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LUCKNOW, SATURDAY MARCH 23, 2019; PAGES 16 ₹3



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LIKE TO NURTURE MY FACTS: SONU 14 VIVACITY

8 terrorists killed in J&K ops in 24 hrs

LeT ultras kill minor held hostage by them in Bandipora, 1 cop hurt in stone-pelting

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a major crackdown on foreign terrorists operating in Kashmir Valley, joint teams of security forces neutralised at least eight terrorists in four separate operations in the last 24 hours while one minor boy, held hostage by the terrorists, killed by them during the fierce firefight in Hajin area of Bandipora on Friday.

Two terrorists each were eliminated in Bandipora, Baramulla and Shopian encounters while one terrorist was eliminated in Sopore gun battle. The operation in the Hajin area lasted almost 24 hours and was executed carefully by the security forces to contain any collateral damage. The dead bodies of the terrorists and the minor boy were recovered from the debris of the house, razed to the ground in final assault.

The operation in the thickly populated area started around 9.00 am on Thursday while cordon and search operations (CASO) were going to track down the presence of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) terror-



Villagers inspect a damaged house after a gun battle in Hajin village, north of Srinagar on Friday

AP

ists in the area.

According to ground reports, the holed up foreign terrorists had held at least eight family members hostage inside the house and were adamant on releasing them. In Shopian encounter, according to police

spokesman, prima facie a group was believed to be responsible for the killing of lady police official Khushboo Jan earlier this week in Shopian. One police official identified as Tariq Ahmad was injured in stone pelting while three others also

sustained injuries.

Unconfirmed reports suggested terrorists visited the house in Hajin area of Bandipora in search of a girl of their liking. Reports claimed after the family members came to know about their motive they

shifted her to some other safe location. As terrorists waited inside the house and insisted on bringing her back security forces, conducting CASO operations in the area were tipped off about their presence in the area. SSP Bandipora Rahul Malik also confirmed that two terrorists were moving in the area in search of a girl when the operations started on ground zero. After the operation was called off, Malik told reporters, "We were receiving regular inputs about the presence of foreign terrorists in the area. He said three CASOs were launched and in the third operation chance encounter with the terrorists took place in densely populated area of Hajin."

He said, "In the first two hours of the operation at least six civilians, who were held hostage by the foreign terrorists were rescued from inside the house." After some time, we came to know about the presence of two more hostages, including a minor boy inside the house.

Malik said, "We roped in close family members of the hostages who made passionate

appeals to release the boy and his uncle but they failed to convince the terrorists."

Later members of the Auqaf committee were also roped in and appeals were made from local religious places to release the hostages. Malik said for nine long hours we waited patiently but in vain. In the evening, firefight started from both the sides as terrorists opened fire when commandos of the special operations group stormed the building.

Uncle of the minor boy was rescued during the heavy exchange of fire but one of the terrorists held on to the minor boy and used him as 'human shield'. According to police, the minor boy was killed by terrorists when security forces barged inside the house to eliminate them.

Police spokesman in a writ-

ten statement said, "From the incriminating material recovered at the site of encounter it is understood that the two killed terrorists were Pakistani nationals identified as Ali and Hubaib. As per police records, both were affiliated with proscribed terror outfit LeT," the statement said. Meanwhile, two more terrorists were killed in an encounter in Shopian district's Ratnipora area on Friday.

Another operation was conducted in Sopore's Warpora area where security forces killed another terrorist after a gunfight on Friday. As a precautionary measure, internet services were snatched in Shopian and Sopore while in other parts of south Kashmir, it has been reduced to 2G. All educational institutions also remained closed in Sopore.

Continued on Page 4

Pulwama mastermind aide held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant breakthrough, a 27-year-old Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist Sajjad Ahmed Khan, a close aide of Pulwama attack mastermind Mudassar, was arrested by the sleuths of the Delhi Police Special Cell near Red Fort in the national Capital.

Sajjad was remanded to NIA custody till March 29 by a city court.

Centre bans Yasin-led JKLF under UAPA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Government on Friday banned Yasin Malik-led Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) for "promoting" secession in the militancy-hit State.

The JKLF was banned under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) after the investigating agencies found that Malik and his outfit is "in close touch with militant outfits in Pakistan" and is supporting extremism and militancy in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere.

After the Pulwama terror attack, the Centre has come down hard on many Hurriyat leaders and withdrawn the security given to them.

Detailed report on P7

India boycotts Pak National Day over invite to Hurriyat

PM Modi greets Imran Khan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Government on Friday boycotted a function on the eve of the Pakistan National Day to register its protest on an invitation extended to the Kashmiri separatist leaders for the function, the External Affairs Ministry said.

It also said no Indian representative will attend similar events in Islamabad. Earlier, Union Minister used to attend the event at Pakistan High Commission to mark its National Day

which Pakistan celebrates to mark the Lahore Resolution on March 23 each year.

"India has decided not to send any representative to attend the Pakistan National Day celebrations today (Friday). This decision was taken after Pakistan High Commission decided to invite representatives of the Hurriyat Conference to the reception," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday sent a message to his Pakistani counterpart Imran Khan, greeting people of the neighbouring country on the eve of its National Day, official sources said.

Continued on Page 4

Shah pick from Gandhinagar marks end of Advani-era BJP

DEEPAK K UPRETI ■ NEW DELHI

The nomination of BJP president Amit Shah for the prestigious Gandhinagar seat, represented by party's patriarch I.K. Advani five times since 1998, reflects a final generational shift of the party — from the Vajpayee-Advani era to the Modi-Shah regime now.

The BJP fielding Shah in place of 92-year-old Advani is seen both as the further tightening of control over the party by the Modi-Shah duo as also for ensuring a solid showing in the home State of the Prime Minister who would yet again contest from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah during the BJP Central Election Committee meeting for the Lok Sabha elections at BJP headquarters on Friday

PTI

Modi's name has been announced by BJP's Central Election Committee from Varanasi even as conjectures are on his contesting from a second seat as he did in 2014 from Vadodra, Gujarat. The BJP did

not announce a candidate for the Puri seat in Odisha with indication that it may be the Prime Minister's second seat which would also go to Assembly polls simultaneously.

Continued on Page 4

BJP drops 6 sitting UP MPs in first list

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The BJP, which released 20 names of 184 candidates for 20 States, going to poll in the first phase of elections on April 11, 'dropped' six sitting MPs from Uttar Pradesh, including former Union Minister Kalraj Mishra (Deoria), 78 and ex-Uttarakhand Chief Minister Bhagat Singh Koshiyari (Nainital), 77, and BC Khanduri, (Pauri Garhwal), 84, although they apparently volunteered not to contest. Khanduri's son, Manish Khanduri, has incidentally joined the Congress and is expected to contest from the Pauri Garhwal seat from where the BJP has nominated its State Uttarakhand president Tirath Singh Rawat.

Besides these, three veterans, the BJP also dropped two more MPs from UP — Ram Shanker Katheria, former Minister of State for HRD, in Agra where he has been replaced by SPS Baghel, a BJP Minister in the UP Government), and Union Minister of State Krishna Raj in Shahjahanpur where Arun Sagar replaced her.

The BJP has announced nominees for 28 seats of the total 80 Lok Sabha seats from UP and of the six MPs dropped so far in the State four belonged to the reserved seats suggesting the BJP's attempts to fine tune its political strategy vis-a-vis the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance that seeks to

Continued on Page 4

CAPSULE

ED ARRESTS ZAKIR NAIK'S CLOSE AIDE

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday arrested a "trusted" aide of controversial Islamic preacher Zakir Naik from Mumbai in connection with a money laundering case against him and others, officials said.

P5

8.96L JOBS CREATED IN JAN: EPFO PAYROLL DATA

New Delhi: Net employment generation in the formal sector touched a 17-month high of 8.96 lakh in January, according to the latest EPFO payroll data.

CONG REJECTS JITIN JOINING BJP REPORTS

New Delhi: Speculation was rife on Friday that Congress leader Jitin Prasad may join the BJP but the Congress rejected such reports, while the former Union Minister termed them as "hypothetical".

P5

Danish among 11 of BSP 1st LS poll UP list

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Friday announced its first list of 11 candidates for Uttar Pradesh that includes the name of former JD(S) leader Danish Ali from Amroha. Ali, who was general secretary of Janata Dal (Secular), had quit the party and joined the Mayawati-led party last week.

The first list of candidates covers almost all seats of first and second phases as the other seats have been left for alliance partners Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD).

Continued on Page 4

Lalu writ runs large in Bihar deal, Sharad to contest on RJD ticket

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

The announcement of the much-awaited Opposition 'Mahagathbandhan' in Bihar on Friday indicates the resurrection of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad's era when he started the Muslim Yadav (M-Y) caste and religion consolidation.

The very fact of fielding an alliance partner, Viskasheel Insaan Party (VIP) from Darbhanga against the wishes of Congress which wanted to field former BJP MP Kirti Azad who joined party recently from the seat and giving the Gaya Lok Sabha constituency to former Bihar Deputy Chief



RJD MP Manoj Jha, State's party president Ramchandra Purbey and Congress' State president Madan Mohan Jha join hands after announcing the grand alliance's candidates list for Lok Sabha election in Patna on Friday

PTI

Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi, who formed his party Hindustan Awaam Morcha (HAM) after breaking from

JD(U) point that the jailed RJD strongman's writ still ruled large in the State.

Continued on Page 4

Gambhir to bat for BJP in LS elections

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Former Indian cricketer Gautam Gambhir, the hero of 2007 T20 World Cup and ICC World Cup-2011, began his second innings as a politician as he donned the saffron colour by joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday. Gambhir's entry is being seen as a strong contender for the New Delhi parliamentary seat.

Diminutive southpaw Gambhir who played 58 Test Matches, 147 One-Day-Internationals and 37 T20s for India and captained Kolkata Night Riders and Delhi Daredevils in India Premier League, has been quite vocal



Union Finance Minister and BJP senior leader Arun Jaitley greets former cricketer Gautam Gambhir as he joins Bharatiya Janata Party in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

after his retirement from international cricket.

"I have done whatever I could for cricket, and this is a platform for me to do something more for the country," he said, adding that he has been influenced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his vision.

If party sources are to be believed, Gambhir is likely to get nomination from the New Delhi Constituency, currently represented by noted lawyer Meenakshi Lekhi. Gambhir, a resident of Rajender Nagar in Central Delhi, has been quite active on social media and his recent tweets on Pulwama terror attack drew a lot of attention. Moved by the martyrdom

of CRPF troopers, Gambhir has offered educational support to the children of the martyrs.

"Besides his public image, 37-year-old Gambhir can become a fresh face for BJP as he has been extremely critical of Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi Chief Minister," said a BJP leader, adding, "Gambhir has been vocal about national and political issues on Twitter over the last few years. Gambhir bagged Padma Shri award this year for his contribution in the fields of sports." The opener last played a one-day international for the Indian cricket team in 2013 and his last Test match was in 2016.

Continued on Page 4

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dwp 52/01/13/0056/1819

'Chowkidar' of dharma and Constitution: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Justifying calling himself a 'Chowkidar', Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that just as a 'chowkidar' of dharma, as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, he was 'chowkidar' of Indian Constitution.

"There is a mad rush among people to call themselves 'chowkidar' because they know that 'chowkidar' is the man who ensures protection. The slogan 'Main Bhi Chowkidar' has become a craze with the people who want to see India as a developed nation," Yogi Adityanath said in a statement issued here on Friday.

He said that during Mayawati's regime, there was looting of government resources. The same was the case during Akhilesh Yadav regime when government money was squandered for personal gains.



"Such people are scared of 'chowkidar' because they know if people become 'chowkidar' it will be the end of corruption," the Chief Minister said.

The 'Main Bhi Chowkidar' poll campaign was launched last week by Prime Minister Narendra Modi by pre-fixing 'Chowkidar' to his Twitter handle. Several BJP leaders, including party president Amit Shah and other Union ministers followed suit, adding the pre-fix 'chowkidar' to their names on their Twitter handles in support

of the campaign.

On March 20, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the caller tune of 'Main Bhi Chowkidar'.

BSP president Mayawati had taunted the BJP's 'Main Bhi Chowkidar' campaign, accusing Modi of changing his profile from 'Chaiwala' to 'Chowkidar' only to get votes in the Lok Sabha polls.

In a series of tweets in Hindi, Mayawati said that ever since the campaign was launched, people like Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were in a fix on whether they should remain people's representatives or become 'chowkidar'.

Yogi replied that people who are neck deep in corruption are now scared of these chowkidars. "The chowkidars will bring a transformation and give a befitting reply to corrupt politicians in this election," the Chief Minister said.

Amethi to witness round 2 of Rahul-Smriti contest

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An intense second round battle of ballots is on the cards in Amethi where Congress president Rahul Gandhi will take on Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in changed scenario vis-à-vis 2014.

Smriti Irani had unsuccessfully contested against Rahul Gandhi in the 2014 Lok Sabha election and had lost by around one lakh votes, but she gave a spirited fight.

Congress has announced the candidature of Rahul Gandhi from Amethi, which goes to polls in the fifth phase on May 6. With the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party combine deciding not to contest from the Congress stronghold, this election will see a direct fight between Gandhi and Irani.

The Union Textiles Minister said that the "walkover" by the two regional parties spoke volumes about the position of Congress in Amethi.



After her name was announced as the BJP candidate for Amethi, Irani said on Friday that the "writing is on the wall for Rahul Gandhi".

Dubbing the contest as one between "a Kaamdar" and "a Naamdar", Irani claimed that while Rahul Gandhi never found time to address the key issues of the people of Amethi, she had given most of her time to the people there during the last five years. Irani said she would go to the constituency soon to begin her campaign.

Gandhi, in turn, has blamed the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party governments at the Centre and the state for taking away the big projects that were lined up for Amethi.



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has repeatedly said that in this election, the BJP will win Amethi and Azamgarh seats also.

In 2014, Amethi Lok Sabha seat was won by Congress and the Azamgarh seat by Mulayam Singh Yadav of Samajwadi Party.

While on her recent visit to Amethi in February, Irani had hit out at the Congress, alleging that the 'naamdars' (dynasts) who ruled for over five decades, never thought about Amethi's development. "The MP from Amethi never raised the problems of its people in Parliament. People like these have only duped the poor and the people of Amethi on whose votes he has reached Parliament," she said.

Yogi to launch BJP campaign from Saharanpur tomorrow

Lucknow (PNS): Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who is one of the star campaigners of Bharatiya Janata Party, will launch the party campaign for Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh from Saharanpur district on March 24. Saharanpur goes to polls with seven other constituencies in western Uttar Pradesh in the first phase of polling on April 11. Besides Saharanpur, polling will be held on April 11 in Kairana, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Meerut, Bagpat, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida). "Before start of the poll campaign, Yogi Adityanath and some senior party leaders will offer prayers at Maa Shakumbhari Devi temple in Saharanpur district. Yogi Adityanath always goes to this famous temple during his visit to Saharanpur," BJP state general secretary and in-charge of western UP, Vijay Bahadur Pathak, said here on Friday.

After Saharanpur, Yogi will hold a rally in Mathura on March 26 where cine star Hema Malini is in the fray and the same day he will launch the campaign in his own native place, Gorakhpur. "Every day, Yogi will address at least two rallies in UP. Detailed programme is being prepared," Pathak said. Along with Yogi, other senior leaders and most of the BJP star campaigners will launch electioneering in western UP, which is going to the polls in the first two phases on April 11 and 18. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah are also expected to address several meetings across the state beginning from last week of this month.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Government of India

Patients with ASR Hip implants by M/s DePuy International Ltd.

The Government has constituted a Central Expert Committee and State Level Committees to address the claim for compensation of patients, who have been implanted with ASR Hip Implants of DePuy International Ltd (Now Johnson and Johnson) before August, 2010.

Therefore, the concerned patients are advised to approach either the State Level Committee or Central Expert Committee with detailed application form (checklist available on www.cdsc.gov.in) to support their claim.

The contact details of the concerned State Government authorities and the Central Expert Committee and the details of compensation formula are available on the said website.

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Ram Gopal sees conspiracy in Pulwama attack

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav sees a "conspiracy" behind the Pulwama attack, and has alleged that 40 paramilitary soldiers were killed for the sake of votes.

Yadav, who was in Saifai (Etawah), the native place of the Yadav clan, to celebrate Holi with SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday, also alleged that the paramilitary forces were unhappy with the government. Yadav also said that if the united opposition came to power after 2019 Lok Sabha election, a probe into this (Pulwama attack) would be ordered.

"Paramilitary forces dukhi hain sarkar se... jawan maar diye gaye vote ke liye... checking nahai thi Jammu-Srinagar ke beech mein, jawano ko simple buses mein bhej diya, yeh sazish thi. Abhi nahai kehna chahata, jab sarkar badlegi, iski jaanch hogi, tab bade-bade log phasenge." (Paramilitary forces are unhappy with the government, jawans were killed for the sake of votes, there was no checking between Jammu-Srinagar, jawans were made to travel in simple buses, it was a conspiracy. I don't want to comment anything on it as of now. When the government changes, a probe will be ordered and big people will be

Govt must stop pretending to be the army: Akhilesh

Lucknow (PNS): "The government must stop pretending to be the army," tweeted Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's posts hitting out at his uncle and senior party leader Ram Gopal Yadav. "The sacrifices of our armed forces should never be questioned. To ask questions of politicians in a democracy is our fundamental right. This government needs to stop pretending to be the Indian Army. Politicians who say they cannot be questioned are dangerous," wrote Akhilesh Yadav. The Twitter war was spurred by Ram Gopal Yadav who alleged a conspiracy behind the Pulwama attack in which 40 soldiers were killed, and declared that it would be investigated when the opposition came to power. In a sharp retort, the Prime Minister tweeted: "Opposition is the natural habitat of terror apologists and questioners of our armed forces. This reprehensible statement by a senior leader like Ram Gopal Ji insults all those who have given their lives in protecting Kashmir. It humiliates the families of our martyrs."

Yadav said. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was not too pleased with Yadav's attack and accused him of "denting" the morale of paramilitary forces.

The Chief Minister also demanded an apology from Yadav. "Ram Gopal Yadav ka bayan ghatiya rajniti ka bhadra udaharan hai, unhe CRPF ke jawano ki shahadat pe prashna khada karne, aur desh ke jawano ka manobal todane wale is bayan ke liye janata se maafi maangani chahiye. (Yadav's comment is an example of cheap politics. He should apologise for questioning the martyrdom of CRPF jawans and denting the morale of country's security forces.)" the CM said. To recall, earlier, soon after Pulwama attack, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had reportedly asked the Centre why it ignored intelligence reports and let the CRPF convoy pass through the area where the attack took place. She had also stated that she wondered why the incident occurred before elections and why no action was taken against Pakistan in the last five years.

Priyanka to visit Ayodhya for darshan of Ram Lalla

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Amidst speculations of some senior Congress leaders switching over their loyalty to BJP in search of greener pasture, AICC general secretary, incharge of UP East, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, will continue the soft Hindutwa line by visiting Ayodhya for darshan of Ram Lalla on coming Wednesday.

In an attempt to revive the party and change its face, the Congress scion had started her campaign by visiting the famous Bandhwale Hanumanji Temple on the banks of Sangam in Prayagraj, besides a visit to Vindhyachal Temple, Sitamarhi temple and also Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi.

Sources in the Congress said Priyanka would visit Rae Bareilly on Monday morning and address party workers and then go to the neighbouring Unnao parliamentary constituency to hold some street corner meetings in favour of party candidate Anu Tandon. On Tuesday, Priyanka will campaign for her mother Sonia Gandhi, who is contesting from Rae Bareilly, and her brother Rahul Gandhi, who is fighting election from Amethi.

In the afternoon, she will proceed for Faizabad and on the way, besides meetings several delegates, she will also take a halt at Agriculture University where she will interact with teachers and professors. Later she will take

a night halt in Faizabad and on Wednesday morning, she will go to Ayodhya for darshan of Ram Lalla.

Priyanka is also likely to hold a road show in Ayodhya to garner support for former UPCC president Nirmal Khatri, who is contesting from Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency.

Meanwhile, speculations are rife that some senior Congress leaders could shift their loyalty towards BJP. The sources also confirmed of UPCC president Raj Babbar advocated change of his constituency. Babbar was given ticket from Moradabad seat but he reportedly wants to contest from Fatehpur Sikri in Agra where he lost the election in 2009 by a narrow margin of 10,000 votes to BSP candidate Seema Upadhyay. This time Seema Upadhyay has reportedly refused to contest and the BSP has given ticket to Rajveer Singh.

Sources said that at least three former ministers of UPA government from UP who were strongly advocating to go with the mahagathbandhan in this election were in touch with senior BJP leaders, and could fight the election on 'Lotus' symbol. One of these leaders hailing from western UP was all set to join the BJP on Friday afternoon but the move was put off at the last moment. The Congress has held up the ticket of one of the minister hailing from Bundelkhand region.

SP changes candidate for Ghaziabad seat

Lucknow (PNS): A day after BJP announced Minister of State for External Affairs VK Singh as its candidate from Ghaziabad, the SP on Friday replaced its previously announced candidate Surendra Kumar 'Munni' with Suresh Bansal. The party took to twitter to share the news of the change of candidate for Ghaziabad seat. In a statement, the party said: "Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has decided to replace the earlier announced candidate for Ghaziabad.

PSP-L claims support of Krishna Patel

Lucknow (PNS): Shivpal Singh Yadav's Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohia) (PSP-L) has claimed that it has the support of the Apna Dal faction led by Krishna Patel, days after that party announced a tie-up with the Congress. The PSP-L has already announced a tie-up with Mohammed Ayub-led Peace Party in Uttar Pradesh for the Lok Sabha polls.

The Apna Dal faction, however, has not made clear

whom it will support if both the Congress and Shivpal Yadav's party are contesting from the same constituency. The PSP-L said it was not averse to an alliance with the Congress as well to fight the BJP.

When asked about the alliance with the PSP-L, Apna Dal (Krishna Patel) spokesperson RBS Patel parried a direct reply. "We have a pact for seats with the Congress but we are giving policy-based support to

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Notice regarding Physical Efficiency Test (PET)

The shortlisted candidates of North Central Railway on the basis of CBT (Computer Based Test) written examination against GEN no. 02/2018 have been called for Physical Efficiency Test (PET) to be held at DSA Ground, Prayagraj (Allahabad) from 26.03.2019 to 07.04.2019. They can download their e-call letter from the official website of Railway Recruitment Cell/ Allahabad i.e. www.rrcald.org Request for change of date, Time or Venue will NOT be accepted. For other information please visit official website of RRC/ALD. 413/19(K)

North central railway www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @CPRONCR

House of ex-judge's daughter burgled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

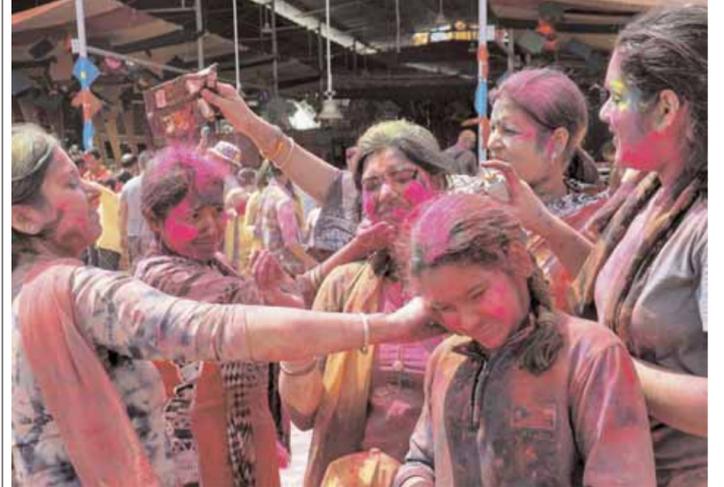
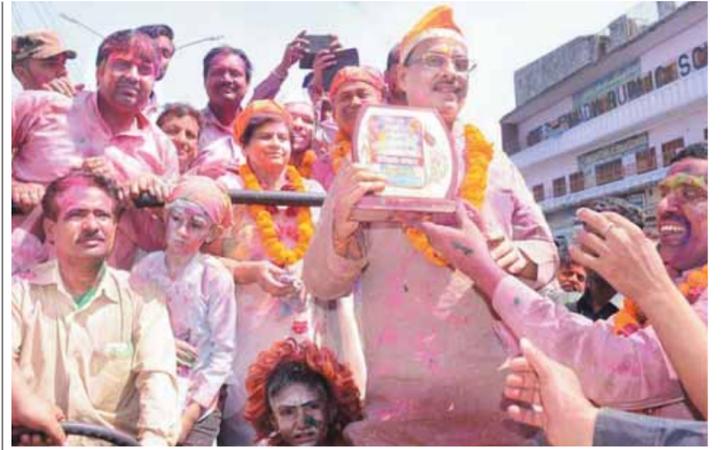
Three incidents of theft were reported in localities falling under the Gudamba and Jankipuram police station in the past 24 hours. The first incident was reported at the house of a daughter of a retired district judge SM Haseeb located at Matin Purwa, Khurram Nagar, under the Gudamba police station on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday. The retired judge, who is the chairman of a CGRF divisional tribunal here, lodged a complaint with the Gudamba police on Friday morning.

The police said that his daughter Shabnam, wife of Kamran, were living with their children at the house for the past several years. Interestingly, she is a senior clerk while her husband is an engineer and both are working with Lucknow Development Authority (LDA). The husband and wife, along with their children, left for Nainital on March 19 for a short vacation. They deputed their maid servant Guliyaa to look after the house in their absence. The police said she used to stay in the house throughout the day and leave for her house in the evening and again come back on her duty around 7 am. She was surprised to see the locks of the main door and entrance broken with lights on when she came to resume her duty on Friday. She saw the rooms were in disorder and locks of almirahs and lockers were also broken. She screamed which drew the attention of the locals. One of the locals informed the retired judge about the theft committed in the

house of his daughter. The district judge immediately reached the house and informed the police and also his daughter about the crime. The judge was not able to tell the estimated cost of valuables and cash taken away by the culprits as the couple were still in Nainital and expected to reach here in the evening. Gudamba inspector RN Rai said that the theft case had been registered with the police station and claimed the investigation was in progress. The second incident took place in the house of a police sub-inspector located in Phoolbagh area under Gudamba police station. The culprits took away valuables worth Rs 2 lakh and Rs 38,000 in cash. The police said Niaz Ahmed owned a tailoring shop in the area and was living on the second floor of the house

of police sub inspector posted CB-CID in Kanpur. At the time of the incident, the tailor was only present in the house as his family had gone to Gonda district while the sub-inspector, along with family, was away to Kanpur. The three unidentified armed culprits entered the second floor of the house by scaling the rear wall and barged into the house by breaking the door and overpowered the tailor and tied him against the wall and took away the valuable and cash. The culprits had their faces covered with the blacked coloured piece of cloth. He said they stayed in the house for more than half an hour. The neighbours came to know about the theft when the tailor raised an alarm after two hours. The tailor was much disgusted and alleged the cops

were not ready to believe the culprits had taken away valuables worth Rs 2 lakh and Rs 38,000 in cash. Meanwhile, unidentified culprits raided the house of Ashwini Yadav, a resident of Jankipuram garden under the Jankipuram police station. The police said Yadav, along with his family, left for his hometown Hyderabad in Bara Banki district on the occasion of Holi on March 19. He came to know about the theft when his immediate neighbour informed him in the morning. He rushed to the capital to have the first hand information about the incident. The culprits took away Rs 12,000 in cash. They barged into the house by breaking the locks. He lodged a complaint of the theft at the police station later in the afternoon.



Keshav: Focus is on increasing footfalls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Metro Rail Corporation (LMRC) has been able to take out its operation cost since the operations began on the entire North-South corridor on March 8. According to managing director Kumar Keshav, with a ridership of 60,000-70,000 every day, LMRC is able to take out the operation cost. About the next strategy, he said it was to increase the ridership for which they were working extensively. "We are selling smart cards in large numbers and we are contacting schools, colleges and informing them about the facilities available. The idea is to make people aware," he said. He added that the aggressive push was required to increase the footfalls. "We are also trying to handle the commuters with courtesy. This kind of publicity is also impor-



tant for Metro. If you talk to the people, their friends and relatives will also start coming in," he said. The LMRC MD said that the focus would remain on increasing the ridership which is a big task. "This is not an easy task to hold the passengers because there are several other modes of transport which people are using for quiet some time and making them shift from those to Metro will be quite an achievement," he

added. Meanwhile, autorickshaw and tempo drivers said that with the advent of Metro, 20 per cent of their business had been affected. "Metro has affected our business with passengers shifting to this mode of transport. However, if Metro increases its fares, it will work to our advantage. Currently, we cannot take small feeder services for Metro," an autorickshaw driver said.

11 arrested with illicit liquor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The police arrested 11 culprits for possessing 85 pouches and 40 litres of the illicit liquor from different places in the state capital. They were selling illicit liquor to the people on the occasion of Holi. Three culprits were arrested by the police from the Vijaykhand area in Gomti Nagar. They were identified as Rajeev Prajapati, Raj Kumar Prajapati and Ramanand. Sub-inspector Rahul Tiwari, who along with the police team, raided their hideouts and seized 30 pouches of illicit liquor. They confessed that they were selling the illicit liquor to earn good profits. Three culprits were arrested from the Maya colony under the Indira Nagar police station after a raid was conducted by senior sub-inspector Viresh Kumar. They were identified as Sanjeet Kumar,

Vijay Valmiki and Deepak Kumar and 15 pouches of the illicit liquor were seized. They were nabbed while going to sell the liquor. Two culprits were arrested from the main market of Nagram and 20 litres of illicit liquor in two containers were seized. They were identified as Veer Bahadur and Virendra. Senior sub-inspector of Nagram police station Awadhesh Shukla said they had confessed to their crime. Forty pouches of the illicit liquor were seized from different places in localities falling under the Malihabad police station. Police station incharge Sarvesh Shukla said Vinod Singh was picked up from Sahilmau area and 15 pouches were found from his possession while Munna was arrested for possessing 25 pouches. Naini Vishwakarma was arrested for carrying 20 litres of illicit liquor in Sahilmau area.

