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LUCKNOW, THURSDAY MAY 9, 2019; PAGES 16 ₹3



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IT'S A BUSY YEAR FOR ME: BHUMI 14 VIVACITY

In hung House, call us first: Opp front

Post-poll alliance to impress on Prez not to give BJP-led NDA chance to form Govt if it fails to get majority

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties have scheduled a meeting on May 21, two days ahead of the Lok Sabha results, to prepare a plan to approach the President of India in case the BJP-led NDA is not able to cross halfway mark in the Lok Sabha to impress upon him not to call the single largest party to form a Government.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, who has been toiling hard to unite the Opposition, called on Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday and discussed plans to hold the meeting.

"Naidu and Rahul discussed the post-poll scenario and more or less agreed to call a meeting of Opposition parties on May 21," said AICC leader. In a brief meeting, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief is believed to have also discussed the voter-verified

paper audit trail issue, voting percentage in the five phases, besides the reports about the Andhra Pradesh Assembly election results.

The Rahul-Naidu meeting comes a day after TRS chief K Chandrashekhara Rao met Kerala Chief Minister Vijayan Pinarayi to revive the formation of a non-BJP and non-Congress Federal Front at the Centre. Political sources said though KCR has always been seen "close" to the NDA fold, his meeting with Vijayan opened the possibility of him joining the Congress-led Opposition camp as Left may not support the BJP.

The Lok Sabha has 543 elected members and the majority mark stands at 272. The BJP had won majority in the 2014 general elections with 282 seats and the combined strength of the NDA went up to 336 seats in the Lok Sabha.

The Andhra Pradesh CM was in Delhi to attend the



Supreme Court hearing on a petition filed by the Opposition to review its judgment rejecting 50 per cent random

physical verification of EVMs using VVPATs. The court dismissed the petition following which the parties again met the

Election Commission to press their demand.

After meeting Rahul, Naidu headed for West Bengal

- Recalling an instance post 1998 elections, then President KR Narayanan had insisted that Atal Bihari Vajpayee produce letters of support before he was called to form the Government and seek a vote of confidence on the floor of the House.
- While the BJP had won 178 seats, the alliance had 252 members.
- The Government, however, collapsed after 13 months, when it lost the vote of confidence by a single vote.

to attend public rallies in support of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for the next two days.

Sources said in case the May 23 result throws split verdict, 21 Opposition parties are planning to meet the President to impress upon him not to call the single largest party to form a Government.

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No work culture is AAP's model for Delhi: Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being garlanded during an election campaign rally at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi on Wednesday

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an apparent attack on the AAP, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said they supported the "tukde-tukde" gang and brought the "nakampanthi" model of governance to the national Capital.

"Till now, we have witnessed four models of political traditions in the country 'Nampanthi, Daampanthi, Vaampanthi, Vikaspanthi'. But only in Delhi, there is a fifth model called Nakampanthi. This means the one who rejects work related to Delhi's development and fail when they try to work. People of Delhi have been fooled by a bunch of 'nakampanthi' who had come on the promise of bringing new kind of politics but they have become synonymous with anarchy and obstructionism. Foul language and taking U-turns have become their identity. It means 'not allowing Centre's Ayushman Bharat in Delhi hospitals,' said Modi while addressing his first 2019 poll rally in Delhi at the Ramlila Maidan without naming the AAP.

The PM was accompanied by the BJP's seven Lok Sabha candidates for the national Capital. "We have focused on making the lives of the middle class in Delhi easier. Be it ensuring easier & cheaper housing, cheaper bills for mobile phones & medicines or exempting the income up to ₹5 lakh per year from tax net, they have been at the core of our governance," Modi said while addressing the mammoth crowd.

He said the BJP has reduced pollution and traffic jam in Delhi by building eastern and western peripherals. Enumerating steps taken out to reduce level of pollution in the national Capital, the PM said, "After the construction of

the eastern and western peripheral, the trucks reach their destination without taking the road from within Delhi, thus reducing pollution and traffic jam. Inflation was always an important poll issue, but now Opposition is not able to corner Government on this."

Training his guns on the Congress, Modi said, "I want to tell the people of our country about those who actually treated our Armed forces as their personal property. Former PM Rajiv Gandhi took his in-laws and their family members from Italy to a personal holiday on Naval warship INS Vikrant."

"They gave strength to those who are against Punjab and supports Khalistan. They even went abroad and contacted the anti-national forces," he said.

"For the first time, the accused of 1984 anti-Sikh riots have been brought behind bars and given punishment for their crimes. After more than 30 years, the law has reached the perpetrators of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. For the first time, they have reached the bars, they have reached the gallows, the PM said.

Thanking the people of the city, Modi said, "I am fortunate that you provided me with the opportunity to serve you. Before I give you an account of my work, I would like to extend my gratitude to every person in Delhi."

"In the past five years, I have criss-crossed the city several times. My security contingent was always with me and I saw people waiting for me to pass. Each time I used to think about how people are running late because of me. This is not my habit and was never my intention," he said amidst thunderous applause of the people.

Large number of VVPAT checks may delay poll results by a day

SIANS ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha elections results may be delayed by a day due to increased number of VVPAT verifications, sources in the Election Commission said on Wednesday.

"As per the previous plan, the results of the elections are scheduled to be declared on May 23. But the results may be delayed and the final results may be declared to May 24 due to increased number of VVPAT verifications," the official said. Explaining the reason, the EC official said that an increase in the number of VVPAT verification from one to five polling booths in each Assembly segment of a Parliamentary constituency, as directed by the apex court on April 8, could delay the counting by more than five-six hours.

In a setback to the Opposition, the Supreme Court on Tuesday declined to increase the count for verification of VVPAT slips with EVMs in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls.

DM changes timing of schools in city

Lucknow: In view of the hot weather conditions, District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma has changed the timing of schools with effect from May 10 (Thursday). All the schools up to Class 12 will open from 7 am to 11 am.

'Desh me aandhi Priyanka Gandhi' echoes in Delhi

Cong leader holds roadshows for Sheila, Vijendra

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi on Wednesday held two roadshows in support of Sheila Dikshit, the party candidate from North East Delhi constituency and its South Delhi candidate Vijender Singh. Priyanka drew a huge crowd as people lustily cheered her along the roadshow.

Perched atop a minibus that started from Seelampur, a minority dominated area, Priyanka and Sheila waved at the ebullient hordes of supporters who were raising slogans "Desh me aandhi Priyanka Gandhi".

Thousands of people, standing on rooftops, balconies and roadsides waved the Congress flags and welcomed Priyanka by raising pro-Congress slogans.

The Congress banners adorned the road. People jostled with each other to catch a glimpse of Priyanka. Some were also showering rose petals on her as the minibus she was travelling on passed by.

Priyanka exhorted the people of Delhi to throw out the Modi Government which thrives on lies and falsehood to mislead the people.

"Modi has been telling lies and trying to mislead the people, and India is now at the crossroads, for the first time after Independence, seeking a dynamic change," said Priyanka adding that such a change can happen only if the people elect a



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, along with the party's Northeast Delhi candidate Sheila Dikshit, waves at supporters during a mega roadshow for the Lok Sabha polls in New Delhi on Wednesday

Congress Government to power at the Centre.

Priyanka said how can those people who do not understand Delhi can serve the people of Delhi.

She said she is the daughter of Delhi and knows the lanes and by-lanes of Delhi like the lines on her palms, and knows the problems, pains and dilemmas of the people of Delhi, their daily struggles to eke out a living.

Priyanka, coming down heavily on Modi's notebandi

(demonetisation) and GST, said it is one of the biggest financial scandals the country had ever witnessed.

"Prime Minister Modi, without any forethought and planning, with his arrogance, inflicted a heavy blow to the country with these financial scams. India, which was competing with the developed countries in all spheres, has now been sidelined as the growth of the country has been stalled, and India is on the

verge of being out of even among the category of developing countries," said Priyanka.

Priyanka started her roadshow in favour of Sheila Dikshit in the North East Delhi Lok Sabha seat from the Bhramपुरi Pulia, Bhramपुरi Road in the Seelampur Assembly constituency.

The roadshow travelled through the Seelampur, Ghonda and Babarpur Assembly constituencies and the route was such that people

in the neighbouring Assembly constituencies also could participate in the roadshow.

In the second roadshow in favour of Congress candidate from the South Delhi Parliamentary constituency Vijender Singh, Priyanka Gandhi started her journey from Virat Cinema in the Devli Assembly constituency, and passed through Dakshinपुरi Extension, Maharshi Balmiki Marg, covering the Devli and Ambedkar Nagar Assembly constituencies.

Rahul apologises to SC for chor misquote

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday tendered unconditional apology in the Supreme Court for wrongfully attributing his "chowkidar chor hai" remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the apex court in the Rafale verdict.

Rahul, who filed an additional affidavit, said he holds the Supreme Court in the "highest esteem and respect" and any attributions to it were "entirely unintentional, non-wilful and inadvertent".

He also urged the top court to close the criminal contempt proceedings initiated on a petition filed by BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, who alleged that Rahul attributed the personal remarks to the apex court and tried to create prejudice. The Congress leader has

repeatedly hurled "chowkidar chor hai" (the watchman is a thief) jibe at Modi to target him over the Rafale deal.

Later in the day at a public rally in Madhya Pradesh, Rahul said the "chowkidar chor hai" slogan has not been coined by the Congress or him but by the youths and labourers of the country. "This slogan was not coined by the Congress, or by Rahul Gandhi, but it is a slogan of the youth, farmers and labourers of India," he said in Bhand.

The three-page affidavit was filed by the Congress president after he had drawn rebuke from the Supreme court on April 30 over his earlier affidavit in which he had not directly admitted his mistake for incorrectly attributing the allegedly contemptuous remark to the top court.

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'Oust Modi' our Quit India drive: Mamata

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Modi-Mamata battle kept pace with the rising mid-May mercury as the Bengal Chief Minister on Wednesday packed more punch to her anti-saffron campaign equating her "oust-Modi" call to Mahatma Gandhi's "quit India" campaign against the British in 1942.

Addressing a huge rally at Purulia, Mamata Banerjee said, "As in 1942 our leaders had launched the Quit India movement against the British Government finally driving them out of India, we have now given a call to oust Modi who is running a fascist Govt."

She went on to add, "Someone has to bell the cat, and it was me who has taken the responsibility to do so."

The BJP is "dangerous" and Modi is "dangerous" too which is why he has no right to remain in power in Delhi, Mamata said replying to an ear-

lier jibe from the Prime Minister who had accused her of non-performance and perpetrating goonda raj in Bengal.

She said the Modi Government has done nothing, except creating division in the society and inciting riots.

The people of the country had read through the Prime Minister's "evil designs of giving false promises and when the day of reckoning came he would hide behind the security forces," said Mamata.

"Last time he came and told you that he was the son of a chaiwala (tea vendor) which he is not. This time he has exhausted all the tea leaf, sugar and milk and has reappeared before you as a chowkidar.

But the people have seen through his tricks and are calling the chowkidar by a different name. My opinion about him is apart from everything, he is a liar too as he has not kept his promises of transferring ₹15 lakh in each bank

accounts or creating 2 crore jobs per year," Mamata said.

"Instead of creating jobs, he slapped GST and demonetisation on the country in the name of unearthing black money which he could not end and ended up destroying 3 crore jobs," she said adding India has decided to do away with a "liar Prime Minister."

Attacking Modi and the BJP for creating an "emergency-like situation in the country," Mamata said, "Nobody can speak out in public against him as they are afraid of Modi," adding there was a need to "stop this fascism and environment of terror."

Meanwhile, post poll violence continued in the districts of Bengal as TMC, BJP and Left cadre clashed in North 24 Parganas, Hooghly, Howrah and other places.

At Khandghosh in Burdwan, a CPI(M) polling agent was killed by alleged TMC miscreants for refusing to



West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supreme Mamata Banerjee addresses an election campaign rally in favour of the party candidate from Ghatal constituency actor Dipak Adhikary, popularly known as Dev, for the Lok Sabha polls, at Debra in West Midnapore district on Wednesday

leave the polling booth and challenging bogus votes.

At Bhatpara, the TMC workers attacked houses of BJP members. At Uttarpara and Dhaniakhali, the houses of

CPI(M) supporters were ransacked by alleged TMC men as they reportedly defied their orders and went to cast their votes, sources said. FIRs has been lodged in all the cases.

CAPSULE

'VICTIMISED FOR TAKING UP CHARGE AGAINST CJI'

New Delhi: Senior Advocates Indira Jaising and Anand Grover have taken objection to victimisation for taking up the issue of sexual harassment charge against Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi. A SC notice has been served on them and their NGO on a plea alleging FCRA violation by them. They said they are "deeply disturbed by the turn of events".

WILL THROW YOU OUT, SC TELLS AMRAPALI

New Delhi: The SC has warned the Amrapali Group they can be thrown out and their residential properties transferred to Noida, Greater Noida Authorities.

CONG COINED TERM 'HINDU TERROR': MODI

Kurukshetra/Fatehabad: PM Narendra Modi on Wednesday accused the Congress of coining 'Hindu terror' and keeping the 'innocent in jail'.

'DON'T FALL PREY TO MODI DESIGN' SP-BSP-RLD alliance's prospects to improve further: Maya

PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Rubbishing the Bharatiya Janata Party's claim that it was doing well in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, leaders of the BSP-SP-RLD combine in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday said that on the contrary, the prospects of their alliance were improving day by day.

"The prospects of the opposition alliance will further improve in the remaining two phases of the Lok Sabha polls," Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati said at joint rally with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav in Azamgarh.

Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Ajit Singh also addressed the rally held at the Azamgarh Muslim Education and Welfare Trust grounds.

The BSP supremo said ever since the 'mahagathbandhan' (grand alliance) was formed, "BJP leaders have lost their sleep."

Mayawati appealed to the voters to ensure a historic win for Yadav, who is the joint opposition candidate from the seat held by the Samajwadi Party in the outgoing Lok Sabha.

After SP patron Mulayam Singh Yadav's appeal to voters to back his son, Mayawati said, "You all should ensure victory of Akhilesh in such a way that the BJP candidate (Dinesh Lal Yadav Nirahua) does not muster courage to contest again."

Hitting out at the BJP, the BSP chief said, "We are not 'mahamilawati', it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi who is 'mahamilawati' (highly adulterated)."

Modi has often labelled the



Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, RLD chief Ajit Singh, SP general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav, Mayawati's nephew Akash Anand, BSP leader Satish Chandra Mishra at an election rally in Azamgarh on Wednesday

opposition alliance "mahamilawati".

Dubbing the Congress and the BJP two sides of the same coin, she said, "Dono kaa chaal charan ek hai (both have same nature and character)."

Mayawati said Modi would try to create more confusion in the days to come and appealed to the voters not to fall prey to his designs.

"Unkey achhe din ladd gaye (Modi's good days are over) and bad days are staring at his face," she said.

"The BJP got hold of some selfish people belonging to the

backward community after the BSP government of social brotherhood was formed in 2007 and helped them form parties. Whenever elections arrive the BJP gives them money to withdraw their candidature or gives them one or two seats for their votes," the BSP chief said.

Commenting on formation of a new party by Akhilesh Yadav's uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav, Mayawati said, "Now the BJP has committed dacoity at Akhilesh's house and got his uncle form a new party. Wherever are there BJP candi-

dates, Shivpal's nominees are fielded to cut into the SP's vote share."

"Small organisations of Dalit communities are being propped up by the BJP to divide votes. You all should shun them," she told party cadre and the voters.

In a similar refrain, the SP chief claimed it was "raining votes" in the "mahagathbandhan" in the last five phases of polling and the scenario would be the same in the remaining two phases.

Making fun of Modi, Akhilesh Yadav said he came as

a tea vendor and became 'chowkidar', and asked the voters to snatch away his 'chowki' (chair).

Hitting out at the attempts being made by the Bharatiya Janata Party to drive a wedge between the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav said the alliance of his party with the BSP would last till UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was sent back to Gorakhpur as mahant of (Goraknath) temple.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav said the alliance would out

both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath from power. "No matter how much you try, this alliance is not going to break. The alliance will go a long way. We have not forged this alliance only to oust Narendra Modi from the Centre... we will not keep quiet until he and his disciple Yogi are unseated from power," Yadav said.

"Our alliance will not fall apart until we send Yogi back to his math (temple) in Gorakhpur," he said.

Akhilesh Yadav, who is contesting against BJP's Dinesh Lal Yadav alias Nirahua, a Bhojpur star, in Azamgarh, claimed that the SP-BSP-RLD alliance would get the maximum number of seats in UP.

"I honoured Dinesh Lal Yadav during my regime. Now

he is contesting for those who withdrew the monthly pension given with the award that the SP government gave. I have no problem with anyone contesting against me," said Akhilesh Yadav.

Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua' is drawing huge crowds in his roadshows and meetings. The SP is, however, counting on caste and local equations to favour their chief.

BJP president Amit Shah has asserted in his speeches and interviews that the party will improve its tally in Uttar Pradesh as compared to 2014 when it bagged a whopping 71 seats out of 80, besides its ally Apna Dal winning two.

Sharing stage with the BSP and the SP bosses, RLD chief Ajit Singh said Modi's days as prime minister were over. He appealed to the people to vote out the "government of liars".

The Samajwadi Chief's decision to contest from his father Mulayam Singh Yadav's constituency is being read as a move to consolidate the Yadav, Dalit and Muslim voters in the eastern UP. The three communities form the crux of the SP-BSP-RLD alliance.

Since 1989, only Muslims and Yadavs have won the Azamgarh Lok Sabha seat. Ramakant Yadav won the seat as SP candidate in 1996 and 1999. He won the seat again as BSP candidate in 2004 and on BJP ticket in 2009. The seat was held by Akbar Ahmed Dumpy as a BSP candidate in 1998.

In 2014, the combined vote of SP and BSP in Azamgarh was over 63 per cent, a factor that favours Akhilesh Yadav.

Also, in the 2017 Uttar Pradesh assembly election, the SP bagged three of the five Assembly segments in Azamgarh and the BSP won two. Azamgarh is one of the 14 Lok Sabha seats that will vote on Sunday, May 12, in the sixth round of the parliamentary election.

PGV to resume campaign in UP today



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will resume her campaign in Uttar Pradesh with two rallies and a roadshow on Thursday.

She will address two rallies and take out a roadshow in Sultanpur, where her aunt Maneka Gandhi is pitted against Congress leader Sanjay Singh.

In 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Priyanka's cousin Varun Gandhi, had contested from Sultanpur and won the seat by a huge margin. This time, Varun has swap his parliamentary seat with his mother Maneka, who had contested from Pilibhit in 2014.

According to Congress MLA Aradhana Mishra, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will campaign for Congress candidates in Pratapgarh and Jaunpur along with Sultanpur.

Mishra claimed that Priyanka would start with a public meeting in Pratapgarh at 1:30 pm in support of party candidate Ratna Singh. Ratna Singh won the seat in 2009 but lost it in 2014.

Thereafter, Priyanka will fly to Jaunpur to address her second rally of the day in support of party candidate Devvrat Mishra.

The Congress general secretary will then reach Sultanpur and participate in a roadshow from 4:30 pm in support party candidate Sanjay Singh.

Modi, Shah to address rallies in UP today

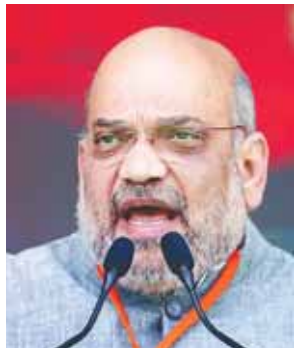
PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the Lok Sabha elections reaching the penultimate phase, senior leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party have intensified electioneering with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking the lead. Modi will address three rallies in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday while BJP president Amit Shah will address four public meeting the same day.

BJP spokesman Manish Dixit said the Prime Minister would address election meetings at Azamgarh, Jaunpur and Prayagraj on Thursday between 1300 hours and 1700 hours.

The Prime Minister's rally in Azamgarh assumes importance because Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav is in the fray from there. Akhilesh's father Mulayam Singh Yadav had won the Azamgarh seat in the 2014 election.

The BJP has fielded Bhojpur superstar Dinesh Lal Yadav 'Nirahua' from Azamgarh, replacing Ramakant Yadav, who left the party after being denied ticket and has joined the Congress. "There is no doubt



that Akhilesh Yadav being former chief minister and national president of Samajwadi Party is a heavyweight. But the BJP candidate is giving a tough fight. He is a craze among youths and after the Prime Minister's rally, the scenario will change," Dixit said.

The SP-BSP-RLD alliance partners held a joint rally in Azamgarh on Wednesday that was addressed by Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav.

After his public meeting in Jaunpur, the last rally of the Prime Minister will be in Allahabad from where the BJP has fielded Rita Bahuguna Joshi

who is Tourism minister in Yogi Adityanath government.

On the other hand, BJP president Amit Shah will address election rallies at Balrampur, Siddharthnagar, Sant Kabir Nagar and Sultanpur on Thursday between 1000 hours and 1500 hours. BJP's prestige is at stake in Sultanpur from where Union Minister Maneka Gandhi is contesting election. She has swapped the seat with her son Feroze Varun Gandhi who is contesting from Pilibhit. Sanjay Singh of Congress and Sonu Singh of SP are the main opposition candidates from this constituency.

BJP leader assaults couple in Meerut

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a sensational incident reported from Meerut, a ruling party leader and his cohorts created a scene in the busy Civil Lines area on Tuesday evening when they not only assaulted a couple but also tore the clothes of the lady.

Surprisingly, the local residents and the policemen as well sided with the BJP leader and made all efforts to bail him out. However, on the intervention of senior officers, a case was registered but no further action was taken.

Prashant Singh, a native of Jagriti Vihar in Meerut, whose father Raj Bahadur Singh is a police sub-inspector, was going to the doctor's clinic on PL Sharma road on Tuesday evening to get his sick wife examined. When the couple was crossing Meghdoot Puliya crossing under Civil Lines police station, a speeding Scorpio hit their motorcycle.

When the couple objected to rash driving, Digvijay Singh, a local BJP leader, two of his henchmen and a woman wearing burqa stepped out the Scorpio and first thrashed the couple.

Singh and his goons allegedly tore the clothes of Prashant's wife. She had to take her husband's T-shirt to save her modesty.

Agitated over the molestation, the woman lay down before the Scorpio and stopped the accused from fleeing. Later, over 100 local residents gathered but they all sided with the BJP leader. Even the local cops took the side of the BJP leader and threatened the couple to leave the place.

However, when the senior officers reached the spot and found that the entire incident was already recorded, they got a case registered against Digvijay Singh and other accused to save themselves from embarrassment.

Interestingly, the cops made no arrest in this regard and claimed that investigation was still on and whoever was found guilty would be arrested.

Meanwhile, the body of a 28-year-old woman with bullet wounds was found near a highway in Satheri village of Muzaffarnagar. The body was recovered by a team of the Ratenpuri police station and sent for post-mortem on Tuesday.

Woman, daughter killed as gas cylinder explodes

Lucknow: A woman and her 16-year-old daughter were killed when a gas cylinder exploded in their house in Salarpur village of Bagraich.

The incident occurred on Tuesday night in the house of Suresh, killing his wife Munni Devi (40) and their daughter Karishma while their son Neeraj suffered serious burn injuries, camp in-charge of SSB Abhishek Kumar said.

The fire engulfed at least 20 houses in the vicinity, officials said. The explosion took place in the thatched house of Suresh when a programme was going on there. Following the incident, the villagers rushed to the SSB camp for help, Kumar said.

On the request of SSB, a fire tender from Gulariya in Nepal came and extinguished fire," the SSB camp in-charge said. Gulariya is a municipality and headquarters of Bardiya district in the Bheri zone of southwestern Nepal in the plains of the Terai region near the southern border with the Bagraich.

