

Editorial

Blinkers on: the BJP manifesto



The Bharatiya Janata Party's election manifesto offers glimpses of its understanding of India and its vision for India. It is a reiteration of the party's three-point agenda of nationalism, welfare of the poor and good governance. Prepared after consultation with a wide range of people and released days before the polls start, the manifesto is to that extent a welcome contrast with 2014, when the BJP did not release it until the first phase of polling was under way. A manifesto is important not for being a catalogue of vote-catching, tall promises, but as a document that explains the direction that a party proposes for the country. The BJP manifesto needs scrutiny for more reasons. It must be judged against its performance in government for five years and also in comparison with the manifestos of other parties, particularly the Congress. In promising welfare for the people, economic growth and material development, the BJP manifesto is not drastically different from the others. But its clarity on what makes the party distinct is remarkable. The BJP's deep yearning for the reshaping of India into a cultural monolith, which it projects as essential for progress, is clear. Unlike in 2009 and 2014, this manifesto is not expansive on the party's cultural agenda, but its stated resolve to "mainstream" the people of the Northeast, its hardline approach on Jammu and Kashmir, and the recurring theme of an unforgiving state as the hallmark of a "new India" all point towards a hardened nationalist course if the party were to retain power. While the BJP has its alliances, it is also emphatic in its pursuit of a majority of its own. The manifesto promises a Ram temple in Ayodhya, a national registry of citizens for the entire country, and citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs fleeing persecution in neighbouring countries. The BJP government has taken significant measures during the last five years to advance this Hindutva agenda. The emphasis on Narendra Modi is also unmistakable — his name figures 32 times, while 'BJP' figures 20 times. The manifesto is boastful of the government's performance on the national security front, and runs down all previous governments to the extent that it would appear that India assumed superpower status and made strides in sectors ranging from space technology to higher education almost exclusively on Mr. Modi's watch. Yet, the BJP manifesto does not dwell too much on Mr. Modi's single most momentous decision: demonetisation. The document claims to be an account of the current challenges, and an ambitious vision to be realised before 2047, the 100th anniversary of India's independence. Yet, it does not mention religious harmony. As a vision statement, the BJP's manifesto is limited in its understanding, and blinkered in its vision.

They also gave conflicting versions



(Day Today) The abrupt end of talks between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in Hanoi is clearly a setback to attempts to find a peaceful solution to the Korean nuclear crisis. Both sides cut short a two-day summit on the second day on Thursday without even signing a joint communiqué. They also gave conflicting versions on why the talks collapsed. Mr. Trump said Mr. Kim insisted on a full withdrawal of American sanctions in return for the closure of only one nuclear facility. However, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho later said Pyongyang had sought only partial sanctions relief in return for dismantling the Yongbyon nuclear site, the North's main facility. Whatever the actual reason, one thing is clear: the bonhomie between the two leaders after last year's Singapore summit was missing in Hanoi. After the Singapore meet, both sides had agreed to have "new U.S.-DPRK [North Korea] relations" and establish a "lasting and stable peace regime" on the Korean peninsula. Pyongyang had also promised to work toward "complete denuclearisation". No such comments about the future course of the peace process were issued this time. The North Koreans have ruled out any immediate plans for a future meeting between the two sides. A part of the problem was the failure of both Washington and Pyongyang in following up on commitments made in Singapore. A few weeks ahead of that summit in June, North Korea had announced a complete freeze on nuclear and missile tests as a reconciliatory gesture. It had asked the U.S. to reciprocate — its main demand was a formal declaration of an end to the 1950-53 Korean War, but the Trump

administration refused to do so. Lack of confidence-building measures too blunted the momentum created in Singapore. When U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo first visited Pyongyang, Mr. Kim refused to meet him. Later, the American intelligence community reported that North Korea continued its ballistic missile programme after the first Trump-Kim summit. With these problems still in place, the second summit between the leaders was announced. Any hopes of clinching a big agreement in Hanoi fell as both sides stuck to their respective demands. However, the setback need not necessarily bring the peace process to a halt. Mr. Trump himself has said denuclearisation is a long process. The freeze on nuclear and missile tests that Mr. Kim announced is still in place. The Korean peninsula has been calm, while inter-Korean relations have markedly improved. Before the Hanoi summit, there were reports that the U.S. would declare an end to the Korean war and that both countries would open liaison offices in each other's capitals as part of normalisation of ties. They also gave conflicting versions on why the talks collapsed. Mr. Trump said Mr. Kim insisted on a full withdrawal of American sanctions in return for the closure of only one nuclear facility. However, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho later said Pyongyang had sought only partial sanctions relief in return for dismantling the Yongbyon nuclear site, the North's main facility. They should go ahead with such measures and build confidence and mutual trust while also taking a phased approach to dealing with more contentious issues such as denuclearisation.

Serish Nanisetti on how development projects in tiger

(Gns. News) Missing from the discourse focussed on Avni however, is the story of how a rising tiger population is forcing the animal to seek out new hunting grounds, as tigers need a huge prey base. Sarati village in Yavatmal district, Maharashtra, was gripped by fear of Avni. Was the 'man-eating' tigress Avni that was killed in Maharashtra's Yavatmal district a casualty of rising man-animal conflict, or was some other dynamic at play? Serish Nanisetti on how development projects in tiger habitats and the fragmentation of migration corridors call for a rethink of conservation policies. The modest stretch of forest that's visible from the roadside is flanked on either side by cotton fields and toor dal (split pigeon pea) crop. A few kilometres away, on the other side of this jungle, in Maharashtra's Vidarbha region, is National Highway 44 (NH 44). These fields are cultivated by the residents of Sarati village, where the Forest Department has set up a camp to search for a tigress cub. The cub belongs to the litter of T1, or Avni, the tigress that was killed on November 2, 2018 and caused a huge national outcry. The killing of the tigress may have slipped from public memory. But for many villagers in Wedshi, Vihirgaon, Pimpalshinde, Borati, Ralegaon, Loni, and other villages in Yavatmal district, the terror of the tiger remains real. The media had highlighted the Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary as a hunting ground for the tigress, which had been declared a man-eater. But the tigress, when it was killed, was several kilometres away, in a different forested tract. How the tigress sought out new territory, found a mate, and had a litter in the small deciduous forest surrounded by agricultural fields and villages is still a matter of conjecture for conservationists. "We began cultivating here in 2003. The forest was right till here [he points to the road]. We cleared it and began cultivating. That was the first time I ever saw a tiger, and I cannot describe the fear I felt," says Gautam Patil, recalling the day he caught a glimpse of Avni during the monsoons, at the height of the man-eater scare. Patil, a farmer, points to his five-acre field. "This might be a small forest, but we cannot see beyond a few metres during the monsoons. We cannot cultivate anything other than cotton, as wild boars and other animals raid the fields." The Pench Tiger Reserve has 30 tigers. While an adult tiger requires 25-40 sq km of forested area to enjoy sufficient quantity of prey, now there is one tiger for every 8-10 sq km, leading to spillage. Vinod Thakur Veterinary doctor and conservation activist. Just three lamp posts away is the house of Gajanan Shyamrao Pawar. He went to his cotton farm abutting the forest to check on his crop on October 24, 2018, and never returned. The 30-year-old's half-eaten body was later discovered in the jungle by his brother. "He had food at 10 a.m. and went to the farm. He didn't return for lunch. A goatherd called to say he was missing. We began a search, and his body was found far inside the jungle at around one in the afternoon," recalls his mother Indukala Pawar, sitting on the doorstep of their small house. Soon after killing Pawar, the tigress had disappeared from the area. According to the records of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests based in Nagpur, the tigress killed three other people — Gulab Mokashe of Wedshi village, Waghur Raut of Vihirgaon, and Nagorao Junghare of Pimpalshinde — in a span of 24 days in August 2018. The Pandharkawada Forest Department records the names of Avni's other victims: Sonabai Bhosale of Borati, Lakshmi Rampuchrey of Jira, Shankar Atram, Jira, and Chanduk Phutki of Adni. All these villages border the small forest which the tigress had made its territory. A few months later, the tigress was shot dead by the son of a hunter tasked for the job by the Forest Department. Missing from the discourse focussed on the 'man-eating' tigress is the story of how a rising tiger population is forcing the animal to seek out new hunting grounds, as tigers need a huge prey base. Not too long ago, there was a real fear of the big cat's extinction. But things have changed since. Aided by excellent conservation efforts, more awareness, and forest management and control over poaching, the overall tiger population in the country has gone up. The 2006 tiger census by the National Tiger Conservation Authority had pegged the number of tigers at 1,411. Officials involved with the 2018 tiger census operations say that the number is now closer to 2,600.



