new concerns about the threat global warming is posing to marine life.

In its latest State of the Climate overview, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reaffirmed that the last four years had been the hottest on record — figures previously announced in provisional drafts of the flagship report.

But the final version of the report highlighted worrying developments in other climate indicators beyond surface temperature. "2018 saw new records for ocean heat content in the upper 700 metres," a WMO statement said.

Trump threatens to shut Mexico border, again

AFP ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump renewed on Thursday his threat to close the vital US-Mexico border, claiming America's southern neighbour was doing "NOTHING" to slow the flow of illegal immigrants to the United States.

In a flurry of early morning tweets, Trump warned: "May close the Southern Border!" "Mexico is doing NOTHING to help stop the flow of illegal immigrants to our Country. They are all talk and no action," he added.

"Likewise, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have taken our money for years, and do Nothing. The Dems don't care, such BAD laws."

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 Victoria Cross Vidyuta Garbar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun, Tel. No. 0135-2763672-76, Fax 0135-2760289.
E-TENDER DATE EXTENSION NOTICE-Vth
 In reference to e-tenders specification No. CCP-1/59/2018-2019 invited previously, for work of Appointment of Project Management Agency (PMA) for construction of 10Nos GIS Substation in UPCL under Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS) are hereby extended due to unavoidable reasons. The e-tender can be purchased and submitted upto 17:00hrs of 22.4.2019. Part-I of the e-tender shall be opened on 23.4.2019 at 15:30hrs.
 Other terms & conditions will remain same as per original tender notice. For further details, please visit our website www.uktenders.gov.in.
 Tender No. - 173 / EE (CM) / UPCL / A-2
 Dated: 27/03/2019
 Superintending Engineer Corporate (C&P-I)

PUBLIC NOTICE
 Information is given to general public at large that my client S M/s Aggarwal Builders & Developers owner of property No. 499/1/15-A, admeasuring 62 Sq. Yds. Gali No. 6, Kharsa No. 600/92, situated at Govindpuri, Kalkaji, New Delhi vide sale deed dated 19.09.2018 doc no. 5151 and second floor without roof rights to be sold Mr. Baboo Kumar and second floor to be sold Baboo Kumar and same to be loan financed by AAVAS Financiers Limited branch RP Delhi. If any person is having objection right of claim against the said property, contact to undersigned along with supporting documents within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice and or the same to the undersigned/advocate by anyone. Naveen Kumar Verma, Advocate F-211, Sector-3, Vaidhali, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh-201010, Contact: 09958871432

SEARCH FOR MISSING
 General public is hereby informed that one girl namely **Shivani, D/o Veer Singh, R/o: H No. 47, Balmiki Mohalla, Village Badli, Delhi, Age: 23 years, Height: 5'3", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, wearing Pink T-Shirt and Black Lower, has been missing from the area of P.S. Samaipur Badli, since 29.11.2018. In this regard a DD No. 55-A, dated 01.12.2018 has been registered at P.S. Samaipur Badli, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned.**

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
 E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
 Fax: 011-24368639
 Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/2585/RD/19

SHO P.S. Samaipur Badli, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27854757, 27854799

SEARCH FOR MISSING
 General public is hereby informed that one female namely **Sunita, W/o Sukhbir, R/o: H No. 132, Near Bhumiya Chowk, Village Bakoli, Delhi, Age: 46 years, Height: 5', Complexion: Shallow, Face: Round, wearing Pink colour Suit and Red Shawl, has been missing/kidnapped from the area of P.S. Alipur, since 11.11.2018. In this regard a DD No. 28-A, dated 16.11.2018 has been registered at P.S. Alipur, Delhi. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the female but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about her please inform undersigned.**

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
 E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
 Fax: 011-24368639
 Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/2619/RD/19

SHO P.S. Alipur, Delhi
Ph.: 011-27202290, 27202265

13 killed in military chopper crash in Kazakhstan

AFP ■ ALMATY (KAZAKHSTAN)

A military helicopter has crashed in southwestern Kazakhstan, killing 13 servicemen on board, the defence ministry said Thursday.

The crash involving the Russian-made Mi-8 aircraft occurred on Wednesday, the ministry said in a statement.

"13 servicemen were killed... While performing their military duty," it said. Kazakhstan's new president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev tweeted that he had ordered an investigation into the crash.

Israelis unveil 'world's longest salt cave'

AFP ■ MOUNT SODOM

Israeli cave explorers said Thursday that a salt cave with striking stalactites near the Dead Sea is the world's longest, beating the previous record-holder in Iran. The cave named Malham, stretching over 10 kilometres, runs through Mount Sodom, Israel's largest mountain, and spills out to the southwest corner of the adjacent Dead Sea.

Pale salt stalactites hang from the ceilings, and some of the walls sparkle with salt crystals. Drops of salty water are visible at the tips of some of the stalactites.

Malham became known to researchers through the work of

Amos Frumkin, founder and director of the Hebrew University's Cave Research Centre, who in the 1980s mapped around five kilometres of it. But in 2006, researchers mapped over six kilometres of the N3 cave in southern Iran's Qeshm island, granting it the widely recognised status of the world's longest salt cave.

Two years ago, Israeli spelunker Yoav Negev decided to complete Frumkin's work, reaching out to Bulgarian cave explorers for reinforcements with the promise of a warm winter adventure. Negev, founder of the Israel Cave Explorers Club, joined forces with Boaz Langford, a researcher at the

university's research centre, to organise a delegation of eight European spelunkers and another 20 locals. They spent some 10 days mapping the cave in 2018. A second 10-day expedition this year with 80 local and international spelunkers completed the measuring and mapping of the cave with lasers, determining its length at more than 10 kilometres. Mount Sodom is essentially a huge salt block covered by a thin but resilient layer of cap rock. The rare desert rains find their way through cracks in the cap rock and dissolve the salt to form small caves that flow down toward the Dead Sea.

Trend Blazer

Amitabh starts prepping for KBC

Actor AMITABH BACHCHAN has started prepping for the new season of the reality game show *Kaun Banega Crorepati (KBC)*.

"So prep for KBC starts and here we are running into introductions, systems, learning new inputs, rehearsing, getting ready for another year," Amitabh wrote on his blog. The actor has been a part of the show for nine seasons. He also talked about his association with the general knowledge-based game show. "Its 2019 and it all began in 2000. 19 years and a gap of about two years when it did not happen for me. But 17 years is a lifetime and a life time that was given a lifeline by you," he wrote.



'Criminal Justice has been an amazing experience for me. It is a legal crime drama, bold and edgy but takes you on a journey that will keep you hooked till you finish the series. It is commendable how smoothly every scene was shot. I'm thrilled that my digital debut has been so intense and enriching.'

—Jackie Shroff



Actress MADHURI DIXIT NENE says she is not contesting the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. There were reports that the actress might contest the Lok Sabha elections from Pune for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). But the actress says she is not involved with any political party.



"It is just a rumour. I am not contesting for any political party. I think I have already cleared the air on that matter," Madhuri said. "In fact, I think there are three other actors who were roped in for the rumour and I clarified it," she added. The actress will soon be seen in multi-starrer *Kalank*.

'Excited for The Titan Games'

Actor DWAYNE JOHNSON recently launched his show, *The Titan Games*. Speaking about the participants that have been chosen to come on the show, Dwayne said, "I think one of the compelling things about our hopeful titans are their background stories and where they have come from. The trials that they have gone through and the challenges that they have faced, proves that they are the potential titans from all walks of life." "I am pretty excited for everybody to watch the show, not only for the physical competition but also the mental strength it is going to take these titans to actually win," he added.