One BJP & Yuva Vahini worker should be present at each booth: Adityanath

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday asked for the presence of at least one worker of the BJP and fringe group Hindu Yuva Vahini at every electoral booth on polling day. In a joint meeting of the BJP and Hindu Yuva Vahini workers here, Adityanath told them to bring people to the booth and make them vote.

During the meet, in which 15 out of 115 booth presidents were absent, the BJP leader asked the party workers to become active instead of the formality of merely working on paper.

The Chief Minister told them to do door-to-door campaigning, have voter lists and resolve poll-related issues. "Booth is the primary unit for winning election and PM Modi says when each worker and booth president wins his booth, election would be won," Adityanath said.

"One BJP and one HYV worker each should remain present at every booth, he said. "If you



could ensure 70 per cent polling, the city (Gorakhpur) could give a lead of at least 1.5-2 lakh to the party nominee."

"When the Election Commission restricted me after the Bajrangbali statement, I decided to visit Bajrangbali temple wherever I found," Adityanath said.

He told them to make the voters aware of the development work.

Amethi youths letter in blood to EC

Lucknow (PNS): Upset at the use of abusive language by Prime Minister Narendra Modi against former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, a youth from Amethi has sent a letter written in blood to the Election Commission seeking directive for the Prime Minister to abstain from making objectionable comments that hurt the sentiments of the people.

Manoj Kashyap of Shahgarh locality in Amethi has allegedly written that he was "traumatised" by the statement of the Prime Minister against late Rajiv Gandhi. Praising the work done by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the youth claimed that Rajivji was known for his contribution to the country, including lowering of the voting age to 18 years, implementation of panchayat raj system, bringing computer revolution in the country. He said late Rajiv Gandhi was also the architect of modern India.

"Former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee had also praised Rajiv Gandhi in an article," he pointed out.

Kashyap further wrote that for the people of Amethi, anyone who insulted Rajiv Gandhi was akin to those who assassinated him.

The reference was obviously to Modi referring to late Rajiv Gandhi as 'Bhrashtachari No. 1' in a recent election rally.

The letter has been shared on the Twitter handle of Congress MLC Deepak Singh.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FINANCE, DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF CUSTOMS, INDIRECT TAXES & NARCOTICS, FARIDABAD

EXAMINATION FOR CONFIRMATION OF ENROLLMENT OF GST PRACTITIONERS

The National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) has been authorized to conduct an examination for confirmation of enrollment of Goods and Services Tax Practitioners (GSTPs) in terms of the sub-rule (3) of Rule 83 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Rules, 2017, vide Notification No. 24/2018-Central Tax dated 28.5.2018.

The GSTPs enrolled on the GST Network under sub-rule (2) of Rule 83 and covered by clause (b) of sub-rule (1) of Rule 83, i.e. those meeting the eligibility criteria of having enrolled as sales tax practitioners or tax return preparer under the existing law for a period not less than five years, are required to pass the said examination before 31.12.2019 in terms of Notification No. 03/2019-Central Tax dated 29.01.2019. Two such examinations for such GSTPs have already been conducted on 31.10.2018 and 17.12.2018. The next examination for them shall be conducted on 14.06.2019 from 1100 hrs to 1330 hrs at designated examination centers across India.

It will be a Computer Based Exam. The registration for the exam can be done by the eligible GSTPs on a registration portal, link of which will be provided on NACIN and CBIC websites. The registration portal for exam scheduled on 14.06.2019 will be activated on 21st May, 2019 and will remain open up to 4th June, 2019. For convenience of candidates, a help desk will also be set up, details of which will be made available on the registration portal. The applicants are required to make online payment of examination fee of Rs. 500/- at the time of registration for this exam.

Principal Director General NACIN, Faridabad

Love-lorn couple end lives after parents' refusal to marriage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A youth and a girl were found hanging from a tree in a mango grove in Malihabad on Wednesday morning, fuelling speculations of honour killing. However, police said the love-lorn couple ended their life as their respective families were against their marriage.

The youth was identified as Ranjeet Rawat (20) and the girl as Seema (name changed), both residents of Sahijanwa village. As per reports, some villagers pass by the mango grove, owned by Gyanendra Singh, and spotted the bodies hanging from a tree. The girl's feet were touching the ground and there were bruises on both the bodies. It appeared that the two were beaten up.

As the news spread, villagers reached the scene in large numbers. On being informed, a police team also reached the place. It surfaced during investigation that the couple were in love.

"The girl's marriage was fixed with another person by her family. However, Ranjeet talked to that person and disclosed his affair with the girl. After that, the girl's marriage was cancelled," villagers told police.

The father of the girl told the police that Seema left home

Man found hanging in boutique, act captured by CCTV camera

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

A 44-year-old man was found hanging inside his boutique in Ganeshganj under Naka police station area on Wednesday morning.

According to SHO, Naka, Upendra Agrawal of Takiya Ganeshganj locality had his boutique in the area. "Upendra opened the shop around 10 am on Wednesday. Around 11 am, his employee reached the shop and found him hanging from the ceiling with a dupatta tied around his neck. His act was captured in the CCTV camera installed at the shop and there is no doubt that he ended his life," the Naka SHO said.



He said the body was sent for autopsy and further investigations were underway. "Upendra probably took the

step due to some family issue or financial crisis. As the family members are grief-stricken at the moment, we could not quiz them," the SHO said.

Meanwhile, in another incident, a labourer, identified as Anuj of Atrauli (Hardoi), ended his life at his rented house in Bargadi village of Bakshi-Ka-Talab on Wednesday. Reports said Anuj was found hanging from the ceiling with a gamchha tied around his neck. A police team took the body off the noose and sent it for autopsy. "He was found hanging in a room on the second floor. The police did not recover any suicide note," a spokesman said.

around 8 am, saying she was going to relieve herself. "But she did not come back. A little later, we were informed that she and Ranjeet had committed suicide," Seema's father told police.

The Malihabad SHO discounted the theory of honour

killing, saying no such evidence or inputs were obtained during probe. "There were no injury marks on the body barring the ligature marks around the necks of both. In light of the circumstantial evidence, it seems that they met in the mango grove and decided to

end their lives as their families were not ready for their marriage," the SHO said.

He said the bodies were sent for autopsy and further investigations were on. "We will talk to the villagers to reach a conclusion as to why the two ended their lives," he added.

Training of poll personnel for counting of votes from May 14

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The 4-day training of 600 polling personnel for counting of votes will begin on May 14. The counting of votes is scheduled for May 23. The counting will take place at Rama Bai Sthal for the nine constituencies of Lucknow, including five Vidhan Sabha constituencies of Lucknow and four of Mohanlalganj.

Chief development officer (CDO) Manish Bansal said arrangements included setting up of 14 tables in each room allotted for each constituency. "Fourteen tables will be set up for each constituency in nine rooms and postal ballot will be counted separately in a separate room," he said. He added that only in case of the Sidhauhi constituency of Mohanlalganj, the counting would take place in Sitapur because the EVMS had been kept there.

"The results from Sidhauhi will be taken via e-mail and fax and will be compiled and announced along with results of other constituencies," he said. He added that the last randomisation of polling personnel would take place either on the eve of the counting or just before counting. "In this randomisation, they are allotted the tables where they have to count the votes polled," he



SSP Kalanidhi Naithani reviewing the security of strong room, where EVMs are kept, at Ramabai Rally Sthal

Pioneer

the CDO said.

Asked about the number of VVPAT slips to be count-

ed, he said: "A total of five VVPAT slips per constituency will be counted, which

means a total of 45 VVPAT slips will be counted during the process."



Girls braving hot weather conditions in Lucknow on Wednesday

Pioneer

Heatwave onslaught continues

Lucknow (PNS): The inexorable onslaught of hot weather conditions continued on Wednesday as the maximum temperature was settled at 43.7 degree Celsius, which was five notches above normal.

There is no relief in store as the weatherman has forecast heat wave and dry weather conditions in isolated parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

In Lucknow, the maximum temperature is expected to be around 44 degree Celsius.

In the state, Banda was the hottest at 46.2 degree Celsius, followed by Allahabad 45.8 degree Celsius, Sultanpur 45.4 degree Celsius, Hamirpur 45.2 degree Celsius, and Varanasi 44.6 degree Celsius.

Elderly women duped of jewellery by imposters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Two miscreants posing as cops duped an elderly woman of her gold ornaments in Vikas Nagar on Thursday.

As per reports, the 70-year-old woman, identified as Sujata Verma of Vikas Nagar (sector 2) was going to a bank to withdraw cash from her bank account. When she reached Church Road, the imposters pretending to be policemen intercepted her. They howled at the woman for wearing jewellery and moving on a deserted road.

"They asked me to put off the gold ring, eartops and two gold bangles in a harsh and authoritative tone. They told me that a crime incident had taken place in the locality and they were conducting a checking drive in the locali-

ty. They gave me a piece of paper in which they put my ornaments and returned it to me. They asked me to open it after reaching home. I opened the sachet when I reached the bank and found a glass bangle inside," she told the police. "The elderly woman did not suspect the imposters as they asked her several questions. She was terribly nervous," sources said. A police spokesman said a case had been registered in this connection.

"The police have been asked to scan CCTV footages in the area to trace the miscreants. The footages will be shown to the woman and the police will trace the suspects once the woman identifies them," the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, two security guards, identified as Harishanker (24) of Hardoi

and Sarvesh (28) of Jhansi, were killed in a road mishap in Gudamba on Tuesday afternoon. Reports said both the guards worked at a private company and lived at a quarter provided to them. On Tuesday afternoon, a speeding loader hit them when they were going for some work near their office. They were rushed to KGMU Trauma Centre where they succumbed late Tuesday night.

ALLEGED

A woman accused her tenants of forcing her to register her house in Madaion in their names by threatening to kill her husband. She alleged that the accused also forced her to sell off her ornaments.

In her complaint, the woman, identified as Jayanti Shukla of Preeti Nagar, stated that she had rented out a

portion of her house to Mehdi Abbas, Shueb Ahmad and Imran Hasan. Abbas and Shueb claimed to be practitioners of law while Imran told her that he was a businessman.

"My husband Sandeep is a private employee. In Sandeep's absence, they used to force me to sell the house to them and threaten to kill my husband. Due to fear, I did not tell anything to Sandeep. On October 28 last year, they took me to registry office where they forced me to sign a sale deed. They later forced me to sell the ornaments to pay for the registration," she alleged.

She said she did not disclose the incident to anyone due to fear. "In due course of time, they sold the land to another woman Sanjana who came to my house, asking me to vacate the land," she alleged.

Meeting at LU for NAAC assessment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The third meeting of the administrative staff of Lucknow University regarding preparation for NAAC assessment was convened on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor SP Singh. The meeting was attended by Pro Vice-Chancellor Rajkumar Singh, DSW NK Khare, Human Resource Development Centre director Padamkant, IPPR director NK Pandey, dean of College Development Council RR Yadav among others.

LU media incharge NK Pandey said the NAAC proforma was being sent to the officials to fill up their information and return to IQAC within 15 days. A meeting was also held on Tuesday which discussed the preparations regarding the NAAC accreditation process. In the last meeting, the HoDs were given 15 days to fill up the

proforma of NAAC. Thereafter, they were allowed 12 additional days to submit the filled-up proforma. LU authorities said that in spite of that, 17 departments didn't submit the filled-up proforma. During the meeting they were asked to submit the same within next three days.

"After all the data by departments, institutes and centres is submitted with IQAC director Rajiv Manohar, it will be analysed and the self-study report prepared. This will be uploaded on the NAAC accreditation website," the authorities said. It may be noted that 70 per cent marking of the University for NAAC will be based on these quantitative data. The visiting peer team will assess the university later for the remainder 30 per cent marking only. NAAC will verify all these data being presented by the departments through institutional data, website or various other e-sources through its own hired agency.

Himachal, Goa, Rajasthan among favourite tourist destinations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The tourists this summer season have a wide variety of choices as far as destinations are concerned. According to tour and travel agents, the most preferred destinations this year are Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan in the domestic circuit and Europe in the international circuit. The tour and travel agents said it was not necessary that people visited only cool destinations to enjoy their vacations.

President of Indian Association of Tour Operators Prateek Hira said cool destinations were not the only places that people were considering for the summer vacations beginning later this month.

"Himachal Pradesh is preferred for its cool weather conditions but Goa is also a much preferred destination

"Himachal Pradesh is preferred for its cool weather conditions but Goa is also among the favourites. With tourists choosing Rajasthan, it is clear that heat is not the factor"

this summer. With tourists preferring Rajasthan, it is clear that heat is not the factor. Besides, with AC rooms available in hotels, the main purpose of tourists is to step out and have a good time," he said.

He pointed out that most of the domestic groups stepping out were of families or corporate teams.

He said that with Lucknow having a direct connectivity with Singapore and Thailand, several tourists were

also preferring these two destinations as well. "Direct connectivity from Lucknow makes a lot of difference for the tourists and hence the flow is to Singapore and Thailand is high," he said.

He further pointed out that in the international circuit, Europe was the most preferred destination. "People are opting for several places in Europe, including Switzerland," he said.

He added that the new trend which they had noticed this season was that sports persons from small places were travelling to destinations like Japan. Regional manager of Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) PK Bose said that tourists up after Akshaya Tritiya when the wedding season begins. "Most of the travellers opt for Haridwar and Uttarakhand during this season," he said.



A woman buying dates, consumed at Iftar during Ramadan, in Lucknow on Wednesday

LDA agrees to help GGL in laying gas pipelines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) has agreed to help the Green Gas Limited (GGL) in laying gas pipelines to set up five compressed natural gas (CNG) stations in the city. The GGL has an expansion plan to establish such stations due to the growing demand for CNG. This was decided at a meeting which was represented by LDA Vice-Chairman PN Singh and senior officers.

The LDA administration had imposed fines on the GGL in the past for violating the rules by cutting the roads and bylanes in an arbitrary manner and also cautioned its officer to

execute any civil work after seeking permission from its competent officer. The contractors engaged in the job were also penalised and blacklisted.

The LDA administration has clearly told the CNG authorities that the road-cutting work would be done under the private partner participation (PPL) model. The work would be supervised by a group of experts leaving no scope of any violation of rules and arbitrary cutting of roads. It is said that the LDA administration would suffer financial losses if the cutting of roads was unplanned.

Interestingly, all the pumps are coming up at different



places in Gomti Nagar. It is said that several lakhs of rupees were spent on the repairs of existing roads and bylanes and their maintenance work was still in progress.

Chief engineer IS Singh said the LDA administration would help the CNG authorities in expanding their network and added that all precautions would be taken to ensure that

no damage was done to the roads or any properties following their beautification. Gontinagar is being beautified to give it the status of a smart residential colony.

The expansion of the CNG network is a part of the national programme to promote environment which is deteriorating following the increase in pollution. The CNG can help check the increase in the percentage of pollution.

LDA's officer on special duty (OSD) RK Shukla said that the work to lay pipelines and repair roads would go on simultaneously and added that it would help in reducing the costs. In the past the repair

work was executed once the entire project was completed which was said to be a costly affair, he further said.

The pipe-laying project would start by June and was likely to be completed within three months. The experts under whose supervision the project was likely to be completed would have to ensure that the road-cutting procedure did not damage the water pipelines and the drainage system. The commoners have to suffer a lot in case the water pipe lines and drainage get damaged. Besides, the LDA would have to spend a huge sum of money on their repairs.

KANPUR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
EMANELMENT OF ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANTS
 Kanpur Development Authority invites application for Empanelment of Consultants in Architectural Planning & Designing of Multi Storied Residential / Commercial building / layouts, specially with expertise in Multilevel Parking, planning & Designing of recreational Park, Landscaping and community facilities and for beautification of important traffic junction in Kanpur city.
 Detailed offers enclosing a bank draft for Rs. 25000/- in favour of Kanpur Development Authority as non refundable processing fees and showing profile along with projects undertaken with details of place, cost, year and time of completion and also showing their terms for undertaking such projects in Kanpur may reach Town Planner, Kanpur Development Authority upto dated 15.06.2019
 Helpline : 2556292, 2557853
 Website : www.kdaindia.co.in
Kinjal Singh
 Vice Chairman

BJP lists abuses hurled at Modi Re-polling at 168 booths in Tripura ordered

Ridicules Cong's claim of forming Govt at Centre as good dream

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Listing abuses that were hurled at Narendra Modi by Congress and other Opposition parties during the ongoing poll campaign, the BJP on Wednesday ridiculed the Congress' claim of forming the Government at the Centre as a "good dream" and insisted that "kamal" would bloom in full glory as more insults are thrown at the Prime Minister. The BJP also took a dig at Congress after its president Rahul Gandhi tendered an unconditional apology for attributing "chowkidar chor hai" remarks to the Supreme Court, saying it showed the opposition party's "political bankruptcy". "Rahul Gandhi had to apologise to the Supreme Court for attributing lies to the

Supreme Court. Congress is a habitual liar. This is political bankruptcy. This is desperation," BJP leader and Union Minister Prakash Javadekar told a press conference here. The Minister listed out over 50 "abuses" which he alleged were hurled by the Congress and other Opposition parties at Modi, and claimed that the more they do so, the more seats BJP will win. "Congress has hurled 52 abusive words at us. It is doing so as it has run out of issues. Congress stands for loot and lies. We are raising relevant issues but the Congress is exhibiting its political bankruptcy. The more they hurl abuses at us, more seats we will win," Javadekar said. "Jitna keechad uchaloge, utna kamal khilega", said the minister. Congress and Opposition parties have sought to describe Modi as "Dushashan", "Gandi naali ka keeda", "Namard", "mad dog", "Bhasmasur", "Hitler and Mussolini". BJP also recalled Congress leader Sonia Gandhi calling Modi "Maut ka Saudagar" in Gujarat poll in 2007. Addressing public rallies in Haryana, the Prime Minister too spoke about abuses used against him by Congress and wondered why the rest of the opposition was silent and refused to condemn it. Javadekar said the Congress was "desperate" as it stands no chance to win people's confidence. The Union Minister ridiculed Rahul's claim that the Congress was forming Government at the Centre saying "sapne dekha aacha hai". "I am unable to understand the worst kind of behaviour by various political parties including the Congress. They are day in and day out cursing the PM, hurling abuses at him. "Gaalio ki loot machi hai. Kaun kitni badi gaali dega iski hor lagi hai (There is a competition among the opposition on who can mouth the worst kind of abuse)," he said. "They are doing this out of sheer desperation and hatred for their leader because they understand that in front of Modi, they stand no chance to

win public confidence. They are hurling casteist abuses. This is Congress culture. It is happening because we are discussing scams," the minister alleged. Javadekar accused the Congress of institutionalising corruption and said there were a number of charges against former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. "When we started asking questions on Bofors, they said why are you talking about Rajiv Gandhi? He was our PM. During his time he justified the genocide of Sikhs, he made the worse kind of communal compromise, politics under Shah Bano's decision, Quattrocchi was allowed to flee and money went from his account to three undisclosed accounts. "Wikileaks has also mentioned Rajiv Gandhi as the main negotiator in a fighter aircraft deal. This is what is happening on ground," he claimed. The Minister said his party has leadership and development as main planks in the ongoing elections while "all Congress has is abuses".

the constituency went to polls on April 11. In a statement issued on Wednesday, the CPI (M) said, "There had been widespread rigging and prevention of voters from exercising their franchise by the ruling BJP during the polls held on April 12. We firmly hold that this order is not in consonance with the ground reality and obviously too little and too late in ensuring a free and fair poll where more than half the electorate was actually unable to exercise their right to vote..." Nothing short of a re-poll for the entire Tripura West parliamentary constituency will serve the purpose of a free and fair poll and protecting the rights of the voters," it said. On April 19, Congress and CPI(M) in Tripura approached the poll panel and complained of massive poll rigging and booth capturing in Tripura West constituency. CPI-M general secretary, Sitaram Yechuri had alleged that more than 460 booths out of the total 1679 in West Tripura were rigged, voters were intimidated and forced to leave the booths and the agents of Left political parties were not allowed to enter inside the booths by the BJP workers. Congress candidate Subal Bhowmick accused BJP workers of intimidating and threatening voters. "We have demanded the immediate resignation of DGP, A K Shukla and Chief Electoral Officer Sriram Taranikanti because police acted as silent spectators when booths were rigged before their eyes by BJP workers," he said in a press conference. Leader of the Opposition in Tripura Assembly Manik Sarkar said, "BJP workers intimidated voters. We could not field polling agents in many booths. We have a strong organisation in the entire state and if we cannot field polling agents, then you can understand the situation." However, BJP candidate and party general secretary of Tripura Pratima Bhowmick denied the allegations of Congress and CPI-M. Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb said "people exercised their franchise in a festive mood and voting was completely peaceful. PNS

Congress, CPI(M) complained to EC of massive poll rigging and booth capturing in State

New Delhi: The Election Commission (EC) on Wednesday declared polling across 168 booths of Tripura West parliamentary constituency as void and ordered a re-polling on May 12 along with the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections 2019. The CPI (M), however, wasn't too happy with the EC's decision and said it was too little, too late. According to EC, that the Union Home Ministry has already deployed 15 companies of Central Para-Military Forces (CPMF) for re-polling in the Tripura West Lok Sabha seat where voting took place on the first phase of polling on April 11. While the CPI (M) voiced its "deep sense of disappointment" over EC's order to hold polling void in 168 booths of the Tripura West seat saying a re-poll should be held in the entire constituency. CPI(M) claimed

that a substantial number of voters has been denied their right to vote due to rigging. "After taking all material circumstances into account, the Election Commission declared under Sub-Sections (2) of Section 58 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 that the polling on April 11, 2019, at 168 polling stations in 1-Tripura West parliamentary constituency against the assembly segments to be void and appointments May 12 as the date and six hours from 7 am to 5 pm for taking a fresh poll," an EC letter to Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sriram Taranikanti said after getting ground reports from the CEO, Special Observer, General Observers and the Returning Officer. While polling was held in the concerned Tripura booths on April 11, the Congress and CPI(M) had lodged complaints of misconduct and rigging in the elections held in West Tripura constituency. The repolling will be held from 7am-5pm on May 12. Tripura West parliamentary seat had recorded over 81 per cent of voter turnout when

as provided under Section 9 and Section 33 (3) of the (RP) Act," the plea had said. Yadav, in his reply to RO's first notice of April 29, had submitted that he was dismissed from BSF due to "indiscipline" which is not covered under the election law and hence, a certificate from EC to that effect was not required, the plea said. "The RO issued second notice on April 30 asking the Petitioner (Yadav) to submit required certificate to the effect that he has not been dismissed for corruption or disloyalty to the state by 11 am on May 01. "First of all...In the present facts of the case, there was no need to produce any certificate as Section 9 is not attracted at all. Secondly, this second notice asking for the certificate was served upon the Petitioner on April 30 at 6 pm. Thus, no sufficient time was given to produce the certificate," the plea had alleged.

rejection of the nomination papers of Yadav, a Samajwadi Party candidate, who was dismissed from BSF in 2017 after he posted a video online complaining about the food served to the troops. The poll panel official held that Yadav failed to furnish a certificate as mandated under the Representation of Peoples (RP) Act to the effect that he has not been dismissed for corruption or disloyalty to the state. "While passing the impugned order...The RO completely failed to appreciate that the Petitioner (Yadav) had produced his dismissal letter along with his nomination paper which clearly shows that he was dismissed from service for alleged indiscipline and not for corruption or disloyalty to state,

SC refuses to hear Cong MP's plea for action against PM, Shah for poll code violations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday refused to further hear the plea of Congress MP Shashmita Dev seeking action against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP President Amit Shah for alleged poll code violations, saying the Election Commission has already decided the complaints. The apex court said it cannot examine the merits of the EC orders, giving clean chits to the BJP leaders, as they gave rise to fresh cause of action for which another petition has to be filed. Since the EC has decided "rightly" or "wrongly" the pending complaints against the Prime Minister and the BJP President, the merits of the orders can be challenged only by filing a fresh petition, said

a bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Deepak Gupta. "The petition has become infructuous as the Election Commission has taken decisions on the complaints," the bench said. Senior advocate AM Singhvi, appearing for Dev, said the additional affidavit has been filed as the apex court had asked her to bring on record EC's orders giving clean chit to Modi and Shah on complaints of MCC violations over their alleged hate speeches and using armed forces for "political propaganda". Referring to various judgments, he said that the EC, being a constitutional body, is obliged to pass reasoned orders. But unreasonable orders, summarily rejecting the complaints, have been passed. "Dr Singhvi, you challenge

the orders (of EC). Instead of filing the affidavit, you should have filed the petition. In half a day, you can file a fresh petition and that is the choice you have," the bench said while refusing to hear Dev's plea further. The plea had said: "Since March 10, that is the date on which General Elections, were notified, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and BJP President Amit Shah, specifically in sensitive areas and states, have ex-facie violated the provisions of the Representation of People's Act and the Conduct of Election Rules and the process, thereof," the plea claimed. "It is in public domain that they have indulged in hate speeches, repeatedly used the armed forces for political propaganda, despite a clear prohibition on the same by the EC."

