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Modi to take office on May 30

Maldives scheduled to be PM's 1st foreign visit; Parliament session from June 6

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take oath of office for his second term on May 30, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said here on Sunday.

"The President (Ram Nath Kovind) will administer the oath of office and secrecy to the Prime Minister and other members of Union Council of Ministers on May 30 at 7 pm at Rashtrapati Bhavan," the communiqué issued by President's Press Secretary Ashok Malik said.

Earlier on Saturday, a delegation of the NDA led by BJP president Amit Shah, along with Prakash Singh Badal, Rajnath Singh, Nitish Kumar, Ram Vilas Paswan, Sushma Swaraj, Uddhav Thackeray, Nitin Gadkari, K Palaniswami, Conrad Sangma and Neiphiu Rio, called on the President and handed over a letter to him stating Modi has been elected the leader of the BJP Parliamentary Party. Letters of support from NDA constituents were also handed over to the President.

Sources said the first session of the 17th Parliament will begin on June 6 and continue



Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes blessings of his mother Hiraba at her house in Gandhinagar on Sunday PTI

till June 15. A day after the Parliament session begins, Modi is expected to travel to the Maldives in his first bilateral visit as PM, according to diplomatic sources and Maldivian media reports.

Bhutan was the first country Modi had visited in 2014 after becoming Prime Minister. News agency PTI quoted diplomatic sources saying the Prime Minister is expected to travel to Male in the first half

of June, while the Maldivian media reported the visit will take place on June 7-8.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj visited the Maldives in March, the first full-fledged bilateral trip from

'India will regain rightful position in world in 5 yrs'

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the next five years will be the time to regain the rightful position of India in the world order. He was speaking here at a function following the election victory, which was kept simple and shorn of pomp because of the Surat fire tragedy.

"Next five years will be very important in the history of the country, as was the period between 1942 to 1947. It will be the time to regain the rightful position of India in the world order. In the past our country had that place. I am sure India will regain its importance in the

world order," he said.

Modi expressed grief over the death of 22 students in Surat building fire tragedy. "Till yesterday, I was in two minds whether to go for this felicitation function or not as on one hand, there was 'kartavya' (duty) and on the other hand, there was 'karuna' (compassion) for those who died in Surat. No amount of words can reduce the grief of the families who have lost their children in that tragedy," Modi said.

"On the other hand, I had to thank the people of the state and also take blessings of my mother as my duty," the Prime Minister added.

India to the island nation after the Government of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih came to power in November 2018.

Modi attend Solih's swearing-in ceremony in November, signalling the importance India attaches to the island nation,

where China has been trying to expand its influence. Last week, Solih congratulated Modi for his "resounding victory".

Modi will visit Varanasi on Monday to thank the people for "reposing faith" in him and offer prayers at Kashi Vishwanath temple.

Imran congratulates PM, Modi reiterates fight terror for peace

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday called up Prime Minister Narendra Modi to congratulate him on his massive victory in the Lok Sabha elections, reiterating Islamabad's desire to work with Delhi. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Sunday said in a statement that PM Modi told his Pakistani counterpart on Sunday that creating trust and an environment free of violence and terrorism was essential for fostering peace and prosperity in the region. The MEA said Khan called up Modi to congratulate him on his re-election.

"The Prime Minister thanked the Prime Minister of Pakistan for his telephone call and greetings," the MEA said. Recalling his initiatives in line with his Government's "neighbourhood first" policy, Modi referred to his earlier suggestion to Khan to fight poverty jointly, the MEA said.

This was the first direct communication between the two leaders since the February 14 Pulwama terror attack and the subsequent Balakot air



strike carried out by India. On May 23, on the day of election results, Khan had tweeted to Modi on his thumping win. "I congratulate Prime Minister Modi on the electoral victory of BJP and allies. Look forward to working with him for peace, progress and prosperity in South Asia," he tweeted.

Modi and Khan are scheduled to meet at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan next month.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mohammad Faisal tweeted that Khan spoke to Modi and conveyed that he looked forward to working with him for the betterment of the people of the two countries.

After BJP's huge win, Andhra can't bargain for spl status: Jagan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh CM-designate YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Sunday met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and later made a candid confession that since the BJP has returned to power with thumping majority, he is at the mercy of the Centre for special category status to the State. The YSR Congress Party chief also met BJP president Amit Shah and sought his support on the

issue. Talking to reporters after his meeting with Modi, Jagan said his party could only request and not "demand or command" the special category status — a lifeline — for the ₹2.58 lakh crore debt-ridden State during a meeting with the Prime Minister here.

Jagan, whose party stormed to power in Assembly polls on the promise of getting special category status to the State, said he requested the PM to be "magnanimous" towards the people of Andhra Pradesh.

CBI issues lookout notice against Kolkata ex-top cop

Summons ex-CP in Saradha scam case SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

There was more trouble for former Kolkata Commissioner of Police Rajeev Kumar. Hours after the Supreme Court order providing the 1989-batch IPS officer protection from arrest for seven days lapsed on Saturday midnight, the CBI on Sunday served him a notice to appear before its officials on Monday morning.

A team of CBI sleuths led by senior officials Partho

Mukherjee and Manish Upadhyay on Sunday evening landed at the top officer's official residence at Rawdon Street in Kolkata in search of Kumar.

Apparently failing to find the top cop there, the officers arrived at the office of DCP South where a notice was served for Kumar to appear before the Economic Offence Wing officials at the CGO complex. He has been asked to report at the CBI office by 10 am in the morning, agency sources said, adding repeated efforts to contact him over telephone had failed.

Kumar was frantically trying to seek anticipatory bail

from a lower court at Barasat after the apex court refused to hear his plea for extension of the shield against arrest. The bail was rejected at lower court on technical grounds on Saturday and he was likely to apply for the same past 10 am on Monday making the CBI order directing him to appear before 10 am significant.

Earlier the CBI on Sunday issued a "look-out notice" on Kumar, who is being probed in the multi-crore Sharada and other chit fund cases for his role as the head of the Special Investigation Team formed by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to investigate the case.



BJP MP Smriti Irani is among the pall-bearers of the mortal remains of her aide Surendra Singh during his funeral at his village in Amethi on Sunday PTI

Irani's aide shot, 5 held in Amethi

PNS ■ AMETHI

In the first incident of post-poll violence in Uttar Pradesh, a close aide of newly-elected Amethi MP Smriti Irani was shot dead by two unidentified men, with police lodging an FIR against five persons and not ruling out the possibility of it being a "political murder".

Irani asked party workers to exercise restraint, even as she targeted Congress president Rahul Gandhi over his "take-care-of-Amethi-with-love" remark, saying she had got the message "loud and clear".



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is greeted by YSR Congress Party president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister-designate YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at former's residence in New Delhi on Sunday PTI

30-yr-old man jumps to death off DND flyover

New Delhi: A 30-year-old man committed suicide after he jumped into the Yamuna river from the DND flyover in south-east Delhi, a police officer said on Sunday.

The incident occurred at around 11.30 p.m. on Saturday when the deceased, who was later identified as Virender, came to the DND flyover from Noida side on his bike. Some passersby saw Virender jump off the flyover and informed the Police Control Room (PCR).

"After a long search operation conducted by teams from the fire department, Delhi Boat Club and local police, the body was finally fished out at 2 p.m. on Sunday," a senior police officer told IANS.

Virender worked as a driver for a Chartered Accountant (CA) in Connaught Place and stayed with his family in Radhe Shyam Park Extension in east Delhi's Krishna Nagar.

"During investigation, it was found that the deceased had gone to Noida to meet some of his friends. They consumed liquor together and when someone from his family called him, Virender said he would reach home soon. But later he jumped off the flyover under the influence of alcohol.

"We are probing the matter to find out why Virender took the extreme step. Prima facie it appears that Virender was suffering from depression for the past few days," the officer said.

No suicide note was found from Virender's possession, the officer added.

In the last couple of years, over 15 persons had committed suicide by jumping into the Yamuna river from the DND flyover.

Politics not complicated if people kept priority: Naveen

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who won the state Assembly election for the fifth consecutive time, on Sunday said politics is not complicated when people and their welfare are kept in the forefront.

"People ask me often what is the secret of the BJD's continuous success and I always tell them these two points - keep people in focus and work for people," Patnaik told newly-elected party legislators, who elected him as the Biju Janata Dal's legislature party leader.

Welcoming the lawmakers, he advised them to lead a sim-

ple life. "Always remember to lead a simple life. When you are simple, people are close to you," he added.

Patnaik also advised the MLAs to work hard and take Odisha to the next level in development.

"We have to honour the faith, people have on us by sincere and dedicated hard work," he said.

Patnaik will take oath as Chief Minister for fifth consecutive time on May 29.

The BJD won 112 of the state's 146 Assembly seats.

IANS



CAPSULE

REPORTS OF JAITLEY'S SINKING HEALTH FALSE

New Delhi: The Government on Sunday said reports on the deteriorating health of outgoing Finance Minister Arun Jaitley are false and baseless, and media should stay clear of rumour mongering. Amid speculation about Jaitley's health, Government spokesperson Sitanshu Kar took to Twitter to clear the air.

WILL LEAVE AAP IN 2020: DISGRUNTLED ALKA LAMBA

New Delhi: Disgruntled AAP legislator Alka Lamba has announced that she would leave the party next year.

43% NEWLY-ELECTED MPs HAVE CRIMINAL RECORD: ADR

New Delhi: Nearly half of the newly-elected Lok Sabha members are facing criminal charges, a 26 per cent increase as compared to 2014, said Association of Democratic Reforms.

MUSA KILLING: NORMALCY RETURNS TO KASHMIR

Srinagar: Life returned to normal in Kashmir after two days of restrictions and shutdown in the wake of the killing of Zakir Musa — the so-called head of an Al-Qaeda affiliate — in an encounter with security forces.

New Lok Sabha has 475 'crorepati' MPs: ADR

New Delhi: A total of 475 members of the new Lok Sabha are 'crorepatris' with Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath's son Nakul Nath topping the list, the Association of Democratic Reforms said Sunday.

The ADR arrived at the figure of 'crorepati' MPs after analysing the affidavits on assets and liabilities of 539 new MPs.

The ADR said it was unable to access affidavits of three of the 542 new MPs — two of the BJP and one of the Congress. The BJP won 303 seats in the 17th Lok Sabha and the Congress 52.

Elections were held for 542 of the 543 Lok Sabha seats. The election for Vellore Lok Sabha seat had been cancelled

by the Election Commission of India, citing abuse of money power. A fresh date is yet to be announced. Two members of the 545-strong House are nominated.

Out of the 301 new BJP MPs, whose affidavits were examined, 265 (88 per cent) were found crorepati, while all 18 winners of its NDA partner Shiv Sena had assets exceeding Rs one crore.

In the Congress, 43 out of its 51 MPs (totalling 96 per cent) were found to be 'crorepati'. Similarly, 22 (96 per cent) out of 23 DMK MPs, 20 (91 per cent) out of 22 of the Trinamool Congress MPs and 19 (86 per cent) out of 22 YSR Congress MPs had assets exceeding Rs one crore.

The top three crorepatris MPs are from the Congress, the ADR said.

Nath, who won from Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh, has declared assets worth Rs 660 crore, followed by Vasanthakumar H from Kanniyakumari, Tamil Nadu (Rs 417 crore) and D K Suresh from Bengaluru Rural, Karnataka (Rs 338 crore).

The average of assets per winner in the Lok Sabha elections is Rs 20.93 crore. There are 266 members in the new Lok Sabha whose assets are Rs 5 crore or above.

The number of crorepati MPs elected in 2009 Lok Sabha elections was 315 (58 per cent) and 443 (82 per cent) in the 2014.

Detailed report on P2

PM only paying lip service to minorities, says Owaisi

Hyderabad: AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi on Sunday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was only paying lip service by saying minorities live in fear as he and his party BJP had been "practicing hypocrisy" for five years.

A day after the Prime Minister stated that minorities live in fear and called for removing it, Owaisi said Modi was not giving a message but "stood exposed with the hypocrisy and contradictions".

If Modi stops gangs which are killing and beating Muslims in the name of cows, the fear among minorities will go away, he told reporters here.

Referring to the latest incident of beating up of a Muslim in Madhya Pradesh by cow vigilantes, Owaisi said the BJP's victory had further embold-

ened these organisations and nobody could stop them.

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimen (AIMIM) chief said as the Prime Minister who takes oath on Constitution, Modi should know that right to life is for human beings and not for animals.

"If the Prime Minister understands this basic thing of Constitution that right to life is for the human being, I am sure the fear will go away but BJP does not appreciate fundamental rights.

"If the PM seriously feels minorities live in fear, will he stop all these gangs who in the name of cow, kill and beat Muslims, take out videos and demean us," said Owaisi terming these gangs as "bhasmasur". IANS

Will probe schemes launched by Naidu: Jagan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister-designate Jagan Mohan Reddy on Sunday said he would order a probe into the alleged financial irregularities in the construction of new State Capital Amaravati, the Polavaram project and other schemes launched by former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

Set to take oath as the Chief Minister on May 30, Jagan said a white paper in this regard would be released after reviewing the works of each department in the State.

He was in the national Capital to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president Amit Shah to discuss the issue of special category status and financial help to of ₹2.58 lakh crore to debt-ridden State.

Asked if his Government would probe the alleged irregularities in the construction of the new State Capital and other

schemes launched by the previous government, Reddy said, "It is a Catch 22 situation. We have to look into the scams... These are not ordinary scams. They are going to be sensational scams."

Accusing Naidu of misleading people about the place where the new Capital would come up in order to buy himself land at lower rates, Jagan said, "This is an inside story. This is something like insider trading. He (Naidu) has bought vast expanses of benami land. This scam does not stop there. He forced people to sell under land pooling and exempted his own benami land," Reddy said, adding that he had nothing personal against Naidu.

On the multi-purpose Polavaram project on the Godavari river, he said, "We will probe if there was any scam in the implementation of the project. This project has to be completed as per the timeline and there is no other option." The state did not have the



YSR Congress Party president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister-designate YS Jaganmohan Reddy is greeted by his supporters on his arrival at Andhra Bhawan in New Delhi on Sunday

He was in the national Capital to call on PM Narendra Modi to discuss the issue of Special Status and financial help to the debt-ridden State

Since the Centre declared it as a national project in 2014, an amount of ₹11,210 crore has been spent on the Polavaram project. The Centre has reimbursed ₹6,727 crore to the State Government, according to the official data.

The project aims to irrigate 2.91 lakh hectares, generate 960 MW of power, and fulfil the water needs of industries and 540 villages in Andhra Pradesh.

He further said his priority would be implementing his party's poll promise of "nine large-scale welfare programmes".

"I have promised to my people and I have a big responsibility to fulfil those. So, I cannot take any chance. With the blessings of the god, I will work towards that direction. In 50 days after taking oath as chief

minister, I will chalk out a plan of action," Jagan told reporters here.

Asserting that the YSRCP-led Government would be "transparent and corruption-free", Reddy said, "We will not only clean the system and show how it is cleansed, but we will also show how to stop scams."

"We will bring in reverse tendering. If scams are found in a project, we will identify and cancel that work and increase the pre-qualification criteria so that more number of people can participate. We will give

projects to those who quote less. Everything will be transparent. We will monitor all projects," he added.

The YSRCP chief said his Government will be "revolutionary" and will set an example in the country.

"Within six months or a year, I will make sure that this Government will stand as an exemplary one in the country. I will ensure that there is no

corruption and clean up the entire system," he added.

Asked about the 32 cases lodged against him, Reddy claimed that those were filed by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the Congress, adding that the huge verdict in the Assembly polls in favour of his party was a clear indication that the cases were false.

"The cases were filed after my father's (former chief minister, late YS Rajasekhara Reddy) death and after I left the Congress. The petitioners in the cases are none other than the TDP and the Congress," he said, adding that everyone in Andhra Pradesh knew about it and that's why people had given this verdict.

Reddy's party has won 151 of the 175 Assembly and 22 of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in Andhra Pradesh, the elections for which were held on April 11. Reddy was unanimously elected as the leader of the YSR Legislature Party on Saturday.

Alert after 15 ISIS ultras set off for Kerala from Lanka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Security agencies have issued an alert warning a boat carrying 15 ISIS terrorists had set off from Sri Lanka to Lakshadweep Islands.

Following the alert, the stakeholder agencies for coastal security like Navy, Coast Guard and Coastal police have beefed up the level of surveillance off Kerala and Lakshadweep coasts, sources said.

The Navy and Coast Guard are maintaining vigil. Ships and aircraft have been engaged to ensure high level of coastal surveillance, the sources said.

This besides, the coastal police has also upped its vigil in its domain after the alert was passed on Saturday to all the coastal police stations and coastal district police chiefs. The coastal police has also been asked to be alert in case suspicious vessels are sighted in their areas.

The security agencies issued the alert following inputs from Sri Lankan agencies which were shared on Thursday.

The South Indian States



have a considerable presence of Islamic State radicals and sympathizers if the number of cases registered against the outfit by the NIA are any indication. The ISIS is suspected to have penetrated a number of so called mainstream Muslim outfits.

NIA investigation in ISIS module of Kerala had revealed that IS operatives had planned attacks in Kerala.

A considerable number of Keralaites are still with the ISIS, which was recently wiped out from Iraq and Syria, according to inputs.

Sri Lanka witnessed a deadly terror attack on Apr 21 when serial blasts rocked the island nation taking a toll of over 250 lives.

The Islamic State had claimed responsibility for the Colombo bombings.

Lack of cross-equatorial flow hinders progress of monsoon

New Delhi: Unfavourable cross-equatorial flow over the Arabian Sea that aids in the progress of the monsoon is one of the reasons for its delay, the national weather agency said on Sunday. Monsoon reached the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on May 18. But it is yet to cover the entire region, the India Meteorological Department said. Conditions are likely to become favourable for the movement of the southwest monsoon into some more parts of south Bay of Bengal, Andaman Islands and north Andaman Sea during Wednesday-Thursday, the IMD said.

It is also expected to make an onset over Kerala on June 6, five days after its normal onset date, it had said. The weather department said the monsoon was yet to get traction from the Arabian Sea.

"The slow pace is because of the lack of cross-equatorial flow in the Arabian Sea," Mritunjay Mohapatra, the additional director general of the IMD, said.

Mohapatra attributed the sluggish pace to the unfavourable Madden-Julian oscillation (MJO) and anticyclonic circulation over the south Indian Ocean that aids

the progress on monsoon.

The MJO can be defined as an eastward moving 'pulse' of clouds, rainfall, winds and pressure near the equator that typically recurs every 30-60 days. It is a traversing phenomenon and is prominent over the Indian Ocean.

In its bulletin, the IMD said 'fairly widespread to widespread rainfall' activity with isolated heavy falls were very likely to occur over Assam and Meghalaya and sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim on Wednesday and Thursday.

Scattered to fairly widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy falls are very likely to occur over south interior Karnataka from May 26-28 and over Tamil Nadu on Tuesday-Wednesday, it said.

On the other hand, heat-wave conditions continue in central Indian and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The heatwave is expected in some parts are very likely to continue over Vidarbha and at isolated pockets over central Maharashtra, Telangana, east MP, Chhattisgarh, east UP, Jharkhand and Odisha during the next four-five days. PTI

Assam Rifles battalion to be deployed in J&K as NDRF

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Assam Rifles, a central paramilitary force that guards India's border with Myanmar, will soon have presence in Jammu & Kashmir after the Centre decided to place one of its battalion (1,000 personnel) into the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) will have four new battalions that will be based in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the National Capital Region. The new battalions of the NDRF will be drawn from the Assam Rifles (location in J&K), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and the Border Security Force (Delhi-NCR region), officials said.

The Assam Rifles draws its strength of officers from the Army and functions under administrative command of the Defence Ministry and the operational command of the Union Home Ministry.

Established in 1835 as a



militia called the 'Cachar Levy', the paramilitary force has a strength of about 47,000 personnel. Land is being acquired to operationalise the new NDRF battalions even as the move to raise the four new NDRF battalions was approved in August with a view to strengthen India's disaster response set up at an estimated cost of ₹637 crore.

The aim for creation and placement of these new units is to reduce the response time, keeping in view the vast geo-

graphical area of the country, the government had said.

The NDRF has 12 operational battalions at present.

It is a specialised force that was raised in 2006 for specific tasks of relief and rescue during natural and man-made disasters.

The operational battalions are located in Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, NCR (Ghaziabad), Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

43% newly-elected MPs have criminal record: ADR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly half of the newly-elected Lok Sabha members have criminal charges against them, a 26 per cent increase as compared to 2014. According to the Association of Democratic Reforms, of the 539 winning candidates analysed by the ADR, as many as 233 MPs or 43 per cent have criminal charges. With ₹660.19 crore assets, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister's son, Nakul Nath is the richest MP in the 17th Lok Sabha. Nakul Nath, who won the elections from Chhindwara in Madhya Pradesh has declared moveable assets worth ₹6,18,41,72,757. His immovable assets are valued at ₹41,77,74,000, followed by Vasanthakumar H of the Congress, having total assets of ₹417 crore who won the elections from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu.

According to ADR, the BJP has 116 MPs or 39 per cent of its winning candidates with criminal cases, followed by 29 MPs (57 per cent) from the Congress, 13 (81 per cent) from the JDU, 10 (43 per cent) from the DMK and nine (41 per cent) from the TMC.

In 2014, 185 Lok Sabha members (34 per cent) had criminal charges and 112 MPs had serious criminal cases against them. In 2009, 162 (nearly 30 per cent) out of the 543 Lok Sabha MPs had criminal charges and 14 per cent had serious criminal charges, it said.

In the new Lok Sabha, nearly 29 per cent of the cases are related to rape, murder, attempt to murder or crime against women, the non-governmental organisation said.

"There is an increase of 109 per cent (in 2019) in the number of MPs with declared seri-



ous criminal cases since 2009," it said. Eleven winners — five from the BJP, two from the BSP, one each from the Congress, NCP and the YSR Congress Party, and an Independent — have murder charges against them, the ADR said.

Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur, the newly-elected BJP MP from Bhopal, faces terror charges in connection with the 2008 Malegaon blasts. The BJP has faced a lot of criticism for fielding her. Moreover, 29 winners have declared cases relat-

ed to hate speech, it said.

Dean Kuriakose from the Congress, who won from the Idukki constituency in Kerala, has 204 criminal cases against him, including culpable homicide, house trespass, robbery, criminal intimidation, it added.

Prez gives assent to Guj Bill for redevelopment of 25-year-old apartments

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind has given his assent to a Bill which will facilitate redevelopment of 25-year-old group housing societies in Gujarat with the consent of 75 per cent residents, instead of all, officials said on Sunday.

The Gujarat Ownership Flats (Amendment) Bill 2018 was enacted by the Gujarat Assembly in September 2018 and it was subsequently sent to the President for his assent.

The President has given his assent to the Gujarat Bill recently, a Home Ministry official said.

According to the legislation, apartments which were

built 25 years ago or earlier can be redeveloped with the consent of 75 per cent of the owners.

Till now, redevelopment of any group housing society in the state required consent of all residents, which had led to conflicts in many apartments.

As many apartments in Gujarat are more than 25 years old and require redevelopment, the new legislation will accelerate such activities, the official said.

Last year, the President gave his assent to a similar bill enacted by the Maharashtra Assembly to smoothen the process of reconstructing dilapidated buildings or a complex of buildings in land-starved Mumbai.

Modi calls on Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A day after being appointed Prime Minister for a second term, Narendra Modi on Sunday called on Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu.

Sources described it as a courtesy call.

Modi reached the Vice-President house here to meet Naidu on Sunday morning.

"Shri Narendra Bhai Modi ji called on me today morning. Greeted him on being elected as the leader of NDA and the next Prime Minister. Over breakfast, we discussed many issues including accelerating development and strengthening Parliamentary institutions," Naidu's office tweeted.

Modi too tweeted saying he called on Naidu and posted two photographs.

Tech to help Vit D-rich shiitake mushroom cultivation cheap & fast

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists at Institute of Himalayan Bio-resource Technology (IHBT), a premier lab of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Himachal Pradesh's Palampur, have developed a cost-effective technology that can help cultivation of highly nutritious Vitamin D-enriched shiitake mushrooms in two months duration against conventional nine-ten months under local condition.

Once taken on commercial scale, the nutritional shiitake mushrooms not only promises to meet the Vitamin D need of the nutrition bereft Indian population but also boost the revenue of the producers as it has high local and global market demand.

Doctors say that at least 80 per cent of urban population in India suffers from deficiency of Vitamin D- vital for absorption of calcium-naturally available from sunlight. Absence of Vitamin D can cause many critical diseases.

Says Dr Sanjay Kumar, Director of the IHBT, "It is well known that mushrooms — Shiitake (Lentinula edodes) being one of the varieties — are the vegetarian source of vitamin D. The technology developed by our scientists aim to enhance production of ergocalciferols (Vitamin D) in Shiitake mushroom which is most preferred variety in India particularly North India."

Talking about the key features of the agri-technology, he said that duration of captive cultivation has been cut down



Production of Shiitake mushroom



Shiitake mushroom and powder



Encapsulated Shiitake mushroom

to two months from conventional eight-nine months and yield is also high ie .5-.6 kg fruiting body per 1 kg of saw-

dust substrate. "Capsule of 500 mg Shiitake powder meets 50 per cent recommended dietary allowances (RDA) of Vitamin

D," Kumar explained.

The development of the technology is part of the Government's Nutraceutical

country.

Rakshak Kumar, scientist and assistant professor at the IHBT added that the mushroom has the attributes of great crops in the coming years. The global demand for Shiitake mushroom is expected to reach approximately 4500 tonnes by 2025 with an estimated market of \$35.4 billion and the international demand for vitamin D is estimated to reach USD 140 million by 2025 growing annually at 1.2 per cent.

In fact, the technology developed by the IHBT is already catching the attention of the entrepreneurs. Innotech AgroPustikam Pvt Ltd, Guwahati Biotech Park, Assam, Pravin Masalewale, Hadapsar Industrial Estate, Hadapsar, Pune, Maharashtra and Ray's Tech Hamirpur, Himachal

Pradesh have signed the pact with the IHBT for transfer of technology while talks are on with two more stakeholders, said Rakshak Kumar.

From general pain in bones and irritability, the deficiency of Vitamin D can cause severe diseases as well. It reduces the immunity of the body to fight infections and makes the body vulnerable for several killer diseases such as cancer, brain disorders and heart problems, as per the doctors.

A survey by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), a trade lobby, conducted between October 2017 and March 2018, found that over half of the population in Delhi, one of the worst smog affected cities, is suffering from Vitamin D deficiency.

'Chhattisgarhi movies have lost connect with people'

ANKIT MISHRA ■ RAIPUR

Majority of films made in Chhattisgarhi language have lost the connect with public, this is the prime reason of Chhollywood movies are under-performing commercially, opined Dr Yogendra Choubey, alumnus of National School of Drama (NSD) New Delhi who is based in Raipur.

Choubey who is among the founding persons of theater department at Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya Khairagarh, had directed a Chhattisgarhi movie 'Ganje Ki Kali' based on the story of renowned writer Amrita Pritam. The film won several



national and international accolades and was praised widely for being a different kind of movie with intellectual touch.

Sharing a personal experience, he informed that a few years back while traveling in an auto rickshaw he



had asked the driver whether Chhattisgarhi movies entertain or inspire him or not?

"To my surprise the auto-rickshaw driver denied watching Chhattisgarhi movies while reasoning that nowadays movies of Amitabh Bachchan are failing so how could Chhattisgarhi movies live up to people's expectations," Choubey said while adding the reply was basically an indicator that Chhattisgarhi

movies have lost connect with audience.

Choubey who has been part of government's several cultural committees including the selection board of NSD, is 'not' an advocate of government supporting films.

"Any commercial cinema can't be directly supported by government. However, on merit basis films that promote local culture, language could win support," he claimed but was quick to add that 'only for screening of films in theaters government's intervention is required'.

According to Choubey, Chhollywood today is a vic-

tim of narcissism. People in this industry feel they know everything but they have to learn to grow then only good cinema can be produced.

"In our state most of the movies are being made not for the public but for self-satisfaction. If you mute the sound of most of Chhattisgarhi movies, then you feel that you are either watching a C-grade Hindi film or a Bhojpuri cinema," he remarked.

However, Choubey is optimistic that there are a handful of good creative people from top film institute like, Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute Kolkata, FTII Pune, NSD Delhi.

NSUI member killed by suspected Maoists

STAFF REPORTER ■ BIJAPUR

A member of Congress party's youth wing NSUI, was hacked to death by suspected Maoists while tagging him as a police informer in the insurgency-hit Bijapur district, police said here on Sunday.

According to police, the deceased was identified as Sahdev Samrath (30), a native of Thothapara area of Gudsakal village. The Naxals had attacked him with sharp-edged weapons on Saturday night when he had gone to attend a wedding function in the nearby Kostapara under Bhairamgarh town.

"The deceased had noticed four to five men armed equipped with sharp weapons looking for him after which tried to escape," a local police officer said.

The assailants hacked Samrath and beat him up brutally with sticks and attacked him with axes and knives, killing him on the spot. Samrath was as an auto-rickshaw driver and also a local worker of the Congress party, police added.

It was not clear why he was killed as no pamphlet or notes was recovered from the



spot. Efforts to trace the assailants were on and police had registered a case in this connection.

The Congress has strongly condemned the killing and termed it a cowardly attack.

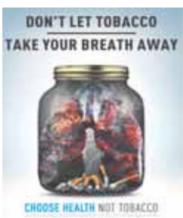
'Yellow Line Campaign' to keep students away from tobacco

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh government's Health department will commence a three-day special drive 'Yellow Line Campaign' from May 29 to 31 across the state near educational institutions to keep these institutions tobacco-free and refrain young generation from getting addicted to tobacco.

Health department has issued a letter to all districts Chief Medical and Health Officers to ensure maximum participation of common people in the campaign.

Health department



officials said under The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA, 2003) will undertake special drive from May 29 to 31, 2019. Already in state, from May 15 to June 15, the 'Non-communicable diseases prevention and treatment month' is underway. The check up of lungs has been

included in the drive.

Similarly, on May 31 at Ambuja Mall, state-level painting, essay writing and debate to be organised from 1.00 PM.

The painting competition to be held in three different categories for students from class 5 to 12th, and essay competition for class 11th and 12th students. Debate event will be held for medical college students.

Prizes would be given to the winners.

Health department officials intimated the drive is part of 'World No Tobacco Day' observed around the

world every year on May 31. The focus of World No Tobacco Day 2019 is on 'Tobacco and lung health'. The world-wide campaign is to increase awareness on the nega-

tive impact of tobacco on people's lung health, from cancer to chronic respiratory disease, the fundamental role lungs play for the health and well-being of all people.

Yellow Line Campaign

Under the Yellow Line Campaign, Chief Medical and health Officers will ensure that within 100 yards of all educational and government institutions, sale or use of tobacco or its products do not take place. The officials will identify such sellers and remove such shops within the prohibited area.

School and college students, including faculty members will be administered pledge to refrain from use of tobacco and its products. A yellow line will be drawn from the boundary wall of the institutions as tobacco free zone cum prohibited area. School Tobacco Control Committee, teachers, students, media personnel and people will be included in drive.

'Nehru Ka Bharat' symposium today

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Pradesh Congress Committee will organise a symposium 'Nehru Ka Bharat' on Monday on the occasion of the death anniversary of India's first prime minister late Jawaharlal Nehru.

Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) general secretary and chairman communication wing Shailesh Nitin Trivedi informed that noted thinker and writer, Purushottam Agrawal would be the key speaker while Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel will pre-



side over the function.

The symposium would be held from 11 a.m. at party state headquarters Rajiv Bhawan.

Baghel to unlock devp projects as MCC lifted

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh's Congress government is all set to unlock development projects as the model code of conduct (MCC) for the Lok Sabha was lifted on Sunday following the declaration of election results.

"The Model Code of Conduct has ceased to be in operation with immediate effect," said a release from the Election Commission.

The MCC for the general elections had come into force on March 10 with the announcement of the schedule for the seven-phased parliamentary polls. Meanwhile, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel while talking to media persons here at Raipur's Swami Vivekanand airport on Sunday evening upon his return from Delhi, expressed his apprehension on state of affairs going on in



the country.

He said "diversity is our identity and unity in diversity is our strength. There are so many languages, cultures, communities in our country but this diversity is our strength, Narendra Modi had attacked on it and this unity is severely hit with the formation of the BJP government at the Centre". "Election was fought on religious patriotism issue and country's military was projected as an army of Modi which was very shocking and disturbing," Baghel alleged.



The newly-elected Lok Sabha MPs from Chhattisgarh held a formal meeting in New Delhi on Sunday at the residence of Vishnudeo Sai, outgoing minister of state for Steel and Coal. BJP has won nine out of state's total 11 seats. BJP national general secretary (organisation) Ram Lal, national joint general secretary Saudan Singh, national vice president and former chief minister Raman Singh, BJP state president Vikram Usendi, Rajya Sabha members from state- Ramvichar Netam and Saroj Pandey- were also present in the meeting.

Naxal involved in killing of Bhima Mandavi shot dead

STAFF REPORTER ■ DANTEWADA

A hardcore Naxal, who was allegedly involved in killing of BJP MLA from Dantewada- Bhima Mandavi along with four police personnel in April this year, was killed in an encounter with security forces in Dantewada district, police said here on Sunday.

The gun battle took place in the jungles of Hiroli under Kirandul police station area when a squad of District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on anti-naxal operation, DIG (anti-Naxal operations) Sundar Raj said.

As the police team was advancing through Hiroli, around 450 km from Raipur, exchange of fire broke out between the two sides, he said.

After the Naxals fled, the body of Guddi, a member of Local Organisation Squad of Malangir Area Committee of Maoists, was found. A revolver with six rounds was also recovered from the spot, Sundar Raj said.

He was suspected to be involved in around 40 cases of Naxal violence, including the killing of BJP MLA Bhima Mandavi and four security personnel.

Mandavi and the policemen were killed

The gun battle took place in the jungles of Hiroli under Kirandul police station area when a squad of District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on anti-naxal operation, DIG (anti-Naxal operations) Sundar Raj said.

when an improvised explosive device (IED) blast blew up their vehicle near Shyamgiri village in Dantewada on April 9.

Guddi was carrying a reward of Rs 1 lakh on his head.

Commandos of the recently set up women platoon of DRG, 'Danteshwari Ladake' (fighters of goddess Danteshwari), also took part in Sunday's encounter with Maoists, the DIG said.

Major fire breaks out at Durg Super market

STAFF REPORTER ■ DURG

A super market and an artificial jewellery showroom were gutted in a ravaging fire at famous Indira Market locality in Durg town on Sunday. However, no injuries or loss to human life was reported when the last report came in.

The fire broke out on Sunday wee hours at around 5:30 am and soon the fire spread to second floor of the super market.

Passerby noticed the incident and informed the police and fire tenders were pressed into service which took at least five hours to douse the fire

Superintendent of Police, Durg, Vivek Shukla informed that the exact reason how the fire broke out was yet to be ascertained but short circuit was suspected to be the reason.



Be more mindful of menstrual hygiene in summer season

STAFF REPORTER ■ RAIPUR

Menstrual hygiene is vital year-round, but it's advisable to be more careful in the summer season when heat and sweat can lead to more rashes, say experts.

Ahead of World Menstrual Hygiene Day, observed on May 28, Monica Bindra, co-founder, LAIQA, and Gurinder Singh Sahota, founder, Silky Cup, have shared tips:

* Change your pad every four hours: If you use sanitary pads to soak the flow during your periods, remember to change it often. Ideally, changing it every four hours is good. If not everyday, do this on the first two days when the flow is heavier.

* Use biodegradable sanitary napkins: Use biodegradable or cotton sanitary napkins or

tampons during menstruation. They are good for your skin and reduce itchiness and rashes.

* Switch to menstrual cups: Menstrual cups, funnel-shaped cups, are an environment-friendly and reasonably priced solution to sanitary napkins and tampons. Menstrual cups are made of silicone and is skin friendly.

* Keep your vaginal area clean: It is important to keep your vaginal area clean, especially during periods. Use warm water and diluted soap to wash the area.

* Never use two pads simultaneously: No, two is not better than one. Some women who experience heavy flow, tend to use two sanitary pads at one go to control the flow and prevent staining of clothes. This, however, is a bad idea as it can cause infections in the vaginal region. Stick to one and keep changing it often

if the flow is more.

* Wear comfortable, clean underwear: Tight thongs or underwear made of fabric that doesn't allow your skin to breathe will also lead to infections. Stick to clean and comfortable cotton knickers that do not stick to your skin.

* Avoid tight clothing: A lot of sweat is discharged during summers, which can be uncomfortable, and makes one's intimate area moist and wet.

* Maintain hygiene in scorching summer: Avoid anything that increases the retention of heat and sweat as this can cause the growth of bacteria and even lead to vaginal infection and urinary tract infections (UTIs). If you suspect any type of rash or infection in or near your genitals, do not ignore it.

Capt to take up Sidhu issue with Rahul this week

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The ongoing spat between Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh and his "out-spoken" cabinet colleague Navjot Singh Sidhu is likely to be taken up by the former with the party's national president Rahul Gandhi in their meeting this week in New Delhi.

Both Capt Amarinder and Sidhu have been camping at the national capital to have audience with Rahul Gandhi to put forth their respective cases.

The Chief Minister, who is currently in the national capital for the Congress Working Committee's introspection meet following its Lok Sabha debacle, is returning Chandigarh on late Monday and will go back to meet Rahul later in the week.

"The Chief Minister is meeting Rahul Gandhi later in the week," a senior functionary in the Chief Minister's Office told IANS.

Capt Amarinder said to have prepared a complete case against Sidhu with the list of constituencies where Congress had always fared well, but failed this time, holding Sidhu responsible for not doing his job well as the Urban Development Minister.



On the other hand, Sidhu is also all-prepared with his list of "urban" segments where the party has performed well for which he should be given all credits.

The cold war between the Chief Minister and his Local Bodies Minister intensified when Capt Amarinder categorically blamed Sidhu for the party's poor performance in the state's urban areas saying that his actions during the parliamentary elections had not only

harmed him but also Rahul Gandhi.

The Chief Minister had stated that the urban vote bank had been the backbone of the Congress in the State but Sidhu's failure to do any development work had hurt the party, which had performed well in the rural areas in these elections.

Capt Amarinder went in to add that he had raised the issue of changing Sidhu's portfolio some months ago,



but the party decided to take a call on it after the Lok Sabha elections. "I am confident that both Rahul Gandhi and party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra would agree to the decision in the interest of the state and the party," said Capt Amarinder after the declaration of results.

He had also expressed his unhappiness over Sidhu's "friendly match" jibe by saying that he should have waited for a day to give such a statement

declining her nomination from Chandigarh Lok Sabha seat — a statement backed by Sidhu.

Sidhu had also declared to step down if the Badals were not punished in the 2015 sacrilege cases.

Referring to Sidhu's remarks on the investigation into the sacrilege cases in Bathinda, the seat that the Congress lost to Akali Dal's Harsimrat Kaur Badal by a slender margin of 21,772 votes, the Chief Minister had said that the Minister evidently did not understand that the SIT had been set up by the Assembly.

The Chief Minister had also reiterated that Sidhu's 'yaari and jhappi' (friendship and hug) with the Pakistani Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, would not be tolerated, especially by Indian army personnel, who were being killed by ISI-backed terrorists while he was going hugging their leaders.

Meanwhile, cricketer-turned-politician Sidhu indirectly took a jibe at the Chief Minister by quoting a couplet from a famous ghazal of Iqbal. "I am not a lone warrior in this universe. I have a plenty of friends now," Sidhu tweeted on Saturday. (with inputs from agency)

Punjab VB arrests absconding DFSC in ₹40 cr paddy scam

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Vigilance Bureau (VB) on Sunday arrested Amritsar District Food and Civil Supplies Controller (DFSC) AP Singh, who had duped the state exchequer of Rs 40 crore in connivance with other officials and Veeru Mal Mulakh Raj Rice mill owner.

Economic Offences Wing (EOW), VB, and Special Investigation Team (SIT) nabbed the accused DFSC from Patiala who was absconding and evading arrest, said the Bureau's spokesperson.

Spokesperson informed that FIR under sections 406, 409, 420, 467, 468, 471, 120-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), and 13(2) read with 13(1) (d) of Prevention of Corruption Act had already been registered at Police Station Jandiala Guru, Amritsar district, and investigation of this case was taken over by the VB from district police.

Some co-accused in this paddy scam including District Food and Civil Supplies Officer Raminder Singh Bath and Assistant Food and Civil Supplies Officer Vipin Sharma and Food Inspector Gurjinder Singh have already been arrested by the Bureau, and some are still absconding, added the

spokesperson.

It was further informed that the accused DFSC entered into a criminal conspiracy with some departmental officials and Veeru Mal Mulakh Raj rice mill owner and "by abusing his official position, caused huge loss to the state government".

Spokesperson added that accused Veeru Mal Mulakh Raj Rice Mill owner obtained a loan of approximately Rs 200 crores from the Punjab National Bank against government paddy and cheated PNB to the tune Rs 200 crore and cheated Food and Civil Supplies Department to the tune of Rs 40 crore approximately in connivance with the accused officers.

The investigation by the VB, so far, has brought forth incriminating evidence against the suspects who failed to perform their duties. A huge quantity of government paddy worth crores of rupees was found misappropriated from the Veeru Mal Mulakh Raj Rice Mill in Jandiala, allegedly by its owner.

Spokesperson said that the accused DFSC would be produced before the court for getting remand to investigate the modus operandi and roles played by the accused while committing this scam.

Hry to start fourth batch of CMGGA from July 21

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Government will start the fourth batch of the 'Chief Minister's Good Governance Associates' (CMGGA) programme from July 21.

Project Director, CMGGA, Rakesh Gupta said the programme has been a success since its launch four years ago.

Giving details, Gupta said that this ambitious fellowship programme launched four years back in 2016, involves youth as change makers in ensuring good governance and provides a platform to the young talent across the country towards creating social impact by working directly with district administration and Chief Minister's Office.

The intense process of selection of 25 associates would start from June 1 inviting online applications. After the completion of the selection process, the batch would start working in tandem with the Chief Minister's office and district Administration from July 21, he said.

He said that the selected candidates would be placed across 22 districts and would assist in implementing innovative approaches, ensuring transparency, efficiency and accountability of the government initiatives. The associates spend 6 to 7 weeks in districts followed by a week-long forum at Ashoka University, the knowledge partner of the programme, to discuss challenges and way forward across work modules.

Interested candidates can apply to join the team and get an impressive exposure to the government functioning and policy making. The programme offers a competitive stipend of Rs 50,000 to the associates and accommodation in their respective districts. More information regarding the process of selection, impor-

The programme has helped to improve the grade level competency of students in Hindi and Mathematics. Based on an assessment carried out by a third party, a total of 94 educational blocks out of 119 in the state have been declared Saksham, making 80 percent students in government schools 80 percent grade level competent. The initiative is now moving in its second wave of attaining Saksham Plus levels, thereby improving competency of students in English

tant dates and the overall recruitment process are available on the official CMGGA website, Gupta said.

He further said that a total of 80 associates from the last three years have worked on multiple programmes over the last three years and achieved impressive achievements. They ensured smooth implementation of the flagship programme of the state. Many of them are now working with UN organizations, national and international NGOs, government think tanks such as Niti Aayog and consultancy firms as well, while some have gone to venture the entrepreneurship journey, he said.

He said that Haryana Government has been successful in ensuring good governance in the state by adopting various new strategies, which has received overwhelming response from all corners. It is the vision of the Chief Minister Manohar Lal to involve and leverage youth, their energy and fresh innovation in ensuring good governance. These timely updates, gap areas and suggestions are directly reported to the Chief Minister every three months by the CMGGAs, he added.

Elaborating on these programmes, he said that Haryana is the first state in the country to digitize over 480 services across 35 departments on a single online platform called

Antyodaya Saral. In addition to the option of online application for availing these services, a total of 115 Antyodaya Saral Centers have been established and made functional in December 2018. Over 14 lakh citizens have availed services through this platform since its inception.