Lucknow (PNS): Two youths were killed in a road mishap on late Thursday night as the motorcycle slipped and fell down from the overbridge near the Polytechnic crossing in which they were seriously injured. They were identified as Satyendra Pandey, aged 28, and his accomplice as Pramod Dubey, aged 25. Both succumbed to injuries later at the hospital. The police said they were on a motorcycle (UP-

Two youths killed in road mishap

32/KP0124) and was passing through the overbridge when all of sudden Pramod, who was on the front seat, lost the balance and the vehicle slipped and fell down from the height of 40 feet. The Dial-100 which stationed there rushed them to the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. Pandey succumbed to injuries immediately after he was admitted at hospital while Dubey

passed away on Friday morning. Both were working in a private establishment. Pandey hails from Gonda district and Dubey, a native of Siddharth Nagar. Two incidents of the suicide were reported from different places in the state capital. The first incident was reported from Matadeen Road falling under the Saadatganj police station. Deepak Mishra was living in a

portion of the house on rent along with his wife Guliyaa, a son and daughter for the past several years. The landlady noticed the body of his wife hanging from the window in the wee hours and informed Mishra that his wife was seen hanging from the window. He was surprised over the drastic step taken by his wife. No suicide note was found from her pos-

session or in the room. Mishra was unable to state the motive of his wife committing suicide. The second incident took place at the Para area where 22-year-old Vikas, a resident of Salempur, committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of the room. The deceased elder brother Dileep Kumar informed the police about the incident. However, no suicide note was found the place. The deceased was unmarried and was a farmer.

Holi marked by traditional gaiety, fervour

Lucknow (PNS): Holi was celebrated with traditional gaiety and fervor in the city on Thursday. A procession was organised by Shubh Sanskar Samiti. Main organiser Ridhi Gaur said the procession started from Chaupatiyan early in the morning. There were 10 camels, 15 tongas with musical bands, dhols and other musical instruments. The procession passed through areas dominated by Shias and they welcomed the revellers and also took part in the festivities. "Holi coincided with Navroz after a period of over 30 years and hence, the Shia community also participated in festivities with us," Gaur said. The procession moved from Chaupatiyan to Bholanath Kuan, Akbari Gate, Victoria Street, Kamla Nehru Marg and Chowk. Others who took part in Holi processions included Bihar Governor Lalji Tandon, mayor Sanyukta Bhatia, Deputy CM Dinesh Sharma and Law Minister Brajesh Pathak.



Mahant of Mankameshwar temple Devya Giri performing Gomti aarti in Lucknow

Two teenagers drown in pond

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Two teenagers drowned in the pond located in Sisendi village falling under the Mohanlalganj police station. They were identified as Himanshu, aged 13, and Vishu, aged 15 years. After playing colours on the occasion of Holi, they went to the nearby pond between 3 pm and 3.30 pm to remove the colours and take bath. Interestingly, they were not swimmers. One of them slipped into the pond while the other in order to save him also slipped into the pond. Their parents got worried as they did not return to the house late in the evening. They started searching for them. Later, the locals also joined them to trace their whereabouts. The parents lodged individual complaints of their sons missing late at night. It was in the morning a group of the milk vendors, who were going to the city to sell their milk, noticed the bodies floating in the pond and informed the gram pradhan who passed down the message to the police.

Breast cancer more prevalent among younger women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Breast cancer incidence is occurring more in younger women in India, experts said at a programme held recently in city. Doctors from reputed medical institutes said that breast cancer was very aggressive in biology when it hits younger women. "There are modifiable factors such as obesity, unhealthy diet and sedentary lifestyles. Tobacco and alcohol in any amount are also responsible for carcinogenic mutations. Support groups play a key role in helping people with breast cancer. Those who have gone through the journey of seeking treatment

for breast cancer are best placed to help support each other," a senior doctor said. It was further pointed out that poor menstrual hygiene can also create problems. "Poor menstrual hygiene leads to infections, inflammations, menstrual cramps and vaginal discharges. Menstruation is a natural sign of health for a young girl or woman, and not an incident for which they should feel shamed or scared," an expert said. Doctors laid stress on the need of focusing on women healthcare. Majority of the speakers stated that women were the main caregivers in their families and communities and

their own health often remained neglected due to a variety of reasons, including lack of awareness, deeply entrenched gender inequalities and social barriers. Breast cancer surgeon Dr Pooja Ramakant (KGMU) said breast cancer was the most common among women and also one of the deadliest. "Women approach us late and unfortunately, 50-70 per cent of patients

are already in advanced stage or metastatic when they are first diagnosed," she pointed out. She said if breast cancer was diagnosed early, chances of survival were higher. "All women and men must self-examine their breasts every month. It does not cost anything and there are no equipment needed. In case of any doubt, people must seek medical check-up without any delay," another doctor said. A senior breast pathologist pointed out that one good sign was that more women were self-examining their breasts. "We must remember that breast cancer is treatable, if diagnosed at an early stage," she added.



सिंडिकेटबैंक
Syndicate Bank

POSSESSION NOTICE
(for immovable property)
[Appendix IV under the Act-rule-8(1)]

The Authorized officer of Syndicate Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice on the date mentioned against account & stated here under calling upon the borrower/surety/owner to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within being together with further interest at contractual rate on the aforesaid amount & incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. within 60 days from the date of the said notice. The borrower/surety/owner having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/surety/owner & the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise to powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with the rule 8 of the said rules, on the date mentioned hereunder. **The borrowers attention is invited to the provision of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.** The borrower/surety/owner in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Syndicate Bank, for the amounts & interest thereon. **Details of the mortgaged property of which the possession had been taken is as follows:**

| Name & Address of the Borrowers/ Guarantors | Description of the charged/mortgaged/ hypothecated property (All the part and parcel of the property consisting of) | Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession |
|---|--|---|
| Branch : Aliganj, Lucknow | | |
| 1. Borrowers-1-M/s Golden Future Welfare Society, Village Tiwaripur Post Kotwa 6th Mile, Sitapur Road, Lucknow-226024 | 1-UREM of Plot of Land, Khasra No. 4, admeasuring area 0.072 Hectare out of 0.292 Hectare area situated at Village Tiwaripur, Pargana Lucknow, Tehsil Bakshi ka Talab, District -Lucknow. Owned by- Golden Future Public School, | 14.11.2018 19.03.2019 |
| 2. Sri Pankaj Kumar S/o Sri Santosh Kumar Verma, Manager-M/s Golden Future Welfare Society, Village Tiwaripur Post Kotwa 6th Mile, Sitapur Road, Lucknow-226024. | Boundaries- North- Chak Marg, South-Bagh and Agriculture part of Ram Khelawan, East-Agriculture plot of others, West- Land of Purchaser. | Rs. 33,72,704.00 as on 28.02.2019 + Intt & other Charges w.e.f.01.03.2019 |
| Guarantors- 1- Sri Chandresh Kumar S/o Vikram Datt, 2- Sri Deepak Kumar Verma S/o Sri Santosh Kumar Verma both R/o- Village Tiwaripur Post Kotwa 6th Mile, Sitapur Road, Lucknow-226024, | 2-UREM of Plot of Land, Khasra No. 4, admeasuring area 0.195 Hectare out of 0.292 Hectare area situated at Village Tiwaripur, Pargana Lucknow, Tehsil Bakshi ka Talab, District -Lucknow. Owned by- Golden Future Public School, | |
| 3- Smt. Uma Kanujia W/o Sri Mohan Lal, R/o- 3/270, Vishwas Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226005, | Boundaries- North- Chak Marg, South-Bagh and Agriculture part of Ram Khelawan, East-Remaining part of Khasra No.4, West- Chak Marg. | |
| 4-Sri Santosh Kumar Verma S/o Sri Jagdish Prasad Verma, 191 Ishi Nagar Kithi Civil Lines, Lakhimpur-262701. | | |
| Branch : Alambagh, Lucknow | | |
| 1. Borrowers-1-M/s Food Express, Near Bank of Baroda, Ashiyana Power House Chauraha, Lucknow-226012, 2- Mrs. Gauri Soni W/o Sri Arun Kumar, R/o- H. No. E-3/53, Sector-H, LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Lucknow-226012 | UREM of Land and Building- H. No. E-3/53, Sector-H, LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Lucknow-226012 | 04.01.2019 19.03.2019 |
| Guarantor- Sri Vivek Soni, R/o- H. No. E-3/53, Sector-H, LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Lucknow-224001. | owned by- Mrs. Gauri Soni W/o Sri Arun Kumar & Sri Arun Kumar S/o Late Sawli Prasad, Boundaries- North- H. No. E-3/54H, South- H. No. E-3/52H, East-4.5 Meter Wide Road, West-H. No. E-3/38H | Rs. 9,22,630.71 as on 28.02.2019 + Intt & other Charges w.e.f.01.03.2019 |
| Branch : Civil Lines , Faizabad | | |
| 1. Borrowers-1-M/s Heavy Wires, Prop. Sri Amit Verma, Kohana Deokali, Faizabad-241001 | UREM of Plot No.1533, situated at Village, Fatehpur,Kamsin, Tehsil Bikapur Distt-Faizabad and admeasuring area- 1800.00 Sq.mtr. (0.1800 Hectare) owned by- Sri Amit Verma S/o Sri Radhe Shyam Verma, | 18.12.2018 19.03.2019 |
| Guarantor- Sri Ghanshyam S/o Sri Devi Prasad, H.No. 333, Fatehpur,Kamsin, Bikapur, Faizabad-224001. | Boundaries- East- Chak Road, thereafter Land Chole Lal, West- Chak Marg, thereafter Bag Ram Shankar etc., North-Chak Road, thereafter Bag Ram Shankar & others, South-Chak Road, thereafter land Devi Prasad. | Rs. 25,86,429.48 as on 28.02.2019 + Intt & other Charges w.e.f.01.03.2019 |

Date: 19.03.2019, Place-Lucknow/Faizabad Authorised Officer, Syndicate Bank

Unsafe water deadlier for children below 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Children below the age of 15 living in countries affected by protracted conflict are, on an average, almost three times more likely to die of diarrhoeal diseases caused by lack of safe water, sanitation and hygiene than by direct violence, UNICEF said in a new report on Friday. 'Water Under Fire' looks at mortality rates in 16 countries going through prolonged conflicts and finds that, in most of them, children under the age of five are more than 20 times more likely to die from diarrhoea-related deaths linked to lack of access to safe water and sanitation than direct violence.

"The odds are already stacked against children living through prolonged conflicts with many unable to reach a safe water source," said UNICEF executive director Henrietta Fore. "The reality is that there are more children who die from lack of access to safe water than by bullets," Fore said. The report states that without safe and effective water, sanitation and hygiene services, children are at risk of malnutrition and preventable diseases including diarrhoea, typhoid, cholera and polio. Girls are particularly affected. They are vulnerable to sexual violence as they collect water or venture out to use latrines. They deal with affronts to

their dignity as they bathe and manage menstrual hygiene. And they miss classes during menstruation if their schools have no suitable water and sanitation facilities. These threats are exacerbated during conflict when deliberate and indiscriminate attacks destroy infrastructure, injure personnel and cut off the power that keeps water, sanitation and hygiene systems running. Armed conflict also limits access to essential repair equipment and consumables such as fuel or chlorine - which can be depleted, rationed, diverted or blocked from delivery. Far too often, essential services are deliberately denied.

BJP MLA shot at; one person arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Bharatiya Janata Party MLA B from Sadar in Lakhimpur Kheri, Yogesh Verma, was shot at when he was playing Holi with party workers at party office on Thursday. The bullet hit his leg and he was shifted to hospital. The local police claimed to have arrested one of the assailant while two others are still at large.

Reports said that Verma was playing Holi on Thursday when he received a gun shot injury. According to district police chief, Poonam, they arrested one Pinki Sakena, while Prem Verma and Naseem, two other accused, were absconding. On Thursday, soon after the incident, Lucknow Range IG, SK Bhagat also visited the spot and ordered arrest of the assailant at the earliest.

Meanwhile, seven people were killed in two separate road mishaps reported from Balrampur and Ballia respectively. Two men were killed when an unidentified vehicle hit their bike in Balrampur's Utraula area on Thursday night, the local police said. The deceased were identified as Anuj Kaushal (20) and Laddu (23). No arrest was made so in this connection.

In Ballia, Shivji Chauhan (22) and his sister Kanchan (23) were killed on Thursday night in Sahatwar area when their bike rammmed into a tree. In another incident, Prakash (23), Dhananjay Rajak (22) and Kanahiya (24) were killed in Maniyar area after a tempo hit their bike.

CITYBRIEFS

WORKSHOP AT CISH

An awareness programme was organised at Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) on Friday on ready-to-fruit mushroom bags which can be used all the year round because of several queries being received for the same. The event was attended not only by retired officers, housewives and youths but also by many others interested to opt for it as a commercial venture. CISH director Shailendra Rajan said that the programme was organised for explaining the minute points important for mushroom cultivation and very much to be followed for ready-to-fruit bags. "In recent years, mushroom has attracted the common man because of its taste and nutritive value. For some of the families, it has become an important ingredient of daily meal. Generally, mushrooms are available in the common market during winters only. Thus, cultivating mushrooms for own use is an attraction to those who attended the programme," he said. Principal scientist PK Shukla gave tips to the participants so that they can easily produce good amount of mushrooms from a bag with less cost. "Few participants were also interested in knowing about the good kitchen garden practices and hydroponics and they sought regular training on these aspects in the city on holidays so that there are large number of people," said Rajan.



Awareness programme organised at CISH

CARDIAC AWARENESS, CONSULTATION CAMP

A free cardiac awareness and consultation camp was organised at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama on Sunday by Dr SK Choudhury, the car-

diac thoracic surgeon of Vivekananda Polyclinic and Institute of Medical Sciences, and his team of doctors and paramedical staff. There will also be investigations for blood sugar, ECG and 50% concession and others such as lipid profile, TMT, 2D Echo etc will be carried out as per necessity. Cases requiring angiography, angioplasty, CABG and other cardiac surgical procedures will also be looked into.

AWARDED

Popular science writing is an art that requires different

craft to reach out to common people. The department of Science and Technology, Government of India, invited PhD students across universities and institutions to convert outcome of their thesis into an interesting format for DST-AWSAR (Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research) awards. Hundred best science story writers were selected from scores of students by a national committee. Swati Verma, research scholar of CISH, bagged DST-AWSAR award for her article. She is the only research scholar from

entire ICAR system to get this coveted award, for which she



has also been given Rs 10,000 prize money by DST. As many as 54 research scholars from various universities and 27 from IITs and IISERs were selected for this award. CSIR students bagged 8 awards.

Holi rush profitable for UPSRTC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) has made good earnings through extra buses running to clear the additional rush in view of Holi. According to UPSRTC regional manager PK Bose, they have earned Rs 41 lakh since March 17. He said they were expecting the maximum collections on March 23 and 24 after which the picture



would be clearer. Bose pointed out that last year, the five day's income for UPSRTC was Rs 7.31 crore while this year, it was Rs 7.72 crore.

"We are getting the best collections on March 23 and March 24 because the bookings are complete in all other modes of transport and hence people will opt for buses. The revenue will be good on

these two days," Bose said, adding that they made an earning of Rs 90 lakh on Friday and Rs 2.25 crore on Thursday. "The maximum rush we received was on Lucknow-Delhi route," Bose said. UPSRTC had made special arrangements of buses on the occasion of Holi and staff deployed for additional duty

U.P. POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD. HAFIZPUR AZAMGARH. Tender Notice
 Following E-Tender are invited from the Experienced / Reputed Contractors / Suppliers for the execution of works. For more details login on website www.etender.up.nic.in in 1. Short Term E-Tender No. 330/AETC/2018-19 : Providing 05 No. Computer Operator for the office works of Electedy, Trans. Division, Azamgarh / Jaunpur / Jaunpur II & Electedy, Trans. Circle, Azamgarh under Electedy, Trans. Circle, Azamgarh. Earnest Money: Rs. 10000.00 (Rs. Ten Thousand) only. Tender Cost: Rs. 1800.00 (Rs. One Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty) Only. Earnest money will be in shape of FDR / CDR / DD duly pledged in favour of Superintending Engineer Electedy, Trans-mission Circle, UPPTCL, Azamgarh. Tenderer can upload their tender bids against Short Term E-Tender No. 330 upto 17.00 Hrs. of 05.04.2019 the same will be opened on dated 06.04.2019 at 12.00 hrs. Intimation regarding opening of Tender Bid Part-II i.e. Price Bid will be given on above e-website in due course of time. Please visit web site www.etender.up.nic.in for details / load and for any other corrections/amendments / modification extension till the date of submission of tender. In case, the tender opening date is holiday or undersigned remain out of headquarters the date of submission and opening of tender will stand extended to next working day. Undersigned has right to reject/divide any tender without assigning any reason thereof. Conditional tenders shall not be accepted. Superintending Engineer (Trans.) Azamgarh No. 386, Date 19.03.2019 Save Electricity in the interest of nation.

चयन प्रक्रिया
 कार्योपस्थान लिमिटेड निविदा संख्या-299 व 300/वि.पा.मं.प्र.।
 ल. / 2018-19 अगोहरासकालका द्वारा अनुभवी उम्मीदवारों / फर्मों से निम्नलिखित कार्यों हेतु अलग-अलग सीलबन्ध ई-निविदाये दो भागों में आमंत्रित की जाती है। जो निविदा खुलने की तिथि तक 12.00 बजे तक प्राप्त की जायेगी तथा उची तिथि को उपस्थित निविदावालाओं / उनके प्रतिनिधियों के समक्ष 14.00 बजे खोली जायेगी। निविदा के प्रथम भाग में घोषित बन्धराशि व बैकटा, तकनीकी एवं अनुभव सम्बन्धित प्रश्न, व्यावसायिक व अन्य शर्तें आदि एवं दूसरे भाग में दरें सम्बन्धित होंगी।
घरोघर बनारसी, एक.डी.आर. / सी.डी.आर. / डी.डी. के रूप में प्रस्तुत की जायेगी जो अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारिषद प्रथम प्रथम, लखनऊ के पास में देय होंगी। प्रथम भाग में जांचित घरोघर बनारसी एवं अन्य प्रश्न पूर्ण तथा उचित / स्वीकार्य योग्य न होने पर द्वितीय भाग को नहीं खोला जायेगा। निविदा का विवरण-निविदा सं. 200/वि.पा.मं.प्र.।, घरोघर बनारसी, खुलने की तिथि क्रमशः निम्नानुसार है: (1) 299-वि.पा.मं.प्र.। / 2018-19 मुख्य अभियन्ता (पा.मं.), लखनऊ हेतु वास्तु संहिता एक नमूना डीजल वास्तु टेंडरसी कोटे का हल्का वाहन 08 माह की अवधि के लिए किराये पर लिए जाने हेतु, रु. 2,00,00,00 29.04.2019. (2) 300-वि.पा.मं.प्र.। / 2018-19 महाप्रबन्धक (लेजा), पारिषद नमूने हेतु बालक संहिता एक नमूना डीजल वास्तु टेंडरसी कोटे का हल्का वाहन 09 माह की अवधि के लिए किराये पर लिए जाने हेतु, रु. 2,00,00,00 29.04.2019. निविदाये खुलने की तिथि को अन्तर्गत की स्थिति में निविदाये अगले कार्य दिवस पर खोली जायेगी। विस्तृत जानकारी एवं अन्य शर्तोंनाती तथा निविदा प्रस्तुत करने के दिनांक विस्तार आदि के सम्बन्ध में सूचना एवं निविदा प्रश्न डाउनलोड करने हेतु हमारी वेब साइट www.upptcl.org देखी जा सकती है। निविदा प्रश्न क्रम क्रम हेतु रु. 236/- घरोघर बनारसी (क. 200.00-GST@18%अतिरिक्त) तथा अधीक्षारी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारिषद प्रथम प्रथम, लखनऊ के पास में देय बैंक ड्राफ्ट द्वारा अथवा नगद रूप में निविदा खुलने के एक दिन पहले 17.00 बजे तक मूलातान कर PAN कार्ड एवं GST No. इत्यादि की छायाप्रति उपलब्ध काराकर निविदा प्रश्न प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। निविदा प्रश्न डाउनलोड करने की स्थिति में निर्धारित निविदा प्रश्न मूल्या का मूलातान करार डिमाण्ड ड्राफ्ट, अधीक्षारी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारिषद प्रथम प्रथम, लखनऊ के नाम पर लखनऊ पर देय मय टेंडर ऑफर के जमा करना होगा। निविदाओं से सम्बन्धित विस्तृत विवरण इस कार्यालय के नोटिस बोर्ड पर भी उपलब्ध है। अगोहरासकालका को बिना कोई कारण बताये किसी भी निविदा अथवा समी निविदाओं को निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारिषद प्रथम प्रथम, लखनऊ सं. 111 से 114 मूलात पारिषद नमन, विद्युत सख-द्वितीय, मौलिक नगर, लखनऊ। फोन: 547, दिनांक 22.03.2019 "सादरित में विजली बचाव"

SCHOOLSCAN

INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARK TEST



Ayush Raghvendra, a class VIII student of City Montessori School, Gomti Nagar Campus II, secured 100 percentile in Mathematics in International Benchmark Test (IBT) and got the top rank globally. The school will honour Ayush with a cash prize of Rs 50,000. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi congratulated Ayush on his achievement and said it was a moment of pride for the state and country. He also congratulated the principal and teachers. IBT is organised by Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) once a year in many countries. In India over 50,000 students appeared in IBT and Ayush has secured 100 percent marks in Mathematics amidst tough competition.



Express' with a view to making masses aware. An anti-child marriage rally and a street play were organised at Takrohi village under this project. Women, children and locals actively participated in the rally. The street play sent across the message that people must say no to child marriage and other social evils. 'Bachpan Express' airs every Saturday at 8 am, 12 noon, 4 pm and at 8 pm.

BACHPAN EXPRESS

City Montessori School's Community Radio, in collaboration with Madar Sewa Sansthan, is airing radio programme 'Bachpan

DANISH AMONG...

According to officials of the BSP, the candidates are Haji Fazlur Rahman from Saharanpur, Girish Chandra from Bijnornagina, Danish Ali from Amroha, Haji Muhammad Yaqoob from Meerut, Satbir Nagar from Gautam Buddha Nagar, Yogesh Verma from Bulandshahr, Ajeet Balyaayan from Aligarh, Manoj Kumar Soni from Agra, Rajveer Singh from Fatehpur Sikri and Shrimati Ruchi Veera from Aonla. Interestingly, around 100 BSP supporters from Moradabad staged a protest in front of the party office here on Friday, demanding reason from the high command for denying ticket to Girish Chandra from Bijnornagina seat. A supporter, Ashutosh, said that Girish, a coordinator of the BSP, was working against the party. Mayawati, also declared the list of her party's star campaigners for the first phase of polls to be held for eight seats in western UP on April 11. BSP supremo Mayawati heads the star campaigners' list followed by party general secretary Satish Chandra Mishra. Akash Anand, nephew of Mayawati, is the third name in the list and thereafter come the name of BSP state president RS Kushwaha. Thereafter, the remaining 16 names are of leaders of western UP mostly Dalits besides one Muslim, Samsuddin Raini.

8 TERRORISTS...

Earlier, on Thursday, two Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militants were killed in an encounter with security forces at Kalantara in Baramulla district while three security force personnel, including an officer, suffered injuries during the operation. According to police, one of the two terrorists killed in Baramulla has been identified as Aamir Rasool of Sopore and from the incriminating material recovered at the site of encounter, it is understood that the other killed terrorist is a Pakistani national. Police spokesman said they were wanted by law for their complicity in a series of terror crimes including attacks on security force establishments and civilian atrocities. According to police records they were also responsible for conspiring and executing many terror attacks in the area. Several terror crime cases were registered against them. Police have registered a case and initiated investigation in the matter. Incriminating materials including arms and ammunition were recovered from the site of encounter. All the incriminating material recovered has been taken into case records for further investigation to probe their complicity in other terror cases. Late, Friday

evening another terror attack was reported from Anantnag area. According to police, a personal security officer (PSO) of Municipal Council Anantnag chairman Hilal Ahmad Shah was wounded in an attack by terrorists.

Witnesses and reports said terrorists opened fire on the policemen in the premises of Municipal Council office Anantnag. They said a PSO of Shah was wounded in the attack. The injured, identified as Irshad Ahmad, were shifted to a nearby medical facility for treatment, said an official. His condition was stated to be critical.

LALU WRIT...

Similarly, Lalu also had his way in wresting the Aurangabad Lok Sabha constituency for HAM. The seat earlier represented by Congress and was considered its stronghold. In totality, this distribution of seats and parties has kept in mind the Muslim and Yadav and other backward classes in mind and forced political parties including the grand old party to move ahead the Lalu who is serving a jail term currently "operating from a hospital in Ranchi". Spearheading the alliance, the RJD will contest 20 seats, the Congress on nine, Upendra Kushwaha's RLSF on five seats, while the VIP and HAM will contest three each, the CPI-ML will fight on one seat on RJD quota. RLSF had quit the NDA fold and a ministerial berth on condition to contest not less than five seats under the Mahagathbandhan banner.

Former JD (U) president Sharad Yadav, who floated his own outfit Loktantrik Janta Dal, will, also contest on a RJD ticket. He will merge his outfit with the RJD post-polls. Nitish and BJP had traditional forward caste voters who have 17 per cent presence in Bihar while the Mahadalits account for 16 per cent and Muslims for 17 per cent vote share in the State. Rest comprises of crucial backward and other backward classes represented by many splinter political parties and remains decisive.

After days of oscillation of talks amongst the partners, the grand alliance leaders announced its seat-sharing formula for the 40 Lok Sabha seats in the State.

GAMBHIR TO BAT...

He played his last Ranji Trophy match in December 2018, after which he indicated he was open to coaching. Gambhir was a high profile campaigner for Union Minister Arun Jaitley in 2014 in Amritsar district of Punjab.

'One in 4 TB patients belongs to India'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

One in every four TB patients in the world belongs to India. Over 7,000 people are diagnosed with TB each day and a life is lost every minute. These figures are as per the WHO Global TB Report of 2018. This was stated by Navin Agarwal, who is the member of World Health Partners, an organisation working in the area of TB awareness. He said that each year, UP accounts for 20 per cent of TB burden of the country. "There are a missing million in India who either remain undetected or are misdiagnosed. Improper treatment often results in potentially fatal type of drug-resistant TB," he said.

He said that March 24 was recognised as World TB Day to educate the public about the impact of TB around the world as on this day only. Dr Robert Koch announced his discovery of Mycobacterium tuberculosis, the bacillus that causes TB. He pointed out that the Prime Minister had announced to make India TB-free by 2025. "TB is a disease caused by bacteria. The bacteria usually attack the lungs but they can also damage other parts of the body. TB spreads through the air when a person with TB of lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, or talks. If diagnosed initially and treated completely as per given prescription, TB can be fully cured in 6-9 month. If a TB patient leaves treatment in between the course, it converts into drug-resistant TB for

which the treatment is for 18-24 months. If patients don't pay attention and complete treatment, it can be fatal," he said. Agarwal pointed out that the state government is implementing lots of schemes in state like free examination, free lab tests, free medicine, counselling and Rs 500/month to each TB patient for their nutritious food in bank account who is continuing treatment with effect from April 1 2018 to eliminate TB from state by 2025 in which many partners are also helping in implementing activities across the state. He said that World Health Partners, one of those partners implementing Tuberculosis Health Action Learning Initiative (THALI), was supported by the US Agency for

International Development (USAID) in UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Punjab and Gujarat. In UP, the project is working for management of patient-centric support and community engagement activities. "Our aim is to ensure follow-up with TB patients to ensure that they adhere to the treatment for increasing treatment outcome and success rate," he said. In 2018, 4.2 lakh and in 2019 till date, more than 70,000 TB patients notified in Nikshay portal by public and private sector are being treated. "As on March 22, more than 2.5 lakh patients have received benefits under Nikshay Poshan Yojana as their nutritional support," Agarwal said.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

INDIA BOYCOTTS...

Making India's stand clear at a media briefing here, Kumar also said India is very clear that any attempt by the Pakistani High Commission or Pakistani leadership to engage with the Hurriyat Conference will not be taken lightly. India has been strongly opposed to Pakistan engaging with separatist leaders of Jammu and Kashmir. "Our High Commission in Islamabad will also not be attending the reception there," Kumar said. Sources said last week India conveyed to Pakistan High Commission that it will not send any representative to the reception if Hurriyat leaders are invited to it. They said India is boycotting the events for extending invitation to Hurriyat leaders and not because of any other issue. At least 30 Hurriyat leaders were invited for this year's function, sources said. In the past Union Minister V K Singh had also attended the event here.

But Pak High Commissioner Sohail Mahmood said coercive measures have never worked in the past and will not work in future even as he raked up the Kashmir issue. "Diplomacy and dialogue remain indispensable for enhancing mutual understanding and addressing outstanding issues including Kashmir," he said. Last year, the reception at the Pakistan High Commission was attended by Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. Some low-ranking leaders from a number of separatist outfits from Kashmir also attended the reception.

India's decision to boycott the reception here and events in Islamabad comes in the backdrop of heightened tension between the two countries after the Pulwama terror attack on February 14 and subsequent air strike by India on a training camp of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in Pakistan's Balakot on February 26. The JeM had claimed responsibility for the Pulwama attack. Pakistan retaliated the next day by unsuccessfully attempting to target Indian military installations. India has mounted diplomatic offensive against Pakistan since the Pulwama attack to corner the country internationally on the issue of terrorism.

SHAH PICK...

The highlight of the announcement on Thursday evening was Shah taking over

Gandhinagar seat from Advani which also means that the BJP veteran did not 'influence' the selection of new candidate for the seat as was being speculated earlier. The nomination of Shah, a Rajya Sabha member, from the seat would add more political heft to his stature and suggest his taking over greater responsibility of governance at the Centre, if Narendra Modi returns to power for a second term. At the same time, it is curtains for Advani's active electoral career and also an official end to the Vajpayee-Advani era that harnessed and nursed a range of influential political leaders including Modi, Arun Jaitley, Sushma Swaraj and Rajnath Singh. One of the founder members of the party, Advani, who served as the Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, has been credited with navigating the party's rise in the late 80s from just two seats in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. Advani is a six-time MP, elected five times from Gandhinagar, where he garnered over 50 per cent of votes each time, and once from New Delhi. Advani had initially opposed Modi as the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate but reconciled only under the larger 'Parivar pressure'. It proved to be a swan song of his career. Modi lost no chance to put Advani and his contemporary Murli Manohar Joshi in the 'Margdarshak Mandal', a euphemism for 'retirement home' for senior party leaders, after he rode to power in 2014. There was not a single meeting of the said committee of elders, headed by no less than the Prime Minister himself, in the last five years.

