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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Governor visits Regional Ayurveda Research Institute

### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 APR:

Governor Ganga Prasad visited the Regional Ayurveda Research Institute here at Tadong today.

He was accorded a warm reception by a team of doctors and researchers headed by Assistant Director and Centre In-charge, Dr Shrip-rakash, a press release informs.

The Governor sought information on the facilities and technical aspects of the institute and interacted with the research officers and staff.

In a brief function, a formal presentation was made on various therapeutic process of Ayurveda including 'Panchakarma Chikitsa' and



'Swasthya Vritt' by Dr Rahul and Dr Shravan Kumar Shahu respectively.

In his address, the Governor stressed on the need to promote Ayurveda to maintain healthy lifestyles.

"Ayurveda, being the ancient health and med-

ical practice with deep scientific base, was developed over centuries of research and experiments in India and it must be brought forth for the balanced and rational treatment of ailments," the Governor said.

He also appealed to

all to adopt Ayurveda.

The Governor, while appreciating the research activities being carried out by the centre, also urged the institute to take up a greater role in community health and reaching out to the masses with its services.

## 5 tourists killed in road mishap

### GANGTOK, 29 APR:

Five tourists hailing from Hooghly, West Bengal, were killed when the Mahindra Maxx passenger vehicle they were travelling in went off the road at 7th Mile on JN Road while returning from Baba Mandir near Nathula on Sunday at 6:40 PM.

Police records reveal that while four passengers died on the spot, one succumbed to her injuries in hospital.

There were nine people on board the ill-fated

vehicle including the driver who has since been booked in connection with the accident.

The dead and the injured were evacuated from site with help from Home Guards (SDRF), local villagers, driver associations and tour operators.

Those killed in the accident are: Kakila Bose, 42, Shenashish Bose, 58, Soma Kar, 32, Sandeep Kaur, 44, and Subhajit Bose, 26.

Mahuya Patra, 21, and Surjyas Kaur, 05, are currently undergoing treatment for their injuries.

## Taxi fares to STNM Hospital ratified

### SUMMIT REPORT

#### GANGTOK, 29 APR:

After the STNM Hospital shifted to Socheygang near Sichey earlier this year, the area, which earlier received only minimal local traffic beyond the residents, suddenly found itself in need for its own share-taxi stand and service. Although a bus service

has been plied into service to the hospital, it is clearly not adequate. Now, some months since the hospital shifted, the State Transport Authority, in a notification issued today, has ratified taxi fares to the hospital from different pick-up points.

Accordingly, the rate from Ranka Stand and Burtuk Helipad to STNM

Hospital has been fixed at Rs35 per passenger and from Indira By-pass and Bojoghari at Rs25 and Rs 50 respectively.

Reserving the taxi to the hospital will now cost Rs 140 from Ranka Stand [Rs 200 for double journey], Rs 100 from Indira Bye-Pass [Rs 150 for double fare], Rs 140 from

Burtuk Helipad [Rs 200 for double journey] and Rs 200 from Bojoghari Phatak [Rs 300 for double journey].

The rates of the local taxis are fixed after thorough survey of the cost to give justice to both the passengers as well as to the Taxi drivers/owners, an official press release adds.

## Report on PM's speech in Barmer sent to EC: Poll authorities

**BARMER, APR 29 (PTI):** The district polls authorities on Monday said a factual report has been submitted to the Election Commission following allegations by the Congress that Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his speech at a rally here had "brazenly" violated the poll code by repeatedly invoking the armed forces.

A factual report along with transcription of the prime minister's address he delivered in Barmer recently has been forwarded to the Election Commission, the district election office said.

The Congress had moved the Election Commission (EC) on April 22 alleging that the prime minister "brazenly" violated the poll code by repeatedly invoking the armed forces in his speeches

and demanded that a campaign ban be imposed on him for some time.

Following the Congress' complaint, the EC had sought a report on the address of the prime minister in Barmer from the district poll authorities.

"The report has been forwarded with the copy of PM's speech as per the direction of the Commission," district election officer Himanshu Gupta said.

During a poll rally in Barmer, Modi had said India is no more afraid of Pakistan's nuclear threats.

"India has stopped getting scared of Pakistan's threats, I have done right, no? Else every other day they (Pakistan) used to say 'we have nuclear button'....What do we have then? Have we kept it (nuclear button) for Diwali?" he had said.

## 208 FIRs, DD entries against political parties, others for poll code violations in Delhi

### NEW DELHI, APR 29

**(PTI):** As many as 208 FIRs and daily dairy entries have been registered against various political parties and others in the national capital for violating the model code of conduct, officials said Monday.

Of these, 16 FIRs have been filed against the Bharatiya Janata Party, 13 against the Aam Aadmi Party, three against the Congress and one against the Bahujan Samaj Party, Delhi's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ranbir Singh said.

He said authorities have removed over 3.4 lakh banners, posters and hoardings across the national capital.

The model code of conduct for the Lok Sabha election came into force on March 10.

The CEO said 1,155 FIRs have been registered and 1,157 people arrested under the Excise Act. Under the Arms Act, 424 FIRs have been filed and 496 people arrested.

Authorities have seized liquor worth Rs 3 crore and over 1,400 kg of drugs.

Police have confiscated 545 unlicensed arms. Forty-three cases have been registered for "misuse of vehicles, loud-speakers, illegal meetings and gratification of electors".

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## State Cong reviews election process, flags concerns

### SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 APR:

A review meeting of Sikkim Pradesh Congress Committee on the recently-held Assembly and Parliamentary elections was held on 27 April here at the party headquarters at 6th Mile, Tadong.

At the meeting, chaired by SPCC president, Bharat Basnet, the party candidates placed their thoughts and experience of the recently-held elections in the State, an SPCC press release informs.

The meeting agreed that opposition parties faced difficulties in the elections and that rules and regulations varied between the districts.



The release adds that the meeting further discussed the malfunctioning of EVMs and delays in voting and observed that issuing of 15,264 ballot papers by the Election Commission in a small State like Sikkim was also a very unique case.

Issuing ballot papers to recently appointed employees who got jobs in a "Mela" was a serious matter regarding the

protection of the democratic values, the meeting resolved.

The release states that party flags in villages have been creating an environment of insecurity and appealed to all political parties and concerned government agencies to take down the party flags from every house before 23 May to avoid any untoward situations.

## Meghalaya Cabinet approves creation of Directorate of Dairy Development

**SHILLONG, APR 29 (PTI):** The Meghalaya Cabinet Monday approved the proposal for creation of a new Directorate of Dairy Development in the state to increase milk production.

Home Minister James K Sangma said the state government had launched the Meghalaya Milk Mission and Rs 215 crore has been sanctioned.

"In view to really increase the milk production in the state, we have decided to approve the

creation of a directorate of dairy development," he said.

The state Cabinet has also approved a proposal for enhancing the grant-in-aid to night and morning ad-hoc secondary schools in the state.

The Home Minister said the proposal to increase the grant-in-aid to 15 such schools has been approved.

The minister also said the government has decided to have uniform rate in the grant-

in-aid extended to such schools unlike earlier where different amount was given to different categories.

The minister also informed the government has decided to implement uniform grant-in-aid extended to such schools unlike earlier where different amount was given to different categories.

The cabinet has also approved the proposal for enhancing the factory license and renewal fees after a gap of 18 years.

## Parks and politics: Politicians find ways to campaign, and beat the heat

### PRASHANT RANG-NEKAR

**NEW DELHI, APR 29 (PTI):** The air is cool with the barest hint of the scorching day ahead, the sun still to hit its hot stride and office a couple of hours away. Perfect time then not just for a morning walk in the park but also for candidates to canvass for votes.

On Monday, Union minister Harsh Vardhan, the BJP's candidate for Chandni Chowk, and AAP's New Delhi candidate Brijesh Gupta were among those who made the most of the morning hours to campaign.

"This is the time when you can meet maximum people at one place. This is also the time where you can meet all members of a family," Vardhan told PTI.

At 6.30 am, BJP workers outside the K L Sharma Park in Paschim Vihar in west Delhi in the constituency eagerly waited for Vardhan to arrive so the campaign for the day could begin.

As residents jogged, ambled or did push-ups on the grass, party workers dressed in 'NaMo' T-shirts with BJP scarves hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a young worker shouted slogans into a mike.

Vardhan, the incumbent MP, was scheduled to start his campaign at 6 am in the morning from the park. Dressed in a NaMo shirt, track pant and jogging shoes, he arrived about an hour later to an enthusiastic welcome from the workers.

Some showered flowers while others wanted to place a turban on his head. Within minutes, the crowd entered the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) maintained park through a narrow passage.

The younger lot jumped a wall at the entrance to join Vardhan. As he entered the park, he started interacting with morning walkers. The first interaction took place with a bunch of people exercising on gym equipment inaugurated by Vardhan recently. After a brief interaction, he proceeded to meet others.

In 30 minutes, he met over 50-60 people in the park, appealing to them to vote for Prime Minister Modi. One woman vented her grievances and he patiently listened, assuring her of action. Some also wanted to take selfies with him.

He then proceeded to

the Meera Bagh area for campaigning.

As temperatures cross 40 degrees Celsius, the time between 6-10 am is one of the most preferred slots for campaigning.

According to Vardhan, every hour should be utilised to the fullest during the polls when time is of the essence.

"I also like visiting parks. Election campaigning gives me more reasons to do that," he added.

AAP's New Delhi candidate Gupta agreed. He also starts his campaign at 6 am and covers three parks a day.

"Where do you get 500-600 people in a concentrated place. This is the advantage of campaigning in the morning. Plus, it gets very hot later in the day," Goyal said.

Workers, too, find it easy to campaign.

Explaining the importance of campaigning in the morning, BJP councillor Neeraj Gupta said parks play an important place in Delhi's politics.

"It is the place where people debate, discuss what's happening in Delhi and national politics. Visiting them in parks facilitates one on one meetings, which helps develop a bond," he said.

## SummitTIMES IN NEPALI

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# East administration briefs candidates for counting day



**GANGTOK, 29 APR (IPR):** A meeting was held with the contesting candidates and their election agents at the District Administrative Centre today in preparation for counting day.

The meeting was chaired by DEO [East], Kapil Meena, and also attended by SP [East], Hem Raj Rai, ADC East, Bharoni Kumar, SP Traffic, Tshering Gyatso and the contesting candidates/election agents of Sikkim Parliamentary Constituency and all assembly

constituencies of East District.

The contesting candidates/elections agents were briefed in detail about the various arrangements that have been made in connection with the counting of votes which is scheduled to be held on 23 May, 2019 from 8am.

