



**WAS NEVER TOO CONFIDENT
TO BE PART OF BHANSALI,
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SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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215 killed, around 500 injured as blasts hit churches, luxury hotels on Easter in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, APR 21 (PTI): A string of eight devastating blasts, including suicide attacks, struck churches and luxury hotels frequented by foreigners in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, killing 215 people and shattering a decade of peace in the island nation since the end of the brutal civil war with the LTTE.

The blasts - one of the deadliest attacks in the country's history - targeted St Anthony's Church in Colombo, St Sebastian's Church in the western coastal town of Negombo and Zion Church in the eastern town of Batticaloa around 8.45 a.m. (local time) as the Easter Sunday mass were in progress, police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said.

Explosions were reported from three five-star hotels - the Shangri-La, the Cinnamon Grand and the Kingsbury in Colombo.

Gunasekera confirmed 207 deaths. However, the News 1st channel said that 215 people have died in the blasts.

Director of the National Hospital Dr. Anil Jasinghe identified 11 of the 27 foreign nationals killed in the coordinated attacks believed to be carried out by a single group.

An Indian, two Chinese and one each from Poland, Denmark, Japan,



Pakistan, America, Morocco and Bangladesh are among the dead at the National Hospital.

Around 500 people, including Indians, were injured in the attacks. No group has claimed responsibility for Sunday's attacks.

However, most of the deadly attacks in the past in Sri Lanka

were carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which ran a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in 2009 after the Sri Lankan Army killed its supreme leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Briefing reporters, Gunasekera said the police was not able to confirm at the moment if they were all suicide attacks. He, however, said that one of the blasts at the Katuwapitiya (Negombo) church has signs of being what looked like a suicide attack.

An unnamed official said a sui-

cide bomber blew himself up at the restaurant of the Cinnamon Grand hotel.

Gunasekera said that 66 bodies were kept at the National Hospital while 260 injured were receiving treatment there and 104 bodies were placed at the Negombo Hospital and 100 injured were receiving

treatment at the Hospital.

Later in the day, a powerful blast in the capital's southern suburb near the Colombo Zoo killed two persons, Gunasekera said.

When a police team entered a house in the Colombo north suburb of Orugodawatta to conduct a search, a suicide bomber blew himself up causing a concrete floor of a two-storey building to crash on them, killing three policemen in the eighth blast, police said.

Soon after the eighth blast, the government imposed curfew with immediate effect. The curfew will be in force indefinitely until further notice, officials said.

State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene said seven persons had been arrested in connection with the blasts.

"We believe these were coordinated attacks, and one group was behind them," Wijewardene said.

President Maithripala Sirisena has appealed for calm.

"I have been shocked by this totally unexpected incidents. The security forces have been asked to take all action necessary," Sirisena said.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe termed the blasts as "cowardly

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Marathon Man announces Charity Run to support college student's treatment



**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 21 APR:**

Amar "Marathon Man" Subba announced another Charity Run today, this one from Singtam to Gangtok to raise funds for the ailing Bandana Limboo on 05 May [Sunday]. The run is being supported by the Press Club of Sikkim, Sikkim Limboo Youth Association and a group of students from Burtuk Degree College.

Bandana Limboo hails from Chisopani in South Sikkim and is a

student of Nar Bahadur Bhandari Degree College, Tadong. She is currently undergoing treatment for Leukemia [Blood Cancer] at AIIMS, New Delhi.

Amar Subba has raised funds for different social organisations and ailing persons through such charity runs in the past as well.

While announcing his charity run at a press conference here today, Mr Subba appealed to organisations and individuals to come forward and support the charity run through contributions to support the expensive treatment Ms Limboo is undergoing.

He informs that the entire fund raised in the run will be handed over to her family to assist the treatment.

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Fire consumes house in Tingzey

MANGAN, 21 APR: A wooden house belonging to Jash Hang Limboo at Tingzey ward, Mangshila, North Sikkim, was totally gutted in a fire on 20 April at around 3 pm. All the belongings in the

house were lost to the fire. Fortunately, there has been no loss of life or injuries. The fire is suspected to have been triggered by an electrical short circuit. [from WANGCHUK BHUTIA]

Easter Rally in Gangtok



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 21 APR:**

Churches from in and around Gangtok came together for an Easter Rally to carry the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the people on Sunday.

Members from around 30 churches participated in the rally carrying banners and placards with messages of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and singing hymns.

The rally, organised by the United Christian Welfare Society of Sikkim [UCWSS], started from Convoy Ground in Tadong and walked along the National Highway to Indira Bypass, Deorali, Hospital Dara, Sadar Thana and finally con-

cluded at the Bethlehem Fellowship Church.

The rally started with prayers led by the UCWSS president, Elder Patrus Gurung, and ended with a short message on Easter and prayers.

UCWSS joint secretary, Andrew Chhetri, who was also the coordinator of the rally, informed that the rally was an annual event of the UCWSS held every Easter Sunday.

He explained that the main objective of the rally was to bring members of different churches of Gangtok together to convey the message of Easter. UCWSS is an umbrella organisation of all churches of the State and has been working for the welfare of Christians of Sikkim.

4 to try for Jamshedpur FC reserve team

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 21 APR:**

Four under-21 year old footballers from Sikkim are leaving Monday for Jamshedpur to attend the selection trials for the reserve team of ISL club Jamshedpur FC. The trial is scheduled for 24 and 25 April and the trial slot for Sikkim players has been facilitated by Bikash Jaiu who plays for Jamshedpur FC.

The four players are Prashant Chhetri, 20, midfielder; Roman Subba, 19, left winger; Rabin Sharma, 18, midfielder and Boxer Pradhan, 20, midfielder.



"We are excited about the selection trial. Jamshedpur FC is a big ISL club and to get selected for its reserve team will be a big achievement for

us. We want to give our best. We are also fit and in form having played in Santosh Trophy recently for Sikkim," the four players said.

Bikash Jaiu informs

that Jamshedpur FC is putting together a u-21 reserve team and had enquired about footballing talent from Sikkim for the selection trial.

"I then contacted in-

terested players here. I am happy that four young players from Sikkim are going for the trial. I wish them the best for the selection trial. Getting selected for the reserve

team will provide them with huge exposure and present an opportunity to play in the I-League second division and major football tournaments like Durand Cup. Players from the reserve team will also get the opportunity to be considered for the main squad," he said.

Bikash is presently in Sikkim now that the ISL season has concluded. He hails from Gyalshing and will be joining Jamshedpur FC in August for pre-season football.

Another Sikkimese footballer, Robin Gurung, also plays for Jamshedpur FC.

Summit Times in Nepali

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Thank You!



Ladakh LS seat: BJP candidate facing defamation case, Cong nominee only crorepati

TARIQ SOFI

JAMMU, APR 21 (PTI):

Among the seven contestants from Ladakh parliamentary constituency of Jammu and Kashmir, BJP candidate Jamyang Tsering Namgyal is facing investigation in a four-year-old defamation case, while the Congress nominee Rigzin Spalbar, a hotelier by profession, is the only crorepati trying his luck from the seat.

The last date for withdrawal of nomination is April 22 in the constituency that is going to the polls in the last phase of the five-phased elections in the state on May 6.

Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency is the largest in India in terms of area. Out of six parliamentary constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh has the distinction of having the least number of polling stations, 559, for the lowest number of voters, 1,71,819. Leh and Kargil districts have 294 and 265 polling stations, respectively.

Besides candidates of the Congress and the BJP, five independents are also in the fray, who included a Congress reb-

el and former MLA Asgar Ali Karbalai and journalist turned politician Sajjad Hussain who is enjoying the backing of arch rivals National Conference and PDP, making the contest a multi-cornered one.

The 33-year-old Namgyal who is presently the chairman-cum-chief executive councillor (CEC) of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh, is facing an investigation into a case lodged against him in 2015.

The case related to conspiracy and defamation is still under investigation, according to the affidavit filed by Namgyal who took over as the CEC of the BJP-led LAHDC in November last year, immediately after the saffron party suffered a major poll debacle when it failed to open an account in the civic polls which was swept by Congress.

Veteran leader Thupstan Chhewang had won the Ladakh parliamentary seat for the saffron party for the first time in 2014 by a narrow margin of 36 votes by defeating Congress rebel candidate Ghulam Raza, but re-

signed from the primary membership of the party in November last year, claiming that all promises made by it sounded like an “empty rhetoric”.

An arts graduate from Jammu university, Namgyal does not own any vehicle and immovable assets. His movable assets are worth Rs 3,35,157, while his wife, a government employee, owns a car and had assets, both movable and immovable, worth over Rs 5.46 lakhs.

The BJP received a shot in the arm recently when almost entire PDP unit of Leh led by its president Tashi Gyalsen joined the party but also faced resentment among senior party leaders in the district for fielding Namgyal and ignoring the senior leaders.

The presence of 61-year-old Congress leader Spalbar, senior Buddhist leader who has served as CEC in the powerful LAHDC twice, pose a major challenge for the BJP to retain the seat though Karbalai's decision to contest the elections is being seen as a major setback to the party in Ladakh.

Spalbar the oldest

among the contestants - is also the richest having assets worth over Rs five crore, his affidavit revealed.

The Congress leader who is in hotel business shares three vehicles between him and his wife, a government employee, while his movable assets are worth over Rs 25.71 lakh, his wife Rs 13.55 lakh, three dependents over Rs 4.63 lakh together. A bachelor of Arts (honours) from a Delhi university, Spalbar's immovable assets stands at Rs 4.62 crore, while his wife has similar assets worth Rs 79.16 lakh.

However, Spalbar has a liability of Rs 60.07 lakh, his wife Rs 27.58 lakh and one of the three dependents Rs seven lakh.

The 54-year-old Karbalai, a matriculate, whose only source of income is pension for being the ex-MLA, has movable assets worth Rs 2,57,608 and his wife only one lakh. His immovable assets stand at Rs 23,72,000 including inherited assets worth Rs 17 lakh.

His jumping into the fray also highlighted the divide between Leh and

Kargil and within the Kargil which recently set an example when the local politicians, cutting across party affiliations, successfully launched an agitation to ensure equal share in the divisional status to Ladakh.

In a major decision in February, the governor administration created a separate division for Ladakh, which was part of the Kashmir division until then, with a full administrative and revenue division at par with Kashmir and Jammu divisions.

However, the administration had to reconsider its decision to post divisional commissioner and an inspector general of police (IG) headquarters in Leh after Kargil residents launched a mass agitation following which the administration announced that the newly created administrative division will have its headquarters jointly at Leh and Kargil.

The Kargil residents, failed to come out with a consensus candidate as both the influential religious organisations - Imam Khomeni Memorial Trust, Kargil and Isla-

mia School, Kargil - fielded separate candidates -- Karbalai and Hussain.

Hussain (37), a freelance journalist who has done masters in human rights and duties, is backed by National Conference and PDP and the presence of Karbalai is bound to divide votes in Kargil mostly between the two. Karbalai enjoys the backing of powerful Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust. According to the affidavit, Hussain has only movable assets worth Rs 59,000 and his wife Rs 50,000.

