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Congress kicks off Lok Sabha poll campaign from Gujarat



(Day Today) Congress leaders paying their respects to a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. Indian National Congress The Congress Working Committee meet is being held in Gujarat after a gap of 58 years. Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said "no sacrifice is too great and no effort is too little" to keep the BJP and RSS out of power, as the Congress Working Committee (CWC) deliberated political strategy in Ahmedabad. Ahead of the formal launch of Congress' poll campaign from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home turf of Ahmedabad, Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh told the CWC that the Congress should highlight the achievement of the UPA, especially, policies that changed the

people's lives. He accused the Modi government of resorting to false propaganda and carrying out disastrous. Former party chief Sonia Gandhi said Prime Minister Modi played the "victim card while people are the real victims". "On the anniversary of Gandhi Ji's historic Dandi March, the Congress Working Committee in Ahmedabad, resolved to defeat the RSS/BJP ideology of fascism, hatred, anger & divisiveness. No sacrifice is too great in this endeavour; no effort too little; this battle will be won," tweeted Mr. Gandhi while the meet was underway. After the CWC meet, Congress president Rahul Gandhi will address the Jan Sankalp rally where the party would stress on the theme of Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan. "Once the next government takes charge there must be a White

Paper on 1) Decision making & impact of Demonetisation 2) Unemployment Situation since 2014 3) GDP statistics 4) Utilisation of fuel taxes & cess 5) Use of public funds for political campaigning. India needs answers," senior leader Ahmed Patel had tweeted on Monday. The Congress is trying bring back the political narrative on issues of governance, agrarian and economic crisis, unemployment and lack of job creation, women safety and others. The party's choice of the venue and date to hold the CWC also underscores its political messaging. Tuesday marks the anniversary of the famous 'Dandi March' started by Mahatma Gandhi from Sabarmati Ashram on March 12, 1930 with a group of Satyagrahis. Before the formal CWC deliberations started, top

leaders gathered at the Sabarmati Ashram for a prayer meeting. The CWC meeting is being held at the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel national memorial to stress on Sardar's Congress legacy. apart from top leaders including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, newly-appointed general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Jyotiraditya Scindia are also attending the meet. The CWC meeting is being held in Gujarat after a gap of 58 years. It was last held in the state at Bhavnagar in 1961. Patidar leader Hardik Patel, who shot to fame by spearheading quota stir in the State and is set to fight the Lok Sabha polls, will join the Congress at the meeting in the presence of Mr. Rahul Gandhi.

World within a country: The size of India's electorate in four charts

(Day Today) File photo of people queuing up to cast their vote at a polling booth in Khammam. The size of the electorate, which will vote in April and May this year to elect representatives to the 17th Lok Sabha, is as big as the combined electorates of 36 democracies in the world. The electorate increased at an average rate of 11.2% every year since 1952. The gender ratio has remained constantly skewed -- for every 52 voters who were men, there were 48 women. Note: If you cannot view the visualisations below, click here Flourish logo A Flourish data visualisation. (Figures for 2019 are provisional). Even as the size of the electorate increased by 16.3% from 2009, the 2014 polls registered the highest ever turnout. Flourish logo A Flourish data visualisation. The overall number of candidates dropped significantly after the security deposit was increased from Rs. 500 to Rs. 10,000 in 1998. The share of women candidates improved slightly. Another interesting pattern is the number of Lok Sabha constituencies and polling stations. The number of constituencies has increased from 401 in 1952 to 543 in 2014 (an increase of 35%). With an in-



crease in the number of seats, the number of polling stations too have gone up from 1.96 lakh in 1952 to 9.28 lakh in 2014 (a five-fold increase). Testing the biggest democracy The latest electoral rolls released in

January 2019 show that 89.78 crore people are registered to vote in the upcoming election. The map below shows a comparison of State-wise electorates with those of other democracies around the world in

their latest elections. For instance, Tamil Nadu's electorate, which is 5.89 crore, is comparable to that of Turkey's 5.93 crore. Uttar Pradesh's (14.43 crore) is nearly as big as Brazil's (14.73 crore).

Trinamool includes 41% women candidates in list for Lok Sabha polls

(News Track) West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee leads a 'walk' organised to mark International Women's Day in Kolkata on March 8, 2019. 19 out of 42 candidates have been replaced. Moonmoon Sen is the only candidate who has been moved from Bankura to Asansol. With 41% women candidates, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee declared the Trinamool Congress' candidate list for 2019 Lok Sabha election. Ms. Banerjee named candidates in all 42 seats, replacing about 50% of the incumbents. Altogether, 19 out of 42 candidates have been replaced in the list announced by Ms. Banerjee on Tuesday afternoon. In the 2014 election, Ms Banerjee nominated 35% women candidates. "Every-one talking about 33% reservation for women, we nominated 41% women candidates," she said. Former actor and MP Moonmoon Sen is the only candidate who has moved from Bankura seat to the prestigious Asansol seat where BJP's expected candidate is Union Minister Babul Supriyo. Among senior leaders of Trinamool Congress, who have been dropped or "requested" Ms Banerjee to drop them, is the party's general secretary Subrata Bakshi. "He told me that he wants to work for the party at the grassroots level and even wants to do walling,"



Ms Banerjee said. Bengal has a tradition of writing party agendas and slogans on the walls. Among other notable Trinamool MPs in the last Lok Sabha, historian Sugata Basu from Jadavpur constituency and Idris Ali have been dropped. "Sugata Basu told me that he is not getting permission to contest from his University," Ms Banerjee said. A Harvard historian, Mr. Basu is the grand nephew of Subhash

Chandra Bose. Idris Ali has been replaced by eminent film actor Nusrat Jahan in Basirhat, where the Muslim vote is a major factor. Four other film actors, two of whom are new, have also made it to the Trinamool's candidate list. Veteran politicians who made it to the list are Subrata Mukherjee, the Panchayat Minister from Bankura, Paresh Chandra Adhikari in Cooch Behar,

Dasarath Tirkey in Alipurduar, Bijoy Chandra Barman from Jalpaguri, Sougata Roy, Manas Bhunia, Mala Roy, Kalyan Banerjee, Dinesh Tribedi, Kakuli Ghosh Dastidar are some of the senior and important leaders to feature in the list. Among others are powerful father-son duo, Dibyendu Adhikari and Sisir Adhikari, from Tamluk and Kanthi constituency in south Bengal.

Met Rakesh Asthana in Dubai, he threatened to make my life hell: Christian Michel tells Delhi court

(Day Today) Christian Michel, a key accused and alleged middleman in AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam case. File The court previously lashed out at the jail authorities for failing to justify the shifting of Mr. Michel to a high-security cell in isolation Christian Michel, the alleged middleman in AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam case, claimed in a Delhi court on Tuesday that former CBI special director Rakesh Asthana met him in Dubai and threatened to make his life hell inside jail if he did not toe the line of the agency in its investigation in the scandal. "Some-time back Rakesh Asthana met me in Dubai and threatened that my life would be made hell and that's what is going on. My next door inmate is (gangster) Chhota Rajan... I don't understand what crime I have committed to be put along with those who have killed several people," he said. VIP chopper case: Delhi court allows ED to question Christian Michel in Tihar jail Mr. Michel, who was present in the courtroom, also told the court that he was put in

the prison with 16-17 Kashmiri separatist leaders. The statements were made by him before Special Judge Arvind Kumar allowed the Enforcement Directorate to interrogate him inside Tihar Jail in Delhi. The court said the agency will quiz him on Wednesday and the day after. A jail official will remain present and Mr. Michel's lawyer is also allowed a limited access during interrogation, for half an hour in the morning and in evening, it said. The court took note of Mr. Michel's submission alleging mental torture inside the jail and directed Tihar jail authorities to produce the CCTV footage and reports by Thursday based on which he was shifted to a high-security ward. On Monday, the court asked the jail authorities to submit their reply on the agency's plea and issued a production warrant for Tuesday for him after his lawyer alleged mental torture inside the jail. Mr. Michel was arrested by ED on December 22 last year after his extradition from Dubai. The court previously lashed out at the jail authorities for failing to justify



the shifting of Mr. Michel to a high-security cell in isolation, saying it will start an inquiry if it does not get a proper response. Mr. Michel is among the three

alleged middlemen being probed in the chopper scam by ED and Central Bureau of Investigation. The others are Guido Haschke and Carlo Gerosa.

