



EDITOR: ASHVINKUMAR KESHAVLAL RAMI

Regd. Office: TF-01, Nanakram Super Market, Ramnager, Sabarmati, Ahmedabad-380 005, Gujarat, India.

Phone/Fax: (079) 2757 3307, 90163 33307 (M) 93283 33307, 98253 33307, Email : garvigujarat2007@yahoo.com • Email : garvigujarat2007@gmail.com • Website : www.garvigujarat.co.in

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Rafale: Modi govt. gave unprecedented waivers in offset agreements

(News Track) The total offsets to be delivered in the Rafale deal by Dassault Aviation (and its 21 Tier-1 sub-vendors) together with MBDA (and its 12 Tier-1 sub-vendors) have been fixed at 50% of the contract value. DPP-2013 provisions relating to arbitration, access to books of accounts, and penalties for the use of influence, commission agents not met. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave exceptional and unprecedented waivers to M/s Dassault Aviation and M/s MBDA in the offset contracts they signed with the Indian government on September 23, 2016 as part of the ₹7.87 billion Rafale deal. These waivers, granted on August 24, 2016 at the highest level of political decision-making, were exemptions given to the two private French companies from having to comply with provisions of the Standard Contract Document of the Defence Procurement Procedure, DPP-2013. The waivers concerned two key issues — the provisions to be made in the offset contracts for arbitration (Article 9) and access to books of accounts of the industrial suppliers (Article 12). A Rafale aircraft performs at the biennial air show Aero India 2019 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station near Bengaluru on February 20, 2019. Investigative reports by N. Ram on the Rafale deal. These had been sent up to the CCS for its "final review and approval" by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar. He had evidently felt uncomfortable with sanctioning, at this level, major deviations from the Defence Procurement Procedure. But that was not all. Two other mandated provisions of DPP-2013 that prohibit the "Use of Undue Influence" and "Agents/ Agency Commission", Articles 22 and 23 respectively of the Standard Contract Document, and provide for penalties against private industrial suppliers in case of transgressions, had been quietly dropped along the way by the DAC. Curiously, while the deletion of these vital

integrity provisions from the Supply Protocols, which were themselves only annexures to the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA), went up to the CCS for "final review and approval", their deletion from the offset contracts, which had been insisted on by the French industrial suppliers, did not have to. These salient facts, which were not disclosed by the government in its submissions to the Supreme Court of India, as well as other aspects of an open-ended and murky set of offset arrangements which were enabled by a major change in offset policy in August 2015, come to light in the final report of the Indian Negotiating Team (INT), dated July 21, 2016, to which, A Rafale jet performing, during the AERO INDIA 2019 at IAF station Yelahanka, in Bengaluru. No bank guarantees meant a more expensive new Rafale deal. What needs to be noted is that nothing in our current series of investigative articles raises any questions about the quality of the Rafale, or indeed the rival Eurofighter Typhoon, combat jet, or about the need to modernise the Indian Air Force. Interestingly, and as a matter of record, this was also the case during The Hindu's Bofors investigation of the late-1980s, when neither the quality of the Bofors, or the rival Sofma, howitzer nor the need to upgrade the Indian Army's artillery resources was in question. There has been a major political controversy over Dassault Aviation's choice of Indian Offset Partners (IOPs), notably Anil Ambani's Reliance Group, and the non-transparent arrangements for the discharge of offset obligations. Offsets are 'domestic content-based requirements' imposed on an exporting foreign entity by an importing government or public entity as a quid pro quo for placing a large order with the exporting entity. 'Offset' is usually rendered in French as 'contrepartie' (compensation), as Eric Trappier, Chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation, pointed out in an interview to AFP. CCS gives exceptional waivers to Dassault &

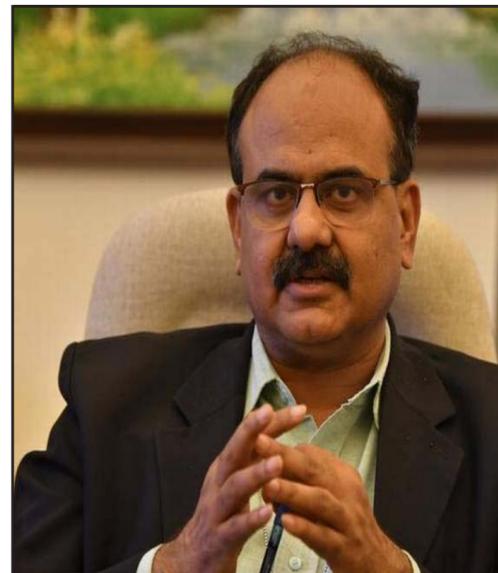
MBDA in offset contracts, exempts them from aligning Arbitration (Article 9) & 'Access to books of account (Article 12) provisions with DPP-2013 Standard Contract. Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar, uncomfortable with major deviations from DPP-2013, gets DAC to send unresolved issues up for "final review and approval" by CCS. DAC drops DPP-2013 provisions on penalties for "Use of Undue Influence" and "Agents/ Agency Commission" from offset contracts. Offset obligations of around ₹30,000 crore are heavily back-loaded, to be discharged over 7 years, with zero discharge in first 3 years and 57% in 7th year. INT's efforts on offset issues weakened by parallel NSA talks. Controversy breaks out over non-transparent & open-ended offset arrangements and choice of Reliance Group as Dassault's only publicly known offset partner. The total offsets to be delivered in the Rafale deal by Dassault Aviation (and its 21 Tier-1 sub-vendors) together with MBDA (and its 12 Tier-1 sub-vendors) have been fixed at 50% of the contract value. The contracted offset obligations, which are valued around ₹30,000 crore, are to be discharged over a period of seven years beginning in the fourth year, that is, from October 2019. The discharge of offset obligations is heavily loaded on to the last two years of the seven-year period. According to the offset schedule, the two private French companies (along with their Tier-1 sub-vendors) will discharge 0% of the value of the total offsets for 'Make in India' in the first three years and 4% in the fourth year. After that, while Dassault (and its Tier-1 sub-vendors) will discharge 16% and 23% of the value of offsets in years five and six, the corresponding figures for MBDA (and its Tier-1 sub-vendors) will be 9% and 30%. No less than 57% of the value of total offset obligations will be discharged in the seventh year. The INT's final report reveals that the initial proposal of Dassault Aviation and MBDA had nearly 88% of offset obliga-

tions loaded on to the seventh year. The avenues proposed for offset discharge were also far from satisfactory. A meeting held in the Defence Ministry on January 4, 2016 decided that in view of advice received from the Ministry of Law and Justice, the French side should be informed that the offsets "will have impact on the commercial proposal" and that the French industrial suppliers should be advised to submit revised offset proposals urgently. "After extended negotiations and on INT's insistence", the report goes on to say, "DA and MBDA reduced the offsets in the last two years (6th & 7th) and brought down the offset obligations in the last year from 88% to 57%. Another milestone was achieved as INT was able to persuade DA to increase the percentage of offsets in the avenue 'direct purchase' from the initial value of 9% to 72% and reduce offsets in the avenue 'investment in kind (equipment)' from the initial value of 30% to 20%. This would facilitate greater direct investment in India by the French vendors." (*) Technology Acquisition (TA) projects with DRDO are foreseen to be included in the Offset Contract, following discussions to take place between Dassault and the DRDO after coming into force of the Offset Contract. Depending on the outcome of these discussions, the Offset Schedule will be amended to reflect the TA projects and their associated offset value agreed between Dassault and the DRDO. However, such amendment will not affect the Annual Offset obligation indicated in the table above. The INT report reveals that the French negotiators were initially "not ready to mention the word 'offsets' in the IGA" but upon insistence by the Indian side, they "relented and added 'Make in India' initiative through Offsets at Article 12 of the IGA". The proposal originally submitted by Dassault Aviation and MBDA was titled 'Rafale Make in India initiative in the frame of the procurement of 36 Rafale aircraft'.