"We have completed the tiger census that was begun in 2018, and the analysis is going on. We will release the information by the end of May," says Y. V. Jhala of the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India, which deployed about 15,000 camera traps spread over 400,000 sq. km in 18 States for the census. India began a quadrennial scientific tiger census, discarding the old pug mark counting method, from 2006. In 2010, there were 1,706 tigers, and in 2014, the number jumped to 2,226, raising expectations of optimistic numbers for the 2018 census as well. The surging numbers have pushed the count of tigers to about 400 in Madhya Pradesh, made famous by Rudyard Kipling's 'The Jungle Book'. But is there land to keep up with this increase? One tiger was mapped travelling from Chandrapur district, bordering the Tadoba-Andhari National Park in Maharashtra, to the Satpura range near Hoshangabad district in Madhya Pradesh. Another tiger, fitted with a tracking collar, was found to have travelled 500 km in 72 days, starting from its habitat in the 138 sq. km Bor Tiger Reserve in Wardha district. It travelled through Amravati and Nagpur before getting electrocuted on a farm in Wardha. The problem is that we haven't yet mapped the tiger corridor, or any of the well-defined routes that the tigers may be using for migration and resettlement. Adding to the confusion is that there are many forest tracts that abut the roads. Milind Pariwakam Wildlife Conservation Trust "He bag, waghache panje (see here, the pug marks of a tiger)," says Niles Gaddamvar in Marathi, pointing to large pug marks in the dust. Gaddamvar works as a guide at the Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary. Officials say that there are now 18 tigers in the Sanctuary. "We are getting visitors from Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune and Mumbai. Most of them manage to spot the tiger in its habitat here and take photographs," says Gaddamvar. He adds that there were only five tigers here in 2011, when he began working as a guide. Safari visitors usually make a stop at the Hanuman temple located next to a small artificial lake on a ridge in Tipeswar. The luckier among them might get to see frolicking tigers and cubs a few yards away from the road and their protected vehicles. How the temple came into being and why it is now deserted is a success story of Indian conservation efforts: nearly 500 villagers of Tipeswar were evacuated and the population resettled outside the forest in Parva village in 2010. Another 140 villagers from Mihirgaon, inside the forest, were paid about 77 lakh per family and relocated outside the forest area in 2014. While these two villages have been pulled out of the forest and resettled, the hamlets on the fringes of the jungle have expanded rapidly. Sarati, which didn't exist before 2003, has 1,057 voters, Vihirgaon has 719 voters, and Lone, another village where Avni claimed a human life, has 417 voters. On February 2, the Field Director of Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra issued a statement: "A road-hit case of a tiger has been reported near Devalapar, Harnakund, on NH 7, this evening between 7 to 7.30 pm. PTR teams, as well as the team of Nagpur division, have reached the spot. There is a trail of blood, and we have also identified the vehicle. Teams reported that the tiger is nearby, and they

have heard growling too. They are monitoring the situation, and a proper decision will be taken as per the local circumstances. The rescue team has left for the spot." Such reports of road accidents and electrocutions involving tigers are barely noticed beyond a small circle of tiger conservationists and observers. As a matter of fact, roadkill incidents are quite common on NH 44 (earlier known as NH 7), which passes through some of the most picturesque river valleys, ridges, and forested zones in central India. In this region, NH 44, which connects Srinagar to Kanyakumari, passes through small agricultural fields draped with rows of colourful saris to keep wild boar at bay. Wildlife conservationists have read the recent rise in the number of tigers as indicating the existence of a broad and long migration corridor — a tongue of land in central India that is changing the tiger story. This tiger corridor is crisscrossed by seasonal rivers such as the Godavari, Wainganga, Penganga, Dollara, and countless other smaller water channels and ravines. According to officials of the Wildlife Conservation Trust, about 24,000 km of roads cut through these corridors, and they have a deadly impact on tigers. About 16 tigers have been killed in road and train accidents over the past five years. Forty-two leopards have also come under wheels. And no one has been keeping track of the number of smaller mammals such as foxes, rabbits, deer, wolves, snakes, peacocks and other wildlife that die on these roads. "The problem is that we haven't yet mapped the tiger corridor, or any of the well-defined routes that the tigers may be using for migration and resettlement. Adding to the confusion is that there are many forest tracts that abut the roads. We want a problem-solving approach to linear intrusions and habitat fragmentation. It is important to work on conservation, but it is also important to work on maintaining connectivity between sub-populations," explains Milind Pariwakam of the Wildlife Conservation Trust. Pariwakam had drafted a report on the factors behind the fragmentation of the fragile tiger corridor. The report calls for a rethink of India's approach to infrastructure development, and recommends special pathways for wildlife so that their movement during migration or resettlement is not affected. "Tipeswar is one of the better-maintained forests which visitors can check out. There has been no man-animal conflict here ever since we evacuated the villages from the core area. Places where such conflict occur are more than 40-50 km from Tipeswar," says P.B. Panchabhai, District Forest Officer of Pandharkawada in Yavatmal district. "The threat to tigers is not due to the man-animal conflict. It is due to the large-scale projects that are coming up near the sanctuaries. Forest Department officials have translocated a village called Agarzari on the border of the Pench Tiger Reserve. But the reports that cropped up there after changes in land use continue to operate. These use barbed wire and electrified fencing to keep animals at bay, leading to accidents," says Vinod Thakur, a veterinary doctor and conservation activist who was part of the tiger census operation. He blames the "four-laning" of the national highway running through the Pench Ti-

