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Volume-05

Issue-245

Dt. 09-04-2019 Tuesday

V.S. 2075

Chetra Shud-04

Page-04

Rs. 00.50 paisa

U.K. court rejects Vijay Mallya's plea against extradition

(Day Today) His legal team can make a renewal application for a brief oral hearing before the same court, in another attempt to push for an appeal hearing. The U.K. High Court on Monday rejected fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya's plea to appeal against his extradition to India. In February, the U.K.'s Home Office said the government signed an order to extradite Mr. Mallya to face charges of fraud and money laundering following the judgment handed down

by Westminster Magistrates Court Chief Magistrate Emma Arbuthnot in December 2018. Subsequently, Mr. Mallya filed an application in the High Court, seeking permission to appeal against the extradition. However, a judge at London's High Court rejected Mr. Mallya's application for permission to appeal against the extradition order, which was passed on April 5 by Justice William Davis. Mr. Mallya launched his application to appeal to the High Court after

Home Secretary Sajid Javid signed the extradition order in early February. It is, however, not necessarily the end of the story. This application to appeal was made on paper — via the exchange of documents between the judge and both sides. Now Mr. Mallya's legal team can make a renewal application for a brief oral hearing before the same court (but not before the judge), in another attempt to push for an appeal hearing. If it were to be rejected at this stage,

there would be no further recourse in terms of the appeal process. "The appellant has five business days to apply for oral consideration," a spokesperson for the judiciary explained. "If a renewal application is made, it will be listed before a High Court judge and dealt with at a hearing." Mr. Mallya, wanted in India for alleged fraud and money laundering amounting to an estimated 79,000 crores, is currently on bail on an extradition warrant in the U.K.

BJP releases election manifesto; promises Ram temple, firm hand in dealing with terror and a \$5 trillion economy

(Day Today) Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the launch of BJP's election manifesto for the upcoming parliamentary elections, in New Delhi on Monday. Released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the 'Sankalp Patra' assures people of a transparent, strong and decisive government. With the aim of achieving another stint in power, the BJP on Monday made a string of promises, including expeditious construction of a Ram temple, a firm hand in dealing with terrorism and doubling farmers income in the next three years. The party also promised to make India the third largest economy globally by 2030 and scrap Article 370 that gives special status to Jammu and Kashmir if it comes back to power. Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the manifesto, titled 'Sankalp Bharat, Sashakt Bharat' (Determined India, Empowered India), in the presence of party chief Amit Shah and other top leaders, including Rajnath Singh, Sushma Swaraj and Arun Jaitley. The 'Sankalp Patra' comes three days before the first of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections begins (April 11). Prime Minister Narendra Modi, flanked by BJP president Amit Shah and Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, releases the party's election manifesto at the organisation's headquarters in New Delhi on April 8, 2019. In the manifesto, the BJP also resolved to annul Article 35A of the Constitution that says no outsider can own property in Jammu and Kashmir. On the economic front, the BJP said it aspired to make India the third largest economy of the world by 2030. "This implies that we commit to make India a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 and USD 10 trillion economy by 2032," it said. The party promised that it will continue with the simplification of the GST process by engaging in dialogue with all stakeholders. The party said purchase of defence equipment will be fast-tracked to strengthen the armed forces and it will continue with its approach of zero tolerance towards terrorism if voted to power. Security forces will continue to get a free hand to deal with terrorism, the document stated. The party said it will implement NRC (National Register of Citizens) in a phased manner in various parts of the country. About Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP said, "We reiterate our position since the time of the Jan Sangh to the abrogation of Article 370. We are committed to annulling Article 35A of the Constitution of India as the provision is discriminatory against non-permanent residents and women of Jammu and Kashmir." Mr. Modi wrote in the preface of the manifesto, "Let us work towards building a strong and inclusive India, whose citizens are assured of dignity, prosperity, security and opportunity." In his write-up in the manifesto, Mr. Shah said, "In its tenure of five years, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi



has been able to take many decisions which are historic and has ushered in a comprehensive and fundamental transformation." He also referred to various schemes and decisions of the government, including Swachh Bharat Mission, Ujjawala Yojana, Saubhagya Yojana, demonetisation, GST, September 2016 surgical strikes and the February last Balakot air strike. "Transparent, strong and decisive government" Speaking at the event to launch the manifesto, Mr. Shah said the party promises the countrymen a transparent, strong and decisive government and urged voters to bring the party back to power. Mr. Modi had provided a decisive government in the last five years and dared to carry out a surgical strike and an air strike on the foundation of terror. With the strikes on terror, the Modi-led government had sent out the strong message that India cannot be taken lightly, he said. India's development from 2014 to 2019 would be written in golden words in history. Head of the party's manifesto committee Rajnath Singh called the mani-

festos a "vision document". The Union government was fully committed to nationalism and zero tolerance towards terrorism. "Our 'Sankalp Patra' is a vision document that lists the expectations of 130 crore Indians," he said. The BJP was committed to implementing a uniform civil code in the country and all alternative options would be explored for the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh in the most conducive manner. The party would ensure the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament with utmost respect to every State's cultural values, he said. Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said the party was committed to annulling Article 35 A of the Constitution, which provided special rights and privileges to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The provision was discriminatory against non-permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir. When the country was at the cusp of history, making most of all its lost opportunities, did it require a fragile government or a decisive one, he asked. The pre-

vious governments only gave slogans, but the Modi-led administration gave resources to the poor, he claimed. Will support the construction of a Ram temple in the disputed site in Ayodhya. "All alternative options will be explored for its construction in a most conducive manner." Will ensure the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament with utmost respect to every State's cultural values. A sum of Rs 25 lakh crore will be spent on rural development in the next five years. Will give Rs 6,000 yearly income support to farmers and pension to small and marginal farmers above 60 years of age. Will establish 75 new medical colleges and post-graduate colleges. Will strengthen the strike capabilities of the armed forces by giving them modern equipment. Committed to annulling Article 35 A of Constitution as the provision is "discriminatory against non-permanent residents of J&K." A National Register for Citizens (NRC)-like exercise will be conducted in States in a phased manner.



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Vice Adm Bimal Verma moves tribunal over supersession

File photo of Vice Admiral Bimal Verma. Credit: Special arrangement. The Armed Forces Tribunal is likely to take up Vice Adm Bimal Verma's petition on Tuesday. Vice Admiral Bimal Verma moved the Armed Forces Tribunal on Monday over his supersession and appointment of Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Chief of Naval Staff (CNS). Vice Adm Verma approached the AFT to know why he was superseded for the top post despite being the senior most, a defence official confirmed. The petition is likely to be taken up on Tuesday. Vice Adm Verma is currently the Chief of Andaman and Nicobar based triservice command and is the younger brother of former Navy Chief Admiral Nirmal Verma. Last month the Government an-



nounced the appointment of Vice Adm Singh as the 24th Navy Chief once incumbent CNS Admiral Sunil Lanba retires on May 31 on completing three years in office. Vice Admiral Bimal Verma would be the senior most officer in the Navy once Admiral Lanba

retires and he will be in office till November. But Vice Admiral Singh will now supersede him. The government had earlier overlooked a senior officer in the appointment of General Bipin Rawat as Chief of Army Staff in 2016.

I-T raids continue for second day against people linked to Kamal Nath

Officials entering the residential premises of Rajendra Miglani, former adviser to Kamal Nath, in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI. The Income-Tax Department's searches against close aides of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath and others continued on Sunday, officials said. Officials said the searches, on charges of alleged tax evasion and hawala transactions during the ongoing poll season, are continuing at various premises in Bhopal, Indore and in the National Capital Region, including Delhi, as tax sleuths are gathering details and evidences. While there is no official word on the exact amount of cash seized,

sources said over 10 crore suspected cash has been seized till now. At least half-a-dozen people, linked to alleged hawala dealer Paras Mal Lodha, are being questioned by the department. The department had launched pre-dawn raids at 52 locations on Sunday on people and associates linked to Mr. Nath. Sources had told PTI that there is a "strong possibility" of the cash recovered during the operation being used as an election inducement to fund political campaigns and bribe voters in the poll-bound State and in Delhi. A preliminary report of the raids was also shared by the department with the Central Board of

Direct Taxes and the Election Commission in Delhi. A cash van with large-sized trunks has been sent by the department at a location in Bhopal to seize and collect the cash found during the raids, they said. Those searched included Mr. Nath's former Officer on Special Duty (OSD) Pravin Kakkar, former adviser Rajendra Miglani, Ashwani Sharma and executives linked to his brother-in-law's firm Moser Bayer and his nephew Ratul Puri's company. Mr. Nath had reacted late Sunday to the development. The department had launched pre-dawn raids at 52 locations on Sunday on people and associates linked to

Mr. Nath. Sources had told PTI that there is a "strong possibility" of the cash recovered during the operation being used "The situation about the I-T raids is not clear yet. It would be appropriate to speak on this after the situation is clear. But the entire country knows how the constitutional institutions were used and against whom they were used during the past five years," he had said. "These institutions were used to scare people. When they do not have anything to say on development and their work, they used this kind of tactics against their opponents," a statement released by the Chief Minister read.