Income tax searches in M.P., other States: ECI holds meeting CBDT chief, Revenue Secretary

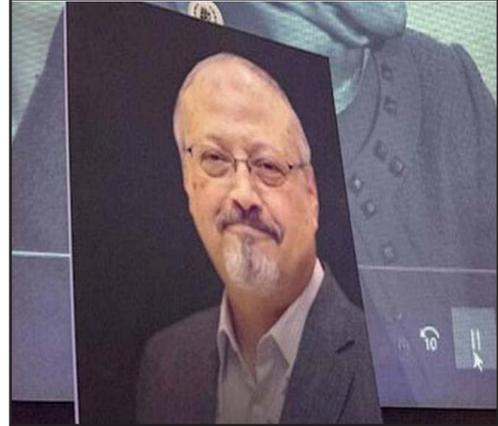
(News Track) Ajay Bhushan Pandey, Revenue Secretary, ECI had directed enforcement agencies under the administrative control of Department of Revenue to take a neutral, impartial and non-discriminatory action and to ensure that the respective CEOs are kept in the loop while carrying out any operation. The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday held a meeting with the Secretary (Revenue) and the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman on the recent Income-Tax Department searches in Madhya Pradesh and some other States. On Sunday, the ECI directed the enforcement agencies under the administrative control of the Department of Revenue to take a neutral, impartial and non-discriminatory action and to ensure that the respective Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) are kept in the loop while carrying out any operation. Subsequently, the ECI summoned the Revenue Secretary and the CBDT chief. All the issues arising out of the advisory were taken up at the meeting. According to an ECI official, the advice for neutral action was given as the Income-Tax Department had failed to immediately inform the Madhya Pradesh CEO about the week-end searches on the premises allegedly linked to the functionaries of a political party. On Monday, the Income-Tax Department issued a statement that it had detected a well-organised racket of collection of unaccounted cash of about Rs. 281 crore during the search operation against close aides of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath and others. The department seized Rs. 14.6 crore of unaccounted cash, diaries and computer files of suspicious transactions. The department also detected a trail of Rs. 20 crore in cash allegedly moved to the headquarters of a major political party from the Tughlaq Road residence of a senior functionary in the Lutyens' Zone of Delhi, as alleged.



US bars entry to 16 Saudis over Khashoggi killing

(Day Today) After initially denying the murder, Riyadh said the operation was carried out by agents who were out of control. The US State Department on Monday barred entry to 16 Saudi nationals over what it described as their role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi as the administration of Donald Trump continues to face harsh criticism over its handling of the affair. Dissident writer Khashoggi was killed and dismembered October 2 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul by a team of 15 agents sent from Riyadh, sparking unprecedented international scrutiny of the kingdom's human rights record. But despite the fact that Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince Mohammed bin Salman was named as "responsible" for the murder by the US Senate, who adopted their resolution after being briefed by the CIA, the US President has refused to publicly take a stand against the country's de facto ruler. Mr. Trump has instead emphasized that Riyadh is a major arms importer for the United States and an important regional ally against Iran. A statement by the State Department listed the 16 individuals and said that they had been designated under the Department of State, Foreign Op-

erations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act. The section in question "provides that, in cases where the Secretary of State has credible information that officials of foreign governments have been involved in significant corruption or gross violations of human rights, those individuals and their immediate family members are ineligible for entry into the United States. The law requires the Secretary of State to publicly or privately designate such officials and their immediate family members." The State Department previously revoked the visas of nearly two dozen Saudi officials and froze the assets of 17 others. After initially denying the murder, Riyadh said the operation was carried out by agents who were out of control. A trial of 11 suspects opened earlier this year in Saudi Arabia. But much of the case remains shrouded, including the precise role of Prince Mohammed. Republicans and Democrats alike have bristled over the White House's apparent embrace of the kingdom and its leadership, and have escalated their opposition to Saudi Arabia. The House of Representatives last week voted to end military support for the bloody Saudi-led war in Yemen, dealing a harsh bipartisan rebuke to the



president and taking the historic step of curtailing a president's war-making powers. The text cleared the Senate last month and now heads to Trump, who was expected to veto the legislation. The New York Times reported last month Prince Mohammed approved a secret campaign to silence dissenters a year before the killing of Khashoggi, who wrote a column for the Washington Post and was a US resident. The campaign included surveillance, kidnapping, detention and torture of Saudis, said the report which cited US officials who have read classified intelligence reports about the effort. American officials referred to it as the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group, the Times said. At least some of the clandestine missions were carried out by members of the team that killed and dismembered Khashoggi in October at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, suggesting his murder was part of a wider campaign against dissidents, the report said, citing the US officials and associates of

Meat trade was never an issue in market, says brother of man assaulted for allegedly selling beef

(Gns. News) On Sunday, the day of the assault, police picked up five people, including two market committee leaders, in a bid to disperse a mob. They were let go after signing a good behaviour bond. Sale of meat of any kind was never an issue in the bi-weekly market of Madhupur on the southern edge of Biswanath Chariali town, the brother of a man who was assaulted by a mob on Sunday for allegedly selling beef, said. Biswanath Chariali, headquarters of Biswanath district, is about 240 km north-east of Guwahati. "Our father started running a rice-meal eatery at the Madhupur market every Thursday and Sunday more than 40 years ago. I took over from him and later let my younger brother Shaikat Ali ran it," Mohammed Sahabuddin, who filed a police complaint on the assault on Monday, told. The district authorities, he said, assured him that action would be taken within 24 hours. On Monday night, the

police arrested two people identified from the video of the assault that was uploaded on social media. On Sunday, the day of the assault, the police picked up five people, including two market committee leaders, in a bid to disperse a mob. They were let go after signing a good behaviour bond under section 107 of Code of Criminal Procedure. Mr. Sahabuddin, who lives in Kalakati village 15 km from Biswanath Chariali, admitted that the eatery has had beef on the menu for decades while letting customers bring home-cooked meat too. "No one told us we could not sell meat. They could have served a notice instead of attacking my brother, and could have taken action officially if we did not comply," he said, adding that the mob mostly comprised people from adjoining areas. In his complaint, Mr. Sahabuddin said some members of the mob threatened to force-feed pork to his brother, who stays in the town behind the local police sta-

tion. District Deputy Commissioner Pabitra Ram Khandu said the authorities swung into action soon after the complaint was lodged and arrested two people connected with the assault. "We took the victim to the hospital and provided treatment. He is now out of danger." Mr. Khandu said the district administration had summoned leaders of local organisations, including the All Assam Minority Students' Union, for a meeting toward normalising the situation. "We have made it clear peace must be maintained under any circumstances with the Lok Sabha election a few days away," he stated. Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Mukesh Agarwal said the police had organised a joint vigil by people of both communities to maintain peace. "High visibility and domination of security forces are in place," Biswanath Chariali falls under the Tezpur Lok Sabha constituency, which goes to the polls with four other seats in Assam on

April 11. They were let go after signing a good behaviour bond under section 107 of Code of Criminal Procedure. Mr. Sahabuddin, who lives in Kalakati village 15 km from Biswanath Chariali, admitted that the eatery has had beef on the menu for decades while letting customers bring home-cooked meat too. "No one told us we could not sell meat. They could have served a notice instead of attacking my brother, and could have taken action officially if we did not comply," he said, adding that the mob mostly comprised people from adjoining areas. In his complaint, Mr. Sahabuddin said some members of the mob threatened to force-feed pork to his brother, who stays in the town behind the local police station. Ten candidates are in the fray but the contest is expected to be between Minister Pallab Lochan Das of the BJP and retired IAS officer M.G.V.K. Bhanu of the Congress. The constituency is currently held by the BJP's Ram Prasad Sarmah, who was denied ticket by the party.

Editorial

Fighting together: the SP-BSP-RLD alliance

The chiefs of the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal combine threw down the gauntlet to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in Deoband in western Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. The scale and fiery rhetoric were clearly aimed at forcing the momentum as western U.P. constituencies go to the polls on April 11, in the first of a seven-phase parliamentary election in the State. The BJP and its partners had won 73 of 80 seats in U.P. in 2014, and the State is central to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's re-election bid. The political landscape in U.P. however, has changed significantly in the interim years, both in terms of party alliances and social realignments. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's entry as a Congress strategist and campaigner has added new variables that could complicate electoral calculations in U.P. In this emergent situation in the State, the rally must have brought some reassurance to the triumvirate of Akhilesh Yadav, Mayawati and Ajit Singh, leaders of the SP, the BSP and the RLD, respectively. Mr. Yadav has been unambiguous in his deference to Ms. Mayawati, and they have been at pains to emphasise that they are reading from the same page, as coherence between the SP and BSP leaderships is crucial for vote transfer of their core supporters. Ms. Mayawati is an icon of Dalit empowerment, and since the 1990s has often been deft in building social alliances around her core vote. Mr. Yadav is the inheritor of the rump of Socialist (Lohiaite) politics in the Hindi belt, which has been reduced to a purely caste-based entity around the SP's Yadav support. Both could be characterised as part of social justice politics, but the accent and rhetoric of their respective politics are dissimilar. Their opposing positions on the use of English is a case in point — the SP has been rather late in blunting its anti-English edge, while the BSP's Ambedkarite politics considers it as a tool of empowerment. Though the SP and the BSP had an alliance in the mid-1990s, they had parted ways bitterly, with an SP mob even trying to physically harm Ms. Mayawati. The rout in the 2014 Lok Sabha and 2017 U.P. Assembly elections have forced a rethink in their adversarial politics. Equally striking is Mr. Yadav's outreach to the BSP, compared to his father Mulayam Singh Yadav's. Both parties are conscious that recovering the support of their larger social constituencies, the backward castes and Dalits, which were drifting towards the BJP in the past five years with a new format of social empowerment through Hindutva, is crucial. However, since the Assembly elections, old caste cleavages have deepened under upper-caste Hindutva assertion.

