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# Summit **TIMES**

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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**64.66 per cent cast vote in third phase of LS polls; one killed in Bengal**

**NEW DELHI, APR 23 (PTI):**

A high voter turnout was recorded in the third and largest phase of Lok Sabha elections Tuesday covering 116 constituencies amid complaints of EVM malfunctioning in many states and killing of a man outside a booth in West Bengal.

Election Commission officials in Delhi put the voting percentage at 64.66. Final figures are likely to change as queues of voters were seen at several centres even after the scheduled time for voting ended.

Polling was also held in Anantnag seat in Jammu and Kashmir which saw a turnout of 13.61 per cent. Elections for this seat are being conducted in three phases.

With Tuesday's polling, voting has been held in 302 Lok Sabha constituencies apart from Anantnag. In Gujarat, a turnout of 58.96 per cent was registered till 5 pm for the 26 seats.

Key political leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president Amit Shah, party veteran L K Advani, Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Congress leader Ahmed Patel cast their votes at different places in the state. Shah is contesting from Gandhinagar seat.

The polling percentage was 70.28 by 5 PM in Kerala from where Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, party MP Shashi Tharoor and Union minister K Alphonse are among those who are trying their luck.

In Karnataka, 60.42 per cent voters cast their votes in the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies with the Congress-JD(S) alliance and the BJP locked in a fierce contest.

An estimated 56.71 per cent of voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm Tuesday in the 10 Lok Sabha seats of Uttar Pradesh amid reports EVM snags at some booths.

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## SKM questions conduct of free and fair elections in Sikkim

**Casts doubt over hike in number of postal ballots this election**

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 APR:**

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha today expressed its dissatisfaction over the conduct of the 2019 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Sikkim. The party has also questioned the lack of action by the Election Commission over various complaints submitted by the party till now.

In a press conference held today, SKM spokesperson, Jacob Khaling said that various complaints regarding the conduct of elections and violations of the Model Code of Conduct have been submitted to the Election Commission but no action has been taken so far. This, he said, can be detrimental to the faith peo-



ple have in the institution and in democracy.

Amongst the various com-

plaints, he mentioned the alleged threats issued against SKM by the SDF president

and Chief Minister, Pawan Chamling in speeches, inconvenience to voters due to mal-

functioning of EVMS/VVPAT, allegation of supporters of former SDF Minister DT Lepcha being caught with weapons, allegation against former SDF Minister GM Gurung trying to influence postal ballots of IRB personnel in Delhi.

No action has been taken on any of these complaints so far, said Mr Khaling.

SKM social media general secretary, Navraj Gurung, said that the number of postal ballots issued this year is much higher than in previous elections and questioned the hike in numbers. He said that over 15,000 postal ballots have been issued this year and argued that only around 9000 postal ballots should have

been issued taking into account the employees engaged in the conduct of elections.

Mr Gurung sought an explanation from the Election Commission regarding this increase in the number of postal ballots.

Meanwhile, the party has also demanded that security be provided to the IRB jawan who had posted a video on social media accusing the SDF Minister, GM Gurung of trying to influence postal ballot voters. Mr Khaling alleged that SDF workers have been issuing threats to the IRB jawan on social media.

SKM also condemned the terrorist attack in Sri Lanka and condoled the demise of an IRB jawan in West Bengal.

## With garbage dump still simmering, Kpg struggles with waste

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**KALIMPOING, 23 APR:**

The garbage dump at Bhalukhop which serves the disposal Kalimpong's waste has been grappling with a fire since 12 April, a dangerous situation which has rendered it incapable of receiving more garbage. Although the fire has been brought largely under control, it continues to simmer.

Bhalukhop villagers inform that the fire was set by "antisocial" elements. In the latest instance, firefighters have been at the spot for three days trying to put off the fire completely, but the dumpyard continues to smolder.

What is more, this is not the first fire at the dumpyard. Villagers inform that this is the fourth such blaze there.

Meanwhile, the town is getting swamped with uncollected garbage. The last time that the municipality disposed garbage from town was ahead of the elections held on 19

April. At present, the garbage is dumped near the municipality office.

The problem also looms large at the hospital.

Superintendent, Kalimpong District Hospital, Dr Ankan Simlandi, stated that he has informed the Kalimpong municipality chairperson, Rabi Pradhan, about the increasing waste collecting at the hospital.

Mr Pradhan explains: "We got a call from dumping ground saying that there is a huge fire on the night of 12 April. We immediately sent our councilors with other villagers to the spot with two fire-brigade units and after seeing the ferocity of the fire we sent back up of more than 20-30 local water tankers. The fire was brought under control by 7 in the morning, but even though we are constantly trying we have not been able to extinguish the fire completely."

Garbage will be taken care of once the fire is completely put-off, he adds.

## HRDD advisory against agencies promising 100% scholarship at education fairs

**SUMMIT REPORT**

**GANGTOK, 23 APR:**

Human Resource Development Department has issued an advisory today warning students against believing claims of 100% scholarship in colleges being made by certain agencies conducting education fairs in the State. The

agencies are claiming that 100% scholarship will be provided through the Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare Department under various Government of India scholarship programmes.

"The scholarship rates disbursed by Social Justice, Empow-

erment and Welfare Department are varied and is based on the rates fixed by the Fee Fixation Committee of the respective States and therefore, may not cover the entire expenses. Neither HRDD nor Social Justice, Empow-

erment and Welfare Department endorses 100% scholarship," the advisory states.

HRDD has cautioned students and parents not to be misled by such claims. It has also asked the agencies conducting such fairs/scholarship tests in Sikkim and the participating colleges to refrain from making such statements.

## Javed Akhtar campaigns for Kanhaiya in Begusarai

**BEGUSARAI (BIHAR), APR 23 (PTI):**

Noted poet and Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar on Tuesday disapproved of Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu urging Muslims to unite and vote against the BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asserting that a mind occupied with ones religious identity can never make an informed political choice.

Addressing an election meeting here, Akhtar who did not mention the Punjab minister by name but dropped ample hints to suggest that he was speaking about the former test cricketer said I do not expect much from them (BJP) who believe in mixing politics with religion. But you cannot speak this language when you are swearing by secularism.

turn to pg02

## At least 45 children killed in Sri Lanka attacks: UN

**GENEVA, APR 23 (AFP):**

At least 45 children were among the more than 320 people killed in suicide bomb attacks in Sri Lanka, the United Nations said Tuesday.

"The total now is 45 children who died," UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac told reporters in Geneva.

He added that the toll from the Sunday attacks could rise as many other minors "are wounded and are now fighting for their lives in intensive care units across the country." UNICEF has confirmed that 27 children were killed

and another 10 injured in the attack at St Sebastian's Church in Negombo.

In the eastern city of Batticaloa, 13 children were killed, including an 18-month-old baby, UNICEF said.

Those 40 children who lost their lives in the two cities were Sri Lankan nationals, while UNICEF has confirmed that another five children of foreign nationality were also killed.

Boulierac was not immediately able to provide details on where the non-Sri Lankan children died.

Danish billionaire Anders Holch Povlsen, who was on vacation in Sri Lanka with his family at the weekend, lost three of his four children in the attack, a spokesman for his clothing retail group Bestseller has said.

Twenty children have also been admitted to hospital following the attack in Colombo, including four who were in intensive care.

Sri Lanka has named the local Islamist group, National Thowtheeth Jama'ath, as the chief suspect, for the violence that has sparked local and international outrage.

## One million species risk extinction due to humans: draft UN report

**Paris, Apr 23 (AFP):** Up to one million species face extinction due to human influence, according to a draft UN report obtained by AFP that painstakingly catalogues how humanity has undermined the natural resources upon which its very survival depends. The accelerating loss of clean air, drinkable water, CO2-absorbing forests, pollinating insects, protein-rich fish and storm-blocking mangroves -- to name but a few of the dwindling services rendered by Nature -- poses no less of a threat than climate change, says the report, set to be unveiled May 6.

Indeed, biodiversity loss and global warming are closely linked, according to the 44-page Summary for Policy Makers, which distills a 1,800-page UN assessment of scientific literature on the state of Nature.

Delegates from 130 nations meeting in Paris from April 29 will vet the executive summary line-by-line. Wording may change, but figures lifted from the underlying report cannot be altered. "We need to recognise that climate change and loss of Nature are equally important, not just for the environment, but as development and economic issues as well," Robert Watson, chair of the UN-mandated body that compiled the report, told AFP, without divulging its findings.

"The way we produce our food and energy is undermining the regulating services that we get from Nature," he said, adding that only "transformative change" can stem the damage.

Deforestation and agriculture, including livestock production, account for about a quarter of greenhouse gas

emissions, and have wreaked havoc on natural ecosystems as well. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report warns of "an imminent rapid acceleration in the global rate of species extinction." The pace of loss "is already tens to hundreds of times higher than it has been, on average, over the last 10 million years," it notes.

"Half-a-million to a million species are projected to be threatened with extinction, many within decades." Many experts think a so-called "mass extinction event" -- only the sixth in the last half-billion years -- is already under way.

The most recent saw the end of the Cretaceous period some 66 million years ago, when a 10-kilometre-wide asteroid strike wiped out most lifeforms. Scientists estimate

that Earth is today home to some eight million distinct species, a majority of them insects. A quarter of catalogued animal and plant species are already being crowded, eaten or poisoned out of existence.

The drop in sheer numbers is even more dramatic, with wild mammal biomass -- their collective weight -- down by 82 per cent. Humans and livestock account for more than 95 per cent of mammal biomass.

"If we're going to have a sustainable planet that provides services to communities around the world, we need to change this trajectory in the next ten years, just as we need to do that with climate," noted WWF chief scientist Rebecca Shaw, formerly a member of the UN scientific bodies for both climate and biodiversity.

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## DC West chairs coordination meeting with School Heads

**GYALSHING, 23 APR (IPR):** The co-ordination meeting of school heads from various schools under HRDD with District Collector West was held at the Conference Hall of the Zilla Panchayat Bhawan today. Shri. Karma R. Bonpo DC West chaired the meeting as the Chief Guest along with Mrs. T. Eden Bhutia, Addl. Director HRDD; Mrs. Karma Doma Bhutia, JD HRDD and Mr. P. L. Subba, Deputy Director HRDD.

