



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

Volume-05

Issue-218

Dt. 12-03-2019 Tuesday

V.S. 2075

Fagan Sud-06

Page-04

Rs. 00.50 paisa

SC to consider sending 10% quota law challenge to Constitution Bench



(Day Today) Act amended Articles 15 and 16 by adding clauses, empowering the government to provide reservation on the basis of economic backwardness. The Supreme Court on Monday decided to consider the question whether the challenge to the 10% economic reservation law should be heard by a Constitution Bench. A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi scheduled a hearing on the question of reference to the larger Bench on March 28. The court refused to pass any interim order to stay or hamper the implementation of the Constitution (103rd Amendment) Act, which provides 10% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for those economically backward in the unreserved category. The issue of reference to a Constitution Bench arose when senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan pointed out that 50% quota limit was part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution and the new amendment tinkered with it. The Act amended Articles 15 and 16 by adding clauses, empowering the government to provide reservation on the basis of economic backwardness. Act violated Basic Structure of Constitution: pleads The petitions in the Supreme Court, mainly the one filed by activist Tehseen Poonawala, said the Act violated the Basic Structure of the Consti-

tion. They argued that the 50% ceiling limit on quota was "engrafted as a part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution's equality code" by the Supreme Court. One of the petitions, filed by Youth For Equality, represented by advocate Senthil Jagadeesan and settled by advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, contended that the Supreme Court, in a nine-judge Bench judgment in Indira Sawhney, had settled the law that economic backwardness could not be the sole basis for reservation. The plea argued that the Act was "vulnerable" and negated a binding judgment of the top court. The petitioners contended that the amendments excluded the OBCs and the SC/ST communities from the scope of the economic reservation. This, it said, "essentially implies that only those who are poor from the general categories would avail the benefits of the quotas". It said the high creamy layer limit of ₹8 lakh per annum ensured that the elite captured the reservation benefits. Further, the petitioners said the Supreme Court had settled the law that the "State's reservation policy cannot be imposed on unaided educational institutions, and as they are not receiving any aid from the State, they can have their own admissions provided they are fair, transparent, non-exploitative and based on merit". A petition said, "While

the impugned amendment attempts to overcome the applicability of Articles 19(1)(g) and 29(2), it remains completely silent on Article 14, which right protects the citizens from manifestly arbitrary State action." It also contended that the term "economically weaker sections" remained undefined in the Act along with the "ambiguous" term of "State. 2006 judgment modified in September 2018. A Constitution Bench, back in September 2018, modified a 2006 judgment requiring the State to show quantifiable data to prove the "backwardness" of a Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe community in order to provide quota in promotion in public employment. The court also had to consider the issue in the light of another judgment pronounced in the Jarnail Singh case in September last, which gave a huge fillip to the government's efforts to provide "accelerated promotion with consequential seniority" for the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) members in government services. "The whole object of reservation is to see that backward classes of citizens move forward so that they may march hand in hand with other citizens of India on an equal basis," the court held in the Jarnail Singh verdict. The question of reference has come even as the Centre has sought more time to file its counter.

Samjhauta blast case: Special court reserves verdict, next hearing on March 14

(News Track) File picture of the Samjhauta Express in flames after it was hit by blasts near Panipat, Haryana, on February 18, 2007. The next date for hearing was fixed following a petition filed by a Pakistani woman in the court. A special NIA court on Monday deferred its order in the Samjhauta Express blast case of 2007 in Haryana's Panipat district, which had left 68 people dead. The next date for hearing has been fixed for March 14 after a petition was filed by a Pakistani woman in the court to get her statement recorded as a witness in the twelve year old case. Swami Aseemanand, who is the main accused in the case was present in the court amid high security around the court premises. Three other accused Kamal Chauhan, Rajinder Chaudhary and Lokesh Sharma were also present in the court. The blasts on the Samjhauta Express, near Panipat, on February 18, 2007, and the subsequent fire in the coaches killed 68 passengers and injured a dozen. Those killed included Indian civilians and government



officials, besides a large number of Pakistani nationals were killed and injured. The initial investigation into the bomb blast was conducted by the Government Railway Police and Special Investigation Team of Haryana Police and subsequently National Investigation Agency (NIA) took over the case on July 29, 2010 following a directive by the Home Ministry.

RBI board had said note ban a commendable step but will have short-term negative effect on GDP for current year

(News Track) Two-and-a-half hours before PM announced demonetisation on Nov. 8, 2016, it also observed at a meeting that the unprecedented move will not have any material impact on tackling black money menace. The Reserve Bank of India board, which included the present Governor Shaktikanta Das as a director, had warned of short-term negative impact of demonetisation on the country's economic growth and observed that the unprecedented move will not have any material impact on tackling the black money menace. The board, according to minutes of the meeting revealed by the central bank in an RTI reply, met just two-and-a-half hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in an address to the nation, announced the demonetisation decision on November 8, 2016. Curbing black money was one of the prime objectives of the shock move to junk old ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes, which saw 86% of high value currency going out of cir-

ulation. The minutes of the board meeting, which approved the government's request for demonetisation, recorded the presence of then RBI Governor Urjit Patel and then Economic Affairs Secretary Shaktikanta Das. Others present included then Financial Services Secretary Anjali Chib Duggal and RBI Deputy Governors R. Gandhi and S.S. Mundra. Both Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Mundra are not part of the board now, while Mr. Das was appointed as the RBI Governor in December 2018. "It is a commendable measure but will have short-term negative effect on GDP for the current year," as per the minutes posted by RTI activist Venkatesh Nayak on the website of Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative. "Most of the black money is held not in the form of cash but in the form of real sector assets such as gold or real estate and that this move would not have a material impact on those assets," the board observed in its 561st meeting held in Delhi. The



Prime Minister had announced demonetisation of high-value currency notes with the aim to curb the black money, check counterfeit currency and stop terror finance among others. While any incidence of counterfeiting is a concern, the minutes said, ₹400 crore as a percentage of the total quantum of currency in circulation in the country is not very significant. Of the ₹15.41 lakh crore worth ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes in circulation on November 8, 2016, notes worth ₹15.31 lakh crore came back during

TTV Dhinakaran moves SC; says no rules were subverted to appoint Sasikala as party general secretary



(News Track) Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) leader T.T.V. Dhinakaran on Monday moved the Supreme Court against a Delhi High Court judgment upholding an Election Commission of India (ECI) decision to recognise the E.K. Palaniswami-O. Panneerselvam faction as the "real" All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) worthy of the 'two leaves' election symbol. The petition was mentioned by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria before a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi. The case has been listed for hearing on March 15. Mr. Dhinakaran, who is also represented by advocates Amit Anand Tiwari and Vivek Singh, challenged the February 28 judgment of the high court as erroneous and sought an ex-parte order to stay the verdict till his petition in the apex court is decided. Mr. Dhinakaran, through his counsel Vivek Singh, challenged the February 28 judgment of the High Court as erroneous and sought an ex-parte order to stay the verdict till his petition in the apex court is decided. He also wants the apex court to freeze the implementation of the ECI decision of November 2017 to allot his rival group the 'two leaves' symbol. Mr. Dhinakaran further asked the court to direct the poll body to allot his group the common symbol 'pressure cooker'. The special leave petition argued that the rival group tinkered with the constitution of the party and "any alteration in basic structure of the party constitution would render the party a new being". Mr. Dhinakaran contended that both the ECI and the High Court failed to consider the test of adherence to the party constitution. He questioned how a faction, which has attempted to amend the basic rules and regulations of the AIADMK, could be recognised as the true heirs of the party. The petition contended that Mr. Dhinakaran had shown 'material facts' to prove that he had the support of the rank and file of the AIADMK. Whereas the rival leaders, by their own admission, had said they had the support of only 11 MLAs out of 134 and support of 12 MPs out of 50. On the other hand, Mr. Dhinakaran had produced an affidavit of support of 122 MLAs and 37 MPs and 1,912 out of 2,040 General Council members. A person claiming to be the party must show sizeable support on his side, the petition said. He dismissed rivals' claim of "subversion of rules" whereby V.K. Sasikala (VKS) was alleged to have usurped the post of general secretary and the control of the party. He said this claim was not supported by fact or evidence. Besides, former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalitha was also appointed the general secretary in a similar fashion, Mr. Dhinakaran

claimed. "VKS was appointed as general secretary on the basis of a resolution moved and supported by the respondents. Further, there was a precedent in the party of similar appointment when Late Dr Jayalalitha was appointed in similar fashion," the petition said. It recalled how the ECI had denied his group a common symbol and "skewed" the level playing field for a free and fair election. The odds were finally leveled in his favour only when the Supreme Court, in a February 7 order, entitled him to a common symbol.