ger Reserve and Kanha Tiger Reserve, and the widening of the railway line in central India from narrow gauge to broad gauge, for the fragmentation of the habitat. "Even Jai, the tiger which became famous as Asia's biggest feline, fell to this development juggernaut in the Umred-Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary. Jai's cub, Srinivas, died due to electrocution. Jai sired around 20 offspring, but now very few of them are in Umred-Karhandla in Maharashtra. The rest have migrated," says Thakur. Big-ticket projects pose an even bigger threat. For instance, according

to filings with the Bombay Stock Exchange, the Birla Cement Corporation is planning to set up a 3.9-tonne greenfield integrated cement plant with a 40 MW captive power plant in Yavatmal district. This can be an opportunity to improve our record and practices in wildlife conservation," says Thakur. While the killing of Avni triggered Mukutban village, Mukutban is on the southern side of the Pandharkawada Forest Department, where man-animal conflict has captured media attention. How a cement plant and the ancillary activities associ-

ated with it will affect the environment is anybody's guess. Of the 50 designated tiger reserves in the country, the 16 in central India form a continuous tiger corridor. The Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary has about 18 tigers. Kawal, though designated as Kawal Tiger Reserve in 2012, has seen a tiger or two only in the last four years. This year, a tiger got electrocuted after it came in contact with an electrified wire trap set up by poachers. The Umred-Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary, on the other hand, is not a tiger reserve but is home to many tigers. "The Pench Tiger Reserve at present has 30 tigers. While an adult tiger requires 25-40 sq km of forested area to enjoy sufficient quantity of prey, now there is one tiger for every 8-10 sq km, leading to spillage. The tigers are moving out to other forests to find prey. This can be an opportunity to improve our record and practices in wildlife conservation," says Thakur. While the killing of Avni triggered celebrations among some villagers, there are also a few who see it differently. "I am unhappy that the tigress is dead. It is a big loss. When the tiger scare was at its peak, I was hopeful that this village would be shifted. The tiger was merely protecting the jungle, which was its home," says Gunawant Tekam, who runs a small shop near the fields that border the jungle in Sarati. "I am saying this because I have seen the fear of the people as well as the changes in the landscape." The depredations of Avni may have grabbed the headlines. But of far greater significance, though missing from the mainstream discourse, is the changing dynamic of tiger migration and movement, which suggests that India needs to rework its conservation and forest settlement policies.

political left and right, and among proponents

(News Track) The idea of a universal basic income (UBI) is gaining ground globally. It has supporters among the political left and right, and among proponents as well as opponents of the free-market economy. A UBI requires the government to pay every citizen a fixed amount of money on a regular basis and without any conditionalities. Crucial to the appeal for such a demand — for a UBI — is that millions of people remain unemployed and are extremely poor, despite rapid economic growth in the last three decades. The National Democratic Alliance government has already unfolded a limited version of the UBI in the form of the Pradhanmantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) which promises ₹6,000 per annum to farmers who own less than 2 hectares of land. Going by media reports, the election manifesto of the Congress Party may announce an even more ambitious version of the scheme. The UBI is neither an antidote to the vagaries of market forces nor a substitute for basic public services, especially health and education. Besides, there is no need to transfer money to middle- and high-income earners as well as large landowners. However, there is a strong case for direct income transfers to some groups: landless labourers, agricultural workers and marginal farmers who suffer from multi-dimensional poverty. These groups have not benefited from economic growth. They were and still are the poorest Indians. Various welfare schemes have also failed to bring them out of penury. A case in point is the access to institutional credit issued by banks and cooperative societies. According to National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) data from the 70th round, institutional credits account for less than 15% of the total borrowing by landless agricultural workers; the figure for marginal and small farmers is only 30%. These groups have to borrow from moneylenders and adhatiyas at exorbitant interest rates ranging from 24 to 60%. As a result, they do not stand to benefit much from the interest rate subsidy for the agriculture sector. Likewise, the benefits of subsidised fertilizers and power are enjoyed largely by big farmers. In urban areas, contract workers and those in the informal sector face a similar problem. The rapid pace of automation of low-skill jobs and formalisation of the retail sector mean the prospects of these groups are even bleaker. An income support of, say, ₹15,000

per annum can be a good supplement to their livelihoods — an amount worth more than a third of the average consumption of the poorest 25% households, and more than a fourth of the annual income of marginal farmers. This additional income can reduce the incidence of indebtedness among marginal farmers, thereby helping them escape moneylenders and adhatiyas. Besides, it can go a long way in helping the poor to make ends meet. Several studies have shown that at high levels of impoverishment, even a small income supplement can improve nutrient intake, and increase enrolment and school attendance for students coming from poor households. In other words, income transfers to the poor will lead to improved health and educational outcomes, which in turn would lead to a more productive workforce. It seems to be a good idea to transfer the money into the bank accounts of women of the beneficiary households. Women tend to spend more of their income on health and the education of children. The effect of an income transfer scheme on unemployment is a moot point. In principle, cash transfers can result in withdrawal of beneficiaries from the labour force. However, the income support suggested above is not too large to discourage beneficiaries from seeking work. In fact, it can promote employment and economic activities. For instance, income receipts can come in handy as interest-free working capital for several categories of beneficiaries (fruit and vegetable vendors and small artisans), thereby promoting their business and employment in the process. Moreover, such a scheme will have three immediate benefits. One, it will help bring a large number of households out of the poverty trap or prevent them from falling into it in the event of exigencies such as illness. Two, it will reduce income inequalities. Three, since the poor spend most of their income, a boost in their income will increase demand and promote economic activities in rural areas. Nonetheless, an income transfer scheme cannot be a substitute for universal basic services. The direct income support to the poor will deliver the benefits mentioned only if it comes on top of public services such as primary health and education. This means that direct transfers should not be at the expense of public services for primary health and education. If anything, budgetary allocation for these services should be raised significantly. Programmes such