No alliance or understanding with Congress in any State: BSP

(Gns. News) As part of the BSP's alliance in UP with the SP and the RLD, the party will contest in 38 out of 80 seats. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Tuesday put to rest the possibility of the Congress becoming a part of the anti-BJP alliance in Uttar Pradesh, which includes the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD). BSP chief Mayawati reiterated that her party would not contest the 2019 Lok Sabha election with any form of "election pact or co-ordination" in any state with the Congress. The BSP supremo's declaration came after she held an India level meeting of her party's state heads and senior leaders to discuss poll strategy for the Lok Sabha. As part of the BSP's alliance in UP with the SP and the RLD, the party will contest in 38 out of 80 seats. The SP has got 37 while the RLD has three, all in West UP. The alliance will not field candidates in Rae Bareilly and Amethi, the Congress strongholds, with the argument that it did not want the top leadership of the grand-old party to be restricted to campaigning in their constituencies. Even after the BSP-SP-RLD alliance formally announced their seat-wise break-up on 78 seats, speculations were rife on the possibilities of the Congress getting a last-minute entry or entering a tactical understanding against the BJP. The BSP supremo's declaration came after she held an India level meeting of her party's state heads and senior leaders to discuss poll strategy for the Lok Sabha. As part of the BSP's alliance in UP with the SP and the RLD, the party will contest in 38 out of 80 seats. The SP has got 37 while the RLD has three, all in West UP. However, Ms. Mayawati publically dismissed any possibilities of an understanding with the Congress. She said the BSP's alliance with the SP was working with "mutual respect" and "good intentions" and that it is considered as the "first and perfect alliance" in UP, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The BSP and SP recently also announced an alliance in UK and MP, in a further snub to the Congress, which indicated that it was prepared to go solo in UP. The SP-BSP alliance "fulfills the needs of social change" and is "capable of defeating" the BJP, which is "necessary in national interest," Ms. Mayawati said.



Editorial

A promise to live by:
on Indian democracy

As the countdown for elections to the 17th Lok Sabha begins, the world's largest democracy has a chance to re-imagine itself. Over the last 16 general elections and numerous elections at lower levels, the resolute trust that the founding fathers of the Republic put in the parliamentary democratic system has been substantially proven wise. India did make some dangerous turns and show signs of fragility, especially during the Emergency in the 1970s, but in the long term it expanded the scope of its democracy through widening representation, devolution of power and redistribution of resources. This is not to overlook the various maladies that have afflicted the country's democracy, such as disinformation campaigns, corruption, disenfranchisement of the weaker sections of the society, the corroding influence of money and muscle power in elections, and divisive majoritarian tendencies. While the representative character of institutions has in general improved, women and religious minorities are alarmingly underrepresented. The exercise of elections itself is a matter of great pride for all Indians. The Election Commission of India has over the decades evolved itself into a fine institution and plays a critical role in the sustenance of democracy. Its efforts to increase voter participation through a series of small steps over the years, including the use of the Electronic Voting Machines, have been praiseworthy. The vulnerabilities of Indian democracy have been pronounced in the last five years, and some of its long-term gains have been undermined. Therefore, this election is more than an exercise to elect a new government. This should also be an occasion to reiterate and reinforce Indian democracy's core values, its representative character and its promise of a constant rejuvenation of the collective spirit. The ECI has announced a series of fresh measures to strengthen the integrity of the electoral process and curb some rapidly growing hazards such as the spread of falsehoods aimed at creating social polarisation for consolidation of votes. Measures such as better monitoring of social media campaigns, while steps in the right direction, are not in themselves adequate to deal with the challenges of these times. The stakes are high for all contenders this year, and Indian politics has reached a level of competitiveness where ground rules of engagement are routinely disregarded. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who rode to power in 2014 on the agenda of material progress through Hindutva, has to defend his reign to seek a second term. His opponents sense an existential danger from him and are trying to mobilise those left behind or who feel disempowered by his governance. While furthering individual interests, all parties must realise that democracy.

Nigerian President Muhammadu

Buhari seeks re-election



(Gns. News) As Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari seeks re-election, his mixed record on the economy and security fronts has made for a close contest. Nigeria, Africa's biggest oil-producer, has barely recovered from a recession following the 2014 global slump in crude prices. The government claims to have curbed inflation, though it is in the double digits. Unemployment, which has climbed to over 20% since Mr. Buhari took office in 2015, could hurt his prospects among a predominantly young population. The adverse sentiment from the current grim global climate for foreign investment may have been compounded by the negative signals emanating from the billion-dollar fines slapped on the region's telecom giant. Last year Lagos declined to join the African Continental Free Trade Area after steering negotiations among the 55 African Union states. The decision dealt a blow to the prospects of transforming Africa into an open and diverse economy, and strengthened the perception that Nigeria was not doing enough to move away from its dependence on oil wealth. In the prevailing atmosphere of rampant institutional corruption dating back decades, Mr. Buhari's image as a morally incorruptible leader held sway with a disillusioned electorate during the 2015 polls. That reputation is still intact. But the former army general now seems politically vulnerable following electoral reverses in the provinces last year. More worrisome for him would be the defection of several members of the ruling All Progressives Congress party to the Opposition People's Democratic Party. The most prominent of them is Mr. Bukhari's main challenger in the presidential race, Atiku Abubakar, a two-term former vice president. The suspension of Nigeria's chief justice on corruption charges last month has raised apprehensions over respect for the popular will in Nigeria. Besides many Western governments, Mr. Abubakar has cautioned the President against electoral interference. On the security front, Mr. Buhari has had moderate success in pushing back Boko Haram, the Islamist terror organisation that gained notoriety some years ago for the shocking disappearance of 200 children. But the group continues to resort to acts of kidnapping and massacre in its stronghold in the northeast. The government claims to have curbed inflation, though it is in the double digits. Unemployment, which has climbed to over 20% since Mr. Buhari took office in 2015, could hurt his prospects among a predominantly young population. The adverse sentiment from the current grim global climate for foreign investment may have been compounded by the negative signals emanating from the billion-dollar fines slapped on the region's telecom giant. Last year Lagos declined to join the African Continental Free Trade Area after steering negotiations among the 55 African Union states. The decision dealt a blow to the prospects of transforming Africa into an open and diverse economy. Meanwhile, even as the violent conflict between farmers and herdsmen festers, concerns have been raised about the lack of equipment for the security forces. A new law passed last year lowering the age to run for public office, could make for a more inclusive democracy. But until the financial entry threshold to the political arena is lowered significantly, such laws will have little impact on the ground. Nevertheless, for a country blighted by bloody dictatorships for many years since the end of colonial rule, the coming polls should inspire confidence in the gradual strengthening of its nascent institutions.