SC asks EC to look into Tej grievances

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Election Commission to examine grievances raised by sacked BSF jawan Tej Bahadur Yadav, whose nomination against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Varanasi was cancelled. A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi asked the counsel for EC to seek instructions and apprise it by tomorrow. Advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for Yadav, referred to an earlier verdict to the court and said election petitions can be filed during the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). Yadav had moved the top court challenging the decision of Returning Officer (RO) to reject his nomination papers from Varanasi Lok Sabha seat, saying it was intended to "give walkover" to PM Modi. The RO on May 1 had

rejected the nomination papers of Yadav, a Samajwadi Party candidate, who was dismissed from BSF in 2017 after he posted a video online complaining about the food served to the troops. The poll panel official held that Yadav failed to furnish a certificate as mandated under the Representation of Peoples (RP) Act to the effect that he has not been dismissed for corruption or disloyalty to the state. "While passing the impugned order...The RO completely failed to appreciate that the Petitioner (Yadav) had produced his dismissal letter along with his nomination paper which clearly shows that he was dismissed from service for alleged indiscipline and not for corruption or disloyalty to state,

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the Assam NRC work while rapping it for seeking suspension of the process during the polls citing non-availability of security forces. The draft Assam NRC was published on July 30, 2018 in which the names of 2.89 crore of the 3.29 crore people were included. The names of 40,70,707 people did not figure in the list. Of these, 37,59,630 names have been rejected and the remaining 2,48,077 are on hold. The first draft of Assam NRC was published on the intervening night of December 31, 2017 and January 1 in accordance with the top court's direction. Names of 1.9 crore people out of the 3.29 crore applicants were incorporated then. Assam, which had faced influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state to have an NRC, first prepared in 1951.

Centre moves SC against Madras HC verdict on Puducherry LG

New Delhi: The Centre Wednesday approached the Supreme Court challenging the verdict of Madras High Court which held that Puducherry Lieutenant Governor Kiran Bedi "cannot interfere" in the day-to-day affairs of the Government of the Union Territory. The matter was mentioned for urgent listing before a bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Deepak Gupta by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta. "There is a standstill in the governance there (Puducherry)," Mehta told the bench while seeking urgent listing of the matter. The bench, however, declined the request and said it had earlier made it clear that advocates seeking urgent listing of their matters can give the listing memos to the registrar. On April 30, the Madras High Court had allowed a plea filed by K Lakshminarayanan, a Congress MLA, and set aside the two communications issued in January and June 2017 by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs "elevating" the power of the administrator. Referring to the Supreme Court judgement on the tussle between Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Lt Governor Anil Bajjal, the high court had said that restrictions imposed on Government of Delhi are not applicable to the Government of Puducherry. "The Administrator cannot interfere in the day-to-day affairs of the government. The decision taken by the Council of Ministers and the Chief Minister is binding on the Secretaries and other officials," the high court had said. Lakshminarayanan had claimed in his petition before the high court that the administrator was interfering in the day-to-day administration of the territorial government, its policies and programmes. PTI

Clarify suspicious movements of EVMs in TN: DMK to EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The DMK has asked the Election Commission (EC) for clarification on the "suspicious movements" of electronic voting machines (EVMs) from Coimbatore. Shifting of EVMs from Coimbatore had stirred controversy on Tuesday night after the Opposition alleged foul play. In a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner and Tamil Nadu chief electoral officer, DMK MP RS Bharathi on Wednesday asked the EC about the sudden movement of EVMs and VVPATs to Theni and Erode. According to Bharathi, about 50 EVMs were brought to the office of Thesildar at Theni from Coimbatore without any intimation to the candidates who had contested in the Theni Lok Sabha constituency and in the by-elections for Periakulam and Andipatti Assembly seats. He said even the District Collector, being the District Electoral Officer, or the officials



available in the Thesildar's office were not able to clarify on the EVMs' movements, raising mistrust on the Election Commission's activity during the late hours on Tuesday. Bharathi said the Chief Electoral Officer told the media that the EVMs were shifted on the orders of the Election Commission, expecting re-poll in certain polling centres, and 20 VVPATs have also been moved to Erode. "It is not known on whose request re-polling is being processed. In fact, no affirmative order is communicated by the Election Commission on the

request made our DMK party for re-polling in 10 polling booths in Pappireddypatti within Dharmapuri constituency," Bharathi said. "While so, moving EVMs and VVPATs to the places, where re-poll is not asked for, creates strong doubts on the activities of the Election Commission. What is the modus operandi behind these suspicious moves of EVMs and VVPAT shall be clearly and transparently explained by the Election Commission. Otherwise, the trust on the Election Commission would further diminish," Bharathi said.

GOA GOVT SEEKS MODEL CODE RELAXATION In another development, the Goa Government has requested the EC to relax the model code of conduct in South Goa district, where voting for the Lok Sabha polls has concluded, to take up pre-monsoon works. Goa's Chief Secretary Parimal Rai wrote a letter to the state chief electoral officer last Friday, urging that the poll code be relaxed in the South Goa district, where voting took place on April 23. Goa CEO Kunal on Wednesday said they have received the letter and pre-monsoon works are allowed in the South Goa district on a case-to-case basis. He also asked the poll body to furnish details of EVMs and VVPATs now shifted to Theni and Erode and not to shift any more such machines from any place to any place in Tamil Nadu without prior intimation to political parties.

SC says won't extend deadline for finalising Assam NRC beyond July 31

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday made it clear that it will not extend the July 31 deadline for finalisation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam. A bench comprising Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice RF Nariman also gave a "free hand" to Prateek Hajela, the Assam NRC coordinator dealing with claims and objections of persons against wrong exclusion or inclusion of citizens in the NRC. Hajela had submitted before the court that the citizenship claims of left out persons were being verified on the basis of "family tree" and land records. Verification of claims on the basis of family tree was being conducted near the place where most of the relatives of the claimant are residing, he had said. On February 5, the apex court had observed that the Centre is "hell bent" on stalling

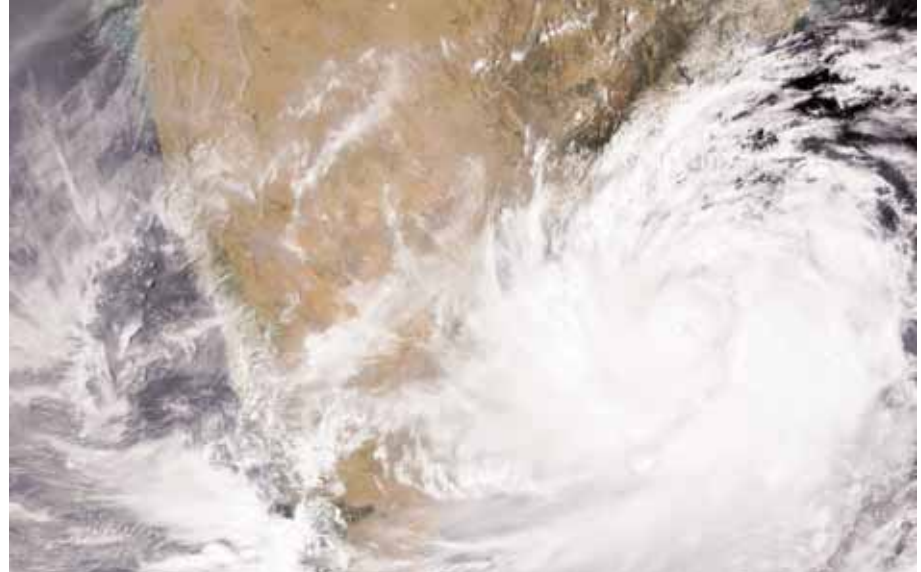
Judges also gave a "free hand" to Prateek Hajela, the Assam NRC coordinator dealing with claims and objections of persons against wrong exclusion or inclusion of citizens in the NRC. Hajela had submitted before the court that the citizenship claims of left out persons were being verified on the basis of "family tree" and land records. Verification of claims on the basis of family tree was being conducted near the place where most of the relatives of the claimant are residing, he had said. On February 5, the apex court had observed that the Centre is "hell bent" on stalling

the Assam NRC work while rapping it for seeking suspension of the process during the polls citing non-availability of security forces. The draft Assam NRC was published on July 30, 2018 in which the names of 2.89 crore of the 3.29 crore people were included. The names of 40,70,707 people did not figure in the list. Of these, 37,59,630 names have been rejected and the remaining 2,48,077 are on hold. The first draft of Assam NRC was published on the intervening night of December 31, 2017 and January 1 in accordance with the top court's direction. Names of 1.9 crore people out of the 3.29 crore applicants were incorporated then. Assam, which had faced influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state to have an NRC, first prepared in 1951.

Fani: CSIR-IHBT prepares ready to eat food

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As Fani cyclone-hit Odisha struggles with one of the worst tragedies the State has seen so far, a CSIR lab Institute of Himalayan Bio-resource Technology (IHBT) in Palampur is all set to do its bit by providing hygienically prepared nutritious "ready to eat food" to the affected families. Said Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Director of CSIR-IHBT, "our institute is in the process of supplying one lakh units of ready to eat canned food (Dal Chawal/Aloo mix) and high energy and protein bars, total weighing around 20 tonnes for distribution." The ready to eat foods will be dispatched to the affected areas by this weekend. Dr Sanjay Kumar further informed that the institute has technologies for preparation of ready to eat foods of global standards and in such tragic circumstances it is the duty of



national institutes to come forward and support the affected population with their need based technologies and products. He further stated that similar support of ready to eat food products was extended to the

victims of during Kerala floods in August 2018. It's almost five days the severe cyclonic storm had made a landfall impact on May 3, 2019 in coastal areas of Odisha, and around one mil-

lion people have been evacuated there. "Therefore, there is urgent need for hygienically prepared nutritious and ready to eat foods for such people," said Kumar. The CSIR-IHBT is a premier

institute known for its state of art research in various areas such as agrotechnology, biotechnology, natural product chemistry, food & nutraceutical technology, high altitude biology. The institute as part of R&D program has developed technologies for commercial production of several ready to eat traditional food products and functional foods targeting malnutrition and life-style related disorders such as energy bars, high protein drink mixes, Spirulina and Shiitake based food and value added Tea products, crispy fruits etc that are commercialized and available for interested entrepreneurs. Talking about the technology, the scientist said that the products are prepared using a special manufacturing process that retain traditional taste and flavour. "The prepared products are preserved by sealing them hermetically in tin cans followed by thermal processing to attain longer shelf life," he said.

Vice-President Naidu on Vietnam visit from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Starting Thursday, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu will undertake a three-day official trip to Vietnam from Thursday. The External Affairs Ministry on Wednesday said in official statement that Naidu will hold meetings with Vice-President of Vietnam Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Chairperson of National Assembly of Vietnam Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan. Naidu will deliver the keynote address at the 16th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration at Tam Chuc Pagoda in Ha Nam Province. He will also meet the Indian community and Vietnamese beneficiaries of the Jaipur Foot Artificial Limb Fitment Camp organized in



Vietnam under the 'India for Humanity' initiative launched to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the statement said. It said India-Vietnam relations have been built on a firm foundation of close cultural, historical and civilisational links and are marked by mutual trust and understanding as well as strong cooperation in regional and international fora.

During the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Vietnam in September 2016, the relationship between the two countries was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the statement said. The Vice President's visit to Vietnam follows a series of high-level exchanges that have taken place in 2018, including visits to India by the prime minister of Vietnam (January 2018) and by the president of Vietnam (March 2018).. These exchanges have resulted in robust cooperation in several areas, have expanded defence and security ties, forged new economic and commercial linkages and deepened people-to-people engagement. The two sides share a common desire to promote peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, the statement said.

IAF aircraft overshoots runway at Mumbai, flights affected

TN RAGUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

An Indian Air Force (IAF) transport aircraft overshoot the main runway of the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA) here on Tuesday night, resulting in a minor disruption in flight operations.

The incident took place at 11.39 pm, when the twin-engine military aircraft Antonov AN-32 was preparing to take off from the main runway at Yelhanka located on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

Both the IAF and CSIA confirmed the incident. "We confirm that the departing IAF aircraft had runway excursion at 2339 hours at RWY 27," a CSIA official said.

"The aircraft had abandoned take-off view a technical issue and overshoot the runway. The aircraft and crew are safe. A recovery team has arrived Mumbai and the aircraft will be cleared shortly," a



defence ministry spokesperson said.

Following the mishap, at least a dozen flights were delayed as the authorities shifted the operations from runway 09/27 to the secondary 14/32 runway. "There was 15-20 minute delay in the departures of flights from Mumbai," an airport official said.

"The runway 27 was cleared and handed over for operations at 4.50 pm today," the IAF spokesperson said.

With a unique layout, the Mumbai airport which is the

second busiest in the country, has two runways — the main runway 09/27 and a secondary one 14/32 — intersecting each other.

The primary runway has the capacity to handle up to 48 arrivals and departures per hour, while the secondary runway can handle 35 movements per hour. On an average, there are 970 flight arrivals and departures at the Mumbai airport every day.

A large part of the operations is carried out from the main runway.

BJP trying to spread communal hatred for votes, says Babbar

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR (UP)

Uttar Pradesh Congress Chief Raj Babbar on Wednesday accused the BJP of diverting people's attention from development issue and trying to spread communal hatred for garnering votes.

Canvassing for party candidate Supriya Shrinete in Maharajganj seat, he said most of the development works were done during the Congress rule and his party is the real voice of the poor, backward and the downtrodden sections of the society.

"The BJP is trying to divert people's attention from development issue and are trying to spread communal hatred and seeking votes," Babbar said at an election meeting in Maharajganj district.

"Only the Congress is capable of carrying out development works for people



belonging to all castes, religions and geographical areas. Only the Congress can take the country ahead on the path of development," Babbar said.

Shrinete said she entered politics to fulfil the dreams of his late father Harshvardhan Singh who had been elected MP from Maharajganj twice.

"The district is facing massive problems, sugar mills are closed and there is no industry to provide jobs to the youth. Here, the struggle is between rich and poor."

"Since the BJP came to power, our country has gone back many steps and there is no one to listen to the poor and helpless," she alleged.

SC lawyers: Victimised for taking up case against CJI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior lawyers Indira Jaising and Anand Grover on Wednesday cried foul over a Supreme Court notice to them and their NGO, Lawyers Collective, on a 2016 plea alleging FCRA violation by them, and said they are "deeply disturbed by the turn of events".

They said they are being "victimised" as Jaising took up the cause of a sacked woman employee of the apex court who had levelled allegations of sexual harassment against Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi which were rejected by an In-House Inquiry Committee on May 6.

The notice was issued to them on a plea seeking investigation and lodging of FIR under various provisions of law for allegedly violating rules relating to receipt and utilisation of foreign funds.

Jaising and Grover, founders of Lawyers Collective,



All India Democratic Women Association (AIDWA) members protest against the clean chat to CJI in sexual harassment case in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

have been asked by a bench headed by the CJI to respond to a plea by an NGO, Lawyers Voice. "It is obvious to us that this is victimisation on account of Ms Jaising taking up the issue of the procedure adopted in relation to the allegations of sexual harassment against the Chief Justice of India by a former employee of the Supreme Court which Ms Jaising has done so in her capacity as a concerned citizen, a senior member of the bar

and a women's rights advocate, without commenting on the merits of the allegations," Jaising, Grover and Lawyers Collective said in a press statement.

They said that since Jaising, a former Additional Solicitor General, has been "publicly vocal" on the due process with regard to the conduct of the In-House Inquiry Committee headed by Justice S A Bobde, the CJI should have recused himself from hearing the matter.

We have brought peace in Jungalmahal: Mamata

PTI ■ KOTSHILA/HURA (PURULIA)

West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said that her Government has been able to usher in peace in tribal Jungalmahal area.

The people of Jungalmahal, the forested tribal area of the State, were afraid of both CPI(M) and the naxals during the Left Front rule, she said.

But the scenario has changed in the area, which comprise Jhargram, West Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia districts, Banerjee said at an election rally at Kotshila in Purulia district. "We have been able to establish peace in Purulia and Junglemahal area and many developmental works have been undertaken — mainly water-related projects," she said.

Criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said he has done nothing in the last five years.

"Do not vote for BJP. They will do nothing and only dish



out lies and make people fight against each other," the fiery TMC leader said.

Banerjee, who had spearheaded the anti-land acquisition movements at Singur and Nandigram, said that her government would protect the rights of adivasis including their claim over land.

At another rally at Hura in the same district, she said the government is planning an airport at Charra to connect the district with Kolkata and other places. She urged the electorate to help TMC wrest all the 42 seats in the State.



Jet airways employees hold placards during a protest at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport Mumbai, India on Wednesday PTI

2 pharmacists injured in firing on Ramzan day 2 in Shopian

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

After the first day of the holy month of Ramzan passed off peacefully in Kashmir valley, 'unidentified' terrorists on Wednesday opened fire in Zainapora area of South Kashmir's Shopian district in which two pharmacists received critical injuries.

The firing incident was reported in the area close to the Sub-district hospital Zainapora at around 3 pm.

The injured persons owned

chemist shops in the area and were local residents of Zainapora.

Local reports suggested the duo were politically connected with the People's Democratic Party.

Official sources said, "unidentified terrorists picked up Irfan Lone and Muzafar Ahmad Bhat from their medical shops and fired upon them from a close range. They both were critically injured in the firing.

Bleeding profusely, the duo

Earlier, on March 31, another chemist Arjumand Majid Bhat was targeted by terrorists in Baramulla town

were rushed to the local hospital from where one of them was shifted to Srinagar.

Soon after the firing incident, security forces rushed to

the spot and cordoned off the entire area to track down the foot prints of terrorists.

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Earlier, on March 31, another chemist Arjumand Majid Bhat was targeted by terrorists in Baramulla town and later he succumbed to his injuries. He was also running a drug de-addiction centre in the area.

Asia's heaviest women sheds 214 kg in four years

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Two years after the once world's heaviest woman from Egypt Eman Ahmed Abdelaty lost as much as 324 kilograms of weight during her treatment at a Mumbai hospital, a 42-year-old woman from neighbouring Palghar district has shed a staggering 214 kilograms during the last four years.

A resident of Vasai town in Palghar district, Amita Rajani — who with a weight of more than 300 kilograms had earned the distinction of being Asia's heaviest woman — currently weighs 86 kilograms.

"A staggering weight loss of 214 kgs — from 300 kilograms to 86 kgs in four years is something unimaginable," renowned bariatric surgeon Dr. Shashank Shah of LaparObeso Centre at Lilivati Hospital at Bandra in north-west Mumbai said on Thursday.

Born as a healthy baby

weighing 3 kilograms, Amita began putting on weight at the age of six years. "By the time she turned 16, her weight had shot up to 126 kgs," Dr Shah said.

"When I was in 10th standard, I weighed 126 kgs and in the final year of college, I was between 160 and 170 kgs...At one stage, my parents took me to London, where endocrinologists could not provide a solution to my problem," Amita recalled.

It was only after she stepped out of her home after a long time and visited Dr. Shah in 2015 that Amita began to nurse hopes of shedding her weight in a big way.

"After her family approached me for treatment, we had to prepare for almost two months before the surgery. A special ambulance with its doors removed was arranged, a huge six-and-half-feet sofa was fitted inside it to transport her to hospital. There she had



(Left) Amita Rajani, a resident of Vasai town in Maharashtra's Palghar district, weighed 300 kilograms four years ago. (Right) After having shed 214 kilograms during the last four years ago, Amita now weighs 86 kilograms. She is with Dr Shashank Shah of LaparObeso Centre at Lilivati Hospital in Mumbai Pioneer photo

a special heavy duty bed, special clothes, a weighing machine and of course, a strict tailor-made diet," Dr Shah said. "After her admission to the hospital in 2015, Amita underwent 1st stage metabolic surgery which was a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy. Later, her condition started

improving and she lost oodles of weight and could walk on her own. In 2017, a second surgery — gastric bypass was performed on Amita, who weighed 140 kgs then. So with these two metabolic treatments and her efforts, she lost weight," Dr Shah said.

"After these two surgeries

and determined efforts from her side, she kept losing weight and is now at a manageable 86 kgs," Dr Shah said.

"When she came to me for treatment, Amita was diagnosed not just with super morbid obesity but also deranged cholesterol, kidney dysfunction, type II diabetes and

breathing problem. Today she is perfectly fine and without any medicines," Dr Shah said. Talking about miraculous recovery from morbid obesity, Amita said: "Once I had fallen from bed. It had taken my family three hours to put me back onto the bed safely. Recently, I fell from the bed. I managed to stand up in just two minutes. I am independent now. I am fully independent and can move alone."

Expressing her happiness over her once-overweight daughter losing 214 kgs of weight, Amita's mother Mamta Rajani said: "I had to help her with all her chores, eating, dressing, controlling fluid retention with towels and bed-sheets that soaked the excess fluid discharged from her thighs. But, if she is how in good shape, full credit goes to Dr. Shah."

Amita is the second major instance where an overweight woman has shed a sizeable

chunk of weight. It may be recalled that 36-year-old Eman Ahmed Abdelaty from Egypt Eman Ahmed Abdelaty had shed as much as 324 kilograms of weight during the treatment that she underwent for 83 days at the Saifee Hospital here. After her discharge from the Saifee hospital on May 4, 2017, Eman left for Abu Dhabi for further treatment.

Eman, whose weight was an estimated 500 kilograms when she arrived in Mumbai by an Egypt Air fully-equipped cargo flight from Alexandria on February 11 2017 to undergo weight-reduction procedure at the Saifee hospital here, weighed 176 kgs when she boarded a special chartered flight to head to Abu Dhabi, where she will be admitted to VPS Healthcare's Burjeel Hospital for further weight loss treatment and rehabilitation.

Eman had undergone bariatric surgery on March 7, 2017 after losing an initial 100

kilos through a strict protein-rich liquid diet.

However, nearly five months after she left for Abu Dhabi having lost as much as 324 kilograms of weight during her 83-day treatment at the Saifee Hospital in Mumbai, Eman died at the VPS Healthcare's Burjeel Hospital on September 25, 2017. At the Burjeel Hospital, she was undergoing further treatment.

Doctors attending on her at the Burjeel Hospital had attributed Eman's death to "complications from the underlying comorbid conditions, including heart disease and kidney dysfunction". "Eman Abdul Atti, the heaviest woman in the world, passed away on Monday 25 September 2017 at 04.35 am due to complications from the underlying comorbid conditions, including heart disease and kidney dysfunction," the hospital management had said in a statement issued then.