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 Pa-

kistan 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 unresponded 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 fall-out 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 Vartham, 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 Vartham's release? Equally important is the issue.

Jacob Koshy reports on the difficulties in implementing the Act and the plight of the Adivasis



(News Track) "A key reason for complications in the implementation of the FRA is the process of staking a claim." On paper, Sunder Singh Kumeti, a Gond tribal, is the owner of 2.5 acres of forest land. However, a portion of this land was taken for the Dallirajhara-Rowghat-Jagdarpur railway line, he claims. In Chhattisgarh, the Forest Rights Act potentially allows 7.4 million tribal and other traditional forest dwellers to claim land rights. However, half these claims have been rejected and the land siphoned off, often arbitrarily. Jacob Koshy reports on the difficulties in implementing the Act and the plight of the Adivasis. Three years ago, Sunder Singh Kumeti, a Gond tribal, lost access to a parcel of land in the forest that he and his family had foraged for two generations. Before that, Kumeti recalls his work routine as being more or less the same everyday from boyhood. He would walk, along with his fellow villagers, several kilometres into the forest abutting his village looking for flowers from the mahua tree, or wood from the stout sal tree. His village, Patkalbeda, located in Antagarh panchayat of Kanker district in Chhattisgarh, is mostly forest area, though not classified as a reserve forest or a protected area. Alongside maintaining their rice fields, collecting forest produce is a key economic activity for the nearly 30 families of the village. To collect berries and wood, the average Patkalbeda tribal forays 8-10 km deep into the forest. Fruits and timber apart, the palms — particularly the 'salphi' tree, known to produce a sweet, milky, alcoholic liquid — are also considered the bounty of these parts. The deciduous forests of this region, which make up the northern half of Bastar, are classified as 'moderately dense' by the forest law. Collecting and trading this produce with townsfolk has been a generations-old practice, says Kumeti. He imagined that life would be no different for his children. But that was not to be. In September 2016, Kumeti and the residents of his village witnessed a cavalcade of trucks bearing iron rods, earth-moving equipment and large vats of cement mixers rolling into these areas. It didn't occur to Kumeti then that the collective fate of his village was going to irrevocably change. Some of the men accompanying the vehicles looked familiar: they were contractors with whom Kumeti had dealt with as a trader and who frequently visited for forest produce. This time, however, there were other men — from the Indian Railways, from the Bhilai Steel Plant, and officers from the Chhattisgarh forest department. They told Kumeti and 15 others that tracts of land in Patkalbeda were being acquired for the Dallirajhara-Rowghat-Jagdarpur railway line. In April 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a section of that railway line connecting Dallirajhara, in Balod district, and a traditional source of iron ore, to Bhanupratappur in north Bastar. The proposed 235 km-long track would connect the Rowghat mines (that local experts say has enough iron ore to last a century) to the mainland, and reduce the behemoth Bhilai Steel Plant's dependence on the Dallirajhara mines, which have iron ore that is estimated to last for only a few years. "The Rowghat-Jagdarpur line will reduce rail distance between Raipur to Jagdarpur by about 260 km. This will boost socio-economic interaction between the capital of Chhattisgarh and backward areas in and around Bastar region," a Press Information Bureau statement said then. The rail project has been in the works for several decades but because of its location in the heart of the Bastar region, and proximity to regions with Naxalite presence, it saw glacial progress. But from September to November in 2016, work on the line rapidly progressed. Workers cut nearly 300 sal, saja and fruit trees for the purpose of surveying and prospecting the forest. The next year, they deployed heavy machinery and destroyed swathes of standing crop, mostly rice, says Kumeti. By January 2018, the machines had uprooted several more trees as well as stumps of those that were previously hacked. In the course of this destruction, acres of land became unfit for cultivation. Kumeti doesn't know how much land he lost. Sanganath Dugga, 50, another resident of the village, says he lost three acres of land. Masooram, 42, Dugga's immediate neighbour, Kumeti, Dugga and Masooram are fortunate, for they have, at least in theory, recourse to a landmark piece of legislation, which was framed in order to correct historical injustice to Adivasis. For the several thousand forest villages of India, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, which is informally called the Forest Rights Act or FRA, is a single sheet of laminated paper. This patta, or title deed, which is zealously guarded by owners, is often their most valuable possession, attesting to the rights to their land in the forest as well as to the number of acres they are entitled to. A key benefit of the deed is that villagers whose land is acquired by the government stand to gain monetary compensation. Aliens in their own lands: When Chhattisgarh's tribals were turned into encroachers. As per the provisions of the FRA, forest dwellers have individual rights and villagers have community rights over tracts of land that they are allowed to manage in ways they deem fit. Any transfer of land for non-forest purposes requires the prior consent of gram sabhas. On paper, Kumeti is the owner of 2.5 acres of forest land. However, a portion of this land was taken for the railway project, he claims. And to ensure that Kumeti and fellow claimants to the forest land stay clear of the railway lines, there are now Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) forces stationed there. Attempts by villagers to point out stretches of their land which have now been made inaccessible are being thwarted by the heavily armed patrol. Work at the railway line came to a halt earlier this year after a "mini agitation" by the villagers, one of the stationed SSB troops says. "Last year, half a kilometre from where we're standing, an improvised explosive device was detonated by the Naxalites. The government is extremely sensitive to the presence of anyone over here," he says. While Kumeti has a piece of paper certifying his possession of the land, Soham Darro says his claims over a piece of land have been rejected. The head of a family of four, Darro owns some pasture land, but a sizeable portion ("at least three acres") in the reserved forest has been denied to him. Darro deposited with the village office documents to prove ownership, but they never made it back to him. "I was asked to deposit an application as well as proof of residence at the panchayat office two years ago. After that, I've never seen those papers. I don't know how I'm supposed to get them back," he says. Kumeti and Darro are