The DC addressed the presentees firstly by briefing about the core motive of the meeting, through which he wanted to understand the current scenario of education status of the district as well as also to take good account of all the issues of various schools and education system of the district.

Further, while emphasising on improving the quality of education,



he informed about the various present schemes through which if utilised efficiently than it can play a vital role in state building process.

He also asked them for going innovative equally instructing them to go through different catago-

ries of books. Enquiring further he informed about the Smart Class setup in the different schools and its benefits and also about Attal Tinkering Labs at the schools.

Later, it was also informed that Gyalshing BAC and Diet have

planned to hold a 'Book Donation Event' on 27th April 2019 at Gyalshing Bazaar and for coordination purpose a Facebook page namely 'Book Donation Campaign 2019' shall be opened for future donation events with motive of good book

to be reached to the primary schools of extreme remote areas of the district.

Also present were Mr. Asap Dahal, AO; Mrs. Dichen Ongmu Bhutia, Coordinator Gyalshing BAC and Mr. Raju Bhandari, AD Gyalshing BAC, HRDD.

### Javed Akhtar...

Sidhu, who made the remarks earlier this month at a rally in Katihar, has been banned for 72 hours by the Election Commission of India as a punitive measure.

Akhtar, who was here to campaign in favour of CPI candidate Kanhaiya Kumar, said we must keep it in mind that wherever religion is mixed with politics, human rights and civil liberties become the first casualty. Look at any part of the world the Middle East, Europe or Latin America and you would find a similar trend.

Training his guns at the BJP, he said you profess to champion the cause of Hindus. Do you not realize that among the countrys homeless, unemployed and poor Hindus outnumber other communities. What do you have to offer to them except the promise of building a temple somewhere.

Scoffing at the party that has been in power for five years, Akhtar an avowed rationalist and atheist remarked the BJP is a peculiar outfit. All other political parties, be they the Leftist ones or those subscribing to any other ideology, have a frontal organization which may have its other wings. Here, the party itself is just a wing that of the RSS.

And what has been the RSS and its history. They, along with Mohd Ali Jinnahs Muslim League, were the biggest collaborators of the British when the struggle for Independence was underway. We need to understand their dislike for Nehru. The Muslim League, which was traitor like the RSS, got its reward with a separate country to rule in the form of Pakistan. These people got nothing, Akhtar remarked sarcastically.

You deride the countrys liberals with labels like tukde tukde gang and descendants of Macaulay. These epithets fit you best since you want to divide the country on sectarian lines and it is you who have been responsible for executing the British idea of two-nation theory, Akhtar who is married to actress Shabana Azmi daughter of renowned poet and a card-carrying Leftist Kaifi Azmi alleged.

Taking a dig at Giriraj Singh, who is the BJP candidate from here, he said this gentleman asks all those who are opposed to Modi to go to Pakistan. In 2014, when Modis popularity was at its peak, 31 per cent had voted for him which means even then 69 per cent of Indians were against him.

If Giriraj Singhs advice is taken seriously by such Indians, Pakistans population would rise manifold and people will not find enough space on its soil to stand.

He also said Kanhaiya, a former JNU students union president who is facing a sedition charge, is paying the price for standing up for truth and asked voters of Begusarai if you are thinking of not voting for the young man, vote for Giriraj instead of wasting your vote on Tanveer Hassan (RJD candidate).

Say Assalam Aleikum (the Islamic form of greeting) to Giriraj and tell him you are voting for him. That way he would at least be grateful to you. If you vote for Tanveer, he will win any way. But he would not give you any credit for that either, said Akhtar at the meeting where academican-turned-political activist Yogendra Yadav was among those present.

### 64.66 per cent...

Prominent leaders in the fray in this phase are four members of SP patron Mulayam Singh Yadav's clan including him besides senior party leader Azam Khan and actor and BJP candidate Jaya Prada. Mulayam's brother Shivpal Yadav and nephews Dharmendra Yadav and Akshay Yadav are also contesting.

There were complaints of EVM malfunctioning at some booths and were attended to, Chief Electoral Officer L Venkateshwar Lu said in Lucknow. The

Samajwadi Party lodged a complaint over the alleged malfunctioning of EVMs with the Election Commission, terming it criminal negligence. At a booth in Etah, the presiding officer was removed after people accused him of forcing them to cast their votes in favour of the SP.

SP leader Ahmed Nafis was taken into custody for some hours in Kasganj in Etah after authorities anticipated breach of peace. SP MP Dharmendra Yadav, who

## Sensitization prog on POCSO and JJ Acts held in Mangan



**MANGAN, 23 APR (IPR):**

A day-long district level sensitization programme for stakeholders on Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 and Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, 2015 was organized by the District Child Protection Unit (North) in association with Integrated Child Protection Scheme, Social Justice Empowerment & Welfare Department at the conference hall of North Zilla Panchayat Bhawan, today.

The programme took place in the presence of the District Magistrate, North, Raj Yadav, Superintendent of Police, North, Kunzang D Shangdarpa, Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Mingma Doma Bhutia, DCPO, North, Wendy M Lepcha, Principals, Vice Principals, Head of Schools, Teachers and local Dignitaries of the district.

DCPO/N, Ms Lepcha elucidating the POCSO Act, 2012 to the stake-

holders, stated that the head of the schools and their faculty has a vital responsibility on the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences as they can understand the children's nature in a better way. The teachers play a vital role in tackling child sexual abuse by observing and asking the children who are behaving in an unusual manner. Further, she urged to the stakeholders to extend their cooperation and join hands on combating child abuse.

Ms Lepcha termed child abuse as a societal disease. It is said that 95 percent of people who commits such crime against children are their close relatives who are trusted by the children. She informed any form of sexual abuse against children can be reported to the nearest Police station or they can also make a call on 1098 (Toll Free) which is available 24/7.

Victims can now use email to report sexual ha-

arrassment against them at [www.ncpcr.gov.in](http://www.ncpcr.gov.in) a website dedicated to prevent child sexual abuse.

Ms Lepcha briefed the responsibilities of the media to make sure that the identity of victim of child who has been sexually abused must not be revealed. Similarly, she also sensitized JJ Act, 2015 to the stakeholders.

Mr Shangdarpa (SP, North) informed to the house that recently two POCSO case has been registered in the district. Such cases are being reported at an alarming rate in the State, he added.

DM, Mr Yadav, appreciated their programme and urged the house to join hands to combat such societal evil. He also informed that the District Administrative Centre, North, will initiate the programme such as Field Friday, Best School Award, Revision of Basic Learning and District Evaluation of Schools from month of June.

## Dikchu Sr Sec School to install CCTV cameras

**WANGCHUK BHUTIA MANGAN, 23 APR:**

A meeting was held at Government Senior Secondary School, Dikchu in East Sikkim chaired by Principal, Dr Saroza Pradhan along with ward Panchayat, Chandra Lal Sharma and the School Management Committee for the smooth functioning of the academic. This was the first meeting held for this aca-

demetic session.

Issues related to the installation of CCTV cameras at the school premises were discussed and it was decided that the cameras will be installed by next month. The reshuffling of SMC members will be done in the next meeting which is scheduled to be held on 08 May.

The committee will be responsible for monitoring of quality edu-

cation, timely completion of approach road to school, fencing of the school compound, implementation of government orders and development of infrastructure in the school.

The Principal urged all the SMC members and parents for their whole hearted support in order to run the school smoothly and deliver quality education.

## World Earth Day celebrated at Mamring school



**SUMMIT REPORT GANGETOK, 23 APR:**

The NSS unit, SAATHI and Eco Club of Mamring Senior Secondary School, East Sikkim celebrated World Earth Day today by conducting a short programme in the morning assembly with placards, awareness speech and cleanliness drive in the school premises, a press release informs. In the afternoon, the school carried out a plantation drive of various medicinal plants in the school garden.

The programme

started with a welcome speech by Songmit Lepcha, NSS Volunteer from class XII and an awareness speech delivered by Janam Subba of class XII highlighting the importance of the day and responsibilities of every human being for safe keeping of environment.

A quiz competition was conducted by volunteer of class XII, Thendup Lepcha.

A motivational speech was delivered by PGT Pol Science, IP Khattiwara appreciating the stu-

dents for protection of environment. The programme ended with the vote of thanks delivered by Sanjay Pathak, a volunteer from class XII.

In the afternoon, plantation work was done by planting various medicinal plants in the school NSS garden. Today's programme was conducted under the guidance of Prahlad Sharma, Principal of the school and coordinated by GTA/NSS PO-cum-SAATHI Coordinator, Bikash Bhattarai and PGT/ Green Teacher, BS Bastola.

### One million species...

The direct causes of species loss, in order of importance, are shrinking habitat and land-use change, hunting for food or illicit trade in body parts, climate change, pollution, and alien species such as rats, mosquitoes and snakes that hitch rides on ships or planes, the report finds. "There are also two big indirect drivers of biodiversity loss and climate change -- the number of people in the world and their growing ability to consume," said Watson.

Once seen as primarily a future threat to animal and plant life, the disruptive impact of global warming has accelerated. Shifts in the distribution of species, for example, will likely double if average temperature go up a notch from 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) to 2 C. So far, the global thermometer has risen 1C compared with mid-19th century levels.

The 2015 Paris Agreement enjoins nations to cap the rise to "well below" 2C. But a landmark UN climate report in October said that would still be enough to boost the intensity and frequency of deadly heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms. Other findings in the report include:

Three-quarters of land surfaces, 40 per cent of the marine environment, and 50 per cent of inland waterways across the globe have been "severely altered".

Many of the areas where Nature's contribution to human wellbeing will be most severely compromised are home to indigenous peoples and the world's poorest communities that are also vulnerable to climate change.

More than two billion people rely on wood fuel for energy, four billion rely on natural medicines, and more than 75 percent of global food crops require animal pollination. Nearly half of land and marine ecosystems have been profoundly compromised by human interference in the last 50 years.