Editorial

Capital high: foreign investment in India



Foreign investors appear to have rediscovered India. The inflow of foreign capital into India's stock market in the month of March hit a high of \$4.89 billion, the biggest foreign inflow into Indian stocks since February 2012. As a result, the stock market rose a solid 8% in March. Foreign investment in Indian equities stood at \$2.42 billion in February, as against a net outflow of \$4.4 billion during the same month a year earlier, and is expected to be strong in April as well. Both cyclical and structural factors are behind this sudden uptick in foreign investment that has helped the rupee make an impressive comeback. The rupee has appreciated by about 7% since early October, when it was reeling at around 74 against the dollar. Last year, India received more foreign direct investment than China for the first time in two decades. While the Chinese economy has been slowing down considerably in the last one year, India has emerged as the fastest-growing major economy. Doubts over the robustness of the GDP calculation method notwithstanding, it is clear that investors expect India to be a major source of global growth in the coming years. Other short-term reasons may also be behind some of the recent inflow of capital into the country. For one, there is a sense among a section of investors that their fears of political instability are misplaced. More important, there are clear signs that western central banks have turned dovish. Both the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, for instance, have promised to keep interest rates low for longer. This has caused investors to turn towards relatively high-yielding emerging market debt. Indian mid-cap stocks, which suffered a deep rout last year, are now too attractive to ignore for many foreign investors. The return of foreign capital is obviously a good sign for the Indian economy. But policymakers need to be careful not to take foreign investors for granted. Other emerging Asian economies will be competing hard to attract foreign capital, which is extremely nimble. Any mistake by policymakers will affect India's image as an investment destination. To retain investor confidence, whichever government comes to power after the general election this summer will need to increase the pace of structural reforms and also ensure proper macroeconomic management with the help of the Reserve Bank of India. The rupee has appreciated by about 7% since early October, when it was reeling at around 74 against the dollar. Last year, India received more foreign direct investment than China for the first time in two decades. While the Chinese economy has been slowing down considerably in the last one year, India has emerged as the fastest-growing major economy. Doubts over the robustness of the GDP calculation method notwithstanding, it is clear that investors expect India to be a major source of global growth in the coming years. Other short-term reasons may also be behind some of the recent inflow of capital into the country. For one, there is a sense among a section of investors that their fears of political instability are misplaced. More important, there are clear signs that western central banks have turned dovish. Both the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, for instance, have promised to keep interest rates low for longer. Long-pending reforms to the labour and land markets are the most pressing structural changes that will affect India's long-term growth trajectory. The high fiscal deficit of both the Centre and the State governments and the disruptive outflow of foreign capital are the other macroeconomic challenges. These are some issues that need to be solved sooner rather than later.

Military redlines and, most Undeniably, Domestic Political Considerations

(Gns. News) The possibility of the ongoing India-Pakistan military stand-off spiralling out of control cannot be overstated, given the high stakes involved with regard to national reputations, military redlines and, most undeniably, domestic political considerations. The limited air war over the Line of Control (LoC), shooting down of each other's aircraft and, equally importantly, the capture of an Indian fighter pilot by Pakistan have further complicated what was initially believed to be a crisis that might not go beyond round one (the terror attack in Pulwama and the Indian air strikes on Balakot). With Wednesday's limited air war, the two sides completed round two, and it's been anyone's guess what round three may entail. Thursday's late evening joint press briefing by the three services gave no definite indication of de-escalation even though the tone of the conference did not suggest escalation. In days ahead, if there is no clear de-escalation, we are likely to witness more fire assaults on the LoC with high calibre weapons and stand-off strikes without crossing the border using short-range air-to-surface or surface-to-surface missiles against each other. In so far as this does not involve more pilot captures, deep strikes in each other's territories and extending to the International Boundary sector, it could still potentially remain contained. But, as they say, miscalculations and mistakes can easily take place in the fog of war whereby the stand-off could move up the next rung of escalation. Let's take a step back and recapture how we got to two rungs up the escalatory ladder. To begin with, by carrying out a daring air strike deep inside the Pakistani mainland, India crossed the redline, from the Pakistani point of view. It meant clear and present reputational damage for the Imran Khan government as well as the Pakistan military. Their retaliatory strike against India was something they felt compelled to undertake. On the Indian side, coming in the run-up to the general election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government couldn't have but responded to a terror attack that took the lives of 40 of its men in uniform. A military response was expected, but choosing to strike inside mainland Pakistan was perhaps not wise. But then, New Delhi's war planners were also trying to stretch the success of the surgical strikes of 2016 (since Pakistan didn't respond to them) by extending its scope beyond Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), a strategy that may not have panned out as planned. From a more conceptual point of view, by carrying out a strike against Pakistan in its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, India wanted to create a new military normal between the two sides, i.e.



counter-terror air strikes inside Pakistan would now be a regular feature, something, one could argue, straight out of the American and Israeli counter-terror playbooks. If Pakistan had faked ignorance of an attack in Balakot, which it initially did, or decided not to respond to it, India would have set the new military normal in stone. Moreover, yet another denial from Rawalpindi would have run the risk of Pakistan's military threats being rendered hollow and the associated conventional and nuclear bluffs being called, in full public view. Knowing fully well the implications of a non-response, Pakistan therefore opted for, I would say, a minimal air strike across the LoC. What further complicated matters for the Pakistani war planners was India's use of the phrase 'non-military pre-emptive strike'. While the term 'non-military' was meant to signal to Pakistan that the attack was against the terror camp and not against its military, the 'pre-emptive' part was unacceptable to the Pakistani side, I would imagine. A successful, and un-responded to, Indian pre-emptive strike, once again from the American playbook, would have meant that India could now keep the option of striking anywhere inside Pakistan to take out terror camps which it believes poses a threat to India. Recall that the 2016 surgical strikes were projected as a 'retaliatory strike' than a 'pre-emptive one', unlike the attack on Balakot. That again, would have been a major problem for Pakistan. In that sense, this week's escalation is the fallout of a misplaced Indian belief that it could change the military normal between the two sides, and the Pakistani refusal to let that happen. To that extent, if the crisis doesn't escalate any further, Pa-

kistan would have successfully dissuaded India from altering the status quo. Given the fact that round two of the military engagement so far has been confined to the LoC skies, it is possible to argue that the two countries want to keep the engagement limited with the possibility of some air skirmishes and then perhaps call it quits. If the limited spatial scope of the strikes is indeed intentional, and not just a result of Pakistan limiting its attacks above the LoC, we could potentially look forward to more signalling for de-escalation, in addition to Pakistan's announcement that the captured IAF pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman, would be released "as a gesture of peace". And yet, there are several challenges to this assessment. For one, India did not gain any military advantage over Pakistan in round two, which makes it difficult for New Delhi to claim victory. More so, Pakistan's custody of an Indian pilot has made New Delhi look weak, and the BJP-led government certainly would not want to look weak in the run-up to the general election. Given that the first conventional shot was fired by India (even as the trigger was the terror attack in Pulwama), would it be possible for India to get off the escalation ladder with Pakistan taking the high moral ground with Wing Commander Varthaman's release? Equally important is the issue of how either side can convey to the other a desire for de-escalation without being seen as blinking first, if indeed there is a desire for de-escalation. At the end of the day, the BJP needs a victory over Pakistan, which the latter will not give without a war of attrition and the attendant dangers of escalation. India may not want to go

