

OPINION 8
THWART THE
JUGGERNAUT

WORLD 12
TRUMP FAVOURS ABORTIONS
IN RAPE, INCEST CASES

SPORT 15
KOMPANY CONFIRMS
MAN CITY DEPARTURE

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Phir Ek Baar Modi Sarkar, predict polls

Most exit polls give BJP-led NDA clear majority in Lok Sabha but discordant survey results in Uttar Pradesh to decide final outcome

ALL INDIA (542)

AGENCY	NDA	UPA	OTHERS
India Today-Axis Poll	339-365	77-108	69-95
New18-IPSOS	336	82	124
News 24 - Today's Chanakya	340	70	132
Times Now-VMR	306	132	104
Republic-C Voter	287	128	127
ABP Nielsen	267	127	148
News X My Neta	242	162	136



UTTAR PRADESH (80)

AGENCY	BJP	CONG	GATHBANDHAN
India Today-Axis Poll	65	2	13
Times Now-VMR	58	2	20
Republic-C Voter	38	2	40
ABP Nielsen	22	2	56
Poll of polls	65	2	13

The BJP under the leadership of Modi will accomplish its target of securing 300-plus seats on its own, and 400-plus seats on the strength of its allies
UP CM YOGI ADITYANATH

Exit polls do not mean exact polls. We have to understand that. Since 1999, most of the exit polls have gone wrong
—Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu

Every single exit poll can't be wrong! Time to switch off the TV, log out of social media & wait to see if the world is still spinning on its axis on the 23rd
—Omar Abdullah

I don't trust exit poll gossip. The game plan is to manipulate or replace thousands of EVMs through this gossip. I appeal to all Opposition parties to be united, strong and bold. We will fight this battle together
—Mamata Banerjee

BENGAL (42)

AGENCY	BJP	TMC
Republic-C Voter	11	29
ABP Nielsen	16	24
India Today-Axis Poll	19-23	19-22
Times Now-VMR	11	28
India News	14	26

DEEPAK K UPRETI/
M MADHUSUDAN ■ NEW DELHI

“A bki baar 300 paar”, was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's war cry during his whirlwind campaigning across the country. On Sunday, as many as six exit polls forecast the same. Suggesting a “Modi wave” bigger than that of 2014, the pollsters gave a maximum of up to 365 seats to the BJP-led NDA and predicted it would bulldoze the Congress even in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh — where the Opposition party recently won the Assembly polls — to storm back to power at the Centre.

As for the UPA, the pollsters forecast a bleak prospect giving the entire alliance as less as just 60 seats and pegging its highest tally at 162. The

Congress-led alliance seemingly has gained in Punjab, Kerala and Tamil Nadu but if the exit polls hold true, the Congress, which was at its lowest tally of 44 seats in 2014, may not touch the three-figure mark this time too.

Only two pollsters said the BJP-led NDA would fall short of the majority mark of 272 seats in the Lok Sabha.

In the politically crucial Uttar Pradesh with 80 Lok Sabha seats, the pollsters have come up with a mixed bag of results indicating the complexities involved at the ground level. If India Today-Axis gave the BJP-led NDA a maximum of 68 seats and News 24-Today's Chanakya said its tally could even cross the 70-seats mark, then ABP-Nielsen gave the NDA as less as 22 Lok Sabha seats and the SP-BSP-

RLD alliance a high of 56 seats, something which should cheer up the Opposition camp.

In battleground West Bengal, the BJP is said to be headed towards making major gains at the expense of the Trinamool Congress with India Today-Axis forecasting as high as 23 seats for the saffron party. However, News18-IPSOS gave the BJP only a marginal gain pegging just 3-5 seats to it and forecasted a sweep by the TMC. The BJP has given it all in Bengal, which is one of the States besides the North-East where it intends to offset probable losses in UP or elsewhere.

The results in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal would be most keenly awaited. It was riding on its stupendous performance of bagging 71 of the 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP that the BJP under Modi came



Voters display their identity cards during the last phase of Lok Sabha polls at Theon village near Shimla on Sunday PTI

to power in 2014. But with arch-rivals BSP and SP joining hands to pose a formidable challenge to the BJP, any major dent in its tally in the Hindi heartland would severely

impact its chances of returning to power. NDA winning more than half of the 80 seats in UP would go on to confirm that mutual transfer of Yadav and Jatav votes of SP and BSP did-

not materialise in entirety. The surge of NDA in 2019 general elections is linked mostly to BJP doing exceedingly well in States like Maharashtra, Haryana, Bihar,

DELHI (7)

AGENCY	BJP	CONGRESS	AAP
India Today-Axis Poll	6	1	0
Times Now-VMR	7	0	0
Republic-C Voter	7	0	0

BJP likely to sweep Delhi, but Congress may bag 1

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP, which won all seven seats in the Lok Sabha election in national Capital five years ago, may lose one seat, though majority of the exit polls have projected that the ruling party at the Centre will again make a clean sweep in Delhi. The Congress could get one seat while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is projected to draw blank.

After many futile rounds of talks for a pre-poll tie-up, which could have improved the prospects of the alliance, the Congress and the AAP went to polls on its own. The

bone of contention was AAP's insistence for tie-up in Haryana and Punjab also, but the Congress didn't rise to Kejriwal's bait, fearing loss of ground to the AAP in the two States. It led to the triangular fight among the BJP, the AAP, and the Congress in Delhi.

The Congress has been hesitant over forming an alliance with the AAP in Delhi after its internal survey found that Congress' chances of winning seats in Delhi would be grim if it joins hands with the AAP. The finding could be dependent on the fact that both parties have the same voter base in Delhi.

Karnataka besides Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh — the three Congress-ruled States. While the BJP was in close contest with the Congress in Rajasthan and MP, it was wiped out in Chhattisgarh. But the pollsters have given BJP the edge in the Naxal-affected State now.

Even in Karnataka, where Congress is again ruling (in an alliance with JD-S), the pollsters suggest the NDA could even bag all the 28 seats.

In Maharashtra, where the BJP-Shiv Sena is predicted to be sweeping the polls, Prakash Ambedkar's 'Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi', a Dalit-Muslim formation, which contested about 37 seats, may have severely dented Congress-NCP chances in most of the 48 seats. The BJP-SS combine could win 38-42 seats, leaving just 6 to 10 for Congress-NCP.

In Haryana, some of the exit polls have forecast defeat of

former Chief Minister Bhupender Singh Hooda with his son and sitting MP Depender Singh Hooda fighting hard to save his Rohtak seat. The BJP seems to have gained by consolidating its non-Jat votes in the State.

As per exit polls it is the Hindi-heartland which has backed Prime Minister Narendra Modi who seemed riding a “pro-incumbency wave” even after much debated rising figures of unemployment and agrarian crisis in many States.

Assam in the North-East is giving the BJP 7 out of 10 seats while Gujarat is said to have voted for Modi to the hilt as exit polls leave only one or two of the 26 seats for the Congress.

Elections to 542 seats of the Lok Sabha ended on Sunday. The Election Commission has deferred election for Vellore in Tamil Nadu over allegations of misuse of money power.

Violent 7th phase brings curtain down on LS polls



Muslim women await their turn at a polling station in Kolkata on Sunday PTI

63.5% turnout reported; bombs hurled in Bengal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

The long-drawn 2019 Lok Sabha polls concluded on Sunday with the seventh and last phase witnessing a 63.52 per cent voter turnout amid incidents of violence reported from West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab, where a Congress activist was killed.

Bengal, despite bombs being hurled and clashes between TMC and BJP workers, recorded the highest voter turnout (73.51 per cent). Bihar recorded the lowest (53.36 per cent) turnout.

The last phase, which will decide the fate of 918 candidates, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saw EVM glitches and poll boycott at some booths.

According to the Election Commission (EC), Himachal Pradesh recorded 70.23 per cent turnout, Madhya Pradesh 73.86 per cent, Punjab 63.67 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 58 per cent, Jharkhand 71.16 cent and

Chandigarh 63.57 per cent. In Bengal, rival groups threw crude bombs in Bhatpara. The tense situation was brought under control when police used batons. Violence was reported in all the seven phases in Bengal.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused BJP workers and Central forces of “intimidating voters” during the seventh phase poll saying she has never seen “such a thing before.” Meanwhile, in Basirhat the BJP alleged that 100 voters were barred from casting their votes and a BJP camp was set to fire in Barasat.

BJP's North Kolkata candidate Rahul Sinha said a crude bomb was hurled near Girish Park in the constituency around noon. Police, however, said crackers were burst in the area, and polling under-vent peacefully. In Kolkata South, TMC candidate Mala Roy alleged she was stopped from entering polling booths.

Sporadic clashes were reported in Kolkata and its surrounding areas. BJP candidate Nilanjan Roy in Diamond Harbour constituency alleged his car was vandalised in Budge Budge area. Similar

reports came in from Jadavpur constituency, where BJP candidate Anupam Hazra's car came under attack by unidentified men.

EVM malfunctioning was reported from across Punjab and Bihar. Violent clashes between workers of various parties in Punjab, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were reported. In the Nalanda seat, a mob ransacked a polling booth and held an official hostage for an hour as they boycotted the polls. Clashes were also reported from Sasaram, Karakat, Arrah and Jehanabad.

Congress and Akali-BJP workers clashed in Talwandi Sabo in Bathinda and Gurdaspur. At Talwandi Sabo, Akalis alleged that shots were fired by ruling party workers. According to reports, one Congress worker was killed in a poll-related violence in Khadoor Sahib seat in Punjab.

In UP, the turnout in Modi's constituency Varanasi was 57 per cent, while in Gorakhpur, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's turf, it was 56.47 per cent. Violence erupted in Chandauli Lok Sabha constituency, where State BJP chief Mahendra Nath Pandey is seeking re-election.

Maya lends hand to Opp unity, to meet Rahul today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even as exit poll surveys have predicted a return of the Modi-led NDA Government, BSP chief Mayawati is likely to meet Congress president Rahul Gandhi and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Monday following efforts by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP leader N Chandrababu Naidu to ensure an Opposition alliance dispensation at the Centre. Naidu on Sunday held a second round of talks with top Opposition leaders, including Rahul, Sonia and NCP chief Sharad Pawar.



Mayawati's meeting with the Congress leadership is seen as a significant outreach and breaking of ice after the BSP chief carried out an acrimonious campaign that was unsparing of the Congress and even kept it out of the Mahagathbandhan in UP. Sources said Mayawati, who nurtures prime ministerial ambitions and has made no

bones about the fact, is said to have agreed to meet the Congress leadership to ensure that an Opposition alliance must come to power anyhow. At the same time, she knows her PM ambitions can't be fulfilled without the Congress' help, sources added. Naidu is the ‘chief facilitator’ of the Mayawati-Sonia meeting.

Mayawati recently said all the votes of the alliance would go to the Congress in Amethi and Raebareilly, the constituencies of Rahul and Sonia.

Mayawati's meeting with the Congress is part of the series of meetings among Opposition parties lined up

ahead of the Lok Sabha results on Thursday. The last time Mayawati had exchanged greetings with the Congress leadership was during the oath ceremony of JD(S)-Congress coalition Government led by HD Kumaraswamy in Karnataka.

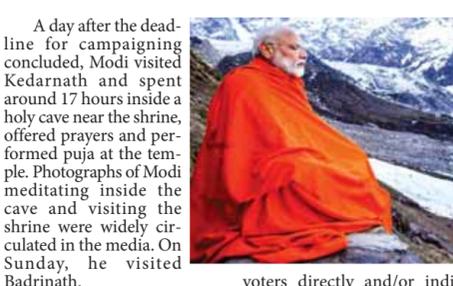
But thereafter the Congress and the BSP failed to agree on seat-sharing for the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections leading Mayawati to vent her anger on the grand old party which formed the Government. Mayawati then joined hands with her rival Samajwadi Party but kept out the Congress.

Continued on Page 4

Opp cries foul over telecast of Modi's Kedarnath visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A political row erupted on Sunday over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kedarnath and Badrinath shrine. Trinamool Congress, TDP and a Congress MP from West Bengal wrote to the Election Commission (EC) claiming that “continuous” telecast of Modi's “private activities” at the shrines is violation of the Model Code of Conduct. While Modi “thanked” the EC for giving him the permission for the visit, Congress president Rahul Gandhi hit out at the poll body, saying its “capitulation” before “PM Modi and his gang” is obvious. “From electoral bonds and EVMs to manipulating the election schedule, NaMo TV, ‘Modi's Army’ and now the drama in Kedarnath; the EC capitulation before Modi and his gang is obvious to all Indians,” Rahul tweeted.



A day after the deadline for campaigning concluded, Modi visited Kedarnath and spent around 17 hours inside a holy cave near the shrine, offered prayers and performed puja at the temple. Photographs of Modi meditating inside the cave and visiting the shrine were widely circulated in the media. On Sunday, he visited Badrinath. Citing that the campaigning for the seventh and the final phase of Lok Sabha polls 2019 was over on May 17, TMC leader Derek O'Brien, in his letter to the EC, urged that the broadcast of Modi's visit to the shrines should be ‘stopped’ as it's a violation of the MCC. The TMC leader also said PM Modi's activities were being covered in minute detail and is being widely publicised “with an ulterior motive to influence

voters directly and/or indirectly.” O'Brien also said that the “Modi Modi” chants were also being heard in the background. “All these moves are well calculated with the ill-intention to influence the voters even on the date of poll,” O'Brien said in his letter to the poll body. “He even announced that the master plan for the Kedarnath temple is ready and also addressed the public and the media at Kedarnath. It is absolutely unethical and moral-

ly incorrect,” O'Brien said. After TMC, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, who was in the national Capital, also wrote to the EC, alleged that this is “indirect canvassing” and influencing voters through a person's religious beliefs and public display of his personal religious activities. Modi's activities like meditating in caves, walking in various costumes, making announcements on Badrinath and Kedarnath master plan, and thus making direct references and indirect appeal to the people of specific religion, amounts to canvassing in disguise, he added.

“...The Election Commission of India, which should have stopped this, has been a mute spectator (thus

further strengthening the public belief that it has different sets of rules for the PM and BJP, and the rules in vogue for other political parties,” Naidu said. Modi, who has expressed scientific knowledge guiding the scientists and defence experts to go ahead with air strikes on a cloudy day to escape from being caught by radars, is now trying to project a “megalomaniac” image of himself through various “dubious” activities, Naidu added. The TDP chief also said it was alarming to see the Prime Minister mentioning about ‘satta’ market, an illegal occupation, and how people suffered huge loss for betting on a particular party in 2014.

For his part, Congress MP Pradip Bhattacharya wrote the poll body saying that the way he (Modi) ensured media coverage of his trip to Kedarnath temple is nothing but a violation of MCC.

56.84% turnout in last phase

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Over 56 per cent of the 2.36 crore voters exercised their franchise in 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in eastern Uttar Pradesh that went to polls in the seventh and final phase of parliamentary elections on Sunday. Polling passed off peacefully.

Election Commission sources said that till 6 pm, the turnout in 13 seats was 56.84 per cent. They said the polling percentage could marginally change as those in the queue till 6 pm were being allowed to cast their votes.

On Sunday, the voters sealed the fates of 167 candidates, including 13 women, prominent among them being Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Varanasi), Union ministers Manoj Sinha (Ghazipur) and Anupriya Patel (Mirzapur), BJP state president Mahendra Nath Pandey (Chandauli), Bhojpur actor and BJP candidate Ravi Kishan (Gorakhpur)

Along with the Lok Sabha poll, bypolls to Agra (North) Assembly seat was also held on Sunday and the polling was around 40 percent.

According to the data given by the state election office till 6 pm, the highest turnout was 62.40 per cent in Maharajganj, while Ballia reported the lowest turnout of 52.50 per cent. In Gorakhpur, the turnout was 57.38 per cent. The high-profile Varanasi constituency recorded more than 57.81 per cent voting was till 7 pm.

In this phase, Varanasi had the highest number of 26 candidates in the fray followed by 15 each in Ghosi and Salempur, 14 each in Maharajganj, Kushinagar and Ghazipur, 13 in Chandauli, 12 in



Maina Devi, a 115-year-old voter, is assisted at a polling booth in Kushinagar and, right, a voter shows his finger marked with indelible ink at a polling station in Mirzapur, during the seventh and last phase of Lok Sabha polls on Sunday

Robertsganj, 11 in Deoria, 10 each in Ballia and Gorakhpur, nine in Mirzapur and four in Bangsao.

In Chandauli, there was a clash between Bharatiya Janata Party and Samajwadi Party workers near a polling booth in Sikitiya area. BJP MLA Sadhna Singh was present when the clash broke out as SP leaders alleged rigging by the BJP. Police intervened and brought the situation under control.

In another incident in Chandauli, it was alleged that some leaders of a political party distributed ₹500 each to the members of the Dalit com-

munity at Tarajivanpur village under Alinagar police station and asked them not to vote while some anti-social elements applied black ink on their finger. The Election Commission has sought a report from the district authorities about the incident.

In Sakaldih assembly segment of Ghazipur Lok Sabha constituency, fire broke out at booth number 237 but it was controlled by the local villagers. The polling was disrupted for 30 minutes due to the fire.

In Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur and Ghazipur, voters had lined up in queues at

polling booths one hour before polling commenced. But polling slowed down with the rise of mercury. Congress candidate Ajai Rai and SP nominee Shalini Yadav cast their votes after worshipping at different temples in Varanasi. Senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi also voted in Varanasi.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath exercised his franchise at 7 am at the polling booth in Gorakshnath temple and was among the early voters.

Union minister Shiv Pratap Shukla also exercised his franchise in Gorakhpur. He was confident that BJP candidate Ravi Kishan would win by a

margin of over three lakh votes and the party would form the government.

Union minister Manoj Sinha voted at Ghazipur and Anupriya Patel at Mirzapur.

A presiding officer in charge of booth number 213 in Gorakhpur died following a massive heart attack on Sunday before the start of the polling.

An official said that the officer, Vinod Srivastava, inspector in Sugarcane department, complained of chest pain and was rushed to hospital but he died early Sunday morning. The deceased presiding officer was in-charge of booth number 213 at Kopawan in Bangsao police station area.

In another incident, presiding officer Raja Ram died due to massive heart attack early Sunday morning. He was deployed at booth number 381 of Pipriach assembly segment of Gorakhpur Lok Sabha constituency. However, polling was not disrupted at the booth as alternative arrangements were made by the authorities.

Meanwhile three villages, two in Gorakhpur and one in Mau district, boycotted polling over development issues. In Varanasi also, villagers of Madhopur in Harau block boycotted polling. Villagers of Nayarar and Chakadal villages in Campairganj assembly segment of Gorakhpur Lok Sabha constituency boycotted polling.

In Mau, villagers of Sanagar, which is in Ghosi Lok Sabha constituency, boycotted polling in protest against absence of road.

According to Additional Chief Electoral Officer BDR Tiwari, reports of EVM malfunctioning were reported from some places but polling was not hampered.

Mixed reaction to exit polls by political parties

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Different political parties have reacted differently to the exit polls which predict another term for the National Democratic Alliance with Bharatiya Janata Party saying the predictions were as per its expectations and the opposition saying the exit poll results are wrong.

BJP state general secretary and in-charge of western UP, Vijay Bahadur Pathak, said here on Sunday that now there should be no doubt in the minds of the opposition that Narendra Modi was returning to power as the people of the country had voted for a strong Bharat. "In UP too, the BJP will give surprising results and the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party alliance will be wiped out along with

Congress," he said, adding that the exit poll figures that the TV channels were showing were less and would increase.

Pathak said in UP, the BJP would get not less than 74 seats. "Take my words, Congress national president Rahul Gandhi is losing election from Amethi," he said. Pathak congratulated the BJP workers at the booth level for this success and attributed the favourable predictions to their hard work.

On the other hand, Samajwadi Party spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary said the SP-BSP-RLD alliance had done very well in UP.

"The exit polls are not the last word. You see the contradiction. One channel says that alliance will win 56 seats in UP while the other is saying that the BJP will win 60 plus seats. Who is correct? In fact, no one

is correct. The actual result will come on May 23," he said. Chaudhary said the alliance would win not less than 70 seats in UP. "There was a wave in favour of this alliance which has been translated into votes," he said.

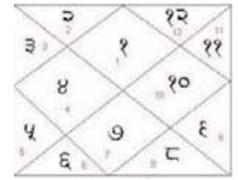
Senior Congress leader Amarnath Agarwal also said that the exit polls were just pastime. It (exit poll) is just a spice which adds flavour to the election process. No politician takes the outcome seriously. Just analyse how true the prediction of these exit polls are. In 2018, all exit polls said BJP would form government in Chhattisgarh but actually it was Congress which came to power there," he said.

Agarwal said, "Wait for May 23. The BJP will be decimated and the country will get rid of a 'feku' prime minister."

Astrologers divided over who will form govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 2019 Lok Sabha elections have not only baffled political pundits and pollsters due to the 'silence' maintained by voters all through the campaigning, even astrologers are divided on who would form the next government — the Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance under the leadership of Narendra Modi or Congress-



minister and I believe I will prove true," he said.

Tripathi said that he was not sure whether the BJP would form government on its own but he was sure that NDA would form the government and Modi would get a second term as prime minister.

On the other hand, Dr SN Jha, lecturer at Astrology department of Lucknow University, predicted that Modi would not return to power this time.

"My prediction is that the Congress-led UPA will return to power. I cannot say whether Rahul Gandhi will be the next prime minister or not but I can

surely predict that Modi will not be the prime minister anymore," Dr Jha said.

He said the downside of Modi started after 2016. "He (Modi) made many promises but failed to fulfil them. He even ignored the warning signals and neglected the holy Ganga. Now, the planetary positions are against Modi and so my prediction is that Congress will form the next government."

Another astrologer, Manindra Maharaj, predicted that the BJP will not get as many seats as it got in 2014 elections but the NDA will form the government and Narendra Modi will be the prime minister once again.

"The BJP is suffering losses because the ministers have not worked as per the expectations of the masses. But Modi worked hard. His hard work and planetary positions will make him prime minister once again," he predicted.

Great enthusiasm among Banarasis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

There was great enthusiasm among Banarasis on the polling day as they braved scorching heat, to exercise their franchise in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi parliamentary constituency. The enthusiasm was also seen even in rural areas.

More than 57.81 per cent polling was recorded till 7 pm in this high-profile constituency which went to polls in the last phase of Lok Sabha polls. Right from the morning, long queues of voters were seen at most of the polling centres.

Several senior politicians including former Union minister and sitting MP from Kanpur, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, who represented Varanasi parliamentary constituency in 2009, cast his vote at BM Convent Junior High School, at Vindhyavasini Nagar. Besides,



Voters casting their votes in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer



Mayor Mridula Jaiswal, with her family members after casting vote

Pioneer

all senior Bharatiya Janata Party MLAs, MLCs, and others, Congress candidate and former MLA Ajai Rai and others exercised their franchise.

Mayor Mridula Jaiswal, along with her family members cast her vote at North-Eastern Railway Junior High School, Chittipur, while state co-in-charge of BJP, Sunil Ojha, cast his vote at BM Convent Junior High School, Orderly Bazar. Besides, BJP state vice-president, Lok Sabha Election convener and MLC Laxman Acharya cast his vote at Prabhu Narayan Inter College, Ramnagar.

UP Minister Neelkanth Tiwari cast his vote at Basic Primary Pathshala, Shankuldhara. Regional BJP chief Mahesh Chandra Srivastava, along with his wife, cast his vote at Kamlapati Inter College, Englishia Line and BJP MLC Ashok Dhawan and Anand Devi Balika Vidyalaya, Tulsipur.

SP alleges harassment of partymen in Gorakhpur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party on Sunday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission, alleging harassment of its workers and leaders in Gorakhpur during polling.

The party also questioned the Election Commission's claim of conducting free and fair polls in Uttar Pradesh.

A delegation of the SP met the Chief Electoral Officer of UP on Sunday and complained about the detention of party leaders in Gorakhpur on the orders of the Bharatiya Janata Party government with the intention of influencing polling.

The SP leaders also alleged that at some places, the names of genuine voters were deleted from the voters' list, particularly in Muslim dominated localities.

A memorandum submitted by the Samajwadi Party delegation to the Chief Electoral Officer alleged that in a deliberate move, faulty electronic voting machines (EVMs) were installed in certain booths so that Muslims, who are observing Ramzan, did not vote as they could not stand in queue for long.

The delegation also raised the issue of clash between BJP and SP workers in Chandauli Lok Sabha constituency and asked the Election Commission to take action against the ruling party leaders.

SP senior leader Udayveer Singh Yadav and Anand Bhadoria led the delegation.

Rajbhar predicts SP-BSP alliance victory in Purvanchal

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party chief Om Prakash Rajbhar, the estranged ally of the Bharatiya Janata Party, has predicted massive victory for SP-BSP alliance in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Rajbhar, who claims to have walked out of the Yogi

Adityanath government, was miffed over denial of seats of his choice in the state and fielded 39 candidates for constituencies which went to polls in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh phases.

"No party will get a majority in these elections. But the SP-BSP alliance will get a massive victory in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Without our support the BJP will suffer losses in at least 30 seats in Purvanchal. It is losing Ballia, Gorakhpur and Ghazipur seats," Rajbhar said. He predicted that BJP would only win 15 seats in the state. "The SP-BSP alliance will win 55-60 seats, while the Congress will get 2-3 seats," he added.

Rajbhar, who has consider-

able clout in eastern Uttar Pradesh, asserted that his party had not campaigned for the saffron party in these elections.

"We are not with them now. We only asked for the Ghosi seat, which the BJP did not give us."

The SBSP chief, who has been playing spoiler to the BJP's plans in UP, last week declared

support for the Congress candidate in Mirzapur and SP-BSP-RLD alliance candidates in Maharajganj and Bangsao.

Earlier this week he had dismissed the possibility of Narendra Modi being re-elected as the prime minister and said that India's next PM would be "Dalit ki beti" (daughter of the Dalits).

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Thieves make off with cash, valuables from two houses

Burglary attempt in another house foiled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Burglars sneaked into two houses in Nai Basti Devapur under Para police station and decamped with cash and valuables on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday. They also tried to commit theft in the same area but they had to beat a retreat as the occupants woke up just in the nick of time.

As per reports, the burglars first sneaked into the house of Suresh Mishra, who had gone to his native town (Hardoi) along with his family. The thieves entered the house by scaling the rear wall and breaking the locks. They collected jewellery worth lakhs of rupees and decamped with the booty. They then entered the house of Ram Singh, located few yards away from Mishra's. The thieves broke the locks and made off with valuables. There was no one in the house at that time. Later, they tried to commit theft in the house of Raj Kumar, who is also a resident of the same locality. Kumar and other family members were in the house and



they woke up hearing commotion. As they raised an alarm, the thieves fled the scene.

Suresh Mishra, who had been away along with his family since May 16, returned on Sunday morning and was surprised to see the locks broken and household goods strewn across the floor.

Ram Singh, who had gone to attend a function of a relative, also returned home on Sunday morning and found the locks broken and valuables missing. Mishra and Singh lodged complaints at Para police station in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, three miscre-

ants were arrested from different places in separate incident. They were identified as Ziauddin, Sanskar Mishra and Mohammad Sohail. Three stolen iPhone sets, two motorcycles and Rs 2,000 in cash were recovered from their possession.

At Gwari crossing under Gomti Nagar police station area, the police picked up Ziauddin and Sanskar Mishra. Ziauddin (23), a native of Sidhauri (Sitapur), lives in a makeshift house near Ganpati Plaza in Gomti Nagar while Sanskar of Lakhimpur Khari also lives adjacent to gate number 3 of Amity University.

The police said they were involved in snatching mobile phones and committing theft in shops by dismantling the shutters. They also used to steal two-wheelers parked in isolated areas.

The police were searching for them for their involvement of a case of auto-lifting near Amity University. They were stopped near the crossing late on Saturday night during a checking drive. They failed to give a satisfactory reply to the police queries. Besides, they also failed to produce the bike's registration papers. They confessed to their crime during interrogation. Ziauddin said they lifted the motorcycle last week and sold it off in Sitapur.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Sohail, who was booked under the Gangster Act but absconding, was arrested by the police on Sunday afternoon. He is a resident of Nigoha. Earlier, his partners in crime had surrendered at the Nigoha police station. He was spotted at the bus stand in Nigoha main market by inspector Jagdish Pandey, who nabbed him after a brief chase.

LU declares UG entrance results



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow University declared the results of undergraduate entrance tests on Sunday. The university authorities said that there would be off-campus online counselling for the students. Only the candidates within the declared ranks can participate in the online counselling. "The candidates interested have to register through the login credentials provided to them at the time of filling forms. The seats will be allotted strictly on the basis of overall ranks of the candidate as well as subjects/colleges (for BE/ED) they have selected in order of preference during choice filling. The candidates who are allotted the seats will have to download a provisional allotment cum confirmation letter through the Lucknow University website after paying the balance amount of fees," an official said.

