



NIKOLAJ COSTER-WALDAU WANTS ARYA STARK SPIN-OFF SHOW

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LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2019: WOMEN CANDIDATES TO WATCH OUT FOR

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WILL NEVER RETIRE FROM FILMS, SAYS ANUPAM KHER

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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Results of high-stakes Lok Sabha polls today

NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI):

The counting of votes for the seven-phase elections to India's lower house of parliament, the world's biggest democratic exercise, will take place on Thursday, bringing the curtains down on a bitterly-fought contest which the country rarely witnessed.

Most of the exit polls have predicted that the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is on course to retain power for a second term, riding on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma like the way he swept to power in 2014.

However, the opposition parties have trashed results of the exit polls, claiming that the BJP will suffer severe drubbing due to rising unemployment, farm distress and slow-down in the economy.

The voting was staggered between April 11 and May 19 in which around 67 per cent of the nearly 900 million eligible people exer-



cised their franchise to elect 542 members of the Lok Sabha from a total of 8,049 contestants.

In the 2014 elections, the BJP won 282 seats while the Congress had suffered a severe drubbing getting an all-time low of 44 seats as against 206 it won in 2009.

From 'chowkidar chor

hai' and 'bhrashtachari no. 1' to 'khaki underwear', acerbic remarks ruled the roost this election season, making it one of the most bitterly-contested parliamentary polls post Independence.

Election Commission officials said the counting of votes for the Lok Sabha elections will be-

gin at 8.00 am Thursday and results are expected only by late evening.

For the first time in Lok Sabha polls, the EC will tally vote count on Electronic Voting Machines with voter verified paper audit trail slips in five polling stations in each assembly segment of a parliamentary constituency.

It will effectively mean that out of nearly 10.3 lakh polling stations, the EVM-VVPAT matching will take place in 20,600 such stations.

In case of a mismatch, the results based on paper slip count will be considered as final.

The entire exercise of EVM-paper trail ma-

chine matching will take an additional four to five hours, EC officials said.

The opposition parties Tuesday raised concerns over reports of alleged tampering of EVMs and asked the Election Commission to ensure transparency in counting.

EC officials said the voting percentage of

67.11 this time was the highest ever-voter turnout in Indian parliamentary elections.

They said as per procedure, postal ballots would be the first to be counted.

The number of service voters stands at 18 lakh and these include personnel of the armed forces, central police force personnel and

state police personnel who are posted outside their constituencies.

Diplomats and support staff posted in Indian embassies abroad are also counted as service voters.

Out of the 18 lakh registered voters, 16.49 lakh have sent their postal ballots to their respective returning officers as on May 17.

The exercise of counting postal ballots manually will itself take a couple of hours at least, an EC official said.

Out of the 543 Lok Sabha seats, elections were held in 542 constituencies as the EC had cancelled polls to the Vellore constituency on the ground of excessive use of money power.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, several union ministers, Congress President Rahul Gandhi, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav are among key leaders who contested the polls.

Avoid post poll violence, Golay directs party supporters

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 22 MAY:

On the eve of counting for the 2019 Assembly and Parliamentary elections, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha president, PS Tamang [Golay] has appealed to party supporters and workers to avoid post poll violence.

In his message, Mr Tamang has expressed confidence that his party will prevail and form the next government. SKM has always stood for peace and shall work for the progress of Sikkim, he adds.

"I would like to thank from the core of my heart to all the people of Sikkim who voted for Change, all our supporters who worked day and night and the supporters who are still vigilant at strong rooms," Mr Tamang has said.

Massive military crackdown against militants in Arunachal: Rijiju

NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI):

Union minister Kiren Rijiju Wednesday said security forces in Arunachal Pradesh have launched a massive operation against the insurgents who killed an MLA and 10 others in the state. He said when members of local community are involved in insurgent activities and maintain links with militants, the security operations can result in collateral damage.

"A massive military operation has been launched by the security forces in eastern Arunachal Pradesh," Rijiju said in a Facebook post.

Suspected NSCN militants on Tuesday gunned down sitting MLA and National People's Party (NPP) candidate for the state assembly polls, Tirong Aboh and 10 others, including his son, in Tirap district in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

Rijiju, who hails from Arunachal Pradesh, asserted that unless the local people cooperate, military action alone cannot be a permanent solution.

"When some members of the local community are involved in insurgent activities and maintain links with them, the security operations would result in collateral damage which becomes an issue of human rights. Some people will only question and blame the security forces but never condemn the acts of insurgents," he said.

The Union Minister of State for Home said some people talk against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), "which is only brought for providing better security to the citizens".

"Since 1997-98, politicians and other important people are primarily responsible as they fall prey to the



Cleanliness drive at Mangan Lal Bazaar on first Saturdays



WANGCHUK BHUTIA

MANGAN, 22 MAY:

The Mangan Nagar Panchayat (MNP) organized awareness cum coordination meeting with Lal Bazaar vegetable vendors on cleanliness and better sanitation practices among the general public today.

MNP also advised the vegetable vendors not to use plastic and also to keep the area clean.

The programme was chaired by MNP president, Zangmoo Bhutia, SHO, Mangan PS, SB Manger, MEO, MNP, Tempo Bhutia and MNP staff.

The meeting was con-

ducted for Lal Bazaar shopping complex and old Lal Bazaar vendors as the Lal Bazaar area has been negligent regarding cleanliness.

SHO Mangan PS also sensitised that Safai and Swachhata of the Bazaar is very important and everyone should follow clean habits. Stating that Sikkim Police personnel have been very cooperative, he urged the public to lend their support.

During the meeting, it was decided that cleanliness drive will be conducted at the shopping complex and its surrounding area on the first Saturday of every month now onwards. It was also informed that they will be provided facilities like proper drinking water supply.

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C DIVISION SIKKIM LEAGUE

Two matches play to a draw on 3rd day



SAGAR CHETTRI

GANGTOK, 22 MAY:

Two matches were played to a draw on the third day of the ongoing Sikkim Football Association [SFA] C Division Sikkim League 2019 here at Paljor Stadium on Wednesday. The first match between Sanju Football Academy, Sombaria and Namthang Football Club ended in 1-1 draw. Goa's giant Churchill Brothers goalkeeper, Kunzang Norbu Lachungpa from Sikkim was present as the chief guest.

Another match between Brother-

hood Football Club and Sikkim Boys ended in a goalless draw. Sikkimese professional footballer, Mobin Rai, who is currently with Football Club Bardax, Goa was the chief guest of the second game.

There will be no matches on 23 and 24 May in the ongoing league. On 25 May, the first match will be played between Red Panda Football Club and Queen Valley at 12 noon and JVC Singtam will take on Ranipool Football Club in the next match.

LS polls: 724 women candidates in fray for LS polls

New Delhi, May 22 (PTI): The fate of 8,049 candidates, including 724 women, in the just-concluded Lok Sabha polls will be decided on Thursday when the results are announced.

The Congress had fielded the maximum of 54 women candidates. It was closely followed by

the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which had fielded 53 women.

Among the other national parties, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) fielded 24 women candidates, the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) 23, the CPI(M) 10, the CPI four, while the Nationalist Congress Party

(NCP) fielded one woman candidate.

As many as 222 women contested the polls independently.

A total of 8,049 candidates were in the fray in the parliamentary polls.

Four transgender candidates contested the polls independently,

turn to pg02

Drones, virtual reality and good old analysis, TV channels pull out the stops for counting day

NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI): Drones that fly overhead to give a "bird's eye view", Rs 1 lakh cash prize if you guess the winner right and good old analysis, television channels are moving from the fantastical to the mundane to entice viewers on counting day Thursday.

With millions in India and abroad preparing to tune into television channels and log in to news networks on their phones and other devices as votes for the Lok Sabha election are counted, media houses are making sure they grab TRPs. Many are using VFX and lurid graphics and others are pitching the fact that they have the best network of on-ground reporters and in-studio analysts.

And, as the clock strikes 6 am on Thursday, all are promising poll results from ground zero first and fast.

CNN-New18's deputy executive editor Anand Narasimhan will hop on to an "elex-a drone quadcopter" that will hover over a virtual map of India to give the "big picture" of the results using "virtual reality on live TV".

"Buckle up for a thrilling ride as India elects its next govt. Get the elevated experience. A bird's eye view of India's biggest results," reads a ticker on a video shared by the channel on micro-blogging site Twitter.

Times Now has promised to bring coverage cut-out for the "millennial

viewer" with the use of "state of the art technology". "Our collaboration with Pixotope (a virtual production systems) means that for the first time ever in India's electoral history and in the broadcast of elections, you will be seeing software innovation powered by the Unreal Engine (a game engine)," Editor-in-Chief Rahul Shivshankar said on Twitter.

The technology is expected to "help in virtual, augmented and mixed reality projections" of the poll results data.

Zee News has decided to welcome the new government from a new studio that will stream the results "to over 170 countries simultaneously", a feat it claims will be the "first of its kind in In-

dia done by an Indian channel". "We will be coming to you on election day from our new studio and would be bringing to you world's biggest election coverage, biggest because we will be beaming to over 170 countries simultaneously," Sudhir Chaudhary, editor-in-chief of the Hindi news channel, said in a video.

Not all media houses have something "never seen before" to offer. NDTV, for instance, will be bringing home the results the traditional way.

In a promo on Twitter, NDTV co-founder Prannoy Roy promised to stream the "fastest election results and analysis" on television as well as online.

turn to pg02

MHA asks states, UTs to remain alert; says calls given in various quarters for inciting violence

NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI):

A day before counting of votes for the Lok Sabha polls, the Union Home Ministry Wednesday alerted all states and Union Territories on the possibility of violence in different parts of the country, saying calls were given in various quarters for inciting violence.

In a statement, the ministry also said it has asked the states and UTs to maintain law and order, peace and public tranquillity.

“The home ministry has alerted the state chief secretaries and directors general of police regarding possibility of eruption of violence in different parts of the country in connection with the counting of votes tomorrow,” the statement said.

The ministry said the states and UTs have been further asked to take adequate measures for the security of strong rooms and venues of counting of votes.

“This is in the wake of calls given and statements made in various quarters for inciting violence and causing disruption on the day of counting of votes,” it said.

The central security agencies have received inputs that some organisations and individuals, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Tripura, have given certain statements which may lead to violence and disruption in counting process, an official said.

Lok Sabha elections were held in seven phases from April 11 to May 19. Counting will take place on Thursday.

Mt Everest witnesses traffic jam like situation as over 200 climbers attempt to reach summit point

SHIRISH B PRADHAN

KATHMANDU, MAY 22 (PTI):

Mt Everest, the world's highest peak, on Wednesday witnessed a traffic-jam like situation as over 200 mountaineers attempted to reach the summit point, a media report said on Wednesday. Climbers from many countries reached above the Camp IV early morning and complained of waiting for more than two hours in queues on their way to the summit point of the 8,848-metre peak, the Himalayan Times reported. Over 200 climbers including high-altitude climbing guides headed from the South Col to the summit point early this morning after they found a second weather window to attempt to stand atop the roof of the world, Gyanendra Shrestha, a liaison officer deployed by the Tourism Ministry at the Everest base camp, was quoted as saying by the paper.

He said that many of the climbers who were earlier stuck reached the top of the peak by Wednesday afternoon but the exact number was not yet known.

Will respect people's choice: HSP on counting results

REBYNA RANA

GANGTOK, 22 MAY:

Hamro Sikkim Party (HSP) held a meeting at the party office today which was presided over by president, Dr Bina Bas-

nett and working president, Bhaichung Bhutia.