down that long-drawn-out path of uncertain outcomes, certain damage and difficulties of spinning narratives of victory and loss in the age of social media and instant communication, and with the Opposition ready to pounce on it. For arch-rivals such as India and Pakistan, public commitment on de-escalation is not a charming option given the potential future narratives about humiliation. Third party mediation also looks easier said than practised — Islamabad might not trust Washington as a neutral mediator, Moscow might not have enough interest, and Beijing's good offices will not find any takers in New Delhi. Unless there is some creative way the U.S. can discreetly mediate between the two countries, third party mediation is looking difficult. The other easier option is to open back-channel negotiations between the two sides. This has precedent in the India-Pakistan context. As a matter of fact, there were quiet back channel negotiations between Islamabad and New Delhi at the height of the Kargil conflict, even as the U.S. was trying to defuse tensions. If indeed the two countries are keen on taking this road, they would need to immediately send their respective back-channel emissaries, preferably to a third country, to hold discreet talks on how to de-escalate. India crossed the redline, from the Pakistani point of view. It meant clear and present reputational damage for the Imran Khan government as well as the Pakistan military. Their retaliatory strike against India was something they felt compelled to undertake. On the Indian side, coming in the run-up to the general

election, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government couldn't have but responded to a terror attack that took the lives of 40 of its men in uniform. A military response was expected, but choosing to strike inside mainland Pakistan was perhaps not wise. But then, New Delhi's war planners were also trying to stretch the success of the surgical strikes of 2016 (since Pakistan didn't respond to them) by extending its scope beyond Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), a strategy that may not have panned out as planned. From a more conceptual point of view, by carrying out a strike against Pakistan in its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, India wanted to create a new military normal between the two sides, i.e. counter-terror air strikes inside Pakistan would now be a regular feature, something, one could argue, straight out of the American and Israeli counter-terror playbooks. If Pakistan had faked ignorance of an attack in Balakot, which it initially did, or decided not to respond to it, India would have set the new military normal in stone. Moreover, yet another denial from Rawalpindi would have run the risk of Pakistan's military threats being rendered hollow and the associated conventional and nuclear bluffs being called, in full public view. Knowing fully well the implications of a non-response, Pakistan therefore opted for, I would say, a minimal air strike across the LoC. What further complicated matters for the Pakistani war planners was India's use of the phrase 'non-military pre-emptive strike'. While the term 'non-military' was meant to signal to Pakistan that the attack

was against the terror camp and not against its military, the 'pre-emptive' part was unacceptable to the Pakistani side, I would imagine. A successful, and un-responded to, Indian pre-emptive strike, once again from the American playbook, would have meant that India could now keep the option of striking anywhere inside Pakistan to take out terror camps which it believes poses a threat to India. Recall that the 2016 surgical strikes were projected as a 'retaliatory strike' than a 'pre-emptive one', unlike the attack on Balakot. That again, would have been a major problem for Pakistan. In that sense, this week's escalation is the fallout of a misplaced Indian belief that it could change the military normal between the two sides, and the Pakistani refusal to let that happen. To that extent, if the crisis doesn't escalate any further, Pakistan would have successfully dissuaded India from altering the status quo. Given the fact that round two of the military engagement so far has been confined to the LoC skies, it is possible to argue that the two countries want to keep the engagement limited with the possibility of some air skirmishes and then perhaps call it quits. If the limited spatial scope of the strikes is indeed intentional, and not just a result of Pakistan limiting its attacks above the LoC, we could potentially look forward to more signalling for de-escalation, in addition to Pakistan's announcement that the captured IAF pilot, Abhinandan Varthaman, would be released "as a gesture of peace". And yet, there are several challenges to this assessment. For one, India did not gain any military advantage over Pakistan in round two, which makes it difficult for New Delhi to claim victory. More so, Pakistan's custody of an Indian pilot has made New Delhi look weak, and the BJP-led government certainly would not want to look weak in the run-up to the general election. Given that the first conventional shot was fired by India (even as the trigger was the terror attack in Pulwama), would it be possible for India to get off the escalation ladder with Pakistan taking the high moral ground with Wing Commander Varthaman's release? Equally important is the issue of how either side can convey to the other a desire for de-escalation without being seen as blinking first, if indeed there is a desire for de-escalation. They would need to work out a solution which will be seen as a win-win deal even if in reality it might not be exactly so. Happyman Jacob teaches at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and is the author of 'Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics'

All Progressives Congress (APC) defeated his closest rival

(News Track) Abrupt postponement, chaos at polling stations and violence, all contributed to the lowest ever general election turnout Nigeria has just had its general election, its sixth since its return to democracy. Incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC) defeated his closest rival, Atiku Abubakar of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), by about four million votes. Despite pre-election promises of accepting the result, Mr. Abubakar has rejected the results, calling the election a "sham" and "militarised" and deciding to question it in court. There were 73 registered candidates in the fray. There are 91 registered political parties. With a population of nearly 200 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, accounting for 47% of west Africa's population. It comprises more than 300 ethnic groups. The numbers of Muslims and Christians are almost equal though the first seem to be politically dominant. Although 82.3 million voters were registered and their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) made, 11.2 million were not collected, denying over 13% of all registered voters an opportunity to vote. Though the observer missions found the register of voters to be generally robust, I feel the figure of 41% registered voters to be disproportionate to the total population. In India, nearly 62% of the population is registered as voters. Unlike India,



counting is done in the polling stations but the results are collated and declared at collation centres. It took seven days to announce the results of the presidential election while the collation of National Assembly elections is still going on. A federal republic with a presidential form of government, Nigeria has a bicameral National Assembly comprising the 109-member Senate and 360-member House of Representatives, both elected for four years. The country has 36 states (besides the Federal Capital Territory), each with an elected governor and a legislative assembly. It is Africa's biggest oil exporter and

has the largest natural gas reserves in the continent. Yet it ranks near the bottom of UNDP's Human Development Report, 2017, ranking 157 in 189 countries. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has enormous power and independence and is considered to be neutral and credible. Each state has a resident electoral commissioner, all appointed through a process of parliamentary ratification. When asked what his most important concerns were, INEC Chairman Mahmood Yakubu had mentioned security, fake news and hate speech, followed by 640 pending court cases and

expenditure control. Despite the experience of two good elections of 2011 and 2015 and assurances given by the INEC, the management of elections was fraught with all kinds of flaws. First, there was the last-minute postponement of the poll by a week, just six hours before its commencement, because of the collapse of logistics. This created extreme anger across the nation apart from causing enormous economic loss (estimated at \$10-25 billion). Then, despite the week's deferment, there were delays not only in the distribution of materials but also late arrival of polling staff, causing a late opening of poll-

ing stations. This in turn led to many procedures not being adhered to. Voting booths were often located too close to polling officials, polling agents and voters waiting to vote, potentially compromising the secrecy of the ballot. There are 91 registered political parties. With a population of nearly 200 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, accounting for 47% of west Africa's population. It comprises more than 300 ethnic groups. The numbers of Muslims and Christians are almost equal though the first seem to be politically dominant. Although 82.3 million voters were registered and their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) made, 11.2 million were not collected, denying over 13% of all registered voters an opportunity to vote. Though the observer missions found the register of voters to be generally robust, I feel the figure of 41% registered voters to be disproportionate to the total population. In India, nearly 62% of the population is registered as voters. Unlike India, counting is done in the polling stations but the results are collated and declared at collation centres. It took seven days to announce the results of the presidential election while the collation of National Assembly elections is still going on. A federal republic with a presidential form of government, Nigeria has a bicameral National Assembly comprising the 109-member Senate and 360-member House of Rep-

resentatives, both elected for four years. The country has 36 states (besides the Federal Capital Territory), each with an elected governor and a legislative assembly. It is Africa's biggest oil exporter and has the largest natural gas reserves in the continent. Yet it ranks near the bottom of UNDP's Human Development Report, 2017, ranking 157 in 189 countries. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has enormous power and independence and is considered to be neutral and credible. Each state has a resident electoral commissioner, all appointed through a process of parliamentary ratification. When asked what his most important concerns were, INEC Chairman Mahmood Yakubu had mentioned security, fake news and hate speech, followed by 640 pending court cases and expenditure control. Despite the experience of two good elections of 2011 and 2015 and assurances given by the INEC, the management of elections was fraught with all kinds of flaws. First, there was the last-minute postponement of the poll by a week, just six hours before its commencement, because of the collapse of logistics. The elections were also marred by sporadic incidents of violence before and on election day, besides destruction of voting materials, ballot-box snatching and bribing of voters. At least 39 people were killed in election-related violence. However, the death toll this time has been