Subsidies to fisheries, industrial agriculture, livestock raising, forestry, mining and the production of biofuel or fossil fuel energy encourage waste, inefficiency and over-consumption.

The report cautioned against climate change solutions that may inadvertently harm Nature.

The use, for example, of biofuels combined with "carbon capture and storage" -- the sequestration of CO2 released when biofuels are burned -- is widely seen as key in the transition to green energy on a global scale. But the land needed to grow all those biofuel crops may wind up cutting into food production, the expansion of protected areas or reforestation efforts.

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in Odisha, 78.97 per cent in West Bengal, 71.47 per cent in Assam, 54.91 per cent in Bihar and 77.28 per cent in Tripura.

Voting was also held in 42 assembly constituencies in Odisha.

In the third phase of the general elections, polling is being held in six Lok Sabha seats in Odisha, four in Assam, five seats each in Bihar and West Bengal and a lone constituency in Tripura. Polling process was briefly hampered with reports of EVM

malfunctioning in some states, and the arrest of two polling agents of the ruling BJP in Tripura, an election official said.

Bombs were reportedly hurled outside a booth in Balurghat seat of West Bengal, leading to commotion, he said, adding, central forces also allegedly baton charged a mob in Suti area of Jangipur. Among the prominent candidates in the fray in Odisha are BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra and Odisha

Congress chief Niranjan Patnaik, while in Bihar, Loktantrik Janata Dal chief Sharad Yadav and state minister Dinesh Chandra Yadav are contesting the polls.

The electoral battle in West Bengal for the third phase features sitting MPs and TMC candidates - Arpita Ghosh from Balurghat and Mausam Benazir Noor from Maldaha Uttar - Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijit from Jangipur and BJP's Humayun Kabir.



# SummitTIMES

## Env. Studies

On Earth Day, begin by not littering

It was Earth Day on Monday and while the observation may or may not have triggered a renewed interest in protecting the environment, one thing is certain, as the crowds dispersed from wherever the functions were held, a litter (no styrofoam cups anymore in Sikkim, thankfully) of used wrappers and other such articles which go into putting up an official show was left behind. Given that these are caretaker government times, it is unlikely that too many events were held. Apart from that, Earth Day is also an essentially civil society driven event, hence even more likely that anything substantial was organized.

One would have grimaced through such ungainly ironies, had some deliberations been of consequence and if undertakings of the day had left some lasting impressions. We've been through too many Earth Day and World Environment Day observations to harbor any such hopes. But we pray to be proven wrong, because these are the times of shallow nationalism and frighteningly environmentally-disrespectful leaders which will require the agencies of the lay people to measure up stronger.

Meanwhile, such days are marked with students force-marched to rallies which mark the observation of such days leaving a trail of litter unique to school uniform pockets, and after the usual speeches, banners and awareness drives, the initiative will drive away too. It is also possible that the Day will receive plantation and cleanliness drives, but what use is tree plantation if no plan exists for post-plantation care? Cleanliness, in our Swachh Bharat should also be daily routine and not a special occasion photo-op.

Moving on, while some might argue that littering is perhaps the smallest of all environmental concerns, it is perhaps because this first step is not taken purposefully enough that we still need to remind people that the environment needs to be protected. Before a society can even start comprehending the demands of the environment, it has to express itself first as a genuinely concerned body. The amount of garbage that still makes it to the jhoras everyday and the distant nonchalance with which people walk home everyday past heaps of inconsiderately dumped household rubbish are all pointers to how ignorant the people are to the need for community participation in handling environmental concerns. Does anyone seriously expect a person who rolls down the car window and tosses out a bottle of coke or beer, to understand and feel for the cracks that have developed on the Zemu Glacier? Will a person who shops for plastic bags in Siliguri [the item being banned in Sikkim] so that the Sunday shopping is more convenient be more than passingly interested in the drying up of Sikkim's largest brackish water lake, Gyamtsona?

It is because this is where Sikkim stands at present that the proposal to convert the capital to a litter and spit free zone, no matter how trivial, superficial or impossible the task may sound, was welcome and still far from achieved. Since the people are not taking that first step on their own, they need to be forced to take it. Once people put that toffee wrapper back in their pockets to throw it into a segregated bin later, they will also be able to comprehend environmental concerns better.

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## Who are Sri Lanka's Christians?

MATHEW SCHMALZ  
*theconversation.com*

At least 200 people have been killed in several coordinated bomb attacks on churches and hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter.

Several Christian communities spread across the island nation were targeted in the attack: Suicide bombers detonated one set of bombs at churches in the cities of Colombo and Negombo on the western coast, home to many Sinhalese-speaking Catholics. Another was detonated in a Protestant church 200 miles away – in Batticaloa, a city in the Tamil majority eastern side of the island.

As a Catholic religious studies researcher and professor, I lived in Sri Lanka in the fall of 2013 and did research on Catholicism in both the southwest and northern parts of the country. Approximately, 7% of Sri Lanka's 21 million are Christian. The majority of them are Roman Catholic.

Sri Lanka's Christians have a long history that reflects the dynamics of colonialism as well as present-day ethnic and religious tensions.

### ENTRY OF CATHOLICISM

It was Portuguese colonialism that opened the door for Roman Catholicism into the island nation.

In 1505, the Portuguese came to Ceylon, as Sri Lanka was then called, in a trade agreement with King Vira Parakramabahu VII and later intervened in succession struggles in local kingdoms. Among those converted included Don Juan Dharmapala, the king of Kotte, a small kingdom near present-day Colombo on Sri Lanka's southwestern coast.

Later, when the Dutch and the Dutch East India Company displaced the Portuguese, Roman Catholicism was revived through the efforts of St. Joseph Vaz.

Vaz was a priest from Goa, Portugal's colony in India, and arrived in Sri Lanka in 1687. Popular folklore credits Vaz with a number of miracles, such as bringing rain during a drought and taming a rogue elephant. Pope Francis made Joseph Vaz a saint in 2015.

By 1948, when Sri Lanka gained independence from Great Britain, Catholics had established a dis-

tinct identity. For example, Catholics would display the papal flag along with Sri Lanka's national flag during independence day celebrations.

But tensions rose in 1960 when the Sri Lankan government compromised the Catholic Church's independence by taking over church schools.

In 1962, there was an attempted coup by Catholic and Protestant Sri Lankan army officers to overthrow the government of then prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, allegedly in response to increased Buddhist presence in the military.

### ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DIVIDES

The 25-year-long Sri Lankan Civil War, starting in 1983, divided the Catholic community.

The war was fought against the government by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, who sought a separate state for Sri Lanka's Tamil community in the northern and eastern parts of the island.

The rebels included Catholics in military positions. But, the Sri Lankan army also had Christian members holding leadership ranks.

Catholic bishops from Tamil and Sinhalese areas could not develop a coherent response to the conflict. They would not even agree on recommending a ceasefire during the Christmas season.

Recent years have seen the rise of militant forms of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Christians have been among its targets. For example, the ultra-nationalist Buddhist organization, the Bodu Bala Sena (also known as Buddhist Power Force) demanded that Pope Francis apologize for the "atrocities" committed by colonial powers.

While being Catholic and being Sri Lankan are not considered to be contradictions, Catholicism in Sri Lanka still struggles with its colonial past.

### PART OF GLOBAL CATHOLICISM

At the same time, Catholicism has a strong cultural presence in the country.

For example, in the North, there is a large pilgrimage site, Madhu, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, which Pope Francis visited in 2015.

There is also an internationally known healing

and prayer center, Kudagama, northwest of the Buddhist holy city of Kandy.

Sri Lankan Catholics have also become prominent in global Catholicism. The cardinal archbishop of the capital Colombo, Malcolm Ranjith, was mentioned as papabile, or candidate for pope, prior to the conclave that eventually elected Pope Francis.

### PROTESTANTS OF SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's Protestant community is quite small, constituting only 1% of Sri Lanka's population. Like Catholicism, it was through colonialism that Protestant Christianity gained a foothold on the island. With Dutch traders and governmental officers came Calvinism and Protestant missionaries who worked in Sri Lanka's coastal areas.

While Calvinist Protestantism declined under British colonial rule, there was a revival in the Tamil-speaking northern areas of the island. The American Ceylon Mission began in 1813 and established a number of medical dispensaries and schools. Jaffna College, opened in 1872, remains an important Protestant educational institution that still has ties to America.

The churches in Negombo, where I did research work and where one of the attacks took place, are beautiful Renaissance and Baroque-style structures that are centers of activity throughout the day. Not only are there daily masses, but Catholics often come to light candles and pray to the saints. During worship ceremonies, women wear veils as was the Catholic tradition in the West until the mid-20th century.

Shrines to the Virgin Mary are a common sight on Negombo's roads along with arches decorated with coconuts, which are the usual markers of a parish festival and procession. In honor of this Catholic culture, Negombo is popularly called "Little Rome."

But now this "Little Rome" – with its beautiful churches, beaches, and lagoon – will also be known as the site of a horrific act of anti-Christian violence.

[the writer is Associate Professor of Religion, College of the Holy Cross]



## Who are Sri Lanka's Muslims?

ANDREAS JOHANSSON  
*theconversation.com*

Nearly 300 people have now been confirmed killed in the Easter attacks in Sri Lanka. And several sources are now suggesting a domestic Muslim Islamist group may have been linked to the atrocity – although no group has yet claimed responsibility.

Sri Lanka's Muslim community is spread across the country, but they make up 9.7% of the island's population. Even though most Sri Lankan Muslims are Sunni, it is a diverse community, with some following the mystical form of Islam, Sufism. Linguistically, most have Tamil as their mother tongue, often leading them to be categorised as part of the island's Tamil minority, alongside Hindus and Christians. There are, however, Muslims who speak the majority Sinhala language.

The origins of Sri Lanka's Muslim community can be traced back to the historic trading routes between South and Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Traders from the Middle East (Arabs and Persians) developed commercial interests in southern India in the seventh century, which also spread to Sri Lanka. These Mid-

dle Eastern merchants married Tamil and Sinhalese women and settled in the east of the island around Batticaloa and Ampara.