The candidates who are not allotted their first preference can opt for upgradation. "They have to give the option whether they want to retain the allotted subjects/colleges (for BE/ED) or want to go for the upgradation process. In case of upgradation, they will be allotted subjects/colleges (for BE/ED) of higher priority or the same subjects/colleges depending upon the vacancy," the official said.

Meanwhile BE/ED-JEE results are expected to be declared on May 21. LU authorities said it was a tentative date. The exams were conducted in the city on April 15 with an approximate attendance of 95 per cent. The LU authorities said that the total number of candidates who appeared in the exam was 67,297. "It was a good response and one possible reason is that BE/ED teachers can now teach in lower classes too," an official said.

Embroidery artisan was killed over illicit relations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

With the arrest of a person, police on Sunday claimed to have worked out the murder of Mohammad Rubin. The person arrested was accused of plotting the murder, destroying the evidence and dumping the body in a deserted place in Kakarabad area under Kakori police station. He was identified as Vikram Singh.

Singh was planning to escape when nabbed by the police. He was taken to police station for interrogation during which he spilled the beans.

The body of Rubin was found wrapped in a bedsheet near a nullah on May 14 morning. The body was noticed by gram pradhan Shiv Balak and the deceased was identified by his elder brother Aslam.

Aslam had suspected the



involvement of a girl, with whom Rubin had a love affair. The victim, an embroidery artisan, had been living in Dubai for the past four years and got married with Fauzia three years ago. The couple have a one-year-old daughter.

The police said that the motive for Rubin's murder was his affair with a woman, who is wife of Shyam Kumar, a friend of Vikram Singh. Reports said that even after marriage, Shyam Kumar's wife continued to have physical relations with Rubin. Both were involved in physical

relations before getting married.

In the meantime, Singh came to know that Kumar's wife was still involved in illicit relations with Rubin. Singh shared it with Kumar and the latter planned to exact revenge.

They, along with the woman in question, plotted a conspiracy to eliminate Rubin. As per plan, she invited him to her house for dinner on May 13 and was hit with an iron rod on the head by Kumar and Singh twice as soon as he entered the house. Singh strangled him to ensure he was dead and the trio wrapped the body in a bedsheet and put it in Singh's car. Around midnight, they threw the body near a nullah in Kakarabad. Though Shyam and his wife are still absconding, the police said the couple would be nabbed soon as their probable hideouts were being raided.

Traffic curbs for Bada Mangal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The Traffic department announced diversions for the Bada Mangal celebrations on May 21 & 28, June 4, 11 & 19. All the heavy vehicles coming from Sitapur side will not be allowed to move from the Purania railway crossing and Daliganj railway crossing towards IT College crossing and Kapoorthala and will be diverted from under Madiaon overbridge, Purania overbridge and Daliganj overbridge via Shahmina road and Engineering College crossing towards Vikas Nagar, Wireless crossing, Badshahnagar, Rahimnagar, Sankalp Vatika and Sikanderbagh.

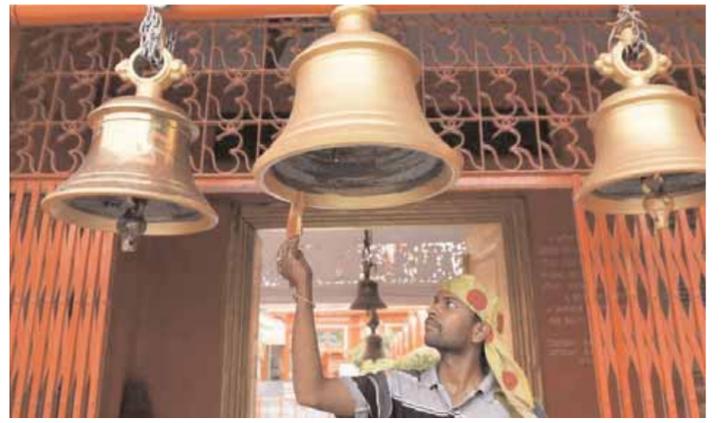
The heavy vehicles coming from Qaiserbagh and Hazratganj will not be allowed to move towards the Subhash crossing and IT College crossing, and will be diverted towards Clarks Avadh crossing, Shaheed Smarak and Daliganj crossing. The vehicles coming from the Kursi road side will not be able to move from Raheemnagar crossing towards Neera Nursing Home, and will be diverted from Rahimnagar crossing towards Wireless crossing, Gole Market, Badshahnagar, Nishatganj and Sikanderbagh crossing.

The vehicles will not be allowed to move from IT College crossing towards Vivekananda Polyclinic, Vivekananda overbridge and Kapoorthala, and Aliganj, and will be diverted towards Faizabad road, Central Bank trifurcation towards Wireless crossing. The vehicles moving from Sahara Tower will not be allowed to move towards Kapoorthala, and will be diverted towards the rear portion of Sahara Tower and Niralanagar bridge.

Commercial vehicles coming from Niralanagar will not be able to move from Niralanagar trifurcation towards Kapoorthala crossing, and will be diverted towards Daliganj railway crossing.

No vehicle will be allowed to move from Sai Mandir trifurcation (Aliganj) towards Kapoorthala crossing, and will be diverted behind Sahara Tower. No vehicle will be allowed to move from Alkapuri trifurcation towards Kapoorthala crossing, and will be diverted towards Alkapuri overbridge.

Traffic will not be allowed to move from Sushila Devi Smitika towards Prayagpur House trifurcation and Hanuman Setu crossing, and



Azad hid in Hanuman temple after Kakori train robbery!

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Very few people know that the Chhachhi Kuan Hanuman temple was used by freedom fighter Chandrashekhar Azad after the famous Kakori train robbery. There are several rare facts about various city temples which have not been highlighted till now.

Heritage activist Vipul Varshney, who has conducted a research on ancient city temples, shared with this reporter interesting facts related to the Chhachhi Kuan temple. "Chandrashekhar Azad used the temple as a hiding place because first, he was a Hanuman devotee; and second, temples were less searched by the Britishers," she said, adding that it was mentioned in several books.

Regarding the origin of the temple, she said: "It has been widely said that while digging was underway for a well in the ancient times, some liquid substance called 'chhachhi' came out along with a Hanuman copper plate and because of this it was named Chhachhi Kuan Hanuman Mandir. It was a copper plate with the picture of Lord Hanuman. Since it was the time of famine, the digging was carried out in this part of Awadh and people drank 'chhachhi'."

"It is also believed that the

famous poet Tulsidas had visited Lucknow on his way to Mathura and stayed at the temple for some time. It also added to the popularity of this spot and it witnesses many devotees who pay obeisance to the deity," she added.

Although many stories emerge about the Naya Hanuman Mandir, research shows that Begum Rabiya of Nawab Mohammad Ali Shah established the famous Hanuman temple in Aliganj.

"She had a dream that there was a grand idol of Hanuman lying near the garden and that she should dig it out and keep it in a temple. She was later blessed with a child and the Nawab immediately started an excavation drive. To his surprise, he found a Hanuman idol. He ordered that the idol should be kept in a temple near Bada Imambara. While the idol was being taken, the elephant carrying it stopped and sat down at a place in Aliganj. Several efforts were made to make him stand up, but to no avail. On the advice of a saint of the area, Begum Rabiya ordered installation of the idol at the same place," said Varshney.

Bada Mangal, which is celebrated in Lucknow each year, is associated mainly with this ancient temple. Members from the temple committee said there was another legend that

at the time of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, Jatmal, a Marwari businessman got disappointed because he had heard so much about the market. He thought that returning empty-handed would not be a good idea. While going somewhere, he reached this temple and stayed there to take rest. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was building Kaiserbagh in the name of Qaiser Begum and someone advised him that if the Kaiserbagh building was coloured with saffron-musk, the entire area would be very fragrant. All the saffron that Jatmal had brought with him was sold and he spent a large amount on the temple. This incident was also corroborated in a court judgement of 1920 on whether the temple came under the public trust. The judgement mentions that parts of the temple were built by Jatmal," the committee member elaborated.

Regarding the old Hanuman temple, it is said that it is a remnant of Awadh Empire. The temple is visited by a number of devotees and is a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. The dome of the temple is adorned with a crescent of moon and an emblem of the grand Awadh empire.

road and behind the temple. In case of Hanuman Setu temple, the parkings will be behind the temple and also on the Hanuman Setu-Nadwa road.

HEAT EFFECT AT ZOO



Lucknow zoo wears a deserted look due to the blistering heat in the city on Sunday

Pioneer

IITR to spread awareness about pesticides used in vegetables

Lucknow (PNS): Under the food safety campaign, Indian Institute of Toxicological Research (IITR) will soon be undertaking a drive to spread awareness about pesticides in vegetables. According to IITR director Alok Dhawan, it is a fact that the levels of pesticides in vegetables available in the market are high. He pointed out that the pesticide levels varied from season to season.

"In the summer season, there are large number of pests and therefore, farmers use a large amount of pesticide to safeguard their crops. Now, since FSSAI has recognised IITR as a Reference Centre for Food, we will carry out a campaign with all the stakeholders to spread awareness about the fact that pesticides should be used as and when required. It is not as though you need the pesticides to grow the vegetables; one can



buy vegetables on weekends and when the vendors do not get the required customers, they have no option but to use pesticides to increase the shelf life of vegetables," he pointed out. The IITR director said washing the vegetables with potassium permanganate solution largely helped in cleaning the fungi and bacterial infections. He said most of the pesticides were in the peels of vegetables, so it was important to remove the peels before eating veggies. "Pesticides can damage to the brain, cause toxicity and also affect the kidney," he added.

He said a general buyer would not be able to know whether or not the vegetable had pesticides. He added that the only thing that a buyer could do was buy the vegetables on a daily basis and wash them thoroughly. "Most of the times, people

Scientists want Lucknow to be declared 'Science City'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

With the results of the elections around the corner, anticipations and expectations are swelling. The scientists of the city said that they had aspirations from the newly-elected MP from Lucknow constituency that he would get it declared 'Science City'.

Scientists of the city said that for a long time it had been called a city of culture but we should appreciate that Lucknow is also a science city with about a dozen scientific institutions of several ministries like Science and Technology (Biotech Park, BSIP, CDRI, CIMAP, IITR, NBRI); Culture (NRLC and ASI); Agriculture (IISTH, NBFGR and IISR), Mining (GSI) and Railway

(RDSO). This is in addition to several government and private and medical universities and institutions and a huge number of schools and colleges engaged in science teaching. The only Regional Science City of the state is also based in Lucknow. The Council of Science and Technology is also located in Lucknow.

Lucknow deserves to be declared a Science City, said Dr CM Nautiyal, a well-known scientist and science communicator from Lucknow. "Apart from research institutions of the Central Government, Lucknow has Anveshanalaya under Public Works Department and also the Ground Water Board of UP as well as the Central Government," he said. He added that Lucknow was rich not

only in science but also in science communication. "The Lucknow University has been running a course on science communication for almost two decades. Lucknow boasts of a Science City and there is a large number of museums here such as the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, Geological Survey of India and the Zoology Department at the University of Lucknow. All three deal with plant and animal fossils and related exhibits. The Regional Science City has set up a Sound and Light Show on its campus which will be an added attraction to the already existing Sci-Max and 3-D shows. Apart from government sector, several NGOs are carrying out science popularisation activities. So given the scenario Lucknow will get another

identity with such a declaration," he said.

Mukund Sharma, a renowned geologist and acting Director, Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, said that such a move was initiated some years ago but unfortunately fizzled out at that time. "Lucknow with its rich culture and establishment in science is the right choice. Lucknow should also get a well-located and easily accessible international-level auditorium for science events. Given the increasing influence of media we should also get a state-of-the-art film-making studio and screening theatre. Science films, even if made, are craving for audience and theatres. There should be bus tours for tourists and students which carry them to institutions, their museums and labs

and thus provide them the much-needed exposure to science at an early stage," he said.

The noted physicist, Prof MM Verma, Lucknow University, feels that Lucknow also has a sizeable number of people who promote scientific temper so it was the right city for becoming the Science City. "It will help develop the city and the outlook of the people. This will promote science tourism and that will increase employment opportunities. Riverside parks could also be developed as nature science parks to teach the students subjects like hydro dynamics and give them other hands-on experience. Students must come out of the laboratory and study science in nature too. Metro pillars etc could be used for propa-

gation of messages of science and scientific temper. A scientific temper so introduced will induce people to worry about environment too," he said. Dr Nautiyal further stated that if Lucknow had the required infrastructure it could be a choice for many international science events. That would generate employment opportunities for science students and business for the local people. "That would provide great exposure to the Lucknowites, especially those interested in science. Besides, society follows role models. Declaration of Lucknow as a Science City will see the projection of great scientists and that will lead to the growth of good science and good scientists. These naturally will lead to a better Lucknow," he said.

Form No INC-26
(Pursuant to rule 30 the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014)
Advertisement to be published in the newspaper for change of registered office of the company from one state to another
Before the Central Government
Northern Region, New Delhi

In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013, Section 13(4) of Companies Act, 2013 and Rule 30(6) (a) of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014

AND

In the matter of M/s April Industries Private Limited having its registered office at SHOP - 6, KRISHANA ARCADE, NEAR UCO BANK, BEGUM BRIDGE MEERUT UP 250002 IN, Petitioner

Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the company proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra ordinary general meeting held on April 29, 2019 to enable the company to change its registered office from "Utter Pradesh" to "NCT of Delhi".

Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the company may deliver either on the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of objection to the Regional Director at the address B-2 WING, 2nd FLOOR, PARYAVARAN BHAWAN, CGO COMPLEX, NEW DELHI-110003 within Fourteen days from the date of publication of this notice with a copy of the address mentioned below:

SHOP - 6, KRISHANA ARCADE, NEAR UCO BANK, BEGUM BRIDGE MEERUT UP 250002 IN

For April Industries Private Limited
SD/-
(SNEH LALLWAN) Director, DIN: 07695275
Address: - 32 Block AE Shalimar Bagh, Delhi 110088 DL IN
Date: 18.05.2019 Place: Uttar Pradesh

Drive against polythene yields over ₹1.88 lakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

The second day of the drive against polythene, encroachments and littering of garbage in the city by the district administration on Sunday resulted in the realisation of Rs 1,88,000 as penalty and the 11 teams set up by the DM seized 39 kilograms of polythene in total. The teams seized these polythene and thermocols from shops, markets and malls.

The DM while giving the details zone-wise said that in Zone 1 the teams seized 9.5 kg of carry bags made of plastic and polythene and realised Rs 87,400 as fine, in Zone 2 they seized 3.5 kg of polythene and realised Rs 35,000 as penalty, in Zone 3-5.5 kg of polythene was seized and the penalty realised was Rs 17,000, in Zone 4 - 9 kg of polythene was seized and Rs 35,300 were realised as penalty and in Zone 5 - 2 kg

of polythene was seized and the penalty realised was Rs 3,000, in Zone 6 - 2 kg of polythene was seized and the amount realised was Rs 14,800, in Zone 7-1.1 kg of polythene was seized and amount realised was Rs 4,000 and in Zone 8-1 kg of polythene was seized and the sum realised was Rs 1,500. Experts state that traditional Indian cultural practices of reusing and recycling old things are much more long lasting than one time use of polythene bags. The convenience of using polybags has become a part of our life and has resulted in problems such as clogged drains, burning of plastic with other waste-releasing toxic gases, deaths of animals, polluted soil and many more.

The expert pointed out that the need of the hour was to provide an alternative to polythene bags which were

convenient to use, cheap, easily available and waterproof and which was why they were being widely used. "We all are aware of the ill effects of these plastic carry bags which are toxic, not food grade, block drains, affect the health of stray animals who unknowingly consume it and the biggest issue is that take over a 1,000 years to decompose. So today we need to make a choice between sustainability and convenience. The alternatives to polybags are cloth bags, jute bags, paper bags which are easy to use and also can be made at home from old cloth and newspapers. We need to bring a change in our habits," she said. It may be pointed out here that the district administration had started a rigorous drive on July 14 last year and the second phase on August 15 which fizzled out with the passage of time.

CITY BRIEFS

MUSIC & DANCE SHOW



Repertour Performante hosted a late night music and dance show titled 'Zubaan' on Saturday. 'Zubaan' is a collaboration project where Indie artists from different musical linguistic scenes come together and perform across the country. The group is headed

by Kavish Seth, an Indie singer-songwriter and poet who primarily writes in Hindustani. Other artistes include Nuria (kathak dancer from Spain), Raghendra Narain and and Kanishk.

RECORD



The record for using a motorbike for the longest time (30 years) was set by Indira Nagar resident Sanjiv Srivastava (54), who is a technician at King George's Medical University. His efforts were recognised by the India Book of Records. Srivastava maintained his bike in good running condition and the record set by him is a message to motorbike users that due attention and care of vehicles can prolong the life of machines.



'MAX LITTLE ICON 2019'

Max Fashion concluded its 'Max Little Icon 2019' with an amazing show at the finale which was held at Hyatt Regency in Lucknow on Saturday. 'Max Little Icon' is a platform that lets the kids showcase their talents and get recognition in their very own city. It encourages little champs

and divas to participate and showcase their talent in singing, dancing, drawing, fashion walk and fancy-dress competition.

JMUN-2019

The 7th edition of Jaipuria Model United Nations (JMUN-2019) came to a close on Sunday. The

closing ceremony was held at Seth MR Jaipuria School. As many as 26 schools from Lucknow and outside participated in the three-day conference. Prizes and certificates were given away to the winners in different contests. The 'Best Delegation Trophy' was won by La Martiniere College.

CISH working on improvement of pointed gourd varieties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) is working on improvement of varieties of pointed gourds (parwal). CISH director Shaileendra Rajan said they had developed new varieties by hybridising local material with unique ones from West Bengal, well known for pointed gourds.

He said although several varieties had been collected and planted at the institute, they were picking promising types with the farmers of UP. He said the Bengal-Assam area was the primary centre of origin of pointed gourds, Malda and Murshidabad had rich diversity. "Varieties in these two districts are different from Uttar Pradesh in size, colour, yield and taste. Fifteen landraces were collected from these districts, particularly those which are the closest to Bangladesh, to evaluate how they would fare in the Lucknow climate and soils. Screening of these landraces was aimed at providing planting material of superior types to tribal farmers of West Bengal and in villages near Lucknow," the



CISH director elaborated. SR Singh, who is working on breeding of the crop, said growing a few plants in the kitchen-garden was sufficient as two vines were enough for fulfilling the requirement of an average family. "The oblong vegetables selected from West Bengal are suitable for making high-quality sweets and we hope these new types will also become popular in UP," he said. The pointed gourd, scientifically known as Trichosanthes dioica, is an important vegetable in north Indian

kitchens and extremely high on nutritive value.

"Parwal can be used for making soup, stew and curry. It can be fried and also used for making different types of sweets. People are less aware of the nutritious advantages of this vegetable. It has high nutritive value because of vitamins A, B1, B2 and C besides calcium. Among the fruits of cultivated cucurbits, pointed gourd is really useful of human health. It has better protein, fat, minerals, fibre, carbohydrates, energy, calcium, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, iron, sodium, copper, sulphur and chlorine as compared to many cultivated cucurbits. It provides very less calories and helps keep the cholesterol levels in control. In Ayurveda, parwal is utilised to deal with gastric problems," the CISH director said.

He added that the vegetable was rich in fibre and helped in proper digestion. "It is good for gastrointestinal and a few problems associated with liver. It is a rich source of antioxidants and vitamins A & C. It helps fight with the free radical molecules that promote aging signs," he added.

Gram pradhan's son shot at, escapes unhurt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Tension prevailed in Karchhana area under the Karchhana police station after some persons opened fire at the son of the pradhan of Hardua village. While Ashish (35), son of the village head, Shobha Narain Dwivedi, escaped unhurt the owner of an automobile agency, Sandeep Mishra (50), was injured in the incident. On hearing the sound of gunfire the villagers rushed to the spot but the assailants had fled from there by that time.

The enraged residents of the area staged a road blockade. Circle Officer, Sachidanand, reached the spot and pacified the enraged villagers. He said that a case would be registered and action would be taken on receiving a complaint in this connection. Dwivedi told the police that Naveen Dikshit, a resident of Nani, and others had opened fire at his residence after a scuffle on May 13. He claimed that a name FIR had been lodged in this connection but

the police did not initiate any action in this connection.

Meanwhile, some anti social elements hurled a crude bomb at the residence of Heeramani Sharma when goonda tax was not paid to him. As a result the window of his house was damaged but the victim escaped unhurt. The incident took place late at night in an area under the Kydganj police station. The police had registered a case against Santosh Bhardwaj and his aides on a complaint being lodged by the victim. The police was investigating the matter.

As per the reports received here, Heeramani, a resident of Chaukhandi locality under the aforesaid police station, owns a grocery shop on the Yamuna Bank Road. His son, Akhilesh, was sitting there. It was alleged that Sanjay Bhardwaj came to his shop and bought some snacks from there. On money being demanded for the articles which Sanjay had purchased he started hurling abuses at him and threatened him with dire consequences. It was also

alleged that Sanjay also demanded ₹50,000 from him and threatened to kill him if he did not pay the amount demanded from him. Heeramani along with his family was asleep when some anti-social elements hurled crude bombs at his residence around 1 am. All the family members got up on hearing the deafening sound of bomb explosion which also shattered the window panes of their house. The people of next houses also got up on hearing the sound and informed the police about the incident. The victim informed the police that Santosh had criminal antecedents. A few months ago he got a bomb hurled at the residence of a shop-owner in order to get money.

Meanwhile, the Kareli police on Sunday arrested a man for allegedly plotting to kill one of his women relatives due to a monetary dispute by using a live wire. According to a report received here, Ishrat Fatima, a resident of Gaus Nagar, had lodged a first infor-

mation report (FIR) against her relative, Sajjad, in which she alleged that he had plotted to kill her. The accused had connected live electricity wires to a plier and placed it near her bed in order to electrocute her. However, she luckily escaped. On being tipped off by an informer, sub-inspector (S-I), Balwan Singh, and his team laid a trap and arrested the culprit, Sajjad, near the Mastan market trifurcation, Station House Officer (SHO) Kareli Vinod Kumar, said. Sajjad confessed to his crime and was sent to jail.

Meanwhile, an FIR was lodged on Saturday against three youths for allegedly kidnapping and murdering a 17-year-old girl of a village under Meja police station in the trans-Ganga area, the police said.

According to a report received here, the girl had disappeared mysteriously on May 9. On a complaint being lodged by her kin, a named FIR was lodged against three youths of the village.

HIMACHAL LS POLLS 143% turnout (!) at highest booth, 74% in smallest

PTI ■ SIMLA

It is strange but true! The world's highest polling station at 15,256 feet in Tashigang village of Himachal Pradesh Sunday recorded an unbelievable 142.85 per cent voter turnout. And all votes were duly declared valid.

In another unique feature of the country's democratic exercise, the smallest polling booth Ka, located near Tashigang in Sipti valley itself and having only 16 registered voters, the poll percentage stood at over 81.25 per cent. A total of 13 voters cast their votes in Ka.

Against merely 49 registered voters in the Tashigang electoral roll, a total of 70 voters cast their votes at the village polling booth, said Kaza Sub Divisional Magistrate Jeevan Negi.

The unbelievable spike in the poll percentage was attributed to the desire of many poll officials, deployed at Tashigang and other neighbouring polling booths to cast their votes at the world's highest polling station, located at a dizzying height of 12,256 ft. Out of the 49 registered

voters of Tashigang village, a total of 36 villagers cast their votes. They included 21 males and 15 females, who together accounted for nearly 74 per cent turnout.

The poll officials cast their votes at Tashigang polling booth after showing their election duty certificate (EDCs) issued to them by concerned assistant returning officers, he added.

Tashigang is a village near an ancient monastery in Himachal Pradesh. It is the highest settlement in Spiti Valley near the India-Tibet border with villages Nako and Khab located nearby and is connected to Shimla by National Highway 22.

Tashigang acquired the unique distinction of becoming the highest polling station during the Himachal Pradesh assembly elections in 2017, when the erstwhile polling station Hikim at the highest altitude of 14,400 ft was replaced by Tashigang due to some technical reasons, said HP's Assistant Chief Electoral Officer Harbans Lal Dhiman.

Hikim is located 160 km from Tashigang. The polling at Tashigang

began at 7 am when the temperature was below freezing point. Voters came to the polling station wearing their traditional attire to beat the chilly weather.

Both Tashigang and Ka polling stations fall under the Mandi parliamentary seat where the highest number of 17 candidates among the four Lok Sabha seats in the state are in the fray.

Mandi is witnessing a direct contest between the BJP and the Congress. Former Union Minister Sukh Ram's grandson Aashray Sharma is pitted as a Congress candidate here against sitting BJP MP Ram Swaroop Sharma.

Aashray's father Anil Sharma, who was a minister in the Jai Ram Thakur-led BJP government in Himachal, had to resign from the Cabinet as he was unwilling to campaign against his son to favour the BJP candidate.

Mandi being his home, Himachal Chief Minister Thakur's prestige is at stake here with veteran politician Sukh Ram too leaving no stone unturned to ensure his grandson Aashray's victory.

Sukhbir's daughter gets EC notice for wearing SAD badge

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal's younger daughter Gurleen Kaur, a first-time voter, was issued a notice for allegedly violating the model code of conduct.

The show-cause notice was issued for wearing Akali Dal badge when she came to a polling booth for casting her vote in Muktsar, under Bathinda parliamentary constituency, an official said.

The Election Commission took cognizance of videos showing she was wearing the party badge.

"We have issued a notice based on videos and we have issued a notice to her," said Muktsar Deputy Commissioner M K Aravind Kumar.

"After the reply comes, we will decide the next course of action," he said. In Chandigarh, Punjab's Chief Electoral Officer S Karuna Raju said he was yet to receive a report in this regard. Meanwhile, Badal posted a picture of his daughter and other family members on his Facebook page after she cast her vote. Kaur was among the

The show-cause notice was issued for wearing Akali Dal badge when she came to a polling booth for casting her vote in Muktsar, under Bathinda parliamentary constituency

3.94 lakh first-time voters in Punjab.

"Today is a great day for us. Gurleen cast her vote for the first time, accompanied by her grandfather Parkash Singh Badal. When the wisdom of age unites with the energy of youth, the country stands tall. It is a proud moment for us and for all those Indians whose children have come of age to be responsible citizens of our noble country," Badal wrote on his Facebook page.

Congress files complaint against Kirron Kher

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

On the day of polling in Chandigarh, Congress on Sunday submitted a complaint to the Election Commission against the BJP and its candidate Kirron Kher for violating the democratic rights of the citizens by releasing its manifesto just hours before the end of campaigning, which is 48 hours before the polling time.

The printing of only 100 manifesto copies thereof is also against the democratic principles of the Constitution of India and against the oath given by Kirron Kher at the time of filing her nomination, said Congress advocate Pankaj Chandgothia in the complaint.

He stated that the manifesto must be released at least 7 days before the polling date to honour the principles of a healthy democracy. The BJP has not obeyed the concept of democracy and deliberately delayed the release of its election manifesto to almost the last minute, to avoid any dialogue or discussion on it, which is the right of every voter. The voter has been denied his fundamental right of knowing the promises and real commitment of the concerned can-

didate Kirron Kher and her party, the Chandigarh unit of BJP, the complaint stated.

Notably, the Chandigarh BJP had on May 16 released its election manifesto.

The Congress' complaint added, it is requested that the candidature of BJP candidate Kirron Kher be cancelled as she has committed grave sacrilege of the Constitution of India and Indian Democratic Principles and violation of the solemn oath given by her at the time of filing nomination."

In another complaint submitted to the Election Commission over telecast of exit polls while the voting was in the progress, Congress said that the telecast on a news channel started at 4 pm while voting was still going on in Chandigarh and other areas of Phase 7.

Although the complaint was registered, still the exit poll program started. Upon this, the Congress raised the matter on the C-VIGIL APP.

Chandigarh EC officials visited Congress advocate Pankaj Chandgothia's office in Sector 28 here and took shots of the program where the Chandigarh trends were also being discussed.

UNESCO includes Kailash Mansarovar in tentative list of heritage sites

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

UNESCO has included the Indian part of Kailash Mansarovar in its tentative list of world heritage sites, sources in the Culture Ministry said Sunday. It was in April that the Archeological Survey of India, which is under the Culture Ministry, sent the proposal mooted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to UNESCO. In the proposal, Kailash Mansarovar is in the mixed category - both as a natural as well as a cultural heritage. Covering an area of 6,836 sq km within India, the area is flanked in the east by Nepal and bordered by China on the north. The Indian site is part of the larger landscape of 31,000 sq km referred to as the 'Kailash Sacred Landscape' constituting the Mount Kailash and Lake Mansarovar in the remote south-western portion of the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and adjacent districts in the far-western region of Nepal.

Both China and Nepal have proposed the landscape as a world heritage site to UNESCO.