The 45-year-old Tsering Nagai, a travel agent by profession with Bachelor of Arts (honours) degree, owns a total assets worth Rs 15.93 lakh, while Mechanical engineering Kachoo Mohammad Feroz (54) has movable assets worth Rs 45,000 and immovable assets worth Rs 20 lakh. Feroz's wife, a government employee, has movable assets worth Rs 2.60 lakh.

The youngest among the contestants is 30-year-old advocate Asgar Ali who has a total assets worth Rs 30,000 and his wife Rs 20,000.

MHA distributes special kits to States, UTs special kits to help probe sexual assault cases

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21

(PTI): Over 3,100 special kits for collecting blood and semen samples, besides other evidence, to carry out immediate investigations into sexual assault cases have been distributed among States and Union Territories by the Ministry of Home Affairs, officials said Sunday.

The Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits (SAECK) or 'rape investigation kits' are designed to carry out immediate medico-legal investigation and aid in furnishing evidence in sexual assault and rape cases.

The MHA has procured 3,120 SAECK and distributed to the States and UTs, a senior MHA official said.

Each of these kits comprises essential items that will aid in furnishing evidence such as blood and semen samples in sexual assault and rape cases, thus helping the prosecution to gather evidence against the accused.

The kits are expected to help law enforcement agencies to ensure effective investigation in a timely manner for better prosecution and convictions in sexual assault cases, the official said.

The kit has a set of test tubes and bottles, which mention contents and specifications.

These kits also con-

tain instructions on collection of evidence from the crime scene. The SAECKs would be sent to the closest laboratory and within two months the results would be out.

Police and medical officers are being given training on how to use the kits in the event of any such case happening in their area of jurisdiction. "We have already trained 2,575 investigators, 1,648 prosecutors and 927 doctors from various States and UTs both for systematic collection of evidence and as master trainers," another official said.

The SAECKs or 'rape investigation kits' were procured with financial support under the central government's 'Nirbhaya Fund', which was named after the 2012 Delhi gang-rape victim.

States will procure additional SAECKs as per requirements gradually.

There are around 15,640 police stations in 29 states and seven union territories in the country.

Incidents of crime against women rose from 3,29,243 in 2015 to 3,38,954 in 2016.

In 2015, as many as 34,651 cases of rape were registered in the country. The figure increased to 38,947 in 2016, according to the data of the National Crime Records Bureau.

Documentary puts spotlight on ruins of Raj Darbhanga's famed palace in Bihar

PATNA, APR 21 (PTI):

An opulent 19th-century palace in Bihar's Mithila region which suffered extensive damage in the devastating 1934 earthquake is the subject of a new documentary that shines a spotlight on this heritage in ruins.

Thick vegetation has taken over the walls of the Naulakha Palace, sullyng remnants of its architectural grandeur while its famed gardens vanished long time ago.

For Gurgaon-based couple, Manish Jha and Gargi, both of whom hail from Bihar, a common passion for travel and photography, ultimately fuelled a shared love for heritage. And a travelogue of their journey into Bihar's culturally-rich Mithila region translated into a documentary on the ruins of the once-regal palace and the temples in its premises in Rajnagar. "The town, located in a corner of north Bihar's Madhubani district, otherwise famous for its eponymous painting style, does not get tourists, despite the wealth of architectural splendour -- be it the palace ruins, the temples in the premises and other old buildings in its vicinity, like the Vishweshwar Singh Janta College, housed in an iconic heritage building," Gargi told PTI.

Gargi, a software professional, and Manish, an Air Traffic Control Officer, both in early 30s, decided to make the film after doing extensive travel in 18 districts of Bihar over a period of two years.

"During our travel, we saw the ruins of Rajnagar, and realised, we needed to promote it as a heritage tourism spot. Bihar has so much to offer but, information is either not disseminated or done very inade-

quately. Hence, sites like these remain neglected," said Manish.

The documentary -- Rajnagar: The City of Ruins -- opens with a drone shot of the ruins of Naulakha Palace built in later part of 19th century in Rajnagar by Raj Darbhaga, the erstwhile zamindari estate of north Bihar.

Gargi, who hails from Ara but grew up in Madhubani, said, the film also has some archival images of the palace, including a pre-1934 monochrome image which captures its grandeur.

The Bihar-Nepal Quake measuring 8.3 on the Richter scale had struck on the fateful day of January 15, 1934, with its epicentre at some 10 km south of Mt Everest. The shock wave had flattened countless houses and destroyed priceless architectural heritage in both the countries.

"The quake of 1934 inflicted massive damage to the heritage of Mithila region, among other places. Even its ruins now are extraordinary and ornate carvings on walls and pillars, and painting in different temples are worth seeing. But, the place still lies in shambles," she said.

Manish, who hails from Madhubani, said, the "place could be turned into a tourist magnet and promote Bihar as a heritage tourism destination". A screening of the over 20-minute film in English, was held on April 18 at the Patna Museum on the occasion of the World Heritage Day.

"Senior officials from ASI, the museum, among others attended the screening which was followed by a discussion on preservation of heritage in Bihar. We are planning to hold a screening in Delhi too," he said.

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

APR 21 (PTI):

Curtains came down Sunday on the over a month-long campaign for the April 23 Lok Sabha elections in Kerala where Congress president Rahul Gandhi is seeking election from Wayanad constituency.

On the last day of campaign, the ruling CPI(M)-led LDF, opposition Congress-led UDF and BJP-led NDA took out rallies across the state to woo the voters.

The most exciting campaign in the recent history of Kerala ended at 6 PM marred by a spate of incidents of violence involving members of all the three major fronts being reported from different parts of the state Sunday.

Polling would be held to all 20 Lok Sabha seats in the state on April 23 from 7 am to 5 pm.

Besides Gandhi, union minister Alphonse Kannanthanam (Ernakulam), Sashi Tharoor (Congress) and BJP leader Kumanam Rajasekharan (both Thiruvananthapuram) and Suresh Gopi (Thiruvananthapuram) are among the prominent candidates.

Gandhi's entry into the poll fray from the hilly Wayanad constituency changed the complexion of polls and galvanised the UDF cadres.

The LDF has slammed the decision of Gandhi to contest from Kerala, saying it could only be seen as a move to fight the Left parties and not the BJP.

The BJP claimed he was afraid of losing his traditional seat of Amethi in Uttar Pradesh and hence sought a "safe" seat in the UDF stronghold.

On Sunday, the roadshow of senior Congress leader A K Antony here was allegedly blocked by a group of LDF activists



forcing the former union minister to return.

More than 30 people, including a policeman, were injured at Thiruvalla, in Pathanamthitta district where the activists of the BJP and the Left clashed, police said adding they made a lathicharge to disperse the stone-pelting crowd.

Stone-pelting was reported from Alathur constituency where the convoy of UDF candidate Ramya Haridas was allegedly pelted with stones.

The campaign saw Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president Amit Shah, several unions ministers, Rahul Gandhi, his sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan and top leaders of Left parties addressing rallies in different parts of the state.

Besides Gandhi's candidature, the Sabarimala issue was also in main focus during the campaigning by all the three fronts though the EC had warned against politicising it.

Modi attacked the LDF government saying the Communists have problems with regard to "our rituals" and the BJP would not allow them to 'destroy' the culture and traditions. He also referred to arrest of BJP leaders during the protest.

Countering the prime minister, Vijayan had accused him of "misleading" the country on the

Sabarimala issue and said those who went against the law were only arrested (during the protests over Sabarimala issue).

The state had witnessed frenzied protests by devotees and others last year after the state government decided to implement the Supreme Court order allowing menstrual age women into the hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala setting aside a traditional ban.

The LDF and UDF also raised the Sabarimala issue. While the UDF said it was with the believers, the LDF sought vote to uproot communalism from the state.

In the Pathanamthitta Lok Sabha constituency, which was the ground zero for Sabarimala protests, the BJP has fielded K Surendran, a leader from north Kerala who was jailed during the agitation. Over 240 cases have been filed against him. The Left front had an advantage in starting the campaign almost a week before the other two fronts as the UDF and the BJP had certain confusions regarding the seat sharing among their allies and finalising the candidates.

Rahul Gandhi in his rallies highlighted the minimum income guarantee promise of his party NYAY and attacked Modi over issues of Rafale deal, jobs among others.

He, however, spared any criticism of the Left

front as had been announced by him after filing his nomination in Wayanad.

The 40-day long campaign saw leaders of rival parties hurling charges and counter charges, including some remarks which caught the attention of the Election Commission for violation of model code.

Tharoor found himself on a sticky wicket during the campaign as his tweet over a visit to a local fish market kicked up a row, with the CPM and BJP demanding an apology, alleging he had insulted the fishermen community.

The former Union minister, who is trying to score a hat-trick from Thiruvananthapuram, claimed his words had been deliberately twisted. Last week, Tharoor suffered head injuries in a mishap while participating in the "thulabaram" ritual at a temple here which required stitches, but he soon hit the campaign trail again.

The devastating floods that hit the state in August last year was also a major poll issue with the Congress and the BJP holding the Vijayan government responsible, alleging that it was a man-made disaster.

They also alleged flood reliefs were not distributed properly.

However, the LDF claimed it was the central government which restricted the funds for the flood victims.

215 killed, around...

attacks" and said his government was working to "contain the situation."

"I call upon all Sri Lankans during this tragic time to remain united and strong... The government is taking immediate steps to contain this situation," he tweeted.

Security has been intensified around the religious places across the capital. The government has temporarily blocked all social media platforms.

"Horrible scenes. I saw many body parts strewn all over," said Harsha de Silva, Sri Lanka's Minister of Economic Reforms and Public Distribution.

The Indian High Commission in Colombo said that it was closely monitoring the situation in Sri Lanka.

"We are closely monitoring the situation. Indian citizens in need of assistance or help and for seeking clarification may call the following numbers : +94777903082 +94112422788 +94112422789," the High Commission tweeted.

"In addition to the numbers given, Indian citizens in need of assistance or help and for seeking clarification may also call the following numbers +94777902082 +94772234176," it said.

The first blasts were reported at St Anthony's church in Colombo and St Sebastian's Church in Negombo just outside the capital.

"A bomb attack to our church, please come and help if your family members are there," read a post in English on the Facebook page of the St Sebastian's Church.

Images circulated on social media showed severely damaged St Sebastian's church, with a shattered ceiling and blood on the pews.

Heavy security has been deployed at the Bandaraiake International Airport. The riot police and the Special Task Force, extra police security has been deployed around the airport, state-run Daily News reported.

Leave of all police personnel has been cancelled in the wake of blasts.

Doctors, nurses and health officials who were on leave have been asked to report to work, Health Ministry sources said.

All state Universities have been closed until further notice. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith said all Easter masses in the Colombo District have been cancelled.

Former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, under whose leadership the Lankan Army crushed the LTTE, termed the attack as "barbaric".

"We will not tolerate such violence, such acts of terrorism, of cowardice within our borders once again," he said.

Marathon Man...

"I am just a runner, but people have to come forward to support the cause and save the life of a Sikkimese daughter," he appealed.

Mr Subba will be joined by some of his students on the run and has appealed to members of different organisations and individuals to be part of this cause by running section of the run with him.

