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NEARBY
3 expenditure observers for Chennai Central seat

CHENNAI
 While only two expenditure observers will be deployed in 38 Lok Sabha constituencies in Tamil Nadu, three observers have been appointed for Chennai Central, where Dayanidhi Maran of the DMK and entrepreneur Sam Paul of the PMK are in the fray. Chief Electoral Officer Satyabrata Sahoo said the EC considered the constituency's "sensitivity" and "history."

ELECTION 2019 ▶ PAGE 4

Sulur MLA R. Kanakaraj dies of cardiac arrest

COIMBATORE
 'Sulur' R. Kanakaraj, the AIADMK MLA from Sulur, died of cardiac arrest on Thursday. With the death of the first-time MLA, the number of vacancies in the Assembly has increased to 22. Bye-election will be held in 18 constituencies on April 18. The ruling AIADMK's strength in the 212-member House stands at 113, excluding the Speaker.

TAMIL NADU ▶ PAGE 5

FRIDAY REVIEW ▶ 12 PAGES (IN TABLOID)

METROPLUS ▶ 4 PAGES (CIRCULATED IN TIRUPPUR & COIMBATORE DISTRICTS)

Modi gets Varanasi again, Shah replaces Advani in Gandhinagar

Most sitting MPs retained in BJP's first list of 184 candidates

NISTULA HEBBAR
 NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday released its first list of 184 candidates for 20 States for the Lok Sabha election, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi slated to fight from his constituency of Varanasi, and party president Amit Shah throwing his hat in the ring from Gandhinagar, re-presented six times by former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani.











The party retained most MPs, and the biggest drop is in the electorally crucial State of Uttar Pradesh, where six candidates have been replaced in a list of 21.

Union Minister for Health J.P. Nadda released the list in the evening, but refused to comment on Mr. Advani being replaced by Mr. Shah.

Sources in the party, however, said the decision on whether to contest or not was left to Mr. Advani, as was the case with former Union Minister Murli Manohar Joshi. This was discussed at the party's parliamentary board two weeks ago.

As for Mr. Shah, senior leaders said the party needed a heavyweight replacement for Mr. Advani, and with Mr. Modi not contesting from Gujarat, Mr. Shah was the natural choice. It is also a sign of Mr. Shah's undisputed

Ready for battle
 In its first list, the BJP has put out the names of candidates for 184 seats, spread across 20 States

 Narendra Modi VARANASI	 Rajnath Singh LUCKNOW	 Nitin Gadkari NAGPUR	 Smriti Irani AMETHI	 Gen. V.K. Singh GHAZIABAD
 Mahesh Sharma GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR	 Kiren Rijiju ARUNACHAL WEST	 D.V. Sadananda Gowda BENGALURU NORTH	 Amit Shah GANDHINAGAR	
 Hema Malini MATHURA	 Baijyant Panda KENDRAPARA			

Prominent absentees: L.K. Advani (Gandhinagar); B.C. Khanduri (Garhwal); Bhagat Singh Koshyari (Nainital)

ed preeminence in the BJP and its affairs, both in Gujarat and nationally.

Rajnath from Lucknow

In Uttar Pradesh, where the BJP faces the formidable alliance of the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, 28 names were announced, including that of Mr. Modi from Varanasi, Home Minister Rajnath Singh from Lucknow and Textiles Minister Smriti Irani from Amethi (to take on Congress president Rahul Gandhi). Among the dropped MPs was Union Minister Krishna

Raj from Shahjahanpur. She has been replaced by Arun Sagar, from Sambhal. Satyapal Saini has been replaced by Parmeshwar Lal Saini. In the Misrikh constituency, Anju Bala has been replaced by Ashok Rawat. In Hardoi, Jai Prakash Rawat replaces Anshul Verma. The Agra and Fatehpur Sikri MPs have both been replaced by S.P. Singh Baghel and Rajkumar Singh respectively.

Significantly, the candidature of Dr. Joshi, the MP from Kanpur; Union Minister Maneka Gandhi, who represents Pilibhit; and her son

Varun Gandhi, representing Sultanpur, was not announced.

Mr. Nadda said all 17 candidates from Bihar had been finalised and the list sent to the State unit. It would be announced at an NDA event.

The BJP announced 21 out of 28 candidates for Karnataka, retaining 16 MPs. New entrant A. Manju from the Congress has been nominated in Hassan to take on Prajwal Revanna, grandson of former Prime Minister Deve Gowda.