Nehru begins to lose
control of the party

(Gns. News) Decoding Indira Gandhi: Jai Ram Ramesh, Srinath Raghavan, Shekhar Gupta, and Mini Kapoor at The Huddle in Bengaluru on Saturday. Mahinda Rajapaksa, Jai Ram Ramesh, Sania Mirza among the day's speakers on day one Bengaluru - The third edition of The Huddle, two-day annual thought conclave, got underway at the ITC Gardenia hotel in Bengaluru on February 9. Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu will deliver the Chief Guest's address on February 10. Other prominent speakers at the event include Sri Lanka's Leader of the Opposition Mahinda Rajapaksa, Home Minister Rajnath Singh, Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot and Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy. 9.45 am - 9.55 am - Inauguration Mukund Padmanabhan (Editor, The Hindu) R Ravichander (Group President & Regional Director, Yes Bank) 10.00 am - 11.00 am - Inaugural Address - Future of India-Sri Lanka ties - Hon Mahinda Rajapaksa, Leader of Opposition, Sri Lanka Chair: N Ram, Chairman, THG Publishing Pvt Ltd 11.05 am - 11.55 am - The Age of Extremes: No space for the middle ground - Arif Mohammed Khan, Politician Ashwani Kumar, Former Union Minister for Law & Justice Shekhar Gupta, Journalist In conversation with Suhasini Haidar, Diplomatic Editor, 12.10 pm - 1.00 pm - Reforms: Time for Version 2.0? Keshav Muruges, Group Chief Executive Officer, WNS Global Services B V R Mohan Reddy, Founder & Executive Chairman, Cyient Rajat Monga, Senior Group President, Financial Markets, YES Bank Vinita Bali, Independent Director & Former Managing Director of Britannia Industries Ltd In conversation with Raghavan Srinivasa, Editor, 1.05 pm - 1.55 pm - Who is Bengaluru? Identities in a changing, cosmopolitan city - Jayant Kaikini, Poet & Writer Madhu Nataraj, Dancer & Choreographer Vivek Shanbhag, Novelist & Playwright Zac O'Yeah, Author In conversation with Vanamala Viswanatha, Academic & Translator 2.55 pm - 3.45 pm - Down the line: Sania Mirza on tennis, motherhood and life lessons - Sania Mirza, Indian professional tennis player In conversation with Veena Venugopal, Associate Editor, 3.50 pm - 4.40 pm - A Mixed Legacy: The many facets of Indira Gandhi - Jai Ram Ramesh, Economist & Politician Srinath Raghavan, Academic & Author Shekhar Gupta, Journalist In conversation with Mini Kapoor, Ideas Editor, Mini Kapoor: There is an interplay of insecurity and leadership with Indira Gandhi. In assessing Indira Gandhi, should we consider her chronologically to make sense of her? Srinath Raghavan: Politics is about reacting to public events. Personality based assessment can only take us that far. No escaping the chronological order to this. The 1970s is a period of historical transition from Nehruvian period and the India that we now live in. It is difficult for historians to make a considerable judgement on this. Jai Ram Ramesh: From 1966 to 1969, Indira Gandhi comes across as a weak Indira Gandhi. She comes into her own in the latter part of 1969. She is different later, she is in her peak in 1972. A large part of it had to do with the economic and political developments. The seeds were sown in the national mandate in 1972. That is when her problems began in Bihar and Gujarat, which led to the Emergency. Post 1980, she is completely different. There has been a glorious inconsistency in the case of Indira Gandhi unlike Jawaharlal Nehru. Shekhar Gupta: Pre-emergency Indira Gandhi and Post-emergency Indira Gandhi... but there is no talk or study about pre-Sanjay Gandhi and post-Sanjay Gandhi. We need better understanding of how Sanjay Gandhi's death affected her; she had changed a lot. A much more complex Indira Gandhi emerged. Jai Ram Ramesh: Her ideological pillars in the 60s and 70s vanished from the scene. Only then Sanjay Gandhi enters. To explain why she took sharp ideological position in the 70s we need to go back to the 1950.

Politics then was sharp right wing and sharp left wing. It sees the emergence right wing in the congress party. India has its first major forex crisis in 1958... the great Indian consortium, you have the combined might of western power. Nehru begins to lose control of the party. Srinath Raghavan: In 1973, her perception was that cold war was significantly increasing in the third world. But immediately for her, the Yom Kippur War ees oil shocks. Inflation reaches 33%. She became a Socialist. There was a strong move to nationalise wheat trade and remove middlemen. She faced incredible resistance from Congress ministers who worry their power base is going back. She rolls back. It is a watershed movement, and her advisors start getting more role. It explains 1974 signing of contingency plan to borrow from IMF. Shekhar Gupta: Then the Allahabad judgment. She had thought Pokhran would turn public opinion, it did not. The dominant theme of Hindi cinema were roti, kapda aur makaan. She didn't know everything; she had begun to misunderstand the scenario. It was tough times; she had not prepared India for the tough times. Jai Ram Ramesh: What were the charges she was guilty of? Does anybody in this hall know? When Raj Narain went to court, Justice Aihna exonerated her on four counts and she was held guilty. Of two counts — one is mike and rostrum for the PM was put up by the state administration. The other, Yashpal Kapoor, who was the OSD had drawn salary for about 14 days after he resigned. These were the two counts for which she was held guilty. Srinath Raghavan: There are no evidence for any of the theories. She was told by Intelligence Bureau that she'll have a thumping victory. Second theory, things are going bad and it'll be better to take your chances now while you have chances. Third argument was that Indira Gandhi was uncomfortable to go down the Emergency route — to jail her contemporaries. After all, she saw herself as a radical democrat who could bring sections to vote for the Congress. This contradiction could have caught up. Jai Ram Ramesh: She was a democrat. Sharada Prasad, her closest aide, wrote on 20th of July 1974, and describes that it was the RSS factor that was responsible for her action on Emergency. She was a reluctant authoritarian. It was not a well planned strategy. Cabinet was called at 6 am and Emergency was ratified. Srinath Raghavan: When she did call elections, why didn't she rig the elections? There was hardly any opposition to speak of and opposition believed that elections would be a sham. Why didn't she rig it? Mini Kapoor: Did she think she had to lose the elections so that she could come to the democratic fold? Jai Ram Ramesh: Indira Gandhi was convinced that she would lose when she was deserted by Jagjivan Ram and Bahuguna. She may not be aware of the extent of the loss. Shekhar Gupta: She knew how to play with the media... still in the late 1970s. One mystery is why she lifted Emergency and why did she sign the Simla agreement. Jai Ram Ramesh: It is unrealistic to expect Mr. Bhutto to agree to Line of Control as the International Border. Indira Gandhi's bitterest critic was C. Rajagopalachari. He called Simla agreement a pact of good hope. Srinath Raghavan: (On 1971 war and Simla Accord) Americans had made it clear that any move to roll over West Pakistan will be taken seriously. The strategy instead would be to consolidate victory in East rather than do anything on the Western

front. Expectation is different in Simla agreement — convert Kashmir from international to bilateral one. The permanence of LOC was not in consideration. The assumption was eventual settlement would be along the LOC. It is anachronistic to assume that Indians wanted whole Kashmir, they could have got it. Srinath Raghavan (On most salient point of Indira Gandhi legacy): Green Revolution. Hands down. If not for this, Indian troops would be in Afghanistan because of our reliance on the US. On economic policy, big businesses loved Emergency — labour dispute and inflation lowered. Economic data supports this as private investments rose. There is a big economic change during this time. Her attitude towards organised labour is antagonistic. She can't even be called a socialist. Big businesses loved this. In the 80s, Dhirubhai Ambani even hosted a dinner for her when she won the election. Jai Ram Ramesh: One distinctive contribution to politics is to bring environment into the mainstream. She made ecology the central driving theme of her governance. It was not Nehruvian. Media was not sensitive to it then. Ecological balance as a measure of development continues to be her legacy. Shekhar Gupta: We have had a long discussion, but we have not mentioned her contribution to internal security. She was new and very weak, she used Air Force in Mizoram. She did it in 1966. She fought the Nagas. First Naga Peace Accord was in 1975. Election of Assam, we really hated her. She forced the election on Assam and many people died. But there was a strong impulse... if she had not held the elections, or she would not go out of Assam. She took the risk, which went out of control. Within the same 15 months in Punjab. In June of 1984, I don't believe that any method other than what she did would have worked. She had the courage and knew the risk of going there. With those two actions, she contributed to India's internal security in a manner no leader could have. Ramchandra Guha speaks as a member from the audience. There was an authoritarian aspect to Ms. Gandhi's concern to environment. She could kick out the adivasis. What was another great achievement is the love for science and space which she got from Nehru. Her greatest failure was the cultivation of dynasty in Indian politics. There is now no major party without dynasty. One in five is from a political family in parliament. Dynasty spread because Congress party, the party of the independence struggle, did it. Down the line: Sania Mirza on tennis, motherhood and life lessons Speakers: Sania Mirza, Indian professional tennis player. In conversation with Veena Venugopal, Associate Editor, Tennis player Sania Mirza in conversation with Veena Venugopal at The Huddle in Bengaluru on Saturday. Sania Mirza: Tennis was not a career option for me at all. It was a process, against the odds. It kept happening and only when I was 12-13 years of age that I realised this is what I want to do in my life. My parents have been an integral part of my team. However, it's not just them. It was 10 years of struggle, grind and sacrifice that went behind my first victory in the junior Wimbledon. It was destiny. You have to work hard towards it, towards your goal. Sania Mirza: People talk about me being the first to do a lot of things... but it is very very hard. Tennis is not a sport of the sub-continent. It