The Portuguese, who started to control Sri Lanka in the 16th century, used the term "Moor" to describe the island's Muslims (as they did other Muslim communities they encountered throughout the world). As a consequence, a local "Moorish" identity was established. In the early 20th century, some Muslims promoted this as a unique "Ceylon Moor" racial identity (the island was called Ceylon during the colonial period). They presumed an Arab heritage, which distinguished them from the local Tamil community, which has its origins in southern India and northern Sri Lanka.

Muslim political leaders have continued to promote this "Moorish" identity, focusing on a collective Arab "blood connection" and pointing out that the island's Muslims are not bound to any specific language (even though most of them speak Tamil). This is different to Muslims in Tamil Nadu, India, who see themselves as Tamils who adhere to the Islamic faith.

### CIVIL WAR

In 1956, the so-called Sinhala Only

Act made Sinhalese the country's official language and was considered discriminatory by Tamil-speaking groups, who started to form militant groups.

Tensions boiled over in 1983, when Tamil attacks on the Sri Lankan army triggered Sinhalese mobs to attack Tamils during a period known as "Black July". As many as 3,000 Tamil civilians were killed, triggering a civil war that was fought between the Sri Lankan government and a number of Tamil groups, most notably the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and lasted until 2009.

Early in the conflict, some Tamil-speaking Muslims sided with the Tamil struggle. But that soon changed as Muslims also became a target for Tamil separatists. In one such attack in 1990, around 150 people were killed by the LTTE when it raided two mosques in the town of Kattankudy.

In the midst of the Tamil Tigers' rebellion, da'wa (missionary) Islamic movements came to Sri Lanka. With this, "new" ideas of political Islam and different rules for clothing were brought to the country. This also triggered clashes between different Muslim groups. In one 2006 incident, for example,

Islamic fundamentalists attacked a Sufi Mosque, highlighting two developments: the Muslim community was divided in Sri Lanka and Islamic fundamentalism was emerging.

Another conflict has also come into focus recently. Buddhist extremists and Sinhala nationalists have also clashed with Muslims on several occasions in recent years, leading to the death of several Muslims.

Indeed, given that Muslims in Sri Lanka have been targeted both by Tamils and Sinhalese, why would a radical Muslim group specifically target another minority group like the Christians? Most likely, this militant group (if it is indeed behind the attacks) is inspired by the global jihadi discourse that sees the West and Western institutions, including the Christian church, as the overarching global enemy. What the outcome for the country will be after these attacks we cannot know. But a new chapter of violence appears to have begun in Sri Lanka and old divisions may yet again escalate further.

[the writer is Director of Swedish South Asian Studies Network (SASNET), Lund University]

## As BJP, TMC dive deep, Congress bastion Malda sees battle for Muslim votes

**ANANYA SENGUPTA MALDA, APR 23 (PTI):** It is a three-cornered contest in Malda, one of the last Congress bastions in West Bengal, which goes to polls on Tuesday in the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections, and Muslim votes are likely to settle the fight for the seat.

Muslims form a major chunk of the electorate in both the Maldaha North and the Maldaha South seats, which have stayed with the Congress for almost 40 years, and there is a distinct buzz about the need for a change this time.

And that buzz has created a space, which the BJP and the TMC are vying for.

While the Congress has pitted Isha Khan Choudhury against sitting Congress MP and now TMC nominee Mausam Noor Ghani Khan's nephew and niece respectively from Maldaha North, the BJP has fielded former CPI(M) leader Khagen Murmu in the seat.

In Maldaha South,

sitting Congress MP Abu Hasem Khan, Ghani Khan's brother, is contesting against Moazzem Hossain of the TMC and Srerupa Mitra Choudhury of the BJP.

"How long can we vote for these people who are still using the name of their dead dada (brother), mama (maternal uncle) for votes," Bhaskar Ghosh (22) asked, referring to the family of Ghani Khan Choudhury, the late eight-time MP who won consecutively between 1980 and 2004, followed by his family members in both the constituencies separated by the delimitation in 2009.

For Ghosh, a student who works at a computer repair shop in Kalichak, the TMC might benefit from the "waning magic of Ghani Khan" in the Maldaha South Lok Sabha seat, where riots had broken out in January 2016 over purported derogatory remarks against Prophet Muhammad.

However, he agrees



with other locals that the riots opened the doors for the BJP to emerge as a key player in the area, leading to the saffron party's surprising win in the assembly seat of Baishnabnagar, which has a Muslim population of around 52 per cent.

"Dalubabu (Abu Hasem Khan, the sitting MP from Maldaha Dakshin) is a spent force here. He comes here only when there is election and forgets about us. All he does when he comes here is talk of Ghani Khan. We don't want to know what they have done for us in the past. We want to know what they can do now," Ghosh

added.

"No Hindu vote is going to Dalubabu this time. However, we are the minority here, so he could still win," Ranjan Haldar (29), who runs a business in the area, said.

BJP national secretary and Bengal in-charge Kailash Vijayvarghi, who was in Malda to campaign for Murmu, indicated that the party had made major inroads and was a serious threat to the Congress this time.

"There is now a fervour for the BJP. Our workers have worked tirelessly. The buzz around the party is more than it was in 2014. This politics of appeasement

(by ruling TMC in the state) had to end," Vijayvarghi told PTI

"The Congress had tried to isolate Muslims from Narendra Modi. But we truly believe in Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas. We are addressing the people's basic issues, be it Hindus or Muslims. It is a myth that Muslims are anti-Modi," he added.

Murmu, once a grassroots CPI(M) leader, said that he is confident of retaining his votes from 2014 when he ended second to Noor in Maldaha North.

However, as a BJP candidate this time, he is unlikely to bag the Muslim votes.

feel Mamata Banerjee is the answer to the city's communally tense atmosphere. The TMC will clinch the Malda North seat, with both the Muslims and Hindus voting in its favour, they opined.

"Most of the roads that you see here are because of her. She has ensured our children go to school and free uniform and books are provided to them. No one else has done such much for us," Abdul Qayum, a labourer in Gazole, said.

Both communities in the constituency praised Mamata Banerjee for her Kanyashree scheme and the pension scheme for the aged. The TMC-led government's scheme promoting education is also a big hit with both communities, most of whom survive on small businesses or work as labourers.

Most people here said they were hit hard by demonetisation and the GST, and are open to change.

Meanwhile, Congress' Isha Khan Choudhury, blamed the chief minis-

ter for creating space for the saffron party in the area.

"Mamata has played into the hands of the BJP. Her politics has created a vacuum in which the BJP sees hope. However, we are not worried. If there are free and fair elections, we will win," Choudhury said.

The Congress has virtually been given a walkover by the Left in both these seats, with CPI(M) voters openly pledging support to Congress candidates.

But for TMC's Noor, the fight in Malda is Didi vs Modi.

"The TMC has emerged as the only secular force which can fight the polarisation of the BJP," Noor, through whom the TMC is trying to woo Congress voters, said.

However, her tag as a "betrayer", by both her party and her family, is a sore issue with many TMC supporters.

As voting was underway Tuesday, the two seats in Malda could be anyone's game.

### Beuran Hendricks signs up with MI as replacement for injured Alzarri Joseph

**MUMBAI, APR 23 (PTI):** South African left-arm pace bowler Beuran Hendricks was Tuesday signed up by Mumbai Indians as a replacement for the injured Alzarri Joseph for the remainder of the Indian Premier League.

The West Indian was picked as a replacement for Adam Milne and went on to make a dramatic entry into the IPL with a record-breaking spell of six for 12.

Hendricks comes in



as a replacement, signing up with his second IPL franchise having represented Kings XI Punjab in the past.

The left-arm pacer has played two One-Day

Internationals (ODIs) and 10 T20Is for South Africa.

Mumbai Indians take on Chennai Super Kings in their next encounter at Chennai on April 26.

### More than 50 feared killed in landslide at Myanmar jade mine



**YANGON, APR 23 (AFP):** More than 50 people are feared killed after a landslide in northern Myanmar engulfed jade miners while they were sleeping, local police said Tuesday, the latest deadly accident in a notoriously dangerous industry.

Dozens die each year in landslides caused by jade mining, a notoriously corrupt and poorly regulated industry concentrated near the country's border with China.

Local police described a freak accident in Kachin state on Monday night so big it created a huge "mud lake" that buried the miners as well as some 40 vehicles.

"Fifty-four people are missing in the mud," a duty officer from Hpakan township police station told AFP, asking not to be named, adding that only two bodies had been recovered so far.

"There's no way they (the missing) could have survived."

The Ministry of Information confirmed the

accident and number of missing, adding that the area was mined by Myanmar Thura Gems and Shwe Nagar Koe Kaung companies.

Myanmar Thura Gems director Hla Soe Oo told AFP by phone he was en route to the site but did not have further details.

Local media shared images, unverified by AFP, that showed the walls of a mine stretching vertically a couple of hundred metres above a vast pool of mud, revealing only the tops of two yellow excavation vehicles.

Hundreds of onlookers gathered nearby, staring at the disaster site and taking photos with their phones.

Fatal landslides are common in the mines with victims often from impoverished ethnic communities looking for scraps left behind by big firms.

A major landslide in November 2015 left more than 100 dead.

The jade industry is

largely driven by an insatiable demand from neighbouring China.

Watchdog Global Witness estimated that it was worth some USD 31 billion in 2014, although very little reaches state coffers.

Northern Myanmar's abundant natural resources -- including jade, timber, gold and amber -- help finance both sides of a decades-long civil war between ethnic Kachin insurgents and the military. The fight to control the mines and the revenues they bring frequently traps local civilians in the middle.

A 17-year ceasefire broke down in 2011 and since then more than 100,000 people have been displaced by fighting.

On coming to power in 2016, civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi promised to make the peace process with the country's myriad armed groups her top priority -- a pledge that has yet to yield significant results.

### Central forces working for BJP: Mamata Banerjee

**ARAMBAGH (WB), APR 23 (PTI):** Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee Tuesday alleged that the central forces were working for the BJP by asking voters in Maldaha Dakshin and Balurghat constituencies, where polling is underway, to cast their votes for the saffron party.