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LIST FOR KERALA ▶ PAGE 6

HC sentences nine to life term for *Dinakaran* attack

Reverses trial court acquittal, convicts police officer as well

B. TILAK CHANDAR
 MADURAI

Over nine years after a trial court acquitted those involved in the 2007 attack on the office of Tamil daily *Dinakaran*, which left three employees dead, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court on Thursday sentenced nine persons, including key accused 'Attack' Pandi, to life imprisonment.

A Division Bench comprising Justices P.N. Prakash and B. Pugalendhi delivered the verdict on the appeal preferred by the CBI and a revision petition filed by the mother of one of the victims.

Compensation awarded

Holding the State vicariously liable, the court ordered a compensation of ₹5 lakh to be paid to each to the families of the three deceased employees. The appeals were preferred against the verdict of the Principal District and Sessions court, Madurai, acquitting all the 17 accused for want of sufficient evidence.

The court said the conclusions reached by the trial judge were palpably erroneous and suffered from manifest perversity. "It is unfortunate that the trial court has abdicated its judicial responsibility to seek the truth and deployed a specious line of



Justice, finally: The arson attack on the Madurai office of *Dinakaran* in 2007 left three employees dead. • FILE PHOTO

reasoning to arrive at the verdict of acquittal."

It convicted Deputy Superintendent of Police V. Rajaram, who had been included as an accused for failing to prevent the arsonists, under Section 217 of IPC (public servant disobeying the law to save person from punishment) and Section 221 (intentional omission to apprehend someone). The officer was asked to be present on March 25 to be heard on the quantum of sentence.

Police role slammed

The court said it was perplexing why senior police officers had to discuss, ruminate and deliberate over a simple act of lodging a complaint. The court sentenced 'Attack' Pandi, Arogyaprabhu, Vijaya Pandi, P. Kandasamy, G. Ramiah Pandian, V. Sudhakar, Thirumurugan, I. Ruban and Malik Batcha to

life imprisonment on charges of murder and five years' rigorous imprisonment, which would run concurrently for charges under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, Explosive Substances Act and the Tamil Nadu Public Property (Prevention of Damage and Loss) Act and imposed a fine.

Taking note of the threat to 'Attack' Pandi in Madurai, the court directed that he would undergo the sentence in Palayamkottai.

In 2007, *Dinakaran* had carried a survey on who was the preferred choice as the political heir of then DMK supremo M. Karunanidhi. Following the publication of the survey that favoured M.K. Stalin, a mob led by 'Attack' Pandi, allegedly a close aide of former Union Minister M.K. Alagiri, hurled petrol bombs at the newspaper's office in Madurai.

U.S. puts Pakistan on notice over terror attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 WASHINGTON

The United States has asked Pakistan to take sustained, verifiable and irreversible action against the perpetrators of terrorism and warned the country that another terror attack on India will prove

to be "extremely problematic."

"We need to see Pakistan taking concrete and sustained action to rein in the terrorist groups, mainly the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba, in order to ensure that we don't have re-

escalation [of tensions] in the region," a senior administration official told reporters at the White House on Wednesday. "And, if there's any additional terrorist attack without Pakistan having made a sustained, sincere effort against these groups, it

would be extremely problematic for Pakistan and it would cause re-escalation of tensions, which is dangerous for both countries," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

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Security forces corner LeT men in J&K

PEERZADA ASHIQ
 SRINAGAR

Security forces faced a 'hostage crisis' in Jammu and Kashmir's Bandipora on Thursday when a team engaged two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) militants in a gunfight, killing one of them.

"The operation against the holed-up militants in Bandipora's Hajin area was delayed owing to the evacuation of civilians from the spot. The house remains under siege," said Senior Superintendent of Police, Bandipora, Rahul Malik.

The police said two militants, including a 'commander,' were trapped during a search operation of Mir Mohalla in the morning. However, three civilians, including a girl, were also trapped in the house. This forced the security forces to suspend the operation.

The police engaged the members of Auqaf, the caretaker body of a local mosque, and a magistrate in "rescuing two hostages, including the girl."

"A boy is believed to be still trapped, and his fate is not known. The team has launched the final assault, in which one militant was killed," the police said. The Army's 13 Rashtriya Rifles, the CRPF and the Special Operations Group of the police have sealed the house. The operation was disrupted by locals, who threw stones.

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