The party has said that it holds public choice in the highest esteem and thanks the people of Sikkim for

their support, regardless of what the outcome shall be. The HSP also rededicates its commitment to a new and better Sikkim, and shall always strive towards that

end in the future.

The party also decided to declare the date of registration in November as the official foundation day of the party, and shall hold a function every

year to mark the same.

The meeting ended with all party workers pledging to work tirelessly for a better and a modern Sikkim in the future.

Cong terms EC ‘Enfeebled Commission’, says it is black day for democracy

NEW DELHI, MAY 22

(PTI): The Congress Wednesday dubbed the Election Commission as “Enfeebled Commission” after the poll body was learnt to have rejected the opposition parties’ demand for pre-verification of VVPATs with EVMs while counting and said it was a “black day” for democracy.

Party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi asked on what basis the commission had arrived at the decision as the Supreme Court ruling on VVPAT counting did not come under Rule 56-D as cited by it.

He also questioned whether the EVMs were “electronic victory ma-

chines” for the BJP and the Model Code of Conduct was “Modi’s Campaign Code”, alleging that the poll body had succumbed to the pressure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP chief Amit Shah.

“It is a black day for democracy and it is very sad and unfortunate for an institution like the Election Commission,” he told reporters.

Addressing a press conference, Singhvi said though the Congress or any other party had not received any reply or order from the EC on their complaints, the poll body has no logistical reason to reject the demand as it entails no extra time or

burden on it.

“Has the Model Code of Conduct become ‘Modi’s campaign code’ and EVMs ‘electronic victory machines’ for the BJP. Has the Election Commission become ‘Enfeebled Commission’ or is it ‘Eradicated Commission’ or ‘Eliminated Commission’ as it has succumbed to the pressure of PM and Amit Shah,” he claimed.

The Congress leader also alleged that the EC had adopted “discriminatory” standards, “one for the aam aadmi (common man) and the other for two people, who are above the law -- the prime minister and Amit Shah”. Questioning what could be the possible

ground for rejection of the opposition’s demand, Singhvi said they have only asked for random checking of VVPATs at the beginning of counting so that a sample can be checked.

Asked whether the Congress will move court against the EC’s decision, Singhvi asked, “Why should we?”

He indicated that there was no enough time left to move the court. “We are appealing to the court of people. We have fought a clean battle. There is no time to go anywhere,” he said, adding that the EC’s decision had given rise to suspicion about its functioning. Singhvi said the

demand made by the opposition was only to reinforce the credibility of EVMs and that of the EC.

The Election Commission is learnt to have stuck to its plan of counting the paper trail machines slips at the end of counts and not in the beginning as demanded by opposition parties.

It is also learnt to have decided to count postal ballots simultaneously with Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) count due to the “sheer size” of the ballots received this time from service voters.

Till now, the postal ballots were counted in the beginning followed by votes polled in voting machines.

Attempted break-in at IAF’s Paris office handling Rafale procurement



NEW DELHI, MAY 22

(PTI): In a suspected case of espionage, there was an attempted break-in on Sunday at the Indian Air Force’s Paris office which is overseeing procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets for India, military sources said.

A group of unidentified persons broke into the office of the IAF’s Rafale project management team in the suburbs of Paris and local police are probing whether the attempt was to steal classified data relating to the aircraft, they said.

“As per initial assessment, no data or hardware have been stolen. The local police are investigating the incident,” said a source.

The sources said the IAF has briefed the defence ministry about the incident and that the Indian mission in Paris

has been in touch with French authorities.

The IAF’s office of Rafale project management is located at the complex of Dassault Aviation, the makers of the Rafale jets.

There was no official reaction from either the defence ministry or the IAF about the incident.

Sources said stealing of any data relating to the weapons package or avionics of the Rafale jets may have serious implications.

The IAF project management team is headed by an IAF Group Captain and it comprises two fighter pilots, one logistics officer and a number of weapons experts and engineers.

The team is coordinating with Dassault Aviation on manufacture of Rafale jets as well as on weapons package on board the aircraft. Prime

Minister Narendra Modi had announced the procurement of a batch of 36 Rafale jets after talks with the then French President Francois Hollande on April 10, 2015 in Paris. The final deal, worth Rs 56,000 crore, was sealed on September 23, 2016.

The Congress has been alleging massive irregularities in the deal and has been targeting the government over selection of Anil Ambani-owned Reliance Defence as an offset partner for Dassault Aviation.

The government has rejected the allegations.

The first Rafale aircraft is scheduled to be delivered in September.

Weeks after India’s Balakot strikes, IAF chief BS Dhanoa said India could have achieved better results if the country had Rafale jets.

Breaking over 55-month growth streak monthly domestic air passenger traffic falls by 4.5% in April

NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI):

Breaking a growth streak of over 55 months, domestic air passenger traffic fell by around 4.5 per cent in April this year, according to data released by Indian aviation regulator DGCA on Wednesday. The domestic air traffic in April this year consisted of 10.99 million passengers as compared to 11.51 million passengers in the same month last year, signifying a fall of around 4.5 per cent, as per the data.

The monthly domestic air passenger traffic has only seen growth for more than 55 previous months, according to the DGCA data available on its website. Suspension

of operations by Jet Airways on April 17, 2019, due to lack of funds is one of the primary reasons why domestic air traffic saw a fall in last month. According to the DGCA data, the share of domestic passenger traffic flown by Jet Airways was just 0.8 per cent in April 2019, as compared 14.7 per cent in the same month last year.

In February and March this year, the share of Jet Airways in domestic air passenger traffic was 10 per cent and 4.6 per cent, respectively.

Low-cost carrier IndiGo solidified its position as the largest airline in India as it has acquired 49.9 per cent

share in the domestic air passenger traffic in April this year, as per the DGCA data. In absolute numbers, the airline flew 5.48 million passengers in April this year. In the January to March period of 2019, the monthly share of IndiGo in domestic air passenger market has gradually increased from 42.5 per cent to 43.4 per cent to 46.9 per cent, respectively.

SpiceJet and Air India flew 1.52 million and 1.44 million passengers, respectively, in April this year. These two airlines had flown 1.51 million passengers and 1.58 million passengers, respectively, in March this year.

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Drones, virtual...

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India TV will be using one of the most significant days in Indian politics to host a contest and give the audience an opportunity to win goodies.

“As India counts on May 23, your say matters. Speak out on IndiaTV. Tweet your one-minute video using #ResultsWithRajatSharma and stand a chance to be in next #AapKiAadalat show. Also, the best five videos will win a cash prize of Rs 10K,” channel chairman and editor-in-chief Rajat Sharma said in a video.

Other contests on India TV will include the opportunity of getting featured on the channel if one predicts correctly the winner of their constituency, and a chance to win Rs 1 lakh if they get right the answers to three questions that Sharma will ask on Thursday.

LS polls: 724...

while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was the only party to field a transgender nominee.

Uttar Pradesh fielded the highest number of women at 104, followed by Maharashtra. Sixty-four women candidates have been fielded from Tamil Nadu, 55 from Bihar and 54 from West Bengal.

According to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and the National Election Watch, 100 or 15 per cent women candidates declared criminal cases, while 78 or 11 per cent declared serious criminal cases against themselves.

Two women candidates declared cases in which they were convicted, four declared cases related to murder, 16 had attempt to murder cases against them, 14 were accused of crimes against women such as causing miscarriage without a woman’s consent, while seven had cases related to hate speech registered against them, the report said.

Of the 100 women candidates with criminal cases against them, 13 are from the BJP, while 10 from the Congress.

According to the ADR report, of the 716 women candidates analysed, 255 or 36 per cent were crorepatis.

In 2014, of the 665 women candidates analysed, 219 or 33 per cent were crorepatis.

Among the major parties, the average worth of assets per candidate for the Congress’s women nominees is Rs 18.84 crore, while it is Rs 22.09 crore for the BJP candidates. The average worth of assets of the BSP’s women candidates is Rs 3.03 crore, while for the TMC nominees, it is Rs 2.67 crore.

The average worth of assets of the women candidates of the CPI(M) is Rs 1.33 crore, Rs 39.85 crore of the SP and Rs 2.92 crore of the AAP.

The average worth of assets of the 222 Independent women candidates is Rs 1.63 crore.

Hema Malini, the BJP candidate from Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, is the richest woman nominee in this election with assets worth Rs 250 crore, followed by Telugu Desam Party’s (TDP) D A Sathya Prabha (Rs 220 crore) from Andhra Pradesh’s Rajampet constituency and the Shiromani Akali Dal’s Harsimrat Kaur Badal (Rs 217 crore) from Punjab’s Bathinda, the affidavits showed.

Six women candidates -- all of whom contested the polls independently -- have declared zero assets in their self-sworn affidavits.

The ADR said 232 or 32 per cent women candidates declared their educational qualification to be between Class 5 and Class 12 pass, while 396 or 55 per cent declared having an educational qualification of graduate and above.

Thirty-seven women candidates have declared themselves to be literate and 26 are illiterates. Two candidates did not give their educational qualification details.

The report further said 531 or 74 per cent women candidates declared their age to be between 25 and 50 years, while 180 or 25 per cent declared their age to be between 51 and 80 years.

While one woman candidate declared she was over 80 years of age, three did not disclose their age and one said her age was below 25 years, the report said.

Massive military...

pressure and at times take the help of insurgents. It is time to take a tough stand and everyone should come together and say no to violence and insurgent groups. If we all stand unitedly, we shall overcome,” he said.

Many political parties and civil society groups in the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir have been demanding the repeal of the AFSPA, which gives special powers to the armed forces to shoot or arrest any suspect and carry out searches in any premises without warrants.

Expressing shock over the brutal killing of the MLA and 10 others, Rijiju said in the last few years, security situation in the entire Arunachal Pradesh has improved, but the two incidents in Tirap district this election have spoilt the atmosphere.

Director General of Arunachal Pradesh Police S B K Singh said Tuesday that the Army units had launched massive combing operations in the area to nab the perpetrators.

Senior police officers of Tirap and neighbouring Changlang districts have reached Khonsa to supervise and coordinate with various security agencies for the operations, Singh said.

The Assembly polls in Arunachal Pradesh were held along with the Lok Sabha elections on April 11.

AIB says Gursimran Khamba out of company, Tanmay Bhat demoted



MUMBAI, MAY 22 (PTI): Comedy group AIB on Wednesday announced Gursimran Khamba will no longer be involved with the company and Tanmay Bhat will step down from the post of CEO.

Last year, Khamba and Bhat, the co-founders of the comedy quartet, distanced themselves from the comedy group, which is battling allegations of sexual harassment against its members.

While Bhat is under attack for his inaction in the complaints against writer-comedian Utsav Chakraborty, Khamba has been directly accused of sexual misconduct.

In a statement shared on its official Twitter account, the company also said the AIB YouTube channel is “dead for the foreseeable future”.

AIB said there has been an Internal Committee and anti-harassment system in place from the start. But the culture at work may not have been perfect which needs to be improved, the statement added.

“To that end, we maintain that Tanmay Bhat’s lapse of judge-

ment regarding Utsav Chakraborty was egregious. As a result, even though, Tanmay Bhat’s suspension has been lifted, he will no longer hold the position of CEO.”

In Khamba’s case, the company said they appointed a two-member External Committee (EC) -- comprising a senior partner at a law firm and a diversity consultant -- to look into the allegations.

But the comic had stepped away from the investigation process during its course, citing “issues with procedure”, AIB said in the statement.