lower than in previous national elections. Abrupt postponement, delays and chaos at polling stations and the violence, all contributed to the lowest ever turnout — 35.6%, down from 44% in 2015. In Lagos, there were only 1.1 million valid votes (just above 5% voted). Further, polling officials, security staff and other essential services personnel were unable to vote and were, therefore, deprived of their vote. There was also widespread failure of smart card readers as polling officials awaited technical assistance or replacements, compounding the problems. Despite the complaints of 'militarisation', police presence was generally discreet and helpful to the electoral process. A coalition of more than 70 civic organisations monitored the elections, which enhanced the credibility of the elections. The numbers of Muslims and Christians are almost equal though the first seem to be politically dominant. Although 82.3 million voters were registered and their Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) made, 11.2 million were not collected, denying over 13% of all registered voters an opportunity to vote. Though the observer missions found the register of voters to be generally robust, I feel the figure of 41% registered voters to be disproportionate to the total population. In India, nearly 62% of the population is registered as voters. Unlike India, counting is done in the polling stations but the results are collated and declared

at collation centres. It took seven days to announce the results of the presidential election while the collation of National Assembly elections is still going on. A federal republic with a presidential form of government, Nigeria has a bicameral National Assembly comprising the 109-member Senate and 360-member House of Representatives, both elected for four years. The country has 36 states (besides the Federal Capital Territory), Nigeria is of great interest to India, being its biggest trading partner. Over 135 Indian companies have a footprint in Nigeria, including the State Bank of India, New India Assurance and Mecon in the public sector and Bharti Airtel, Tata, Bajaj, Birla, Kirloskar and Mahindra in the private sector. The number of Indians is relatively small — about 50,000. Though we have substantial economic interests, there are no political favourites. But as the world's largest democracy, India has great interest in the success of the largest democracy of Africa. While the election commissions of the two countries have regular interactions and many officials have visited the flagship institution, the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management, there is need for enhanced engagement. S.Y. Quraishi is a former Chief Election Commissioner of India and the editor of 'The Great March of Democracy: Seven Decades of India's Elections'. He was a member of the Commonwealth Observer Group

BJP has 'copy-pasted' its 2014 document, says Congress

(News Track) BJP president Amit Shah (right), Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh (left) holding copies of the party's manifesto. Here are the day's election-related developments at a glance. BJP has 'copy-pasted' its 2014 document; Congress. The Congress criticised the BJP's manifesto, saying the ruling party has "simply copy-pasted" its 2014 poll document and changed all previous deadlines. Senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel said the BJP should have come out with a 'maafinama' (letter of apology) instead of a manifesto. In a series of tweets, he said the difference between the BJP's manifesto and that of the Congress could be seen from the cover page itself. "For its 2019 manifesto, BJP has simply copy-pasted its 2014 manifesto & changed all previous deadlines from 2019 to 2022, 2032, 2047, 2097. Luckily they didn't shift any deadlines to the next century," he wrote on the microblogging site. Mr. Patel also hit out at BJP leaders for not taking any questions after releasing the manifesto and compared that with Congress president Rahul Gandhi's interaction with journalists after releasing the poll document. We will throw the 'dacoit and liar' chowkidar out of power and politics: Mamata. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday sharpened her attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi by calling him a "dacoit and liar chowkidar" who looted public money during demonetisation. Ms. Banerjee mocked Mr. Modi for making films, television serial in his name. "Mr. Modi thinks he is a bigger public figure than Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar," she said. Hitting out at the Prime Minister for his comment at a public meet at Coochbehar district on Sunday that she and the TMC were suffering from a fear psychosis of him, she warned him "not to dare to threaten her" as it will be his "biggest mistake". "In the name of demonetisation he has looted public money and now ahead of elections, he is acting the chowkidar. This chowkidar is a looter and jhootha [watchman is dacoit and liar]. He is using public money in elections. After looting the country, he is promising ₹1,000, ₹2,000 for farmers. He should be ashamed. I have never seen such a liar Prime Minister in my life," she said. "Out of his five years ten-

ure, he has been touring the globe for four-and-a-half years. What was he doing when the farmers were committing suicide across the country? What was he doing when people died due to demonetisation and crores of people lost their jobs?" she asked. Criticising the BJP manifesto, which was released during the day, which promises bringing in Citizenship (Amendment) Bill and driving out infiltrators, she alleged that if Mr. Modi is re-elected, he would turn legal citizens into refugees. "If you vote for them [BJP], they will turn you all into refugees in your own country. We will never allow NRC and the Citizenship Bill in our State," she said. "Now when elections are knocking at the door, he [Mr. Modi] is threatening everybody and is telling lies all day. He will get the first prize if there is a competition for lying. In this election, people will put Leukoplast on his mouth so that he can't utter more lies. For the sake of the country he should not only be ousted from his chair but also ousted from politics," she said. During 2014 Mr. Modi promised to reopen closed tea gardens. "Did they keep their promise? No. Instead, we [TMC government] have opened the tea gardens," she claimed. — PTI Take notice of 'seditious' campaign by NC, PDP, Panun Kashmir tells ECI. Panun Kashmir, an organisation representing Kashmiri Pandit migrants, appealed to the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ban candidates of the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), from contesting the general election as they were running a "seditious and secessionist" campaign in the Valley. The campaign launched by the NC and the PDP that accession of Jammu and Kashmir with India was conditional and abrogation of Article 370 would lead to separation of the State from India was preposterous and had seditious connotation, the organisation said. "The NC and the PDP have embarked upon a brazenly seditious and secessionist campaign. They are virtually acting as overground flanks of Pakistan and the separatist establishment in Jammu and Kashmir," convenor of Panun Kashmir Agnishakher said. "We appeal to the ECI to take notice of the seditious nature of the election campaign launched by the NC and the PDP and ban their candidates from contesting the parliamen-

tary election," he said. NC vice-president Omar Abdullah last week said his party would not allow any attacks on Jammu and Kashmir's special status and would seek restoration of terms of accession of the State, including the provision for 'Sadr-e-Riyasat' (president) and prime minister posts. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti too said the relation of Jammu and Kashmir with India would end if the terms and conditions of the State's accession to the Union were changed. "2020 will also be a deadline from Jammu and Kashmir to the nation. If you remove those terms and conditions on which Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India, our relation with the country will also end," Ms. Mehbooba told reporters after filing her nomination papers for the Anantnag Lok Sabha constituency. Panun Kashmir said the two regional parties have rejected every view and policy of the Government of India pertaining to foreign affairs, defence and internal security. "The Election Commission of India cannot close its eyes to the seditious election campaign launched by both these parties," Panun Kashmir chairman Ajay Churungoo said. — PTI In a bid to reach out to voters, especially the young one, the Trinamool Congress and the BJP in West Bengal have extended their fight to the social media with innovative ideas and catchy jingles. From coming out with web series to catchy online songs to campaigns, both the parties are looking at making optimal use of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, besides traditional emails and SMS. Attacking the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the TMC has launched a web series "Pradhan Mantri Hisab Do" (Prime Minister, answer this). There is also a "Jumla meter" on Trinamool Congress' website showing whether or not claims made by the BJP especially on governance issues in West Bengal, are true. The BJP, on the other hand, has made the music video of "Main Bhi Chowkidar" campaign viral on social media. The Facebook page of the party's West Bengal unit livestreams all the public meetings of Mr. Modi and party president Amit Shah. A rally in Saharanpur, scheduled to be addressed by Congress president Rahul Gandhi and party's general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, has been cancelled. They

haven't been able to take off due to bad weather. Ms. Vadra will come to Saharanpur at 10 am tomorrow, says a local leader. A storm rips the tents at the Congress rally in Saharanpur before Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra reach. A local leader at the stage says this is the "storm of Hindu-Muslim unity, the storm of the Congress party" Manifesto is a reflection of people's aspiration, says Modi. The BJP's poll manifesto is a reflection of people's aspiration, "jan ke mann ki baat", according to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After launching the BJP's manifesto, he said: "An unprecedented scale of dialogue took place before the manifesto was finalised and it is the true spirit of democracy. "Three main themes emerge from the manifesto — Nationalism [our inspiration], Antyodaya [our philosophy] and Sushaasan or good governance [our mantra]. "While most governments are judged and set goals for five years we have set a mid-term goal of 75 promises to complete before 2022, the 75th anniversary of our independence. The biggest assessment of a government is not just what you did but whether you ensured last mile delivery. "We will create a new Jal Shakti ministry as well as one for fishermen as well. We want to work on how to reach tap water to all and create a special task force for it. I met many people of Tamil Nadu and we got the idea through crowdsourcing. "I have to work in five years to make up for all that should have been done in the last 60 years. We have kept the common man at the centre of our manifesto and our promises. "Only the poor can defeat poverty. Thus empowerment of poor is important, to start with small things to kindle aspirations. We want to trust the citizens of the country and therefore kept their strength at the centre of our programmes." Youth Congress workers at the Saharanpur rally of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra say they got these shirts made to wear today Prime Minister Narendra Modi released the BJP's manifesto at the party's headquarters in New Delhi in the presence of senior leaders Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley, and Sushma Swaraj among others. Termed 'Sankalp Patra,' the manifesto promises uniform civil code, the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Bill and reiterates the BJP's commitment to build a