was a transition where we learnt by trial and error; made decisions based on what we saw. It was a tough phase (to go to the international space). The transition period is the toughest for any athlete. Veena Venugopal: When you started winning the big games, how did you balance the natural game and performance pressure? Sania Mirza: I stopped reading the newspapers. Sorry, I know I am at The Hindu event. You learn to become thick skinned. I grew up in the limelight. I had to learn to deal with pressures. I am really stubborn and I will do what I believe is right. I had three surgeries. After surgeries your body parts change, it's never back to how it was. I would have loved the training that I had when I was 13-14 when I was 8. When you push your body to the limit, you are always playing catch up. You have to gear yourself up and adapt to the changes. I have played against Martina Hingis in singles when she came back after her retirement. We had mutual respect. For me, she has been the best partner and for her, I am the best partner. I felt complete after winning the doubles title. I won the title on my wedding anniversary. As sports people, we are very greedy. When I won Grand Slam, I would want to win more Grand Slams. I was controversies favourite child because of my skirt, T shirt etc. It was a phase when the media was also growing about 15 years ago. I have had a love-hate relationship with media. I was worried for my sanity... first trolling used to happen in media, now in social media. You have to become thick skinned. If you are not thick skinned, you are not going to survive. For me trolls are just hilarious. They are like the biggest losers. They are sitting behind laptops and phones and feel so powerful. I have to feel sorry for them. I find trolls quite amusing. Trolls are cowards, they are powerless. I take it (trolling) as a compliment. Probably, they are doing it because they are not in my position. I will play for my country and not for anybody. Me and Mahesh [Bhupathy], he is one of my best friends and our families too. Me and Rohan [Bopanna] also played and we still do. Hopefully, playing the next Olympics looks realistic again. After the last Olympics, I was not sure about playing again. Everybody should play a sport, not just cricket. Sports is a great equalizer. Tennis is like a reality TV sport. It is raw in emotion. Where else do we swear ourselves and celebrate? Sports teaches us, not just me. Not just as a girl, but as a human being. We see everybody as a human being. When we go to Olympics, we stay under the same roof and together. Sports teaches you to keep trying even after losing. We are a country of a lot of people. We need to have more people making it to the top. I do regret that there isn't any system to promote players to the top level. We are doing better as a country in different sports, but in tennis we are not quite there. It helps to marry a sportsman. We have issues like take the towel off, shoes off etc. But it's great to be married to someone like him. We have other issues... like he has not seen the baby for a long time. Why can't my son be a doctor? Just because he is son of sports people, why should he play cricket or tennis? He will probably be a journalist. He will be whatever he wants to be. He is just three-months old. I just want him to be a good human being. Realistic possibility for comeback is by the end of the year. My conditioning training is coming in the next ten days. Now that I have lost weight, I do tennis

specific training. I am 32 years old, I am not so young as a tennis player. But I would die if I did not try. Tennis is my life, it has given me everything. I still have it in me. My advice to youngsters is not to play to be come a star but to play for the love of the sport. Don't play for the fame. You just have to be good to earn bread and butter for anything. Steffi Graff was someone I looked up to. I am still star struck when I look at her. She is so complete. She is really a good example of people having it all. It was mostly my parents, who were my solid pillars. We are not competing with cricket. No sport can compete with cricket in India. Tennis has grown by leaps and bounds. We are not competing, millions want to watch cricket, but not tennis. Though hockey is our national game, how many watch? Out of four pages of sports, it will be nice if we don't have three and a half pages of cricket. See, we are not competing, millions want to watch cricket, but not tennis. Though hockey is our national game, how many watch? Out of four pages of sports, it will be nice if we don't have three and a half pages of cricket. See, we are not competing, millions want to watch cricket, but not tennis. Though hockey is our national game, how many watch? Who is a Bengaluru? Identities in a changing, cosmopolitan city Speakers: Jayant Kaikini, Poet & Writer. Madhu Nataraj, Dancer & Choreographer. Vivek Shanbhag, Novelist & Playwright. Zac O'Yeah, Author. In conversation with Vanamala Viswanatha, Academic & Translator. (From left) Zac O'Yeah, Madhu Nataraj, Vanamala Viswanatha, Vivek Shanbhag, Jayant Kaikini at The Huddle in Bengaluru, February 9, 2019 | Photo Credit: K. Murali Kumar

Vanamala: A Bangalorean - the definition is complex, versatile. We are not here as urban planners or social scientists. We have our own unique perspective coming from humanities. Beneath the fashionable story of diversity is exclusion. Vanamala: Bangalore is different from Mysore, which was the cultural capital. Historically, Bangalore has been diverse. One wave in the 1960s when PSUs came to the city; the second wave decades later that brought in multi-ness. Borders within the city have become porous. The city has grown and growing. What is the nature of the change? Shanbhag: The change that I have seen is not just in terms of infrastructure... trees cut, lakes have gone. One of the swabhava of Kannadigas and Bangaloreans is linguistic tolerance. You can immediately experience it the moment you come to Bangalore from any part of India. None of us in the panel have Kannada as the mother tongue, but we consider ourselves Kannadigas. One of the finest Kannada poets, Bendre, spoke Marathi at home. It is this, which I feel is changing. People who moved from other parts made Kannada their own. Shanbhag: Bangalore's problems, we think, is due to IT. When they moved in from other parts of the country, rapid changes happened. Not enough time nor any support given to these people to form a connect with Kannada. Even in English medium schools, the children spoke in Kannada. It is not so today. Vanamala (in Kannada to Madhu Nataraj): You have lived in Bangalore for 30 years. What is your opinion? Madhu: Many times when people ask me how it is to be a Bangalorean, I feel very much like Alice in Wonderland. I have seen a Bangalore that was idyllic. We would book a movie ticket 2 weeks in advance, wait 2 months for a movie to release. You could go to a 500 year old temple in the morning and go to a kutcheri in the evening. Go to a performance by Sting. When I came back to Bangalore