He said that Haryana is also the first in the country to make systematic reforms in education and improving learning level outcomes of students through Saksham Haryana. The programme has helped to improve the grade level competency of students in Hindi and Mathematics. Based on an assessment carried out by a third party, a total of 94 educational blocks out of 119 in the state have been declared Saksham, making 80 percent students in government schools 80 percent grade level competent. The initiative is now moving in its second wave of attaining Saksham Plus levels, thereby improving competency of students in English, he said.

As part of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign, Associates have worked on improving conviction rate of cases being registered under POCOS Act. Gender sensitization programme such as Jaagruti has been initiated to break gender norms and empower women of the state, Gupta added.

AAP seeks CBI inquiry into Faridkot scam

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Demanding an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in a custodial death case of a 19-year-old in Faridkot, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday asked the Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh to resign in the capacity of the state's Home Minister.

At the same time, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has declared to visit Faridkot on Monday, where the family members of the deceased were sitting on a dharna in front of the SSP office alleging that the youth was tortured to death in the lock-up, and demanding registration of a murder case against the five cops.

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA and the Leader of Opposition in Vidhan Sabha Harpal Singh Cheema demanded a CBI investigation into the entire incident of a death of young boy Jaspal Singh in the police custody and then disposing of his body.

Also lashing out at the Chief Minister while demanding his resignation as the Home Minister, Cheema said that a shocking incident has taken place in Faridkot where a young boy was mysteriously died in the police custody and his body was disposed of in a canal, following which the involved police officer Narinder Singh also committed a suicide, but the Chief Minister's "irresponsible" attitude is not only condemnable but also shameful.

Cheema said that the law and order situation in the state is similar to that during the previous government,

CM's attitude condemnable, Congress' role doubtful: Cheema

"but it is getting worse every day. A major part of the police machinery is uncontrollable, the people are wandering door-to-door for justice, but the 'Maharaja' is busy in his revelry".

"Due to all this, Capt Amarinder Singh should immediately resign as the Home Minister and hand over this important responsibility to any other competent Minister who can keep the disobedient police system in discipline and make it accountable," he said.

Cheema said that the Congress and the Badals have politicised the Punjab Police since a long time.

"There is tremendous political pressure on the police administration for the self and political interests, and a major faction of this politicised police, which is ready to take the law into the hands for their political masters, has become a gang in itself and this Faridkot incident is the result of the same," he alleged.

Demanding a government job for an eligible member of the deceased's family, Cheema questioned why till date no representative of the Government or the ruling Congress party has met the Jaspal's family which is staging a protest.

Find some time for governance, no law & order in Punjab: Sukhbir to Capt

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Badal on Sunday asked the Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh to find sometime for the governance in the State as law and order is a complete shambles in Punjab. Condemning the police high handedness against peacefully agitating Sikhs sitting in dharna at the Naradok chowk on Patiala-Rajpura road, he said that the Chief Minister "seems totally indifferent to what is going on in the state".

Expressing shock and revulsion over reports of the rape of a four-year-old girl child in Sangrur the other day, Sukhbir said that this was not a one-off incident. "There have been shocking incidents of rapes and murder throughout the state and there is no security of life and property here," he said.

He asked the CM if he would take direct responsibility for all rapes and murders in the state, as he used to blame the CM during the tenure of the SAD-BJP government? "The people of Punjab keep looking for their Chief Minister whose whereabouts have become one of the biggest mysteries. Even his cabinet colleagues and bureaucrats are in the dark about where their CM is. Punjab has become a headless state," he said.

SAD chief said that Capt emerged from his pleasure dome briefly during the poll campaign. "Other than that, the only time the people hear about their Chief Minister is when Amarinder holds forth on his opponents within the party. Already, the constant comic confrontation between the CM and Navjot Sidhu has dissipated the energies of the government... That is the only governmental activity taking place in the state," he quipped.

Restaurant manager shot at, injured in Delhi

New Delhi: A restaurant manager was injured after he was shot at allegedly by an acquaintance after a fight between them in Central Delhi's Karol Bagh, police said Sunday.

The injured, identified as Akash, lives with his family in Pitampura, he said.

The incident took place Saturday night when Akash, who is in his early 20's, was working at the restaurant and suddenly, his acquaintance, Kunal, came in. They scuffled over some issue at a corner in the restaurant after which Kunal took out a pistol and fired at the manager, a senior police officer said.

None of the other employees of the restaurant or the customers were injured, he said.

The accused, Kunal, immediately fled the spot along with the pistol, he added.

Akash was rushed to a hospital from where he was referred to the Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) hospital. He is undergoing treatment and is stated to be in a stable condition in the RML hospital, the officer said.

Akash suffered a gunshot wound to the stomach, he said. Kunal, who is also in his early 20's, stays with his family in the same locality in Pitampura where Akash resides, he added.

Confirming the incident, Mandeep Singh Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) said a case has been registered and an investigation is underway.

The exact cause behind the alleged attempt of killing will be ascertained only after the accused is nabbed, the officer said.

The officer added that though the injured is out of danger, he has not been able to detail the exact sequence of events or cause of the fight that led to firing.

Investigations are also underway to ascertain if it was a fight that led to firing or if it was "planned", police said, adding they are also looking for CCTV footage available, if any, to ascertain the sequence of events. **PTI**

Max temp hover close to normal levels in Hry, Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The maximum temperatures on Sunday hovered close to normal limits at most places in Punjab and Haryana including their common capital Chandigarh.

Chandigarh recorded a maximum temperature of 38.7 degrees Celsius, which was within the normal limits. The minimum temperature recorded was 20.9 degrees, three notches below normal.

In Haryana, Ambala recorded a high of 39.2 degree Celsius while Bhiwani's maximum settled at 39.9 degree Celsius, both of which were within normal limits.

Hisar recorded a maximum temperature of 40.3 degree Celsius, three notches below normal limits. Narnaul, however, experienced a hot day at 42.7 degree Celsius, up

three notches against normal. Karnal witnessed maximum temperature of 38.4 degrees, one degree below normal.

Amritsar in Punjab recorded a high of 38.2 degree Celsius, two degrees below normal.

Ludhiana and Patiala recorded near similar maximum temperatures at 39 degree Celsius and 39.2 degree Celsius respectively, down by one degree each against normal.

The Meteorological Department has forecast dry weather for the next five days in Punjab and Haryana.

Meanwhile, in neighboring hill state of Himachal, its capital - Shimla recorded maximum temperature of 26 degree Celsius while the minimum settled at 13.7 degrees, two notches below



normal. Una recorded a high of 38.4 degrees, Sundernagar

settled at maximum temperature of 35.5 degrees, Kangra saw 34 degrees, Solan 32.2

degrees. Manali and Dharamshala recorded respective maxi-

mum temperatures of 24.6 degrees and 28.2 degree Celsius.

People behind MP incident BJP, Modi voters: Owaisi

Hyderabad: AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi Sunday alleged that those behind the attack on three people in Madhya Pradesh over beef rumours were voters of BJP and Narendra Modi and claimed mob lynching in the name of cow vigilantism would continue.

On Modi's address to NDA MPs that their mantra should be 'sabka saath, sabka vikas and sabka vishwas', the Hyderabad MP tweeted, "In 5 years the only thing he managed to add is 2 more words to his slogan. Vishwas is only possible when you start living up to your Oath & believe the Constitution. Otherwise this Vishwas talk is just lip service."

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "I think ever since the BJP came to power, the mob lynching gang has become a 'Bhasmasur' and one day they will sink along with the BJP and this is definitely going to happen."

"Bhasmasur" a mythological character known for trying to destroy his creator.

"The Madhya Pradesh incident, of which a video is out... they (attackers) all voted for Modi... They all are 100 per cent Modi voters. See the photos on

their social media page... They are openly telling that they are BJP and Modi voters."

Suspected cow vigilantes had thrashed three persons in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district for allegedly carrying beef, following which the assailants as well as the victims of the attack were arrested.

Police said the three persons, who were beaten up, were arrested on May 22 as possession, transportation or sale of beef is illegal in Madhya Pradesh.

Owaisi reiterated that after the Lok Sabha results were declared, mob lynching in the name of cow vigilantism was going to continue and would not stop, because these outfits felt that they have won and none could stop them.

On Modi's speech in the Central Hall of the Parliament on Saturday, Owaisi sought to know how many contradictory things the Prime Minister would say. "It is open contradiction. If he (Modi) thinks by talking in such a way he is giving some message... No he is not giving any message..."

He is exposed. Talks one thing and does another. This is not something new...," Owaisi said. **IANS**

Lankan PM vows to decimate local ISIS

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has vowed to take security measures to prevent the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorism raising its head again in the country as he appealed to people not to support extremism or religious fanaticism.

The premier after meeting with a group of representatives of civil societies and trade union collective at Temple Trees on Saturday said the security forces and police have been able to apprehend everyone involved in the Easter Sunday attacks that killed 258 people, the Colombo Page reported.

"But this doesn't mean that this is the end of this type of terrorism. We now have to take certain measures of counterterrorism to ensure that the country will not face terrorism again," he cautioned.

He said the government is discussing the counterterrorism measures that are being taken, with the country still on edge after the attacks on three hotels and three churches that were blamed on a local jihadi group, the National Thowheeth Jama'ath (NTJ). The Islamic State group has also claimed a role in the attacks.

"We have also had the help



of the Muslim community in bringing about many changes and suggestions - Madrasa education bill not allowing sharia universities, ensuring name boards in only the three national languages," the premier said. Civil societies and trade union representatives inquired the prime minister on the political and institutional responsibilities which have failed to prevent the Easter Sunday attacks and also on the security situation in the country after the attacks.

The premier responded, saying the parliamentary select committee (PSC) has been appointed to investigate the issue.

He pointed out that the attacks in Sri Lanka is one instance that the ISIS did not have the support of the local Muslim community for their actions and that should be maintained.

Prime Minister Wickremesinghe requested not to drive people to extremism by supporting religious fanaticism and racism.

"We must maintain it that way and not allow extremism to come in, racial and religious hatred to come in, whereby driving some people to the other side," he said.

Christians make up 7.6 per cent and Muslims 10 per cent of mainly Buddhist Sri Lanka.

The prime minister said the government will appoint a resident committee of parliament to look into all the incidents and circumstances surrounding the Easter bomb blasts.

Wickremesinghe said a methodology will be devised preventing Islamic State (IS) terrorism to raise its head again in the country by safeguarding the law and order of the country.

He also said that the Speaker has agreed to open the proceedings through the media in order for people to gain access to the activities of the PSC. "Today we have taken all the measure to restore law and order. We've been able to observe Ramadan, We've been able hold prayers, Sunday Mass, and Vesak Poya has been observed very, very successfully," he said.

8 in the fray to replace May as British PM

PTI ■ LONDON

At least eight candidates, including hard Brexiteer Boris Johnson, have joined the fray to battle it out to take over the reins from British Prime Minister Theresa May as the UK's ruling Conservative Party leadership contest gets underway.

While Johnson, the former foreign secretary, is seen as the frontrunner to succeed May, the contest still remains wide open to at least seven other contenders.

May had announced her resignation earlier this week and is set to formally step down as Tory leader and PM on June 7, after a three-day state visit to the UK by US President Donald Trump.

The formal segment of the party leadership contest will then kick off on June 10, but prospective candidates have already begun laying out their bids for the top job.

UK environment secretary Michael Gove became the latest Tory MP to announce his intention to challenge Johnson on Sunday.

"I can confirm that I will be putting my name forward to be prime minister of this country. I believe that I'm ready to unite the Conservative and Union Party, ready to deliver Brexit, and ready to lead this



great country," he told reporters outside his home in London on Sunday.

Gove's decision is reminiscent of the 2016 leadership race, when he was accused of betraying Johnson by withdrawing his support for him and choosing to contest himself. It led to Johnson withdrawing his bid and Gove went on to lose out in the party ballot, resulting in May being chosen for the post.

Among some of the other contenders eyeing Downing Street include the former Brexit secretary, Dominic Raab, and former Commons leader Andrea Leadsom - both of whom confirmed their leadership bids in different Sunday newspapers.

They joined UK foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt, international development secretary Rory Stewart, health secretary Matt Hancock, and former work and pensions secretary Esther McVey, in the battle for the leadership.

Country could hold vote over nuclear deal: Iran's President

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iran's president has suggested the Islamic Republic could hold a referendum over the country's nuclear program amid the unraveling deal with world powers and heightened tensions with the United States, Iranian media reported Sunday.

According to the official IRNA news agency, President Hassan Rouhani, who was last week publicly chastised by the country's supreme leader, made the suggestion in a meeting with editors of major Iranian news outlets on Saturday evening.

Rouhani said he had previously suggested a referendum to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2004, when he was a senior nuclear negotiator for Iran.

At the time, Khamenei approved of the idea and though there was no referendum, such a vote "can be a solution at any time," Rouhani was quoted as saying.

A referendum could provide political cover for the Iranian Government if it chooses to increase its enrichment of uranium, prohibited under the 2015 deal with world powers.

GLOBE TROTTER

10 KILLED IN GAS LEAK IN CARGO SHIP IN CHINA

Beijing: At least 10 people died and 19 others injured after carbon dioxide leaked from a cargo ship's fire preventing system at Longyan Port in eastern China's Weihai city, officials said on Sunday. The accident happened around 4 pm. On Saturday, when the ship owned by the Fujian Shipping Company was being repaired.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA PM PETER O'NEILL RESIGNS

Port Moresby: Papua New Guinea PM Peter O'Neill resigned on Sunday, media reports said, following a string of high-profile political defections that threatened his leadership. O'Neill — who had been in power since 2011 — handed over the reins to Julius Chan, who has twice been prime minister, PNG broadcaster EMTV reported.

10 HURT AFTER OPEN FIRE OUTSIDE NEW JERSEY BAR

Trenton: Authorities say at least two gunmen fired into a crowd outside a bar in New Jersey's capital city, wounding 10 people, two critically, but the motive for the shooting remains unknown.

APPARENT TORNADO KILLS 2 IN OKLAHOMA

El Reno: An apparent tornado killed at least two people as it destroyed a motel, roared through a nearby mobile home park and caused other significant damage in the Oklahoma City area, officials said Sunday.

Record 7 women in Australian PM Morrison's Cabinet

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Sunday announced his new 22-member Cabinet which includes a record seven women.

The new Cabinet will be sworn in on Wednesday. The ruling conservative coalition, led by Prime Minister Morrison, defied exit polls to deliver a shock defeat to the opposition Labor Party, forcing its leader Bill Shorten to resign.

Morrison announced Linda Reynolds to be the Defence Minister while Bridget McKenzie will become Australia's first-ever female Agriculture Minister.

"I have high expectations of my ministry and clear goals for each of their roles," Morrison was quoted as saying by media reports from Canberra.

"This will include congestion-busting on regulatory and bureaucratic roadblocks, making better use of technology and better integrating service

delivery across portfolios," he said.

Peter Dutton will remain in Home Affairs and Senator Arthur Sinodinos will be the new Ambassador to the United States, succeeding Joe Hockey when his finishes his term.

Sussan Ley was announced the environment minister, replacing Melissa Price.

He will also recommend Mitch Fifield to become Australia's Ambassador to the United Nations, with Paul Fletcher to take over his communications portfolio. "They will both be exceptional representatives and our countries interests abroad will be well served in that role," Morrison said.

David Littleproud will now focus on the natural disaster and emergency management portfolio. Ken Wyatt becomes the first Aboriginal person to hold the Indigenous Affairs portfolio. "Incredibly honoured to be the first Aboriginal Minister for Indigenous Australians," Wyatt tweeted.

Final votes cast as Europe chooses bloc's future

AFP ■ BRUSSELS

Tens of millions of Europeans will vote Sunday as 21 countries choose their representatives in a battle between the nationalist right and pro-EU forces to chart a course for the bloc.

Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania and Cyprus were the first to open their polling stations at 0400 GMT and France, Germany, Italy and the rest followed over the next two or three hours.

Seven EU member states had already voted, but no official results can be published until rest of the union has taken part. The European Parliament will give an estimate at 1815 GMT and provisional results will begin to emerge from 2100 GMT.

Eurosceptic parties opposed to the project of ever closer union hope to capture as many as a third of the seats in the 751-member Strasbourg assembly, disrupting the pro-integration consensus.

The far-right parties of

Italian deputy PM Matteo Salvini and France's Marine Le Pen will lead this charge, and anti-EU ranks will be swelled by the Brexit Party of British populist Nigel Farage.

France's President Emmanuel Macron has taken it upon himself to act as figurehead for the centrist and liberal parties hoping to shut the nationalists out of key EU jobs and decision-making.

"Once again Macron is daring us to challenge him. Well let's take him at his word: On May 26, we'll challenge him in the voting booth," Le Pen told a rally in France on Friday.

Meanwhile, the mainstream parties are vying between themselves for influence over the choice of a new generation of top European officials, including the powerful president of the European Commission.

And Brussels insiders are closely following the turnout figures, fearing that another drop in participation will undermine the credibility of the EU parliament as it seeks to

establish its authority. Britain and the Netherlands were first to vote, on Thursday, followed by Ireland and the Czech Republic on Friday with Slovakia, Malta and Latvia on Saturday, leaving the bulk of the 400 million eligible voters to join in on Sunday.

At the last EU election in 2014, Slovakia had the lowest turnout of any country, at less than 14 percent, and centrist president Andrej Kiska is worried that the far-right is poised to profit.

"We see that extremists are mobilising, we see a lot their billboards and activities all over Slovakia. We can't let someone steal Europe from us. It's our Europe," Kiska told reporters.

But the right and the far-right have not had everything their own way so far. In the Netherlands, the centre-left party of EU vice president Frans Timmermans won the most votes and added two seats to the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) bloc in parliament, according to exit polls.

Chinese V-P arrives in Pak on three-day official visit

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan arrived in Islamabad Sunday on a three-day official visit to Pakistan during which he will hold talks with President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan on a host of bilateral issues including the smooth development of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Wang, 70, is a member of the ruling Communist Party of China's (CPC) powerful Politburo Standing Committee. He is also a member of China's Parliament, National People's Congress and the Central Foreign Affairs Commission, a key foreign affairs body of the CPC.

He was received at the airport by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and other high officials. During the visit, Vice President Wang will call on President Alvi and have a separate meeting with Prime Minister Khan.

UN says Afghan captives held by Taliban subjected to abuse

AP ■ KABUL

Afghan captives held by the Taliban have been subjected to abuse, ill-treatment and actions that may amount to torture, the UN said Sunday — a statement that comes as the US is trying to find a negotiated solution to the country's protracted war.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said it interviewed 13 detainees from a group of 53 recently rescued from the Taliban, mainly members of Afghan forces but also civilians and government officials captured by the insurgents.

The group was freed on April 25 when Afghan troops raided a Taliban-run detention facility in the Khas Uruzgan district in southern Uruzgan province.

Most of the captives were held since 2018, with three since 2016, the UNAMA statement said, adding they were kept in poor conditions and subjected to forced labor. It cites the detainees as saying that the Taliban killed some of

their captives. "I am gravely concerned about these serious allegations of ill-treatment, torture and unlawful killing of civilians and security personnel, as well as the deplorable conditions of detention," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the head of UNAMA.

The detainees were shackled while in captivity and almost all said they were beaten. The Taliban told them it was punishment for supporting the government, working with the Americans or fighting the insurgents.

The UN statement comes as Washington's peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad is pressing ahead with talks with the Taliban, who refuse to negotiate directly with the Kabul government.

The talks so far have focused on a timetable for U.S. Troop withdrawal as well as Taliban guarantees that they won't harbor terrorist groups or allow Afghanistan to be used as a staging ground for global terrorist attacks.



US President Donald Trump is served a baked potato with butter while sitting at a counter with first lady Melania Trump, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife Akie Abe during a dinner at the Inakaya restaurant in the Roppongi district of Tokyo on Sunday.

Trump downplays N Korea launches on Japan visit

AFP ■ TOKYO

US President Donald Trump on Sunday played down recent missile launches by North Korea as he teed off a state visit to Japan with a round of golf with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Before hitting the course, Trump tweeted that North Korea had tested "some small weapons" that had "disturbed some of my people, and others, but not me."

This appeared to be a reference to one of his "people", National Security Advisor John Bolton, who had said the previous day there was "no doubt" the launches had contravened UN Security Council resolutions.

But Trump said: "I have confidence that Chairman Kim will keep his promise to me."

The American president maintains that North Korea's

leader Kim Jong Un had pledged he was serious about denuclearisation although experts say there is still a wide gulf between the two sides over what that means exactly.

At their summit, Trump and Abe are likely to touch on tensions with North Korea, which have mounted after a summit in February in Hanoi collapsed without an agreement, as well as trade as Tokyo and Washington attempt to thrash out a deal.

On trade, Trump tweeted that "great progress" was being made in the negotiations but "much will wait" until after Japanese upper house elections expected in July -- with rumours rife Abe might also call a snap general election at the same time.

The serious diplomacy starts on Monday, when Trump will be the first leader to meet Japan's new emperor, Naruhito,

who has been on the Chrysanthemum Throne for less than a month following his father's historic abdication.

But Sunday was more about cementing diplomatic bonds between the two countries over the leaders' shared passion for golf -- the fifth time they have found time in their schedules for a round.

Under a cloudless sky with sizzling temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius (86 Fahrenheit), the two world leaders played at the Mobra Country Club course in Chiba, just outside the capital.

Aerial footage on Japanese television showed the pair practising and teeing off, as well as putting on the manicured greens, accompanied by former professional golfer Isao Aoki.

As Trump's Marine One helicopter thundered in, shattering the serenity of the course, a casual-looking Abe

was there to greet him, sporting white trousers and a blue top. Trump was dressed in a red sweater and black trousers with a red USA cap.

Abe later tweeted a selfie of the two grinning into the camera, as the pair relaxed before the formal element of Trump's four-day trip begins.