Ram temple in Ayodhya. "If even part of the promises made by politicians in the past had been fulfilled, India would have been in a different standing. Prime Minister Modi has always said that this crisis of credibility should be addressed which we have tried to do in this document," said Home Minister Rajnath Singh, who is the chairperson of the party's manifesto committee. "We are committed to nationalism and we have a zero tolerance policy towards terrorism. We are committed to uniform civil code in the country. We will bring back the Citizenship Amendment Bill but we will also protect the cultural and ethnic identity of every State. We are committed to the construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya in an atmosphere of harmony," he said. In the manifesto, the party promised zero per cent rate of interest for up to 5 years on credit of upto ₹1 lakh on Kisan Credit Card. "All farmers to be given income support of ₹6000 p.a. no ceiling of 2 hectares ownership," said Mr. Singh. "We will bring in a national commission for trade. We will also give small shopkeepers a pension scheme after 60 years of age. We have determined 75 steps that we will take to build a New India till 2022 [75th anniversary of independence]. We will increase

seats in excellent engineering colleges and management institutes as well as in law colleges," he said. The party promises to provide power for every village and double the number of national highways. Mr. Singh said the party would ensure the passage of the Triple Talaq Bill. Amit Shah cancelled Maharashtra rallies as people didn't turn up: NCP The NCP claimed that BJP chief Amit Shah cancelled his rallies in Gadchiroli and Chandrapur districts of Maharashtra on Sunday as people did not turn up for the public meetings. For the sake of the country he should not only be ousted from his chair but also ousted from politics," she said. During 2014 Mr. Modi promised to reopen closed tea gardens. "Did they keep their promise? No. Instead, we [TMC government] have opened the tea gardens," she claimed. The BJP dismissed the claim, saying Mr. Shah's rallies were cancelled due to "technical reasons." Union Minister Hansraj Ahir and BJP MP Ashok Nete are seeking re-election as BJP nominees from Chandrapur and Gadchiroli-Chimur Lok Sabha seats respectively, which will go to the polls on April 11. "Amit Shah's two public meetings in Gadchiroli and Chandrapur were cancelled. The airplane is

an excuse, the real reason is people had not turned up," NCP national spokesperson Nawab Malik tweeted with the hashtag "23 May, BJP gone". Maharashtra BJP spokesperson Keshav Upadhye said, "Unlike the NCP's public meetings, BJP's rallies always receive a big response," he said. — PTI In manifesto, RJD promises implementation of Mandal Commission suggestions. The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) released its manifesto titled "Pratibadhat Patra (commitment document)" while promising to implement all the suggestions of the Mandal commission if voted to power. Party leader Tejashwi Yadav, along with party Rajya Sabha member Manoj Jha and State RJD chief Ram Chandra Purvey, released the manifesto at the party headquarters in Patna. "The RJD also agrees with the manifesto released by the Congress," said Mr. Tejashwi. The manifesto said that it "favours reservation for weaker section of the upper caste". Audio clip of Congress leader 'seeking money' leaked Amid the political heat in Mandya, Karnataka, thanks to a high-profile poll battle between Independent candidate Sumalatha and coalition nominee Nikhil K., an audio clip, allegedly of a phone conversation between veteran

Congress leader and Gandhian G. Made Gowda and JD(S) Minister C.S. Puttaraju in which the former is "seeking money" from the latter for election expenses, was leaked on Sunday. In the one-minute-55-second clip, a voice that is purportedly of Mr. Gowda asks the Minister to arrange money for party workers. It also says former MLC Madhu G. Made Gowda (son of Mr. Made Gowda) would collect the money. The voice, allegedly of Mr. Puttaraju replies that he would arrange for the money. Hours after the audio clip was leaked, Mr. Gowda admitted that he had asked for money. But he clarified that it was not for bribing voters, but for election expenses. Assam Chief Electoral Officer bans all political advertisements on polling day. He Chief Electoral Officer of Assam has banned all political advertisements in newspapers on election day and the preceding day of polling in the State unless these have been pre-certified by the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee at the State or district level. "In the context of Assam, the restricted days of advertisement are 10th and 11th April for Phase-I, 17th and 18th April for Phase-II, 22nd and 23rd April for Phase-III," a press release said.

'One more official in each booth will cut VVPAT delay'

(Day Today) In poll mode: State Election Commission officials provide training on how to operate EVMs and VVPATs. In poll mode: State Election Commission officials provide training on how to operate EVMs and VVPATs. Opposition parties file rejoinder to EC in Supreme Court. Deployment of one more official and an extra worktable in each polling booth will 'substantially reduce' the 5.2-day delay a proposed 50% VVPAT verification will cause in vote-counting in the Lok Sabha elections, Opposition parties countered the Election Commission of India (ECI) in the Supreme Court. The ECI had objected to the Opposition's idea of 50% random physical verification of VVPAT slips in each Assembly segment of a Parliamentary constituency or Assembly constituency in order to ensure free and fair General Elections in 2019, the first phase of which commences on April 11. The poll body had told the apex court that such an increase would create an "insurmountable difficulty" in the election process. It would lead to exactly 5.2 days of delay in vote-counting. The Opposition's rejoinder presented a counter-calculation under-cutting the poll body's math. "If the delay of 5.2 days is to be balanced with the integrity of electoral process, the balance will certainly tilt towards the latter... the delay of 5.2 days will occur only if the ECI chooses not to increase it," the Opposition said in its rejoinder. Putting one more person on the job of verifying VVPAT slips in each of the 50% polling booths in a constituency would reduce the period of vote-counting from 5.2 days to 2.6 days. The rejoinder is accompanied by a sworn affidavit

from Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and all the other leaders. "Sensitising one or more officials and providing one or more worktables for them is not an 'insurmountable difficulty' for the ECI by any stretch of imagination," the Opposition parties argued. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi is scheduled to hear the case on April 8. The Opposition said the ECI's estimate of six days (or 5.2 days to be exact) was based on the "assumption that even if the number of EVMs to be verified was increased, only one person would count all those increased numbers of EVMs, one after the other". So, ECI has calculated that if VVPAT verification in one polling booth requires one hour, 125 booths (50% polling booths) would need 125 hours. "It is quite obvious that if the number of EVMs to be verified is to be increased, the number of people deployed to count VVPAT slips will also have to be increased. The same person cannot count VVPAT slips of all the EVMs one after the other, as presumed by the ECI," the Opposition said. An extra person pitching in in each of the 50% polling booths to verify the VVPAT slips would reduce vote-counting time from 5.2 days to 2.6 days. If the decision, otherwise, is taken to verify VVPATs in 33% booths (83 booths), one more official on the job would reduce the vote-counting time from 3.5 days to 1.8 days. The poll body had told the apex court that such an increase would create an "insurmountable difficulty" in the election process. It would lead to exactly 5.2 days of delay in vote-counting. The Opposition's rejoinder presented a counter-calculation under-cutting the poll body's math. "If the delay of 5.2 days is to be balanced with the integrity of electoral process, the balance will certainly tilt to-

wards the latter... the delay of 5.2 days will occur only if the ECI chooses not to increase its present workforce at all, not even by one person. "Even if the VVPAT verification margin is further reduced to 25% voting booths (63 booths) in each constituency, an addition of one official in each of these booths would shorten the vote-counting time from 2.64 days to 1.31 days, the Opposition calculated. The Opposition said 50% VVPAT verification is necessary to instill public confidence in the integrity of electoral process. ECI has conveyed its belief in the secure design of the EVM-VVPATs, the elaborate procedural safeguards adopted for their usage, and finally, the fact that there have been zero errors in sample verifications so far. But the Opposition said EVMs were not "completely defectless". The Opposition said the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) report of March 22, which the ECI was relying on to resist the 50% verification, was "fundamentally erroneous". The report is "predicated on a flawed assumption, that is, the parliamentary elections conducted in 543 constituencies all over India and spread over a six-week period is a 'single homogeneous event'". "Election to each of the 543 constituencies is a separate and distinct event. Each Assembly Constituency or segment of 500 to 1000 booths is treated as a separate unit, the required sample size will still be in the range of 300-400, which translates to an average of 50%... the ISI report assumes EVMs are defectless," the Opposition said. It said the ISI report is like constructing a fire-resistant building under the assumption that fire will never occur in there. The rejoinder is accompanied by an affidavit sworn by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for him and all the other leaders.