Pointing out that the central forces do not have the right to ask voters to vote for BJP candidates, Banerjee said the Election Commission has been apprised of it.

"I have got information that the central forces are sitting inside

booths in Englishbazar in Maldaha Dakshin and asking voters to vote for the BJP. They do not have the right to do such thing. We have informed the Election Commission about our reservations regarding this," she said.

"Why are they (central forces) doing it? The police cannot enter a polling booth," she added.

She said that the central forces could come to a state during the elections but they should work with the assistance of the state force and then leave.

Criticising the BJP for



allegedly using the central forces, she said, "You cannot use the central forces. You did the same thing during the 2016 (assembly) elections in

West Bengal. I have not forgotten it."

West Bengal will teach the BJP an apt lesson, she claimed.

Central forces have

been deployed at over 92 per cent of the booths in the third phase of the polling in five Lok Sabha constituencies on Tuesday.

### Manmohan Singh casts his vote in Assam

**GUWAHATI, APR 23 (PTI):** Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday cast his vote at a polling booth here during the third phase of Lok Sabha elections in Assam.

He was here along with his wife Gursharan Kaur.

He arrived in Guwahati in a commercial flight on Tuesday afternoon and went to Dispur Government Higher Secondary School to exercise his franchise.

Though Singh posed for photographers, he did not speak.

He was accompanied by Congress' Gauhati constituency candidate Bobbeeta Sharma, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president and Rajya Sabha MP Ripun Bora, and the leader of the opposition in Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia.

From the booth, Singh went to the residence of former Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia to take rest and meet senior Congress leaders from the state, including former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi.

He is supposed to return to Delhi in the evening.

### Man hacked to death outside booth during polling in WB

**MURSHIDABAD (WB), APR 23 (PTI):** A 52-year-old man, claimed to be a Congress activist, was hacked to death outside a booth during polling in Murshidabad Lok Sabha constituency, a senior state police officer said.

Two other persons were also injured in the attack which, the Congress alleged, was perpetrated by workers of the ruling Trinamool Congress.

"One person was killed in poll violence in Murshidabad," ADG (Law and Order) Siddhathnath Gupta told PTI.

The victim, identified as Tiyarul Sheikh, went to vote at a booth in Baligram Primary School under Bhagwangola police station limits when a group of men attacked him with sharp weapons following an al-

tercation, police sources said.

When taken to hospital, he was declared brought dead.

"Two other persons were also injured in the attack.

They were admitted to hospital," the sources said.

The Election Commission sought a report from the Murshidabad district magistrate, a senior official said.

Congress candidate of Murshidabad Lok Sabha seat, Abu Hena, claimed, "Tiyarul was our party worker. TMC goons killed him when he went to cast his vote. The TMC men were indulged in malpractices inside the booth when Tiyarul reached there.

There was an altercation between them following which he was attacked."

### Hectic parleys among judges over sexual harassment allegations against CJI

**NEW DELHI, APR 23 (PTI):** Hit hard by the allegations of sexual harassment levelled against Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, hectic parleys are on among Supreme Court judges to bring the judiciary out of the crisis.

Reliable sources in the apex court said senior judges discussed the issue late last evening and Tuesday morning.

They also pointed to the fact that the first five courts had a delayed start of judicial proceedings.

Sources said views of three women judges have also been taken and some sections of employees of the apex court are also deliberating the issue.

An official of the apex court said however that much should not be read into the delayed proceedings as court number 4 was hearing the same matter relating to the CJI in a different combination and one of

the judges was originally part of the bench headed by him.

He was referring to the special bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra, R F Nariman and Deepak Gupta who were hearing the matter of sexual harassment as an advocate claimed a larger conspiracy to frame the CJI on allegations of sexual harassment.

The official said the bench sat according to its convenience as not only Justices Mishra and Nariman, number four and five in seniority, were sitting together but Justice Gupta had to return to the bench headed by the CJI.

However, when judicial proceedings in first five courts of the Supreme Court, which are presided over by five senior-most judges including the CJI, could not begin till 12.05 PM on Tuesday, it gave rise to speculations that the judges were deliberating upon emergent situations

in the wake of allegations against the CJI. Sources said that hectic parleys among the judges of the apex court had taken place on Monday evening after reports had started appearing that two prominent lawyers' bodies of the apex court were critical of the CJI's becoming the judge of his own cause.

It was on the advise of some senior judges, the CJI constituted a new bench which was made public late last evening for holding special hearing on Tuesday.

Further, sources said there was no official announcement about the outcome of the deliberations among the judges and what appeared in media were only based on speculations.

Around 11 AM the apex court's display board flashed the message that first five courts, presided by senior-most judges, would assemble at 11.30 AM.

This also did not happen and

finally the courts started judicial functions after 12.00.

Sources said that the CJI held deliberations with the senior judges over the developments that took place in last two days, particularly in view of two lawyers' associations of the Supreme Court questioning the unprecedented hearing of the apex court bench headed by the CJI that too on a Saturday.

As per the sources, today's deliberations involving senior most judges assumed significance as it has taken place after various bar bodies including the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) criticised the unprecedented hearing by a three-judge bench headed by the CJI on a Saturday following the sexual harassment allegations against the CJI himself.

# Defence the key to Arsenal's top-four bid

**LONDON, APR 23 (AFP):** Unai Emery is faced with a defensive dilemma that could make or break Arsenal's hopes of a top-four finish to their Premier League campaign. The Gunners travel to Wolves on Wednesday having missed a chance on tightening their grip on a top four finish ahead of at least two of Tottenham, Chelsea and Manchester United undermined by a 3-2 defeat at home to Crystal Palace on Sunday.

Arsenal were extremely poor defensively that day. Two goals were from badly-defended set-pieces while the other was the result of an extraordinary individual error by Shkodran Mustafi.

Gunners manager

Emery had opted to rest a number of players after a win at Napoli the previous week that had seen north London side Arsenal into the last four of the Europa League.

Now, after that plan backfired, the Spaniard must decide whether to keep the three-man back line that allows Mesut Ozil to flourish in an advanced midfield position behind Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Alexandre Lacazette, or play safe with a traditional back four.

Arsenal won 1-0 at Watford in their most recent away day outing with a back four and switched to one at half-time against Palace.

It would be no surprise, therefore, if Nacho Monreal came back on



the left of the defence and Ainsley Maitland-Niles, who came off the bench at the break on Sunday, was restored to the right. - **MUSTAFI MISTAKE** -

Emery's biggest headache though is to decide if the veteran Laurent Koscielny can carry on playing at a time

when Mustafi cannot be relied on.

Sunday was not the first time Mustafi's errors had been costly -- an attempt to shield the ball from Wilfried Zaha merely allowed the Palace forward a free run on goal -- yet no Gunner in any position has been

picked more in the Premier League this season than the Germany international.

Fortunately, Sokratis Papastathopoulos has served a two-game ban and is expected to go straight back in the team.

The inexperienced Konstantinos Mavro-

panos is another option and started against Watford and Palace but was substituted before the hour mark against the former and lasted just 45 minutes in last weekend's match with the Eagles.

"I have the confidence in our way and I want to be positive because this season we have been working and fighting to be in this key moment with the possibility to be in the top four, and we are," Emery said after the Palace loss.

"We are also in the semi-final of the Europa League and we can be proud of all the season.

"Today we can be frustrated, but tomorrow stand up and be ready for the game on Wednesday against Wolves knowing it is going to be very difficult but it is in our hands.

## Chelsea up to fourth after frustrating Burnley draw

**LONDON, APR 23 (AFP):** Chelsea accused Burnley of time-wasting and playing "anti-football" after Blues boss Maurizio Sarri was sent off before a touchline skirmish marred their frustrating 2-2 draw on Monday.

Sarri's side fell behind to Jeff Hendrick's fine finish before N'Golo Kante equalised moments later.

In a frantic opening 24 minutes at Stamford Bridge, Gonzalo Higuain put Chelsea ahead, only for Burnley's Ashley Barnes to punish more dismal defending from the Blues.

Without a win in their last two league games, Chelsea will take only slender comfort from climbing one point above fifth placed Arsenal into fourth place, level on points with third placed Tottenham.

Chelsea would have gone third with a victory, but instead they have now played a game more than top four rivals Tottenham, Arsenal and Manchester United, who are three points behind in sixth.

It was a missed opportunity after defeats for Tottenham, Arsenal and United at the weekend and Chelsea were booed off at full-time.

In a fitting coda to a damaging evening, Sarri was sent to the stands for protesting in the final seconds before several members of the Blues bench were involved in a tetchy touchline clash with their Burnley counterparts.

Sarri's assistant Gianfranco Zola said his boss was so "emotional" after the game that he couldn't fulfil his media duties.

"He was very upset because he has heard not good words towards him from the Burnley bench. The only reason he walked over there was to get our players to go into position, he was trying to help the ref," Zola said.

- **TOO MUCH TIME WASTING** -

Zola took a swipe at Burnley's perceived gamesmanship, which included Claret's keeper Tom Heaton being booked in the first half for time-wasting.

"We are unhappy. There was too much time wasting. Five minutes injury time wasn't enough to compensate. We couldn't build important rhythm," Zola moaned.

"We expected it to be a tough game. We didn't expect so much time wasting. We expected (referee) Kevin Friend to give more extra time. That's why we're very unhappy." Chelsea defender David Luiz went

even further in his criticism of Burnley.

"It's anti-football. Wasting time all the time, especially when you have the ball. Their players went to the floor and stopped the game," he said.

Now Arsenal can replace Chelsea in fourth if they avoid defeat at Wolves on Wednesday.

"We need to improve but we're in a good way. We care, as we showed today," Zola said.

Adding to Sarri's problems, he was hit by first half injuries to France midfielder Kante and England winger Callum Hudson-Odoi.

"It doesn't look very good unfortunately," Zola said of Hudson-Odoi. "It's a problem with his Achilles tendon." Brushing off the bench-clearing clash, Burnley boss Sean Dyche said: "By the time I turned round there was something going off in the tunnel.