as the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme should also stay. With direct income support, the demand for the programmes will come down naturally. However, in the interim, it will serve to screen the poorest in the country and give them a crucial safety net. If basic public services are maintained, there is limited fiscal space for direct income support. It will have to be restricted to the poorest of poor households. The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 can be used to identify the neediest. Groups suffering from multidimensional poverty such as the destitute, the shelter-less, manual scavengers, tribal groups, and former bonded labourers are automatically included. The dataset includes more than six crore landless labourers. It also includes many small farmers who face deprivation criteria such as families without any bread-earning adult member, and those without a pucca house. The other needy group, small farmers, missing from the SECC can be identified using the dataset from the Agriculture Census of 2015-16. Together, these two datasets can help identify the poorest Indians, especially in rural India. However, many households such as marginal farmers belong to both datasets. However, the income support suggested above is not too large to discourage beneficiaries from seeking work. In fact, it can promote employment and economic activities. For instance, income receipts can come in handy as interest-free working capital for several The Aadhaar identity can be used to rule out duplications and update the list of eligible households. As an approximation, the number of eligible households is 10 crore. That is, even in its basic form, the scheme will require approximately ₹1.5 lakh crore per annum. Three, since the poor spend most of their income, a boost in their income will increase demand and promote economic activities in rural areas. Nonetheless, an income transfer scheme cannot be a substitute for universal basic services. The direct income support to the poor will deliver the benefits mentioned only if it comes on top of public services such as primary health and education. This means that direct transfers should not be at the expense of public services for primary health and education. If anything, budgetary allocation for these services should be raised significantly. Programmes such

'Real development' will be the deciding factor



(News Track) Historically starved for irrigation and drinking water, it will be a vote for development as perceived by the voters in Rayadurg, despite claims and counter-claims on 'real development' that has taken place in the constituency. Kalava Srinivasulu, Minister for I&PR and Telugu Desam Party candidate from the constituency, has made efforts to transform Rayadurg town by widening the roads and bringing dependable drinking water supply, a fact acknowledged by the residents. The constituency with the second highest number of voters in the district after Anantapur Urban, has a large geographical area, where fallow lands are on the verge of desertification. The sitting MLA had taken up plantation on a large scale to reverse this process, but he himself is not happy with the outcome, though 70% saplings survival rate has been noticed, he claims. 'Real development' will be the deciding factor. People in village after village anxiously wait for their turn at the only public tap to carry water more than a km. At Avuladatta village in the constituency, Hanumanthappa Naik and Thippeswamy carry water into the colony on a bicycle everyday that too waiting for their turn at the sole borewell that is functional for an hour daily. The Sreerama Reddy drinking water project near Penna Ahothilam Balancing Reservoir that is supposed to fill two overhead tanks in the village serves once in three days that too only to one tank. Other borewells have failed as groundwater has depleted due to -47% deficit rainfall. Mr. Srinivasulu strikes a chord with the locals during his door-to-door campaign, but is flooded with requests for sanction of houses in the town. Kapu Ramachandra Reddy, the YSR Congress Party candidate, who won two times from Rayadurg once in 2009 and again in 2012 by election with huge margin, lost narrowly in 2014. He alleges the TDP neglected the BCs in the constituency despite the MLA being from that community. A number of visits by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had not improved ground situation, he alleges. He says the greatest failure has been lack of efforts to bring irrigation water in five years. "Spending ₹2 crore on Pylon and project inauguration does not satisfy farmers," he alleges. Geographically being on the borders of Karnataka on the western side of State, road connectivity to other parts of the district is a big hurdle, but works have been launched to widen the roads and ₹250 crore has been invested by the R&B Department, says Mr. Srinivasulu.

Electoral bonds and transparency



(Day Today) The new funding mode may open a route for foreign corporates to influence govt. policies. The unbridled flow and influence of hush money in elections has always been a matter of concern and the introduction of electoral bonds on January 2 last year has lent more teeth to the criticism that it has opened a legitimate route for vested interests to flush ill-gotten wealth to influence electoral outcome under a veil of anonymity. The National Democratic Alliance government had described the bond scheme as an electoral reform in a country moving towards a cashless digital economy. As of now, donors need not provide their names, address or PAN on contributing less than ₹20,000. The Election Commission had said in an affidavit to the Supreme Court that the bonds, contrary to the Central government claims, would wreck transparency in political funding. The decision to lift the cap on foreign funding would be an invite for foreign corporates to impact Indian politics and government policies. The affidavit was placed in public realm by the Association of Democratic Reforms. The Centre had amended the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Income Tax Act, the Companies Act and made changes in the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, to lift the curbs on funding elections. The Election Commission clarified that the amendments would help to pump in black money for political funding through shell companies and clear the route for unrestricted foreign funding of parties which would pave the way for Indian politics being influenced by foreign companies. The amendments to the RP Act help political parties to hush up recording donations through electoral bonds in their final statement to the election commission. This is described as a retrograde step that struck at the root of transparency. The commission now has no way to find out whether the donations were received by political parties from companies or overseas sources. According to P.D.T. Achary, former Lok Sabha Secretary General, the issue of bonds goes against transparency, the grain of public policy. "Political parties are not private entities and are active players of democracy who are entrusted to run the government and frame public policies. Hence, the funds they receive from various sources should be subjected to public scrutiny." The donations to political parties should not be shrouded by a blanket of anonymity, he says. Mr. Achary clarifies that the ruling party will be invariably benefited by such moves and hence it should be subjected to public auditing. This mysterious funding mode will help corporates to influence government functioning and policy making too, he says. Political observer J. Prabhash deems the issue of bonds would end up with four or five hyper-rich corporate families controlling the democracy, framing of policies and government business too. "A cap on funding is imperative. A maximum limit should be set for making contributions to political parties. Crowd funding is the best regimen to address the malaise of black money flowing into the electoral arena. Communist parties have set a model worth emulating by mobilising resources from the masses. They collect even small sums to fund their campaigning and that would weed out the scope for the infusion of black money into the poll arena," says Mr. Prabhash.