Actress JACQUELINE FERNANDEZ tells AYUSHI SHARMA why...

...IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

Health sensibility and consciousness has been on the rise at an exponential rate in the country. Taking the stairs instead of the escalator, accounting a trainer after or before work hours, replacing soft drinks and other packaged drinks with health and immunity-boosters — these are some of the ways a fit routine and the need for a healthy body is taking over the Indian minds.

There is yet another side to India's growing health consciousness. Actress and fitness enthusiast Jacqueline Fernandez said that the trend blazer has been pointing upwards for people reading food labels and understanding nutrition charts before making a decision. She said that the change has surely come in and people are taking their health as the "most important factor."

Well, it's also one of the major reasons why 'Delhi Gets Raw' was organised in the city recently by the Raw Pressery. She said that cold-pressed juices are more helpful in maintaining health as compared to other packaged drinks or everyday juices in the market, which are made with concentrate, stabilisers and extra-added sugar and preservatives. "Cold-pressed juices are never heated and consist 100 per cent fruit. They



retain more nutrition and living enzymes in the juicing process. It basically makes your food work harder to gain more nutrition, vitamins and enzymes to lead a healthy lifestyle," said she. The actress is an extremely avid follower of yoga, purely because of its "holistic health benefits." She said, "I'm really glad we hosted *Yoga Rise* in Delhi, as the city is now leaning towards making healthy the new sexy. Nothing looks as good as a healthy body and vibe. Our aim is to go out there and help people make the right choices. I'm grateful that yoga has become that channel for us. The energy in Delhi is surreal and we hope to do more of such wellness events."

'ALWAYS SET AN AIM FOR EVERY WEEK AND KEEP A TRACK OF YOUR PROGRESS. DON'T PUSH YOURSELF BEYOND LIMIT ESPECIALLY AFTER A TIRING DAY. NEVER PUNISH YOUR BODY'

fully embraces yoga. It is rooted deep in her workout and fitness regime. She not only follows it religiously, but also suggests her friends and family to practice it. She said, "To achieve flexibility, yoga is the best exercise. It also slows down your stress level." Talking about her fitness mantra, Jacqueline said, "It is quite simple — one should eat right, must get adequate sleep, and exercise regularly because it's never too early or too late to work towards being the healthiest you. I ensure that I maintain a healthy diet, stay positive and relaxed. Being healthy is the need of the hour." No matter how one keeps in mind the fitness mantras, she says, there are certain things that need to be worked upon like "stamina and flexibility."

She recalls that she discussed about how there was a need of cold-pressed juices with no added preservatives with her friend before the beverage brand was even launched. "At the same time, such juices should also be convenient and a seamless fit in our current fast-paced life without making any compromise in quality. The juices are easy to carry and can be home-delivered whenever required," she suggested.

Some of her fitness tips: - Always set an aim for every week, keep tracking your progress. - Have sufficient quantity of water, it keeps the body hydrated. - Don't push yourself beyond limit especially after a long tiring day. Never punish your body. - Always read the label before buying food items. - Eat fresh, healthy and nutrient-enriched foods. It's no wonder that more than half of us open a supplement bottle to get the nutrition we need. Many of us take supplements not just to make up for what we're missing, but also to give ourselves a boost. Jacqueline feels that getting nutrients straight from a pill sounds easy, but supplements don't necessarily deliver on the promise of better health. She said, "I believe in eating healthy and having a natural diet as that is best for the body. While this might take some time to adapt, it will surely pay off in the long run and help lead a more balanced life."

BEAT THE JURY

The JCB Prize for Literature returns with inclusivity for Indian fiction in languages other than English high on its agenda. By TEAM VIVA

They say 'literature is the voice of human heart'. As the JCB Prize for Literature jury comes back this year, Rana Dasgupta, literary director, said, "The Jury is conceived to reflect a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. This is how we ensure the verdicts are fresh and interesting to a large number of readers. The members of the 2019 jury are passionate readers, and eminent within their respective fields. They will have fascinating debates about the books we send in their direction."



The jury will close on April 30. The jury will announce the list of ten titles on September 4, followed by the short list of five titles on October 4. The winner of the ₹25 lakh prize will be announced at the awards dinner on November 2. If the winning work is a translation, the translator will receive ₹10 lakh. Each of the five shortlisted authors will receive ₹1 lakh; if a shortlisted work is a translation, the translator will receive ₹50,000.

The 2018 prize was awarded to *Jasmine Days* by Benjamin, translated from the Malayalam by Shahnaz Habib.

Love is ageless

Is There Still Sex in the City? the follow-up to the iconic novel, brings a fresh take on women in their 50s

Comedy series *Sex and the City*, which examines love and dating after 50. In a competitive situation, Paramount Television has landed the rights to its follow-up novel — *Is There Still Sex in the City?* which is set to be released by Grove Press on August 6, hails from *Sex and the City* author Candace Bushnell.

The book is a take on sex, dating, and friendship in New York city after 50. Set between the Upper East Side of Manhattan and a country enclave known as the village, the book looks at love and life, marriage and children, divorce and bereavement, as well as the real pressures on women to maintain their youth. Bushnell will write the pilot script and serve as an executive producer on the project along with Liza Chasin from 3dot Productions and Robyn Meisinger. "The original *Sex and the City* book and series served as a ground-breaking touchstone for an entire generation of women, myself included," said Nicole Clemens, president of Paramount TV.

Diljit unveils his wax statue at Tussauds

Actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh on Thursday unveiled his Madame Tussauds' wax statue. A die-hard fan of reality TV star Kylie Jenner, Diljit wants her wax figure too, should find a spot in the iconic Regal Building at Connaught Place. The *Udta Punjab* star has said in the past, he wanted to visit Madame Tussauds in London, but could not. "There was a long line. I was in London for a day so couldn't find the time. I tried again but the attempts were not successful. Then I thought, I will go in like this only," he said. And now the singer's wax replica has indeed entered the museum. He acted surprised by the strong resemblance between him and his wax figure, which sports black and red casuals with a huge neck piece and a black turban. It is the first turbaned figure in Madame Tussauds Delhi. "Forget about having a wax figure here, I had almost given up hope of even entering Madame Tussauds," said the artist, who took a selfie with the figure. Asked which actress' statue he would like to have here, he laughed and said, 'Kylie Jenner.' Diljit, who turned up at the event all suited up, has often expressed his "love" for the reality TV star on social media. His fans gathered outside the Regal building to get a glimpse of him. One of them said, "It's an honour for all the Sikhs to have his wax figure as he is the first Sikh celebrity to get a wax statue at Madame Tussauds." Diljit wasn't seen interacting with his fans, but he had a message. "First of all, there is no need to be like me. I am just doing my job. I am working for myself and family. Keep working hard, you will get what you want," he said.



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

Doing without convenience

Automotive technology has come a long way in the past two decades but is there any modern convenience you could do without?