Maya lends hand to Opp...

From Page 1

Naidu's meeting with Sonia assumes importance as the latter held an internal meeting with top Congress leaders on Saturday evening to assess the party's process and strategy to stake claim for Government formation in case of a hung verdict on May 23 when the results will be announced.

Sources said Naidu has assessed that the NDA cannot get more than 200 seats and thus has reportedly urged the Congress leadership to prepare for the possibility of the BJP-led NDA ending up with fewer

seats than it anticipates, giving the Opposition a window.

Sonia, who remains the UPA chairperson even after handing charge of the Congress to her son, has taken the lead for an Opposition meeting on the day of the results, for which invites have already been sent out.

Naidu had on Saturday also held talks with several Opposition leaders, including Loktantrik Janata Dal leader Sharad Yadav in the national Capital and with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and BSP supremo Mayawati in Lucknow.

Naidu met Rahul and Pawar for the second consecutive day on Sunday morning, followed by a meeting with Sonia in the evening. He also held a separate meeting with CPI(M) general secretary Yechuru and discussed the possibility of all Opposition parties getting together.

Naidu has also held several rounds of discussion with various Opposition leaders, including TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee and AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal. Naidu's TDP was part of the NDA, but quit the alliance a few months ago.

Nirmal's family continues construction near Army depot

PTI ■ JAMMU

Construction of a building by senior BJP leader Nirmal Singh's family near an Army depot in the city's outskirts is near completion, despite the Jammu and Kashmir High Court directing them last year to maintain status quo at the disputed site, officials said.

Singh's lawyer R K Gupta said there was no stay on construction activity by any of the residents of the area.

"The court has only directed the implementation of the notification issued in 2015 is

in accordance with the law and the act," he said, adding that the notification is not valid in terms of provisions and cannot be implemented.

The high court on May 7 last year had asked them to maintain status quo until final disposition of an Army plea which has claimed that the building was in violation of laid down norms.

The high court, while hearing a contempt petition, had asked various departments of the state to file their replies and had directed state authorities to "ensure" that the August 2015 order is "strictly imple-

mented with all provisions of law/rules and no unlawful/impermissible activity in the area is permitted".

The 2015 order was clear that "no variation shall be made in the ground level and on building, wall, bank or other construction....Erected, added to or altered otherwise than with the written approval of the General officer in Commanding..."

"No wood, earth, stone, brick, gravel and or other material shall be stacked, stored or otherwise accumulated" and the order was applicable to all those living

1000 yards of the ammunition point at village ban.

It said that any violation "shall be dealt with by the local Army commander under law and no compensation in respect of removal of such unauthorised structures shall be payable to the owners."

However, a palatial building is nearing completion in Ban village despite the order, the officials said.

Raising security and safety concerns in view of the building's proximity to an ammunition depot, the Centre had filed two petitions before the high court, but are still

awaiting a proper hearing a year later.

Construction work on the plot had started in 2017 prompting the Army to send a communication to Singh, who was the then deputy chief minister in the PDP-BJP coalition government, asking him to stop the activity as it was in "violation of the Works of Defence Act (WoDA) 1903" which bars any construction activity upto 1000 yards (914 metres approx).

The construction activity falls nearly 581 yards (531 metres approx) from the boundary of the depot.

Poll raids: ₹34 cr cash, liquor, drugs seized

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Cash, drugs, liquor and precious metals worth ₹3449.12 crore were seized by enforcement agencies since the Lok Sabha polls were announced on March 10. The quantity of drugs and narcotics seized by the poll body is equal to the weight of 19 adult male Asiatic elephants (an adult male Asiatic elephant weighs nearly 4000-4500 kg). The seized quantity of drugs/narcotics is 76521.09 kg worth over ₹1270.37 crore.

According to flying squad of the EC, the contrabands being circulated/seized in Gujarat, Delhi and Punjab are of a much superior quality than the ones being supplied elsewhere.

In 2014, the overall seizure was ₹1,206 crore, Director General (Election Expenditure) in the EC Dilip Sharma said on Sunday after the seventh and the final phase of polls. For the current elections, two more head-precious metal like gold and

freebies/other items have also been added under which the seizures are being made.

As per data, 184.3 lakh litre liquor worth of over ₹294.91 crore was seized across the country which will fill roughly five and-a-half Olympic-sized swimming pools. Between March 10 and May 19, ₹839.03 crore in cash, precious metals, including gold, worth ₹986.76 crore and 'freebies', including sarees, wrist watches, aimed at inducing voters worth ₹58.56 crore were seized, he said. The total comes to ₹3449.12 crore.

Tamil Nadu has topped the list of states from where the maximum amount of cash, liquor and narcotics have been recovered by the EC during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, followed by Gujarat and Delhi.

As per data, EC seized maximum value seizures (₹950.03 crore) have been made in Tamil Nadu, followed by Gujarat (₹552.72 crore) and Delhi (₹426.10 crore). In Tamil Nadu,

the total cash seizure was ₹227.13 crore while precious metals, gold and jewellery of 3113 kg worth of ₹709.67 crore was seized during the polls. Mizoram and Lakshadweep are the two states from where no cash has been recovered.

Political parties as well as independent candidates use ambulances and other vehicles fitted with flashing lights to carry cash and other items to lure voters. EC observers, surveillance teams and enforcement agencies raid airports, highways, railways stations, hotels and farm houses if there is any suspicion of illegal money.

Accepting money to vote or not to vote for a candidate is a punishable offence with prison terms, fines or both. The use of money in elections has increased in the last few years. A Delhi-based NGO, Centre for Media Studies (CMS), has estimated that all political parties in 2019 would together spend over ₹60,000 crore.

Keep Central forces in Bengal till May 27, BJP urges poll body

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Expressing concern that the Estate's ruling TMC may target a section of voters after polling is over, the BJP on Sunday requested the Election Commission to order the presence of central armed police forces in the State till the Model Code of Conduct period ends.

BJP leader and Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters that elections in six of the nine seats, which have undergone elections on Sunday, were marred by violence.

Citing media reports and other feedback, she said BJP candidates have been attacked and accused Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers of not letting voters, who are opposed to the Mamata Banerjee-led party, enter polling booths.

"The EC should take cognisance of it. Since Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been openly talking about

Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters that elections in six of the nine seats, which have undergone elections on Sunday, were marred by violence

revenge, TMC workers have been beating up people and we are afraid that they will start targeting voters after the polls are over. The central armed police forces should be there till the end of the Model Code of Conduct," she said.

The MCC will remain in force till May 27, according to the EC. The counting of votes is due on May 23.

Sitharaman was joined by nominated Rajya Sabha MP Swapna Dasgupta who said, "In West Bengal, the violence unleashed by the TMC as part of its 'badla' strategy won't end."

"Central forces must remain in the state as long as the Model Code is in operation till end-May," he said.

Govt deports 600 foreigners, including 200 clerics after Sri Lanka Easter bombing

Colombo Authorities have identified about 1,200 such individuals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Out of the 600 foreigners including 200 hardcore maulvis (Muslim religious preachers) deported by Colombo post the suicide bombings there, over a 100 were Indians who, along with those from Pakistan and Maldives, were suspected to be engaged in radicalization in the Sri Lankan mosques.

Besides the Indians, clerics from Pakistan and Maldives have also been deported in large numbers owing to their terror links that emerged after serial suicide bombings in Colombo on Sunday Easter last month that took a toll of over 250 persons including 11 Indians. Besides the 200 maulvis, the 400 other individuals are also suspected to have travelled on tourist visas but have been essentially engaged in radical preachings, sources said.

Sri Lankan authorities have identified about 1,200 such individuals who are being screened for terror links and depending upon antecedent verification more such clerics are likely to be deported to the respective countries.

The revelation of the Indian maulvis in radicalization activities in the island nation has set alarm bells ringing in the security establishment here as they apprehend the international terror groups might have developed a hub of such transnational radical preachers in the country.

The deportations began on Tuesday after the Sri Lankan authorities informed the respective foreign missions on the issue. By Thursday, the 600 such radicals were deported to the respective countries.

Pakistani clerics have infiltrated the mosques in the region including in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Maldives and even in some of the ASEAN countries. These clerics are being exploited by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence for the larger design of implementing state agenda of sponsoring terror in the neighbourhood, sources said.

The sources said such radical clerics are also part of the transnational radicalization networks of the international terror groups like the Al Qaeda and ISIS who have a long term agenda of radicalization and subsequently recruit them into their fold for their terror designs, including logistics management chain and funding through illegal narcotics supply chain.

During the last two years, Indian clerics in large number, as revealed by the Sri Lankan deportations, are also taking up jobs of Islamic preaching in foreign shores.

In the wake of the development, the challenge for the security agencies is two-fold, one to keep tabs on their activities after their deportation and secondly to establish their role and extent of involvement in radicalization during their stay in Sri Lanka, insiders said, adding the Indian security agencies will have an onerous task ahead to contain the impact of the deported radical clerics.

They said counter-terrorism and security-related issues come under the domain of the security agencies in so far as Sri Lanka is concerned as any adverse activity there has a direct bearing on the security calculus in South India, especially Tamil Nadu.

Ahead of carrying out the suicide bombing in Colombo, chief National Thowheed Jamat Zaharan Hashim had stayed in South India for three months but remained undetected by the Intelligence Bureau.

They said counter-terrorism and security-related issues come under the domain of the security agencies in so far as Sri Lanka is concerned as any adverse activity there has a direct bearing on the security calculus in South India, especially Tamil Nadu.

Pakistani clerics have infiltrated the mosques in the

Extreme hot condition not appropriate for elections, says Paswan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP chief and Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Sunday spoke against polling in April-May, saying extreme hot condition in the period is not appropriate for elections as he asked political parties to evolve consensus for polls to be held in either February or November.

Earlier in the day, Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar also questioned the long drawn polling in intense heat conditions and suggested general election should be held in two or three phases either in February-March or October-November. In his tweets, Paswan said people are nowadays more aware about voting but April-May is not an appropriate period for Lok Sabha or assembly polls as the period is extremely hot and results in a lower turnout.

"After a new government is formed after the elections, leaders of all political parties should seriously consider holding the polls either in February or November. It will facilitate campaigning. People will cast votes in comfort, boosting the turnout. It will strengthen democracy," the Lok Janshakti Party leader said.

In his comments, Kumar also disfavoured gap between voting days.

He stressed on a constitutional provision for conduct of election at a more suitable time and said he will write a letter to his counterparts in other parties after completion of current election to reach a consensus over the issue.

The seven-phase Lok Sabha election, which started on April 11, is ending Sunday.

Campaigning has been especially exacting in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal as they have undergone polls in every phase.

Parties spend ₹53 cr poll ads on FB, Google, YouTube

BJP spent over ₹17.10 cr on 12,002 ads on Google platform and ₹4.23 cr on over 2,500 ads on Facebook

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Political parties have spent over ₹53 crore on digital platforms like Google and Facebook since February 19 during the ongoing Lok Sabha campaign till May 17. BJP is the top spender on Google and Facebook advertisement, followed by DMK. According to Facebook's Ad Library Report, there were 1.21 lakh political ads with a total spending of more than ₹26.5 crore between February and May 17 this year. Similarly, ad spend on Google, YouTube, and partner proper-

ties since February 19 stood at ₹27.36 crore with 14,837 ads. The voting for the last and final phase was completed on Sunday. In terms of geographies, according to the report, the maximum money on election ads has been spent in Andhra Pradesh (₹5.23 crore), followed by Tamil Nadu (₹4.43 crore) Telangana (₹2.03 crore) and Delhi (₹2.81 crore) for the period.

BJP spent over ₹17.10 crore on 12,002 advertisements on Google platform and ₹4.23 crore on over 2,500 ads on Facebook. The BJP spent on campaigning a combination of video, print and digital ads on supporting pages like 'My First Vote for Modi', 'Bharat Ke Mann Ki Baa' and 'Nation with NaMo' too, 'Main Bhi Chowkidar', 'Bhrastachar Mitane ke liye, Naya Bharat

Banane ke liye, Vishwa mein Samarth dikhane ke liye Desh ka maan badane ke liye and Atankwad ko harane ke liye surakshit rashtira banane ke liye and, infused over Rs 4 crore on ads on the social networking platform that has well over 200 million users in India. On Google's platforms, it has spent more than ₹17 crore. The DMK, which is second in spending on digital platform with the expenditure of Rs 4.10 crore on 266 advertisements.

The Congress spent ₹1.46 crore on Facebook for 3,686 ads. It shelled out another ₹2.71 crore on Google's platforms with 425 ads, while YSR Congress Party of Rs 2.31 crore. Meanwhile, Congress has been highlighting the promises made by its PM candidate Rahul Gandhi through multiple digital advertisements.

The pro-Congress page 'Bande Mein Hai Dum' spent Rs 2.59 lakh for drumming up support for the grand old party on Facebook and the Indian Youth Congress spent ₹6.52 lakh on the social media platform.

As per Facebook's data, Trinamool Congress has spent ₹29.28 lakhs. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) shelled out ₹13.62 lakh for 176 ads on the Facebook page. Interestingly, Google's political ad dashboard showed that Auburn Digital Solutions was running AAP campaigns and had spent ₹2.18 crore from February 19 onwards.

Google enforced its election ads policy for India in February, which requires advertisers to provide a certificate issued by the Election Commission (EC), or anyone authorised by it, for each ad they wish to run. An advertiser must first be verified

by Google before submitting this pre-certificate for advertisement.

Amid increased political advertising on social media platforms, the Election Commission (EC) has given directions for close tracking of expenditure by political parties and candidates on these platforms during elections. In a communication to chief electoral officers of all states and Union Territories on April 18, EC said "ad transparency reports" from Google, Facebook, and Twitter, among others, should be closely studied. The poll panel has conveyed to all states that parties' payments for social media campaigns should be tracked and assessed. It must also be ensured that these reflect correctly in the accounts of parties and candidates.



Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) under the aegis of Ministry of Culture organised a 10-day training programmes for the in-service school teachers and students from all parts of the country with an aim to disseminate Integrated Art Education among students. The All India Annual Cultural Festival- Indradhanush 2019 from May 18-28, 2019 will see children between the age group 6-16. On the first day CCRT director in-charge Rishi Vashist motivates young minds

Names of RS members who moved impeachment motion against HC judge can't be disclosed: CIC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Names of Rajya Sabha members, who moved an impeachment motion against a high court judge, and those who withdrew it can't be disclosed as it would be a breach of parliamentary privilege, the Central Information Commission has held.

Chief Information Commissioner Sudhir Bhargava gave this order on a petition filed by S Malleswara Rao, who had sought to know from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat the number of MPs who had signed and moved the impeachment against Justice C V Nagarajuna Reddy, and those who withdrew it. Reddy retired from the Hyderabad High Court last year.

The Rajya Sabha Secretariat had cited Section 8(1) (c) of the RTI Act to deny the information.

The section exempts from disclosure information which can cause a breach of privilege of Parliament or a state legislature.

Bhargava said in order to enable the Parliament or a state legislature or their

Quoting British constitutional theorist Thomas Erskine May, Bhargava said, "Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively is a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament... And by members of each House of Parliament individually, without which they cannot discharge their functions."

individual members to perform their functions effectively and without any impediments or interference from any quarter, certain privileges are conferred upon them in the Constitution under articles 105 and 194.

Quoting noted British constitutional theorist Thomas Erskine May, Bhargava

said, "Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively is a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament... And by members of each House of Parliament individually, without which they cannot discharge their functions."

"The commission notes that giving a notice of motion by any member in the course of discharge of his parliamentary duties is covered within the meaning and scope of the term 'Proceedings in Parliament'," the commissioner said.

He said the disclosure of details of members who gave the motion and some who subsequently withdrew their names under the RTI may open the parliamentary conduct of such members to public scrutiny.

"Such disclosure may not only indirectly influence the members in discharge of their parliamentary duties, but has a tendency to influence their independence in the future performance of their duties, thereby would cause breach of privilege," Bhargava said.

Pre-monsoon rainfall records 22% deficiency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pre-monsoon rainfall from March to May, a phenomenon vital to agriculture in several parts of the country, has recorded a deficiency of 22 per cent. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) recorded 75.9 millimetres of rainfall from March 1 to May 15 as against the normal rainfall of 96.8 millimetres, which comes to around minus 22 per cent. From March 1 to April 24, the IMD recorded a deficiency of 27 per cent. According to IMD data, the deficiency has fallen over the last fortnight due to rains over east and northeast India.

Meanwhile, the southwest monsoon has advanced into South Andaman Sea and conditions are favourable for it to reach the North Andaman Sea and the Andaman Islands in the next 2-3 days, the IMD said.

Of the four meteorological divisions of the IMD, the south peninsula, which comprises all the southern states, has recorded pre-monsoon deficiency of 46 per cent - the highest in the country.

This was followed by 36 per cent in the northwest sub-



division that covers all the north Indian states - it was 38 per cent from March 1 to April 24, but has dropped by 2 per cent due to rainfall across several parts.

The deficiency in the east and northeast region that covers eastern states of Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and northeastern states was seven per cent. There was no deficiency in the central region

which comprises states of Maharashtra, Goa, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

However, from March 1 to April 24 the pre-monsoon rainfall recorded in the central division was five per cent than normal. The region has also been witnessing intense heat waves and several dams in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra have reached zero

storage level.

Pre-monsoon rainfall is important for horticulture crops in some parts of the country. In states like Odisha, ploughing is done in the pre-monsoon season, while in parts of northeast India and the Western Ghats it is critical for plantation of crops.

Laxman Singh Rathore, former director general of the IMD, said in parts of northeast

Meanwhile, the southwest monsoon has advanced into South Andaman Sea and conditions are favourable for it to reach the North Andaman Sea and the Andaman Islands in the next 2-3 days, the IMD said

India and the Western Ghats, pre-monsoon rainfall is critical for plantation crops. There will be "moisture stress" in case of a deficit, he said.

Crops like sugarcane and cotton, planted in central India, survive on irrigation and also require supplement of pre-monsoon rains, Rathore added.

"In the forested regions of Himalayas, pre-monsoon rainfall is necessary for plantations like apple. Due to moisture, pre-monsoon rainfall also helps in minimising the occurrence of forest fires," he said.



President Ram Nath Kovind pays homage at a portrait of the former President of India, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, on his birth anniversary at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

INDIA VOTES



CELEB CORNER



TV actress Ratan Rajput



Cricketer Ishan Kishan



Former cricket captain and Sourav Ganguly, his wife noted-dancer Dona Ganguly (C) and his brother ex-cricketer Snehasish Ganguly



RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group Chairman, Sanjiv Goenka

83-year-old cancer survivor among elderly voters in Patna

PTI ■ PATNA

Cancer-related ailment has left octogenarian Surendra Garai debilitated but not his spirit as he arrived at a booth here to cast his vote. Despite scorching heat, Garai, who retired as an executive engineer in 1995, came along with his 78-year-old wife and family to exercise the franchise.

"He is an oral cancer survivor, and has had three surgeries since he was diagnosed with the disease on 2009. His tongue had to be removed in an operation done about six months ago," his daughter, Arunima Kumari said. But, he is always enthusiastic to vote and urged all the family members to join in, she said.

Garai, wife Bindeshwari Devi, Arunima and her husband Sanjeev Kumar and another family member came together to vote at a booth in Kankarbagh area. "He still goes for morning walk every day supported with his walking stick and tries to keep fit even at 83. He is not able to speak but his spirit is very high, and for voting too, as he has practically participated in all elections," Arunima told PTI.

She, however, complained that none of her family members, and herself were handed out voter slips, and "we faced some hassle at the booth." "We came in the afternoon, because we did not want to stand in a queue for searching our names. But, glad we were able to eventually vote," she said.

Violence, low turnout mark Bengal last phase polling

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ DIAMOND HARBOUR/KOLKATA

Bengal lived up to its violent reputations even as reports of stray, yet continued and 'systematic' violence emanated from most of the nine parliamentary constituencies — and four Assembly seats where, bypolls took place — that went to the seventh and final phase of polling on Sunday.

Reports of bombing, booth-capture, proxy voting and came in from Jadavpur, Diamond Harbour, Joynagar, Dum Dum, Basirhat and North Kolkata even as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused the Central forces of "doing excess."

The final phase of polling witnessed a "remarkably low" 72.91 per cent of polling till 5 pm in the evening. Though the rate may go up by a few notch-



A fire set ablaze during clashes, allegedly between the BJP and TMC activists, from Kankinara under the Bhatpara Assembly constituency where by-election was underway, in North 24 Parganas, on Sunday

es till the polling ends it is unlikely to cross the 80 per cent bar. Bengal normally votes in excess of 83-84 per cent.

While Barasat constituency recorded 74.47 per cent votes

the figure for Basirhat was 77.77 per cent. Dum Dum saw 73.05 per cent polling while 67.09 per cent voters exercised their franchise at Kolkata South seat.

At Kolkata North even

lower 61.18 per cent voter turnout was recorded.

Neighbouring Jadavpur saw 70.97 per cent polling while Diamond Harbour saw 77.40 per cent voters casting



BJP candidate from Jadavpur seat Anupam Hazra (R) with a party worker, injured in a clash with TMC Workers near a polling booth, during the last phase of Lok Sabha polls in South 24 Parganas district, on Sunday

their votes. At Joynagar and Mathurapur seats 75.87 and 78.52 per cent voters ventured out to vote.

Bombing was reported

from Deganga at Basirhat parliamentary constituency. Similar incidents were reported from Falta in Diamond Harbour and Joynagar con-

stituencies. BJP and CPI(M) workers clashed at Jadavpur where a Left polling agent was beaten up by alleged TMC men apparently causing a cerebral stroke to the victim, sources said.

The BJP and TMC supporters fought with crude bombs at Islampur and Bhatpara Assembly by-elections segments. Bombs were lobbed from all sides giving the security forces a hard time even as repeated lathicharges were resorted to control the violent mob belonging to the two outfits.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister accused the Central forces of "unprecedented torture on common people." She said, "I have not seen such a level of torture by the central forces before," Banerjee said in a short statement.

Tej Pratap's bodyguards bash up journalists at polling booth in Patna

PTI ■ PATNA

Private security guards of RJD leader Tej Pratap Yadav on Sunday beat up a couple of photo journalists in the city after one of them allegedly smashed the windscreen of the former Bihar Minister's vehicle, enraged over the car crushing the toes of a fellow lensman.

The incident took place at the Veterinary College here, where a polling station has been set up and the maverick leader had arrived to cast his vote for the Patna Sahib Lok Sabha constituency.

After casting his vote, a fuming Yadav told reporters, "Am I not supposed to exercise my constitutional right? People had surrounded the vehicle in a way that it was getting difficult to move. And as soon as we realised somebody has been

hurt, the car stopped."

"Still, some of you journalists clambered on the bonnet and started banging on the windscreen, leaving it damaged badly. In such a situation, what choice do security personnel have except to intervene," he said.

The incident drew strong condemnation from a number of journalists' bodies, which demanded an apology from the RJD supremo Lalu Prasad's elder son.

Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who is the BJP candidate from the seat, said, "This is unfortunate. Should not have happened."

Police said a probe has been ordered into the incident. "Investigation is on into the incident and upon completion, action will be taken in accordance with law," said Senior Superintendent of Police, Patna, Garima Malik.

'Soopda saaf' for BJP in UP, Bihar: Shatrughan Sinha

PTI ■ PATNA

Actor-turned-politician and Congress leader Shatrughan Sinha on Sunday expressed confidence that he would retain the Patna Sahib Lok Sabha seat for the third consecutive term despite a formidable challenge posed by the BJP, which has fielded Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad from the seat.

Sinha, whose wife Poonam has also made her electoral debut in Lucknow against Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, said for the BJP it would be "soopda saaf" (whitewash) at the hands of the "Mahagathbandhan" in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, which together account for 120 Lok Sabha seats.

Of the 120 seats, more than 100 were bagged by the NDA five years ago. The sitting MP also scoffed at claims made by the BJP, which he quit last month ending three decades of association, that it was poised to win 300 seats on its own. "They did not win 300 in 2014 despite the Modi lahar (wave). Now when the lahar has become a kahar (curse), making such a claim is just bluster," he said.

Who am I? Modi getting blessing from people of Varanasi: Joshi on PM's poll prospects

PTI ■ VARANASI

As people of this holy city voted on Sunday in the last phase of the Lok Sabha 2019 elections, former MP and veteran BJP leader Murali Manohar Joshi said he is nobody to bless Narendra Modi, the party's candidate from this seat, as the Prime Minister has got blessings of the people here.

Joshi, who won on BJP's ticket from Varanasi in 2009, was shifted to Kanpur in 2014 to make way for Modi to fight his Lok Sabha elections from this constituency in politically-significant Uttar Pradesh, but did not get a chance to fight the 2019 elections from any seat.

After casting his vote here, Joshi was asked by reporters whether his blessing are with Modi, who is again in the electoral fray from Varanasi, to which he said, said, "Who am I?... People are blessing him." Joshi also visited the famous Kashi Vishwanath and Sankat Mochan temples here. He was BJP's president and a Union Minister in the NDA Government from 1999 to 2004.

He won the 2014 Lok Sabha elections from Kanpur and was also head of Parliament's Estimates Committee. Several reports presented by his panel were critical of the Modi Government. Earlier this year, Joshi had said in a statement that he was conveyed by the BJP General Secretary (Organisation), Ram Lal, about the party leadership's decision that he should not be contesting the elections. Lal is known as a Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) appointee in the party.

Voted for development, say conjoined twins

PTI ■ PATNA

Twenty-three-year-old conjoined twins Sabah and Farah, who have been acknowledged as separate voters, on Sunday urged people to exercise their franchise in large numbers after casting their ballots.

The twins, joined at the head, had first voted in the 2015 Assembly polls when their names were printed on a single voter ID card and their vote was counted as a single one.

This time they have been issued separate voter IDs and permitted to cast their votes separately.

"We have voted for development and urge people to come out and do likewise in large numbers," the sisters told newspapermen outside their booth in Samanpura locality of the city, falling under the Patna Sahib Lok Sabha seat. A poll official, who accom-



panied the young women, told reporters "as per Election Commission's directions transport arrangements were made for Sarah and Farah and we helped them to cast their votes at the booth".

District Magistrate Kumar Ravi said the girls have been acknowledged as separate voters since "despite nature having made them the way they are, they have their individual opinions and choices".

POLITICIAN'S CORNER



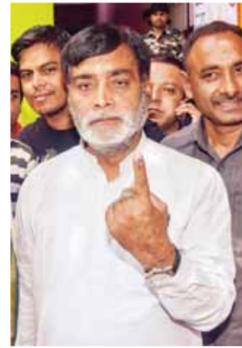
Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar



Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Modi



Ravi Shankar Prasad and his wife Maya Shankar



Ram Kripal Yadav



Nitish Kumar's son Nishant Kumar



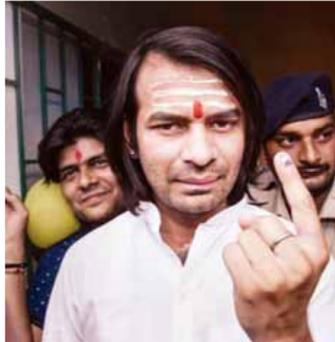
Bihar Education Minister Krishnanand Verma



RJD leader Rabri Devi



Misa Bharti



Tej Pratap



Shatrughan Sinha with wife Poonam Sinha



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath



Moon Moon Sen with her daughters Raima Sen and Riya Sen



Ajay Rai



Murlidhar Joshi



Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee



Biman Bose



Lokpal Chairperson Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose and his wife Debjani Ghose



DIG, Patna Central Range, Rajesh Kumar, with his wife

MAMATA REJECTS EXIT POLL AS CONSPIRACY

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Close on the heels of the exit polls giving BJP a remarkable breakthrough in Bengal, State Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee rejected its findings saying "gossip" of exit polls was being done to match a likely EVM tampering by the BJP. Even as most Bengali news channels put BJP's tally between 12 and 23 pulling down Trinamool Congress' seat to "anywhere between 20 and 25 seats" the Chief Minister said "I don't trust Exit Poll gossip. The game plan is to manipulate or replace thousands of EVMs through this gossip. I appeal to all Opposition parties to be united, strong and bold. We will fight this battle together." She said, "When I say something I say with some thought behind it," adding "no

one is God's angel to presage things. In 2016 they had nearly got us defeated. There is a plan in it. This is a conspiracy. They are trying to feed this to the market to establish the truth." Secondly she said, "the conspiracy is to dishearten the opposition move so that they cannot activate their alliance." This "gossip will shoot up the share market" from tomorrow because some business houses have huge stake in it." She reminded how Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in a meeting said that TMC MLAs were in contact with him and after May 23 the State Government would fall adding "there is a conspiracy going on against democracy and against Opposition parties and against Bengal." She said that she had spo-

ken to many national leaders and everyone was supporting her view. "I appeal and advice all the opposition leaders to keep a watch on the strong rooms and the EVM to thwart a foul play." One of the popular Bengali channels gave 24 seats to TMC, 16 to the BJP and 2 to the Congress. The Left for the first time after Independence drawing a blank according to the post-poll survey seeing its voter percentage going down to about 5 per cent from 30 per cent in 2014. Another channel put the toll for TMC to 28, Congress to 3 and BJP to 11. A third channel said the BJP would get 19 seats, the TMC would get 22 seats and the Congress would manage only 1 seat of Behrampore.