All the candidates were informed about the provisions regarding filling and timely submission of Form 18 for appointment of Counting Agents. They

were also intimated about the provisions for appointment of counting agents, their training and the number of such agents that could be appointed.

The DEO/East also explained in detail about the counting plan for Assembly Constituencies/Parliamentary Constituency, along with the plan made for the movement of EVMs and VVPATs from strong room to the Counting Halls. Further, he also elucidated the plans

on counting of postal ballots and ETBPS, and the new guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India regarding counting of VVPATs.

Moreover, he described the details of access control, restrictions on use of mobile phones and security arrangements made at the place of counting. It was also intimated to all the candidates and their agents that the strong room would be opened on 23 May at

07:30am in the presence of all candidates and their agents.

SP East also briefed everyone about the traffic and transportation arrangements made for the counting day. He appealed to everyone for maintenance of law and order on the counting day and said that they were ready to ensure that the counting of votes is carried out in a peaceful manner and without any disturbance to law and order.

## Van Dijk not eying Messi's crown as world's best

**LONDON, APR 29 (AFP):** Virgil van Dijk was crowned the Premier League's Player of the Year by his peers on Sunday, but the Liverpool defender insists he is not thinking of battling Lionel Messi to win the Ballon d'Or.

Van Dijk will come up against the five-time Ballon d'Or winner when Liverpool travel to Barcelona for the first leg of their Champions League semi-final on Tuesday.

Messi has scored 46 goals this season as Barca have wrapped up another La Liga title with three games to spare and remain on course for a treble of league, Copa del Rey and Champions League.

"That's not something that's on my mind at all," said Van Dijk at the prospect of rivalling Messi.

"There are currently players walking



around in this football world that are out of this world basically and they've been doing it for many years.

"I'm very happy how I perform at the moment, how consistent I'm performing, that I'm fit as well. I think I just need to not look too far ahead."

Liverpool head to the Camp Nou on a run of 10 consecutive wins in all competitions, but have still not been able to usurp Manchester City at the top of the Premier League.

Jurgen Klopp's men trail the champions by one point with two

games to play and face a tricky trip to Newcastle sandwiched between both legs of their semi-final with Barcelona.

"Right now we're in a tight title race, in the Champions League semi-finals against a fantastic team, where probably the best players are playing so we just take it game by game," added Van Dijk.

"For us, now it's time to focus on Barcelona midweek and then we have a big game at Newcastle away as well.

"I won't look too far ahead and the only goals I will set are personal goals with Liverpool.

## China, Pakistan sign agreement on space exploration

**BEIJING, APR 29 (PTI):** China and Pakistan have signed an agreement on space exploration, marking a new phase in space science co-operation between the all-weather allies.

The agreement was signed on April 27 during the visit of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan to China for the 2nd Belt and Road Forum (BRF), the China National Space Administration (CNSA) said in a statement.

The space agreement will serve as a high-level foundation for co-operation in space science and exploration. Both nations will conduct scientific and technological experiments, astronaut training, along with manned space applications and achievement transformation, official media quoted the CNSA statement as saying on Monday.

The space agreement between China and Pakistan also comes close on the heels of India's successful Anti-Satel-

lite (ASAT) Missile test last month.

The test made India the fourth country in the world after the US, Russia and China to acquire the strategic capability to shoot down enemy satellites. China had conducted such a test in January 2007 when its anti-satellite missile destroyed a weather satellite.

Under the agreement, the CNSA and the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission will establish a China-Pakistan space committee chaired by top officials from both sides to address future collaborative issues.

China has advanced space programme with successful manned missions besides exploration missions to Moon. China is also building its space station which was expected to be ready by 2022. It has also unveiled plans to send spacecraft to Mars and Jupiter.

"The newly-signed space exploration agreement between China

and Pakistan on manned space missions manifests their more profound co-operation on the peaceful use of outer space," state-run Global Times quoted experts as saying.

Since Pakistan is China's all-weather friend, China is willing to provide know-how to foster Pakistan's technological development on the use of outer space, Lan Jianxue, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, told the Global Times on Monday.

"China-Pakistan space cooperation will help Pakistan in terms of satellite monitoring of natural disasters and agricultural production, land and resources surveying, and waste handling in a microgravity environment," Lan said, adding that China will also benefit from the cooperation, including for commercial applications of space technology, investment security and counter-terrorism.

## Two Delhi Fire Service officials injured as fire breaks out in 3 chemical factories

**NEW DELHI, APR 29 (PTI):** A major fire broke out in three chemical factories in west Delhi's Naraina Monday, triggering a blast in which a fireman and a special officer of the Delhi Fire Service were injured, a senior officer said.

The fire broke out in the factories located behind PVR Cinema at the Naraina industrial area around 11.35 am. Forty fire tenders were rushed to the spot after a call about the blaze was received.

Officials said the factory where the fire started did not have a fire safety clearance and even the other two factories were functioning without a fire No Objection Certificate. They said there could have been casualties, had it been a working day.

"The chemical was adhesive in nature. It is suspected that it was spirit. The fire was brought under control at 2.10 pm. Just when it was thought that the fire had been doused, there was a blast in containers in which chemical was stored which led to injuries to fireman Naresh Kumar and special officer Aman," the Delhi Fire Service official said.

The impact of the blast was such that the duo slipped and sustained burn injuries. "The fireman sustained burn injuries on the back and even when water was being poured

to ease the pain, he was feeling a burning sensation and was crying constantly," a witness said.

The injured were rushed to B L Kapoor Super Specialty Hospital and are out of danger, Chief Fire Officer of Delhi Fire Service Atul Garg said.

Garg said it seems the factories did not have fire clearance, but they are checking the facts.

One of the three factories was completely gutted in the blaze, one was partially burnt and the third one was affected a little bit, a senior fire officer said, adding that the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

"There was panic in the area as locals saw smoke emanating from a factory around 11 am. Rumours are being spread about the fire tenders reaching late. Actually, fire engines reached there on time," General Secretary of Naraina Gurdwara C S Bhatia said.

The blaze intensified due to wind making the job of firemen difficult, an official said, adding that the factory was located in an open area due to which the firetenders could reach the spot in time and had easy access to the factories.

Smoke billowing from the factory could be seen from a distance as the firetenders made multiple trips to the fire station to fill water in the containers.

## Farmers trained on turmeric cultivation



**SUMMIT REPORT GANGTOK, 29 APR:**

Mavedir, a service provider agency for Organic Sikkim, in collaboration with the Horticulture & Agriculture Department, organized a

ward level training on turmeric cultivation on 29 April at Lower Salangdang ward under Lungchok Salangdang GPU and the at Mangsari GPU in West Sikkim.

At both the train-

ings, farmers were informed about the package of practices for turmeric of 'Lacer' and 'Lhakadang' varieties.

Turmeric rhizomes were distributed to all the farmers who attended the trainings.

## Where's the jobs? Rahul asks youths wearing 'main bhi chowkidar' T-shirts at rally

**CHURU (R'THAN), APR 29 (PTI):** Youths wearing T-shirts with the BJP's "main bhi chowkidar" slogan at a rally on Monday caught the attention of Congress president Rahul Gandhi, who asked them about the 2 crore jobs promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a public meeting in Sardarshahar town of Rajasthan's Churu district, Gandhi acknowledged the presence of some youths who were wearing the T-shirts having the "main bhi chowkidar" (I, too, am a watchman) slogan of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"You are wearing T-shirt of the 'chowkidar' (watchman). You all are welcome here," Gandhi said.

The Congress chief first said Modi had promised Rs 15 lakh in the bank accounts of all Indians and asked whether anyone present in the rally had received the amount.

"Chowkidar' ji had also promised 2 crore

jobs. Anyone among you got the jobs?" Gandhi asked, pointing to the youths who were wearing the T-shirts.

Describing demonetisation and the goods and services tax as an attack on the country's economy and employment, the Congress leader claimed lakhs of youths were left unemployed by the twin decisions.

Gandhi accused Modi of giving public money to the top 15 rich people, adding that the Congress wants to give money to the poor through its proposed minimum income support scheme, Nyay.

Under the scheme, Rs 72,000 will be deposited annually in the bank accounts of the poorest 5 crore women of the country, Gandhi explained. "The money to run the scheme will not come from the bank accounts of the middle class and shopkeepers or from the pockets of honest businessmen."

He also talked about the Congress' manifesto promise of making loan default by farmers a civil

offence.

"I want to give a message to PM Modi, you want to send to jail those farmers who cannot repay a loan of Rs 20,000," Gandhi said. "But you can also send behind bars those who have taken away Rs 35,000 crore of public money. If they are not jailed, then the farmers will also not go (to jails)."

Gandhi pointed out to the farmers' budget promised by the Congress if it comes to power.

"After the 2019 election, two budgets are going to be presented in India. The first budget will be the special budget for the farmers. Not after the general budget, it will be presented before the general budget."

In the budget, Gandhi said, the farmers would be told how much money the government was going to give them in a year. Issues of minimum support price (MSP) and compensation will be clear in the budget, he added.

## BJP urges EC to deploy central forces in all polling booths in West Bengal

**NEW DELHI, APR 29 (PTI):** The BJP Monday approached the Election Commission complaining that TMC workers have "hijacked democracy" in West Bengal and creating ruckus during voting, and again demanded deployment of central forces in all polling booths in the state.

Following reports of a clash between the ruling Trinamool Congress and BJP workers outside a booth in Asansol's Barabani, and vandalism of the vehicle of Union Minister and sitting MP Babul Supriyo, a BJP delegation met top officials of the poll panel here.

The delegation included Union Ministers Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi and Vijay Goel, and the party's media in-charge Anil Baluni.

After meeting the poll panel officials, Naqvi told reporters, "The ruling Trinamool Congress workers have hijacked democracy in the state and are indulging in violence. They are being supported by the local machinery and we demand deployment of central forces in all polling booths in the state."

Later in a press conference, BJP's national spokesperson G V L Narasimha Rao said there were reports of "rampant violence" in West Bengal during polling on Monday.



Some BJP candidates, including ministers were attacked, he said.

"There is a clear indication that West Bengal is going with the BJP in this election. A state which was in the grip of the TMC is today experiencing winds of change. There is a massive build-up in support of BJP in the state.

"Mamata Banerjee is seeing the writing on the wall and the TMC cadre are indulging in violence only to scare away BJP voters. The people of the state are determined to bring change in the state," Rao said.

The BJP leaders, during their meeting with poll panel officials, also expressed concern over "no action" been taken against Congress president Rahul Gandhi for his "baseless allegations" against BJP chief Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said a memorandum in this regard has been submitted to the Election Commission.