from NY, the audience accepted me. The purists ostracized me. Bangalore allowed me a space to be creative. Artists may drop other cities, but not Bangalore. The audiences here are more welcoming and open-minded. Zac O'Yeah (take on change in Bangalore): I've been here 27 years and been walking a lot on the streets here. Bangalore to me has always had the same characteristics of a cosmopolitan city, just as it were when it was set up 200 years by the Brits as a cantonment. Things are changing rapidly, from day to day. Landmarks to navigate are going. From "Take a left at the banyan tree", it's become, "Take a left where the banyan tree used to be." As a writer, it is difficult to write about a city that changes must faster than it takes to write a book! O'Yeah: In three years that it takes for a novel, the whole city is torn down and rebuilt! Peculiar thing about Bangalore. In other cities the old part of the city remains the same. But in Bangalore, they'd even tear down the Eiffel to rebuild if they could. Anybody you meet, can speak 4-5 languages. I'm fascinated by the multi-lingual people in the city. Won't find it any other city. Jayant Kaikini: (on differences between Mumbai and Bangalore): In Kannada, we convert the tongue into a mother. The language is a mother. Mumbai was a liberating place for me. Everyone from India came for work. It is clean, minimalist living that has by default become spiritualistic. It is a cosmopolitan city with a collective mind. Each micro (area) reflects the macro. Bengaluru is in the process. It is evolving towards this. This can be seen in night bus journeys: family talks in English while boarding in Bangalore. Stop for dinner, it is groggy English-Kannada. And by the time it reaches the villages, it is Kannada. There is a cultural jet lag. The dominant theme of Hindi cinema were roti, kapda aur makaan. She didn't know everything; she had begun to misunderstand the scenario. It was tough times; she had not prepared India for the tough times. Jai Ram Ramesh: What were the charges she was guilty of? Does anybody in this hall know? When Raj Narain went to court, Justice Aihna exonerated her on four counts and she was held guilty. Of two counts — one is mike and rostrum for the PM was put up by the state administration. The other, Yashpal Kapoor, who was the OSD had drawn salary for about 14 days after he resigned. These were the two counts for which she was held guilty. Srinath Raghavan: There are no evidence for any of the theories. She was told by Intelligence Bureau that she'll have a thumping victory. The same is in the reverse journey. A real cosmopolitan urban place allows anonymity and freedom. Strangers talk to strangers. Bangalore is heading to this. Not yet there - it is still a confused place. There is little pride in Kannada among the aspirational class; Kannada papers hidden and preferred for English. Idli and Kannada food being sidelined for North Indian food. All metaphors for the lowering of pride in Karnataka. In Mumbai, Marathi went through this. Eventually, evolved into a larger thought of the city. Kannada will go through that too. Vanamala: Migrants into Bangalore, not just from outside, but even within Karnataka, there is an influx. There is a flip side to Bangalore's welcoming culture and accommodating spirit. But what is happening to Kannada and Kannada speaking people or those who have recognised Kannada as a dominant language. Is it justified to say that local people are feeling undermined by the growth of Bangalore? Vivek: It is true that there is a growing feeling of this kind. For a long time, the best Kannada teaching centre was the one run by Tamil Sangham. Zac: There has to be a differentiation between being a Kannadiga and being a Bangalorean. I've been breathing the same polluted air, drinking the same poisonous water, eating the same food colourant in gobi manchurian. I have Bengaluru in my lungs and bloodstream. But not being Kannadiga doesn't make me any less Bangalorean. It is about the love for the city, and I view the city as my ailing mother now.

US pulling last diplomats from Venezuela amid power crisis

(NewsTrack) U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during a news conference. The announcement came from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in a tweet shortly before midnight comes as Venezuela struggles to restore electricity following four days of blackouts around the country. The U.S. said late Monday that it is pulling its last remaining diplomats from Venezuela, saying their continued presence at the country's embassy in Caracas had become a "constraint" on U.S. policy as the Trump administration aggressively looks to oust socialist President Nicolas Maduro. The announcement came from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in a tweet shortly before midnight comes as Venezuela struggles to restore electricity following four days of blackouts around the country. The U.S. has led an international effort to replace Mr. Maduro with opposition leader Juan Guaido, who vows to hold a new presidential election. Mr. Guaido is backed by some 50 countries, while Mr. Maduro maintains support from countries such as China, Russia and Cuba. Mr. Maduro ordered all U.S. diplomats to leave Venezuela in late January because of its support for Mr. Guaido, but he later retreated and allowed them to stay. The U.S. still withdrew the bulk of embassy personnel, leaving a skeletal staff led by career foreign service officer James Story. Mr. Pompeo said the remaining diplomats would be out of Venezuela by the end of the week but gave no indication of future policy steps despite past warnings that "all options" including the use of military force are on the table for removing Mr. Maduro. The move came after another day of chaos as power outages that began on Thursday evening continued to cause problems for Venezuelans, leaving them with little power, water and communications. People converged on a polluted river to fill water bottles in Caracas, and scattered protests erupted in several cities. A 3-year-old girl with a brain tumor languished in



a Caracas hospital, awaiting treatment after doctors started surgery but then suspended the operation when nationwide power outages first hit on Thursday, said the girl's fearful mother, who only gave her first name, Yalimar. "The doctors told me that there are no miracles," said Ms. Yalimar, who hopes her daughter can be transferred on Tuesday to one of the few hospitals in Venezuela that would be able to finish the complex procedure. The girl's story highlighted an unfolding horror in Venezuela, where years of hardship got abruptly worse after the power grid collapsed. On Monday, schools and businesses were closed, long lines of cars waited at the few gasoline stations with electricity and hospitals cared for many patients without power. Generators have alleviated conditions for some of the critically ill. President Nicolas

Maduro said on national television Monday night that progress had been made in restoring power in Venezuela. He also said two people who were allegedly trying to sabotage power facilities were captured and were providing information to authorities, though he gave no details. Mr. Guaido, who heads the opposition-controlled congress, and the United States say Mr. Maduro's claims that the U.S. sabotaged the power grid with a "cyberattack" are an attempt to divert attention from the government's own failings. There have been acts of kindness during Venezuela's crisis. People whose food would rot in refrigerators without power donated it to a restaurant, which cooked it for distribution to charities and hospitals. The blackouts also have hit the oil industry. The country hasn't shipped \$358 million in oil since the power

failures started, and "the whole system is grinding to a halt," said Russ Dallen, a Miami-based partner at the brokerage firm Caracas Capital Markets. Two large tankers are sitting empty at the Jose offshore oil-loading dock, and at least 19 other ships are waiting their turns there, Mr. Dallen said. Engineers have restored power in some parts of Venezuela, but it often goes out again. There have been a few protests in Caracas and reports of similar anti-government anger elsewhere. Mr. Guaido tweeted about reports of looting in some cities, but details were difficult to confirm. Security forces dispersed "criminals" trying to take advantage of the power cuts, Mayor Willy Casanova told local media. However, numerous videos posted on social media that purported to be from Maracaibo showed crowds

roaming the streets and people running from looted, damaged buildings with no police in sight. In Caracas, some people reported more sightings of "colectivos," a term for armed groups allegedly operating on behalf of the state to intimidate opponents. The mood in Caracas was desperate. Marian Morales, a nurse working for a Catholic youth group, and several colleagues handed out diapers and food from a car parked near a hospital. Police and men in civilian clothing ordered them to leave, saying they didn't have permission. Morales said the needy are cautious about approaching to collect the handouts because of the presence of security forces. Early Monday, an explosion rocked a power station in the Baruta area of Caracas. Residents gathered to look at the charred, smoldering equipment. Mr. Guaido said three of

four electricity transformers servicing the area were knocked out. He has blamed the blackouts on government corruption and mismanagement. Winston Cabas, the head of Venezuela's electrical engineers union, which opposes the government, disputed government allegations that the country's main hydroelectric dam was sabotaged last week. The U.S. still withdrew the bulk of embassy personnel, leaving a skeletal staff led by career foreign service officer James Story. Mr. Pompeo said the remaining diplomats would be out of Venezuela by the end of the week but gave no indication of future policy steps despite past warnings that "all options" including the use of military force are on the table for removing Mr. Maduro. The move came after another day of chaos as power outages that began on Thursday evening continued to cause problems for Venezuelans, leaving them with little power, water and communications. People converged on a polluted river to fill water bottles in Caracas, and scattered protests erupted in several cities. A 3-year-old girl with a brain tumor languished in

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Venezuela, but it often goes out again. He blamed a lack of maintenance as well as the departure of skilled workers from the troubled country over the years. "The system is vulnerable, fragile and unstable," he said. Spain's airline pilots union asked for Spanish airline Air Europa to stop flying to Venezuela after one of its crews was attacked at gunpoint in Caracas. The Sepia union said two pilots and eight more crew members of a flight from Madrid were assaulted on Saturday while going from the airport to their hotel in the Venezuelan capital. None of the crew members was injured. Air Europa responded by ordering the crews of flights to Venezuela to not spend the night in the country, according to the union. The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on a Moscow-based bank jointly owned by Russian and Venezuelan state-owned companies, alleging it tried to circumvent U.S. sanctions on the South American country. The U.S. said it is targeting Evrofinance Mosnarbank for supporting Petroleos de Venezuela SA, the state oil company previously targeted by sanctions in January. Evrofinance said it was carrying out its activities normally despite the announcement and pledged to "meet its obligations to the clients and partners in full." The U.S. and the other governments that recognize Mr. Guaido as Venezuela's interim president say Maduro wasn't legitimately re-elected last year because opposition candidates weren't permitted to run. Mr. Maduro says he is the target of a U.S. coup plot.