After the golf, the two leaders were set to take in the final day of the sumo "basho" or tournament in Tokyo. Trump will present Japanese grappler Asanoyama with the "President's Cup" -- weighing 60-70 pounds (27-32 kilograms) and measuring 54 inches (1.4 metres).

Security around the halloved Ryogoku Kokugikan sumo stadium was ultra-tight, with fans screened with metal detectors and asked to sip from any bottle they planned to take in to prove the liquid was not dangerous.

Mexico confirms 6 killed in crash of Army helicopter

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

Authorities in Mexico have confirmed that six people died when a military helicopter that was helping fight forest fires crashed in the north-central state of Queretaro.

The Russian-made MI-17 transport helicopter was carrying water to firefighters when it went down Friday in the pine-covered mountains known as the Sierra Gorda.

The crash occurred near the township of Jalpan de la Sierra, located on a high mountain range that drops abruptly onto Mexico's Gulf coast plain.

The National Forests Commission said Saturday that one of its workers died in the crash, raising the death toll to six. Five Navy crew members also died.

Kurdish rebel leader calls end to jail hunger strikes in Turkey

AFP ■ ANKARA

Imprisoned Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan has called for an end to hunger strikes by thousands of jailed supporters in Turkey protesting the conditions of his detention, his lawyers said Sunday.

Ocalan, the co-founder of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) held on Inmrali island off Istanbul since 1999, was allowed to see his

lawyers this month for the first time in eight years.

"I expect the action to come to an end in light of the broad statements to be made by my two lawyers," Ocalan said in a message read by his lawyer Nevroz Uysal during a press conference in Istanbul.

The first visit took place on May 2.

After Turkish authorities lifted an official ban on lawyers' visits to Ocalan, a second trip

by two of his lawyers was made on May 22.

His lawyers said during their visit on May 22, Ocalan said the hunger strikes "had achieved their goal" and was insistent in his call for the action to end.

"We believe the hunger strikers will end their action after this," the lawyers added. Some 3,000 prisoners across different prisons were on hunger strike, the pro-Kurdish

Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) has said, in solidarity with one of the party's lawmakers who launched the action in November.

MP Leyla Guven was in custody when she went on hunger strike to protest Ocalan's isolation from his family and lawyers but she was later released. Other detainees then followed suit. Eight people also killed themselves over the issue,

according to the HDP.

Ocalan's PKK, blacklisted by Ankara and its Western allies as a terror group, has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984 during which more than 40,000 people have been killed.

Ocalan was caught in February 1999 in Kenya and jailed several months later after he was found guilty of treason, separatism and murder. Despite the almost com-

plete isolation, Ocalan is still a key figure of the Kurdish insurgency and the movement generally in the region.

His lawyers said Ocalan indicated he would "play a positive role" in Syria in confronting the issues there "including the Kurdish issue" if he was given the chance.

Ocalan previously said in a message following the May 2 visit that "Turkey's sensitivities" should be taken into account in

Syria, where the US-backed Kurdish YPG militia is battling the Islamic State group.

Turkey says the YPG is a "terrorist offshoot" of the PKK.

The visits come just weeks before a controversial re-run of the Istanbul mayoral election, which was lost by the ruling party of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on March 31.

Experts say Kurdish votes played a significant role in

Erdogan's party loss and now he is hoping for their support again in the repeat vote on June 23.

But Turkish Justice Minister Abdulhamit Gul said Friday the lawyers' visits "had nothing to do with a peace process" and "no link to the Istanbul elections".

Ocalan had called for a ceasefire in 2013 to allow peace talks a chance to reach a negotiated settlement.

Rahul's reckoning

Congress chief must mean his 'ordinary worker' aspiration, break the old coterie and become a building block himself



"It is better to be patient and get what you desire in the right time, than have high office thrust upon you when you are not ready." One doesn't know if King George VI indeed uttered the exact words as shown in the hit show, *The Crown*, but they do aptly summarise the situation that a precariously perched Congress president Rahul Gandhi finds himself in after his career-best failure as captain of the ship. With one crucial difference. He did try sincerely to make it his desire, overcoming his limitations and the tag of dynastic entitlement.

Granted he may not have chosen his legacy but was born to it. Granted he was the reluctant prince who was given the trusteeship of the party as a family conglomerate than feeling the grand old party ground up as the nation's aspiration. Granted, he wasn't comfortable with the existing durbar style engineering of the party which even denied him space to take his own decisions. Still, he tried. But surrounded by obsequious compliance than constructive criticism, he lost reality. For all his honest efforts, neither he, nor his sister could live down the tag of elitist arrogance set by the overarching image of his mother Sonia Gandhi and her trusted lieutenants. So much so that he himself became presumptuous, one that cost him his home seat of Amethi. As the coterie strengthened the hand-me-down logic, a national assumption gained ground that Gandhi and sister Priyanka were immature and incapable, simply because they seemed to be toying the line rather than effecting real change. And therein lies the Congress conundrum. Gandhi is a victim of the popular perception outside and the intransigent party structure inside. Somewhere, he feels let down inside more. That is why he insisted he would resign and begin like an ordinary worker. Question is whether the hawks, fossilised over time with stale strategies, can afford to let go of their only person who can seemingly stir things up a bit yet while appearing to be in continuity with the old order? The Congress old guard must learn that they won't even make it to a BJP-style *margdarshak mandal* as the party undergoes an existential threat and must give way to an assertive leadership that is bubbling under. If Rahul himself wants to take the back seat, they should first.

An epic can be written about Congress' electoral bungling. Foremost among them being the refusal to shun old style optics, pretending to be commoners for three months, commiserating with the masses and ignoring that Indian polity now trusts only performance over intent. The revival was more cosmetic than structural. Even Prime Minister Modi and deputy Amit Shah went into a research lab huddle as to why the BJP slipped in the three heartland States in the Assembly elections and changed every leader on the ground to infuse new energy. The Congress' Lok Sabha rout in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh was solely the price of its presumptive logic compared to the redress urgency of the BJP. The party further failed to begin Nyay experiments on the ground in the States it had power, something which would have appealed to the troubled farmer and the poor instead of the abstraction called Rafale that needlessly drew attention to its own suspicious Bofors deal. It did not acknowledge the grassroots tenacity of its federal partners. Incidentally, its nemesis — Mamata Banerjee, Jaganmohan Reddy, Himanta Biswa Sarma — were Congressmen once. Rahul, therefore, allowed the growth of new talent at the State level. But when it came to chief ministership in Rajasthan and MP, the old hawks came to roost at Sonia's insistence, shattering the hard work of Sachin Pilot and Jyotiraditya Scindia. Yet an Amarinder Singh's retention ability should have taught the Congress an essential lesson of empowering State level leaders and disseminating the message of governance, considering national-level muscular leadership of the Modi kind is not its strength. Rahul's good-soul image won't wash unless he is seen as scything through the deadwood with a firm hand. And is willing to build a competent, even if shared, leadership. If he wants any kind of relevance beyond being seen as the charioteer who took the party on the road to perdition, he should work the soil for the next five years and allow an alternative matrix to develop that is not dependent on traditional ways of deal-making. That style has ended with Modi 2.0's new rich-poor binaries. He has to get down and dirty in his own party first.

What's next for Britain?

Britannia once ruled the waves and much of the world, today British polity is in a shambles



When Theresa May exits 10 Downing Street soon most likely having failed to deliver Brexit, it would mean that Queen Elizabeth II would have seen off 14 Prime Ministers. One cannot forget that two of those leaders — Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair — served for over a decade. And Britons are not placing much hope on the choice of leaders that will replace her in the Conservative Party. In such a situation, one would have supposed the Opposition to rise to the challenge but the Labour party is also

riddled with strife. While voters in the prosperous south-east of England are still opposed to leaving the European Union and are demanding another referendum, it is almost certain that parties advocating leaving the European Union will do extremely well in, ironically, elections to the European Parliament. Where Great Britain goes from here is anyone's guess, but it is not going to be a land of milk and honey. At least, England stands a good chance in the cricket World Cup.

Other democracies in the world must learn from Britain that direct democracy, where the electorate is asked to take a decision on a major economic and political issue, is not advisable. David Cameron, the former Prime Minister who called the referendum, will go down in history as being the man who threw the country into turmoil and promptly ran away from the mess he had created. Much has been written about the Brexit campaign on both sides and now movies are being made as well to unequivocally state how easily the 'leave' campaign hijacked certain issues and how false narratives can confuse and terrify voters. There is a reason we elect politicians into Parliaments. They have to take the tough decisions. Sure, they should listen to the worries of their constituents but one expects them to be better informed and educated than the average voter and not let emotive issues change the way they vote. The Brexit referendum was a disaster at many levels but it was at its core an abdication of responsibility by politicians. And as the rest of the world is learning that promising your voters that they could eat their cake and have it, too, when those promises depend on someone else acquiescing, is nothing better than lying. The British negotiations to leave the European Union have been torturous for the rest of the world to watch, let alone for British citizens. Britain has produced some remarkable leaders over the years, it might be time for some to emerge again.

opinion

Culture wars

India has emphatically spoken its voice. People have rejected self-appointed guardians of the 'Idea of India' and have their own vision of a 'New India'



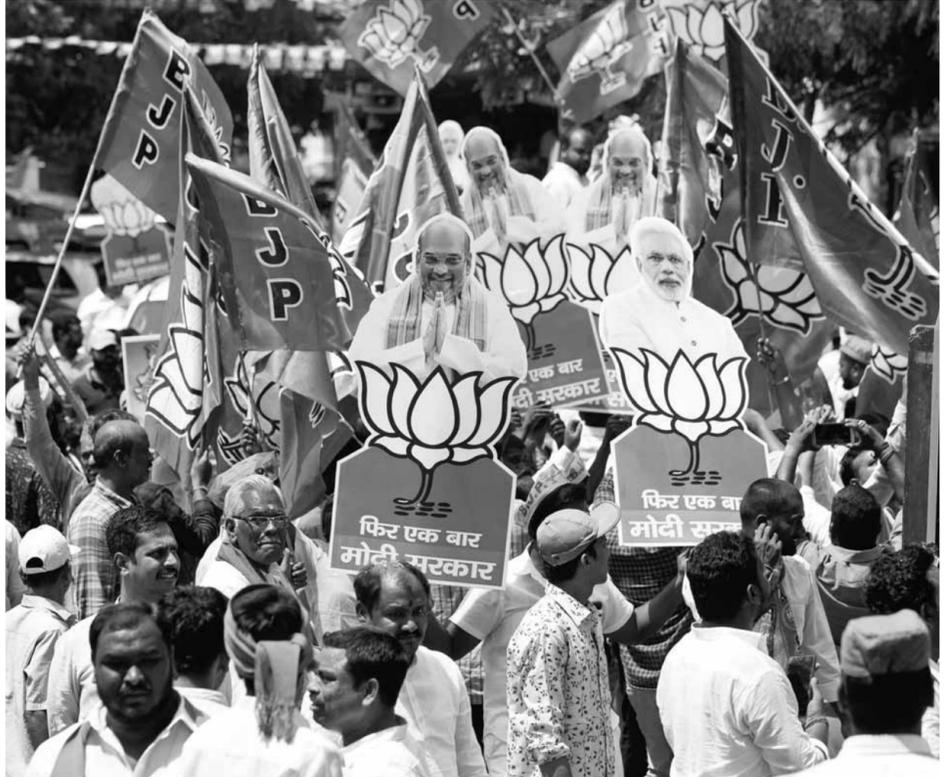
KUSHAN MITRA

The most astounding thing about the 17th Lok Sabha election has not just been the magnitude of the Bharatiya Janata party's (BJP) victory with Narendra Modi at the helm and party chief Amit Shah as his able general. In a way, they have become a modern-day Octavian and Agrippa combination. But more than the 300 seats, it was the scale of the vote-share that was truly amazing. The BJP and its allies got close to half of the total votes polled. Just think about it for a few minutes — one in every two Indians voted for Narendra Modi. This can only mean that the vote for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was an all-inclusive one, something that those who are screaming from the rooftops about this being a majoritarian Government, should take note of.

It is almost a 10 per cent climb in the vote share for the alliance since the 2014 polls. And this despite some economic pressures on the country, the aftermath of demonetisation, a lack of jobs, agrarian crisis and what not. In the modern democratic era of India following the Emergency, only the vote garnered by Rajiv Gandhi in 1984 in the aftermath of his mother's assassination exceeds this. Indeed, when one looks at other major democracies, only Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom in 1983 in the aftermath of the Falklands war and Ronald Reagan in 1984, thanks to the early 1980s economic boom, have seen sharp rises in popularity among voters. This election has changed so many perceptions of Indian politics — in the so-called 'cow belt' of northern Indian States, Narendra Modi's popularity has smashed caste-based politics for good. Of course, many, many tomes, theories and thesis will be written about the 2019 elections that will slice and dice the data to show how India has changed and many of them will be fun to read.

But when Narendra Modi swept into power in 2014, a whole host of professional agitators came out of the woodwork vowing to resist. These professional malcontents — from Bollywood celebrities to some journalists — swelled the ranks. They went around with begging bowls claiming to be bulwarks against the BJP's 'Hindu nationalism' and stood firmly against Modi and Shah. Some invented stories of how they were attacked for carrying leather bags and, shamefully, some national newspapers pandered to those myths. And these are the very people, who in their arrogance and immense elitism, blame the voters for the victory of the BJP and its perceived nationalism.

In the last few days, some journalists and failed comedians alike have completely lost the plot on social media, even claiming that they don't recognise India "anymore."



One can argue that they never realised that India was changing right around them — they wanted welfare programmes for the poor blind to the fact that those very welfare programmes were changing the dynamics of the country. They saw themselves as the arbiters of Indian culture without realising how India was changing, they made fun of Narendra Modi supporters calling them 'bhakts', they demeaned and laughed at the 'chowkidar' epithet and it all seemed so funny on social media memes.

They claimed they wanted to wrest back India from the so-called 'Hindutva' brigade and went out of their way to demean the nation in the foreign media. Of course, one cannot ignore that some elements of the BJP's core support base have done several reprehensible things and Modi himself was often too slow to condemn such incidents. There is also little doubt that the BJP and Narendra Modi have been almost blatantly anti-intellectual at a level and have listened to bad advice, demonetisation being the single biggest example of this. But the hypocrisy of

“ AN EYE HAS TO BE KEPT OVER BAD AND STUPID THINGS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL WANT TO DO. THE MEDIA AND THE CITIZENS MUST ALWAYS BE READY TO PROTEST, BUT BEING PROFESSIONALLY AND PERPETUALLY OUTRAGED JUST BECAUSE THE BJP IS IN POWER, WILL NOT CUT IT ANYMORE ”

these malcontents was remarkable, their selective blindness and amnesia was comical and what one is flabbergasted that these people did not realise that this double-standard chipped away at their credibility every passing day among the public at large, but definitely pleased the literature festival crowd.

These people have lost the culture wars, they have to accept that India has changed. The idea that there has to be a resistance like AntiFA in the US is almost laughable. And the constant and unending use of the term 'fascists' is getting tiresome and only harming the need for an opposition. This loud minority must not again be allowed to derail India, their relevance comes from this, their pockets are lined, thanks to this.

Sure, there needs to be an eye kept over the bad and stupid things that the Government will want to do. The media and the citizens of the country must always be ready to protest, but being professionally and perpetually outraged just because the BJP is in power will not cut it anymore. Those people will find that even their echo

chamber is now in interstellar space. They have lost the culture wars, they painted this election as a battle for India's soul but India's soul has clearly moved on.

That said, the BJP and the Prime Minister should be acutely aware of the fact that even if they might have won the battle for India's soul, a battle which can easily be framed as a cultural victory, they must not only be inclusive but also try to integrate some of those who have found it difficult to believe in them. Not everybody viscerally opposed to the BJP can be persuaded to change; but others should give Modi a chance.

Narendra Modi did squander a lot of his political capital after his 2014 victory. That plainly ridiculous suit which he wore when former US President Barack Obama came to town was the cherry on top. He should use this political capital wisely to unite even some of those who have not been on his side. Winning this war does not mean finishing off the enemy as some on his corner believe he should do. It means integrating them.

(The writer is Managing Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

The margins of loss have been very huge, which means something did not work. We will see what needs to be corrected.



Congress leader —Sheila Dikshit

Over *Bharat*, she (Priyanka Chopra) chose the US. She has worked hard all her life and when she got the biggest film of her life, she dumped it.



Actor —Salman Khan

My message is of gratitude for the enormous contribution that India has been giving to all causes of the United Nations.



UN Secretary-General —Antonio Guterres

I don't believe in selling religious aggression, I believe in a religion that draws light from humanism. Those, who believe in tolerance, let us come together and awaken all.



TMC chief —Mamata Banerjee

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The mandate of 2019

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Naya Bharat" (May 24). Cometh the hour — a general election — cometh the man — Narendra Modi. There can be no doubt about the fact that the spectacular mandate delivered in favour of the BJP-led NDA alliance is, in reality, proof of India's unshakable faith in the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. Remember, on becoming the Prime Minister in 2014, he had asked India's electorate to give him at least 10 years to put India on a path of progress and prosperity?

Well five years later, India's voters have agreed — resoundingly and unhesitatingly. For now, India must rejoice in its selection of a stable and strong Government, while the ruling party assesses how it may learn from past mistakes to provide better governance in the next five years. The new Government has its work cut out. Having raised the pitch on security, it will have to adroitly handle relations with Pakistan and China.

J Akshobhya Mysuru

Testing time for regional leaders

This refers to the editorial, "Naya Bharat" (May 24). One of the tragic stories of the 'Modi wave 2' has revolved around some strong regional chieftains, who were blown off by a gale. Foremost among them is N Chandrababu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh. The Telugu Desam Party was crushed to defeat in the Lok Sabha elections; more humiliatingly, Naidu was dethroned as Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister by YSR Congress party's YS Jaganmohan Reddy. Naidu, whose dream-child Amaravathi needs massive funds to survive the arduous gestational period and see the light of day, must introspect as to how and why he has crumbled under his own weight of ego, arrogance and hyped up expectations. In Uttar Pradesh, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati took a costly gamble of tying up with the Samajwadi Party (SP), its sworn enemy. People could see through Mayawati's ambitious designs and the *maha-gathbandhan* was decimated. The Dalit icon should take a fresh look at her famed social engineering which she orchestrated so beautifully some years ago.

Then there is the maverick Mamata Banerjee, perhaps shell-shocked by the numbing results. The well-oiled machinery of Amit Shah-Narendra Modi ensured the unthinkable. Mamata must be worried because the



Assembly polls are due in two years in West Bengal. An overconfident, aloof and rude Mamata requires to mend ways to remain in the voters' hearts. Next in line is HD Deve Gowda, the former Prime Minister. Gowda bungled badly in selecting a 'safe' seat, Tumakuru and had to bear the ignominy of witnessing grandson Nikhil Kumaraswamy lose in the prestigious Mandya constituency. If the Karnataka coalition breaks, then it is a battle for survival for Gowda and sons. Lastly, Delhi's Arvind Kejriwal, the least ambitious of all at the national level. Where does he stand now?

Ganapathi Bhat Akola

Lessons in debacle

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Naya Bharat" (May 24). As the Indian election neared an end, *Time*, the American magazine, dedicated its cover to India's

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, labeling him as the country's "divider in chief." The author of the article, Aatish Taseer, asked if India can endure five more years of the Modi Government. He also said that the Congress has "little

to offer than the dynastic principle" and described Congress chief Rahul Gandhi as "an unteachable mediocrity." People of India have given the answer by granting five more years to Modi and handing him

a landslide victory, blowing off all political barriers of caste, creed, community, region and religion.

The Congress' rout in around 18 States/Union Territories has sent out the message loud and clear that the party needs to shed its dynastic albatross if it has to survive. Rahul Gandhi's negative politics and persistent attacks on the Prime Minister proved disastrous for the grand old party.

The Congress chief made so much noise about the Rafale deal and even coined slogans like "Chowkidar Chor Hai" but there were no takers. A fragmented Opposition only aided the BJP's win. Prime Minister Modi and his party should now follow Constitutional goals and ensure peace and prosperity. As for the Congress, it must ponder over its shortcomings and face the electorate with a concrete and plausible alternative five years from now. Tough decisions need to be taken. Fresh young blood needs to be infused and a comprehensive plan must be formulated to lead the party to gradual recovery.

MC Joshi Lucknow

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Expressions of success

Accomplishment of a purpose will require being a light to oneself and that is as much a matter of personal growth as of external recognition



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Everyone wants to be successful. Almost everyone has some faith or belief in symbols and his/her socialisation orients him/her to read the meaning under the symbols and thereby flag external indicators of success. In itself, success is often self-consuming and often cripples one if not destroy him/her by setting newer goal posts. Consider the current election results. Nearly 350 MPs from the projected ruling combine have not even formally entered the Lok Sabha portals and the race for the next indicator of success, ie making it to further prominence by getting into the ministerial position, has become a matter of speculation and conduct. The media has been talking about the possibility of the Prime Minister taking oath — alone — on the day the Cabinet is to be sworn and that other Ministers would be sworn in later. Success, but for how long and how much?

Put it simply: To a large extent, success is an act of choice, a frame of mind and a vantage point of perception. It's often how one looks at a situation, interprets and internalises it. This is only part of the story. There are objective situations and externalities to it. Illustratively, if one doesn't have adequate shelter or enough food to eat, then clearly one is in the grip of poverty, no matter how one defines it. Of the many definitions of poverty, perhaps the simplest one to understand is that it is an involuntary deprivation of the basic facilities and amenities of life, as accepted in the community where one is embedded.

Caution needs to be exercised here without being confused. Different communities have different perceptions of amenities and basics of life. For some, a common toilet maybe a way of life and it doesn't occur to that person that personalised toilets are achievable. And even if that person sees it as achievable, it may not be an objective in his/her life to reach that level. Once this is established, the story of success intensifies and it is an escalating story. Like many human emotions — love, hate and irrationality — success is without boundaries. The more you succeed, the more you want. The more you want, the more you work for it. Getting there, and once having got there, one needs to learn how to pause or one starts resetting the goal post. There are two messages to be given. One is that success is a personalised experience. Second, success is embedded in a social framework of reference. If success walks on these two legs, both of them are important to understand. One is as successful as one believes one to be.