Over 900 posts taken down from social media platforms during LS polls

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, removed a total of 909 posts during the Lok Sabha election, following directions from the Election Commission (EC). Facebook alone took down

650 posts, followed by Twitter (220), ShareChat (31), YouTube (five) and WhatsApp (three), Director General (Communications) in the EC Dharendra Ojha said on Sunday, after the seventh and final phase of polling was concluded. Of the 650 posts taken down by Facebook, 482 were

political messages posted during the "silence period." The "silence period" starts 48 hours before the hour set for conclusion of polling in a particular phase. The seventh phase of polling came to a close at 6 pm on Sunday, so the "silence period" had begun at 6 pm on Friday for this phase.

As many as 73 social media posts were political advertisements in the "silence period", two were violative of the Model Code of Conduct, 43 were related to voter "misinformation", 28 were dubbed as those crossing the limits of decency, 11 were related to exit polls and 11 were hate speeches,

Ojha said. There were also 647 confirmed cases of paid news, of which the maximum of 342 were reported in the first phase itself, he added. During the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, 1,297 confirmed cases of paid news were reported, Ojha said.

Nitish targets Lalu, rubbishes claims about Prashant Kishor on rapprochement

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday repudiated arch rival Lalu Prasad's claim that he had sent poll-strategist-turned politician Prashant Kishor for rapprochement owing to unease with the BJP. Kumar also said he was looking forward to the formation of a new Government by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Centre and his JD(U) joining it. The Chief Minister, however, made it clear that his party will stick to its stand on issues like Article 370, Uniform Civil Code and the Ayodhya dispute, which was at variance with that of the BJP. The JD(U) chief, who had a low-key presence during the general elections, talked in detail on varied issues, including condemning BJP Bhopal candidate Pragya Singh Thakur describing Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse as "patriot", and also questioned the long-drawn polling in intense heat condition. Terming Thakur's remarks on Godse as "nindaneeye" (condemnable), he hoped that

the saffron party would consider taking action against her. Replying to queries from journalists outside a polling station near the Raj Bhavan, where he cast his vote, Kumar dismissed the recent statement by senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who had hinted at the possibility of a post-poll tie-up with the JD(U) in the event of the elections throwing up a hung Parliament. The CM said though he shared "excellent personal relations" with the veteran leader, the latter's words did not carry much weight within his own party. "Hum kyon bhejenge (why would I send)," replied Kumar curtly, when asked about the jailed RJD supremo's controversial claim in his recently-published autobiography that he had sent Prashant Kishor as his emissary to discuss the prospects of a realignment, a few months after he returned to the BJP-led NDA in July, 2017. "It is a fact that Prashant Kishor does keep meeting people from various political parties. He has to as a talented political strategist. But, he formally joined our party only in September last year, Kumar said.

Modi to get massive mandate; BJP 300 plus, NDA over 400: Yogi

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR

Amid the ongoing voting for the last phase of Lok Sabha polls on Sunday, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath claimed that the BJP will form the next Government at the Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi with a "massive mandate" of "300 plus seats" of the BJP and "400 plus" of the NDA allies. "Polling on 67 Lok Sabha seats in UP has already been held, and voting was held on 13 seats today. I can say with confidence that on May 23, when the election results will be declared, the BJP under the leadership of Modi will accomplish its target of securing 300-plus seats on its own, and 400-plus seats on the strength of its allies," said Adityanath after casting his vote. "In UP, the BJP will be successful in achieving the target of 74-plus seats," said the chief minister, adding "the festival of the democracy should be treated enthusiastically." Asked whether the Chief Minister's remarks amounted to influencing voters or flouting the model code of conduct after the end of

campaign, UP Chief Electoral Officer L Venkateshwarlu told PTI in Lucknow that the Election Commission will look into it if it gets any complaint on the matter. "No complaint has yet been received in this connection. If we get any complaint, we will seek a report from the local administration in this regard and look into it," he said. Adityanath was among the first voters to exercise his franchise here on Sunday. He cast his vote at the Prathamik Vidyalaya near Jhoolelal Temple in Gorakhpur at 7 am. Speaking to reporters after casting his vote, the chief minister said, "People are fighting this election for the nation's interest and if someone cannot understand it, his IQ (intelligent quotient) is questionable. The entire election revolved around Modiji. With big achievements of his government during the last five years, the BJP will win the election." "This is the first election which hinged on Modiji. All through the seven phases of the polls, I found it centred around Prime Minister Modi," the CM said.

Exit polls do not mean exact polls: Vice-Prez

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday mocked at the exit polls, saying they were not exact polls. "Exit polls do not mean exact polls. We have to understand that. Since 1999, most of the exit polls have gone wrong," the Vice-President pointed out. Naidu addressed an informal meeting of well-wishers, who felicitated him in Guntur. Referring to the ongoing general elections, he said every party exuded confidence (over victory). "Everyone exhibits his own confidence till the 23rd (day of counting). There will be no base for it. So we have to wait for 23rd," he remarked. "Country and the state need an able leader and stable Government, whoever it be. That's what is required. That's all," Naidu observed. The Vice-President also said change in society should start with political parties. "If democracy has to strengthen and something good has to happen to people elections, selections, candidates, parties all should dis-

charge their duties responsibly and properly," he noted. The Vice President lamented that civility has become a casualty in the present political discourse. "There is a lot of degeneration in the speeches of political leaders. They are resorting to personal abuses. One is not an enemy to the other in politics, they are only rivals... They are forgetting this basic fact," he said. Expressing anguish over the behaviour of elected representatives in Parliament and state legislatures, he said, "See how MPs are behaving in Parliament and MLAs in Assembly, irrespective of the parties. Panchayat and civic bodies' members follow them." The Vice-President also found fault with political parties announcing freebies to win over the electorate. "The way parties are behaving. You have been given a mandate for five years. You have to work. Without doing that, you announce freebies at the last minute. I am always opposed to it. Free power means, no power," Naidu observed.



77.62% POLLING IN BYPOLLS TO 4 TN ASSEMBLY
Crucial by-elections to four Assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu Sunday recorded an overall 77.62 per cent turnout with Aravakurichi topping with a little over 84 per cent. The bypolls, besides re-polling in 13 polling stations, were held smoothly. There were some reports of EVM glitches which were resolved immediately, according to Election Commission officials. Byelections were held in Aravakurichi (84.28 per cent), Sullur (79.41), Thiruparankundram (74.17) and Ottapidaram (72.61). An average 84.13 per cent polling was recorded in the 13 polling stations where repoll had been ordered for reasons, including alleged irregularities and technical issues, reported during the elections held on April 18.

ASSEMBLY BYPOLLS IN K'TAKA: 75.81% POLLING
An average of 75.81 per cent polling was recorded in the by-elections to two Karnataka Assembly constituencies, Chincholi and Kundgol, on Sunday. While Chincholi registered a voter turnout of 70.3 per cent, Kundgol 81.33 per cent. The outcome of the bypolls is likely to have a bearing on the stability of the JDS-Congress coalition Government in the State.

PANAJI ASSEMBLY BYPOLL: 75.25% TURNOUT
A voter turnout of 75.25 per cent was recorded at 6pm for the Panaji Assembly bypoll held on Sunday. Goa's Chief Electoral Office informed. The constituency has over 22,000 voters, and polling was held at 30 booths, it said, adding that the exercise, which began at 7am, was peaceful. The bypoll was necessitated due to the death of former Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar on March 17 this year.

AP REPOLL: 89 PC TURNOUT RECORDED
Over 89 per cent polling was recorded in the repolling in seven polling stations in Chandragiri Assembly segment under the Chittoor Lok Sabha constituency in Andhra Pradesh Sunday, officials said. Interestingly, it was 1.13 per cent less than the total votes polled during the elections held on April 11, according to the office of the State Chief Electoral Officer.

Get down to business

The economic challenges are far tougher this time and real euphoria will be when the new leadership surmounts them



Every election has its own takeaway and this, too, has one, certainly beyond the noise of violence, rhetoric, bigotry and raging passion. It is that of the silent voter, who has zipped up his choices close to his chest and has become extremely individualist than classist about what works best for him, what he has got, not got, likely to get. He values a leadership which can deliver without the encumbrances of the usual tropes of caste, colour or wave and be practicalist about forging a new character of India going into the next

decade. Leaving aside parties, for the voter this has been a normal and emotionless general election in a long, long time with no discernible wave, pro or anti-establishment, and where choices will be weighed purely on issues. Hence, there's a return of good old uncertainty that makes the wait for May 23 that much longer and exciting. If Prime Minister Narendra Modi does return, with a reduced tally or otherwise, it will certainly not be with the saviour halo of 2014. For a campaign, which was marred by more questions than answers, where every official machinery seemed to be orchestrated to the ruling dispensation's comfort, and which plunged to the desperation of polarising the voter not only on religion but on a nation's flawed past versus the undone present, he will be carrying a notional albatross around his neck. It would be a grace period for him to actually do something progressive and inclusive once he knows the verdict is on his side and the insecurity of endearing himself to the masses is gone. If it is the Congress-backed federal front which manages to stave him off, it will need to get off the anti-Modi referendum mode, search for a cohesive leader and get down to transacting the business of governance. Even as a grand Opposition bloc that fails to make a mark, it has to be a responsible alternative that can match issues with solutions. No matter who occupies which side of the Treasury benches, both will have to give up catcalls and be extremely performance-oriented.

For the challenges are many, the primary one being economic with an oil crisis looming ahead following the US-Iran standoff, India losing immunity from sanctions and the world economy going into a sluggish slump. Ideal conditions for a test of leadership indeed. If the new government passes it and restores market stability, that will merit greater euphoria. Unlike 2014, when international crude oil prices had dipped, this time procuring alternative oil supplies to hold prices is a real challenge considering a reduction of imports from Iran would also mean losing the benefits that came with them. Then it has to deal with the US-induced arm-twisting called protectionism. Trade tariffs can undo any kind of diplomatic headway made so far and imbalanced trade deficits, particularly with China, are a matter of concern. More than promises that Modi could afford in 2014 to demonstrate a policy shift, this time either he or the alternative leader has to implement what each promised in the manifestoes and hit the ground running, particularly with regard to creating jobs, ameliorating farm distress and reshaping the contours of the agricultural economy. In fact, agrarian reforms could very well present a stand-out opportunity for the new regime. It would be better for anybody to not be too ambitious about announcing mega or populist projects for they bring in unexpected pressures of time-bound deliveries that are dependent on too many variables. Besides, there is a slowdown on consumption and demand. Scalable and realistic growth targets should be the focus than what is predicted or expected. The saving grace for India is that even amid a global recessionary wave, its growth rate by most agencies has been predicted to be around seven per cent against the global figure of 3.5 per cent. Transparency in bank operations, especially after the series of scams, is a priority. Just as there has to be a semblance of institutional autonomy, which over the last five years, has been compromised by power play. Internationally, India has to play smart between humouring the US and negotiating new talk points with China. At home, whichever front comes to power has to attempt a social cohesion of disparate allies rather than imposing a monolithic egoism. That in itself will be a corrective check and balance. Finally, there's a bipartisan systemic momentum in policies but true leadership knows how to make a virtue or vice of it. Let's hope for the former.

Trump's rulebook

Under the US President's proposed 'skill-based' migration programme, Indians are in a quandary



For a country that has been built by immigrants for the past four centuries, the United States (US) has become oddly hostile to immigrants over the past couple of decades. Now, President Donald Trump, who was elected in part due to his anti-immigrant rhetoric, wants to change the America 'Permanent Resident' visa system — known to many as the 'Green Card' for the colour of the document — to a new system that will dramatically change the way immigrant visas are issued, by moving to a skill-based system like many other nations such as Australia and Canada. While this might sound like a godsend to Indians, because many of our migrants are skilled Information Technology (IT) workers, the Trump administration was considerably light on details in its proposals. But one detail that is known is that the new rules would make it tougher for families to move as quotas for them will drop heavily unless they are equally skilled or perhaps members apply separately.

One reason that the Trump administration might have been light on details is because it is very unlikely that these proposals will pass through the Democratic-controlled lower house of the United States, the Congress of Representatives. Trump and his Republican party have been at loggerheads with the opposition Democratic Party ever since he won a surprise victory for the Presidency amid accusations of collusion by foreign powers in influencing the election. Regardless of politics, what is worrying is how the US is thinking. These visas might make it easier for new IT workers to migrate no doubt but by being a disincentive to accommodating their families, will no doubt make the US less attractive for some. As it is, the Trump administration overturned an Obama-era rule that allowed spouses of H1B visa holders, overwhelmingly Indian technology-industry workers' wives, to hold H4 visas. This, coupled with the way Trump has decided to treat the children of illegal immigrants, who are crossing the US border with Mexico, makes it quite clear that going after the family is a sure-shot way of reducing immigration. While this Bill may not pass, it might have the kernel of an idea for future legislation. If you are single and skilled, things should not be a problem to get to move; it will obviously help Indian H-1B visa holders do away with the green card backlog. There are only a fixed number of Green Cards and they are taken by family-based petitioners. Still the single worker influx will have its attendant problems, too.

Thwart the juggernaut

By signing an executive order to protect its networks from foreign espionage, the US has drawn the first blood on what was hitherto whispered as a need to counter Chinese ambitions



BHOPINDER SINGH

US President Donald Trump recently signed an executive order on 'Securing the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain' that effectively walked the talk on clamping down on the growing Chinese presence and influence. While the order itself was ostensibly country-agnostic and company-agnostic, the unmistakable target was a leading Chinese company, Huawei. Predicated under security concerns, the statement from the White House said that the order, "declares a national emergency with respect to the threats against information and communications technology and services in the United States (US) and delegates authority to the Secretary of Commerce to prohibit transactions posing an unacceptable risk to the national security of the US or the security and safety of its people." Soon, the US Commerce Department added Huawei to the 'entity list' of banned organisations. Against the backdrop of the ensuing US-China trade wars, this latest American salvo has huge implications for Chinese products and services going forward, as it questions the construct of "Made in China," given the inextricable and complex Government-industry interlinkages that beset the ownership, interests and operations of major Chinese organisations.

Unlike most unilateral decisions initiated by Trump, this executive order had bipartisan support across the political divide, symbolising the overwhelming threat perceptions within the US that are emanating from China. The Huawei action was looming for some time and the US had been sabre-rattling on the same with other Western powers. While Australia had acceded to the warning and banned the organisation earlier, the European nations were sceptical about the US' seriousness. Given that the Chinese multi-national had outmanoeuvred the European companies like Ericsson and Nokia in grabbing market shares across emerging markets of Africa, Latin America and Asia — the expectation of reciprocal protectionism would rise within Western capitals to support their own organisations as the Chinese state does.

The US went as far as threatening its allies to withdraw "intelligence" inputs unless they stopped using the Chinese manufacturers like Huawei for building their 5G infrastructure. At the heart of the fears is the new internet architecture that could possibly "link" industrial equipment, personalised data, security cameras and civic facility details among others and transport the data dump to a repository in China, from where a apocalypse-like situation of a virtual "shutdown" of American military-economic-civic infrastructure could be effected if China so wanted in a crisis!

Given the Chinese ambition, investments and strategic outlook, such fears of data protection are not entirely unfounded. Expectedly, the Chinese have likened the US move to a "cold war mentality" and alluded to the US



fears as unsubstantiated paranoia. Given the construct of the organisation itself and the rules governing its principal place of origin and headquarters ie, China, it is certainly obliged and vulnerable to the *diktats* of its Ministry of State Security.

Like most Chinese offerings, the winning appeal of Huawei was in its cost-effective technology and terms of trade. However, the recent move has added a 'non-commercial' angularity of dealing with Chinese companies. Last year, the global list of top 500 companies, as measured by *Fortune* magazine, had an unprecedented 120 Chinese companies making the cut (just shy of 126 by the leading nation, US). This sudden emergence of Chinese companies owes its success in huge measure to the complex commercial-political wiring of Chinese organisations that baffles most corporate-watchers as to their real ownership and control structures. Founded in 1987 by a former People's Liberation Army (PLA) officer, Ren Zhengfei, who now owns only one per cent of share, it has grown into a \$106 billion global conglomerate with a mammoth \$14 billion dedicated towards R&D. Despite its immense size, scale and the competitive intensity of its domain, it still grew at a staggering 21 per cent over the previous year. Today, it serves 45 of the top 50 telecom operators

THE ONUS IS NOW ON THE CHINESE TO DEMONSTRATE TRANSPARENCY AND UNVEIL THEIR CONTROL AND COMMAND STRUCTURES BEHIND CORPORATES AS ALSO CONVINCING THE WARY WORLD OF THEIR INTENTIONS AND AMBITIONS. UNFORTUNATELY, IT WILL BE AN UPHILL BATTLE FOR CHINA

worldwide and its network already reaches one-third of humankind. Somewhere, questions abound about such rapid rise, access and the 'invisible-hand' that drives such surreal growth. Given its formidable presence and invaluable necessity in the infrastructure of some third-world countries, it will not be easy to 'ban' its products across such countries — though it certainly marks the beginning of larger implications for 'Made in China' that go beyond a corporate entity.

Partly on account of genuine fears and partly on account of the escalating trade war, the recent US move has drawn the first blood on what was hitherto whispered as a need to counter the Chinese juggernaut. In a barely veiled threat, the Chinese have reminded the US about its own vulnerabilities with American organisations like Qualcomm, who generate over half of their revenues from China, as indeed the likes of Intel and Apple, who rely on Chinese parts and market! Many of China's strategic sovereign imperatives like the 'One Belt, One Road' or in this case, the 'Digital Silk Road', which promises hyper speeds and capacities of 5G (promoting 'Internet of Things') communication, envisages a pivotal role for organisations like Huawei. The sovereign intent on becoming a Cyber and Artificial

Intelligence (AI) superpower has fuelled the Chinese State to support and fund many aggressive and audacious investments that make the world nervous, given the known Chinese ambitions and penchant for means. The temerity and commitment behind developing cutting-edge technology that could have multiple "spin-off" usage and data-sharing has the Western world worried.

The Chinese are past masters in reverse engineering and sourcing technology licitly and illicitly, especially in matters of defence equipment and overall security preparedness. However, due diligence and care has to be ensured with evidentiary proof of potential misuse or "leakage" before censoring or ascribing any questions on the Chinese organisations as it should not violate the principle of fairplay in the global economy. The onus is now on China to demonstrate transparency and unveil its control and command structures behind its corporates as also convince the wary world of its intentions and ambitions. Unfortunately, it will be an uphill battle for China given its history and its prevailing instincts to convince the world, otherwise.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry)

SOUNDBITE

The BJP will get me murdered by my own personal security officer one day like Indira Gandhi. My own security officers report to BJP.



Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

Kamal Haasan needs to define a Muslim to be identified as an intelligent person. For that he will have to read and study for at least a hundred years.



Union Minister — Giriraj Singh

The Pacific has the moral authority to offer a lesson for the rest of the world. We absolutely need to save the Pacific to save the world.



UN Secretary-General — Antonio Guterres

Development is asking: Did you see the Prime Minister's first press conference? It looks like the last episode of *Mann ki Baat* has been telecast on TV instead of radio.



Samajwadi Party leader — Akhilesh Yadav

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Falling standards

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Ocean of darkness" (May 16). The Election Commission's (EC) decision — an unprecedented step of invoking the rarely used Article 324 — to snip campaign time by 19 hours for nine constituencies in West Bengal that went to polls on Sunday, citing an atmosphere of "fear and hatred", is likely to add fuel to simmering political flames. Safety and security of voters being of prime concern, the EC's decision was based on the site reports of independent election observers.

All parties should share the blame for the politics of divisiveness and distraction. But the really disturbing element in this election has been the questionable role of the EC, which, far from being perceived as an institution of independence, came to be seen as a tool in the hands of the political class. It will take a long while for the institution to recover its credibility. The 2019 election has, therefore, shown that while democracy is safe, it is not in particularly good health.

KS Jayatheertha
Bengaluru

Partisan panel needs to be rescued

This refers to the editorial, "Ocean of darkness" (May 16). The Election Commission's (EC) decision to curtail electioneering by 19 hours in the nine constituencies in West Bengal that went to polls recently was wholly unjustified. Evidently, it was taken to benefit the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It was yet another proof that the electoral body was doing the BJP's bidding. It is clear that the EC fixed the deadline for electioneering as 10 pm last Thursday for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to finish his rallies.

What was needed was not invocation of Article 324 to cut short the campaign period and 'remove' ADG Rajeev Kumar and Principal Secretary Atri Bhattacharya but exemplary punishment to those who unleashed violence in Kolkata and created the 'fear psychosis'.

Nobody has any illusion that the poll panel has been reduced to the establishment's lapdog. The perception that the commission condones blatant breach of the Model Code of Conduct by the BJP and denies a level-playing field to all parties not only costs the



Constitutional body its credibility but also subverts the sanctity of the election process. The Commission shirked its responsibility when it came to taking action on the complaints lodged against Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah, too. Constitutional bodies should adhere to the Constitution without wavering if democracy is to be alive and kicking robustly.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Laxity in action

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Best left alone" (May 18). Pragna Singh Thakur, the terror accused in Malegaon blast case, has emphatically announced that Nathuram Godse is a patriot and would remain a patriot forever. The BJP, which nominated her to contest the Bhopal seat as if

there was no other worthy person in the party to be fielded, should hang its head in shame for the encomium paid by its 'sadhvi' nominee to a murderer. If the saffron party was truly 'national' and respected the Father of the Nation, it should have debarred her from contesting the polls.

Shalini Gerald
Chennai

Criminals in fray

Sir — It is rather disturbing that there are reportedly 7,928 candidates with criminal cases in the electoral fray. Self-declarations have been given by 1,500. There are serious criminal cases against 1,070. If 1,500 candidates have given declarations, the remaining 6,428 are mum.

While it may not be fair to bar those facing criminal cases in courts from contesting the elections, candidates, who have concealed that they are facing criminal cases, should have been barred from contesting.

The number of candidates facing such cases may be high if politically motivated complaints are lodged and charges are cooked up to prevent a candidate from contesting. Some hiding their records bear testimony to how loosely the law has been enacted. Such gaps must be sealed. Necessary amendments, if need be, must be moved.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Spiralling suicides

Sir — The rising number of suicides and mental health issues among young ones need to be taken seriously. It is unfortunate that a young life full of potential is lost. Social media platforms must have adequate safeguards.

Kunal Singh
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Great powers, endless wars

The great power mania infects almost everybody. The US is no exception. But if a nation remains so for long, eventually it becomes insane



GWYNNE DYER

Great nations do not fight endless wars," said US President Donald Trump in his State of the Union speech last February, but he was wrong. That's exactly what they do. Great powers fight more wars than anybody else, even if, like the US today, they have no hostile neighbours. The original observations were made half a century ago by Quincy Wright, an American political scientist at the University of Chicago. During the entire history of 'modern' Europe from 1480 to 1940, he calculated, there have been about 2,600 important battles.

France, a leading military power for the whole period and the greatest power for most of it, participated in 47 per cent of those battles — more than a 1,000 major battles. Russia, Britain and Germany (in the form of Prussia), which were all great European powers by 1700, fought in between 22 and 25 per cent of them. And then the rate of participation falls off very steeply.

Spain was a great military power until the mid-1700s but then dropped out of contention and can offer only a 12 per cent attendance record for battles over the whole four-and-a-half centuries. The Netherlands and Sweden, which were great military powers only for brief periods, were present at only eight and four per cent of Europe's battles respectively. Indeed, Sweden has not used its Army in war for 190 years now. By any other yardstick — the amount of time a given European country has spent at war, the number of wars it has taken part in, the proportion of its population that has been killed in wars — the result is the same.

There is a steep and consistent gradient of suffering, in which the most powerful nations fight most often and lose most heavily in lives and wealth. How can this be? Why doesn't great power deter other countries from fighting you? Well, it actually does, to some extent. However, great power also enables the country possessing it to acquire "interests" everywhere and tempts it to use its military power to protect or advance those interests. Only great powers fight "wars of choice."

North Vietnam did not choose to fight the US. Neither did Cuba or Grenada or Libya or Panama or Serbia or Iraq. Nor, for that matter, did Canada (then British North America) in 1812 or Mexico in 1846 or Spain in 1898. Those were all "wars of choice" for the US but not for the other side. This is not to say that they were all wars of aggression. The first Gulf War was not, for example, nor was the Kosovo War. But they were all wars that the US could have chosen not to fight without suffering grave harm to its own legitimate interests. It chose to fight them, often for relatively minor stakes, because it could.

The great power mania infects everybody. Trump, despite his well-founded conviction that America should bring its troops home from the Middle East, has now vetoed a bipartisan Congressional resolution that tried to force an end to American participation in the war in Yemen. Never mind the lies that are told about the Houthi rebels who control most of Yemen being simply pawns of Iran and about Iran being the reason the Middle East is so "unstable."

Why would Trump, like several generations of American "statesmen" before him, fall for the bizarre notion that deciding who rules in Lebanon or Egypt or Yemen is a "vital national interest" of the US? The webs of spurious logic that support such nonsense are familiar. "Oil is our vital national interest, so Saudi Arabia is our indispensable ally." Why? Wouldn't Arabia want to sell its oil to the US under any imaginable regime? And hasn't fracking made the US virtually self-sufficient in oil anyway?

"Since Saudi Arabia is our ally, we must support its war in Yemen, and support it against Iran too." Why? You managed to be closely allied with both Israel and Saudi Arabia back in the days when the Saudis still saw Israel as a mortal enemy. You don't have to back either of them in everything they do. "Our credibility is at stake." This is the last resort falsehood that can justify almost any otherwise indefensible military commitment. Don't let them see you back down, no matter how stupid your position is. They won't respect you if you bail out.

Or as Trump put it when he was still just a candidate for the Republican nomination: "Our military dominance must be unquestioned and I mean unquestioned, by anybody and everybody." Power purely for the sake of power. Any country that remains a great power for long enough eventually becomes insane.

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

AT THE LAST MOMENT, THE COMPLETE MUSLIM VOTE GOT SHIFTED TO CONGRESS. WE ARE TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED.

—AAM AADMI PARTY CHIEF
 ARVIND KEJRIWAL

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO VOTE WHICHEVER PARTY HE/SHE WANTS TO. PEOPLE OF DELHI DID NOT UNDERSTAND NOR LIKED HIS GOVERNANCE MODEL.

—CONGRESS LEADER
 SHEILA DIKSHIT

Women-friendly AI

If tech intelligence is shaped by a homogenous group of men, its 'thinking' will adapt inherent biases present in the system. AI, after all, learns and replicates from training data, says NANDITA KOSHAL

Leadership in internet-driven technology firms has long been viewed as a bastion of male domination. Latest figures by Statista, a German online portal for statistics, confirm that tech is still not a "woman's world" as the female lot still form a minority in its workforce. Figures are even more schismatic when we consider the percentage of women occupying leadership positions in the top tech companies of the world. While in Netflix, women hold an encouraging 43 per cent of the leadership positions, the picture becomes bleaker as we consider the percentages for Facebook (30), Apple (29), Google (26) and Microsoft (20). All these data are well below the desired level of 50 per cent that depicts gender parity.

This trend is, however, not specific to big tech companies only. Even the start-up and entrepreneurship ecosystem has witnessed biased trends against women. According to Silicon Valley Bank's 'Women in Technology Leadership 2019' report on tech executives in the US, the UK, China and Canada, while 56 per cent of start-ups have at least one woman in an executive position, only 40 per cent have minimum one woman on the board of directors.

These trends highlight the need to bring more and more women in technology space, especially in leadership roles. The imperative goes beyond the narrative of just maintaining gender parity. Technological advancement constantly needs new and diverse knowledge, perspectives and intellectual and technological innovations. With technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT) and Robotics seeing tremendous growth, wherein we are trying to make machines think like humans, it is essential to bring elements of diversity, inclusivity and heterogeneity in the world of intelligence.

If "intelligence" in the world of technology is largely shaped by a homogenous group of men, it is more likely that "thinking" of technology will adapt the inherent conscious or unconscious biases and prejudices of the section. This is largely because AI learns and replicates from the training data. The algorithms developed will, thereby, imbibe the prejudices present in the data. It is, hence, essential that more women become part of the core teams developing technology to make the future of intelligence unbiased.

It is also found that diversity in tech and business leadership positions positively affect profits of the firms. A 2016 study at Pearson Institute for International Economics demonstrated a positive correlation between women at the C-suite level and firm profitability. According to their research, a firm with 30 per cent women at C-suite level leadership can expect a 15 per cent boost to their profitability.