"We wish to invite the commission's attention to the repeated and persistent violations of the

Model Code of Conduct by Rahul Gandhi, President of Indian National Congress. The specific instances of brazen, baseless, malicious and defamatory allegations against Narendra Modi and Amit Shah," the BJP said in the memorandum.

Citing the various instances where Gandhi, in his public rallies, made "baseless allegations" against Modi and Shah, the BJP said these are just a few instances of the "brazen, blatant and utterly false and unverified and unsubstantiated allegations of Rahul Gandhi. There is a pattern and design and it continues unchecked and unabated."

This should be of concern for the poll panel as Gandhi, "unabashedly and shamelessly spreads lies and tears the model code of conduct," that the commission has put together as a set of basic rules of the game, Naqvi said.

The BJP also complained to the poll panel about the Madhya Pradesh chief secretary and the director general of police about their "partisan attitude".

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# Entrepreneurship Awareness and Business Hackathon impresses all



## SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 29 APR:

The two-day 'Entrepreneurship Awareness Workshop and Business Hackathon' organized by AIC-SMUTBI, supported by Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog, concluded to an overwhelming response and promising prototypes and

proposals today.

Founder of Echo stream and La Designs, Sonam Tashi Gyaltsen, was present as the keynote speaker and also evaluated the 20 projects presented by students from across the state.

He shared his inventions and experiences which have been highly beneficial and have

carried great social impacts.

A fireside chat, an initiative of Google Startup Grind was also conducted by CEO, Summit Thakur, untapped Technologies, with Mr Gyaltsen. Founder of NetSpeq Solns, Karma L Bhutia, joined as a panelist for the event and examined the prototypes



exhibited by the teams along with Mr Gyaltsen.

Judges were very impressed with the innovative ideas and creative presentations by the participants.

The day ended with a valedictory function which had Associate Director (Std. Affairs), Prof Ratika Pradhan. The top two ideas of the

Hackathon - from Holy Cross School, Tadong and Government Senior Secondary School, Rangpo were awarded prize money of Rs 10,000 each.

On behalf of SMUTBI, Programme Manager, Dr Bikash Sharma, congratulated all the winners and participants and conveyed his gratitude to Atal Innovation

Mission, NITI Aayog.

He thanked all the dignitaries and the principals and teachers of the participating schools.

CEO, Prof (Dr) Tejbanta S Chingtham, SMUTBI expressed his happiness on the successful completion of the event and congratulated the winners and the participants.

## NPS celebrates Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee and awards day



## SUMMIT REPORT

NAMCHI, 29 APR:

Namchi Public School celebrated the Sacerdotal Silver Jubilee of its Principal, Rev Fr Stany Sequeira, who gave away the annual awards in a grand celebration held in the school's multipurpose auditorium.

The day's function began with an Eucharistic Celebration followed by a cultural extravaganza. The Director, Rev Fr George A D'Souza, in his address welcomed the

Fathers, Sisters, Guests, Parents and spoke about the Sacerdotal journey of Rev Fr Stany Sequeira.

The school choir rendered the hymns for the solemn occasion. The cultural extravaganza witnessed traditional, prayer, Konkani and contemporary dances and couple of English songs by the school choir. The Principal was also felicitated by the Fathers, Sisters, Staff, Parents, his family members and students. The Principal,

Rev Fr Stany Sequeira, in his address thanked the Fathers, Sisters, his family members, guests and the organizing committee for putting up such a marvelous function. The Principal, who gave away the academic excellence awards, also gave away the ISC and ICSE 2018 Board Exam School toppers and best Sports Girl and Boy awards to the selected students. The programme culminated with a grand lunch.

## Rafale case: Centre seeks deferment of Tuesday's hearing in SC

NEW DELHI, APR 29

(PTI): The Centre on Monday sought deferment of tomorrow's hearing on the pleas seeking review of the Rafale deal verdict of December 14 last year saying it needs time to file a detailed reply on these petitions.

The Centre's prayer was made before a bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi which did not say anything on the issue of adjournment of the scheduled hearing on Tuesday.

The bench, also comprising Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, allowed senior advocate R Balasubramanian, appearing for the Centre, to circulate a letter of adjournment among the parties which include petitioners who have filed the review pleas.

The Centre's letter said it needs time to file reply on merits on the review petitions.

The review petitions filed by former Union ministers Yashwant Sinha, Arun Shourie and activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan is listed for hearing before a bench headed by the Chief Justice on Tuesday in the post lunch session.

Two other review petitions -- filed by Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh and advocate Vineet Dhanda -- are also listed for hearing on Tuesday.

The Centre has said in the letter that it has raised certain preliminary objections on maintainability of certain documents relied upon in the review petitions and the court had decided the issue on April 10.

It said that since the government has not filed any reply on merit of the review pleas, it would need some time to file a detailed reply to the petitions seeking review of December 14, 2018 verdict in Rafale fighter jet deal case.

In a setback to the Centre, the apex court on April 10 allowed the pleas which relied on leaked documents for seeking review of its Rafale judgement and dismissed the government's preliminary objections claiming "privilege" over them.

The Centre had submitted that three privileged documents were unauthorisedly removed from the Defence Ministry and used by the petitioners to support their review petitions against the December

14, 2018 judgement of the apex court which had dismissed all pleas challenging the procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets from France.

The top court had rejected the objections raised by the Centre that those documents were not admissible as evidence under Section 123 of the Indian Evidence Act, and no one can produce them in court without the permission of the department concerned as they are also protected under the Official Secrets Act.

It had noted that all the three documents were in "public domain" and published by prominent daily The Hindu were "in consonance with the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech".

It had said the documents used in the pleas were published in The Hindu in February and one of the papers was also published by The Wire.

The apex court had also noted that no law enacted by Parliament specifically barring or prohibiting the publication of such documents on any of the grounds mentioned in Article 19(2) of the Constitution has been brought to its notice.

## Stars of Hope organize Say No to Plastics Week

### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 APR:

Stars Of Hope organised a weeklong "Say No To Plastic Week" campaign on the occasion of Earth Day from 22 to 28 April. SOH has been organizing this intervention of these dates for the past three years.

The idea behind the observation was to convince people to refrain from using plastics and plastic products for a week and also to generate wide awareness about the impact of plastics on the environment as well as on human health.

More than 10 schools, two GPUs and 20 organisations from within and outside the state took part in the initiative.

SOH, with its partners, organised more than 30 competitions in various schools partic-



ipated in by more than 300 students.

Many clean-up drives and awareness rallies were also organised in the weeklong campaign, a press release informs.

SOH informs that

more than 10,000 people were sensitized through various events and an online campaign reached out to a further 50,000.

SOH is a Gangtok-based social organisation formed in the year 2015.

## Guj dams dry up, state govt claims no problem till July end

AHMEDABAD, APR 29

(PTI): The Gujarat government on Monday said a majority of the dams in the state have either dried up or were having negligible water due to scanty rainfall last year, but added that the Sardar Sarovar Dam would provide drinking water till the end of July.

Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel Monday said the water level in the Sardar Sarovar Dam was 119.5 metres at present.

"Due to scanty rainfall last year, water storage is negligible in almost all the dams at present. However, enough water is available in Sardar Sarovar Dam to

provide drinking water to the people of Gujarat," Patel told reporters in Gandhinagar.

"Around 4 crore people in Gujarat are being given water through the Narmada canal network and there is no need to worry till July end. At present, we are supplying water from the Narmada project to 8,911 villages, 165 towns and six cities," he said.

"The live storage in Narmada dam is 0.93 million acre feet. We are yet to receive an additional 0.35 million acre feet from Madhya Pradesh. Thus, there won't be any problem of drinking water till July end," Patel claimed.

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## Help the Minor Recover

*by helping them heal from the trauma of crimes visited on them*

The safety of children around grown-ups even in environments where they are expected to be safe is being discussed at the national level and on even media platform at present. Children, however, have always been in harm's way and Sikkim is not new to disturbing incidents of minors being targeted with sexual violence. It is important that these discussions continue and the society does not get inured to the horror of sexual offences being committed against children just because it gets reported so often.

Words fail you when it comes to deploring the rape of a minor. While rape in itself is a reprehensible act, when the victim is a minor, the heinousness of the crime multiplies. The crime is no longer one in which the victim is violated physically, but becomes a transgression which scars an innocent mind permanently. Unfortunately most cases of child abuse and rape of minors are committed by people known to the child. Family friends and relatives, whom a child is normally conditioned to trust, are known to betray the faith and turn into animals as are neighbours and acquaintances that families leave children unattended around. While the Courts and the conscience of the predator will decide how the culprit lives with his guilt, it is the impact of such crimes on the fragile minds of children that is a matter of deeper and continued concern. Everything that a child has been led to believe and conditioned to accept [like trusting and respecting her/ his elders] are felled in one swoop of a warped mind. As much as the culprit needs to be punished, the child needs to be saved. The emotional trauma that is sure to haunt the mind which is still uncertain of what singled her/ him out to be targeted with such a crime needs to be addressed.

Minds of the minors understand and weigh everything as rewards and punishments. Already confused, the child cannot be left to find the reasons behind the crime by herself. She should not be allowed to go through the rest of her formative years trying to figure out what she had done wrong to deserve such 'punishment'. She has to be told that she was in no way responsible for what happened to her. It is important that victims understand that a deranged mind and ignorant elders allowed the crimes to happen. Everyone responsible for the child's care has to apologise to her for having ignored the warning signs [every culprit must have displayed some signs of his paedophilia] and allowed the crime to visit her. Victims also need professional help. It is now obvious that most parents don't have the wherewithal to handle such situations and ensure that their children heal properly. Hence, they along with the child need to be counselled by professionals so that the situation does not become worse for the child who has already suffered enough.

It is also important for all parents to look out for possible paedophiles in the family or the neighbourhood. Because this is such a repulsively deviant behaviour to discover in someone you know, most people tend to subconsciously ignore it even when it is obvious. We do so at our own peril.

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# Reporting on China in Africa is too binary. What needs to be done to fix it

YU-SHAN WU  
theconversation.com

China's involvement in many parts of Africa is expanding. Several milestones have been reached in recent years. These include China becoming the continent's largest trading partner in 2009 and the opening of the country's first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017.

So it's not surprising that this has become an ever-expanding topic for both the media and researchers. But the accuracy of work being done, particularly in terms of reportage, leaves a great deal to be desired.

Over the past ten years media scholars have increasingly begun to turn their attention to the issue. It's one of the reasons for the 2009 launch of the Africa-China Reporting Project at the University of the Witwatersrand, where I'm associated. More recently scholarly work has been produced in a bid to identify what's missing.