Hitting the delete button on Advani's nomination kicks up speculation on the fate of another veteran Murli Manohar Joshi, 83, who is currently MP from Kanpur after being shifted in 2014 from Varanasi from where Modi would again seek re-election. Though the BJP officially maintained that there is no ceiling of 75 years of age for contesting Lok Sabha poll, the Modi-Shah duo looks set to bid adieu to most of the ageing party leader and look for new generation loyalists to follow their tune.

BJP DROPS...

throw a massive challenge to its 2014 performance when it won a whopping 71 seats. The turncoats with winnability factor are expectedly being rewarded by the party. The BJP's first list gives place to two Biju Janata Dal entrants to the party like Jay Panda (Kendrapada) and Balabhadra Majhi (Nabar-

angpur) in Odisha. Both are elected MPs. A third new entrant to the party finding name in the list from Odisha is former IAS officer Aparajith Sarangi (Bhubaneswar) who also joined the BJP recently. Another 'changer' Sujay Vikhe Patil, who crossed over from the Congress to the BJP this month, has been awarded ticket (Ahmednagar) in Maharashtra. Home Minister Rajnath Singh has been re-nominated from Lucknow and Textiles Minister Smriti Irani from Amethi (to take on Congress president Rahul Gandhi). Lucknow seat has been with the BJP since 1991 and been represented by Vajpayee five times. Before Rajnath stepped in BJP leader Lalji Tandon held the seat from 2009 to 2014. Actress and BJP's sitting MP Hema Malini has been re-nominated from Mathura, West UP, seat and expects a tough fight from the RLD candidate who would have SP-BSP backing. Union Ministers VK Singh (Ghaziabad), Union Minister Satya Pal Singh (Bagpat), Mahesh Sharma (Gautam Budh Nagar) have been given tickets but face a stiff battle ahead with the SP-BSP-RLD combine, besides the anti-incumbency.

The BJP is yet to announce names of party candidates from Pilibhit and Sultanpur which is currently held respectively by Union Minister Maneka Gandhi and her son the sitting MP Varun. A switchover of seats is expected in these two constituencies, according to sources. The BJP announced 21 out of 28 candidates for Karnataka retaining 16 sitting MPs, and with new entrant A Manju from the Congress now getting a BJP ticket from Hassan to take on Prajwal Revanna, grandson of former Prime Minister Deve Gowda. No candidate is yet announced for Bengaluru South, although Tejaswini Ananth Kumar, wife of late Union Minister Ananth Kumar is talked as a potential candidate.

In Tamil Nadu, the BJP's lone sitting MP, Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan has been reelected from Kanyakumari and state unit chief Tamilsai Soundararajan from Thooth-ukudi where she will face off against DMK MP Kanimozhi. BJP is contesting five seats in an alliance with AIADMK. In Kerala, the party firmed up its alliance with the Bharth Jana Sena Party (BDJS) on Wednesday, giving it five seats, and the Kerala Congress (Thomas) with one seat. The list saw BJP announce 13 out of its 14 seats in contest with Union Minister KJ Alphons to fight with Ernakulam and former Mizoram Governor Kummanam Rajashekhara to fight Shashi Tharoor from Thiruvananthapuram.

ED arrests Zakir's close aide

Agency to file fresh chargesheet soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday arrested a close aide of terror preacher Zakir Naik from Mumbai in connection with a money laundering case against him and others.

The agency arrested Abdul Kadir Najmudin Sathak, a jeweller, under the Prevention of Money Laundering (PMLA) for his role in "actively assisting Naik and aiding him in money laundering by transferring funds of dubious origin from the UAE to facilitate production and broadcasting incriminating videos for spreading communal hatred and radicalisation of a particular community."

Following his arrest, the agency will soon file a fresh chargesheet in this case based on the fresh evidence that will be gathered after questioning Sathak, sources said.



Sathak had allegedly sent about ₹50 crore funds directly to Naik, which the preacher illegally routed and laundered, the sources said. Sathak was also the director of Global Broadcasting Corporation FZE LLC that owned Naik's Peace TV channel. The company Global Broadcasting was "controlled"

by Naik. He will be produced before a special PMLA court in Mumbai.

"An amount of ₹79 crore was received from GBC to Ms Harmony Media Pvt Ltd. But for these monies, it would not have been possible to produce these controversial speeches of Naik and reach wider audiences through Peace TV," the agency alleged.

It claimed that the source of funds remitted by GBC to Harmony Media is "suspicious" as advertisements were not run on this channel and Sathak had not submitted any details in this context.

Naik has been under investigation of the Central probe agencies since 2016, when the Centre banned his Islamic Research Foundation (IRF) for five years.

Indian security agencies have been monitoring him ever since allegations surfaced that he had inspired one of the militants involved in the Dhaka restaurant terror attack on July 1, 2016, which left 22 people dead. One of the Dhaka attackers was reportedly radicalized after watching programmes of Peace TV.

ILLEGAL FOREX CASE

ED slaps ₹14.40L penalty on Geelani

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate has levied a penalty of ₹14.40 lakh on hardline Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani in a 17-year-old case of illegal possession of \$10,000 in contravention of the foreign exchange laws. The foreign currency was seized during an Income Tax raid at Geelani's residence in Srinagar's Hyderpora area in 2002. "This case has now been adjudicated by the Enforcement Directorate on 20.03.2019. By way of adju-

dition order, a penalty of ₹14,40,000 (Rupees Fourteen Lakhs Forty Thousand only) has been imposed on Syed Ali Shah Geelani and \$10,000, which was acquired illegally by him and was recovered by Income Tax Department during search (in 2002) from residential premises of SAS Geelani have also been ordered to be confiscated," the ED said in a statement. Geelani heads the hardline faction of the Hurriyat Conference and is based in Srinagar. PNS

Naik, wanted in India for terror-related activities and hate speech, reportedly left the country in 2016 and has since obtained permanent residency from the Malaysian Government.

The ED had registered a criminal case against Naik and others in December, 2016 after

taking cognisance of a National Investigation Agency (NIA) FIR filed under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)

The ED is probing money laundering aspect of Naik's dubious business and the subsequent proceeds of crime thus generated.

Congress seeks probe into charges of pay-offs by BSY



Senior Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala addresses a Press conference at party headquarters in New Delhi on Friday. Ranjan Dimri / Pioneer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU

The Congress on Friday sought an investigation by the Lokpal into a media report that alleged bribes of ₹1,800 crore were paid by former Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa to the BJP's top brass. Yeddyurappa rubbished it as "atrocious and malicious" allegations. The report was based on the alleged contents of a diary that, it said, had been with income tax department since 2017. But, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) also issued a statement saying that the pages were false and fabricated.

Earlier, Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it was time the Government got the Yeddyurappa diary probed by an independent agency. "If there is no truth in this diary, why isn't PM Modi ready for an investigation? Now, even the Lokpal is appointed. Why can't the first independent investigation be on this issue?" Surjewala added. Congress president Rahul Gandhi also accused all BJP leaders of being "corrupt" and cited a media report that claimed former Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa had allegedly paid bribes to the tune of ₹1,800 crore to the top party

leadership. "All 'chowkidars' (watchmen) of the BJP are thieves. NoMo. Arun Jaitley, Rajnath Singh...", he tweeted, tagging the report.

Responding to the charge, Yeddyurappa said that the documents cited by the Congress are forged. "The Congress party and its leaders are bankrupt of ideas, they are frustrated with growing popularity of the Modi ji, they have lost the battle before it began. I-T Department officials have already proved that the documents are forged and fake," Yeddyurappa said. The BJP leader said that the allegation has been already inquired into by the Income Tax department and it has been found that documents are "fake" and claimed it as a "closed chapter".

BJP president Amit Shah claimed that after all the "fake" issues have collapsed, "the desperate are now relying on forgery". "The Congress campaign is in shambles. Now even forgery can't save them. Few loose sheets given by a Congress Minister is only as credible and reliable as Rahul Gandhi's leadership skills," Shah claimed on Twitter.

Earlier, Surjewala, said PM Modi should come forward and clarify. "Prima facie, this is a case of investigating all BJP leaders, right from the PM

and downwards. It is a fit case to be investigated by the newly appointed Lokpal," Surjewala said, waving a copy of the 'expose' at the press conference. "The ball is in the PM's court. He must decide whether chowkidar chor hai ya chowkidar jaanch ke liye taiyaar hai (or the chowkidar is ready for an investigation)," Surjewala added.

In a statement, the CBDT said: "He (Yeddyurappa) stated that he was not in the habit of writing a diary and that the loose sheets in question were not in his handwriting. He denied his handwriting and signatures on the loose sheets. He further stated that contents of the loose sheets were false and fabricated and his name has been used to malign his political career. He also provided a sample of his handwriting in order to verify the genuineness of the said loose sheets," it said.

Reacting to the report on the payoffs from former BJP Chief Minister to BJP's central leadership, CPI(M) General Secretary Sitarama Yechury said that Lokpal and EC should probe matter.

He said that these are very serious cases of corruption involving the top most leaders of the BJP. If true, this calls for strictest action.

Ex-YSRC MP's daughter meets CEC, seeks fair probe into father's death

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: Former YSR Congress MP YS Vivekananda Reddy's daughter, Sunitha Narreddy, met the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora on Friday seeking a fair investigation into her father's death. Sunitha said the investigation should not be under the state government and that she was planning to meet the Secretary of the Home Ministry regarding the same.

"The issue has been (made into) an election campaign by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. The head of the state, who is directly supervising the case, has made irresponsible statements. This is a huge conflict of interest," Sunitha said. During her meeting with CEC Sunil Arora, Sunitha submitted a representation demanding a fair investigation be carried out into the "murder" of her father without interference by the state government. Vivekananda Reddy, former minister and younger brother of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy, was found dead at his home in Kadapa on March 15.

In her submission to the CEC, Sunitha said the Andhra

Pradesh chief minister was making "wrong statements" which could hamper the investigation by the Special Investigation Team (SIT).

She said Naidu's remarks blaming her cousin and YSR Congress chief YS Jaganmohan Reddy for the "murder" might influence the SIT probing the matter.

"My father was killed a week ago. I have given a representation to the CEC because I am concerned about the way the investigation is being done. I have asked the CEC to ensure a fair investigation. The chief minister has been making repeated statements that the murder was done by a family member and Jaganmohan Reddy is responsible for the same."

"When SIT has not given its report, how is the chief minister able to know what the findings are and draw conclusions? How will there be a fair trial if the chief minister keeps making statements like these," Sunitha said.

She also said that her mother will soon move a petition in the Andhra Pradesh High Court for a fair investigation in the matter. PNS

Indian Statistical Institute submits report on VVPAT sample size to EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With elections just weeks ahead, the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) presented its report on the sample size of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slip counting to the Election Commission on Friday. The EC is now expected to take a call on the demands of political parties to increase the number of polling stations where paper trail machine slips are matched with electronic voting machine (EVM) results, to dispel fears of rigging.

The VVPAT is a paper slip generated by the EVM when a vote is cast. These are visible to the voters who can see if their vote has been cast as per the button pressed. The VVPAT is used in all polling stations but as of now, results of EVMs and VVPATs are matched in one polling station per constituency.

The development comes just a week after the Supreme Court sought a response from the Commission on the extent to which VVPAT slips could be tallied with the EVM votes. A bench headed by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi on March 15 asked EC to give its response on the issue on March 25. The petition by 21 political parties had challenged the



ECI's decision to verify VVPAT of only one randomly selected booth in every Lok Sabha constituency. The petitioners had stated that this would cover just 0.44% of the total votes polled and the idea behind introducing VVPAT in all Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies would be defeated.

The report titled 'Random Sampling For Testing of EVMs via VVPAT Slip Verification' was presented by Professor Abhay G. Bhatt, ISI to the Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora and Election Commissioners Ashok Lavasa and Sushil Chandra. The expert committee at ISI also consisted of Prof Rajeeva L. Karandikar, Director, Chennai

Mathematical Institute (CMI) and Onkar Prasad Ghosh, Dy. Director General (Social Statistics Division), Central Statistics Office.

There have been demands to increase the number of polling stations where EVM and VVPAT results are matched to dispel fears about electronic voting machines being 'hacked' to favour a particular political party. Parties have demanded that at least 50 per cent paper trail slips per constituency be counted to ensure there is no rigging.

Elections for the 17th Lok Sabha will be held in seven phases, between April 11 and May 19. The results will be declared on May 23.

DMK to EC: Block PM's biopic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Movie is scheduled to hit the screens on April 5

The DMK has asked Election Commission (EC) to block the release of a biopic on Prime Minister Narendra Modi during election time saying it is in contravention of the Election Code of Conduct. The movie, which is titled PM Narendra Modi and stars Vivek Oberoi in the lead role, is scheduled to hit the screens on April 5, a week before the first phase of the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections. The party functionary Arasu Bhupathy has written to the EC saying the biopic, that is sched-

uled to be released next month, seeks to influence voters during the Lok Sabha General Elections. The movie's trailer was released on Thursday and featured Vivek Oberoi playing Narendra Modi through various stages of his life. The film has been produced by Sandip Singh, Anand Pandit and Suresh Oberoi and will be released in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil.

Earlier this week, the Congress in Goa had written to the EC seeking a ban on the release of the movie. The Congress' student wing, National Student's Union in India, had claimed that the movie was a 'propaganda by the BJP to influence voters' during the Lok Sabha elections and was thus in violation of the model code of conduct. The letter demands a ban on the movie 48 hours prior to voting which is known as election silence where a party is not allowed to promote or campaign.

Twitter welcomes EC's awareness programme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Microblogging site Twitter on Friday welcomed the Election Commission's awareness programme on its platform starting with the launch of a new emoji for the upcoming polls.

"Committed to providing front row access to the election conversation, Twitter India welcomes the Election Commission of India's SVEEP onboard the platform. Twitter India is also launching a special election emoji, aimed at

encouraging healthy participation in election-related discussions, and encouraging more people to go out and vote," Twitter said in statement.

Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) is a programme of the Election Commission to educate citizens, electors and voters about the electoral process in order to increase their awareness and participation in the electoral processes through various modes and media platform.

Prasada terms speculation of joining BJP 'hypothetical'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi: Congress leader Jitin Prasada on Friday dubbed the speculation of him joining archrival BJP "hypothetical". There is a buzz that Prasada, who has been fielded by the party from the Dhaurahra in UP for the Lok Sabha polls, will join the BJP. Responding to questions posed by reporters on whether he would join the BJP, the former Union Minister said, "Why should I answer hypothetical questions?" PNS

CBI carries out searches at four locations in TN

New Delhi: The CBI on Friday carried out searches at four locations in Tamil Nadu, including the premises of AIADMK MP Anwhar Raajhaa, in connection with alleged irregularities in appointments at a Waqf board college. The searches at these premises began on Thursday and continued till Friday afternoon, official sources said.

The CBI had registered a case against Raajhaa on the orders of the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court, alleging irregularities in the

appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff at MSS Waqf Board college in Madurai.

In January, Justice P Velmurugan of Madurai bench of the Madras High Court had directed the CBI to file a report within six months on a petition which also alleged that Tamil Nadu minister Nilofer Kafel and Raajhaa were involved in the irregularities. The court issued the order on a petition by Sardhar Basha who alleged that more than 30 appointments had been made in violation of the UGC guidelines.

AHEAD OF WORLD TB DAY ON MARCH 24

WHO norms to improve treatment of multidrug-resistant TB

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the World TB Day on March 24, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued a set of guidelines aiming to improve treatment of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) by asking the countries to set up an accountability framework to coordinate actions across sectors and to monitor and review progress; an electronic TB surveillance systems to keep a tab on epidemics through real-time monitoring and better access to healthcare. Tuberculosis (TB) is the world's top infectious disease killer, claiming 4,500 lives each day. Ten million people still fall ill with TB each year, with too many missing out on vital care.

To improve treatment of MDR-TB, the health agency has recommended shifting to fully oral regimens to treat people with MDR-TB. The recommendations are part of a larger package of actions designed to help countries increase the pace of progress to end the deadly disease.

"The theme of this year's World TB Day is: It's time to end TB," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, according to a statement here.

Since 2000, 54 million lives have been saved, and TB deaths fell by one-third, but ten million people still fall ill with TB each year, with too many missing out on vital care. The WHO package is



Tuberculosis (TB) is the world's top infectious disease killer, claiming 4,500 lives each day. Ten million people still fall ill with TB each year, with too many missing out on vital care

designed to help countries close gaps in care ensuring no one is left behind. Key elements include: an accountability framework to coordinate actions across sectors and to monitor and review progress; a dashboard to help countries

know more about their own epidemics through real-time monitoring - by moving to electronic TB surveillance systems.

The other features of the guidelines are effective prioritization of planning and implementation of impactful TB interventions based on analyses of patient pathways in accessing care and a civil society task force to ensure effective and meaningful civil society engagement, said the statement.

"This is a set of pragmatic actions that countries can use to accelerate progress and act on the high-level commitments made in the first-ever UN High Level Meeting on TB last September," said Dr Tereza

Kasaeva, Director WHO's Global TB Programme.

Dr KK Aggarwal, President, Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) noted that while target to make TB-free India by 2025, which is five years ahead of the global deadline set by the WHO, is ambitious, India must mobilize resources further to achieve this. Early diagnosis and complete treatment are extremely important to prevent and control TB.

"Introduction of new and effective drugs and tools, improved hygiene and nutrition as well as stronger emphasis on grass-roots level TB awareness and plan implementation all over the country," is a key, he said.

Maran Brothers, Raja embarrassment for DMK

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The Maran brothers including Dayanidhi Maran, former Union Minister for communications and information technology, have become an embarrassment to the DMK in this Lok Sabha election. The party which was having a dream run in the campaign trail towards the Lok Sabha election faced further dilemma when the widow of Sadiq Batcha, the slain business partner of former Union Minister A Raja, complained to the police that she was being targeted by a group of people. Both Dayanidhi and Raja are DMK candidates for the April 18 Lok Sabha election.

The Madras High Court which dismissed the petition on Wednesday, filed by Dayanidhi and his elder brother Kalanidhi asking the court to quash the charges framed against them by the CBI special court in the illegal telephone exchange case, came down heavily on the grand nephews of late M Karunanidhi for the dilatory tactics, deployed by them in the threshold of framing the charges itself. The case was that while he was holding the post of the Union Minister of communications and information technology (2004 to 2007), Dayanidhi Maran misused his official powers and got a private telephone exchange installed at his private residence in Chennai and used the same for the commercial business of Sun TV Network, south India's largest satellite television network owned by his elder brother Kalanidhi Maran. According to the charge sheet by the CBI which probed the case, the private telephone exchange with high speed data transmission network had caused a loss of ₹1.78 crore to the exchequer. The Marans, from day one of the investigation had caused hurdles in front of the probe agency, the CBI and subsequently the trial court in Chennai acquitted the Marans stating lack of sufficient evidence. When the

CBI appealed against the trial court verdict, the Marans approached the apex court with a plea to quash the charge sheets against them. The Supreme Court stood its ground and asked the brothers to stand trial. This prompted the brothers to approach the High Court again pleading for the quashing of charges. The Single as well as the Division Benches of the Madras High Court dismissed their pleas twice. When the Marans approached the High Court for a third time pleading for acquittal from the case, the court asked them on Wednesday what prevented them from facing the trial. "If the petitioners are confident enough that they have a strong case for their defence and none of the charges framed by the lower court can be sustained, they must willingly go ahead facing the trial court and get an honourable exit. In the contrary they had ensured that this case does not cross the threshold of framing of charge sheet and come up with same plea every time by giving it dif-

ferent form," said Justice Anand Venkatesh while dismissing the petition. Meanwhile, the ghost of Sadiq Batcha, a business associate of former minister A Raja has come to haunt the DMK. Rehana Banu, widow of Sadiq Batcha, who was found dead under mysterious conditions in March 2011, came under stone pelting while she and her children were travelling in a car. A group of unidentified persons who followed her car in bikes smashed the windshields of the car with iron rods. The incident came within days of Banu placing advertisements in newspapers on the occasion of the death anniversary of Batcha which fell on March 16. It was on this day in 2011 Batcha was found hanging in his house in Chennai, days before he was to appear before the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI to be interrogated in connection with the 2G Spectrum case. Rehna Banu has been provided with police security following her complaint to the authorities.

AIADMK MLA R Kanakaraj dies of cardiac arrest

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The ruling AIADMK in Tamil Nadu suffered a setback on Thursday when one of the party MLAs breathed his last due to cardiac arrest. With the demise of 66-year-old R Kanakaraj who was representing Sullur constituency in the assembly, the strength of AIADMK has come down to 113 including the Speaker. This means that the AIADMK should win at least 17 of the 18 Assembly constituencies which go to the by-polls on April 18. The effective strength of the Tamil Nadu Assembly is 234 and the party in power requires 117 for absolute majority. The AIADMK which fought the 2016 Assembly election under the leadership of Jayalithaa was re-elected with 136 seats. With the demise of Jayalithaa and the disqualification of 18 party MLAs under the anti-defection law, the strength of the party came down

to 118. The by-election to R K Nagar which had been represented by Jayalithaa was won by TTV Dhinakaran who fought independently. Thus the strength of AIADMK was diminished to 117. The demise of two more MLAs and disqualification of one more MLA who was sentenced by a court of law brought down the strength of the AIADMK to 114. The party's position was further weakened by the stance of three MLAs who were elected under the Two Leaves symbol of the AIADMK. These three MLAs would cross over to the Dinakaran or Stalin camp depending on the kind of enticements they get. Hence the AIADMK should win all the Assembly constituencies except Thiruvur that go to the polls. Thiruvur, which had been represented by last CM Karunanidhi has been a DMK fortress and it is difficult for the AIADMK to surmount the sympathy wave for the late party patriarch.



NDPP, CONG NOMINEES FILE NOMINATIONS

Kohima: One candidate each of the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) and the opposition Congress filed their nominations for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland on Friday. NDPP nominee Tokheho Yepthomi, who is the consensus candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Alliance (PDA), and KL Chishi, former chief minister and Congress candidate, submitted their documents to Returning Officer M Patton. PDA candidate Sharingain Longkumer, an NDPP leader, also filed his nomination for the by-poll to Aonglenden assembly constituency.

JD(U)'S 2ND LIST FOR ARUNACHAL ASSEMBLY POLLS OUT

Itanagar: The JD(U), which is contesting the elections for the first time in Arunachal Pradesh, has released its second list of eight candidates for the assembly polls. The party's North East Executive Council (NEEC) Chairman, Senchumo Lotha, released the second list of nominees for the polls on Thursday. The Janata Dal (United) on Wednesday had announced the names of five candidates.

BHARTI PAWAR, PRAVIN CHHEDA JOIN BJP

Mumbai: In another setback to the NCP ahead of next month's polling, its State unit vice president Bharti Pawar on Friday joined the BJP, while the Congress leader Pravin Chheda also returned to ruling party.

BJP, IPFT, CPI(M) CONTESTANTS FILE PAPERS

Agartala: Candidates for the ruling BJP and its ally IPFT filed their nominations against each other for the West Tripura Lok Sabha constituency on Friday.

PLEA QUASHED SEEKING POSTPONEMENT OF POLL DATE

Madurai: The Madras High Court on Friday dismissed a PIL seeking postponement of the polling date in Madurai Lok Sabha constituency in view of the Chithirai festival.

THOSE DEFAMING ARMY WILL GET DEFEAT: UP MP

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Minister Shrikant Sharma said on Friday that people will give a befitting reply with their votes to those defaming the Indian Army for vote bank politics.

BJP DROPS ONLY WOMAN MP FROM RAJASTHAN

Jaipur: The BJP has fielded 14 sitting MPs, including four Union ministers, and dropped the only woman lawmaker from Rajasthan as it announced its first list of candidates for the Lok Sabha polls.

INK FINGER SWAP FOR LOCAL TO AVOID LS CONFUSION

Mumbai: Voters will be inked on the index finger of their right hand for the local body polls in Maharashtra on March 24 to avoid confusion during the Lok Sabha polls that follow, State Election Commissioner JS Saharia said.

FAROOQ LEADS CAMPAIGNING OF CANDIDATES IN JAMMU

Jammu: National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Friday led the campaigning of joint Congress-NC candidates and said the alliance was aimed to keep India secular and 'save' it from divisive politics.



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Telugu Desam Party president N Chandrababu Naidu, gestures in a public meeting ahead of Lok Sabha elections 2019, in Visakhapatnam, on Friday

KERALA TOP COP, BUSINESSMAN MAY CONTEST POLLS

Kochi: The Lok Sabha elections in Kerala could see two prominent persons entering the poll fray — the State's senior most Director General of Police Jacob Thomas and leading businessman Kochouseph Chittilappilly. The State will vote in the third phase on April 23. A source in the know of things told IANS talks have been initiated in this regard by Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam, a corporate social responsibility initiative of the Rs 1,500 crore Anna-Kitex group of companies, based near here.

₹3.9 CR, LIQUOR SEIZED IN KARNATAKA

Bengaluru: Officials in Karnataka seized Rs 3.9 crore in cash, 1,841 litres of liquor valued at Rs 23 lakh and 119 kg drugs valued at Rs 4.85 lakh during raids on political parties, their candidates and cadres ahead of the general election in April, said the state chief electoral officer (CEO) on Friday.

RAHUL TO UP ANTE AGAINST MODI IN BENGAL

Chanchol (West Bengal): Congress president Rahul Gandhi is likely to give a big push to his party's Lok Sabha campaign when he addresses his first-ever public rally in this small census town of Malda district in West Bengal on Saturday.

₹57L UNDISCLOSED MONEY SEIZED IN NAGALAND

Dimapur: Income Tax sleuths have made a seizure of Rs 57.10 lakh cash as undisclosed money, making it the biggest cash seizure by the Directorate General of Income Tax Investigation in the North-East so far since the notification of the general election.

FORMER SP MP FROM HARDOI, 2 BSP LEADERS JOIN BJP

Lucknow: In a jolt to the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, three of their leaders switched over to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) here in Uttar Pradesh on Friday. Former MP Rajnarayan Budhholiya aka Raju Maharaj joined the BJP at its party office here in the presence of BJP state unit chief Mahendra Nath Pandey. Besides Budhholiya, the BSP's 2014 Lok Sabha candidate from Machhlishahr, Bholanath P. Saroj, and former state Minister Satish Palaso too joined the saffron party. All three were said to be unhappy over the SP-BSP alliance, according to their aides. The three leaders were also denied ticket for the Lok Sabha polls.



BJP candidate Rameshwar Teji with Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and NEDA Chairman Himanta Biswa Sharma hands over his nomination paper for contesting from Dibrugarh parliamentary constituency, in Dibrugarh, on Friday

NCP won't field Vijaysinh from Madha constituency

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After Ranjitsinh — son of a Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MP and former Deputy Chief Minister Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil — switched to the BJP, the NCP is playing its safe by not fielding his father, Vijaysinh, as its candidate from the Madha constituency in western Maharashtra. Instead, it has fielded a politically influential but a new face Sanjay Shinde as its candidate against Ranjitsinh from Madha constituency. Currently, Shinde is the President of Solapur Zilla Parishad. He is a bitter political rival of Mohite-Patils in Solapur district, where Madha tehsil falls. Shinde had recently quit the NCP to contest against BJP candidate Ranjitsinh Mohite-

Patil, as he had no hopes of getting nominated as a candidate by the Sharan Pawar-led party. Till recently, he was being wooed by the BJP into its. However, Shinde returned to the NCP after persuasion by party chief Sharad Pawar himself. Addressing a news conference after Shinde's re-entry to the NCP, Pawar on Friday announced that Shinde would contest the Lok Sabha polls as a joint candidate of the NCP, Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana and Peasants and Workers' Party. Ranjitsinh had quit the NCP on March 19 and joined the BJP on the following day. The BJP nominated him as its candidate from Madha immediately afterwards. It may be recalled that on

March 11, NCP chief Sharad Pawar had backed out of the contest, setting the stage of the entry of his grandson Parth Pawar into electoral politics. A month after he indicated that he would contest from Madha Lok Sabha constituency in western Maharashtra, Pawar, announced that he had decided not to contest the 2019 Lok Sabha polls from Madha constituency or any other constituency. Pawar's announcement had come after he met the party office bearers from Solapur in western Maharashtra — at which he urged his party workers to support the NCP's sitting MP Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, who will re-contest the Lok Sabha polls from Madha constituency. However, in the subsequent days, Ranjitsinh also began to lobby for the Madha seat. However, senior Mohite Patil — who is the close confidant of Pawar for very many years, appears to have had way.