Regional disparities

indicative of larger problem

(NewsTrack) While services sector grows by leaps and bounds, agriculture is floundering, shows Economic Survey 2018-19. The regional disparity within the State has been rising over the years, particularly as the services sector, concentrated in Bengaluru, grows by leaps and bounds while agriculture, the backbone of most districts, stagnates, according to the Economic Survey 2018-19. When compared to 2014-15, Bengaluru Urban saw its average income increase by nearly ₹83,000, but in Yadgir, incomes went up only by ₹12,000. Among the reasons for the impressive growth rates of Bengaluru region is the contribution of the services sector. Bengaluru Urban's tertiary sector income is 10 times more than its closest competitor Dakshina Kannada and 50 times that of Yadgir. While the survey cautions against comparing district-level incomes over time owing to the limitations of their methodologies, the report notes: "District income is a useful policy

indicator to monitor the nature and degree of inter-district variations as well as, disparities in the process of economic growth at the State-level." Narasimha Pani, Deputy Director from Department of Planning, Programme Monitoring and Statistics and who oversaw the chapter on State income in the survey, said that income comes are tabulated on a combination of income, production and expenditure. "Data is available for the primary sector (agriculture). But the secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (services) sector incomes are allocated to districts based on certain economic indicators. This is the best we can do with the allocated data," he says. Regional data needs to be more robust as it give impetus to areas that specifically need attention and expenditure, say economists. Vinod B. Annigeri, Director, Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Development Research (CMDR) at Dharwad and who has researched regional imbalances in the State, says the State's expenditure has been skewed to-

wards Bengaluru and South Karnataka. "There are Special Development Plans (SDPs) to address the inequalities of North Karnataka. But the governance infrastructure is not there to implement it. We had suggested that there has to be a system that imposes penalties if the SDPs are not spent within the time limit... There is a need for political will if the State has to address historic, cultural and political reasons for North Karnataka lagging behind," he says. With agriculture fluctuating based on rains and market prices, it becomes imperative to break Bengaluru's monopoly on the services sector to ensure equitable growth, he says. "For this, you need to set a skill-base and infrastructure to attract private investment. It is a long-term goal, but there has yet to be an earnest start," says Dr. Annigeri. K. Gayithri, Professor at Institute for Social and Economic Change in Bengaluru, showed in her recent research work that Karnataka's budgets tend to put more money

U.K., EU announce change to Brexit deal ahead of key vote



(Day Today) U.K., EU announce change to Brexit deal ahead of key vote. Prime Minister Theresa May and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker attend a news conference in Strasbourg, France on March 11, 2019. Prime Minister Theresa May said new documents to be added to the deal provided "legally binding changes" to the part relating to the Irish border. The legal 585-page withdrawal agreement itself though was left intact. "In politics, sometimes you get a second chance. It is what you do with this second chance that counts. Because there will be no third chance," Mr. Juncker warned the legislators who will vote late on March 12. "Let's be crystal clear about the choice — it is this deal or Brexit might not happen at all," he said. Ms. May said the changes should overcome lawmakers' qualms about a mechanism in the deal designed to keep an open border between Britain's Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland. The mechanism, known as the backstop, is a safeguard that would keep the U.K. in a customs union with the EU until a permanent new trading relationship is in place. Brexit supporters in Britain fear the backstop could be used to bind the country to EU regulations indefinitely. Ms. May said the new wording "will guarantee that the EU cannot act with the intent of applying the backstop

succeeded. Ms. May said new documents to be added to the deal provided "legally binding changes" to the part relating to the Irish border. The legal 585-page withdrawal agreement itself though was left intact. "In politics, sometimes you get a second chance. It is what you do with this second chance that counts. Because there will be no third chance," Mr. Juncker warned the legislators who will vote late on March 12. "Let's be crystal clear about the choice — it is this deal or Brexit might not happen at all," he said. Ms. May said the changes should overcome lawmakers' qualms about a mechanism in the deal designed to keep an open border between Britain's Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland. The mechanism, known as the backstop, is a safeguard that would keep the U.K. in a customs union with the EU until a permanent new trading relationship is in place. Brexit supporters in Britain fear the backstop could be used to bind the country to EU regulations indefinitely. Ms. May said the new wording "will guarantee that the EU cannot act with the intent of applying the backstop

indefinitely." "Now is the time to come together to back this improved Brexit deal and deliver on the instruction of the British people," she said. But the changes appear to fall well short of Brexiters' demands for a unilateral British exit mechanism from the backstop. Pro-Brexit U.K. lawmakers said they would read the fine print and wait for the judgment of Britain's Attorney General before deciding how to vote on March 12. Announcing the breakthrough in Britain's House of Commons, Cabinet Office Minister David Lidington said lawmakers faced "a fundamental choice... to vote for the improved deal or to plunge this country into a political crisis." And Mr. Juncker warned Britain "there will be no new negotiations" if lawmakers rejected the deal again. Britain is due to pull out of the EU in less than three weeks, on March 29, but the government has not been able to win parliamentary approval for its agreement with the bloc on withdrawal terms and future relations. The impasse has raised fears of a chaotic "no-deal" Brexit that could mean major disruption for businesses

India discusses Venezuelan oil purchases with U.S.



(NewsTrack) Foreign Secretary Vijay Keshav Gokhale calls on U.S. Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo in Washington on March 11, 2019. Recently, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton had warned India and other countries against purchasing oil from Venezuela. Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale on Monday discussed the situation in Venezuela and Venezuelan oil purchases with U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo during their meeting on Monday. Mr. Pompeo told the press at a briefing. Asked if there was a discussion on India's oil purchases Mr. Pompeo said, "Yeah, so we're asking the same thing of India as we are of every country: Do not be the economic lifeline for the Maduro regime." "So we talked about — I certainly won't characterize the conversations; they're private conversations. But I'm very confident — in the same way that India has been incredibly supportive of our efforts on Iran, I'm confident that they too understand the real threat to the Venezuelan people. And so we had a good conversation around that." India and seven other countries were given a six month exemption from U.S. sanctions on trade with Iran and allowed to purchase a limited quantity of Iranian oil without facing sanctions. Mr. Gokhale's discussions in Washington are expected to cover the renewal of the sanction exemption. Regarding Venezuela, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton had warned India and other countries last month against purchasing oil from Venezuela on Twitter in response to Venezuelan Oil Minister Manuel Quevedo making a trip to India to pitch for more oil sales. "Mr. Maduro's theft of Venezuelan resources will not be forgotten". But I'm very confident — in the same way that India has been incredibly supportive of our efforts on Iran, I'm confident that they too understand the real threat to the Venezuelan people. And so we had a good conversation around that." India and seven other countries were given a six month exemption from U.S. sanctions on trade with Iran and allowed to purchase a limited quantity of Iranian oil without facing sanctions. Mr. Gokhale's discussions in Washington are expected to cover the renewal of the sanction exemption. Regarding Venezuela, U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton had tweeted above a link to a report on Mr. Quevedo's visit to India. In the process of tightening the screws on the Nicolas Maduro regime in Venezuela and paving the way for Juan Guaido — whom the U.S. recognizes as the legitimate Interim President of Venezuela, the U.S. has imposed sanctions on the country, including on the sale of oil by the Maduro regime, which it does not recognise.