Sikkim Limboo Youth Association advisor, GS Subba, mentioned that many have been coming forward to support the treatment of Bandana Limboo and around Rs 5 lakh has already been raised.

Campaign ends for third phase of Lok Sabha polls in Bengal

KOLKATA, APR 21 (PTI):

High-octane campaigning by political parties, including roadshows and speeches by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief Amit Shah and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, for the third phase of Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal on April 23, concluded on Sunday.

The constituencies which go to polls on Tuesday are Balurghat, Malda North, Malda South, Jangipur and Murshidabad.

All the five seats will see a four-cornered contest between the Trinamool Congress (TMC), the BJP, the Congress and the Left Front.

An electorate of 8,023,852 will decide the fate of 61 candidates in these parliamentary constituencies.

The TMC has fielded sitting MP Arpita Ghosh against BJP's Sukanta Majumdar in Balurghat. The CPI(M) has nominated no candidate, while the Congress has named Sadik Sarkar.

In Malda North, the TMC has named former Congress MP Mausam Noor against BJP's Khagen Murmu, the Congress has nominated Isha Khan Chowdhury and the CPI(M) Biswanath Ghosh.

Malda South will see the ruling party's Moazzem Hossain locking horns with BJP's Sreerupa Mitra Choudhury.

Congress's Abu Hasem Khan Chowdhury is also in the fray.

In Jangipur, TMC's Khalilur Rehman will contest against former president and Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijit. The BJP has fielded Mafuja Khatun and the CPI(M) Zulfikar Ali.

Abu Taher Khan is the TMC candidate from Murshidabad against BJP's Humayun Kabir. The Congress has nominated Abu Hena and the CPI(M) named Badrud-daza Khan for the seat.

The Election Commission will deploy a total of 324 companies of central forces, which will cover over 92 per cent of the polling booths in the five Lok Sabha constituencies, to ensure free and fair polling, officials said.

The polling personnel have already left for 1,530 booths in Balurghat constituency, 1,713 in Malda North, 1,616 in Malda South, 1,762 in Jangipur and 1,907 stations in Murshidabad. Besides general election observers and expenditure observers, the poll panel has for the first time deployed a special police observer.

In another first, VVPAT will be used in all polling booths along with the EVMs, EC sources said.

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Accelerator and SAATHI organize Northeast Scholarship Test

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 21 APR:

The 3rd Northeast Scholarship Test organised by the Accelerator in association with SAATHI was held today at Modern Senior Secondary School. More than a thousand students from various streams took the test, a press release informs.

The Accelerator is one of the first organisations to begin providing financial aid to meritorious students through this exam in Sikkim, the release adds. The empanelled colleges and universities also sent representatives to promote their respective institutions



among the students.

The test is going to held next at Namchi at New Light Academy on 23 April.

The scholarship provided to the students is being offered by the empanelled colleges and uni-

versities, it is informed.

The Accelerator CEO further explained that their organization also

provides information on various other scholarship schemes at both, the state and the national level.

Sri Lanka bomber queued at hotel buffet then unleashed devastation



COLOMBO, APR 21

(AFP): The suicide bomber waited patiently in a queue for the Easter Sunday breakfast buffet at Sri Lanka's Cinnamon Grand hotel before setting off explosives strapped to his back.

Carrying a plate, the man, who had registered at the hotel the night before as Mohamed Azzam Mohamed, was just about to be served when he set off his devastating strike in the packed restaurant, a manager at the Sri Lankan hotel said.

"There was utter chaos," said the manager, who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity as he is not allowed to speak for the company.

The Taprobane restaurant at the hotel was having one of its busiest days of the year for the Easter holiday weekend.

"It was 8:30 am and it was busy. It was families," the manager told AFP.

"He came up to the top of the queue and set off the blast," he added.

"One of our managers who was welcoming guests was among those killed instantly." The bomber also died. Parts of his body were found intact by police and taken away.

Other hotel officials told how the bomber, a Sri Lankan, checked in giving an address that turned out to be false, saying he was in the city for business.

Two other hotels, the Shangri-La and the Kingsbury, were hit at about the same time, along with three churches packed with worshippers attending Easter Sunday services.

The blast at St Anthony's Shrine, an historic Catholic Church, was so powerful that it blew out much of the roof, leaving roof tiles, glass and splintered wood littering the floor that was strewn with bodies.

Authorities have not said who staged the attacks. But all suffered major casualties and damage. Many of the 35 foreigners killed in the blasts were at the hotels,

officials said.

"There was utter chaos, but we rushed all the injured to hospital in a very short time," the Cinnamon Grand manager said.

"About 20 people were seriously wounded and we sent them to the National Hospital." The hotel is close to the Sri Lankan prime minister's official residence and Special Task Force commandos were quickly at the scene.

At the Shangri-La, witnesses said they heard two loud blasts and that staff reported some people had been killed. But details of the toll were not immediately given.

An AFP photographer saw extensive damage in the second floor restaurant at the hotel, with windows blown out and electrical wires hanging from the ceiling.

The Shangri-La said in a statement that the bomb hit at approximately 9:00 am local time at its Table One restaurant.

"We are deeply saddened and shocked by the incident and our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the casualties and those who have been affected," it said.

"Our immediate priority is to look after the safety and wellbeing of all involved. A Shangri-La crisis management team has been activated to provide all necessary support." The Kingsbury is also one of Colombo's most expensive hotels, positioned near the city's World Trade Center.

The toll there was not known.

In a statement on its Facebook page, the hotel said: "On behalf of the entire Kingsbury team we share in the shock, grief and mourning of our entire nation in the aftermath of the recent attack."

"Medical evacuation and treatment of the injured guests and employees were handled immediately."

The hotel said it had been "isolated" for further safety checks.

Olive Ridley hatchlings begin new journey from Gahirmatha

KENDRAPARA (ODISHA), APR 21 (PTI): The unique natural phenomenon - hatching of baby turtles sans their mothers - has begun at the idyllic beach of Kalam Island off Odisha coast in Kendrapara district, forest officials said.

Like every year, the phenomenon has left the wildlife lovers awestruck and elated, they said.

In the past 72 hours, millions of turtle hatchlings, have emerged from the eggs, which were buried in the sand, and crawled towards the sea, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Rajnagar Mangrove (wildlife) Forest Division, Prasanna Kumar Acharya, said.

The emergence of baby turtles mark the grand culmination of the

annual sojourn of Olive Ridley sea turtles in Odisha's Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, known as the World's largest nesting ground for these endangered species, he said.

Kalam Island is a part of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.

More turtle hatchlings would emerge from the eggs in the next seven to 10 days, Acharya said.

The beach will be swarming with turtle hatchlings in the coming days, the DFO said. Around 4.50 lakh turtles had congregated at the beach for nesting in March.

"The entire beach is teeming with baby turtles and the wildlife officials of Bhitarkanika National Park, stationed at the nesting ground, were the only ones to

witness the phenomenon," he said. Tourists and researchers were denied entry to savour the unique experience since the unmanned island is located close to the defence test range centre, a prohibited territory.

The babies after emerging from the sand pits wandered aimlessly around the beach for nearly an hour and then gradually crawled towards the sea, a wildlife staff said.

The eggs usually hatch after an incubation period of 45 to 55 days.

"Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, free from human interference, also happens to be the most congenial and conducive spots for mass nesting of endangered Olive Ridley turtles," Acharya added.

Star-studded campaign on cards for Kanhaiya in Begusarai



PATNA, APR 21 (PTI): Top Left leaders - Sitaram Yechury, D Raja and Sudhakar Reddy - as well as Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar will descend on the soil of Bihar next week to campaign in Begusarai where former JNU students' union president Kanhaiya Kumar is pitted against Union minister and firebrand BJP leader Giriraj Singh.

According to a release issued by the CPI's state headquarters here, Yechury will be addressing a rally in Begusarai on April 23 while his CPI counterpart Sudhakar Reddy will be there on the same day and the day after.

The CPI national secretary D Raja will be arriving in Patna on Monday for a five-day tour of Bihar during which he will also campaign for Kanhaiya, his party candidate, from April 23 to 26, the release said.

Akhtar will be in the

parliamentary constituency on April 23, the release added.

Meanwhile, critically-acclaimed actor Prakash Raj, who has won the National Award twice and became famous in Bollywood by virtue of his performances as the main antagonist in blockbusters such as "Wanted" and "Singham", landed in the dusty mofussil town on Saturday.

Raj, who claims to have become vocal on politics following the murder of noted journalist, and his close friend Gauri Lankesh in 2017, shared photographs on social media of himself holding hands with the 32-year-old CPI candidate and addressing rallies.

"Begusarai is rising up to Kanhaiya Kumar. As I travel with him, I can see hope in the eyes of the people. Winds of change. I can sense empowerment... I am proud to be by his side," Raj

wrote on his Facebook page. The noted actor, who is also contesting the polls as an Independent from Bengaluru, has indicated that he is likely to campaign for Kanhaiya till Monday.

Incidentally, Raj will be the second Bollywood personality to campaign for Kanhaiya Kumar in Begusarai.

Actress Swara Bhasker addressed a rally a fortnight ago after he had filed his nomination.

Known as the "Leningrad of Bihar" because of the strong presence of Left parties, Begusarai is witnessing a three-cornered contest, the third player being less talked about but equally formidable Tanveer Hassan of the RJD who was the runner-up in 2014.

Held by BJP's Bhol Singh, who passed away a few months ago, the seat would go to polls on April 29 in the fourth phase of general elections.

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We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who stood by us in our time of bereavement and regret our inability to thank them individually.

Lachhi Tamang (wife) and family members.
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Need to Always be All Ready

Monsoon preparedness should be a year-round effort

Here are the basics, in Geographical terms - the South-East quadrant of Sikkim, its footprint spreading across the alignment from Mangan to Dikchu, also sweeping through Rabong, and then to Gangtok up to Rongli, is the maximum rainfall zone of the State. The South-West corner around Hilley in West Sikkim is the other wetter zone and between the two sits the dry-to-the-extent-of drought-prone spread of Namchi and its immediate surroundings.

This much, anyone who has lived in Sikkim for a decent stretch of years will know instinctively. Ironically, this obvious fact has remained blindsided for far too long in the State, catching its people and planners on the wrong foot every time the skies open up, which is very often. Readers of this newspaper would have noticed that all four districts have been going through the motions of monsoon preparedness, but most of these have been limited to clearing jhoras and drains, with the connectivity and supplies situation receiving only nominal attention. Perhaps the reasonably tame monsoons of the past few years have inflicted some somnolence, but then again as any resident will point out, monsoons play in cycles of three years in Sikkim – three years of normal or less than normal rains and then three years of ferocity. The last monsoon was normal, and if past trends, also recognized by experts are any indication, Sikkim is being set up for a strong wave of rains this year. News reports about monsoon preparedness are included in the paper as much to inform people of the preparedness plans as for them to check back when the slides begin.