“The EC was unable to conclude the investigation on account of this withdrawal. Given these circumstances, Gursimran Khamba will no longer be involved in operations at AIB, and will be working independent of us,” the company added.

As per the statement, the company will continue to be managed by remaining two members Rohan Joshi and Ashish Shakyra, who will also pursue solo interests in the coming future.

AIB said as a “hundred per cent independent, creator-owned

company”, post the allegations going public, their business went to “zero”.

“...The lack of revenue inflows made it impossible for us, as owners, to sustain outgoing costs... But with no revenue and operational costs piling up, we had to make some hard, and unfortunately permanent decisions. We had to let our office space and entire team go overnight.”

The statement added all the employees who were let go managed to find another job.

“The AIB YouTube channel is for all intents and purposes, dead for the foreseeable future - there will be no new sketches anytime soon... If and when we decide to release other content on the channel (for eg stand-up clips), you will be the first to know,” it added.

The statement was the first activity on the group’s Twitter page since October 2018, after company HR head Vidhi Jotwani announced Bhat and Khamba were distancing themselves from AIB amid allegations in the wake of the #MeToo wave.

Phusrey Lake - An Important Tourism Spot

DILLI RAM DAHAL & KARMA D.O. BHUTIA

Geographically, Phusrey lake is located at 27°10’ 12” N and 88°42 8” E at an altitude of about 2,288m in the mid-Himalyan belt of Kalimpong district. The word Phusrey in Nepali generally signifies ‘grayish’ or dull in colour. As per the Forest Department of West Bengal, it falls within Class A wetlands (Forested wetlands). Administratively, it falls within the Lingsey GPU, Kalimpong district, West Bengal. The lake is about 222m in length and 60 m wide and encompasses a geographical area of about 2.083 ha. The inhabitant also called this lake as Mulkharaka/Manokamna Pokhari and is famous for the reflection of leading lofty guardian deity of the Eastern Himalayan landscape. The take-off point to Phusrey lake is Hathi-chira (±1,650m), in the Lingsey GPU. The important halt places on the way to Phusrey are Pithamchin, Khopi-kharka (±1,870m) and Mul Kharka (±2,056m). Mul-Kharka is a small village with a dozen of houses in the Lingsey GPU mostly inhabited by the Sherpas & Tamangs.

The surface run-off from the dense forest of Neora valley national park & Pangolakha wildlife sanctuary gets accumulated in the elongated depression adding a plenty of water to the lake during monsoon months. The lake is not directly fed by any streams, however, presence of springs in the forested land is highly suspected. As the lake being sacred boating/ rafting on the lake water is prohibited which create problem in volume estimation. It is a small size depression filled up lake without any outlet at present is under the stress of contemporary climate change and anthropogenic interventions, the amount of water in the lake has decreased and shoreline of the lake has been exposed. The region provides a few ecosystem goods and services viz., provisioning, cultural, recreational services to the down-stream communities. The animistic practices in the region are very dynamic and reflect a strong man-nature relationship. From Phusrey lake complex majestic view

of Kinchenjunga range [sic] (Kanchenjunga) Rache, Rambang & Reshi river valleys can be witnessed during clear weather. Besides, dense forests, variety of birds, Chimal (Rhododendron) flowers can be witness in the months of April and May every year. Additionally, a narrow valleys and protruding spurs descending to the Rambang, Chhuba



and Reshi valleys can be visualize from the bugiyals of Phusrey.

Further, West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTD) has developed this eco-destination in the last 15 years, now this eco-destination has started attracting domestic tourist from several parts of India. The lake is well connected to the Rhenock-Aritar -Pithamchen road. It takes around 2.5 hours to reach the lake from Rhenock bazaar. The Phusrey lake has a sufficient ground for tent pitching, it also has a tourist lodge built-up by WBTD which offers accommodation to the domestic and foreign tourists. The most popular Aritar-Phusrey-Rachela trail passes through this wetland complex. Recently, official recognition of the trekking trail has been given by WBTD for its marketing. Though, the attraction of Phusrey wetland to the local inhabitants, domestic and foreign tourists has already been highlighted by weekend destinations (2012) and Akash Malik (2018), respectively.

Geomorphologically, it lies on the low

lying depression encircled by the ridges of low height. In the Eastern part lie a vast grazing land and towards west lie a trekker’s lodge and towards W, SE and Northern side is the dense forest of Pangolakha wildlife sanctuary & Neora valley National park. Geologically and structurally, it falls within the domain of Darjeeling and Daling

gneiss series representing the Precambrian age. The meticulous field observation has revealed that nival processes operate in and around the wetland complex in the colder months resulting in the rapid weathering of Darjeeling and Gneiss series of the rocks. The region is free from any kind of adverse geological features of recent origin and is suitable for human habitation. The most important Common Property Resources (CPR) in the region includes a temple, Serene lake (Phusrey), trekkers lodge and an extensive pasture (alpine bugiyal) in the vicinity. The prayer flags fluttering in the shore of the lake, temple and festival during Ramnami signify its sanctity.

(The authors work in the Department of Eastern Himalayan & Geography, Government College Rhenock-Rungdung, East Sikkim and can be reached at dilliramdahal@rediffmail.com. Further, authors thank Rinchen Tshering Bhutia, Block Officer, Pangolkha Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS) for sharing his knowledge about Phusrey trekking trail and experiences).

Missing you always, Daddy!



Kamal Psd. Alley
(16/07/1938 - 22/05/2014)

There’s is a special kind of feeling when we think about you, Dad it’s a pleasure to remember all the happy times we’ve had. There’s a special kind of caring that is meant for you alone. There’s a place somewhere within our heart that only you can own. Missing you always Daddy. Your ever loving
Roma, Annapurna, Puran, Ahaan and Jed.



Namgyal Institute of Tibetology
Gangtok, Sikkim
Ph: (03592) 281525 / 280822

NOTICE FOR APPOINTMENT OF ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND ASSISTANT PROFESSOR FOR THE SOWA-RIGPA COURSE ON TEMPORARY BASIS

Applications are invited through proper channel for the appointment of the following posts for the Sowa-Rigpa course under the patronage of Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. The initial appointment will be on consolidated pay basis.

- | | | |
|------------------------|----|-------|
| 1. Associate Professor | -- | 1 no. |
| 2. Assistant Professor | -- | 1 no. |

The applicants must have the following qualifications/credentials:

- BSMS/MD from a recognized University or a degree in Sowa Rigpa from a University/ college established by law.
- Minimum of three years of teaching experience for the post of Associate Professor.
- The applicant’s age for the post of Assistant Professor should not be more than 45 years as on 31st July, 2019.
- Basic computer knowledge.
- Skill of reading, writing and speaking in Tibetan, English and Hindi.

The interested candidates may submit their applications along with their latest CVs. to the office of the Joint Director, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Deorali, Gangtok-Sikkim: 737-102 within 20 days from the date of this advertisement. Candidates will be selected on the basis of an interview to be conducted on 27th June, 2019 at 10 AM at Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. Please note no T.A. or D.A. will be admissible in this regard.

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Baghouse dust filters can minimise industrial emissions: BCC&I

KOLKATA, MAY 22 (PTI): Concerned with growing industrial air pollution, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I) has suggested the industries to install ‘Baghouse Dust Filters’ in order to cut down industrial emissions.

“While industrial growth is integral to the growth of the nation, putting right policies and norms for combating pollution by the government is absolutely imperative to the overall health of the nation,” Deb A Mukherjee, Chairman, Energy Committee, BC-C&I, said.

“The Energy Committee have been making continuous efforts through numerous forums, platforms and conclaves to ideate, discuss and invite all solutions concerning building up of clean energy practices, effective transport choices, correct industrial practices as they all contribute to the air quality of our environment,” Mukherjee said.

Industries like steel, aluminium, cement and glass are now required to ensure that their emissions level meet the stan-

dard of particulate matter at below 10 mg per cubic meter.

The chief contributors of air pollution are industries that use combustible processes that cause gaseous emissions, apart from automobile emissions and construction projects, he said.

Baghouse dust filters can serve to minimize the particulate matter as a result of industrial emissions of cement, glass and steel plants.

In this technology, inside a casing there are filtering elements made of textile or fabric felt with the correct pitch for having the correct ascension velocity. Air flows through the bags, the dust contained in the air stays on outside and the clean air then flows through inside.

“We welcome companies like Ekoplant who are offering state of the art technology at a reasonable costs”, Mukherjee said.

Stressing the need to check industrial emissions and improve environment for the safety of entire population, Chairman of the West Bengal Pollution Control

Board (WBPCB), Dr Kalyan Rudra, said they have also taken serious note about the threat to the environment.

“We (WBPCB) have stipulated guidelines and we see whether standards are being maintained by the industries and problems are contained,” Dr Rudra said.

Sustainable solutions that can aide industrial development keeping pollution levels within limits have slowly started taking shape through technological innovations and collaborations as witnessed recently with the setting up of bag house filters unit at JSWs Dolviand Vijayanagar steel plant by the Italian MSME EKOPLANT, Mukherjee added. It meets specific industrial needs at cost effective rates that would encourage more and more industries to adopt this safe technology to combat industrial dust emissions.

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When People Speak, Listen

...and respect their decision and celebrate and sulk in peace

The counting of votes is expected to take substantially longer than how quickly the EVMs were counted in 2014. That said, before it is time for dinner today, the people's verdict for the next five years would have become clear. There will celebrations in some corners, dejection in others; and surprises and shocks as rejections and endorsements are dished out in ample measure. Psephology is a very uncertain science when applied to our country and speculations on what the EVMs hold are best made in private, but what is certain though is that the State government for the next term, irrespective of the seat-share, will be one voted into power by the most number of Sikkimese, ever. The voter turn-out might have dropped marginally in 2014, but in absolute numbers, 3.38 lakh Sikkimese voted on 11 April 2019. In comparison, 3.10 lakh people had cast their votes in 2014. Compare this with the 76,299 voters who elected the first Bhandari-led Government in Sikkim in 1979, or even the 1.78 lakh who voted in 1994 [when the first SDF Government was elected], and the scale of endorsement that the new government will enjoy becomes apparent.

In a country where governments are being formed by opportunistic alliances and slim shares of the now-finally-warming-up voter response, Sikkim will again have a government that most of its adults [78.19%] decided to have a share in electing to power. And this should be the message that underlines the verdict that Sikkim posts today.

Once the elections results are declared, analysis and commentary will start pouring out from the woodwork. There will also be allegations ranging from condemnations of communal voting patterns to intimidation and definitely some imaginative suggestions in line with some of the hilariously puerile arguments that the campaign trail in Sikkim was littered with. That is expected, because politics has not yet matured to the level of giving Sikkim sporting losers or even gracious victors [except in clean sweep scenarios]. The rumour mill is already suggesting that the post-verdict scenario will not necessarily have victors as unanimous as is easy to be in victory. Let's hope that the whisper brigade is wrong once again in Sikkim and there is no post-poll violence. What needs to be borne in mind is that Elections 2019, even if the campaigning was a tad boring when it comes to debating issues and too vitriolic when it came to running down opponents, was the strongest celebration of democracy in Sikkim thus far. The campaigning was peaceful and the polling passed without any untoward incident. Most of the ingredients required for a healthy democracy were noticeably present – the number of candidates was respectable enough even though the contest was essentially two-way and the expressions of support open and loud confirming a maturing democratic space, and as mentioned, the voter turnout was handsome.