Apart from bringing in more diversity, inclusivity and profitability to the firms, women bring fresh perspectives, narratives, creativity, flexibility, visibility, responsibility and dynamism to the firm. Further, a report from First Round Capital found that companies with a woman on their founding leadership teams outperformed all-male companies by 63 per cent. Women may be a minority in tech but their power and presence is definitely rising in the world. According to the *Forbes* 2018 list of world's 100 most powerful women, 20 are from the tech industry. The cohort of women in leadership positions in tech is substantially increasing in this list of power women. The list saw the likes of Susan Wojcicki, CEO YouTube, who figured as the seventh most powerful women in the world, closely followed by IBM CEO Ginni Rometty and Facebook's COO Sheryl

AS WE EMPHASISE ON THE NEED FOR WOMEN LEADERS IN THE INTERNET-DRIVEN TECH INDUSTRY, IT IS IMPERATIVE TO ADDRESS WHY THERE IS LACK OF THEM THEREOF. UNDENIABLY, FACTORS LIKE DIFFICULTY IN BALANCING DEMANDING LEADERSHIP JOBS AND FAMILY LIFE, LACK OF FLEXIBLE WORK HOURS, BIASED PERCEPTIONS AND THINKING OF IMMEDIATE CAREER OPTIONS THAN PLANNING LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE



Sandberg, figuring in the 10th and 11th position in the list.

China's Jean Liu, president, Didi Chuxing and India's Roshni Nadar Malhotra, CEO, HCL Enterprises, also featured as 10 most powerful women in tech according to the same list. All these prominent executives have been celebrated not only for their leadership skills but also for changing the face of the industry and for demonstrating utmost responsibility and sensitivity in dealing with the adverse situations.

The rise of women in leadership positions has partly been attributed to the strategic move by companies. According to this manoeuvre, women are promoted to a C-suite position when likelihood of failure is more, especially when a company is going through exceptionally challenging times, a concept now widely known as glass cliff. While cases like that of Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer might give credence to this theory, glass cliff should be viewed by women as an efficacious opportunity to break the glass ceiling. A shining example of this is Anne Mulcahy, CEO of Xerox from 2001 to 2009, who successfully managed to turn the company around after being promoted at a time when Xerox was tottering on the verge of bankruptcy. In fact, Harvard Business Review study had found that while men were preferred to head a successful company by respondents (67 per cent), majority (63 per cent) opined

that woman should take over the company in crisis. Glass cliff rather than being viewed as a trap for ambitious women should be seen as chance for women to break the stereotype and demonstrate their mettle.

As we strenuously emphasise the need for women leaders in internet-driven tech industry, it is also imperative to address why there is lack of them thereof. Undeniably, factors like difficulty in balancing demanding leadership jobs and family life, lack of flexible work hours, biased perceptions and thinking of immediate career options than planning long term career goals play an important role.

Similarly, women also face problems in getting good mentors as men get wary to mentor women due to fear of allegations of sexual harassment and exploitation. The main reason, however, why technology leadership still remains a male bastion, lies in the concept of comparative advantage that both the genders respectively have. While women are considered to be adept at managing people, men are considered to be more skilled at managing technology. As an economic principle, it is most profitable and efficient to allocate resources according to comparative advantage that resource has, especially if the opportunity cost of allocating resources to opposing trades is high.

Industries work on the principle of profitability, which explains their

natural learning towards male leadership. Hence, most of the tasks like fund raising, hard negotiating and production processes, which form the core of leadership decisions, are usually male dominated. Whereas, processes like managing human resource, communications, managing risk in which women thrive, although very important, may not necessarily be considered core attributes.

However, this should not be construed to imply that women and men should only function within these social constructs. Wherever, it's a choice between a more skilled woman and less skilled man or vice-versa, preference should be given to skill and merit. Therefore, it is essential for women to come out of their comfort zones and imbibe those attributes which are core characteristics of becoming leaders.

The need for bringing more women in technology no longer remains a question of equality alone, it has now become a necessity, too. Both men as well as women will need to change their attitudes and attributes to bring in more women in the industry. Diversity and inclusion are going to be the keywords in driving the world of technology and women can definitely be prognosticated to play a significant role in this new era of intelligence.

(The writer is a Research Associate at OP Jindal Global University and a Chapter Leader at ISOC)

Cure the illness from within

Access to low-cost generics at the cost of sidelining the protocols mandated by the WHO and compromising on drug quality will lead us nowhere. There's a need to enforce stringent quality regulations. Will the pharma sector amend itself, asks TANU PRIYA

In recent times, India has earned the distinction of being the "pharmacy of the world" for championing the cause of supplying affordable drugs to many countries. The pace at which the "pharmacy of the world" is growing, there's no denying that India is utilising its full potential. That the domestic market grew by ₹1.1 trillion in 2016-2017 and that India accounts for 20 per cent of the global export volume speaks volumes about our place in the global market. The Indian pharmaceutical market (IPM) is expected to grow at 9-12 per cent CAGR between 2016 and 2021. Owing to an increase in Government spending in the healthcare sector and with the launch of schemes like Ayushman Bharat, the domestic market is expected to witness further expansion in the near future.

However, this is just one side of the story. On the other side, standard procedures, as mandated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and also required by Western drug-regulating authorities like the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), to approve a batch of drug upon its import, are often sidelined.

However, while exporting the same batch of drugs, India fulfils the mandatory requirements — Good Laboratory Practices (GLP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and Good Clinical Practices (GCP).

India's stand on quality drug manufacturing: Many manufacturing units are reportedly not compliant with the WHO's version of GMP for pharmaceutical products, neither do they follow good laboratory practices. While there are 12,000 manufacturing units in India, only 25 per cent of them comply with GMP standards. And there are only a few nationally-accredited laboratories in India.

The demand for 62,000 pharmaceutical products requires adequate and industry-specific drug testing laboratories to be put in place. However, at present, only around 47 test facilities are listed and which have been certified under the National GLP programme, of which six central laboratories sample around 8,000 drugs per annum. This has resulted in insufficient output. The industry has been unable to satiate mass demand.

One significant yet unintended



spill-over of low output, low-quality pharmaceuticals is the rise to another beast-drug-resistant disease. When a strain of tuberculosis, for instance, is exposed to substandard levels of medicine that isn't strong enough to contain it, the strain evolves into resisting further antibiotic action. Therefore, with the existing multiplying problems that the pharmaceutical industry faces, it is certain that drug resistance would further plague India's health profile.

The case of Jan Aushadhi: Another push by the Government, the Jan Aushadhi multi-purpose stalls were launched in 2015 under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi

Pariyojana Kendra scheme, which catapulted the growth of "generics-only" The programme aims at making quality medicines available at affordable prices for all, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, through exclusive outlets so as to reduce out-of-pocket expenses in healthcare.

But a move such as this, promising to bring healthcare within the reach of the common man, has been marred by its own set of complications. Five medicines have been recalled from Jan Aushadhi stores in the last 20 days alone due to quality lapses. There were six other recalls between January and March, taking the total to 11 in just the

first four months of 2018 while there were 11 recalls in all of 2017.

Such frequent drug recalls are unusual in India where a single recall can land a company in serious trouble, including legal action, an export ban and financial losses. Drugs are typically recalled if the product is defective, contaminated, contains a foreign object, fails to meet specifications or is misbranded. There are also other issues of quality, partiality in procurement modalities and irrational combinations that affect the timely availability/supply of the right kind of drugs.

By opening Jan Aushadhi centres without supply and quality assurances and without substantially increasing the health budget, any mass movement to achieve universal health coverage is bound to fail. Can we afford to be careless on the quality aspect of drugs just to introduce cheaper variants of a drug? It is this question that is looming large in the Indian pharmaceutical market today.

Leaving a patient confused is not a sign of a healthy pharmaceutical ecosystem: Adding to the woes is the lack of awareness among patients as

they struggle between the efficacy of branded and non-branded generics. The latest blow by the Government was to make it mandatory for doctors to prescribe generic salt, giving leeway to the chemist nexus to grow to further incompetence and lowering quality standards. All efforts meant to achieve universal health coverage somehow missed the basic but crucial factor ie, quality. The gamut of "generics only" is finding an anchor in the subcontinent but is disturbing to the state of millions, who expect quality over just price.

The systemic sidelining of brands entering the domestic space by pushing hard for cheaper alternatives cannot be seen in a socio-welfare spirit. Irrespective of export or domestic distribution, a drug must be manufactured under the safety protocols enlisted by the WHO. It's not fair to suddenly stop a patient from consuming a drug that has fostered trust based on results. We are nowhere near to relying solely on "generics" since they do not meet safety standards of their exported versions.

(The writer is Project Officer, Capacity Building and M&E, UNDP)



A CHANCE TO RESHAPE POLITICS

EU elections are a chance to reshape British politics. They should be a rejection of Brexit, the parties that campaigned for it and the parties that now want to impose the harshest version. In the right-wing narrative, these elections are all about the Brexit party and the battle for the Tory leadership. In a more balanced perspective, though, they are about something much bigger. (The Guardian Editorial)

Sebi ups surveillance before poll results



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Regulator Sebi and stock exchanges have beefed up their surveillance mechanism to check any manipulative activities in the market this week in view of the high-octane election related events lined up.

The heightened surveillance and monitoring systems are already in place for Monday, the first trading session after the announcement of exit poll results, while they would be further ramped up on Thursday, when the final

results will be declared, a senior official said.

The poll results are likely to have a bearing on trading and increased monitoring helps to keep in check possible manipulations and excessive volatility in the markets.

Manipulators tend to exploit such volatile situations in the stock markets.

The enhanced vigil on the markets will continue till May 23, when the results of the Lok Sabha polls will be declared.

According to the official, movements in Nifty futures

and options on the Singapore exchange will also be closely monitored. Trading in Singapore stock exchange starts much before Indian markets open and their trends generally have an impact on domestic markets.

The BSE Sensex soared 537 points and the NSE Nifty reclaimed the 11,400 level Friday in a broad-based rally ahead of the poll results.

During the week, the Sensex gained 467.78 points, or 1.24 per cent, and the Nifty advanced 128.25 points, or 1.13 per cent.

Merger impact: BoB looks to rationalise 800-900 branches

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) is considering the option of rationalising 800-900 branches across the country to improve operational efficiency, following its merger with Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank.

The merger of Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank with BoB became effective from April 1. It does not make sense to have branches of Dena and Vijaya at the same location when both have been merged into BoB, a senior bank official said.

"There are cases where branches of three banks are at one location or one building. So these branches have to be either closed or rationalised as duplication is a drain on efficiency," the official said.

After comprehensive review, BoB has identified 800-900 branches which needs to be rationalised, the official said, adding that the lender could opt for re-location and in some cases closure.

Besides, there is also need to close regional and zonal offices of merged entities as they would not be required.

The official further said, the bank needs to expand in eastern part of country as it has



strong presence in South, West and northern part of the country.

With the first ever three-way merger, BoB has now become the second-largest public sector lender after State Bank of India with over 9,500 branches, 13,400 ATMs, and 85,000 employees to serve 12 crore customers.

The consolidated entity started the operation with a business mix of over ₹15 lakh crore on the balance sheet, with deposits and advances of ₹8.75 lakh crore and ₹6.25 lakh crore, respectively.

The maiden three-way amalgamation is considered as the major step in the consolidation of the public sector banking industry recommended in 1991 by the Narasimham Committee report.

It is to be noted that when State Bank of India (SBI) amalgamated its five associate banks and Bharatiya Mahila Bank in April 2017, it rationalised about 1,500 branches across the country.

Don't go too far in damaging moves, China tells US

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's top diplomat Wang Yi has asked US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo not to go "too far" in its "damaging moves" against the Chinese interests, saying that both countries will benefit from cooperation and lose from conflicts.

State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang held a telephonic conversation with Pompeo on Saturday, days after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order banning American companies from installing the foreign-made telecom equipment posing a national security threat, a move apparently aimed at banning Huawei from US networks.

Beijing has warned of retaliation against the order that effectively barred Chinese telecom giant Huawei from the US market.

The world's top two economies are locked in a trade battle that has seen mounting tariffs, sparking fears that the conflict could damage the global economy.

Wang, noting that the US has recently made remarks and taken actions that are harmful to the Chinese interests in various fields including cracking down on Chinese enterprises' normal operations through political measures, said China strongly opposes such actions.

"We urge the US side not to go too far," he told Pompeo. History and reality have



shown that as two big countries, China and the US will both benefit from cooperation and lose from conflicts, Wang said, adding that cooperation is the only right choice for the two countries.

The two sides should follow the direction set by the two countries' heads of state, manage their differences on the basis of mutual respect, expand cooperation on the basis of mutual benefit, and work together in pushing forward a China-US relationship based on coordination, cooperation and stability, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Wang as saying.

China has always been willing to resolve economic and trade differences through negotiations and consultations, which, however, should be conducted on the basis of equality, he said, adding that China, in any negotiations, must safeguard its legitimate interests, answer the calls of its people, and defend the basic norms of international relations.

Wang stressed that China has stated its firm opposition to the US' recent negative words and acts related to Taiwan,

and urged Washington to abide by the 'one-China principle' and the three China-US joint communiques, and handle Taiwan-related issues carefully and properly.

The two sides also exchanged views on relevant international and regional issues, the report said.

Wang emphasized that China, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, is committed to the de-nuclearisation, peace and stability of the Middle East.

The trade war between China and the US escalated after Trump this month increased the import duty on Chinese products worth \$200 billion from 10 per cent to 25 per cent. China retaliated by slapping tariffs on \$60 billion worth of US imports.

Trump has been demanding that China reduce the massive trade deficit which last year climbed to over \$539 billion. He is also pressing for verifiable measures for protection of intellectual property rights (IPR), technology transfer and more access to American goods to Chinese markets.

RBI's vision document on payment systems to spur digital economy: Fintech firms

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The RBI's 'Payment Systems Vision 2021' document would act as a catalyst for promoting digital economy and instill confidence among the general public, fintech companies say.

Aiming at a 'cash-lite' society, the Reserve Bank of India last week released the vision document for ensuring a safe, secure, convenient, quick and affordable e-payment system as it expects the number of digital transactions to increase more than four times to 8,707 crore in December 2021.

The RBI has said it will implement the approach outlined in the document during the period 2019 - 2021.

COO of Payworld Praveen Dhabhai said the vision document has a focus on empowering payment system providers and at the same time providing ease to consumers.

"We are confident with our vision as a payment system provider aligned with the regulators, we will be able to contribute in increasing the digital transactions penetrations

especially in the assisted segment in smaller cities and rural Indian," he said.

Navin Surya, Chairman Emeritus, Payments Council of India said: "Clarity in defining outcomes in terms of scale of digital and overall payments vis a vis GDP is a very good measurement to look forward to and also assess the impact of work done by all stakeholders."

However, KYC, simplicity, digital KYC and KYC bureau, as well as simplification of existing policies to enable NBFCs to issue credit cards is missing from the document, said Surya, who is also the chairman of Fintech Convergence Council.

Mandar Agashe, founder and vice chairman, Sarvatra Technologies, was of the opinion that the 24X7 helpline that the RBI plans to set will help in instilling confidence in customers regarding the digital payments system.

Other than this, geo-tagging of payment system touch-points will help companies understand where and what type of transactions are taking place, which will also lead to curtailing frauds, he added.

India registers trade deficit with 11 RCEP members in 2018-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India has registered trade deficit in 2018-19 with as many as 11 RCEP member countries — including China, South Korea and Australia — out of the grouping of 16 nations that are negotiating a mega trade pact since November 2012.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) bloc comprises 10 Asean group members (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos and Vietnam) and their six FTA partners - India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand.

According to the provisional trade data, India's trade deficit — the difference between imports and exports — with three countries (Brunei, Japan, and Malaysia) has in fact increased marginally in 2018-19 as compared to the previous fiscal.

The trade gap with Brunei, Japan, and Malaysia has increased to \$0.5 billion, \$7.1 billion and \$3.8 billion, respectively in the last fiscal. It was \$0.4 billion, \$6.2 billion and \$3.3 billion in 2017-18.

However, deficit with Australia, China, Indonesia, Korea, New Zealand and



Thailand has narrowed in 2018-19 as compared to the preceding fiscal.

With Australia, China, Indonesia, Korea, New Zealand and Thailand, it narrowed to \$8.9 billion, \$50.2 billion, \$10.1 billion, \$11 billion, \$0.2 billion, and \$2.7 billion, respectively, in 2018-19, compared to \$10 billion, \$63 billion, \$12.5 billion, \$11.9 billion, \$0.3 billion, and \$3.5 billion in 2017-18.

Interestingly, the trade surplus with Singapore (\$2.7 billion) in 2017-18 has turned into deficit of \$5.3 billion in 2018-19.

India has trade surplus with Cambodia (\$0.1 billion), Myanmar (\$ 0.7 billion), and the Philippines (\$1 billion) in 2018-19.

India did not carry out any trade with Laos in the previous

fiscal. Experts have mixed views over the impact of increasing trade gap on India's position in negotiating mega free trade agreement.

An industry expert on these negotiations said as this is a comprehensive trade deal, India will get greater market access in other countries not only in goods, but in services also.

On the other hand, some experts said that India needs to be cautious while negotiating the pact, as trade deficit is increasing with several of the RCEP member nations, which would impact domestic manufacturers.

"Free trade pacts are not about only giving market access, but also getting that access in other countries. Our exports to countries like

Singapore, with which India has trade surplus, is not increasing. In 2018-19, we have a trade deficit with Singapore," said Biswajit Dhar, the professor of economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

He said that as the strength of the domestic manufacturing is weak, India would not be able to take advantage of such free trade agreements.

An official said that India does not have free trade agreement with two of its biggest trading partners — the US and China — but the country has highest positive balance of trade with America, while it has highest deficit with China.

RCEP negotiations, which started in Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in November 2012, aims to cover goods, services, investments, economic and technical cooperation, competition and intellectual property rights.

Pressure is also mounting on India for early conclusion of the proposed trade pact.

Member countries are looking to conclude the talks by end of this year but many issues, including the number of products over which duties will be eliminated, are yet to be finalised. Domestic steel and other metal industries wants these sectors to be kept out of the deal.

Oil producers meet to discuss output amid Iran tension

AFP ■ JEDDAH

Major crude producers are set to meet on Sunday to discuss how to stabilise a volatile oil market amid rising US-Iran tensions in the Gulf, which threaten to disrupt supply.

Key OPEC members and other major suppliers including Russia will assess the oil market and examine compliance to production cuts agreed late last year.

But the subject of Iran, which is not present, will dominate the one-day meeting of the OPEC+ group.

It comes days after sabotage attacks against tankers in highly sensitive Gulf waters and the bombing of a Saudi pipeline by Iran-aligned Yemen rebels.

The meeting also comes as the full impact of re-instated US sanctions against Tehran kicks in, slashing the Islamic republic's crude exports.

Hours before the meeting in Jeddah, host Saudi Arabia said it does not seek war with Iran, but is ready to defend its interests.

The meeting is set to make recommendations ahead of a

key OPEC summit in late June, to be attended by Iran.

President Donald Trump said last month Saudi Arabia and other OPEC members had agreed to his request to boost oil production in order to tamp down rising prices.

Massive drops in exports by Iran and Venezuela plus output cuts of 1.2 million barrels per day, implemented by the OPEC+ group since January, have cut supply.

But UAE Energy Minister Suheil al-Mazrouei said inventories were still building up.

He told reporters Saturday that the job of balancing the market was not yet complete, a hint that any ramp-up in production could send prices crashing as they did in late 2018.

OPEC and the International Energy Agency said earlier this month that global oil supply fell in April due to US sanctions on Iran tightened and OPEC+ production cuts.

The IEA said Iranian crude production fell in April to 2.6 million bpd, down from 3.9 million before Washington announced in May 2018 it

would withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and re-impose sanctions.

Iran's output is already at its lowest level in over five years, but could tumble in May to levels not seen since the devastating 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Energy intelligence firm Kpler sees Iranian exports plunging from 1.4 million bpd in April to around half a million barrels in May — down from 2.5 million in normal circumstances.

Venezuela's output is also tumbling, down by over half since the third quarter of last year.

Kpler data shows OPEC+ members have kept to agreed production cuts.

But exporters fear a rush to raise production to plug the gap left by Iranian exports could backfire, triggering a new supply glut.

Both attacks targeted

routes built as alternatives to the Strait of Hormuz, the conduit for almost all Gulf exports.

Iran has repeatedly threatened to close the Strait in case of war with the US, which said this month it was sending an aircraft carrier and strike group to the region.

Saudi Arabia accused Iran of ordering the pipeline attacks, targeting "the security of oil supplies... And the global economy".

Saudi foreign affairs minister Adel al-Jubeir said Sunday his country does not want war with Iran, but was ready to defend its interests.

Riyadh "does not want a war, is not looking for it and will do everything to prevent it", he told journalists in Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia called Saturday for urgent meetings of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League to discuss escalating tensions, government news agency SPA said.

It also said Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had spoken with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo about enhancing security in the region.

Govt plans introducing artificial intelligence system in MCA 21 portal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Corporate affairs ministry plans to introduce artificial intelligence system in the MCA 21 portal as it seeks to make compliance process easier as well as ensure routine enforcement activities are done round-the-clock on autopilot basis.

MCA 21 is the electronic backbone for dissemination of information to all stakeholders, including the regulator, corporates and investors. All filings under the companies law are submitted to the ministry through this portal.

Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas has said the ministry would look to "introduce Artificial Intelligence in MCA 21 when version 3 of the portal is rolled out in about a year's time".

"It will look to rationalise all the forms, follow the principle of single source of truth

so that one is not required to fill in known details again (as it will get filled automatically) and also interlink databases, so that routine enforcement is done 24x7 on autopilot basis," he said.

In the ministry's monthly newsletter, Srinivas also said that MCA 21 allows electronic filings of various documents under Companies Act, 2013 and has fully automated all processes related to enforcement and compliance monitoring under the Act.

Earlier this year, the ministry sought applications from service providers to develop as well as operate the upgraded version of MCA 21 system.

MCA 21 system was started in 2006. The first phase of the e-governance initiative of the ministry was implemented by Tata Consultancy Services and the second phase is being implemented by Infosys for the period from January 2013-July 2021.

IOC TO EXAMINE US SANCTIONS' IMPACT ON CPCL EXPANSION

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's top refiner Indian Oil Corp (IOC) will evaluate the implications of US sanctions if Iran was to invest in its subsidiary Chennai refinery's Rs 35,700 crore expansion, its Chairman Sanjiv Singh said.

IOC plans to pull down the 1 million tonnes per year Nagapattinam refinery of its subsidiary Chennai Petroleum

Corp Ltd (CPCL) and build a brand new 9 million tonnes unit in the next five to six years.

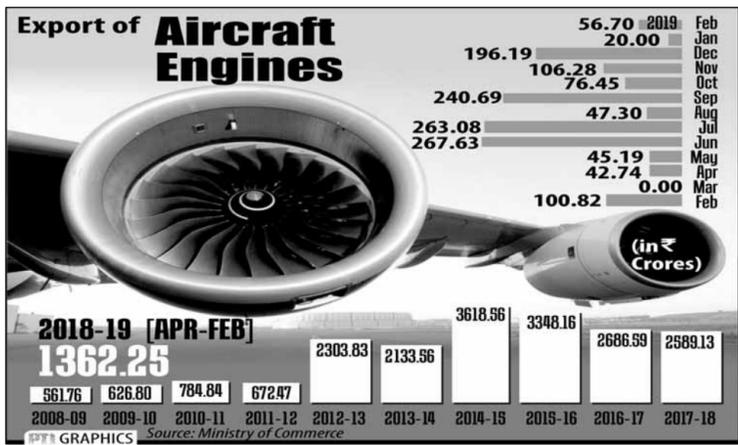
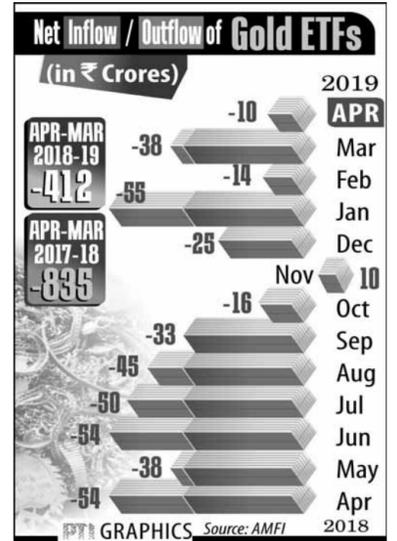
National Iranian Oil Co (NIOC), which holds 15.4 per cent stake in CPCL, is keen to participate in the expansion project, Singh said.

Following US decision to reimpose economic sanctions on Iran, IOC will examine the impact of NIOC investing further in CPCL.