The concerned departments getting into monsoon readiness mode is a welcome sign, but what cannot be ignored is that monsoons become a challenge essentially because the drier months are allowed to pass without enough preparedness work getting done. For instance, meteorological data informs that Sikkim has an average of 160 days of rainfall every year (for Gangtok, this is 184 days!). That is a staggering number of wet days, but the data also reveals that the capital has almost as many days without rain and for a region kept on tenterhooks with what the clouds bear, the dry months need to be used well – to reinforce, repair, rebuild and restore. And yet, planners in the various civil works agencies of the State and Central governments refuse to make use of the dry months to get done with their digging and scrapping. It goes without saying that any work which, in any way, weakens slopes and alignments should be banned safely ahead of the monsoons because Sikkim's slopes have a tendency to come down like dominos at the slightest disruption once the monsoon sets in. With slightly over half the year spent with rainfall [albeit of varying intensities], planning here should be with the wet weather in mind. In these days of climate change, this becomes even more important because while the number of days with rainfall might come down, the intensity is projected to increase and that is even more destructive.

One needs to also bear in mind is that the rash of freak weather that Sikkim has been experiencing in recent years is no longer 'freakish' because it is consistent with climate change patterns. Sikkim now has a Department of Science & Technology with a longer name which includes "Climate Change". The policy-makers should realign the focus of this department to counsel other arms of the government on climate change adjustments and preparedness. Any student who has prepared for an essay/ debate competition on climate change will tell you that the intensity of climatic phenomenon is projected to reach extreme levels with climate change. Sikkim is already experiencing this. There might be fewer days of rainfall, but the days when it rains, it will pour. Departments working on civil projects like roads, hydel projects or construction should be the ones who get briefed on what to expect in the coming years and adjust their designs and work schedules accordingly. Storm drains, for example, should not be designed to just receive 8 cm of rain over an entire day in May, but to evacuate this inundation within an hour. Having been caught off-guard should not be accepted as an excuse anymore. Water conservation, an important issue around the word as in Sikkim, needs to be approached in a more pragmatic and interdisciplinary manner with intelligent and informed plantation efforts because a hill/ slope which conserves water well is also less prone to slip away. Done right, the spring rejuvenation mission should not only address the future needs of water supply, but also stabilise the slopes of Sikkim which have been debased by too much 'development' and too little respect for traditional knowledge...

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Extinction Rebellion: disruption and arrests can bring social change

ALEXANDER HENSBY
theconversation.com

Extinction Rebellion (XR) burst onto everybody's screens with disruptions and mass arrests across the UK and around the world, in protest against government inaction on climate change. Radical disruptions have been at the heart of XR's activism since it was founded in 2018 – from January's disruption of London Fashion Week, to the infamous naked protest in Parliament – but the scale of the most recent actions has finally succeeded in forcing mainstream news cycles to start giving the politics of climate change the attention it deserves.

One could argue that XR's week of action was fortunately timed – the extension of Article 50 to October has created something of a news vacuum while everyone takes a momentary breather from Brexit. Nevertheless, activists would rightly claim that climate change is the bigger looming catastrophe. In October 2018, the UN's climate agency published grave projections of the enormity of the challenge ahead if we are to limit the most catastrophic consequences of climate change. For both XR and the Fridays for Future school strike movement, the piecemeal response of nations at the UN's annual climate change conference two months later made it clear that there is no more time to lose.

The aim, then, is to force the issue. Through their blockades of iconic central London sites, XR is keeping climate change at the forefront of the public and politicians' lips, making the seemingly abstract problem facing all of us feel real. And rather than just warning of this climate emergency, it offers a vision of an alternative future, where a Citizens Assembly takes the lead in reducing UK emissions to net zero.

Perhaps inevitably, XR's actions have been met with a familiar backlash from some political commentators – witness Adam Boulton's sneering performance on Sky News, and David Blunkett's indignant authoritarianism in the Daily Mail. But while activists say they regret the disruption caused to working people, they consider their actions a necessary evil in order to change the conversation.

Older activists will surely point to the impact and legacy of 1999's Battle of Seattle, when the Global Justice Movement successfully closed down the World Trade Organisation's annual meeting. Not only was this extremely empowering for those involved, it crucially helped make resistance to a largely abstract neoliberal governance structure seem concrete and real.

Much like the Occupy demonstrations seven years ago, XR's latest eye-catching protests have been friendly and open, laden with artistic per-

formances, talks, and human connection. This good-natured spirit has so far meant that XR has gained significant traction not only on the airwaves, but on the streets too.

XR's efforts are aimed at building momentum, and they are based in political science – their website highlights a figure that it takes just 3.5% of a nation's population engaged in sustained nonviolent resistance to topple a dictatorship. In the UK, that's less than 2.5m people. Their clear demands and principles give the movement a clarity and focus that the Occupy movement may have lacked, and they are growing week by week – Extinction Rebellion says that 50,000 people have joined the movement since the protests started.



However, contemporary mainstream news cycles are fast and fickle, and XR will have to act quickly and carefully to maximise use of their newfound public platform.

DANGER OF DIMINISHING RETURNS

It's extremely important that the movement's purpose does not become overshadowed by its tactics. XR have ransacked the playbook of direct action repertoires – blocking roads, using fake blood, recreating funeral marches, and surprise nakedness. While these have so far been successful in bringing XR's name and cause to the fore, using such tactics ad nauseum can quickly lose the public's imagination and support. This was evident in the Global Justice Movement of the 2000s, as the desire to recreate the euphoria of Seattle resulted in tactical "summit hopping" with diminishing returns.

State agencies also learn quickly how to police repeated mobilisations more ruthlessly and extremely – although XR's "trademark" repertoire, the tactical use of mass arrests, so far appears to be combating this threat effectively. Police have powers to disperse protesters, but the sheer number of people now willing to be arrested shifts the balance

of power between the public and the state. For example, police have so far been unable to clear any of the four sites in central London, as spates of arrests were closely followed by new wave of protesters arriving to entrench control. The city's police stations do not have the capacity to hold hundreds of arrested protesters for long periods of time, and court costs will discourage officers from pursuing charges, limiting the punitive power of the state.

At the same time, XR's tactics risk fetishising the act of being arrested as a symbol of participants' commitment to the cause. XR's co-founder, Roger Hallam, recently told the BBC that in order to achieve XR's goal of "getting in the room with government", it may need to create a law and order cri-

sis on the scale of 1,000 arrests. Such an arbitrary target is problematic, as it may encourage activists to take more risk in pursuit of a goal that is by no means guaranteed.

Even if one is critical of the politics seemingly behind many "aggravated trespass: charges, a criminal record can be extremely costly and discriminating for many younger activists, especially people of colour. This contrasts with the relative risks posed to seasoned activists whose job, lifestyle, or privilege allows them to ride the consequences. It is crucial that XR fulfils a duty of care to support those who are prepared to put their bodies on the line, but with more than 700 arrested already, its an expensive, high-risk game should multiple criminal charges be brought.

But for now, XR activists will consider recent events as a runaway success. They have gained visibility, traction, and have at least temporarily steered media attention away from Brexit. Most importantly, they have put climate change squarely in the middle of public conversation. Let's hope it stays there.

[the writer is Lecturer in Sociology, University of Kent]

Everyday racism fuels prejudice and hate. But we can challenge it

KUMAR YOGEESWARAN
theconversation.com

In the aftermath of the Christchurch terror attacks a month ago, New Zealanders are grappling with difficult, albeit necessary, questions about discrimination and casual racism.

The response to the horrific attack has been heartwarming. Tens of thousands of people from different backgrounds offered support to the Muslim community and paid their respects to those senselessly killed and wounded. The response of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has been similarly refreshing, and has become a global talking point. This gives us hope for a better future.

But lurking behind news articles and commentary proclaiming that this is "not us", debate is growing about what this atrocity also tells us that we have been reticent to acknowledge.

EVERYDAY RACISM LINKS TO EXTREMISM

In some ways, both of these narratives ring true. On the one hand, we have bought into New Zealand's high global ranking for tolerance and inclusion. On the other hand, New Zealand's Human Rights Commission (HRC) and those of us who research prejudice and bigotry routinely find evidence for everyday experiences of casual racism. These experiences give extremism the space it needs to breathe.

One in three of the complaints received by the HRC in New Zealand is about racial discrimination. In 2017, the commission launched a Give Nothing to Racism campaign fronted by acclaimed film director Taika Waititi.

Everyday, or "casual" racism and bigotry can appear relatively subtle or blatant. It may include comments such as complimenting someone who

doesn't fit the dominant group for being "well-spoken", calling someone a "good" Muslim/Māori/Asian, excusing race-based jokes or comparisons as "just joking". These seemingly benign comments are often accompanied with more blatant experiences of ethnic slurs, being told to go back to one's country, or managers admitting they do not hire people with "foreign" sounding names (a violation of New Zealand law).

Compounded with such day-to-day experiences is research spanning decades and using a variety of tools (including neuroscience methods, reaction-time measures, and behavioural measures) to show bigotry lies on a continuum from blatant to subtle.

It's worth mentioning, even subtle biases contribute to negative outcomes for minority groups' health, well-being and participation in wider society. And even subconsciously perceiving minorities as "less civilised" can fuel intergroup conflict and violence towards minority groups, as shown by decades of research.

While terrorism may represent the actions by a small number of extremists, they are fuelled by social norms that allow these ideologies to take root and propagate. As claimed French theorist Jean Baudrillard observed in *The Spirit of Terrorism*: "terrorism merely crystallizes all the ingredients in suspension."

SOCIAL NORMS SHAPE ATTITUDES

This does not imply that communities themselves are responsible for acts of terrorism, but rather that terrorism reflects what circulates in geopolitics, national politics, normative beliefs of those around us, the media and the influence of other ideological and social forces. Global context is, of course, important, but New Zealand now needs to reflect

on how social norms within our own community can inadvertently promote hate and prejudice.

In Christchurch, and New Zealand more generally, extremist groups have been omnipresent for decades. Just last year, there was a white supremacist march down a main street in Christchurch that received numerous car horn toots of support. Students in Auckland have reported an increase in extremist group messaging on campus, even after the disbanding of a controversial European student association.

More broadly, data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Survey (NZAVS) show that 28% of New Zealanders are willing to express negative feelings toward Muslims. Fortunately, this is where all of us may be able to contribute to reinforcing the inclusive and tolerant society we tout in international rankings.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Well-intentioned and fair-minded people are often unaware of everyday experiences of members of minority groups. They often dismiss them as unrepresentative because the majority has a psychological investment in believing it "doesn't happen here". But such experiences do happen here as empirical research consistently finds, and these experiences cannot be undone simply through a similar number of positive experiences. People have a "negativity bias", which means that negative events are weighed more heavily than positive ones. And if we have limited opportunities to forge meaningful close connections with people from other groups, then all it takes is a handful of negative experiences to wash away the benefits of other positive interactions and create distrust and social distancing between groups. Research shows although positive experiences are more common, negative experiences influ-

ence our attitudes more strongly.

Even as we work in increasingly diverse workplaces, our social circles tend to be fairly homogenous. Data from the NZAVS show that as recently as 2017, 64% of White New Zealanders report that they did not spend any time in the last week socialising with someone Māori. Some 83% say the same about socialising with someone Pasifika, and 77% report spending no time with someone Asian, suggesting that for many of us, our social networks are largely homogenous.