In analysis I did for a recently co-authored chapter in New Directions in Africa-China Studies we argue that a number of factors have contributed to coverage of the relationship between China and African countries, at times becoming a fertile area for propaganda, misinformation and disinformation. The main factors are the pressure on journalists for fast-paced information gathering. And the second is the impact that platforms such as Google, Facebook and Twitter are having on the dissemination of news, including the growing trend of the misuse of information.

Search a topic in the widely reported area of China in Africa, and it's clear that many of the "facts" made available often appear contradictory. China is frequently framed and referred to in binary terms. It's either portrayed as predator, or as a friend.

But the truth is far more nuanced. Individual relationships between China and particular countries differ. It's also true that relationships between Beijing and certain regions have different hues. On top of this, these various relationships have been moulded over time.

There are ways to address the gaps in coverage and dearth of context. But it will require support as well as concerted effort on the part of journalists and media houses in African countries to report on behalf of Africans.

### NO NUANCE

The "predator" coverage portrays African countries as "set to burn as debt soars". The "friend" image is portrayed through coverage of officials rejecting this view, as they did at last year's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

Other examples include China being portrayed as "grabbing land" in Africa, and offering "rogue



aid". On the other hand reports tend to speak about "Chinese-funded" transport infrastructure projects without acknowledgement of the fact that a myriad international and local partners are also involved.

These over-simplified and overarching "China-Africa" narratives are deeply misleading. They make extracting facts about the China-Africa relationship extremely challenging: very often opinion trumps verification.

### WHAT AFFECTS REPORTING?

I have established three reasons why certain narratives take hold in the popular psyche and become representative of this complex relationship.

The first relates to the issue of perceptions towards China. Perceptions about China are coloured by social and historical contexts. For example, business or government officials who have engaged with China for a longer period of time are more likely to view it in a more nuanced and even positive way.

The second factor is linked to interest. For example, those who have something to lose from China's role in Africa may harbour more negative views. And those who have something to gain are more likely to push a positive line.

The problem is that most of the time reporting doesn't make clear why particular individuals, or groups, hold certain views. For example, those who have a stake in the direction of links between China and a particular country, would want to push their view. Not explaining their particular interest can leave an incomplete and misguided impression. So a single perspective can multiply to become the defining narrative of story.

The third aspect is related to a lack of understanding. The focus on Asia studies in African higher education institutions remains limited. This in-

cludes deeper understanding of the rich history, culture and complexities of the East Asia region. In contrast the US, one of China's main global competitors, has a long tradition of Asia studies and exchanges.

### WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Part of the reason stories may be misreported is that data and information about particular relationships, particularly related to high-level agreements and deals, are missing.

This was highlighted when the Democratic Alliance, South Africa's main opposition party, threatened to take legal action against power utility Eskom, if it did not make its 2018 loan agreement with China public. Hence links with China is also at times, a backdrop to deeper domestic interactions.

The advent of technology and the information age has brought societies closer together. But they have also reinforced persistent differences based on perception, interests and limited understanding.

The divisive views and reporting such as the Africa-China example won't dissipate unless journalists continually ask "why" when they are presented information about China and Africa's relations.

They also have a duty to stand back and not perpetuate the preferred flavour of the news cycle.

For their part, media houses should make sure that their journalists are better equipped to cover these complex relationships. Given that one of the trends that stands out is that reporting on the relationship between China and African countries takes place from outside the continent, it's imperative that more on-the-ground reporting, verification and support for local journalists is encouraged.

*[the writer is Research Associate, University of the Witwatersrand]*

## Sudan: The symbolic significance of the space protesters made their own

AMIRA OSMAN  
theconversation.com

Where there is revolution, there's a central gathering point – just think of Egypt's Tahrir Square, Taksim Square in Istanbul and Habib Bourguiba Avenue in Tunisia. They all captured the world's imagination as places where the power of the masses couldn't be ignored.

As an architect who studies urban public spaces, and as a Sudanese, I have wondered since December 2018 – when protesters rose up against Omar al-Bashir's regime – which space would become Khartoum's equivalent of Tahrir Square. Which of the Sudanese capital city's public spaces would hold similar symbolism?

Some open areas in Khartoum, such as Al Saha Al Ghabraa, have historical links to the al-Bashir regime and would not have been acceptable to the protesters. Others would hold immense symbolic value, but would raise questions about links to specific political parties. Buildings of significance, such as the parliament in Omdurman, don't offer a public square in the true sense of the word, and so would not be an appropriate gathering space.

The answer emerged on 6 April 2019. Hundreds of thousands of people marched to the Sudanese Army's headquarters in the Ministry of Defence's complex. That march evolved into a multi-day sit-in. Weeks later, and with al-Bashir ousted, the sit-in continues.

It's a powerful, significant choice of venue. First, the army headquarters are usually off-limits. Photography is not permitted and access is restricted. Yet the army permitted a massive gathering on its doorstep. Second, the army actually went on to actively defend the protesters against attacks by the National Intelligence



and Security forces. The venue offered protection and security.

Finally, it was a symbolic choice: the protesters knew that army collaboration would be crucial to achieve a transitional government.

All of this echoes what research and history have repeatedly shown. Urban public spaces may be built to represent governments, but they are often appropriated by citizens and become sites of protest. The space in Sudan has not been a gathering place before, and the roads that surround the complex actually hold no special characteristics spatially or architecturally. Yet they have been appropriated – and they have come to serve the protesters' purpose well.

### AN ALTERED SPACE

The Sudanese military complex in Khartoum is comprised of three sections. The Land Forces occupy a section that's built to resemble army tanks. The Air Force's section is shaped like an airplane, and the Navy's resembles a ship. This approach to architecture – buildings that project their meaning in a literal way – has a name: "ducks" The spaces adjacent to the buildings are in-

habited by protesters who literally live on the site.

The complex sits just north of the airport and is flanked on the east and west by the Hay al Matar (Airport District) and the neighbourhood of Burri, which has been one of the most active neighbourhoods during the revolution. A couple of kilometres to the north is a bridge that crosses the Blue Nile to Khartoum North.

This has transformed the streets. Some have said that this space is now a microcosm of the future Sudan that the protesters envision. It's a space where freedom of expression is permitted. Murals and street art are everywhere.

Temporary classrooms have been set up to commemorate a teacher who was killed by the security forces. Makeshift clinics staffed by volunteers offer free medicines. We are being told by people on the ground about the free food, water and medicines that are being provided through donations. Street children and the homeless have been accommodated. Engineering and architecture students are working to build drinking fountains. Temporary toilets have been set up.

Street traders are selling their goods. Cultural activities abound, too:

musicians and political leaders from different parties visit the area each day to entertain and educate.

It's important to point out that the situation is in flux. The routes were pedestrianised. Protesters would not let vehicles in, apart from those making important deliveries. But Sudan's military council has now called for the reopening of the routes.

### WHAT NEXT?

The fate of other iconic places of protest hasn't always been celebratory or positive. Sometimes, authorities move to eradicate history and memory in these spaces.

There are hopes that Khartoum's story might be different. Already architectural groups on social media are discussing the possibility of retaining this space as a "freedom square" in future plans for the city. Others have argued that this is not possible because of the site's military nature.

But whatever happens, there's no doubt that Khartoum's military complex – and its role as a space for public protests and uprising – will go down in history and would have to be acknowledged in any future visions for the city.

*[the writer is Professor of Architecture, Tshwane University of Technology]*



Clashes disrupt polling in Bengal, minister’s car vandalized

**KOLKATA, APR 29 (PTI):** Violence marred the first few hours of polling in West Bengal, where the fourth phase of elections is underway in eight Lok Sabha constituencies. According to a senior election official, clashes broke out between the supporters of rival parties in Nanoor, Rampurhat, Nalhati and Siuri areas of Birbhum seat, injuring several people on the two sides. In Dubrajpur area of the constituency, voters allegedly engaged in a scuffle with the central forces when they were barred from entering the booths with mobile phones. Security personnel reportedly opened fire in the air to control the mob, following which polling was stalled in these booths, the official said. The state election office has also received reports of violence from Jemua and Barabani areas of Burdwan East (SC) constituency, he maintained. “In Barabani, BJP candidate and central minister minister Babul Supriyo’s vehicle was vandalised allegedly by the workers of the TMC outside a polling station, while in Jemua, voters fled a polling station after being threatened by miscreants,” he told PTI. According to reports, Supriyo had a tiff with the polling officials in-

side a booth, following which TMC supporters attacked his vehicle. Supriyo, on his part, said, “I visited Barabani to witness the poll process, but found that voters were not being allowed to exercise their franchise. Our fight is to establish democracy... It is shameful that I have to say this in a democratic country.” The senior election official gave assurances that measures were being taken to rein in poll-related violence. “Polling was peaceful in the first two hours. However, news of clashes started surfacing from several areas thereafter. We have sought reports from each of these places. Our officials are monitoring the situation and taking measures to conduct the election in a free and fair manner,” he said. In Birbhum constituency, the Election Commission has show-caused BJP candidate Dudh Kumar Mondal after he was seen talking over a mobile phone inside a polling booth, just before casting his ballot, the official said, adding that the presiding officer of the station has been removed. Notably, the EC has put TMC’s Birbhum president Anubrata Mondal under scanner after poll workers complained that they feel “threatened” by his presence. Accusing the TMC of

rigging the polls in almost every booth, BJP’s Krishnanagar candidate Kalyan Chaubey said voters in several areas were not allowed to cast their ballots. “The TMC goons have jammed the booths in Chapra, Dompukur and Hatisala areas of Krishnanagar constituency. The central forces are guarding the booths and 100-metre radius around those centres, but people beyond that were being warned against casting their votes. I was also threatened by some of them,” Chaubey said. Rebuffing the charges, TMC Krishnagar candidate Mahua Maitra said the accusations were baseless and bereft of truth. “As they (BJP) do not have a support base in the constituency, they could not appoint enough observers for the polling stations. Now, they are giving excuses. They are baseless allegations,” she added. A total of 1,34,56,491 electorate will seal the fate of 68 candidates on Monday in eight parliamentary seats -- Baharampur, Krishnanagar, Ranaghat (SC), Burdwan East (SC), Burdwan-Durgapur, Asansol, Bolpur (SC) and Birbhum. The EC has deployed 580 companies of central forces to man over 98 per cent of the polling booths in these constituencies to ensure free and fair polling.