KUSHAN MITRA



The automobile has been around for a 125 years now, and ever since Bertha Benz, the pioneering wife of the car's inventor Karl Benz demonstrated that a vehicle could be used over long distances, humanity has not been the same because the tyranny of distance was suddenly removed. The internal combustion engine may be loathed by misguided environmentalists but without it we cannot imagine modern society. Even if we consider that the real boom in automobile ownership really started a century ago at the end of the First World War and the subsequent economic boom, the car of those days were nowhere near the cars of today, even something as elementary as the layout of the pedals and self-starting engines were not around. Forget a hundred years, I have been driving cars since I was just under 18, working my way up to a license at a driving school. And back then, about to give my twelfth boards, I had a rather different vision for my life, even thought that I would give my IIT entrance exams. The last thing I imagined was that I would end up travelling

around India and the world driving and writing about cars for a living, so things turned out fairly alright I'd say. But back in the late-1990's, while the Maruti 800 and Zen had made their way onto our roads and the first of the cars from the new breed of manufacturers like Ford, Opel and Hyundai were just coming in, many folks still drove the Ambassador and the Padmini. And if you did you would remember that changing gears was a bit of a skill. Today, many cars have a rev-counter and while that is something that you would miss in a car if it was not there, unless you are out and out gunning the car, do you really need it? Because in an automatic car, the computers are so smart that they know exactly how you are driving and what gear you need to change to, and even if you override the system, the gears change seamlessly. That wasn't the case in old cars, you had to listen to the note of the engine and know just when to slot the cogs in. But synchromesh gears are not new, so that is not a rabbit hole that we will go down. But from the 2000's to today, in cars that I have been driving for a living so many things have changed.



So I asked a couple of my peers what feature of the last twenty-odd years in automotive development that they could not live without today. Now these features are necessarily brand-new but have become far more common in the past twenty years. Murali Swaminadhan of the Hindu BusinessLine told me that it would be modern Climate Control systems, which according to him are now essential thanks to hot weather conditions and rising dust and pollution, as well as so advanced that you don't really need to keep on fiddling with them like you needed to with the sliders on the Maruti

800 for example. Adil Jal Darukhanawala, automotive expert and historian and my driving companion over the past few days driving a new luxury car told me that it would be the dual-clutch gearbox. This is a remarkable feature that allows for near instantaneous gear changes with the car keeping the next gear in the sequence selected by having two clutches, one for odd gears and one for even gears. Of course that is a very simplistic way of describing this but essentially that is what it is. While these DCT gearboxes are standard on luxury cars, you can find them on the Volkswagen Polo

GT TSI and Automatic options on the Vento, and the VW Group calls their DCT gearboxes a DSG and the technology was developed by Porsche for sporty versions of the 911. Ford had such a gearbox on the earlier EcoSport and Fiesta. For me, the feature I can't really live without are reversing and even all-round 360 cameras. Particularly with modern car safety features ironically leading to a rash of blind spots, it is impossible to often reverse without these, and occasionally even make tight turns. The 360 camera on the new Nissan Kicks might feel like a gimmick but is very useful. As I wrote in an earlier column, I have become so used to this that my basic reversing skills are not as good as they used to be. The fact is that cars today are very advanced, very fuel efficient and very safe. And not only are they a world removed from cars of a century ago, they are a world removed from cars from just twenty years ago. I like driving classic cars occasionally, but anyone who says that the 'old days' were better has no idea of what they are talking about. Nothing like the present and I can't wait for the future!



Seven Stars of Happiness



Vir Singh

Our contemporary civilization and all the civilizations to come must be saturated with happiness. Happiness is an attribute of an environment that builds up with seven sources. These sources generate positive energies and combat entropy of the biosphere and evolve happiness, more happiness, and more happiness - putting the civilization on the path to an everlasting joy. Everlasting joy is conditioned by sustainable happiness. We can call these sources as Seven Stars of Happiness (figure 1). These are:

1. Knowledge
2. Beauty
3. Institutions
4. Spirituality
5. Democracy
6. Freedom
7. Creativity

Knowledge is a source of enlightenment. And any source of enlightenment brings infinite happiness to life. Knowledge charges your mind with an

amazing lure to unfold mysteries of the universe. And when your mind is creatively engaged in unfolding mysteries of the universe, you are immersed in infinite joy.

Happiness flowers in all its bright and enchanting colours amidst beauty. Happiness itself is an imperative for synthesizing beauty. As Lady Blessington says, there is no cosmetic for beauty like happiness.

Many institutions - such as marriage, family, schools, universities, etc. - developed and evolved by human society prepared a fertile base to multiply and enhance happiness through the promotion of selflessness, unity, integrity, solidarity, learning, peace, tranquility, humility, and intellectualization. These institutions are vital for passing happiness-cultivating values on to future generations.

Spirituality breaks down dormancy of all human faculties and activates them to unleash their potential of physical, intellectual, ethical and aesthetic development to help individuals illuminate the self and the society they are part of with happiness.

Democracy has its national and global role in consolidating human freedom and giving freedom its valuable dimensions of deeper responsibility and commitments. Blooming in luxuriant premises of democracy, freedom nurtures

happiness for one and all. We cannot imagine any lasting happiness without freedom. Dictatorship rules are curse to human freedom. A hell of democracy is much better than a heaven of dictatorship. For democracy keeps the seeds of happiness viable, which at certain point of time grow into bumper crop of happiness, but a 'heaven' of dictatorial regime crushes human dignity and erases hope of happiness.

Creativity evolves from happiness. And creativity also gives happiness its true meaning. The both are complimentary to each other. A happy environment explodes potential of superb creativity. Creativity evolves to its climax forms amidst an environment of happiness. Creativity itself transcends human happiness. The higher the forms of creativity the more vibrant the faculties of happiness. Development of art, philosophy and cosmology has emerged as inexhaustible sources of happiness. Happiness sought new dimensions of its expression. And conditioned by happiness, our scholars evolved more illuminating forms of art and philosophy.

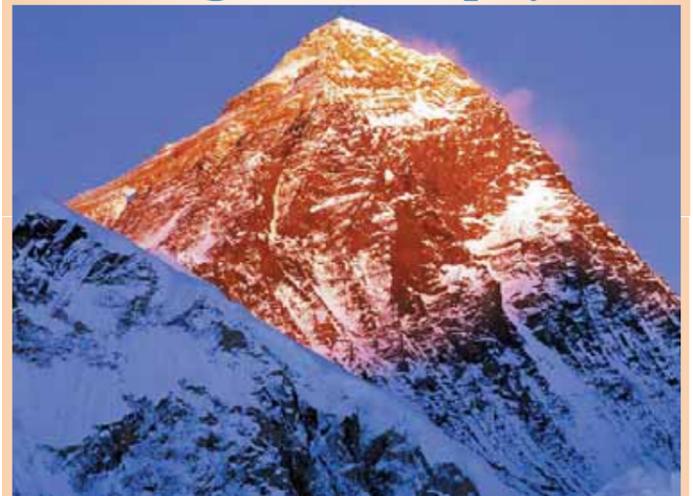
Philosophy elevated its interest from Earth to the cosmos and cosmology continuously served to nourish human intellect to unfold cosmic mysteries giving human happiness a new dimension of its own vastness. Happiness, indeed, finds deeper

roots with creativity. The higher the form of creativity the more intensive the happiness. Creativity keeps you reverberating with fullness of life. With creativity one can beautifully link oneself with the past and happiness can be fetched even from the times which are gone. Happiness is dynamic; it travels across ages. Creative achievements and glory of the past trigger happiness in the present times. Happiness of the present helps create happy futures.