While this is similar to patterns elsewhere in the world, these homogenous networks create psychological distance between "us" and "them". This also insulates us from hearing differing perspectives because minorities often fear that they will be seen as complainers if they share negative experiences in casual settings.

Instead, establishing relationships with people who are different from ourselves promotes positive intergroup contact, which is one of the most well-established approaches to reducing prejudice. Similarly, promoting social environments that encourage dialogue and cooperation, establishing common goals and providing opportunities for multicultural experiences offer some starting points for how to move forward.

At a time when the UN estimates more than 250 million people live outside of their country of birth, cultural diversity is an inevitable reality. It means we must learn to live and work together, and at the very least tolerate our differences. If each of us works to remove everyday bigotry within our immediate environment, we make it that much harder for extremist ideologies to take hold.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology, University of Canterbury]

EC special observers abusing people of West Bengal: Mamata

GAYESHPUR/RANAGHAT (WB), APR 21 (PTI): Claiming that officers sent by the Election Commission as special observers are abusing and insulting the people of West Bengal, Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Sunday accused the BJP of trying to run a parallel government in the state.

The chief minister also alleged that the poll panel has deputed the two retired officers to run the government in Bengal. "The officers are abusing and insulting the people of the state," she said, reacting to Special Observer Ajay V Nayak's observation that the situation in Bengal is similar to what it was in Bihar around 10 to 15 years ago.

The people have lost faith in the state police, and therefore, their demand for deployment of central forces at all polling booths has increased, Nayak, a former chief electoral officer of Bihar, said on Saturday.

"The BJP is trying to run a parallel govt in the state," she said, adding, "Two retired officers have been sent to run the government, this is unconstitutional. They are trying to help the BJP."

Banerjee said that in 2016, assembly elections were held with deployment of central forces in all the booths, but that did not deter her party from registering a resounding victory.

Alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mann ki Baat' addresses were full of falsehood, the CM said that he spoke the language of the RSS on radio over the last five years. "The prime minister's position has a stature, I have never seen a person stoop so low," she said, addressing two election rallies in Nadia district.

Claiming that lakhs of migrant labourers lost their jobs due to demonetisation, she said, "You had done notebandi, people will do votebandi."

She alleged that labourers from Bengal were killed and subjected to violence in the then BJP-ruled Rajasthan and other places, leading to their mass return out of fear of persecution.

Banerjee accused the Modi government of depriving West Bengal in the last five years. "Every day, he is resorting to lies. They are seasonal birds, who come during elections only and vanish after the polls," she said.

Asserting that she faced several vilification bids throughout her political career, the CM said, "I don't care if someone calls me a thief".

Banerjee added that she has written 87 books and a number of songs, royalties from which are enough for her sustenance.

Neither the BJP nor the Congress will win the general elections. Instead, friendly regional parties will form the government at the Centre, she said.

"The BJP, the Congress and the CPI(M), who are all brothers in arms, will become mere signboards... after the elections," Banerjee said.

Battle for Malda: One family, three candidates and a wall that separates them

ANANYA SENGUPTA

KOTWALI (MALDA), APR 21 (PTI): It was a "difficult decision" to join TMC, said Mausam Noor, sitting behind her desk in her ancestral home, a legacy of Ghani Khan Choudhary, her uncle and veteran Congress leader from Malda, who represented it eight-times in Parliament.

But Noor says she has no regrets. Noor is among three members from Ghani Khan's family contesting the General Elections this time on different party tickets. Isha Khan, her cousin and sitting MLA from Sujapur legislative segment in Malda-North constituency, is contesting this Lok Sabha election against her on a Congress ticket.

Noor's uncle and Isha Khan's father, Abu Hashem Choudhary, is a three-time MP from Malda-South and contesting from there again.

The father-son duo is trying to appropriate the legacy of Ghani Khan, who has considerable influence on the psyche of voters in the area even a decade after his death.

After Noor decided to fight against her cousin, a wall has been erected at the ancestral home, sending a clear message to visitors to weigh their options before entering the compound. A series of chairs are lined up near the wall and large photos of Ghani Khan and his sister Ruby Noor, Mausam Noor's mother, hang over them.

Visitors are forewarned against sitting on one of the chairs, a weathered leather high-back chair. "Ghani Khan used to sit there," a family loyalist said.

It is this loyalty, Congress hopes, would win it the two seats in Malda to the father-son duo. Noor had won



Malda-North constituency in 2014 on a Congress ticket. She joined the Trinamool Congress in January this year. Malda, about 350 km from West Bengal capital Kolkata, has been a Congress bastion for decades. After Noor joined TMC, the wall was built, dividing the compound where Ghani Khan used to meet his supporters and assured them his support.

Family feuds are not new in politics. But this wall may mark the end of an era for Congress, which has not shied from seeking votes in Ghani Khan's name in the two con-

stituencies Malda (North, South) for four decades. Congress workers fear Noor may divide Muslim voters, who have traditionally stood behind the family and have been a deciding factor in previous elections.

"It was a difficult choice. A difficult decision," Noor told PTI. "I made this decision after consulting my supporters, advisors and even my family. It was a situation when I thought the only way to confront BJP was to form an alliance of the opposition. But that did not happen."

"The only next option avail-

able was joining TMC as only didi (Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee) is able to stop the religious polarisation happening here, she said, explaining why she does not "regret" her decision.

What about the family? Did not her decision divide the family of Ghani Khan? Noor maintains her decision to join TMC has not harmed her personal relations with her cousin or her uncle. She may be right. Isha Khan's wife was looking after Noor's children as they rode bikes inside the campus when re-

porters visited the ancestral home. But voters do not seem convinced, they see her decision to quit Congress as selfish.

"This wall upsets me," said Jamarul, who came to meet Isha Khan. "For years, this building stood for something security, safety and continuity. That is lost now. How could she do this? It could split Muslim votes benefiting the BJP," he said, appearing disappointed with the split in the family.

Despite the political divide, supporters said, the family members have managed to live in the same compound. They also share their kitchen. "There is one kitchen, food is served from there. However, during elections, Noor and her children's food is being cooked separately," said Renu Roy, who has worked for the family for 40 years.

Noor's decision is "just politics", she added. Abu Hasem Khan refused to speak on Noor's defection to TMC, saying only that it will not "affect us".

"TMC has tried to campaign that Noor's desertion will harm us. However, her decision will harm her own reputation and not of our family," Isha Khan said, confident that Congress will retain both the seats.

While Noor is a candidate from Malda-North, her vote is in Malda-South, where her uncle is pitted against TMC's Md Moazzem Hossain.

Will she vote for her uncle on April 23, when the constituencies go to polling? That's not clear yet. Also, it is difficult to objectively analyse the consequence of Noor's decision to join TMC until its outcomes are clearly visible. That will take a month when the general election results are declared on May 23.

Campaign ends for third phase polling in Assam



GUWAHATI, APR 21 (PTI): Campaigning for the third and final phase of polling in four Lok Sabha seats of Assam ended at 4 PM on Sunday.

Polling will be held in Kokrajhar (ST), Dhubri, BARPETA and Gauhati constituencies on Tuesday to decide the fate of 54 candidates, including nine women.

The ruling BJP concentrated on the initiatives taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to develop Assam and the Northeastern region, including the inauguration of three bridges in the state.

The opposition Con-

gress and other parties highlighted the BJP's attempt to bring in the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill and the alleged failure of the Modi government to fulfill the promises made before the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Campaigning for the third phase was relatively low key though Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaigned for the BJP's Gauhati candidate Queen Oja on April 11. Most of the campaigning was done by state unit leaders. Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, Finance Minister Himanta Biswa

Sarma and BJP state president Ranjeet Dass, Assam Pradesh Congress president Ripun Bora, leader of the opposition in the state assembly Debabrata Saikia participated in the campaign trail. The highlight of the third phase campaign was the road shows by candidates of different parties.

State minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stole the show in most of the meetings and road shows with his dance moves on BJP's theme song 'Akou Ebar Modi Sarkar' (Modi Sarkar, once more), sung by popular Assamese singer Simanta Shekhar.

The campaign for this

phase was mostly characterised by public rallies, roadside meetings and door-to-door visits.

There are two sitting MPs-AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal in Dhubri and independent Naba Sarania in Kokrajhar- besides state social welfare minister Pramila Rani Brahma of the BPF in Kokrajhar and Congress MLA Abdul Khaleque in the fray.

An electorate of 77,0622, including 38,15,335 men, 36,61,570 women and 157 of the third gender, will be eligible to exercise their franchise in 9,577 polling booths.

Star-studded campaign on cards for Kanhaiya in Begusarai

PATNA, APR 21 (PTI): Top Left leaders - Sitaram Yechury, D Raja and Sudhakar Reddy - as well as Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar will descend on the soil of Bihar next week to campaign in Begusarai where former JNU students' union president Kanhaiya Kumar is pitted against Union minister and firebrand BJP leader Giriraj Singh.

According to a release issued by the CPI's state headquarters here, Yechury will be addressing a rally in Begusarai on April 23 while his CPI counterpart Sudhakar Reddy will be there on the same day and the day after. The CPI national secretary D Raja will be arriving in Patna on Monday for a five-day tour of Bihar during which he will also campaign for Kanhaiya, his party candidate, from April 23 to 26, the release said.

Akhtar will be in the

parliamentary constituency on April 23, the release added.

Meanwhile, critically-acclaimed actor Prakash Raj, who has won the National Award twice and became famous in Bollywood by virtue of his performances as the main antagonist in blockbusters such as "Wanted" and "Singham", landed in the dusty mofussil town on Saturday.

Raj, who claims to have become vocal on politics following the murder of noted journalist, and his close friend Gauri Lankesh in 2017, shared photographs on social media of himself holding hands with the 32-year-old CPI candidate and addressing rallies. "Begusarai is rising up to Kanhaiya Kumar. As I travel with him, I can see hope in the eyes of the people. Winds of change. I can sense empowerment... I am proud to be by his side," Raj

wrote on his Facebook page. The noted actor, who is also contesting the polls as an Independent from Bengaluru, has indicated that he is likely to campaign for Kanhaiya till Monday.

Incidentally, Raj will be the second Bollywood personality to campaign for Kanhaiya Kumar in Begusarai. Actress Swara Bhasker addressed a rally a fortnight ago after he had filed his nomination.

Known as the "Leningrad of Bihar" because of the strong presence of Left parties, Begusarai is witnessing a three-cornered contest, the third player being less talked about but equally formidable Tanveer Hassan of the RJD who was the runner-up in 2014.

Held by BJP's Bhola Singh, who passed away a few months ago, the seat would go to polls on April 29 in the fourth phase of general elections.

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I have to prove myself every time I get a chance: Lamichhane

ABHISHEK HORE
NEW DELHI, APR 21 (PTI): Opportunities in the IPL have been few and far between for Sandeep Lamichhane and Nepal's teenage spinner says he has to "prove" himself every time he gets a chance.

His three wickets, including that of Chris Gayle, played an influential role in Delhi Capitals' five-wicket victory over Kings XI Punjab, which broke their jinx at home here on Saturday night.