US to designate Iran Revolutionary Guard a terrorist group

(Gns. News) Although the Guard has broad control and influence over the Iranian economy, such penalties from the U.S. may have limited impact. The designation, however, could significantly complicate U.S. military and diplomatic work, notably in Iraq, where many Shiite militias and Iraqi political parties have close ties to the Guard. And in Lebanon, where the Guard has close ties to Hezbollah, which is part of the Lebanese government. Without exclusions or waivers to the designation, U.S. troops and diplomats could be barred from contact with Iraqi or Lebanese authorities who interact with Guard officials or surrogates. The Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies have raised concerns about the impact of the designation if the move does not allow contact with foreign officials who may have met with or communicated with Guard personnel. Those concerns have in part dissuaded previous administrations from taking the step, which has been considered for more than a decade. It was not immediately clear whether the designation would include such carve-outs. In addition to those complications, American commanders are concerned that the designation may prompt Iran to retaliate against U.S. forces in the region, and those commanders plan to warn U.S. troops remaining in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere of that possibility, according to a third U.S. official. This official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, seemed to anticipate the designation, saying in a tweet Sunday aimed at President Donald Trump that Mr. Trump "should know better than to be conned into another US disaster." This would be just the latest move by the Trump administration to isolate Iran. Mr. Trump withdrew from the Obama administration's landmark nuclear deal with Iran in May 2018 and in the months that followed, reimposed punishing sanctions including those targeting Iran's oil, shipping and banking sectors. The Revolutionary Guard designation, planning for which was first reported by The Wall Street Journal, comes with sanctions, including freezes on assets the Guard may have in U.S. jurisdictions and a ban on Americans doing business with it or providing material support for its activities. Although the Guard has broad control and influence over the

Iranian economy, such penalties from the U.S. may have limited impact. The designation, however, could significantly complicate U.S. military and diplomatic work, notably in Iraq, where many Shiite militias and Iraqi political parties have close ties to the Guard. And in Lebanon, where the Guard has close ties to Hezbollah, which is part of the Lebanese government. Without exclusions or waivers to the designation, U.S. troops and diplomats could be barred from contact with Iraqi or Lebanese authorities who interact with Guard officials or surrogates. The Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies have raised concerns about the impact of the designation if the move does not allow contact with foreign officials who may have met with or communicated with Guard personnel. Those concerns have in part dissuaded previous administrations from taking the step, which has been considered for more than a decade. It was not immediately clear whether the designation would include such carve-outs. In addition to those complications, American commanders are concerned that the designation may prompt Iran to retaliate against U.S. forces in the region, and those commanders plan to warn U.S. troops remaining in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere of that possibility, according to a third U.S. official. This official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. Aside from Iraq, where some 5,200 American troops are stationed, and Syria, where some U.S. 2,000 troops remain, the U.S. 5th Fleet, which operates in the Persian Gulf from its base in Bahrain, and the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, are potentially at risk. A similar warning is also expected from the State Department of possible Iranian retaliation against American interests, including embassies and consulates, and anti-American protests, the first two U.S. officials said. Similar alerts were issued at the start of the Iraq War in 2003 and more re-



cently when the Trump administration announced it would recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Despite the risks, Iran hardliners on Capitol Hill, such as Sens. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., and Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and elsewhere have long advocated for the designation. The Trump administration has escalated rhetoric against Iran for months, but this will mark the first such designation by any American administration of an entire foreign government entity. Portions of the Guard, notably its elite Quds Force, have been targeted previously by the United States. Officials informed of the step said an announcement was expected as early as Monday. Two U.S. officials and a congressional aide confirmed the planned move. They were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. Iranian foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, seemed to anticipate the designation, saying in a tweet Sunday aimed at President Donald Trump that Mr. Trump "should know better than to be conned into another US disaster." This would be just

the latest move by the Trump administration to isolate Iran. Mr. Trump withdrew from the Obama administration's landmark nuclear deal with Iran in May 2018 and in the months that followed, reimposed punishing sanctions including those targeting Iran's oil, shipping and banking sectors. The Revolutionary Guard designation, planning for which was first reported by The Wall Street Journal, comes with sanctions, including freezes on assets the Guard may have in U.S. jurisdictions and a ban on Americans doing business with it or providing material support for its activities. They say it will send an important message to Iran as well as deal it a further blow after Trump pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal and reimposed economic sanctions. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton have taken up the call and have in recent months spoken stridently about Iran and its "malign activities" in the region. Mr. Pompeo has made clear in public comments that pressure on Tehran will only increase until it changes its behavior. Just

last week, Mr. Pompeo's special representative for Iran, Brian Hook, accused Iran and its proxies of being responsible for the death of 608 U.S. troops in Iraq between 2003 and 2011. He cited newly declassified Defense Department information for the claim, which is expected to be used in the justification for the Guard designation. "Secretary Pompeo will continue to use all the tools at our disposal to press the regime to change its destructive policies for the benefit of peace in the region and for the sake of its own people, who are the longest-suffering victims of this regime," Hook said, in an indication that new action is coming. The department currently designates 60 groups, such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State and their various affiliates, Hezbollah and numerous militant Palestinian factions, as "foreign terrorist organizations." But none of them is a state-run military. Once a designation is announced by the secretary of state in coordination with the Treasury secretary, Congress has seven days to review it. If there are no objections.

Increase random checking of VVPAT slips to five per Assembly segment, SC directs Election Commission



(News Track) Earlier, under the ECI guideline 16.6, only the VVPAT slips from one EVM in every Assembly segment/constituency was subjected to physical verification. The Supreme Court on Monday increased voter verified paper audit trail (VVPAT) verification to five random Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in each Assembly segment/constituency. In case of general elections, VVPAT slips of five EVMs in each Assembly segment of a Parliamentary Constituency would be subject to physical counting. In State Assembly elections, the VVPAT verification would extend to five random EVMs in each Assembly constituency. The Supreme Court order would be implemented in the Lok Sabha polls, scheduled to commence from April 11. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi increased the number of EVM-VVPATs subjected to physical verification in order to "ensure the greatest degree of accuracy, satisfaction in election process." "Not only political parties but the poor and the illiterate should be satisfied," the apex court observed. Earlier, under the ECI guideline 16.6, only the VVPAT slips from one EVM in every Assembly segment/constituency was subjected to physical verification. Now, with five such EVMs under physical scrutiny, the apex court said the election would see "fool-proof." The Supreme Court's decision is a far shot from what 21 Opposition parties wanted — VVPAT verification in 50% or 125 polling booths in each constituency. The increase to five EVMs from one would only increase the VVPAT verification percentage from 0.44% to less than two per cent. The court said VVPAT verification of five EVMs, rather than in 125 polling booths, is more "viable at this point of time." It would not be a drain on the ECI's infrastructural resources and manpower as the Opposition's idea would have been. Neither would counting VVPAT slips of five EVMs take any substantial amount of time. The ECI had said that a 50% random physical verification of VVPATs would delay Lok Sabha poll results of 2019 by six whole days, quoting a March 22 report of the