residents of the same village and their experiences exemplify the two major challenges in implementing the FRA effectively. Forest land that should ideally be managed by the gram sabha is not always legally transferred to the village community, and, sometimes, individuals are unable to claim ownership of their land. In a blow to Kumeti and millions of others like him across India, the Supreme Court, on February 13, ordered that all Adivasis and forest dwellers whose claims under the FRA have been rejected should be evicted from the forests by July 2019. This was on the back of a petition in the court by some environment groups demanding that those who didn't have proof to identify themselves as forest dwellers be marked as encroachers and evicted. Their presence, it was argued, endangered wildlife and forest conservation efforts. Following protests, the court temporarily stayed its own order on February 28, and directed the States to compile the reasons for rejecting the claims and explain whether and how due process had been followed. Chhattisgarh, 45% of which is forest area, hosts some of India's richest mineral deposits, including coal, iron ore, bauxite and limestone. Forest land was once the fiefdom of the British. Following Independence, it was seen as the exclusive turf of the forest bureaucracy. However, after the enactment of the FRA and with mounting instances of the exploitation of this economic wealth to the detriment of Adivasis, the state's control over these forests is being contested by the tribal and forest-dwelling populace. The FRA was enacted to recognise the close connection of Adivasis share with forests and their natural claim to forest land and its produce. Since the FRA came into force on December 31, 2007, there have been 4.2 million title claims over 14 million acres of forest land nationwide, of which only 1.8 million have been accorded, according to November 2018 data from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Chhattisgarh topped the list among States. Nearly 8.9 lakh title claims, by individuals and communities, were made in the State. Only 4.16 lakh claims, or less than half, were actually granted. The rejection rate was also highest in Chhattisgarh among the States, the data indicate. "Chhattisgarh epitomises the necessity of the FRA. It has rich natural wealth, which corporations and industry desire. There is a large tribal population that is dependent on the forests. Yet, awareness of the FRA is poor, from the district administration level to the forest officials," says Alok Shukla, convener of the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan, a coalition of activist groups that works on FRA matters. In Chhattisgarh, the FRA has the potential to secure the rights and livelihoods of more than 7.4 million Adivasis and traditional forest dwellers, who constitute 32% of the State's population and are spread over at least 3.02 million hectares in over 11,500 villages. Only 5% of the total Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes population in Chhattisgarh has claimed individual forest resource rights. There are no data on titles recognised in favour of women. Community forest resource rights have also not been recognised in Chhattisgarh, says Pujya Priyadarshini, a lawyer and activist with the Community Forest Resource-Learning and Advocacy, an NGO network that among other things analyses the political impact of FRA implementation. A key reason for complications in implementation of the FRA is the process of staking a claim. Adivasis may claim individual rights over forest areas if they can prove that they have been residents of the area before December 13, 2005. Their claims are vetted by a three-layered system: the gram sabha, where the claims are first submitted; a sub-divisional-level committee (SDLC) headed by a government officer; and a district-level committee (DLC) headed by the district collector. Kumeti holds the title deed that shows his claim over forest land. He is surrounded by his neighbours in Patkalbeda village. Kumeti holds the title deed that shows his claim over forest land. He is surrounded by his neighbours in Patkalbeda village. Forest claims have to be accompanied by documentary evidence such as government identity cards, statements by elders, and physical evidence of possession or use of land. The gram sabha's forest rights committee verify the claims. If the gram sabha is satisfied, it directs the claims to the SDLC for review. If approved, the claim is forwarded to the DLC, which is the final legal authority to approve or reject claims. Their presence, it was argued, endangered wildlife and forest conservation efforts. Following protests, the court temporarily stayed its own order on February 28, and directed the States to compile the reasons for rejecting the claims and explain whether and how due process had been followed. Chhattisgarh, 45% of which is forest area, hosts some of India's richest mineral deposits, including coal, iron ore, bauxite and limestone. Forest land was once the fiefdom of the British. Following Independence, it was seen as the exclusive turf of the forest bureaucracy. However, after the enactment of the FRA and with mounting instances of the exploitation of this economic wealth to the detriment of Adivasis, the state's control over these forests is being contested by the tribal and forest-dwelling populace. The FRA was enacted to recognise the close connection of Adivasis share with forests and their natural claim to forest land and its produce. 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"And often forest and village officials, who are not supposed to be in the gram sabha committees, call the shots. The asymmetry of power is very evident in these interactions." Keshav Shori, founder of DISHA, an organisation that scouts forests for Adivasi settlements to educate residents about

the FRA and the need to file title claims, says that in the pursuit of forest land, officials frequently concoct rules, or bring in provisions of irrelevant legislation to lay claim to forest land. "The FRA says land cannot be taken away by the government until forest rights are recognised. Often, rules that apply to non-forest lands, such as the Land Acquisition Act or the Panchayat Act, are used to capture forest land," he says. Early last month, the Environment Ministry granted clearance for diverting more than 841.5 hectares of forest-land for mining coal in Chhattisgarh's Parsa block. The region is part of the pristine Hasdeo Arand forests. The coal will be mined from the area for use in captive power plants operated by the Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited. The mining operations will be handled by Rajasthan Collieries Limited, a unit of Adani Enterprises. While there are cases pending in the Supreme Court regarding the allotment of these mining contracts, Shukla says similar exercises are imminent in southern regions of Bastar, that were so far inaccessible because of Naxal activity. "The takeover of forest land by private corporations has led to a certain level of activism and Adivasis are standing up for their rights in Sarguja and Parsa. But a lot more training and awareness programmes are required in these regions (Antagarh and Kanker) to avert situations like these," he says. The demand for due recognition of forest rights was reflected in the Assembly election results in Chhattisgarh in 2018. In the rural constituencies, the BJP lost favour with the voters, while the Congress made marginal gains, largely because it promised to properly implement the FRA. Overall, the Congress swept the State. After the Supreme Court order, Congress president Rahul Gandhi asked Chief Ministers in Congress-ruled States to file a review petition against the mass eviction of Adivasis and other forest dwellers. Soon after coming to power, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel convened a meeting of district authorities and civil society organisations to discuss ways in which the FRA could be better implemented. "There was a lot of latent anger regarding the poor implementation of the FRA. That impacted the BJP in the election. The Congress has taken over only recently, so the expectations that people have from the party might carry over into the Lok Sabha elections too," says Shori. An analysis in March by the CFR-LA finds that implementation of forest rights could be a key poll issue in a fourth of India's 543 parliamentary constituencies. In Chhattisgarh, this could resonate in the Bastar, Kanker, Raigarh and Sarguja constituencies. CFR-LA says, given that 43-70% of the voters in these areas stand to gain from proper implementation of the FRA, Kumeti and his compatriots are divided about the effectiveness of either the BJP or the Congress in this regard. For now, they have put their faith in the court. Through a civil rights organisation, the villagers first petitioned the Collector of Kanker for compensation and jobs in lieu of their land being taken for the project. In January 2018, they finally petitioned the High Court but are yet to hear anything concrete. Dugga says, "We understand that the government requires land for developmental projects and we aren't against it. However, we would like our children to benefit too. What else can we bequeath them?"

Despite the experience of two good elections

(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 "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 polling 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 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

IPL 2019: Mumbai Indians eye revenge against Kings XI Punjab

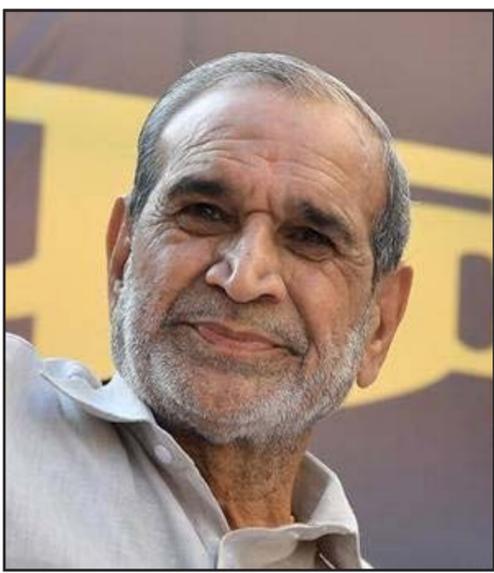


(News Track) The previous encounter between the two teams in Mohali had ended in a comprehensive eight-wicket win for Kings XI, but home conditions at the Wankhede Stadium are expected to favour MI. Revenge will be on their mind when Mumbai Indians lock horns with Kings XI Punjab, the hosts looking to stretch their winning run in the Indian Premier League here on Wednesday. The previous encounter between the two teams in Mohali had ended in a comprehensive eight-wicket win for Kings XI, but home conditions at the Wankhede Stadium are expected to favour MI. MI enter the match high on confidence following successive victories over holders Chennai Super Kings and last edition's finalists Sunrisers Hyderabad. Significantly both these victories came mostly because of MI's all-round bowling strength as the bowlers defended totals successfully. MI are also blessed with splendid batting firepower in the end overs from West Indian Kieron Pollard and Hardik Pandya. Kings XI, who too have been given a shot-in-the-arm by their six-wicket victory on Monday night over Sunrisers, need to chip away at the top of the MI batting as well as ensure that the big-striking Pollard and Hardik don't take away the game like they did when carving 45 runs in the last two overs against CSK to turn the game around. MI don't even have anyone in the top-20 run scorers' list this season, an indication of the depth in their batting, and have a superior fast bowling attack bolstered by the inclusion of West Indian pacer, Alzarri Joseph, who blew away Sunrisers with his

record-breaking haul of 6/12 in Hyderabad in their previous game. The hosts have a formidable pace attack with Jasprit Bumrah and left-arm Jason Behrendorff also there, along with Joseph and Hardik, to utilise the bounce and carry on the Wankhede track. Kings XI, third on the table with eight points, have been top heavy in batting with KL Rahul and Mayank Agarwal leading the way with 200-plus aggregates and the indomitable Gayle too not far behind. In bowling, skipper R. Ashwin (7 wickets) has done well in five out of six games that the team has played and has got good support from the likes of Sam Curran, Mohammed Shami and Murugan Ashwin. Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma (c), Quinton de Kock (wk), Suryakumar Yadav, Yuvraj Singh, Kieron Pollard, Hardik Pandya, Krunal Pandya, Mitchell McClenaghan, Jason Behrendorff, Mayank Markande, Rahul Chahar, Jasprit Bumrah, Alzarri Joseph, Anmolpreet Singh, Siddhesh Lad, Ankur Roy, Evin Lewis, Pankaj Jaiswal, Ben Cutting, Ishan Kishan (wk), Aditya Tare, Rasikh Salam, Barinder Sran, Jayant Yadav. Kings XI Punjab: Lokesh Rahul (wk), Chris Gayle, Mayank Agarwal, Sarfaraz Khan, David Miller, Mandeep Singh, Sam Curran, Ravichandran Ashwin (c), Andrew Tye, Murugan Ashwin, Mohammed Shami, Mujeeb Ur Rehman, Karun Nair, Moises Henriques, Varun Chakravarthi, Harpreet Brar, Simran Singh, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Hardus Viljoen, Ankit Rajpoot, Arshdeep Singh, Darshan Nalkande, Agnivesh Ayachi.