"I have always wanted to do my job. I have to prove myself every time I get my chance," the 18-year-old leg-spinner said at the post-match press conference.

This was Delhi's second win in five outings here, with one coming in the Super Over, and sixth overall.

Considering the talent and the results, he may not have played as many matches as he would have loved to, but Lamichhane has



no complaints.

"Sometimes it feels disappointing (being not picked in the playing XI), but at the end of the day, you need good reserves and I think they have got much more knowledge on cricket.

"They have plans in their minds and that's why they chose different playing XIs. You just need

to keep improving," said the Nepal national team spinner who has played T20 leagues across the world.

The pitch at the Feroz Shah Kotla has been a major bone of contention in this edition of the league, but the spinner believed his team would be happy to play their remaining two home

games on similar tracks.

"Pitch was good today, it was turning a bit at the start but after that it was coming nicely onto the bat. The poor bowling today was due to dew factor and it was really wet and hard to grip.

"Pretty happy with the pitch, it will be a good game if we get these kinds of wickets,

but there was dew and that was the main factor tonight. Gripping was difficult, but there was turn on the pitch," said Lamichhane.

Pleased at taking the big wicket of Gayle, who smashed five towering sixes during his brisk half-century, Lamichhane admitted that may have turned the game around.

"I think yes, probably, it was a much-needed wicket for us. Chris Gayle was looking in good form and he hit 70 runs in 35 or 36 odd balls, he was in brilliant touch.

"Anywhere you bowled he was just smashing all over the ground. And getting those two wickets in the 13th over, it was really good for us."

Lamichhane, who believes in keeping things simple, thanked the cricket authorities in his native for paving the way for his entry into the big league.

"I would be very thankful to Nepal cricket because I have done really good for them, and that's why I got into Delhi Capitals. I don't have to look back at my journey.

"Last season I played three games. This time if I am getting seven to eight games, I would like to make sure next time I play all the 14 games," he signed off.

Comic poised to take over presidency in Ukraine vote

Kiev, Apr 21 (AFP): Ukrainians went to polls Sunday in the second round of an extraordinary election with a comedian who plays a president on TV expected to win in a stunning rebuke to the political establishment. Forty-one-year-old Volodymyr Zelensky's bid to lead the country of 45 million people was initially dismissed as a joke when he announced his candidacy on New Year's Eve.

But now all opinion polls suggest incumbent President Petro Poroshenko is heading for defeat amid widespread anger over poverty, corruption and war.

Zelensky's victory is expected to open a new chapter in the history of a country that has gone through two popular uprisings in two decades and is mired in a five-year conflict with separatists in the east.

Polling stations opened at 0500 GMT as voters from Ukrainian-speaking regions in the west to Russian-speaking regions in the war-torn east went to

cast their ballots. Speaking outside a polling booth in the capital Kiev, Galyna, 81, said she voted for Zelensky.

"Because I am against Poroshenko," said the pensioner who refused to give her last name.

Zelensky has tapped into widespread frustration over graft, poverty and a conflict with separatists that has claimed some 13,000 lives.

But others doubted whether the consummate showman would be able to take on the country's vested interests, negotiate with the likes of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and stand up to Russia's Vladimir Putin. Viktoriya Olomutska in Kiev suggested many voted for teacher-turned-president Vasyl Goloborodko, Zelensky's character in the popular TV show "Servant of the People", now in its third season and available on Netflix.

"People have gone mad," said the 39-year-old Poroshenko supporter, adding many pinned their hopes on "a fictional character".

Confident Delhi look to continue momentum against rejuvenated Rajasthan

DINESH SHARMA
JAIPUR, APR 21 (PTI): A win at home finally achieved after multiple losses, a confident Delhi Capitals will hope to keep the juggernaut rolling when they take on Rajasthan Royals in an away IPL encounter here on Monday.

Delhi have been doing better at away games rather than at their home ground but Saturday night they managed to reverse that at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground with a five-wicket win over Kings XI Punjab, helping them remain on third spot in the points table.

Rajasthan Royals also won their match here on Saturday by the same margin against a formidable Mumbai Indians as Steve Smith celebrated his return at the helm with a captain's innings.

With both teams rejuvenated after their respective victories, it will be an interesting battle for one-upmanship come Monday.

However, Rajasthan would be a bit more desperate than Delhi as they are languishing at the second last position in the points table with just three wins from nine outings.

Rajasthan would look to continue to capitalise on their home advantage under new captain Smith. But they would certainly miss their prolific opener Jos Buttler.

Anjiky Rahane, who has been

struggling with his form and also seemed to be out of ideas, was eventually stripped of captaincy and next he might also lose his opening slot to Rahul Tripathi.

Tripathi was impressive during his 45-ball fifty against Kings XI Punjab, while Rahane was too slow in his 21-ball 26 as Rajasthan failed to chase down 182, finishing at 170/7.

With Smith back in form, having almost recovered from his elbow injury, and the youngsters like Sanju Samson and Riyan Parag coming good with the bat, Rajasthan would fancy their chances. Though their bowling still remains a worry in death overs. Except Jofra Archer and leg spinner Shreyas Gopal, none of the bowlers have been consistent.

Delhi Capitals have a solid batting line up with a blend of experience and youth.

Senior opener Shikhar Dhawan laid the foundation with a fluent 56 of 41 balls and skipper Shreyas Iyer contributed with an unbeaten 58 off 49 balls to win their last game.

With Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw at the top and the likes of Rishabh Pant, Iyer and Colin Ingram to follow, Delhi would start as a confident batting unit.

Down the order, even Axar Patel is capable of accelerating the run-rate.

As far as bowling is concerned, Delhi Capitals heavily depend on Kagiso Rabada although they have variety in medium pacers Ishant Sharma, Sandeep Lamichhane and spinners Amit Mishra and Axar Patel.

Another victory for Delhi will brightening their chances of making the play-offs and they would leave no stone unturned to achieve a win against the home side.

Teams (from):
Rajasthan Royals: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Sanju Samson, Ben Stokes, Shubham Ranjane, Ashton Turner, Steve Smith, Stuart Binny, Shreyas Gopal, Sudhane Midhun, Jaydev Unadkat, Ish Sodhi, Prashant Chopra, Mahipal Lomror, Oshane Thomas, Aryaman Birla, Riyan Parag, Dhawal Kulkarni, Jofra Archer, Krishnappa Gowtham, Liam Livingstone, Varun Aaron, Jos Buttler, Shahshank Singh, Manan Vohra, Rahul Tripathi

Delhi Capitals: Shreyas Iyer (c), Prithvi Shaw, Shikhar Dhawan, Rishabh Pant (WK), Colin Ingram, Keemo Paul, Axar Patel, Rahul Tewatia, Amit Mishra, Kagiso Rabada, Ishant Sharma, Hanuma Vihari, Ankush Bains, Chris Morris, Sherfane Rutherford, Jalaj Saxena, Sandeep Lamichhane, Trent Boult, Avesh Khan, Nathu Singh, Bandaru Ayyappa, Colin Munro, Manjot Kalra.

Match starts at 8pm.

Hima suffers back spasm, fails to finish 400m race



DOHA, APR 21 (PTI): In a blow to India's campaign in the Asian Athletics Championships, sprint sensation Hima Das suffered a back muscle spasm during the 400m heat race on the opening day here on Sunday.

The 19-year-old world junior champion and national record holder did not finish the heat number one which was won by Nadeesha Ramanayaka of Sri Lanka.

"She had spasm at L4 and L5 (two lowest vertebrae in the lumbar spine). The doctor who attended her informed us and he said nothing serious. She will be OK within a day or two," deputy chief coach Radhakrishnan Nair said in a statement.

The injury has put Hima's participation in the women's 4x400m relay and mixed 400m relay on the final day in doubt though Nair said it was not a serious injury.

It is learnt that the injury cannot also be dismissed as a minor one and whether Hima will take part in the women's 4x400m relay and mixed 400m relay will be decided in a day or two.

"You cannot just dismiss the injury to be a minor one also. So, we

have to see her condition tomorrow or Tuesday and take a call after that. Fingers crossed and let us see," a well-placed source told PTI.

The Assamese runner, who had spoken about being troubled by a back problem on and off, was not expected to win the gold in the quarter-mile event, but was a medal contender.

The impact of Hima's absence, if it happens, will be felt in the women's 4x400m relay race in which India has historically dominated and is a strong gold medal contender in this championships also.

Hima has a personal best of 50.59 seconds though she has not been at her best after she took a break to prepare for her exams before coming back to win the Federation Cup in 52.88 seconds last month.

Bahrain's Salwa Naser, who was second in world list last year with a 49.08 seconds, is the overwhelming favourite to take the gold. She had beaten Hima comfortably in the Asian Games 400m final. Naser won the heat number two in 52.29 seconds, ahead of India's MR Poovamma (52.46 seconds).

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Mirabai misses bronze by a whisker, Jeremy smashes Youth World record at Asian C'ship

Ningbo (China), Apr 21 (PTI): Former world champion Mirabai Chanu produced her personal best but missed out on podium by a whisker, while Youth Olympics gold medallist Jeremy Lalrinnunga went on a record-smashing spree at the Asian Weightlifting Championship here Sunday.

The 24-year-old Mirabai lifted 86kg in snatch and a personal best of 113kg in clean and jerk for a total of 199kg in the women's 49kg event to finish on fourth position. Her earlier personal best total in 49kg was 192kg in the EGAT Cup in Thailand in February.

In a remarkable performance, 16-year-old Jeremy secured second place in group B of the 67Kg men's event. During his record-smashing spree, he claimed three world marks.

Earlier in the day, Jhili Dalabehera opened India's medal account, claiming a silver medal in the women's 45kg category. However, 45kg is not a Olympic weight category. The points gathered from this event will come in handy when



the final rankings for 2020 Tokyo Olympics are made next year.

Unfortunately Mirabai missed the bronze as China's Zhang Rong with the same total of 199kg (88kg+111kg) finished third under new rules, which came into effect in 2017.

Under these rules, the competitor who has a lower clean and jerk result (that means higher snatch

result) will be ranked higher in the classification of athletes for total lift. The gold medal went to Hou Zhihui of China who produced an effort of 208kg (92kg+116kg) while North Korea's Ri Song-gum clinched the silver, lifting 200kg (86kg+114kg) in the gold level Olympic qualifier.

After clearing 86kg in her snatch, Mirabai began her clean

and jerk with a 109kg and then lifted 113kg successfully. But in her third attempt, the Manipuri could not lift 115kg and that cost her dear. Had she been successful in her attempt to lift 115kg, she would have won a silver with a total of 201kg.

Mirabai, however, picked up a bronze in clean and jerk while she was fourth in snatch. In World Championships and continental championships, medals are awarded separately for snatch, clean and jerk, and total lift. But in the Olympics, medals are awarded only for total lift.

This was Mirabai's second international competition in this category after the International Weightlifting Federation re-jigged the weight categories last year. She was earlier competing in 48kg.