IIT Delhi issues show cause notice to Sanfe start-up for false claim



(Day Today) On April 7, Alt News debunked the claims of the company that the product was FDA-approved and tested by AIIMS. Sanfe Period Pain Relief Roll On, an Ayurveda product to help women with menstrual pain, was launched by an IIT Delhi start-up Redroomtechnology Private Limited on March 8 claiming to be FDA-approved. The press release sent out by IIT Delhi and a tweet from its official handle on March 8 claimed that the product was FDA-approved. The Sanfe website went one step further to claim that the product was also tested by AIIMS. The news was carried by many mainstream newspapers; did not carry the news. On April 7, Alt News debunked the claims made by Archit Agarwal and Harry Sehrawat who are B. Tech students at IIT Delhi and Directors of the company that the product was FDA-approved and tested by AIIMS. Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Agarwal admitted that the product was approved by Directorate of Ayush, Haryana, and not by FDA as originally claimed. He

also admitted that the product was not tested by AIIMS. Launch of Sanfe Period Pain Relief Roll On Launch of Sanfe Period Pain Relief Roll On Speaking to The Hindu about the "trial" Bhupender Nagpal, owner of the Haryana-based Space Organics that is manufacturing the product, said: "We gave the product to 79 women working in our factory and to other women we know for testing." Apparently, no systematic trial was carried out. "It was a mistake, a slip. I had a chance to look at it [press release] but did not know about it. We carried a corrigendum in The Hindu on March 28 once we realised our mistake," Dr. Srinivasan Venkataraman from the Department of Design, who is part of the start-up told. The corrigendum says: "...Wherever it has been mentioned that Sanfe Period Pain Relief Roll On is a FDA-approved product, it should be considered as Ministry of AYUSH, Haryana-approved product". On April 8, Mr. Agarwal and Mr. Sehrawat issued a press statement stating: "It is a factual and an unintentional mistake"

to have stated that the product is FDA-approved. It adds: "The factual and the unintentional mistake was the consequence of our misunderstanding that FDA is the equivalent of Directorate of Ayush for this product. We deeply apologise for the mistake." However, IIT Delhi has taken serious note of deliberate attempt to misrepresent facts. In a press statement released on April 8 it stated: "The press release issued on March 8 claimed that the product was FDA-approved. It has come to our notice that the claim was false. An internal inquiry is being initiated against the Sanfe (Redroomtechnology Private Limited) founders and a show cause notice has also been issued to them. Based on this inquiry report action would be taken. Prima facie it appears that a certificate issued by Directorate of Ayush Haryana, Sector-3, Panchkula, has been misrepresented as that issued by FDA. IIT Delhi has zero tolerance policy for false representation of information and takes strict action in such cases."

Rahul Gandhi is not contesting from Karnataka for fear of JD(S) revenge: Modi

(News Track) Prime Minister Narendra Modi flanked by State BJP leaders, including B.S. Yeddyurappa, S.M. Krishna, Pratap Simha and V. Srinivas Prasad, at an election rally in Mysuru on Tuesday. At Mysuru rally, PM highlights apparent trust issues between coalition partners. Playing up the apparent trust issues between coalition partners Congress and JD(S), Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said Congress president Rahul Gandhi was not contesting from Karnataka as he feared the JD(S) would "exact revenge" on him over the Congress withdrawing support to the Deve Gowda government at the Centre in the past. Addressing an election rally in the city on Tuesday, Mr. Modi alluded to the JD(S) supremo's stint as Prime Minister and said he had been forced to resign because the Congress, at the behest of Sonia Gandhi, withdrew support for his regime. "There was fear that Deve Gowda would exact revenge against Sonia Gandhi by not supporting Rahul Gandhi, so he did not contest from Karnataka," Mr. Modi said. He said the Congress has justified Mr. Gandhi's decision to contest from Kerala as the result of his desire to do so from south India. "If so, he should have contested from Karnataka, where his own party is in power. The Congress even made efforts to scout for a safe seat [for him] in the State. But they had suspicions that Deve Gowda would take revenge and did not trust the JD(S)," the Prime Minister said. He alleged that the Congress had sensed growing public anger against it and thus, the party president was forced to scout for a safe seat. Mr. Modi said that Mr. Gandhi was at risk of losing from his current Lok Sabha seat (Amethi). Continuing his attack on the grand old party, he said, "The Congress gave the slogan of 'garibi hatao', but after decades of sloganeering even the poor have realised that poverty can be eliminated only if the Congress is removed from power." He lashed out at the Mahagatbandhan for "lacking a vision" for the country and said those parties cannot go beyond "Modi hatao" (remove Modi) in their speeches. The functioning of the Congress-JD(S) government in Karnataka betrays this lack of vision, he said, alleging that Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy had become



a "punching bag" for the Congress. Mr. Modi also mentioned the late actor-turned-politician M.H. Ambareesh in his speech at the Mysuru rally, evoking loud applause from the crowd. He asked citizens to vote for his wife Sumalatha, who is backed by the BJP and is contesting as an Independent against the JD(S)'s K. Nikhil, son of Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, in Mandya constituency. Mr. Modi said the people have kept Ambareesh in their hearts because of his work.

Along with Ms. Sumalatha, his contribution to Kannada and the culture of the land is praiseworthy, he said. The Prime Minister, who had courted criticism for stating that Congress president Rahul Gandhi was contesting from Wayanad in Kerala because Hindus were a minority there, alluded to the subject again at the election rally in Mysuru. Mr. Modi did not mention Mr. Gandhi by name, but referred to him as the "naamdar" who decided to contest from the "safe seat" that was

Wayanad. "The country is discussing whose flags were being waved there," he said. Social media had gone into overdrive over the "Pakistan flags" being waved in Wayanad in a video clip, but it transpired that the flags were of the Indian Union Muslim League, a political party in Kerala. But this did not prevent the Prime Minister from raking up the issue at the public rally, where he also accused the Congress of pursuing "vote bank politics" and coining phrases such as "Hindu terror".

SC rejects preliminary objections by govt, to examine Rafale review pleas on merits on the basis of published documents

(News Track) A Rafale aircraft performs at the biennial air show Aero India 2019 at the Yelahanka Air Force Station near Bengaluru on February 20, 2019. Dates of hearing of the review petitions to be fixed later. In a unanimous judgment, the Supreme Court on Wednesday decided to hear the review petitions on the Rafale fighter aircraft deal on merits on the basis of the documents published in the media, including The Hindu, on the disparity in pricing details of the 36 jets, objections raised by the Indian negotiating team to parallel negotiations conducted by the Prime Minister's Office, among others. The Bench led by Chief

Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi dismissed the preliminary objections raised by the Union government claiming privilege over the Rafale documents and projecting the publication of the documents as part of a conspiracy following the leak of these defence purchase records from the Ministry of Defence. Attorney General K.K. Venugopal submitted that the review petitions were based on "stolen" Rafale documents, which are not admissible in evidence. A view of the Supreme Court of India, in New Delhi. Full text of Supreme Court verdict dismissing Centre's objections on maintainability of Rafale review petitions.

"We deem it proper to dismiss the preliminary objections to hold and affirm that the review petitions will be adjudicated on their merits on the basis of the relevance of the three documents whose admissibility was questioned by the respondents [government]," Chief Justice Gogoi read out the operative portion of the judgment that he and Justice S.K. Kaul wrote. Chief Justice Gogoi added that Justice K.M. Joseph had concurred with them in a separate judgment. "He has also reached the same conclusion but in a different manner," the CJI said. The dates of hearing the review petitions would be fixed later.