BJP can do chowkidari after 'losing' LS polls: Mayawati

UP CM retaliates

Lucknow/Gorakhpur: BSP chief Mayawati on Friday said the BJP could take up "chowkidari" after "losing" the Lok Sabha elections, prompting a sharp retort from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who asserted that "thieves get uneasy when the watchman becomes alert". In a tweet, Mayawati Friday morning said the BJP leaders were free to amuse themselves and do whatever they want, but they should not insult the country and denigrate constitutional posts in any way. "Let DM, CM & PM remain as per the provision of the Constitution. They can do chowkidari after losing polls," she tweeted. Mayawati alleged that while BJP leaders did not care about the files on the Rafale deal, they were hiding crucial data on unemployment and



farmers' plight. In a series of tweets, she took a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his colleagues for calling themselves 'chowkidar' (watchman). She alleged they were not bothered about Rafale files being "stolen", but were hiding data on "declining" employment rate, poverty and farmers' plight. She claimed that data were being hidden for votes or image and asked if the country needed such a "chowkidar". The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister claimed that

while several BJP leaders and ministers declared themselves 'chowkidars' like the prime minister, the Uttar Pradesh chief minister was not sure whether to announce himself as one or remain a public servant or a yogi (sanyasi). The BJP leaders might adopt whatever fashion they want, but they should work as 'watchmen' of the law and Constitution, she said, adding that this was all that the people wanted. Reacting to Mayawati's tweet in Gorakhpur Friday, Adityanath said, "Thieves get uneasy when chowkidar becomes alert." "I and the entire state could understand the uneasiness, worry and pain of Mayawati," he said. Adityanath alleged that during her regime, a new record of loot and corruption was set, and she is upset as these things stopped due to the alertness of the chowkidar. PTI

उपरोक्त पावर ट्रान्समिशन कॉन्फिगरेशन लिमिटेड ई-निविदा संख्या 301 से 306/590-मात्र (₹ 500,000+G.S.T. @ 18% अतिरिक्त) (4) 304-वि०पा०म०(प्र०) ल०/2018-19, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत 132 के०बी० उपकेन्द्र पर घास कटाई का कार्य, धरोहर धनराशि ₹ 7,500.00, निविदा दिनांक 27.04.2019 को 16:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जा सकती है। मांग-1 खुलने की तिथि 28.04.2019, समय 13:00 बजे के उपरान्त एवं मांग-2 (ग्राइस पार्स) खुलने की तिथि तदनुसार ई-वेबसाइट पर सूचित की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य ₹ 590/-मात्र (₹ 500,000+G.S.T. @ 18% अतिरिक्त) (6) 305-वि०पा०म०(प्र०) ल०/2018-19, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत 220 के०बी० विनहट सी०जी० सिटी उपकेन्द्र पर सिक्योरिटी फेंसिंग एज हेतु कन्सेप्टिना क्वावल फेंसिंग सॉलर रोल लाई की आपूर्ति व लगाने का कार्य तथा 220 के०बी० के खतरे में RTGS/NEFT के माध्यम से निवन्दत सी०जी० लीनो लाईन पर 20 मीटर स्थानान्तरित कर यूटीडीआर संख्या तथा ई-निविदा की प्रति ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाइट पर सूचित की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य ₹ 590/-मात्र (₹ 500,000+G.S.T. @ 18% अतिरिक्त) (2) 302-वि०पा०म०(प्र०) ल०/2018-19, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-प्रथम लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत 132 के०बी० उपकेन्द्र रहींमाबाव पर 20 एम्पीडीएफ परिवर्तक को 40 एम्पीडीएफ परिवर्तक से बदलने के सम्बन्धी कार्य, धरोहर धनराशि ₹ 5,000.00, निविदा दिनांक 01.04.2019 को 16:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जा सकती है। मांग-1 खुलने की तिथि 02.04.2019, समय 13:00 बजे के उपरान्त एवं मांग-2 (ग्राइस पार्स) खुलने की तिथि तदनुसार ई-वेबसाइट पर सूचित की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य ₹ 590/-मात्र (₹ 500,000+G.S.T. @ 18% अतिरिक्त) (3) 303-वि०पा०म०(प्र०) ल०/2018-19, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत 220 के०बी० उपकेन्द्र पर घास कटाई का कार्य, धरोहर धनराशि ₹ 7,000.00, निविदा दिनांक 27.04.2019 को 16:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जा सकती है। मांग-1 खुलने की तिथि 29.04.2019, समय 12:30 बजे के उपरान्त एवं मांग-2 (ग्राइस पार्स) खुलने की तिथि तदनुसार ई-वेबसाइट पर सूचित की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य ₹ 590/-मात्र (₹ 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सूचित की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य ₹ 590/-मात्र (₹ 500,000+G.S.T. @ 18% अतिरिक्त) (3) 303-वि०पा०म०(प्र०) ल०/2018-19, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत 220 के०बी० उपकेन्द्र पर घास कटाई का कार्य, धरोहर धनराशि ₹ 7,000.00, निविदा दिनांक 27.04.2019 को 16:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जा सकती है। मांग-1 खुलने की तिथि 29.04.2019, समय 12:30 बजे के उपरान्त एवं मांग-2 (ग्राइस पार्स) खुलने की तिथि तदनुसार ई-वेबसाइट पर सूचित की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य ₹ 590/-मात्र (₹ 500,000+G.S.T. @ 18% अतिरिक्त) (3) 303-वि०पा०म०(प्र०) ल०/2018-19, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड-द्वितीय लखनऊ के अन्तर्गत 220 के०बी० उपकेन्द्र पर घास कटाई का कार्य, धरोहर धनराशि ₹ 7,000.00, निविदा दिनांक 27.04.2019 को 16:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडरिंग वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जा सकती है। मांग-1 खुलने की तिथि 29.04.2019, समय 12:30 बजे के उपरान्त एवं मांग-2 (ग्राइस पार्स) खुलने की तिथि तदनुसार ई-वेबसाइट पर सूचित की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य ₹ 590/-मात्र (₹ 500,000+G.S.T. @ 18% अतिरिक्त) 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Let TERRORISTS KILL 12-YEAR-OLD IN J&K Its not jehad but jahalat: Villagers

Srinagar: This is not "jehad" (armed crusade) but "jahalat" (benighted), a village elder pleaded to Pakistani terrorists in North Kashmir's Hajin area while asking them to release a 12-year-old boy who was held captive and subsequently killed on Thursday. Videos of the village elder of Mir Mohalla of Hajin surfaced on social media, showing him asking the two Lashker-e-Taiba terrorists, Ali alias Furkan and Hubaib, to release Atif Mir.



Villagers carry the body of a 12-year-old boy, Aatif Mir during his funeral procession in Hajin village on Friday

The incident took place 33 km north of Srinagar where the terrorists had taken shelter in the boy's house at gunpoint, police officials said on Friday.

The terrorists wanted to sexually abuse his sister but the family had helped her escape. This infuriated them and they started beating up the family members, including Atif and his old uncle Hameed Mir, they said. Hearing their cries, other people in the locality informed police. After assessing the situation, the police started rescuing the family. They managed to secure the release of the parents and other family members till they were fired up by the holed up terrorists. "We knew that the boy and uncle were trapped inside and, so, we asked the villagers to appeal to the terrorists to release them," a senior

official said. Speaking in Kashmiri, the village head was the first to ask the terrorists to release the innocent boy. "Do whatever you want, but this is not jehad but jahalat. Please release the boy," he said.

The police also made an appeal through Aqeega Begum, the wife of Hameed, who was virtually breathless as she asked the terrorists to release her husband and nephew.

Simultaneously, the police made a room intervention and brought Hameed out of the house. He told them that he was assaulted by the terrorists

who hit him with iron rods and an AK rifle. "I tried my best to get my nephew out of this. I begged them but they remained unmoved," Hameed told the police. As pressure mounted on the terrorists, they killed the helpless Atif, the police said, adding that the security forces later mounted a heightened operation and killed both the Pakistanis. Ali had been active in the area for long and was involved in the killing of a BSF personnel and others, including death of a man whose throat was slit in front of his son.

Efforts on to rescue 18-month-old boy trapped in borewell

PTI ■ HISAR

Rescuers were Friday engaged in a difficult operation to pull out a one-and-a-half-year-old child who fell into a 60-foot-deep borewell while playing near his house in Balsamand village in Hisar district of Haryana.

The massive rescue operation has been going on for the past over 40 hours after the child fell into the borewell Wednesday evening. A team of NDRF and Army experts was being assisted in the rescue operation by civil and police authorities, officials here said.

As the rescuers on Friday reached close to the spot where the child is trapped, digging by machines was stopped and was now being done manually to proceed further to ensure that soil does not fall over the infant, they said. Earlier, the authorities had started digging a parallel well about 20 feet away from the borewell and subsequently create a tunnel to bring out the child safely.

The child's movements were being monitored using a night-vision camera which was dropped inside the borewell. On Thursday, the rescuers had tried to pull out the child with the help of a net, but had to shelve the plan after facing some difficulties.



Royal Bengal tigers seen on a hot, sunny day at Tata Steel Zoological Park (TSZP) in Jamshedpur on Friday

PTI

Sena renominates 17 sitting MPs

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The ruling Shiv Sena on Friday renominated 17 of its sitting MPs, including Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprise Anant Geete, as its candidates as it released its first list of 21 nominees for the Lok Sabha polls.

The Shiv Sena, which is contesting in alliance with the ruling BJP, will contest 23 out of total 48 seats in the state. On its part, the BJP will contest the remaining 25 seats in the state.

Apart from Geete, the Sena's other prominent renominated candidates are: Arvind Sawant (Mumbai south), Gajanan Kirtikar (Mumbai north-west), Rahul Shewale (Mumbai north-central), Rajan Vichare (Thane), Chandrakant Khaire (Aurangabad), Anandrasul (Amaravati), Shivajirao Adhalrao Patil (Shirur) and Vinayak Raut (Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg). The only woman to have been fielded by the Shiv Sena is Bhawana Gawli, who has been renominated from Yavatmal-Washim constituency. "We

will release the second list of two candidates — for Satara and Palghar seats — at the joint public rally of BJP-Sena alliance to be held at Kolhapur on December 24," Maharashtra Minister and senior Sena leader Subhash Desai said. Given that the BJP has not named its candidate for Mumbai north-east constituency which is currently represented by its senior functionary Kirit Somaiya and the Sena has not nominated its candidate for the Palghar seat which is currently held by the BJP, there is speculation that the two saffron parties may swap these two seats. The speculation stems from the Sena leadership has told the BJP in unambiguous terms that it is vehemently opposed Somaiya being re-nominated from Mumbai north-east Lok Sabha constituency and has also said that in the event of the re-nomination of the sitting MP, it would not only not campaign for Somaiya but would work towards defeating him in the polls.

The Shiv Sena's bitter Opposition to Somaiya's re-nomination stems from the fact that the latter has not only been a vociferous critic of the Sena leadership, but he has in the past repeatedly allegations of corruption in the Sena-ruled Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). Sources said that the BJP might consider offering the Mumbai north-east to the Shiv Sena in lieu of Palghar seat which it had retained in the Lok Sabha by-polls held in May last year but had to give up to the seat to the Sena during the seat sharing negotiations.

Yasin Malik-led JKLF banned by Centre

N ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Security on Friday decided to ban the Yasin Malik-led Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) for "promoting" secession of the militancy-hit State from the Union of India. JKLF was banned under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) after the investigating agencies found that Malik and its outfit is "in close touch with militant outfits in Pakistan" and is supporting extremism and militancy in Jammu & Kashmir and elsewhere.



Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Central Government has followed policy of 'Zero Tolerance' against terrorism and acted strongly against terrorists. Security forces have been given free hand to deal with terrorism. Malik was the mastermind behind the purging of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir valley and is responsible for their

genocide. "JKLF has many serious cases registered against it. This organisation is responsible for murder of 4 IAF personnel and kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed. Thirty seven FIRs have been registered by J&K Police against JKLF. Two cases, including the case of murder of IAF personnel, were registered by CBI. NIA has also registered a case, which is under investigation. JKLF continues to be actively engaged in supporting and inciting secessionism," said Home Secretary, talking to media about the ban on JKLF. The Home Secretary said the Government is committed to relentlessly pursuing a policy of curbing the activities of secessionist groups which are threat to the country, said Gauba. The review of security of Jammu & Kashmir-based separatists would continue, he

added. Malik is, at present, lodged in Kot Balwal jail in Jammu, and is likely to face trial in the three-decade-old case of kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayeed, the daughter of then Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, and gunning down of four IAF personnel in Srinagar. The JKLF was founded by Pakistani national Amanullah Khan in mid-1970 at Birmingham in the United Kingdom and came into prominence in 1971 when its member hijacked an Indian Airlines plane flying from Srinagar to Jammu. The organisation was also involved in the kidnapping and killing of Ravindra Mhatre, an Indian diplomat posted the UK, in 1984. A week later, India executed Maqbool Bhat, a JKLF activist, who had been sentenced to death.

Ban on JKLF will turn J&K into open air prison: Mehbooba

Srinagar: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday said ban on the Yasin Malik-led Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front was a "detrimental step" that will turn Kashmir into an open air prison. The JKLF was banned on Friday for "promoting" secession of the militancy-hit State from the Union of India, officials

said in New Delhi. "Detrimental steps like these will only turn Kashmir into an open air prison," Mehbooba said in a tweet. Banning the outfit under various provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act after a high-level meeting on security chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, officials

said the Centre is of the opinion that the JKLF is "in close touch with terror outfits" and is supporting extremism and militancy in Jammu & Kashmir and elsewhere. They said the outfit claims "secession of a part of the Indian territory from the union" and supports terrorist and separatist groups fighting for this purpose.

8.96L jobs created in Jan, 76.48L in last 17 mths: EPFO payroll data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Net employment generation in the formal sector touched a 17-month high of 8.96 lakh in January, according to the latest EPFO payroll data.

The EPFO has been releasing payroll data from April 2018, covering the period starting September 2017. The addition in January was 131 per cent higher as compared with 3.87 lakh EPFO subscribers added in the year-ago month. In September 2017, a net of 2,75,609 jobs were created.

Around 76.48 lakh new subscribers were added to social security schemes of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) from September 2017 to January 2019, the data showed. This indicates that these many jobs were created in the formal sector over the past 17 months.

The net EPFO enrolment in January 2019 stood at 8,96,516, which is the highest since September 2017. The EPFO, however, revised slight-



ly downwards its payroll data for December 2018 by 1.8 per cent to 7.03 lakh, against the earlier estimate of 7.16 lakh released last month.

It also revised the cumulative job addition data for the September 2017-December 2018 period downwards 6.6 per cent to 67.52 lakh, from the earlier forecast of 72.32 lakh.

The sharpest revision was for March 2018 in the latest report which showed contraction or exit of 29,023 members from the EPFO subscriptions whereas last month's estimated addition of 5,498 members.

The EPFO data showed that the March 2018 figure is negative due to large number of exits reported in March, in view of it being the closing month of the financial year. During January 2019, the highest number of 2.44 lakh jobs were created in the 22-25 years age group, followed by 2.24 lakh in the 18-21 years age bracket. The data of the exited members is based on the claims submitted by the individuals and establishments and the exit data uploaded by employers, whereas the number of new subscribers is based on the

Universal Account Number (UAN) generated in the system and those who have received non-zero subscription. The EPFO said the data is provisional as updation of employee records is a continuous process and gets updated in subsequent months. This is age-band wise data of new members registered under the EPFO where the first non-zero contribution received during particular month. For each age-wise band, the estimates are net of the members newly enrolled, exited and rejoined during the month as per records of the EPFO, it added. The estimates may include temporary employees whose contributions may not be continuous for the entire year. Members' data are linked to unique Aadhaar Identity, it added. The EPFO manages social security funds of workers in the organised/semi organised sector in India and has more than 6 crore active members (with at least one-month contribution during the year).

Resentment in Bengal BJP over 'defected candidates'

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

With at least 25 per cent of its candidates getting imported from the ruling Trinamool Congress or the CPI(M), rumblings of discontent increased in Bengal BJP hours after the saffron outfit published its first candidate list for the coming Lok Sabha elections. A posse of violent party men ransacked the Coochbehar district party office and blockaded the district BJP president's car protesting the candidature of Nitish Pramanik an erstwhile TMC leader.

"Pramanik has no credibility. He is an imported person from the TMC, a party that has unleashed untold miseries on our workers for the past several years. Yet he has been given the nomination because of money and muscle power. The people will not accept him," a senior district party leader said adding he would tender his resignation from his party post. "Dipak Burman who has been working for the party for the past several years and has a better acceptability among the mass should have been given the nomination. Pramanik needed more time to settle down in the party," another local party man said claiming workers would "feel demoralised." Party sources said wondering "how the party could give nomination to a person whose name is yet to be cleared from charges of human trafficking."

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, ALLAHABAD

No: AGRA/ELE/OP/TENDER/18/08/R Dated: 19.03.2019

E-Tender Notice

Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (OP), North Central Railway, Agra, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites the following E-Tender on prescribed form the details of the tenders are as under:-

| Tender No. | Name of Work | Approx. Cost (₹) | Earnest Money (₹) |
|-----------------------|--|------------------|-------------------|
| AGRAELEOP TENDER1808R | "Housekeeping work of Driver & Guard Running Room, Mathura for Two years." | 3852074.16 | 77100.00 |

Cost of Tender form: ₹3360/- Completion period (in months): 24 Months Date of opening of tender: 11.04.2019

Note: 1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders will be available on website www.ireps.gov.in up to 15:00 hrs. on 11.04.2019 the due date of tender opening. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital signature certificate issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3. Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form/letter head if attached by vendors shall be straight way ignored and shall not be considered. 4. Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. 5. This tender notice have also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in. 6. Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Tender Document Cost in respect of e-Tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. 7. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 40919(K)

North central railway www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @CPRONCR

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY, ALLAHABAD

E-TENDERING NOTICE Allahabad Division

E-Tender Notice No.: NCR-SBH-ALD-2019-1 Date: 15.03.2019

For and on the behalf of President of India, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (W) / NCR, Allahabad invites the following E-Tender in prescribed forms, from reputed contractors with adequate experience and financial capability for the under mentioned work up to 22.04.2019 in 15.00 Hrs. The details of tender are under:-

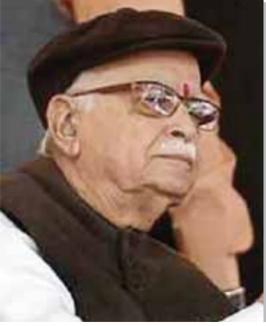
| S. No. | Name of Work | Approx. Cost of work (₹) | Earnest Money (₹) | Cost of Tender Form (₹) | Duration of work |
|--------|--|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Hiring of school buses for school children of Officers & employees living in Rail Gaon Colony, Subedarganj (06 Nos.-40 seater, 01 No.-24 seater, 01 No.-12 seater Mini Bus & 01 No. Tata Magic or Similar) | 2,15,13,600.00 | 2,57,000.00 | ₹ 10,000/- | 03 Years |

Date & Time of Opening of Tender : 22.04.2019 at 15.30. Minimum Eligibility Criteria: Applicable. **Note:-** 1. The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders will be available/uploaded since 17.00 Hrs. of 15.03.2019 and shall be remain on website www.ireps.gov.in up to 15.00 hrs on due date 22.04.2019 of tender opening. 2. Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate issued by CCA under IT Act-2000. 3. Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entity in any other form / letter head if attached by vendors shall only be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. 4. Document being attached should be personally signed by the tenderer with firm seal. 5. This tender notice has also been uploaded on www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in & www.ireps.gov.in. 6. Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) and Tender Document Cost (TDC) in respect of E-Tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. 7. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. 8. Tender online can be submitted up to 15.00 hrs. on 22.04.2019. 9. The said supplier of goods and/or services would be subjected to GST ACT and Rules as applicable from time to time. (As per railway board letter no 2016/AC-III/6 dated 12 May 2017). 394/19 FA

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in railway_northcentral@CPRONCR

End of Advani era

The great leader is out from the poll race but the respect he will enjoy till the end of his life cannot be taken away



Ironies are an integral part of political power play. And none should know this more closely than Lal Krishna Advani, doyen of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for decades and later Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of India. His unceremonious ouster from the BJP's 2019 list of Lok Sabha nominees from Gandhinagar in Gujarat, the seat he represented in Parliament, is a transparent signal that the party he built with his own hands no longer needs his guidance and for its new monitors, Mr Advani is perhaps more of a burden than a source of inspiration. This is indeed ironic for it was Mr Advani who rebuilt it block-by-block, at least from 1984, when it had collapsed to an abysmal tally of two seats in the Lok Sabha and brought it to its unassailable position in 2014. Arguably, he was past his prime in terms of age, although physically and mentally he demonstrated no sense of illness or fatigue. His ouster from Parliament, therefore, probably has little to do with age and more with the generation gap that was visibly widening between him and the current crop of party leaders who have been ill at ease with his towering stature.

The bigger irony is that almost every BJP leader today is a hand-picked protégé of Mr Advani but have behaved like impatient children, straining at the leash to cut off their filial bond with the parent. This is truly tragic and flies in the face of India's much-vaunted cultural tradition which emphasises reverence towards family elders. But in this case, it is not just a question of family bonds. LK Advani led the BJP through a succession of adversities and ignominy to make it India's foremost political outfit. His innovative usage of the motorised Rath Yatra to mobilise people for the construction of a Ram Mandir at Ayodhya may remain controversial but was undoubtedly the turning point in the country's contemporary history. In fact, it set India's political agenda since the early 1990s and continues to dominate the political discourse even today. Despite being bestowed with the epithet of "Iron Man", his ability to cobble together coalitions was unmatched and he enjoyed a rapport with other political leaders, enabling the Jana Sangh and its successor to carve out a dominant position in the political firmament. A Parliamentarian par excellence, Mr Advani's erudite contributions to debates in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha won him applause from all sections of the two Houses. Despite age not being on his side, his intellectual sharpness, vivid memory and remarkable knowledge of history and politics dwarfed most contemporaries. Somehow, he was viewed by most as a man who would never retire from politics and never cease to contribute to the national discourse.

Whatever the BJP leadership's compulsion in sidelining him from the benches of Parliament, India will be poorer for his absence from the esteemed Houses. Together with his life-long friend and comrade Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who passed away only last year, Mr Advani signified a glorious era in Indian politics and even if he is no longer a Member of Parliament (MP), will undoubtedly continue to contribute to national debates. Few people have the natural talent for building organisations and also guiding the nation at the same time. Mr Advani's role may have now been cut to size but the respect he will enjoy till the very end of his life can never be taken away. The termination of his role as MP, therefore, is only a punctuation mark, not a full stop to a remarkable political career.

Just Nirav won't do

Though his extradition will take time, real justice will come when his protectors, leaders and bankers, are brought to book



With just a couple of weeks to go before the general election, the arrest of fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, the key accused in the ₹13,500 crore Punjab National Bank scam, in London seems convenient for the ruling BJP and has given an edge to its "MainBhiChowkidar" campaign. It is a different matter though that had it taken up its policing responsibilities seriously early on and not at the fag end of its term, the likes of Nirav and his uncle Mehul Choksi wouldn't have easily fled the country in the first place.

Now with liquor baron Vijay Mallya's extradition closer to reality, the BJP wants to play up Nirav's arrest as an example of its intent to clean up society when fact of the matter is the businessman's cover was blown by a UK daily and not by our government. This despite the fact that he was blatantly roaming free, had started a business, procured an insurance number, paid taxes to his area council and even planned plastic surgery to acquire a new identity as a UK resident. So no matter how much the BJP tries to appropriate the credit or the Opposition parties might say "I told you so", the reality is his repatriation will take some time coming. In the end, his stay at an overcrowded jail during Holi is minuscule dispensation of justice considering the long road ahead to extradition. The economic offences against Nirav are, of course, stronger than they were in Mallya's case but the documents are humongous. Even assuming that the London courts speed up the process, though they are in no way going to play by the political imperatives of India, it would take no less than a year to conclude matters.

Despite an extradition treaty with the UK, we have got back only one out of 28 most wanted in the last decade. The extradition process is so intricately complex and painstakingly time-consuming that most offenders abuse it to seek refuge in that country. There are layers and layers of inquiry and cross-checks of the veracity of the claims for extradition there, no matter how serious the offence may appear to us. Besides, an appeal for asylum, which would but naturally imply a threat perception of the fugitive in his home country, is vetted very seriously there. Then there's the issue of human rights and political witch hunt. Mallya claimed immunity, citing a biased media trial back home that could impair a fair inquiry, a government-controlled, motivated probe and our poor prison conditions, which compared to UK, will always appear short. Article 9 of the Extradition Treaty between India and the UK recognises unjust and oppressive proceedings as a ground to deny requests of the home country. Nirav Modi is expected to appeal on similar lines. But the biggest question that hovers over us is once the agencies bring him back and get him to spill the names of bank officials and politicians who helped him in the entire fraud, will there be an unsparing crack-down on the latter irrespective of whoever is elected in May? The diamond merchant not only fraudulently got LoUs (letters of undertaking) issued and FLCs (foreign letters of credit) enhanced but sold faulty diamonds at high prices, converted crores of black money during demonetisation into white and travelled on a revoked passport. Nirav Modi is a byproduct of a corrupt system, and till the flagbearers of that system are brought to book, justice wouldn't be fair.

Credibility at stake

In recent times, the media is engaged in a game called 'survival of the fittest', which has been facing flak for misleading, hyped and insensitive coverage. The status quo must change



AJOY KUMAR

Last week, while flicking past some news channels, I chanced upon a broadcaster. There were animations of fire and bluster splashed across the screen and close to 15 panelists were debating some issue — all speaking at the same time. The news ticker kept moving along with all the noise and colour. It was commendable that the news broadcaster also managed to fit in a weather, time and pollution check. In this week's column, I would talk about the growing crisis of the Indian media and how it is imperative for to arrest its sharp decline.

Media plays a unique and critical role in the development of any modern society. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find figures that inspire awe, both in fact and fiction. An example of Edward Murrow will stand out here. One of the most legendary figures of broadcast journalism, Murrow, earned his corn as a war correspondent during the Second World War but what actually brought him fame, and more significantly respect, was the manner in which he took on McCarthyism.

In the 1950s, McCarthyism was the practice followed in the US, of categorising acts or persons as treasonous without any due regard for evidence. While McCarthyism was a creature of the 1950s, many would say that its fundamental tenets exist even today in many countries. I will not disagree. In fiction, too, there are heroes of journalism that have been inspired by figures like Murrow. These creatures of fiction, too, attempt to imbibe values that we would want to see in our journalists: Courage, integrity and approachability. It is a tragedy then that many in today's media are often found wanting in these respects. Journalists, who display courage and integrity, are crucial in aiding the process of nation-building. The corollary, however, is just as true: Journalists, who are pliable and publish information without any independent thought, accelerate a country's decline.

What's the nature of the problem? The fundamental issue with the Indian media today is that it has come in the category of 'infotainment', a combination of some information with an unhealthy dose of 'entertainment'. This is precisely the reason why people say that they get their news from comedians and comedy from the news. A good reason for this change is the upsurge in digital media. Media outlets nowadays compete primarily to gain screen time and boost their advertisement revenue rather than through subscriptions. Since news channels compete for advertisements, facts are often compromised in favour of being the first to a piece of news. This was evident during the episode of doctored tapes of students from the Jawaharlal Nehru University that were broadcast on a few news channels without they having conducted any basic verification. It once again became evident during the recent India-Pakistan standoff where certain



media outlets contributed to the panic and hysteria. In an environment that required calm heads, some news anchors were, unfortunately, screaming their heads off.

Another problem with the Indian media is that social media and the internet has made anybody and everybody a broadcaster. They even allow everyone to claim their own facts. This makes it all the more difficult for everyday people to distinguish between 'verifiable news' and 'fake news'. This is the 'WhatsApp' school of journalism where people appear to get information from photo-shopped pictures or videos rather than a reliable source.

To put things into context, a news channel immediately manages to reach out to millions of Indians when they publish a piece of information; whereas WhatsApp now has limited the forwarding of any information to 25 people from 250. Therefore, while WhatsApp, which essentially has nothing to do with the news, has taken the initiative to stem the flow of false information, there are many in the media who have not.

Is there a solution? In my article, I have been critical of some sections of the news media. I do understand that it is survival of the fittest in the media and, therefore, there isn't



THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE WITH THE MEDIA TODAY IS THAT IT HAS COME IN THE CATEGORY OF INFOTAINMENT, A COMBINATION OF SOME INFORMATION WITH AN UNHEALTHY DOSE OF ENTERTAINMENT. THIS IS PRECISELY THE REASON WHY PEOPLE SAY THAT THEY GET THEIR NEWS FROM COMEDIANS AND COMEDY FROM THE NEWS



much room for leeway that journalists have while reporting news. I appreciate these concerns. However, I believe that some steps could prove useful in regaining some of the credibility that the media has lost.

(i) Adherence to a code of conduct: While the Press Council of India does prescribe the "norms of journalistic conduct", as per the code itself, "the sanction behind the code of ethics is moral." This isn't enough. I don't mean to propose creating legal sanctions for violation of these norms but one suggestion is that media houses are audited for violation of norms that have been detailed in the code of conduct. In the case of companies, it is important for stakeholders, who do not participate in the day-to-day affairs of the company, to have some method to gauge whether the firm is being run in an ethical way. News channels, too, must be subject to audits by an independent agency that examines the manner in which they are being run. The audit reports should be published and freely available so that the veracity of information by such outlets can be examined.

(ii) Demanding better from ourselves: A large part of the blame does lie with the media firms that refuse to speak truth to power but

instead act as 'his master's voice'. Whether it is the question of jobs or about the actual speed of Indian trains, there are sections in the media who have been found severely wanting. In times like these, then, it becomes imperative for consumers of such information to be more discerning and at the very least compare different pieces of information. We can ask tough questions from the ones who provide information to us by asking them hard questions even if they don't ask the powers that be the same types of questions.

So, the only way forward is if all parties concerned put their best foot forward. In this context, the words of Murrow are appropriate. While speaking about fear-mongering and false propaganda around him, Murrow, in one of his most famous broadcasts, reminded his fellow countrymen of their better nature. He said, "We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason." It is important for those in the media to remember these lines. If they don't and we don't, the realm of inspiring journalists in the future will only be in the realm of fiction rather than fact.

(The writer is Jharkhand PCC president, former MP and IPS officer. Views are personal)

SOUNDBITE

Demonetisation was a way to whitewash black money. We know how jobs and lives were destroyed by *notebandi*.

CPI(M) general secretary —Sitarum Yechury

The Government needs to stop pretending to be the Indian Army. Politicians who say they cannot be questioned are dangerous.

Samajwadi Party leader —Akhilesh Yadav

India and Pakistan should resolve differences bilaterally. Their participation can become impossible without a commitment for an unconditional fight against terror.

SCO Secretary-General —Vladimir Norov

Am I nothing in my party? You are making me insignificant. If format changes at the last moment, it's a party's decision if the leader (Tejashwi Yadav) doesn't come.

RJD leader —Manoj Jha

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Create separate fund

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Clipped wings" (March 21). The ongoing crisis in Jet Airways is an outcome of a tussle between the stakeholders, particularly Etihad and promoter Naresh Goyal, who holds majority shareholding in India's second largest flyer.