As an undergraduate student of a top-grade university in a B-grade city, this writer, having achieved some prominence in grades, was part of a group playing host to a Minister, who had flown in to the city on a Government aircraft. He was of the same State as where this university was and when the Minister was asked to tell more about himself, it looked strange to the writer that while the Minister was in his mid-50s, he remarked: "What more could I want from life? I have got enough. How much can the son of a peasant get? I am, after all, a peasant's son."

It struck the writer odd then, it strikes odd even now. The Minister's framework of reference was a peasant (a *kisan*). The sense he conveyed was that in his scale of living and occupation, a peasant (*kisan*) was the bottom of the pyramid. Having become a Minister in the Central Government, he had not only changed professions, but arrived. Why the society should look up to a Minister is not difficult to guess, especially if it is resource scarce. This is the not the story the world over. Illustratively in Scandinavian countries, it will be difficult to make out on the streets, if somebody was a Minister or a mere peasant. Put simply, success appears not only in multiple shapes but also multiple sizes, colours and myriad manifestations.

The story rolls on. That there are social indicators of success has already been referred to above. This is a frame of reference, which cannot be wished away. The proposition is simple — success is an internal feeling of well-being, arising out of a conformity to a visualisation of a preferred state of being. It is also enscathed in a context of group, community and geographical habitat. In all cases, it is a consort of smugness, of achievement, so recognised by the individual and the community to which he/she affiliates.

Like all stories, there is more to come and the missing part of the narration above is that success always requires internal peace and external recognition. Success will require being a light to one self and that is as much a matter of personal growth as of external recognition.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant)

IN MY MEMOIR I RESPECTFULLY DESCRIBE THE BRIEF, INNOCENT AND CONSENSUAL ROMANTIC INVOLVEMENT I HAD WITH NATALIE PORTMAN IN 1999. —MUSICIAN MOBY

POINT COUNTERPOINT



I WAS SURPRISED THAT MOBY CHARACTERISED THE VERY SHORT TIME THAT I KNEW HIM AS DATING BECAUSE MY RECOLLECTION IS OF AN OLDER MAN. —ACTOR NATALIE PORTMAN

Busting myths about smoking

It is ironic for e-cigarettes and harm reduction products to be banned while legal sales of tobacco cigarettes continue. The alternative can impact public health positively



KONSTANTINOS FARSALINOS

India has a major problem with tobacco. It is the second largest consumer of tobacco with over one in 10 of the world's smokers and incurs a staggering economic burden of approximately \$26 billion per annum. As per a report by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, the total economic costs attributable to tobacco usage related diseases in India, in the year 2011 for people aged between 35-69, was ₹1,04,500 crore (around \$22.4 billion). The tobacco epidemic has indeed reached alarming levels. As per latest estimates, there are nearly 106 million people in India who smoke tobacco and 32 million who smoke as well as chew it. There are a total of 270 million people who use it. India is home to roughly 11.2 per cent of the smokers in the world and 1.35 million people in the country die every year due to tobacco-related illnesses.

Yet despite harm reduction alternatives being available to smokers, these are yet to be effectively incorporated into tobacco control policies to complement traditional measures such as taxation and graphic warnings on cigarette packaging. The fact that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare issued an advisory to ban the manufacture, distribution and sale of e-cigarettes, instead of regulating the category to potentially lower smoking rates and improve public health outcomes is a worrying development that ought to be reconsidered.

Countless studies have shown that Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), such as e-cigarettes and vaping devices, pose only a small fraction of the risks of smoking; they crucially remove combustion from the process. Research by globally renowned public health organisations such as Public Health England, The Royal College of Physicians, American Cancer Society and National Academy of Sciences, Medicine and Engineering publicly acknowledged the lower harm potential of e-cigarettes. Further, these are supported by the Heart Care Foundation of India, which has prepared a consensus statement on tobacco harm that was signed by leading medical practitioners in India.

Recently, Dr RN Sharan conducted an independent review of 299 peer reviewed articles, which demonstrated that toxic chemicals such as class 1 carcinogens, respiratory toxins and carcinogenic metal ions were found to be present in significantly higher quantities in conventional cigarette compared to ENDS vapour. For instance, Cadmium, a heavy metal which is a class 1 carcinogen, a respiratory toxin and a reproductive and developmental toxicant, was found to be approximately 1,400 times higher in cigarette smoke than in e-cigarette vapour. Similarly, lead and chromium, which are class 2b probable carcinogens, were 12 and 13 times more common in cigarette smoke than in e-cigarette vapour respectively. Other carcinogens such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons that are abundant in tobacco cigarette smoke, are completely absent from e-cigarette vapour.

The problem facing vaping is the myths that are spread by vested interests. Tobacco harm reduction is a scientific field and must be debated on the basis of rigorous scientific evidence.

“ THERE IS ALSO A GENERAL FAILURE TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN E-CIGARETTES AND COMBUSTIBLE TOBACCO CIGARETTES. AS A RESULT, THE SAME RESTRICTIONS ARE OFTEN PLACED ON BOTH. THERE IS ALSO AN ATTEMPT TO CLASSIFY E-CIGARETTES AS TOBACCO PRODUCTS DUE TO NICOTINE BEING EXTRACTED FROM TOBACCO. THIS DECISION IS UNREASONABLE AND HAS NO SCIENTIFIC BASIS ”



A lot of the stories being circulated are simply wrong and constitute misinformation, stemming from a time when there was inadequate research on this category. There is also a general failure to differentiate between e-cigarettes and combustible tobacco cigarettes. As a result, the same restrictions are often placed on both. There is also an attempt to classify e-cigarettes as tobacco products due to nicotine being extracted from tobacco. This decision is unreasonable and has no scientific basis.

Tobacco harm reduction is based on the absence of combustion, which is a process that creates almost all of the toxins that a smoker inhales, resulting in high risk for disease and death. E-cigarettes have no combustion and do not contain tobacco. Available scientific evidence provides that e-cigarettes are by far less harmful than smoking. In fact, they fit perfectly to the definition of tobacco harm reduction. As I spoke earlier in 2014, "It makes no more sense to argue that nicotine-containing e-cigarettes are tobacco products than to argue that biodiesel is a vegetable product because it is derived from plants."

Recent well-publicised research, associating vaping with increased risk for cardiovascular disease, failed to prove either an increased risk or that any such risk even exists. Studies provide no information on whether e-cigarette use was initiated before (and how long before) or after the development of the disease.

We analysed the data from the National Health Interview Survey of 2016 and 2017 using the same methodology as this study. In this case, we examined the association between ever using medications to lower cholesterol and having a heart attack. We found that ever use of anti-cholesterol medications was associated with 115 per cent higher odds (more than double the odds) of having had a heart attack. And that was on top of having hypercholesterolemia and adjusted for all other risk factors for heart attack. Should we claim that "ever taking prescribed medicine to lower cholesterol, adjusted for having hypercholesterolemia as well as other risk factors, is associated with increased risk of heart attack?" Of course not. That would be absurd.

The mistakes made by the researchers in interpreting the data are unacceptable. They know that the statements about increased risk are wrong and yet they made them to great fanfare. This poses an obvious question of why they made such claims. Predisposition and dogmatism should never drive methodology and interpretation of scientific research.

Another myth associated with ENDS is that they are a gateway to combustible cigarettes. Even if ENDS have a correlation to subsequent smoking, which has not been proven to be the case, its contribution to smoking prevalence is minimal. At the same time, ENDS are by far more appealing to smokers, making them a perfect tool to

distract them from tobacco cigarettes. We should not forget that all these years, ENDS usage was allegedly increasing among youth, predominantly among them experimented with e-cigarettes, and the smoking prevalence has substantially declined. In the US, for example, during the period that ENDS became popular (2011-2017), smoking prevalence among youth decreased by more than 50 per cent.

Fake news has become a defining narrative of this generation. The misconceptions around ENDS are discouraging and preventing smokers from switching to a substantially less harmful alternative. Education is the key. With it, harm reduction efforts can succeed and will create a more open-minded approach needed to motivate users to move away from combustible cigarettes. ENDS provide a substantially less harmful, yet still satisfying, alternative to millions of smokers who have been unable or unwilling to quit smoking. Banning them is equivalent to the Government hammering a nail in the coffin of Indian smokers. It also violates a basic human right, people's access to reliable and balanced information and to tools needed to improve their health. It is ironic for e-cigarettes and harm reduction products to be banned while legal sales of tobacco cigarettes and other harmful tobacco products continues.

(The writer is a research fellow, Onassis Cardiac Surgery Center and at the Department of Pharmacy, University of Patras, Greece)

Modi vs who: Deliverance vs dilemma

The huge electoral victory of Prime Minister Modi and the BJP is an endorsement of the social and economic policies of the party. The new Government must now steer the country towards inclusion and development for all and deliver on unfulfilled promises



ANNPURNA NAUTIYAL

The historical win of the Modi-led NDA has established the fact that its claim to form a full majority Government was based on ground realities and a close assessment of the people's pulse. The confinement of the *mahagathbandhan* not only proves Modi's popularity but also the failure of narrow-minded parties, who played the caste card. Questions raised by the Opposition regarding Modi's recent visits to Kedarnath and Badrinath shrines during the last leg of the election, his local attire in both places, his meditation for soul-searching in a small cave, spirituality, dialogue with the media and love for Uttarakhand made him even more popular. The

huge tally of more than 300 seats as also the margin of victory clearly indicates that this political exercise was about Modi versus the rest. Interestingly, the latter was not at all comfortable with the former's body language that spoke volumes about courage and confidence. Modi's motto of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' became a source for the fall of Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and the grand old party.

This election also changed the narrative of 'hatred' and 'intolerance' towards Modi and his style of functioning, which was also expressed by Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister, who had stated that Modi's five-year rule was the most traumatic and devastating for India's youth, farmers, traders and all democratic institutions.

Singh had also looked down Modi's foreign policy legacy and diplomacy by accusing him of adopting a flip-flop policy towards Pakistan from visiting the neighbouring country uninvited and inviting the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to the Pathankot air base to probe a

terrorist attack. He also criticised the relationship with other neighbours and his economic policy. Various articles, which portrayed Modi as the front-runner of spreading a new language of 'hate' and shifting the focus from fighting corruption to generating 'hate' like Trump, also reflected the lobbying to slander Modi nationally and internationally.

The numerous nicknames — ranging from psychopath, bad economist, *nautanki*, showman, immature and divisive politician, Hindu nationalist, communal, to *chowkidar chor hai* — further amplified the insecurity which Modi with a humble beginning and background generated in *mahagathbandhan* leaders. The tactful linkage of nationalism to national security, spirituality, religion and minimum Government swept away this coalition in all directions, including the Hindi-speaking belt. Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and others proved no competition to Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah's strategy and careful handling of this election. The Modi factor had influenced the political parties so much

that they not only lost direction but converted the usually multi-dimensional and multi issues-based election into a single issue: How to stop Modi from regaining power. Congress leaders accepted that their only aim was to stop Modi from wresting the top seat.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) the Samajwadi Party even formed an alliance to check the rise of a single person. But these groups easily forgot that it was Modi, who called the shots in this much-hyped and personalised election. The violence in West Bengal was yet another example of the fear of Modi and BJP gaining an upper hand in Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee's bastion, which to some extent, proved true. The landslide win is an example of Modi's clever rhetoric, vision, connect with people and affirmative approach.

The issues of jobs, poverty, infrastructure, development, building of youth, which should have been the key to any national election, became secondary and hatred towards Modi became the primary goal for the

Opposition. This, in fact, worked towards Modi's advantage. As for a large number of people, particularly in rural areas the numerous schemes like the supply of cooking gas without black marketing, toilets for convenience, medical schemes, cleanliness drive, connect through 'Mann Ki Baat', ease of doing things like passport services, makeover of cities, infrastructure development, digitalisation, transparency, reduced corruption and red tapism, Government e-market procurement scheme, competition for better facilities and desire to bring international standards in education by improving quality facilitated by the Modi Government became a very admirable figure among a large number of people. Though voting percentage was low, but people preferred to ignore the pains of demonetisation, Goods and Services Tax and even the politics of caste and religion and supported Modi unconditionally. This was all possible due to the policies of inclusive development.

The bold foreign policy steps like Balakot strike, face-to-face

stance at Doklam at Ladakh border with China, refusal to participate in Belt and Road Initiative summit of China despite Chinese persistence, oil imports with Iran despite US pressures, getting Masood Azhar declared as international terrorist even after China's reluctance, participation in multinational naval and military exercises and talking equally with all powers to advance India's interests earned Modi a different kind of admiration and image of being a tough leader. No leader in India has earned such ire and adulation, therefore, this phenomenon is quite unique.

The repeat of 2014 victory in 2019 by the BJP despite so much political hatred and caste and politics of religion is unprecedented. The Government must now vouch for *achhe din*, corruption-free India and all-inclusive development for all. The people have given their support to the BJP and Modi in particular. It is now for them to fulfill promises.

(The writer is professor of political science, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar, Garhwal, Uttarakhand)



A POISONOUS LEGACY

Theresa May's successor will face equivalent choices in a hostile climate where continental goodwill and domestic public patience are spent. It was once within her power to reframe the debate around goals that were more achievable, but she refused that challenge. So she passes on an insoluble problem to a successor who can only win the job by promising to do the impossible. It is a miserable and poisonous legacy. (The Guardian editorial)

TMC sans ideology will vanish soon, says Mukul

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



BJP leader Mukul Roy on Sunday said the Trinamool Congress had outlived its purpose and would evaporate with the passage of time.

Once the Man Friday of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee who jointly built the TMC with her after quitting the Congress in 1998, Roy joined the BJP about two years ago and said, "TMC is a party devoid of ideology and philosophy of its own. It was formed to remove the CPI(M). Once the purpose was served, the TMC had no further goal. It would now disintegrate and soon BJP would take its place."

Roy, a former Railway Minister and number two man in the TMC before quitting the party said a philosophy-less outfit that survived only by loot and crime was destined to meet its end. On the increasing polarisation of politics in Bengal Roy said it was Mamata who had added fuel to communal politics in the State and reaping the harvest of her own misdeeds.

He further said that the TMC president in her madness

from the colossal electoral defeat had insulted the Muslim populace by comparing them with milking cows that deserved care.

The Chief Minister had earlier on Saturday told the press that she would continue to attend the parties thrown by the Muslim community leaders at the risk of being called a "promoter of appeasement politics" because "I have to take care of the cow that gives milk."

This was an utter insult to the Muslim community, which was only considered as a vote bank by the Chief Minister the BJP leader said.

On whether he was fore-

A PHILOSOPHY-LESS OUTFIT THAT SURVIVED ONLY BY LOOT AND CRIME WAS DESTINED TO MEET ITS END

—Mukul Roy

seeing the end of the TMC Government anytime soon, Roy said he was leaving it on the electorate saying, "it is the people to decide the course of things and not a party or a leader."

POST LOK SABHA POLLS Bihar grand alliance faces uphill task in 2020 Assembly election

Patna: A detailed analysis of the Lok Sabha election results in Bihar suggests that the NDA, which obliterated the Opposition in the State winning all but one out of the 40 seats, is poised to retain power in the Assembly polls due next year.

Out of the 243 Assembly segments in the State, the RJD led in eight, the Congress in four, the RLSP in one and the HAM in two. Besides these constituents of the Mahagathbandhan, Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM and the CPI(ML) established lead in two and one Assembly segments respectively.

In 2015 Assembly polls, the RJD had won 80 seats and its old ally the Congress had 28 MLAs. The two parties had then sought to broaden the social base of the combine by forging an alliance with the RLSP headed by Koeri leader Upendra Kushwaha, HAM led by Jitan Ram Manjhi who is a Musahar (SC) and Vikasheel Insaan Party (VIP) founded by Mukesh Sahni who belongs to the sizeable Nishad community.

Facing an election for the

first time without its charismatic founding president Lalu Prasad who is serving sentences in fodder scam cases the RJD drew a blank in the Lok Sabha polls putting up the worst-ever performance since the party's inception in 1997.

RJD sources said the party's attempt to brazen out the numerous charges of corruption against Prasad and his family and its continued patronage of persons with criminal antecedents found few takers.

In Siwan and Nawada, where wives of RJD leaders convicted in cases like murder and rape were in the fray. They lost by heavy margins to NDA nominees who were making their Lok Sabha debut.

The party also scored a self-goal in Jahanabad, which it lost by about 1,000 votes, a margin less than the number of votes polled by a rebel candidate who was said to enjoy patronage of Prasad's elder son Tej Pratap Yadav.

The Congress had given tickets to four sitting Bihar MPs of the previous Lok Sabha but it proved to be of little help. Actor-turned-politician and

two term MP from Patna Sahib Shatrughan Sinha failed to retain the prestigious seat for the party he had joined recently. Tariq Anwar put up a fight in Katihar but it was not good enough. Ranjeet Ranjan, quite popular in Supaul, lost to a less-fancied JD(U) candidate. Kirti Azad, who represented Darbhanga, was packed off to Dhanbad in the adjoining Jharkhand with no better result.

The only saving grace for the Congress was Kishanganj, which the party retained with a sitting MLA as candidate in place of the incumbent MP who had died a few months ago. The party defeated the JD(U), leading in three of the six Assembly segments. The AIMIM, which finished third, and yet polled close to three lakh votes, led in two.

The Congress also led by a slender margin in Mokama falling under Munger Lok Sabha seat which it lost to the JD(U) by over 1.5 lakh votes.

With three MPs in the previous Lok Sabha, the RLSP had walked out of the NDA when its demand for adequate number of seats was not met. PTI

Jolt to Kushwaha's RLSP, all 3 of its legislators join JD(U)

Patna: After drawing a blank in the Lok Sabha elections, former Union Minister Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Samata Party on Sunday received yet another setback as all three of its members in the bicameral legislature joined Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U).

Confirming the development, Assembly Speaker Vijay Kumar Chaudhary and legislative council deputy chairman Haroon Rashid said letters to this effect have been forwarded by two RLSP MLAs--Lalan Paswan and Sudhanshu Shekhar-- and MLC Sanjiv Singh Shyam on Friday.

"The legislators had also appended letters of approval from the JD(U). They were asked to appear in person for completion of formalities. Henceforth, they shall be treated as JD(U) legislators," Chaudhary and Rashid told PTI here.

Notably, the RLSP legislators had earlier revolted against Kushwaha's decision to snatches with the NDA and join the Mahagathbandhan. PTI

They announced that they would remain with the ruling coalition and seek recognition from the Election Commission as the "real Rashtriya Lok Samata Party".

The stupendous victory of the NDA in the Lok Sabha polls, wherein it won all but one of the 40 seats in the state, appears to have made the dissident RLSP legislators realise that it was safer to join the chief minister's party, which contested 17 seats and bagged 16, than seeking recognition as a separate group.

Kushwaha was with the JD(U) till 2013, when he resigned from the party and his Rajya Sabha membership following differences with Nitish Kumar.

He went on to float his own party which aligned with the NDA and won all three seats it had contested in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, riding the Modi wave.

In the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls, the RLSP contested five seats in alliance with the RJD, the Congress and two other small outfits. PTI

'Ready to sacrifice everything to safeguard country's values'

Rae Bareilly (UP): UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi has said she is ready to sacrifice everything to safeguard the basic values of the country, as she thanked the people of Rae Bareilly for re-electing her.

In a letter addressed to the people of Rae Bareilly, the Congress leader also thanked the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, which did not field any candidate against her. "I promise you that to safeguard the basic values of the country and to uphold the tradition of the ancestors of the Congress, I will not step back from sacrificing whatever I have got," Sonia said.

"I know that the coming days are going to be very tough, but I am fully confident that with the power of your support and trust, the Congress will meet every challenge," she said.

Referring to the people of her constituency, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA)



leader said she had always tried to look after this extended family.

"Like every Lok Sabha election, this time also you have reposed your faith in me. I am thankful to each and every Congress worker, and friends from the SP, BSP, Swabhiman Dal for the hardwork put in for my win," Gandhi said.

"My life is an open book in front of you all. You are my family. I derive strength from you and this is my real asset," she added.

Gandhi had won the Rae Bareilly seat by defeating the Bharatiya Janata Party's Dinesh Pratap Singh by over 1.67 lakh votes, according to the Election Commission website. PTI

Mandate for creating new India's new UP, says Yogi

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath says the massive mandate in the Lok Sabha polls was a mandate for creating "new India's new Uttar Pradesh" and gave a befitting reply to those parties which cheated the poor in the name of social welfare and relied on caste politics.

Adityanath says his Government's focus on development helped him secure another term in the politically important State.

"While the opportunistic coalition of the SP and BSP were relying on caste politics, I kept toiling for development of citizens rising above caste, creed or religion. This is the reason people voted for the BJP," the Chief Minister told PTI, giving full credit for the massive mandate to PM Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah.

"The massive mandate

received in Uttar Pradesh in favour of the ruling party is the mandate for creating new India's new Uttar Pradesh.

The mandate is against nepotism, casteism, corruption. It is a befitting reply to those hypocritical parties which cheated poor in the name of social welfare. It is a victory over goons of SP who were harassing our mothers and sisters by collecting 'goonda tax' from traders and industrialists," Adityanath said.

During the poll campaign, while Modi talked about 55 years of Congress and his five-year tenure in rallies, Adityanath presented the report card of his two-year rule.

Noting that the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh was earlier bad, the chief minister said, "Crime had become a business in the state because of nexus of criminals, corrupt police officers and politicians.

But today the same group is running for cover due to 'zero tolerance' policy of the present government against criminals".

"In last two years, for the first time in the history of Uttar Pradesh, stringent action was taken against criminals without looking at their caste, religion and political inclination. The police department, which had become infamous for its poor work culture and behaviour towards people, is now going through drastic changes," he said.

On the Punjab and Haryana High Court recently ordering Punjab and Haryana Governments to uproot emerging 'gang culture' and look at the measures adopted by UP, he said, "This is the result of commitment of our Government that in a very short span of time, the UP law and order model has set an example for other States to follow." PTI

Industrialist Vasanthakumar to quit MLA post

Chennai: Sitting Congress MLA H Vasanthakumar on Sunday announced his decision to quit from the post following his victory in the Lok Sabha election in Kanyakumari parliamentary constituency.