Goa BJP wants Manohar Parrikar's son to campaign for the party



(Day Today) Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Manohar Parrikar's sons Abhijat and Utpal while paying homage to the late Goa Chief Minister. Utpal Parrikar, the elder son of Manohar Parrikar, is also a frontrunner for the BJP's ticket for Panaji Assembly by-poll. Late Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar's older son Utpal met BJP's Goa Organisational Secretary Satish Dhond on Tuesday, with the latter conveying the party's desire that he should join the Lok Sabha election campaign for North Goa in the Panaji constituency. Sources close to Mr. Utpal Parrikar told The Hindu on Wednesday that the meeting was held at the instance of Mr. Dhond. Mr. Dhond reportedly called Mr. Utpal and told him to start moving around Panaji for the election campaign of North Goa candidate and Minister for AYUSH Sripad Naik. This development assumes significance as the assembly by-election for the Panaji constituency has just been announced. Sources said that this could be a possible hint for Mr. Utpal Parrikar preparing himself for the Panaji assembly by-poll to be held on May 19. The Panaji constituency has been represented by the late Manohar Parrikar from 1994 with a brief break in 2014, when he became the Defence Minister. Parrikar's aide at the time Siddharth Kuncolienkar became MLA twice in succession before once again vacating the seat for Parrikar when he returned in the post-2017 State Assembly election as Chief Minister. Mr. Dhond, when contacted by The Hindu, said that he has definitely asked Mr. Utpal Parrikar, among others, to get down to work in Panaji for the North Goa constituency election, but the decision on the Panaji candidate will be taken only after the April 23 Lok Sabha and assembly by-elections are over. "We have a full process, we have to first ascertain views of party's various wings, important party leaders and workers, other important well-wishers in the constituency and then the State election committee will take up the names," said Mr. Dhond who worked for Goa BJP very closely with the late Parrikar. "At this stage with Mr. [Manohar] Parrikar not around, as it is, we are feeling that pressure during the electioneering, in that we do not want to mix up this issue. We will take the call after April 23," he said. A senior source in the Goa BJP Election Committee, on condition of anonymity, confirmed that names of Mr. Utpal Parrikar and Mr. Kuncolienkar, are on the list of probable candidates. Parrikar died on March 17 after a prolonged battle with pancreatic ailment, upon which the issue of his successor started being publicly discussed with some groups suggesting the name of his older son. After his demise, some national leaders of BJP had advised his sons Utpal and Abhijat to work for the party as their father did. In a letter thanking people and party workers for their support during Parrikar's illness and after his death, the two brothers had pledged to honour their father's life by continuing his legacy and service and dedication to the State and the nation. This was considered in Goa's political circles as an indication of his older son's desire to join active politics. When contacted, Mr. Utpal Parrikar had recently told presspersons that he had not applied his mind to the issue, but will take the call at the right time. Sources close to the Parrikar family said that the late leader scrupulously kept them away from politics when the brothers were young, but once they matured as adults, he did not interfere in their careers or other choices in their lives. Mr. Utpal (38) has done a Master's degree at an US University and is presently into business.

Kohli, Mandhana win top prizes at Wisden Cricketers' Almanack honours



The Indian men's captain was named the Leading Cricketer in the World for an unprecedented third year in a row by the 2019 edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, while this is Mandhana's first award. It was double delight for India as it swept the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack on Wednesday with Virat Kohli and Smriti Mandhana clinching the 'Leading Cricketer of Year' honours, continuing their award-winning spree. Kohli and Mandhana had won big in the last ICC Awards night too. Mandhana was adjudged 'Women's Cricketer of the Year' as well as the 'Women's ODI Player of the Year' by the ICC in December, while the talismanic Kohli won the Cricketer of the Year award besides finishing as the top batsman in Tests. Indian captain Kohli was named the Wisden Leading Cricketer of the year for the third successive time, having amassed 2735 runs across the three formats in 2018. The Indian talisman was picked as one of the five Wisden Cricketers of the year, along with England's Tammy Beaumont, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran and Rory Burns. The India skipper is only the third cricketer ever to have won the award more than three times after Don Bradman (10 times) and Jack Hobbs (8 times). Kohli had notched up 593 runs in five Tests at an average of 59.3 during India's 1-4 loss to England and ended the year with five hundreds to his name. Mandhana was rewarded for scoring 669 and 662 runs in ODIs and T20Is last year. She also amassed 421 runs at an astounding strike rate of 174.68 in the women's Super League. The Indian men's team captain was named as the Leading Cricketer in the World for an unprecedented third year in a row by the 2019 edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack while this is Mandhana's first award. Indian captain Kohli was named the Wisden Leading Cricketer of the year for the third successive time, having amassed 2735 runs across the three formats in 2018. The Indian talisman was picked as one of the five Wisden Cricketers of the year, along with England's Tammy Beaumont, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran and Rory Burns. The India skipper is only the third cricketer ever to have won the award more than three times after Don Bradman (10 times) and Jack Hobbs (8 times). Afghanistan spinner Rashid Khan was named the Leading T20 Cricketer of the Year for the second year in a row, following his superb performance last year. He took 22 wickets at an average of 8.68 for Afghanistan in T20Is, besides scalping 21 wickets in the Indian Premier League 2018. The Five Cricketers of the Year are chosen by Lawrence Booth, the editor of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, with the 2019 version serving as the 156th edition. Wisden has been listing out Cricketers of the Year since 1889 and it is considered as one of the more prestigious awards in the sport.

Netanyahu secures election victory, in office for record fifth term

(News Track) Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu waves to his supporters after polls for Israel's general elections closed in Tel Aviv, Israel on Wednesday, April 10, 2019. He faces possible indictment in three graft cases, and has denied wrongdoing in all of them. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has won the Israeli national election, securing a record fifth term in office despite running neck-and-neck with his challenger Benny Gantz, the country's three main television channels said on Wednesday. With 97% of the votes counted, neither of the candidates' parties had captured a ruling majority, but Mr. Netanyahu was clearly in a strong position to form a coalition government with other right-wing factions that have backed him. The closely contested race was widely seen in Israel as a referendum on Mr. Netanyahu's character and record in the face of corruption allegations. He faces possible indictment in three graft cases, and has denied wrongdoing in all of them. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara wave as Netanyahu speaks following the announcement of exit polls in Israel's parliamentary election at the party headquarters in Tel Aviv, Israel