PNB scam: ED files fresh charge sheet against Nirav Modi under anti-money laundering law



(News Track) The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a fresh charge sheet against Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam accused Nirav Modi under the anti-money laundering law, officials said on Monday. They said the charge sheet or the prosecution complaint has been filed before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Mumbai. This is a supplementary charge sheet against the diamondaire and few others and the ED had recorded additional evidences gathered in the case and attachments made, they said. Further details about its contents are awaited. The development comes two days after a British daily reported that Nirav Modi, accused in the \$2 billion scam, is living in a swanky \$8 million apartment in London's West End and is now involved in a new diamond business. The ED said on March 9 that the United Kingdom's Home Secretary has recently referred India's request for extraditing the tainted businessman to a court for initiating legal proceedings against him. The ED filed the first charge sheet in this case in May last. This is a supplementary charge sheet against the diamondaire and few others and the ED had recorded additional evidences gathered in the case and attachments made, they said. Further details about its contents are awaited. The development comes two days after a British daily reported that Nirav Modi, accused in the \$2 billion scam, is living in a swanky \$8 million apartment in London's West End and is now involved in a new diamond business. The ED and the CBI are investigating Nirav Modi, his uncle Mehul Choksi and others for alleged money laundering and corruption to perpetrate the alleged scam in the Brady House branch of the PNB in Mumbai that was unearthed last year. Nirav Modi, 48, is currently living in a three-bedroom flat occupying half of a floor of the landmark Centre Point tower block in London, where rent is estimated to cost £17,000 a month, The Telegraph had reported.

Editorial

An open field: on Lok Sabha polls in U.P.

The Election Commission announced the Lok Sabha poll schedule on Sunday, and there is little doubt that the final outcome will be determined in great part by the vote in Uttar Pradesh. By including 11 candidates for U.P. in its first list last week, the Congress has reiterated its inclination to contest alone in the critical State in the absence of a deal with the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. Though the Congress decision does not entirely shut the doors on a joint front of anti-BJP parties in U.P., the chances of such a formation are turning bleaker. There is no way of discerning the likely impact of a multi-cornered contest in the State, but in 2014 the scattering of the anti-BJP vote in the State helped Prime Minister Narendra Modi get 71 of the 80 seats, vital to gaining an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. An equally sweeping victory for the BJP in the 2017 Assembly election initially appeared to reinforce Mr. Modi's aura of invincibility, but this soon turned out to be the trigger for a series of developments that cumulatively pose a challenge to his bid for a second term at the Centre. Facing irrelevance, regional parties such as the SP, the BSP and the Rashtriya Lok Dal felt compelled to bury the hatchet and form a front against the Hindutva challenge. This reconfiguration appeared to make an emphatic turn in the State's politics, and the BJP lost all the three Lok Sabha by-elections that followed. It is in this landscape that the Congress is trying to resolve its indecisiveness about going it alone. Yet, there is uncertainty at the granular level. Aspirants are being shunned by each party, resulting in a pool of disgruntled local actors now scurrying for shelter in other parties. The SP and the BSP will be contesting less than half their usual number of seats; the BJP is certain to replace a large number of its sitting MPs to reduce anti-incumbency at the constituency level. The Congress, though without an organisational base in the State, has the claim to be the national challenger to Mr. Modi. It might be tempted to rope in some of these dissidents from other parties, while remaining open to the possibility of an alliance. There is no way of discerning the likely impact of a multi-cornered contest in the State, but in 2014 the scattering of the anti-BJP vote in the State helped Prime Minister Narendra Modi get 71 of the 80 seats, vital to gaining an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. An equally sweeping victory for the BJP in the 2017 Assembly election initially appeared to reinforce Mr. Modi's aura of invincibility, but this soon turned out to be the trigger for a series of developments that cumulatively pose a challenge to his bid for a second term at the Centre. The shifting loyalties of individual leaders will have an impact on the caste coalitions that all parties factor into their calculations. An overarching social coalition of Dalits, backwards and Muslims in U.P. blocking the Hindutva advancement in 2019 is a possibility, but only one of several. Mr. Modi's strategy in the midst of this realignment of social groups in the State will be to pull his own campaign above local factors, and make it into a Hindu nationalist meta-narrative. The ongoing tensions with Pakistan and the debate on Ayodhya provide him with enough rhetorical tools. The terrain of U.P. has been fertile for this kind of politics too, a politics that makes nonsense of the accretion of vote banks through seat adjustments.