Indian Statistical Institute, which had said that a sample verification of 479 EVMs and VVPATs out of a total 10.35 lakh machine would lift public confidence to 99.9936%. Reacting to this, Deputy Election Commissioner Sudeep Jain had said the ECI's sample verification for the April-May Lok Sabha polls would cover 4,125 EVMs and VVPATs. "This is 8.6 times the sample size recommended in the Indian Statistical Institute report," ECI had said. Appearing for ECI, senior advocate C.A. Sundaram pointed out that VVPAT counting is a manual job. The risk of error multiplies with an increase in human intervention. Mr. Sundaram and Mr. Jain both said a 50% VVPAT verification would require a huge increase in extra personnel in each of the 4,125 polling stations. A verification team in a polling booth is composed of three counting officials, a returning officer and a general observer. The Opposition had argued that "one more person and a table" in every polling booth would suffice to meet the rigour of 50% VVPAT verification. "Where did you get the information that only one person counts all the VVPAT slips? It must be one team," Chief Justice Gogoi addressed senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, who appears for the 21 Opposition parties. Mr. Singhvi later acknowledged that was "technically wrong" in this regard. Meanwhile, the Commission submitted that no mismatch has been detected in mock polls or in the verification of VVPAT slips carried out at 1,500 polling stations till date. The ECI affidavit had said increased VVPAT slip counting would require extensive training and capacity building of election officials in the field. VVPAT slip counting takes place in specially erected VVPAT counting booths under the close monitoring of the returning officer and direct oversight of the observer. The ECI said its confidence in EVM-VVPATs is sourced from their secure designs, elaborate procedural safeguards adopted for their usage, and finally the fact that there have been zero errors in sample verifications so far.

Maldives: Modi calls Solih following MDP's big election win



(Day Today) Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on December 17, 2018. Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi on December 17, 2018. (Photo Credit: R.V. Moorthy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Indian PM said the poll outcome was indicative of "the high level of trust and support" that Maldivian citizens had vested in their Government and its policy priorities. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday wished Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on his party's landslide victory in the recent parliamentary elections. A statement from President Solih's office said Mr. Modi "personally called" on Monday morning, "to congratulate him on his party's exceptionally strong performance" in the Maldives's Majlis elections, in which his Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) secured 65 of 87 seats, securing a significant majority in parliament. Mr. Modi said the poll outcome was indicative of "the high level of trust and support" that Maldivian citizens had vested in their Government and its policy priorities. "He [Mr. Modi] further conveyed his full confidence that the Maldives government can deliver on their promises towards the Maldivian people in the upcoming five years, and that the Indian Government will always stand ready to be of assistance to the Maldives," the statement said. independently learnt from sources in Male that Mr. Modi also spoke to former President and prominent MDP leader Mohamed Nasheed, who won a seat in the capital Male and made a political comeback, after being exiled for some years due to a highly disputed criminal conviction during the predecessor government of President Abdulla Yameen. Mr. Nasheed returned to Male following the regime change last year and contested the recent polls after a Maldives court overturned his earlier conviction. New Delhi has been watching developments in Male closely, as it tries to re-establish ties with the neighbour after the relationship turned increasingly hostile during the Yameen administration. Mr. Modi attended President Solih's swearing-in ceremony in November 2018, and then held talks with Mr. Solih in New Delhi, when the Maldivian President visited in December last year. In February, Mr. Modi also met with Mr. Nasheed in New Delhi.

Bangladesh deploys guards near Myanmar border, Nissan shareholders vote to oust Ghosn, and other news in pictures



(Gns. News) Bangladesh on Sunday deployed heavily-armed border guards to an island near its southern border with Myanmar for the first time in 20 years, officials said. Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) distributed images showing dozens of troops carrying assault rifles disembarking at Saint Martin's island, a small island in the Bay of Bengal that has caused diplomatic tensions between the neighbours. The BGB said the troop deployment was part of "regular activities" to ensure border protection and curb drug trafficking. But the force's lieutenant colonel, Sarker Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman, told AFP it was the first time since 1997 their men had landed there. "After more than 20 years we felt we should deploy," he said. Home Minister Narendra Modi along with BJP leaders Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh releasing the BJP Sankalp patra. Prime Minister Narendra Modi releases BJP's manifesto in the party headquarters in New Delhi in the presence of senior leaders Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Arun Jaitley, and Sushma Swaraj among others. Termed 'Sankalp Patra', the manifesto promises Uniform Civil Code, passage of Citizenship Amendment Bill and reiterates BJP's commitment to build a Ram temple in Ayodhya. "If even part of the promises made by politicians in the past had been fulfilled, India would have been in a different standing. PM Modi has always said that this crisis of credibility should be addressed which we have tried to do in this document," says Home Minister Rajnath Singh. "We are committed to nationalism and we have a zero tolerance policy towards terror. We are committed to Uniform Civil Code in the country. We will bring back the Citizenship Amendment Bill but we will also protect the cultural and ethnic identity of every state. We are committed to construction of a Ram Temple in Ayodhya in an atmosphere of harmony."

adds the Home Minister. In its manifesto, the party has promised zero per cent rate of interest for upto 5 years on credit of upto ₹1 lakh on Kisan Credit Card. "All farmers to be given income support of ₹6000 p.a. No ceiling of 2 hectares ownership," says Mr. Singh. An injured man receives treatment in a hospital after a blast in Jalalabad, Afghanistan April 8, 2019. An injured man receives treatment in a hospital after a blast in Jalalabad, Afghanistan April 8, 2019. | Photo Credit: REUTERS Multiple Taliban attacks have killed at least seven policemen and three civilians across Afghanistan on Saturday, as insurgents continue with near daily assaults on government and civilian targets. Taliban killed at least four policemen when they stormed a security check point in northern Sari Pul province, a provincial official said. Mohammad Noor Rahmani, head of the provincial council, said five others were wounded in Saturday's attack on the outskirts of the province's capital city. Nissan shareholders vote to oust Ghosn as director. Nissan shareholders wait in line to enter a hotel to attend the company's extraordinary shareholders' meeting in Tokyo. Nissan shareholders wait in line to enter a hotel to attend the company's extraordinary shareholders' meeting in Tokyo. AFP Bangladesh deploys guards near Myanmar border. Nissan shareholders vote to oust Ghosn, and other news in pictures. Nissan Motor Co shareholders voted former chairman Carlos Ghosn out as a director on Monday, severing his last ties with the automaker. Shareholders at the emergency meeting also voted out another director, Greg Kelly, and voted in favour of making Renault Chairman Jean-Dominique Senard as a director, according to announcements made at the meeting. Jin Young Ko wins ANA Inspiration for first major Golf title. Jin Young Ko, of South Korea, poses with the Dinah Shore Trophy after winning the LPGA Tour ANA Inspiration golf tournament at Mission Hills Country Club in

Rancho Mirage, Calif. Jin Young Ko, of South Korea, poses with the Dinah Shore Trophy after winning the LPGA Tour ANA Inspiration golf tournament at Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho Mirage, Calif. Jin Young Ko won the ANA Inspiration for her first major title, celebrated with the traditional winner's leap into Poppie's Pond and will jump to No. 1 in the world ranking. The woman who said this year that her goal was to be the happiest player on the course was thrilled about the first two. "I still can't believe," Ko said. "I'm really happy." She wasn't all that excited about the No. 1 spot in the world. "I just try to focus on my game on the course," Ko said. "It doesn't matter about world ranking. I don't like numbers like No. 1 or No. 2. I'm just playing on the course." She did that better than anyone else over four days on the Mission Hills course made more difficult by thicker rough, tighter fairways and some longer holes. On Sunday, the 23-year-old South Korean closed with a 2-under 70 in hot and mostly calm conditions for a three-stroke victory over Mi Hyang Lee. Rwandans sitting in the stands hold candles as part of a candlelit vigil during the memorial service held at Amahoro stadium in the capital Kigali, Rwanda Sunday, April 7, 2019. Rwandans sitting in the stands hold candles as part of a candlelit vigil during the memorial service held at Amahoro stadium in the capital Kigali, Rwanda Sunday, April 7, 2019. Rwanda is commemorating the 25th anniversary of when the country descended into an orgy of violence in which some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were massacred by the majority Hutu population over a 100-day period in what was the worst genocide in recent history. A quarter century after the 1994 genocide that killed 75% of the country's ethnic Tutsis, Rwanda has six "reconciliation villages", where genocide survivors and perpetrators live alongside each other. Convicted killers re-integrate into society by publicly apologising for their crimes. Survivors profess forgiveness.