These factors deserve universal celebration, cutting across party lines in Sikkim. While this celebration is underway, let us also bear in mind that when so many free citizens express themselves, unanimity is not always possible; majority opinion will definitely be there, but unanimity might not only not be possible, but is perhaps not even healthy. Democracy requires a certain amount of dissent to stay sharp and healthy and also to keep governments responsive and responsible.

One fear that has returned to Sikkim with the polls is that of post-poll violence. Such violence, like any reaction, is of two types – spontaneous and planned. Faster counting would ensure that the first reaction, except when it is of jubilation, will not happen because the results would then have been announced before dark. But the counting is expected to stretch out long hours this time and that will require the district and police administrations to devise stronger deterrents and better preparation. The Sikkimese society still has that decorum which does not allow in-your-face aggression [seen in how vehicles are torched after dark and violence mostly indulged in at least from a stone's throw away making identification difficult]. As for planned rampages, the cops will have no excuses for allowing these because they should have identified possible troublespots and deployed proper reinforcements.

Now, to see how Sikkim has spoken.

And for those who care to listen, remember, this is the time for celebrations, irrespective of victory or loss, not the moment to settle scores or even dish out rewards. This is also the moment to listen and understand what the people have said through the EVMs.



Lok Sabha elections 2019: women candidates to watch out for

CAROLE SPARY
theconversation.com

The outcome of the world's largest election is almost upon us – the counting of votes by 900m eligible voters begins on May 23. With more than 500 directly elected seats being contested in India's lower house of parliament, the Lok Sabha, all eyes are on who will win and what this means for the next government.

One hope is that India's lower house of parliament will improve upon the meagre number of women MPs elected to date. A depressing statistic revealed in Performing Representation, a book I co-authored with Shirin M Rai, is that if you count every woman MP elected to the Lok Sabha over every parliament since independence, these together would not fill a single Lok Sabha of 543 directly elected seats. This is despite the prominence of several senior women leaders in Indian politics and the fact that women make up between one third to one half of local government representatives around the country as a result of gender quotas implemented in the 1990s.

Nonetheless, there are many women politicians that we should look out for. Of the 8,000+ candidates, there are more than 700 women – proportionally slightly higher than in previous elections.

On May 23, when the results are announced, it won't just be a question of how many women were elected. If we are to do justice to the diversity of women in Indian politics, we must also consider who the women are, where are they from, which party they represent, and what they seek to represent in parliament.

CANDIDATES AND CONTROVERSY

There are two women candidates who have captured the public imagination in this election. They illustrate, for very different reasons, why the last six weeks of voting have been dubbed a toxic election.

One is a progressive candidate, Atishi Marlena, contesting in East Delhi for the Aam Aadmi Party. She has been widely praised for her contribution to reforming government schools in Delhi as an adviser to the government, improving the quality of both teaching provision and infrastructure. But, as many women in politics sadly experience, she has also been subjected to

some severe misogynistic and casteist abuse on the campaign trail.

Atishi is not the first woman candidate to experience such abuse, even during this election. But her experience is a stark reminder of how poisonous electoral politics can be and why many women are put off careers in politics.

In contrast, the controversial Sadhvi Pragya Singh Thakur is contesting for the BJP in the city of Bhopal, in the Hindi heartland state of Madhya Pradesh. She is a Hindu holy woman and member of the Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation, the RSS, which has links with the governing BJP party. Her nomination was heavily criticised because of her alleged links to the 2008 Malegaon bombings, for which she was arrested but granted bail on health grounds in 2017.

She courted further controversy when she referred to Mahatma Gandhi's assassin, Nathuram Godse, as a "patriot" ("deshbhakt"). Senior BJP leaders condemned these remarks saying that this is not in line with party ideology, but they have not rescinded their support for her.

Her victory or defeat in the election will serve as a litmus test for the level of public support for the BJP's right-wing Hindu nationalist majoritarian agenda, and the extent to which parties and voters are willing to overlook alleged criminal behaviour of candidates.

BANERJEE AND MAYAWATI

Some of the most prominent women in the 2019 election are not candidates but are leading their party campaigns. This includes the chief minister of West Bengal and head of the All India Trinamul Congress party, Mamata Banerjee, who has been fighting hard this election to prevent the BJP from gaining strength in her state of West Bengal.

Another is the head of the Bahujan Samaj Party, Mayawati, in the northern, most populous Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. She has entered into an alliance with her opponent, the Samajwadi Party, in order to fight the governing BJP party and avoid splitting the anti-BJP vote.

Both Mayawati and Banerjee have directly confronted incumbent prime minister, Narendra Modi in their campaigns, and will likely play an important role in the immediate aftermath of the results.

THE NEW GENERATION

We know that almost two thirds of sitting women MPs are running again in 2019. This is significant because Indian politics has a high turnover of elected representatives. The male-dominated terrain of party politics in India, as well as a perception that men have higher "winnability" within party selection committees, means it is significant when women are re-nominated by their parties.

Prominent women MPs to look out for are Meenakshi Lekhi (BJP) from Delhi, Supriya Sule (NCP) from Maharashtra, Susmita Dev (Congress) from the northeastern state of Assam. They are among a newer generation of senior women political leaders from across the political spectrum.

RETURNING VETERANS

After passing the leadership of the Indian National Congress Party to her son Rahul Gandhi, four-term veteran Sonia Gandhi is contesting again in Uttar Pradesh.

Other veterans who lost in 2014 have been given another chance by their parties in 2019. Meira Kumar, former speaker of the Lok Sabha (2009-2014) is back, fighting for her former constituency in the northern state of Bihar. Sheila Dikshit, a three-time chief minister of Delhi (1998-2013) and former MP, is again contesting in Delhi for the Congress party.

THE SOUTH

National media coverage of Indian elections is often dominated by north Indian politics, but women candidates from south India are also worth watching. The south has higher development indicators, but this has not always led to women's participation in politics.

The low number of women nominated by major parties in these states in 2019 means this trend is likely to continue. This will be the first election in decades without J Jayalalithaa, the longstanding chief minister of Tamil Nadu who died in December 2016. But we may see incumbent MP and senior TRS leader Kavitha Kalvakuntla, contesting in the state of Telangana, return to parliament. There are also two women Congress candidates, Jothimani (in Tamil Nadu) and Ramya Haridas (in Kerala), who may not have garnered much national media coverage but are interesting candidates to watch out for.

[the writer is Assistant Professor of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham]

Bonobo mothers meddle in their sons' sex lives – making them three times more likely to father children

BEN GARROD
theconversation.com

Dating is never easy, for any of us. Scenarios play over in our heads, classic questions and worries bombard us. Will she like me? Does he share the same interests? Will my mum be watching us have sex? Thankfully, that last question isn't actually one us humans have to deal with. But new research shows that for bonobos, sex really is often a family affair. What's more, rather than being an embarrassing hindrance, motherly presence greatly benefits bonobo sons during the deed.

Along with chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes), bonobos (Pan paniscus) are our closest living relatives. Restricted to a 500,000 km² thickly-forested zone of the Congo Basin, these endangered great apes were only formally discovered in 1928, which until 2017 made them the most recently-described living great ape species.

Operating in female-led social systems, bonobos are capable of showing a wide range of what were

long held as human-specific feelings and emotions, such as sensitivity, patience, compassion, kindness, empathy and altruism.

They're also perhaps the most promiscuous non-human species on the planet. While chimpanzee sex is tied closely to reproduction, up to 75% of bonobo sexual behaviour is purely for pleasure. From saucy greetings and social bonding to conflict resolution and post-conflict make-up sex, sex serves hugely important functions in most aspects of bonobo social behaviour. Even the mere discovery of a new food source or feeding ground is enough to spark a wave of communal sexual activity.

It seems that the number of reasons for a bonobo to have sex is surpassed only by the number of forms in which they do it. Indiscriminate of sex and age, the only combination strictly off limits in bonobo society is between a mother and her mature son. In addition to standard penetrative encounters, they frequently engage in manual genital massage and oral sex. These positionally creative

apes are also the only animal (other than us) to practice tongue-on-tongue kissing or face-to-face penetrative sex. The prominence of bonobos' sexual behaviour in social life has led researchers to brand bonobos as the "make-love-not-war apes".

MEDDLING MOTHERS

Bonobo mothers, however, seem to make a war out of seeing their sons successfully make love. They've frequently been observed to form coalitions with their sons to help them acquire and maintain high dominance rank, protect their sons' mating attempts from interference by other males and even interfere in the mating attempts of other, unrelated males.

The new research, published in Current Biology, shows that these strategies pay off. Males who had a mother present in their social group engaging in these behaviours were about three times more likely to produce offspring than males whose mothers were no longer part of the group.

Mothers of successful bonobo fa-

thers were present more than twice as frequently during conception than in chimpanzees, a species in which males are socially dominant, and in which maternal presence provided no benefit to sons. Thus, it appears that the dominance of females in bonobo social systems allows mothers to exert behavioural influence to boost the sexual fitness of their sons.

This elevated female social power doesn't just let bonobo mums get involved in their families' sex lives, but is likely responsible for a host of peaceful and progressive traits rarely seen in the mammal world. Females practice sex even when not ovulating, male-male competition is much reduced, and the species is remarkably tolerant to bonobos from outside of their social group. Perhaps us humans ought to take note of how positively society can change when females are in positions of influence. It's probably better if we keep our sex lives parent-free, though.

[the writer is Professor of Evolutionary Biology and Science Engagement, University of East Anglia]

Bihar sees high female turnout in Lok Sabha polls

PATNA, MAY 22 (PTI): Nearly 60 per cent female voters came out to exercise their franchise in Bihar in the Lok Sabha elections as against just about 55 per cent turnout for men.

As per the figures released by the Election Commission here, the overall turnout for female voters stood at 59.92 per cent as against 55.26 per cent for men.

The constituencies which registered the highest female turnouts were Katihar (72.37), Supaul (71.64), Kishanganj (70.37), Araria (69.39), Purnea (68.15), Begusarai (67.13), Samastipur (66.74), Vaishali (66.62) and Ujiarpur (65.12).

In contrast, the male turnout did not exceed 65 per cent in any of the 40 seats in the state and exceeded 60 per cent in only five Supaul, Araria, Kishanganj, Katihar and Purnea, it said.

Notably, among the constituencies with the highest female turnouts, only Supaul and Vaishali had a woman candidate as one of the main contestants. While sitting Congress MP Ranjeet Ranjan is in the fray from Supaul, in Vaishali the LJP has fielded Veena Devi.

In some constituencies, the difference between male and female



turnout was significantly high. In Sitamarhi 54.53 per cent men voted as against 64.36 per cent women. In Madhubani and Jhunjharpur, the male turnout stood at 48.14 per cent and 51.25 per cent respectively as against 59.97 per cent and 63.83 per cent for female voters in these constituencies.

Siwan, where the main contest is between Kavita Singh of JD(U) and Heena Shahab of RJD, both married to local bahubalis, the female voters appeared similarly enthusiastic as their turnout stood at 59.56 per cent as against only 50.17 per cent for men.

However, in adjoining Gopalganj (SC) and Maharajganj, which did not have any prominent fe-

male candidate, women's turnout was, similarly, about 10 per cent higher than that of men.

However, all the constituencies which went to polls in the last phase registered lower female turnouts.

Patna Sahib, which covers the entire Bihar capital, saw a measly 43.07 per cent female turnout as against 49.27 per cent men. The seat is witnessing a high-profile battle between actor-turned-politician and second term MP Shastrughan Sinha, who is the contesting on a Congress ticket, and Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad who has been fielded by the BJP.