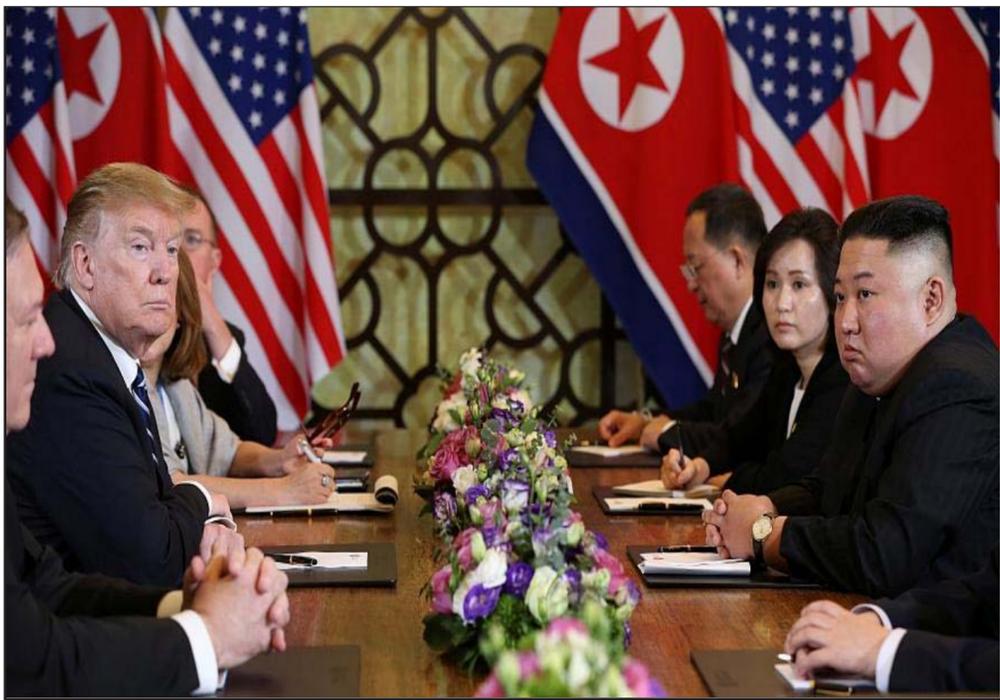
Abdelaziz Bouteflika



(Day Today) Algerians have been protesting against their ailing 82-year-old President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who is seeking a fifth term in elections next month. On the last day to file nominations, it was announced that the veteran would cut short his rule if he is re-elected and initiate constitutional reforms. But such vague assurances have had little impact on the protesters in the hydrocarbon-rich nation who are becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of education and employment opportunities. Mr. Bouteflika, credited with restoring stability in Algeria after a bloody civil war in the 1990s between Islamist insurgents and the military, has remained a figurehead in recent years. Though he has held the post of President since 1999, ever since he suffered a stroke in 2013 he has hardly been seen in public. That, however, did not stop him from contesting the 2014 elections, which he won with a thumping majority, despite being out of action on the campaign trail. But the removal of top-ranking military and intelligence officials in subsequent years sparked speculation about who was really in charge. The government's modus vivendi in the years following the civil war was to clamp down on dissent, and hand out generous welfare benefits. Given the turbulence of the civil war years, the initial stability worked well in a country that had grown wary of change. Persisting in that approach enabled the ruling inner coterie to wield real power on behalf of the President. The status quo was allowed to persist as the opposition parties failed to rise above their divisions. Algiers even evaded the anti-establishment fervour that had swept several northern African countries during the Arab Spring. Now, Algerians are demonstrating a resolve to move on from being seen as dependents on the state, to assert their rights as citizens. Mr. Bouteflika's latest re-election bid is being seen as a cynical manoeuvre by his inner circle. The voices of opposition have grown louder, as depleting oil revenues render the government's welfare programmes less sustainable. Moreover, the ruling National Liberation Front's contemptuous remarks against the clamour for change have incensed the public. Unlike in the past, the security forces have been more muted in their response so far. Thus, the government could well be misreading the situation if it believes the crisis will blow over. The military could be making a mockery of the electoral process by insisting on Mr. Bouteflika's candidacy, in effect undermining the highest elected office. Though he has held the post of President since 1999, ever since he suffered a stroke in 2013 he has hardly been seen in public. That, however, did not stop him from contesting the 2014 elections, which he won with a thumping majority, despite being out of action on the campaign trail. But the removal of top-ranking military and intelligence officials in subsequent years sparked speculation about who was really in charge. The government's modus vivendi in the years following the civil war was to clamp down on dissent, and hand out generous welfare benefits. Given the turbulence of the civil war years, the initial stability worked well in a country that had grown wary of change. Persisting in that approach enabled the ruling inner coterie to wield real power on behalf of the President. The status quo was allowed to persist as the opposition parties failed to rise above their divisions. Algiers even evaded the anti-establishment fervour that had swept several northern African countries during the Arab Spring. Now, Algerians are demonstrating a resolve to move on from being seen as dependents on the state, to assert their rights as citizens. Mr. Bouteflika's latest re-election bid is being seen as a cynical manoeuvre by his inner circle. It cannot reduce a vibrant society to one that is democratic only in name. Mr. Bouteflika, who is reported to be operating from a hospital in Switzerland, should withdraw from the fray. Algeria needs a new beginning.

The Art of the Deal' and a reality TV sta

(News Track) Whatever the reasons for the collapse of the U.S.-North Korea talks, both sides have kept alive hopes for their revival. The much awaited Hanoi summit (February 27-28) between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un ended abruptly. A working lunch and the signing ceremony were cancelled, leading to speculation that the talks had collapsed. This may be a premature conclusion. Mr. Trump, 72, has shown, time and again, that while he may be a novice at nuclear negotiations, he is a master of 'The Art of the Deal' and a reality TV star. For him, summits are about political timing. Mr. Kim, though less than half Mr. Trump's age seems to have a natural knack for it too. The Trump-Kim romance is like a three act opera and after two acts (Singapore in June 2018 and Hanoi), this is the Intermission, with a final act yet to unfold. Remember the suspense before Act I, which took place despite all odds. There was initial optimism when U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a surprise visit last May to Pyongyang, returning successfully with three U.S. detainees. Days later, National Security Adviser John Bolton bunged a spanner in the works by proposing the "Libyan model" for North Korea's denuclearisation. North Korea reacted strongly with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Kye-gwan indicating that it would be forced to reconsider the summit if the U.S. insisted on driving it into a corner. Mr. Trump backtracked, released the letter he had sent to Mr. Kim, expressing regret about the delay and adding that he was still hopeful. He also publicly distanced himself from Mr. Bolton's remarks by pointing out that what he wanted with North Korea was 'a deal'. South Korean President Moon Jae-in stepped in, visiting Washington in May and, on his return, meeting Mr. Kim at Panmunjom to restore calm. By the end of the month, the vice-chairman of the central committee, Gen. Kim Yong-chol, was in the U.S. meeting Mr. Pompeo and carrying a personal letter from Mr. Kim to Mr. Trump. And the June summit was restored! Singapore sling: When Trump meets Kim Jong-un. While the summit resulted in a joint statement holding out tantalising prospects of establishing a new period of U.S.-North Korea relations, building a lasting and robust peace on the Korean peninsula and Mr. Kim reaffirming his firm commitment to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, what was



striking was the growing trust and respect between the two leaders. An unexpected personal chemistry had been established. Fast forward to Hanoi, Act II. Expectations were set high. Stephen Biegun, appointed Special Representative for North Korea last year, had hinted that forward movement on ending the "war" was possible. The 1950-53 Korean War, which led to the division of the peninsula and claimed nearly three million lives, was paused with the 1953 Armistice Agreement. For North Korea, any move towards formalising peace is a step towards regime legitimacy. While a formal peace treaty would require U.S. Senate ratification, political steps towards normalisation would not. North Korea expected some acknowledgement of its continuing restraint with regard to testing and unilateral moves hinting at closing down some test sites. Both Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim were aware that differences about 'denuclearisation' persisted. For North Korea, it means 'denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula', North Korea dismantling its facilities and giving up its arsenal to go hand in hand with a permanent peace that removes the U.S. military threat and normalisation. For the U.S., 'denuclearisation' is frontloaded, implying complete, veri-

fiable and irreversible disarmament that requires North Korea to bring nuclear military activity to a halt, make a full declaration and subject itself to international verification, before sanctions are lifted. Mr. Trump had indicated that he was happy about the continued ban on nuclear and missile testing and not in a hurry. However, the pitch was queered by intelligence reports surfacing that in addition to the principal nuclear facility (Yongbyon), North Korea had built another uranium enrichment facility at Kangsan. It put a question mark on Mr. Kim's commitment to 'denuclearisation'. Another report indicated that though the Punggye-ri test site was shut, continued plutonium production and uranium enrichment during the last 12 months would have enabled North Korea to add up to seven devices to its existing arsenal estimated at 30 devices. These disclosures diminished the value of North Korea's offer of closing Yongbyon, which houses reactors (one for plutonium production and the older one possibly for tritium) in addition to an enrichment facility. Mr. Trump had accepted the idea of a road map but instead of working out the details, he prefers to rely on his sense of political timing to conclude a successful deal. Further, there was a growing perception that he was

in too much of a hurry, which meant that any agreement would be modest and likely be labelled a bad deal by the non-proliferation hardliners. He cleverly chose 'no deal' to a 'bad deal' — and the curtain came down on Act II. It seems the U.S. demanded more than Yongbyon, which was more than North was willing to give. Mr. Trump said, "It was all about sanctions. They wanted the sanctions lifted in its entirety and we couldn't do that. Sometimes, you have to walk and this was one of those times." His regret was evident when he added, "When we walked away, it was a very friendly walk." North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho claimed they had "demanded only partial sanctions relief in exchange for dismantling Yongbyon". Whatever the reasons, reactions on both sides have been restrained. A return to the rhetoric of 'fire and fury' therefore seems unlikely. Right now, the mantra in Washington is that no deal is better than a bad deal. Yet, realisation will soon dawn that the current situation only permits North Korea's stockpile to grow as there is zero likelihood for Chinese and Russian support for further tightening of sanctions. There are no plans for a third summit though Mr. Trump said that he "remained optimistic about a positive

future outcome", adding, "there is a warmth that we have and I hope that stays." Mr. Pompeo acknowledged "real progress" and said the "U.S. is ready to get back to the table to continue the talks". It is likely that during this Intermission, South Korea will step up its diplomacy with both Washington and Pyongyang. Mr. Moon has played a low-key but critical role in nurturing the process. Domestically, he has staked a lot, having had three meetings with Mr. Kim last year, including one in Pyongyang. This may be a premature conclusion. Mr. Trump, 72, has shown, time and again, that while he may be a novice at nuclear negotiations, he is a master of 'The Art of the Deal' and a reality TV star. For him, summits are about political timing. Mr. Kim, though less than half Mr. Trump's age seems to have a natural knack for it too. The Trump-Kim romance is like a three act opera and after two acts (Singapore in June 2018 and Hanoi), this is the Intermission, with a final act yet to unfold. Remember the suspense before Act I, which took place despite all odds. There was initial optimism when U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a surprise visit last May to Pyongyang, returning successfully with three U.S.