Alleging Prime Minister Narendra Modi carried out parallel negotiations with France for the Rafale fighter jet deal, Rahul in the rally accused him of insulting the martyrs by "committing a theft" in the multi-crore defence contract. "Officials of the Indian Air Force wrote that Narendra Modi held parallel negotiations with France. Chowkidar was holding direct dialogue with the manufacturer of Rafale Dassault...Chowkidar now explain to the country why you committed a theft?" he said at the election rally in MP.

The Congress chief said, "The Rafale deal would have given jobs to the country's youths but Narendra Modi did not give contract to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL)."

Guv reviews J&K security after killing of BJP leader

Srinagar (PTI): Facing criticism over the issue of withdrawal of security to politicians in Jammu & Kashmir, Governor Satya Pal Malik on Wednesday held a meeting to review the matter and decided to hand over an inquiry into attacks on leaders from the chief secretary to the additional director general of police.

Following the killing of BJP leader Gul Mohammed Mir by militants in South Kashmir on Saturday, various political parties flayed Chief Secretary B V R Subrahmanyam and Home Secretary Shaleen Kabra for what they termed as "lack of vision" on security issues.

A Raj Bhavan spokesman said the governor reviewed the security scenario and directed the administration to ensure safety of protected persons and give due consideration to the genuine apprehensions of political activists working at the grassroots level. The spokesman said the governor also assigned the probe into the attacks on political leaders to Additional Director General of Police Muneer Khan. Khan has been accused of favouritism while granting security to political persons.

The spokesman said the governor directed that Khan would conduct the inquiry into all such attacks since October 2018. He

said Khan would submit his report, covering all the relevant aspects, along with appropriate recommendations, within 15 days. In view of threats from militant groups to members of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayats, it was decided that elected Sarpanches, Municipal Councillors and Mayors/presidents, may be provided safe accommodation for their stay either at the state or district level. "This will come into effect immediately and the Divisional Commissioners and IGs (inspectors general of police) will operationalise this after contacting the Sarpanches and ULB members," the spokesman said.

IN HUNG HOUSE...

"The parties will sign a letter before the results of May 23 and convey their viewpoint in support of an alternative Government. The reason for this preemptive move is to ensure that the President does not give the single largest party an opportunity to attempt and break regional parties and alliances," sources said.

Recalling an instance post the 1998 elections, President KR Narayanan had insisted that Atal Bihari Vajpayee produce letters of support before he was called to form the Government and seek a vote of confidence on the floor of the House. While BJP had won 178 seats, the alliance had 252 members. The Government, however, collapsed after 13 months, when it lost the vote of confidence by a single vote.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

RAHUL APOLOGISES...

"The deponent (Rahul) unconditionally apologises for the wrongful attributions to this court. The deponent further states that any such attributions were entirely unintentional, non-wilful and inadvertent," Rahul said in his fresh affidavit filed. "The deponent (Rahul) most respectfully prays that this court may be graciously pleased to accept the instant affidavit and close the present contempt proceedings," he stated in the affidavit.

In his fresh affidavit, Rahul said that he has never intended to, directly or indirectly, commit any act which interferes with the process of administration of justice. "At

the outset, the deponent herein most respectfully submits that he holds this court in the highest esteem, and respect. The deponent has never sought or intended to, directly or indirectly, commit any act that interferes with the process of administration of justice," he said.

He also said the affidavit is made "bona fide and in the interest of justice, and nothing material has been concealed therefrom". A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi is scheduled to hear Lekhi's contempt plea against Rahul on May 10 along with the review petitions in the Rafale deal case. The Gandhi scion had earlier filed two affidavits in the Supreme court in the mat-

ter and had written the word "regret" in bracket in both of them. Rahul had made the remarks on April 10, the day the apex court had dismissed the Centre's preliminary objections over admissibility of certain documents for supporting the review petitions against the December 14 last year verdict in the Rafale case.

The Supreme court on April 15 had given a categorical clarification that in its Rafale verdict there was no occasion for it to make a mention of the contemptuous observation that "chowkidar Narendra Modi chor hain" as has been attributed to it by Rahul Gandhi. On April 30, the top court had given another opportunity to Rahul to file

a better affidavit relating to his remark.

Alleging Prime Minister Narendra Modi carried out parallel negotiations with France for the Rafale fighter jet deal, Rahul in the rally accused him of insulting the martyrs by "committing a theft" in the multi-crore defence contract. "Officials of the Indian Air Force wrote that Narendra Modi held parallel negotiations with France. Chowkidar was holding direct dialogue with the manufacturer of Rafale Dassault...Chowkidar now explain to the country why you committed a theft?" he said at the election rally in MP.

The Congress chief said, "The Rafale deal would have given jobs to the country's youths but Narendra Modi did not give contract to Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL)."

Unfriendly trade winds

Trump's war on nations with high tariffs had to hit India hard. This is yet another priority issue for the next Government



Wilbur Ross is a big believer in the India story and over the past decade has been a huge investor in many companies, most famously SpiceJet, which he effectively kept alive when it was floundering. However, now Ross finds himself in the employ of the United States' taxpayers and his boss, US President Donald Trump, whose agenda, as we heard time and time again on his campaign trail, is to "Make America Great Again." And one way Trump plans to make America great again is by imposing retaliatory tariffs on

nations that have put up high barriers to US-made products. His first major target was famously China and while the US-China trade talks are ongoing, the Chinese are not exactly finding dealing with him and his negotiators easy. India should be happy that China is catching most of the flak from Trump because a few fusillades here, too, have hammered home hard. He has referred to India as the 'tariff king' and his comment on India's import duties on motorcycles hit us so hard that the government promptly cut duties on imported motorcycles although Harley-Davidson, the company it was supposed to benefit really, didn't see much progress in sales. Ross visited India, met all the top members of the Cabinet and expressed his displeasure at all sorts of moves by the Indian government, such as increased local sourcing that has impacted Flipkart, now owned by American retail giant Walmart and a data localisation rule that has MasterCard cribbing to all and sundry. However, as a long-time student of India, Ross knows that despite his meetings with Prime Minister Modi, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu, things can't change at the current time in the middle of elections. That said, by meeting senior members of the Cabinet, Ross also indicated the US belief that the current dispensation is coming back.

If that is the case, Narendra Modi should know that he has a Trump problem on his hands. While the US will enter full election mode for its 2020 presidential election in the next few months, India's trade relations with it should not implode on higher tariffs. Besides, India knows that it has to at some stage return the US favour on the diplomatic front, the latter having prioritised its security concerns over those of Pakistan beside getting China to agree on the UN listing of Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. However, it must not do so at the cost of its national interests in commerce. It stood commendably firm in its caveat on capping prices for medical devices. Also, there should be some semblance of reasonableness in linking paring down tariffs at our end with theirs. Prabhu tactically did not take up the Generalised System of Preferences, which the US is withdrawing, and focussed on other areas of cooperation. Whoever has the hot seat next should also remember that Ross will not continue to hold the post given the revolving door nature of the US administration. Also, with the US-China trade talks stalling, India appears to have found some extra time to plan a better negotiating stance. This time around it must use some of its better assets in industry and think-tanks in addition to bureaucrats to negotiate with Trump.

Federal front regroup

Despite the return of KCR in post-poll negotiations, the anti-BJP coalition has a lot of hurdles



The problem with the concept of *maha-gathbandhan* — an alliance of regional parties that are as against the BJP as the Congress — is that its constituents never coalesce together with confidence despite their command over the grassroots. Somewhere they are scared of seizing the national agenda collectively and are reconciled to their limited territorial might, clutching on to prominent national parties as props for a pan-Indian sustenance. Worst, for the best of ambitions, they are more prone to bargaining the best deal for

their respective fiefs and fritter away their tally and common ground all too easily. This uncertainty between intention and execution has prevented the federal front from acquiring critical mass. Besides, the policy paralysis of coalition front governments at the Centre has definitely bred voter fatigue over time. Nobody trusts a pyrrhic leadership race anymore. The same half-hearted co-existence of disparate interests sounded the knell of an anti-BJP front this election, the SP and the BSP being the only exception in Uttar Pradesh. That, too, by the way, is rooted in their need to hold on to their turf and not be swamped by national parties. Now when some pollsters have predicted that both the BJP and Congress may not get the magic numbers on their own and that regional players may put up a determined show, talk of a federal front has gathered momentum in a post-poll scenario. Except this time, all are on the same page about shedding equidistance and choosing the Congress as the much-needed adhesive.

The federal front's one-time architect and Telangana Chief Minister, K Chandrashekar Rao, has spurred into action again, holding meetings with Kerala's Leftist Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and hoping to get Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy and DMK's Stalin on board. He is keen to form a southern bloc in post-poll negotiations and restore the trust among other parties, who were upset about his intransigence on including the Congress and had seen him as a B team of the BJP. Clearly, he doesn't want to be left out of possibilities and is trying to assuage the anxieties of both archrival and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Bengal counterpart and his original ally, Mamata Banerjee. The larger question is whether Didi, who is now helming the federal front, will be comfortable with him or not. She was none too happy when despite going the mile with KCR, the wily leader had left the door ajar for possible negotiations with the BJP and a rewarding largesse for his newly-formed state. Hence the renewed diplomacy now to dispel fears of him being a sellout. KCR himself knows that if there's anybody who can ultimately strike a balance between allies and the Congress in the larger picture, it will be Mamata Banerjee. So has he subsumed his ego or is he playing saboteur once again? Meanwhile Naidu has spoken to Congress chief Rahul Gandhi about an all-Opposition parties meeting on May 21 to discuss the possibilities of a conglomerate government in case of a fractured mandate. The Congress may be ready to take the Karnataka model ahead but would it stay out of the leadership race if it manages to improve its numbers? Rahul Gandhi has after all led the party to victory in three different States and would be amped up with additional gains if any. He could emerge consensus among the colliding heads of aspirant front PMs — NCP chief Sharad Pawar, Naidu, Mamata and BSP's Mayawati. Most importantly, would any of the federal front leaders agree to cede ground to a first among equals? Besides, if everybody is so keen, why didn't they show the same urgency for a pre-poll arrangement knowing full well that a post-poll arithmetic usually doesn't hold ground with the President as a first option? The prospects are still hazy.

Fading memories

While remembering the events of 1919 and seeking to better integrate the spirit of May 4 into the party's narrative, the student revolt of 1989 has been completely blacked out



CLAUDE ARPI

China is suffering from a strange disease, a sort of selective amnesia — certain things from the past are clearly remembered, while other events seem to have been completely erased from the nation's collective memory (or at least from the party's annals). Take the May Fourth Movement, which was recently celebrated with much fanfare in every corner of the Middle Kingdom. In this case, the memory of the event, which occurred a hundred years ago, is absolutely clear.

Following the 1911 Revolution in China, the Manchu (Qing) dynasty disintegrated, triggering the fall of imperial rule. Eight years later, the May Fourth Movement took place in the Chinese capital where students started protesting against the nationalist Government's weak response to the Treaty of Versailles, allowing Japan to control the territories surrendered by Germany in Shandong.

On the morning of May 4, 1919, student representatives from 13 different local universities met in Beijing and drafted five resolutions, in particular, to oppose the granting of Shandong to the Japanese and the creation of a Beijing student union. Later in the afternoon, some 3,000 students of Beijing University marched to Tiananmen Square, shouting slogans such as "struggle for the sovereignty externally, get rid of the national traitors at home" and "don't sign the Versailles Treaty."

Nobody can deny that it was a true revolution. Hundred years later, Chinese President Xi Jinping affirmed that patriotism was the core spirit of the 1919 event. He added that the May Fourth Movement inspired the ambition and confidence of the Chinese people and the nation to realise national rejuvenation. "It was also a great enlightenment and new cultural movement of disseminating new thought, new culture and new knowledge," Xi said.

The President urged Chinese youth "in the new era" to love the country, the party and adhere to the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC)... by the way, where was the party in 1919? Seventy years later, another student revolution took place on Tiananmen Square in Beijing and the Communist Party has no remembrance of it.

The aspiration of the students may have been very similar: A craving for a fairer world, more freedom for the youth to express themselves, a more democratic system (termed the 'Fifth Modernisation') and greater transparency and participation in the state's affairs. A power struggle at the top of the party ended with the decision to send tanks on to the Square on June 4, 1989, which resulted in the death of some 3,000 youths.

The Tiananmen papers, prefaced by a Chinese scholar, Andrew Nathan, gave a clear picture of the decision process inside the Politburo, which led to the massacre. Nathan



wrote: "For the first time ever, reports that provide a revealing and potentially explosive view of decision-making at the highest levels of the Government and party in the People's Republic of China (PRC)... the protests were ultimately ended by force, including the bloody clearing of Beijing streets by troops using live ammunition. The tragic event was one of the most important in the history of communist China and its consequences are still being felt."

This has completely been blacked out by Beijing. In May 1968, students in France and elsewhere in Europe also dreamt of a better world, but the two-month revolution, often violent, did not result in any casualty, neither from the students nor the police side.

Wang Xiangwei, a former editor-in-chief of the *South China Morning Post*, wrote an editorial piece for the Hong Kong newspaper. After mentioning the similarities between the student movement in 1919 and 1989, he commented: "But the Government will disregard the 30th anniversary of another student demonstration in 1989 that preceded its bloody crackdown on June 4. The latter protest may be less seminal in China's mod-

ern history, but its core spirit should not be obscured." Wang also noted that before the beginning of the May 4 celebrations, Xi chaired a meeting of the Politburo "to discuss ways to enhance study into the movement's history and significance. The President seeks to better integrate the spirit of May 4 into the party's narrative that only it can lead the country's youth to his goal of national rejuvenation."

The sad fact is that today, China is probably worse off than in 1989. Sycophancy and repression have reached new heights. Recently, the regime re-established an alliance of nine colleges, called the "Yanhe University Talent Training Alliance," in order to perpetuate what is called the YAN'AN RED DNA. YAN'AN WAS THE PLACE WHERE THE LONG MARCH ENDED; IT LATER BECAME THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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Another instance, during the cultural revolution, party committees in universities made the students report on the anti-

party faculty members.

After the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, the regime systematically established student informants in key Chinese universities. In 2005, the arrangement was expanded to almost every university and even some high schools explained the well-informed site *Chinascopie*: "Although on the surface, the purpose is to collect information on academic activities, the student informants are the ears and eyes of the communist party authorities in the universities." One could multiply the examples. One can just guess that China's freedom-loving students will again revolt one day.

Incidentally, in 1989, the Indian Government ordered the state television to pare down the Tiananmen coverage to the barest minimum. Analyst C Raja Mohan explained: "The Government's monopoly over television helped Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signal Beijing that India would not reveal in China's domestic troubles and offer some political empathy instead."

Rajiv Gandhi had travelled to China barely six months earlier. Sometimes, it is easier to be Alzeimerish.

(The writer is an expert on India-China relations)

SOUNDBITE

In 1942, Quit India movement was launched against the British, now we are fighting to oust a fascist Modi from power.



West Bengal CM —Mamata Banerjee

I am working now, I am not in the zone to get married. I don't care about what the world has to say. I think jumping the gun is silly.



Actor —Arjun Kapoor

Detecting and disrupting terrorists and other high-risk criminals prior to them carrying out an attack is a high priority for the international community.



UN Secretary-General —Antonio Guterres

Rahul Gandhi had to apologise to the Supreme Court for attributing lies to it. Congress is a habitual liar. This is political bankruptcy. This is desperation.



Union Minister —Prakash Javadekar

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Learn from the past

Sir — This refers to the article, "Scrub allegations and come clean" (May 8) by Kalyani Shankar. The writer is right to note that the Election Commission's (EC) autonomy has taken a dip as it failed to ensure that all political actors play by the rules of the game during the ongoing general elections. It took the Supreme Court to awaken the EC from slumber and pull it up for its failure to enforce the law against leaders who violated the Model Code of Conduct.

It is noteworthy that under former Chief Election Commissioners like TN Seshan, RVS Peri Sastri, Sukumar Sen and SY Quraishi, the electoral body had grown in strength. Such officers are known for their creative solutions that adhered not only to the spirit of the Constitution but were also in accordance to the law. The EC must take cue from them and find strength in the mandate given to it by the Constitution than being a lame duck.

Azhar A Khan Rampur

Needed, a comprehensive education module

This refers to the editorial, "Genuine scores?" (May 4). Parents, students as well as colleges thrive on self and mutual back-patting sprees. Memory and hard work are prioritised over meaningful and active learning. There is an emphasis on mechanical learning or 'rote learning'. The present education system in India emphasises on 'see' and 'tell' and fails to stress on 'how' and 'why'. In the active process of learning, students 'participate' or 'involve' themselves much more than just 'listening'. Knowledge, skill, attitude, analysis, synthesis and evaluation — all these are ingredients of active learning. Discussions, debates and deeper learning are focussed on to pave the way for a thoughtful learning.

From time-to-time, educationists advocate a 'grading system' to bridge the gap between an 'above 95' and 'below 90' student. The varying syllabus in the CBSE and State boards has made life tough for students. Uniformity is the need of the hour. A common education system, which amalgamates work and skills, the-



ory and thoughts and reading and learning must be incorporated across the country. Transformation of children from being dependent to self-reliant is a tough journey. Our education system should aid the process instead of complicating it. Parents must take care and ensure their children blossom into complete individuals.

Ganapathi Bhat Akola

Remembering Tagore

Sir — Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 7, 1861, as per the Gregorian calendar. However, according to the Bengali calendar, he was born on the 25th day of the Boishakh month. His birth anniversary is celebrated as per the Bengali calendar in West Bengal and Bangladesh and this

year, it has fallen on May 9.

During one of my recent visit to 'Jorasanko Thakurbari', Tagore's ancestral house in Bengal, I got the opportunity to see his room where he was born and where he breathed his last. Jorasanko means twin bridges. The name of the place must have got its name because of the material existence of the twin bridges over the canal in that

area. But it has now got a new spiritual connotation. As Tagore had said in one of his songs: "This is only about coming and going..."

Tagore had tremendous faith in the spirit of India. He had said, "I do not think that it is the spirit of India to reject anything, reject any race, reject any culture. The spirit of India has always proclaimed the ideal of

unity. This ideal of unity never rejects anything, any race, or any culture. It comprehends... all things with sympathy and love. This is the spirit of India."

The British used the twin bridges — Jorasanko — when they ruled India. They used the bridge of birth and creation to bring the ideals of liberty. But at the same time, they also used the other bridge — of death — to import the poison of racial hatred, to destroy the religious fraternity and the spirit of India so that they could divide and rule.

Sujit De Kolkata

Model State

Sir — Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his entire team have done a stupendous job in tackling cyclone Fani. Other States must learn from this model and work towards minimising losses when disasters, natural or man-made, strike.

P Aриhant Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Voices from Victory Day

It is imperative that the present generation grasps the lessons from Russia's victory over fascism and the German war machinery



SV NAIR

May 9 is one of the most revered days in Russia. This day brings to human memory the horrendous phase of the World War II, which for the people of Russia, marked the great patriotic war between 1941 and 1945. The terrible excesses still linger in the minds of the older generation. The importance of this day also lies in the fact that the Russians still perceive it as the most important event in the 20th century. According to a State poll, almost half of the Russians have planned to attend the Victory Day military parades. Indeed, Russia has a lot to commemorate and honour: The Soviet people and the Red Army chronicled the great victory over fascism with blood and tears, undertaking the supreme sacrifice of 27 million people, thus setting an all-time global toll of human lives. Without their sacrifice, the outcome would have been very different.

This day also commemorates the surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945. It was declared a national holiday and was followed in 15 Republics of the Soviet Union after the signing of the German Instrument of Surrender in the late evening of May 8, 1945. The Soviet Government announced the 'Victory Day' on May 9 after the signing ceremony in Berlin. The occasion became a reason for showing its military might.

With Vladimir Putin assuming power, the Russian Government started promoting the prestige of the governing regime and history. Hence, national holidays and communications became a source of national self-esteem. Victory Day in Russia has increasingly become a celebration in which popular culture plays a central role. On this day, President Putin plays host to Moscow's largest-ever military parade, marking the anniversary of the Great Victory of the Soviet People over Fascism in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). In an appropriate gesture, the Russian Centre of Science and Culture (RCSC) in New Delhi, jointly with the Embassy of the Republic of Belarus, marked the 74th Anniversary of the Victory over Fascism in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) and the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Belarus (July 3, 1944). On this occasion, a seminar titled, 'Impact and Lessons of the Great Victory of Soviet People over Fascism for Mankind', was held.

World War II was the deadliest conflict in human history, which saw 50 to 85 million fatalities, most of whom were civilians in the USSR and China. It included massacres, genocides, strategic bombing, deaths from forced starvation and disease and the use of atomic weapons. Operation Bagration, a code name for the 1944 Soviet Belorussian Strategic Offensive Operation, a military campaign fought in Soviet Belorussia in the Eastern Front of World War II, deserves special mention here. The USSR inflicted the biggest defeat in German history, totally shattering the latter's front line. World War II changed the political alignment and social structure of nations across the globe. This is why the United Nations was established to foster international cooperation and prevent future conflicts among countries. The victorious great powers became Permanent Members of the UN Security Council. In those painfully terrible days encountered by trials, travails and tribulations, practically every Soviet family was deprived either of a father, a husband or a son in the war-front.

Thousands of families were rendered homeless and the people — young and old, men and women, both dead and wounded — were found strewn all around. These accounts of World War II should remind mankind that without Soviet contribution, the destiny of the world would have been indeed unimaginable. It is a lesson for the present generation to bear in mind that it was the Soviet Red Army, which bore the brunt of Hitler's German war machinery, striking a crushing defeat, and in the process, rescued humanity from the menace of Nazism. Hope mankind has developed the right perspective with sensibility and sensitivity.

(The writer is Media Advisor, Russian Centre of Science and Culture, New Delhi)



POINTCOUNTERPOINT

MONEY DOES NOT MATTER TO ME. THAT IS WHY WHEN MODI ACCUSED MY PARTY OF BEING *TOLABAAZ*, I WANTED TO GIVE HIM A TIGHT SLAP OF DEMOCRACY.
 —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE



RAGE ALL YOU WANT BUT I JUST HAVE THIS ONE REQUEST FROM YOU, DO NOT FEEL ASHAMED WHEN WE HAVE TO BECOME FRIENDS AGAIN SOME DAY.
 —UNION MINISTER
SUSHMA SWARAJ

How to get an umbrella

Financial inclusion in a diverse country like India needs a spectrum of services in order to encapsulate the different dimensions of the diverse populations they reach



MOÏN QAZI

Finance is one field where we have witnessed significant innovations in recent decades. Earlier, we could only visualise social change in rural India because villages were so deeply mired in caste conflicts. These issues had engendered local tyrannies and subverted the social order, resulting in bondage and servitude for a significant portion of the population for generations. In the 1970s, the locus of change shifted to other areas, which worked towards levelling caste divisions and neutralising feudal overlords. Finance was the pivot of this process of change.

When I began life as a rural banker in the 1970s, outsiders rarely visited the villages. Those who did, other than the occasional anthropologist, Government extension officers, family planning staff of the Government or census worker, were missionaries of various religions. Over the years, I noticed that the balance shifted to agents toting financial schemes. Of course, those who lived in the villages already had both. As an ancient Indian proverb has it — a village can be formed wherever the three come together: A river, a priest and a money-lender. This gradual change in the profile of visitors and reformers was my first introduction to the then embryonic revolution in development finance, which later grew into the niche of social banking.

Bankers, who began showing up in villages on their bicycles, motorcycles or jeeps in the 1970s and 1980s, were usually employees of local branches of State-owned banks. Their mission, as assigned by their Governments and assorted international donors, was to find trustworthy villagers to whom they could provide credit. This, it was thought, would help villagers start small businesses, thereby increasing rural economic growth while at the same time empowering people to climb out of poverty.