She had missed the World Championships last year, a gold level Olympic qualifier, owing to a back injury which had also forced her out of the Asian Games in Jakarta. Mirabai returned to action in February, clinching the gold

medal in 49kg at the EGAT Cup in Thailand, which was the first of the six Olympic qualifying events for her. Jeremy gave a power-packed performance, smashing the Youth World and Asian records in snatch, clean and jerk and total lift with an effort of 297kg (134kg+163kg) to be placed second in his group behind Pakistan's Talha Talib, who lifted 304kg (140kg+164kg).

The final standings for the men's 67kg event will be known after group A competition on Monday. Jeremy, in fact, broke 15 records in total, combining national and international marks. He smashed six international records -- three youth world and three youth Asian -- and nine national records -- three youth national, three junior national and three senior national.

The Mizoram weightlifter pulled off clean lifts in two of his three attempts in snatch (130kg, 134kg) to set a new youth world record. The earlier youth world record was also in Jeremy's name when he had lifted 131kg in the

EGAT Cup in Thailand in February.

Jeremy then lifted more than double his body weight (157kg, 163kg) in two successful attempts in the clean and jerk, and in the process obliterated Kazakhstan weightlifter Saikhan Taisuyev's youth world record of 161kg.

It was Jeremy's personal best and 9kg more than his 288kg youth world record effort in the EGAT cup, where he won the silver medal. It was his only second international competition in 67kg after the international federation added this weight category last year for the Olympic Games and other events.

Jeremy also smashed the 67kg national senior record in snatch, clean and jerk, and total lift. He smashed his own snatch record of 131kg while he erased Gulam Navi's clean and jerk record of 160kg to better his own total lift record of 288kg. The Asian Championships is a gold level Olympic qualifying event, the points from which will be counted when the final rankings for Tokyo 2020 cut are done.

Egyptians vote in second day of referendum to extend Sisi rule

CAIRO, APR 21 (AFP): Egyptians voted for a second day on Sunday in a referendum on proposed constitutional amendments aimed at cementing the rule of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

Sisi is widely expected to win backing for changes making it possible for him to stay in power until 2030, boosting his control over the judiciary and giving the military even greater influence in political life.

Egyptian media outlets, tightly controlled by the state, have carried images of packed voting stations, while dissenting voices from the opposition and rights groups against the measures have been largely restricted to the internet.

Some voters say their employers have encouraged them to vote, while others say they have received food coupons from unidentified people. In their initial report on the first day of the nationwide electoral



process, an international observer team said "there were no hurdles to voting".

The three-day referendum bucks the trend of North Africa's renewed uprisings, in which mass pro-democracy protests this month swept away veteran presidents in Algeria and Sudan.

Former defence minister Sisi took power in

2013 and was elected president in 2014 after leading the army's overthrow of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

He was re-elected for another four-year term in 2018 with more than 97 percent of the vote.

The proposed constitutional changes would allow him to extend his current term by two years and to run for an-

other six-year term.

Since Sisi took power, rights campaigners have regularly accused his government of abuses including mass trials and torture, as well as a clampdown on opposition and the press.

Human Rights Watch has slammed the proposed changes, saying they would "entrench repression". In a statement

Saturday, the New York-based watchdog criticised the "grossly unfree, rights-abusive environment" of the vote.

Supporters of the amendments say they will help ensure Egypt's political stability, security and economic development.

The results are expected to be announced on April 27.

Trump goofs up again! tweets 138 million people died in Sri Lankan blasts

WASHINGTON, APR 21 (PTI): Known for his gaffes, US President Donald Trump yet again committed a faux pas on Sunday as he erroneously wrote that "138 million people" were killed in a string of blasts in Sri Lanka. The near-simultaneous attacks on Easter Sunday at three churches and as many luxury hotels frequented by foreigners killed more than 160 people and injured over 450 others, shattering a decade of peace in the country after the end of the brutal civil war with the LTTE.

President Trump offered "heartfelt condolences" to the people of Sri Lanka and said the US stood ready to help.

The US leader, however, erroneously wrote that "138 million people" were killed in the attacks instead of just 138.

"Heartfelt condolences from the people of the

United States to the people of Sri Lanka on the horrible terrorist attacks on churches and hotels that have killed at least 138 million people and badly injured 600 more. We stand ready to help!" Trump said in a tweet which was taken down after more than 20 minutes. Trump's remarks did not go unnoticed as the agile twitterati started poking fun at the appalling tweet.

"You might want to revise that death toll Donald Trump. Not everything is measured in millions. How 'heartfelt' can the condolences be if you aren't even concentrating on the message of condolence when sending it out?" said former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah. "138 million? Maybe you should wait for the facts pops," wrote one follower of the US president.

"We are a population of 20 million. 138 million is mathematically impossible. Keep your icky condolences, we don't want it," responded another user. "138 million! More than the population of Sri Lanka. We are now an empty Country as per Donald!!" tweeted another follower. Sri Lanka has a total population of around 21.7 million.

Trump is known for his wrong tweets and for using embarrassing nicknames as well as 'mispronouncing names' of people such as "Jeff Bozo" in reference to Jeff Bezos of Amazon.

In March, he mistakenly referred to Apple CEO Tim Cook as "Tim Apple", a verbal slip which netizens poked fun at by sharing rib-tickling memes on social media. Last year, he had called Lockheed Martin CEO Marillyn Hewson "Marillyn Lockheed."

No changes needed in citizenship bill if Clause 6 implemented properly: Sonowal

TRIDEEP LAHKAR

GUWAHATI, APR 21 (PTI): The citizenship bill does not require any changes if Clause 6 of the Assam Accord is implemented properly, says Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal about the proposed legislation which the top BJP leadership has vowed to bring back if voted back to power. In an interview to PTI, the student leader-turned politician said the bill will be brought after arriving at a consensus with all stakeholders.

"It (amending the Act) is not a new thing as amendments were taken up nine times before this also. This is a continuous process since 1950," he said, adding the BJP will ensure constitutional safeguards to Northeast's political, cultural, social and linguistic identity.

When asked if the Assam government will request the Centre to make necessary changes in the existing bill to allay apprehensions of the people here, Sonowal said that is not needed if the Clause 6 of the Assam Accord is implemented properly. The Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, which was signed in 1985 after the Assam Agitation of 1979-85, envisages that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, should be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the people of Assam.

"If Clause 6 is implemented in letter and spirit, then the indigenous people of Assam are well guarded and protected. That was the agenda ought to be taken up on priority by earlier governments, but it was never seriously considered, Sonowal said. "Now the prime minister has taken up the matter with sincerity, commitment and dedication. So, I believe once it is implemented, we have nothing to worry. If Clause 6 is implemented, we have no issue with the citizenship bill, even if it comes in the current form, he added.

Several groups and parties have opposed the bill, which was passed by the Lok Sabha on January 8 but was not tabled in Rajya Sabha and seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after six years of residence in India even if they do not possess any document.

Interestingly, though the BJP top brass has been talking about the citizenship bill in poll rallies, the state leaders have not raised the issue in their meetings and speeches.

State minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier said that the citizenship bill was a non-issue in the state and the people are more concerned about national issues.

Sonowal also took a dig at the proposed 'mahagathbandhan' of opposition parties saying the ambitious grouping is dreaming of dethroning Prime Minister Narendra Modi but will "collapse soon" as it does not have any policy on patriotism, integration and service to the nation.

He claimed the constituents of this 'grand alliance' are together during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections only for their vested interests.

"They do not have any policy of integration, service to nation and pa-

triotism. The 'mahagathbandhan' is mainly just to get power. They are all with vested interest," he said. The members usually stay different, but sometimes they come on the same platform but with different self interests, he added.

"So, there is no national interest in it. I have not seen any national interest within themselves. That is why, I firmly believe that it will collapse soon," he asserted.

Sonowal was once president of the influential All Assam Students' Union (AASU), which has been at the forefront of the protests against the citizenship bill across the Northeast in the past several months. When told out that the concerns raised by people of Assam and the Northeast were not taken into account while drafting the bill, he disagreed and said the Clause 6 has been taken at the highest level for the first time in the history.

"It is Modi ji who has taken it up and ultimately constituted a high-level committee by the Union Cabinet comprising only Assamese people from different fields. It was given very clear terms of references. The committee has been asked to prepare a report on how Constitutional safeguards can be ensured in best possible manner," he added.

The existence of the nine-member committee is in a lurch with its fifth member and chairman M P Bezbaruah withdrawing from it in January. The other four members refused to be a part of it in protest of the Citizenship Bill, are a representative of the AASU, eminent literateurs Nagen Saikia and Rong Bong Terang along with educationist Mukunda Rajbongshi.

Passion for police job drives man to play cop

HYDERABAD, APR 21 (PTI): Passion for a police job drove a 29-year-old man, who was a B Tech dropout, to don the role of an assistant commissioner, but the bluff was called off by the Telangana police who apprehended the man here, police said Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team Saturday caught MV Ravichandra, who was moving about in Secunderabad by introducing himself as the assistant commissioner of police and deputy superintendent of police in the Intelligence wing, a press release from the police said.

During interrogation, Ravichandra reportedly told investigators he had a passion for working in the police force and had claimed before his friends and neighbours he was selected as a DSP in 2012 and was since working in the Intelligence department, the release said.

Fake police identity cards, police uniform and other incriminating material were seized from Ravichandras possession, it said.

Ramachandra was once arrested in 2015 for beating up a person by impersonating as a DSP and was remanded in judicial custody, it said.

Later even after being released, he continued to play the role of a police official till he was arrested Saturday.

Pak puts on display documents of Jallianwala Bagh massacre



M ZULQERNAIN

LAHORE, APR 21 (PTI): For the first time in its history, Pakistan has put on display rare documents of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre to mark its 100th anniversary.

The six-day exhibition showcasing about 70 historical documents related to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and Martial Law in Punjab in April 1919 opened at the Lahore Heritage Museum here on Saturday. A year earlier, Pakistan had exhibited the archives of the trial of revolutionary leader Bhagat Singh in Lahore.

The massacre took place at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar (undivided Punjab) during the Baisakhi festival on April 13, 1919, when troops of the British Indian Army under the command of Colonel Reginald Dyer opened fire at a crowd of people holding a pro-independence demonstration, leaving scores dead.

"The government has decided to showcase archives of different historical events and famous personalities so that people could know what had happened during

that period," Abbas Chughtai, Pakistan's Punjab province government's archive department director, told PTI.

Chughtai said that the archived documents are displayed to mark the massacre's centenary year and the practice will continue in coming days as well.

"We are also planning to exhibit the documents related to the work of Rudyard Kipling," he said.

"We urge people to visit the Lahore Heritage Museum and go through the pages of history," he said, adding that the exhibition will go on till April 26.

The documents include different number of Martial Law Order, copy of the ordinance regarding continuance of trials held by Commissions and Summary Courts, expulsion order of 47 students of different colleges of Lahore in connection with disturbances and a copy of the questions raised by Lord Sydenhamin House of Lords, England about sentence passed by martial law commission to Muhammad Bashir, whose proclamation was an immediate cause in

bringing a large mob to Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919.

A copy of assistant commissioner Murree's letter about sending European and Anglo Indians to Murree from Lahore for their safety during the disturbances, a copy of the report about outbreak of disturbances in Lahore, Amritsar, Kasur, Ahmadabad and Patna and the Rawalpindi governor's letter to the chief secretary to declare martial law in Jehlum to teach the people discipline as a punishment for throwing stone on Mr Barton's car, the deputy commissioner of Rawalpindi also features the exhibition.