Farmers in western T.N. demand social security

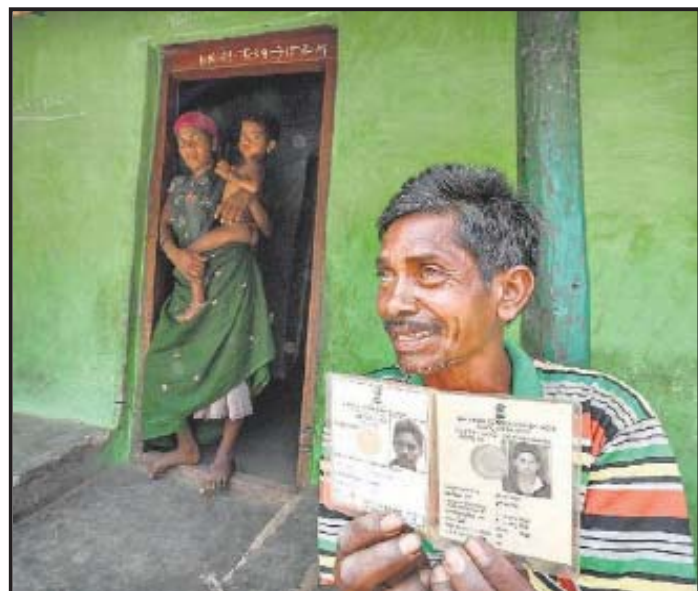


(News Track) Missed opportunity: Agriculturists say their condition would have improved, had the Centre effectively implemented the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmer. Unable to sustain their primary occupation, many are said to have begun migrating to cities to work as daily-wage labourers. K.M. Ramagoudar, president of the Tamizhaga Vivasayi Sangam and a farmer based out of Karur, about 25 km from Krishnagiri, is a frustrated man these days. "Even the so-called big farmers, who own five or six acres, have started going to Bengaluru, where they are working as daily-wage labourers. This only shows they are unable to sustain their basic occupation — farming," Mr. Ramagoudar laments, adding that farmers leave their native places to work as coolies only to avoid embarrassment locally. It is for this reason that the farmer-leader demands the formulation of a scheme along the lines of old age pension. "Let the next government pay ₹10,000 to each farmer," he suggests, adding that he chose to withdraw his nomination to contest the Krishnagiri parliamentary seat on the basis of an

assurance given by the ruling AIADMK that his demand will be considered after the election. He is not the only one calling for social security for agriculturists. G. Ajithan, general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Banana Growers' Federation and a resident of Mohanur in Namakkal, also favours it. Explaining the importance of social security, Mr. Ajithan says the condition of agriculturists would have improved, had the Central government effectively implemented the key recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers, headed by M.S. Swaminathan. The panel's prescription of giving one-and-a-half times the cost of production was made, keeping in mind the requirement of the farmers to look after their families and meet their cost. The farmer says that "unfortunately, the matter has been linked to possible increase in retail inflation. Eventually, we have been left in the lurch". Mr. Ajithan, who is also the State secretary (technical) of the Consortium of Indian Farmers' Associations, says those who are going to occupy power at the Centre should implement "three Ss" — better support price, sufficient supply of water and social security. Acknowledg-

ing that farmers too have started accepting freebies, Balachandran, an agriculturist raising the foot of the Kolli Hills in Namakkal district, says freebies are no remedy for the problems being faced by the farm sector. "The increase in the number of days of work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) from 100 to 150 will only aggravate the problem for us. We have been struggling to get adequate manpower for farm work as people prefer to work under the central scheme," he says. If the government wants to help the farmers, beneficiaries of the scheme could be allowed to work on lands belonging to the agriculturists without too many restrictions. By doing so, they will be kept occupied, instead of being given free money. At the same time, the problem of labour shortage can also be addressed, Mr. Balachandran suggests. Seeniappan, a farmer who lives in Chinnappur, about 10 km from Dharmapuri, calls for the execution of a massive project for supplying Cauvery water for irrigation in the district as, according to him, agriculturists in the region have been hit by successive monsoon failures in the last two years.

Caught between AP, Odisha: identity crisis for tribals of Kotia group of villages



(News Track) He has two names with separate voter ID and ration cards. His name is Muthyalu Marri in Andhra Pradesh and Mutal Mari in Odisha government records. About 60 years old, he belongs to Poraja tribe and ekes out a living by resorting to podu (also known as shifting) cultivation. Like him, there are over 4,000 tribal people living in hilltop hamlets. Meet Gemmila Ambri, another senior citizen, who is very candid in admitting the identity crisis faced by them though happy over availing themselves of ration and other benefits from both the States. "This village is Dhulipadar in Odisha and Dhulibhadra in Andhra Pradesh records. Sometimes we are seen as second class citizens by officials visiting from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh for availing ourselves of benefits from the two States," he points out. Poraja, Domb, Jatapa Dora and few other tribal groups live in 21 tiny villages very often termed as Kotia group of villages. They are facing identity crisis ever since the area turned into an inter-State dispute. With claims over jurisdiction by Odisha and Andhra Pradesh and trading of charges of intrusion into one's area without permission, both the States have extended various benefits such as ration, houses, roads and healthcare to them. Odisha stepped up efforts since past two years to counter Andhra Pradesh's efforts to assert over the villages. The dispute that was referred to the Supreme Court arose ever since united State of Andhra Pradesh was formed in 1953. The confrontation between the two States reached a flashpoint with Andhra Pradesh holding Janmabhoomi meetings last year and deputing the Vizianagaram Collector and some top officials, and Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who hails from Odisha, visiting the area to interact with the tribal people last year. Come elections, politicians from both the States prevail upon the people here to cast their franchise to candidates contesting from their respective areas. "This village is Dhulipadar in Odisha and Dhulibhadra in Andhra Pradesh records. Sometimes we are seen as second class citizens by officials visiting from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh for availing ourselves of benefits from the two States," he points out. Poraja, Domb, Jatapa Dora and few other tribal groups live in 21 tiny villages very often termed as Kotia group of villages. They are facing identity crisis ever since the area turned into an inter-State dispute. With claims over jurisdiction by Odisha and Andhra Pradesh and trading of charges of intrusion into one's area without permission, both the States have extended various benefits such as ration, houses, roads and healthcare to them. While Kotia group of villages come under Salur Assembly constituency and Araku Lok Sabha seat of Andhra Pradesh, they are part of Pottangi Assembly and Koraput Lok Sabha constituencies of Odisha. All the villages are reportedly under the influence of Left Wing Extremists. Incidents of violence are being reported now and then. Parts of Koraput district are described as hotbed for Maoists after a lull in their activity in North Andhra. In the census held in Odisha in 1951, the tribal people were shown as part of the State. Mr. Pradhan said Odisha since it was formed in 1936 had been treating the people of the villages as theirs. The dispute arose only after Andhra Pradesh staked its claim since 1960s and it has still remained unresolved.

Afghan forces battle Taliban for 5th day in western province



(Day Today) In this Oct. 31, 2018, photo, Afghan National Army soldiers carry out an exercise during a live firing at the Afghan Military Academy in Kabul. A provincial council member said last week that around 600 Afghan security forces were trapped inside the base, running low on ammunition, food and water. Afghanistan. The Taliban effectively control half the country and launch daily attacks on the army and police. Afghan forces have launched an operation to drive back the Taliban four days after the insurgents attacked and besieged an army compound

in the western Badghis province. Col. Qais Mangal, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said Monday that at least 12 security forces have been killed in the last 48 hours, bringing the overall death toll to more than 40. Dozens more have been wounded. Mangal says dozens of insurgents have been killed and wounded by air and ground forces. A provincial council member said last week that around 600 Afghan security forces were trapped inside the base, running low on ammunition, food and water. There was no immediate update on their numbers or condition. The Taliban

effectively control half the country and launch daily attacks on the army and police. Afghan forces have launched an operation to drive back the Taliban four days after the insurgents attacked and besieged an army compound in the western Badghis province. Col. Qais Mangal, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said Monday that at least 12 security forces have been killed in the last 48 hours, bringing the overall death toll to more than 40. Dozens more have been wounded. The Taliban effectively control half the country and launch daily attacks on the army and police.