April 10, 2019. The veteran right-wing leader's Likud party and Mr. Gantz's new centrist Blue and White party both won 35 seats, according to the Knesset website and the Israeli TV channels. That would mean a five-seat gain for Likud. "It is a night of colossal victory," the 69-year-old Mr. Netanyahu told cheering supporters in a late-night speech at Likud headquarters, while cautioning that a "long night and possibly day" lay ahead awaiting official results. Fireworks flared behind him as his wife Sara applauded and kissed him. "He's a magician," the crowd chanted. Final results were expected by Friday, though the provisional results showed 65 of the Knesset's 120 seats would go to the right-wing bloc of parties led by Mr. Netanyahu, against a total of 55 seats for centre-left factions. If he wins, Mr. Netanyahu, 69, will be on track to be the longest-serving Prime Minister in Israel's 71-year history. Mr. Netanyahu said he had already begun talks with prospective coalition allies. In power since 2009, and having led the country for a total 13 years including his first term in the 1990s, Mr. Netanyahu has been fighting for his political survival. Mr. Gantz, a popular 59-year-old former general, had also claimed victory earlier, cit-

ing preliminary exit polls published soon after voting ended on Tuesday that showed his party had won more seats than Likud. "We are the victors," said Mr. Gantz, a former military chief fighting his first election. "We want to thank Benjamin Netanyahu for his service to the nation." Despite both men claiming victory on Tuesday night, a clearer picture emerged by Wednesday morning as the results began streaming in, painting Mr. Netanyahu as the winner. During the campaign, the rival parties accused each other of corruption, fostering bigotry and being soft on security. Mr. Netanyahu highlighted his close relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump, who delighted Israelis and angered Palestinians by recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017 and moving the American Embassy to the holy city last May. Two weeks before the election, Mr. Trump signed a proclamation, with Mr. Netanyahu at his side at the White House, recognising Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights captured from Syria in the 1967 Middle East war. In a rare turn during the race towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Mr. Netanyahu further alarmed Palestinians by pledged to annex Jewish settlements in the oc-



cupied West Bank if re-elected. Palestinians seek a state there and in the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Mr. Netanyahu's pre-election promise was widely seen as an attempt to draw right-wing votes rather than a change of policy. Commenting on the election,

Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat said: "Israelis have voted to preserve the status quo. They have said no to peace and yes to the occupation." The last round of U.S.-brokered peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians collapsed in 2014. Once the votes are tal-

lied, President Reuven Rivlin will ask parties that have won parliamentary seats who they support for Prime Minister. He will then pick a party leader to try to form a coalition, giving the candidate 28 days to do so, with a two-week extension if needed.

Israeli election results: what happens next?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara wave as Netanyahu speaks following the announcement of exit polls in Israel's parliamentary election at the party headquarters in Tel Aviv, Israel April 10, 2019. There are indications that Netanyahu has a clearer path to forming a coalition government with other right-wing, far-right and religious parties. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main challenger Benny Gantz both claimed victory in Israel's election on April 9. Israeli TV exit polls produced differing results about who will emerge as the leader of the largest single party, and the polls have been wrong in the past. So both sides still have all to play for. However, there are indications that Netanyahu has a clearer path to forming a coalition government with other right-wing, far-right and religious parties. Here's a quick guide to what happens next: How long does it take the results to come in? Final results are expected by Friday, but partial results are published by the Knesset as the vote-counting proceeds, so a clearer picture will begin to emerge before the final tally. Israel has a parliamentary system, which means voters choose from party lists of candidates to serve in the 120-seat Knesset. No party has won a majority since Israel's first election, in 1949. In the 2019 election, about 6 million Israelis are eligible to vote. To enter parliament, a party must pass a threshold of at least 3.25 percent of the national vote, equivalent to 4 Knesset seats. With 40 parties running, of which at least 12 have a real chance of passing the threshold, the calculations take time. What happens after the election results are published? Israel's president will consult with the leaders of every party that won seats about their preference for prime minister, and will then choose the legislator who he believes has the best chance of putting together a coalition. The nominee, who does not necessarily have to be the head of the largest party, has up to 42 days to form a government. If he or she fails, the president asks another politician to try. The leading candidates usually have a good idea whether they have majority support before they meet with the president, but things can often change in the process of deal-making. Netanyahu will likely seek a coalition similar to his current government, with ultranationalist and Jewish Orthodox parties. Gantz, who heads the centrist Blue and White Party, will likely have the support of the left-wing parties. But early exit polls predict that even with that he would fall short of a governing majority. Past coalition negotiations have often dragged on. Whoever is asked to form the next government will have to accommodate numerous parties, unless Netanyahu and Gantz choose to join forces and form a unity government. Netanyahu's corruption cases. The prime minister is facing possible indictment in three graft cases, and may learn later this year if he will be formally charged.

Imran Khan sees better chance of peace talks with India if BJP wins election



(News Track) He said Mr. Modi, like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was electioneering based on "fear and nationalist feeling". Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said he thinks there may be a better chance of peace talks with India if Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wins the general election due to begin on April 11. Mr. Khan said that if the next Indian government were led by the opposition Congress party, it might be too scared to seek a settlement with Pakistan over Kashmir, fearing a backlash from the right. "Perhaps if the BJP — a right-wing party — wins, some kind of settlement in Kashmir could be reached," Mr. Khan told a small group of foreign journalists in an interview. This was despite the massive alienation that Muslims in Kashmir and Muslims in general were facing in Modi's India, said Mr. Khan. "I never thought I would see what is happening in India right now...Muslim-ness is being attacked." Mr. Khan said Indian Muslims he knew who many years ago had been happy about their situation in India were now very worried by extreme Hindu nationalism. He said Mr. Modi, like Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was electioneering based on "fear and nationalist feeling". The BJP's pledge this week to propose stripping decades-old special rights from the people of Jammu and Kashmir, which prevent outsiders from buying property in the state, was a major concern, though it could also be electioneering, Mr. Khan said. Mr. Khan did appear to offer India an olive branch, saying that Islamabad was determined to dismantle all Pakistan-based militias in the country, and that the government had full sup-

port from Pakistan's powerful army for the programme. Those to be dismantled include groups involved in Kashmir. Nuclear-armed neighbours Pakistan and India both claim Kashmir in full but rule in part. Mr. Khan said Kashmir was a political struggle and there was no military solution, adding that Kashmiris suffered if armed militants from Pakistan came across the border, leading to Indian army crackdowns. Relations between Pakistan and India, which have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947, two over Kashmir, reached a crisis point in February after a suicide bombing killed 40 Indian paramilitary police in Kashmir. Islamabad denied responsibility for the February 14 attack, which was claimed by Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, but the bombing prompted India to carry out a