detainees. Days later, National Security Adviser John Bolton bunged a spanner in the works by proposing the "Libyan model" for North Korea's denuclearisation. North Korea reacted strongly with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Kye-gwan indicating that it would be forced to reconsider the summit if the U.S. insisted on driving it into a corner. Mr. Trump backtracked, released the letter he had sent to Mr. Kim, expressing regret about the delay and adding that he was still hopeful. He also publicly distanced himself from Mr. Bolton's remarks by pointing out that what he wanted with North Korea was 'a deal'. South Korean President Moon Jae-in stepped in, visiting Washington in May and, on his return, meeting Mr. Kim at Panmunjom to restore calm. By the end of the month, the vice-chairman of the central committee, Gen. Kim Yong-chol, was in the U.S. meeting Mr. Pompeo and carrying a personal letter from Mr. Kim to Mr. Trump. Since last May, both sides have refrained from hostile activities and propaganda, the militarised zone (DMZ), is peaceful, landmines have been removed and some maritime confidence-building measures put in place. With economic troubles at home and hardliners in Seoul accusing him of being over-optimistic and naive, he is vulnerable. The South Korean Constitution only provides one term for the President and Mr. Moon is confident about the legacy he wants to leave behind. More has been achieved during the last year since the collapse of the Agreed Framework in 2002 when U.S. President George W. Bush included North Korea in his "axis of evil" speech. Between then and 2017, North Korea carried out six nuclear tests, including one believed to be a fusion device, and over a 100 missile tests, demonstrating intercontinental ballistic missile capability. Mr. Moon's goal is to register sufficient progress on both 'normalisation' and the 'denuclearisation' tracks so that the process becomes irreversible. Such a breakthrough needs a top-level process. And so an Act III is likely. The hardliners will eventually recognise virtue in a step-by-step process as long as it is irreversible. A new stage will have to be found, Bangkok, even Hong Kong if China cooperates. But the cast is willing. After all, it is the blossoming of a beautiful relationship.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) bears an uncanny resemblance to India

(News Track) India's most recent encounter with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) bears an uncanny resemblance to India's failed attempt to gain entry to the inaugural session of the same grouping held in Rabat, Morocco, in 1969 and for much the same reasons. In the earlier episode New Delhi lobbied fiercely to wangle an invitation to the meeting. However, on Pakistan's insistence the invitation that had been extended was withdrawn and India was denied membership of the OIC despite its insistence that as the country with the third largest Muslim population in the world it deserved a seat at the "Islamic" table. I remember writing an oped at the time that New Delhi's bid for membership of the OIC was both morally wrong and politically futile. As a country whose foundational philosophy was based on secularism, it was inappropriate for India to join an organisation whose defining criterion was shared religious identity. In India's case this applied to all organisations that used religious criteria to define themselves, whether they be Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj being greeted by the present Chair of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Photo courtesy: Twitter/@MEAIndia What did we gain at OIC, asks Congress. Further, since India's membership of the OIC would be perceived as a powerful refutation of the basis on which Pakistan was created, it was bound to object stridently to India's induction into the organisation. Pakistan had great leverage with the conservative Arab monarchies for ideological reasons and because of the fact that its military was willing to provide the Arab monarchies with well-trained soldiers for hire that the latter needed to protect



their insecure regimes. Pakistan at that time also had close relations with Iran and Turkey with whom it shared membership of CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation, formerly the Baghdad Pact) and an anti-Soviet and pro-U.S. orientation. Consequently, Islamabad had much greater clout within OIC circles than did New Delhi and was in a position to thwart Indian attempts to attain OIC membership. As it turned out, my prediction came true. New Delhi's attempt to gain OIC membership led to unnecessary humiliation that could have been avoided had South Block acted with greater forethought. The situation today is both different and similar to 1969, and this was clearly reflected in India's latest experience with the OIC. In an apparent gesture of goodwill, the organisers of the OIC Foreign Ministers meet-

ing in Abu Dhabi, which in effect meant the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia invited External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj as the guest of honour and keynote speaker (picture) despite Pakistani objections. This was both a reflection of India's growing economic and political stature internationally and the desire on the part of the Gulf monarchies to cultivate New Delhi in order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by India's expanding economy and its technologically skilled workforce. However, this is where the difference between 1969 and 2019 ends and the similarities kick in. The impact of Ms. Swaraj's speech, especially her denunciation of terrorism that was clearly aimed at Pakistan, was more than neutralised by a number of events that followed her address. First, the

Abu Dhabi declaration issued at the end of the meeting did not contain even a simple expression of thanks to the Indian External Affairs Minister for addressing the plenary session of the assembly. Furthermore, it failed to mention the fact that Ms. Swaraj was the guest of honour at the meeting and delivered the keynote speech. This omission was very glaring in view of the fact that the document mentioned all sorts of unimportant issues, such as the UAE hosting the 2020 Expo in Dubai. Second, to add insult to injury, the document's only reference to the India-Pakistan stand-off stated that the OIC welcomes the "positive initiative undertaken by the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan to hand over the Indian pilot as a gesture of goodwill to de-escalate tensions in the region". The Pakistani "initiative" was

given a very positive twist by decontextualising it totally. There was not even an implicit reference to the primary reason that led to the most recent India-Pakistan conflagration, namely, Pakistani support for terrorism as witnessed most dramatically by the attack in Pulwama that killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel. Third, what was even more galling from the Indian perspective was the resolution on Kashmir that accompanied the Abu Dhabi declaration. This was both a reflection of India's growing economic and political stature internationally and the desire on the part of the Gulf monarchies to cultivate New Delhi in order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by India's expanding economy and its technologically skilled workforce. However, this is where the difference between 1969 and 2019

ends and the similarities kick in. The impact of Ms. Swaraj's speech, especially her denunciation of terrorism that was clearly aimed at Pakistan, was more than neutralised by a number of events that followed her address. This included the phrase "Indian terrorism in Kashmir" while condemning what it called "atrocities and human rights violations" in the State. It is clear from this sequence of events and the wording of the documents that emanated from the OIC meeting that despite the invitation to Ms. Swaraj, the leopard has not changed its spots and that Pakistani influence within the organisation has diminished only marginally. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj being greeted by the present Chair of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Photo courtesy: Twitter/@MEAIndia At OIC meet, India flays terror funding Once again, the Ministry of External Affairs, instead of prematurely celebrating the invitation to Ms. Swaraj to address the Abu Dhabi conference, should have thought long and hard before advising the Minister to accept the invitation. It was particularly incumbent upon the Ministry of External Affairs to do so in light of the resolutions passed by the OIC over the years regarding Kashmir and India-Pakistan issues which had always favoured the Pakistani point of view. It appears from hindsight that the External Affairs Minister's participation in the OIC Foreign Ministers' conclave, like the Indian attempt to gain admission into the Rabat conference in 1969, was nothing short of an avoidable fiasco. Mohammed Ayoob is University Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, Michigan State University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington DC

'Key conspirator' in Pulwama suicide car bomb attack among 2 militants killed in encounter



(Day Today) "From the incriminating material recovered from the site of encounter, it's understood that the other killed terrorist was a Pakistani national," say police. Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) 'commander' Mudasir Ahmad Khan, a "key conspirator" in the Pulwama suicide car bomb attack that left 40 CRPF jawans dead on February 14 last, was among two militants killed in an encounter at Tral in Pulwama on Sunday night, a Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) police spokesman said on Monday. "The investigation so far conducted revealed that Khan was one of the key conspirators of the recent Pulwama convoy attack," said the police spokesman in a statement. Khan and his non-local associate were trapped inside a residential area in Tral's Pingsh village on March 10 afternoon. The body of Khan, son of Ferooz Ahmad Khan, a resident of Tral's Midoora Tral, has been handed over to the family after they

identified him. "From the incriminating material recovered from the site of encounter, it's understood that the other killed terrorist was a Pakistani national codenamed Khalid," said the police spokesman. According to the police records, both the militants were "affiliated with JeM outfit" and "were wanted by law for their complicity in a series of terror crimes, including attack on security establishments". The duo were involved in "planning and executing several terror attacks", including a CRPF camp in 2018. "Arms and ammunition, including assault rifles, were recovered from the site of encounter. All these materials have been taken in the case records for further investigation and to probe their complicity in other terror cases," said the police. Disputing the Army's claim of killing three militants, the police said only two "charred bodies" have been recovered from the encounter site.