This is a case of individual interest overlapping the corporate one. Now, the already stressed State-run banks are being persuaded by the Government to take over Jet's liability as it doesn't want 23,000 employees to be out of jobs.

The Jet turmoil must be resolved by infusing capital through the foreign route, initiating a joint venture with some international flyer of repute and converting debt into equity for ensuring proper valuation. To avoid these kinds of financial crises in future, particularly in the aviation sector, a separate fund can be created that is sourced from employees, management, Government and banks.

KS Padmanabhan
Chennai

Chowkidar is for the rich to protect their wealth

This refers to the editorial, "War of words" (March 20). The #MainBhiChowkidar campaign has reduced the world's largest democracy to a laughing stock. Thanks to the Prime Minister's ingenuity, India is now a land of *chowkidars*. Conceived and launched as a counter to the Congress' *'Chowkidar chor hai jibe'*, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) seems to have relied on the catch-phrase to romp home. If addition of the word *chowkidar* as a prefix to Twitter handle names alone could win an election, then all is not right with that democracy. The *chowkidar* tag may not quite resonate with the country's impoverished multitudes as the watchman or *chowkidar* is employed by the rich for protecting their wealth. If the Opposition succeeds in portraying Modi as the *chowkidar* for the rich, the BJP stands to lose.

The poor still outnumber the rich in our country. The BJP could have made a bigger claim — than being just a *chowkidar* — if it had convincingly established that the Rafale deal was not dubious. Instead, it has roped in actors,



sportspersons, school children and soldiers to lend colour to the campaign video and make it appealing. It is not yet clear whether the BJP's exhortation to make the #MainBhiChowkidar campaign a people's movement will help in Modi's re-election. A *chowkidar* does not look like a good substitute to a *chaiwala* to tap the voters' innate sympathy for weaker sections and recreate the Modi wave.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Let the airline breathe

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Clipped wings" (March 21). Jet Airways was the brainchild of Naresh Goyal but the time has perhaps come for him to let some other airline like Etihad to run the company and make it viable again rather than holding on to the beleaguered airline for

the sake of his own satisfaction. Lenders must learn from the Kingfisher fiasco. If a financially sound management is better suited to turn it around, then Goyal must have a pragmatic approach and desist from playing with the lives of more than 23,000 employees, whose career now is at stake.

Bal Govind
Noida

Water wars

Sir — Few decades back nobody would have imagined that water would one day be sold. Water is the oil of the 21st century and many wars may be fought over it as it remains unevenly distributed across the globe.

Most of us would do well to recall our school chemistry class-

es, where we were told: Water is a universal solvent. But one wonders when people will dissolve their differences over water and resolve issues amicably before it reaches a boiling point. The question also remains whether inter-linking of rivers will solve India's water crisis or lead to more disputes.

TS Karthik
Chennai

Revisit laws

Sir — It is necessary to revisit the clauses of extradition treaties so that offenders do not take advantage of the loopholes and get the better of legal systems. Inordinate delays tire out a system in pursuit of such cases and often reach a dead end after the initial burst. The case of Lalit Modi has been going on for nearly a decade and he is almost forgotten after prominent offenders came to spotlight. Unlike a few decades ago, India's image as a global economic power has grown manifold. Hence the country deserves better.

V Subramanian
Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

It's time to shed the TB burden

Eradicating polio was an important step. As we observe world TB day, we must pledge to stem this disease by making it a national priority



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

Tuberculosis (TB) isn't a full stop. It's just a layover. I began fighting TB when I was 16. The doctor didn't diagnose me correctly. I didn't get the right treatment. I persisted and fought it. So can you. Don't keep quiet, seek help." These were the powerful words by Deepthi Chavan, TB survivor and an indefatigable patients' rights advocate. She beat the odds of her surviving just six months after being diagnosed late for multi-drug resistant (MDR) TB because she refused to give up and didn't let stigma silence her. The 35-year-old continues to raise her voice for better access to TB drugs, better treatment and diagnosis of this curable disease. Most of all, Chavan — a part of the Survivors Against Tuberculosis, a network working to make the disease more patient-centric — wants TB to be made a national priority.

But is anyone listening? After all, if polio could be made one, why not TB? Considering India has the highest TB burden in the world with an estimated annual incidence rate of 274 per 100,000 people and kills 400,000 people annually, the case for it to be given equal importance becomes even stronger. Moreover, TB is infectious unlike polio. Caused by bacteria, TB generally affects the lungs. Around 40 per cent of Indians carry the bacteria. In other words, more people in India, than elsewhere in the world, have latent TB. What is worrying is that every case of active TB comes from a person with latent infection. Every new case of latent TB means a person with active TB disease has not been diagnosed or treated effectively and, thus, transmitted the bacteria to an uninfected person. Unless it's treated with the same anti-microbial drugs used against active TB and taken over nine months, latent TB can't be ended.

However, it has to be first diagnosed. Over one-third of the cases are not diagnosed or are diagnosed but not treated, according to India's Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP). Many fall through the surveillance system when they don't go to a doctor or don't get diagnosed when they do. The situation is further aggravated by inadequately equipped public and private healthcare facilities. Delayed diagnosis coupled with poor treatment and follow-up, prolonged costly treatment, painful side effects, stigma and discrimination often have fatal consequences, leading to loss of lives.

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), who have been trained as providers of the Directly Observed Treatment Short-course (DOTS), have played an important role. They have managed to identify persons with history of cough for more than two weeks and referred them to the nearest Designated Microscopy Centre for sputum examination. Their duties also include ensuring the patient completes the treatment. ASHAs are paid an incentive on completion of responsibilities. But do ASHAs really have the time to do so much considering they already have so much on their plate? Improving maternal and new-born health care, ensuring institutional births, raising awareness about family planning, menstrual hygiene and management, tracking immunisation and malnutrition and preparing malaria slides are some of the 43 activities ASHAs are required to do in lieu of incentives.

So why not have TB *mitras* (friends) much like the existing *shiksha* (education) *mitras*, who can focus on just TB and provide relief to the overburdened ASHAs? Not only can they be valuable allies, they can plug the surveillance gaps since TB treatment regimen requires a patient to take up to 75 doses of medication under the supervision of an observer, over the course of six months or more. This becomes challenging for families living in urban slums and rural areas to make regular visits to a TB centre to take medication. TB *mitras* can follow up patients if they stop coming for treatment and ensure they don't develop the deadlier drug-resistant TB.

These TB *mitras* would be from the same community, speak the same language and dialect and be familiar with the culture. Once trained, they would make home visits and quietly identify people who have TB so that the fear of stigma doesn't force them underground. Once people with TB are identified, TB *mitras* would ensure adherence and treatment. This TB *mitra* could also be a member of women's self-help groups (SHGs). Strong SHGs networks across India can play a vital role in reaching out to women, traditionally the last to seek health care. Kerala, which has emerged as the success story in reducing TB in the State, has been the first off the blocks in this case. Its strategy to engage SHGs under the State Kudumbashree women's empowerment programme has helped in its TB prevention and control programme. According to Dr Shibu Balakrishnan, RNTCP Kerala, one of the 20 women in the SHG is a trained health worker. Moreover, SHGs are part of the TB task force and map the community, especially women, for infection, thus helping to reduce TB incidence. If India is to achieve SDG 3 (eliminating TB by 2030), it must adopt innovative strategies focussed on individuals. Only then, can it make a real difference.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

IF THEY (IAF) KILLED 300, IT'S OKAY. ALL I AM SAYING IS CAN YOU (BJP GOVERNMENT) GIVE ME MORE FACTS AND PROVE IT (BALAKOT AIR STRIKE)?
 —INDIAN OVERSEAS CONGRESS CHIEF
SAM PITRODA

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE MOST TRUSTED GUIDE OF CONGRESS PRESIDENT HAS KICK-STARTED THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE PARTY.
 —PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI

On the brink of a crisis

The discourse on shrinking availability, unsustainable use and degradation of water has been a continuous process but only across the table. When will change happen?



RG AGARWAL

Water, one of the precious natural resources, is under severe stress in our country. The past few decades have witnessed a significant increase in its demand across various sectors. Consequently, India is faced with the worst water crisis in its history. It is estimated that by 2050, the per capita availability of water at the national level will drop by 40-50 per cent and water scarcity can lead to a loss of up to six per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030.

A recent study by the National Geophysical Research Institute showed that the largest depletion of groundwater in the world is happening in north India, with Delhi being the epicentre of this growing crisis. Experts say that groundwater is being pumped out 70 per cent faster than was earlier estimated. While the situation is alarming, efforts to conserve water have been negligible as the country lacks both in advocacy and implementation.

Impact on agriculture: Unmonitored use of water is causing huge loss to the farmers in drought-prone areas, who face increased production cost and extreme poverty. Approximately 78 per cent of the fresh water available in the country is consumed by the agriculture sector. Inequality in water allocation for irrigation, with more than 60 per cent of it being diverted for the cultivation of water-guzzling crops like sugarcane and paddy, adds to the distress. These are the two most water-intensive crops, which are being cultivated widely in some of the most water-stressed regions of the country.

Further, groundwater is increasingly being pumped out for irrigation purposes given the free or subsidised access to electricity in many States, which ultimately results in groundwater depletion. It is estimated that Indian farmers use two to four times more water to produce a unit of major food crop than what is used in China or Brazil. With a drop in the water table, there has been an increase in the cost of pumping, salination and presence of heavy metals among others. This has raised questions about the cost of crop production and quality of the produce. A water effective policy for agriculture can improve yield, thereby reducing farmer's misery.

Need for strategic planning: India holds the capacity to become the food basket of the world if sustainable agriculture practices are adopted. Water management can be a huge game-changer over here. Over-dependence on the rain gods during the monsoon season with little effort to conserve water has been costing the growth of this sector. The spatial distribution of rain, too, has had a deep impact. Today, agriculture contributes approximately 17 per cent to the nation's GDP. With approximately 80 per cent of the country's population being dependent on agriculture, the contribution to GDP can be increased multi-fold.

Besides, irrigation infrastructure has seen substantial expansion over the past few



years but it is clearly not enough. Turning a blind eye to water management with no unified vision towards maintaining water resources will soon turn our country into a water-starved nation. Better water management strategies are the need of the hour.

Modern technologies and localised strategies: For sustainable agriculture growth, adoption of water-saving technologies with modern irrigation methods such as sprinkler and drip irrigation systems need to be implemented aggressively. Crop rotation should be adopted according to agro-climatic conditions of the region. Agro forestry and horticulture should be given priority in water-deficient areas. Beyond that, each State should work on long-term and sustainable solutions for water conservation. Integrated water development plans should be applied on a priority basis with effective coordination between various departments to save the situation from worsening.

Role of Government: Our country has also set a few examples of water conservation at the community level. The Niti Aayog reported that Rajasthan has strengthened its water management practices. Other States such as Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have also shown improvement. However, 60 per cent of the remaining States (15 out of 24) have been classified as low performers in terms of water conservation.

Private sector participation: It is evident that private company participation can make a big difference in changing the overall water scenario. A public-private partnership (PPP) in promoting water conservation can go a long way to recharge underground water and channelise water for agricultural purposes. All that we need is a common goal and a holistic approach. Companies must devise their

SUSTAINABLE WATER MANAGEMENT HAS A HUGE ROLE TO PLAY IN DOUBLING THE FARMERS' INCOME, A NOTABLE GOAL SET BY THE GOVERNMENT. IT WILL IMPROVE CROP YIELDS AND QUALITY AND HELP FARMERS GET MORE RETURNS

own means and plans for water conservation.

For instance, leading agrochemical companies in our country have made water conservation a major plank. They are working in tandem with rural communities to help save water. Check dams filled with rainwater have been constructed in many villages across the country. Efforts like these will come a long way in benefiting the households.

Further, they have also established RO water plants with technical support from various social sector organisations to ensure safe drinking water for the villagers. Trees prevent floods, soil erosion and help in water conservation. Thousands of trees have been planted and plans are on to plant more of them with help from the local community. Initiatives like these need to be taken up by more private companies, which will benefit the local communities they work with.

Change-making models: Sustainable water management has a huge role to play in doubling the farmers' income, a notable goal set by the Government. It will contribute to improving crop yields and enhance the quality of crops which in turn will fetch more returns for the farmers.

As the world observed the Water Day on March 22, it will be worthwhile to remind Indians that reform must begin now and it should start by first changing the mindset. Pricing water and water-related services can adequately encourage people to waste and pollute less. Water-related issues have often taken an ugly shape in the past. It is critical that the situation is eased by making best use of available technologies and resources to increase water use efficiency. Conserving water is the only way to secure our future.

(The writer is chairman of a chemical manufacturing company)

Only Nixon can go to China

It's amusing how popular leaders get away with doing things contrary to the ideological perception they build for themselves



NADEEM PARACHA

In the 1991 film, *Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country*, Commander Spock, the right-hand man of Captain James T Kirk, describes Kirk's diplomatic overtures towards the Klingon Empire as "Only Nixon can go to China." Spock, who belonged to the entirely rational and logical society on planet Vulcan, was paraphrasing a famous metaphor which had become part of America's political language in the early 1970s. The film, of course, was fiction but the phrase wasn't.

In the original *Star Trek* TV series and the five films that followed it, an alliance of planets in the 'Alpha Quadrant' of the Milky Way galaxy was at war with the hated Klingon Empire for decades. However, in the sixth film of the franchise, the alliance

decides to send Captain Kirk to make peace with the Klingons. Kirk had had a history of fighting against the Klingons. He harboured immense hatred towards them. So when he agreed to host a diplomatic dinner for the Klingons, this is when Spock made the metaphorical remark.

The expression first emerged in 1971, a few months after the then US President Richard Nixon announced that he would be visiting China. Until Nixon's visit in February 1972, the US and China had no diplomatic relations. America did not recognise China's communist Government. It had severed all ties with China after Mao Tse Tung's communist forces ousted the Chinese nationalists in 1949 and formed a communist state and Government. China became a strategic and ideological ally of America's Cold War adversary, the Soviet Union.

The phrase "Only Nixon can go to China" was derived from a statement made by a Democratic Party senator, Mike Mansfield, and cited in the December 1971 issue of *US News and World Report*. Mansfield was quoted as saying, "Only a Republican, perhaps Nixon, could

have made this break and gotten away with it." By this, Mansfield meant that only a staunch anti-communist politician such as Nixon, from the conservative Republican Party, would be able to approach communist China without facing any backlash from America's largely anti-communist polity. Had the same move been made by a leader of the more liberal Democratic Party, that leader would have faced severe criticism.

This phrase, thus, evolved to mean a right-wing politician initiating a policy or move that was associated more with those in the 'liberal' or progressive camp. However, in their essay for the 1998 issue of the American academic journal *Public Choice*, economists Tyler Cowen and Daniel Sutter write that, even though the phrase is often used for "right-wing politicians taking a left-wing course of action", it can and has gone from left to right as well.

Fact is, the phrase may have come into use after 1971, but what it denotes has been happening across the 20th century and even in the 21st. For example, in the 1950s, former US President Dwight Eisenhower (Republican Party) openly challenged

America's military and defence industries; in 1979, Israel's staunch Zionist Prime Minister Menachem Begin agreed to make peace with Egypt; Egypt's once radically anti-Israel leader Anwar Sadat recognised Israel; the populist Bolivian President Paz Estensorro introduced widespread 'neo-conservative' policies; Francois Mitterrand, the socialist French president (1981-95), privatised large parts of France's public sector; US President Donald Trump has made loud peace overtures towards North Korea, etc.

There are many such examples. But why does this happen? Simply put, experts believe that a popular leader doing something, which does not suit his/her constituency's beliefs, is more likely to get away with it than if the same is done by an opposing leader. For example, had US President Obama (Democratic Party) so enthusiastically tried to reconcile with communist North Korea, he would have been castigated by the populist media and conservative 'middle America'. But Trump, a right-wing populist, is quite clearly getting away with it.

Professor Alexander Cukierman

and economist Mariano Tommasi, in their March 1998 paper for the *American Economic Review*, write that most leaders (both on the right and the left) have at their disposal the intellectual resources and specialist advisers to help them determine political and economic trends. According to Cukierman and Tommasi, these leaders do not disclose their findings in this respect to the voters before an election. They keep to the script of how they are perceived. However, being largely pragmatic, if need arises, they are willing to do the opposite of the ideological perception that they build for themselves during an election.

Nixon restored relations with China because Beijing had broken away from the Soviet Union and the US forces were fighting a losing war in Vietnam against communist guerrillas, many of whom were being backed by the Chinese. Cukierman and Tommasi insist that there are always pragmatic economic and political reasons behind the 'Nixon going to China' moments. But these moments do not completely isolate a leader's constituency. Because such moments

are explained away in the context of what and how the leaders are ideologically perceived.

Nixon's supporters were delighted to read a quote in which he told Mao, "rightists can do what leftists can't". Mitterrand explained his privatisation of certain sections of France's public sector as a way to salvage the country's welfare state.

According to Anwar Saeed, in his book, *The Discourse and Politics of ZA Bhutto*, Pakistan's 'socialist' Prime Minister ZA Bhutto agreed to allow the right-wing opposition to table a bill to constitutionally oust the Ahmadiyya community from the fold of Islam because he anticipated the post-1973 Saudi-backed rise of 'political Islam'. Bhutto, albeit in an entirely contrived manner, explained the move in the context of his leftist party's 'Islamic Socialism'. His daughter Benazir Bhutto wanted to change the weekly holiday in Pakistan from Friday to Sunday. Her father had changed it to Friday under pressure from the Opposition in 1977.

Benazir was advised not to do this if she didn't want to attract the wrath of the right-wing opposition. Yet, the

conservative Nawaz Sharif regime managed to change it to Sunday without much opposition because, at the time, most religious parties were part of his coalition Government. Nawaz explained that the move would be economically beneficial and was 'endorsed by the *ulema*'.

However, he could not get away with suggesting peace with India, but an anti-India general Pervez Musharraf, when he came to power, did. The 'left-liberal' coalition Government led by the PPP (2008-2013) did not get any traction from the polity and from the opposition parties led by Sharif and Imran Khan for a widespread operation against extremist groups. In fact, the Government was accused of "doing America's bidding against Islam."

Yet, no such accusations were raised when a military operation was initiated by the second Sharif regime, even though Khan's PTI had reservations. But these reservations vanished when Khan came to power and recently ordered a crackdown against militant outfits. This became his "Only Nixon can go to China" moment.

(Courtesy: The Dawn)

Sensex snaps 8-day winning run on profit-booking

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Snapping its eight-day winning streak, the BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled over 222 points on Friday as investors scrambled to book profits after the recent rally while ratings agency Fitch slashed India's growth forecast.

Lacklustre global cues and a depreciating rupee also weighed on the markets, analysts said. The 30-share index opened on a positive note at 38,452.47, but soon succumbed to heavy selling pressure, touching an intra-day low of 38,089.36. It finally closed at 38,164.61, down by 222.14 points, or 0.58%.

On similar lines, the NSE Nifty shed 64.15 points, or

0.56%, to finish at 11,456.90. On a weekly basis, the Sensex added over 140 points, while the wider Nifty gained 30 points.

Fitch Ratings on Friday cut India's GDP growth forecast for the next fiscal to 6.8% from 7% estimated earlier on weaker than expected economic momentum.

Tata Motors was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, tumbling 2.47%, followed by Reliance Industries (2.44%), Maruti (1.84%), SBI (1.76%) and Bajaj Finance (1.23%). NTPC emerged as the biggest gainer in the index, spurring 3.67%. Other winners included L&T, Asian Paints, Tata Steel and PowerGrid, rising up to 1.54%. "Domestic market ended on a weak note as investors

turned to profit booking given the sharp rally in last two weeks and weak global cues. US Fed has indicated that there will be no rate hike this year and ended its ongoing QE tightening programme due to concern over economic growth.

"On the other hand, uncertainties over Brexit deal and delay in trade deal between US-China continued to impact global markets. Global bond yields were on decline as global central banks were tweaking their monetary policy to support growth... this is likely to benefit emerging markets like India in the medium term," said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net buyers in the capital markets,

putting in ₹1,771.61 crore on a net basis on Wednesday, as per provisional data.

Meanwhile, data showed that German manufacturing contracted for the third straight month in March, highlighting global growth concerns. In Asia, Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.14%, Shanghai Composite Index climbed 0.08% and Korea's Kospi increased by 0.09%. Japan's Nikkei surged by 2.01%. In the Eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX was down 0.36%, Paris CAC 40 shed 0.87% and London's FTSE fell 0.91% in early deals.

Oil market benchmark Brent crude futures fell 1.11% to USD 67.11 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the rupee was trading weak by 10 paise to 69.93 against the US dollar in late afternoon trade.

Tata Power SED bags ₹1,200 cr contract from Defence Ministry

New Delhi (PTI): Tata Power Strategic Engineering Division (SED) has bagged a ₹1,200 crore contract from the Defence Ministry for supply of ship-borne 3D Air Surveillance Radars.

Tata Power SED has signed a deal with the Ministry of Defence to supply 23 ship-borne 3D Air Surveillance Radars to the Indian Navy over the next 10 years, a Tata Power statement said on Friday. The contract was signed under the Buy & Make (India) category of the Defence Procurement Procedure 2013 that will be offering the Indian Navy a proven solution, with a production arrangement in India under Transfer of Technology. The contract will be executed by Tata Power SED as the prime contractor with foreign OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) partner Indra Sistemas, Spain.

Fitch cuts India growth forecast for FY20 to 6.8 pc on weak momentum

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Friday cut India's GDP growth forecast for the next fiscal to 6.8% from 7% estimated earlier on weaker than expected economic momentum.

In its latest Global Economic Outlook, Fitch also slashed GDP growth forecast for current fiscal ending March 2019 to 6.9% from 7.2% projected in the December edition.

The 6.9% estimate is a notch lower than 7% growth estimated by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for the current fiscal.

Indian economy grew 7.2 per cent in 2017-18 fiscal.

"While we have cut our growth forecasts for the next fiscal year (FY20), ending March 2020) on weaker than expected momentum, we still see Indian GDP growth to hold up reasonably well at 6.8% followed by 7.1% in FY21," Fitch said. The rating agency said, India's GDP growth softened for the second consecutive quarter in the October-December period at 6.6% after clocking a growth of 7% and 8% in July-September and April-June periods, respectively.

"The slowdown has been driven by cooling activity growth in the manufacturing sector and, to a lesser extent, agriculture. Weaker momen-

... assigns investment grade rating to NTPC's proposed notes

New Delhi (PTI): Fitch Ratings on Friday said that it has assigned BBB-(EXP), an investment grade rating, to NTPC's proposed senior unsecured notes.

The proposed notes are to be issued out of the company's USD 6 billion medium-term note programme and are rated at the same level as the NTPC's senior unsecured rating, as they will constitute its direct, unconditional, unsubordinated and unsecured obligations, a Fitch Ratings statement said.

The final rating is contingent upon the receipt of final documents conforming to information already received. The NTPC's Issuer Default Rating reflects its standalone credit profile of 'BBB-'. Fitch will rate the company using a top-down approach based on a strong likelihood of state support if the company's standalone profile weakens but stays within three notches of the Indian sovereign rating (BBB-/Stable) under the agency's government-related entities (GRE) rating criteria.

It said, credit availability has tightened up in areas heavily dependent on non-bank financial companies (NBFCs), such as autos and two-wheelers, where sales have dropped. Also, food inflation has been muted and fell into negative territory late last year, weighing on farmers' incomes.

According to Fitch rupee is expected to weaken to 72 to a dollar by the end of December 2019, and further to 73 by December 2020, from 69.82 to a dollar in end December 2018.

It said, fiscal and monetary policies are becoming more growth friendly and RBI adopted a dovish stance and cut interest rates by 0.25% last month.

"We have changed our rate outlook and we now expect another 25bp cut in 2019, amid protracted below target inflation and easier global monetary conditions than previously envisaged," Fitch said.

Fitch also cut its global GDP forecasts for 2018 and 2019 at 3.2% in 2018 and 2.8% in 2019 from 3.3% and 3.1% respectively projected earlier. It, however, retained China's growth projections at 6.6% in 2018 and 6.1% in 2019.

It estimates oil prices to remain around 65 dollar to a barrel in 2019 and fall to USD 62.5 to a barrel in 2020, from USD 71.6 a barrel in 2018.

Alto best selling PV model in Feb; Maruti makes clean sweep of top six spots

New Delhi (PTI): Maruti Suzuki India's entry level small car Alto was the best selling passenger vehicle model in February, clocking 24,751 units as the company swept the top six spots. According to the latest data by Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, Alto had sold 19,941 units in February last year. Alto overtook MSI's compact sedan Dzire which was the best selling model in the same month last year. This year

Dzire slipped to the fourth position selling 15,915 units as against 20,941 units in February last year. The second best-selling model last month was MSI's hatchback Swift with 18,224 units, up from third spot last year when it sold 17,291 units. MSI's premium hatchback Baleno was in the third place with 17,944 units, up from the fourth in the year-ago month when it sold 15,807 units. The new WagonR from MSI sold 15,661 units to

be in the fifth position, the same as the previous generation WagonR in February 2018. In the sixth position was compact SUV Vitara Brezza from MSI selling 11,613 units, improving one position from last February when it sold 11,620 units. Hyundai Motor India Ltd's (HMIL) premium hatchback Elite i20 was the seventh best selling model last month with 11,547 units, down a position from the year-ago month when it sold 13,378 units.

Its SUV Creta was the eighth best selling PV model in February with 10,206 units while the company's compact car Grandi10 was in the ninth position with 9,065 units, a spot down from the year-ago month when it sold 10,198 units. Tata Motors' hatchback Tiago made it to the top ten best selling passenger vehicles list with 8,286 units, replacing Mahindra & Mahindra's utility vehicle Bolero which sold 8,001 units in February 2018.