CBI calls Sajjan Kumar 'kingpin' of 1984 anti-Sikh riots, opposes bail

(Day Today) The CBI objected to grant of bail to former Congress party leader Sajjan Kumar, saying he is behind the "gruesome" massacre of Sikhs in the 1985 riots in the Capital. The 73-year-old Kumar was sentenced to life by the Delhi High Court on December 17 for murder in a Delhi anti-Sikh riots case. He has appealed to the Supreme Court and sought bail. But the CBI, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, said Kumar is facing trial in another 1984 riots case and it would be a "travesty of justice" to enlarge him on bail now. Mr. Mehta described Kumar as a "kingpin" while arguing against bail before a Bench led by Justice S.A. Bobde on Monday. "This is a gruesome offence of massacre of Sikhs. He [Kumar] was the leader and the kingpin of this," Mr. Mehta submitted. The case in which Kumar is convicted and sentenced relates to the killing of five Sikhs in Delhi Cantonment's Raj Nagar Part-I area of south-west Delhi on November 1 and 2, 1984, and burning down of a Gurudwara in Raj Nagar Part-II. Anti-Sikh riots broke out after the assassination of then prime minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984, by her two Sikh bodyguards. Kumar's counsel, however, countered that he had earlier been granted anticipatory bail. He said his client has been



in jail for the past three months. However, the Bench was also told by one of the advocates that Kumar was a sitting MP in 1984 and several Sikhs were killed during the riots in his constituency. When Kumar's counsel referred to the merits of the case, Justice Bobde stopped him, saying "we do not know why you are inviting our attention to the facts of the case... Today, you [Kumar] are convicted by the High Court. It is not a charge by police. We cannot treat it lightly". The court asked about the status of trial of the ongoing trial in the second case. Mr. Mehta said it was at the stage of recording of prosecution evidence. The Bench asked the CBI to further apprise it of the status of the trial and scheduled the bail hearing for April 15.

Arithmetic is in favour of BJP in western Maharashtra: Chandrakant Patil

(Day Today) The man in charge of the all-important western Maharashtra seats of Sangli, Madha, Maval and Baramati, is confident that the BJP's strategy in the sugar belt will yield favourable results. Senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and Maharashtra Revenue Minister Chandrakant Patil, deputed to oversee the party's strategy in western Maharashtra, is confident of "achieving total supremacy" in the sugar belt. He tells the Hindu the belt, once dominated by Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress, will see the BJP win the prestigious Madha and Maval seats. How do you see the BJP-Shiv Sena's position in western

Maharashtra? The BJP-Sena will achieve complete supremacy in the sugar heartland this time around. I was always in favour of an alliance with the Sena. We are working in unison and are in an especially strong position in the crucial Lok Sabha seats of Sangli, Madha, Maval and Baramati. The BJP's Sangli unit is riven with factionalism, while the entry of influential Dhangar leader Gopichand Padalkar into the fray is expected to eat into your BJP's votes. How do you see these challenges? The Chief Minister himself has intervened in resolving the issues within the BJP's Sangli unit. I have personally overseen that all differences are buried through a number of

meetings. Much has been made about Gopichand Padalkar, who campaigned for us in the 2014 elections. He was never really with the BJP, nor was he that potent a political force. His support even when he campaigned for us amounted to less than 40,000 votes. In the last general elections, the Congress candidate [Pratik Patil] secured four lakh votes, which this time is going to be divided between the Swabhimani Paksha and Padalkar, who is the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) candidate. As in-charge of the high-prestige Baramati Lok Sabha seat, you have expressed your determination to end the stranglehold of the Pawar clan there. What is your game plan?

Garvi Gujarat Vice Admiral Bimal Verma withdraws petition from Armed Forces Tribunal



(News Track) He was asked by the AFT to first seek internal channels for redressal through the Ministry of Defence. Vice Admiral Bimal Verma on Tuesday withdrew the petition from the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT), which was moved a day earlier over his supersession and appointment of Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Chief of Naval Staff (CNS). He was asked by the AFT to first seek internal channels for redressal through the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Vice Adm. Verma was asked to file a statutory complaint to the MoD as per provisions of the Navy Act, an official source said adding that he is free to approach the AFT if his concerns were not addressed. He was represented by Advocates Rhea Verma and Ankur Chibber who asked the Tribunal to direct the government to address his concerns in a time-bound manner given the limited time frame. This was declined by the Tribunal which observed that they do not act as advisers to the government of India. Vice Adm Bimal Verma moves tribunal over supersession. Last month the government announced the appointment of Vice Adm. Singh as the 24th Navy Chief once incumbent CNS Admiral Sunil Lanbar retires on May 31 on completing three years in office. Vice Adm. Verma is currently the Commander-in-Chief of Andaman and Nicobar based tri-service command and is six months senior to Vice Adm. Singh. The government had earlier overlooked a senior officer in the appointment of General Bipin Rawat as Chief of Army Staff in 2016.

CIAL crosses one-crore passenger mark again



(Day Today) The Cochin International Airport has crossed the 10 million (1 crore) passenger mark for the second consecutive year during 2018-19 despite the closure of the airport for 15 days in mid-August last year after the airport facilities were flooded. For the first time since the beginning of operations, CIAL had crossed the 10 million passenger mark in a year in 2017-18. The total number of passengers who travelled through all the four airports in the State during 2018-19 comes close to 1.65 crores, out of which CIAL's share stands at 1.02 crores, which is 61.8 per cent. Of the 1.02 crore passengers who travelled through CIAL, 52.68 lakhs travelled in the domestic sector. This is the first time in the CIAL history that the domestic passenger volume surpassed that of the international sector. The total aircraft operations for this period was 71,871 against 69,665 in the previous year, said an official communication from CIAL. CIAL launched its aircraft operations on June 10, 1999. It handled 4.95 lakh passengers in the initial year till March 2000. The first full year 2001-02 saw a passenger volume of 7.72 lakhs. The passenger volume crossed 10 lakhs during 2002-03. The cumulative figure (the total number of passengers travelling through CIAL since its inception) touched 1 crore in seven years. It added the next 10 million in three years and the third 10 million in another 2.5 years. CIAL handled more than 50 lakh passengers in 2013-14. The number increased to 77.57 lakh in 2016-17 and crossed the 10 million mark in a single year during 2017-18. Altogether, CIAL has handled 8.39 crore passengers since 1999. The total aircraft movements for the whole period of operation is 7,37,049. In order to accommodate the ever increasing domestic traffic, CIAL renovated its terminal-1 which was launched on March 21. As per the ongoing summer schedule, the airport handles 1,672 aircraft movements weekly. It offers direct connectivity to 23 Indian cities and 16 international destinations.