President confers Padma awards on 47 'inspiring' personalities



(News Track) Actor Mohanlal receiving the Padma Bhushan from President Ram Nath Kovind. Forty-seven prominent personalities, including Malayalam actor Mohanlal, former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, Akali Dal leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa and renowned journalist Kuldip Nayar (posthumous), were conferred the Padma awards by President Ram Nath Kovind here on Monday. Bihar leader Hukumdev Narayan Yadav (Padma Bhushan), former CEO of multinational techno giant Cisco systems John Chambers (Padma Bhushan) and renowned dancer and filmmaker Prabhu Deva (Padma Shri) were also honoured at a special function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, among others. While Viswanathan Mohanlal, Dhindsa and Nayar (posthumous) were conferred the Padma Bhushan, Jaishankar was honoured with the Padma Shri. Nayar's wife received the award from the President. The Padma Awards – one of the highest civilian awards of the country – are conferred in three categories: the Padma Vibhushan, the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Shri. As many as 112 "inspiring" personalities were selected for this year's Padma awards and their names were announced on the eve of Republic Day this year. The remaining awardees are likely to be conferred the honour at another function to be held on March 16, a Home Ministry official said. As many as 112 "inspiring" personalities were selected for this year's Padma awards and their names were announced on the eve of Republic Day this year. The remaining awardees are likely to be conferred the honour at another function to be held on March 16, a Home Ministry official said. Other notable awardees include renowned singer Shankar Mahadevan Narayan (Padma Shri), former Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha Karia Munda (Padma Bhushan), physicians Sandeep Guleria and Ilias Ali (both Padma Shri) and wrestler Bajrang Punia (Padma Shri). A record 50,000 nominations were received for the 2019 awards, over 20 times more than 2014, when there were just 2,200 nominations. The technological intervention has made the nomination process accessible to the people at large and the emphasis of the government to confer Padma awards on unsung heroes, who are doing selfless service for the nation, have resulted into the above transformation. This is reflected in the awardees selected with an eclectic list, covering diverse fields, the official said.

awardees are from across the nation, all segments of society and the government has gone beyond excellence alone, recognising larger impact and their selfless service, an official said. The nomination process for Padma awards was made online in 2016 and a simple, accessible and secure platform was put in place to encourage citizens at large to participate. Erstwhile 'Government Awards' transformed into 'Peoples Awards', another official said. Bihar leader Hukumdev Narayan Yadav (Padma Bhushan), former CEO of multinational techno giant Cisco systems John Chambers (Padma Bhushan) and renowned dancer and filmmaker Prabhu Deva (Padma Shri) were also honoured at a special function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan which was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, among others. While Viswanathan Mohanlal, Dhindsa and Nayar (posthumous) were conferred the Padma Bhushan, Jaishankar was honoured with the Padma Shri. Nayar's wife received the award from the President. The Padma Awards – one of the highest civilian awards of the country – are conferred in three categories: the Padma Vibhushan, the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Shri. As many as 112 "inspiring" personalities were selected for this year's Padma awards and their names were announced on the eve of Republic Day this year. The remaining awardees are likely to be conferred the honour at another function to be held on March 16, a Home Ministry official said. As many as 112 "inspiring" personalities were selected for this year's Padma awards and their names were announced on the eve of Republic Day this year. The remaining awardees are likely to be conferred the honour at another function to be held on March 16, a Home Ministry official said. Other notable awardees include renowned singer Shankar Mahadevan Narayan (Padma Shri), former Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha Karia Munda (Padma Bhushan), physicians Sandeep Guleria and Ilias Ali (both Padma Shri) and wrestler Bajrang Punia (Padma Shri). A record 50,000 nominations were received for the 2019 awards, over 20 times more than 2014, when there were just 2,200 nominations. The technological intervention has made the nomination process accessible to the people at large and the emphasis of the government to confer Padma awards on unsung heroes, who are doing selfless service for the nation, have resulted into the above transformation. This is reflected in the awardees selected with an eclectic list, covering diverse fields, the official said.

Democracy under threat in Modi's regime, says Gehlot



(Day Today) Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot addressing a press conference "He has wasted thousands of crores of rupees in advertisements, publicity and marketing" Shortly after the Election Commission announced the Lok Sabha election schedule, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Monday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that democracy and Constitution had come under threat in his regime. "Mr. Modi has failed to maintain the dignity of the office he holds. He is resorting to gimmicks to win the polls," he said. Mr. Gehlot said Mr. Modi had not only treated the Opposition with contempt during the last five years but had also undermined the institutions and created an "atmosphere of fear and intimidation" for industrialists, bureaucrats, politicians, and media houses. "If all the Opposition parties are feeling like this, there is a substance in it." In a series of tweets, Mr. Gehlot said Mr. Modi was trying to create an impression that the Opposition was questioning the valour of Armed Forces after the Pulwama terror attack and the air strikes in Balakot. "Nothing can be farther from the truth than this. Congress president Rahul Gandhi was the first person to publicly say that the party is with the government," he said. "Time for change has come" "The Prime Minister is trying to divert the attention of voters. We have simply asked for clarification in the wake of conflicting claims about casualties in air strikes. We were first told that 350 persons had died, then the figures were reduced to 250, followed by the claims that the attack was done only to show the prowess of Indian Air Force. On its part, the Air Force said it was for the government to give the figures," Mr. Gehlot said. Mr. Gehlot said the Opposition was within its rights to demand that the questions raised by the foreign media about the Balakot air strikes should be properly dealt with to ensure that no one defamed India. "The way Mr. Modi addresses the public and misleads them through the cacophony of words puts him in the role of an actor. He has wasted thousands of crores of rupees in advertisements, publicity and marketing...He would have succeeded as an actor," Mr. Gehlot said. Mr. Gehlot said that the time for change had come and the "popular will of people" would get reflected in the election results to be announced on May 23. He also alleged that the Prime Minister's Office had exerted pressure on the Election Commission to delay the announcement of election schedule until Mr. Modi's inauguration and stone laying events were completed.

India can't stop water from flowing into Pakistan: Pak official



(Day Today) A view of Sindhu river (Indus), in Ladakh region (Leh) of Jammu and Kashmir. File photo | Photo Credit: G.P. Sampath Kumar. Last month, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said in New Delhi that India had decided to "stop" the flow of its share of water to Pakistan after the Pulwama terror attack that killed 40 CRPF soldiers. Islamabad - India cannot stop the flow of water into Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty, a top Pakistani official said on Monday, asserting that Islamabad will move the International Court for Arbitration if New Delhi halts the water from the Ravi, Sutlej and Beas rivers. The official of the Permanent Commission for Indus Waters alleged that India had "continuously been involved in water aggression." Last month, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said in New Delhi that India had decided to "stop" the flow of its share of water to Pakistan after the Pulwama terror attack that killed 40 CRPF soldiers. Pakistan responded to his remarks, saying it was not concerned over India's plan to stop the flow of its share of water. "The Ministry of Water and Power is reviewing India's move to stop water from flowing into Pakistan. As per the Indus Water Treaty, India cannot stop water from flowing into Pakistan and if they do so then we will move the International Court for Arbitration," Geo News reported, quoting an official as saying. "India's Indus Water Commission did not apprise Pakistan regarding the move to stop the flow of water," the official said. It will take India several years to change the direction of the water to keep it from flowing into Pakistan, the official added. Under the Indus Water Treaty signed in 1960, the waters of the western rivers — the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab — was given to Pakistan and those of the eastern rivers — the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej — to India.

Taliban leader Omar lived next to US Afghan base: biography

(News Track) Taliban founder Mullah Omar lived within walking distance of US bases in Afghanistan for years, according to a new book that highlights embarrassing failures of American intelligence. Washington believed the one-eyed, fugitive leader had fled to Pakistan, but the new biography says Omar was in fact living just three miles from a major US Forward Operating Base in his home province of Zabul before his death in 2013. "Searching for an Enemy", by Dutch journalist Bette Dam, reveals the Taliban chief lived as a virtual hermit, refusing visits from his family and filling notebooks with jottings in an imaginary language. Dam spent more than five years researching the book and interviewed Jabbar Omari, Omar's bodyguard who hid and protected him after the Taliban regime was overthrown. According to the book, Omar listened to the BBC's Pashto-language news broadcasts in the evenings, but even when he learned about the death of al-Qaeda supreme Osama Bin Laden rarely commented on developments in the outside world. Following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 which led to the fall of the Taliban, the US put a \$10 million bounty on Omar and he went into hiding in a small compound in the regional capital Qalat. Dam writes. The family living at the compound were not told of the identity of their mystery guest, but US forces twice almost found him. At one point, a US patrol approached as Omar and Omari were in the courtyard. Alarmed, the two men ducked behind a wood pile.