NIFTY 50

| SCRIP | OPEN | High | LOW | LTP | CHANGE |
|------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| NIFTY 50 | 11549.20 | 11572.80 | 11434.55 | 11456.90 | -64.15 |
| NTPC | 131.00 | 136.20 | 129.70 | 134.10 | 4.85 |
| IT | 1379.00 | 1415.00 | 1376.20 | 1395.00 | 24.10 |
| ASIANPAINT | 1459.00 | 1479.90 | 1452.60 | 1471.20 | 15.05 |
| JSWSTEEL | 284.80 | 289.55 | 283.00 | 285.00 | 2.70 |
| INFY | 745.00 | 746.35 | 732.50 | 740.00 | 6.05 |
| COALINDIA | 232.70 | 233.80 | 230.00 | 233.00 | 1.85 |
| TATASTEEL | 517.00 | 524.00 | 515.60 | 517.30 | 3.70 |
| AXISBANK | 764.70 | 765.90 | 735.55 | 760.50 | 4.75 |
| HINDALCO | 208.10 | 211.55 | 206.05 | 208.40 | 1.25 |
| GRASIM | 821.00 | 829.00 | 814.60 | 820.20 | 2.35 |
| EICHERMOT | 2138.00 | 2167.40 | 2127.00 | 2139.00 | 61.00 |
| ONGC | 152.95 | 153.45 | 148.45 | 152.25 | 0.40 |
| BAJAJFINSV | 6970.00 | 7080.00 | 6938.90 | 6970.00 | 16.50 |
| POWERGRID | 197.90 | 200.85 | 197.15 | 197.60 | 0.20 |
| YESBANK | 253.00 | 257.50 | 250.35 | 252.35 | 0.20 |
| TITAN | 1103.60 | 1124.40 | 1093.70 | 1102.90 | 0.55 |
| ULTRACEMCO | 3945.85 | 3976.90 | 3883.60 | 3924.00 | 1.70 |
| TECHM | 794.50 | 798.00 | 783.20 | 790.10 | 0.25 |
| HDFC | 1998.00 | 2010.00 | 1970.60 | 1988.00 | 0.45 |
| ITC | 300.00 | 300.00 | 296.55 | 298.75 | -0.15 |
| DREDDY | 2779.00 | 2779.00 | 2738.50 | 2749.25 | -2.40 |
| UPL | 933.90 | 941.00 | 927.25 | 933.55 | -1.85 |
| ADANIPOR | 359.60 | 362.00 | 355.30 | 359.85 | -0.75 |
| M&M | 678.70 | 684.50 | 670.00 | 677.00 | -1.60 |
| TCS | 2015.00 | 2016.00 | 1983.30 | 2010.50 | -5.05 |
| HEROMOTOCO | 2624.45 | 2637.95 | 2594.05 | 2601.00 | -8.15 |
| BAJAJ-AUTO | 2960.00 | 2998.85 | 2930.05 | 2939.75 | -9.90 |
| ICICIBANK | 394.45 | 396.30 | 390.00 | 391.45 | -1.45 |
| SUNPHARMA | 475.80 | 479.70 | 469.35 | 472.20 | -2.55 |
| WIPRO | 262.45 | 263.75 | 258.50 | 260.05 | -1.50 |
| HINDUNILVR | 1687.55 | 1703.85 | 1673.70 | 1677.50 | -10.05 |
| HCLTECH | 1038.00 | 1048.00 | 1018.00 | 1030.45 | -7.50 |
| BHARTIARTL | 336.00 | 347.40 | 329.30 | 331.60 | -2.40 |
| VEDL | 174.20 | 176.60 | 173.05 | 173.20 | -1.35 |
| INDUSINDBK | 1715.00 | 1731.55 | 1694.30 | 1698.50 | -14.90 |
| KOTAKBANK | 1334.00 | 1346.65 | 1311.00 | 1339.00 | -12.60 |
| BAJFINANCE | 2868.00 | 2895.50 | 2816.00 | 2842.00 | -26.60 |
| IBULHSGFIN | 740.00 | 754.60 | 724.10 | 725.30 | -7.30 |
| HDFCBANK | 2300.00 | 2307.00 | 2270.80 | 2275.10 | -23.90 |
| CIPLA | 534.90 | 539.00 | 523.60 | 527.00 | -6.25 |
| GAIL | 356.80 | 359.35 | 347.30 | 348.80 | -5.90 |
| MARUTI | 6567.00 | 6716.30 | 6532.35 | 6555.00 | -118.55 |
| SBIN | 304.30 | 306.40 | 295.00 | 297.90 | -5.90 |
| ZEE | 447.70 | 448.85 | 431.50 | 434.10 | -9.10 |
| RELIANCE | 1372.50 | 1380.90 | 1336.70 | 1345.10 | -30.35 |
| IOC | 158.80 | 161.25 | 155.10 | 155.25 | -3.75 |
| HINDPETRO | 275.00 | 278.20 | 266.55 | 268.20 | -6.90 |
| TATAMOTORS | 181.95 | 182.00 | 174.90 | 175.30 | -2.90 |
| INFRATEL | 325.10 | 329.25 | 313.90 | 315.30 | -9.75 |
| BPCL | 389.50 | 394.70 | 376.45 | 377.00 | -12.15 |

NIFTY NEXT 50

| SCRIP | OPEN | High | LOW | LTP | CHANGE |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------|
| NIFTY NEXT 50 | 27965.15 | 28094.95 | 2773.50 | 27760.00 | -204.10 |
| ICICIGI | 984.00 | 1004.00 | 973.55 | 999.00 | 19.15 |
| DMART | 1484.80 | 1515.00 | 1473.10 | 1508.05 | 25.90 |
| ACC | 1565.00 | 1597.60 | 1555.25 | 1583.00 | 22.80 |
| LICHSGFIN | 521.50 | 534.85 | 519.50 | 528.00 | 7.35 |
| PGH | 10296.00 | 10548.00 | 10296.00 | 10430.00 | 134.70 |
| AMBUJACEM | 228.75 | 233.40 | 227.40 | 229.85 | 2.40 |
| PIDILITIND | 1175.00 | 1200.00 | 1175.00 | 1187.00 | 10.25 |
| SBILIFE | 610.00 | 619.00 | 605.00 | 611.10 | 5.25 |
| MARICO | 338.25 | 344.20 | 338.00 | 340.20 | 2.15 |
| SHREECEM | 1809.80 | 1819.90 | 1785.05 | 1812.45 | 87.95 |
| BANDHANBNK | 500.50 | 508.00 | 497.75 | 500.00 | 2.30 |
| BRITANNIA | 3094.00 | 3117.90 | 3088.00 | 3100.00 | 11.90 |
| INDIGO | 1405.00 | 1462.00 | 1403.00 | 1426.20 | 23.00 |
| HAVELLS | 753.60 | 767.90 | 753.60 | 757.35 | 0.05 |
| ABB | 1344.40 | 1349.00 | 1334.85 | 1337.90 | -0.80 |
| PEL | 2616.05 | 2654.20 | 2590.30 | 2604.20 | -3.00 |
| DABUR | 426.50 | 428.40 | 424.10 | 425.45 | -0.60 |
| L&T | 146.00 | 148.80 | 144.60 | 145.55 | -0.25 |
| PETRONET | 242.95 | 247.70 | 240.95 | 241.50 | -0.45 |
| CONCOR | 516.60 | 518.50 | 510.45 | 512.60 | -1.65 |
| HDCLIFE | 364.30 | 367.45 | 361.55 | 362.70 | -1.25 |
| GODREJCP | 703.55 | 711.85 | 690.05 | 699.75 | -8.80 |
| SRTRANSFIN | 1212.70 | 1230.00 | 1190.00 | 1197.95 | -8.80 |
| BOCHOLD | 18363.00 | 18450.00 | 18220.00 | 18250.00 | -142.80 |
| AUROPHARMA | 779.00 | 786.90 | 782.10 | 789.90 | -6.70 |
| OFSS | 3402.00 | 3420.00 | 3350.15 | 3370.00 | -29.65 |
| NMDC | 106.75 | 109.60 | 103.00 | 102.10 | -0.95 |
| ASHOKLEY | 91.00 | 92.00 | 89.25 | 89.90 | -0.95 |
| LUPIN | 755.00 | 758.00 | 740.25 | 743.80 | -6.60 |
| HINDZINC | 276.00 | 281.75 | 273.15 | 273.40 | -3.65 |
| MRF | 57000.00 | 57299.00 | 56175.55 | 56200.00 | -776.60 |
| MCWOWELL-N | 572.30 | 573.35 | 562.75 | 563.75 | -7.85 |
| NHPC | 24.95 | 25.05 | 24.45 | 24.65 | -0.35 |
| SIEMENS | 1059.15 | 1067.70 | 1043.00 | 1046.60 | -15.10 |
| DLF | 200.10 | 202.70 | 195.40 | 196.25 | -3.10 |
| CADILAH | 337.90 | 342.35 | 330.75 | 332.45 | -5.45 |
| BHEL | 68.75 | 69.35 | 66.90 | 67.40 | -1.15 |
| OIL | 175.60 | 177.15 | 171.50 | 172.00 | -3.05 |
| BIOCON | 690.00 | 693.00 | 616.00 | 617.00 | -11.15 |
| ABCAPITAL | 105.00 | 105.95 | 102.15 | 103.00 | -1.90 |
| COLPAL | 1295.95 | 1295.95 | 1260.25 | 1264.00 | -25.80 |
| NEL | 94.00 | 94.40 | 90.55 | 91.25 | -2.25 |
| NIACL | 188.80 | 189.45 | 183.05 | 184.20 | -4.60 |
| SAIL | 53.10 | 53.80 | 51.60 | 51.70 | -1.35 |
| IDEA | 33.10 | 33.30 | 31.90 | 32.05 | -1.05 |
| GICRE | 255.00 | 262.00 | 245.00 | 245.70 | -8.60 |
| SUNTV | 620.90 | 620.90 | 589.45 | 592.65 | -2.90 |
| BANKBARODA | 126.05 | 126.95 | 119.30 | 119.95 | -5.25 |
| ICICIPRULI | 335.00 | 345.80 | 327.05 | 327.95 | -15.00 |
| MOTHERSUMI | 156.80 | 159.15 | 146.40 | 146.65 | -10.40 |

BSE 500

| Script | Open | High | Low | LTP | CGPOWER |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| SUZLON | 6.99 | 7.01 | 6.62 | 6.68 | AVANTI |
| SPICEJET | 93.50 | 104.70 | 93.30 | 98.10 | CANBK |
| RCOM | 5.23 | 5.32 | 4.87 | 5.32 | PVR |
| YESBANK | 252.15 | 257.30 | 250.65 | 252.50 | TATAPOWER |
| JPASSOCIAT | 6.07 | 6.08 | 5.78 | 5.84 | MPHASIS |
| PNB | 95.80 | 96.00 | 90.90 | 91.70 | |

UK secures delay to Brexit Day with strict EU caveats

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK has secured a short delay to the March 29 Brexit deadline after the European Union (EU) leaders reluctantly agreed to offer embattled Prime Minister Theresa May time until May 22 to get the divorce deal through another House of Commons vote next week. If the agreement, already defeated twice over the controversial Irish backstop clause, fails to clear the UK Parliament for a third time, the EU has set April 12 as the deadline for Britain to make up its mind on the next move.

While the EU's latest offer reduces the likelihood of a no-

deal Brexit by the March 29 deadline, the UK could still leave without a deal if Prime Minister May fails to get the backing for her deal from MPs by April 12. "The UK government will still have a choice of a deal, no-deal, a long extension or revoking Article 50," said Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council, soon after EU leaders agreed to May's plea for a short extension to the Brexit deadline at an ongoing council meeting in Brussels. "April 12 is a key date in terms of the UK wondering whether to hold European Parliament elections.

If it has not decided to do so by then the option of a long extension will immediately

become impossible," said Tusk, on behalf of all EU member-countries. If May's deal fails to clear the Parliament hurdle yet again next week, the UK would be expected to table its no-deal plans for crashing out of the 28-member economic bloc by April 12 or accept a longer extension to the Article 50 mechanism and contest the European Parliament elections scheduled for May 23.

"I hope that we can all agree we are now at the moment of decision. And I will make every effort to ensure that we are able to leave with a deal and move our country forward," May said, adding that Britain's MPs now had a "clear choice". She, however, did not

repeat her vehement opposition to the prospect of a longer extension to Article 50, which is likely to come with many strings attached from Brussels. In return for even more time for Brexit, should Britain go down that route, the EU will demand that the UK holds a general election or a second referendum. A longer extension on offer is believed to run until December 31 this year or beyond.

The BBC quoting Downing Street sources said that an agreement with the EU to extend the Brexit deadline would be a piece of international law and would take precedence even if Parliament rejected it.



Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, right, speaks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel during a round table meeting at an EU summit in Brussels. AP

India-Pak should resolve differences bilaterally: SCO

PTI ■ BEIJING

India and Pakistan should resolve their issues bilaterally, the SCO's new Secretary-General has said, asserting that their participation in the security grouping could become "impossible" without a commitment for an "unconditional" fight against terrorism and separatism. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was established in Shanghai in 2001 with China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as founding members. It was expanded in 2017 with the inclusion of India and Pakistan.

Addressing his first press conference here on Wednesday after assuming charge, Vladimir Norov said that the Pulwama terror attack was a "direct provocation" by the opponents of peace between India and Pakistan. Tensions

between India and Pakistan escalated after a suicide bomber of Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed killed 40 CRPF personnel in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district in February 14.

"The recent situation between India and Pakistan, which has resulted in human casualties, I would like to note that there has been a direct provocation by the opponents of the Indo-Pakistani accord and peace," Norov, who was the former Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, said in response to questions. Asked how the SCO mechanism could be used to resolve the recent tensions between India and Pakistan, he said: "before joining the SCO as full members, India and Pakistan committed themselves to strictly implement all the provisions of the legal framework that has been developed by the Member States of the Organisation." "One of the such



fundamental obligation is not to bring bilateral contradictions and disagreements to the SCO family, as the SCO is not engaged in the settlement of disputable bilateral issues, whether border, water or other topics in relations between individual Member States," he said. These issues must be resolved and are being resolved through bilateral consultations

and dialogue, goodwill and mutual reasonable compromises, he said.

"The most important condition for participation in a multi-disciplinary cooperation within the SCO is the commitment to unconditional and consistent struggle against terrorism, separatism and extremism. Otherwise, it would be impossible for the two states to participate in the SCO," Norov said.

The whole world has heard clear signals from the parties not to escalate relations and their readiness to fully understand and follow the principles established within the organisation, he said. "In addition, to offer mediation of the member states of the organization as there is an intention to resolve the differences in a bilateral format," Norov said.

After joining the SCO, India and Pakistan have common ground and are ready to

work in the SCO format to ensure regional security, joint counteraction to complex challenges and threats, sustainable socio-economic development, he said. This was stated by the leaders of India and Pakistan at last year's SCO summit in Qingdao in particular their intention to play an active and constructive role in the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group as peace and stability in Afghanistan is a matter of common concern for all the SCO countries, he said. Both India and Pakistan participated in the activities of the SCO as observers for 12 years and their accession to the SCO was preceded by a fairly long preparatory stage, he said.

At present, representatives of India and Pakistan are actively working in two permanent bodies of the organisation which included the SCO Secretariat and the Executive Committee of the SCO

Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), Norov said, adding that the Indian and Pakistani sides also take part in the activities of all 29 SCO working mechanisms of the SCO. Also over 300 military personnel of India and Pakistan took part in the international anti-terrorist exercises "Peace Mission-2018", which took place at the Chelyabinsk region of Russia last year. This "testifies to the joint and effective work of these two countries within the SCO," Norov said.

The counter-terrorism exercises are due to be held this year again.

The SCO will hold its summit in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, in June this year. Norov said the admission into the SCO of the "two large and influential states of South Asia" is of particular importance for the organisation and for the Eurasian region, as well to India and Pakistan themselves.

'Ready to meet new Pakistani leadership'

PTI ■ WASHING TON/ ISLAMABAD

President Donald Trump has indicated his readiness to meet Pakistan's new leadership, amidst the ongoing peace talks between the US and the Taliban facilitated by Islamabad to end the brutal war in Afghanistan, America's longest. The relations between Pakistan and the US nosedived after President Trump last year accused Islamabad of giving nothing to Washington but "lies and deceit" and providing "safe haven" to terrorists. In September, the Trump administration cancelled USD 300 million in military aid to Islamabad for not doing enough against terror groups like the Haqqani Network and Taliban active on its soil. Trump also criticised Pakistan in a Twitter post back in November, saying Islamabad was not doing enough to stop terrorism.

President Trump made this surprise announcement on the possibility of a meeting between him and Prime Minister Imran Khan at the end of a White House media interaction on Wednesday when a journalist asked him to comment on the current situation between India and Pakistan. "Pakistan — we'll be meeting with Pakistan. I think our relationship right now is very good with Pakistan," Trump said before departing the White House for a visit in Ohio. US envoy Zalmay Khalilzad is spearheading efforts to strike a peace deal with the Taliban with the help of



Pakistan. Khalilzad, the Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, said that Pakistan has an important role to play in Afghan peace talks and cannot be under estimated, state-run Radio Pakistan quoted him as saying.

Pakistan has been bargaining for the first meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister Khan in return for Islamabad's help in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. The cricketer-turned-politician assumed charge as Pakistan prime minister in August last year. The representatives of the Afghan Taliban, the US as well as officials from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been meeting in Doha, Qatar. The talks were facilitated by Islamabad as Washington continues to seek an end to the nearly 18-year war in Afghanistan that has killed over 2,000 US soldiers. The US has 14,000 troops deployed in Afghanistan. Two US soldiers were killed in an operation in Afghanistan on Friday, Fox News reported.

Friday's deaths were the first for US forces there since January. Last year, 13 American troops died while deployed there. President Trump's signal that he is ready for a meeting with the Pakistani leadership also came hours after a senior administration official warned that the US remained concerned about India-Pakistan tensions as their militaries were still on alert nearly three weeks after their most dangerous confrontation in decades following the Pulwama terror attack.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after a suicide bomber of Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) killed 40 CRPF personnel in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district in February 14. India launched a counter-terror operation in Balakot.

Kiwi women don headscarves in solidarity with Muslim victims

PTI ■ CHRIST CHURCH

Women across New Zealand wore makeshift hijabs as a statement of peace and solidarity on Friday, a week after a white supremacist killed 50 Muslims at two mosques in the southern city of Christchurch. Rafaela Stoakes, a 32-year-old mother of two, said wearing the Islamic head covering gave her an insight into what it means to stand out and feel part of the minority.

On Friday morning she covered all but a few locks of her dark chestnut-coloured hair in a loose red and white scarf, crossed neatly beneath her chin and tucked into a black hiking jacket.

She was one of many women embracing #HeadScarfForHarmony, to make a stand against the hate espoused by the Australian



man accused of killing dozens of worshippers. Headscarves were also worn as a mark of respect by policewomen and non-Muslim volunteers directing the crowds around the site in Christchurch holding communal prayers on Friday. Many were wearing a headscarf for the first time. "It is amazing

how different I felt for the short time I was out this morning," Stoakes told AFP. "There were a lot of confused looks and some slightly aggressive ones," she said. "I did feel a sense of pride to honour my Muslim friends, but I also felt very vulnerable and alone as I was the only person wearing one."

Italian move to join China's Belt and Road coup for Beijing

PTI ■ BEIJING

Despite criticisms, Beijing has been steadily gathering support for its "Belt and Road" initiative, which aims to weave a network of ports, bridges and power plants linking China with Africa, Europe and beyond. Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte has pledged to sign a memorandum of understanding this week on supporting the initiative during a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has made the initiative a signature policy of his administration.

Italy's involvement would give China a crucial inroad into western Europe and a symbolic boost in its economic tug-of-war with the United States. Italy would be the first member of the G-7, a group of seven major economies that includes the United States, to join Belt and Road, following



Chinese President Xi Jinping, left, goes to shake hands with Italian President Sergio Mattarella during a business forum inside the Quirinale Presidential, in Rome, Friday

Portugal's embrace of the initiative in December.

It appears to be driven partly by hopes that Chinese investment in Italy's ports might help revive the country's traditional role as a key link in trade between the East and West. The

Belt and Road program is a loosely defined umbrella for predominantly China-financed — and usually China-built — projects in more than 60 countries from the South Pacific through Asia to Africa and Europe.

7 killed as man drives car into crowd in China

PTI ■ BEIJING

A man rammed his car into a crowd of pedestrians in China's central Hubei province, killing six persons and injuring seven others before being shot dead by the police on Friday, in the latest such incident in the country.

Cui Lidong, 44, a restaurant owner, was reportedly involved in a domestic quarrel and attacked his wife and

daughter before driving his car into the crowd, local government officials said. The incident took place at around 6 AM (local time) in Zaoyang city, state-run CGTN reported.

While six pedestrians were killed, the police shot dead the driver. The seven injured persons have been hospitalised, the report said. A video published by news portal Thepaper.cn showed

several people lying on the ground. One witness said that the car ploughed randomly into pedestrians and other vehicles.

"There were bodies everywhere on the street," another witness was quoted as saying by the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

Incidents of random attacks on civilians by disgruntled persons have become common in China in

recent years. Last September, three people were killed and 43 others injured when a man drove his SUV into a crowd and later went on a stabbing spree in China's Hunan province. Some persons carrying knives targeted primary schools and mall to vent out their anger.

In March, the police arrested a man in Tangshan for attacking several pupils outside a primary school.

60 people killed in Ghana bus collision: Police

Accra (AFP): At least 60 people were killed on Friday in a head-on collision between two buses in southern Ghana, police said. The crash happened at about 2:00 am (local time) in the Bono East region, some 430 kilometres (270 miles) by road north of the capital, Accra.

"The vehicles were travelling in separate directions when the collision occurred," police commander Joseph Antwi



Gyawu told AFP. "At least 60 people have been confirmed dead and one of the buses caught fire with the other seri-

ously mangled," he added. The buses were each carrying about 50 passengers at the time of the crash.

Emergency services were at the scene, including firefighters to put out the blazing vehicles.

Kwame Arhin, a doctor at the Kintampo Government Hospital, said 28 people were being treated for injuries. "Seven out of the 28 passengers who were rushed here are in critical condition," Arhin told AFP. "We have referred four. Most of them had head injuries. I've seen a few being taken to the morgue," he added.

Excess hormones may cause blindness in women: Study

PTI ■ LONDON

Increased levels of hormones including testosterone could cause a brain condition that may lead to blindness in women, according to a research. Scientists at the University of Birmingham carried out the research which explores the role of hormones known as androgens in the way Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension (IIH) develops.

The IIH is caused by high pressure in the brain with consequences from blindness to incapacitating daily long-term headaches. IIH was originally identified over 100 years ago yet the cause of



the condition has remained unknown, although there has been much speculation about why more than 95 per cent of total incidence is in women

with obesity. "For over 100 years the cause of IIH has been unknown. These findings mark a key step forward; for the first time we have found a

pattern of androgen dysregulation that is unique to IIH and potentially a driver of abnormal brain pressure in people with the condition," said corresponding and senior author of the study Alex Sinclair.

Taken together this provides the first evidence that IIH may be a manifestation of female androgen excess," said Sinclair, scientist at the varsity.

Once regarded as rare, incidence of IIH is now rising dramatically in line with the global rise in obesity and there has been a 150 per cent rise in incidence in last 10 years. Currently there are very limited treatment options. The

researchers examined the levels of androgens in blood and urine, as well as in brain fluid known as cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), in 55 women with IIH aged 18 to 45.

They then compared the results with the levels observed in women with obesity of the same age and body mass index (BMI), as well as a cohort of women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

PCOS is a common condition and is classically associated with increased levels of specific types of androgens, which can cause excess hair and irregular periods, the varsity said in a statement on Thursday.

GLOBE TROTTING

Priyanka Chopra welcomes Serena Williams on Bumble fund

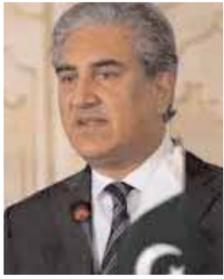
Los Angeles: Indian actress Priyanka Chopra welcomed tennis star Serena Williams to the Bumble Fund. Williams has joined Priyanka as an investor of social and dating application Bumble. The "Mary Kom" actress on Thursday tweeted: "Welcome to The Bumble Fund, Serena Williams! We're very lucky to have you on board... Bumble." Bumble on Wednesday announced Williams, who had earlier teamed up with the company for an ad campaign #InHerCourt, will be joining the organisation as an investor and active member of the Bumble Fund. Bumble was set up by Whitney Wolfe Herd shortly after she left Tinder, a dating application she co-founded. Apart from being a date-finding platform, Bumble also facilitates friendships with its "BFF mode" and business networking via Bumble Bizz



Discussed Azhar issue with China: Qureshi

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said he discussed the issue of Masood Azhar with close ally China, which blocked for the fourth time a proposal at the UN to designate the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief as a 'global terrorist'. Qureshi who returned from Beijing on Thursday after attending the first strategic bilateral dialogue between the two all-weather allies, heaped praise on China. "We take each other into confidence on all issues. Sometime they guide us and sometimes they change their policy after listening to us," he said after talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Qureshi said he discussed the issue of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Azhar with China, which used its right of technical hold to stop a proposal by France, the US and the UK against him at the UN Security Council.



China, a veto-wielding permanent member of the Security Council, for the fourth time blocked a bid in the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council to designate Azhar as a "global terrorist", saying it wanted "more time to examine" the proposal. The technical hold is valid for up to six months and it can be again extended by up to three months. India has described the outcome as "disappointing". The JeM claimed responsibility for the February 14 Pulwama suicide attack that left 40 CRPF personnel dead and raised tensions between India and Pakistan.

"As you know, China despite a lot of pressure used the right of technical hold in order to collect more information on the issue.... We talked what US, China and UK were thinking about it," Qureshi said. He said the two sides held discussion on the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanction Committee but refused to share details. He said Pakistan was aware what the world wanted on the issue of Azhar. "We are aware. We know what

the world wants, what we should do, what are our interests, and what should be our policy. It (issue of Azhar) should be seen in larger context...It should be seen in the context of money laundering and what FATF is saying because it is all linked," he said. Qureshi further said that discussion with China on the issue of Azhar will continue. He also said that Pakistan was analysing the contents of the dossier given by India on Pulwama. "We are serious about it and are analysing the dossier and (will) present our findings to you (media) and to the world," the foreign minister said. Amidst the Indo-Pak tensions following the Pulwama terror attack by a JeM suicide bomber, Qureshi confirmed that Azhar was present in Pakistan but said he was "very ill." He said Pakistan was committed to address militancy and eliminate it completely from the country.

Pak weighing options after acquittal of all accused in Samjhauta blast case

Pakistan is studying the verdict on the 2007 Samjhauta train blast case by an Indian court and the acquittal of all the four accused and weighing its options, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said. The Samjhauta Express is a bi-weekly train that runs between Delhi and Attari in India and Lahore in Pakistan. The blast on the train took place near Panipat in Haryana on February 18, 2007, when it was on its way to Attari in Amritsar, the last station on the Indian side. The blast killed 68 people. Pakistan says 44 of its

nationals lost their lives. The blast ripped apart two coaches of the train. The train service was launched in July 1976 after the signing of the historic Shimla Agreement between the two countries. A special court in Panchkula in Haryana acquitted the main accused Swami Aseemanand and three others in the case on Wednesday. Before giving the verdict, the judge dismissed the plea filed by a Pakistani woman for examining some eyewitnesses from her country. "The decision by India's National Investigation Court has shaken the people. The four accused were acquitted after 11 years, including Swami Aseemanand, who had already confessed his crime," Qureshi said.

"Pakistan strongly protested on this development and gave a demarche to India," he told the media in Islamabad on Thursday on his return from an official visit to China. He said Pakistan was studying the Samjhuta train verdict and weighing its options.

In New Delhi, official sources said the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad Ajay Bisaria clearly conveyed to the Pakistani Foreign Office that the trial into the Samjhauta Express terror case was carried out in a "transparent" manner. The sources said the Indian envoy highlighted that the due process of law was followed by the Indian courts and judicial system in a transparent manner. He also pointed out the lack of cooperation from Pakistan, including in serving court summons to Pakistani witnesses in the case, the sources said, adding the summons were returned by Pakistan Foreign Office (FO).

On Wednesday, the Pakistan FO said the acquittal of the accused, 11 years after the "heinous" Samjhauta terror attacks "makes a travesty of justice and exposes the sham credibility of the Indian courts". Pakistan called upon India to explore judicial remedies to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice, according to the FO.

Pak to receive \$ 2.1bn loan from China by March 21

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Islamabad (PTI): Cash-strapped Pakistan will receive over USD 2 billion loan from its "all-weather" ally China by Monday to provide a boost to its ailing economy, the Finance Ministry has announced. Ministry's adviser and spokesperson Khaqan Najeb Khan said that "all procedural formalities" for the transfer of the USD 2.1 billion (15 billion yuan) loan being provided by the Chinese government have been completed, and "the funds will be deposited in the State Bank of Pakistan's account by Monday, March 25", the Dawn newspaper reported.

Pakistan has received USD 1 billion each from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as part of the bailout packages by the two Gulf nations to help shore up Islamabad's dwindling foreign currency reserves. Saudi Arabia's assistance was part of the USD 6 billion bailout package - USD 3 billion balance-of-payments support and another USD 3 billion in deferred payments on oil imports - which Riyadh had agreed in October last year. Islamabad is also in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a bailout package.

The loan facility "will further strengthen foreign exchange reserves and ensure balance of payment stability," the spokesperson said. Following a meeting in Beijing between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Prime Minister Imran Khan in November 2018, China said that it was willing to offer assistance to Pakistan to help it weather its current fiscal woes but the terms of such aid were still being discussed.

Shortly after, Chinese Consul General Long Dingbin had said during an interview that in order to "boost Pakistan's economy", Beijing was investing in multiple sectors and launching business ventures instead of providing loans. Earlier, Pakistan officials said that Islamabad would seek around USD 8 billion from the IMF which would be the biggest package by the Fund for Islamabad.

'Pak may soon hit oil, gas jackpot'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan is on the verge of hitting a kind of jackpot in the form of discovering a huge reserve of oil and gas in the Arabian Sea, Prime Minister Imran Khan has said, hoping that the discovery will solve the economic problems of the cash-strapped country. The offshore drilling for oil was in final stages and there could be a major find, he said.

"I implore that we all pray that Pakistan gets this natural resource in substantial quantity. Our hopes and expectations from the offshore drilling being carried out by the ExxonMobil consortium prove to be true," he said on Thursday. "There's already been a delay of about three weeks, but if the indications we are getting from the companies are anything to go by, there's a strong possibility that we may discover a very big reserve in our waters. And if that happens, Pakistan will altogether be in a different league," he said.

In an informal chat with a



group of newspaper editors and other senior journalists, Khan did not share details of the offshore drilling process. And there has been no official word from ExxonMobil and the international oil exploration company ENI which have been involved since January in drilling an ultra-deep well (230km inside the sea) for oil in what is known as Kekra-1 area. Italy's ENI and US oil major Exxon Mobil are jointly drilling for gas offshore in Pakistan's Arabian Sea. Many other Western companies have

left more than a decade ago because of Islamist militant violence.

ExxonMobil returned to Pakistan after nearly a decade after surveys were carried out last year suggesting the possibility of big oil reserves within the Pakistani waters. The prime minister believes that if big oil reserves are discovered, most of Pakistan's economic problems will be addressed and then there will be no stopping the country's progress.

Talking about various challenges his government was

confronted with, Khan said that bringing about economic stability remained his biggest challenge. He said when he took charge, the foreign reserves were extremely low and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was putting extremely tough conditions, like "asking us to allow free floating of the rupee".

Khan said that with the help of friendly countries like the UAE, China and particularly Saudi Arabia, the government managed to improve the situation. Now, he said, even the IMF had relaxed its terms and things were moving in the right direction.

Pakistan has received USD 1 billion each from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as part of the bailout packages by the two Gulf nations to help shore up Islamabad's dwindling foreign currency reserves. Earlier, Pakistan officials said that Islamabad would seek around USD 8 billion from the IMF which would be the biggest package by the Fund for Islamabad.

China chemical plant blast death toll reaches 47, Xi for all-out efforts to rescue victims

PTI ■ BEIJING

The death toll in the powerful explosion at a chemical plant in China climbed to 47 on Friday with President Xi Jinping demanding all-out efforts to carry out search and rescue operations. The blast occurred after a fire in a fertilizer factory in a chemical industrial park in Yancheng, Jiangsu province on Thursday, according to the government of Xiangshui county.

Forty Seven people have been killed and a further 90 seriously injured, reported state-run China Daily. President Xi, also the general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, demanded all-out efforts to search and rescue victims. Xi, who is on his five-day tour of Europe, said that all-out efforts must be made to search those trapped, and the



injured must be timely treated and relief work must be well carried out to maintain social stability.

Meanwhile, environment monitoring and early warning should be strengthened to prevent environmental pollution as well as secondary disasters, he said. The explosion affected 16 surrounding enterprises. Open fire has been put out and

air pollution indexes are within the allowed range. Xi ordered that the cause of the accident must be identified as early as possible and that authoritative information should be timely released.

The Ministry of Emergency Management said 88 people have been rescued from the site of the incident. Eye-witnesses said several

workers were trapped after buildings were knocked down by the shockwave stated to be a mild tremor caused by the blast which took place in a pesticide plant. The blast also shattered windows of nearby residential houses.

The fire fighter brigade of Jiangsu has mobilised 176 fire trucks with 928 personnel to join the rescue mission, the Ministry of Emergency Management said. A professor of applied chemistry at Beijing University of Chemical Technology, in an interview with CCTV, said the leak of toxic chemicals might have affected the people and environment in the surrounding areas. According to the city's environmental protection authority, the explosion had a negative influence on the air quality in the chemical park and its surrounding areas within a 500-meter radius, but the strong winds are expected to lift the heavy smoke.

N Korea pulls out of inter-Korean liaison office

AFP ■ SEOUL

North Korea pulled its staff out of an inter-Korean liaison office Friday, Seoul said, weeks after leader Kim Jong Un's summit with US President Donald Trump ended without agreement. The office in the Northern city of Kaesong was opened in September as the two Koreas knitted closer ties, but the South's vice unification minister Chun Hae-sung told reporters Pyongyang had notified the South they are pulling out of the liaison office.

The decision had been taken "in accordance with an order from an upper command," he said, adding: "They said they didn't care whether we stayed at the liaison office or not." The South's President Moon Jae-in was instrumental in brokering talks between the nuclear-armed, sanctions-hit North and Washington, Seoul's key security ally.