Telangana govt. releases 220 cr. for Rythu Bandhu

(News Track) Two farmers at Kishampalli village in Nagarkurnool district complaining about non-receipt of Rythu Bandhu benefit for Yasangi season. TRS leaders face the heat from farmers during poll campaigns over non-receipt of the monetary aid. The heat faced by the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) party activists and leaders from a section of the farming community, during the ongoing canvassing for the Parliamentary polls, regarding the non-receipt of Rythu Bandhu benefit for the Yasangi even at the end of the season has forced the State Government to resume disbursement of the benefit on Monday. According to official sources in the government, the Finance Department has released 220 crore on Monday for the purpose of crediting the amount to the beneficiary farmers' accounts. It is being expected that the entire amount due, about 2800 crore as stated by the officials, would be cleared in the next three or four days. The farmers who have not received the benefit for the second crop of the 2018-19 agriculture year have been complaining about it not only with political functionaries of the ruling party but also with those of the Opposition parties. Non-receipt of the benefit has been taking shape of resentment as expressed by one Baddu Naik of a Lambada habitation (thanda) near Vattem in Nagarkurnool district: "I have voted for TRS in the Assembly and Sarpanch (TRS-supported candidate) elections. But, now I am thinking otherwise since nobody, who has been approached regarding my non-receipt of Rythu Bandhu amount for Yasangi has given me any assurance as to when the amount will be credited". Mr. Naik, who owns little over four acres of land in different survey numbers, was also vocal against BJP stating that he was yet to receive the PM-Kisan benefit. He is not alone in complaining about the non-receipt of both the benefits, there are scores of such farmers across the State. "Even the offices of District Agriculture Officer (DAO) and the Agriculture Commissionerate in Hyderabad has been getting calls from farmers about non-receipt of the Rythu Bandhu benefit regularly for over a month now and the matter has already been taken to the notice of the higher officials concerned," a senior officer said, admitting about the problem.

SBI sets terms for Jet Airways sale



(Day Today) Maximum stake on offer is 75% in the cash-strapped airline; last date for receipt of EoI is April 10. State Bank of India (SBI) on Monday invited bids from strategic and financial investors for stake sale in the cash-strapped Jet Airways. SBI, the lead bank of the consortium of lenders of Jet Airways (India) Ltd., has offered bidders a maximum of 75% stake (8,51,98,037 shares). The minimum stake on offer is 31.2% (3,45,42,383 shares). SBI Capital Markets Ltd., on behalf of the SBI, has invited expression of interest (EoI) for a change in control and management of Jet Airways. The last date for receipt of EoI is April 10. Selected bidders are required to submit binding bids by April 30, 2019. A competitive bidding process would be followed for identification of a suitable investor to acquire ownership of the company on as-is where-is basis. The winning bidder is expected to settle the obligations of the company in relation to existing bank loan facilities. EoIs had been invited from individuals, including foreign nationals, trusts, cooperative societies, private limited companies, public limited companies, partnership firms and sole proprietorships. Bidders can be strategic invest-

ors (SIs) or financial investors (FIs). In the event of a bidder not being a consortium, the SI bidder should have a minimum net worth of 21,000 crore in the immediately preceding financial year or have funds available for investment in Indian assets of 21,000 crore or more or a minimum of three years of experience in the commercial aviation business. If the bidder is an FI, then it should have minimum assets under management of 2,000 crore in the immediately preceding completed financial year or committed funds available for investment in Indian assets of 21,000 crore or more. A consortium that may bid would consist of not more than three members with shareholding of an individual member not being less than 15%. There must be a lead consortium member to take decisions. After conclusion of the EoI stage and following execution of a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) and payment of bid access fee, the qualified bidders would be provided access to the data room to provide information about the company. Interested parties are expected to submit a preliminary term sheet providing indicative valuation for 100% equity share capital of the company and settlement of all obligations of the company.

Ryots celebrate order, ready for a long battle



(News Track) A farmer removing a pillar erected to mark lands acquired for Salem-Chennai green corridor project in Ramalingapuram near Ayothiyapattinam in Salem district on Monday. Burst crackers, distribute sweets to celebrate the landmark ruling. Farmers in Dharmapuri and Salem, who have opposed the Salem-Chennai eight-lane green corridor project, felt triumphant after the High Court quashed land acquisition for the expressway. Hailing the verdict, farmers' associations pointed out that the project was not essential. Farmers in Salem performed pujas and uprooted the stones placed by revenue officials to mark out the land acquired for the expressway. Those in Harur and Pappireddipatti in Dharmapuri district were, however, guarded in their reaction, making it clear that the battle was not over yet. Chandra Mohan, an organic farmer of Irulapatty who spearheaded the opposition to the project in Harur and Pappireddipatti, called the verdict a victory for farmers. "We are happy, but we are going to fight the government since they are going to appeal [against the HC order] in the Supreme Court. We have prepared the papers to be filed," he said. Jegadeeshwari, who was set to lose 11 cents and 11.5 acres of mango plantation, said, "The Ministers have made it clear that they will appeal. Will the Supreme Court really stop the project or will the government have its way," she wondered. R. Gopalakrishnan, president of Desiya Nedunjalaikalal Vivasayigal Sangam, said, "We express our gratitude to the judiciary. The judgment inspired farmers to pursue their protests

and legal battle for various other issues." "Farmers here have been protesting for years to receive settlements for the land acquired for the Salem-Ulundurpettai highway. Today, many affected farmers feel that the fight should be resumed for their land." A. Ramamoorthy, district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said, "There are three highways already connecting Salem with Chennai. Therefore, this project is not essential. It will benefit only a few corporates who want to exploit the natural resources in the region." At Ramalingapuram in Salem, farmers and residents gathered at a Mariamman temple, distributed sweets and performed pujas.

Some farmers bowed to the land and then uprooted and threw away the stones placed to mark out the acquired land. Cadres of Pattali Makkal Katchi, which is part of the AIADMK-BJP alliance, burst crackers and distributed sweets. K. Sivakami, whose two acres of agricultural land was marked for the green corridor, said "The judgment brings huge relief to us. It has been a year-long fight for our land, our rights." M. Kavitha of Ramalingapuram said, "I would have lost seven acres of agricultural land, my only asset, to the project. Both the State and Central governments should respect our sentiments and give up any further proceedings in the case", she said.

Hyderabad LS seat: a safe haven for MIM

(News Track) While the result of the Hyderabad Parliament seat seems to be a foregone conclusion, the poll battle, given past trends, is likely to be between the Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslim ean and BJP. The Hyderabad seat, which covers large swathes of Old City, has been a bastion of MIM since 1984. Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, Asad's father, was elected six times from 8th to 13th Lok Sabha. The constituency comprises Charminar, Chandrayangutta, Goshamahal, Yakutpura, Bahadurpura, Malakpet and Karwan Assembly segments. All are represented by MIM legislators with the exception of Goshamahal, which elected BJP legislator T. Raja Singh. While Hyderabad seat is a Muslim majority constituency, it does have a sizeable population of Hindus. Areas such as Lal Darwaza, a part of both Yakutpura and Chandrayangutta segments, Gowlipura and parts of IS Sadaan in Yakutpura, Choolapura in Charminar and Ziaguda and Langar Houz in Karwan, are Hindu-populated neighbourhoods. The 2014 elections saw Owaisi taking on BJP's Bhagwant Rao and the TRS's Rashid Shareef. Owaisi witnessed a landslide victory and polled 2,02,454 votes more than his closest rival - Dr. Bhagwant Rao. With the TRS allying with the MIM, Mr Owaisi is expected to have a smooth sailing this time. In fact, TRS' 2014 candidate Rashid Shareef, in the run-up to the 2018 Assembly polls, had claimed the party was not supporting its cadre here. The 2009 elections saw Owaisi locking horns with the editor of Siasat daily and TDP candidate Zahid Ali Khan.

ECI begins arrangements for phase 1 LS polls, voting on in Israel polls, and other news in pictures



(Day Today) Election Commission officials in the process of loading the candidates and parties' list on EVMs to be used in the Erode Parliamentary Constituency, in Erode on Tuesday. Election Commission of India officials have started making arrangements for conducting the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on April 11. Only Modi can give a strong govt: Amit Shah. A section of the crowd at the rally of BJP president Amit Shah in Shamshabad, in Hyderabad on Tuesday. A section of the crowd at the rally of BJP president Amit Shah in Shamshabad, in Hyderabad on Tuesday. BJP President Amit Shah on Tuesday made a strong pitch for return of the party-led NDA government at the Centre, saying only Prime Minister Narendra Modi can give a strong government. Addressing an election rally at Shamshabad near Hyderabad, he also said the BJP's manifesto released Monday was nothing but a document to make the country great. Referring to the Pulwama terrorist attack and subsequent air strike by India targeting terror camps in Pakistan, Mr. Shah asked whether Congress President Rahul Gandhi could give a fitting reply like Modi. "The biggest work that the Modi government did was to secure the nation," he said. Israel parliamentary elections: voting begins. Benny Gantz, leader of Blue and White party, and his wife Revital cast their ballots as Israelis began voting in a parliamentary election, at a polling station in Rosh Ha'ayin, Israel April 9, 2019.