In adjoining Patliputra, Lalu Prasads daughter Misa Bharti's presence

in the fray seems to have failed to enthrone female voters as their turnout stood at 52.40 per cent compared with 59.07 per cent for male.

In Sasaram (SC), which former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar seeks to wrest back from BJP's Chhedi Paswan, female turnout was 51.65 per cent as against 56.88 per cent for male.

Even in Nalanda, the home turf of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who has been working over the years to carve out a following among female voters, cutting across caste and religious lines, through measures like reservations in panchayats ban on alcohol and free uniforms and bicycles to school-going girls, only 47.44 per

cent women voted compared with 50.15 per cent men.

Female turnout was similarly lower than that of men in the remaining four seats Arrah, Jehanabad, Karakat and Buxar which went to polls on May 19.

The only other seat besides these eight where the female turnout remained lower than that of male was Gaya (SC).

Former chief minister and HAM president Jitan Ram Manjhi is engaged in, virtually, a straight contest with JD(U)'s Vijay Manjhi in the constituency which went to polls in the first phase on April 11 and where 55.55 per cent women came out to vote as against 56.74 per cent men.

Arunachal NPP urges Centre to apprehend Tirong Aboh's killers

ITANAGAR, MAY 22 (PTI): The Arunachal Pradesh unit of National People's Party (NPP) on Wednesday urged the state and the central governments to apprehend the insurgents behind the killing of MLA Tirong Aboh and 10 others.

Suspected NSCN militants on Tuesday gunned down Aboh, also an NPP assembly poll candidate, and 10 others, including his son and two security personnel, in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. The NPP, which

called an emergency state executive meeting, appealed to the investigating teams to trace "political leaders of the district, who are involved with the militant groups responsible for killing Aboh".

Aboh, 41, was seeking re-election from the Khonsa West constituency. "This is the first-ever incident in which an insurgent group ambushed and killed a contested candidate in the state," said Gicho Kabak, the party's state unit president. It also urged the

state government to provide adequate security to NPP candidates and party leaders.

Meanwhile, a massive combing operation was launched by security forces to trace the suspected NSCN militants, an official said on Wednesday.

The Army, the Assam Rifles and the state police have launched the operation to nab the perpetrators involved in the crime, Tirap Deputy Commissioner P N Thungon said.

Rs 8.45 lakh hawala money from Kuwait seized in Assam, 2 held

GUWAHATI, MAY 22 (PTI): An Islamic cleric and a businessman were arrested by the Assam police for their alleged involvement in a hawala transaction amounting to Rs 8.45 lakh, which was sent from Kuwait.

Nurul Islam, the principal of the Jamia Islamia Salafia Arabic college in Barpeta, was arrested after an amount of Rs 8.45 lakh in cash was recovered from him, Barpeta Superintendent of Police (SP) Robin Kumar said on Wednesday.

"During interrogation, Islam confessed that the money had come

through a hawala channel from Kuwait," Kumar told PTI over phone.

A Guwahati-based businessman, Arun Saraf, was also arrested by the police for allegedly facilitating the hawala transaction. Kumar also said a cash amount of nearly Rs 28 lakh was deposited by Islam in the bank account of the college in three separate transactions since December, 2018.

"The accused has not been able to tell us from where this money came and the nature of the expenditure," he added.

The SP did not rule out the possibility that

the money would have been spent on anti-social activities. "Our investigations are on," he said.

Meanwhile, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) joined the police probe and questioned both Islam and Saraf about the source of the money.

The hawala system works essentially through an underground network, where a handler in one country or place accepts cash from a customer and then a handler in another country or place hands out the equivalent amount (minus commission) to the receiver.

SC grants protection from arrest till May 28 to BJP candidate from Barrackpore LS seat

NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted protection from arrest till May 28 to Arjun Singh, a BJP candidate from Barrackpore constituency in West Bengal, in various criminal cases lodged against him by the state police.

The top court said that no coercive action will be taken against Singh, a four-time MLA, as it took note of widespread violence in the politically sensitive West Bengal during the Lok Sabha polls.

A vacation bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra and M R Shah made it clear that Singh will not be arrested by the state police till May 28 from today and granted him liberty to approach the appropriate forum for bail after the apex court's protection ceases to exist.

While granting protection to Singh, who has left the ruling Trinamool Congress party to contest Lok Sabha polls on BJP ticket, the bench took note of ongoing indefinite lawyers' strike in the state since April 25 which has paralysed the judicial work.

"No coercive action be taken against the petitioner (Arjun Singh) for a period commencing from today till May 28 with regard to all the cases registered against him," the bench said.

After having dictated the order, Justice Mishra remarked: "People who

indulge in arson and rioting do not belong to a party. They join the party in power to commit violence."

Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, appearing for Singh, alleged political vindictiveness on the part of the state government and said that 21 cases have been registered against him from April 4 to May 20.

He said that in five of the cases he has been granted bail but more cases have been registered against Singh after he joined BJP.

Counsel for the West Bengal government said that cases for rioting and arson were lodged against him.

The bench told the counsel for state government that it was inclined to grant protection from arrest to the petitioner (Singh) to enable him to be present for counting of votes tomorrow as he was a candidate for the Lok Sabha polls.

The bench, while asking as to why Singh wanted to go to West Bengal, in the forenoon observed: "Lot of violence is taking place there. You (Singh) know it very well".

Kumar said that he was a candidate from Barrackpore Lok Sabha seat and wanted to be present during counting of votes.

"If I go back without protection I will be arrested. Tomorrow I have to be present at counting," the senior advocate had said.

Journalist, social activists express concern over 'fake' NRC objections

GUWAHATI, MAY 22 (PTI): A group of people in Assam on Wednesday expressed concern over "false" objections raised by persons with "vested interests" to "harass genuine Indian citizens", whose names have appeared in the draft NRC. Complaints have been raised by persons and groups with "vested interests" against "genuine" citizens who have established lineage dating back to early 19th century, claimed journalist and convenor of rights body, Centre for Justice and Peace, Zamsheer Ali.

Objections have been filed against Ali's seven-year-old daughter and the "entire family, tracing its lineage to the same legacy data, has to be present at the NRC Seva Kendra to prove her citizenship", he said. The complainants do not even appear before the authorities during the time of hearing of their pleas, the journalist alleged. "It is a concerted effort to ensure that names of genuine Indian citizens are deleted from the final NRC, scheduled to be released on July 31," he said.

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) aims to separate "genuine" citizens from "illegal immigrants". The complete draft of the register, published in July, 2018, had excluded 40.07 lakh names out of the 3.29 crore applicants. A window ending December 31, 2018, was provided for those who wanted to file claims for re-inclusion.

Within this same period, people who suspected that foreigners have made their way to the list were also allowed to file their objections. The final list is slated to



be released by July 31. Objections have also been filed against the inclusion of the name of Hara Kumar Goswami, a social activist of Rampur village in Barpeta district.

"There is no history of migration in our village but objections have been filed against five persons, including me, mainly because we highlight the problems being faced by people struggling to establish their citizenship, and also those who have been declared as D-voters," Goswami said. Echoing similar sentiment, researcher and social activist, Syeda Mehjabeen Rahman, said, "Objections are filed randomly and in my case, it has been filed against me and my uncle."

She also alleged that authorities of the NRC Seva Kendras were "in league" with the complainants providing them with the Application Receipt Number (ARN) of the applicants. "It is mandatory for a complainant to mention the Application Receipt Number (ARN) of the person, against whom the objection is being filed."

"But the ARN is known only to the applicants and the authorities at the Seva Kendras," Rahman said.

Student leader and writer Ashraful Hus-

sain, whose five-year-old niece has been served with an objection notice, said, "The entire NRC exercise is being conducted under the supervision of the Supreme Court, but the guidelines of the apex court are being flouted at the ground level."

"We are not against the NRC but we want an inclusive list, in which the names of all genuine Indian citizens are included." The opposition Congress in the state had claimed in a memorandum, submitted to the District Registrar of Citizen's Registration in Korajhar, that "fictitious" persons were raising complaints and objections, based on which the authorities were issuing notices to "genuine" citizens.

A copy of the memorandum was sent to NRC State Coordinator Pra-teek Hajela.

Assuring the people of all possible help during the claims and objection verification process, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal had said early this week, "The entire NRC process is monitored and supervised by Supreme Court in a very transparent manner and the state government is extending full support to ensure that no genuine Indian citizen is left out of the final NRC."

Assam Rifles and Coast Guard sign Charter of Affiliation

SHILLONG, MAY 22 (PTI): The Assam Rifles and the Indian Coast Guard on Wednesday signed a 'Charter of Affiliation' to utilise each other's assets for operational training, sports and adventure.

Assam Rifles director general Lt Gen Sukhdeep Sangwan and Indian Coast Guard director general Rajendra Singh represented their respective forces at the signing ceremony at the AR headquarters here.

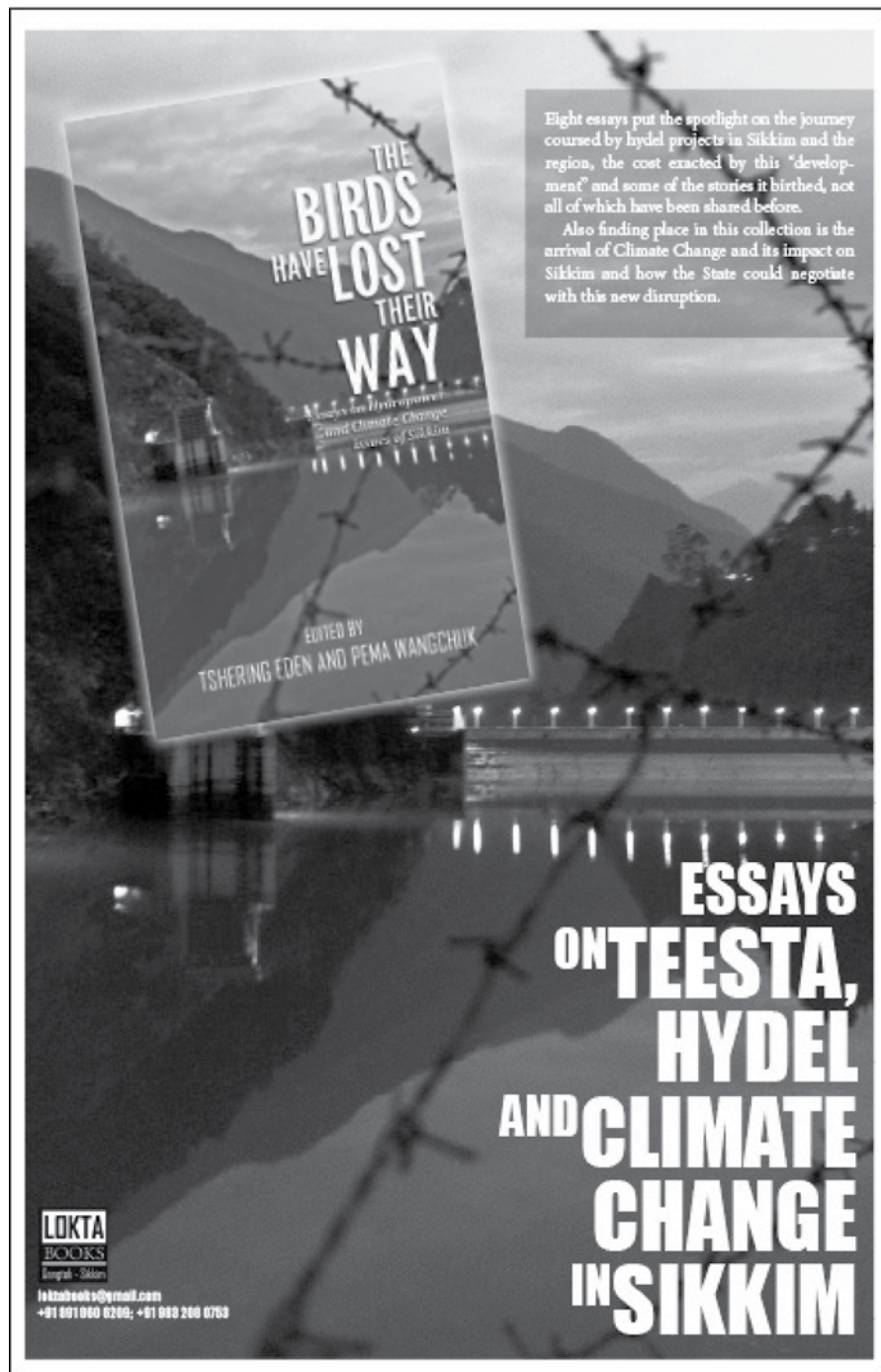
"Affiliation has been carried out between 3rd (Naga Hills) Battal-

ion of Assam Rifles and the Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Shaurya'," Sangwan said, after the historic signing, a first affiliation among paramilitary forces. He said the initiative will facilitate greater understanding of operational ethos, sharing of best practices from each other, building camaraderie and utilization of one another's assets for training, sports and adventure.