The bankers and missionaries, who shared much of the same client pool, were curiously alike in some ways. Usually outsiders to the local community, members of both groups tended to discover their own preconceptions in the villages, rather than the local realities and dynamics. However, many of them genuinely cared about helping poor people increase their incomes and better their lives. Some were even quite successful. They came with powerful ideas, found other similarly powerful plans already present and often became catalysts for the cross-fertilisation of their own ideas of social and economic reforms and wisdom of the locals.

A unique characteristic of bankers visiting villages was the refreshing change in their academic credentials and their willingness to adapt to the harsh realities of rural life. Most of them were from technical backgrounds, endowed with a vision that focussed more on the technical and practical, rather than the financial aspects of the problems of the poor. This was particularly seen in the innovative practices they fostered in agriculture, dairy and small enterprises and artisanry. Their overarching goal was energisation of the rural economy and promotion of entrepreneurial approaches. Development finance was just one of the many sources into which they dipped.



They brought a range of weaponry to combat poverty and agricultural regress: High-yielding varieties of seeds, new techniques for pest management, a modern range of equipment and chemical fertilisers. Veterinary doctors brought exotic breeds of cattle, a range of new drugs and nutritional supplements to combat mortality and improve cattle health. Artificial insemination techniques built superior breeds of cattle.

Financial inclusion or access is a component of financial development, along with depth, stability efficiency and financial development, which is important for economic growth. Financial inclusion in particular has a bearing on equity as well. Access to a transaction account is a first step towards broader financial inclusion as it serves as a gateway to other financial services like credit or insurance; lowers transaction costs for daily economic activities; and enables the creation of a buffer for emergencies. Other potential benefits of financial inclusion include: Improving efficiency and targeting of Government welfare programmes; reducing corruption through better monitoring and regulation of financial transactions through digital technology. Transfers made directly to the citizen's bank accounts can eliminate corrupt and inefficient intermediaries. Digitisation of finance and economy holds the key to myriad problems.

Building inclusive digital economies requires the collective action of Governments, industry, financiers and the civil society. Before speeding ahead, we need to build the infrastructure, align our policies and create the tools that will enable the poor to board the digital train. India has a highly vibrant and innovative high-tech ecosystem in the world. However, along with it, there exist hundreds of millions of people, who live in villages, who are happy with a technology that is hardly more sophisticated than a bullock cart and a plough. Since systems are meant to work for the user, the onus is on the designer to make sure the users can access the system comfortably.

There is a need to integrate various modules — savings, credit and insurance among others — into a technology framework for the development of holistic strategies for comprehensive financial inclusion. Low-income groups, women in particular, have the lowest access to formal financial instruments, forcing them to rely on age-old informal mechanisms: Money under the mattress, money guards, relatives, friends and money-lenders. These informal mechanisms are insufficient and unreliable as well as highly expensive. Thus, financial exclusion imposes large opportunity costs on those who suffer from it the most.

While policy and financial regulatory initiatives enabled substantial progress in terms of financial inclusion indicators — branch penetration, account density or deposit and credit figures — there is a need to strengthen enabling institutions, which actively promote financial deepening in our country. Alternate service channels such as agents or business correspondents have tremendously expanded their outreach. They are better positioned to serve remote pockets as they operate in a limited geographical area, enjoy greater acceptability among the rural poor, have greater understanding of the issues specific to the underprivileged and have flexibility in operations, providing a level of comfort to their clientele. Formal financial services such as savings, loans and money transfers can enable the poor improve resistance to shocks, boost productivity of business, facilitate empowerment of marginalised groups, such as women and rural residents, and help reduce poverty. Life is one long risk for them as they are just a tragic event away from a financial catastrophe.

One way to ensure that the past wrongs are not repeated is to have mandates and subventions in the financial inclusion space so that banks and other financial institutions vigorously expand their outreach to cover even remote populations. The cost involved in the implemen-

tation of these mandates is quite stiff and need serious consideration. Instead of banks recovering these costs by overcharging ordinary customers, or by demanding recapitalisation by the Government, one alternative can be that the Government pays for these mandates. These costs can be determined by an independent agency. Not only will the cost of the mandate become transparent, it will make services accessible. The Government will also have to make a reasoned decision about how long to impose the mandate. Moreover, only efficient service providers will come forward to bid for these mandates.

On the demand side, financial literacy is an important tool for financial inclusion. Consumers have to understand the nature of the products and services they are buying as well as the implications of these purchases. There is also the need for substantial research on how vulnerable groups manage their complex financial lives. This can aid product design and solutions of financial instruments that can be tailored to their needs. Financial inclusion in a diverse country like India needs a spectrum of services in order to encapsulate the different dimensions of the diverse populations they reach.

Financial services need to be tailored to the needs of the disadvantaged groups, especially the women, poor people and first-time users, who may have low literacy and numeracy skills. Fintech is now providing platforms that allow financial institutions to carry on personalised, electronic conversations with customers through text messages using powerful data analytics that tailor messages to customer behaviour. All stakeholders must now realise that financial inclusion can succeed only through the (convenient) marriage of all four paradigms: Digital, finance, literacy and numeracy.

(The writer is Member, NITI Aayog's National Committee on Financial Literacy and Inclusion for Women)

Disaster beyond cyclone Fani

The formation of a tropical cyclone itself is going to be more readily triggered when there is availability of very warm conditions at the ocean surface and when the vertical temperature gradient through the atmosphere is strong



KOTA SRIRAJ

Fani wreaked unprecedented havoc in Odisha as it was the second such severe cyclone in the last hundred years to have formed in the Bay of Bengal. In spite of these harsh credentials, it could not exact much human casualties. This storm has had an interesting life since it first formed as a low-pressure area over the equatorial Indian Ocean and southeast Bay of Bengal on April 25, 2019. In short, it has been highly unpredictable for forecasters to pin it down, especially with respect to its track and speed.

After forming and intensifying into a depression, Fani moved towards Sri Lanka and threatened to make landfall somewhere on the coast of Tamil Nadu, according to forecasters. But

then, it changed its direction and also decreased its pace to stay in the Bay of Bengal for more than eight days, all the while becoming more intense and ending up becoming an extremely severe cyclonic storm. Such cyclones sniff out warm waters on the sea surface and progressively become more intense. This is where climate change comes in. Scientists and weather experts now firmly believe that enough studies have proven that warmer sea surfaces due to climate change make cyclones not only frequent but also intense in nature.

Towards the end of its journey through the Bay of Bengal, Fani changed its character again. At first, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted that Fani on landfall would carry ferocious winds with speed ranging from 175-185 kilometres per hour (kmph). With a final wind speed of more than 200 kmph, it battered the coastal areas of Odisha. Ferocious winds not only claimed 34 lives but have left a trail of destruction with life almost coming to a standstill. In spite of rising sea surface temperatures contributing to the severity of



cyclones, mankind has been unable to rein in global warming and consequently, climate change. The coastal areas, which can directly contribute towards lowering sea surface temperatures, are still engaged in activities that are detrimental to a healthy environment.

In the immediate future, climate change is likely to affect tropical cyclone behaviour even more intensely in two ways. First, the formation of a tropical cyclone itself is going to be more readily triggered when there is availability of very warm conditions at the ocean surface and when the vertical temperature gradient through the atmosphere is strong. As the climate

continues to warm up, the difference between the temperature near the surface of the Earth and the temperature higher up in the atmosphere is likely to decrease. Given a rise in greenhouse gas emissions and spiralling global warming, these conditions at the ocean level are going from bad to worse.

In addition to this, an increase in temperature of the surface ocean also affects the intensity of cyclones along with changes in upper atmosphere conditions both in terms of maximum wind speeds and in the intensity of rainfall that occurs in association with the cyclone. This is because the storms draw energy from the surface waters of the ocean and as more heat/energy is stored

in these upper waters, cyclones have a larger source of energy to draw from.

The interconnected nature of climate change with extreme natural events, especially cyclones, needs to be understood in detail. The erstwhile nature of cyclones during the 70s and even the 80s used to be frequent but they came along with a certain degree of predictable intensity with them. But of late, as ocean temperatures warm up rapidly, thanks to climate change, this predictability has been the first casualty. In fact, it is being estimated by the scientific community that in the coming decades, the frequency of cyclones may come down but this can hardly be considered as a harbinger of good news because the cyclones, as and when they occur, will be so fierce and devastating that recovery will take years for affected regions.

The human race is quick at adoption and that is what we are doing. Take the case of Odisha, which evacuated its people and minimised the loss of life really well. This is one State which has set a template. The way Odisha tackled the natural disaster may also mean that human race has now finally cho-

sen to fall in line and adapt to harsh climate change conditions rather than fight with the same and reverse it. This realisation should not just be for India but for the global community as well.

Rightly did Odisha receive acclaim from the UN for enabling successful evacuation of its people. But it would have been even greater if India had come to global attention for its measures to tackle global warming, especially sea surface temperatures, that eventually contribute to either reducing the frequency of cyclones or at least bringing down their intensity.

All is still not lost as far as the threat of cyclones is concerned. India can still make a difference by showing that coastal communities and cities can tackle global warming and keep their sea temperatures down. The world is bristling with technology that can change the course of how a cyclone can and will behave. Will our leadership and Government make a difference this time? Guess we may have to wait and watch the next cyclone.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



GENEROSITY IS GOOD

The last decade placed enormous pressure on charities. In the decline in donors, we are seeing the effect. Donors may also have felt discouraged by the sheer scale and difficulty of the problems being addressed. But no one should be under any illusion that we can do without these organisations. A healthy, active democracy requires a vibrant civil society as well as government. Generosity is a healthy impulse. (The Guardian editorial)

Suicide attacks in Lahore kill 10

PTI ■ LAHORE

A teenage Taliban suicide bomber blew himself up outside one of Pakistan's oldest and most revered Sufi shrines in Lahore on Wednesday, killing at least 10 people, including five police commandos, and injuring 25 others as the country marks the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The powerful blast took place around 8:45 am (local time) outside Gate number 2 of the 11th-century Data Darbar shrine, the largest Sufi shrine in South Asia, where the elite police personnel were deployed for security, police said.

A CCTV footage showed that a teenage boy wearing black shalwar kameez and a suicide vest came closer to the vehicle of elite force and blew himself up. "The suicide bomber is about 15 years old and made no suspected movement before blowing himself up," Lahore police spokesperson Syed Mubashir told PTI.

He said at least 10 people including five policemen were killed in the blast. Over 20 injured are being treated at the Mayo Hospital Lahore, of them the condition of six is said to be critical. He said two suspects have been taken into custody.

The Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JeA), a breakaway faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), claimed the responsibility for the attack. "We also heard that Jamaatul Ahrar had claimed the responsibility of the Lahore blast on social media but we can't confirm it before investigation," Mubashir said.

Punjab Inspector General Police Arif Nawaz told reporters that it was a suicide attack and the target was the vehicle of the elite force that was stationed outside the shrine of Sufi saint Ali Hajveri popularly known as Data Darbar.

He said the suicide bomber came closer to the police personnel vehicle and blew himself up, killing five of them and



A police officer comforts a man who lost his family member and a mother mourns the death of her son Wednesday, May 8, 2019, outside a hospital in Lahore, Pakistan.

injuring four others critically. One security guard and three civilians are among the dead, he said.

The impact of the blast shattered the windows in nearby vehicles and buildings, local media reported. Television footage showed a number of damaged vehicles near the shrine.

Lahore Deputy Commissioner Saleha Saeed told the media that one of the dead bodies brought in to Mayo Hospital was that of the suspected attacker. "It was a suicide attack. Ball bearings

were also used in the attack," she said. Mayo Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Yar Muhammad put the death toll to nine.

"We have received nine people including policemen dead. The condition of six injured is critical and doctors are trying their best to save their lives," he said.

Wednesday was the second day of Muslim holy month of Ramadan. The Data Darbar area is thickly populated and the shrine attracts thousands of visitors every day. "I was performing my duty when I heard

a powerful sound of the blast nearby. I rushed to the spot and found people in a pool of blood. I informed the police on emergency number and shifted two injured to Mayo Hospital," traffic police warden Rizwan Ahmed said.

Safia Bibi was to enter the shrine from the Gate 2 when the blast took place.

She suffered injuries. At Mayo Hospital she told reporters that she came along with her daughter to take blessing of the Sufi saint. "My daughter had entered the shrine while I was behind her

when I heard a sound of powerful blast. I fainted and recovered my consciousness at the hospital and found my daughter sitting besides me. I am thankful to God that my daughter is safe," Safia said.

Prime Minister Imran Khan strongly condemned the attack and directed the Punjab government to provide all assistance to the injured and families of victims.

Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar also condemned the attack and ordered an inquiry into the incident, summoning reports from the Punjab Inspector General of Police and the additional chief secretary of interior, according to a handout issued by the Punjab government.

Provincial Law Minister Basharat Raja said that the death toll may rise as some of the injured were in critical condition. "We condemn this cowardly act," he said. A rescue operation was conducted in the area before it was cordoned off for investigation. The shrine was evacuated, with devotees moved out through exits away from the blast site. Entry to the Data Darbar has since been restricted. Educational institutions near the shrine have been closed for Thursday.

Heavy contingent of police, Counter-Terrorism Department and forensic officials are collecting evidence from the site of the attack. The Inspector General of Police said police will share their findings once they conclude their probe. All regional police officers and city police officers have been directed to examine security in their respective areas and remain alert during the month of Ramadan.

The Data Darbar shrine is visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year. In 2010, the shrine was targeted in a suicide attack that killed more than 40 people.

Since then, the area has been increasingly hemmed in by heavy security, with visitors forced to pass through several layers of screening before they can enter the complex.

China, US bilateral trade volume drops by 20%

PTI ■ BEIJING

The bilateral trade volume between US and China dropped by 20 per cent in the first four months of this year following a trade war between the world's two largest economies and it could get worse if US President Donald Trump goes ahead and clamp punitive tariffs on USD 200 billion worth of Chinese imports this week, according to official data.

The data - released by the General Administration of Customs here ahead of the crucial 11th round of trade talks to be held in Washington on May 9-10 - said that from January to April, the trade between the two countries was 1.1 trillion yuan (USD 173 billion), down from 20 per cent in 2017 prior to they engaged in a tit-for-tat trade tussle last year.

If Trump goes ahead with his threat to raise tariffs on USD 200 billion worth of Chinese imports from 10 per cent to 25 per cent Friday, the bilateral trade is poised to tumble further, inflicting deeper wounds on the two sides and claiming collateral damages

on others, state-run Global Times reported.

The 11th round of talks between China and the US are being held amid uncertainties about future rounds of parleys as Trump administration officials accused Beijing of backtracking from issues agreed in the previous rounds of talks. Asked about the allegations, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told the media on Wednesday that negotiation itself is a process of discussion. It is natural for the two sides to have differences, he said. "China will not side-step contradictions but we are sincere about continuing the consultations," he said on Tuesday. In April, China's exports denominated in US dollar terms shifted into reverse, signalling growing downward pressure amid rising uncertainties in world trade amid an ongoing trade conflict between Washington and Beijing. In April, China's exports reached USD193.49 billion, down 2.7 per cent year-on-year, much lower than expected, GAC data showed. Imports of US goods fell 26 per cent from a year earlier to USD

10.3 billion, while China's exports to US were down by 13 per cent at USD 31.4 billion.

Trump is demanding China to reduce the USD 375 billion trade deficit. He also called for verifiable measures for protection of intellectual property rights (IPR), technology transfer and more access to American goods to Chinese markets.

He has already increased the tariffs on over USD 250 billion Chinese exports to US and threatened to extend tariffs on USD 200 billion Chinese imports to 25 per cent. China too slapped reciprocal tariffs on some US exports to the country. Trump recently hinted that President Xi Jinping could visit the US in June setting off speculation that both countries could work out a trade deal by next month.

Media reports suggest that the two sides are still discussing key issues on structural issues, such as the US accusation of unfair subsidies in China, a mechanism to verify compliance and what to do with the tariffs the two have already imposed on each other's goods.



Two barges push a container ship to the dockyard in Qingdao in eastern China's Shandong province Wednesday. AP

Prince Harry, Meghan present first glimpse of their baby boy

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain's Prince Harry and wife Meghan Markle on Wednesday presented the first glimpse of their baby boy, the seventh in line to the British throne born on Monday. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex described their new-born, who is referred to as Baby Sussex until his name is announced, as a "dream" and parenthood as "magic" as they attended a photocall at St George's Hall in Windsor Castle.

A visibly beaming Harry, 34, carried the infant out for the cameras before a brief interaction. "He has the sweetest temperament, he's really calm. He's been the dream," said 37-year-old Meghan.

Describing her first days as a mother, she added: "It's magic, it's pretty amazing. I have the two best guys in the world so I'm really happy." Harry said: "It's great. Parenting is amazing. It's only been two and a half days, three days, but we're just so thrilled to have our

own little bundle of joy."

The royal joked that his son has "already got a little bit of facial hair" as he spoke of his excitement at becoming a dad. Baby Sussex, the eighth great grandchild to Queen Elizabeth II, is believed to be the first mixed-race child born to a senior member of the British Royal Family in centuries.

Coming in ahead of him in the line of succession as it stands are his grandfather the Prince of Wales, his uncle the Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, his three young cousins Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis, and his father Harry. The infant, however, will not be made a prince unless his great-grandmother steps in, who is set to meet the new baby later on Wednesday.

Asked which parent the baby resembled more, Harry said: "Everyone says that babies change so much over two weeks. We're basically monitoring how the changing process happens over this next

month really. But his looks are changing every single day, so who knows?"

William had earlier welcomed his brother to "the sleep deprivation society that is parenting".

The father-of-three said he looked forward to seeing the new parents "when things have quietened down". Prince Charles also expressed his joy at the birth.

During an official visit to Germany with the Duchess of Cornwall Camilla, he said: "We couldn't be more delighted at the news and we're looking forward to meeting the baby when we return."

A statement added that Meghan's mother, Doria Ragland, was "overjoyed at the arrival of her first grandchild" and was with her daughter at Frogmore Cottage - the new parents' home on the Windsor Estate.

The birth is understood to have taken place in hospital as opposed to at home as Meghan had intended.

US welcomes release of 2 jailed Reuters journalists

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The US has welcomed the release of two Reuters journalists in Myanmar after they were pardoned by the country's civilian government, amidst international pressure. Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo walked free Tuesday from Yangon's Insein jail after spending over 500 days in prison. They were jailed under Myanmar's Official Secrets Act for reporting on a massacre of Rohingya civilians.

The two men were released as part of an amnesty of 6,520 prisoners by the country's President Win Myint. "Jailed for over 500 days since December 2017 for reporting on atrocities against the Rohingya, we are delighted they will be reunited with their families," White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said Tuesday. The two journalists from the London-based news agency won



The door to the Reuters news agency office at United Nations headquarters is decorated Tuesday. AP

international acclaim for their reporting on the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar.

The men led an explosive Reuters investigation - which eventually won a Pulitzer Prize - into the killing of 10 Rohingya men in the village of Inn Dinn,

Bangladesh as a result of the ensuing violence.

Their December 2017 arrests made them an international cause celebre and a sign of Myanmar's deteriorating press freedoms under Nobel laureate and civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Sanders hoped other jailed journalists in Myanmar would also be freed.

A free press, freedom of religion, and the rule of law are fundamental principles for any democracy. The United States will continue promoting a stable, prosperous, and democratic transition in Burma," Sanders said.

Welcoming their release Senator Marco Rubio said the two journalists were unjustly jailed for their work - reporting the alleged atrocities against the Rohingya. "Their cases serve as a reminder of the critical role a free press plays in bringing

accountability and transparency to governments, and we must do all we can to protect and advance those principles," Rubio said. Non-profit Reporters Without Borders (RSF) also welcomed the release of the two journalists.

"As well as the release of two individuals who should never have been in prison - Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo - this is a fundamental victory for press freedom and for the RSF, which had campaigned constantly since their arrest," said Daniel Bastard, the head of RSF's Asia-Pacific desk.

"Their case is emblematic of investigative journalism's importance for the functioning of democracies. We hail the role played by all those civil society actors who, both in Myanmar and internationally, never forgot the fate of these two journalists and kept fighting for them until this successful outcome," he said.



Britain's Prince Harry and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, during a photocall with their newborn son, in St George's Hall at Windsor Castle, Windsor, south England, Wednesday. Baby Sussex was born Monday at 5:26 a.m. (0426 GMT; 12:26 a.m. EDT) at an as-yet-undisclosed location. An overjoyed Harry said he and Meghan are "thinking" about names.

Pakistan arrests 34 Indian fishermen

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan has arrested 34 Indian fishermen for allegedly violating the country's territorial waters, nearly 10 days after releasing 60 prisoners from India as a goodwill gesture, officials said Wednesday. The fishermen, arrested on Tuesday, have been handed over to the police, a Maritime Security Agency spokesman said. "They will appear before a judicial magistrate who will decide on their judicial remand," he said. This is the first time since January that the maritime security agency has arrested Indian fishermen.

In January, five Gujarati boatsmen were arrested and jailed. On April 29, Pakistan released 55 Indian fishermen and five civilians as a "goodwill gesture" amidst tension between the two countries after the Pulwama terror attack.

Last month, the Pakistani government released more than 250 Indian fishermen from the Landhi and Malir jails in Karachi. The fishermen were released in three phases. The Pakistan Foreign



Ministry had earlier announced to release 360 Indian fishermen in four separate batches in April as a goodwill gesture.

Pakistan and India frequently arrest fishermen as there is no clear demarcation of the maritime border in the Arabian Sea and these fishermen do not have boats equipped with the technology to know their precise location. Owing to the lengthy and slow bureaucratic and legal procedures, the fishermen usually remain in jail for several months and sometimes years.

According to the list of prisoners exchanged by India and Pakistan in January, there are 347 Pakistani prisoners in Indian jails, 249 of whom are described as civilians and 98 fishermen, the report said.

GLOBE TROTTING Jennifer Aniston has 'zero time' for dating

New York: Jennifer Aniston says dating has never been on top of her priority list but she is open to finding love. The 50-year-old actor said she has "zero time" for romance right now. The have zero time, to be honest ... Dating has not been one of my first priorities. I feel like whatever (romance) looks like, it will present itself, and it's not about seeking it out," Aniston told Harper's Bazaar. She said when ever love comes knocking, she would welcome it. "I'm not like, 'No, I'm done with that. That's never going to happen again.' My time on this planet has been about... It hasn't looked a certain way. It's my way; it's what I've been given this round. "But I would say I don't find any of my past has given me a reason to harden up and create a shell or a wall of 'No more, that's it, I'm closed'," Aniston said. Asked if she believed in the concept of soul mates, the actor said she has her own interpretation of the term. "I think we have many soul mates. I don't think there's one and one only. I think we have soul clusters. I've had some of my friends for 35 years. I think we've all made some sort of unconscious agreement," Aniston said. "It's like when certain groups of people meet, they form a little soul cluster - a sort of common group of souls who have been put together," she added. Aniston was involved in two high-profile marriages, first to Brad Pitt and then Justin Theroux.



Mackenzie Foy, Kate Winslet to headline new 'Black Beauty' film

Los Angeles: "Interstellar" star Mackenzie Foy and Oscar winner Kate Winslet are set to play the leads in the latest film adaptation of classic novel "Black Beauty". The novel, penned by English author Anna Sewall in 1877, is one of the best-selling children's books of all time. The story follows the titular wild horse and its bond with a 17-year-old girl, undergoing trauma after the death of her parents. In a significant departure from the novel, where Black Beauty is shown as a carriage horse, the new film will portray the character as a wild mustang captured on the Wyoming Plains. Foy, 18, will essay the role of the 17-year-old girl, while Winslet, 43, will voice Black Beauty's inner thoughts.



Iran suspends N-deal curbs ... in push for relief from US sanctions

AFP ■ TEHRAN

Iran said Wednesday it had stopped respecting limits on its nuclear activities agreed under a 2015 deal with major powers until they find a way to bypass renewed US sanctions.