Mamata angry with central force for firing during polling



**KOLKATA, APR 29 (PTI):** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday slammed the central forces for allegedly firing “inside” a polling booth in Birbhum district and accused the BJP of misusing the forces in the elections. Stating that the law and order is a state subject, she said it is not the job of the central forces to enter polling booths and they should keep vigil outside. In Dubrajpur area of Birbhum constituency, voters allegedly engaged in a scuffle with the central forces when they were barred from entering booths with mobile phones, a senior election official said. Security personnel reportedly fire in the air to control the mob, following which polling was stalled in the booths, the official said. “I have heard that the CRPF fired inside a booth in Dubrajpur. I am yet to get the detailed report. CRPF personnel can be deputed outside booths, but they do not have the right to lathicharge or fire,” Banerjee, also the TMC supremo, said. She alleged that the firing was a ploy to rig the polls by the BJP with the help of central forces. “Law and order is

a state subject and not a central subject. Even if the central forces have to conduct a route march, they are required to do it along with the state police,” the TMC chief said while speaking at rallies in Bagdhah and Swaroop Nagar in North 24 Parganas district. Banerjee accused the BJP of misusing the law and bringing in central forces without depending on the state police and using them in garnering votes for themselves. “We know the law. I have heard that complaints were made (before the EC) that the central force personnel have gone inside booths and asked people to vote for the BJP. This will not help the BJP,” she said. “The BJP do not trust the Bengal police. The police are on security duty during the Durga Puja, during Diwali. They protect us from thieves and dacoits. And during elections, you need policemen from Delhi,” Banerjee said. Asking the BJP to trust the people, she said police will not vote for its candidates but the people will. Violence was reported from several parts of the eight Lok Sabha constituencies where polling is going

on Monday. Clashes have broken out between the supporters of rival parties in Nanoor, Rampurhat, Nalhati and Siuri areas of Birbhum seat, injuring several people. The Election Commission has deployed central forces at around 98.8 per cent of the booths in the eight seats -- Baharampur, Krishnanagar, Ranaghat (SC), Burdwan East (SC), Burdwan-Durgapur, Asansol, Bolpur (SC) and Birbhum. Addressing the rallies, Banerjee called upon the people to vote against the BJP and dethrone Prime Minister Narendra Modi from power. “He (Modi) is adept at lying constantly,” Banerjee said adding “Whenever he comes to Bengal, he provokes his supporters to disrupt peace in the state in order to yield political dividend,” she alleged. The BJP brigade is distributing money to purchase voters and resorting to divisive politics which is in contrary to the state’s culture, Banerjee claimed. The TMC chief expressed confidence that her party will win all the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state and play a pivotal role in forming the next government at the Centre.

Cyclone ‘Fani’: NDRF, Coast Guard put on high alert; fishermen asked not to venture into sea



**NEW DELHI, APR 29 (PTI):** The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Indian Coast Guard have been put on high alert and fishermen asked not to venture into the sea as cyclone ‘Fani’ is expected to intensify into a very severe storm by Tuesday, the Home Ministry said Monday. The cyclonic storm ‘Fani’ Monday morning was located at 880 km of South-East of Chennai and it will continue to move North-West and change its path to North-East from Wednesday. The cyclone is expected to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm by

Tuesday, a home ministry statement said. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), its landfall over Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh is ruled out. However, the possibility of landfall in Odisha is under continuous watch. The NDRF and the Indian Coast Guard have been put on high alert and placed at the disposal of the state governments concerned. Regular warnings have been issued since April 25 to fishermen not to venture into the sea and asking those at sea to return to coast, it said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is closely

monitoring the situation and has directed Cabinet Secretary PK Sinha to convene a meeting of the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) to take stock of the situation with the state governments and the central ministries and agencies concerned to ensure necessary preparations to deal with the situation. The IMD has been issuing three hourly bulletins with latest forecast to all the states concerned and the home ministry is also in continuous touch with the state governments and the central agencies concerned, the statement said.

This temple in Chambal ravines stands out as ancient replica of Parliament House

**NIRMAL YADAV MORENA (MP), APR 29 (PTI):** A replica of the Parliament House blossoms in an unnamed area in the ravines of the Chambal Valley in the Bhind-Morena region, which of late has earned disrepute for being home to dacoits. Far from political noise, the Chausath Yogini temple, which stands out as a replica of the Parliament House, is situated in the desolate Chambal Valley. It is a temple of Lord Shiva in reality but the Parliament House in New Delhi is apparently a replica of the structure, an argument which a section of archaeologists does not buy. As the election fever grips the country, candidates in the poll fray hopeful to see themselves become a Member of the Parliament are making a beeline to the temple to get their wish fulfilled. BJP candidate for Morena and Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar is among those paying obeisance at the temple. Tomar rues that not only the heritage site of Chausath Yogini temple in Morena’s Mitawali village but also several other places of historical importance still remain away from public glare. The Union minister says there is a proposal to bring the region to the Unesco World Heritage Site list. According to him, the temples in the region were restored in 2005 under the supervision of KK Muhammed, former regional director at the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Tomar, however, admits that the restoration work could not be completed after Muhammed’s retirement. Muhammed told PTI there are heritage sites dating back 1,000 years in two villages, Mitawali and Padhawali, within a range of 5 km in inaccessible parts of the Chambal Valley.

Foreign invaders attacked and ruined these heritage sites. The structures could not be restored as the ruins then became a haven for dreaded dacoits of Chambal. And now, crevices have developed in the walls due to illegal mining blasts. Muhammed said, around 700 years ago in 1323, when the temple was constructed under the regime of King Devpal, no one would have imagined that British architect Edwin Lutyens would precisely depict the architectural beauty of this temple on the “temple of the Indian democracy”. The temple constructed at a height of 200 metres on a hill reminds tourists, reaching Mitawali after taking uneven roads, of the Parliament House. Veteran archaeologist Muhammed said there are two opinions among historians regarding the Parliament House being a replica of the temple. While one section believes that Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhavan, and other such structures on the Raisina Hills were Roman-inspired architecture, the other is of the view that architects Lutyens and Herbert Baker clearly presented a mix of the Indian and the western architect in these constructions. Muhammed claimed that the design of the Parliament House is inspired from the circular Chausath Yogini temple. He said the vedic mantras engraved on the walls of the Parliament House is a vindication that the British architects did take into account the Indian building construction art. The Chausath Yogini temple was a centre for ‘tantra vidya’ (black magic). The circular structure has 64 temples of Lord Shiva. It has idols of Lord Shiva with 64 yoginis, which in tantric tradition, connote feminine spirit.

TMC accuses Modi of horse trading, to complain to EC



**KOLKATA, APRIL 29 (PTI):** Trinamool Congress leader Derek O’Brien Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of horse trading for saying at a poll rally that 40 party MLAs are in touch with him and said it would complain to the Election Commission. “Expiry Babu PM, lets get this straight. Nobody will go with you. Not even one councillor. Are you election campaigning or horse trading! Your expiry date is near. Today, we are complaining to the Election Commission.

Charging you with horse trading,” Brien tweeted. Modi while addressing an election rally at Sreerampur in Hoogly district on Monday said that 40 TMC MLAs were in touch with him and will desert their party once BJP wins the general elections. “Political ground has slipped from under your feet,” Modi said at the targeting the TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Banerjee is one of Modi’s and BJP’s severest critics.

TMC’s 40 MLAs in touch with him, claims Modi

**SREERAMPUR (WB), APR 29 (PTI):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed on Monday that 40 TMC MLAs were in touch with him and will desert their party once the BJP wins the general elections. He also accused TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee of nepotism, insisting she wants to politically establish her nephew in West Bengal. Modi also assailed her over her prime ministerial ambitions, saying “Didi, Dilli door hai (Delhi is far away for you).” “Forty TMC MLAs are in touch with me and all your MLAs will desert you once the BJP wins the elections. Political ground has slipped from under your feet,” Modi told an election rally in Sreerampur, targeting the West Bengal chief minister. Mocking Banerjee for often losing her cool as she was “sensing defeat”, Modi said she cannot even dream of becoming

the prime minister. “With just a handful of seats, ‘Didi’ you can’t reach Delhi. Delhi is far away. Going to Delhi is just an excuse. Her real intention is to politically establish her nephew,” he said. Banerjee’s nephew Abhishek is a sitting MP from Diamond Harbour and the TMC candidate for the seat. Lashing out at opposition parties for questioning the credibility of EVMs, Modi said his rivals have moved on from abusing him to criticising EVMs, as they face “imminent defeat”. “Earlier only Modi was abused, now even EVMs are being abused. The opposition is doing so as it faces imminent defeat,” he said. He also accused the state’s ruling party of rigging elections, claiming its “goons” were preventing voters from exercising their franchise.

Eight essays put the spotlight on the journey coursed by hydel projects in Sikkim and the region, the cost exacted by this “development” and some of the stories it birthed, not all of which have been shared before.

Also finding place in this collection is the arrival of Climate Change and its impact on Sikkim and how the State could negotiate with this new disruption.

**ESSAYS ON TEESTA, HYDEL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN SIKKIM**

EDITED BY TSHERING DOEN AND PEMA WANGCHUK

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Being called superhero makes me happy, says Avengers fan Russell



**KOLKATA, APR 29 (PTI):** Saying Andre Russell and Avengers in one breath may sound a little more than odd but being tagged a 'superhero', like the protagonists of the cult Hollywood franchise, makes the cricketer "happy".

While the Avengers series has an unbelievable following across the world, the kind of strokes that the West Indian conveniently pulls off can often be hard to believe in the world of cricket.

He again played the central role, guiding Kolkata Knight Riders to a win over Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League (IPL) here Sunday, smashing 80 odd runs in very few balls.

"Yes, I am a fan of (Avengers), I am watching it for a while," he said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

"If the fans say that I am a (super hero) I am happy."

"Hand-eye co-ordination, a good bat speed and balance is important. I generate a lot of power from the shoulders and core. Everything works together.

"You need to make sure your body is fit and strong in order to play those upward shots in those moments," Russell said, speaking about qualities that make him a superhero in the cricket arena.

Russell made 80 off 40 balls, hitting eight sixes and six fours at the iconic Eden Gardens, and no matter what the MI bowlers tried, they failed.

"When the bowler is trying to outsmart you

with a wide or slower ball. That shot was a surprise for me as well (the one I hit over covers). We have given ourselves a chance."

The win snapped a six-match losing streak for the three-time former champions in the ongoing edition.

"Hopefully the result in the next two games goes our way. One of my best T20 days, definitely. We needed to get 200-plus but getting 230 was just enough. If it was just over 200 we would have been on the losing end.

"We kept our heads calm under pressure and executed our plans well. Yes, I was worried about the diamond earring."

Hardik Pandya outscored the man, who is his equivalent in terms of incredible hitting, but ended on the losing side despite striking 91 off 34 balls.