Regional Manager Sunil Kumar Sobti, in the meeting of Branch Heads, welcomes General Manager S Vijay Kumar. S Vijay Kumar advised Branch Heads to adopt positive and dynamic approach and to improve upon all business parameters. Sunil Kumar Sobti urged the Branch Heads to focus on Recoveries, Retail Credit, MSME and Cross Selling to support citizens of Delhi. During the meeting representative of SBI Life Insurance also gave their presentation

Scheme	NAV	1Yr%	ICICI Pru FMCG Fund(G)	238.85	4.60	UTI Banking and Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	96.55	0.02	Reliance Vision Fund(G)	505.86	-4.91
DHFL Pramerica Global Equity Opp Fund(G)	18.69	15.51	Mirae Asset Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	17.07	4.55	Sundaram Value Fund-II-Reg(G)	15.67	-0.15	ICICI Pru Infrastructure Fund(G)	49.40	-4.95
SBI Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	18.22	15.07	Canara Rob Equity Diver Fund-Reg(G)	130.89	4.52	DSP Equal Nifty 50 Fund-Reg(G)	9.85	-0.24	SBI Equity Opp Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)	15.60	-4.96
Reliance US Equity Opp Fund(G)	15.33	14.24	Franklin Build India Fund(G)	41.12	4.46	DHFL Pramerica LT Equity Fund-Reg(G)	13.97	-0.29	DSP World Gold Fund-Reg(G)	10.80	-4.98
ICICI Pru US Bluechip Equity Fund(G)	27.02	12.88	Parag Parikh Long Term Equity Fund-Reg(G)	24.77	4.30	HDFC TaxSaver(G)	507.91	-0.35	SBI Healthcare Opp Fund-Reg(G)	111.39	-4.98
Franklin India Feeder - Franklin U.S. Opportunities Fund(G)	31.33	10.91	Baroda Large Cap Fund(G)	14.15	3.97	Reliance Focused Equity Fund(G)	46.38	-0.35	Franklin India Equity Advantage Fund(G)	76.20	-5.01
Aditya Birla SL Global Real Estate Fund(G)	19.73	10.28	DSP World Agriculture Fund-Reg(G)	16.50	3.76	DSP Focus Fund-Reg(G)	22.53	-0.35	Invesco India Midcap Fund(G)	46.09	-5.05
ICICI Pru Technology Fund(G)	58.17	10.17	ICICI Pru Focused Equity Fund(G)	29.48	3.62	DHFL Pramerica Tax Plan(G)	30.30	-0.49	Motilal Oswal Midcap 30 Fund-Reg(G)	24.48	-5.08
HDFC Top 100 Fund(G)	484.60	9.80	Reliance Banking Fund(G)	276.28	3.59	Reliance Consumption Fund(G)	62.90	-0.53	Principal Tax Savings Fund	200.82	-5.10
HDFC Index Fund-Sensex(G)	335.09	8.70	Kotak India EQ Contra Fund(G)	51.63	3.57	JM Tax Gain Fund(G)	16.59	-0.58	SBI LT Advantage Fund-II-Reg(G)	13.39	-5.19
Tata Index Fund-Sensex Plan(G)	92.98	8.67	Mirae Asset Emerging Bluechip-Reg(G)	51.34	3.56	ICICI Pru Bharat Consumption Fund-2-(G)	9.80	-0.61	ICICI Pru Value Fund-10(G)	11.17	-5.26
SBI Technology Opp Fund-Reg(G)	64.04	8.44	BNP Paribas Large Cap Fund(G)	86.83	3.41	Axis Focused 25 Fund(G)	27.06	-0.62	UTI Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	59.67	-5.30
Tata Digital India Fund-Reg(G)	14.97	8.40	ICICI Pru Bluechip Fund(G)	41.34	3.40	ICICI Pru Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	314.42	-0.63	IDFC Multi Cap Fund-Reg(G)	89.21	-5.52
Baroda Banking & Fin Serv Fund(G)	22.97	8.30	Reliance Multi Cap Fund(G)	95.18	3.31	UTI Value Opp Fund-Reg(G)	59.09	-0.70	ICICI Pru Exports & Services Fund(G)	53.81	-5.61
Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-A(G)	21.16	8.23	JM Large Cap Fund(G)	66.14	3.10	DSP Equity Fund-Reg(G)	38.00	-0.73	Sundaram Global Advt(G)	16.42	-5.82
ICICI Pru Growth Fund-2(DP)	11.89	8.09	DHFL Pramerica Large Cap Fund(G)	164.78	3.05	Franklin India Taxshield(G)	553.53	-0.76	L&T Equity Fund-Reg(G)	79.19	-5.84
Reliance Index Fund - Sensex Plan(G)	18.62	7.93	SBI Focused Equity Fund-Reg(G)	139.98	2.63	Reliance Close Ended Equity Fund-II-A(G)	18.16	-0.88	UTI MNC Fund-Reg(G)	185.82	-5.94
ICICI Pru Banking & Fin Serv Fund(G)	64.40	7.89	L&T India Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	26.85	2.61	SBI Magnum Fund-Reg(G)	137.72	-0.92	SBI LT Advantage Fund-I-Reg(G)	12.98	-6.05
Axis Bluechip Fund(G)	28.47	7.88	Tata Large & Mid Cap Fund(G)	200.45	2.93	TaxGain'93-Reg(G)	23.40	-0.99	UTI Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	51.15	-6.09
UTI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	74.23	7.88	Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	8.64	2.57	Aditya Birla SL CEF-Global Agri-Reg(G)	23.40	-0.99	UTI LT Adv Fund-V(G)	9.28	-6.15
Franklin India Technology Fund(G)	158.54	7.83	Edelweiss Large Cap Fund(G)	34.91	2.47	Agri-Reg(G)	63.26	-1.01	Principal Nifty 100 Equal Weight Fund(G)	68.76	-6.29
IDFC Nifty Fund-Reg(G)	23.50	7.77	SBI Tax Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	24.00	2.38	UTI Dividend Yield Fund-Reg(G)	63.26	-1.01	SBI Magnum Global Fund-Reg(G)	162.47	-6.37
HDFC Index Fund-NIFTY 50 Plan(G)	103.43	7.71	Principal Focused Multicap Fund(G)	62.59	2.24	Invesco India Growth Opp Fund(G)	32.89	-1.02	Sundaram Rural and Consumption Fund(G)	39.88	-6.42
						Franklin India Equity Fund(G)	568.57	-1.11	L&T India Value Fund-Reg(G)	34.61	-6.43
						Aditya Birla SL Equity Fund(G)	707.48	-1.14	Templeton India Equity Income Fund(G)	45.21	-6.46
						Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr I-Reg(G)	13.30	-1.20	Aditya Birla SL Dividend Yield Fund(G)	152.82	-11.43
						Edelweiss Multi-Cap Fund-Reg(G)	14.17	-1.30	Kotak Infra & Eco Reform Fund(G)	19.22	-11.51
						BNP Paribas Long Term Equity Fund(G)	36.89	-1.32	Canara Rob Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	42.71	-12.05
						Sundaram LT Tax Adv Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	14.28	-1.33	L&T Business Cycle Fund-Reg(G)	14.70	-12.05
						ICICI Pru Value Fund-8(D)	10.30	-1.44	SBI Magnum Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	69.65	-12.24
						ICICI Pru Value Discovery Fund(G)	140.77	-1.45	L&T Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	126.26	-12.26
						Motilal Oswal Focused 25 Fund-Reg(G)	21.22	-1.51	Aditya Birla SL Mfg. Equity Fund-Reg(G)	12.39	-12.44
						IDBI India Top 100 Equity Fund(G)	23.17	-1.70	Aditya Birla SL Infrastructure Fund(G)	30.64	-12.78
						Invesco India Tax Plan(G)	49.02	-1.82	DSP World Mining Fund-Reg(G)	7.85	-13.04
						Aditya Birla SL Intl. Equity Fund-B(G)	18.11	-1.92	Aditya Birla SL Midcap Fund(G)	271.89	-13.14
						SBI LT Advantage Fund-III-Reg(G)	12.98	-1.92	Kotak Global Emerging Mkt Fund(G)	15.06	-13.16
						Tata Equity P/E Fund(G)	129.75	-7.54	L&T Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	15.20	-13.24
						BNP Paribas Multi Cap Fund(G)	45.44	-2.10	Invesco India Feeder - Invesco Pan European Equity Fund-Reg(G)	10.30	-13.48
						DHFL Pramerica Diversified Equity Fund-Reg(G)	12.96	-2.11	IDFC Sterling Value Fund-Reg(G)	48.66	-13.84
						Principal Dividend Yield Fund(G)	51.96	-2.22	Sundaram Mid Cap Fund(G)	447.35	-13.86
						Aditya Birla SL MNC Fund(G)	738.47	-2.24	IDBI Midcap Fund(G)	10.08	-14.07
						ICICI Pru R.I.G.H.T Fund(G)	41.10	-2.28	Kotak World Gold Fund(G)	7.57	-14.10
						Reliance Value Fund(G)	71.69	-2.40	ICICI Pru Smallcap Fund(G)	24.07	-14.13
						Edelweiss Large & Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	30.20	-2.42	SBI Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	49.47	-14.18
						Reliance Japan Equity Fund(G)	12.49	-2.45	DHFL Pramerica Midcap Opp Fund-Reg(G)	17.10	-14.33
						ICICI Pru Value Fund-11(G)	11.89	-2.86	Edelweiss Mid Cap Fund-Reg(G)	25.07	-14.49
						UTI Healthcare Fund-Reg(G)	79.72	-2.94	DSP Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	52.31	-8.17
						Invesco India Contra Fund(G)	46.07	-3.03	Motilal Oswal Long Term Equity Fund-Reg(G)	16.64	-8.17
						UTI LT Equity Fund (Tax Saving)-Reg(G)	83.67	-3.05	Principal Global Opportunities Fund(G)	28.08	-8.23
						DSP Equity Opportunities Fund-Reg(G)	211.65	-3.09	SBI Contra Fund-Reg(G)	104.41	-8.25
						Canara Rob Emerg Equities Fund-Reg(G)	91.08	-3.12	DSP India T.I.G.E.R Fund-Reg(G)	87.90	-8.38
						HDFC Capital Builder Value Fund(G)	284.74	-3.19	HDFC Infrastructure Fund(G)	15.92	-15.66
						Tata Mid Cap Growth Fund(G)	132.35	-3.21	Baroda Mid-cap Fund(G)	8.47	-16.14
						Edelweiss Long Term Equity Fund (Tax Savings)-Reg(G)	45.29	-3.29	Kotak Small Cap Fund(G)	67.08	-16.55
						Reliance Growth Fund(G)	1079.90	-3.39	L&T Emerging Businesses Fund-Reg(G)	23.09	-17.15
						Franklin India Opportunities Fund(G)	71.29	-3.42	IDBI Small Cap Fund(G)	8.91	-17.65
						ICICI Pru Growth Fund-3(DP)	10.12	-3.44	Aditya Birla SL Emerging Leaders Fund-4-Reg(G)	52.76	-17.78
						Invesco India Feeder - Invesco Global Equity Income Fund(G)	12.61	-3.46	DSP Small Cap Fund-Reg(G)	52.76	-17.78
						JM Value Fund(G)	30.86	-4.21	IDFC Infrastructure Fund-Reg(G)	14.37	-18.50
						Tata Ethical Fund(G)	152.91	-4.24	Sundaram Select Micro Cap-Series X-Reg(G)	12.81	-20.16
						Aditya Birla SL Tax Relief '96(G)	30.32	-4.35	Aditya Birla SL Pure Value Fund(G)	48.52	-21.00
						Principal Personal Tax saver Fund	188.17	-4.51	Aditya Birla SL Small Cap Fund(G)	32.80	-21.52
						Principal Multi Cap Growth Fund(G)	137.33	-4.52	Sundaram Small Cap Fund(G)	78.10	-23.36
						Edelweiss Emerging Markets Opp Eq. Offshore Fund-Reg(G)	12.02	-4.67	Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr V-Reg(G)	8.20	-24.50
						IDFC Core Equity Fund-Reg(G)	43.08	-4.72	Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)	9.89	-24.71
						HDFC Focused 30 Fund(G)	74.77	-4.73	Sundaram LT Micro Cap Tax Adv Fund-Sr IV-Reg(G)	8.39	-25.26
						Motilal Oswal Multicap 35 Fund-Reg(G)	25.48	-4.78	Aditya Birla SL Emerging Leaders Fund-7-Reg(G)	11.92	-25.41
						Sundaram Diversified Equity(G)	99.39	-4.80	UTI Transportation & Logistics Fund-Reg(G)	90.56	-26.52



Tata Index Fund-Nifty Plan(G)	68.63	7.61	Aditya Birla SL Focused Equity Fund(G)	57.92	2.03
ICICI Pru Growth Fund-1(DP)	11.14	7.43	ICICI Pru Value Fund-9(G)	12.15	1.93
SBI Nifty Index Fund-Reg(G)	97.67	7.36	SBI Tax advantage Fund-II(G)	34.87	1.84
ICICI Pru Nifty Index Fund(G)	109.80	7.11	Invesco India Largecap Fund(G)	27.90	1.79
Reliance Index Fund - Nifty Plan(G)	19.03	7.08	DHFL Pramerica Large Cap Fund-2-Reg(G)	12.21	1.77
Reliance Large Cap Fund(G)	34.15	6.93	Kotak Bluechip Fund(G)	226.91	1.75
Aditya Birla SL Index Fund-Reg(G)	111.47	6.92	Reliance Pharma Fund(G)	140.86	1.72
HDFC Equity Fund(G)	650.87	6.91	DSP Global Allocation Fund-Reg(G)	12.17	1.68
Franklin India Index Fund-NSE Nifty(G)	90.07	6.89	UTI Mastershare-Reg(G)	118.60	1.49
SBI Magnum Equity ESG Fund-Reg(G)	103.26	6.86	ICICI Pru Bharat Consumption Fund-1-(G)	10.06	1.21
IDBI Nifty Index Fund(G)	20.98	6.81	Franklin India Bluechip Fund(G)	449.75	1.12
Sundaram World Brand Fund-Sr II-Reg(G)	15.03	6.79	Tata India Tax Savings Fund-Reg(G)	17.74	1.08
Sundaram World Brand Fund-Sr III-Reg(G)	15.21	6.73	Aditya Birla SL Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	28.52	1.06
Mirae Asset Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	49.73	6.56	Kotak Equity Opp Fund(G)	115.80	1.03
Sundaram Fin Serv Opp Fund(G)	41.56	5.78	Aditya Birla SL Frontline Equity Fund(G)	218.74	1.02
Franklin India Focused Equity Fund(G)	40.01	5.70	Axis Long Term Equity Fund(G)	43.49	0.97
ICICI Pru LT Equity Fund (Tax Saving)(G)	372.32	5.70	Aditya Birla SL India GenNext Fund(G)	80.37	0.93
Axis Multicap Fund-Reg(G)	11.33	5.59	JM Multicap Fund(G)	31.10	0.93
Invesco India Financial Services Fund(G)	56.36	5.58	DSP Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	46.60	0.91
Kotak Standard Multicap Fund(G)	34.73	5.50	Reliance Quant Fund(G)	25.38	0.83
Tata Banking & Financial Services Fund-Reg(G)	18.75	5.44	IDFC Large Cap Fund-Reg(G)	31.45	0.69
ICICI Pru Value Fund-15(G)	10.62	5.36	DSP Top 100 Equity Fund-Reg(G)	203.36	0.63
DSP US Flexible Equity Fund-Reg(G)	24.55	5.30	HDFC Growth Opp Fund-Reg(G)	109.51	0.61
Canara Rob Equity Tax Saver Fund-Reg(G)	63.46	5.14	SBI Large & Midcap Fund-Reg(G)	212.82	0.56
Sundaram Select Focus(G)	176.56	5.03	Canara Rob Consumer Trends Fund-Reg(G)	37.83	0.50
Canara Rob Bluechip Equity Fund-Reg(G)	24.24	5.03	JM Core 11 Fund(G)	8.82	0.49
Kotak Tax Saver Scheme(G)	43.22	4.89	UTI Equity Fund-Reg(G)	137.62	0.49
ICICI Pru Multicap Fund(G)	285.90	4.86	SBI BlueChip Fund-Reg(G)		

Trump favours abortions in rape, incest cases

AFF ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump has declared himself "strongly Pro-Life," days after two US states passed tough new restrictions on abortions, but said exceptions should be made for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest.

The US president spelled out his position on abortion — set to feature prominently at next year's election — in his first comments on the hot-button issue since Alabama's Governor signed a near-total ban on the termination of pregnancy.

"As most people know, and for those who would like to

know, I am strongly Pro-Life, with the three exceptions — Rape, Incest and protecting the Life of the mother — the same position taken by Ronald Reagan," Trump tweeted late on Saturday.

Trump, who is seeking to expand on his conservative support ahead of his re-election bid, added: "The Radical Left, with late term abortion (and worse), is imploding on this issue. We must stick together and Win for Life in 2020."

Alabama's governor on Wednesday signed a near-total prohibition on abortions widely seen as the country's most restrictive ban, and the Missouri legislature on Friday



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made the procedure illegal from eight weeks of pregnancy.

Neither make exceptions for rape or incest — only for cases where the mother's life is in danger.

Republican-led legislatures in Georgia, Ohio, Mississippi,

Kentucky, Iowa and North Dakota have also enacted laws banning abortion from the moment a fetal heartbeat is detected.

Supporters hope that legal battles over the laws will reach the Supreme Court, as they pursue the long-sought conservative goal of overturning its landmark 1973 abortion ruling, known as *Roe v Wade*.

Roe v Wade guarantees women's rights to abortion as long as the foetus is not viable — around 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Trump, a bombastic, twice-divorced billionaire, won over the evangelical vote during his 2016 campaign by promising to

appoint anti-abortion justices at the Supreme Court.

He has since brought two conservative appointees to the highest court in the land — Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh — shifting the balance of the nine-person bench.

In a series of tweets on the deeply polarizing issue, Trump said the US had "come very far in the last two years" on abortion, and praised "two great new Supreme Court Justices".

On Sunday, defenders of women's reproductive rights are set to march in protest against Alabama's new abortion law in four of the Southern state's cities, including the capital Montgomery.

Saudis say they don't want war But will defend themselves

AP ■ DUBAI

Saudi Arabia does not want war but will not hesitate to defend itself against Iran, a top Saudi diplomat said on Sunday amid heightened tensions in the Persian Gulf after attacks on the kingdom's energy sector.

Adel al-Jubeir, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, spoke a week after four oil tankers — two of them Saudi — were targeted in an alleged act of sabotage off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and days after Iran-allied Yemeni rebels claimed a drone attack on a Saudi oil pipeline.

"The kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not want war in the region and does not strive for that... But at the same time, if the other side chooses war, the kingdom will fight this with all force and determination and it will defend itself, its citizens and its interests," al-Jubeir told reporters.

A senior Iranian military commander was similarly quoted as saying his country is not looking for war, in comments published in Iranian



media on Sunday.

Fears of armed conflict were already running high after the White House ordered warships and bombers to the region earlier this month to counter an alleged, unexplained threat from Iran.

The US also has ordered nonessential staff out of its diplomatic posts in Iraq.

But President Donald Trump appears to have softened his tone in recent days, saying he expects Iran to seek negotiations with his administration. Asked on Thursday if the US might be on a path to war with Iran, the president answered, "I hope not."

The current tensions are

rooted in Trump's decision last year to withdraw the US from the 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and world powers and impose wide-reaching sanctions, including on Iranian oil exports that are crucial to its economy.

Iran has said it would resume enriching uranium at higher levels if a new nuclear deal is not reached by July 7.

That would potentially bring it closer to being able to develop a nuclear weapon, something Iran insists it has never sought.

Energy ministers from OPEC and its allies, including major producers Saudi Arabia and Russia, are meeting in

Saudi Arabia on Sunday to discuss energy prices and production cuts.

Iran's oil exports are expected to shrink further in the coming months after the US stopped renewing waivers that allowed it to continue selling to some countries.

OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers have production cuts in place, but the group of exporters is not expected to make its decision on output until late June, when they meet again in Vienna.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman, meanwhile, has called for a meeting of Arab heads of state on May 30 in Mecca to discuss the latest developments, including the oil pipeline attack.

The kingdom has blamed the pipeline attack on Iran, accusing Tehran of arming the rebel Houthis, which a Saudi-led coalition has been at war with in Yemen since 2015. Iran denies arming or training the rebels, who control much of northern Yemen, including the capital, Sanaa.

"We want peace and stability in the region, but we won't stand with our hands bound as the Iranians continuously attack. Iran has to

understand that," al-Jubeir said. "The ball is in Iran's court."

Al-Jubeir also noted that an investigation, led by the UAE, into the tanker incident is underway.

The state-run Saudi news agency reported Sunday that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to discuss regional developments.

There was no immediate statement by the State Department about the call.

An English-language Saudi newspaper close to the palace recently published an editorial calling for surgical US airstrikes in retaliation for Iran's alleged involvement in targeting Saudi Arabia's oil infrastructure.

The head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, Gen. Hossein Salami, was quoted Sunday as saying Iran is not looking for war, but he said the US is going to fail in the near future "because they are frustrated and hopeless" and are looking for a way out of the current escalation.

His comments, given to other Guard commanders, were carried by Iran's semi-official Fars news agency.

For Iranians, economic crisis looms larger than US tensions

AP ■ TEHRAN

Across Iran's capital, the talk always seems to come back to how things may get worse.

Battered by U.S. Sanctions and its depreciating rial currency, Iran's 80 million people struggle to buy meat, medicine and other staples of daily life.

Now they wonder aloud about America's intentions as it rushes an aircraft carrier and other forces to the region over a still-unexplained threat it perceives from Iran.

The Associated Press spoke to a variety of people on Tehran's streets recently, ranging from young and old, women wearing the all-encompassing black chador to those loosely covering their hair.

Most say they believe a war will not come to the region, though they remain willing to defend their country. They think Iran should try to talk to the US To help its anemic economy, even as they see President Donald Trump as an erratic and untrustworthy adversary.

"Trump is not predictable at all and one doesn't know how

to react to him and what is the right thing to do against him," said Afra Hamedzadeh, a 20-year-old civil servant and university student. "Since he controls the global economy we are somehow left with few options." But opinions vary across Tehran, depending on whether you speak to someone coming out of Friday prayers, in the back of a shared taxi cab, or exiting the coffee shops popular with young people.

"If America could do anything, it would have done many things by now," said the chador-wearing Zohreh Sadeghi, a 51-year-old housewife coming out of prayers.

"It can't do anything. It can't do a damn thing." That's an opinion shared by 35-year-old office worker Massumeh Izadpanah.

"When someone keeps trying to scare you it means that they think they are not yet ready for war. When someone really wants war it starts the war right away. Like when Iraq attacked us, all of a sudden bombs were dropped," she said.

"But right now America just says, 'I'm coming,' to scare

Iran." A young nation, many across Iran were alive for its bloody 1980s war with Iraq, a conflict that began when dictator Saddam Hussein invaded and dragged on for eight years. That war, in which Saddam used chemical weapons and Iran launched human wave attacks, killed 1 million people.

Since Trump withdrew the U.S. From Iran's nuclear deal with world powers last year, state television increasingly has focused attention on that war's wounded.

In Tehran's southern Javadih neighborhood, veteran Mohammad Ali Moghaddam said he was ready to fight again.

"I would encourage my three sons and grandsons to go to defend Iran too," said Moghaddam, a 58-year-old welder. Arezou Mirzaei, a 37-year-old mother of two in central Tehran, is more worried.

"I think the Government should do something to avoid war," Mirzaei said. "If war was good, then Afghanistan and Iraq would not be the mess that we see on TV."

May pledges 'new, improved deal' to save her Brexit plan

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Theresa May on Sunday promised a "new and improved deal" that she hopes will see her controversial Brexit agreement through Parliament when it comes up for a fourth vote in the first week of June.

Writing in "The Sunday Times," May said it was "truly" decision time for MPs when the Withdrawal Agreement Bill returns to the House of Commons and claimed that she would not simply be asking them to "think again" but will be asking them to consider an improved package of measures that honours the June 2016 referendum result in favour of Brexit.

"When the Withdrawal Agreement Bill comes before MPs, it will represent a new, bold offer to MPs across the House of Commons, with an improved package of measures that I believe can win new support," she writes.

"I will not be simply asking MPs to think again. Instead I will ask them to look at a new and improved deal with fresh pairs of eyes - and to give it their support," she said.

May, who is weighed down by mounting pressure from her backbench MPs to lay out a clear timetable for her exit from Downing Street after the fourth vote on her withdrawal agreement with the European Union (EU) next month, revealed that she was open to holding a series of indicative votes in Parliament in a last-ditch effort to try and see her deal through.

"The Cabinet will consider the details of those changes next week. It will also consider whether holding votes in Parliament to test support for possible solutions would be a useful prelude to MPs considering the legislation," she said.

The beleaguered British PM has been struggling to surmount the opposition to the controversial Irish backstop clause in the agreement, which the EU sees an insurance policy against a hard border between its member-country Ireland and the UK after Brexit. However, the Brexiters with-



Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May with her husband Philip Leave after a church service near her Maidenhead constituency England on Sunday

in her own Tory party have consistently voted against it over fears that it could be used as an excuse to keep Britain tied to EU norms even after its exit from the 28-member European economic bloc.

May warned that even though her new package will be a stronger proposition, it was important for the parliamentary arithmetic to fall into place to avert a chaotic no-deal Brexit and leave the EU with a deal in place by the latest deadline of October 31.

"While the deal MPs are to vote on will be different, the dynamics of their decision will remain the same. A majority of MPs are against leaving without a deal; whatever you think of that as an outcome, Parliament will do all it can to block it," she said.

The Conservative Party leader also used the intervention to make a plea for the European Parliament elections scheduled for next Thursday, when opinion polls indicate that her party will be punished at the ballot box in favour of the newly-formed anti-EU Brexit Party.

She said: "I hope that everyone who wants to see Brexit delivered in a responsible way as soon as possible will vote for the only party that can actually deliver that: the Conservative Party."

"The other parties standing in this election either cannot deliver Brexit or have so far

refused to do so. Only the Conservatives can and will. But whatever the result on Thursday, it will then be for MPs to take a decision."

Earlier this week, the Opposition Labour Party had called off the cross-party talks initiated after May's last Commons defeat in an effort to arrive at a parliamentary consensus on Brexit.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn blamed her "weak" leadership, which is now on a time-bound clock, for the failure of the talks.

May asserted that the talks had succeeded in finding some "common ground" with Labour, which would feed into the improved package of assurances to support her withdrawal agreement.

"Some other issues have proved to be more difficult, in particular the question of a second referendum. The fact is that while nine out of ten Conservative MPs have backed the Brexit deal, there is a much bigger split on the Labour benches on a so-called 'people's vote'," she noted, in reference to a demand by many Labour MPs for a compulsory second referendum on any Brexit deal to give the British people another say over the issue.

"We had a people's vote in 2016 - and the people are still waiting for their decision to be implemented," said May, who has remained firmly opposed to another referendum.

Oz PM Scott Morrison stages 'miraculous' poll win

Bill Shorten resigns as Labor leader

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Backed by "quiet Australians" and defying exit polls, the ruling Conservative Coalition led by Prime Minister Scott Morrison staged a "miraculous" victory in the general election on Sunday, devastating the opposition Labor Party, forcing its leader Bill Shorten to resign.

Around 16 million Australians swarmed to the polling booths across the country on Saturday to elect the nation's 31st prime minister, in what was widely referred to as the climate-change election.

The latest results showed that the Conservative Coalition has won 74 seats while Labour secured 66. A party needs 76

seats for a simple majority in the 151-member House of Representatives. It was not clear if 51-year-old Morrison will require the support of independent MPs to govern.

But an independent, Helen Haines, who won from the seat of Indi, said that she would be working with the Coalition in the scenario of a hung parliament. Haines said she was very determined to work with the government on addressing climate change.

Morrison along his wife Jenny visited a church in Sydney's Sutherland Shire on Sunday in his electorate of Cook where he thanked his local voters.

"I have always believed in miracles... For me and for my government, for all of my team it's all about you... Tonight is about every single Australian," a beaming Morrison told his supporters.

At his victory party in Sydney, the Conservative Coalition leader said, "Tonight



is about every single Australian who depends on their government to put them first. And that is exactly what we are going to do."

In his speech, Morrison also paid tribute to "the quiet Australians" who voted for his coalition.

"It has been those Australians who have worked hard every day, they have their dreams, they have their aspi-

"Our government will get back to work just as Gladys Berejiklian got back to work in New South Wales, just a few months ago," he told his supporters.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump congratulated Morrison on his election victory.

President Trump congratulated Prime Minister Morrison on his Coalition's victory in Australia's federal election, White House deputy press secretary Judd Deere said.

"The two leaders reaffirmed the critical importance of the long-standing alliance and friendship between the United States and Australia, and they pledged to continue their close cooperation on shared priorities," Deere said.

Centre-left Labor Party leader Bill Shorten, who campaigned heavily on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conceded his defeat and said he would resign as the party

Bad news for Imran, no oil, gas reserves found off Pak shore

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's dream of the cash-strapped country becoming self-sufficient in oil has been dashed after no reserves were discovered in the Arabian Sea off the Karachi coast, media reports said on Sunday.

The drilling work at Kakra-1 well in deep sea near Karachi has been stopped after no oil or gas reservoir could be found, according to Special Assistant to Prime Minister Khan on Petroleum Nadeem Babar.

Pakistan was hopeful of finding large oil and gas reserves in its territorial waters in the Arabian Sea. US oil giant Exxon Mobil, Italy's ENI and a couple other companies were involved in drilling an ultra-deep oil well.

Babar told Geo News that the process of drilling up to more than 5,500 meters was completed on Kakra-1 (Indus G-Block) off Karachi coast. Babar said the office of DG

Petroleum Concessions has been apprised of the results of drilling.

He said that the cost of drilling project, which has now been abandoned, remained over USD 100 million.

In March, Prime Minister Khan had said Pakistan would not need to import oil after reserves were found near Karachi coast.

"We are hopeful of finding large reserves of oil and gas in the sea near Karachi. The nation should pray for this and I will soon share good news regarding this," Khan had said.

"God willing the reserves will be so large that we will not need to import any oil," he said. Khan said he believes that if big oil reserves are discovered, most of Pakistan's economic problems will be addressed and then there will be no stopping in the country's progress.

Around four months ago, Italian firm ENI, the operator of the Kakra-1 offshore block,

started drilling in a joint venture with US firm ExxonMobil, one of the world's largest oil and gas firms, and the Pakistan state-owned Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) and Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL).

Each of the four firms has a 25 per cent participating interest in the block.

The drilling was carried out in ultra-deep waters some 280 kilometres away from the Karachi coast.

The well was spudded on January 13 this year, targeting a carbonate reservoir with a prognosed total depth of 5,660 metres. Some surveys had found the block 'Indus-G' similar to the Indian offshore Bombay High oilfield, which produces 350,000 barrels per day of crude oil, while others described it as similar to the ones in the oil- and gas-rich Kuwait, the *Express Tribune* reported.

Austrian Prez calls for Sept poll in wake of scandal

AFF ■ VIENNA

Austria's President Alexander Van der Bellen on Sunday called for fresh elections in September after a corruption scandal embroiling the far-right brought down the coalition Government in spectacular fashion.

Just days before key EU elections, Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache was forced to resign in disgrace Saturday following explosive revelations from a hidden camera sting. Conservative Chancellor Sebastian Kurz — whose 18-month coalition with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) had been held up as a European model — reacted by pulling the plug on their union.

"My preference is for early elections in September, if possible the beginning of September," Van der Bellen told journalists on Sunday after holding talks with Kurz.

GLOBE TROTTER

GUNMEN KILL 19 AT FISH MARKET IN CONGO
Bunia: At least 19 people were killed when gunmen attacked a fish market in northeast Democratic Republic of Congo near Lake Albert, local officials said on Sunday. No group has claimed responsibility, but the region around Ituri province has been hit in the past by intercommunal violence between militias from the Hema and Lendu communities.

UN PEACEKEEPER KILLED IN MALI
United Nations: A Nigerian peacekeeper was killed on Saturday in an attack on the United Nations' stabilization mission in Mali, the UN said. The victim "succumbed to his wounds following the armed attack by unidentified assailants" in Timbuktu, a statement said. A Nigerian peacekeeper was also injured. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply saddened" by the assault, which he said could amount to a war crime. In a separate incident Saturday, three Chadian peacekeepers were wounded.

A NECESSITY FOR ALL

Air pollution is not just a topic for school essays but has become one of the deadliest issues in the country. STANZIN YANGZOM highlights the importance of afforestation



We have been planting them near our houses for many years now."

Tsewang Norboo from Stakna village suggests that we can plant trees in all the vacant places wherever one lives. "Trees save us from flood and many other natural calamities. Trees are already very less in number and if we continuously cut them, it can be very harmful for both human beings as well as for animals."

Other villages have planted apricot trees which have the dual benefit of providing fruit and improving the air quality.