The well-trailed announcement came as Washington stepped up its rhetoric against Tehran, accusing it of planning "imminent" attacks and deploying an aircraft carrier strike group with several nuclear-capable B-52 bombers to the region.

Iran said it was responding to the sweeping unilateral sanctions that Washington has reimposed since it quit the agreement one year ago, which have dealt a severe blow to the Iranian economy.

It said it would stop implementing some of the restrictions it had agreed with immediate effect. Tehran said it would abandon more if the remaining parties to the agreement — Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia — failed to start delivering on their commitments to sanctions relief within 60 days.

President Hassan Rouhani underlined that the ultimatum was intended to rescue the nuclear deal from his US counterpart Donald Trump who has repeatedly called for it to be scrapped since he pulled out on May 8, 2018. "We felt the (deal) needed surgery and that the year-long sedatives have not delivered any result. This surgery is meant to save the (deal) not destroy it," Rouhani said at a cabinet meeting broadcast live on state television.

Robert Kelley, a former UN nuclear inspector now with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, said the commitments Iran was dropping had



no bearing on its ability to develop an atomic bomb. He said Iran was simply seeking to "save face" after "striking a deal which was not respected by the other side."

Under the landmark deal agreed by Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, the parties to the agreement were supposed to lift nuclear-related sanctions on Iran in return for it reining in its activities to ease fears it was seeking the capability to produce an atomic bomb.

But the promised sanctions relief has failed to materialise as European and Asian banks and oil companies have moved swiftly to abide by the renewed US sanctions for fear of financial or commercial repercussions. Rouhani slammed European countries for seeing the US as the world's "sheriff" and said this keeps them from making "firm decisions for their own national interests." "You have responsibilities, too ... for keeping your youth away from drugs, the flood of immigrants and other cooperation Iran has had with you so far. If this trend continues, the cooperation will cease."

The three European parties to the deal — Britain,

France and Germany — tried to save the accord with a trade mechanism meant to bypass reimposed US sanctions, but their attempt was dismissed by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as a "bitter joke".

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who was in Moscow on an official visit, accused European governments of not fulfilling their obligations under the nuclear deal.

"Our friends in Russia and China maintained very good relations with us in this year but the rest of the... participants did not meet any of their obligations," Zarif said.

Germany urged Iran to uphold the nuclear deal. "We as Europeans, as Germans, will play our part and we expect full implementation from Iran as well," Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert said. Britain called Iran's decision an "unwelcome step" and urged it to avoid "further escalatory steps". China underlined that it "resolutely opposes" the unilateral US sanctions on Iran but called on all parties to uphold the nuclear deal. Russia said it remained committed to the nuclear deal and denounced what it called

"unreasonable pressure" on Iran.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council said it no longer considered itself bound by the agreed restrictions on stocks of enriched uranium and heavy water.

It said after 60 days, it would also stop abiding by restrictions on the level to which Iran can enrich uranium and modifications to its Arak heavy water reactor that were designed to prevent the production of plutonium.

Uranium enriched to much higher levels than Iran's current stocks can be used as the fissile core of a nuclear weapon, while heavy water is a source of plutonium which can be used as an alternative way to produce a warhead. The council called for swift action by the remaining parties to the deal, warning time was running out.

"The window which is now open for diplomacy will not remain so for long, and the responsibility of the (deal) failing and any possible consequences are completely on the US and the remaining parties," it said.

On the eve of the Iranian announcement, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made an unannounced visit to Baghdad, an ally of both Washington and Tehran. Pompeo said he made the trip because Iranian forces are "escalating their activity" and said the threat of attacks was "very specific", without giving further detail. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a fierce opponent of the nuclear deal, seized on the Iranian announcement as evidence that it was pressing ahead with its nuclear programme. "We shall not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon," he said.

South Africans vote in health check for ruling ANCB

AFP ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africans voted Wednesday in nationwide polls all but certain to return the ruling ANC despite anger over corruption scandals, sluggish growth, and record unemployment. The election is the first measure of whether President Cyril Ramaphosa can reinvigorate support for a party whose backing rests largely on its liberation credentials, but now faces the prospect of a reduced majority.

"The ANC has been in power for the past 25 years and I don't see any change," lamented unemployed father-of-two Jacob Mareitwa, 30, who lives in a shack in Coligny in the North West province. Ramaphosa, 66, took over last year after the ANC, which first swept to power in 1994, forced then-President Jacob Zuma to resign after a nine-year term dominated by corruption allegations and a struggling economy. Zuma oversaw the party's most significant drop in support in the democratic era.

"This is a vote that reminds us of 1994... heralding a new period," Ramaphosa said after casting his ballot at a school in Chiawelo, Soweto, and described himself as "excitedly confident" of the outcome.

I am truly humbled by the turnout... it's a vote for the democratic system we have been building for 25 years," he said. "This is like a rocket booster for democracy." The 1994 vote saw Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress take power in the country's first multi-racial polls, marking the end of apartheid.

Support for the ANC has fallen in every election since 2004 with the party taking 54 percent in 2016 municipal elec-



President Cyril Ramaphosa casts his vote at the Hitekani Primary School in Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa Wednesday. South Africans are voting Wednesday in a national election that pits President Cyril Ramaphosa's ruling African National Congress against top opposition parties Democratic Alliance and Economic Freedom Fighters, 25 years after the end of apartheid.

tions, compared with 62 percent in 2014's national vote.

Most opinion surveys suggest the ANC will secure nearly 60 percent of the Wednesday vote, thanks to Ramaphosa's appeal and a fractured opposition.

"It reflects the weakness of the opposition, more than it does reflect the achievements of the ANC," said political scientist Collette Schulz-Herzenberg from Stellenbosch University. The ANC has been confronted by deepening public anger over its failure to tackle poverty and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa.

"It's not easy to make the right choice," said Soweto-based first-time voter Nokuthula Shongwe, 18, who stated her priorities as unemployment and crime. "I'm ner-

vous." The economy grew just 0.8 percent in 2018 and unemployment hovers around 27 percent — soaring to over 50 percent among young people.

Of the 47 opposition parties in the race, only the main opposition centrist Democratic Alliance (DA) and the radical-left Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) are major players.

The DA is hoping to shed its image as a white, middle-class party. Its first black leader, Mmusi Maimane, is contesting his maiden general election since taking the helm in 2015, and is expected to make modest gains on the DA's 2014 vote share of 22 percent.

"Vote for the future of this country and the South Africans who are unemployed," Maimane said after voting in

Soweto, insisting the poll was not "a beauty pageant but a contract" between voters and their representatives.

"This vote is about competence... so we can clean up this country," added Maimane, wearing a suit in the DA's signature blue and posed for selfies with voters. But the EFF, founded six years ago by former ANC youth leader Julius Malema, is predicted to make major gains, growing from 6.3 percent to a forecast 11 percent. "A lot of people died for us to vote — we are here to honour their memories," said Malema as he cast his ballot in Seshego in eastern Limpopo province.

"If you need change, EFF is the way to go," added Malema, sporting his signature red and a green baseball cap with a red star.

Thai Junta-backed party needs allies after election count

Bangkok (AFP): Thailand's army-backed party needs allies to get enough votes to allow coup leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha to cling to power, according to election results released late Wednesday that were immediately challenged by anti-junta rivals.

The Junta-linked Palang Pracharat party now has 115 seats in the lower house, only 11 votes shy of a majority in the combined parliament thanks to 250 military-appointed senators. The results were announced more than a month after the March

24 vote, the first election since the junta seized power in a 2014 coup. It was held under new rules crafted by the generals, including the creation of appointed senators who can vote for prime minister.

Despite the booked-in advantage, the lower house results leave Palang Pracharat needing coalition partners.

The most obvious candidates are Bhumjaitai and the Democrat Party, which both have more than 50 lower house seats.

Officials from both parties said Wednesday they have yet

to reach a decision. "The party is split," longtime Democrat official Sirichok Sopha told AFP. A number of smaller parties are also up for grabs. Palang Pracharat could not immediately be reached for comment. The election was widely seen as a choice between junta allied parties and those aligned with billionaire ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

A whopping 27 parties will have seats when parliament convenes within 15 days. Wednesday's results are likely to set off horsetrading, negotiations and challenges. The

Shinawatra-linked Pheu Thai party won the most lower house seats — 136 — posing a legitimacy crisis for the gruff junta leader Prayut should he become prime minister. It is also part of a lower house coalition with six parties, including upstart newcomer Future Forward headed by telegenic billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit.

Future Forward surged to third place in the popular vote and now has 80 seats. But Thanathorn has been hounded by court cases and complaints that the rising star has blasted as political sabotage. The

Election Commission has come under fire for wildly inaccurate initial counts, the 2.1 million invalidated ballots, and the staggered release of full results. It has been flooded with complaints since the election, and recounts and new voting sessions were held in a handful of polling stations. Pheu Thai threatened to take legal action over the formula used to calculate seats.

Thai considers the Election Commission's action as an intentional abuse of the law and against the constitution," it said in a statement.



French President Emmanuel Macron greets a veteran during ceremonies marking the 74th anniversary of World War II victory in Europe, under the Arc de Triomphe Wednesday in Paris.

UN chief praises India for counter-terrorism support

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appreciated India's support to the counter-terrorism work of the world body and underscored the need to "detect and disrupt" terrorists fleeing the Islamic State prior to them carrying out an attack as a high priority for the international community.

The UN chief made these remarks during the launch of the United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme on Tuesday, over two weeks after the Easter Sunday terror attacks in Sri Lanka claimed by the ISIS. The programme would help to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation, expand multilateral networks for sharing information to detect, identify, disrupt and prosecute terrorists and to ensure that member states most affected by terrorism have the capacity to tackle this evolving threat, he said. "The United Nations Countering Terrorist Travel Programme we launch today is about helping to meet all these objectives. I would like to thank the Dutch Government for its generous contribution to this effort," he said. "I appreciate the continued support of the Governments of India, Japan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar to the counter-terrorism work of the United Nations," Guterres said.

The UN chief noted that following the territorial defeat of ISIL (also known as ISIS and Islamic State), many terrorists are trying to return home or relocate to safe havens or other



troubled parts of the world. "Many are well trained and could carry out future terrorist attacks. Others hope to radicalize and recruit new followers to their cause. They, as well as those they inspire, represent a major transnational threat," he said. "Detecting and disrupting these terrorists and other high-risk criminals prior to their carrying out an attack is a high priority for the international community," he said.

The programme will help member states collect, process and share travel data with other competent national and international authorities, with full respect for privacy and other fundamental freedoms, he said. "We know that policies that fully respect human rights are essential in tackling violent extremism. This information sharing will enhance the abilities of member states to effectively detect, prevent, investigate and prosecute terrorist offences, including their related travel," Guterres added.

Highlighting that there has been a dramatic movement of terrorists to and from conflict zones around the world over the last seven years, he said that just two years ago, more than

40,000 people from more than 110 countries may have travelled to join terrorist groups in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

"The recent despicable attacks in Kenya, New Zealand and Sri Lanka, among others, are tragic reminders of the global reach of the scourge of terrorism," he said, adding such incidents underscore the need to work closely with partners across the United Nations system and beyond.

The General Assembly and Security Council resolution 2396 have reaffirmed the need to strengthen international cooperation and information sharing to improve national detection capacities and prevent the travel of terrorists, Guterres said.

"Importantly, this (the programme) will also enable the detection and disruption of human trafficking and other forms of serious organised crime and to faster identify their victims," he said. Guterres said that the UN family is ready to assist in protecting and ensuring the rights of all victims whose interests are served by this project. "It represents the kind of cooperative, inter-governmental and institutional approach that I aimed for when I established the Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact last year to enhance counter-terrorism coordination and coherence across the system," he stressed. In that context, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre has also stepped up its efforts to meet the growing expectations and demands from countries most affected by terrorism, he said.

Lanka offers relief package to revive tourism industry

Colombo (PTI): The Sri Lankan government has announced a one-year debt moratorium and subsidised working capital for the tourism sector as a slew of measures to help revive the tourism industry hit hard by the Easter Sunday terror attacks.

The relief package comes as the official tourism arrival figures released on Tuesday, the first monthly report since the terror attacks, showed that Sri Lanka's tourist arrivals declined 7.5 per cent in April 2019 compared to the same period last year. The Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority said April recorded 166,975 foreign tourists in the country compared to 180,429 in April 2018, a 7.5 per cent dip in arrival of tourists from abroad. State Minister for Finance Eran Wickremaratne said the debt moratorium will



be given by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka to tourism sector institutions and individuals, on a case-by-case basis.

The moratorium period will be until March 31, 2020 for both capital and interest payments granted to the tourism sector as of April 18, 2019, the minister said. The interest subsidy is borne by the government on outstanding credit

facilities, both capital and interest, he said.

The working capital debt and interest will be treated as separate loans to be repaid from July 2020. Working capital loans will be based on revenue of hotels. Up to 75 per cent of the interest will be subsidised, the state minister said. The Value Added Tax on hotels will also be reduced to 5 per

cent from 15 per cent, Wickremaratne said. Duty free importation will be allowed for security equipment such as handheld metal detectors, walk-through metal detectors, baggage x ray inspection equipment and vehicle scanners.

The bombings, which targeted three Christian churches and three Colombo hotels, killed over 250 people, including 44 foreigners, and injured over 500, including 37 foreigners. Tourism industry officials said there have been 70 per cent cancellations of prior bookings after the attacks.

The US, China, the UK, India and Australia were among the countries which issued travel warnings on Sri Lanka following the blasts carried out by local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jammath (NTJ).

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena Tuesday appealed to the international community to lift travel warnings issued after the terror attacks.

Tourism accounts for about five per cent of Sri Lanka's economy, with India, Britain and China being the main markets. The country earned about USD 4.4 billion in 2018 from the tourism sector. Around 450,000 Indian tourists visited Sri Lanka last year and the island nation was expecting the total Indian tourist arrivals to cross one million in 2019.

Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority Chairman Kishu Gomes has said that tourist arrivals are expected to fall 60 percent in May. Sri Lanka is expected to lose 1.5 billion US dollars in revenue from tourism in 2019.

Teen girls more vulnerable to bullying than boys

PTI ■ LONDON

Teenaged girls are bullied more often than boys, and are more likely to consider or attempt suicide, a study has found.

Researchers from Rutgers University in the US conducted analyses of the data from a US survey from 2011-2015. "Bullying is significantly associated with depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, suicide planning, and suicide attempts," said Nancy Pontes, an assistant professor at the Rutgers School of Nursing-Camden.

"We wanted to look at this link between bullying victimisation, depressive symptoms, and suicidality by gender," Pontes



said in a statement.

Pontes said that, in general, girls are more often bullied than boys, and girls are also more likely to consider, plan, or attempt suicide compared with boys, regardless of being bullied or not

— although boys are more likely to die by suicide. In this study, researchers looked at significant associations and not direct causal links.

Using two methods of statistical analysis, the study, pub-

lished in the journal Nursing Research, shows the probability of a link between bullying and depressive symptoms and suicide risk. Bullying among boys is often physical, Pontes said. While many schools are cracking down on physical bullying which people can see, those actions probably are preventing and stopping bullying that is more common among males, she said.

Among females, the bullying is often the kind that is not visible. It is often relational bullying, such as excluding someone from activities and social circles, or spreading rumours about them. The actions are not overt, Pontes said, so they could go on for a long time without anyone else

knowing. "Our school interventions should understand the differences in bullying and how we might better address females who are bullied," said Pontes. The researchers believe that preventing bullying should begin at a young age. She said parents should start teaching preschool children that bullying is unacceptable.

Pediatricians and nurse practitioners should talk about the harmful effects of bullying with parents so that they can intervene early and reduce the victimisation that causes adolescents to consider suicide, so they will be able to live happier and healthier lives.

SPORTS IS A WAY OF LIFE

On his appointment as the vice president of the Uttar Pradesh Olympic Association, **DR PN ARORA**, the managing director of Yashoda Superspecialty Hospitals, in an interview with **ANKITA SAXENA**, says that youth's involvement in sports can give a positive direction to the country's growth

What is your vision to further the reach and active participation of Uttar Pradesh Olympic Association?

Our vision is focused; to attract maximum Gold medals in the Olympic Games. Apart from identifying the right players from the state to represent the country, we are ensuring that the players of all Olympic sports get proper training, direction as well as proper diet to help them keep fit and ready. It has been seen that many a time talented players are unable to afford training since they have to support their families which leave them off the selection procedure. For this, we are planning to engage coaches and also tie-up with some stakeholders to generate funds to help the sportspersons bring laurels for the country.

Infrastructure for sports is directly related to the performance of the sportspersons. Does the Uttar Pradesh Olympic Association have any plans to develop state-of-the-art facilities in the state?

Uttar Pradesh is the largest state in the country which also translates into a larger responsibility on our part to identify, train and nurture sportspersons. This needs a multi-level and multi-institutional participation. In order to train players we need state-of-the-art infrastructure and training personnel and facilities. As an association we plan to make sure that will cooperation of key stakeholders, facilities are available at the ground level, not only in cities but also in districts and villages to encourage more people to take up sports.

How does the association identify talented players?

We have been organising tournaments from time to time of various levels to provide a platform to the budding players to showcase their skill in a particular sport. Last year, we organised a badminton tournament in Hapur which saw an overwhelming participation from players from all across the country. What was thrilling to see was the number of girls who participated in the event. Such events have become a magnet for sportspersons and it gives us an opportunity to identify the potential players who can be taken under our wing for further training. We will also be advertising the dates of such tournaments in the mainstream media and other channels to ensure that the players are informed about them well in advance.

Given the injuries suffered by various sportspersons, proper medical facilities to tackle them hold very high importance. Do you feel that Uttar Pradesh and in large the country, needs more hospitals/ divisions dedicated to sports?

As part of an association I realise that we need



to facilitate the players in every way possible to help perform at both national and international platforms. I want the players to know that the association is approachable by any player and we will ensure that their medical needs are taken care of. I have three hospitals and can ensure specialised treatments for any type of injury. Those who cannot afford the treatments, I can also offer treatment free of cost. However, injuries are one part of the game while diet is

another. It is the association's responsibility to look into the diet of the players and I am sure we will do our best.

How do you think involvement of youth in sports can benefit the country?

Despite having the largest youth population in the world, India has not been able to realize the full potential of involvement of its youth in sports. I relate sports directly with good health and the development of a state and by in large

the country. It is my belief that sports is an important part of one's life since it teaches discipline, team work spirit of sportsmanship among many other life skills. Even if one decides not to pursue sports as one's career, it is still important that one should be engaged in playing some game as it benefits the professional aspirations. I think that if one is engaged in an activity, it can arrest many social issues as well. There is a need to change the perception of parents as well towards sports who put pressure on their children to perform in studies and leave sports since it is not a viable career. However, I strongly believe that this can be addressed if all stakeholders come together to work in the same direction.

What are your suggestions to the sportsmen?

The only suggestion to the players is that they should have the dedication and concentration like that of Arjun of the Mahabharata. It has to be a focused approach in order to achieve more medals. For everything else, we are there for them.

TRAINING GROUND

Uttar Pradesh Olympic Association is a member of the Indian Olympic Association which is the governing body for the Olympic Movement and the Commonwealth Games in India. As an affiliated member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) and Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), the IOA administers

various aspects of sports governance and athletes' welfare in the country. In this regard, the IOA oversees the representation of athletes or teams participating in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and other international multi-sport competitions of IOC, CGF, OCA and ANOC. The Indian Olympic Association is recognised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.



NLC India contributes to aid relief in Odisha

In a response to the distress of the people of Odisha, facing one of the worst unprecedented Cyclone 'Fani' relief works, NLC India Limited, a Navratna CPSE of Government of India, has contributed ₹2 crore towards the Government of Odisha Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund. Rakesh Kumar, CMD, R Vikraman, Director (HR) and Prabhakar Chowki, Director

(Mines) of NLCIL, handed over the cheque to the chief minister of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik in the presence of senior officials of NLCIL at the CM's Office in Bhubaneswar.

Acknowledging the gesture, the state's chief minister expressed his gratitude to NLCIL for standing by with the people of Odisha in this hour of crisis.

SCOPE powers green initiatives



Little efforts can bring large savings of electricity as power saved is power produced. This has been reflected by SCOPE which has brought down the energy consumption substantially in two of its towers at Lodhi Road and Laxmi Nagar, New Delhi. These two towers accommodate the corporate and regional offices of 65 public sector enterprises. The director general of SCOPE, Dr UD Choubey, informed that, during 2018-19, savings in power consumption was around 0.93 million units, which is equivalent to saving worth ₹1.02 crore. In the last

seven years, such efforts by SCOPE and its constituents have resulted in saving of 9.10 million units, which is equivalent to ₹9.36 crore. This has been possible by undertaking various steps by the organisation. These steps include the effective monitoring of power consumption, replacement of conventional lights with LED lights and occupancy sensors, overall energy consciousness, and energy efficient equipment, among others. SCOPE is determined to save further energy by way of lower consumption of electricity in the year 2019-20.

Bonphul's oxygen optimiser now GreenPro certified



Bonphul Air Products which aims to be the world's most comprehensive indoor air quality (IAQ) company, has successfully attained the GreenPro certification by the Green Products and Services Council, an initiative of the CII-Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre, Hyderabad, for its oxygen optimisers branded as 'OxyMax'.

The certification has been given to OxyMax under the 'Innovation' category after the successful evaluation of the product by the Council on criteria's which include product design, product application,

product performance, benefits to green built environment, product stewardship and case study. A Green Product Certification signifies that a product is 'Green' i.e. environment-friendly and safe. The certification is aimed to facilitate the green product market transformation in the country, enabling green building projects in selecting the right product and equipment and to increase the market demand for the green products.

OxyMax is the world's second and India's first oxygen optimiser. It operates in a 'split' mode, with an outdoor

unit and an indoor unit. The outdoor unit harvests oxygen from the outside air and pumps it indoor, where it is dispensed by the indoor unit. This increases the oxygen level in the indoor air from its current level to 21 per cent, creating an environment of freshness and vigour.

In a letter to Bonphul, it is affirmed by the council that OxyMax, the oxygen optimiser contributes in maintaining the good health and wellbeing of occupants in green buildings by enhancing indoor environment quality through increasing oxygen level, and also contributes in improving the energy efficiency of such buildings.

Prior to this, OxyMax has also successfully received the ROHS and CE certifications for conforming to health, safety, and environmental protection standards. Bonphul Air Products will be felicitated with the certificate by the Council during the GreenPro Summit 2019 to be held from May 29 and 30 in Pune.

INDIAN TEENS TO SHOWCASE TALENT AT 'US KIDS GOLF'



India's growing strength in Junior golf has been amplified with the qualification of as many as 32 players in various age-group competitions under the global banner of the 'US Kids Golf'. These 32 kids are from 13 age groups—eight among boys and five among girls. A total of 20 boys and 12 girls are now eligible with the 'Priority Status' for the US Kids global events in Europe and some of them will also be eligible for the World Championships, depending on their status. Of the five categories of Priority Status, Burgundy status holders will be eligible for US Kids World Championships and 13 of the 32 Indian players have earned the Burgundy status on the basis of their scoring. Of the remaining, 14 have Orange Status and five have Blue Status.

The opportunity to play on international courses also readies the youngsters to play on Championship courses where the world's best compete annually. This year, the European segment of US Kids will see the players practice and play at courses like the Renaissance, Gullane, Craigelaw, Archerfield Links and others. Each age-group's competition is held at a different venue and all the events are scheduled for the last week of May.

Gullane is where the prestigious Scottish Open was held last year with India's Shubhankar Sharma playing it for the first time, while this

year's Scottish Open is scheduled to be held at the Renaissance. So, the UK Kids Golf events will give the teen and pre-teens a chance to see and play course they will hope to play on as adults later on. A lot of the youngsters who have achieved Priority Status this season will be playing in Europe for the first time, adding to their experience of playing in quality courses in India and Asia and now Europe.