Vasanthakumar, who is the proprietor of Vasanth & Co brand of consumer retail outlets is a sitting MLA from the Nanguneri Assembly constituency.

In the Lok Sabha polls held on April 18, he defeated BJP leader Pon Radhakrishnan by a huge margin of 2.59 lakh votes.

After calling on DMK Chief MK Stalin at Anna Arivalayam, the DMK headquarters, Vasanthakumar said he decided to quit from the post of legislator. "I held discussions with DMK Chief here and with TNCC President K S Azhagiri over telephone. Based on their directive, I have decided to quit from the post of legislator," he said. PTI

Non-matriculates to PhD holders among new MPs in Bihar

Patna: Non-matriculates, PhD holders, doctors and engineers, Bihar has sent people from different educational background to the 17th Lok Sabha.

Ajay Mandal and Mahabali Singh, the two JD(U) MPs from Bhagalpur and Karakat, respectively, did not finish school, while those who have cleared their Class 10 board examinations include Baidyanath Mahto (Valmiki Nagar), Rampriti Mandal (Jhanjharpur) and Chandeshwar Prasad Chandravanshi (Jehanabad).

Others who did not pursue education after school are BJP lawmakers Veena Devi (Vaishali) and Pradip Kumar Singh (Araria) and Lok Janshakti Party's Ram Chandra Paswan (Samastipur).

Kaushalendra Kumar,

Vijay Manjhi and Santosh Kushwaha, JD (U) MPs from Nalanda, Gaya and Purnea, respectively, have studied till intermediate and so has LJP's Chirag Paswan. Paswan has retained his Jamui (SC) seat.

At the other end of the spectrum are the highly qualified ones such as BJP's first time MP from Madhubani, Ashok Yadav, who is a PhD holder, JD (U)'s Dinesh Chandra Yadav, who has won from Madhepura, holds a diploma in civil engineering, and Alok Kumar Suman, who bagged the Gopalganj reserved seat, is a doctor by profession.

Sanjay Jaiswal, BJP MP from Pashchim Champaran and Congress MP from Kishanganj, Mohd Javed, have degrees in medicine. Javed is the only non-NDA candidate to have won his seat in Bihar. PTI

AFTER POLL DEBACLE Pinarayi Govt to face Opp heat in Assembly

Thiruvananthapuram: Days after the massive drubbing it received in the Lok Sabha elections, the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF Government will be facing the Congress-led UDF Opposition heat in the Kerala Assembly session beginning on Monday.

While the CPI(M)-led LDF could win only one seat, the UDF swept the April 23 Lok Sabha polls cornering remaining 19 seats in the State.

A buoyant UDF, fresh from its landslide victory, is likely to corner the Government on a host of issues such as alleged shoddy handling of rehabilitation of people affected in the August deluge last year, the Sabarimala women entry and the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB)'s Masala bonds launched recently.



The Opposition front is also likely to hammer the government on the high court appointed amicus curiae report that lapses in dam management had aggravated the impact of the floods which had claimed over 400 lives besides causing widespread devastation last year.

Soon after the poll results were out on May 23, Leader of the Opposition in the assembly Ramesh Chennithala has demanded Vijayan's resignation, saying the state government had no moral grounds to

continue. The Chief Minister has already made it clear he was in no mood to oblige the Opposition and the poll outcome was a "temporary setback" and not a referendum on his Government.

Vijayan has also made it clear the Sabarimala women entry issue was not the reason for the Left front's rout.

The State had witnessed violent protests after the Government decided to implement the last year's Supreme Court verdict allowing women and girls of menstrual age also to offer prayers at the hill shrine.

"Sabarimala never affected this election. If Sabarimala was a factor, the biggest beneficiary would have been the BJP", Vijayan had told reporters Saturday.

The Government, which completed three years in office last week, would try to highlight its achievements including 'improvement' in law and order situation and lack of any major corruption taint.

However, the assembly would not transact any business Monday as it would adjourn for the day after paying tributes to late Kerala Congress (M) supremo K M Mani, who passed away on April 9.

A former Minister, Mani had represented Pala in the Assembly for five decades.

During the session, there will be discussions and voting on demand for grants in the Budget for 2019-20 fiscal.

Besides Government business, private members bill are among those which are likely to be taken up in the session. PTI

Congress' Patole booked for ruckus at Nagpur counting centre

Nagpur: The Congress' Nana Patole, who lost from Nagpur Lok Sabha seat to BJP's Nitin Gadkari, was booked along with his supporters for allegedly disrupting the vote counting process on May 23, police said Sunday.

An official said Patole and his supporters entered the counting centre on May 23 without permission and then got into altercations with polling staff and also indulged in sloganeering. He said Kalamna police filed a case against Patole, local Congress leader Abhijeet Wanjari and 10-15 polling agents of the party on a complaint lodged by Shital Deshmukh, Additional Election Officer, Nagpur East constituency on May 24. PTI

PS Golay to take oath as new Sikkim CM today

Gangtok: Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) president Prem Singh Tamang, popularly known as PS Golay, will take oath as the new Chief Minister of Sikkim on Monday, a Raj Bhavan source said on Sunday.

The 51-year-old Golay will be administered the oath of office by Governor Ganga Prasad at a function at Paljor Stadium at 10 am on Monday, the source said.

Some Ministers are likely to be sworn in along with Golay, who was elected as the leader of the SKM legislature party on Saturday night.

The SKM supremo, accompanied by the 17 newly-elected legislators of his party, on Saturday had called on the Governor and staked claim to

form the next Government in Sikkim.

Prasad had reportedly told the SKM delegation to wait for his decision as he sought legal opinion on the matter as Golay had been convicted to a year's imprisonment in a corruption case in 2016 and had served the prison term, sources said.

After getting the legal opinion, the Governor invited Golay to form the next government, the Raj Bhavan source added.

The SKM, founded in 2013, won a slender majority in the 32-member Sikkim legislative Assembly by bagging 17 seats against 15 won by the SDF. Golay did not contest the assembly polls to devote all his time to campaign for his party. PTI

BJP to introspect Panaji bypoll defeat, says Parrikar's son

Panaji: Former Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's son Utpal Parrikar on Sunday said the BJP will introspect its defeat in the by-election to the Panaji Assembly seat, which was held by his father for long.

Congress leader Atanasio Monserrate on Thursday won the Panaji bypoll, necessitated due to the death of sitting MLA Manohar Parrikar in March.

The Congress nominee defeated BJP candidate Siddharth Kunkolienkar by a margin of over 1,700 votes in the seat, which was held by the saffron party for 25 years.

The former Chief Minister's son was earlier among the candidates short-listed by the BJP, but it later fielded Kunkolienkar in the bypoll, held on May 19.

Utpal Parrikar, who actively campaigned for the BJP in the bypoll, said the party will do an assessment of its defeat and make all efforts to win the seat next time.

"The state BJP leaders and workers will introspect on the results and will ensure that we win the Panaji seat in the next election," he told reporters here. He said he will give his inputs about the poll results to the party leaders, as and when there is a discussion on it.

"The party will go through the internal assessment and make the required corrections," he said.

Asked if he would have managed to retain the seat had he been given the ticket, he said, "I don't think we will achieve anything by speaking about the past."

By-elections were recently held in four Assembly constituencies of Goa, out of which the BJP won three seats but lost the Panaji seat. PTI

Tracing lovers of militants new trend in Valley

New Delhi: With Zakir Musa's killing, security forces have recorded an extremely important kill in the battle against Islamic fundamentalism in the Valley in the main south Kashmir where the jungles are now being used to train local youth. Musa, a byproduct of generation X, was a neophyte who grew up in turbulence and turmoil and experienced the so-called 'azadi' struggle firsthand, but chose the path of 'sharia' instead. He was brainwashed through Wahabi Salafism.

Zakir Rashid Bhat, 25, was trapped by security forces in a three-storey house in southern Kashmir late on Thursday and to flush him out, the house was set ablaze during the operation. Bhat or Musa, a former com-

mander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, the largest of the militant groups fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir, founded his own group and declared its association with al Qaeda in 2017.

Caught between two lovers, one of whom snatched to the intel network which moved with alacrity to pin Musa down and kill him. Apparently a poster boy Burhan Wani and Samir Tiger too died because their ex-lovers squealed to police snitches and gave them the exact location of the prey. This is a major downside and new IG Kashmir SP Pani is meticulously using his intel network to nail these terrorists one by one.

The most dangerous ele-

ment is that stone pelters are seamlessly migrating to weaponised militancy. The age group of 12-20 is most vulnerable to this phenomenon. The next big thing after Musa's extermination is Riyaz Naikoo.

Riyaz Naikoo, 33, carries a reward of ₹12 lakh on his head. He now replaces Zakir Musa as the most wanted militant commander in the Valley after Musa's death. Although he is not affiliated to the Al Qaeda as Musa was, Naikoo is the most senior commander of the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen or HM, to which Musa too belonged until he got fed up of the group and dumped it.

Categorised as "A++" level militant, intelligence agencies believe Naikoo is more of a 'lib-

eral militant commander" as compared to Musa who settled for nothing except the struggle to establish an Islamic State in Kashmir. Kidnappings of families of policemen attributed to Naikoo forced the police brass during 2016-17 to tell policemen not to visit their families in south Kashmir areas without security and permission from seniors.

This threat became more real by circulation of Naikoo's threatening video clips on social media. Naikoo's appearances at funerals of slain militants where he would offer gun salutes became a major problem for the security forces. He also used these funerals as a delta for recruitment.

But the local terror net-

work has its hands full with 41-year-old IG Kashmir SP Pani who is chasing the quarry relentlessly notching up kill after kill. Odisha IPS officer Swayam Prakash Pani was appointed the Inspector General (IG) of Police, Kashmir range, making him the youngest officer to hold the post last February. A 2000 batch IPS officer of Jammu Kashmir cadre, Pani (41) was serving as the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, South Kashmir Range.

Pani, a ruthless hunter who relies on intel to manage anti-terrorist operations, served as the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, South Kashmir Range. During his tenure as DIG, south Kashmir, many militant commanders were

killed in encounters. While focusing on anti-militancy operations, Pani also relentlessly worked to bring misguided youths to the mainstream and succeeded in bringing seven youths back to normal life. Pani also ensured securing arrests of militants from encounter sites.

As many as four militants were arrested from encounter sites during his tenure as DIG.

There are now two generations in Kashmir Valley which have openly espoused the cause of 'azadi', for the construct of this war against India is now 40 years old. Kashmiris have over these 40 years forgotten they are welded to the sovereign through the instrument of accession. Kashmiri nationalism has given way to Islamic

radicalisation and even the Hurriyat hawks are on the margins.

Since 2010, despite sporadic attempts to recruit youngsters in the Valley by militant organisations, Kashmiris had more or less got used to peace realising that 'Hindustan Chodega nahin' or Pakistan was no longer an option.

The tipping point came in January 2013 when Afzal Guru was hanged and while the Omar Abdullah administration ring-fenced the Valley from expected trouble, this underlying credo of faux peace was shattered and even exacerbated by the extreme Right of India BJP going into a coalition with the extreme Right of Kashmir soft separatist PDP. IANS

ISIS BOAT SETS OFF FROM LANKA Kerala, Lakshadweep coasts on high alert

Thiruvananthapuram: The Navy, Coast Guard and Coastal police are maintaining a high level of surveillance off Kerala and Lakshadweep coasts following intelligence reports that a boat carrying 15 Islamic State Terrorists had set off from Sri Lanka to Lakshadweep islands.



Representational image

"The Navy and Coast Guard are maintaining vigil. Ships and aircraft have been engaged to ensure high level of coastal surveillance", Naval sources told PTI on Sunday. Coastal police are also continuing their vigil. Kerala Police sources had Saturday said coastal police stations and coastal district police chiefs have been alerted. Though such alerts are a usual practice, as there is specific information, coastal police stations and police chiefs of coastal districts have been asked to be alert in case suspicious vessels are sighted.

The coastal police department said it was on alert since May 23, the day the alert came from Sri Lanka. After the serial bombings in Sri Lanka, Kerala was on alert, especially after NIA investigations revealed that IS operatives had planned attacks in the State. Intelligence agencies believe that a considerable

number of Keralites are still with the ISIS, which was recently wiped out from Iraq and Syria. Sri Lanka witnessed a deadly terror attack on Apr 21 when eight blasts rocked the island nation, claiming over 250 lives. The Islamic State had claimed responsibility for the incident. **PTI**

Balakot attack was to warn terrorists: Gen Rawat

Ezhimala: Chief of Army Staff General Bipin Rawat has said the Balakot attack in February was to ensure that terrorists being trained across the border do not survive to carry out action against India.

Coordinated efforts are being made by various Government agencies to tackle cross-border terrorism, he said.

"Through the coordinated efforts of various Government agencies, now the NIA has stepped in, the Enforcement Directorate has stepped in and all are trying to ensure financing and funds available to terrorists are cut off," he said, responding to a question on insurgency in Kashmir at a media interaction here.

He also said the situation there has been brought under control.

Rawat said the country has been facing terrorism since Independence and that security forces and all agencies supporting them have met these challenges head on.

"We have been able to ensure that the insurgency has been brought under control. Of course in the Kashmir Valley, we have been witnessing ups and downs of insur-



gencies. "That's because they got support from our western neighbour. At the same time many (people) are misguided due to a misinformation campaign spread by terrorists. But we have brought the situation under control," he said. The Chief of Army Staff was interacting with the media here yesterday after reviewing the passing-out parade of 264 trainees, comprising midshipmen and cadets of the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and 10 international cadets. Asked about the radar

comment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Rawat said some types of radar cannot see through clouds because of the manner in which it operates. "There are various kinds of radars working with different technologies. Some have the capacity to see through, some don't have the capacity to see through. "Some kinds of radar cannot see through clouds because of the manner in which it is operating. Sometimes we can, sometimes we can't," Rawat said. In a television interview

THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN FACING TERRORISM SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND THAT SECURITY FORCES AND ALL AGENCIES SUPPORTING THEM HAVE MET THESE CHALLENGES HEAD ON
—General Bipin Rawat

the Pulwama attack that claimed the lives of 40 CRPF personnel.

The Prime Minister's comment drew widespread ridicule and condemnation from various quarters, including a large number of memes on the social media.

The cadets who passed out Saturday marked the culmination of their training at the Indian Naval Academy (INA) here.

The passing-out parade was reviewed by General Rawat and meritorious midshipmen and cadets were awarded medals after the ceremonial review.

INA Commandant Vice Admiral R B Pandit and Director of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, Anurag Kumar, were in attendance at the parade.

The parade also saw 15 female cadets marching shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts to join the ranks of the Indian Navy, a release issued by the Academy said.

There were 10 trainees from various friendly nations, including two each from Maldives, Myanmar and Seychelles, one from Tanzania and three from Sri Lanka. **PTI**

Sons, daughters of leaders shine in LS polls in TN

Chennai: Amid a raging nationwide debate over dynastic politics, five kin of noted politicians in Tamil Nadu emerged victorious in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls.

What makes their victories more noteworthy is that many scions of politicians in the North and one in Karnataka bit the dust, chief among them being former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's son and Congress President Rahul Gandhi, who lost from the party's bastion of Amethi.

Jyotiraditya Scindia, son of former Union Minister Madhav Rao Scindia lost from Guna, while Manvendra Singh, son of Jaswant Singh, founding member of BJP lost in Barmer.

Karnataka saw Nikhil Kumaraswamy, son of Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy losing from Mandya. Notable among winners in Tamil Nadu was

Raveendranath Kumar, son of Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam, who won from Theni, defeating senior Congress leader EVKS Elangovan.

Other prominent winners were Karti Chidambaram, son of former Finance Minister P Chidambaram, who triumphed at Sivaganga and former Union Minister Dayanidhi Maran, son of the late Murasoli Maran.

Dayanidhi Maran won from Central Chennai segment.

No less noteworthy was the victory of Kanimozhi, daughter of late DMK chief M Karunanidhi, from Tuticorin, warding off the challenge from BJP Tamil Nadu unit President Tamilisai Soundarajan.

Kalanidhi Veerasamy, son of former DMK Minister 'Arcot' N Veerasamy, won from North Chennai, defeating Desiya Murpokku Dravidar Kazhagam (DMDK) candidate Alagapuram Mohanraj. **PTI**

Lawyer, assistant held in Dabholkar murder case sent to CBI custody

Pune: A court here on Sunday remanded two men, including a lawyer, in CBI custody till June 1 in the rationalist Narendra Dabholkar murder case.

Advocate Sanjeev Punalekar, who had represented some of the accused in the same case, had asked one of the alleged shooters to destroy the weapons, while Vikram Bhawe had helped them in reconnaissance before the crime, the CBI said.

Punalekar and Bhawe were arrested in Mumbai on Saturday.

Bhawe, a member of the right wing outfit Sanatan Sanstha, was earlier convicted in the case related to a low-intensity blast at Gadkari Rangyan auditorium Thane.

He worked as Punalekar's assistant in his office, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said.

The duo was produced before additional sessions judge S N Sonawane amid tight secu-

urity on Sunday.

The prosecution told the court while seeking remand that Bhawe had helped Sharad Kalaskar and Sachin Andure, the alleged shooters, to conduct a recce of the spot, and helped them escape after the crime.

He also took the motorcycle they had used during the crime and left it at an abandoned place, it said.

As to advocate Punalekar's role, the agency said in June 2018, Kalaskar visited the lawyer's office in Mumbai and told him about his role in Dabholkar's murder.

"Punalekar then told Kalaskar to destroy the fire arms used in the murder cases including the journalist Gauri Lankesh murder case," said special prosecutor Prakash Suryawanshi.

According to the agency, the murders of Dabholkar, communist leader Govind Pansare (killed in Kolhapur in February 2015) and Lankesh (shot dead in Bengaluru in

September 2017) were linked.

On July 23, 2018, Kalaskar dismantled four country-made pistols by taking out their barrels and sliders, and threw them into the Thane creek while on the way to Nalasopara from Pune, the prosecutor said, adding the dismantled pistols were yet to be recovered.

Advocate Virendra Ichalkaranjikar, the accused's lawyer, said the CBI has arrested Punalekar on the basis of Kalaskar's statement to the Karnataka Police in October 2018, which Kalaskar had later retracted.

The CBI arresting Punalekar on the basis of that statement after seven months was "illogical", he said. In February 2019, the CBI annexed a copy of this statement when it filed a charge-sheet against Andure and Kalaskar, but Punalekar was not probed, and "now all of a sudden they are stating that his role was revealed during the investigation," he said. **PTI**

Normalcy returns to Kashmir after restrictions withdrawn

Srinagar: Life returned to normal in Kashmir on Sunday after two days of restrictions and shutdown in the wake of the killing of Zakir Musa — the so-called head of an Al-Qaeda affiliate in the valley — in an encounter with security forces in Pulwama district, officials said.

They said there were no restrictions in place in any part of the valley on Sunday.

"Normalcy has returned to the valley as there is no strike today and no restrictions have been imposed anywhere," an official said.

Officials said shops, fuel stations and other business establishments re-opened this morning while public transport also operated normally.

The weekly flea market on the TRC Chowk-Batamalo axis through the Lal Chowk city centre was also open, they said.

Musa, the so-called head of the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind, was killed in an encounter with

security forces at Dadsara village of Tral in the south Kashmir's Pulwama district Friday after forces launched a search operation on late Thursday evening following specific information about the presence of militants there. Fearing law and order problems, authorities had imposed curfew in parts of Kashmir Valley as a precautionary measure on Friday. The curfew continued on Saturday in view of a strike called by the headline Hurriyat Conference chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani against the killing of Musa and a civilian, Zahoor Ahmad, a resident of Naira Pulwama — by unidentified gunmen on Thursday. Mobile internet was also suspended on Thursday night across the valley, but the low-speed service was restored in most parts on Saturday evening following improvement in the situation. The high-speed mobile internet service continued to remain barred. **PTI**

Low-intensity quake hits WB's Bankura district

Kolkata: A low-intensity earthquake, measuring 4.8 on the Richter Scale, shook West Bengal's Bankura district and its nearby areas on Sunday, the Met department said here.

A tweet by the India Meteorological Department said the quake hit Bankura at 10.39 am.

Official sources in Jharkhand maintained that tremors were also felt in the Santhal Pargana region of the neighbouring state, mainly in Dumka, Rajmahal and Deoghar districts.

There was no report of any casualty or damage to property so far from anywhere, according to reports.

The epicentre of the earthquake in Bankura was 10 km below the surface of Earth at latitude 23.3 degrees north and longitude 86.9 degrees east. **PTI**



People pay their last respect to the mortal remains of Indian climber Kuntal Karar during his funeral at his residence in Howrah on Sunday **PTI**

BJP supporter killed in Tripura

Agartala: A supporter of the ruling BJP was killed in Tripura's West Tripura district, police said on Sunday.

The BJP alleged that the CPI(M) had a hand in the death of its supporter, but the communist party denied the allegation.

"A BJP karyakarta was murdered at Banikya Chowmuhani area on Saturday night. We have report that there is involvement of CPI(M). There is also silent Congress support from behind," BJP state spokesperson Nabendu Bhattacharya told reporters.

Police said Shibu Das was found severely injured at Banikya Chowmuhani area under mysterious circumstances and he died on way to a local police station. A case has been registered

and investigation is on.

Another BJP supporter Biju Bhowmik was killed at Fatikcherra of West Tripura district on Friday last, police said.

Bhattacharya claimed that two BJP supporters were killed since Lok Sabha election results were announced, adding that 25 BJP supporters were assaulted in the last three days.

However, the opposition CPI(M) Sunday rubbished the BJP allegations and claimed that murders of two BJP supporters were due to their own factional feuds.

CPI(M) central committee member Bijan Dhar claimed on Sunday evening that more than 200 cases of attacks and 88 cases of arson had taken place in Tripura since Lok Sabha results were announced. **PTI**

Surat fire: 2 more persons arrested

Surat: Two persons who were on the run in connection with the devastating fire in a coaching class in Surat which killed 22 students were on Sunday arrested, police said.