What should be the motto of a civilization? It must be Happyism. Pursuance of happyism must be the central theme of every concept, every perspective, every project, every art, every philosophy, every plan, every policy, every law, every governance. Happyism would help cultivate peace and beauty in a civilization. A happy civilization is a highly creative civilization. A happy civilization is a vibrant civilization. A happy civilization is a life-enhancing civilization. A happy civilization is a true civilization. Happiness, in essence, is a gist of a civilization. Happyism would serve as a foundation of sustainably happy civilization.

(The writer is a Professor of Environmental Science at GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology. He is author of numerous books on environmental, agroecological and eco-philosophical issues).

The Power of Himalayan Yogic Philosophy



Ravi Dabral

I have heard and read about many famous international personalities such as Steve Jobs (co-founder of Apple) and Mark Zuckerberg (Chairman and CEO of Facebook). They went to the Himalayas in Uttarakhand to learn spirituality under the patronage of ashram gurus and yogis, soon after which they became very successful, renowned and wealthy personalities. I was embarrassed to know that foreigners understood the importance of the spiritual powers of gurus and yogis in the Himalayas, but despite being a native of Uttarakhand, I never understood their role and significance.

For around fifteen years, I conducted extensive studies, research, investigation, and interacted with many Himalayan yogis and ashram gurus. During my stay at the ashrams in Rishikesh, Haridwar and hills of Himalayas, I interacted with some renowned international personalities and came to know about their real-life experiences. On the condition of anonymity, they agreed to share their enlightening experiences for the benefit of global readers and citizens. Finally, I found secrets to spiritual peace and material wealth, ways to inculcate virtues and values, and methods to eradicate vices such as greed, lust, and addiction.

The materialistic way of life is that of enjoying the pleasures of the five senses, and ignoring spirit, intellect, and virtue. Materialism considers enjoyment as the final objective of human existence. It believes neither heaven nor hell. It does not seek liberation, and doesn't believe in reincarnation.

As per Charvaka, the illusion of the soul is due to a particular combination of four elements - earth, water, fire, and air. Maybe through a chemical process generating wild thoughts and dreams in the mind, humans were led to believe that they were special on earth and needed values and ethics, which, indeed, are mere phantoms created by a diseased mind.

Charvaka's philosophy declared that religion was a means of livelihood for the priests, propagated by kings and politicians to fool and rule over the innocent.

Sage Charvaka, said to be one of the chief disciples of sage Brihaspati, was impressed with the materialism philosophy. He promoted and spread it among Devils. As it is easier to be addicted to vice than virtue, addiction to vice spread like fire in a jungle and reached ordinary people; it became their lifestyle. People who used to earlier worship nature or deities soon inherited vices which still exist in modern society.

Marketing experts, public relations (PR) agencies, event management companies and psychoanalysis experts encash the consumerist mindset. They kill our intellect and reason with the help of glamourised events and celebrity advertisements. People thus become slaves to harmful products. Once addicted, the person suffers in terms of health and money. On the contrary, MNCs selling such products become richer and treathumans as mere products who consume their products.

In mythology, sage Brihaspati, the teacher of Devas or Deities, propagated the materialism philosophy, that is, 'eat, drink and be merry' among the Asuras or Devils so that they may spend their lives in material pursuits and ruin themselves without giving any trouble to deities.

To lead a virtuous and peaceful life, the being must avoid jealousy, anger, hatred, selfishness, gossip, expectation from others, comparison with others, and criticism of others. It is important to have empathy and sense of brotherhood to live in harmony with other beings. Such mental and spiritual development can occur through practice of Indian spiritual principles.

India must consider including principles of spirituality from ashrams in Himalayas in degree courses and MBAs, given that stressed executives from international corporations have sought solace in these holy spots.

A spiritual immersion course may be made part of higher education, degree courses and MBAs as students, from this point forth, head towards a very stressful materialistic world. It is important to prepare future leaders with a spiritual mindset so that generations to come don't lose sight of what is essential during material pursuits.

(Based in Uttarakhand, the author has been a commodity trader for over two decades. The article is based on his latest launched book 'Greed Lust Addiction' in English and 'Laalach Vaasana Lathi' in Hindi)

KNOW THYSELF



Pranav Pandya

It is but natural to enquire about the name, village, address, etc. of a person with whom one has to travel or whom one has to accompany for some time. This acquaintance gives freedom from worry and at the same time paves the way for depending on mutual help in emergencies. A total stranger looks suspicious.

One's own entity always remains with oneself. Its physical and mental aspects are so close that they remain with the self round the clock whether one is awake or asleep. Wife is called by many epithets like life partner, better half of the husband, two bodies-one consciousness, etc. but, she too remains with the husband for a few hours that too at some distance from him. Children come near once in a while for specific purposes but they are considered one's very own and one has to share their pleasures and pains. A person is always worried about the future of his children and, as far as possible, plans ahead for it. It is strange that our inseparable instruments of expression like the body and the mind, which are always there with us, are neglected by us. Seldom one enquires about their purpose.

The soul has embodied itself in the material plane with some purpose. Do we understand the purpose and consciously and resolutely pursue it? Whenever a bungalow or a vehicle is given to an officer, he is told that these are to be used for official purposes and not for personal work. If any officer defaults and rents out a portion of his bungalow or uses his vehicle for private purposes, it would be considered immoral and willful infringement



ment of the rules for personal gain and will attract suitable punishment.

Human life is precious. It is a unique, artistic creation of the Creator. Such a boon is not available to any other creature on the earth. No other creature is endowed with the faculty like the human intellect, or with two hands with ten fingers that can be creatively and dexterously used? Which other creatures have the ability to stand erect and walk on two feet? Who is capable of earning their livelihood and accumulating the surplus for later use? Which other creature uses clothes and houses? Who else other than man possesses the wisdom to develop an organized family and social order? Whose senses possess such sensitivity? Who

possesses the intricately fashioned living garment like the human body? The fact that a human being has been blessed with special faculties sets him apart from other creatures. Thus it becomes evident that human life has been given to us for some specific purpose willed by God. We must concentrate on clearly understanding this purpose and then live life in the light of our true identity as a spark of Divinity. If appropriate efforts are not made to know our true selves through the special faculties and instruments gifted to us for this search by our Creator and we squander away these divine gifts in sense-gratification, it would be a betrayal of our spiritual inheritance leading to endless suffering and pain.

In order to get started on this pilgrimage of self-discovery, we will have to wake up out of the stupor of self-forgetfulness - Maya. Here is what Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo has said about self-effort in the path of self-discovery in his marvelously inspiring words:

"In all that is done in the universe, the Divine through his Shakti is behind all action but he is veiled by his Yoga Maya and works through the ego of the jiva in the lower nature.

In yoga also it is the Divine who is the sadhak and the sadhana; It is his Shakti with her light, power, knowledge, consciousness, Anand, acting upon the adhara and, when it is opened to her, pouring into it with these divine forces that makes the sadhana possible. But, so long

as the lower nature is active the personal effort of the sadhak remains necessary.

The personal effort required is a triple labor of aspiration, rejection and surrender - aspiration, vigilant, constant, unceasing - the mind's will, the heart's seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature; rejection of the movements of the lower nature - rejection of the mind's idea's, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind, - rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being, - rejection of the physical nature's stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, tamas, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Anand may establish itself in a body growing always more divine; surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement of the Divine and the Shakti.