According to the Assam Rifles DG, "The Indian Coast Guard has immense technological advantage in using tech-

nology to guard frontiers along the sea while Assam Rifles has got specialization in jungle warfare, mountain warfare and conventional operations." He said the Assam Rifles is looking forward to get some exposures on technology and put it to use in the borders along the Indo-Myanmar border which the force is guarding.

"We will also get to see their perspective of national security and how do we see it. Since both are border guarding forces, the nation should benefit," he said.



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Seeking revival, West Indies ready to unleash power game at World Cup

AMANPREET SINGH
NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI): The advent of some fearsome power-hitters, led by a burly Andre Russell, has suddenly made the once intimidating but now struggling West Indies emerge as a serious threat to the World Cup's top contenders.

'Universe boss' Chris Gayle was not at his brutal best at the recent IPL but Russell's butchering of the bowlers has forced the teams to take note of what could await them at the biggest ICC tournament.

Proven performers such as Carlos Brathwaite and Darren Bravo are already there and add to that the rise of young Shimron Hetmyer, who boasts 100-plus strike-rate in both ODIs and T20s, and opener Shai Hope, the Caribbean side definitely looks potent enough to spring a surprise.

Since every team has to play all competitors, there is no escape.

The bickering between the West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) and the players has had a devastating impact on West Indies' progress as an international team in both Tests and ODIs in the last few years.



The result was that players such as Gayle, Kieron Pollard and Dwayne Bravo were not in thick of action when the side was locked in battles across the globe.

The side lost confidence, and most importantly, its identity as a force to reckon with.

But now that Gayle and Co. are there in their line-up, and Bravo and Pollard too named as reserves, this World Cup could revive West

Indies' fortunes.

The small grounds in England coupled with flat pitches during the English summer could serve as the ideal platform for the West Indies batsmen to unleash their power game.

It's time that the tall and strong West Indies batsmen, possessing enviable power, cash in on the opportunity and pull the trigger for their resurrection. The kind of talent they have does not

justify their low eighth rank in the ICC table.

Bangladesh are placed above them and only Sri Lanka and new-entrants Afghanistan are behind the superpower of the 1970s and 80s.

And it had all started here in England. The first three World Cups, starting 1975, were held here and the West Indies made all three finals, establishing themselves as undisputed

kings of cricket.

But for that to happen, the challenge for the Caribbean batsmen is to ensure that they fire in unison and pull off those performances on consistent basis. One or two innings won't do.

Much would depend on the kind of start they get from Gayle. The Jamaican has been smart of late, putting a price on his wicket. He will be crucial to the West Indies' plans. If he fails, Russell, Darren

Bravo and Hetmyer have to ensure that the middle-order makes up for it.

Nothing could be better if he clicks. The longer he stays at the crease, the better it is for them.

Jason Holder and Kemar Roach hold the key while challenging the best batsmen. Russell's medium pace will also be handy if there are overcast conditions. Left-arm pacer Sheldon Cottrell is yet to leave an impressionable mark in international cricket.

Yet, they would largely bank on their pacers since Ashley Nurse is the only experienced spinner in their ranks. Left-arm spinner Fabian Allen has played only seven matches, taking just one wicket so far.

While the lack of quality spinners is a handicap, in batting, they definitely have the arsenal, but will they fire in unison?

Well, only time will tell.

West Indies World Cup Squad: Jason Holder (c), Chris Gayle, Kemar Roach, Darren Bravo, Andre Russell, Shai Hope, Sheldon Cottrell, Evin Lewis, Shannon Gabriel, Carlos Brathwaite, Ashley Nurse, Shimron Hetmyer, Fabian Allen, Oshane Thomas, Nicholas Pooran.

Shiva, Panghal lead home domination at India Open Boxing



TAPAN MOHANTA

GUWAHATI, MAY 22

(PTI): It was a spectacular homecoming for World championship bronze medalist Shiva Thapa, while Asian Games gold medalist Amit Panghal also lived upto his billing reaching the semifinals in 52kg category at the second India Open boxing tournament here Wednesday.

Five other Indians also progressed to the semifinals at the Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Indoor Stadium.

Three years after he was crowned national champion at the same venue, a matured Thapa returned stronger as he clinically executed his plans to outwork his taller Mauritius opponent Hellene Damien 5-0 and set up a semifinal clash against D Krystian Szczepanski of Poland in the 60kg category.

"I was facing a taller opponent like him for the first time in my category," said Thapa, who will switch to 63kg after the tournament keeping in mind of the approved weight categories for Olympic qualification.

"He had a better reach so my strategy was to hit him from the close range and then quickly go out of his reach. It worked out perfectly."

All the buzz of the day was about the 13th bout of the day as hordes of school children, Shiva's family members including his father Padam Thapa waited anxiously for the local favourite to come inside the ring.

"I can't express in words the amazing feeling. The crowd was all at their toes and it was about living up to their expectation," said Thapa, who last month became the first Indian male boxer to claim four consecutive Asian medals with his bronze at the Asian Championship in Bangkok.

Ankit and Manish Kaushik also had 5-0 wins over their respective opponents making it a three-Indian lineup in the 60kg category.

In the 52kg category, Indians ruled the roost with Panghal, national champion P L Prasad, former world youth champion Sachin Siwach and reigning Commonwealth Games champion Gaurav Solanki making it

an all-Indian lineup.

Panghal, who claimed the 49kg gold after defeating reigning Olympic champion Hasanboy Dusmatov of Uzbekistan in the Asiad final in Jakarta last year, opted to play a waiting game against Thailand Chakapong Chanpirom in the first round.

Having moved up to Olympic category 52kg after winning gold at the Strandja meet in Bulgaria earlier this year, Panghal then stepped up his pace to win 5-0.

"It took sometime for me to assess him and get a grip of his style of play but I'm happy that it paid off," Panghal said.

"It's a tough category. Many new boxers will come in to meet the Olympic qualification standard. I have to watch both," Panghal, who had clinched a gold in his new weight category in the Asian championship beating Dusmatov again, added.

Panghal will take on reigning national champion Prasad in the semifinal, while the other half will see Siwach face-off against Bidhuri.

Fresh from a bronze at the GeeBee Boxing tournament Finland, Siwach did his homework well to exact revenge on world championship bronze medalist Rogen Ladon of Philippines.

The two-time former Olympian had defeated Siwach by a split-decision in the President's Cup quarterfinals in Astana last year.

Siwach rectified his mistake and waited to capitalise on the Filipino's mistakes to go for the kill as he won 4-1 via split decision.

"Last time I went for an allout attack that did not pay off. I watched videos of the bout and this time I could rectify my mistakes," Siwach said as he also got the support of his father and uncle who had come all the way from Haryana to support him. He will next face Solanki, who had it easy against Louis Fleurot of Mauritius to seal a 5-0 win.

"We never faced in a competition. But I've been his sparring partner in the camp. We all know each others strengths and weaknesses. I'm 100 per cent confident of an easy win," Siwach said.

Host of match-winners and Dhoni's expertise make India favourites: Mithali



NEW DELHI, MAY 22 (PTI):

A slew of match-winners coupled with Mahendra Singh Dhoni's expertise make India favourites to lift the upcoming ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, believes Mithali Raj, captain of national women's ODI team.

"The Indian team has a lot of match-winners now," Mithali said in a video posted on Twitter.

"Of course, the captain (Virat Kohli) leads from the front with the openers Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan, but we also have fast bowlers like Jasprit Bumrah and the spinners," she said.

"But overall I think, the team which posts a big total and the bowlers who are able to do the job to contain those runs, is the team which is going to win. But then we do have a lot of depth. We have the expertise of Dhoni in the side. So, I can't pick one player, but India definitely has a lot of match-winners."

In the video, Mithali can be seen sharing her views on the World Cup with Andrew Fleming, British Deputy High Commissioner posted in Hyderabad. "All the

teams, all the main players are in good form with the IPL just wrapping up recently. Everyone is now looking forward to the World Cup," she said.

Asked which team has a better chance to lift the trophy, Mithali said, "India is absolutely going in as favourites because they have been doing very well in the one-dayers and in other formats in the recent past."

Mithali, however, also picked hosts England as another team who can go on to clinch their maiden 50-over World Cup title.

"But I cannot rule out the home team (England). Even they have done very well. They had some 10 to 15 victory streaks in the one-dayers. They will also play on home conditions. Having said that, I think as an Indian I will root for India," she said.

India will gear up for the World Cup with warm-up matches against New Zealand and Bangladesh on May 25 and 28 respectively.

Virat Kohli and Co. will open their World Cup campaign against South Africa on June 5 at Southampton.

India bow out of Sudirman Cup after 0-5 loss to China

NANNING (CHINA), MAY 22 (PTI): India crashed out of the Sudirman Cup mixed team badminton championships after losing 0-5 to 10-time champions China in the second and final group match, here Wednesday.

After going down 2-3 to Malaysia in their opening Group 1D match, India needed an extraordinary effort to get across the mighty Chinese but the shuttlers yet again produced a below-par performance to go down in a lop-sided contest.

The gap between India's mixed doubles pair

of Pranaav Jerry Chopra and N Sikki Reddy and Chinese combination of Wang Yilyu and Huang Dongping was evident once again as they went down 5-21 11-21 against the world no 2 pair to trail 0-1.

Sameer Verma, whose straight-game loss to Lee Zii Jia proved to be vital against Malaysia on Tuesday, once again took the court after Kidambi Srikanth suffered an injury during practice sessions here.

"Won't be playing today due to an injury caused during practice.

Will be backing the team for today's all-important match," Srikanth had tweeted ahead of the clash. In Srikanth's absence, Sameer fought for an hour and 11 minutes in the men's singles tie before losing 17-21 20-22 against Olympic champion Chen Long as India slumped to 0-2 deficit.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, who recently made a comeback after recovering from a shoulder injury, and Chirag Shetty were then given the task of taming the world no 7 pair of Han Chengkai and Zhou

Haodong but the Indian men's doubles pair lost 21-18 15-21 17-21 to allow China take an unsailable 3-0 lead.