"The situation demanded to go all out and I was lucky enough everything was coming out, except the ball I got out," Hardik said.

His nine sixes and six boundaries went in vain.

"To be honest, with this kind of total you don't think much, just go out there and express yourself. I knew (Kieron) Pollard was there, I couldn't take time and I just wanted to enjoy the game.

"I am just holding my shape pretty well and the confidence makes a huge difference. I knew something different had to happen, but it was difficult for one guy to keep going.

## Madrid misery continues with defeat at struggling Rayo

**MADRID, APR 29 (AFP):** Real Madrid's response to Barcelona winning the title was to lose to 19th-placed Rayo Vallecano and fall 18 points behind La Liga's newly-crowned champions.

A deserved 1-0 defeat at Vallecas Sunday means Zinedine Zidane's second term now shows four wins from eight games and a worrying lack of improvement since he returned as Madrid's coach.

Adri Embarba's penalty, given after consultation with VAR, was enough for Rayo, who move to within six points of survival, with three games left to play.

For Madrid, the gap widens between them and Barcelona, whose players had been dancing on the pitch at Camp Nou the night before and posing for photos with their children after wrapping up a fourth La Liga title in five years.

Zidane took over knowing Madrid's chal-

lenge was all-but extinguished but the difference on Barca then was 12 points while catching Atletico Madrid still seemed achievable.

Atletico are now nine points ahead and the way Madrid are closing out this season will surely be a cause for concern.

Not since March 31 has anyone except Karim Benzema, out with a hamstring injury, scored for them in La Liga and they created precious few chances against a Rayo side that had conceded 62 goals this term. No side in the division has shipped more.

Zidane said last week that the league would be the club's first priority from August but, even with new signings and fresh motivation, it could prove difficult to flick the switch. Madrid's winning habit has long-been lost.

Rayo's last victory over Real at Vallecas was in 1997, by the same scoreline, and this time



they were without their top scorer too, Raul de Tomas, who is on loan from Madrid and ineligible to face his parent club.

Zidane handed Gareth Bale another chance but he struggled to impress while Thibaut Courtois made his first start under the Frenchman, in ahead of Keylor Navas.

Rayo's Jose Pozo twice tested Courtois early on while Bale went through but saw his finish tipped over the bar

by Alberto Garcia.

In the 23rd minute, Rayo won their penalty as referee Pablo Gonzalez took advice from VAR before judging Jesus Vallejo to have hauled down Javi Guerra in the box. Embarba made no mistake.

Madrid wanted their own spot-kick when Mariano Diaz took a tumble from a corner but Gonzalez was unmoved, and the second half was surprisingly comfortable for Rayo.

Bale's free-kick was

palmed away by Garcia while Zidane threw on Brahim Diaz, Lucas Vazquez and Isco in search of some inspiration. It never came.

- TOP-FOUR RACE STAYS WIDE OPEN -

Beneath Madrid, La Liga's last Champions League spot remains up for grabs after Valencia, Sevilla and Getafe all endured surprise defeats earlier on Sunday.

Valencia lost 1-0 at home to Eibar while Sevilla were beaten by the same scoreline away to

struggling Girona, whose victory could prove crucial in their fight against relegation.

Both slips gave Getafe the opportunity to pull clear in the three-way race for fourth but they stumbled too, edged out 2-1 away to Real Sociedad.

It means Getafe, Sevilla and Valencia have now managed only three wins between them from their nine fixtures in the last three rounds of the league.

Getafe stay ahead of Sevilla only on head-to-head, with Valencia three points behind and perhaps looking to the Europa League as their best hope of Champions League football next season.

Valencia play Arsenal at the Emirates Stadium in the first leg of their semi-final next week, with a potential final to come against either Chelsea or Eintracht Frankfurt.

### No one batting with Hardik made it harder for us, says MI's De Kock

**KOLKATA, APR 29 (PTI):** Mumbai Indians' Quinton de Kock has rued the lack of support for Hardik Pandya, whose incredible power-hitting kept Kolkata Knight Riders on tenterhooks till the final ball of the 18th over here.

Chasing 233, Hardik's 91 from 34 balls kept MI in the hunt till his dismissal swung the game in favour of KKR at the Eden Gardens.

"We would have loved a couple of less wickets when Kieron (Pollard) and Hardik walked in. But, unfortunately, it didn't happen today so there's the collapse and no one batting with Hardik made it harder for us," the South African said at the post-match news conference Sunday.

De Kock got out without opening his account,



after top-edging Sunil Narine in the second over.

"When you have to score of 233, you need to play one or two shots anyway. You have to try against any bowler who comes on and take a chance to get things going.

"So if I hit that ball for four or six, you probably would have said 'great shot' but unfortunately I got out so didn't

look," he said about his slog-sweep.

The bowlers have too little in the batsmen-dominated format and De Kock said it's more to do with the batting-friendly sub-continent wickets.

"In India they have generally very small fields, while wicket is batting friendly. Australia have bigger ground, while there's a bit in the wicket for South Africa.

Here it is more batting friendly anyway. Bowlers are always under pressure."

De Kock further said he hated every minute of keeping to Russell who slammed a 40-ball 80 not out.

"I'm not joking, I hated every minute of it. You can't fault him. He took his time, and then did what he does the best. You just have to appreciate what is done. Not just this game but in the IPL. Hope he doesn't do it again against us," he said.

Mumbai Indians will have a return-leg clash against KKR on May 5 which will be their last clash in the league round. Needing a win to seal a playoff berth, Mumbai Indians next face Sunrisers Hyderabad at home on May 2.

### RR look to keep playoffs hopes alive against RCB

**BD NARAYANKAR BENGALURU, APR 29 (PTI):** Royal Challengers Bangalore will look to give their forgettable campaign a semblance of respectability and dash Rajasthan Royals' faint playoffs hopes in the IPL here Tuesday.

Rajasthan, with 10 points from 12 games, still have a theoretical chance to make it to the playoffs, provided they do not lose any of their remaining two matches.

Also, they would require table-toppers Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals to defeat their respective opponents.

Under the circumstances, Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes' absence will add to Rajasthan's pressure, more so when Archer's 12-ball 27 for a winning cause against Kolkata Knight Riders is taken into account.

Jos Buttler, who had 311 runs and three fifties in eight innings, had also returned to England for World Cup preparations.

The change in captaincy - replacing Ajinkya Rahane with Steve Smith - helped RR to an extent as this helped



Rahane roar back to form with an elegant century, albeit in a losing cause, against Delhi Capitals.

It also saw Rajasthan bring their campaign back on track by beating Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders.

RR's last win at the Eden Gardens could galvanise their players to believe in themselves, after Ryan Parag led a dramatic late comeback.

They, however, still need to iron out a few flaws which have plagued them of late. The failure to grab moments, which cost them the games against Kings XI Punjab, Sunrisers Hyderabad and

Chennai Super Kings, is one of them.

The biggest positive for Rajasthan has been Sherays Gopal, who, with his googlies, deceived the likes of Virat Kohli, A B de Villiers and Shimron Hetmyer in the previous match.

Sanju Samson, who had hit the first ton of this IPL, has been good. Hosts RCB will be playing for pride after their slender hopes of entering the playoffs went up in smoke with their defeat to Delhi Capitals on Sunday.

Teams (from): Rajasthan Royals: Ajinkya Rahane (capt), Sanju Samson, Shubham Ranjane, Ashton Turner, Steve Smith, Stuart Binny, Shreyas

Gopal, Sudhesan Midhun, Jaydev Unadkat, Ish Sodhi, Prashant Chopra, Mahipal Lomror, Oshane Thomas, Aryaman Birla, Riyan Parag, Dhawal Kulkarni, Krishnappa Gowtham, Liam Livingstone, Varun Aaron, Shahshank Singh, Manan Vohra, Rahul Tripathi.

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Virat Kohli (capt), Parthiv Patel, AB de Villiers, Colin de Grandhomme, Umesh Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Moeen Ali, Shimron Hetmyer, Dale Steyn, Shivam Dube, Mohammed Siraj, Navdeep Saini, Devdutt Padikkal, Himmat Singh, Milind Kumar, Gurkeerat Singh Mann, Heinrich Klaasen, Pawan Negi, Washington Sundar, Akshdeep Nath, Prayas Ray Barman, Kulwant Khejroliya, Tim Southee.

### Opening or floating, talented Gill 'happy' to bat anywhere

**KOLKATA, APR 29 (PTI):** His two half-centuries this IPL season may have come in his favoured opening slot but Shubman Gill has defended Kolkata Knight Riders' debatable decision to use him as a floater.

Opening the batting for only the third time this season, the talented 19-year-old smashed a career-best 76 to power KKR to 157 for one in 15 overs against Mumbai Indians Sunday. In the end, KKR notched 232 for two in 20 overs.

The Punjab opener, who batted at No. 3 in his debut series for India in the New Zealand ODIs earlier this year, was tried out in various positions, including at No. 7, in a couple of matches.

"Chris Lynn and Sunil Narine have been doing well (as openers). Narine was giving good starts. So I was happy to happy to get a chance and capitalise on that," Gill said at the post-match news conference following his team's 34-run win.

"It's one of the best knocks in this IPL, especially considering the situation that we had lost six matches in a row. We do all kinds of practice in various match-conditions. It was all about preparing the mindset and executing on the field."

Giving credit to India's domestic cricket, Gill said it prepares them to be confident even for a big lucrative league like the IPL.

"We play so many matches at different levels. You start to gain confidence by doing well. So when you're in a big league like IPL, you know you don't have to prove anyone. I've already

proved myself there. It's all about continuing that."

Gill, billed as a future India star, has had a forgettable international stint with 16 runs from two ODIs.

Asked whether his IPL success will hold him in good stead, Gill said: "I don't think so far ahead. It's about doing well and capitalise on whatever opportunities I get."

Gill smashed six fours and four sixes in a chanceless knock, putting on an opening stand of 96 runs with Chris Lynn (54).

After Lynn's departure, KKR's biggest impact player Andre Russell was also finally seen higher up the order.

Gill played in such a manner that even Russell was happy to play the second fiddle.

"We had a good opening partnership maybe he was sent in to capitalise on that. I was set when Russell came in to bat. They were employing spinners after Lynn got out. So we decided that I take on the spinners.

"Then he will take chances after getting set. Setting up a good partnership was our priority at that stage," he said.

Desperate to arrest their slide, KKR made wholesale changes and even sprang a surprise by going in with an extra batsman in Robin Uthappa.

"It was about going all aggressive as we had back-up options. The support was important. We had lost six matches in a row so it was about returning to winning ways and carry on that run till the final," Gill said, hoping that they would make the playoffs.