In proportion as the surrender and self consecration progress the sadhak becomes conscious of the divine shakti doing the sadhana, pouring into him more and more of herself, founding in him the freedom and perfection of the divine nature. The more this conscious process replaces his own effort the more rapid and true becomes his progress but it cannot completely replace the necessity of personal effort until the surrender and consecration are pure and complete from top to bottom.

Note that a tamasic surrender refusing to fulfill the condition and calling on God to do everything and save one all the trouble and struggle is a deception and does not lead to freedom and perfection."

(Pranav Pandya is the head of the World Gayatri Pariwar, Chancellor of Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya and director of Brahmapur Research Institute. Besides, he is the editor of Akhand Jyoti and president of Swami Vivekananda Yogvidya Mahapeetham)

Ole on the wheel

Manchester United appoint Solskjaer as new manager following his extraordinary run as caretaker at Old Trafford

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said he is "beyond excited" to be handed the Manchester United manager's job on a full-time basis as the club announced on Thursday he had signed a three-year deal.

The Norwegian, 46, has inspired a dramatic revival of United's fortunes since taking over from the sacked Jose Mourinho in December, winning 14 of his 19 games and leading the Red Devils to the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

Solskjaer, who scored 126 goals in 366 appearances for United, was already a hero to fans as the man who scored the stoppage-time winner in the 1999 Champions League final to complete a historic treble.

In his short spell in charge he has lifted United back into contention for a top-four finish in the Premier League and is preparing for a mouthwatering Champions League clash against Barcelona next month.

"This is the job that I always dreamed of doing and I'm beyond excited to have the chance to lead the club long-term and hopefully deliver the continued success that our amazing fans deserve," he said in a statement on *manutd.com*.

Solskjaer told MUTV he had relished the support from the fans since he replaced Mourinho.

"I've always had it but I have to say the last few months have been absolutely crazy with the way they've taken to the players, to me and to the coaching staff. We've really appreciated that support and hopefully we can pay them back now."

After Mourinho was sacked following a 3-1 loss to Liverpool on December 16, Molde boss Solskjaer was given the task of reviving United's flagging fortunes but was expected to return to the Norwegian club following his caretaker spell.

MANAGERIAL STATISTICS

Matches	19
Win	14
Loss	2
Draw	3
Win %	73.7



THE NORWEGIAN, 46, HAS INSPIRED A DRAMATIC REVIVAL OF UNITED'S FORTUNES SINCE TAKING OVER FROM THE SACKED MOURINHO IN DECEMBER, WINNING 14 OF HIS 19 GAMES AND LEADING THE RED DEVILS TO THE QUARTER-FINALS OF THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

POGBA TRANSFORMED

At that stage Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino was the firm favourite for the permanent Old Trafford hotseat after an impressive few years at the helm at Spurs.

But Solskjaer forced the hand of Manchester United hierarchy by sheer weight of results, becoming the first United manager to win his first six league games.

The Norwegian also helped cleanse the toxic atmosphere at United, where Mourinho had fallen out with a number of key players.

France World Cup winner Paul Pogba and Marcus Rashford in particular have thrived under Solskjaer, who has been credited with restoring an attacking verve missing under a succession of managers.

United's executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward said: "More than just perfor-

mances and results, Ole brings a wealth of experience, both as a player and as a coach, coupled with a desire to give young players their chance and a deep understanding of the culture of the club."

Rashford on Thursday posted an image of himself and Solskjaer on *Instagram* with the caption: "Congrats boss."

FERGUSON EFFECT

Solskjaer spent 11 seasons at Old Trafford as a player under Alex Ferguson, winning six Premier League titles and the 1999 Champions League trophy.

On the pitch, the Norwegian, nicknamed the "Baby-faced Assassin", became an embodiment of United's never-say-die spirit, often scoring late goals when points or trophies looked to have been lost.

Solskjaer lost his battle with persistent knee problems in 2007 before becoming the United's reserve-team manager.

He won two league titles during a first managerial spell at Molde, but struggled badly during a brief stint at Cardiff in 2014.

When he took over as interim boss at Old Trafford, the club were languishing in sixth place in the Premier League, 11 points off the top four.

But they have lost just once in the league since then and are now in fifth place, just two points behind fourth-placed Arsenal, with eight games remaining in the season.

The highlight of his reign so far was a dramatic 3-1 victory over Paris Saint-Germain in the last 16 in the Champions League, with United overturning a 2-0 first-leg defeat to reach the quarter-finals on away goals.



SINGLES

PANT, BAJRANG WIN DSJA AWARDS

NEW DELHI: Asian Games Gold medal winning wrestler Bajrang Punia, women's hockey player Rani Rampal, Test cricketer Rishabh Pant and pistol prodigy Manu Bhaker won this year's Delhi Sports Journalists Association's (DSJA) Best Sportspersons awards on Thursday. The awards were presented by Indian Olympic Association and world hockey body (FIH) president Narinder Batra. While Bajrang and Rishabh won the award among men, Rani and Manu were conferred the recognition in the female category. "It is very inspiring when sports journalists give such awards," said Bajrang, adding that the award would inspire him to work harder in the run up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Cricketer Pant echoed similar sentiment. "I can never forget how many Delhi sports journalists encouraged me from my early days," said Pant about the support he received from the media during his junior cricketing days. Besides, Jaspal Rana (shooting) and Tarak Sinha (cricket) were conferred with the best coaches award.

LALIGA SCHOOLS TO HOLD CAMPS

SANTA CLARA: LaLiga Football Schools, a grassroots development initiative by the Spanish football league, LaLiga, along with India On Track (IOT) will be providing comprehensive training to Indian children and coaches across a range of cities in the country. LaLiga Football Schools will be hosting special training camps for students in 8 cities in India, namely Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Kochi, Calicut, Thrissur, Pune and Surat from April 1 to June 30. The aim will be to make training available to as many children as possible. Following the training provided at LaLiga Football Schools, the camps will be delivered using LaLiga's technical curriculum and detailed methodology, overseen by Javier Cabrera, the programme technical director in India. Ranging from 6-12 days, the aim of the summer camps is to popularise football amongst the youth in India. To ensure long-lasting impact, LaLiga will also organize a "Train the Trainer" programme where 48 Indian coaches will be trained by the technical director and UEFA Pro-Licensed coaches assigned by LaLiga.

ENG EVES WHITEWASH SL IN T20S

COLOMBO: The England women's team rode on a powerful batting effort to outclass Sri Lanka by 96 runs in the third and final Twenty20 International and complete a 3-0 whitewash at the P Sara Oval here on Thursday. Put into bat, England openers Amy Ellen Jones (57 off 38) and Danielle Wyatt (51 off 33) cracked half-centuries to lay the foundation for a big total. After the dismissal of the openers, incoming batswomen Tammy Beaumont (42 not out off 25) and Natalie Sciver (49 off 24) took the Sri Lankan bowlers to cleaners as England piled up 204 runs for the loss of 2 wickets in the allotted 20 overs. Chasing the huge target, just three hosts' batswomen reached the double-figure mark as Sri Lanka could only manage 108 for the loss of 6 wickets in 20 overs. The visitors had outclassed Sri Lanka by eight wickets in both the earlier clashes.