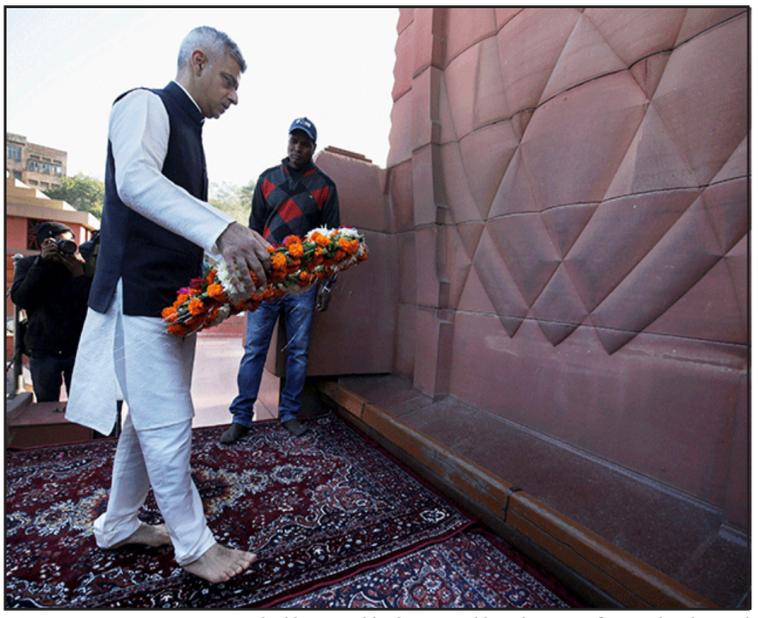
cross border air strike against what it said was a militant training camp in Pakistan. Pakistan responded with air strikes of its own. Pollsters say Mr. Modi and the BJP's re-election bid got a boost from a wave of patriotism after the suicide bomb attack and the Indian government's fast response. Mr. Khan said there was still the possibility if the polls turn against Mr. Modi in the next few weeks that India could take some further military action against Pakistan. Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi warned on April 7 that Islamabad had "reliable intelligence" that India would attack again this month. India described the claim as irresponsible. Mr. Khan said that it was vital for Pakistan to have peace with its neighbours, Afghanistan, India and Iran, if it was to have the kind of economy needed to pull 100 million people out of poverty.

Chandrasekhar Rao prima facie violated model code by making communal remarks: Election Commission



(News Track) Poll panel issues notice to the Telangana Chief Minister seeking a reply by April 12 evening. The Election Commission of India has taken a serious note of Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's comments against a religious community during his recent meeting in Karimnagar district, and sought an explanation from the latter within two days. In its notice to the Chief Minister, the ECI said it was, prima facie, of the opinion that Mr. Rao's remarks had the potential of disturbing the harmony and aggravating the existing differences between social and religious communities and appealing to communal feelings were violative of the modal code of conduct. The poll panel was responding to a complaint that the Chief Minister tried to secure votes by passing derogatory remarks. Viswa Hindu Parishad State president M. Rama Raju lodged the complaint with the ECI against the Chief Minister's remarks. The ECI said it obtained the English version of the speech delivered on March 17 and a factual report from the Chief Electoral Officer and examined the English version of the speech before arriving at the decision to serve the notice. In its notice to the Chief Minister, the ECI said it was, prima facie, of the opinion that Mr. Rao's remarks had the potential of disturbing the harmony and aggravating the existing differences between social and religious communities and appealing to communal feelings were violative of the modal code of conduct. The poll panel was responding to a complaint that the Chief Minister tried to secure votes by passing derogatory remarks. Viswa Hindu Parishad State president M. Rama Raju lodged the complaint with the ECI against the Chief Minister's remarks. "The Commission gives you (the Chief Minister) an opportunity to submit explanation, if any in this regard on or before 5 pm on April 12, failing which the Election Commission shall take a decision without any further reference to you," ECI principal secretary S.K. Rudola said in the notice.

No apology for Jallianwala Bagh for now, says U.K.



(Day Today) The British government has failed to use the opportunity of a parliamentary debate on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre to apologise for the atrocity, with a Foreign Office Minister referring to potential "financial implications" as one of the issues to be considered. However, Mark Field, the Minister for Asia and the Pacific, said that he recognised the "strong and compelling case," for Britain to go beyond the deep regret already expressed by the U.K. relating to the events of April 13, 1919, when hundreds were killed and more than 1,200 injured after British troops led by Reginald Dyer opened fire on a peaceful gathering. Mr. Field told MPs at the Westminster Hall debate called by fellow Conservative MP Bob Blackman that his "orthodox" views made him reluctant to apologise for things that

had happened in the past, adding that it debased the currency of apologies if "we make them many many events". He also referenced potential financial implications. However, in an indication that things could shift somewhat in the future, he said that the issue of how to respond to the centenary was an "active debate among Ministers" and that it was "work in progress." His comments fell short of the formal apology sought by the MPs who attended the event. Mr. Blackman told MPs that "India will never forget. We owe it to the victims and their families to never forget what happened in our name... I hope we see an apology from the British government... It makes me sad and ashamed that this was done in our name... it is time we own up to it and that we made an apology and suitable reparation." "I am disappointed," said Virendra Sharma, the MP for Ealing Southall who spoke at the debate and last year initiated a push for a memorial in the U.K. to mark the atrocity. He described the government's approach to the question of what to do as "confused". The debate, which saw MPs from across the political parties join in the call for an apology, also led to wider questions about Britain's approach to the massacre and the darker moments of colonial history. This would help tackle far wider societal issues such as rising hate crime and racism. "By othering or writing people out of history can we really be surprised that hate crime continues to exist or racism continues to fester?" During the debate, some MPs suggested that the apology could help move bilateral relations forward, while one questioned how Britain could project itself as a proponent of international human rights — condemning other countries such as most recently Brunei — when it had failed to acknowledge its own culpability and apologise for atrocities in its own past. "It is not over yet," says Mr. Sharma, pointing to a letter signed by MPs that will be sent to the Prime Minister this week, demanding a formal apology.

HC summons Revenue Secretary, officials; seeks details on illegal structures

(Day Today) Long overdue: The court has been asking the government to crack down on encroachments along roads, parks and open spaces. The Madras High Court has summoned the Revenue Secretary on Wednesday to explain steps taken by him for implementation of a series of orders passed by the court regarding unauthorised constructions spread across the State and the action initiated so far against government officials who delay demolition of illegal structures. Justices M. Venugopal and S. Vaideyanathan said that they had

been repeatedly insisting upon strict compliance with court orders. Yet, "it is unfortunate that no steps have been taken by the authorities... Though we are reluctant to direct the appearance of the officials, taking note of their lethargic attitude, we direct the appearance of Principal Secretary, Revenue Department." Since the case on hand was related to Tiruvallur district, the judges ordered that the Collector concerned as well as the Tahsildar of Ponnammallee taluk should also be present in the court along with the Revenue Secretary. Several orders passed by the Special Division Bench had, so far, passed several orders

coming down hard upon unauthorised constructions. It had been repeatedly emphasising that the State government must attempt to remove illegal constructions and encroachments in public places such as roads, parks and Open Space Reserve Area, instead of regularising them. It had ordered that the question of regularisation would not arise at all if buildings did not have enough set back area on all four sides. Regularisation could be done only if the unauthorised portions of the buildings were demolished and the constructions were brought in accordance with the building plan, it had said As ob-