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Priyanka Vadra's first public speech as Congress General Secretary

(News Track) AICC General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra participates in a prayer meeting at Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. Congress begins its poll campaign from Modi's home State, Shiv Sena warns reminds its ally BJP of 2014 poll promises, and more. Today's election-related developments at a glance. Congress and ZPM forge alliance in Mizoram. The opposition Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) in Mizoram and the Congress have forged an alliance to contest the Lok Sabha election and an Assembly bypoll, Congress sources said on Tuesday. According to the understanding, which will be announced later, the Congress will field candidate in the lone Lok Sabha seat in the State and the ZPM will contest the Aizawl West-Assembly seat. Both the elections would be held together on April 11. Trinamool announces candidate list. With 41% women candidates, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee declared the Trinamool Congress' candidate list for 2019 Lok Sabha election. Ms. Banerjee named candidates in all 42 seats, replacing about 50% of the incumbents. Altogether, 19 out of 42 candidates have been replaced in the list announced by Ms. Banerjee on Tuesday afternoon. In the 2014 election, Ms. Banerjee nominated 35% women candidates. "Everyone talking about 33% reservation for women, we nominated 41% women candidates," she said. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's first public speech as Congress General Secretary. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's maiden address to the party workers happened at a rally in Adalaj, Gandhinagar. Her brief speech, the first one as the General Secretary, targeted the BJP and its policies. "Where are 2 crore jobs that were promised? Where is Rs 15 lakh that was promised to be deposited in everyone's bank account?" she asked amid cheers from the party workers. Likening the upcoming elections to "second freedom movement," Ms. Vadra said, "It is sad to see what's happening in the country. Institutions are being demolished; hatred is being spread." She urged people to use their votes as a weapon and not to be to frivolous issues. BJD to contest Lok Sabha, Assembly elections on its own. Biju Janata Dal president and Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has ruled out a pre-poll alliance. "We will fight the elections on our own," he told reporters in Bhubaneswar when asked if there was any likelihood of the BJD entering into a tie-up with other political parties for the parliamentary and assembly elections in the State. In the 2014 elections, the BJD had grabbed a lion's share of 20 Lok Sabha and 117 assembly seats as the party formed government for the fourth successive term in the state. The state is all set to witness staggered polling this time with balloting slated to be held in four phases on April 11, 18, 23 and 29 for the 21 Lok Sabha and 147 assembly seats. Differences in ruling Meghalaya alliance over Lok Sabha candidates. Sharp differences emerged in the ruling alliance in Meghalaya with the regional parties deciding to support UDP and NPP candidates in Shillong and Tura respectively, but the BJP deciding to fight elections on its own. "We will go ahead and field our candidates for the two seats. As a national party, our focus is to field candidates. Our interests are for the nation," BJP state president Shibun Lyngdoh said. UDP general secretary Jemino Mawthong is likely to contest from Shillong while former Union minister Agatha Sangma might fight elections from Tura. Six parties form Punjab Democratic Alliance. The Punjab Democratic Alliance (PDA), which comprises six parties including the BSP and the CPI, have announced candidates for 12 of the state's 13 Lok Sabha seats. Besides the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI), the PDA includes the Punjab Ekta Party (PEP), the Lok Insaaf Party (LIP), the newly-launched Punjab Manch, and the Revolutionary Marxist Party of India (RMPI). The Punjab Manch is led by Patiala MP Dharam Vira Gandhi, who is under suspension from the Aam Aadmi Party since May 2015. Under the consensus reached by the alliance, the BSP, the PEP, and the LIP will contest in three seats each. The Punjab Manch will contest the Patiala seat, the CPI will contest Ferozpur and the RMPI will contest the Gurdaspur seat. Poll-



ing in Punjab will be held on a single day on May 19. Prakash Ambedkar's front to contest in all seats in Maharashtra Dalit leader Prakash Ambedkar said his political front will contest all the 48 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra, a development which comes as a jolt to efforts of the Congress and NCP to forge a 'grand alliance' against the BJP. "Several proposals were made for forging an alliance with the Congress but there hit a roadblock. We cannot negotiate further with the Congress leadership," Mr. Ambedkar told reporters. Maharashtra Congress leader's son joins BJP. Sujoy Vikhe-Patil, son of senior Congress leader Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, joined BJP. Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil is also the Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Assembly. Mr. Sujoy joined the BJP in presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and state BJP chief Raosaheb Danve at an event held in south Mumbai. The development follows the Sharad Pawar-led NCP spurning a request by Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil to leave aside the Ahmednagar Lok Sabha seat for his son. BJP to finalise candidates in Telangana on March 15. The BJP would finalise its candidates for Lok Sabha elections in Telangana on March 15, official spokesperson

of party's State unit Krishna Saagar Rao told PTI. The Lok Sabha elections would be held in single phase in Telangana on April 11. 102-year-old Shyam Saran Negi has never missed an election since 1951. This election, vote for full statehood to Delhi: Arvind Kejriwal. The Aam Aadmi Party's agenda for this Lok Sabha election is to fight for the statehood of Delhi. A long-pending demand of the party, it was reiterated by the party's convenor Arvind Kejriwal at a press meet in New Delhi. Be ready to face questions over 2014 poll promises, Shiv Sena tells BJP. The BJP secured a big win in 2014, riding on the promises of peace in the Kashmir Valley and construction of Ram temple. "However, both the issues have remained unresolved in 2019 as well," Tuesday's editorial in Shiv Sena's mouthpiece Saamna reads. The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena, which is a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance, has said the BJP should now be prepared to face questions from people over its 2014 poll promises. "History says people cannot be fooled for long. Even people have questions, the answers to which they seek through ballot boxes," the editorial reads. Congress Working Committee meets in Gujarat. Former Congress presi-

CB-CID to probe Pollachi sex scandal; 4 accused detained under Goondas Act



(Day Today) Coimbatore Rural Superintendent of Police R. Pandiarajan The Pollachi sexual assault and blackmail case has been transferred to the Crime Branch-Criminal Investigation Department. Tamil Nadu Director-General of Police T.K. Rajendran passed the orders on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Coimbatore district collector K. Rajamani ordered detaining of the four accused under the Goondas Act for their alleged involvement in the case. He passed the orders based on a recommendation by Coimbatore Rural Superintendent R. Pandiarajan. The accused were booked under Sections 354 (A) [sexual harassment], 354 (B) [assault or use of criminal force] of the IPC read with the mobile phones seized from the accused had videos of at least 40 women who the accused had allegedly blackmailed for money and sexual favours. Tamil Nadu Director-General of Police T.K. Rajendran passed the orders on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Coimbatore district collector K. Rajamani ordered detaining of the four accused under the Goondas Act for their

alleged involvement in the case. He passed the orders based on a recommendation by Coimbatore Rural Superintendent R. Pandiarajan. The accused were booked under Sections 354 (A) [sexual harassment], 354 (B) [assault or use of criminal force] of the IPC read with 66 (E) of IT Act and Section 4 of Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act. The release of video clipping of the sexual assault created outrage across the State with political leaders demanding stringent action against the perpetrators. A fallout of the political outrage, the AIADMK had expelled 'Bar' Nagaraj, a Pollachi functionary. The party merely charged him with bringing disrepute to the organisation. Nagaraj was earlier arrested on charges of assaulting the brother of the complainant in the case. He is now out on bail.

