

## Yogi launches UP campaign, calls Cong candidate 'Azhar Masood's son-in-law'

'Terrorists fed biryani by previous govts, bullets by ours'

AMIL BHATNAGAR  
SAHARANPUR, MARCH 24

UTTAR PRADESH Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath kicked off the BJP's Lok Sabha poll campaign in the state from Saharanpur Sunday by targeting the constituency's Congress candidate, Imran Masood, and referring to him as Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar's "son-in-law" who "speaks his language".

Without mentioning the rival candidate's name, Adityanath



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said, "Azhar Masood's son-in-law comes to Saharanpur, and speaks his language. Should someone who speaks Masood's language be allowed to win from

Saharanpur or should the symbol of development and security, Raghav Lakhnupal (the BJP candidate), win?"

Declaring that the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre is committed to tackling terrorism, he said: "You must have heard of Osama bin Laden's name. He was killed brutally. One day, Azhar Masood will be killed in a similar fashion. You don't worry."

Hitting out at the Opposition, Adityanath said: "In the previous CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Yogi Adityanath, Amit Shah at the BJP Vijay Sankalp rally in Agra on Sunday. Gajendra Yadav REPORT PAGE 8

## DELHI'S NOTE VERBALE

# India raises with Pak abduction, conversion of Hindu sisters

In Twitter spat with Sushma Swaraj, Pak minister says 'not like Modi's India'

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

INDIA HAS sent a note verbale to the Pakistan Foreign Ministry over abduction of two Hindu minor girls in Pakistan and their alleged conversion to Islam. This followed a Twitter spat between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Pakistan's Information Minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain over the matter on Sunday.

"India has asked that suitable remedial action be taken by the Pakistan government to protect and promote safety, security and welfare of its own citizens, especially from the minority communities," a source said.

As the incident, that happened in Pakistan's Sindh province, raised an uproar among civil society there, Swaraj

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## Delhi stand consistent

HINDUS IN Pakistan comprise a minuscule 1.2% of the population, and instances of intimidation, abduction, persecution, forced conversions and forced marriages of girls belonging to the community have been reported frequently. While New Delhi has consistently asked Islamabad to take care of its citizens, it is in Pakistan's self-interest to protect its own.

## Missing in national job market: 2.8 cr rural women over the last six years

JAY MAZOOMDAAR  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

OVER 5 crore rural women have left the national job market since 2004-05. Female participation has fallen by 7 percentage points since 2011-12, amounting to approximately 2.8 crore fewer women looking for jobs.

The decline, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-2018 report by NSSO which the government has withheld, is more acute in the working age group of 15-59 years. In this bracket, the rural female participation rate fell from 49.4 per cent in 2004-05 to 35.8 per cent in 2011-12 and further to 24.6 per cent in 2017-18. In effect, partici-



### FEWER WOMEN SEEKING JOBS

	RURAL		URBAN	
	All ages	15yrs+	All ages	15yrs+
2017-18	18.2	24.6	15.9	20.4
2011-12	25.3	35.8	15.5	20.5
2004-05	33.3	49.4	17.8	24.4

Source: NSSO All figures in %

pation of rural women of working age has been halved since 2004-05 (see chart).

"Higher participation in education is one answer to the CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Govt probe on Raman Singh son-in-law: Fraud, overspending, fake audit

DIPANKAR GHOSE  
RAIPUR, MARCH 24

A THREE-MEMBER probe panel of senior government officials, looking into financial irregularities at the Dau Kalyan Singh (DKS) government super speciality hospital in Raipur, has submitted a report alleging expenditure worth crores without official approvals, overspending, and the submission of false audit reports.

It is based on this 18-page report that Chhattisgarh Police last week registered an FIR against Dr Puneet Gupta, son-in-law of BJP leader and former three-time Chief Minister Raman Singh. Gupta served as Superintendent of DKS hospital from January 2016 to January 2019, when he was shifted out by the Congress government —



Police probe irregularities in hospital under Puneet Gupta

he later resigned from government service.

Police charged Gupta on March 16 for alleged "financial irregularities worth Rs 50 crore" and booked him under clauses of criminal conspiracy, forgery and cheating.

The charges are based on a police complaint, filed by the new DKS Superintendent, Dr KK Sahare, who cited the report submitted by the committee set up by the Chhattisgarh government.

Sahare's complaint cites the probe report in detail and states CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



## GOVT & POLITICS

CONG FIELDS KARTI, NO WORD ON SECOND SEAT FOR RAHUL P 8

## Rumours of 'sex videos', political links, protests leave TN's Pollachi town shaken

KAVITHA IYER  
POLLACHI, MARCH 24

LATE IN February, when three men were arrested in Tamil Nadu's Pollachi for allegedly sexually abusing a college student and trying to film her, the town responded as expected, with shock. Two men who had befriended her through WhatsApp

a few months ago had picked her up in a car on a state highway, barely 5 km outside the main city, not far from a couple of colleges. But by early March, what could have been just another sordid crime had sparked an incensed protest in the town as social media outrage poured into the streets too, students and women's organisations staging demonstrations that appeared

to be increasingly embarrassing for the Tamil Nadu government.

Now, nearly a month since the police complaint was filed, the police have overcome some mortifying gaffes including revealing the name of the victim and complainant; four men are in judicial custody. And yet, Pollachi continues to protest.

This Tuesday, trade associations across the town decided to

keep shops closed. A lawyers' collective in Coimbatore protested, as did various students' organisations in the district. Through the week, a large posse of policemen and policemen continued to keep a watchful eye in the town's central areas — something seemed to have shaken the little town of about 95,000 people out of a

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## In Punjab, debris gives life to civic projects



Bathinda civic body chief Rishi Pal Singh (left) checks bricks made from debris. Gurmeet Singh

RAAKHI JAGGA  
BATHINDA, MARCH 24

IT IS usually found piled up on construction sites, tucked below bridges and flyovers, swept to the side of newly built roads and highways. No one knows exactly how much it adds up to, although official estimates point to around 175 million tonnes in the cities alone. And yet, it presents one of the biggest hurdles in India's battle against waste and pollution — construction waste and debris.

Experts say what is needed is a comprehensive national initiative. But then, every small step counts. Like in Bathinda, where a group of municipal corporation officials have come together to recycle their construction waste to make bricks, manhole covers, sidewalks and plant holders.

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