"I don't know what you can call it now. Handbags? Manbags? Bum-bags?" Chelsea were stunned in the eighth minute when Hendrick's rocket put Burnley ahead.

It was a poor goal for Chelsea to concede as Cesar Azpilicueta could only head a Burnley corner to the edge of the area, where Hendrick was left unmarked to volley a superb dipping strike past Kepa Arrizabalaga.

- **SLOW TO REACT** -

Eden Hazard's majestic assist helped Chelsea draw level four minutes later, underlining why the club are so keen to keep their talisman out of Real Madrid's clutches.

Cutting in from the left, Hazard twisted and turned so rapidly that Burnley defender Matt Lowton fell flat on his backside as the Belgian picked out Kante for a powerful shot that flashed past Heaton from 10 yards out.

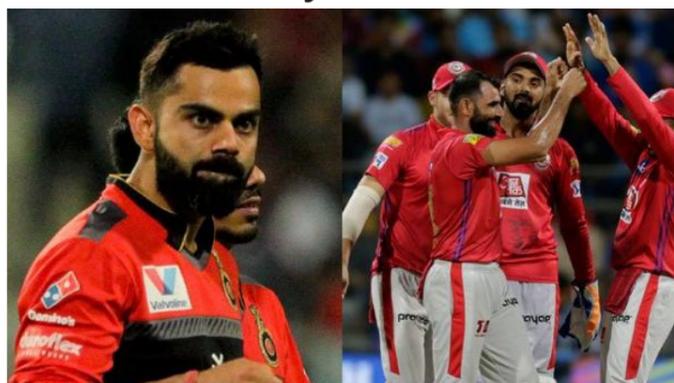
Pushing forward with pace and precision, Chelsea went in front two minutes later when Higuain turned smartly to pick out Azpilicueta.

The Chelsea defender executed a deft back-heel to Higuain, who continued his run and crashed a brilliant finish into the roof of the net from an acute angle.

But Burnley punished more poor defending to equalise in the 24th minute.

With Chelsea slow to react to a Burnley free-kick, Ben Mee's header was glanced on by Chris Wood and the unmarked Barnes apply the finishing touch with a close-range volley.

## RCB look to post third successive win when they clash with KXIP



**BD NARAYANKAR**

**BENGALURU, APR 23 (PTI):** Belatedly getting into the groove with back-to-back victories, Royal Challengers Bangalore would look to continue the momentum when they take on Kings XI Punjab in an IPL match here on Wednesday.

RCB must be all fired up after posting one-run win over a formidable Chennai Super Kings and would be desperate to keep the juggernaut rolling.

Having survived a brutal assault at the hands of Mahendra Singh Dhoni in the last game, they should have gained some confidence.

Come tomorrow, Virat Kohli-led RCB would not like to look back.

Although AB de Villiers and Kohli did not click with the bat but the failures would prompt them to score runs and put up a big total for the

Royal Challengers.

RCB might draw some inspiration from their match-winning knocks of an unbeaten 59 by de Villiers and 67 by Kohli, against Punjab when they met in the first leg.

However, their bowling remains a worry despite the arrival of Dale Steyn. RCB's bowling was exposed once again in the last match here when Dhoni almost pulled off the impossible chasing 162, needing 26 runs off the last over bowled by Umesh Yadav.

The visitors ultimately fell short by just one run with wicketkeeper-batsman Parthiv Patel saving the day for RCB by running out Shardul Thakur when CSK needed two of the last ball.

It was RCB's only third win in 10 games in the season so far.

Kohli and Co. will hope to post another win this season against KXIP,

who are placed fifth in the points table with 10 points.

Ravichandran Ashwin's outfit will be coming out all guns blazing, especially after losing their last match against Delhi Capitals by just two runs at Feroz Shah Kotla.

Punjab would want to consolidate their position in the points table with the help of hard-hitting West Indian Chris Gayle, K L Rahul and David Miller -- all of whom would be looking to capitalise on RCB's weak bowling.

The pace-spin duo of Mohammed Shami and Ashwin has been KXIP's best bowlers and the team would expect them to come up with another good show.

Among others, Ankit Rajpoot, Sam Curran, Hardus Viljoen and Andrew Tye will also be looking to provide depth to the Kings XI bowling.

## Selection thing was running in my mind, says Pant



**JAIPUR, APR 23 (PTI):** Ignored for the World Cup, Rishabh Pant said the "selection thought was running" in his mind.

Pant made a statement with a blistering 78 off 36 balls and powered Delhi Capitals to a six-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals in the Indian Premier League here.

"I am feeling lovely. To make your team win in an important match is a good feeling. I won't lie, the selection thought was running in my mind," Pant said at the post-match press conference.

The young keeper-batsman added, "I focussed on my process and it worked for me. The wicket was playing good, and I just took advantage of that, I guess. Most important thing for our team is that everyone knows our role, and the support staff tells us, 'this is your role, and this

is what is going to happen to you."

Pant, who was left out of India's squad at the expense of Dinesh Karthik, smashed six fours and four sixes during his stay in the middle.

DC skipper Shreyas Iyer was happy with the way the pitch played, and so was his counterpart Steve Smith.

"When we play away from home, the wickets are so good. We enjoy playing on the rise, and the wickets are perfectly made for them," Iyer said.

"It was important to get a good start in the Powerplay, and Shikhar (Dhawan) has been doing that well. The way we've been playing away games and coming back to our home games, we are unaware of how our pitch plays itself."

Smith said: "This was the best wicket we have played on all tournament. Shikhar played a

magnificent knock, and Rishabh is a powerful young man, and he plays the ball in strange spots. We probably didn't finish off with the bat as well as we could have. I thought (Chris) Morris and (Kagiso) Rabada executed well in the backend.

"It's a really good cricket wicket, and a really good game of cricket."

DC fought back after Rajasthan looked to cross 200 at one stage.

"We knew they were going to go all out, especially the way Ajinkya (Rahane) was batting. This is a big ground, and the pitch was a belter. The way they started, we were expecting 200, but the bowlers did well to restrict them to 190," Iyer said.

The win lifted Delhi to the top of the table with 11 victories and four defeats from 11 outings.

## Shiva assured of 4th straight medal; Sarita, Nikhat also enter Asian semis

**BANGKOK, APR 23 (PTI):** Shiva Thapa (60kg) secured himself an unprecedented fourth successive medal, while veteran L Sarita Devi (60kg) made the semifinals for the first time in nearly a decade to continue India's stupendous run at the Asian Boxing Championships here on Tuesday.

In all, eight Indian boxers -- four women and four men -- advanced to the medal rounds on day two of quarterfinals.

The 25-year-old Thapa defeated Thailand's Rujakran Juntrong in a one-sided lightweight (60kg) contest. He prevailed 5-0 and has a tough semifinal lined up against Kazakhstan's Zakir Safullin, a silver-medallist from the 2015 edition.

Thapa had won a gold in 2013, a bronze in 2015 and a silver in the 2017 edition of the marquee continental event. He is

the first Indian to achieve the incredible feat.

In the women's draw, former world champion Sarita, who last reached the Asian semis back in 2010 and ended with a gold, defeated Kazakhstan's Rimma Volosenko in a split decision to advance.

Former junior world champion Nikhat Zareen (51kg) too booked her maiden semifinal berth at the tournament, beating Kazakhstan's Nazym Kyzaibay in the quarters.

Last edition's silver-medallist Manisha (54kg) also secured herself at least a bronze by defeating Filipino Petecio Zzaa Nice, while former national champion Simranjit Kaur (64kg) edged past a gritty Ha Thi Linh of Vietnam to make the last four.

Joining Thapa in the men's semifinals were Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Satish Kumar (+91kg), Ashish Kumar (75kg) and Ashish (69kg).

Ashish Kumar got the better of Kyrgyzstan's Omerbek Uulu Behzhigit in a unanimous verdict, while his namesake trounced Vietnam's Tran Duc Tho 5-0, displaying an impeccable counter-attacking game.

In the evening session, Satish out-punched Korean Kim Dohyeon, an exhausting showdown that left the Indian with a cut above his right eye.

Thapa, who is also a former world championship bronze-medallist and a two-time national champion, opened the proceedings for India and got busy immediately.

The Indian had a spring in his step as he went about dismantling his clueless opponent.

The technically superior Thapa also seemed to have added some more power to his punches and an aggressive streak which his rival found tough to deal with.

Ashish, on the other hand, was locked in a messy contest with Bekzhigit but was clearly the more accurate of the two boxers, finding favour with all the five judges.

Sarita also endured a draining contest against Volosenko but the veteran from Manipur raised the bar when it mattered to move ahead. The performance in the championship is a turnaround of sorts for the 37-year-old, who ended without a medal at the world championships in Delhi last year.

However, Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist Naman Tanwar (91kg) bowed out after losing his quarterfinal bout to Jordan's Hussein Eishaish lashaish 0-5.

In the women's draw, it was curtains for Nupur (75kg) after she went down to North Korean Pak Un Sim in her quarterfinal bout.

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## Sterling calls for nine-point racism penalty

**LONDON, APR 23 (AFP):** Raheem Sterling has called for clubs whose fans racially abuse players to be hit with a nine-point penalty, saying current punishments meant the issue was "nowhere near being sorted" by football authorities.

The Manchester City forward has become increasingly outspoken on racism in football, having received abuse on the pitch while playing for both his club and on England duty.

Recently, he cupped his hands to his ears in response to derogatory

chants from Montenegro fans while playing for England last month.

Now Sterling has become one of the signatories to a manifesto published in Tuesday's edition of Britain's The Times newspaper calling for more black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in positions of power within football, more severe punishments for racist abuse and greater action by social media organisations, sponsors and traditional media.

"When I was a boy

growing up in London, going to school and playing football, I didn't know what racist abuse was because I never suffered any," Sterling wrote in The Times.

"So it seems crazy that, in 2019, I feel the need to write a piece in a newspaper calling for radical changes to the game that I love.

"But I do because the racism problem in football is so bad, runs so deep and is nowhere near being sorted."