FCB ANNOUNCES DATES FOR TRIALS

NEW DELHI: Ferit Cricket Bash, India's first independent cricket league for amateur players, on Thursday announced the dates of its preliminary trials for Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. Delhi trials will take place from April 4 to 8 at Karnail Singh Stadium, Railway Colony, Paharganj. A jury comprising renowned Ranji players and certified coaches will select the best players among the participants. The selected players will further compete in the next round (Phase 2 clinics) to ensure their place in the badge team of their respective state. After rigorous sessions of trials and short-listing processes, the selected candidates will become members of one of the 16 teams. Cricket legends Muttiah Muralitharan, Chris Gayle, Zaheer Khan and Praveen Kumar will mentor the players. The winning team will also get a chance to play in a local club tournament in Australia. **Agencies**

Hamilton warns Mercedes of Ferrari recovery

AFP ■ BAHRAIN

Defending champion Lewis Hamilton has warned his Mercedes team "to stay on their toes" at this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix where Ferrari will be seeking to bounce back after being beaten at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

Hamilton, who came home second in a damaged car behind in-form teammate Valtteri Bottas, said he was delighted, but surprised by Mercedes' comprehensive maximum points showing in Melbourne.

"I think everyone was surprised by our showing in Australia," he said.

"No-one was expecting to see a gap like that with Ferrari. They were ahead — that is what we saw in testing — but



it wasn't the case that weekend.

"We just did our normal job, but I am sure they will come back strong. So, we have to be ready and we have to stay on our toes."

Ferrari's four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel, who finished fourth behind Red Bull's Max Verstappen in Australia, will be seeking his third straight victory in

Bahrain in Sunday's race.

The 5.4km Sakhir circuit is expected to be kinder to Ferrari than the semi-street track in Melbourne.

The Italian outfit will also be boosted by their record in Bahrain where they are the most successful team with six wins, including last year's success for Vettel which followed a front row lockout of the grid.

Indian shooters clinch 1 Gold, 2 Silver

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian shooters on Thursday clinched one Gold and two Silver on the second day of competitions to remain on top of the standings in the 12th Asian Airgun Championships in Taoyuan, Taipei.

Ravi Kumar and Elavenil Valarivan won a Silver in the senior 10m air rifle mixed team event while India made it a 1-2 in the corresponding junior event on yet another profitable day.

Ravi and Elavenil topped the qualification rounds with a score of 837.1 but were beaten in the five-team final by the Korean pair of Park Sunmin and Shin Minki.

In the junior 10m air rifle mixed team event, two Indian teams made it to the final round. The pair of Mehuli Ghosh and Keval Prajapati topped the qualification, while Shreya and Yash Vardhan finished second.

Shreya and Yash, however, turned the tables on their compatriots in the final, pipping them by a margin of 0.4 points.

The pair of Shreya and Yash overturned the early deficit, finishing with 497.3 to Mehuli and Keval's 496.9.

HAZLEWOOD, STARC ON TRACK FOR WC

AFP ■ SYDNEY

Australia have received a boost with injured fast bowling spearheads Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc resuming bowling this week and on track to be fit for their World Cup defence.

Hazlewood has been sidelined since January with a back injury, while Starc pulled out of Australia's Twenty20 and one-day tour of India last month with a "substantial" muscle tear.

The pair's return to the nets is timely after Jhye Richardson returned home this week from Australia's one-day series against Pakistan with a dislocated shoulder.

"When the squad gets announced I'll probably be 65-70 percent and I've still got a good four or five weeks from that date to get ready to play one-day cricket," Hazlewood said in a Cricket Australia podcast. Australia's World Cup squad



must be named by April 23 with the tournament starting on May 30 in England.

Starc, the 2015 World Cup player of the tournament, is also faring well in his comeback since picking up the injury during the Sri Lanka Test. "He (Starc) looks fine, he started bowling as well this week," Hazlewood said.

"He's coming off not as big a break as me so won't take him long to get up and running. He seems to be heading in the right direction."

Federer ready for Anderson barrage

AFP ■ MIAMI

Roger Federer is preparing himself for a barrage of Kevin Anderson big serves after the Swiss superstar sealed his place in the ATP and WTA Miami Open quarter-finals in just 61 minutes on Wednesday.

Federer is celebrating 20 years at this tournament and edged closer to his fourth title in South Florida as the up and coming Russian Daniil Medvedev was swatted aside 6-4 6-2.

Next up for the 20-time Grand Slam-winning legend is the South African world number seven who famously beat the 37-year-old at Wimbledon in 2018 over five dramatic sets.

That triumph was Anderson's only win over Federer in six attempts — and the only time he's won a set.

But having classically dealt with Medvedev, the former world number one knows it won't be as straightforward with the 6 ft 8 in Anderson at the other end of the Hard Rock Stadium's center court.

"I think if you beat me at Wimbledon, you've got my attention," smiled Federer.

"He's got a great serve and I'm happy he's playing again after his injury."

"So from that standpoint, I know what I'm about to expect tomorrow. The matches I have played against him I know can be extremely close always."

Defending champion John Isner, meanwhile, powered his way to the semi-finals as Roberto Bautista Agut, who sent world number one Novak



Djokovic crashing out in the previous round, was seen off 7-6 (7-1), 7-6 (7-5).

"I was pretty fortunate out there," confessed the American, who smashed down 24 aces compared to the Spaniard's tally of just three and will play the winner of Croatia's Borna Coric and Felix Auger-Aliassime, the 18-year-old from Canada.

In the women's draw, Simona Halep moved closer to

reclaiming her world number one crown after a well-executed 6-4 7-5 triumph over China's Wang Qiang.

Following Petra Kvitova's exit on Tuesday, Halep needs only to reach Saturday's final to knock Naomi Osaka off the top of women's tennis after being dethroned following the Japanese's second major win at the Australian Open earlier this year.

Halep's recovery from 1-5 down in the second set showed the kind of mental toughness

Hopman Cup departs Perth after 31 years

PERTH: The unique mixed teams Hopman Cup in Perth has been axed after 31 years and replaced by the ATP World Team Cup, officials said on Thursday in a revamp of the season-opening tennis calendar.

Two of the three cities to host the new men-only tournament — Sydney and Brisbane — had already been announced with Perth now confirmed as the third.

It means the popular Hopman Cup, won this year by Swiss pair Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic, has had to make way.

However, the International Tennis Federation said it is keen to keep the mixed team format alive and had received interest from cities around the world keen to host the Hopman Cup.

"We are in discussions with potential partners to decide where and when this tournament will be next hosted," said ITF president David Haggerty.

"We will keep the Hopman Cup alive and look forward to successful future editions of this unique event."

AFP

displayed by only the very best and the Romanian is looking in good shape to land her first Miami title, even if she's not overly consumed about the prospect of reclaiming the number one tag.

"It doesn't mean everything to get back to number one. It's more important to finish the year in that position," said the number two seed, who will face either Karolina Pliskova or Vondrousova in the last four.

"But if I do it, I will be very proud."

We have been focussing on circle penetration: Mandeep

PTI ■ IPOH

India has pumped in 14 goals in four matches in the ongoing Sultan Azlan Shah Cup and young striker Mandeep Singh on Thursday said the team is focussed on frequent circle penetrations, which in turn will lead to more shots at goal.

The 24-year-old Mandeep scored a hat-trick in India's 7-3 win over Canada in their fourth round-robin league match on Wednesday to seal the five-time winners place in the summit clash against Korea.

"We have tried to improve as a unit. Being a part of the forward-line, I feel we have focused on making more circle penetrations, getting more shots on target, and regaining possession quickly. If we can execute these things in the next two matches, I am sure we can finish with Gold medal," Mandeep said.