Sushma Swaraj assures all help to families of Indians killed in Ethiopian Airlines plane crash



(News Track) Four Indians were among the 157 people killed in the plane crash on March 10 Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj on Monday assured all help to the families of the four Indians killed in the Ethiopian Airlines plane crash and directed the Indian missions in Ethiopia and Kenya to ensure assistance is provided to them. The Indians, including a U.N. consultant attached with the Environment Ministry, were among the 157 people killed when a Nairobi-bound Ethiopian Airlines plane crashed after taking-off from Addis Ababa on March 10. FILE PHOTO: Workers service an Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737-800 plane at the Bole International Airport in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Airlines grounds all its Boeing 737 Max 8 planes. The deceased Indian nationals were Shikha Garg, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) consultant attached with the Environment Ministry, Pannagesh Bhaskar Vaidya, Hansini Pannagesh Vaidya and Nukavarapu Manisha. Responding to a

relative from the Vaidya family, Ms. Swaraj said, "I have spoken to the son of Mr. Vaidya in Toronto. I am shocked you have lost six members of your family in air crash. My heartfelt condolences. I have asked Indian Embassy in Kenya and the India Embassy in Ethiopia to reach you immediately. They will provide help and assistance in respect of all your family members." Replying to a tweet from a relative of N. Manisha, the Minister said she has asked the Indian High Commissioner in Nairobi, Rahul Chhabra, to provide them all help and assistance. Ms. Swaraj said she is trying to reach the family of Shikha Garg. "I have tried her husband's number many times. Please help me reach her family," she said. The Boeing 737 crashed minutes after an early-morning takeoff from Addis Ababa, killing all eight crew and 149 passengers on board, including tourists, business travellers, and Garg, who was on her way to attend a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) meeting.

Analysis: Does the Islamic State still pose a threat?



(Gns. News) Islamic State members walk in the last besieged neighborhood in the village of Baghouz, Deir Al Zor province, Syria March 10, 2019. While its era of territorial rule may be over for now, there is near universal agreement that the IS remains a threat. Islamic State (IS) looks about to lose its last foothold — on the banks of the Euphrates near the Iraq border. While its era of territorial rule may be over for now, there is near universal agreement that the IS remains a threat. What has its territorial defeat accomplished? Islamic State's possession of land in Iraq and Syria set it apart from other like-minded groups such as Al Qaeda and became central to its mission when it declared a caliphate in 2014, claiming sovereignty over all Muslim lands and peoples. The destruction of the quasi-state it built there has denied the group its most potent propaganda and recruiting tool as well as a logistical base from which it could train fighters and plan coordinated attacks overseas. It also freed its former subjects from summary executions and draconian punishment for breaking its strict laws or, for some minorities, sexual slavery and slaughter. Warfare wiped out thousands of its fighters. And, financially, its defeat deprives it of greater resources than any modern jihadist movement has enjoyed, including taxes on its inhabitants and the proceeds of oil sales. What threat does the Islamic State still pose in Iraq and Syria? In its previous guise as an Al Qaeda offshoot in Iraq a decade ago, IS navigated adversity by going underground, biding its time to rise suddenly again. Since suffering devastating territorial losses in 2017, IS has steadily turned again to such tactics. Sleeper cells in Iraq have

staged a scatter-gun campaign of kidnappings and killings to undermine the Baghdad government. The group has also carried out many bombings in northeast Syria, which is controlled by U.S.-backed Kurdish forces, including one that killed four Americans in January. Kurdish and U.S. officials say it remains a menace there. In Syria, IS fighters are on the brink of losing their last foothold of Baghouz at the Iraqi border. But they still have presence in sparsely populated territory west of the Euphrates River in an area otherwise held by the Syrian government. What has happened to its leaders, fighters and followers? The fate of the IS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, remains a mystery. The U.S. government's top experts strongly believe he is alive and possibly hiding in Iraq. U.S. sources recently said. Other top echelon leaders have been killed in air strikes. Thousands of Islamic State insurgents and civilian followers have also been killed and thousands more captured. An unknown number remain at large in both Syria and Iraq. Iraq is putting on trial, imprisoning and often executing IS detainees. The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) holds many hundreds of Islamic State fighters and followers, but the numbers have ballooned as the SDF advanced into the area near Baghouz. A senior U.S. defence official in Washington said in early March that about 20,000 Islamic State fighters and family members had come out of Baghouz. An SDF official said SDF forces were holding about 4,000 suspected Islamic State fighters from Iraq and Syria and more than 1,000 foreign fighters. Many low-level local operatives have been released in Syria. The SDF complains that

Western states are reluctant to take back the foreign fighters, who are widely seen as a security threat at home but who might be hard to legally prosecute. Can it still organise or inspire attacks overseas? As Islamic State clung to its last scrap of land, the head of Britain's spy agency MI6 warned that the group would return to "asymmetric" attacks. Even after it began losing ground militarily, IS still claimed responsibility for attacks made in different countries, though often these have been blamed on "lone wolves" without its direction. It started years ago to call on followers abroad to plan their own attacks, rather than focusing purely on ones staged by trained operatives supported by the group's hierarchy. In early 2018 the head of U.S. military central command said Islamic State was resilient and remained capable of "inspiring attacks throughout the region and outside of the Middle East". What does its fall mean for the future of global jihad? Although Islamic State's core territory was in Iraq and Syria, jihadists fighting in other countries, notably Nigeria, Yemen and Afghanistan, pledged their allegiance to it. (Gns. News) whether those groups will still wear its mantle, especially if Baghdadi is captured or killed, is an open question, but there seems little chance they will soon end their campaigns. Al Qaeda also retains numerous franchises around the world, and other militant Islamist groups operate in countries where normal governance has broken down. Jihadist ideology has long proven itself able to mutate as circumstances change, and there is no shortage of warfare, injustice, oppression, poverty, sectarianism and naked religious hatred for Islamist militants to exploit.

Lok Sabha election 2019: Report card | how these MPs fared

(News Track) With the Lok Sabha election round the corner, looks at the performance of five MPs from constituencies around Mumbai, and how the Opposition and civil society rate them. Member of Parliament: Shrikant Shinde. Second rank candidate/party: Anand Paranjape / NCP. Utilisation of MPLAD funds: Spent all of the ₹25 crore. Mr. Shinde said he avoided spending on road works or footpaths as MPLAD funds are not meant for this. A shooting range in Ambernath, gardens, open gyms, a cricket pitch at Dombivali, a jogging track in Thakurli, are some of the key works done by him. Attendance: 83%. Questions asked in Parliament: 900. Parliamentary Committees they worked on: Committee on Health and Family Welfare. Private Members' Bills introduced: 7. Self-assessment: "I was true to my word on improving railway services. I expedited work on the 5th and 6th line between Thane and Diva; received Central approval for Kalyan-Thane-Mumbai waterway, Thakurli Terminus, and Kalyan Yard remodelling work; and State approval for Dombivali Metro. Initiated work on a multi-specialty hospital in place of ESIC hospital, Ulhasnagar." Mr. Shinde said. Future plans, if re-elected: "I will continue my on-going work. Work on all the projects that are under way will be over and new developmental projects will be taken up," said Mr. Shinde. Opposition rating: NCP leader Anand Paranjape said, despite enjoying power from municipal corporation to Parliament, no infrastructure project was completed. "Nothing has been done about Kalva-Airoli elevated corridor, Thane-Diva 6th line in MUDP-II, Dombivali to Mankoli creek bridge, 3rd line between Kalyan-Kasara and Kalyan-Karjat, Kalyan rail terminal and setting up a ₹6,500 growth centre in 27 villages of KDMC. Mr. Shinde has failed to make any impact." Civil society view: Pradip Bhanage, an activist from Dombivali and local journalist said, "Mr. Shinde knows his core voters and has kept them happy by focusing his works around them. He is easily accessible to ordinary citizens. Railways is a lifeline to this region. There is no significant improvement in railways infrastructure. Shiv Sena enjoys power from corporation to Parliament, but civic issues in Kalyan are far from being solved." Member of Parliament: Rajendra Gavit (Winner in 2014-Chintaman Vanga / BJP. Rajendra Gavit won Palghar by-election on May 31, 2018). Constituency: Palghar. Political party: BJP. Lok Sabha election 2019: Report card | how these MPs fared. Votes won in 2014: 2,72,782. Winning margin: 29,572. Second rank candidate/party: Shrinivas Vanga / Shiv Sena. Utilisation of MPLAD funds: Spent ₹5 crore for one year. Mr. Gavit said he spent his all of his funds on repairing a few roads, passenger amenities at stations, a muslim graveyard and a ₹50 lakh fund for child welfare and development in project-affected areas. Attendance: 68%. Questions asked in Parliament: 8. Parliamentary Committees they worked on: None. Private Members' Bills introduced: 0. Self-assessment: "Despite a short tenure, I have managed to get some key projects off the ground — most notably, a ₹360-crore creek bridge which will reduce the distance between Palghar and Virar. We have provided more foot-overbridges and escalators than the previous government. Palghar is also the leading district in Maharashtra in implementation of the Forest Rights Act," Mr. Gavit said. Future plans, if re-elected: "We will continue doing the same work. There are talks that Shiv Sena will get this constituency, but it hasn't materialised yet," Mr. Gavit said. Opposition rating: President of Bahujan Vikas Aghadi and sitting MLA Hitendra Thakur said, "One needs to only look at the number of tribal children who have died due to malnutrition in an area whose guardian minister is also the State Cabinet minister for Tribal Development." Mr. Thakur said that the series of large infrastructure projects in the area has been met with stiff opposition and will play a huge role in the upcoming elections. Civil society view: Local activist Ramakant Patil said that Mr. Gavit and his predecessor have not made an impact on policy issues. "Administratively they've been okay. But issues such as implementation of MNREGA,