They were identified as Harshul Vekharria and Jignesh Paghdal, and their arrests come a day after coaching class owner Bhargav Butani was held, an official said. Twenty-two students, including 18 girls, of an art and craft coaching institute died in a massive blaze in the four-storeyed Takshashila Arcade in Sarthana area of Surat on Friday.

"Vekharria is the builder while Paghdal used to handle the overall management of Takshashila Arcade. Both were arrested today. We have also got two-day remand of Butani," Surat Police Commissioner Satish Sharma said. **PTI**

TTV urges EC to provide info on non-registration of party votes

Chennai: AMMK chief TTV Dhinakaran on Sunday demanded that the Election Commission provide details of alleged non-registration of votes of his party workers in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections in Tamil Nadu.

Talking to reporters here, he said the EC should provide information about non-registration of votes in the polling booths during the April 18 elections.

He also termed as "strange" non-registration of votes for his party.

"How can it be possible? Even if a booth has only about four or five party cadres, what happened to their votes?" he asked.

"It is strange that there is non-registration of votes. I have received information from party functionaries that there was zero registration of votes to



our party," he claimed.

It was EC's responsibility to reveal whether the votes of his partymen were registered or not, he said and clarified that he was not targeting anyone on the issue.

Asked whether he would take legal action on the matter, the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) leader said he cannot do so due to lack of evidence to support his claim. **PTI**

Expose elements bent upon creating disturbance in J&K: DGP

Jammu: Jammu & Kashmir Director General of Police Dilbag Singh on Sunday asked his force to remain alert and expose the elements who want to create disturbance in the State.

He said the achievements of the security forces including the state police against militancy particularly in neutralising terrorists like Zakir Musa has been appreciated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and state Governor Satya Pal Malik.

Musa, the so-called head of the Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind, was killed in an encounter with security forces at Dadsara village of Tral in the south Kashmir's Pulwama district on Friday.



"You need to expose the elements who will try to create any disturbance... The police being local has a greater responsibility in foiling any attempts of reviving the militancy in the areas (declared militancy free in Jammu region)," Singh told policemen

during his visit to Gool in Ramban and Mahore and Reasi in Jammu region.

The Ramban and Reasi districts were declared 'militancy free' about a decade ago but recently two Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT) militants were arrested in Gool as army

claimed to have scuttled an attempt by the outfit to revive militancy in the region.

The DGP appreciated the achievements of the police in the districts in tackling militancy and other crimes and said that the state police was capable and competent of handling any kind of contingency.

Singh, who also visited 58 Rashtriya Rifles and 15 sector headquarters of the army and interacted with the officers there, said police and other security agencies are facing different challenges.

"Police along with the security forces including Army, CRPF, SSB, ITBP and BSF is doing an excellent job in tackling militancy and other challenges," he said.

The state police would continue its good work for the service of the people and with their increasing cooperation, it will succeed in restoring peace in the state, he added.

The DGP also appreciated the efforts of the police in smooth and peaceful conduct of panchayat, local body and the recently held parliamentary elections in the state.

Singh said necessary formalities for effecting the second phase of promotions in the state police force have been started and that pre-promotion courses have begun at various places.

"Police headquarter is well aware of some difficulties of the police personnel and measures will be taken to redress these issues," he said. **PTI**

Post Surat tragedy, experts to conduct Vadodara fire audit, says Civic chief

Vadodara: Civic and police authorities in Vadodara in Gujarat have sealed and snapped electricity connections of 192 coaching classes in fire safety compliance action initiated against the backdrop of the devastating blaze on Friday in Surat which killed 22 students.

Vadodara Municipal Corporation Commissioner Ajay Bhadoo Sunday said the civic body planned to carry out the first ever fire audit in the city for which experts from the Delhi-based Institution of Fire Engineers will be brought in.

"Experts from the Institution of Fire Engineers are expected in Vadodara in the

next couple of days to carry out the audit," Bhadoo said, adding that it may be the first of its kind exercise anywhere in the state and possibly the country.

"The VMC Fire Brigade has sealed 192 coaching classes and their power supply halted over the last two days," he informed.

He said the city has a huge number of small and medium sized commercial units in its three industrial estates and the fire audit would provide a detailed assessment of the kind of equipment and number of personnel required to avert any Surat-type tragedy.

Vadodara police commissioner Anupamsinh Gehlot

said apart from sealing establishments that were not complying with fire safety norms, the process of issuing notices to several coaching classes had also begun.

Twenty-two students, including 18 girls, of an art and craft coaching institute died in a devastating fire that engulfed the four-storeyed Takshashila Arcade in Sarthana area of Surat on Friday.

Preliminary probe revealed that use of highly inflammable materials and tyres, which doubled up as chairs in the coaching class, caused the fire to spread rapidly. Gujarat Chief Secretary J N Singh said on Sunday. **PTI**

Single authority for GST refunds likely by August

For sanctioning and processing GST refunds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A single authority for sanctioning and processing GST refunds is in the offing as the Finance Ministry looks to speed up and simplify the process for exporters, an official said.

The current mechanism entails a twin refund sanctioning authority of the central and state tax officers but that could well change by August when the proposed new structure involving a single authority comes in place.

As per the system being worked out by the Revenue Department, the taxpayer will get full refund from his jurisdictional officer once the claim is sanctioned, while at the back-end the Centre and states will apportion the amount to be paid to each other.

Currently, once a taxpayer files refund claim with the jurisdictional tax authority, say the central tax officer, then he would clear 50 per cent of the claims, and the remaining is cleared by the state tax officers after further scrutiny.

A similar system is followed when a taxpayer approaches the state tax officers for Goods and Services Tax



(GST) refunds. Thus, the time taken to clear the entire refund amount gets longer, leading to liquidity crunch for exporters — an issue that the proposed single mechanism for refund clearing intends to fix.

Under the proposed 'single authority mechanism', once a refund claim is filed with a tax officer, whether Centre or state, the officer will check, assess and sanction full tax refund (both Central GST and State GST portion), thereby removing difficulties faced by the taxpayers. This will later get adjusted/settled amongst the two tax authorities through internal account adjustments.

Currently, the two authorities settling the same refund claims adds to unnecessary complexities and inconvenience for the taxpayers. It has been seen that even after sanctionment/payment of refund by concerned jurisdictional tax

officer, the counterpart tax authority at times tends to delay the GST refund.

As per the formula for division of GST assesses decided by the GST Council, state tax officials administer and control 90 per cent of the assesses below ₹1.5 crore annual turnover, and the remaining 10 per cent is with the central tax officers.

The Centre and states share control of those assesses with annual turnover of over ₹1.5 crore in 50:50 ratio.

Commenting on the move, AMRG & Associates Partner Rajat Mohan said: "A single window tax refund in a federal, democratic economy would be a massive jump in ease of doing business. Inter government tax adjustments have to be done on month-on-month basis to avert any possibility of temporary revenue deficit to a particular Government."

FinMin to launch ETF with bank stocks, fin institutions this fiscal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry is planning to launch an exchange traded fund (ETF) consisting of stocks of PSU banks and financial institutions this fiscal and will soon appoint an advisor to explore its feasibility, according to an official.

After the resounding success of CPSE ETF and Bharat-22 ETF, the Government is looking at diversifying the ETF basket by including stocks of public sector banks and financial institutions.

"We will be soon appointing an advisor to suggest on launching an ETF with PSU bank scrips. The advisor will also look into the feasibility of including stocks of financial institutions and insurance companies into the basket," the official told PTI.

The plan to launch a bank ETF comes on the back of the Government seeing huge investor demand for two existing ETFs. It has raised ₹32,900 crore through two tranches and an additional fund offer of Bharat-22 ETF, and ₹38,000 crore in five tranches of CPSE ETF in the domestic market.

"We expect balance sheet of PSU banks to strengthen going forward and an ETF would provide risk-averse investors an option to hold

shares of multiple banks through a single financial instrument," the official said.

Currently, there are two state-owned insurance companies — General Insurance Corp of India and New India Assurance Co Ltd — and 19 public sector banks that are listed on exchanges. Besides, financial institution IFCI is also listed on the exchanges.

The Government currently has two exchange-traded funds — CPSE ETF and Bharat-22 ETF — listed on domestic exchanges. ETFs function like a mutual fund scheme and have underlying assets of Government-owned companies.

The Finance Ministry has also started consultations with global investors for launching CPSE-scrip based ETF in overseas market.

The official further said that the Government does not intend to launch in the domestic market any new ETFs comprising stocks of public sector companies since in most of these companies Government holding is nearing 51 per cent.

Bharat-22 ETF, which was launched in 2017-18, has 16 central public sector enterprises covering six sectors, three public sector banks and three private sector companies where the Government holds minority stake.

Jaypee Infra insolvency: Creditors' meet on May 30 to discuss NBCC bid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Debt-laden Jaypee Infratech's financial creditors, which include bankers and homebuyers, will meet on May 30 to discuss state-owned NBCC's bid to acquire the realty firm and complete stuck housing projects.

A meeting of Committee of Creditors (CoC) has been called on May 30, sources said. As many as 13 banks and 23,000 homebuyers have voting rights in the committee.

Earlier this month, creditors rejected a bid by Mumbai-based Suraksha Realty through a voting process.

Later, the CoC decided to put on vote the NBCC's offer even as bankers were opposed to this move citing certain conditions in the resolution plan submitted by the public sector firm.

On the bankers' plea, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) had on May 17 annulled voting by homebuyers and lenders on NBCC's bid and allowed renegotiation on the offer by May 30. Voting process could start from May 31.

At present, bankers and NBCC are negotiating on the latter's bid to acquire Jaypee Infratech.

Sources had earlier said that NBCC was unlikely to dilute certain conditions, including exemption from future tax liability, mentioned



nesses, including land parcels and Yamuna Expressway.

Clarifications from the NBCC were sought in the wake of Jaypee Infratech's Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) Anuj Jain flagging to the lenders that the

state-owned firm's bid was conditional and non-binding.

The IRP had written to the CoC that NBCC's revised bid would not be binding unless key relief measures such as extinguishing of income tax liability and exemption from seeking consent of YEIDA (Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority) for any business transfer, were taken.

In 2017, Jaypee Infratech went into insolvency process after the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) admitted an application by an IDBI Bank-led consortium seeking revival of the realty firm.

In the first round of insolvency proceedings conducted last year, the ₹7,350-crore bid of Lakshdeep, part of Suraksha Group, was rejected by lenders.

Later in October 2018, the IRP started the second round of bidding process to revive Jaypee Infratech on the NCLT's direction.

India's coal import up 13% to 21 MT in Q4



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import increased by 13.4 per cent to 20.72 million tonnes in April compared to 18.27 million tonnes (MT) in the same last year, according to a report.

Of the total imports during April 2019, non-coking coal or thermal coal shipments were at 15.08 MT, according to provisional data by mjunction services. Imports of coking coal, used in iron and steel making, were 3.52 MT in April while metallurgical coke imports during the month were at 0.22 MT.

Mjunction, a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL, is a B2B e-commerce company that also publishes research reports on coal and steel verticals.

Coal and coke imports

during 2018-19 increased by 9.66 per cent to 235.35 MT as compared to 214.61 MT imported in FY2017-18, latest mjunction data showed.

Commenting on the import trend, mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma said, "The flat trend in non-coking coal import in April was in line with expectations, as the power plants continued to have sufficient stock of coal."

"This scenario may continue in the current month," he added.

The Centre had earlier urged state-run Coal India to pledge self-sufficiency in production to eliminate import of thermal coal.

The Government has set a target of 1 billion tonne of coal production by 2019-20 for the mining major, but is considering relaxing the timeline.

'Don't be too optimistic': Huawei employees fret at US ban

AFF ■ BEIJING

While Huawei's founder brushes aside a US ban against his company, the telecom giant's employees have been less sanguine, confessing fears for their future in online chat rooms.

Huawei CEO Ren Zhengfei declared this week the company has a hoard of microchips and the ability to make its own in order to withstand a potentially crippling US ban on using American components and software in its products.

"If you really want to know what's going on with us, you can visit our Xinsheng Community," Ren told Chinese media, alluding to Huawei's internal forum partially open to viewers outside the company.

But a peek into Xinsheng shows his words have not reassured everyone within the Shenzhen-based company.

"During difficult times, what should we do as individuals?" posted an employee under the handle Xiao Feng on Thursday.

"At home reduce your debts and maintain enough cash," Xiao Feng wrote.

"Make a plan for your financial assets and don't be overly optimistic about your remuneration and income."

This week Google, whose Android operating system powers most of the world's smartphones, said it would cut



ties with Huawei as a result of the ban.

Another critical partner, ARM Holdings — a British designer of semiconductors owned by Japanese group Softbank — said it was complying with the US restrictions.

"On its own Huawei can't resolve this problem, we need to seek support from government policy," one unnamed employee wrote last week, in a post that received dozens of likes and replies.

The employee outlined a plan for China to block off its smartphone market from all American components much in the same way Beijing fostered its internet tech

Taobao to buy the needed components. Another dangled the prospect of setting up dozens of new companies to make purchases from US suppliers.

Many denounced the US and proposed China ban McDonald's, Coca-Cola and all-American movies and TV shows.

"First time posting under my real name: we must do our jobs well, advance and retreat with our company," said an employee named Xu Jin.

The tech ban caps months of US effort to isolate Huawei, whose equipment Washington fears could be used as a Trojan horse by Chinese intelligence services.

Still, last week Trump indicated he was willing to include a fix for Huawei in a trade deal that the two economic giants have struggled to seal and US officials issued a 90-day reprieve on the ban.

In Xinsheng, an employee with the handle Youxin lamented: "I want to advance and retreat alongside the company, but then my boss told me to pack up and go", followed by two sad-face emoticons.

COAI urges new Govt to ease telecom sector's financial woes, review spectrum prices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The new Government should take urgent steps to ease the financial burden on the stressed telecom sector, slash overall levies to an ideal 4-5 per cent and review spectrum prices to make it affordable ahead of the crucial 5G rollout, industry body COAI said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has led Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to a landslide victory for a second term in office, while the Congress suffered a serious setback in the Lok Sabha polls.

The new Government, which is set to be formed in the next few days, will present the full Budget for 2019-20, and the mobile operators' association is hoping that some of its long-pending demands will be taken up in the coming months.

Topping its wishlist is cut in levies, as the industry hopes that the current level of 30 per cent levy would be reduced to provide a breather to the stressed sector.

"Charges like Licence Fee, Spectrum Usage Charges and redefinition of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) needs to be looked at," Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) Director General Rajan

Mathews told PTI. Asked what the association considers to be an ideal level, Mathews said globally levies do not exceed 5 per cent and hence 4-5 per cent would be "ideal".

On the issue of debt restructuring, Mathews said telecom operators should be given more time for repayment of spectrum bought in auctions. This, he said, can be done by increasing the moratorium period to four years and payment period to 18 years keeping the 'Net Present Value' unchanged.

The industry also wants the Government to look at making spectrum prices "more affordable".

"If we want 5G to take off, the present pricing will not get you there," Mathews added.

He noted that at the present prices proposed, operators will not be able to afford the radiowaves which, in turn, will pose a challenge in rollout of 5G services.

A section of the industry has questioned regulator TRAI's methodology of computing the reserve price, claiming it has resulted in spectrum prices being unreasonably higher than global benchmarks.

Earlier this year, Bharti Airtel Chairman Sunil Mittal too had flagged high reserve prices of 5G spectrum. He had said the Government must price spectrum reasonably and lower various levies to encourage rollout of 5G services in the country at the earliest.

The telecom czar had also warned that the spectrum auction may fail and Airtel might not bid for airwaves if the auctions are held at prices recommended by TRAI.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended auction of about 8,644 MHz of telecom frequencies, including those for 5G services, at an estimated total base price of ₹4.9 lakh crore.

The telecom sector is burdened with staggering debt levels and cut throat competition.

Competition has only intensified since 2016, when Reliance Jio, owned by richest Indian Mukesh Ambani, stormed into the market and offered lifetime free calls and dirt cheap data. Jio's disruptive offerings forced rivals to slash rates, affecting profit margins. Since Jio's launch, rivals have either merged, resorted to acquisitions or folded up.

Ex-servicemen of Assam Rifles to organise rally tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Assam Rifles will be organising an Ex-Servicemen rally in Darjeeling district of West Bengal on May 28, 2019. Rally will commence at 8:30 AM at Gymkhana Club Auditorium, Darjeeling.

The aim of the rally is to assist Assam Rifles Ex-Servicemen & Veer Naris in resolution of their grievances, if any. It also aims at enhancing their awareness with regard to latest policies/regulations as well as job opportunities.

Stalls would be established by various branches of Headquarters Directorate General Assam Rifles like Record Office, Pension Cell (UPAO), Assam Rifles Ex-Servicemen Association & Welfare and Rehabilitation Board Directorate. Civil Administration will also put up stalls like Banking Services, Agriculture and Horticultural departments, PAN Card & Aadhaar Card services. A medical camp will also be organised by the Headquarters Directorate General Assam Rifles during the rally for the benefit of the Ex-Servicemen fraternity.

Indians lead top 10 nationalities investing in Dubai's gold sector

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indians lead the top 10 nationalities investing in Dubai's gold sector followed by the citizens of Pakistan, Britain, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Oman, Jordan, Belgium, Yemen and Canada, according to a new report.

As many as 4,086 companies operate in the gold sector in Dubai and the number of investors stands at 62,125 including 60,012 businessmen and 2,113 businesswomen, the Business Registration and Licensing (BRL) sector in the Department of Economic Development (DED) said in its new report.

The report includes statistics on the number of companies operating in Dubai, the activities of the gold market sector and the distribution of the companies across the emirate. It aims to familiarise entrepreneurs with the gold sector, and highlight its role in adding value to the economy, a statement from the DED said.

Of the 4,086 companies, 2,498 licences were issued for

'Jewellery and jewels of gold and silver', 1,184 for trade in 'Gold and precious metals', 392 for 'Goldsmiths and precious jewellery', seven for 'Gold foundry and precious metals', and five for 'Gold liquidation' activity, it said.

The total gold, jewellery and diamond sales, reached 274 billion dirhams last year, an increase of about three per cent compared to 2017, according to the Dubai Gold and Jewellery Group.

The UAE's trade in gold and precious stones has also grown significantly in recent years and its foreign trade in this sector is estimated at about 400 billion dirhams annually.

The import of gold was valued at 142.4 billion dirhams, while the value of exports amounted to 75.9 billion dirhams, and the value of re-exports to 26 billion dirhams, according to the Federal Customs Authority.

The gold and jewellery sector provide residents of Dubai with gold imports from about 30 countries. This also meets the demand of tourists who visit Dubai.

TRAI SPECTRUM PRICES HIGH DUE TO INCONSISTENCY IN PRINCIPLES: STUDY

New Delhi: The spectrum price recommended by regulator Trai is high due to inconsistency in the principle applied by the watchdog for calculating base rates, a joint study by ICRIER and Broadband India Forum has claimed.

"Our analysis ... On the pricing of the 1800 MHz band finds that a bulk of the reserve prices not only continue to remain high, there are also inconsistencies in the principles applied," the joint report by

Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) and Broadband India Forum said.

It said that the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has placed immense value on the bid price of previous auctions and this method does not always account for changing market conditions or operator circumstances even if the gap between two subsequent auctions is not significant.

PTI



The three-day expo was a congregation of innovators & imaginers, academia, policy makers & city administrators, Government representatives, business delegates, multinationals, etc that came to strike business deals, expand their markets, and explore new technologies and solutions in the fields of smart cities, water management, solar, transport and infrastructure. With more than 400 exhibitors, the expo saw record 15000+ visitors and strong sales across all disciplines

FedEx: Back & Running

Roger beat Lorenzo in his first match on clay court Slam



AFP ■ PARIS

Roger Federer marked his return to Roland Garros after a four-year absence with a 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 win over Italy's Lorenzo Sonego on Sunday and said he had "missed playing in Paris so much".

Federer, the 2009 champion in Paris, will face German lucky loser Oscar Otte

for a place in the third round. The 20-time major winner hadn't played the tournament since 2015 when he reached the quarter-finals. However, on Sunday, it was as if the 37-year-old had never been away as he swept to victory in one hour 41 minutes on a rebuilt and packed Court Philippe Chatrier. It was his 60th successive first round

win at a Grand Slam. "I missed it so much so thanks for the welcome," said Federer. "I felt great playing on this court. It looks great and attractive, so congratulations to everyone involved. Hopefully I can play here again for my next match." Federer broke serve five times and fired 36 winners past 24-year-old Sonego,

the world number 73 who made the quarter-finals at the Monte Carlo Masters this year after qualifying. "Two breaks in the first set were very important for me and when I was leading 4-0 I could take more risks, be more aggressive," said the third seed. "I know that I can play very well on clay and I am very happy to win in straight sets."

TSITSIPAS ENTERS ROUND 2

Rising Greek star Stefanos Tsitsipas moved into the French Open second round on Sunday with a comfortable straight-sets win over Maximilian Marterer on Court Philippe Chatrier.

The 20-year-old sixth seed, a semi-finalist at the Australian Open earlier this year, brushed aside German Marterer 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (7/4).

Tsitsipas raced into a 2-0 lead and edged a third-set tie-break to see off an opponent who reached the fourth round in Paris last year.

"It was a difficult first match... In the tie-break I managed to play like I did in the first two sets," said Tsitsipas, who was playing on the Roland Garros show court for the first time.

"These are the moments we're practising for and dreaming of, I'm really happy to play here."

Tsitsipas will next face either Indian Prajesh Gunneswaran or Bolivia's Hugo Dellien as he looks to reach the third round for the first time.

NEW COURT UNVEILED

The new Court Simonne Mathieu, a 5,000-capacity semi-sunken arena enclosed by greenhouses, was officially unveiled on Sunday.

It forms part of the 350 million euro upgrade of the entire site which will also see the demolition of the Court 1 'bullring' after the 2018 tournament.

Spain's Garbine Muguruza, the 2016 champion, had the honour of opening proceedings against America's Taylor Townsend and the 19th seed marked the occasion with a 5-7, 6-2, 6-2 win.

"It's cute," said the Spaniard. "It's not small, but it's, you know, cosy."