### Pune school kids create flutter in world school chess



**MUMBAI, APR 29 (PTI):** Two Pune school kids, Arush Dolas and Nivaan Khandadia, have created a flutter by clinching the gold and bronze medals respectively at the recently held World School Chess Championships at Antalya in Turkey.

With podium finishes in the competition, both Dolas and Khandadia have now earned the title of being known as Candidate Master (CM), which is given by the world chess body FIDE, a media release said on Monday.

Dolas, studying in the Bishop High School in Pune, won the U-7 open

title category by scoring eight points in nine rounds.

Khandadia, who is the youngest rated chess player from the Global Indian International School, settled for the third place with 6.5 points.

A seasoned campaigner, Dolas trains under the watchful eyes of Woman International Master Mrulalini Kunte.

Khandadia, from the South Mumbai Chess Academy (SMCA), has now set a record of playing 500 games of competitive chess by taking part regularly in various tournaments, the release added.

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# Australia holds first election debate as race tightens

**SYDNEY, APR 29 (AFP):** A fresh opinion poll showed Australia's bare-knuckle election campaign tightening significantly but the centre-left opposition Labor party maintaining a narrow lead ahead of a first televised leaders' debate Monday.

The Newspoll survey showed Labor's edge over the conservative governing coalition narrowed to two percentage points, well within the margin of error.

For months the polls had shown the opposition headed for a landslide victory at the May 18 vote.

The latest result heaps pressure on the 51-year-old Labor leader Bill Shorten ahead of Monday's prime time debate.

He will meet face-to-face with Prime Minister Scott Morrison Mon-



day night in the West Australia state capital of Perth, for the first of up to three debates.

Monday's opinion poll underscores how competitive Australian elections are.

The campaign so far has been dominated by shrill attacks and hyperbolic accusations of impending doom if one side or the other wins.

Morrison and his influential backers in Australia's media have tried

to paint Shorten as an untrustworthy, tax-and-spend politician who is already treating the election as a coronation.

Labor is more popular than the Liberal party in a generic ballot, while Morrison, an evangelical Christian, has better personal approval ratings than Shorten, a former union leader.

"This is a very close election, and everyone's vote is going to count,"

Morrison said on the campaign trail Monday ahead of the debate.

While the Liberals have tried to make the election a referendum on Shorten, Labor has focused on policies designed to appeal to working families.

They have accused Liberals of working only for the "top end of town".

Monday's poll also underscored the complexities of Australia's

election system -- which asks voters to rank parties by preferences and encourages voting pacts between major and minor parties.

The poll for the first time featured sizeable support for controversial mining mogul Clive Palmer, who has bought his way into the race with months of ad spending worth tens of millions of dollars.

His populist "Make Australia Great" message can be seen on billboards and TV screens across the country, echoing the campaign waged successfully by Donald Trump in his 2016 run for the White House.

The Newspoll predicted that 60 percent of Palmer's supporters would preference Morrison's Liberal party, boosting its showing relative to Labor.

## Biden to hit campaign trail before blue-collar supporters

**PITTSBURGH, APR 29 (AFP):** Former US vice president Joe Biden, the newest Democratic presidential candidate, will hit the campaign trail in earnest on Monday with a rally before union members who have been a mainstay of his and the party's support.

For his first public event since announcing his candidacy last Thursday, Biden chose Pennsylvania, the state where he was born 76 years ago -- and more specifically Pittsburgh, a blue-collar city now remaking itself as a tech hub.

Perhaps best-known as former president Barack Obama's two-term deputy, Biden has set himself apart from most of the sprawling Democratic field by opting for a strategy of full-on confrontation with President Donald Trump.

He accuses the current Republican president of undermining long-time American values.

Whether that approach appeals to voters -- or if they prefer other Democrats' focus on issues like healthcare, the environment and infrastructure -- will become clear in coming months.

But Biden, with name recognition earned not just with Obama but in his 36 years representing the state of Delaware in the Senate, starts out with a leg up over other Democrats.

A Washington Post/ABC poll on Sunday put him in the lead among Democrats, with 17 percent support, to 11 percent for Senator Bernie Sanders and five percent for South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

Pennsylvania voted for Trump in 2016 -- af-



ter favoring Obama in the two previous elections -- making it one of the key industrial states where a sense of social and economic decline and alienation seemed to play into Trump's hands.

But Biden has long been a favorite of blue-collar voters, and he prides himself on staying close to the Democrats' working-class supporters.

"Wall Street bankers and CEOs did not build the United States," he said in a recent appearance in Massachusetts in front of striking supermarket workers. "You built the United States... ordinary people of the middle class built this country." In Pittsburgh, Biden will be addressing a union group about his ideas for rebuilding the American middle class.

The announcement of his candidacy drew rapid fire from Trump, who immediately conferred on him the dismissive title of "Sleepy Joe." It also may have sparked the insistence last week by the 72-year-old president that he is a "young, vibrant man" -- presumably contrasting himself with Biden, who has visibly aged since leaving the White House and will need reserves of energy during the long campaign ahead.

With several young Democrats seeking the

nomination -- the youngest is 37-year-old Buttigieg -- Biden's age seems certain to become an issue. However, one top rival, Bernie Sanders, is also no spring chicken at 77 years old.

And with many of his Democratic rivals taking left-leaning positions on issues from the environment to reparations for the descendants of slaves, Biden's decidedly centrist and moderate approach could make him an outlier.

"Here's the problem for Joe," Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said Sunday on CBS: "Does he fit into the Democratic Party of 2020? I don't know." For now, Biden can take comfort not only in the polls, which made him a frontrunner even before he declared his candidacy, but also in his fund-raising success.

He raised USD 6.3 million in the 24 hours after his announcement, the highest figure for any Democrat so far.

Biden has another problem, however -- the accusations, dating back years, that he has been a little too "touchy-feely" around women on the campaign trail and at public events.

He has insisted that he never "intended" to make anyone uncomfortable and has promised to do better in future.

## Floods in Indonesia kill dozens, thousands displaced



**BENGKULU (INDONESIA), APR 29 (AFP):** Floods sparked by torrential rains have killed nearly 40 in Indonesia with a dozen more still missing, officials said Monday, marking the latest calamity for a disaster-prone nation.

Landslides and floods are common during the monsoon season between October and April, when rains lash the vast Southeast Asian archipelago.

On Monday, Indonesia's disaster agency confirmed 29 deaths and said at least 13 more people were missing in Sumatra island's Bengkulu province.

A landslide triggered by heavy rain in neighbouring Lampung province on Saturday also killed a family of six.

Meanwhile, flooding in and around parts of the capital Jakarta last week killed at least two people, forced more than 2,000 to evacuate their homes and set 14 pet pythons on the loose.

In Bogor, a satellite city of Jakarta, residents had to contend with the prospect of coming face to face with the giant serpents, after they were set loose from a private property due to the high waters.

Six of the snakes -- which were as long as four metres (13 feet) -- have been found, but eight were still

missing, officials said at the weekend.

"If you find them please report it to authorities or volunteers," said Indonesian disaster agency spokesman Suto-purwo Nugroho.

That was not much comfort for some Bogor residents.

"We're terrified to hear this," said Samsudin, who goes by one name.

"Apparently they're very big so we want authorities to help us find them or take action."

In Sumatra, some 12,000 residents have been evacuated from water-logged Bengkulu with hundreds of buildings, bridges and roads damaged.

Authorities have set up temporary shelters and public kitchens for those displaced by the rains.

Hardest hit was Bengkulu Tengah district, just outside of the provincial capital, where 22 people were killed along with hundreds of livestock.

Illegal coal mining was partly to blame for deadly landslides, authorities said.

"Apart from natural factors like the heavy rain, (the flooding) was also caused by human activity that destroys the environment," disaster agency head Doni Monardo told reporters in Bengkulu on Monday.

Activists have long

warned deforestation from rampant mining in the province could trigger a catastrophe.

At least four major rivers in Bengkulu overflow every time it rains due to environmental damage near their banks, activists said.

"The flooding in Bengkulu was made worse by the severe damage... caused by coal mining," Ali Akbar from local environmental group Kanopi Bengkulu said in a statement.

Illegal mining was blamed for killing dozens on the island of Sulawesi in March when a make-shift mine collapsed.

Mineral-rich Indonesia has scores of unlicensed mines -- many with complete disregard for even the most basic safety procedures.

Also in Sulawesi this year, some 70 people were killed by floods and landslides that wiped entire villages off the map. Nearly 10,000 people were displaced.

Last month, some 112 people died and more than 90 remain missing after torrential rains pounded Indonesia's Papua region, triggering landslides and flash floods.

Indonesia, a nation of some 17,000 islands, is one of the most disaster-prone nations on Earth. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are a common occurrence.

"We overnight laid a siege to the house. They (suspected militants) staged a blast early Monday in which at least two of them were killed," a RAB spokesman told reporters.

He said that those living in the neighbourhood were evacuated ahead of the raid.

## Jihadists kill pastor, four others in Burkina church attack



**OUAGADOUGOU, APR 29 (AFP):** Gunmen killed four worshippers and a pastor in the first jihadist attack on a church in Burkina Faso, security and local sources said Monday.

Sunday's attack took place in the small northern town of Silgadji near Djibo, the capital of Soum province, and two others were reported missing.

"Unidentified armed individuals have attacked the Protestant church in Silgadji, killing four members of the congregation and the main pastor," a security source told AFP.

"At least two other people are missing," the source added.

It was the first attack on a church since jihadist violence erupted in the West African nation. Muslim clerics and imams have been targeted as well.

"The attack happened around 1:00 pm, just as

the faithful were leaving the church at the end of the service," a member of the church who did not want to be identified told AFP.

"The attackers were on motorbikes. They fired in the air before aiming at the members of the congregation," the witness added.

Burkina Faso has suffered from increasingly frequent and deadly attacks attributed to a number of jihadist groups, including the Ansarul Islam group, the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara.

The attacks started in the north of the country before targeting the capital Ouagadougou and other regions, notably the east of the country.

In February, a Spanish priest, Father Cesar Fernandez, was killed in a raid attributed to jihadists in Nohao in the centre of the country.

## Prez suspends defiant Lankan police chief over blasts, names successor; appoints new defence secy (Eds: Adds defence secy's appointment)

**COLOMBO, APR 29 (PTI):** Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on Monday suspended defiant police chief Pujith Jayasundara and named his successor as well as a new defence secretary as part of the revamping of the security establishment following the country's worst terror attack.

Sirisena on Friday said that Jayasundara had resigned but he never sent the letter and remained in his official residence, according to officials.