Saina Nehwal then went down 12-21 17-21 to All England Champion Chen Yufei in a 33-minute women's singles match, while World no 3 women's doubles pair of Chen Qingchen and Jia Yifan beat Ashwini Ponnapa and Sikki 21-12 21-15 as India sunk without a trace.

India had reached the quarterfinals in the 2011 and 2017 editions of the Sudirman Cup.

Sethu FC crowned IWL champions after Sabitra's brace

LUDHIANA, MAY 22 (PTI): Sethu FC turned around a first-half deficit to beat Manipur Police SC 3-1 and win the Indian Women's League trophy here Wednesday.

Radharani Devi had put Manipur Police in the lead towards the end of the first half, but an own goal by Umapati Devi put Sethu back in the game, before their Nepal international Sabitra Bhandari scored two goals to win it for the Madurai-based side. Sethu got off with more chances in the first half, as they kept the Manipur attackers in check and built on their swift counter-attacks to move the ball up the pitch quickly.

Their left winger Sandhiya looked lively in the opening exchanges, as she bombed down the left flank to give a lot of trouble to the Manipur defence.

The India international had the first clear chance a little after 10 minutes, when she received the ball just inside the box and pulled the trigger. However, she scuffed her instep shot and it lacked any sting. The winger had another good chance when she received the ball from a melee inside the Manipur box, but her shot rolled inches wide of the post.

Manipur's Bala Devi was tightly marked, and she often had to drop to the midfield or to the right wing,



in order to make some space for herself. Bala began to cut a rather frustrated figure, and was starting to resort to long-range efforts.

Manipur's goal came at just the right time, with a little over a minute of regulation time left for the first half, as Radharani leaped above the rest to nod in a corner from the left. Sethu came out with more vigour in the second half, and got the goal that they were looking for, when Dangmei Grace broke down the right and sent in a low cross as captain Indumathi Kathiresan pulled the trigger. However, it took a deflection off Manipur Police defender Umapati Devi, who was unfortunately awarded the own goal.

It took the Madurai-based side around another five minutes to take the lead for the first time in this game, as their mercurial Nepalese striker Sabitra Bhan-

dari was set through on goal. The Sethu number nine rounded off the keeper, before slotting it into the net from an angle. Sabitra, who was relatively quiet for most of the first half, came into her own after the goal that gave her confidence.

She scored her second of the evening, when Sandhiya broke swiftly down the left and played her in through the channel between the left back and the left centre-back. The Nepal international opened up her right foot and slotted it into the bottom corner to give Sethu the two-goal cushion.

From then on, it was a matter of seeing out the Manipur attacks, a responsibility that the likes of Sethu defenders Ashalata Devi and Sweetey Devi, and midfielders Sumithra, Ratanbala and Indumathi carried out perfectly.

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Indian-American judge orders Trump accounting firm to hand over records to Congress

WASHINGTON, MAY 22 (PTI): An Indian-American judge has rejected President Donald Trump's attempt to block House Democrats from getting his financial records, dealing an early setback to his administration in its legal battle with Congress.

Judge Amit Mehta of the DC District Court on Monday decisively ruled in favour of the House Oversight Committee, whose chair, Elijah Cummings had subpoenaed 10 years' worth of Trump's financial records from accounting firm Mazars USA back in April.

He told the accounting firm that it will need to turn over Trump's accounting records from before he was president to the Democratic-controlled House Oversight Committee, CNN reported.

In a 41-page opinion, Mehta of the DC District Court dealt a significant blow to the White House as he rejected Trump's attempt to block the committee's subpoena, asserting that Congress is well within its authority to investigate the president.

Mehta's ruling is narrow in that it only deals with the House Oversight Committee's Mazars subpoena. But it's a key development in the larger, ongoing subpoena battle between Trump and Congress, because it gives Democrats legal ammunition when they go to court to enforce other



outstanding subpoena requests. The Trump administration recently issued a blanket denial of all Democrats' subpoena requests, saying the information they seek is politically motivated. Democrats, on the other hand, say the administration's actions amount to an unprecedented attempt to block Congress from its constitutionally mandated oversight.

The House of Representatives has flagged the ruling to a judge in New York, where another court is considering challenges to House subpoenas to Deutsche Bank and Capitol One for more Trump records, CNN said.

Congress specifically can probe the president for conflicts of interest and ethical questions, Mehta wrote. He cited everything from the presidency of James Buchan-

an, to the Teapot Dome scandal, to Watergate and Whitewater to back up his ruling.

Mehta noted that in the past 50 years, Congress had twice investigated a sitting president for alleged criminal activity before starting impeachment proceedings: Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal, and Bill Clinton during the Whitewater scandal.

"History has shown that congressionally-exposed criminal conduct by the president or a high-ranking Executive Branch official can lead to legislation," Mehta wrote.

"It is simply not fathomable that a Constitution that grants Congress the power to remove a president for reasons including criminal behavior would deny Congress the power to investigate him for unlawful conduct

-- past or present -- even without formally opening an impeachment inquiry," he added.

Trump's legal team plans to appeal, a person familiar with the case said Monday.

Mehta's opinion, coming not even a week after a hearing in the case, will kickstart a race to appeals courts.

Mazars won't have to turn over the subpoena for another seven days, according to the judge, but other courts will have to step in to stop the accounting firm from complying with Congress after that.

The House Oversight Committee subpoena of Mazars seeks a vast amount of communications and financial records related to the firm's work for Trump himself, as well as his businesses and foundation from 2011 through

2018. Mazars became a target in the House investigation after former Trump personal attorney Michael Cohen accused the President of fudging his wealth in an unsuccessful attempt to buy the Buffalo Bills football team and reduce his real estate tax burden.

Cummings called the ruling a "resounding victory for the rule of law and our Constitutional system of checks and balances." Trump immediately called the ruling "crazy."

"We disagree with that ruling, it's crazy," Trump told reporters, noting that Mehta was appointed by President Barack Obama.

"This never happened to any other president," he added, saying that Democrats are trying to "get a redo" on the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election.

Chinese ambassador blames US for sinking trade deal

WASHINGTON, MAY 22 (AFP): China's ambassador to the United States said in a Tuesday interview with Fox News that Washington repeatedly "changed its mind overnight" and sunk deals that could have ended the two countries' trade war.

Ambassador Cui Tiankai also slammed as "politically motivated" the White House's move to ban the transfer or sale of US technology to Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

"We are very worried. Such actions will really undermine people's confidence in the normal function of the market," Tiankai told Fox.

Washington has long suspected deep links between Huawei and the Chinese military, and its moves against the company came amid the churning trade dispute.

After a six month ceasefire, the standoff erupted anew on May 10 when the United States increased punitive duties on 200 billion in Chinese imports after talks in Washington collapsed.

Beijing followed suit three days later, saying it would raise tariffs on USD 60 billion in US exports starting on June 1.

In the interview, Tiankai said the administration of President Donald Trump was to blame

for the failure to reach an agreement.

"If you review the process of trade talks between us over the last year or so, it's quite clear it is the US side that more than once changed its mind overnight and broke the tentative deal already reached," Tiankai said.

"China remains ready to continue our talks with our American colleagues to reach a conclusion. Our door is still open," he added.

US officials this week however issued a 90-day reprieve on the ban on dealing with Huawei, saying breathing space is needed to a avoid huge disruption.

Newly developed seed and seedling revealed at Asia Agri-Tech Expo 2019



TAIPEI, TAIWAN, MAY 22, 2019 /PRNEWSWIRE/: "Taiwan Seed Varieties" will return to the Asia Agri-Tech Expo & Forum 2019 and showcase the newly developed seeds and seedlings. With the theme 'innovative, eco-friendly and sustainable,' the displayed products feature heat-, disease-, moisture-, and drought-resistant and tolerant. The trade show is slated at Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, Hall 1 from 31st October to 2nd November.

"Taiwan Seed Varieties" showcases seeds and seedlings featuring heat-, disease-, moisture-, and drought-resistant and tolerant. (PRNewsfoto/UBM Asia Ltd., Taiwan Branch)

Supported by Agriculture and Food Agency, Council of Agriculture (COA) in the three consecutive editions, Asia Agri-Tech Expo 2019 aims to accelerate the seed business in the

Asia-Pacific region that provides sustainable solutions for environment, food crises and food safety.

The Asia and Pacific Seed Association (APSA), a leading seed industry non-profit organisation and World Vegetable Center (WVC), a non-governmental international agricultural research institute with high authoritativeness collectively cooperate with the trade show organiser and will deliver presentations on-site of the show.

The WVC will unveil its up-to-date achievement in "Taiwan Seed Varieties," while APSA will share the latest seed trends and Asia-Pacific market information. It is not only a meaningful milestone for the show, but also a beneficial connection to agricultural stakeholders, remarked Sabine Liu, General Manager of the show organiser.

The showcasing vegetable and fruit seeds at

Agri-Tech Expo 2019 include broccoli, cauliflower, cucumber, pumpkin, green bean, watermelon, tomato, melon, papaya, among others. Furthermore, flower seedlings will cover the categories of turf, herb, bedding plants and more.

Both online and offline matchmaking programme for seed business will be launched in the show. The Buyer Incentive Programme has been announced on the event website. Asia Agri-Tech Expo & Forum 2019 is expected to recruit more than 350 exhibitors and attract approximately 22,000 visitors. About Informa Markets

Asia Agri-Tech Expo & Forum is organised by Informa Markets, a division of Informa plc. Informa Markets creates platforms for industries and specialist markets to trade, innovate and grow. For more information, please visit www.informamarkets.com.

Trump nominates aerospace executive for Air Force secy

WASHINGTON, MAY 22 (AP): President Donald Trump has nominated an aerospace executive to be the next secretary of the Air Force.

Trump says in a tweet that he has chosen Barbara Barrett, former chairman of the Aerospace Corporation, to replace Heather Wilson who is stepping down at the end of this month after two years on the job.

Barrett, 68, served as ambassador to Finland in

2008 during the administration of then-President George W Bush. She also served as deputy administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration and was vice-chairman of the US Civil Aeronautics Board.

This is the second time she's been picked for the Air Force job. In 2003, Bush announced he would nominate her, but she was never confirmed. She's a trained civilian pilot and was certified for space travel.

Protesters clash with Indonesian police after election loss



JAKARTA, MAY 22 (AP): Supporters of an unsuccessful presidential candidate clashed with security forces and set fire to a police dormitory and vehicles in the Indonesian capital on Wednesday after the release of official election results. National Police spokesman Dedi Prasetyo said protests turned violent late Tuesday and continued through the night. He said Wednesday that dozens of people were detained.

KompasTV showed protesters throwing

rocks, a paramilitary police dormitory on fire, and hundreds of riot police in a central neighbourhood of the city.

Indonesia's Election Commission on Tuesday said President Joko Widodo had won a second term with 55.5 per cent of the vote in the April 17 election.

His opponent, former general Prabowo Subianto, has refused to accept the results and declared himself the winner. His campaign plans to challenge the election in the Constitutional Court.

Two Indian businessmen get 10-year visa in UAE



DUBAI, MAY 22 (PTI): Two Indian businessmen have become the first in the community here to be issued a 10-year-visa of the United Arab Emirates under the Gulf nation's long-term residency scheme to woo investors and talented students, according to a media report.

Vasu Shroff, chairman of the Regal Group of Companies and Khushi Khatwani, managing director of the Khushi Group of Companies and Al Nisr Cinema Film, received their visas stamped on their passports from the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) on Tuesday.

The 10-year visa scheme was rolled out in January and some Arab scientists and experts in the medical field were the first ones to receive it.

