



NEARBY

SP-BSP combine gains more OBC heft in U.P.

LUCKNOW
The SP-BSP-RLD alliance in Uttar Pradesh gathered strength on Tuesday with the formal support of three smaller OBC-based parties of Purvanchal — in particular the Nishad Party, which had trounced the BJP in the 2018 Gorakhpur by-election.

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Two minors killed in house fire

NEW DELHI
Two children were killed when a fire broke out in their house in south-east Delhi's Shaheen Bagh on Tuesday afternoon. The fire department said they are yet to ascertain the cause of fire.

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Very, very serious matters in CBI report on Saradha case: SC

Former Kolkata police chief connived with accused in ponzi cases, says agency

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked whether it is expected to close its eyes, "suppose if some very very serious matters" come to light.

The court's observation came after perusing the CBI's status report on the examination of former Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar in Shillong in connection with the multi-crore ponzi scam cases, including the Saradha and Rose Valley scandals. A three-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, however, refrained from making any comments on the contents.

CBI team manhandled
The petition stems from a February 3 incident in which the West Bengal police manhandled a CBI team that went to Mr. Kumar's Kolkata



Anatomy of a scam

■ The present case emanates from the investigation of ponzi scheme cases, mainly the multi-crore Saradha scam. The Saradha group collected ₹2,459.59 crore from the public between July 2008 and April 2013. They have to return around ₹1,983.02 crore to the depositors. And this is only the principal amount, minus the interest

■ In 2014, SC ordered all cases to be given to CBI. It took over the probe into 76 cases against the group and other companies. One chargesheet and six supplementary ones have been filed from November 2014 to January 2019



■ CBI wants to investigate the "larger conspiracy" which emerged during the probe. It wanted call data records of five mobile phones, belonging to main accused Sudipta Sen and Debjani Mukherjee, for 2012 and 2013

■ The CBI's allegation is that the West Bengal police gave the crucial call records after an unexplained delay of 14 months. Also, the call records that were provided were found to be incomplete and tampered with

residence to question him in the Saradha scam case.

The Supreme Court, while transferring the probe into the ponzi scams to the CBI from the State police, had ordered the latter to fully support the central investigating agency to reach the truth.

However, what began as a contempt case has now

snowballed into the CBI levelling allegations that Mr. Kumar, as the functional head of the West Bengal government-appointed Special Investigation Team (SIT), actively connived with the high-profile accused in the ponzi scams to tamper with the crucial call data records (CDRs).

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the CBI, said the statements made by the contemnors in their affidavits were misleading and false. The court asked the CBI to file an application listing the allegations, supported by full facts, in the next 10 days.

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70% of fleet will be airborne in a month, Jet assures govt.

CEO, CFO meet Aviation Ministry and DGCA officials

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Jet Airways hopes to have over 70% of its planes back in air in the next month as the SBI-led consortium provides the beleaguered airline interim funding, its top brass told the government on Tuesday.

The management, including chief executive officer Vinay Dube and chief financial officer Amit Aggarwal, met officials of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on the airline's operations.

"Our discussions were on how the airline can provide enough aircraft so demand can be met and passengers are not put to any hardship owing to either a rise in airfares or large cancellations," Pradeep Singh Kharola, Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, said at a briefing.

The airline now has only



Waiting for a plan: Grounded aircraft of Jet Airways parked at Mumbai Airport on Tuesday. ■ PRASHANT WAYDANE

35 planes flying, out of a total of 103 planes, and will aim to get 40 more planes airborne by the April-end, the officials said.

Mounting dues

Nearly 50 planes have been grounded owing to the non-payment of lease rentals, while others are inoperable because of maintenance issues that have led to large-

scale flight cancellations.

The airline's chairman Naresh Goyal and his wife Anita resigned from the Board on Monday, effecting a resolution plan under which an interim fund of ₹1,500 crore would be pumped in by the lenders.

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JET GEARS UP TO RESTORE
SUSPENDED FLIGHTS ▶ PAGE 13

BJP asks M.M. Joshi not to contest, fields Pachauri in Kanpur seat

Senior leader reveals party directive

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister Murli Manohar Joshi ruled out contesting in the Lok Sabha election, writing a letter to his constituents in Kanpur on Monday, stating that he was doing so after BJP general secretary (organisation) Ram Lal reportedly told him to withdraw from the fray. The party on Tuesday fielded Satyadev Pachauri in Kanpur.



Murli Manohar Joshi

The letter, circulating widely now, is unsigned but has been vouched to be genuine by Mr. Joshi's aides and BJP leaders in Kanpur.

"Dear voters of Kanpur, Shri Ramlal, General Secre-

tary (organisation), Bharatiya Janata Party, conveyed to me today that I should not contest the ensuing General Elections from Kanpur or elsewhere," read the note by Dr. Joshi.

Earlier, former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani was replaced by BJP president Amit Shah in the Gandhinagar constituency, former Union Minister Shanta Ram was replaced in Kangra, and veteran Kalraj Mishra was asked not to contest either Deoria or any other seat.