Moon has long backed engagement with the North to bring it to the negotiating table, and has been pushing the carrot of inter-Korean development projects, among them the



restarting of an industrial zone also in Kaesong and lucrative cross-border tourist visits by Southerners to the North's picturesque Mount Kumgang.

But the sanctions currently in place effectively block their resumption, while a preliminary study for a plan to renovate the North's decrepit rail system was repeatedly delayed. Questions were even raised over whether supplies provided to set up the liaison office were a sanctions violation. The failure by Kim and

Trump to reach agreement in Hanoi last month on walking back Pyongyang's nuclear programme in exchange for relaxation of the measures against it has raised questions over the future of the wider process. In Vietnam both sides expressed willingness to talk further, but it has since emerged that Washington presented Kim with a wider definition of what it regards as denuclearisation.

A senior Pyongyang diplomat told reporters last week that the North was considering

suspending nuclear talks with the US.

Analysts said Friday's decision could be a sign Pyongyang felt Seoul was unable to exert sufficient influence on Washington. "With the pull-out, the North is pressuring the South to do more as a middle man between Pyongyang and Washington after it didn't get the resumption of the Kaesong industrial complex and Mount Kumgang tours," said Yoo Hyeon, professor of North Korea studies at Korea University.

"It could be seen as either pressure, or a warning," he told AFP. "Internally, Pyongyang could use the withdrawal as a propaganda message to its people that it is taking a lead when it comes to inter-Korean relations."

The North has recently summoned several of its top diplomats around the world back to Pyongyang.

Cheong Seong-chang, a senior researcher at the private Sejong Institute, said that move and Friday's pull-out could signal "that the North is considering a shift in denuclearisation strategy and foreign pol-

icy". It was "hard to rule out a hardline statement", he added. In his New Year speech — a key political event in the North — Kim said without giving details that Pyongyang might see a "new way for defending the sovereignty of the country and the supreme interests of the state" if the US persisted with sanctions. Seoul sought to keep the door open to more contact.

"We regret the North's decision," vice minister Chun said. "Though North Korea has pulled out, we will continue to work at the liaison office as usual." The facility opened three months after Kim signed a vague pledge at his first summit with Trump in Singapore to work towards "denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula", and shortly before Moon went to Pyongyang for his third summit with Kim last year. It stands in a city that was initially part of the South after Moscow and Washington divided Korea between them in the closing days of World War II, but found itself in the North after the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

Lankan Tamils for allowing foreign judges to probe war crimes

Colombo (PTI): Sri Lanka's main Tamil party TNA on Friday called for allowing foreign judges and prosecutors to probe the alleged war crimes, a day after the UN Human Rights Council gave Colombo two more years to set up a credible investigation into the country's brutal civil war. Sri Lankan troops are accused of killing at least 40,000 ethnic Tamil civilians during former president Mahinda Rajapaksa's regime that brought an end to the three-decade long civil war with the LTTE in 2009, according to the UN.

According to the government figures, around 20,000 people are missing due to various conflicts including the civil war with Lankan Tamils in the north and east which claimed at least 100,000 lives. The United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on Thursday approved giving two more years to the Sri Lankan government to set up a credible war crimes investigation into the civil war. M A Sumanthiran, the senior Tamil National Alliance (TNA) spokesman, said that they would urge for "a tribunal which is entirely international".

"We will take the case to the International Criminal Court," he said while addressing Parliament. Sumanthiran said the official position taken by Foreign Minister Thilak Marapana on Wednesday in Geneva that foreign judges cannot constitutionally operate in Sri Lanka was false. "It is false to say that constitution does not allow foreign judges to function," he said. Referring to a case precedent in 2001, Sumanthiran, a lawyer, said that the constitutional provisions do not curtail or restrict the operation of foreign judges in Sri Lanka. He said that the UNHRC resolution adopted in October 2015, which was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka, Colombo is bound to allow an international investigation.

Erdogan urges fight on Islamophobia

PTI ■ ISTANBUL

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday called on the world to fight back against Islamophobia in the same way it responded to "anti-Semitism after the Holocaust", following the deadly attacks on two New Zealand mosques. The Turkish leader has presented the mosque attacks, by a self-avowed white supremacist who killed 50 people, as part of a wider assault on Islam and demands the West do more against anti-Muslim sentiment. "Just as humanity fought against anti-Semitism after the Holocaust disaster, it should fight against rising Islamophobia in the same determined fashion," Erdogan told an emergency meeting of ministers from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul. "Right now we are facing Islamophobia and Muslim hatred," he said.

During the March 15 attack, alleged gunman Brenton Tarrant killed 50 men, women and children — the victims aged between three and 77 years old — in a massacre that sparked global revulsion.

He livestreamed much of the killing and spread a manifesto on social media claiming it was a strike against Muslim "invaders". Representatives from the OIC, which groups Muslim countries, said in a statement that "genuine, comprehensive and systematic measures" were needed to tackle the "affliction" of Islamophobia. They called on countries with Muslim communities and minorities to refrain from statements and actions that associate Islam with "terror, extremism and threats." In his hate-filled "manifesto" before the mass killing, the accused killer suggested neo-Nazi ideology and immigration prompted his action and mentioned other right-wing extremists. He also referenced Turkey, and



Istanbul's landmark Hagia Sophia, that was once a church before becoming a mosque during the Ottoman empire.

New Zealand's government on Friday reassured Muslims living in the country they would be "safe and secure" despite the deadly attacks in Christchurch. "Ensuring Muslim communities in New Zealand feel safe and secure is a particular focus," New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters told the OIC meeting. Peters said New Zealand authorities would make sure "no stone stays unturned" in the prosecution of the attacker. "This person will face the full force of New Zealand law and spend the rest of his life in isolation in a New Zealand prison," he said. Erdogan, campaigning for local elections this month, had angered New Zealand's government by repeatedly showing the video made by the alleged gunman, an Australian who was arrested after the massacre. The Turkish leader also angered Australia with comments about anti-Muslim Australians being sent back in "coffins" like their grandfathers at Gallipoli, a bloody World War I battle. More than 8,000 Australians and nearly 3,000 New Zealanders — part of forces known as ANZAC — died fighting Turkish forces at Gallipoli, which has a prominent place in Australia's collective memory.

Compounds in coffee may cut heart disease risk

London (PTI): Scientists have identified compounds found in coffee, cocoa and wine, that may reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases, a study has found. The research by Kjeld Hermansen of Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark suggests that there is an association between the consumption of polyphenols and a reduction in cardiovascular diseases prevalence.



Coffee is one of the main sources of polyphenols in the diet. The compounds naturally occur in the beverage and contribute to its unique flavours and aromas. In recent years there has been growing academic interest in the role of polyphenols in health through their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. The research found that polyphenols may have a range of cardio protective functions but the precise mechanisms are not yet fully understood. It is suggested that they may alter cholesterol absorption and the processing of fats in the body, and reduce inflammation.

India-US relationship flourished under Modi

Washington (PTI): The relationship between India and the US flourished under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an official in the Donald Trump administration has said, adding it expects the ties to improve after the Lok Sabha elections. The senior official also said the first ever India-US two-plus-two dialogue, held in New Delhi last year, took the relationship forward.

Responding to a question on five years of the Modi government and the recent visit of India's Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale to the US, the official said, "US-India relationship has really flourished... since Modi took power." "The high-



light, I would say, was Prime Minister Modi's visit to the White House in the June of 2017 where a lot of progress was made on the relationship. I would just say that the visit by Foreign Secretary Gokhale was just the latest illustration of the positive trajectory that

the relationship is on," the official said requesting anonymity. "We look forward to working with whoever is elected in this (general) election," the senior official said, adding there is "a lot of strategic logic" to the India-US relationship.

ARTISTRY 50 MINUTES

Hampi's most avid visitor

Australian photographer JOHN GOLLINGS portrays buildings as living, ageless habitats rather than monuments which are lifeless. By CHAHAK MITTAL

As one entered the pavilion that showcased an array of Australian architectural photographer John Gollings' works, a variety of large canvas-like photographs spoke volumes about the maestro's years of endless wandering through the tribal and rural streets of India. Capturing the greatest works by artisans and architects, the photographs make it seem that the audience is almost visiting the places all across the world. But it is Hampi in India which had Gollings' attention as he had covered the town with its various abandoned structures, which are now being listed under the archaeological sites of India.

However, the photographer feels that such masterpieces shouldn't be forgotten, rather should be revived and preserved for generations to come. They are an evidence of the various cultures and traditions that rulers and kings followed. They shouldn't be taken for granted or abandoned and should be regarded as major monuments and symbols of the rich Indian heritage.

Gollings' exploration and documentation of both modern and ancient sites in India has resulted in a body of work that records its changing social, economic and political landscape. "These projects are of great cultural and historical significance. Their value should be kept intact," he said.

Be it the architecture across Asia, the abandoned Chinese city of Jiaohe; the Khmer temples of the Angkor Wat, stretched across mainland Southeast Asia; the architecture of the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire; the grain stores of the nomadic Berbers in Libya; or the abandoned structures in Hampi, Gollings has brought his characteristic style, giving the viewer an understanding of the embedded perspectives in each of the



captured structures.

It was in 1980 when Gollings had first visited Hampi and fallen in love with and developed admiration for the place. Ever since, he has been returning to the site every year.

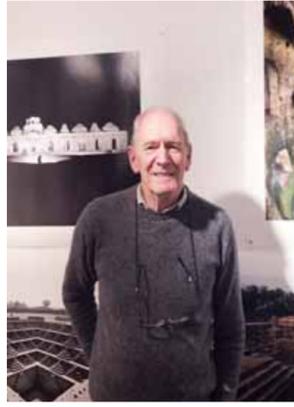
Explaining his innate fondness of Hampi, the photographer said that the town is "vast" and its monuments are "an architectural splendour." He said that even though he has been visiting the place regularly for so many years, it doesn't leave a stone unturned in surprising him each time. "I discover a new aspect every time I come here, which is why I have become so fond of it. I am addicted to Hampi. I have gained a vast experience in architectural photography here as the sites give me a chance to experiment in many ways. I am able to give an aesthetic touch to it by taking photographs in different

lights and times of the day. There cannot be any other archaeological site like this," said he.

He complained that ironically, ever since the place has been listed in the world heritage sites, "it has become difficult to work here. It was much simpler and beautiful before. Now there are fences all around the place and timing that limit my visits. It is closed for visitors after five in the evening."

His photographs, that were recently displayed at the India Habitat Centre's *Photosphere* and also as part of the six-month long Australia Fest, were a classic example of time travel, with capsules featuring architectural changes.

The exhibition also showcased his most recent project for which the photographer went



around capturing step wells in India. He said that these are all examples of modern architecture. "They say a lot about traditionality and history of Indian temples. When I am capturing a building, I want it to stand out. Earlier, when Indian temples were captured in black and white, their colours would lie on the same page. But here, I wanted to make each colour stand out. Hence, these step wells with muddy look describe perfectly what architecture offers to traditions," he explained.

Fashion might go out of style or change with time, but buildings and structures remain timeless. As an epiphany, the photographer said that it occurred to him that he "wanted to capture everything that had ever been built in the world."

For him, it's all about taking and waiting for that "one perfect shot."



The meeting point

Iranian percussionist FAKHRODDIN GHAFFARI calls Delhi his second home, not just because he has stayed here for long but because of his country's common cultural linkages, says SAIMI SATTAR

Inherently, music and art are not entertainment," believes Fakhroddin Ghaffari, the Iranian percussionist who performed at the 13th edition of the Holi Moo, a multi-genre festival that celebrates the advent of spring with colours, music and entertainment. For those, who look at this performing art primarily as a source of entertainment, the artist believes that there is a section that answers to the description. "This is not bad, no music is. But every kind of music exists because there is a story to tell. However, art and music are for enlightening and awakening as there is a much deeper philosophy and thought process behind it rather than just entertainment," says the artist who is pursuing a Ph.D in Indian classical music which he says took hundreds of years to reach its cultural finesse. He says, "Music and art are connected to a deep culture that aims to make the world a better place. It is primarily important for the message that it delivers," he says.

Arts and music form an important part of Ghaffari's life as he has imbibed them at a young age from his surroundings. "My parents, uncles, grandparents and aunts are painters, sculptors, calligraphy artists and more. My grandfather is a chef and a musician. I've been learning music since I was five under the *guru shishya parampara* from my uncle who is a musician. I was blessed to be born in the environment," he says.

Ghaffari often works on collaborations. Though he comes from the Persian classical tradition and has done his graduation and Masters in Indian music, he believes that for any joint performance to be successful, each artist should be firmly rooted to their respective traditions. "One needs a considerable depth and understanding of melody when you collaborate as you have to think out-of-the-box. Collaborations help creative people and are a big learning experience," he says. Interestingly, he has worked with not just people from different musical genres but also from different fields. "While a play was being performed in a theatre, I too was on stage performing live. I've worked with silent movies," he says.

However, working with a person from an altogether different genre or field can

be a challenging prospect. Ghaffari says, "Sometimes it is difficult if you are not flexible and insist that I am an Iranian or Indian classical music performer. Things can get difficult then. There will be a clash if you insist that *Maine ye hi seekha main yahi bajaunga*," he says in accented Hindi. He believes that two people, who are collaborating, need to reach out to each other until they are in a common space. "You can't expect one to bend over all the way. You have to take a step forward and meet in the middle point. It is a deep learning experience," he adds.

Ghaffari decided to be a part of the festival as the organisers are his friends. "I can see how much hard work and honesty they are putting into it. The festival is all about getting together and being one. I played during it last year as well. This time, along with a friend, Mohit Lal, I curated the opening act of the World Music Stage," he says.

Not many people might know that the percussionist calls the capital his second home as he grew up here. "I came here when I was 14 and have been here since then. It is my first home rather than my second as I spent crucial teenage years when people form their personality in Delhi," he says.

And it is not just that he has stayed here for long, but a common thread that binds the place with Iran. He believes that, "There is so much similarity between India and Iran that anyone who hasn't even been to the other country or heard the music there would still feel at home. The masala may be different but the food is the same."

Having stayed in the city for a long time, he feels passionately. "It is a city that needs to be cared for and cherished, but that is not happening. Delhi is a city, where no matter where you are standing or whichever direction you look, there is a sign of heritage, culture and what not. Delhi has been an international cultural hub between 1600 and 1800. It has seen great days and while the government is trying to do its bit, the people can do better. The city is not liveable any more as for some months in a year, you can barely breathe. It is sad and it is making me question my stay here. I don't like thinking this way," he says quietly.

CONVERSATION 45 MINUTES

THE KID AS A SUPERHERO

Helping others even though no one helped him when he was down and out is what makes Shazam played by ASHER ANGEL special. By TEAM VIVA

Who is Billy Batson? What's he like when we first meet him and what's going on in his life?

ASHER ANGEL: There's a lot going on in his life. Billy got separated from his mom, so he's basically just out on the street. He's a loner. He has no family. It's just him alone in this world. And he finds out that he's capable of this amazing superpower, that by just saying one word — "Shazam!" — he turns into an adult Super Hero. For anyone, that would definitely change you, have an impact on your mental disposition, and then it's decision time. What are you going to do with these superpowers? Are you going to be good, are you going to be bad? What's going on?

Once he gets over the panic of having superpowers and being an adult, he figures things out with Freddy who is like his manager. They learn to control these powers together. And it's also relatable because Billy finally finds a family with the kids he meets in foster care, something that he never thought was possible

What is Billy feeling when he's thrust into this house full of foster kids?

He's like, "I don't want any part of you guys. I don't want to be here. I don't want to get to know you. I want to just go out in the world, just look for my mom. And if that's not good enough, then it's just me."

What does he think on the first night when he meets Freddy who exposes his love of all things superhero-related?

He's probably thinking, "This kid's so dorky, such a geek." But then, as he keeps talking, he's like



"Hey, he's cool and funny."

They're about the same age. Do you think that helps Billy feel a little more comfortable?

Definitely. At the beginning, the thought is, "Okay, it's another foster home. I'm just going to sneak out and run away." Of course, that's what he's thinking. But once he really gets to know



Freddy, he starts exploring relationships with Darla, Mary, and everyone. And he finds a real family.

How does Billy find his way to the Wizard and what happens?

He's on the subway and somehow, he's transported to the Rock of Eternity. He's scared, he doesn't know where he is and he sees this

Wizard who's hunch-backed and on his throne. Billy's thinking, "I just want to get out of here, I don't want to be here." And then the Wizard says, "You are the champion." And Billy's just thinking, "Are you crazy? Who would believe that out of all the people, it would be me?" And The Wizard tells him, "You're strong in spirit, you're pure in heart," and Billy says the

word, "Shazam!" and realises that this isn't a dream. He's six-foot-two! He doesn't know what to do, and the only person he could go to is Freddy. Actually, one of my favorite moments is when Zac Levi goes up to the window and he has a sign, "Don't scream," and Freddy just freaks out (Laughs). That's a classic moment, like a superhero movie meets Big

How did you and Zachary Levi work out how to play the same character, as actors, to indicate that you're the same guy?

We didn't have a lot of time, because I was shooting another show. We had two days to figure it out. And we both did a couple of self-tapes for each other. We already had the same mannerisms and the same facial expressions, but we definitely did pick up a couple of ticks that both of us have so that we could incorporate them. But we really just had to trust in each other and in David.

How did your director, David F Sandberg, work with you to help you discover Billy?

There was a scene that I did for him, and that's really what made him think, "You are the one we have been looking for," because he really saw everything that he wanted. And he told me, "I don't want it to be like the comics where Billy is not the nicest guy. He's just sad. He wants his mom." And throughout the movie, you really see Billy evolve. When he gets superpowers, he's this happy kid and he's starting to open up and the real Billy is actually coming out, the one that everyone wants to see.

There are a lot of kids in this movie. What did you all do in your off time?

There was a lot of fun stuff to do. It was cold in Toronto, almost freezing. But we took field trips, we did dinners. We did some sleepovers and that's how we really bonded and playing games and watching movies together.

Jack and I really bonded at Comic-Con as we really came to know each other. This is where we really became friends because we

were with each other all day doing interviews, cracking jokes and we had a sleepover that night.

What do you think is the most inspirational trait that Shazam has?

Probably him helping others. He's human, and he's a kid who's had a hard life and he chooses the right path to help people even though he feels no one ever helped him before now. So, that's cool. But he has learned from his hardships.

What do you feel, now that you are officially part of the DC Super Hero universe?

It's crazy, it's unreal. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. I've always dreamt of going into the movie theatre and either seeing the trailer or seeing the movie and I can't even tell you what it was like seeing it for the first time. It was so exciting. I couldn't believe it.

What do you think audiences are going to experience when they're watching this movie?

They're going to experience a lot of action, of course, but also a good story about wish fulfillment. And it's just light-hearted and funny. I think what makes it different from any other superhero movie where they're flying through the air and fighting each other, is that this is superhero is a kid. He thinks like one. And what kid out there doesn't want to be a superhero? Actually, what person out there wouldn't want to have super-hero abilities? Zac killed it and people are really going to like him. Obviously he was amazing in the trailer and it's going to draw them in and when they see the movie, they're going to like it even more. (The film releases on April 5.)

SHORT CIRCUITS



SONU NIGAM
I had learned Taekwondo in 2001 for a year. I know numerology on my fingertips. Later, I learnt the art of palmistry for some time and have also trained in yoga. I can type perfectly without even looking at the screen. I like to nurture my knowledge and facts and add on to it as much as possible.



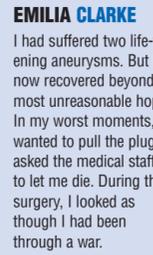
MOUNI ROY
The best part of our journey is that we have to have the will to be surprised by life. If I am thinking too much about the future and running after something, I will definitely miss out on the present. So whenever an opportunity came my way, whether it was an acting assignment, dancing or singing, I just tried to focus on that.



SHAH RUKH KHAN
Karan Johar is technologically challenged but has other good qualities like his taste in clothes. However, make love, not war. Just like life, Twitter doesn't come with instructions, so mistakes are natural and also he has fat fingers. Go easy all... It's more fun.



JACKIE SHROFF
It's just fabulous to work with Vijay (Tamil actor), who is the son of S. A. Chandrasekhar, my director from the film *Kudrat Ka Kanoon*. He is a gentle giant and a nice guy. And so, I'm catching up with his dad and the superstar. Also Atlee is a great director. They are looking after me like a child.



EMILIA CLARKE
I had suffered two life-threatening aneurysms. But I have now recovered beyond my most unreasonable hopes. In my worst moments, I wanted to pull the plug. I asked the medical staff to let me die. During the surgery, I looked as though I had been through a war.

ENCOUNTER 30 MINUTES

Love unsilenced

Director FARUK KABIR and actress MAANVI GAGROO believe that belonging to the LGBTQ community makes one no less than a human. It is absolutely normal. By CHAHAK MITTAL

Not too long ago, a global survey indicated that the views of the Indian youth have become less rigid about homosexuality over time. However, even though Supreme Court's historical verdict decriminalised Section 377, it also indicated that societal acceptance from the older age group might still be a long way off.

Director Faruk Kabir's new film, *377 Ab Normal*, currently streaming on a digital platform, showcases the journey of four petitioners and highlights the common struggles arising out of the social stigma which the LGBTQ community has been saddled with over the years.

It was after the Supreme Court's verdict that Faruk conceptualised the film. It was not to encompass all the stories that he had come across into one, rather "the idea was to tell a few stories in this journey that could represent the collective mindset or feeling of a majority heterosexual society. This is not a film about just the LGBTQ community, it is also for the heterosexual population, their sensibilities and their acceptance of the otherness."

As part of research, the director had gone through a lot of case studies and files from real petitioners. "There were some really powerful, human stories. It makes you realise that being a lesbian or a gay makes



him/her no less of a human being. At the end of the day, they are people with just a different sexual preferences. These are just two people falling in love, irrespective of the gender," he says and goes on to add that one size doesn't fit everyone after all. Hence, "the same goes for the society and its people too." With the film, the director wanted to show that with this diversity in human preferences, "all consciousness has to be

represented and accepted in society."

He questions that if for different communities, there are particular quotas, isn't it time for some for the LGBTQ now? "They also represent the Indian society as much as the heterosexual population does. We need to normalise it," says he.

Talking about why the abolishment of Section 377 was necessary not just for the LGBTQ communi-



ty, but for the heterosexual population as well, he says. "Under Section 377, certain public acts were illegal. Before this verdict was passed, any Indian, irrespective of his/her sexual preference, caught in a harmless act of togetherness could also be charged under Section 377 for unnatural offences and be imprisoned."

Elaborating further, he says, "It was a very regressive law that did not

include many other sexual acts apart from the ones that the Church had listed," he informs.

The film stars Tanvi Azmi, *Four More Shots Please*-fame Maanvi Gagroo, actor Sid Makkar, *Made in Heaven*-fame Shashank Arora, Zeeshan Ayyub, Paras Tomar and Kumud Mishra.

Maanvi, who had been busy with her two back-to-back online shows, says that when she heard what her role was about in the film, she instantly agreed as it cast her in three different layers and characters with three differently-conceptualised shows. However, the stronger reason turned out to be that she had never played a role like this one before. "It was a first of its kind for me. I have always been an avid follower of this subject. I had gender studies as one of my main courses during my college and had a number of gay friends who had different stories to tell. Some of them kept quiet as they did not have the courage to step out of the closet and accept the reality in front of their families. This role made me realise that their stories were just as human as anybody else's," she says.

She says that she stopped seeing it as a gay relationship and saw it as one between two people. "It is about two people falling in love and building a connection, living their lives together. We need to stop labelling



'Why only Tinder, and not Grindr? For the ones who don't know, Grindr is a dating app for gay, bi, trans, and queer people.'
—SALMAN KHAN

it as gay or lesbian. It is about two souls connecting beyond the physical realm. While working in the film, I learnt that it is as normal as a boy and a girl falling in love. I just hope that one day, they get rid of the label of LGBTQ completely."

Talking about how her perspective about the issue transformed, she says the society's fault is its ignorance and misunderstandings. "When I started the project, I had a different view on gay relationships. By the end of it, they became just normal human relationships to me. The same goes for the society which lacks information and due to their preconceived notions and stereotypes, they ignore facts. Until and unless the society gets the right exposure, it will be difficult for them to understand and accept it," says she.

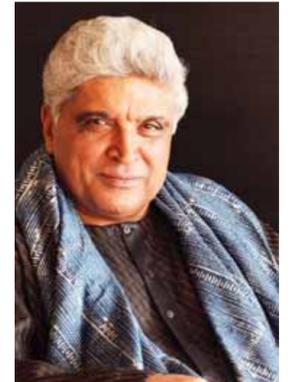
(The film is now streaming on ZEE5.)

'Haven't written songs for Modi biopic'

Veteran lyricist Javed Akhtar denied writing songs for Omung Kumar B directorial film, *PM Narendra Modi*. Akhtar took to Twitter and expressed shock to see his name in the credits of the film's trailer. "I am shocked to find my name on the poster of this film. Have not written any songs for it," Akhtar tweeted along with the snapshot of the trailer's video in which his name was mentioned among several other artistes in the lyrics category.

The trailer of *PM Narendra Modi* — based on the life of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi — was launched on Thursday. The film will showcase the journey of Modi from his humble beginnings to his years as the Gujarat Chief Minister, to the landmark win in the 2014 general elections, and finally becoming the PM. Actor Vivek Anand Oberoi is essaying the role of Modi in the biopic, which is scheduled to release on April 5.

—IANS



STUDIO CHAT 45 MINUTES

Actor VICKY KRIEPS fashioned her character of a strong woman on her grandmother in *Phantom Thread*. By TEAM VIVA

A white canvas

It's true that you didn't have much contact with Daniel Day-Lewis before filming *Phantom Thread*?

We met for the first time in London at the Covent Garden Hotel when we read the script. Post that, I never met him. I was told that he preferred not to rehearse. Then I met him on the set.

He famously prepares for a role for a long time before the filming starts. Was it intimidating when you met him almost for the first time when you were on set?

It was intimidating for me. But I knew I had no alternative. Someone proposes a job offer and you say 'OK, how can I work with this?' So I just accepted it. Also when we met in London, reading of the script was so obvious. It felt so natural and in a way, as if this story had to be told by us. This might sound weird. So I then tried to trace the memory of that moment and I knew it was going to be fine.

Was there a parallel between the story about Reynolds and Alma, and you as an actress working with a successful established actor like Daniel?

Yes. I think this is why I accepted it since I thought it



would fit the story and while playing Alma, I thought it would suit her to not know about the things that are going on around her. I dived more and more into what I had — nothing. I tried to be like a white empty canvas.

Did you watch Anderson's previous films to prepare?

I didn't. When I knew I would be working with Paul and Daniel, I decided not to watch their movies and to not find out about method acting.

Are they very different people in and out of character?

Not really. I spoke to him about it and this method acting to me is a word, an approach. It's how you work to get to the place that everyone wants to reach, where you can be so free that you can be open to what is happening on set.

But were you excited to work with Daniel?

Well, that's exactly the

point. I was not excited because I tried not to be excited. I tried not to think about that I was working with Daniel Day-Lewis, a method actor. If I had been looking for signs of 'is this him or is this the character', I think it would have taken away from my performance. As an actor, what you want to be is completely honest and pure so you don't want to think about 'I'm now in a movie with this guy and is he method or not?'

The film is about a strong woman, Alma, fighting to save her relationship with Reynolds. What does it mean to you to be a strong woman?

Many things. But related to Alma, I would say she is a strong woman because she doesn't need approval from men, women or anyone else. She is who she is. It's only when you want approval to be liked in the eyes of someone that you become weak, especially women. If you open yourself to the judgement of men, want-

'IT'S ONLY WHEN YOU WANT APPROVAL, TO BE LIKED IN THE EYES OF SOMEONE THAT YOU BECOME WEAK. IF YOU OPEN YOURSELF TO THE JUDGEMENT OF MEN, WANTING TO BE BEAUTIFUL OR SEXY, THIS IS WHEN YOU PUT YOURSELF IN A WEAK POSITION'

ing to be beautiful or sexy, this is when you put yourself in a weak position. And Alma doesn't give in. For me, I'm still trying to understand her. But she's between a man and a woman; old and young; and now and the 50s. I think that makes her very strong and it is something that women have had over the years.

When I prepared Alma, I knew I had to give her a strong back because I wanted her to be this white canvas but behind that had to be a lot of earth. So I thought of my grandmothers — who are no longer with us — this is where I found my answers. These women, from that generation, had to be incredibly strong because there was no other way. If you went through the war, you wouldn't have asked yourself, "Am I comfortable? Do I get the attention I need?" You get up, get your day done and do what you can. Alma has left her country and come to a new one, England, and she had to go

and work in the teashop.

What was your experience of working with Daniel? Any anecdotes to share?

I've been asked that a few times. And recently, we were doing some TV interviews together — Daniel was sitting next to me — I realised that the way he was there, talking, reminded me of how he was when he was in character and it was fascinating. When you are an actor, you do it because you are so intrigued by life, you are curious, and it's this curiosity that drives you. When I'm with Daniel, I could sit there for hours and just listen and watch him as everything about him is so detailed. He knew exactly how this man, Reynolds, would behave. I could watch him talk and stand and I could detect the body language of his character — and of course, I tried to do that with my character as well — but when someone is such a perfectionist, you can watch it. It's like art. I loved listening to him as Reynolds when he was talking about the 1950s, which Daniel as a child would have known, and he would tell me about Virginia Woolf and England. He could talk about it for hours and I would just sit and listen (laughs).

One of the many memorable scenes in the film is when your character finally tells Reynolds what she thinks of him...

Do you mean the dinner scene where Alma tells him her opinion? Well, that's an example of how Alma and I, both our experiences, are so close and what Paul was probably searching for. When I read the script, I thought this was what the story would need — this person who doesn't know and is finding out things. And the end of that scene is improvised and whatever I say as Alma's opinion of Reynolds came to me in that moment. I didn't know I was going to say that. All I knew was that I had the lines for that scene and they were so beautifully written — and Daniel said the same — that it felt like being on a slide.