He added: "You will all have read about the various high-profile racist in-

cidents in recent months: the abuse I received playing for Manchester City away to Chelsea; the booing that the black England players were subjected to in Montenegro; the nastiness that Moise Kean of Juventus endured in Italy and the endless insults thrown at players on social media.

"But that is sadly just the tip of the iceberg. Up and down the game, across the world, black and Asian players, fans and coaches are subjected to racism. Every day, from park football to the Champions League.

# China wins Belt and Road fans but criticism persists

**BEIJING, APR 23 (AFP):** President Xi Jinping will lead a hard sales push at a Beijing summit this week, to corral more countries into a global infrastructure project at the core of China's superpower ambitions and win over those who see a strategic threat.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) envisages massive investments in maritime, road and rail projects across 65 countries from Asia to Europe and Africa that collectively account for 30 per cent of global GDP.

If fully realised, it could shape the world economic and geopolitical landscape for decades to come.

But its scope and ambition have divided Europe, while US officials have called it a "vanity project", and detractors have warned that it is laden with debt risks and opaque deals favouring Chinese firms and labour.

Despite the criticism, momentum appears to be on Xi's side, with leaders from 37 countries flocking to Beijing for the three-day summit beginning Thursday.

It's the second such event, with an inaugural 2017 summit bringing 29 leaders together.

China added a key nation to its Belt and Road roster when Italy became the first G7 member to sign on to the project last month.

Prime Minister Gi-



useppe Conte will participate in the summit and Switzerland appears set to sign on with President Ueli Maurer flying to Beijing. Russian President Vladimir Putin and other leaders from Europe, Asia and Africa will also attend, but major EU nations are sending ministers and the United States said it would not have a high-level delegation.

Since Xi launched Belt and Road in 2013, China has invested USD 90 billion in projects while banks have provided between USD 200 billion and USD 300 billion in loans, according to Xiao Weiming, a Chinese government official overseeing Belt and Road.

Sri Lanka turned over a deep-sea port to China

for 99-years after it was unable to repay loans. Pakistan needs an international bailout. And Montenegro has had to make difficult choices after taking on crushing Chinese debt to pay a Chinese company to build a new highway.

It has also become an election issue in some countries.

Chinese officials say the projects foster development in poor countries and Xiao dismissed "debt trap" warnings as repeating "the same old tune".

Foreign Minister Wang Yi denied last week that the project was a "geopolitical tool", though he admitted that "jointly building the Belt and Road is a developing process, it won't

happen overnight, and there will inevitably be some troubles."

Italy rolled out a red carpet for Xi Jinping in Rome last month and signed a memorandum of understanding on the Belt and Road, with Beijing planning to invest in Italian ports.

The NATO member country's ascension drew consternation in Brussels and Washington, and even within the leadership of Rome's ruling coalition - Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini said Italy would be "no-one's colony".

For China, the initiative is both a practical solution to economic issues at home and a way to expand its global influence - a key concern for Xi, who frequently trum-

pets the goal of a "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation".

It "alleviates a lot of the built up excess industrial capacity that results from the Chinese economic model," said James Bowen of the Perth US-Asia Center.

"Chinese workers need jobs and China has materials that need to be exported and built out in other countries rather than in China." The World Bank estimates that Belt and Road funded infrastructure could marginally boost trade and officials there say it is offering funding in areas where it is sorely needed.

But the money comes as loans instead of aid, requiring countries to pay China back for the massive projects its com-

panies and people build.

Pushing back has proved a successful election issue in Asia, including in Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Malaysia, as the trademark infrastructure push is used to whip up fears about eroding sovereignty.

In the Maldives, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih claimed victory last year on the back of an anti-corruption campaign targeting the opaque deals with Beijing and "China's colonialism".

Opposition candidates in Sri Lanka and Malaysia similarly wielded the debt laden deals to victory.

The new Malaysian prime minister cancelled some and renegotiated a rail project cutting 30 per cent off the price tag.

## ISIS claims Lanka Easter blasts as toll rises to 321

**COLOMBO, APR 23 (PTI):** Sri Lanka's worst terror attack targeting churches and luxury hotels that killed 321 people on Easter Sunday was claimed by the Islamic State even as a senior minister informed Parliament Tuesday that initial probe suggested local Islamist extremists carried out the devastating blasts in retaliation for the shootings in New Zealand mosques. Forty suspects, including the driver of a van allegedly used by the suicide bombers, have been arrested so far in connection with the attacks that shocked Sri Lankans who observed a day of national mourning on Tuesday.

National flags were lowered to half mast and people bowed their heads as a three-minute silence began at 8:30 am local time, the time the first of the attacks occurred on Sunday.

In a statement issued through its propaganda 'Amaq' news agency, the ISIS claimed that "the executors of the attack that targeted citizens of coalition states and Christians in Sri Lanka two days ago were with the group," according to the Site Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist activities.

Sri Lanka has said little-known local Islamic extremist group called National Tawheed Jamaath (NTJ) was behind the attacks and it was investigating whether they had international support as the toll rose to 321 on Tuesday. Ten Indians were among 38 foreigners killed in the attacks.

Addressing an emergency session of Parliament Tuesday, State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene said the "preliminary investigations have revealed that what happened in Sri Lanka was in retaliation for the attack against Muslims in Christchurch".

Five Indians were among 50 people killed in the terror attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, which was carried out by 28-year-old Australia-born Brenton Tarrant during Friday prayers on March 15.

According to an intelligence memo sent to some government offi-

cial before the attack, a member of the NIJ had posted "extremist content" on social media after the Christchurch shootings were carried out by a right-wing extremist, Wijewardene said. All the suicide bombers were Sri Lankan citizens. Authorities have placed all police stations in Colombo on high alert as police were hunting for an unidentified container truck and a van believed to be carrying explosives.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe described the Easter attacks as "global terrorism reaching Sri Lanka".

In his address to Parliament, Wickremesinghe said that the attacks were of a different nature than the political objectives of the terrorist campaign which Sri Lanka faced until 2009 when the three-decade long conflict ended with the defeat of the LTTE.

"Muslim community is against these attacks. There are only a few who are involved in these attacks," he said, adding that the international community has expressed solidarity with Sri Lanka over the blasts.

The group which carried out the attacks was trained for the planned attacks, he said, adding that the government will deal with the situation.

Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa blamed the government for failing to ensure national security.

"When I handed over the government it was free of terrorism. No such attack would have happened under my government," he said.

Rajapaksa said the government must step down if public security cannot be guaranteed.

Meanwhile, police arrested 16 more suspects during the past 24 hours, taking the total number of arrested people to 40, police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said.

"26 of them are with the CID, three are being held by the Terrorism Investigation Division (TID). Nine of them have been already remanded and two are being held at a Colombo south police station," Gunasekera said.

## Kremlin says 'too early' to say if it can work with Ukraine's Zelensky

**MOSCOW, APR 22 (AFP):** The Kremlin on Monday said it was "too early" to say whether it could work with Volodymyr Zelensky, the comedian who was elected to the Ukraine presidency in a weekend vote. "It's too early to talk about President (Vladimir) Putin congratulating Mr Zelensky, or about the possibility of working together. It will only be possible to judge based on real actions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Peskov said Moscow "respects the choice of the Ukrainian people".

But he added that the fact that Ukrainian citizens living in Russia had been barred from participating in the vote "called into question the legitimacy of the election as a whole".

Ukraine and Russia have been at loggerheads since a 2014 Kiev uprising ousted a pro-Kremlin leader. Russia that year annexed Crimea and has backed separatists in a conflict in eastern Ukraine that has killed some 13,000 people.

Shortly after Zelensky's landslide victory on Sunday, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said the new leadership could be "a chance for improving cooperation with our country". However he said he was under "no illusions" about the president-elect.

## Death toll in Brazil buildings disaster hits 24



**RIO DE JANEIRO, APR 23 (AFP):** The death toll from the collapse of two buildings in Rio de Janeiro more than a week ago has reached 24, Brazilian officials said.

A woman injured in the April 12 disaster died in the medical facility where she was being treated, a spokeswoman for the Unimed-Rio Hospital said on Monday, a day after rescuers ended a search for survivors.

The latest toll is an increase

from 15 given by officials on April 16, when nine people were still listed as missing.

Several others were hurt when the adjacent apartment buildings in the hillside neighborhood of Muzema buckled, days after torrential rain wreaked havoc in the city. Police are searching for three people suspected of building or selling apartments in the structures. Many of the cheaply made apartment towers in Muzema

favela were erected without permission from city planning authorities. Like many poor neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro, Muzema is run by shadowy militias that use violence to enforce their rule.

They sell land rights and control access to city services such as water and electricity.

Authorities have pledged to demolish some of the surrounding buildings in Muzema to prevent further collapses.

## Turkish police arrest ruling party member, eight others after opposition chief attack

**ISTANBUL, APR 22 (AFP):** Turkish police on Monday arrested nine people, including a member of the ruling AKP party, after a mob attack on opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu that sparked widespread criticism.

Kilicdaroglu, 70, of the Republican People's Party (CHP) was assaulted on Sunday in a crowd as he attended a funeral

in Ankara for a soldier killed fighting Kurdish militants in the south-east. The attack came days after the opposition CHP won Ankara and Istanbul from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP in March 31 local elections, seen as a major setback for the ruling party after a decade-and-a-half in power.

A video of Sunday's attack showed the CHP

leader being mobbed and punched, then chanting crowds surrounded a house where he was taken for his protection. The images went viral on social media.

CHP leaders blamed Erdogan's AKP for provoking the attack and demanded those detained be held accountable. They called for the interior minister to resign over

the incident. "This is not an ordinary attack, this is not an ordinary provocation. This is planned," CHP Istanbul chief Canan Kaftancioglu told several thousand supporters at a rally in the city.

The crowds waved banners reading: "Are you so scared?" in reference to the AKP's loss of Istanbul and Ankara.

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

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

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**CUTE AND CAFFEINATED!** The actress, Lucy Hale steps out with an iced coffee in hand in L.A.

## Film, web series on multi-million dollar call centre scam in works

**MUMBAI, APR 23 (PTI):** Filmmaker Firoz Nadiadwala is working on a film and a web series based on the multi-million dollar call centre scam that rocked the city in 2016.