About the death toll in the massacre, the 3rd September letter of deputy commissioner Amritsar in the documents reported the final figure of death at Jallianwala Bagh to 291 including two women and five children, a copy of notice both in Urdu and Hindi language informing them about how many were killed in the massacre, a letter of the deputy commissioner informing about whipping of school boys in Lahore.

BJP releases animated videos to target Opposition

NEW DELHI, APR 21 (PTI): The BJP on Sunday took to animation videos to mock Congress chief Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders with a series of sports-based animated clips to accuse them of seeking proof of the Balakot terror strike and to assert Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invincibility against a fragmented challenge in Lok Sabha polls. The videos, released through the saffron party's official Twitter handle and

by its senior party leaders including Arun Jaitley and Piyush Goyal, sought to draw analogies from cricket, chess, tug of war, kabaddi and other sports to show "confusion" and differences among the opposition parties.

Almost all the videos prominently presented Modi as a hero single-handedly taking on the opposition leaders on various issues including corruption and fight

against terror. In one cricket-based animated clip, Modi has been shown as hitting a six to win the match, while opposition leaders are shown questioning the empire on his decision to declare the shot a sixer and demanding a "proof".

Tagging the video in his tweet, Jaitley said, "Which Indian asks for proof of India's victory? Those asking for proof would be defeated again and the Modi government

would come again." In another video, Modi is shown single-handedly taking on a group of opposition leaders in a game of Kabbadi and eventually emerging victorious.

Talking about these videos, BJP's Information Technology (IT) cell head Amit Malviya said, The idea was to communicate the party's message to the electorate in a manner they will relate to and find interesting." The animated videos

were tweeted by various senior BJP leaders, besides from the official handle of the party.

The BJP leaders said the videos are in line with the party's campaign theme, launched on April 7, to ask the voters to select Prime Minister's "cohesive and tested" government against what the party describes as "chaos and mahamillawat" offered by the Opposition.

Modi has been at the centre of

the party's campaign for regaining power in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections with the tagline of "Phir ek bar, Modi sarkar" (Modi government, once again). The seven-phase elections began on April 11 and voting would continue through May 19, followed by counting of votes on May 23 for all 543 seats. While voting for the first two phases have taken place, the third phase is scheduled for April 23.

Was never too confident to be part of Bhansali, Rajamouli's films: Alia Bhatt

MUMBAI, APR 21 (PTI): Alia Bhatt, touted as one of the most sought-after young actors in Bollywood, says she was "never confident" of being part of two eminent filmmakers Sanjay Leela Bhansali and S S Rajamouli's films.

Alia feels overwhelmed to be directed by two renowned directors Bhansali and Rajamouli in "Inshallah" and "RRR" respectively. She finds both of them similar, when it comes to their passion for cinema.

"For me the bigness, the high is to be working with these two directors. There is a similarity between them, I think they are both obsessed with their films.

"They have got such a clear vision with what they do. They are so creative, it is all artistic. I was never too confident that I will be part of either of their films," Alia told PTI.

It was a long wait for Alia, who had auditioned for Bhansali's 2005 movie "Black" at the age of nine, but was rejected.

She adds, "I was hoping for many years to work with him. When one day news came up that he is doing a film I was like why isn't he coming to me. When he did come to me, I was over the moon."

"Inshallah" will see her sharing screen space with superstar Salman Khan for the first time.

Talking about how her pairing with Salman will be presented in the film,

Alia says, "I don't want to talk much about it. I would just say let's wait for the magician being, Mr Bhansali to reveal its traits.

bumped into Rajamouli sir at an airport and I begged him that whatever part he has (for me) I will do it. That time he had not casted for the girl yet.



"He has a certain idea and vision for this film and he will put it out there in front of the world. Till then we should not say much. This film is lovely in every aspect -- be it the story or the world that he is creating."

The shoot for the film is likely to begin from August. And it will co-produced by Salman and Bhansali's production banners and is reportedly set to arrive in cinema houses during Eid next year.

The "Kalank" actor is equally excited about "RRR", her first Telugu film. And she has started learning the language.

"The Telugu lessons are hard but I am picking it up fast," she adds.

Recollecting her chance encounter with Rajamouli, Alia reveals, "I had

"He said he was anyway talking about my timelines. So I told him whatever be the timelines, I will make it happen. We made it happen."

The film stars N T Rama Rao Jr., Ram Charan Teja in the lead and Ajay Devgn in a cameo appearance. It is scheduled to release on July 30, 2020.

The 26-year-old actor was also rumoured to be working with Aamir Khan on a project based on the life of late spiritual leader Rajneesh, popularly known among his followers as Osho.

Commenting on the film, Alia says, "That is not like a confirmed thing so we should not talk about it. I don't want to talk about the details of what is happening. It is all underway.



SOFITEL: Dancing With the Stars pros Maksim Chmerkovskiy and Peta Murgatroyd celebrate LAPALME Magazine's Spring Issue cover launch with a party hosted by creative director Derek Warburton.

Jenna Dewan recalls 'very intense year' after split with Channing Tatum



LOS ANGELES, APR 21 (PTI): Jenna Dewan says the past one year following her separation from former husband Channing Tatum was "very intense".

Dewan said she wrote about her experiences in the book "Gracefully You: How to Live Your Best Life Every Day". "It's kind of a combination of a lot of things. It's no secret that I had a very intense year and a lot of change," the 38-year-old actor said.

She was in conversation with actor John Cena, who filled in for host Ellen DeGeneres on her show. Dewan and Tatum, 38, who started dat-

ing after they starred opposite each other in the 2006 dance film "Step Up", announced their split in 2018. They separated after eight years of marriage and share five-year-old daughter, Everly.

"I'm a hippie at heart. I'm sort of a seeker. I like to do practices and rituals and things that sort of connect me to something greater than myself, bigger than myself.

"Through that, I used a lot of those techniques to help me through change. There's a lot of personal stories; there's a lot that I go into... It was really cathartic and fun to write this," Dewan said.

Northeast's first anthology film screened in Guwahati



GUWAHATI, APR 21 (PTI): Three filmmakers have come together to create an anthology in Assamese language, the first of its kind in the northeast, centered around themes of existentialism and loneliness.

'Ji Golpor Ses Nai' (never-ending stories), which premiered in Guwahati earlier this week, is a collection of short stories, tied to a single premise. With Assam as the backdrop, one of the shorts is about the inexplicable influence of a person on another.

'Ardha Satya', directed by Prodyut Kumar Deka, is based on a tale written by Guy de Maupassant and has Pankaj Mahanta and Kalpana Kalita in the lead.

'Epitaph', the second short directed by Prasant Saikia, has Himangshu Prasad Das playing the protagonist.

Adapted from one of the works of Sahitya Akademi award-winning Assamese author and journalist Homen Borgohain, the story delves deep into the life of struggling writ-

er and his love life.

The third short, 'Prasnabudhok', is based on a story by French novelist Honore de Balzac. Directed by Utpal Datta, the film talks about the constant struggle for desired space between husband and wife.

Datta, an independent filmmaker, said loneliness is a fundamental part of a human life.

"Loneliness may seem an unusual topic for a film. It doesn't sound very dramatic, but it's a fundamental part of being human," he said.

Pointing out that Assamese cinema took 80 years to make an anthology, Datta said 'Ji Golpor Ses Nai' has three different stories, tied together by one theme.

The three shorts, produced by Pallabi Borah, Krishna Kalita and Namrata Datta, have used similar strategies to portray human emotions -- diminishing long shots, recurring motifs and empty spaces.

'Sirikkathe', a Tamil production released in 1939, is considered to be the first anthology film in India.

K-Pop Girl Group GFriend to Perform in Singapore This July



It's going to be a Sunny Summer in Singapore! K-pop girl group GFriend just announced that they will be staging a performance in Singapore at The Star Theatre on 20 July.

Fans can expect hits such as "LOVE WHISPER", "Love Bug" and "Mermaid" to be performed on stage — as well as some slick choreography that will be sure to mesmerise and delight Buddies.

Prices for tickets start at \$148, \$188 and \$228, and will go on sale on 20 April at 10am. Of course, as part of their tour, GFriend will also be providing some top notch fan service. 250 Category 1 and 200 Category 2 ticket holders will stand a chance to attend a hi-touch session with the girl group members, while 150 Category 1 and 100 Category 2 ticket holders will be able to head into the concert venue for their sound check.

What's more, Category 1 ticket holders will also have extra benefits. 50 lucky fans will receive signed posters from the group, while 30 will be able to take a group photo with their K-pop idols. This marks the girl group's second concert in Singapore since 2016.

ARIES: Your birthday season draws to a close this Saturday as the Sun leaves your sign, shifting into Taurus and your practical second house of work and money. It's time to roll up your sleeves and get down to business! Ease your way into this transition by incorporating daily practices like better budgeting and catching up on bills as opposed to trying to overhaul everything at once.

TAURUS: The Sun beams into Taurus from Saturday until May 20, igniting your birthday season and all kinds of fresh starts. Put the bubbly on ice, Bull—this calls for a celebration! For the next four weeks, put your own agenda first. You may be resurfacing after doing some deep inner work, closing important chapters and creating space for all the exciting new things to enter your sphere.

GEMINI: Draw the blinds and hang the Do Not Disturb sign. This Saturday, the Sun slips into Taurus and your twelfth house of rest and closure, giving you cosmic permission to channel your inner hermit. For the next four weeks, the power of saying no will go a long

way. Use this cycle for deep healing if you've struggled to release a painful situation. Since the twelfth house rules the subconscious, you might benefit from seeing a therapist or energy healer. Steer clear of draining energy vampires.

CANCER: Come out, come out! On Saturday, the Sun zips into Taurus and your eleventh house of group activity, sparking synergies with new friends and business contacts. Use this cosmic mojo to spread your social-butterfly wings, hitting new scenes in your area or expanding your online following to widen your reach.

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: The devil's in the details, Virgo, but that doesn't mean you should get lost in them. Yes, your meticulous sign loves to read between the lines, but sometimes you risk missing the big picture by being so fastidious. On Saturday, the Sun soars into your visionary ninth house, broadening your horizons and encouraging higher-minded thinking. This transit stokes your wanderlust.

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:** Spring awakening? More like a mini hibernation. Chez Aquarius has never looked so appealing. After a social month, the Sun decamps to Taurus and your cozy fourth house, activating your domestic bliss until May 20. You've been on the go and are nearly running on empty, but thankfully the stars give you permission to unwind and nest. Spruce up your digs so you can feel more at home. Then invite your close friends over for dinner instead of going out every night!

PISCES: How well do you really know your neighborhood, Pisces? On Saturday, the Sun glides into your community-oriented third house and encourages you to explore fresh terrain in your own backyard. For the next four weeks, locally sourced is the name of the game. Hang up your car keys and explore your town by foot or go check out an up-and-coming district. Chat up fellow residents at the coffee shop, see an art exhibit or peruse the culture listings for what's happening near you.