Ysetan Dolma from Ang village says, "Our village has lots of apricot trees. We need to plant different kinds of them. We have planted great number of poplar saplings also for future use. Both these trees help us in so many ways with our livelihood. We are able to sustain our lives from the sale of apricots and in future too we will continue to get an income from them. There are not just environmental benefits but also numerous economic benefits."

Trees absorb harmful gases providing us with fresher and cleaner air to breathe. Air pollution is not just an essay topic for a 2nd grader anymore but one of the deadliest killers in India today. These days even a city like Leh has been facing air pollution due to shortage of trees.

These days planting trees is becoming essential because human beings are cutting them indiscriminately for their personal greed. Rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and population growth have contributed to this denudation to a great extent. Afforestation is good for larger benefit of society. In Leh district, the quantity of trees is very less, but we can easily increase the number. The more trees we plant, the better for us, we will be able to have a clean and green environment. It helps majorly in sustaining the livelihoods of many people in Leh.

Small business opportunities in green waste management and landscaping arise when cities value mulching and its water-saving qualities. Vocational training for youth interested in green jobs has also facilitated employment. This will also help in uplifting the poor by helping them to get a better income.

—Charkha Features

FRUITS HARVESTED FROM TREES CAN BE SOLD AND THUS PROVIDE INCOME. SMALL BUSINESSES IN GREEN WASTE MANAGEMENT ARISE WHEN CITIES VALUE MULCHING AND ITS WATER-SAVING QUALITIES. VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR THE YOUTH INTERESTED IN GREEN JOBS IS ALSO A GREAT ECONOMICAL BENEFIT

Historian Thomas Fuller once said, "One that would have fruits must climb the tree." When one mentions Leh, the picture that comes to mind is a place with the rugged terrain of the Himalayas and sparse vegetation.

On October 29, 2012, the people of Leh witnessed an event where an attempt, though a small one, was made to turn the perception around. Volunteers planted nearly one lakh Ladakhi willow trees which was a world record. Those saplings have now grown into trees and are located between the Hemis monastery (Ladakh's largest monastery) and the Indus River. In 2017 at a tree plantation drive organised by the Leh Forest Department, hill council chief executive councillor, Dr Sonam Dawa said, "the hill council has a road map to save the environment by planting more trees on barren land and which also stress-

es upon the need for water conservation."

Environmental degradation has now become a serious issue for Ladakh and there is a need for more tree plantation which should be done on a regular basis. Different types of trees like apple, apricot, poplar, willow and walnut can easily be grown because the climatic conditions are suitable. Trees are useful for oxygen and can control air pollution. The fruits are nutritious for human beings and the leaves can be used as fodder for the animals.

Thubstant Dolma from Phey village says, "We have different types of apple trees. Due to the weather conditions, the apple harvest is good in our village. Since the last few years we have started growing different types of vegetables also. We are also trying hard to grow more trees and vegetables in the village."

Stanzin Angmo from Nimoo vil-



lage says, "We can grow poplar trees too which are useful for wood and other raw materials that are used for manufacturing disparate goods such as furniture, doors, windows and decorative items. The trees prevent soil erosion.



OF, FOR AND BY THE PEOPLE

The new era, which political parties promise to bring, would remain an unfulfilled dream as long as the nature of the people is not transformed, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUN JI

The biggest festival of Indian democracy, the elections, are over and people are now waiting for the results. Almost every party who contested in this election, announced its policies and programmes in its manifesto if voted to power and are chosen to govern. These policies and programmes address various current issues and major problems of the day as well as the long-term development of the country or the State. In short, each party highlights certain issues and in its political wisdom, tries to offer the best solution for it.

Some parties put greater emphasis on the importance of being Indian and buying Indian or being Swadeshi whereas others emphasise that we must come out of the cocoon, liberalise the country's economy, invite foreign investment and participation in a big way and thus make the country competitive in the world's markets. Some say that India's security ultimately lies in being a non-nuclear power while others stress that we as a country should not feel shy to openly go nuclear, as only strong nations survive. The economic policy of some parties, as published in their manifesto, lays equal emphasis on rural as well as urban development while others feel that it is more prudent to focus on agro-rural development, as most of the population in India lives in villages.

Some of them also suggest that India should not blindly follow the western model but learn from the mistakes made by the west which have resulted in dangerous levels of environmental pollution besides causing other ills due to its excessive emphasis on the urban-industrial development. Thus, one would find a variety of views expressed in the manifestos of different political parties. However, if we put together the plus points from the manifestos of all political parties, the end statement that would emerge would consist of the following special features. The party would work for better environment and take measures to stop further deterioration, that it would work for creation of more employment opportunities, better standard of living and reduction in crime and corruption and work for a better social order that has harmony, that all would fully enjoy human rights, justice and basic freedom and finally there would be peace and good relations with neighbours and hence, there would be stability and security and no wars. So, in a nutshell, the statement would mean that there would be purity, peace and prosperity or health, wealth and happiness. This can be termed as the Charter of the people's



demands. Now, if we ponder over this statement a bit more deeply, we would come to the conclusion that health, wealth and happiness or purity, peace and prosperity are indivisible. They all go together and they cannot exist in an enjoyable form if only some of the populace have these and the rest do not. They cannot exist, if there is no sovereignty and there is clash of interests due to any of these being in short supply. Thus, these have to be in abundance for people to experience the joy of life coupled with the breath of freedom. So, if there is disease and squalor in some parts of the country or if there is hunger, poverty, pain or lack of peace in our neighbourhood or even in any remote part of the country, we cannot have complete peace. Moreover, purity, peace and prosperity will be only fleeting if there is no spirituality and if all the divine virtues are not intact in human character.

But unfortunately, no party has published a manifesto which talks of man becoming divine. This is because little does any party realise that all its promises to the electorate would remain unfulfilled if the citizens of the country do not have a great character. So, the new era which they promise to bring would remain an unfulfilled dream as long as the nature of the people is not transformed into something better. This is a task which they cannot perform because they do not have the magic wand of divine knowledge which transforms human nature into the divine one. For it is the work of the Supreme who places before mankind the partless manifesto of complete purity, peace and prosperity or ever-healthy, ever-wealthy and ever happy life before all people irrespective of their race, religion or caste and community. This goal can be realised by all sections of society, provided they have purity in their life, based on divine knowledge given by Supreme. This, then can be considered as the manifesto of the people and for the people.

Badkhal lake in Faridabad, which was once a popular tourist gateway for the people of the national capital, has turned into a barren piece of land for the past 20 years, thanks to illegal quarrying and mining in the area.

Now, various measures are being discussed at the government level to restore the lake, including construction of a sewage treatment plant (STP), but damaged aquifers, low groundwater level and disturbance of water catchment pathways cast aspersions.

Also, experts feel that restocking of existing forest lands that have been depleted in all these years could hold key to bringing Badkhal lake back to its old glory.

Rajendra Singh, who won the Magsaysay Award in 2001 and the Stockholm Water Prize in 2015, feels rejuvenation of the lake could be done through natural ways.

"The source of water for the lake is forests and they are in a degraded state now. So there is need to ensure greenery in the catchment area for smooth flow of water," said Singh, who is also called the Waterman of India.

Badkhal lake was built soon after the country got Independence in 1947 to facilitate water supply to the nearby farms. In 1972, the Haryana government built a resort off the

A future without water?

Experts feel that restocking of existing forest lands that have been depleted in all these years could hold the key to bringing Badkhal lake back to its old glory

lake, which was a major tourist attraction during the '70s through to the '90s.

Later, construction boom in the National Capital Region (NCR) drove quarrying and mining in the area at a large scale. As illegal mining and quarrying mushroomed, the downward water flow to the lake was not just obstructed, but aquifers were also damaged, said environment analyst Chetan Agarwal.

In addition, deforestation and rampant borewell digging in the area owing to urbanisation worsened the situation, leaving the lake high and dry.

"Mining and quarrying disturbed the aquifers in the upstream areas and created some amount of disturbance in the pathway of waterflow. So less water must be coming to the lake now. Groundwater levels too have gone down to 150-200 feet near the Badkhal lake. So water percolates in the ground very fast. Also, shrinking of forests is a major cause of con-



cern," Agarwal said.

Damdama lake, which is about 20 km from the Badkhal lake, has also dried up for similar reasons.

The Aravali Range, which is considered to be the oldest range of fold mountains in India, has witnessed damage to

the flora and fauna in this region, which is close to the Asola Wildlife Sanctuary, owing to excavation activities.

While the impact of mining activities on the big carnivore in the area — the leopard — has not been assessed properly yet, it has definitely taken a toll on

the population of birds and various kinds of trees in the area, Agarwal said.

Ashraf Khan, a youngster who lives near the Badkhal lake, said he never saw water in it.

"My parents told me that there used to be water in the

lake earlier and people used to do boating during summers. However, I have never seen the lake full of water except for few puddles during monsoon," he said.

"About two decades ago, the Badkhal lake would be filled with water even during summer months. Now, the tourists hardly go there," a Haryana government official said.

The average booking of three-four rooms daily in the 30-room resort run by the Haryana government, which would remain fully booked 20 years ago, bears testimony to it.

The Indian Institute of Technology-Roorkee (IIT-R) was appointed last year to carry out geo-technical survey of the dried-up Badkhal lake under the Smart City project. It has submitted its report to the government recently.

The government is planning to build a sewage treatment plant to fill the lake. The project is in the final stage of the tendering process, sources said.

However, experts are not impressed with the plan. Singh said the government's plan was not "revival" as claimed, but "renovation": "It is renovation as it is a new physical work. However, if you want to revive and rejuvenate the lake, you need to ensure continuous flow of water into the lake," he said.

—IANS

“ The pen is mightier than the sword. —Rick Riordan ”

GENES DECIDE IF YOU WILL OWN A DOG OR NOT

The choice of getting a dog at home is heavily influenced by an individual's genetic make-up, says a study.

For the study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, the scientists looked into the heritability of dog ownership using information from 35,035 twin pairs from the Swedish Twin Registry. "As such, these findings have major implications in several different fields related to understanding dog-human interaction throughout history and in modern times," Fall said.

Although dogs and other pets are common household members across the globe, little is known how they impact our daily life and health. "Perhaps some people have a higher innate propensity to care for a pet than others," Fall added. The researchers found concordance rates of dog ownership to be much larger in identical twins than in non-identical ones — supporting the view that genetics indeed plays a major role in the choice of owning a dog.



ELECTRIC CARS CAN HELP YOU LIVE LONGER

Migration from polluting vehicles that burn fossil fuels to electric vehicles, ideally using electricity generated sustainably could significantly reduce the incidence of cardiopulmonary illness due to air pollution, says a study.

This could lead not only to less employee absence from work through illness but also lead to broad improvements in the quality and length of life.

The researchers, Mitchell House and David Wright from the University of Ottawa in Canada, analysed the health benefits associated with driving an electric vehicle, and compared them with the cost of expanding the electric vehicle-charging infrastructure between 2016 and 2021.

The study, published in the International Journal of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles, found that in the majority of plausible scenarios of balanced growth, when the number of vehicles rises so does the number of charging stations, and there is a positive net benefit to society.



BULLYING AT WORKPLACE MIGHT CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

If you are bullied at the workplace, it may lead to counterproductive behaviour besides harming your health, warn researchers.

The study showed that in some cases this is characterised by a lack of problem-solving and high avoidance coping strategies like drinking alcohol when having a problem and experiencing very frequent negative emotions.

"Overall, our results show the need to consider not only exposure to and types of bullying but also their associated consequences. In particular, the findings highlight that victimisation is associated not only with health problems but also with a greater likelihood of not behaving in line with the expected social and organisational norms," said Roberta Fida, Professor at the University of East Anglia in England.

Bullying is one of the major occupational stresses for employees and the effects can compromise their development and health, as well as interfere with the achievement of both personal and professional goals.



ELECTRICITY FIGHTS BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

Amid growing antibiotic resistance, Indian-origin researchers have developed a way to charge up the fight against bacterial infections using electricity.

The electric field-based dressing can not only disrupt biofilm infections, it can also prevent such infections, said the study published in the journal Annals of Surgery.

Bacterial biofilms are thin that form on some wounds, including burns or post-surgical infections. These bacteria generate their own electricity, using their own electric fields to communicate and form the biofilm, which makes them more hostile and difficult to treat.

The dressing electrochemically self-generates one volt of electricity upon contact with body fluids such as wound fluid or blood, which is not enough to hurt or electrocute the patient, said the study. The researchers believe that the discovery has the potential to create significant changes in the way physicians treat patients with bacterial infections which are resistant to antibiotics.



HEART ATTACKS MORE SEVERE IN MORNING

Heart attacks that mostly happen in the morning tend to be more severe than at night, warn researchers.

The study, published in the journal Trends in Immunology, discusses how time of the day affects severity of afflictions, ranging from allergies to heart attacks.

For example, studies showed that adaptive immune responses, in which highly specialised, pathogen-fighting cells develop over weeks, are under circadian control. Researchers compiled studies that looked at the connection between circadian rhythms and immune responses. "This is 'striking' and should have 'relevance' for clinical applications, from transplants to vaccinations," said study senior author Christoph Scheiermann, Professor at the University of Geneva.



Trend Slazer

Petrified to shoot for Sadak 2: Alia

Actress **ALIA BHATT**, who is gearing up for her next film *Sadak 2*, says she is petrified to shoot for the film, which will be directed by her father and veteran filmmaker **Mahesh Bhatt**, opposite Pooja Bhatt and Sanjay Dutt.

Alia took to Instagram, posting a photograph of the film's clapboard, she wrote: "Today is Day 1 of *Sadak 2*. And that's my father, now also my director, holding the clap. I begin shoot in a few days and honestly, I'm petrified. I feel like a tiny mouse trying to climb a beautiful, immense, emotional mountain. I hope I make it to the top and if I fall I hope I'm able to get up again."

The actress says it is a "tough climb."



'I am completely obsessed with make-up. I love to experiment different cosmetic products. I even check social media to have a look at trending make-up and fashion styles... So that I don't miss out on anything. During the day, I prefer to have a natural look. So I prefer a minimal make-up. At nights, I like to go a little bold.'

—Tara Sutaria



TANUSHREE DUTTA's lawyer

Nitin Satpute has clarified that police has not given clean chit to actor **Nana Patekar** who was accused of sexual harassment.



Satpute said, "There were rumours that clean chit has been given to Patekar by the police but it isn't. These are just false rumours and we are going to take action against them. Nana is just playing psychological games."

He claimed that Nana is "trying to put pressure on police and is misleading the case." He has also refuted the reports which stated that there are not proper witnesses' statements which resonate Tanushree's allegations.

Smith's B'wood touch to Aladdin

Actor **WILL SMITH** has asked director **Guy Ritchie** to add a touch of Bollywood in forthcoming film *Aladdin*.

"Aladdin is hot... people are going to love it. I have been trying to do my best Bollywood version in this film. I keep telling Ritchie that he has to give it a full Bollywood flavour," Smith said.

He added, "I have been visiting India, meeting and hanging out. They need to present me something. I don't know what we want to do — but we should start, we should produce it together."

The film is a thrilling and vibrant live-action adaptation of the loved animated classic movie.



A QUESTIONING SPIRIT

The youth have become numb to a lot of things that they read about and see but cinema still has the power to venture deep into their soul. People now want to know how India became 'India,' actor **ARJUN KAPOOR** tells **SAIMI SATTAR**

That is one newspaper that we do not get in Mumbai, why is that? asks Arjun Kapoor as soon as I introduce myself. When I get into the details, he immediately pipes in, "Should we start an edition in the commercial capital?" When I laugh and reply in the affirmative, he starts discussing the similarity between the two cities, so much so that the two could be twins. That is Arjun, as I discover over the course of the next 15 minutes or so, interested in a whole lot of different issues which he can discuss with a clarity that is engaging.

The actor is in the capital to promote his forthcoming film, *India's Most Wanted*, directed by Raj Kumar Gupta, and at the press conference just before the interview, he does not miss answering any questions, some humorously and others on a more serious note depending upon the issue at hand.

When a young reporter wants to know what Malaika Arora, his rumoured girlfriend, had to say about the film, without missing a beat, Arjun replies, "I will tell you this on the side," as the entire hall reverberates with laughter.

Another reporter, introducing herself says, "I am from Hindustan..." when Arjun replies, "So am I." When someone asks him how he will appeal to the public to watch his film, he is quick to retort, "If I appeal, in this season, it will seem as if I am asking for votes." Not surprisingly, there is laughter, yet again.

But he does not let his humour pepper the proceedings when it comes to the film, which is based on a real life mission about the capture of a terrorist by five ordinary men "without firing a bullet." When someone talks about the association of religion with terror, Arjun counters, "The genuine fact of the matter is that world over, whether it is the incident in Sri Lanka or New Zealand, people are trying to radicalise others and rationalise it by using religion to justify it. There is no religion which justifies violence against innocents. Terrorism is terrorism. Using religion to instigate vio-

lence and terrorism gives an insight into the base mindset of these men and women. We are a secular country and surnames do not matter. We should remember that we have been taught to be together as a country so why should we let anyone divide us on religion, caste and creed?"

So when I point out that on his Twitter handle, he has been asking people to say *Vande Mataram* which is one of the slogans, of late, that has been mired in controversy, Arjun gives me a patient hearing to explain my point of view and also voices his views. "Patriotism is an emotion that is stirred within you on its own. It has nothing to do with people who are trying to use it for their personal agenda. Our intent has to be clear. If you want to take 10 seconds to pay tribute to people who keep India safe, it has nothing to do with politics. People have the understanding to differentiate and you must respect that understanding. Rather than being divisive, it unites," he elaborates.

The promo of the film, which releases on May 24, is realistic with subtle patriotism in evidence. Arjun agrees, "It is non-jingoistic. That was the intent. It is grounded in reality because that is how intelligence people operate. It's not about the ones who stand behind mics and speak but about doers. These are balanced individuals who do not say *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* or *Jai Hind* or *Desh ke liye jee jaan lutaenge* after every third line. Their actions speak. I think it is contemporary. Understated is the new cool."

He believes that what will go in favour of this film is rather than spoonfeeding answers, it will encourage the audience to ask questions. "If you make cerebral films, you will open up and tap into a larger mindset. A lot more people will ask good and interesting questions and make relevant observations. When you go back home, you will wonder the morality of why these things happen, how people use religion to their advantage and how ground level realities are hidden from the common man. There are a lot of questions that are worth diving into but films usually don't make us do that. It is nice to pick up the morsel and bite into it yourself," says the actor who made his debut with *Ishaqzaade* in

2012 opposite Parineeti Chopra with whom he stars next in Dibakar Banerjee's *Sandeep aur Pinky Faraar*.

We go on to discuss the spate of patriotic films that have come out recently. He says, "Last year when I signed it, the ecosystem of politics was very different. Right now, we are in a patriotic swing, politically and cinematically. But it just got aligned rather than being designed."

He believes that there is a reason that the audience has warmed up to the idea of patriotic films, where there has been a flurry with *Parmannu*, *Raazi*, *Uri* and *RAW* following quickly one after the other. "Our youth are very restless. There is an adrenaline rush in their veins and they do feel a sense of patriotism. They have become numb to a lot of things that they read about and see but cinema still has the power to venture deep into their soul. Earlier people felt that *araj ye kahaniyan kaun dekhta chahaga?* People now want to know how India became 'India.' A film like *Raazi* is a part of contemporary history and tells us about an incident which happened in our lifetime. People are more intrigued by their own motherland rather than looking at the Western civilisation for inspirational answers, solutions and validation today," he says and points out that there had been a big void since *Border* in 1997. "*Chak De! India* was differently patriotic and beautifully so," he adds.

While preparing for this role, Arjun did meet some officers, though not the ones who actually took part in the mission because of security reasons. "When I met them I realised that violence is their last resort. It is called Intelligence Bureau for a reason as the word indicates the use of brains rather than physical strength. Mental strength means you have to be able to get along with people to get information, blend in the crowd and live a normal life. This role is not like that of a hero in a conventional film, rather this



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

is a common man," he says. While Arjun has done shoots at live locations in *Finding Fanny* and *Aurangzeb* or even for his forthcoming *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*, he says the experience here was different for a reason. "You need to be responsible while you are portraying an existing person's life. So when they see this, they should feel that justice has been done. You cannot just walk in and say the lines without having the emotional integrity. You need to build a mood which is difficult when you are shooting at live locations because there are logistical nightmares. But you have to stay honest, maintain your sanity and still deliver as Prabhat and not let the Arjun Kapoor aura step in. I think that the pay off is that the tone is consistent," he says.

Arjun has his reason for choosing this film. "I signed this last February, so it was six years into my professional life. As an entertainer, you feel a certain social responsibility. The feeling was in the sub-conscious and you can't ignore it. I felt a certain rage when I read the story and the need to tell it. It is not as if I woke up in the morning and suddenly decided to do a film on a terrorist. When I read it, I realised the amount of filth which is there in our country, where the story of 400 people having lost their lives has disappeared. This man was caught in 2013. We are sitting in 2019 and he is alive. While the due process of law should be followed and he should be given a fair trial, the need is to ensure that it is done within a time frame," says Arjun who has supported initiatives like the Earth Hour and has helped raise awareness for conservation in the Sundarbans region of the country. In 2017, he joined hands with the global movement and campaign, 'Globe Rising,' to empower women.

Arjun says that there is a way that he goes about in choosing any role. "I look at whether as an audience, I would want to watch the film. Then whether the director is on the same page as I am. So when I am hearing something, does it

sound exactly the way I want to do it? Then whether my character is exciting. Sometimes the story can be great but my character might not be enough to bite into. So these three. And in that order."

Actors do have a rich smorgasbord to choose from now thanks to the improvement in content. Arjun explains, "Our audience is more interested in knowing about our country and culture, so the stories are now more richly embedded within our own communities and tribes. Earlier, films were based in Switzerland where the hero came on a bike. We no longer look Westwards for approval, inspiration or validation." He also points out that while the stories are more rooted, there is also more exposure to world content thanks to the digital medium. "So, you are competing with the West in a way. But we have found our own stories. *Stree* will not work in a Western society as they tapped into an interesting connect where the older generation will believe in a superstition while the youth shall mock it. *Badhaai Ho* wouldn't be so taboo or funny abroad. Similarly, a *Ki & Ka* would be generic as house husbands exist in the West. In India, it is a new conversation. The evolution of the audience always dictates cinema patterns," he says.

Arjun, who has done 11 films in seven years, says that he does not wish to go any faster as it would be a difficult pace to do justice to any role. "I've done more films than my contemporaries, whether it is Varun (Dhawan) or even Siddharth (Malhotra). In the first three years, I had seven releases. As is bound to happen, post that I was choosy. Sometimes films take long to be made. *Tevar* took a year and after that I needed a break. After *Ki & Ka*, I hosted *Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi*, a TV show for three months. *Half Girlfriend* needed three-four months of preparation. So films get spaced out. Now when I am shooting *Panipat*, I can't shoot anything else because I am bald in the film. Every film takes at least six to eight months. I think the audience, too, don't need an overdose but a break. This year I have three releases and last year, I had one," he says as he walks off ready to express his candid views to another journalist.

CANNES DIARIES

Colour doesn't matter anymore

Actress and director **MATI DIOP** says that it's quite sad that she is the first Black female filmmaker in the competition section at the festival in its 72-year-old history



young generation who were trying to flee. They went towards Spain and many of them disappeared. I needed to tell this story. I had already dealt with it in my short but I felt I wasn't done with it."

Diop links her reconnection with Senegal to her birth as a filmmaker. She is the daughter of Senegalese jazz musician Wasis Diop and niece of the pioneering Senegalese director Djibril Diop Mambéty (*Touki Bouki*). Diop's 2013 documentary *A Thousand Suns* examined her uncle's legacy and his 1972 film, considered a cornerstone of African cinema.

Diop has gradually formed her own aesthetic, one that sometimes bleeds documentary and fiction. A friend called "*Atlantique*," a fantasy documentary, Diop prefers "a contemplative action film."

"It was written as fiction but I don't make this limit. I don't

think it's our business as filmmakers to draw these limits between documentaries and fiction. When you have the desire to make a film, you make it," she says. "The reality that I described is so anchored in social and political and economic terms, of course there is a real texture and embodiment of the subject and my approach in it that can be documentary-like."

Atlantique is also dazzling and otherworldly, with waves of sorrow washing up on Dakar shores. Mama Sane plays Ada, whose boyfriend, along with his shipmates, vanishes at sea. After, a mysterious specter haunts many of those who drove the young men away. Diop compares the tale to *Ulysses*.

"It's a misunderstanding to consider Penelope (of *Ulysses*) a passive figure who's just waiting for her beloved to come back," said Diop. "What I found interesting is that although these women are waiting for these men to come, their life is transformed by the experience of this loss. It's how these women can conquer their own life and reach a certain level of emancipation through the loss they experience."

Diop has gradually come to terms with her history-making status in Cannes. On Friday, she told reporters that maybe she is a little proud, and noted that Jordan Peele's films (*Us*, *Get Out*) have been enthralling for her. In the interview, she cited Sofia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides* as a guidepost to her.

"I must acknowledge that myself, when I was growing up, I didn't have a black or mixed race filmmaker who would have been inspirational to me," said Diop. "It's important to have these kinds of figures. So if I may someday become a kind of figure for younger women, then that would be wonderful. So I think that it does matter."

—AP

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DIANA GLITTERS IN GOLD

Actress Diana Pentz, who is at the gala as a part of an association with Grey Goose, made a sparkling debut with a glittery gold ensemble at the film festival. For her look, the *Cocktail* actress chose a ravishing mini golden tassel dress by Greek fashion designer Celia Kritharioti.

She paired it with embellished sheer golden knee-length heeled boots by the same designer. The 33-year-old actress attended the grand Chopard party with nude make-up and lips. She completed her look with sleek middle-parted hair.



HUMA DAZZLES IN BLAZERS

Actress Huma Qureshi presented herself in two ensembles — a sparkling black blazer dress with golden court shoes, followed by a red blazer paired with a tulle skirt.

The actress' forthcoming web series, *Leila's* trailer was released at the gala, which is set in the imaginary world of *Aryavarta* where there is great suffering, extreme and totalitarian rules of engagement and fictional extremes constructed around an obsession with purity, communal and divisive societal dramas and grit.



—Agencies

Bale warms bench as Real Madrid blow season finale

AFF ■ MADRID

Real Madrid delivered a suitably dreadful end to their miserable season, and Gareth Bale was not even given the chance to say a likely goodbye, as Zinedine Zidane's side were beaten 2-0 at home to Real Betis on Sunday.

Zidane had indicated this could be Bale's final game ahead of an expected summer departure but the Welshman was left on the bench, made to watch on as three substitutes came on ahead of him at the Santiago Bernabeu.

None were able to revive another dreary and disjointed Madrid performance, which concluded both the season and first phase of Zidane's much-hailed return as coach.

As the players saluted the fans at the end, they were greeted by a chorus of whistles.

By then, Bale was already off down the tunnel, perhaps aware that any attempt at a farewell could be given an even colder reception.

When the referee's final whistle blew, Bale received a hug from Betis coach Quique Setien and strode off.

Zidane will rightly not be held culpable for most of Madrid's failings this season, including finishing third in La Liga, 18 points behind Barcelona and eight adrift of Atletico Madrid, not to mention crashing out of the Champions League in the last 16.

He will also not be blamed for their league total of 68



points, their lowest in 17 years, nor the 12 defeats. Real Madrid have not had more in a single league campaign since 1974.

But even if few expected the deep-rooted problems to vanish after Zidane's arrival in March, most Madrid fans would have hoped at least for signs of improvement.

Instead, they have now won five of his 11 games in charge this season and out of the last five have won one and lost three. Some of the displays, including this one, were as bad as anything seen under either Julen Lopetegui or Santiago Solari.

Zidane has promised change over the summer and many in his squad here could be elsewhere next season including goalkeeper Keylor Navas, who was the subject of several affectionate chants during the game, as well as Nacho, Sergio Reguilon, Isco, Marcos Llorente and Bale.

If this was to be Bale's last appearance after six seasons, in which there have been numerous injuries but several trophies too, including four in the Champions League, it seemed a sorry way not to say goodbye.

Setien could be on his way too this summer, after a turbulent season in charge of Betis,

who were in contention for Europe but instead finish 10th.

Marcelo flashed an early shot inches wide but the best chance fell to Karim Benzema, who hit the post after Raphael Varane's harmless cross was skewed straight to him by Francis Guerrero.

Navas' fingertips pushed over a lob from the excellent Giovanni Lo Celso before an uneventful half was ended by a smattering of whistles from the home fans.

It would get worse after half-time. Benzema passed up two good openings in the box and Vinicius turned Aissa Mandi inside-out but was

denied by the feet of Pau Lopez.

Betis looked dangerous in behind Madrid's defence, with Dani Carvajal lucky only to be cautioned for preventing Junior Firpo from sprinting clear.