'If it is not Modi, it will be instability, corruption, nepotism', says Ram Madhav

(Day Today) BJP general secretary says there is not even a name in the Opposition which can be projected as a prime ministerial candidate. BJP general secretary Ram Madhav says Prime Minister Narendra Modi enjoys overwhelming support, and there is no alternative before the country and the Opposition. The dates for the Lok Sabha election was announced on Sunday. What is the BJP's outlook on the polls and the party's prospects. There is a very strong sentiment in favour of Prime Minister Modi, across the country and various cross sections of society too. The main focus of our campaign will therefore be the five years of government, and Modiji as leader. "If not Modi, who?" is going to be the central question, and we will do as well as we did last time or even better. Isn't the BJP's strong focus on Prime Minister Modi, a kind of 'Modi vs All' battle, ignoring the fact that you have 30 allies in the NDA, and it's probably NDA vs others? Actually the contest is not 'Modi vs all' at all; it is actually 'Modi vs who?' As far as we are concerned, the NDA is stronger than it used to be and we have more allies than we had in the past. A strong NDA with Modiji as a leader ranged against who? We don't know. There is no one single formation that is against us. In Delhi, we don't know whether Congress and AAP will go together; one day they say they will, another day they say they won't. In Uttar Pradesh, there is one alliance but there is also another alliance because the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party alliance did not include the Congress. So there is no one single alliance or a leader of that alliance to chal-



enge Modiji. So we say, if not Modi, then who? This leadership question was also there in 2004, when the BJP focussed strongly on then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee against a difficult opposition, but the UPA won regardless. Do you think that this alone can affect the outcome of an election? Much has changed in the country between 2004 and 2014. The Congress was in a much better position, and if you recall, the Congress alliance tried to make Sonia Gandhi the Prime Minister, which for various reasons did not happen and Dr. Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister. The leadership of the Congress was not disputed by others. Today, even if some party proposes someone in the Congress as Prime Minister, some other parties will oppose it. Today there is not even a name before the

Opposition who can be projected as Prime Minister. Having said that, we cannot take any challenge lightly. But the central point remains, that if it is not Modi, it will be instability; if it is not Modi, it will be a rag-tag alliance; if it not Modi, it's going to be a corruption and nepotism-led government. Analysts say the BJP will gain if it focusses on national issues, and national security issues while the Opposition will gain by keeping the contest local and focussed on bread and butter issues. Do you agree? We are ready for any debate on development with the Opposition. In fact, it is the Opposition which is running away from those issues, raising atrocious questions on what happened in Balakot. We are going to the people with Modiji as our leader and a five-year report card we are proud

of. The Election Commission (EC) has said there will no simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha polls in Jammu and Kashmir. All political parties had, however, said they favoured simultaneous polls. What do you say now that the EC has decided otherwise? Our party [members] also — when they met EC officials — said they preferred simultaneous polls. If you think about elections in the State, what immediately dominates the thought is the situation in the Valley, but there are large parts of the State, like Jammu, which are peaceful. But in the larger picture they get affected and cannot enjoy their rights fully. Our party was in favour of simultaneous polls, but the Election Commission looked at various aspects and took a decision. We accept that decision and will prepare for Parliamentary polls.

Nissan, Renault retool alliance board structure, Congress holds CWC meet in Gujarat, and other news in pictures

(News Track) Renault Chairman Jean-Dominique Senard (left) and Nissan CEO Hiroto Saikawa speak at the start of a joint press conference following a board meeting at the Nissan headquarters in Yokohama, near Tokyo on March 12, 2019. Nissan, Renault and Mitsubishi form new board. The chief executives of Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi are setting up a new board to oversee the French-Japanese auto alliance. Renault Chairman Jean-Dominique Senard, Renault Chief Executive Thierry Bollere, Nissan Chief Executive Hiroto Saikawa and Mitsubishi Motors Corp. Chief Executive Osamu Masuko appeared together Tuesday at Nissan Motor Co.'s Yokohama headquarters to announce what they called "a new start" for the alliance. Congress holds CWC in Gujarat. Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and former PM Manmohan Singh attend a prayer meeting at Gandhi Ashram, Sabarmati in Ahmedabad on Tuesday March 12, 2019. Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and former PM Manmohan Singh attend a prayer meeting at Gandhi Ashram, Sabarmati in Ahmedabad on Tuesday March 12, 2019. The Congress Working Committee, on Tuesday, held a meeting at the Sardar Vallabhbhai National memorial in Ahmedabad. The new general secretaries, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Jyotiraditya Scindia are in attendance along with former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Tokyo 2020 Olympics stamps go on sale. Japan Post Co. Ltd. chief stamp designer Akira Tamaki, shows off the sheets of commemorative stamps for Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, featuring the Olympic and Paralympic mascots Miraitowa and Someity as well as an image of the new Olympic Stadium, in Tokyo, Japan March 5, 2019. Japan Post Co. Ltd. chief stamp designer Akira Tamaki, shows off the sheets of commemorative stamps for Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, featuring the Olympic and Paralympic mascots Miraitowa and Someity as well as an image of the new Olympic Stadium, in Tokyo, Japan March 5, 2019. Stamps celebrating next year's Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games went on sale on Tuesday, 500 days before the start of the summer showpiece. The stamps, released by Japan Post Co., feature the Olympic and Paralympic mascots Miraitowa and Someity as well as an image of the new Olympic Stadium, which is still under construction. One million sheets of 10 stamps are on sale, priced at 920 yen (\$8.26), which



includes a donation of 100 yen towards preparations for the Games. Dozens queued outside the main post office near Tokyo station to get their hands on the special stamps.—Reuters. U.S. experts arrive at Addis Ababa. Parts of the landing gear lay in a pile after being gathered by workers during the continuing recovery efforts at the crash site of Ethiopian Airlines flight ET302 on March 11, 2019 in Bishoftu, Ethiopia. A team of U.S. aviation experts has arrived at the site where an Ethiopian Airlines jetliner crashed, killing 157 people on a flight to Kenya. A Federal Aviation Administration statement said the American agency's people were at the crash site outside Ethiopia's capital on Monday with representatives of the National Transportation Safety Board. Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and former PM Manmohan Singh attend a prayer meeting at Gandhi Ashram, Sabarmati in Ahmedabad on Tuesday March 12, 2019. Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and former PM Manmohan Singh attend a prayer meeting at Gandhi Ashram, Sabarmati in Ahmedabad on Tuesday March 12, 2019. The Congress Working Committee, on Tuesday, held a meeting at the Sardar Vallabhbhai National memorial in Ahmedabad. The new general secretaries, Priyanka

Gandhi Vadra and Jyotiraditya Scindia are in attendance along with former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Congress president Rahul Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Tokyo 2020 Olympics stamps go on sale. Japan Post Co. Ltd. chief stamp designer Akira Tamaki, shows off the sheets of commemorative stamps for Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, featuring the Olympic and Paralympic mascots Miraitowa and Someity as well as an image of the new Olympic Stadium, in Tokyo, Japan March 5, 2019. Stamps celebrating next year's Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games went on sale on Tuesday, 500 days before the start of the summer showpiece. The stamps, released by Japan Post Co., feature the Olympic and Paralympic mascots Miraitowa and Someity as well as an image of the new Olympic Stadium, which is still under construction. One million sheets of 10 stamps are on sale, priced at 920 yen (\$8.26), which includes a donation of 100 yen towards preparations for the Games. Dozens queued outside the main post office near Tokyo station to get their hands on the special stamps.—Reuters. U.S. experts arrive at Addis Ababa. Parts of the landing gear lay in a pile after being gathered by work-

ers during the continuing recovery efforts at the crash site of Ethiopian Airlines flight ET302 on March 11, 2019 in Bishoftu, Ethiopia. Parts of the landing gear lay in a pile after being gathered by workers during the continuing recovery efforts at the crash site of Ethiopian Airlines flight ET302 on March 11, 2019 in Bishoftu, Ethiopia. They are joining an Ethiopian-led investigation that includes authorities from neighboring Kenya and elsewhere. The new Boeing 737 Max 8 jetliner went down six minutes after takeoff from the airport in Addis Ababa in clear weather on Sunday. The FAA says it plans to soon issue an update to operators of that Boeing model. Boeing will be part of the investigation.—AP. Venus advances in straight sets at Indian Wells. Venus Williams returns a shot to Christina McHale at the BNP Paribas Open tennis tournament Monday, March 11, 2019 in Indian Wells, California. Venus Williams is returning back her own clock at the BNP Paribas Open, moving into the fourth round with a 6-2, 7-5 victory over qualifier Christina McHale. Williams is seeking her 50th career WTA Tour title in the desert, where she has never won the event. And at 38, she's showing vintage form. "I don't really play that often, so when I do, I need to play well," she said. "It's extra motivation for me to play just a little bit better out there." Younger sister Serena, a two-time champion at Indian Wells, retired from her match on Sunday because of a viral illness.—AP