I got a call from the office (GDRFA), inviting me to visit him. I went there at 1pm and within five minutes they issued the 10-year visa for me, Shroff was quoted as say-

ing by the Gulf News.

It is really a very good initiative for the investors who bring up the economy. This will encourage more investors to make investments here," he said.

Shroff, a textile magnate and recipient of Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, India's highest award for non-resident Indians (NRIs), said people from around the world are waiting for The Expo 2020 and with such initiatives by the government, it will prove to be one of the best countries in the world.

He said more Indian businessmen were expected to get the 10-year-residency, considered as a first step towards obtaining permanent residency.

Khatwani, who is known for his entrepreneurship in the field of movies and jewellery, said the move gives a sense of belonging to the country.

You feel relaxed and it becomes hassle-free. This will offer more convenience and comfort to

investors, he said. Consul General of India in Dubai Vipul welcomed the move and congratulated the duo.

I am very happy about this. It is a great step from the government of UAE. People who had to renew visas every two or three years are getting a longer duration. That will make life easy for prominent Indian businessmen and investors here," he said.

The UAE on Tuesday launched a permanent residency scheme, the "Golden Card", to attract investors and "exceptional talents" such as doctors, engineers, scientists, students and artists. It offers unprecedented benefits to the card holders and their families while creating an attractive environment for business and growth.

The new initiative will attract greater foreign investment and stimulate the local economy, making it more efficient and attractive for investors. It will also increase the UAE's competitiveness and reaffirms the country's position as a global incubator.





DRAMA! The Victoria's Secret model, Winnie Harlow rocks a showstopping red gown at the screening of *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* during the Cannes Film Festival.

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Crimea seeks to woo Indian film-makers

MUMBAI, MAY 21 (PTI): To attract Indian film-makers, the Film Commission of the Republic of Crimea has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the India-based Russia Information Centre (RIC).

The RIC will promote the Crimean region, part of the Russian Federation since 2014, as a shooting destination for Indian film industries, it said.

"Our delegation will visit India in 2020 to discuss all the details of cooperation," said Konstantin Maloletnev, Managing Director, Film Commission of the Republic of Crimea, in a recent statement.

The cultural department of Sevastopol in Crimea and a delegation of Indian travel agents also signed an MoU to promote tourism in Russia,

the RIC said. The MoU too is aimed at exploring outdoor film shooting and tourism potential of the region.

Mumbai-based Russia Information Centre had organised the meeting between the government of Sevastopol and the Indian delegation last month.

Governor of Sevastopol Dmitri Ovsyannikov was present when the MoU was signed.

"As a part of Russia familiarisation tour, 108 delegates from India were taken to Moscow, Yekaterinburg and Crimea," said Paresh Navani, head of RIC.

"We will also be organising an official BRICS conference on tourism in Crimea in 2020," Navani said.

BRICS denotes a grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Holly Hunter boards 'Succession' season two

LOS ANGELES, MAY 22 (PTI): Oscar winner Holly Hunter is set to star in the second season of HBO satirical family drama "Succession". The show, which premiered on the network in June last year, follows the fictional Roy family, the dysfunctional owners of a global media empire who are fighting for control of the company amidst uncertainty about the health of the family's patriarch, Logan Roy.

Hunter, best known for starring in films such as "Broadcast News", "The Piano" and shows like "Top of the Lake", joins Brian Cox, Jeremy Strong, Hiam Abbass, Sarah Snook, Kieran Culkin, Alan Ruck, Nicholas Braun and Matthew Macfadyen in the cast.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the show is expected to come back for its sophomore run in August this year.

Created by Jesse Armstrong, "Succession" is executive produced by Adam McKay, Frank Rich, Kevin Messick, Will Ferrell, Jane Tranter, Mark Mylod, and Tony Roche.

Armstrong also serves as showrunner and executive producer.

Nikolaj Coster-Waldau wants Arya Stark spin-off show



LOS ANGELES, MAY 22 (PTI): "Game of Thrones" star Nikolaj Coster-Waldau says he wants Maisie Williams' Arya Stark to feature in her own spin-off of the hit HBO series.

The actor, who played Jaime Lannister in the epic fantasy drama, said he is rooting for the faceless warrior as she embarks on her journey to the west of Westeros in the season finale.

"That episode, it was amazing! I really thought it was a great ending. And Arya!" Coster-Waldau said in an Instagram video.

The 48-year-old actor also gave a nod to the in-the-works prequel, tentatively titled "The Long Night", and the viral online petition to HBO to redo the series with "competent writers". "I know they're doing all these pre-

quels, but what about the sequel? With Arya? How about - I'm just throwing something out here - how about a petition? An online petition to HBO that they do a sequel with Arya Stark," he added.

The Danish actor admitted he was "sad" to bid adieu to the long-running series, that premiered in 2011.

"What a great 10 years. Thank you so much for watching. I'm just grateful," he said.

It was curtains down for Coster-Waldau in the penultimate episode, when Jaime and his twin sister/lover Cersei (played by Lena Headey) died in each other's arms under the weight of the Red Keep as Daenerys Targaryen razed almost all of King's Landing to the ground.

'The Invisible Man' sets for March 2020 release

LOS ANGELES, MAY 22 (PTI): Universal Studios has announced that Elizabeth Moss and Storm Reid-starrer "The Invisible Man" reboot will be released on March 13, 2020.

The film, a Universal-Blumhouse production, is based on the classic 1897 sci-fi novel by HG Wells. The novel has been adapted for both the big screen and television over the years.

According to The Holly-

wood Reporter, Leigh Whannell wrote and is directing the film. He will co-produce alongside Blumhouse.

The project will start production in Sydney, Australia in July this year.

The most notable adaptation of Wells' novel was the 1933 black-and-white film, featuring Claude Rains in the title role.

Universal had earlier planned a shared universe

based around its classic monster characters and had roped in stars like Johnny Depp, Tom Cruise, Russell Crowe, Javier Bardem and Sofia Boutella for it. But the plan has been kept on hold after the failure of Cruise's "The Mummy" in 2017.

Depp, who was supposed to take on the title role, will not star in the new project, which is being developed as a separate entry.

Will never retire from films, says Anupam Kher

MUMBAI, MAY 21 (PTI): In a career spanning 35 years, Anupam Kher has seen several highs and lows but the actor says he will continue giving his all to films and retirement is nowhere in sight.

The 64-year-old actor said one has to be excited about work to be able to continue for long.

"You have to be excited about your work. The day you carry the burden of 'veteran', 'legend', 'thespian' (it wouldn't work). You're given these titles to signal it's time to retire. But I won't retire from work even in the next 50 years," the actor told reporters.

For Kher, the key to be a relevant artiste is to approach every film with a clean slate - without any baggage of past laurels.

"Everyday when I go to work, I tell myself I don't know anything about acting. That's the only way. If we take pride in our knowledge, we won't learn something new.

"So I always walk in thinking I don't know anything, it helps a lot. When you're ready to learn from everyone, it's great."

Kher was speaking at the trailer launch of his upcoming film, "One Day".

The actor said once he is done with his international commitment, he will resume



work on domestic projects "from next year". He currently stars in a New York-based medical drama "New Amsterdam" from NBC.

"In all these years, I have seen several ups and downs and for the first time I don't have any film. I'll be back from New York in a year's time and we will start life all over again."

Directed by Ashok Nanda and co-starring Esha Gupta, the film is scheduled to release on June 1.

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ARIES: With the moon and weighty Saturn aligned in your career zone, you're in your productive element. But before you hit the "Go!" button on any new missions, make sure you aren't leaving a ton of unfinished projects in the pipeline. Your professional street cred is on the line, Aries, and if you don't make good on your promises, you could lose the reputation you worked so hard to build.

TAURUS: Loving without limits again, Taurus? Uh-oh. It's a twisted truth: The more sacrifices you make, the less the others seem to appreciate your efforts. To preserve the delicate balance in relationships, hit the brakes on over-giving, over-functioning and over-anything! But check that resentment, Bull.

GEMINI: Brace for intensity! With today's Capricorn moon percolating in your obsessive eighth house, you might find yourself agonizing over an important relationship. But if you fixate on what COULD go wrong (but hasn't yet), you will give yourself major anxiety. Stop ruminating and set up a time to talk so you can find out how this person actually feels.

CANCER: You're in a results-oriented groove, Cancer, and ready to make this a seriously productive day. Next question: How do you get people on-board with your game plan? It will take more than a smile and a handshake to get those contracts signed. Put together a pitch deck or outline a detailed action plan with clear deliverables and "KPIs." If people aren't ready to step up, they may pull back, and that can be disappointing.

LEO: You're hustling to achieve an important benchmark, but relax, Leo! Instead of stressing over minutiae, call a summit to make sure everyone is aligned around long-term goals. If you're unhappy with someone's deliverables, today's moon-Saturn alignment can help you deliver feedback in a poised, professional manner. While you don't want to berate anyone, provide clear direction about how you'd like it done. Maybe it's time to put your step-by-step process into writing or conduct some hands-on training.

LIBRA: When conflicts flare up today, try not to autopilot into peacekeeper mode. True,

that's a Libra's default setting, but in your zeal to smooth things over, you could wind up suppressing an important conversation. With the moon and mature Saturn aligned, there's space to discuss touchy topics without drawing battle lines. Criticism from a managerial type may also put you in a mood.

VIRGO: You're pumped up and ready to share your discoveries with anyone who crosses your path today! But read the room before you unleash like a paid sponsor for your latest passion. People could feel overwhelmed, even pressured, if they sense that you're trying to sell them on something. You know that's not the case, Virgo, but if you don't want to alienate your audience, warm them up slowly.

SCORPIO: Keep your mind on your money as the moon aligns with conservative Saturn in your fiscally savvy second house. Whether professional or personal, have frank conversations about cash flow—especially if YOUR bank account is on the line. And even if it isn't, you don't want to be accused of overspending someone else's funds, right? Clarity saves the day. Hitting the town tonight?!

SAGITTARIUS: With the moon and weighty Saturn in your communication corner today, your words carry extra weight. If you have an important message to share with the world, cue up the posts, record a podcast or an IGTV video. An influential person may be inspired to DM you; maybe your ideas could go viral among a strategically hashtagged group. If people request your feedback, make sure your critiques are constructive!

CAPRICORN: With the moon hovering in Capricorn all day AND connecting to your ruler, focused Saturn, you're in your productive element. You've got a mission to accomplish, and you won't take kindly to any slackers in the bunch. Warning: If you start barking orders, your collaborators might resist—or even go rogue. If you want to retain their loyalty, invite them to weigh in on the process and outcome. That said, a "tortoise" on the team could seriously test your patience. Before you excommunicate them, consider this: Could their exacting attention to detail be redirected to a more nitpicky task?

AQUARIUS: Over the past couple years, the planets have supported you with stepping into your power—and you're really enjoying this new phase of leadership. But watch out! Today, an uppity overachiever could threaten your position. Before you start defending your throne, consider an alternative route. Could you lighten your workload by delegating a few (important) tasks? You don't have to be a control freak to stay in command. Support your "competitor's" growth and use them to your advantage!

PISCES: Your easygoing spirit clashes with your possessive side, igniting a major internal battle. You work hard to project a mellow image—kind of like a chilled-out guru who's got it totally handled. But be honest, Pisces: In private, have you been texting friends at all hours with messages like, "OMG, does this mean they totally hate me now?" If you're searching for answers about the future of an alliance, be upfront about your needs. If you discover that your missions don't align anymore, it will hurt for a minute, yes—but at least you'll finally have clarity about next steps.