Benny Gantz, leader of Blue and White party, and his wife Revital cast their ballots as Israelis began voting in a parliamentary election, at a polling station in Rosh Ha'ayin, Israel April 9, 2019. Israeli voters began casting ballots Tuesday in parliamentary elections that will determine whether longtime Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remains in office after a decade in power. Clouded by a series of looming corruption indictments, Netanyahu is seeking a fourth consecutive and a fifth overall term in office, which would make him Israel's longest-serving leader, surpassing founding father David Ben-Gurion. "Go to vote. Choose whoever you believe in. Respect each other and let us all wake up for a new dawn, a new history," he said. Nissan ex-chair Ghosn says 'conspiracy' led to his arrest. Former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn, seen on a screen, speaks in a video during a press conference held by his lawyers in Tokyo. Former Nissan chair-

man Carlos Ghosn, seen on a screen, speaks in a video during a press conference held by his lawyers in Tokyo. Ousted Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn said he was innocent and slammed former colleagues whom he accused of backstabbing and conspiring against him, in a pre-recorded video that marked his first public address since his initial arrest last year. In the video, shown to reporters in Tokyo, the former Nissan Motor Co chairman said he was the victim of selfish rivals bent on derailing a closer alliance between the Japanese automaker and French partner Renault SA. Protesters warn of Chinese 'invasion' of Philippines. Anti-China protesters raise placards and national flags during a protest in front of Chinese consular office in the financial district of Manila on April 9, 2019. Anti-China protesters raise placards and national flags during a protest in front of Chinese consular office in the financial district of Manila on April 9, 2019. Protesters descended on the Chinese embassy in Manila on Tuesday to oppose the Asian superpower's growing sway in the Philippines and as tensions rise over Beijing's presence in the disputed South China Sea. Filipino flag-waving marchers chanted "China out" and brandished a banner saying "Defend our sovereign rights", referring to Beijing's expansive claims to the resource-rich waterway. 9 leaders of Hong Kong pro-democracy protests found guilty. Occupy Central leaders, from right, Benny Tai, Chan Kin-man, Chu Yiu-ming, Tanya Chan and Eason Chung shout slogans before entering a court in Hong Kong, Tuesday, April 9, 2019. Occupy Central leaders, from right, Benny Tai, Chan Kin-man, Chu Yiu-ming, Tanya Chan and Eason Chung shout slogans before entering a court in Hong Kong, Tuesday, April 9, 2019. A group of Hong Kong democracy leaders were found guilty on Tuesday for their involvement in mass rallies at a trial that sparked renewed alarm over shrinking political freedoms under an assertive China. Nine activists were all convicted of at least one charge in a prosecution that deployed rarely-used colonial-era public nuisance laws over their participation in the 2014 Umbrella Movement protests, which called for free elections for the city's leader. Among the most prominent members of the group on trial were sociology professor Chan Kin-man, 60, law professor Benny Tai, 54, and Baptist minister Chu Yiu-ming, 75. Colombia lower house rejects president's changes to peace tribunal.

Only Modi can give strong government: Amit Shah



Bharatiya Janata Party president Amit Shah along with Telangana BJP leaders during an election campaign in Shamshabad, Hyderabad on Tuesday. Here are the day's election-related developments at a glance. Only Modi can give a strong government: Amit Shah, BJP president Amit Shah made a strong pitch for return of the party-led NDA government at the Centre, saying only Narendra Modi can give a strong government. Addressing an election rally at Shamshabad near Hyderabad, Mr. Shah said the BJP's manifesto was nothing but a document to make the country great. Referring to the Pulwama terrorist attack and the subsequent air strike by India targeting terror camps in Pakistan, he asked whether Congress president Rahul Gandhi could give a fitting reply like Mr. Modi. "The biggest work that the Modi government did was to secure the nation," he said. Mr. Shah also sought to know whether the "thukada-thukada gang" and "Rahul baba and company" could give a "capable leadership" to the country. "Can they give a strong government? Only and only Modi can give a strong government to the country," he said. Trinamool will play a crucial role in govt formation, says Mamata. West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee has hinted at the possibility of a post-poll alliance. Speaking at a rally in Raiganj, she said: "In every State, alliances have been formed to oust Modi... Once he is voted out of power, all of us can work together to build a new India." She blamed the BJP for not renaming the State as Bangla. "The BJP doesn't like West Bengal and Bengalis; that is why they have stopped the process of renaming the State as Bangla." The State Assembly had unanimously decided to rename the State, but it's pending with the Centre. Ms. Banerjee also blamed the Congress for the rise of the BJP. "It is because the Congress failed to put up a fight against the BJP, the saffron party grew from strength to strength." Asserting that the Trinamool Congress would play a "crucial role" in government formation, she said, "the Congress cannot form a government on its own, it will have to seek help from others." Prime Minister Narendra Modi flanked by Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis and NDA leaders Uddhav Thackeray and Ramdas Athavale at an election rally in Katie, Maharashtra on Tues-

day. At a rally in Latur, Maharashtra, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, took potshots at the Congress, saying, "The Congress says chowkidar chor hai, but crores of rupees are found with Congress leaders and their aides." He was referring to the recent Income Tax department searches in several places. "It shows who the choris. It shows why you are scared of the chowkidar. Bundles of notes are found in Madhya Pradesh just within 6 months of forming the govt," he says in a veiled attack on Chief Minister Kamal Nath. Mr. Modi urged the first-time voters to exercise their franchise. "The first-time voters should dedicate their votes to the brave Air Force fighters who attacked the Balakot terror camp in Pakistan." BJP manifesto is short-sighted and arrogant, says Rahul. Congress president Rahul Gandhi has termed the BJP's election manifesto the voice of an isolated man, short-sighted and arrogant. In a tweet, he said, "The Congress manifesto was created through discussion. The voice of over a million Indian people it is wise and powerful. The BJP Manifesto was created in a closed room. The voice of an isolated man, it is short sighted and arrogant." In its manifesto, which was released on Monday, the BJP made a string of promises, including expeditious construction of a Ram temple, a firm hand in dealing with terrorism and doubling of 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. The Congress dubbed the BJP's manifesto a "jhansa patra" (deception document) and a "bubble of lies". It would have been better had the BJP issued a "maafinama" instead, it said. Over 16.85 lakh voters to decide fate of 12 candidates in Udhampur. The fate of 12 candidates, including Union Minister Jitendra Singh, will be decided by over 16.85 lakh voters of Udhampur in the second phase of the Lok Sabha election on April 18. The constituency is spread over 17 Assembly segments in six districts -- Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Reasi, Udhampur and Kathua. According to the figures provided by the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Jammu and Kashmir, Shailendra Kumar, there are 16,85,779 registered voters in Udhampur, including 8,76,319 men, 7,89,105 women, 20,312 service voters (20,052 men and 260 women) and 43 transgender electors. History shows vote transfer will be a tall order for alliance in Karnataka If the "unprecedented" alliance between the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) is to

succeed in the Lok Sabha election, voters need to buck the trend of voting differently in State and national elections. On paper, the combined vote share of the alliance in the recent Assembly polls threatens the dominant BJP in most parliamentary seats. However, Assembly constituency-wise polling numbers from recent elections point to a significant chunk of voters shifting their allegiance in the year's gap between State and parliamentary polls. These "lost votes" seem to be heading to the BJP, rather than the coalition partners. This changing voter behaviour is clear in the tabulation of areas where parties lost votes (a loss of more than 2,000 votes is considered to be significant) between a parliamentary election (2009, 2014) and the preceding Assembly election (2008, 2013). The BJP has lost votes in just 60 Assembly constituencies — or 13% of the total segments — between national elections and State elections. Three-fourths of these constituencies were held by BJP MLAs. These "lost votes" were primarily in south Karnataka and the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, where the Congress and JD(S) have the upper hand. In the other areas, the BJP managed to retain and build on its vote base even if it lost the previous year's Assembly election. While the Congress improved its tally in the 2008 and 2013 Assembly elections, in the succeeding Lok Sabha elections, it lost votes in 189 Assembly constituencies (or 42% of the total segments that form parliamentary constituencies). Nearly six in 10 of these seats were held by Congress MLAs — which suggests that a large number of voters chose a non-INC candidate in the parliamentary polls. It's a contest between 'chor' and chowkidar: Manoj Tiwari. BJP supporters during the release of the party manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha election, at the party headquarters in New Delhi on Monday. The coming election would be a contest between 'chor and chowkidar', and the citizens of the Capital will decide which political party fitted which role, Delhi BJP president Manoj Tiwari said at a public meeting at north-west Delhi's Wazirabad. The North-East Delhi MP took the opportunity to reiterate the works undertaken by the Modi government. "People who level baseless charges will be taught a lesson. Delhiites will decide who the 'chor' is and who the 'chowkidar' is," he said.