MUDRA and the Forest Rights Act haven't been tackled at the Union-level. The major election issue this time will be the Bullet Train and Mumbai-Vadodara Highway projects that will affect farmers, adivasis and fishing communities. Member of Parliament: Kapil Patil Constituency: Bhiwandi. Political party: BJP. Lok Sabha election 2019: Report card | how these MPs fared. Votes won in 2014: 4,11,070. Winning margin: 1,09,450. Second rank candidate/party: Vishwanath Patil / Congress. Utilisation of MPLAD funds: Spent all of the ₹25 crore. Mr. Patil said he utilised 100% fund on concretisation of roads, paver blocks, construction of footpaths, amenity blocks, high mast lights, toilets, a water supply programme, borewells and community halls. Attendance: 91%. Questions asked in Parliament: 462. Parliamentary Committees they worked on: Standing Committee on Urban Development, Consultative Committee on Railway Ministry Private Members' Bills introduced: 0. Self-assessment: "Mr. Patil said, "We have gotten works worth ₹23,000 crore approved for this constituency. The cabinet has cleared railway proposals worth ₹3,000 crore. I have utilized my entire fund as well." Future plans, if re-elected: "I will demand an AIIMS hospital for Thane, as per the Centre's new policy, so people don't have to go to Mumbai hospitals. Bhiwandi requires a direct train from Mumbai. Once work on the Virar corridor is done, we will get direct connectivity. We have also demanded a jetty. For the textile industry, I will urge the Centre to come up with conducive policies," Mr. Patil said. Opposition rating: Vishwanath Patil, who contested against Kapil Patil in 2014, said, "The MP has not done anything to support two major protests in the area in the last five years. He has always sided with the elite. During protests against Samruddhi Mahamarg, where was he when the armed forces entered the villages? We formed a committee to save these lands. He does bhoompujan of projects that never take off. He has no connect with the grassroots." Civil society view: Zahid Mukhtar Shaikh, a social worker and Bhiwandi-resident said, "The MP did nothing on two fronts — after GST was imposed, the powerloom sector suffered heavy losses. We were promised refunds, we file returns regularly but the process is too long. Almost 60% of textile mills have moved out of Bhiwandi due to high electricity bills. The MP did not do anything to seek respite from the energy ministry." Member of Parliament: Rajan Vichare Constituency: Thane Political party: Shiv Sena. Lok Sabha election 2019: Report card | how these MPs fared. Votes won in 2014: 5,95,364. Winning margin: 2,81,299. Second rank candidate/party: Sanjiv Naik / NCP. Utilisation of MPLAD funds: Of the ₹25 crore, 79.31% was spent on infrastructure and allied projects, 9.20% on health, 6.90% on education and 4.6% in the field of sports. Attendance: 78%. Questions asked in Parliament: 504. Parliamentary Committees they worked on: Industry. Private Members' Bills introduced: 0. Self-assessment: "Mr. Vichare said, "A lot of work has been done for citizens' convenience. We built the SATIS flyover outside Thane station. Work has

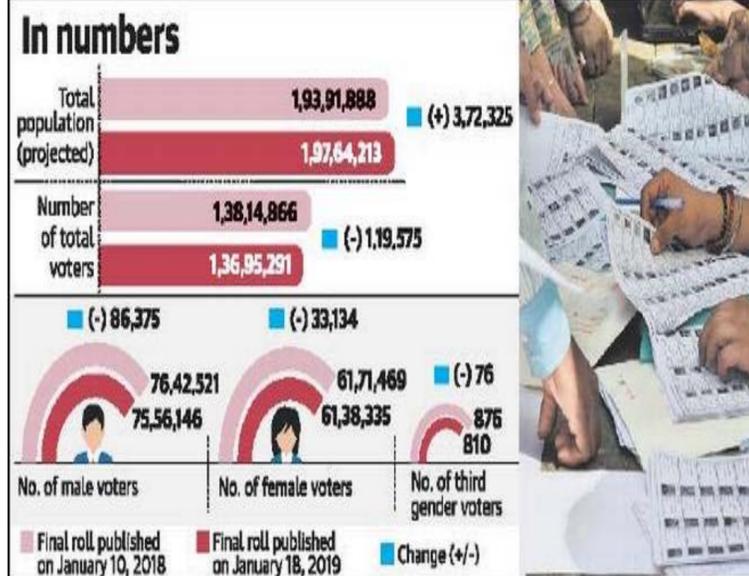
begun on the Digha station on the Kalva-Airoli elevated corridor, so Karjat-Kasara residents won't have to come to Thane to go to Navi Mumbai soon. A new passport office is being inaugurated in Navi Mumbai. The proposal for a new jetty at Uttan has been passed." Future plans, if re-elected: "My priority will be constructing a new railway station — tentatively named New Thane — between Thane and Mulund, for which we are trying to acquire the Thane Municipal Hospital land. It will ease load on Thane station, which witnesses a footfall of eight lakh every day. We will also start water transport from Bhayander to Thane to cut travel time to half-an-hour," Mr. Vichare said. Opposition rating: Mr. Vichare's predecessor, NCP leader Sanjeev Naik said the projects that Mr. Vichare talked about were proposed during his term, and no new effort has been observed. "We had proposed two stations on the Kalva-Airoli route: Digha and Khairane-Bonkode. Mr. Vichare ignored Khairane-Bonkode and moved Digha 500 metres closer to Kalva. "Nothing has been done about Kalva-Airoli elevated corridor, Thane-Diva 6th line in MUDP-II, Dombivali to Mankoli creek bridge, 3rd line between Kalyan-Kasara and Kalyan-Karjat, Kalyan rail terminal and setting up a ₹6,500 growth centre in 27 villages of KDMC. Mr. Shinde has failed to make any impact." Civil society view: Pradip Bhanage, an activist from Dombivali and local journalist said, "Mr. Shinde knows his core voters and has kept them happy by focusing his works around them. He is easily accessible to ordinary citizens. Railways is a lifeline to this region. There is no significant improvement in railways infrastructure. Shiv Sena enjoys power from corporation to Parliament, but civic issues in Kalyan are far from being solved." Member of Parliament: Rajendra Gavit (Winner in 2014-Chintaman Vanga / BJP. Rajendra Gavit won Palghar by-election on May 31, 2018). Constituency: Palghar. Political party: BJP. Lok Sabha election 2019: Report card | how these MPs fared. Votes won in 2014: 2,72,782. Winning margin: 29,572. Second rank candidate/party: Shrinivas Vanga / Shiv Sena. Utilisation of MPLAD funds: Spent ₹5 crore for one year. Mr. Gavit said he spent his all of his funds on repairing a few roads, passenger amenities at stations, a muslim graveyard and a ₹50 lakh fund for child welfare and development in project-affected areas. Attendance: 68%. Questions asked in Parliament: 8. Parliamentary Committees they worked on: None. Private Members' Bills introduced: 0. Self-assessment: "Despite a short tenure, I have managed to get some key projects off the ground — most notably, a ₹360-crore creek bridge which will reduce the distance between Palghar and Virar. We have provided more foot-overbridges and escalators than the previous government. Palghar is also the leading district in Maharashtra in implementation of the Forest Rights Act," Mr. Gavit said. Future plans, if re-elected: "We will continue doing the same work. There are talks that Shiv Sena will get this constituency, but it hasn't materialised yet," Mr. Gavit said. Opposition rating: President of Bahujan Vikas Aghadi and sitting MLA Hitendra Thakur said,