The president of the US Kids India, Rajesh Srivastava, said "Our main aim is to get these youngsters ready for the bigger challenges as they grow in the sport and get to play where the world's best compete like the Gullane or Renaissance which have hosted the Rolex series events like Scottish Open on European Tour." He further added, "Thus, when these young players finally get to play major events at the same courses, they will not be in awe of them, but take on the challenge."

Priority status is a qualification system that determines when players receive invitations for multi-day events. There are five levels in order—Platinum, Burgundy, Green, Orange and Blue. The players must also meet the Scoring Requirement for their age group and the Priority Status expires after one year. Players can have multiple levels of status, each level with its own expiration date.



Rythme School to charm Las Vegas

The students of Rythme School of Music mesmerised the audience during the 'Music Beyond Boundaries' show organised by Le Rythme. They presented musical fusion and different forms of classical dances. More than 120 students participated in the programme of which more than 30 students presented group performances to present the harmony among different instruments. The Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee, Pandit Rajendra Prasanna played *jugal bandi* between Indian Flute and western Flute with Jeanne Mirramon. He also played the shehnai with the violin of Dr Santosh Nahar. Ustad Akram Khan accompanied in tabla. Renowned singer Rini Mukherjee, founder of Le Rythme, mentioned "It is our privilege to train the students across the different parts of the society. As a part of skill development programme, 19 eminent Gurus are engaged to train the students. I am sure that with all of our initiatives, in due course, the students from underprivileged sections of the society will also be turned into real asset of the country and will perform in the international platforms. They will participate in NABC 2020 at Las Vegas next year."

NMDC rejects news regarding recruitment notification

A statement released by the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) states that the company has observed that some websites have hosted recruitment notice about 'NMDC Executive Trainees Recruitment 2019'. This is to inform that it is a fake news that is being spread through websites and social media with malicious intent. All concerned are requested to beware of such mischievous act aiming to deceive the innocent by fraudulent means and hence do not pay any attention or act upon it. It is clarified that NMDC Limited, a Government of India Enterprise, has not issued any such notification pertaining to recruitment of Executive Trainees-2019 in any website or newspapers. NMDC does not take any responsibility for public responding to/applying against such fake posts.



Ignite young minds to conserve energy

Tata Power Delhi Distribution (Tata Power-DDL) felicitated the winning students of its pan India contest on energy conservation—'Bijli Bachao Star Banjao'. The campaign was launched to ignite young minds to save and make optimal use of electricity and to become a proud contributor in supporting the 'Power for All' initiative of the Government of India.

The CEO of TATA Power-DDL, Sanjay Banga and the chief of HR and Admin, Sushil Kumar Srivastava, presented the winners with certificates, gift cards and mementos. "I congratulate the winners and appreciate their efforts for sharing interesting ideas on energy conservation. I am sure that these little champs will further promote the judicious use of electricity for a sustainable living cause among their friends and families," said Banga.

Enjoy special Ramadan menu at The Ashoka Hotel

With the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan, The Ashoka Hotel is celebrating the magnanimous spirit of Ramadan and is all set to take care of its guest and their special needs with its special menu of 'Iftar' and 'Sehri'. The special menu is being hosted at the hotel's coffee shop—'The Samavar' (24x7).

To pay exceptional regards to the traditions of the guests, the management will provide special amenities like the prayer mat to facilitate the course of the festival. The mats are being made available at the moment of guest check-ins. The hotel is also extending the facility of 'book your meal'



where the guests can book their *iftar* or *sehri* even before reaching the hotel. The service will be extended through the room service and the Coffee Shop.

During *Sehri* and *Iftar*, the lavish handpicked selection, right from the starters, main course to the desserts, is presented to delight the taste buds. The course of *Sehri* begins with varieties of dishes

made with eggs, to the mouth-watering fried fish, 'Mutton Rogan Josh', 'Chicken Nuggets' among others, served with traditional *paranths* and *roomali roti*. To complement the after taste of these amazing dishes, milk and *jalebi* is served to the guests.

The treat of *Iftar* is journey of flavours in itself. It begins with refreshing drinks like 'Nimbu Paani' and 'Sharbat-e-Gulab' and dates. To tune the palate for the night, the course delights with assorted vegetable/*paneer pakora*, 'Chicken-Do-Pyaaza' and much more. The *Sehri* and *Iftar* are non-chargeable for the in-house guests.

ICSI strengthens auditing standards

The Council of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) has approved the issuance of four ICSI Auditing Standards and the same were released recently at the ICSI House in New Delhi. The Standards are required to be observed by the Company Secretaries undertaking Audits. The Standards seek to promote best auditing practices, uniformity and consistency while conducting audits.

The four Standards are—CSAS-1: Auditing Standard on Audit Engagement; CSAS-2: Auditing Standard on Audit Process and Documentation; CSAS-3: Auditing Standard on Forming of Opinion and CSAS-4: Auditing Standard on Secretarial Audit. These are applicable on recommendatory basis on Audit engagements

accepted by the Auditor on or after July 1, 2019; and mandatory for Audit engagements accepted by the Auditor on or after April 1, 2020

The CSAS-1 lays down the Auditor's role and responsibilities with respect to an Audit Engagement and the process of entering into an understanding/agreement with the Appointing Authority for the purpose of audit. The CSAS-2 lays down the responsibilities and duties of the Auditor with respect to Audit Process in conducting audit and maintaining proper audit records. The CSAS-3 covers the basis and manner for forming Auditor's opinion on subject matter of the audit while the CSAS-4 covers the basis and manner for carrying out the Secretarial Audit.

ICSI's president CS Ranjeet

Pandey, chairman, ASB and Council Member CS Vineet K Chaudhary, the vice chairman, ASB and Council Member CS Manish Gupta, and the officiating secretary of ICSI CS Ashok Kumar Dixit, were present at the release of the Auditing Standards.

While speaking about the issuance of Auditing Standards, CS the president said, "I am confident that these standards issued by ICSI will guide our Members and further strengthen our Audit Process". CS Vineet K Chaudhary congratulated the entire team of ICSI for this achievement and commented that the institute shall be conducting familiarisation programmes for the members to make them understand the true spirit of the Auditing Standards issued by the ICSI.

Trend Glazer

It's a busy year for me: Bhumi

Actress **BHUMI PEDNEKAR** is extremely busy this year as she has six films lined up. The films are *Bala*, a social satire, *Dolly Kitty Aur Wo Chamakte Sitare*, *Saand Ki Aankh*, a biopic, *Pati Patni Aur Woh*, a romantic comedy and the multi-starrer epic *Takht*. She also features in an untitled horror film opposite Vicky Kaushal.

"I am grateful that I have got the opportunity from such talented filmmakers. I have always wanted to push my boundaries as an artiste. It's a great responsibility to deliver for them and bring the characters to life," Bhumi says.



'I really don't understand the unwarranted interest and negativity about my citizenship. I have never hidden or denied that I hold a Canadian passport. I find it disappointing. It's a matter that is personal, legal and non-political, and of no consequence to others. I work in India, and pay all my taxes in India.'
—Akshay Kumar



Actress **SONAM KAPOOR AHUJA** will next be seen in *The Zoya Factor*, an adaptation of Anuja Chauhan's book about a girl, Zoya Singh Solanki who ends up becoming a lucky charm for the cricket world cup team.



She says, "A lot of girls feel, 'if I am such a mess, how am I going to succeed?' But I want to say, it's okay to be a mess. I think that's what I said through Mili in *Khoobsurat* and that's what I liked about Zoya as well. She is a huge mess. But I like to play girls who are regular and normal."

'My child is like a slice of heaven'

The forthcoming Mother's Day will be rapper **CARDI B's** first as a mother. And she has one more reason to celebrate. She has topped Spotify's global list of most-streamed mothers.

Talking about her child, she said, "She is so fun. I love her, she's my little best friend. She makes the gloomiest days look like sunshine. It's a slice of heaven."

The Grammy winner isn't the only mother who juggles the demands of parenting with life in the limelight. Honouring them, Spotify has come out with lists. Cardi B is followed by singer Beyonce, Adele, Pink and Shakira. As for India, most-streamed Indian artists-moms on Spotify is topped by Alka Yagnik. The second position went to Sunidhi Chauhan, followed by Tulsi Kumar.



While **PRIYANKA CHOPRA** may have failed to make a strong impression among social media users with her Met Gala look, fashion designers appreciate her over-the-top boldness, says **TEAM VIVA**

SPLIT VERDICT

With netizens analysing celebrities at the Met Gala 2019, both with criticisms and praises, actress Mandira Bedi summed it up best when she took to social media to express her opinion. She wrote, "People are ooohing and aaaahing all day, over some women who are looking absolutely ridiculous in the clothes they are wearing... Follow the theme, 'yes', but don't look absurd for God's sake." We couldn't agree more. There has to be a line drawn between being avant garde and downright crazy.

From 'Nobody sits at the Met Gala' outfit of Katy Perry that was emblazoned with candles and sticks



a chandelier to Cardi B's gigantic red dress that needed its own entourage, Kim Kardashian's droplets-falling and seemingly-wet skin-tight dress to Lady Gaga's four seasons of fashion — camp fashion-themed Met Gala 2019's red carpet showcased all things extravagant, glamorous and over-the-top. Talking about the outfits and looks by Indian women on the floor, actress Priyanka Chopra played it bold as she wore a silver Dior gown with colourful, feathered ruffles at its bottom and a high leg slit. Going whimsical, she carried a similar-coloured cape

with a silver spiked crown on the top. Her silver-frosted brows and eyelashes and a dark burgundy lip colour, however, failed to make an impression among the global audience as her curly, back-combed hair waves couldn't complement the overall look. Deconstruction is good but certainly that doesn't mean being destructive. No wonder she kicked off a meme fest with comparisons to Sri Lankan cricketer Lasith Malinga's hair and Johnny Depp's Mad Hatter character from *Alice in Wonderland*. In other words, she was shown to have been hit by a thunder shock.

Frankly Deepika Padukone's Barbie look was too plastic and lifeless while Isha Ambani's 'simple' mauve ball gown with hand-embroidered crystals and ostrich feathers, turned out to be fit for a Disney set.

Designers, of course, complimented the boldness of PeeCee's spirit. Varun Bahl described her look as "giving major fashion goals" in the genre of quirk. Said he, "Channelling her inner Mad Hatter, Priyanka made heads turn with her flamboyant Dior gown and added a touch of Indian tradition with *bindis*. She truly incorporated the meaning of the theme and went with it really well."

Designer Nikasha disagreed as she felt that Priyanka's look "needed little more of a story." She said, "She did try to stay authentic to the theme and I must compliment her for the efforts. Having said that, I felt that she could have added more gravitas to her look. It could be more reasoned." Being unrecognisable is one thing but burying her strong facial accents wasn't certainly on point.

'PRIYANKA DID TRY TO STAY AUTHENTIC TO THE THEME AND I MUST COMPLIMENT HER FOR THE EFFORTS. HOWEVER, SHE COULD HAVE ADDED MORE GRAVITAS TO HER LOOK. IT NEEDED LITTLE MORE OF A STORY'

Nikasha, who called camp fashion as "ironic, kitschy and tongue-in-cheek," felt that exaggerated and tacky are also other associated words. "It is something so outrageously artificial, affected, inappropriate or out-of-date as to be considered amusing. But did it really amuse us in the end?" she wondered.

Talking about Deepika's look, she said, "I consider her a gorgeous style icon who is always one step ahead on her glamorous avatar. However, this pretty Barbie look was just that — too pretty and glamorous but there was nothing iconic or tongue-in-cheek about it." On Isha's look, she said, "Lavender is definitely her colour but the pretty pouf and volume did very little for camp fashion. She could have carried a *Mata Hari* or an Indian goddess look with more oomph." Lastly, calling Natasha Poonawalla "pretty and predictable," she said, "Let's go easy on her as she is not really a media star, a fashion diva at best."

Designer Abhinav Mishra identifies camp fashion as something "that has

everything to do with irony and the humour of being way too extra but be visually appealing at the same time." Appreciating PeeCee's vibrant stance, he said, "This was her third appearance at the Met Gala and as usual, all eyes were on her. I loved the fact that she incorporated her make-up with *bindis* as she said she wanted to add a touch of the Indian traditions to her look but overall the ethnicity didn't perhaps gel too well."

While he rated "drop-dead gorgeous" Deepika's look as the "truest to the theme," he found Isha Ambani "undoubtedly beautiful." However, he added, "It didn't relate much to the gala's theme. I feel she could have experimented a little more with the outfit." On the other hand, he compared PeeCee's Indian touch with Natasha Poonawalla's sparkling *maang tika*. "She surely had her princess moment on the red carpet with that plated train." Calling Deepika a style inspiration, Varun said, "Bringing her zaniest best to the red carpet this year, I found her look more of a dramatic flair which took everybody by storm." Isha, he added, "could have carried a clutch to complete the look even though she was absolutely stunning at her debut."

However, global critics panned the Met Gala as an outrageous, presumptuous show that was too intent on making a statement than honouring the true spirit of creativity. Also, the presence of youtubers and wannabes was something that trivialised what once used to be a culture statement. From the looks of it, it was not even a pantomime, but a freak show.

Manga mix with spices

Mixologist **RICHARD HARGROVES** tells **AYUSHI SHARMA** how he trusts local resources



He whisks, stirs and serves the freshest formulated cocktails like Bolt, faster than the speed of light. It's all about speed, he says, since people don't like to wait once they have made their order. It makes them angry.

Taking us on a journey through his special curations at the Gurugram bar-cum-restaurant, Dragonfly, mixologist Richard Hargroves says, "You need different types of drinks to suit the needs of disparate individuals. People want their cocktails to be mindful of their tastes and preferences." Out of the specially-curated 12 alcoholic cocktails for summer and four non-alcoholic ones, five are laid out before us. And we try three.

First in line is the *Japanese Colada*, a tad bit more captivating from the usual *Pina Colada*. Using an eight-year-old Bacardi, he has blended it with *Shochu* (a Japanese distilled beverage made with rice, barley, buckwheat and brown sugar), home-made coconut sorbet, pineapple cordial, some almond milk, tamarind reduction and plum wine reduction together with pineapple syrup and champagne. Shaking it vigorously with crushed ice, the cocktail is garnished with some coconut and pineapple foam, giving it the look of a mocktail. The colada tingles the senses evocatively.

He apprises us that whenever one launches a cocktail menu, there is always a theme woven around it. So here, all the drinks are inspired by *Manga* characters. He



The best way to make summer cocktails here is to make use of local spices and ingredients. They lend a huge kick to the drink and I am sure they would find takers in the West, too

says, "Attention is paid to even the minutest detail, something that a restaurant or bar will not be able to focus on. And that is where our expertise comes in."

One of the mixologist's key mantras is to make his own syrups. They not only add a cool element but as well save money as they last for about a week and cut down on liquor waste. They are the cost of only a cup of sugar.

Next on the counter is *Lemongrass Whisky Sour*. Infused with lemongrass, which enhances the aromatics, he takes out the Japanese Yamazakura whisky and blends it with lemongrass cordials, vanilla syrup with a dash of *angostura* bitters, typically used for flavouring beverages. Extra marks for his uphill battle but the drink appears dull and tastes exactly like its name — sour.

Another drink, *Sakazuki Cooler*, is a gin infused with passion fruit, blended with *Shochu* and plum wine. To balance the drink's flavours of fresh lemon and green apple juice, he uses a dash of honey, ginger cordial and orange bitters. Served in a dragonfly-shaped, oval cup, which make it look a bit over the top, the cocktail is garnished with a caramelised apple ring, toasted sesame seeds and mint spring. The one-of-a-kind drink is enough to make one realise how a good cocktail can really help you unwind.

So how has he customised cocktails for India? Hargroves instantly responds that he plays

around with the resources. He says, "There are very limited amounts of cures here. If we talk about London, we have 10 different types of muses, flavours and ingredients. But the trouble here is that you don't have that privilege. This is a disadvantage for India to not have the entire set of ingredients. So that limits you to present what you have thought of. For instance, we did a research a couple of days ago and we experimented with over 20 classic cocktails but it was quite hard to complete because there were very few ingredients."

However, doesn't this dearth of resources not make one creative and innovative? "Of course it does. There are certain elements that you simply cannot replicate even if you wish to. So you have to think out of the box and create something totally brand new."

Explaining further, he says that in most countries one can bring the cure over subject to approval. "However," he says, "if I bring it over here and it doesn't have enough sales, it will eventually disappear and die out. We have to build an awareness first before we develop a market for flavour profiles. Also, you have to pay a huge fee for the licence to bring such ingredients into the country. The best way is to make use of spices and ingredients here. They lend a huge kick to the drink and I am sure they would find takers in the West too."



Vidya to play Shakuntala Devi

The mathematical wizard or Shakuntala Devi, mathematician, astrologer, cookbook author and novelist, has donned many hats throughout her life. She had been known for her ability to make incredibly swift calculations. Shakuntala's genius was first discovered when she was five when she solved a math problem for 18-year-old students. Though she never received any formal education, her talent for numbers also earned her a place in the 1982 edition of *The Guinness Book of World Records*.

Actress Vidya Balan will soon play the role of Shakuntala Devi in a biopic film on the writer. *The Shakuntala Devi* film will be helmed by Anu Menon along with Nayanika Mahtani and the dialogues will be penned by Ishita Moitra. Producer Abundantia is currently developing the film for the big screen. Scheduled to go on floors, later this year, the film is slated to release in summers of 2020.

Vidya said, "I am extremely excited to play the human computer, Shakuntala Devi, on the big screen. She was someone who truly embraced her individuality, had a strong feminist voice and braved many a naysayer to reach the pinnacle of success. But what truly fascinates me is that you wouldn't normally associate a fun person with Math... and she completely turns that perception on its head. I am thrilled that Vikram (Malhotra), who I've worked with on *Kahaani*, and his team are producing the film. Anu and I are proud to bring

to life the story of one of the most inspiring women of this country. How incredible is it that 'The Math Genius' or 'The Human Computer' was a small-town Indian girl, who took the world by storm."

Producer Vikram Malhotra echoes her sentiment, "We have always been at the forefront of supporting progressive and insightful stories. I am delighted that we are extending our content philosophy further with this exciting story on the life and times of Shakuntala Devi. I am confident that this compelling story will resonate strongly with fans of all ages. I'm delighted to collaborate with Vidya once again, her versatility as a performer is unmatched and the passion that she has brought to this film is amazing. I am equally delighted to partner with Anu, who has woven an entertaining and evocative narrative. With this film, we hope to take engaging storytelling to the next level."

Director Anu adds, "Shakuntala Devi was an extraordinary woman, who lived ahead of her times and on her own terms, unapologetically. Her love for numbers and the passion with which she spread the joy of math, against all odds, is truly fascinating. Shakuntala is a true heroine of our times. Also, who else can capture the spirit of a woman like Shakuntala than the incredible Vidya Balan? We have spent months together in script development and it's been nothing short of exhilarating. I hope all of us together can do justice to the life of Shakuntala, who was truly one of her kind."

4 NOTHING

Liverpool cap historic 4-0 (4-3) comeback at Anfield against Barcelona to enter CL final



AFP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool produced one of the most stunning comebacks in Champions League history to beat Barcelona 4-0 and progress to the final for the second consecutive year on Tuesday as stand-in striker Divock Origi and substitute Georginio Wijnaldum both scored twice.

Liverpool went into the match at Anfield trailing 3-0 from the first leg and deprived of injured star attacking duo Mohamed Salah and Roberto Firmino.

However, Origi — making a rare start — and substitute Wijnaldum both netted twice as Barca for the second season in succession surrendered a three-goal first-leg lead to exit the Champions League.

Liverpool will face either Dutch side Ajax or Premier League rivals Tottenham in the final on June 1 in Madrid and will likely be favourites to be crowned European champions for the sixth time.

The Reds' stunning victory brought back memories of

when they last lifted the trophy in 2005 when they overturned a 3-0 half-time deficit in the final against AC Milan in Istanbul.

However, Klopp underlined the importance of his side writing their own history even if their bid for a first Premier League title for 29 years falls short behind Manchester City this weekend.

"We believed in this chance, we didn't compare it with Istanbul or whatever," added Klopp. "We want to create our own history. We need new chapters obviously and the boys did it."

Despite the despondency of losing Salah and Firmino, Klopp's men never lost faith and were accompanied by a typically raucous Anfield atmosphere for a European night.

Origi would almost certainly not have started had Salah and Firmino been fit.

But the 24-year-old Belgian has made a habit of scoring important goals in Liverpool's title challenge and had his first ever in the Champions League on seven minutes on the

LIVERPOOL WILL FACE EITHER DUTCH SIDE AJAX OR PREMIER LEAGUE RIVALS TOTTENHAM IN THE FINAL ON JUNE 1 IN MADRID AND WILL LIKELY BE FAVOURITES TO BE CROWNED EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS FOR THE SIXTH TIME

rebound after Marc-Andre ter Stegen had denied Jordan Henderson's initial effort.

BARCA COLLAPSE AGAIN
Barcelona boss Ernesto Valverde was left to face up to the second major European embarrassment of his time in charge.

The Spanish champions blew a 4-1 first-leg lead to bow out at the quarter-finals against Roma last year.

His side were left to rue not taking their chances in the first half after weathering Liverpool's early burst.

Lionel Messi had seemingly turned the tie in the

Catalans' favour late in the first leg with a brilliant free-kick and his first effort was tipped over by Alisson Becker before the Brazilian denied his international teammate Philippe Coutinho.

Liverpool were seemingly dealt another injury blow as Andy Robertson was withdrawn at half-time, but he made way for Dutch international Wijnaldum with James Milner moving to left-back.

Wijnaldum's impact was massive. He was picked out by Trent Alexander-Arnold's low cross and drilled under Ter Stegen. And from Liverpool's next attack, Xherdan Shaqiri picked out Wijnaldum to head home at the Kop end.

Valverde tried to restore some order as Coutinho was replaced for the second time in the tie.

The change briefly had an impact, but Barca were inexplicably caught cold from a quick Alexander-Arnold corner 11 minutes from time that picked out Origi completely unmarked to fire high past Ter Stegen.

"With any other team I wouldn't think it was possible. They are really mentality giants. I am really proud to be the manager of this team. What they did tonight was really special. I will remember it forever."

—Jurgen Klopp

"Once again we showed that everything is possible in football."

—Georginio Wijnaldum

"We are all very emotional now because of the elimination. We have to raise our spirits because there is a Copa del Rey final to come. There will be difficult days for everyone but we have to lift our heads."

—Josep Bartomeu

"I apologise to the fans because after the Rome thing, it happens again, it is very hard to fall like that with a good result in the first leg."

—Sergio Busquets

"Things got on top of us after those two quick goals. We didn't manage to get on the score-sheet and they rolled us over really. It's a terrible result for our fans and for ourselves. It's really, really unfortunate, but credit to Liverpool."

—Ernesto Valverde

"Unbelievable! I don't think many people gave us a chance. We knew it would be difficult but still possible."

—Jordan Henderson

"Who's going to the final? We are. That's all that matters."

—Andy Robertson

"You know when you talk about the great nights, this is the best ever. It's absolutely incredible."

—Robbie Fowler

"This place has seen some of the most amazing nights, European nights, of football and it's right up there with them. Possibly the best."

—Michael Owen

"What they've produced here is breathtaking and you can do nothing but respect the team, the management, and the way this club have conducted themselves, especially on a night like tonight."

—Rio Ferdinand

Arsenal lean on Lacazette, Aubameyang to save season

AFP ■ LONDON

Arsenal's collapse at the business end of the Premier League season means the success or failure of Unai Emery's first campaign now solely depends on lifting the Europa League and as a result sealing Champions League football.