Sister Abhaya murder case: Kerala High Court dismisses discharge pleas of accused



(News Track) Dismissing the petitions of Father Dr Thomas Kottoor, and Sister Sephy, the first and third accused respectively, Justice Sunil Thomas directed them to stand trial in the case. The Kerala High Court on Tuesday dismissed revision petitions filed by two accused — a priest and nun — seeking their discharge in the more than two-decade-old Sister Abhaya murder case. Dismissing the petitions of Father Thomas Kottoor, and Sister Sephy, the first and third accused respectively, Justice Sunil Thomas directed them to stand trial in the case. Last year, a special CBI court in Thiruvananthapuram had rejected the discharge petitions filed by the two accused. The CBI court had observed that there was sufficient ground for presuming that the two had committed offences punishable under Indian Penal Code sections 302 (murder) and 201 (destroying evidences) read with section 34 (Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention). The High Court, however, upheld the CBI court order discharging second accused in the case Father Jose Poothrikkayil. Discharging Poothrikkayil, the CBI court had held that the prosecution had failed to bring out sufficient material to proceed against him. Challenging the CBI Court decision discharging Poothrikkayil in the case, a plea was filed in the High Court. The High Court also discharged fourth accused and a former crime branch SP, K.T. Michael in the case. The court said that he can be made an accused during the trial of the case, if necessary. Michael, accused of allegedly destroying evidence in the case, was added in the list of accused by the CBI court last year. Michael, as the in-charge of the crime branch probe into the case, had closed it summing up that sister Abhaya had committed suicide. Abhaya's body was found in the well of the ST Pius Convent in Kottayam on March 27, 1992. She was an inmate of the convent. Initially, the case was investigated by the local police and state crime branch which concluded that Abhaya had committed suicide. However, the case was taken over by CBI on March 29, 1993 following a legal battle by human rights activist Jomon Puthenpurackal. The central probe agency in 2008 arrested Kottoor, Poothrikkayil and Sephy on the charge of murder. According to the prosecution, Kottoor and Poothrikkayil were allegedly having an illicit relationship with Sephy, also an inmate of the convent. On the night of March 27, 1992, Abhaya allegedly saw Kottoor and Sephy in a compromising position, following which the three accused hacked her with an axe and threw her into the well, it had said in its charge sheet. The accused were arrested in 2008 and released on bail by the Kerala High Court a year later.

BJP, Cong. are corrupt: Mayawati



(News Track) BSP chief Mayawati receiving a memento from RLD leader Jayant Chaudhary and others during a rally in Meerut on Monday. Alliance partner Jayant Chaudhary hints at BSP chief's role as Prime Minister. Continuing her tirade against the BJP and the Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Monday described both parties as "corrupt". "If the Congress had Bofors, the BJP is tainted by the Rafale deal," she said at a massive mahagathbandhan rally in Hajipur village of Meerut, where voting will take place on April 11. Though RLD vice-president Jayant Chaudhary was present at the rally, it was essentially a BSP show of strength with its candidate Haji Yaqub Qureshi organising the rally near his base. The turnout more than equalled, if not actually surpassing the numbers of Sunday's Deoband rally. The campaign songs were interspersed with an elephant's trumpeting, sending the crowd into wild celebrations. A Mayawati fan was holding a large cut-out of Parliament with Mayawati as Prime Minister embossed on it. With a hand on the crowd's pulse, Mr. Chaudhary hinted at Ms. Mayawati as a prime ministerial candidate. He asked members of the enthusiastic crowd to close their eyes and think of the contribution and unfulfilled dreams of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram and Chaudhary Charan Singh. "Now, I ask you to open your eyes and see that only the person sitting on stage can fulfil those dreams and aspirations," he said. In her address, instead of giving ad hoc doles, Ms. Mayawati promised to give permanent jobs to the poor in the government and private sector, if voted to power at the Centre. "Policies come and go with the governments. We want to strengthen the hands of the poor," she said. Stating that the BSP-SP-RLD pact was not limited to the Lok Sabha elections, Ms. Mayawati said, "We will fight the next Assembly elections together and root out the Yogi [Adityanath] government [from Uttar Pradesh]." The BSP supremo said the party did not believe in manifestos. "Unlike the BJP and the Congress, we don't believe in boasting. We get things done," she said. She said before the Deoband rally, the BJP was describing the mahagathbandhan combine as a divided house. "But the massive turnout at Deoband would make them lose their sleep. And the 'Jai Bhim' chant at Meerut will make them forget 'Namo, Namo'. The Prime Minister calls us 'sarab' (liquor) but he is intoxicated by power. I believe the voters of Meerut, Bijnore and Baghat will give him a reality check," Ms. Mayawati said.

SSC paper leak case: Supreme Court directs CBI to file status report



(Day Today) Staff Selection Commission (SSC) aspirants stage a protest over the alleged paper leak in New Delhi. The exam paper conducted by the govt. to recruit staff at multiple levels in various Ministries and departments, was allegedly leaked, leading to protests from job seekers in 2017. The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the Central Bureau of Investigation to file the case diary and the status report in the investigation carried out in the 2017 SSC exam paper leak case. A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi said it will take up the matter for hearing on April 11. The apex court had on April 1 allowed the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) to declare the result of a re-examination of SSC Combined Graduate Level (CGL) 2017 held last year. It had said the injunction granted on August 31, last year on the declaration of result for SSC CGL, 2017, would not continue on a re-examination conducted on March 9, 2018. The top court had said that lakhs of unemployed youths have suffered because someone from the organisation was corrupt.

U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Nielsen resigns amid border turmoil

(Gns. News) Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen speaks at George Washington University's Jack Morton Auditorium in Washington. In a tweet on Sunday, April 7, 2019, President Donald Trump said he's accepted Nielsen's resignation. Ms. Nielsen was also the highest profile female Cabinet member, and her exit leaves DHS along with the Pentagon and the White House staff itself without permanent heads. U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen resigned on Sunday evening after U.S. President Donald Trump had, according to reports, requested her resignation. Ms. Nielsen will stay on until April 10 after which Kevin McAleenan, current U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner will take charge as Acting Homeland Security Secretary. Ms. Nielsen, 46, was appointed to her role in December 2017. She will be remembered most for her role in overseeing

the "zero tolerance" policy towards migrants crossing the Mexico-US border, which resulted in the separation of more than 2,700 children from their parents. Ms. Nielsen had resisted the move, advocated by Mr. Trump, for weeks, but finally made a choice in the spring of 2018 to sign a memo bringing to life a policy that was widely seen as an inhumane. President Donald Trump visits a new section of the border wall with Mexico in Calexico, Calif., Friday April 5, 2019. Gloria Chavez with the U.S. Border Patrol, center, and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen listen. resident. Donald Trump visits a new section of the border wall with Mexico in Calexico, Calif., Friday April 5, 2019. Gloria Chavez with the U.S. Border Patrol, center, and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen listen. "Nielsen will go down in history as presiding over an exceptionally cruel regime that separated families and violated human rights," Chennai-born Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, tweeted. "I welcome her resignation and believe she should be held accountable for the abuses that happened under her watch." Mr. McAleenan was among those who had encouraged Ms Nielsen to sign the family separation memo in 2018. The New York Times reported. In June last year, a judge had ordered that separations under most circumstances would not be permitted and that separated children had to be reunited with their parents. However, almost 250 families have been separated since — without violating the June order, the government claimed in February this year. "I said it before, but I really fear for our democracy when the body who creates the laws is telling the body who enforces the law, 'just don't enforce the law,'" Ms. Nielsen had

told Fox News last month. Ms. Nielsen was grilled in March by a U.S. House of Representatives committee on the border situation, and questioned repeatedly on whether the enclosures in which children were held were significantly different from dog cages. The Secretary, who posted her resignation letter on Twitter, hit out at Congress and the courts in the document. Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, commanding General of the U.S. Army corps of Engineers, center and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, listens as President Donald Trump participates in a roundtable on immigration and border security at the U.S. Border Patrol Calexico Station in Calexico, Calif., Friday April 5, 2019. Trump headed to the border with Mexico to make a renewed push for border security as a central campaign issue for his 2020 re-election. Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, commanding General of the U.S. Army corps.