"One needs to only look at the number of tribal children who have died due to malnutrition in an area whose guardian minister is also the State Cabinet minister for Tribal Development." Mr. Thakur said that the series of large infrastructure projects in the area has been met with stiff opposition and will play a huge role in the upcoming elections. Civil society view: Local activist Ramakant Patil said that Mr. Gavit and his predecessor have not made an impact on policy issues. "Administratively they've been okay. But issues such as implementation of MNREGA, MUDRA and the Forest Rights Act haven't been tackled at the Union-level. The major election issue this time will be the Bullet Train and Mumbai-Vadodara Highway projects that will affect farmers, adivasis and fishing communities. Member of Parliament: Kapil Patil Constituency: Bhiwandi. Political party: BJP. Lok Sabha election 2019: Report card | how these MPs fared. Votes won in 2014: 4,11,070. Winning margin: 1,09,450. Second rank candidate/party: Vishwanath Patil / Congress. Utilisation of MPLAD funds: Spent all of the ₹25 crore. Mr. Patil said he utilised 100% fund on concretisation of roads, paver blocks, construction of footpaths, amenity blocks, high mast lights, toilets, a water supply programme, borewells and community halls. They talk about acquiring the Mental Hospital land for the New Thane station, but I fail to see the delay, especially since the guardian minister is also the Health Minister." Civil society view: Thane-based activist Rohit Joshi said, "Going by the promises in his manifesto, Mr. Vichare has failed in resolving local transport and basic infrastructure issues. Work on the Kopri road overbridge and Versova Bridge is going on at a very slow pace, causing heavy traffic jams. The SATIS project has been a disaster and yet, a second bridge had been

TikTok cannot be banned, can only be regulated, say experts

(News Track) Of late, several controversies have erupted over videos on the mobile platform. In the light of several controversial videos on media platform TikTok and political leaders voicing concern, Information Technology Minister M. Manikandan recently made an announcement in the Assembly that the State would take steps to get the Chinese-developed app banned. The police have also pointed to the far-reaching implications of hosting videos on the app. They said there had been several law and order incidents due to sharing of videos on the app in the last few months. Recently, tension prevailed on the main road linking Nagalapuram to Tiruthani in Tiruvallur district when a group of Dalits staged a strong protest, demanding action against a Caste Hindu youth who circulated a video disparaging their community. Women squatted on the road with cans of kerosene, while a few others set fire to tyres. The situation was brought under control only after police arrested the accused when he surrendered. Venkataraman, 26, of Thazhavedu village near Tiruthani, had posted a video on TikTok of his speech against the Dalits of the area. Apparently, he had done it at the instigation of his friend, Vijay, 18. When the police picked up his father for questioning, Venkataraman led Vijay near a lake and killed him. Bala Swaminathan, president, Cyber Society of India, said several mobile phone users had downloaded the app and using it. He added that if the law and order situation was under threat, it was important to check the misuse of the app and enforce regulations. The situation was brought under control only after police arrested the accused when he surrendered. Venkataraman, 26, of Thazhavedu village near Tiruthani, had posted a video on TikTok of his speech. The anti-vice squad of Chennai police recently busted a gang that used morphed pictures of women downloaded from Tik Tok to lure customers. Using Tik Tok, miscreants had created a video on the Salem Collector and circulated it on social media. Widespread misuse of the application has been reported in Salem, Virudhunagar and Tirunelveli districts. Advocate and cyber expert N. Karthikeyan said, "As of now, the authorities cannot ban Tik Tok application legally since it is a company incorporated in China. If the government bans Tik Tok, it will merely will crop up in another name or form. The Union government should constitute an empowered committee to study the possibility of regulating such applications."

Lok Sabha polls: Delhi to vote on May 12



(Day Today) BJP, Cong yet to finalise candidates; time to throw out most-dictatorial govt in history of India: Kejriwal. The polls for all seven Lok Sabha constituencies in Delhi will be held on May 12 in the sixth phase of the seven-phase 2019 general election, the Election Commission of India announced on Sunday. The figures released by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Delhi on January 18 stated that there are over 1.36 crore voters in the city. However, the number is likely to increase with the office of the CEO holding several special camps to enrol new voters. "Total voters during general election 2014 were 1,27,06,366 whereas electors as per final roll published on January 18 are 1,36,95,291, which is an increase of 9,88,925 [7.78%]. The number of voters is likely to increase further during continuous updation before the general election 2019," the CEO said. He said the number of polling stations has been increased from 13,418 to 13,816. The number of polling locations has also increased from 2,670 to 2,696 as a part of an exercise to rationalise polling stations, he added. Welcoming the announcement, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted: "Ultimately back to We the people—the real power of our democracy. Time to throw out the most dictatorial and anti-federal govt in the history of India. Time to seek answers on demonetisation, jobs, destruction of traders in destroying brotherhood amongst different communities. [sic]." Both the Delhi Congress and the

Delhi BJP said two months would give them ample time to launch their campaigns. AAP has already announced six of the seven candidates for the polls even though sources say a tie-up with the Delhi Congress was still on the cards. The BJP and Congress are still in the process of finalising their candidates. The Delhi Congress said it has received over 100 applications for the seven Lok Sabha seats. The BJP is in the midst of carrying out an exercise to evaluate the performance of all of its seven sitting MPs. AAP on Sunday said it will be rolling out a three-tier Lok Sabha campaign. At the first level, it said 1,000 teams will go door-to-door, covering seven Lok Sabha constituencies divided into 560 zones. The party will also distribute a letter, written by Mr. Kejriwal, explaining the benefits of full statehood and the disadvantages Delhi currently faces because it is not a full State. They said 20 vehicles equipped with LED screens and speakers will do the rounds at each constituency. They will play a song on full statehood and replay speeches of Mr. Kejriwal and highlight his achievements. At the second level, all AAP legislators will hold extensive campaigning in their constituencies and at the third level, AAP will field "star campaigners" at rallies and street meetings. The Delhi CEO has appealed to all Delhiites to check their name in the final electoral roll as a mere holding of Voter Identity card does not entitle the voter to cast his/her vote during the election.

Chinese Foreign Ministry denies opening Twitter account



(News Track) Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang denied social media, including Twitter and Facebook, besides internet giant Google remained blocked by Chinese firewalls. They can be accessed only through VPNs, (Virtual Private Networks) which circumvent the Chinese firewalls. Chinese Foreign Ministry on Monday denied opening an official account on Twitter account which remained inaccessible in China though a large part of its official media uses it to highlight

their news content. "It looks real? You are being fooled by this," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a media briefing here when asked about a Twitter account claiming to be that of Chinese Foreign Ministry. "It is further proof that on cybersecurity we must have a discerning eye. We must adopt a cooperative approach and deal with the risks and challenges by global cooperation," Mr. Lu said. He however skirted a question whether his ministry has complained to the microblogging plat-

form Twitter about the account being operated in its name. Internet social media, including Twitter and Facebook, besides internet giant Google remained blocked by Chinese firewalls. They can be accessed only through VPNs, (Virtual Private Networks) which circumvent the Chinese firewalls. Though Twitter is not allowed in China, it is widely used by official media like state-run Xinhua news agency, various newspapers and official television channel CGTN to highlight their news content.

Bilawal Bhutto meets ailing Sharif in jail; demands best treatment for 3-time PM

(Day Today) Nawaz Sharif (69), has been imprisoned at the high security Kot Lakhpat jail since December 2018 following his conviction in a corruption case. In a significant development in Pakistan's political scene, Opposition leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met Nawaz Sharif at the Kot Lakhpat jail here on Monday and asked the Imran Khan-led government to provide the best medical treatment to the ailing former prime minister. Nawaz Sharif (69), has been imprisoned at the high security Kot Lakhpat jail since December 2018 following his conviction in a corruption case. Sharif's daughter

Maryam Nawaz, quoting cardiologists sent by the government to examine Sharif on Thursday said, the 3-time former premier's heart disease has "worsened". Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal's meeting with Sharif is being seen by political observers as a step to form a major opposition alliance against the Imran Khan in days to come. After the meeting, Mr. Bilawal told reporters outside the jail that he came to inquire after Sharif's health. "Although there are political differences but Mr Sharif is not well and I have come here to see him and inquire after his health. Mr Sharif looked very

unwell. "I demand the government provide him best treatment. He should be given treatment according to his wish. Injustice shouldn't be done to him," Bilawal, 30, said. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) speaks during a news conference in Islamabad. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) speaks during a news conference in Islamabad, Pakistan. He said it is difficult to defend the country on human rights if best treatment is not accorded to a three-time prime minister. "It is our failure that the chartered.