The Gunners travel to Emery's old club Valencia on Thursday defending a 3-1 semi-final, first leg lead given to them by star strikers Alexandre Lacazette and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang at the Emirates last week.

Arsenal's awful record on the road this season will give the Spanish side plenty of encouragement that they can overturn a two-goal deficit.

Emery's men conceded three times in losing at Wolves and Leicester in their last two away league games and were also defeated at BATE Borisov and Rennes before turning Europa League ties around at the Emirates.

Attack may therefore be the visitors' best form of defence in the cauldron of the Mestalla and Arsenal are at least getting what they paid for from Lacazette and Aubameyang.

The Londoners' first season without Arsene Wenger for 22 years has been dogged by many of the same defensive problems suffered by the Frenchman towards the end of his reign.

But Wenger's final two big signings have come good as club record fees were paid for Lacazette in the summer of 2017 and Aubameyang in January 2018.

After a difficult first six months in England, many thought Aubameyang's arrival was ominous for Lacazette's



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longevity at the club, but the two have formed a fine partnership on and off the field.

Only Liverpool's Mohamed Salah has scored more Premier League goals than Aubameyang's 20, but it is Lacazette who won the club's player of the year prize for his all round contribution with 18 goals and 12 assists.

Those figures are all the more impressive as they have often had to battle for just one starting spot.

Both players have voiced their displeasure at Emery's reluctance throughout the campaign to play with two strikers.

"You know that I like to play with two strikers but I don't

want to say it," admitted Aubameyang, while Lacazette conceded to French television station RMC he "could be even happier" if he started more regularly.

"Every player wants to play each match for 90 minutes, but as a manager I need to use the player in the best moment," said Emery in defence of his decisions throughout the season.

"Sometimes our performances are better with both, but sometimes our big performances are better with only one, and after they make an impact replacing another striker."

Given the problems Emery is trying to patch up at the other end, the Gunners are likely to need the firepower of both to ensure they make it to Baku to try and save their season next month.



Hockey series Finals to stay in Bhubaneswar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar has suffered some minor damage owing to Cyclone Fani but that would not come in the way of conducting the Hockey series Finals scheduled to be held in the city next month, Hockey India asserted on Wednesday.

Rejecting speculation that the June 6-15 tournament might be shifted out of the Odisha Capital to either Lucknow or Raipur, a top Hockey India official said no such decision has been taken and the national body is committed to host the event in Bhubaneswar.

"I don't know from where these reports come from but we absolutely had no discussions with Odisha government about shifting the venue," a top HI official said.

"We are in touch with the Odisha government officials and we have been informed that the extent of damage in the hockey stadium is minimal. Hockey India officials will also travel to Bhubaneswar this week to assess the condition of the turf and take stock of the situation at the official team hotels.

Six months ago, Bhubaneswar hosted the FIH World Cup but last week's Cyclone Fani wreaked havoc in the city, causing substantial damage.

The Kalinga Stadium, venue for the World Cup and next month's Hockey Series Finals, too was at the receiving end of the nature's fury.

India beat WA Thundersticks 2-0

PTI ■ PERTH

The Indian men's hockey team Wednesday defeated WA Thundersticks 2-0 to start their Australia tour on a positive note at the Perth Hockey Stadium here on Wednesday.

Goals from Birendra Lakra (23rd minute) and Harmanpreet Singh (50th) secured the win for the visitors in their opening match of the tour, where they will also play the Australian national team on May 15 and May 17.

India will play their next match against Australia 'A' on May 10.

But according to the Odisha government's Department of Sports and Youth Services (DSYS) the damage to the stadium has been minimal and they are hopeful of hosting the tournament as scheduled.

Eight countries — including Japan, Mexico, Poland, Russia, South Africa, USA, Uzbekistan and hosts India — are set to take part in the men's Hockey Series Finals, which is a qualifying tournament for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

FIFA upholds Chelsea transfer ban

AFP ■ ZURICH

The ban on Chelsea signing players over the next two transfer windows remained largely in place after FIFA issued their ruling on the London club's appeal on Wednesday.

In February, the Blues were banned from signing players for their men's teams for the next two transfer windows after being found guilty by FIFA's disciplinary committee of breaching regulations relating to the recruitment of minors.

Chelsea denied any wrongdoing and appealed.

On Wednesday, the governing body of world football



announced that its appeal committee had "decided to partially uphold the appeal".

The committee lifted part of the ban, but only for players under 16 who are not "international transfers and first regis-

trations of foreign minor players".

That means Chelsea will still not be able to sign male players over the age of 16 when the summer transfer window opens.

SINGLES

LEE TO MISS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR: Badminton star Lee Chong Wei will miss the World Championships in August after falling down the rankings following a prolonged absence due to cancer, an official said on Wednesday. It means the Malaysian former world number one loses the chance to win the world title for the first time, and deals another blow to his fading hopes of competing in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Michelle Chai, general manager of the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM), said Lee — currently ranked 113 in the world — would not play in the championships in Switzerland from August 19-25. "Lee Chong Wei won't take part in the world championship as he currently does not qualify on merit," she said. A country can send a maximum of two players who are inside the world top 150 and there are two Malaysians currently above Lee — Lee Zii Jia and Liew Daren.

IND TO PLAY CURACAO IN KINGS CUP

NEW DELHI: India will play against Caribbean nation Curacao in their first match of the 47th King's Cup football tournament at Buriram in Thailand on June 5. According to the fixture announced by Football Association of Thailand on Wednesday, the hosts will face Vietnam on June 5 in the four-team tournament. The respective winners will lock horns against each other in the final on June 8 and the third-place match will be held earlier on the same day. All the matches will be played at the Chang Arena Stadium, Buriram. As per FIFA Rankings of April, India are ranked 101 and Thailand at 114. Vietnam are at 98 and Curacao at 82.

B'DESH MONITORING SL BEFORE TOUR

NAGPUR: Bangladesh cricket officials said on Wednesday they were monitoring security in Sri Lanka in the wake of last month's terror attacks and ahead of a planned tour slated for July. The national team narrowly avoided being caught in the New Zealand mosque attacks that killed 51 people. Bangladesh's ODI series in Sri Lanka was scheduled to take place in July, having been brought forward from December. But the fate of the series has been thrown into doubt following the April 21 attacks in Sri Lanka churches and hotels that killed more than 250 people. "We won't say the series is uncertain, but we are monitoring the situation through the Bangladesh High Commission and our foreign ministry," cricket board chief executive said. Agencies

'Glad to be back': Federer wins on clay return



Roger Federer celebrates after winning his first match at Madrid Open against Richard Gasquet AP

AFP ■ MADRID

Roger Federer shook off a brief bout of pre-match jitters as he returned to clay after a three-year absence, posting a 6-2, 6-3 win over Richard Gasquet on Tuesday at the Madrid Open.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion needed just 52 minutes to brush Gasquet aside in the second round, but confessed he had to control his emotions during afternoon match strategy sessions with his team.

"I was very calm all day, but two hours before, I was feeling it a bit. But that was the only time," Federer said. "The nerves went away quickly, I'm just happy I started well."

"I'm glad to be back," said the three-time Madrid champion who last played on clay almost three years ago, losing to Dominic Thiem in the Rome third round on May 12, 2016.

Federer skipped the dirt for two full seasons to concentrate on his grass court form, winning Wimbledon in 2017. He claimed the Madrid title in



2006, 2009, and 2012.

"I've been missing the clay, this is a great return, it's a special night for me," he said.

Federer swept up the opening set in 23 minutes and broke Frenchman

Gasquet — who had defeated him twice on clay — for 5-3 in the second before serving it out a game later.

Federer has won 18 of 21 meetings with Gasquet, just back from six months out with injury.

NISHIKORI WAWRINKA FACEOFF

Kei Nishikori will face Stan Wawrinka in the third round after battling past Bolivian qualifier Hugo Dellien on Wednesday.

Nishikori needed just over two hours to win 7-5, 7-5 after Dellien saved seven set points during an impressive fightback from 5-1 down in the opening set.

The Japanese will go up against Wawrinka on Thursday for a place in the quarter-finals. The winner could play Rafael Nadal.

Wawrinka beat Argentina's Guido Pella 6-3, 6-4, with a break in each set proving enough for the three-time grand slam champion.

Nishikori has lost his last two meetings with Wawrinka, including a three-set defeat in Rotterdam in February, when his Swiss opponent went on to reach his first final since undergoing knee surgery in 2017.

The pair have reached 12 grand slam semi-finals between them.

Nishikori's compatriot and world number one Naomi Osaka is through to the quarter-finals of the women's tournament for the first time after she eased past Belarusian Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-2, 6-3.

The two-time major champion will face either Switzerland's Belinda Bencic and Ukraine's Kateryna Kozlova in the last eight.

A potential semi-final foe for Osaka is world number three Simona Halep, who annihilated Slovakian Viktoria Kuzmova 6-0, 6-0 in 44 minutes.

Halep is chasing her third Madrid title after winning the tournament in 2016 and 2017.

LEADERBOARD	
RUNS	692 David Warner (SRH)
WICKETS	25 Kagiso Rabada (DC)
6S	755
4S	1601

They (MI) were playing a nice brand of cricket even in our conditions...They have simply outplayed us
— STEPHEN FLEMING



DC win a thriller against SRH

PTI ■ VISHAKAPATNAM

Young Keemo Paul gave the final touches to a Rishabh Pant blitzkrieg as Delhi Capitals beat Sunrisers Hyderabad by two wickets in a nerve-wracking IPL Eliminator here on Wednesday.

Chasing a target of 163, Delhi Capitals, who had lost the way after a blazing start, were brought to cusp of victory by young Pant, who smashed 49 off 21 balls with five sixes as West Indies' Paul finished it off the penultimate ball of the innings with a boundary off Khaleel Ahmed.

Pant, who resurrected the innings from a precarious 111 for 5 couldn't have chosen a better venue than chairman of selectors MSK Prasad's home ground to drive home a point on his much debated World Cup exclusion.

It was a sense of déjà vu for Pant, who had similarly hit winning runs in an U-19 World Cup final in 2016 when Khaleel was the bowler in the final over.

Delhi Capital now face Chennai Super Kings in the second Qualifier in their bid to make it to the maiden IPL final against Mumbai Indians.

Needing 34 from three overs, Pant showed brilliant game awareness to target Sunrisers' weakest link Basil Thampi, smashing him for 21 runs in the 18th over as he brought the game on even keel.

A six off Bhuvneshwar Kumar brought the equation down to five runs before Pant in his bid to finish the game was holed out with five required from seven balls.

When the chase started, Prithvi Shaw (56 off 38 balls) was in his element in the fifth over bowled by



Bhuvneshwar Kumar when he first played a flowing cover drive, followed by a ramp shot for six over third man and a lofted boundary over mid-off to put Sunrisers on the backfoot.

Sensing that Prithvi has taken the lead, senior partner Shikhar Dhawan (17) after collecting three boundaries started playing the second fiddle with

55 coming off Powerplay overs. One of the most regal shots played by Prithvi was a six over long-on when he gave off-spinner Deepak Hooda the charge.

In the same over, Wriddhiman Saha effected a smart stumping down leg-side to see the end of Dhawan even as Prithvi completed his 50 off 31 balls.

However just like Sunrisers, Delhi also lost momentum at start of the back-10 with Khaleel's extra pace and bounce accounting for Prithvi and skipper Shreyas Iyer (8). Prithvi's innings had six fours and two sixes.

It was Rashid Khan (2/15 in 4 overs), who then removed Colun Munro (14) and Axar Patel (0) to peg

back Delhi at 111 for 5. Pant, who teed off with a six off Mohammed Nabi, hit him for a second six as 42 runs were required off the last four overs when Pant changed the match.

Earlier, Delhi Capitals bowlers pulled the plug in the middle overs, restricting Sunrisers Hyderabad to a par score of 162 for 8.

Keemo Paul (3/32 in 4 overs) was ably supported by Amit Mishra (1/16 in 4 overs), Ishant Sharma (2/34 in 4 overs) and Axar Patel (0/30 in 4 overs) as the quartet bowled 40 dot balls between them.

Ishant got rid of Wriddhiman Saha (8), who offered a simple catch to Shreyas Iyer at mid-off.

Martin Gupthill (36) hit three sixes including two off his countrymate Trent Boult to set the pace in the Powerplay overs which yielded 54 runs.

Credit to Delhi bowlers as the next 14 overs produced only 108 runs.

As Gupthill was in attacking mood, it gave the normally flamboyant Manish Pandey (30) to play around before the spinners came in operation.

Axar and Mishra choked the run-flow and Gupthill was accounted for trying to slog sweep the leg-spinner. His innings had four sixes apart from a boundary. Sunrisers suddenly lost momentum in those middle overs as Pandey and Kane Williamson (27 off 26 balls) added only 34 runs in seven overs before he Karnataka batsman was dismissed by a Keemo Paul slower delivery. Pandey was holed out by Sherfane Rutherford at long-on boundary making it 90 for 3 for Sunrisers.

Vijay Shankar (25 off 11 balls) and Mohammed Nabi (20 off 13 balls) added 36 runs in 2.4 overs to beef up the total but Paul kept things tight in the end.



Velocity spice up Women's Challenge

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Mithali Raj's Velocity overcame some anxious moments late in the innings before registering a three-wicket win over Trailblazers to keep the race to final in the inaugural Women's T20 Challenge alive, here on Wednesday.

After their five-wicket win over Supernovas in the tournament-opener on Tuesday, a victory over Velocity would have sealed Trailblazers' place in Saturday's summit clash.

But it was not to be as Velocity first restricted Trailblazers to 112 for six after opting to bowl and then chased down the target with 12 balls to spare to keep the tournament alive for all the three teams.

In the final league match on Thursday, Velocity will play Supernovas and the outcome of that game will decide the finalists.

Opting to field, left-arm spinner Ekta Bisht (2/13) and New Zealand's Amelia Kerr (2/21) shared four wickets between them to keep Trailblazers under check from the word go.

Harleen Deol top-scored for Trailblazers with 43, while opener Suzie Bates made 26. Skipper Smriti Mandhana made a run-a-ball 10 while Deepti Sharma scored 16 off 16 deliveries towards the end to take Trailblazers past the 110-run mark.

Later, after the early dismissal of Hayley Matthews, Shafali Verma (34 off 31; 5x4s, 1x6) and Danielle Wyatt (46 off 35; 5x4s, 2x6s) accelerated the scoring for Velocity to set the platform for an easy chase.

After the dismissals of Verma and Wyatt, Mithali (17 off 22) looked set to finish off the chase before Velocity lost four quick wickets — three in the 18th over bowled by Deepti Sharma — with just two runs needed for victory.

While Veda Krishnamurthy was run out for a first-ball duck, Deepti cleaned up the experienced Mithali with a yorker with the first ball of the 18th over before going through the defence of Shikha Pandey a ball later.

Off the fifth ball of the same over, Deepti claimed her fourth scalp of the day when she bowled Kerr to raise hopes of an improbable win for her side, but it was not to be.

Off-spinner Deepti (4/14) was the wrecker-in-chief for Trailblazers. She was ably supported by Rajeshwari Gayakwad (1/28) and Harleen (1/19).

By virtue of this win, Velocity are on top of the standings just ahead of Trailblazers with Supernovas yet to open their account.



Rohit rates SKY as one of best against spin

CHENNAI: Talented batsman Suryakumar Yadav has earned praise from his Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma who described him as one of the best players of spin bowling after his match-winning 71 not out against Chennai Super Kings in the first IPL Qualifier. Suryakumar's 54-ball unbeaten knock on a sub-standard Chepauck track ensured a smooth passage to the final for the Mumbai Indians as they

beat the defending champions by six wickets.

"He's (Suryakumar) probably is one of our best batsmen against spin. We knew the spin threat CSK possess will be a huge factor. Suryakumar plays spin very well. I have seen him at close quarters. The shots he plays behind the wicket, those are not easy shots. Always knew he was going to come good at some stage," Rohit said after the match on Tuesday.

The 28-year-old Suryakumar, who won the Man of the Match award, said he had decided to play most of his shots along the ground after watching how the pitch behaved when CSK batted.

"After first innings, I saw what happened, not too many players were able to hit the shots in the air. So I wanted to play down the ground, pick singles and doubles. Had the chat after first innings that

someone from the top-order will have to play towards the end because it won't be easy for players coming in later," the former Mumbai Ranji captain said.

For Rohit, the role of his three spinners (Jayant Yadav, Krunal Pandya and Rahul Chahar), who gave away only 60 runs for four wickets in 11 overs among them, was important.

"It was important to restrict them to as little as possible, because it can get tricky against their quality spinners," said Rohit.

He was happy that his call to have off-spinner Jayant Yadav paid off.

"It was a call we had to make, knowing they have quite a few right-handers in the CSK squad. Jayant is a quality bowler. Thought that a finger-spinner can be more effective than a wrist spinner." PTI



Kapil Dev poses for photo with the winners of 1st set of the Britannia Khao, World Cup Jao Campaign in New Delhi on Wednesday. 100 lucky winners will head on an all-expenses paid trip to England to watch the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup.

India will need some luck to progress beyond semis: Kapil

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The legendary Kapil Dev on Wednesday said India will have no trouble in making the World Cup semifinals given the "balanced" line-up, which features an "unmatchable" duo in Virat Kohli and Mahendra Singh Dhoni, but will need some luck to progress beyond that.

The World Cup, which begins on May 30, will see all 10 participating nations face each other in a round-robin format.

India's 15-member squad boasts of experienced players like Dhoni, Kohli, Rohit, Shami and Shikhar Dhawan along with in-form youngsters such as Bumrah, Hardik Pandya and Kuldeep.

"India has a great combination of youth and experience. In a way they are more experienced than the other teams. They have the right balance — four fast bowlers, three spinners and they have Virat Kohli and Dhoni," Kapil, the 1983 World Cup-winning captain, told reporters at a promotional event of Britannia Khao, World Cup Jao Campaign on Wednesday. "Dhoni and Kohli have

done extremely well for India. Both of them are unmatchable," he added.

The legendary all-rounder also hailed India's pace attack and said it will deliver in the English conditions.

"The four fast bowlers we have are fantastic, they are very good. I think the English conditions will help them swing the ball. Then players like Shami and Bumrah can bowl 145kmph, have swing and pace," he said.

Kapil, who has also coached the Indian team in 1999-2000, predicted that the "Men in Blue" will reach the semifinals alongside hosts England and defending champions Australia.

"I think India will definitely finish in the top four. After that it will be really difficult. After the semifinals, stroke of luck alongside personal and team performance will determine who goes forward," he said.

"England, Australia and India are the top three teams. These teams have more strength than the others. New Zealand or West Indies can emerge as the surprise package," he said.

Smith's 89 not enough for Aus success

AFP ■ BRISBANE

Will Young stroked a masterful 130 to steer an under-strength New Zealand to a seven-wicket win over Australia in a World Cup practice match on Wednesday, outshining a classy unbeaten 89 from Steve Smith.

The visitors chased down their 278 target with 10 balls to spare, inflicting the first one-day defeat on Australia in 10 games, although this was not counted as a full international.

Young, who is uncapped and not part of New Zealand's World Cup squad, was eventually run out after smacking 11 fours

and two sixes in his 132-ball knock.

George Worker (56) and Tom Latham (69 not out) were also among the runs as New Zealand, missing Kane Williamson, Martin Gupthill and Trent Boult, made 283 for three in reply to Australia's 277 for six.

Australian pace spearhead Mitchell Starc made his long-awaited return from injury and was the pick of a lacklustre bowling attack, taking 2-14 off five overs before being withdrawn from the action.

It was his first match back since tearing a muscle three months ago. Earlier, former skipper



Smith was the star attraction with his 89, including four big sixes, in only his second game in Australian colours since his one-year ban for ball-tampering expired.

He came to the crease when Shaun Marsh was out for 28 and was in fine touch in a major boost for Australia ahead of their

World Cup defence in England.

Usman Khawaja and Glenn Maxwell were also in form, scoring 56 and 52 respectively.

But David Warner, who made 39 on his return from the "Sandpapergate" scandal in the first of the three unofficial matches in Brisbane on Monday, did not fare so well.

He opened the innings with Aaron Finch, rather than Khawaja, but was soon back on the sidelines after spooning a catch to cover without scoring, lasting just six balls.

Australia won the first match by one wicket, with the final game at Allan Border Field on Friday.



Flintoff backs Stokes to 'steal the show'

AFP ■ LONDON

Andrew Flintoff believes Ben Stokes can 'steal the show' for England in a home season featuring both the World Cup and the Ashes.

For the first time since the inaugural men's World Cup in 1975, England are staging arguably the two biggest events in their calendar — the one-day showpiece and a Test series against arch-rivals Australia — in the same season.

Flintoff believes Stokes' bowling confidence may have been set back by being hit for four successive sixes by the West Indies' Carlos Brathwaite in the last over of a 2016 World Twenty20 final in Kolkata that England had been poised to win.

But Flintoff said that was partly a consequence of Stokes' willingness to take responsibility at key stages.

"With Ben he's just different," Flintoff told reporters in London on Tuesday. "As a batter he can bat three, he can bat four — his bowling's getting better all the time."

"The World T20 probably knocked his confidence a little bit. That can happen, bowling at the death," added Flintoff.

"He's always in the big moments of a game. He seems to be that lad who lifts the team."

Flintoff, a central figure with both bat and ball when England regained the Ashes on home soil in 2005, said the season ahead would be the ideal stage for Stokes to shine. "World Cup, Ashes — it's all to play for," he insisted.

"As a character and player like Ben, you wouldn't be surprised if he just steals the show."

"We can (then) all forget about 2005 and move on with ourselves!"

Jhye Richardson out of WCup



AFP ■ SYDNEY

Australian fast bowler Jhye Richardson was ruled out of the World Cup on Wednesday after failing to recover from a dislocated shoulder, with namesake Kane Richardson replacing him.

He picked up the injury during Australia's series against Pakistan in the United Arab

Emirates in March, but was included in the squad for the World Cup in England starting later this month.

But recent tests showed he would not be ready in time.

"This is obviously very disappointing news for the team and for Jhye, who has been exceptional throughout his rehabilitation process," said team physiotherapist David Beakley.

"After his most recent assessment and attempting to bowl in the nets, it was clear that Jhye was not progressing as fast as required."

"Therefore, in consultation with selectors, we made the decision to withdraw him from the squad."

Kane Richardson was called up to replace him, with long-time pace spearhead Josh Hazlewood, who has been put out of action since January with a back injury, overlooked.

It's going to be amazing but gruelling: Bairstow on WC, Ashes



PTI ■ LONDON

England batsman Jonny Bairstow can't wait for the "biggest summer" of his cricket career to get underway with the World Cup this month but he also expects it to be the most gruelling as the Ashes is lined up just a few weeks later.

Bairstow, who scored 445 runs from 10 matches for Sunrisers Hyderabad in his debut IPL season, will be a key player for the England in the World Cup starting May 30. The World Cup will end on July 14 and the Ashes, against arch-rivals Australia, will start August 1.

"It is huge. It is the biggest summer I will ever be involved in. It is the biggest ever summer for English cricket full stop," he told *The Daily Telegraph*.

"A World Cup and an Ashes; it is going to be amazing. You dream of winning them. If you can't dream about that and think what that is going to feel like then what is the point (of playing)?"

"At the same time you know it is going to be a gruelling summer. Five Tests at the end of World Cup is going to be tough, mentally and physically," he added.

Bairstow played alongside Australia's David Warner in the IPL but the Englishman said there would be no love lost when the two square off during the Ashes.

"We can say hello now. We did not have a connection before, but now we've played together and done well together and had a good partnership it will make a difference."

"We spent five weeks together having dinner and coffees. It changes things but it will still be England versus Australia," he said.