Other winners on the first day included Japanese seventh seed Kei Nishikori, a quarter-finalist in 2015, who eased past France's Quentin Halys 6-2, 6-3, 6-4. However, Italian 16th seed Marco Cecchinato, the man who sent Novak Djokovic crashing out in the quarter-finals in 2018, fell at the first hurdle.



Kerber suffers shock defeat

AFP ■ PARIS

German fifth seed and reigning Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber saw her hopes of a career Grand Slam ended by Russian teenager Anastasia Potapova at Roland Garros on Sunday as Roger Federer prepared to make his Paris return after a four-year absence.

Fifth-seeded Wimbledon champion Kerber slumped to a 6-4, 6-2 defeat to 18-year-old Potapova who was making her French Open debut.

"I had a lot of confidence and I have to thank my coach for that," said 81st-ranked Potapova who hit 28 winners past her German opponent.

Kerber, 31, has now lost six times in the French Open first round.

The German left-hander had come into Roland Garros carrying a right ankle injury which forced her to pull out of the Italian Open and retire from her second round tie in Madrid.

"She played really good, I tried my best," said Kerber who was broken six times in the match which brought the curtain up on a rebuilt Court Philippe Chatrier.

"I didn't really have great preparation and I was just happy to get on court to play the match."

"I didn't have many expectations coming in." Potapova's first win over a top 10 player gives her a second round clash against either China's Wang Yafan or Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic.

Valencia stun Barca to win Copa del Rey



AFP ■ SEVILLE

Barcelona wanted a trophy to ease their Champions League heartache but instead fell to another shock defeat as Valencia pulled off a thrilling 2-1 victory on Saturday to win the Copa del Rey.

Chasing a record fifth consecutive triumph, Barca were undone by a relentless and gutsy Valencia side, who hung on after Lionel Messi pulled a goal back to set up a dramatic finish in Seville.

By then, Valencia were already two up, Kevin Gameiro and Rodrigo scoring twice in 13 frantic first-half minutes, after the latter spurned a golden early chance that could have spared them a nerve-shredding last 17 minutes.

Messi drove the comeback effort and Goncalo Guedes twice should have wrapped it up for Valencia, missing a one-on-one and then an open goal before the final whistle sparked pandemonium.

Valencia's coach Marcelino, who might have been sacked when his team were four points off relegation in January, raced around the pitch in a frenzy.

CHASING A RECORD FIFTH CONSECUTIVE TRIUMPH, BARCA WERE UNDONE BY A RELENTLESS AND GUTSY VALENCIA SIDE

Barcelona's players sank to their knees.

"We always had faith," said Marcelino. "Beating Barcelona to win the cup is very special. We deserved to win."

Messi admitted on Friday his team had still not recovered from the "hard blow" suffered against Liverpool and certainly they seemed too easily disheartened here, finding their fight only once it was too late.

Messi also threw his support behind Barcelona's coach Ernesto Valverde but it remains to be seen whether the backing of the board remains after two

dreadful defeats have now spoiled such a brilliant La Liga success.

"I do not think it's the coach's fault," said president Josep Maria Bartomeu.

If Barca's season all but ended three weeks ago, Valencia's arguably found life a few days later, as they moved into the top four for the first time and then held on to qualify for the Champions League.

'HISTORY MADE'

Winning their first trophy since 2008, in the club's centenary year, completes a remarkable comeback campaign that, after 15 games, had them languishing in 15th. "We have made history," said captain Dani Parejo. Gameiro added: "In the difficult moments we stayed close. I don't have the words to describe it."

Some saw a metaphor in Barcelona's pre-match tifo, spelling out 'All Together' splitting down the middle, while there were key absentees from their starting line-up too, Marc Andre Stegen, Luis Suarez and Ousmane Dembele all injured.

Valencia should have been ahead within five minutes, Clement Lenglet's error sending Rodrigo clear but his finish was brilliantly scooped off the line by the recovering Gerard Pique.

Barca, with Sergio Busquets in the centre of a back three, settled but lacked zip and in the 23rd minute they were behind. Jose Gaya scuttled in behind Nelson Semedo and his pull-back wrong-footed everyone except Gameiro, who fired in.

Barcelona stirred before the break. Ivan Rakitic volleyed and then headed wide, before Messi registered their first shot on target in the 43rd minute.

Malcom and Arturo Vidal came on for Semedo and Arthur during the interval, as Barca turned the screw. Messi might have turned the match but after wriggling through his sumptuous flick towards the far corner brushed the post. There were 17 minutes to survive and with six left, Messi headed over but he was dispossessed by a sliding challenge.

Messi drove from the edge of the area but it was blocked and Guedes twice should have wrapped it up, first missing a



Hanfmann hopes to shock Nadal

AFP ■ PARIS

When Yannick Hanfmann takes on 11-time champion Rafael Nadal in the biggest match of his career at Roland Garros, he won't be fazed by the noise generated by thousands of fans getting behind the Spaniard as being partially deaf from childhood means he probably won't hear them anyway.

The 27-year-old German, ranked a lowly 184 in the world, has come through three tough rounds of qualifying to make the main draw in Paris for the first time.

Likely to play Nadal on the 15,000-seater Court Philippe Chatrier, Hanfmann says his

childhood deafness can occasionally work to his advantage.

"A centre court full of spectators doesn't affect me," the Munich resident told Germany daily Bild in an interview.

"I have a hearing aid but it doesn't really work. Sometimes it's a problem, because not everyone knows."

"If I don't react when somebody calls my name, they think 'what's up with him?'"

Hanfmann only turned professional four years ago after a four-year US college stint in which he helped the University of Southern California win two national titles.

He has won just one match on the main tour all year and his

earnings reflect that.

In 2019, he has banked just \$3,600 while world number two Nadal has earned \$3.7 million in the same period, taking his career total to almost \$107 million. Whatever happens when he faces Nadal, Hanfmann is guaranteed his biggest pay day yet — 46,000 euros if he exits in the first round.

Despite the disparity in achievement on court, Nadal will not be over-confident. At Roland Garros, however, Nadal has only lost twice in 14 years — against the now-retired Robin Soderling in 2009 and this year's top seed Novak Djokovic in 2015. Against those two losses are an astounding 86 wins.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's Apurvi Chandela continued her golden run of form, winning the women's 10m Air Rifle after a closely-fought contest on Sunday at the year's third International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Rifle/Pistol stage in Munich, Germany.

The shooter from Jaipur shot a score of 251 in the final to outshine Wang Luyao of China, who shot 250.8, to settle for the silver medal. Another Chinese shooter, Xu Hong, finished third with a score of 229.4 in the final.

It was a neck-and-neck battle between Apurvi and Wang, where the Indian was just 0.1 ahead as she shot a 10.4 to Wang's 10.3 to clinch the issue.

This was Apurvi's second ISSF World Cup gold of the year followed by a world record score in New Delhi in February.

In the second Beijing leg she had finished just outside the

Apurvi shoots Gold



medal bracket -- at fourth place. This was also Apurvi's career's fourth ISSF medal.

Another Indian in the fray today, Elavenil Valarivan also made it to the finals along with teammate Apurvi but narrowly missed out on a medal, finish-

ing fourth. She lost to eventual bronze medalist Xu Hong of China by just 0.1 points.

After 20 shots in the 24-shot final, Xu edged out Elavenil 208.4 to 208.3.

Earlier, all three Indians in the 149-strong qualifying field

China whitewash Japan to win Sudirman Cup

AFP ■ NANNING

Shi Yuqi stunned world champion Kento Momota as hosts China whitewashed Japan for an 11th Sudirman Cup title on Sunday.

Japan have never won the badminton world mixed-team championship and their search goes on after they were well beaten 3-0 in the Chinese city of Nanning.

China's dominant victory over the top seeds is an ominous indication of the depth they possess in their ranks with next summer's Tokyo Olympics on the horizon.

Roared on by the home crowd, China went 1-0 up through their men's doubles and then took a 2-0 lead after a captivating women's singles match between Chen Yufei and Akane Yamaguchi.

Japan needed their talisman Momota to beat Shi in the men's singles to keep the tie alive.

The world number one had defeated second-ranked Shi four times in five previous meetings, including last year's world championship final.

It looked like more of the same when the 24-year-old Momota won the first game 21-15, but Shi suddenly found rhythm and his subdued



Japanese rival faded spectacularly.

The 23-year-old Shi raced to the second game 21-5 and took that searing momentum into the decider, winning the third game — and with it the Sudirman Cup — 21-11.

Shi sealed the championship with a smash and was mobbed by his team-mates, who raced onto the court after his surprise win.

China, the long-time pre-eminent power in badminton, reclaim the trophy that they lost to South Korea two years ago.

the day went to Laura-Georgeta Coman of Romania and 16-year-old Hungarian Eszter Meszaros, who finished 5th and 6th respectively in the women's 10m air rifle, given the top four consisting of two Indians and two Chinese were not eligible.

India already has five quota places in Rifle and Pistol competitions.

As a result they forfeited their right to quotas in the women's air rifle and men's 10m air pistol competitions, given they have already secured the maximum possible two quotas in these events.

Apurvi, Anjum, Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma and Divyansh Singh Panwar have secured quotas for the country so far.

India's other quota is in the men's 10m air rifle and thus the shooters would be eligible for only one quota.

Monday will witness three finals with six Tokyo quota places up for grabs.

'We will work on our batting skills'

After suffering 6-wicket defeat against NZ in first warm-up game, Men In Blue hope to get better wickets and perform well in World Cup

PTI ■ LONDON

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is hoping to get better pitches in the World Cup than the one at Kennington Oval where India's batsmen were blown away by New Zealand in their first warm-up game.

With a brisk half-century, Jadeja was the only batsman to stand out in a dismal performance.

But the senior player assured there was nothing to worry about.

"It was typical English conditions, wicket was soft initially but it got better as the game progressed. We are hoping that we don't get this much amount of grass and get a better wicket to bat in the World Cup," Jadeja said at the post-match press conference.

Opting to bat, India were all out for 179 in conditions slightly favourable to bowlers, and New Zealand chased down the target with plenty to spare.

"This is our first game, it is just one game and we can't judge players on one bad innings, one bad match. So nothing to worry as a batting unit," Jadeja said.

"It is always difficult in England, you are coming from India, where you play on flat wickets, we still have time to work on it. There is nothing to worry, we just have to keep playing good cricket.

"As a batting unit we will work harder on our batting skills, everyone has a lot of experience, so nothing to worry."

Jadeja said the aim was to utilise the opportunity of batting out the remaining overs after he walked in to bat in the 20th over.

"I was telling myself that my shot selection should not be faulty. There was no rush," he said. "There were many over left. So I was taking my time.



"I knew that if I could play out the initial overs then it would become easy gradually. I kept my shot selection very limited in that initial phase. That proved beneficial. I played out the good overs they bowled me early on and then it became easy."

Asked about India's decision to bat first in seaming conditions, Jadeja said: "We knew there will be seaming conditions, so we decided to bat to face tough conditions because if we bat in such conditions it will be easy for batsmen in actual matches. We took it as a challenge. We will do well, we have no doubt."

Jadeja said he will look to play his natural game and not put himself under pressure during the showpiece event.

Kohli pleased with lower-order fightback

After the Indian top order failed to live up to the expectations in the warm-up game against New Zealand, skipper Virat Kohli expects his lower-order batsmen to rise to the occasion if a situation arises in the upcoming World Cup.

"Very good," Kohli said of the lower-order contributions at the post-match presentation. "I mean, the one thing we spoke about in a tournament like the World Cup is, you could easily have

your top order out for not too many, so the lower order has to look forward to that and I think Hardik (Pandya) batted really well. MS (Dhoni) absorbed the pressure really well and (Ravindra) Jadeja got a few runs as well, so I think we got a lot out of this game. The lower order getting some runs that was the biggest positive."

The Indian skipper lauded bowlers' effort and felt that the fielding and catching need to improve. **IANS**

"Everywhere I play, I will continue doing what I do. I will not put pressure on myself thinking about the world cup, will try to keep it simple," he said.

Jadeja blasted 54 off 50 balls, and the knock was studded with six fours and two sixes.

Talking about his innings, Jadeja said: "I had a lot of time, there were a lot of overs. So I was talking to myself to not get the shot selection wrong. There was no rush. I knew if I can clear the initial overs, it will be helpful for me and that is what happened," he said.

"I was working on my batting during IPL. Whenever I get a chance, I go to the nets and work on basic technique and basic shot selection."

'Hope to end our losing streak'

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan's chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq is confident that the national team will break its six-match losing streak in the World Cup against India when it takes on the arch-rivals at the mega-event on June 16.

Pakistan have never won against India in a World Cup match but the former Test captain feels that they can post a breakthrough victory against the neighbours this time around when the two teams meet at Manchester next month.

"People take an Indo-Pak match very seriously and some even go on to say that 'we will be happy even if only we can win against India during the World Cup,'" said Inzamam.

"I'm hopeful that we will end our losing streak against India in World Cup matches," he told a Pakistan Cricket website.

The veteran of 120 Tests, however, said that the World Cup is not just about the match against India, and "Pakistan have the potential to beat other sides as well".

Pakistan go into the World Cup having suffered 10 successive ODI defeats and were also beaten by Afghanistan in the warm-up



match of the World Cup. Inzamam, who is under-fire in recent times for making late changes in the World Cup squad, spoke about the difficulties of selecting national team and the pressure that comes with it.

"People think it is easy to jot down 14-15 players in order to form a squad but it's nothing like that because there is a lot of pressure. For example it was very difficult for us to select fast-bowlers for the World Cup because there were a lot of good names around including the likes of Amir, Junaid and (Usman Khan) Shinwari," said the 49-year-old.

On threat posed by minnows like Afghanistan during the upcoming tournament, Inzamam said no team should be taken lightly in the WC.

Rain washes away warm-up games

PTI ■ CARDIFF/BRISTOL

The ICC World Cup warm-up matches between Pakistan and Bangladesh and South Africa and West Indies were on Sunday called off due to rain in both the venues.

While the Pakistan-Bangladesh match in Cardiff

was abandoned without a ball being bowled, the tie between South Africa and West Indies saw very little action.

South Africa were coasting at 95 for no loss in Bristol after being sent into bat when the match was called off. Hashim Amla was batting on 51 off 46 balls.



'We will take confidence from win against India'

PTI ■ LONDON

Acknowledging the swing on offer during their warm-up game against India, fast bowler Trent Boult says the convincing win over one of the favourites gives them confidence heading into the World Cup.

Boult was the wrecker-in-chief, returning impressive figures of 4/33 to bowl out India for 179 in under 40 overs at the Kennington Oval.

"Nice to see it swinging around a little bit," Boult told ICC after the game here on Saturday.

"I'd love to expect that everywhere, some good wickets around the country. It's going to be a good challenge, but us as a bowling unit, we're definitely looking forward to it, but we'll take some confidence out of today.

"But yeah, the biggest challenge will be when it's not swinging and not nipping around a little bit. Then how do we take wickets? So we'll look at that."

With batsmen dominating one-day internationals in England in recent years, there is a belief that this World Cup could see imposing totals being notched on regular basis.

"We know what early wickets does to the batting side," Boult said.

"We want to be as aggressive as we can to try and get into any team's batting order, so we know if we get two or three wickets at the top of the order, it puts a lot of pressure on the opposition. That is the basic plan, and for me, it's about pitching the ball up and swinging the ball around as much as it can."

Boult was the joint leading wicket-taker in the 2015 edition with 22 scalps from nine matches. The conditions have become more challenging since then, but he isn't intimidated by predictions of 500-plus scores.

"The ball hasn't really swung around as much since then, but I don't know if I'm going to make any drastic calls like someone's going to make 500," he said. "But we'll face it if it happens."

Aussies look for win

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Beware, for Australia are on the prowl. With recent one-day international series wins against India and Pakistan, they gave a glimpse of what they can do at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2019; with the win over England in their first warm-up game, they've sounded out a downright warning to other teams.

Steve Smith is in sublime form. His 116 against England in Southampton on May 25 was a lesson in pacing an innings, as he progressed from caution to chaos. Others, such as David Warner, Shaun Marsh, Usman Khawaja and Alex Carey also scored some solid runs.

Australia's bowling was good too — it has to be if you're able to defend 297 against this England batting line-up — but that hardly comes as a surprise. Even during their slump, the bowling was never really an issue. But what is impressive was that they were able to put the brakes on England even in the



absence of Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins, who will lead the attack in the tournament proper.

While in their first warm-up fixture, they conceded 338 to South Africa and then folded for 251.

On a positive note, Dimuth Karunaratne found runs once again, with a valiant 87, while the experienced Angelo Mathews notched up 64. Sri Lanka will hope that runs from the leadership group can have a positive impact on the others. **(Venue: The Rose Bowl)**

England to face Afghanistan in warm-up

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

England, the world No 1 side, suffered defeat in their first warm-up match against a resurgent Australia. So much has been said about the strength of this English side and their contention for their maiden World Cup title. But even before the tournament has begun, the signs have already emerged that when it comes to the World Cup, every team goes in with a chance of winning it and that nothing is a foregone conclusion.

It wasn't a typical game in these conditions. Aus put up 297 — well below what has been par in ODIs in this part of the world recently — before going on to successfully defend it. While their failure to chase down a sub-300 total was an aberration on the part of Eng, they did have their share of positives to take from the match, such as James Vince, who replaced Alex Hales in their



WC squad, continuing to show why he is an investment worth making.

Afghanistan began on the opposite note, picking up victory over Pak.

Their bowling strength came to the fore once again, with spinners Nabi and Rashid Khan snaring five wickets between them. The batting was solid, with contributions from various corners. **(Venue: The Oval)**

Poms sweat on Wood's fitness regime

England fast bowler Mark Wood was left with a nervous wait after his World Cup chances were thrown into doubt by a foot injury that saw him leave the field during a warm-up defeat by Australia in Southampton on Saturday.

The Durham quick had managed just 3.1 overs in his opening spell when he

abandoned his run-up after feeling pain in his left foot.

Wood's injury-plagued career has been blighted by a history of repeated ankle problems but he did give Eng some cause for optimism by running off to the pavilion, although the fact he then went to hospital for a scan and took no further part in an eventual 12-

run defeat was concerning.

"We'll see how it turns out in the morning. It can be a worry for him," said England stand-in captain Jos Buttler.

"He's worked hard and it's something he's battled a bit which is a frustration for him. I'm sure he's in the best hands. We hope for the best for him." **AFP**

Old warhorse Malinga keeps Sri Lanka dreaming



AFP ■ COLOMBO

Lasith Malinga will be one of the World Cup's oldest players but the Sri Lanka paceman shows no signs of slowing down as he bids to prove his critics wrong.

Malinga was stripped of the Sri Lanka one-day international captaincy in April after losing all eight matches in a troubled reign that lasted just four months.

Sri Lanka's selectors, led by former fast bowler Ashantha de Mel, said Malinga was unable to unite the team, while he was also accused of falling out with other senior players.

That hammer blow reportedly prompted Malinga to consider retirement, but he opted to stay on after being named in the World Cup squad.

The 35-year-old recently reminded the world of his enduring qualities when he claimed 16 wickets for the Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League.

He produced a sensational final over in the Twenty20 final against Chennai Super Kings to hand Mumbai a record fourth IPL title.

Malinga frequently hits speeds of over 86 miles-per-hour (138 kph), while his devastating slower balls were in evidence during the IPL, a welcome sign for embattled Sri Lanka ahead of the World Cup in England and Wales, which starts on May 30.

With several inexperienced bowlers in Sri Lanka's squad, Malinga, with 322 ODI wickets to his name, is expected to be the cutting edge to the team's attack.

Malinga was Sri Lanka's captain when they won the 2014 World T20 title with a host of stalwarts by his side including Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara and Tillakaratne Dilshan.

But following the retirement of Sri Lanka's big guns, a new crop of players made their way into the side, a group selector De Mel believes did not fully back the quick bowler as skipper. New captain Dimuth Karunaratne's first major goal will be to bring a hurting Malinga back into the fold to ensure the team get the best out of the old warhorse.

If SL are to have any chance of repeating their 1996 magic they need Malinga fit and firing in what is likely to be his final World Cup.



Introspection made me better person: Smith

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Self introspection and social work during the year-long ban for his involvement in the infamous ball-tampering scandal has helped him grow as a better person, says Australia batsman Steve Smith.

"Having a year to reflect and do some different things that I'd never done before (was beneficial). Doing stuff in the mental health space, doing stuff with Gus Worland (an Australian television and radio personality) — that was incredibly eye-opening and satisfying in a way to know I was making a difference to other people," Smith was quoted as saying by *cricket.Com.Au*.

"I took a lot out of that. I do feel I've certainly grown as a person over the last year, that's for sure," said the prolific batsman.

Smith was involved in activities to help raise awareness of mental health during his suspension period.

It's a case of creating our own legacy: Holder



PTI ■ BRISTOL

Hopes are pinned on a born-again West Indies to relive their glory days but skipper Jason Holder says the upcoming World Cup is "a case of creating our own legacy".

Windies have a proud history at the World Cup, winning the first two editions of the tournament and making the final of the third. After struggling for nearly two decades, a few stunning wins against England recently lifted their spirits.

"Not personally," Holder told the ICC when asked if he feels surprised to re-establish their dominance, adding, "It's just a case of us creating our own legacy."

"We obviously know our history what the past players have done. We will take it stage by stage, step by step, not get too far ahead of ourselves."

The presence of big players such as Andre Russell and Chris Gayle have helped, acknowledged the 27-year-old skipper.

"Guys like Andre Russell make it easy for me, they tend to give a lot of support. I can't thank them enough for the support they have given me, I know they continue to rally behind me. It's important for us to continue to build as a group. It's a relatively young side and we have got one or two experienced heads in the cam it's a good mix."

He has rated hosts England as the favourites in the showpiece.

"England are the number one side in the world for good reason, you now they are playing some very good cricket, lot of hype around them, they have obviously got the home advantage."

"I guess got to give them respect being the number side in the world. All teams are practically equally matched, they are well-balanced sides, sides that can defeat anyone on any particular day. We have just got to take it game by game, give everyone the respect they deserve and we will have to execute our plans," Holder said.