The principal work on Nadiadwala's latest production titled "Hot Shots Dare to Dream" is currently underway.

The producer is best known for making multi-starrer comedy films like "Hera Pheri" "Welcome" series and "Aarakshan" among others.

According to the press release issued by the makers, "Hot Shots" is based on the real-life scam in which US-based tax payers were targeted by tele-callers from over half a dozen call-centers in Mira Road, Mumbai, India. The racket defrauded thousands of US citizens and residents of approximately US 300 million dollars equivalent to INR 2,100 crores.

"After acquiring the rights



of this real-life scam story for a movie and web series, we have been developing the content for over two years now and are confident with the final script. We have decided to give it a dual format release, this is the first time a film as well as an extended version as a web series will be released on a major OTT platform.

"Hot Shots" is an edge of the seat human drama that

has all the elements of a thriller complete with emotions, wit, friendship, ambition, greed and power struggle," web series co-producers Arjun Kumar and Farid Sama said in a statement.

Details regarding the cast and crew will be announced soon.

Produced by Base Industries Group, it will be filmed in real locations in Mumbai, Dubai and New York.

## Satish Kaushik finalises 'Tere Naam' sequel script, says not discussed it with Salman yet

**MUMBAI, APR 23 (PTI):** Actor-filmmaker Satish Kaushik says he has locked the script for the much-anticipated sequel to his 2003 blockbuster "Tere Naam", which featured superstar Salman Khan in the lead.

The director said he is yet to decide the cast for the film.

"We have the script ready.

Though I can't reveal much about the film, I can say that it's a love story of a gangster. We haven't thought about the cast yet as we have just locked the script. We will get started with the film once work on my next production 'Kaagaz' is over," Kaushik told PTI. When asked if he has discussed the script with Salman, Kaushik denied approaching the 53-year-old star.

"Tere Naam", which gave Salman's career a much-needed push following a series of box-office debacles in early 2000s, is touted one of his most memorable performances.

His portrayal of college rowdy Radhe Mohan was well-received by the audiences and his look from the film became a rage with the fans.

The movie also featured Bhumika Chawala and Ravi Kishan.

## JRR Tolkien's family does 'not endorse' upcoming biopic



**LOS ANGELES, APR 23 (PTI):**

The JRR Tolkien family and the Tolkien estate on Tuesday said they do "not endorse" the biopic on the iconic author of "Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" series, set to be released next month.

Titled "Tolkien", Nicholas Hoult plays the eponymous character in the film, directed by Finnish helmer Dome Karukoski.

The family and estate in a statement, acquired by The Hollywood Reporter, said they wished to "make clear that they did not approve of, authorise or participate in the making" of the film, which recounts the years of toil and imagination that gave the novelist the inspiration for his storytelling in the early 20th

century. "They do not endorse it or its content in any way," the statement added.

A representative confirmed that the family is yet to watch the film and the statement was not regarding any particular scene or element of the story. They added that the estate had been approached about biopics in the past without ever giving its approval.

The biopic, which also features Lily Collins, Colm Meaney, Derek Jacobi, Mimi Keene and Pam Ferris, is due to land on May 10, more than 46 years after Tolkien's death.

"Tolkien" is also the first Fox Searchlight film to be distributed by Disney since its multi-billion dollar acquisition of 21st Century Fox.

## 'Chhapaak' completes Delhi schedule

**NEW DELHI, APR 23 (PTI):** The Delhi schedule of Meghna Gulzar's acid survivor drama, "Chhapaak", is complete.

The director shared the announcement on Twitter Monday.

"Happily halfway done! Delhi schedule wrap for team #Chhapaak," Meghna wrote.

She also posted a picture of the cast and crew from the sets and another one where the team posed near the iconic Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The film is based on the life of acid

attack survivor Laxmi Agrawal, played by Deepika Padukone and also stars Vikrant Massey.

The wrap came the same day a video from the sets, which features Deepika and Vikrant kissing, leaked online.

A source close to the film told PTI Monday that post the leaks, "Security has been tightened on the sets".

"Chhapaak", backed by Fox Star Studios, is scheduled to release on January 10, 2020. Deepika is also turning producer with the film.

## Jonas Brothers to release their first album in a decade in June

**LOS ANGELES, APR 23 (PTI):** The Jonas Brothers are set to release their fifth studio album, 'Happiness Begins', on June 7. The LP marks their first in ten years.

Nick, Joe and Kevin Jonas took to social media to reveal the title and release date for their new album.

"#HappinessBegins June 7th. After 7 years of not working together and finding ourselves we're back to give you our journeys in album form. Out of all the albums we've done I'm most proud of this one. Wish you could have it now, but you'll just have to wait a little bit longer," Kevin wrote on Twitter.

Joe also posted on his Twitter

page, "Can't wait for you guys to hear this album!"

Nick tweeted, "So excited to share



that our new album #HappinessBegins will be out June 7th!"

The trio have already released two singles -- "Sucker" and "Cool" -- from the album.

## Charlize Theron 'blessed' to work with Seth Rogen



**LONDON, APR 23 (PTI):** Hollywood star Charlize Theron says she feels blessed to get an opportunity to collaborate with Seth Rogen on their upcoming film "Long Shot". The 43-year-old star said she has always been a 'fan' of the 38-year-old actor and was delighted to work with him in the comedy.

"I've been a sincere, down to the core of my body, fan of Seth Rogen's. I have watched everything that he's touched and never in a million years did I think I would be in a movie with him, so I am hashtag blessed," Theron told Ok! magazine.

In the film, Rogen plays a journalist who is spending time with Theron, a presidential hopeful who also happens to be his former babysitter.

Theron said working in a comedy was a different experience for her. "I usually die or kill people in my movies, or get assaulted. This is not my wheelhouse," she said.

**ARIES:** Take time today to get your finances in order, Aries—even if you're not in a number-crunching mood. No one loves facing the monetary music, but ignoring those bills and impulse-shopping like there's no tomorrow could leave you in the red. No one's telling you to cancel that fancy trip to Tulum or to halt all spring shopping.

**TAURUS:** Looking to change things up? That big transformation might finally happen, Taurus—though it may not play out exactly as you imagined. Tectonic shifts could cause unexpected aftershocks as the Sun and unpredictable Uranus hold their annual summit, this year in YOUR sign and your first house of identity.

**GEMINI:** Draw the blinds and hang the Do Not Disturb sLook inward, Gemini. Today marks a rare and potent cosmic concord, but you'll need to be proactive to benefit from it. The ego-driven Sun meets up with radical Uranus in your twelfth house of the unconscious and healing. The stars will support you if you need to confront deep-seated issues or

unhealthy habits. You might want tap a coach, therapist or healer because these types of problems can be complex and difficult to unpack. Keep a journal on your nightstand: Psychic messages may come through in your sleep.

**CANCER:** You'll be the life of the party, Cancer, as the Sun dances its annual do-si-do with shock, jock Uranus in your eleventh house of group activity. Your charms are irresistible today, as you give everyone in your path a dose of your flattering attention. Whether you're chatting up your boss at work or bantering with a waiter at dinner, no one will be able to resist your allure.

**LEO:** Set your sights on that brass ring! This Saturday, the Sun enters Taurus and ignites your career zone until May 20. For the next four weeks, lean all the way into your loftiest goals. Flaunt your sign's natural leadership skills and rub elbows with industry leaders and VIPs. Since el Sol will gift you with added charisma, there's no need to downplay your ambitions.

**LIBRA:** On Saturday, the sizzling Sun slides into Taurus and your sultry eighth house,

cranking up the spring fever. Until May 20, your superpower is drawing sexy admirers like moths to a flame. But adding another notch to your Gucci belt isn't the end goal here since the eighth house is all about playing for keeps. Single Libras are far more interested forming an intense and lasting bond with someone special.

**VIRGO:** It's good to be cautious, Virgo, but are you playing it a bit TOO safe? As the life-giving Sun forms its annual alignment with irresistible Uranus, you'll be inspired to explore new frontiers. Your heart is open, and you're ready to dive into the unknown, whether that's a budding friendship, a foreign locale or a life-changing workshop.

**SCORPIO:** This Saturday, the Sun slides into your seventh house of committed partnerships, activating your urge to merge. But does your highly selective sign need to lower the bar just a little? Nobody will ever meet ALL your criteria. You could do yourself a disservice by dismissing someone over a few petty flaws. For the next four weeks, bring more balance to friendships, romance and business alliances.

**SAGITTARIUS:** Hang up your hedonist's hat, Archer. After a wild and carefree month of excess, the Sun glides into Taurus and your healthy sixth house from Saturday until May 20. Skip the extra Americano and opt for a matcha latte or fresh smoothie for clean, green energy. Fill your plate with fresh veggies and cut back on animal products, excess salt and sugar. Incorporate more self-care into your regimen: daily movement, massage, acupuncture or even a trip to the spa!

**CAPRICORN:** Lights, camera, action! This Saturday, the confident Sun blasts into Taurus and your passionate fifth house, setting the stage for romance and fame. But don't expect it to happen while you hide in the shadows, Cap. You're going to have to step out in a big way before May 20, wearing your heart on your sleeve and unabashedly expressing yourself. Work this cosmic charisma to your advantage and turn up the charm dial to maximum. You could find yourself in front of some serious power players during this phase,

and you'll want to be ready for anything!

**AQUARIUS:** Personal transformation is the name of the game today, as the Sun and your emancipated co-ruler Uranus align in your fourth house of home and family. They say, "There are no secrets that time does not reveal," so why not get a healing head start and divulge them yourself? If you've been longing to get closer to a relative or newish friend, carpe diem. Meet for dinner or schedule a long phone call tonight. Has a negative energy invaded your inner circle?!

**PISCES:** Incoming breakthroughs! Today, the Sun teams up with transformational Uranus in your third house of ideas and communication. In a surprising plot twist, a life-changing revelation could emerge out of "innocuous" small talk. Don't censor yourself if you know this realization could help others. Share your white-light moment with everyone from your office friends to your social media squad. This is why people consider you a role model and inspiration.