"We have had a good tournament so far as we have 10 points from four matches, but of course we would have liked to get all 12 points on the board," he said ahead of India's final league match against Poland on Friday.

India and Korea, the top two teams in the league tables with 10 points each, have



qualified for Saturday's final with a match in hand.

Both India and Korea are unbeaten in the tournament so far, with three wins and a draw, and they had played out a 1-1 draw in their league match on March 24.

"We know Korea are a strong side, but we are doing everything to minimise any

errors in our game. It is going to be our first final of 2019, and we are very well prepared to face them in the final," said the player from Punjab.

"We have learned a lot about Korea from the 1-1 draw in pool stages, and I feel Friday's match against Poland will also give us a chance to prepare well for the final."

Shivendra set to be appointed as assistant coach

NEW DELHI: Former India centre forward Shivendra Singh is set to be appointed assistant coach of the national men's hockey team and will start working with the side next month.

A livewire during his playing days, Shivendra will exclusively work with the strikers and form an integral part of the Indian coaching staff set to be

headed by Australian Graham Reid.

Reid's appointment is just a formality now after Hockey India and Sports Authority of India recommended his name to the Sports Ministry.

Besides Shivendra, former Australian drag-flicker Chris Ciriello, who is the current analytical coach, will be the other

assistant coach in new set-up. "Shivendra Singh will join the Indian team soon as an assistant coach soon. He will work with the forwards under the new chief coach," a source close to the development said.

Shivendra was part of the Indian team that won a Silver medal in the 2010 Delhi Commonwealth Games, besides being a member of the Bronze medal-winning side of 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games. The coaching set-up will also have SAI coach Piyush Kumar Dubey, who is already with the team at the ongoing Azlan Shah Cup in Ipoh, Malaysia. He will exclusively work with the goalkeepers.

LEADERBOARD

RUNS	131	Nitish Rana (KKR)
WICKETS	5	Yuzvendra Chahal (RCB)
6S	88	Weren't really focussed on the small things and they do cost you big in this format
4S	194	— R ASHWIN



HURRICANE HARDIK BLITZ LIFTS MI TO 187

Pandya smashes 18-ball 32 in end to help Mumbai recover after middle order collapse



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Hardik Pandya's muscled a couple into the stands and one out of sight as Mumbai Indians recovered from a middle-order collapse to post a decent 187 for 8 against Royal Challengers Bangalore in an IPL

match on Thursday. Pandya hit three sixes and two fours in his unbeaten 32 off 14 balls after Yuzvendra Chahal (4/38 in 4 overs) reduced MI from a comfortable 124 for 2 to 147 for 7. MI lost five wickets in a space of 3.3 overs for only 23 runs. This was after a vintage



ALZARRI JOSEPH REPLACES MILNE

MUMBAI: Three-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians have signed West Indian pacer Alzarri Joseph after their New Zealand import Adam Milne was ruled out of the event due to a heel injury. The 26-year-old Milne has been forced to pull out without playing a single IPL game this season. "Mumbai Indians have picked Alzarri Joseph as a replacement for the injured fast bowler Adam Milne for the IPL 2019," the IPL said in a

statement. "Joseph has featured in nine Tests and 16 ODIs for the West Indies so far," it added. Joseph, a right-arm pacer, has picked up 25 Test wickets and 24 ODI wickets for his country. Joseph's inclusion further boosts Mumbai's bowling attack after the return of Sri Lankan veteran pacer Lasith Malinga. Mumbai lost their opening game against Delhi Capitals on Sunday. AP

Yuvraj Singh was raising visions of a six sixes over with three maximums in Chahal's 14th over. However he wasn't fourth time

lucky as Chahal's courage to maintain flighting the ball yielded results. Chahal then removed

Suryakumar Yadav (38 off 24 balls) and Kieron Pollard in quick succession to bring RCB right back in the match.

It was then left to Hardik Pandya to score the bulk of the 30 runs in the final two overs to take MI to a fighting total on a placid batting track.

In fact, Hardik's third and final six went out of the stadium as he gestured to the dressing rooms pointing his bulging biceps.

However at the beginning it looked like MI would cross the 200-run mark as Rohit Sharma (48 off 33 balls) and Quinton de Kock (23 off 20) added 54 for the opening stand but it was foiled by Chahal's lion-hearted bowling.

Rana wants to hold form for entire season

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Consecutive fifties in different batting positions ought to be a confidence-builder but Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Nitish Rana says he is occupied by the concern of maintaining his form that usually "fizzes" out early in the IPL.

As a makeshift opener in the absence of Sunil Narine, Rana struck a fine 68 in KKR's first match against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Sunday.

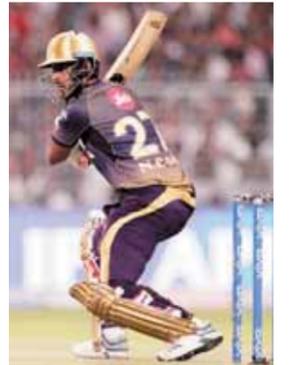
Back at No 4 in their second match, Rana scored a 34-ball 63 against Kings XI Punjab on Wednesday to overtake Delhi Capitals' Rishabh Pant (103 runs in two matches) in the early Orange Cap race.

"I haven't thought too far ahead. But for the last couple of seasons, I start well but my form fizzles out towards the later half of the tournament," Rana said after KKR's 28-run win.

"So this time around, I want to work on this. I want to continue the kind of form I have started in till the end of the tournament."

Having impressed at different batting positions, Rana said, "That's the sign of a good team. My plan was clear — to hit a loose ball and then, let DK (Dinesh Karthik) or (Andre) Russell take over for the last four-five overs."

Four of his seven sixes came against India's top off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin but Rana said the attack was not pre-planned.



"I was just trying to build my innings. I was taking it ball by ball at the start and then when I thought I could charge, I did that."

"It doesn't matter for me who the bowler is. My game plan was simple. I thought that was the time to attack and I did. That was the plan for the two overs — of Ashwin and South African pacer (Hardus Viljoen)."

Rana also hailed Andre Russell's 17-ball 48 and said the lifeline, when the Jamaican survived owing to a no ball, gave them 20-25 runs extra.

"Having 218/4 definitely worked in our favour, how Russell got a lifeline and that probably gave us those 20-25 runs extra."

Hesson regrets lack of alertness

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kings XI Punjab coach Mike Hesson said "game-changer" Andre Russell completely snatched the match away from his team in the IPL clash against Kolkata Knight Riders and rued the no ball that let off the swashbuckler before he went on a rampage.

Russell was on three off five balls when he was bowled by Mohammed Shami with an inch-perfect yorker on off-stump but it was declared a no ball because the side had three fielders, instead of the mandatory four, inside the circle in the 17th over.

Russell then smashed eight boundaries in a row to add 44 runs in the next 12 balls to push KKR to a record 218/4 at the Eden Gardens.

"It's a fine line when you're bowling to Andre Russell. He's a gamechanger," Hesson said as Russell returned with a second man-of-the-match award in KKR's 28-run win.

"The game changed in the 17th over. Obviously we had a plan for Russell that we exe-



cutted well, but we weren't quite alert enough in the field, and that's where the game changed."