But the warning went unheeded as Andres Guardado was next to race through and he provided the perfect pass to the back post where Loren could hardly miss.

Lo Celso might have made it two before Jese, once of Real Madrid and a product of their youth system, finally did.

For the last time this season, the home fans made their feelings known at the final whistle.

Pliskova sweeps past Konta to win Italian Open

AFF ■ ROME

Czech fourth seed Karolina Pliskova swept past Britain's Johanna Konta 6-3, 6-4 to win the WTA Italian Open on Sunday.

Pliskova, the 2017 French Open semi-finalist, clinched her 13th career title, in the final major warm-up tournament on clay before Roland Garros starts on May 26.

A break in each set was enough for former world number one Pliskova to get past Konta, sealing victory on her third match point after 85 minutes on court.

"It was a great week for me and my team," said the 27-year-old, now coached by former Rome champion Conchita Martinez.

"There were a couple of tough matches so I was happy to fight through them. I was a

little bit nervous today, but it was the final in Rome, so that's to be expected."

Top seeds Naomi Osaka and Petra Kvitova pulled out injured during the event, while Roland Garros champion Simona Halep crashed out in her opening match in Italy.

Four-time Rome winner Serena Williams also withdrew before the second round as her return after a two-month lay-off was cut short when her knee injury flared up.

Pliskova, the highest remaining seed, got an early break in the final and swept 3-0 up in just eight minutes on the red clay of the Foro Italico.

A double fault when serving for the set handed Konta a break point but the British number one squandered the chance with a smash into the net with the entire court open to her.

Konta then hit a weak forehand shot into the tape and the ball bounced wide, allowing Pliskova to wrap up the first set in 36 minutes.

Pliskova broke in the seventh game of the second set, despite Konta saving two break points, with the Czech number world number seven powering through for the biggest title of her career since Cincinnati in 2016. She becomes the first Czech woman to win the Rome tournament since Regina Marsikova in 1978.

In the men's competition, world number one Djokovic — winner at the Madrid Open last weekend — will meet defending champion and eight-time winner Rafael Nadal.

It will be the 54th clash between the world's top two men's players who have won 12 of the last 14 Rome titles between them.

Gatlin edges Kiryu to win 100m in Osaka

OSAKA: Justin Gatlin pipped Japan's Yoshihide Kiryu to win the men's 100 metres as fellow American Michael Norman fired a world championship warning with a superb 200m at the Golden Grand Prix Osaka on Sunday.

The 37-year-old Gatlin produced a strong finish to clock 10 seconds flat, the reigning world champion dipping at the line to edge out Kiryu by a hundredth of a second at the IAAF world challenge meet in Osaka.

Indonesia's world under-20 champion Lalu Muhammad Zohri broke his own national record as he took third in 10.03 — the fastest time ever recorded by an athlete from Southeast Asia.

While Gatlin targets one last hurrah at the world championships in Doha later this year, Norman laid down a marker by winning the men's 200m in a meet record 19.84 seconds, shaving 0.03 off the mark Namibia's Frankie Fredericks set 20 years ago.

The runaway victor, who last month clocked a personal best of 43.45 in the 400m, left Yang Chun-Han trailing in his wake, the Taiwanese runner-up in 20.50. Ominously for his rivals, Norman insisted that he can still get faster.

"I feel as though there are multiple areas I can improve on," said the 21-year-old. "I didn't feel as though the intensity that I usually have during a 200m was there."

Meanwhile, the Japanese men's 4x100m relay quartet made amends after their disqualification at last week's World Relays in Yokohama by beating Team USA into second place.

Clips of Kiryu fumbling and then catching the baton in mid-air went viral, but the Japanese — shock Rio Olympic silver medalists behind Usain Bolt's Jamaica — made no mistake this time as Kiryu anchored their home in a world-leading 38.00 seconds.

The Americans, who had Gatlin on their second leg, took silver in 38.73.

Ethiopia's Belihu wins TCS World 10K run Kenya's Tirop defends women's title

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Ethiopia's Andamlak Belihu Sunday won the TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2019 title by crossing the tape in IAAF Gold Label Road Race in 27 minute 56 seconds, just eight seconds outside his personal best and 12 seconds off the course record.

"I expected to run a fast time as there were so many good runners in this race, but I also expected to run even faster than this," Belihu told reporters after the race.

The 20-year-old triumphed in difficult conditions as there was high humidity and temperatures touched 26 degrees Celsius.

Right from the gun, Belihu was prominent at the front of the leading pack, often forcing the pace.

Eight men went through the 5km mark in 14:11 before Uganda's Mande Bushendich made an audacious early move

just after the halfway point. Bushendich, who finished second in 28:03, went through the gears so rapidly that the leading group was quickly fractured and by the 7km mark only Belihu was left to challenge him.

Ethiopia's Birhanu Legese, the Tokyo Marathon winner earlier in the year and Tata Steel Kolkata 25K winner in December, finished third in 28:23.

Agnes Tirop's finishing time may have been more than two minutes slower than her course record but the 2017 IAAF World Championships 10,000m bronze medallist defended her title, becoming the first woman to win back-to-back titles in the 12-year history of the Bengaluru race.

It was clear from the leisurely opening kilometres that this was going to be a much slower race than in 2018. A group of nine women went



through the first half of the race in a modest 18:06, more than two minutes down on last year's split.

Tirop herself injected regular short bursts of pace during the next three kilometres but none were sustained, and they did nothing to break up the group apart from dropping Bahrain's 2017 world marathon champion Rose Chelimo.

Coming into the Bengaluru's famous Cubbon

Park, eight women were still closely grouped together and that was still the situation as they entered the stadium for one final lap of the track.

Ethiopia's Letsenbet Gidey darted into the lead on entering the stadium but, with 50 metres to go, Tirop still had plenty in reserve and emerged victorious in a thrilling five-woman sprint for the line.

Tirop won in 33:55 — in sharp contrast to the fast men's race it was the slowest winning time in the history of the event — with just two seconds covering the top five, with the Kenyan being followed home by four Ethiopian women.

"I would have liked to have run faster and I did my best but no one else wanted to push hard so I was just content with the win," said Tirop.

Senbere Teferi was second and Gidey third, both women also given 33:55; 2018 world half marathon champion

Netsanet Gudeta was fourth in 33:56 with Dera Dida one second further back in fifth place.

The TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2019 has a total prize fund of USD213,000, with the men's and women's winners each taking home USD 26,000. Among Indian women, Sanjivani Jadhav won the race for consecutive year by crossing the line in 35:10 ahead of Parul Chaudhary, who clocked 35:36.

"I was carrying a niggle in my hamstring so am happy to have finished on top, but I could have surely achieved a better time," Jadhav, who finished 10th overall, said.

Chaudhary, who was trailing in the first 2.5 km, said she was confident of a podium finish.

"I know my body well and knew when to pace, so I wasn't worried about my slow start," she said.

I'm more aggressive now: Thapa

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

World championship bronze medallist pugilist Shiva Thapa said he is more aggressive in his approach and hungrier for success as he gears up for the India Open boxing tournament beginning here on Monday.

The 25-year-old from Assam became the first Indian male boxer to claim four consecutive Asian medals with a 60kg category bronze in last month's Asian Championship in Bangkok.

He had won a gold in 2013, a bronze in 2015, followed by a silver in 2017 at the same tournament.

"You saw in the last Asian Championships too that I play much more freely now. Even more than that, I can readily impress the judges now, I am being more aggressive now," the 25-year-old said at the pre-tournament news conference here.

Armed with a record fourth Asian Championship medal, local favourite Thapa will be fighting it out in the 60kg category in the India Open before switching to 63kg keeping in mind the approved weight categories for Tokyo Olympic qualification.

"The more punches I can give, the more chances of winning the rounds I have. This is the style of boxing I have adopted now and our coaches too are helping me with this approach. Santiago Sir is work-

ing a lot on my technique and I am building on that," he said giving credit to India's chief performance director Santiago Nieva.

The second edition of the India Open kickstarts with 35 men and 37 women boxers from India vying for glory in the competition which will see close to 200 pugilists from 16 boxing powerhouses participating at the Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Indoor Stadium.

Thapa is among six Assamese boxers who will vie for the title in front of their home crowd.

Acknowledging the tremendous support at home, Thapa said: "Every boxer is getting ready to give his best. The competition is very strong so we have been training very well for it."

"We all are ready for the tournament and I would want to wish all the best to my team. I hope we will all be an inspiration to all the youngsters here. I wish more and more boxers come out from the northeast region."

The USD 70,000 prize purse tournament will see London Olympic bronze medallist Mary Kom making her competitive debut at home in 51kg after opting out of the Asian Championships last month in order to prepare for the World Championships.

"I have experience in both the categories. It's not that I am

doing anything different for 51kg. The India Open will help me to add to my experience further. I will try to give my best," the six-time world champion said oozing with optimism.

"We are trying our best to win a medal for our country. We shall be trying our best to do even better and get more medals. Assam boxing Association, BFL, Santiago have all been supporting us."

"This time we shall try our level best and also win medals for the country. I always try my best to make India proud."

Asian Games champion Mirzakhailov Mirazizbek, two-time World Championships medallist Jasurbek Latipov of Uzbekistan, Youth Olympic champion Brian Agustín Arregui of Argentina, world champion and reigning Asian Championships, Josie Gabuco of Philippines will ensure that the line-up is competitive.

With four months to go for the World Championships in Russia, which is also an Olympic qualifier, the India Open will serve as the preparatory ground for all the participants.

"The field has some of the best boxers from the world. This will give a chance to show our boxers to the home fans and will help in their preparation for the World Championships in September," India's chief performance director Nieva said.

Wilder retains WBC heavyweight title with brutal first round KO

AFF ■ NEW YORK

Undefeated Deontay Wilder brutally knocked out Dominic Breazeale in the first round of their grudge match Saturday night to retain his World Boxing Council heavyweight world title.

Wilder, who has one of the most destructive right hands in heavyweight history, floored the challenger with a one-punch knockout with 43 seconds left in the opening round.

Wilder swarmed Breazeale from the opening bell, hurting him with a straight right hand then finishing him off later in



the round with the devastating right to the chin that was set up by a left jab. Breazeale lay on his back, then got up at the count of 10 as the referee waved it off.

Wilder, 33, improved to 41-0-1 with 40 KOs in making the ninth defence of his title against heavy underdog

Breazeale at the Barclays Center arena in Brooklyn, New York. Breazeale, who had lost just one previous fight to Anthony Joshua, dropped to 20-2 with 18 KOs.

There was bad blood between the two heading into the fight with the buildup marked by a series of macabre threats from Wilder, who had spoken of his willingness to cause a fatality in the ring.

Threats of violence are a stock-in-trade part of promoting fights, but Wilder's gruesome pre-fight comments were condemned by many in the sport as going too far.

Dutee faces expulsion from family after revealing same sex relationship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Unapologetic about her same-sex relationship with a younger relative, India's fastest woman Dutee Chand is facing a tough battle of acceptance in her family.

Dutee, who won two silver medals at the 2018 Asian Games, became one of the few athletes in the world to openly admit same-sex relationship.

"I am having a relationship with a 19-year-old woman from my village for the past five years. She is studying B.A. 2nd

year in a Bhubaneswar college. She is a relative of mine and whenever I come to home, I spend time with her. She is a kind of soul-mate for me and I want to settle down with her in future," Chand, 23, told PTI from Hyderabad where she is training.

A landmark judgement of the Supreme Court last year had made same sex relationship between consenting adults a non criminal act though marriage between such individuals is still not legal in India.

Dutee, the 100m national record holder (11.24 seconds),

says while her parents have not yet raised any objection to her relationship, her eldest sister has threatened to not only expel her from the family but also send her to jail.

"My eldest sister kind of wields power and authority in my family. She has thrown out my elder brother from home because she does not like his wife. She has threatened me that same will happen to me. But I am also an adult who has individual freedom. So, I decided to go ahead with this and make it public.

"My eldest sister feels that

my partner is interested in my property. She has told me that she will send me to jail for having this relationship," she said.

Dutee said her partner is free to marry whoever she wants to if she decides to do so in future.

"I will continue my athletics career. I am going to take part in the World University Games next month and hope to qualify for the World Championships later this year. My aim to qualify for next year's Olympics, so I am training hard," she said.

While Dutee refused to

name her partner, she said the Supreme Court judgement on the issue gave her the courage to go public.

"My partner also agreed that we should make this public and face whatever repercussions it may bring to us. I believe in individual freedom and right to decide how and with whom I will live my life."

She said another reason for coming out in the open was that she did not want something which happened with sprinter Pinki Pramanik, who was accused of rape by her live-in partner.

LOCAL EVENTS

DRAGON FC LIFT TROPHY



Dragon FC edged past DPS Eldeco 1-0 to lift the 1st Excellia Seven-a-side Football Trophy at Milkha Singh ground on Sunday. Aryan scored the loan goal of the match in the 38th minute. Earlier, Dragon FC beat White Eagle while DPS defeated Excellia Sports Academy to reach the final. Vikas Singh was adjudged best goalkeeper while Rohan and Raj were given the best scorer and best defender trophy respectively. Excellia School director Ashish Pathak and school incharge Pushpinder gave away the prizes.

TALENT HUNT WIN TOURNEY

Talent Hunt Cricket Academy beat DPS Gomti Nagar by seven wickets to win the Under-14 Cricket Series at RDSO ground on Sunday. Animesh Mishra was adjudged man of the tournament while Suyash Singh and Aditya Chitransh bagged the best batsman and best bowler trophy respectively.

BRIEF SCORES:

DPS: 107 (Abdullah Shariq 21, Suyash Singh 19, Vinayak Tripathi 10; Aditya Chitransh 25/6)
THCA: 110 (Kartikey Singh 71, Vikas Yadav 26; Parth Verma 1/2, Suyash Singh 30/1)

SHIVANI CUP



Aryan Pandey, Suryansh Srivastava and Sanvi Agarwal won the U-16, U-14 and U-10 titles respectively in the 26th Shivani Cup Sunday Chess Tournament on Sunday. Shivani Public School founder Satyabhama Dubey gave away the prizes.

Yuvi mulls retirement

...may seek nod to play private T20 leagues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Yuvraj Singh, one of India's greatest limited overs cricketers, is seriously contemplating retirement from international cricket and pursue a freelance career in ICC approved foreign Twenty20 leagues.

The Punjab left-hander would make a final decision only if he gets permission from the BCCI. It has been learnt that Yuvraj has come to terms with the fact that he is unlikely to play for India.

"Yuvraj is thinking of calling it quits from international and first class cricket. He would like to speak to the BCCI and get more clarity on playing his trade in tournaments like GT20 (Canada), Euro T20 Slam in Ireland and Holland as he has offers," a BCCI source privy to the development, told PTI on Sunday.

Recently, Irfan Pathan put his name in the draft for the Caribbean Premier League but Pathan junior is an active first class player, who didn't seek permission from the BCCI.

"Irfan was told to withdraw his name from the draft. As far as Yuvraj is concerned, we need to check the rules. Even if he retires from first class cricket, he will still be an active T20 player registered under BCCI. The rule needs to be checked," a senior BCCI functionary said.

Yuvraj played for Mumbai



Indians in this year's IPL but didn't get many chances which might have prompted him to seriously think about future plans.

The leagues like one in Canada and the new venture in Dublin and Amstelveen can gain a lot of mileage if Yuvraj plays in the league.

There is a school of thought that if Zaheer Khan and Virender Sehwag can be a part of a T10 venture in Dubai then why can't Yuvraj be

allowed. However, the BCCI official said, "The T10 might have been approved by the ICC but it's still not an acknowledged format. But yes, going forward, as and when the players association takes shape, the case for retired players may come up for consideration."

He agreed that in principle, retired international players should be allowed to take part in Big Bash, CPL or BPL, if they get offers.

A sixth triumph looks realistic for Australia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Synonymous with World Cup success, Australia will enter the showpiece with realistic hopes of widening the gulf between them and the rest, having tenaciously rallied from the ball-tampering saga that prompted radical changes in their cricketing culture.

The five-time winners have showed exemplary resilience in navigating the tempestuous phase that nearly broke their back and spirit, and the recent away series victories against India and Pakistan are proof of their never-say-die attitude.

The much-awaited return of David Warner and Steve Smith from their one-year bans has bolstered the team and boosted the morale of those, who will wear the yellow jersey in the United Kingdom.

The squad has completed its World Cup preparatory camp in Brisbane and headed to the United Kingdom via a stopover in the Gallipoli peninsula.

Located in the southern part of East Thrace, the European part of Turkey, Gallipoli peninsula holds great significance in Australia's history as this was the place where 11,000 Australian and New Zealand soldiers lost their lives in a disastrous Allied military offensive.

The most successful one-day side in history, Australia have lifted the trophy a record five times, including three consecutive wins between 1999 and 2007.

Winning three on the trot is no doubt unprecedented but such has been Australia's dominance in the tournament that they emerged victorious even in the 1987 edition when they entered as rank outsiders after the exodus of some of their best players.

Hosting the tournament for only the second time four years ago along with New Zealand, Australia were not overwhelming favourites to lift the



trophy but they still became champions at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground.

It will not be surprising at all if the current team, captained by Aaron Finch, triumphs at the hallowed Lord's on July 14.

They certainly have the wherewithal to go all the way and record what would be an unprecedented sixth title.

Warner's year-long international exile has come to an end and with nearly 700 runs in the Indian Premier League, he has sounded a warning to rival bowlers bracing up for the mega event.

While he did not quite set the IPL on fire like Warner, Smith showed glimpses of his old touch in the three warm-up matches against New Zealand

recently. After finding form in the latter part of the IPL, Smith played well for unbeaten innings of 89 and 91, enough for Justin Langer to say he had "slept better".

Stripped of their roles as captain and vice-captain respectively and banned for 12 months for their involvement in the ball-tampering scandal during the Test series against South Africa in March last year, both Smith and Warner will be using the sport's biggest platform to make amends for their indiscretion in Cape Town.

It remains to be seen if Warner is given his usual opening slot or made to bat at number three. Only once in 104 ODI innings has Warner not gone in as opener.

Given the depth of talent and competition for spots there were a number of tough calls the selectors had to make to settle on the 15-man squad.

The squad does not include in-form batsman Peter Handscomb and fast bowler Josh Hazlewood, while the likes of D'Arcy Short, Kane Richardson, Ashton Turner and Matthew Wade also missed out, clearly showing the depth in the setup.

A depth that augurs well for them in the World Cup.

SQUAD: Aaron Finch (capt), Jason Behrendorff, Alex Carey, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Pat Cummins, Usman Khawaja, Nathan Lyon, Shaun Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Jhye Richardson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, David Warner, Adam Zampa.

Against India it's our turn this time: Ngidi

PTI ■ DUBAI

South African fast bowler Lungi Ngidi wants to set the record straight against India in the upcoming World Cup, saying his team "owes one" to the Virat Kohli-led side following its ODI series loss at home.

Visitors India had sealed a comprehensive 5-1 win over South Africa last year.

The Proteas were missing some key players skipper Faf du Plessis, AB de Villiers and Quinton de Kock during that series and Ngidi believes a full-strength team will be able to return the favour when they clash with India on June 5 at Southampton.

"I believe we owe them one," the 23-year-old said.

"I'm looking forward to India. When they came here, they had a good series against us. So in my mind, I believe we owe them one. It would be a very exciting game for me. I'm sure it will be for all the guys as well."

"They're a great team, don't take that away from them. But when they had a good series here, we were missing a few players. With those guys back, we'll see how it events out a bit," added the 23-year-old.

South Africa have never won the World Cup and Ngidi said it would be a dream come true if he can help the side to victory.

Warner, Smith ready to face fire in Eng

PTI ■ LONDON

The English crowd may throw some taunts on Steve Smith and Warner during the World Cup but they are ready to "face the fire", says Australia coach Justin Langer.

Warner and Smith return to high intensity action at the showpiece event after serving out their one-year bans, imposed for their role in last year's ball-tampering scandal.

Langer admitted that controlling the crowd is not their hands but urged the fans to treat Warner and Smith as human beings, prone to committing mistakes. "We can't control the crowd. What I do know? It may ramp up, it may heat up, but it won't be any hotter than it was twelve months ago. I've never seen anything like it so the boys are very well prepared. They've paid a heavy price and we're always expecting to come here and to face the fire and we're ready for that," said Langer after team's first training session after their arrival.

But what has been their preparation in dealing with the angry crowd response? to this Langer said the Australian camp has to support them emotionally and ensure that Warner and Smith remain comfortable.

"What we've got to understand is that they're human beings as well. There's not too many I've met in my life who like being booed or heckled or disliked so... they're human beings."

"We're going to have to care for them. We are going to have to put an arm around them and make sure they're going ok. But what people say, whether it's in the crowd or social media or wherever there's nothing they can do about that they can't control it but what we can do is keep an eye on them and make sure they're going ok as people as much as cricketers."

Langer said Smith is hitting the ball as clean as hard as he was doing it before



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the ban. A proof of it was when Smith hit pacer Pat Cummins so hard that the ball sailed over and hit a car passing by on the Nottingham Road.

"As batsman it's brilliant. I watched Steve Smith batting against New Zealand in those three practice games, he's literally a master of the game, so it's nice to have him back."

"Dave's got that look on his eye, he's really hungry, he's a great player as we all know, he's so dynamic, he brings so much energy, and that's what we ask from our players. You watch Glenn Maxwell field or bowl or bat — he brings the energy. Dave Warner always brings energy to the contest. It's really nice to have him back."

Retired Bravo named in Windies reserves

PTI ■ ST JOHN'S

Retired Dwayne Bravo has been included in the list of 10 reserve players by Cricket West Indies (CWI) for the ODI World Cup starting in England on May 30.

Bravo, who had announced his retirement last October, and Kieron Pollard, who hasn't played an ODI since October 2016, found a place in the reserve list put up on the website of Cricket West Indies (CWI) on Sunday.

Bravo, who plays for Chennai Super Kings in the Indian Premier League, featured in an ODI way back in October 2014 and his last match for West Indies was a T20I against Pakistan in September 2016. It was under his captaincy that the West Indies team had returned home midway through a series in India in 2014 after a fallout with the board.

Pollard, on the other hand, last played an ODI in 2016 against Pakistan at Abu Dhabi. He last represented the regional side in a T20I against India in November 2018.

Other players in the list include Sunil Ambris, John Campbell, Jonathan Carter, Roston Chase, Shane Dowrich, Keemo Paul, Khary Pierre and Raymon Reifer.

"The choice of players in the reserve list is to really cover our bases and ensure we have a good balance in the pool of players that can be selected if replacements are required," said Interim Chairman of Selectors Robert Haynes.

"We think the skill set in this pool is strong with a good blend of experience and upcoming young players who can be ready to contribute when required."

The West Indies will have a training camp in Southampton, England from May 19 to 23 to prepare for the World Cup.

The four-day camp, involving the entire 15-man squad, will include an additional warm-up fixture against Australia, which will be played on May 22 at the Ageas Bowl.

'Dhoni puts opposition under pressure'



FIANS ■ MUMBAI

With the ICC Cricket World Cup 2019 just around the corner, all eyes will be on Team India which is seen as the most strong contender and on former captain MS Dhoni who is probably featuring in his last World Cup.

Experts of the game believe the stumper will be a major weapon in Captain Virat Kohli's armoury.

Speaking on Star Sports, the tournament's official global broadcaster which introduced a new show 'FAB 15' that analyses each player who is part of the Indian World Cup squad going to England, former New Zealand cricketer Brendon McCullum said: "He is invaluable to the Indian team, he has

a blueprint in his mind along with an approach to the game. He always puts the opposition under pressure when he arrives at the crease and reads the game perfectly. His fitness has been great, and he has been striking the ball beautifully in the recent past."

On MSD's recent form as a wicketkeeper and batsman, former England batsman Kevin Pietersen said: "His calmness gives him the ability to judge what's in front of him, it doesn't matter what situation it is, he is just one of those guys who you know would hold onto the ball when thrown at him."

"The best thing about IPL this year was the rebirth of MSD's batting, he took out all the bowling attacks in front of him," he added.

Did not blow whistle on spot-fixing scandal: Afridi

PTI ■ KARACHI

Former captain Shahid Afridi Sunday said that he did not blow the whistle on the spot-fixing scandal that rocked world cricket during Pakistan's tour of England in 2010.

Having discussed in detail about the spot-fixing scandal in his autobiography 'Game Changer', Afridi insisted he did not pass on the information or messages to the tabloid 'News of the World' which eventually broke the story.

"These players (Salman Butt, Muhammad Asif and Muhammad Aamir) still think that Lala (Afridi) blew the whistle about them to the newspaper that is not true. It was one of my friends in England who passed on the information without informing me and even after that the newspaper carried out its own investigation and sting operation to confirm and trap the players," Afridi said on a news channel.

Afridi said his former team-mate Abdul Razzaq had first talked about the involvement of some players with fixers when the team was playing the World T20 in West Indies in 2010.

"Razzaq kept on telling me after one match against Sri Lanka that he had doubts about Salman Butt but I did not believe him at that time. I said they are like our younger brothers. Later on as fate would have it a damaged mobile which went to a repair shop and whose owner knew my friend in England revealed messages that surprised me and made me suspect that these players were indeed spot-fixing matches," he said.

Afridi, who retired from international cricket in 2016, said he was hurt and disappointed when Butt's involvement in the scandal was confirmed as he liked him a lot.

He also maintained when he first saw the messages about Butt, Asif and Aamir, he could

not sleep for few days and did not have the courage to share it with Razzaq who realised something was wrong.

Asked why he did not confront Butt and the other players about the messages, Afridi said he was let down by the reaction of the team management including Waqar Younis and Yawar Saad when he first showed them the messages.

"It was disappointing for me. My first job was to inform the management, I did that they said 'beta kya karsakta hai ab (son, what we can do now)'. That is also why I gave up Test cricket and the captaincy and returned home."

He conceded that the management did try to warn the players not to meet or mix up with suspicious characters like Mazhar Majeed who was also eventually jailed for his role in the spot-fixing scandal.

Afridi also revealed why he had supported the comeback of Aamir to the Pakistan team after he completed his ban.

Ashwin set to play for Nottinghamshire

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin will be tuning up for the inaugural World Test Championship against West Indies by playing in English County for Nottinghamshire.

"Yes, Ashwin will be playing for the Notts this season. The CoA had already made it clear that any centrally contracted cricketer will have automatic rights to play County cricket if that player gets an offer. Ashwin's deal is almost final and only the CEO needs to sign his NoC," a senior BCCI functionary privy said.

After Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane inked a deal with Hampshire, it is the turn of Ashwin to play six division 1 County games for the Nottinghamshire side that also has England's premier fast bowler Stuart Broad in their ranks.

This will be Ashwin's sec-

ond stint in English County, having played four games for Worcestershire during the 2017 season.

It was a fruitful season back then for the 32 year old, who got 20 scalps in four games and also scored 214 runs.

The BCCI has been in touch with the various county sides as they want their top long form specialists to play county cricket every season during June and July.

As of now, Rahane, Ashwin and Cheteshwar Pujara (with Yorkshire on three year contract) are certain to play the county games.

Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma may also feature in a few games if things fall in place.

As far as the youngsters are concerned, Prithvi Shaw, Hanuma Vihari and Mayank Agarwal will be with the India A side in the West Indies as a part of the shadow tour before the senior squad embarks on its journey.

India go into World Cup as the best bowling side: Rajput

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former India opener Lalchand Rajput believes the Virat Kohli-led side has the best bowling attack among the 10 teams to take part in the upcoming World Cup, making it one of the favourites for the 50-over showpiece event.

"I think India has got best bowling attack and we have got a very well balanced team. We have got very good all-rounders and if we look at any other team, India is best equipped for that," Rajput, who is also the mentor of Triumph Knights Mumbai North East, said here on Sunday.

"...And if it is a good day our team, it is very difficult to beat them. And Hardik (Pandya) is a great X-factor in the team and (Ravindra) Jadeja who can get going at the lower order, so overall I think we have got a very good chance and I think we should be in the top four," added Rajput, who is now Zimbabwe's coach. India begin their campaign



against South Africa at Southampton on June 5.

Rajput, who was the team's cricket-manager when India lifted the inaugural T20 held in South Africa in 2007, feels that this team has the a heavy top three in Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit Sharma and skipper Kohli.

Asked about the similarities between the World Cup winning 2007 side and the current team, Rajput said, "As I said, there are lot of all-rounders, all-rounders makes lot of difference and I think we have got good all-rounders, the strikers as well, we got a

very heavy top three (batsmen) and that's very important."

"Earlier also there was (Virender) Sehwag, Sachin (Tendulkar), now we have got Shikhar Dhawan, Rohit (Sharma) and Virat (Kohli) and then we have got the X-factor, somebody can really bang like a Hardik Pandya, (Mahendra Singh) Dhoni as usual a great finisher, so we have got a very well balanced team," said the former Afghanistan coach.

Rajput heaped praise on the ongoing T20 Mumbai League saying it will only grow.