Senior Deputy Inspector General C D Wickremaratne has been appointed as the acting police chief while former Inspector General N K Illangakoon named as an advisor to the Defence Ministry, according to the President's office.

Police chief Jayasundara was asked to quit along with defence ministry secretary Hemasiri Fernando, taking responsibility for the intelligence failure that led to the bombings.

Jayasundara, however, refused to heed Sirisena's call to resign following April 21 coordinated blasts on three churches and three luxury hotels.

The police chief in Sri Lanka can only be removed through a parliamentary procedure and Sirisena's action suspending him is the first step towards that, the officials said.

The attacks carried out by suicide bombers came in spite of early warnings and the security establishment's failure to take preventive action has come under severe criticism.

## Lanka to introduce tough laws to eliminate jihadism: PM Wickremesinghe



**COLOMBO, APR 29 (PTI):** Introducing a tough new legislation to eliminate jihadism and extremism from Sri Lanka is the government's top priority, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has said in the aftermath of country's worst terror attacks on Easter Sunday.

The deadly attacks could have been prevented if the new Counter Terrorism Bill, which provides for territorial jurisdiction, was passed in Parliament without delay, he said on Sunday after joining the Sunday Mass in Colombo and the mass at the Saint Anthony's church in Kochchikade, a week after the deadly suicide bombing killed over 250 people.

"No anti-terrorism law in Sri Lanka provides for territorial jurisdiction under which a cadre belonging to an international terrorist organisation could be arrested in Sri Lanka if they are found. Not even the penal code provides that provi-

sion," the Prime Minister was quoted as saying by the Daily Mirror.

Introducing legislation against extremism is a priority for the government and new laws will be introduced to eliminate jihadism from the country, Wickremesinghe was quoted as saying by the Colombo Page.

"We have included this provision in the new Counter Terrorism Bill. However, it is stuck in Parliament for months. The Easter Sunday attacks could have been prevented if this legislation was passed," he said.

Nine suicide bombers carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three churches and three luxury hotels on the Easter Sunday, killing 253 people.

The Islamic State claimed the attacks, but the government has blamed local Islamist extremist group National Thowheeth Jamaath (NTJ) for the attacks.

Sri Lanka on Saturday banned the NTJ and a splinter group linked to the ISIS.

A total of 106 suspects, including a Tamil medium teacher and a school principal, have been arrested in connection with the Easter Sunday blasts.

Wickremesinghe reiterated that defence authorities should have acted upon the warnings given by intelligence units.

"There has been no breakdown in the intelligence services but the issue has been that the defence authorities had not acted upon the warnings," he added.

Last week, State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene accepted that there had been "major" lapses in the security arrangements.

Sri Lankan and international media reported that India and the US provided specific warnings about terror attacks to Sri Lanka, ahead of the Easter Sunday bombings.

## Two suspected militants blow themselves up during raid by Bangladesh's anti-terrorism unit

**BY ANISHUR REHMAN DHAKA, APR 29 (PTI):** Two suspected militants were killed on Monday after they blew themselves up during a raid at their hideout by the Bangladesh's elite anti-terrorism unit in Mohammadpur area here, officials said.

The Rapid Action Bat-

talion (RAB) surrounded a single-storey tinshed house in Mohammadpur's Basila area, on the outskirts of Dhaka, following a tip off.

The personnel of the elite anti-crime and anti-terrorism unit met with gunfire, followed by a powerful blast, they said.



## Aamir Khan, Priyanka Chopra Jonas among first Bollywood celebrities to cast vote

**MUMBAI, APR 29 (PTI):** Bollywood stars Aamir Khan, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Rekha, Madhuri Dixit Nene and R Madhavan stepped out early morning to exercise their right to vote for Lok Sabha Election 2019, here Monday.

Maharashtra is polling in on 17 seats in the fourth phase of the general election. In Mumbai alone, voting is on in six seats. Besides Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have also gone to polls.

Among the early voters were Priyanka, Priya Dutt, Lara Dutta, Aamir, who came along with wife Kiran Rao.

Posting on Twitter a selfie showing her inked finger, Priyanka wrote, "This is the moment that matters.... Every vote is a voice that counts. #LokSabhaElections2019."

While Madhuri tweeted, "Voting is our right, let's use it wisely! The future of our country is in our hands. Let's do our duty and #VoteForIndia."



Like Priyanka, she also accompanied her tweet with a selfie, showing her inked finger.

Actor Urmila Matondkar, who re-

cently joined Congress and is contesting from the North constituency of the city, was also among the first ones to cast her vote.

Madhavan posted on Twitter a picture of himself and his wife after casting their votes.

Actor Amrita Rao, who came to cast her vote at a booth in Mahim, told PTI that "voting is important for everyone irrespective of their status."

"It is a duty of every citizen who wants betterment of the country and its people. However being a celebrity you do carry the power to influence and if my voting can influence even one more person to get out if the house and vote I shall be more than satisfied," she added.

Other Bollywood celebrities, who have voted so far, include, Rahul Bose, Kunal Kohli and Ravi Kishan.



**TRIPLE THREAT!** The lovely ladies, Emma Roberts, Janelle Monae and Kelly Clarkson pose together at the red carpet premiere of their new animated movie, UglyDolls.

## 'Game of Thrones' actor Daniel Portman says he was groped by fans



**LONDON, APR 29 (PTI):** Actor Daniel Portman, who plays Podrick Payne on HBO's fantasy series "Game of Thrones", was groped by the fans of his character.

The critically-acclaimed and globally-loved series is in its final and eighth season.

"I don't want to say (being groped) comes with the territory, but, you know, people are crazy about it. It's certainly not cool.

"What can you do? You know? Obviously tell them not to do it. It hasn't happened

for a while. In this day and age you'd think that people would be able to separate reality from fiction," Portman told Esquire.

Referring to one of the scenes from the season three in which his character sleeps with prostitutes, only to have payment refused, the actor added, "I've been grabbed by so many like the amount of like older, older women who are very..."

The final episode of "Game of Thrones" will air on May 19.

## Kit Harington wishes to work with Sophie Turner again

**LOS ANGELES, APR 29 (PTI):** "Game of Thrones" star Kit Harington says after the HBO epic fantasy series ends with its eighth and final season, he would like to re-team with Sophie Turner on another project.

The British actor plays Jon Snow in the popular series, while Turner essays the role of Sansa Stark. It was revealed in the last episode of season seven that Sansa and Jon are related by blood.

"I'm always going to be very fond of it. It's hard to remember who any of the cast members was 10 years ago," Harington told People magazine.

Harington, however, believes fans might have some concerns and reservations with him and Turner having any other equation on screen.

The 32-year-old actor added that apart from Turner, he would also like to work with his wife Rose Leslie, whom he met on the sets of the series, which had its premiere in 2011. Leslie played Ygritte on the show.



## Why Arya Stark was always going to be the Game of Thrones savior



It was always going to be Arya Stark. Warning, spoilers follow for the third episode of Game of Thrones' final season!

In "The Long Night," the assembled forces at Winterfell, a who's who of Game of Thrones characters, took on the Night King and his army of dead. And it was Maisie Williams' Arya Stark who ended things. Yep, Arya saved the day.

"For, god, I think it's probably three years now, we've known that it was going to be Arya who delivers that fatal blow," co-creator David Benioff explained in the video below.

"She seemed like the best candidate provided we weren't thinking about her in that moment," co-creator D.B. Weiss said.

"One of the great things about having this many people you care about in a sequence together is that it can kind of pull people's attention and focus to people they care about a lot, like Jon, like Dany, like Theon and Bran, not to mention Tyrion and Sansa in the crypt. So you're going all over the place with people you who you're desperately worried for, and hopefully you forget about the fact that Arya Stark ran out of that castle with the battle drums playing, going towards some purpose, and we don't know what until it happens."

"We hoped to kind of avoid the expected. Jon Snow has always been the hero, the one who's been the savior, but it just didn't seem right to us, for this moment," Benioff said.

The duo knew it had to be Valyrian steel, and the exact spot where the child of the forest put the dragonglass blade to create the Night King, so he became "uncreated by the Valyrian steel," Benioff said.

generally considered erratic, but Mercury's retrograde through your relationship house over the past three weeks might have made you flip-flop. Perhaps a BFF hasn't had much time for you since finding "The One" or an ex resurfaced without an offer of commitment. Enough already! .

**LIBRA:** Channel-surfing or downward-dogging? If you've been doing more of the former over the past three weeks, you can thank Mercury, which has been retrograde (backward) in your self-care sector. But don't throw in the towel! Today, the quicksilver planet turns direct, helping you find sustainable routines.

**SCORPIO:** You're back! On March 5, expressive Mercury turned retrograde in your passionate fifth house. You may have felt like you were missing the love boat. Or perhaps you couldn't get a clear read on a romantic interest. Get ready to shake off the confusion and insecurity today, as the communication planet powers forward and calls forth your most radiant self!

**SAGITTARIUS:** Baby, it might (still) be

cold outside, but it wouldn't hurt to open a few windows and air out Chateau Sagittarius. With Mercury retrograde in your domestic fourth house since March 5, home and family matters might have felt a bit dazed and confused. Your survival instincts kicked in, causing you to retreat from the insanity. You can breathe a sigh of relief and re-engage today, as Mercury turns direct. Call a truce with your roomies, make up with your S.O., seek out a solution with your mother! **CAPRICORN:** Banish that either-or thinking, Capricorn. After a confusing three-week Mercury retrograde in your communication house, the messenger planet powers forward today. While you prefer to pour your (prodigious) energy into one thing at a time, this approach may not be serving you. Don't be afraid to dip your toe into multiple ponds, like those librarian-slash-actors or entrepreneur-slash-activists. Commuting or living in two cities is even a possibility for some earthbound Goats.

**AQUARIUS:** Loosen those purse strings, Aquarius. Since Mercury went retrograde

on March 5, you may have had a few budgetary breakdowns. But the messenger planet resumes forward motion today, making it safe to once again enjoy your hard-earned cash. This is a perfect time to revisit (and if necessary, revamp) your plans to strike a healthy balance between saving and spending. Invest in your greatest resource: yourself! A personal growth workshop, meditation retreat or life-coaching sessions can awaken your creativity and usher in a tsunami of entrepreneurial ideas.

**PISCES:** Vote with your dollar on Saturday, Pisces. An auspicious Sun-moon angle sends a reminder of how loudly money talks. Perhaps you'll choose socially responsible companies over those with murky or questionable practices. Supporting a small business owner can keep the unique character of your neighborhood thriving. This cosmic confab could inspire you to do business in different ways yourself or even earmark some of your earnings for a very specific cause you want to support.