So you had this beautiful text and you would go on the slide because it was so strong. But it didn't have an ending. And Paul said to me that because there was no ending, he was hoping that something would happen — that Alma just told him what she thinks. And I remember afterwards thinking, "was that OK or wrong? Was I allowed to do this?" (Laughs)

You appeared in the German crime series *Tatort*. Was that a school for you as an actor?

I actually only did one episode of *Tatort*. Was that a good school? I think a good school was when I worked on Joe Wright's *Hanna*. I had a small role but I was working with Cate Blanchett. I also did *Anonymous* with Vanessa Redgrave and I used that really like a school. I was observing the whole day and learning how things work. I remember thinking back then "this feels easy like breathing and it feels like home." But then my brain was going "no, it can't be, this is a big set and you are supposed to be intimidated." It was quite hard after making those films to go back and do *Tatort* and things like that knowing that actually you can do things differently. I remember the wigs in *Hanna* were perfect — they were made by this English guy and he's a genius. And on the job I was doing afterwards I could see how bad the wigs were and I couldn't tell myself to not see it, so it was a blessing and a curse (laughs).

When did you know that you wanted to do acting?

Because I grew up in Luxembourg, I wouldn't dare to have the idea that this was what I wanted. It was too crazy and unreachable.

Paul Thomas Anderson said that he saw you in a film where you are a cleaner...

Yes, *The Chambermaid*.

Did he tell you what it was about your performance in that film that convinced him to cast you?

Well, first of all, I was very lucky that he watched it

because the film was on iTunes and he could have missed it. He liked it. I don't know if he saw something in me. In *Phantom Thread*, the uniform I wear is quite similar to the one in *The Chambermaid*. Maybe that was on his mind and I don't talk much, maybe he thought "oh that's good too."

Is there something unique about the way he directs?

Well, he's mad and that's great (laughs). Someone who is mad and ready enough to have a woman poisoning a man because they love each other. So he's mad enough to invent these stories. That's the basis of everything and that means he is open and free in his mind. As an actor, if you work with someone like this, it's great because you can blossom in every possible way. And to me what was striking was that he is always respectful of the actors. He comes to you and says, "What do you think Alma would do?" And that can be intimidating but if you get rid of your fear, it's actually great because you can start to be free and not think about your performance of the scene or what you want to achieve.

Does he do many takes?

If he needs them, yes. He's both. Like with me, he didn't do many takes and at one point he said to me, "Vicky you know I like what you are doing, right?" And I was like, "Well, actually no, because you haven't said anything." And he said, "Well, you should know that if I don't like it, I'll do it 10 times, so if I don't say anything, that's a good sign." But if he needs to, he does many takes.

Phantom Thread is an Oscar-nominated film. Has being in the film opened doors for you?

I have no answer to it because currently my life has not changed in any way. I hope it doesn't. I hope I meet more spirits like Paul with whom I can share my vision. (The film premieres on March 24 at 1 pm on Sony P.IX.)

Depay triggers Dutch rout

Memphis nets brace and assists each for Wijnaldum and Van Dijk's goals as Netherlands start Euro campaign with 4-0 win

AFP ■ PARIS

Eden Hazard ensured Belgium kicked off their qualifying campaign for Euro 2020 on Thursday with a brace in a home victory over Russia, while a Memphis Depay-inspired Netherlands romped to a 4-0 win over Belarus.

World Cup semi-finalists Belgium earned a battling 3-1 win over Russia in Brussels as Hazard struck twice for Roberto Martinez's side in their opening game in Group I.

Youri Tielemans rounded off a flowing move with a crisp low strike to fire Belgium ahead on 14 minutes at the King Baudouin Stadium, but Thibaut Courtois gifted Russia an immediate equaliser.

The Real Madrid goalkeeper, put under pressure by Artem Dzyuba, panicked and scuffed the ball straight to Denis Cheryshev who duly swept home into an empty net.

Michy Batshuayi had a shot cleared off the line, and later hit the post, but Hazard restored Belgium's lead just before half-time after drawing a foul from Yuri Zhirkov in the area.

The Chelsea playmaker sealed the three points two minutes from time with an alert finish, while Aleksandr Golovin was sent off for Russia just before the end.

Cyprus thrashed San Marino 5-0 to provisionally seize top spot in the group, while Scotland crashed to a humiliating 3-0 loss in Kazakhstan — a nation ranked 117th in the FIFA rankings.

Yuriy Pertsukh and Yan Vorogovskiy notched early goals for Kazakhstan before Bakhtiyor Zainutdinov's terrific header extinguished any chance of Scotland recovering.



Memphis Depay and Georginio Wijnaldum celebrates after Liverpool playmaker scores his sides second goal

DEPAY DAZZLES

In Rotterdam, Memphis Depay dazzled for the Netherlands with a brace and two assists as they cruised past Belarus 4-0 despite having to play the final 20 minutes with 10

men. Depay set the Dutch on their way just seconds into the match and slotted home a second-half penalty after setting up Georginio Wijnaldum for a simple second



Eden Hazard celebrates with teammate after scoring his second goal against Russia

21 minutes in, before crossing for Virgil van Dijk to nod in the fourth with his side down to 10 after final substitute Kenny Tete limped off with a hamstring injury.

Ronald Koeman's exciting young side shoot straight to the top of Group C, level on three points with Northern Ireland, ahead of Sunday's clash with Germany, who they knocked out of the Nations League the last time they met in November.

The Dutch have been a revelation since Koeman took charge in the wake of their failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, beating both the Germans and world champions France to win their Nations League group and set up a semi-final clash with England in June.

PIATEK ON ROLL

Krzysztof Piatek continued

his magnificent season with the only goal in a 1-0 win for Poland away to Austria in Group G.

The AC Milan forward, already with 19 goals in 27 Serie A appearances this term, has now scored twice in three outings for his country following his international debut in September.

World Cup runners-up Croatia, relegated from the top tier of the Nations League last year, ground out an unconvincing 2-1 victory against Azerbaijan in Zagreb.

Rami Sheydaev put Azerbaijan on top on 19 minutes before Croatia hit back through Borna Barisic and a 79th-minute effort by Andrej Kramaric in Group E.

Slovakia top the section on goal difference following a 2-0 defeat of Hungary in Trnava, as Ondrej Duda and Albert Rusnak scored for the hosts.



Indian women players celebrate after winning record fifth SAFF championship

INDIAN WOMEN WRAPS UP SAFF TITLE

PTI ■ BIRATNAGAR

India continued its dominance at the SAFF Women's Championship by lifting its fifth straight title with a 3-1 victory over hosts Nepal in the final on Friday.

With this win India has extended its unbeaten run in the tournament's history to 23 games.

India scored through Dalima Chhibber, Grace Dangmei and substitute Anju Tamang at the Sahid Rangshala Stadium.

Both the sides were seen pressing hard from the first whistle. Dangmei fashioned a couple of early chances down the right wing for India, while Nepal registered a couple of shots from distance with Manjali Kumar testing Indian custodian Aditi Chauhan in the 14th minute.

Just three minutes into the game, after some excellent build-up play down the right, Sandhiya laid off a ball for Sanju to shoot from the top of the box. The winger's effort was a powerful one but it was saved by the opposition keeper.

On the other end, Sabitra Bhandari posed a threat for India in the penalty area but her curling effort was off target.

In the semifinal against Bangladesh, it was Chhibber who opened the scoring for India and this time around too, it was the right-back who gave India the advantage. In the 26th minute, she smashed the ball past the keeper from a free-kick from 30 yards with a powerful drive and put the defending champions into a 1-0 lead.

Ratanbala Devi could have added a second goal six minutes later but her shot from dis-

ance was saved by the Nepal goalie.

In the 34th minute though, Sabitra equalised for the hosts as she rose high above her marker and headed the ball into the back of the Indian net.

The break saw both sides locked at a goal apiece.

The second half began with India creating the majority of the opportunities, with Sanju and Ratanbala putting their respective efforts just over the bar.



With this win India has extended its unbeaten run in the tournament's history to 23 games

India's pressure paid off in the 63rd minute as Sanju put Grace through on goal with a delightful through ball.

The winger swiftly broke through, showed great composure and slotted the ball home to restore India's advantage.

India continued to keep Nepal at bay.

Coach Maymol Rocky brought on Anju Tamang in place of Sandhiya midway through the second half at the top of the pitch and in the 78th minute, the move paid rich dividends as she slammed the ball on the volley for India's third goal after a crafty first-time assist from Indumathi Kathiresan.

Towards the end, Nepal tried hard to break the rival defence but the Indians refused to bow down and stood firm.

INDIA START CAMPAIGN AGAINST JAPAN

PTI ■ IPOH

Putting behind the disappointments of last year, the Indian men's hockey team will renew its quest for glory when it takes on Asian Games Gold medallists Japan in their opening encounter of the 28th Sultan Azlan Shah Cup on Saturday.

Despite being without the guidance of a coach and a series of injuries plaguing its players, most recent being Gurjant, who returned home after fracturing

his nose during a practice match, the Indian team is upbeat and confident of a show good.

"Japan, Korea and hosts Malaysia will be the teams to watch out for. They are travelling with full squads and they will pose a stiff challenge for us," skipper Manpreet Singh said on the eve of their opening match.

"The youngsters will need to step up their game and I believe having fresh faces can be an advantage as the possibility of the opponents knowing much



about the new comers is less."

The Indian team reached here on Monday and have been going about their routine to get used to the humid conditions. On Thursday, the team played a practice match against hosts Malaysia and are geared up for a good start to the tournament.

India's previous outing at Sultan Azlan Shah ended with the team finishing fifth but saw some good performances by a young unit combined with a few senior players.

The team had lost narrowly (2-3) to Argentina in their first match, drew with England 1-1, lost to Australia 2-4 and beat Malaysia 5-1. Though they lost 2-3 to Ireland in the round robin stage, they beat them 4-1 in the placing match.

"Youngsters have always used the platform to come up with memorable performances here and though the forward line barring Mandeep Singh has about 12 caps between each other, we are hopeful they will

soak up the pressure early on and deliver," Manpreet said.

"It's important for us seniors to back all the youngsters in the team and guide them through the tournament to get the best out of them," he added.

India have been crowned champions in 1985, 1991, 1995, 2009 and shared the honours with South Korea in 2010.

In most recent years, the Indian team settled for Silver in 2016 after losing to Australia and Bronze in 2017.



Venus holds off Jakupovic in Miami

AFP ■ MIAMI

Venus Williams displayed the mental strength that has made her a seven-time Grand Slam singles champion on Thursday, holding off a spirited challenge by Slovenian Dalila Jakupovic at the WTA Miami Open.

The 38-year-old American, a quarter-finalist at Indian Wells last week, turned back Jakupovic 7-5, 6-3 in 78 minutes to reach the second round after a rough start.

Jakupovic was serving for the first set and Williams was on the back foot before the qualifier wilted under the pressure and 43rd-ranked Williams booked a second-round matchup against Spanish 24th seed Carla Suarez Navarro.

Tenth seed Serena Williams, a 23-time Grand Slam singles champion and younger sister of Venus, will open in the second round against Sweden's Rebecca Peterson, who eliminated German qualifier Laura Siegemund 6-1, 5-7, 7-5.

Three consecutive breaks saw 80th-ranked Jakupovic ease into an early 3-2 lead with Williams struggling on serve, and she served

for the first set at 5-4 before Williams answered to claim a set that saw seven service breaks in all.

Williams stormed ahead 5-1 in the second set and cruised from there.

Williams, in a record 20th Miami appearance, knows she faces a tougher test in Suarez Navarro even though she owns a 6-3 career edge on the Spaniard.

Mari Osaka, the older sister of world number one Naomi Osaka, was ousted in her opening match, falling to American Whitney Osuigwe 6-2, 6-4.

Canada's Bianca Andreescu, fresh off the Indian Wells title, rallied to beat Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-2 in her opening match.

World number two Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic downed Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-1, 6-4, to become the first player into the third round.

In ATP first-round matches, Australia's Bernard Tomic dispatched Brazilian qualifier Thiago Monteiro 6-4, 6-1 and Aussie Jordan Thompson downed Britain's Cameron Norrie 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Smriti, Jhulan continue to top

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian duo of Smriti Mandhana and Jhulan Goswami continued to lead the batting and bowling charts respectively in the latest ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings released on Friday.

While Mandhana topped the ODI player rankings for batters with 797 points, Goswami was atop the bowlers list with 730 points.

India's ODI skipper Mithali Raj was static at the fourth place with 713 points as the only other cricketer from the country in the top 10 batting list.

Among bowlers, Indian pacer Shikha Pandey stayed at the fifth spot with 688 points, while leg-spinner Poonam Yadav was steady at the 10th place with 656 points.

In all-rounder list, India's Deepti Sharma shared the third spot with D van Niekerk of South Africa with 388 points.

Among others, England captain Heather Knight and fast bowler Anya Shrubsole inched towards the top 10 for batters and bowlers, respectively after handy performances in their three-match series against Sri Lanka.



Jhulan Goswami celebrates after dismissing English player

While Knight has moved up one place to 11th after scoring 84 runs, Shrubsole is 11th in the other list after moving up two places and to within one point of her career-best points tally of 654 with five wickets in the series, which saw England move up to second place in the ICC Women's Championship.

England are on 18 points after 15 matches, strengthening their position in the eight-team championship that provides direct qualification berths to hosts New Zealand and four other top teams in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2021.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka's chances of a direct qualification were quashed with the 3-0 series loss at home as they have managed only two points from 15 matches and will now need to go through the Qualifying tournament.

Australia are on the verge of qualification after only 12 matches, as they lead the table with 22 points.

India are third with 16 from 15 matches while New Zealand (14 from 15) and South Africa (13 from 12) are in fourth and fifth positions, respectively.



Lionel Messi will start friendly against Venezuela in Madrid as he makes his return for Argentina following a self-imposed eight-month exile

Will Jacks smashes 25-ball hundred

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Surrey's Will Jacks blazed his way to a 25-ball century, including six sixes in an over, during a pre-season T10 clash with Lancashire in Dubai.

In all, he smashed eight boundaries and 11 sixes.

After producing the brutal assault on Thursday, the batsman said that he was looking to play shots from the first ball.

"From the first ball I just tried to play my shots, after the first few overs my intention was to try and hit every ball for six, and I think after four sixes I thought, 'I could hit six sixes here'. I had never done it before and it was nice to do that and something I will cherish," the International Cricket Council quoted Jacks as saying.

Had the match been accorded official status, Jacks' effort would have been bettered by Chris Gayle's world

record for the fastest century in competitive cricket, achieved in the 2013 IPL, by five balls.

Jacks hit Stephen Parry for six sixes in an over on the way to his ton. He also passed the top score of 87 for the 10-over format achieved by Alex Hales last year.

Jacks first reached his fifty off just 14 deliveries and then smashed six consecutive sixes to bring up his century.

Jacks' knock powered Surrey to 176 and a 95-run win over Lancashire. The 20-year-old Jacks made his debut for Surrey in first-class, List A and T20 last season, scoring 121 off 100 balls in a Royal London Cup match against Gloucestershire.

The match between Surrey and Lancashire was a pre-season fixture for both the teams, who are gearing up for the county season, which begins next month.

Durham appoint Bancroft as captain

AFP ■ LONDON

Durham have appointed Cameron Bancroft as captain for the upcoming English County Championship and One-day Cup season, the northeast county announced on Thursday.

Bancroft was banned for nine months for ball-tampering in a Test against South Africa in Cape Town last March.

Durham high performance coach James Franklin and the county's director of cricket Marcus North, a former Australia batsman, decided to appoint Bancroft as captain in succession to retired local hero and former England all-rounder Paul Collingwood.

"We're delighted to have Cameron with us for the season and we're confident he has the attributes to lead this exciting young Durham dressing room," Franklin said.

"He has invaluable experience at the top level and has enjoyed a successful spell in England before, during his time with Gloucestershire."

Former New Zealand international Franklin added: "He's proven since returning to first-class cricket over the last few months that he has the mental toughness, skill and attitude to excel at the highest level."

Bancroft has played in eight Tests and opened the batting against England in the 2017/18 Ashes.

Cricket's mega stars ready for annual carnival

With ICC World Cup in mind, Virat, Dhoni & Rohit along with other WC hopefuls look to make mark in IPL



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

MS Dhoni's tactic against Jasprit Bumrah's yorkers, Virat Kohli's strategy to counter Kuldeep Yadav's googlies, Steve Smith's desperation to show his footwork, the 12th edition of Indian Premier League will be all these and much more.

The annual cricket carnival like every other edition will also throw up a few unexpected heroes, who will be topic of 9 pm dinner table discussions as India's cricket fanatics get ready for their two-months of 8 pm binge-watch.

This edition of the league will bear special significance with the mega ODI World Cup starting only two and half weeks after the final on May 12. In 2011 and 2015, the World Cup was held before the IPL and this is the first time that it will be held post the tournament.

With skipper Virat Kohli stressing on workload management for all the World Cup hopefuls, it promises to be an interesting IPL.

On one hand, players will need to stand up to the expectations of their fran-

chises who are paying million bucks and on other hand will be the commitment towards country which expects nothing short of trophy from 'Men In Blue'.

Set to complete a dozen of editions, IPL has always carried a different meaning for different players, especially the eight captains.

For Dhoni, the Chennai Super Kings is an extended family where he always seemed to be in control. He has created a different kind of legacy in IPL with three titles and has a legacy to defend. And who knows whether these are the last seven games at the Chepauk where CSK fans will get to watch their beloved 'Thala' in his canary yellow jersey.

Virat Kohli has nothing to prove as a batsman after his heady accomplishments over the years but eight years as RCB captain without an IPL title, sticks out like a sore thumb.

Former KKR skipper Gautam Gambhir's not so charitable comments on Kohli's IPL captaincy wouldn't have gone unnoticed as far as the India captain is concerned and he would be happy to turn the corner even though World Cup has

perhaps occupied 90 percent of his mind space.

Rohit Sharma perhaps leads a franchise which is the most demanding amongst the eight teams and nothing short of a final appearance or a trophy makes the owners happy.

The India vice-captain also has three IPL titles under his belt but there would be no less pressure to win a fourth title and at the same time keep a tab on Hardik Pandya and Jasprit Bumrah's workload.

Ajinkya Rahane will perhaps ponder on how he slipped out of the ODI radar after playing his part in the 2015 edition and a good show for Rajasthan Royals will certainly lift his spirits.

With Steve Smith ready to sing the redemption song and the two mavericks in Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler adding the zing, Royals will be serious contenders for a place in the play-offs.

Ravichandran Ashwin has said he is "no slouch with white ball" and will probably carry a baggage of angst now that it is crystal clear that he has missed the World Cup bus. With find of English cricket Sam Curran in his ranks, Ashwin

will aim to make a statement.

But if his variations could trouble a Kohli or a Rohit, he certainly would have made a point and also helped Kings XI Punjab gain the upperhand.

Shreyas Iyer all this while must have cursed his luck for not being considered worthy enough to be in the scheme of things for the World Cup.

Just like Delhi has decided to shed 'Daredevilry' for 'Capital' in search of luck, the immensely talented Iyer will also like the rub of the green to go his way in company of Rishabh Pant, Ishant Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw.

For Dinesh Karthik, it will be a tense four-week period where he will have to time and again do justice to his finisher's tag but also live up to the expectations of the Kolkata Knight Riders, which has a solid fan base.

The only foreign leader Kane Williamson will certainly feel a bit less pressure this time with David Warner back in the mix for Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Australian cricket's perennial bad boy will be out there to prove a point to one and all who had all but written him

IPL FIGURATIVELY

213674 runs were scored for the loss of 8136 wickets at 26.26 in 26509.1 overs at an economical rate of 8.06 runs per over in 597 matches so far in Indian Premier League.

22541 runs were scored for the loss of 909 wickets at 24.79 in 2935.3 overs at an economical rate of 7.67 in 76 matches in the IPL-6 in 2013 which is the most in a single edition.

469 runs for the loss of 10 wickets in 40 overs is the highest match aggregate in Indian Premier League. Chennai Super Kings scored 246 runs for the loss of five wickets in 20 overs while Rajasthan Royals made 223 for five in 20 overs at Chennai on April 3, 2010.

135 runs for the loss of 12 wickets in 20.5 overs is the lowest match aggregate in this championship. After bowling out Kolkata Knight Riders for 67 in 15.2 overs, Mumbai Indians made 68 for two in 5.3 overs to win the match. The same number of runs were scored for the loss of 10 wickets between Kings XI Punjab and Delhi Daredevils at Mohali on April 30, 2017.

146 runs is the biggest win in terms of runs in Indian Premier League. Mumbai Indians beat Delhi Daredevils at Delhi on May 6, 2015.

7 the number of tied matches played in the Indian Premier League so far.

17 hat tricks were achieved by 14 bowlers in this championship. Amit Mishra's three-hat tricks are the most by a bowler. Yuvraj Singh performed two hat tricks.

292 sixes by Chris Gayle in 111 innings of 112 matches for

Kolkata Knight Riders, Kings XI Punjab and Royal Challengers Bangalore is the most by a batsman in this championship.

4985 runs by Suresh Raina in 172 innings of 176 matches with one hundred and 35 fifties is the most by a batsman in Indian Premier League.

154 wickets by Lasith Malinga for Mumbai Indians in 110 innings of as many matches with five four-wicket haul is the most by a bowlers in this championship.

229 runs partnership between Virat Kohli and Abraham de Villiers for the second wicket for Royal Challengers Bangalore against Gujarat Lions at Bangalore on May 14, 2016 is the biggest in Indian Premier League.

124 dismissals, 94 catches and 30 stumpings, in 152 innings of 168 matches by Dinesh Karthik for Delhi Daredevils, Kings XI Punjab, Gujarat Lions, Mumbai Indians, Kolkata Knight Riders and Royal Challengers Bangalore is the most by a wicket-keeper in Indian Premier League.

95 catches by Suresh Raina in 175 innings for Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Lions is the most by a fielder, other than wicket-keeper, in this championship.

159 matches Mahendra Singh Dhoni led Chennai Super Kings and Rising Pune Supergiants is the most by a skipper.

176 matches by Suresh Raina for Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Lions is the most by a player. Mahendra Singh Dhoni is on the second spot with 175 appearances.

Faisal Features

off after the ball tampering scandal. This will help Williamson get his strategies in place with Rashid Khan expected to be the trump card.

As far as balance is concerned, Rajasthan Royals looks the most balanced on paper while CSK and MI as usual have a lot of matchwinners.

Capitals also has a good batting lineup, something that can't be said about

their bowling.

Veterans like Chris Gayle and AB de Villiers are expected to have their moments alongside young turks like Shubman Gill and Shaw.

There could be a Varun Chakravathy, a Prayas Ray Barman or Prabh Simran Singh, who catch the imagination of the country with their talent. In all, possibilities are endless during next seven weeks.



One man doesn't win IPL: Fleming on Gambhir's Kohli jibe

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Carlos Brathwaite's presence in the KKR line-up will boost the franchise's batting, which is the "best" among eight teams, claimed assistant coach Simon Katich.

The Barbados all-rounder in the most expensive buy for KKR at ₹ 5 crore and will add firepower alongside Chris Lynn, Robin Uthappa and Andre Russell.

"The big fella has got potentially one of the best strike rates in World T20. So in terms of our batting, it's the strongest in the competition," Katich made his ambitious claim during the unveiling of new recruits.

A career T20 average of shade under 17 in 143 games doesn't exactly inspire confidence but Katich probably wants to measure his ability to be destructive looking at his career strike-rate of 145.04.

"We are blessed with a lot of powerful players like Lynn, Narine, who is good during the Powerplay. There is Robin (Uthappa), Nitish (Rana), DK, there is Shubman (Gill)..."

With a maximum of four foreigners allowed in the playing XI, it may be a selection headache for KKR think tank after Carlos' inclusion but the Aussie said they would assess the conditions to pick the XI.

"It depends on the opposition and where we are playing. In certain games, there will be a possibility that they will play together potentially. But throughout, our batting line up has been our real strength."

"Last year six of our batsmen were inside the top-25 leading run-getters," he pointed out.

"So we have a very powerful batting line up. It's great to see the big fella get out there and start swatting sixes like flies at the back end of the innings."

Eyeing to match the triple title feats of Chennai and Mumbai in the league, Kolkata will begin their campaign against Sunrisers at Eden Gardens on Sunday.

Dad's Army face Virat challenge

PTI ■ CHENNAI

One man doesn't win the IPL," Chennai Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming said on Friday, differing with Gautam Gambhir's viewpoint that one can't say Virat Kohli and Mahendra Singh Dhoni in the same breath, as India's captain has not won the tournament.

Former India opener Gambhir, who led Kolkata Knight Riders to two IPL trophies in 2012 and 2014, recently said that in a result-oriented franchise environment, Kohli has been "lucky" to have survived despite Royal Challengers Bangalore never winning the coveted title in his eight years as skipper.

But Fleming thought otherwise.

"One man doesn't win the IPL. It's a tough competition to win. It's getting tougher because teams are a lot smarter.

Players are conditioned to playing in the IPL. Coaches and managers are getting more shrewd in how they buy and put together teams," Fleming said.

"So just because you're probably the best batter in the world, probably one of the best players in the world, it doesn't mean he's going to have success in the IPL."

"There's a number of things that go towards it. One thing I do know is that when there's a challenge put in front of him, he meets it."

Fleming was speaking on the eve of the IPL-12 opener between CSK and Bangalore at the Chidambaram Stadium.

He said South African captain Faf du Plessis, leg-spinner Imran Tahir and New Zealand all-rounder Mitchell Santner had arrived and were available for selection.

Warner in superb rhythm, raring to go

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Sunrisers Hyderabad smentor VVS Laxman on Friday said skipper David Warner looks in superb rhythm and is raring to go as his team prepares to take on Kolkata on Sunday.

Warner recently recovered from an elbow surgery and smashed a rapid-fire century for his Sydney club side on return.

"He is totally fit and raring to go. He has really worked hard on his fitness and also what really amazed me was the kind of rhythm he showed from the first practice session," Laxman said after practice session.

"We also played a couple of practice matches in Hyderabad and he scored in both those matches and was in fantastic rhythm and that is something really pleasing for all of us," he said.

"David Warner is really looking positive going into this season. I am sure he is looking forward to contributing to Sunrisers," Laxman said.

"He has been an exceptional player for us, a premier batsman for us and I am sure he will look forward to scoring heavily this season as well and win matches and hopefully the tournament for Sunrisers."

DC can be IPL powerhouse: Rabada

PTI ■ MUMBAI

South African speedster Kagiso Rabada feels a new look Delhi Capitals has the potential to be a "powerhouse" in the future editions of the Indian Premier League.

Rabada re-united with his Delhi Capitals' teammates on Friday as they prepare to take on the Mumbai Indians in their first match of the season at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday.

The 23-year-old, who arrived in the country after helping his national team beat Sri Lanka 5-0 in the recently-concluded ODI series, is looking forward to playing a crucial part this season.

"I think we have put together a great squad this time around. It is a fairly young squad and I feel there is a good mixture of overseas players along with the Indian players," he said.

"We have some very exciting spinners as well along with good batsmen. Of course, the pace bowling is going to be one of our strengths and I am really looking forward to playing a part in my team's success this season."

Rabada said he is excited to see the progress of the team this season.

Sanga, Styris back Rohit as MI opener

Mumbai: Former Sri Lanka captain Kumara Sangakkara and New Zealand all-rounder Scott Styris have backed Rohit Sharma's decision to open for Mumbai Indians in the upcoming 12th edition, which begins on Saturday.

Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit has already announced his decision to open in all the games.

While legendary leg-spinner Anil Kumble, who was with the Mumbai Indians earlier, had an advice for the star India batsman, that he should continue opening throughout the tournament.

Asked about it, Sangakkara said: "I feel he (Rohit) should open, without a doubt. Rohit Sharma should have opened last year also and I am very happy that he is opening this year, that gives Mumbai Indians the best opportunity of scoring hundreds and winning games."

Echoing similar views, Kumble said, "Mumbai has always had this issue with Rohit (opening). What Mumbai Indians and Rohit need to decide is if he decides to open, he needs to open for the rest of the tournament."

Also Styris said Rohit opening is good for "India" in view of the upcoming World Cup.

"He is going to open and that is good for India, we know that for the World Cup. He is such a champion there and I think we will see his skills, he is so good and he stand-out anyway in this IPL."

| LAST YEAR'S MATCHES | |
|---------------------|---|
| ➤ | Cheenni Super Kings beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 6 wickets at Pune |
| ➤ | Cheenni Super Kings beat Royal Challengers Bangalore by 5 wickets at Bangalore |
| ➤ | Virat Kohli's 732 runs in 21 innings of 22 mtches are the most by a batsman against CSK in the IPL. He also has the most number of 30-plus scores (12) against them. Similarly, his counterpart Mahendra Singh Dhoni's 710 runs in 24 innings of 25 matches are the most by a batsman against RCB in the IPL. |

they would be aware of the requirements.

CSK enjoy an impressive record against RCB, having won 15 matches and lost seven with one no-result. The hosts haven't lost to its rival since 2014.

While the home team has a well-balanced squad with most of the bases covered, RCB is facing concerns over the availability of some foreign players at certain stages of the tournament.

Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal will again be the key man for RCB as he has been over the past seasons and will need the rest of the bowling attack to step up.

Kohli has always led from the front and his exploits in the IPL are well documented, the RCB skipper will begin yet another campaign aware that his form could prove vital in the success of his side in the grueling tournament.



Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore will face MS Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings

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| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Live on Star Sports 1 & 2 | HEAD TO HEAD |
| CSK VS RCB | M 22 |
| CHENNAI | CSK 14 |
| SATURDAY 18:00 PM | RCB 7 |

While CSK is a three-time champion, the Bengaluru franchise is probably the biggest underachiever despite boasting of some of the best names in its squad.

The outcome of Saturday's game will depend on which team bowls better and holds its nerve as both side have players who can turn a match on its head in a jiffy.

CSK's Ambati Rayudu and Ravindra Jadeja will be keen to

step up their performances and seal a spot in the Indian World Cup squad. While RCB paceman Umesh Yadav will also look to shine in the IPL and make a case for selection in the England-bound playing XI.

A lot has been said about the workload, especially that of the bowlers, which needs to be monitored. CSK head coach Stephen Fleming said on Wednesday that it is up to the players and as professionals,

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PTI