"We had that little bit of jubilation and then things turned pretty quickly (with the no ball) and we weren't quite able to turn the last few overs for 12 or 14 runs. Instead we ended up giving away 22 or 24 runs, and it probably changed the game."

Skipper Ashwin's decision to bring on their ₹8.4 crore buy Varun Chakravarthy to bowl the second over backfired spectacularly. Sunil Narine hammered the uncapped mystery spinner for three sixes and a four in a 25-run over.

Defending the ploy, Hesson said: "It wasn't

so much Narine. Lynn was on strike at the start of that second over. That was the match-up we were looking for. And then Narine came on strike and you know he was able to take a toll."

Hesson also backed Chakravarthy and said he was nervous like anyone else playing their first game.

"The way he came back in the second and third over was excellent. And it will give him and us a lot of confidence. You know, playing your first game in front of a crowd like this is difficult."

"Narine's obviously going to hit you from ball one. I think he will learn to settle down a bit quicker. But I'm still very pleased the way how he came back."

Up Next BATTLE OF COLOURS



PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Mankaded' in their opening match, Rajasthan Royals would look to resurrect their fortunes in Friday's IPL clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad, who would also be aiming to put behind a disappointing first-day show.

Rajasthan's campaign started on a controversial note when Jos Buttler became the first cricketer in the IPL to be 'Mankaded'. The incident raked up a storm but Rajasthan will have to get over the episode to ensure that their campaign remains on track.

Buttler looked in great touch in their opener but he would look for more support from the likes of Ajinkya Rahane, Sanju Samson, Steve Smith and Ben Stokes in the batting department.

In particular Smith, who returned to the IPL after missing the last edition following the ball-tampering scandal, would be eyeing more time at the crease ahead of the upcoming World Cup.

Dhawal Kulkarni and spinner Krishnappa Gowtham were brilliant upfront with the ball against Kings XI, but Stokes and Jaydev Unadkat leaked runs. Pacer Jofra Archer, who gave away just 17 runs in his four overs, looked threatening but wickets eluded him. Just like Rajasthan, Sunrisers too didn't have a dream start to their campaign, losing by six wickets to Kolkata Knight Riders.

While the David Warner-led Sunrisers' batting looked solid, the death bowling performance spoiled their chances against KKR.

Warner, who is in imperious form after returning to competitive cricket following the one-year ban for ball-tampering, played true to his reputation, smashing 85 off 53 balls against KKR the other day.

And Sunrisers' know their chances heavily depend on Warner's success even though they also have the likes of skipper Kane Williamson, Jonny Bairstow, Vijay Shankar, Manish Pandey, Yusuf Pathan and Shakib Al Hasan in their ranks.

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HYDERABAD

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LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

• Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated Rajasthan Royals by 11 runs at Jaipur

• Sunrisers Hyderabad beat Rajasthan Royals by 9 wickets at Hyderabad

FOR THE RECORD

• Steven Smith who scored 460 runs at 28.75 in 20 innings of 25 matches, needs 40 runs to become the 12th batsman to score 500 runs for Rajasthan Royals in IPL.

• Bhuvneshwar Kumar needs just four wickets to become the first Sunrisers bowler to complete a century of wickets in IPL. He has taken 96 wickets at 20.94 in 72 innings of as many matches since 2014.

Faisal Features

Williamson wasn't available in the first game due to injury but head coach Tom Moody indicated that he in all likelihood "will be fit for Friday's game and lead the side".

Sunrisers' bowling unit, led by Bhuvneshwar Kumar, had a good outing for most part of the match on Sunday before the Andre Russell storm blew them away in the last three overs.

And come on Friday, Bhuvneshwar and the rest of the attack, which also includes Rashid Khan, will be eyeing a much-improved death bowling show.

Haven't discussed 'Mankading' even once: Unadkat

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Rajasthan Royals as a team has moved on from the Jos Buttler 'Mankading' incident and the focus will strictly be on winning their next IPL encounter against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Friday, said seamer Jaydev Unadkat.

Asked if the team was affected by 'Mankading' controversy, Unadkat said: "We haven't even mentioned it once after that day. We have moved on from that incident. It's time that we focus on the game coming up."

"Every game is going to be crucial in a tournament like this. Mankading (controversy) has not really made any kind of impact on us and we are looking for what we can do to win the game



on Friday."

Buttler looked a cut above rest when it came to attacking the KXIP bowling and Unadkat said that the Englishman alone can't win the franchise games as he would also require support from other batsmen.

"It (Buttler's form) actually adds to that confidence. If someone starts like that, people can take confidence and can learn from the way he has been approaching the game. He has been tremendous for us throughout the last season."

"However, there need to be others, who can also contribute as Buttler alone can't win you games. Yes, him being in prime form is an advantage for us."

Guptill eyes 'Net Gains': Facing Rashid at training to prepare for WC game

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Martin Guptill is not among the four first-choice overseas players for Sunrisers Hyderabad but the senior New Zealand batsman wants to utilise his time facing Rashid Khan at the nets to prepare for the World Cup game against Afghanistan on June 8.

With David Warner, Jonny Bairstow, Rashid Khan and Shakib Al Hasan being the first choice foreigners and regular captain Kane Williamson waiting to get fit, Guptill will have to bide his time but he wants to make optimal use of it.

For Guptill, Rashid is a bowler he has not faced much save a few games in an earlier Caribbean Premier League edition.

"I played with him in CPL a couple of years back. He is an amazing bowler. He is very hard to face because he is quick," Guptill said during a media interaction.

"I will be getting into the nets to figure out how to play him because our second game at the World Cup this year is against Afghanistan. Obviously, if I can face him at the nets, may be I can put some plans in place for the



World Cup," said the 32-year-old, who has played 47 Tests, 169 ODIs and 76 T20 Internationals.

Guptill is hopeful of making full use of his chances at

corrected it against Bangladesh," he said.

Asked what exactly the problem was, Guptill said: "My balance was not correct. I was not loading up well in my set up that caused me playing to different lines than I would have liked to. But I did work hard with my longtime coach at Auckland with whom I share a good working relationship."

Guptill has never been a sought after player in IPL like some of his other New Zealand team-mates but he actually has no qualms.

"I go into auctions with reasonably low expectations. If I get picked, it's good and if not can't do anything about it. It's my third season with a third team. So I am doing the rounds. SRH is quite a tight-knit unit and they have had the same core of players for a number of years now. I know I can't get into the XI straightaway," he said.

He might get a chance in the second half when Bairstow returns to England but Guptill does not want to look that far ahead.

"I try not to get too ahead. Cricket is a funny game. I take each net session as it comes and work hard.



'Not in spirit of cricket': MCC backtrack on Mankad judgement

AFP ■ DUBAI

Cricket's lawmakers MCC appeared to backtrack on the Ravichandran Ashwin 'Mankad' controversy on Wednesday when they said that the Indian's running out of Jos Buttler in an IPL game was "not within the spirit of the game".

Earlier this week, the MCC insisted that the rule governing the 'Mankad' was essential to avoid unrestrained back-cup.

On Wednesday, the MCC's manager of the Laws Fraser Stewart told British media in the UAE that they had now reviewed their original statement.

"Having extensively reviewed the incident again and after further reflection we don't think it was within the spirit of the game," Stewart said.

"We believe the pause was too long between the time Ashwin reached the crease and the moment it was reasonable to expect the ball would be delivered."

"When Buttler could have reasonably expected the ball to be delivered, he was in his ground."