GENERATIONAL SHIFT ▶ PAGE 10

Six choke to death after entering septic tank in T.N.

Three of family among those killed in tragedy at residence near Sriperumbudur



In full swing: Rescuers at work at a house in a village near Sriperumbudur in Kancheepuram district. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

Six persons, including a 53-year-old shopkeeper and his two young sons, died of asphyxiation in the septic tank of a house at a village near Sriperumbudur in Kancheepuram district on Tuesday.

The police identified the deceased as Krishnamoorthi, 53; his sons, Kannan, 23 and Karthik, 21; Paramasivam, 31; Lakshmikandan, 35; and Shradha Bhai, 28.

The police said Krishnamoorthi ran a shop outside his home at Selvaperumal Nagar, near Sriperumbudur.

He had engaged a few conservancy workers to clean and repair the septic tank in the morning. The workers left after completing their task before noon, and Krishnamoorthi went into the tank later to check whether the work was done properly. He lost consciousness after inhaling poisonous gases and fell down in the tank.

Sons jump in

Realising that their father had fainted, his sons jumped in to rescue him. They too felt uncomfortable and collapsed. On seeing them fall, the family's tenant Paramasi-

vam, Lakshmikandan, a worker in a gas agency and a migrant worker Shradha Bhai, who had come to the spot to buy something, tried to rescue the three, and climbed in. But all of them were asphyxiated, the police said.

Finding the six trapped, passersby and other neighbours alerted the 108 ambulance service and the police. Personnel of Fire and Rescue Services, who rushed to the spot, found them motionless in the tank.

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'Use of NSA in cow slaughter cases wrong'

VARGHESE K GEORGE
BHOPAL

The use of the National Security Act (NSA) by the Madhya Pradesh police in cases of suspected cow slaughter was wrong and will not be repeated, Chief Minister Kamal Nath has said.

Termining the controversial use of the law that primarily targeted Muslims a legacy of the previous BJP government, he told *The Hindu* in an interview that instructions were given to

the police to stop the practice. Mr. Nath faced criticism for continuing with the BJP policy after reports emerged that his government, too, had invoked the NSA in such cases.

"Objectives of the NSA are very clear. It was the previous government's policy to do this [use it in cow transportation cases]," he said, termining the practice a "misuse of the law."

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Ishrat Jahan's mother moves CBI court

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AHMEDABAD

Shamima Kauser, mother of Ishrat Jahan, who was killed along with three others in an alleged fake encounter in Gujarat in 2004, has approached the local CBI court here challenging the Gujarat government's refusal to grant sanction to prosecute former police officers D.G. Vanzara and N.K. Amin, charge-sheeted by the agency.

The Gujarat government recently refused to grant sanction to prosecute the officers. It reportedly stated

that they were doing their official duty and therefore cannot be prosecuted.

In her application, Ms. Kauser submitted that the Gujarat government's decision would have serious repercussions and obstruct judicial proceedings. She also contended that the special CBI court had earlier rejected the application of Mr. Vanzara and Mr. Amin on the ground that there existed evidence against them in the crime.

"In August 2018, this court rejected the theory that the applicant's daughter

was killed in an encounter and held that the charge-sheet prima facie showed that the encounter was staged," she stated in her application moved by her lawyer Vrinda Grover in the Ahmedabad court.

She also sought a copy of the government's report on refusal to grant sanction.

Meanwhile, both accused have moved their application in the court, asking for proceedings against them to be dropped, following the Gujarat government's refusal to sanction their prosecution.

'Political parties most distrusted, Army, judiciary win people's trust'

Survey ahead of polls shows lack of jobs is single biggest worry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Lok Sabha election, a public opinion survey in 12 States has found that political parties are the most distrusted political institutions in the country.

Also, one in five among those surveyed felt that unemployment was the single biggest issue facing the country today.

Negative net rate

The survey, Politics and Society between Elections 2019, found that political parties had a negative net trust rate of -55% (calculated as the percentage of respondent who trust them minus the percentage who do not). They are the only institutions with a negative net rate.

On the other end of the scale, the Army is the most trusted institution in the country, with an effective trust rate of 88%, while the judiciary — including the Supreme Court, High Courts and district court — enjoys an effective trust rate of more than 60%.

The report, published jointly by Azim Premji University and Lokniti, surveyed about 24,000 people

from 12 States — Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Delhi.

Each State had about 2,000 respondents. Previous surveys over the past two years had covered 12 more States, and researchers expect to collate all three surveys for a more comprehensive analysis in future.

Electoral process

"For too long, studies on Indian democracy have focused only on elections, as though our democratic system can be reduced to the electoral process," said political scientist Zoya Hasan at the report launch on Tuesday.

She welcomed the survey which did not focus on how many seats would be won by which party, but rather looked into the perspectives and opinions of the Indian voter.

Apart from measuring institutional trust, the survey attempts to provide a glimpse into people's views on governance, sexuality, gender, nationalism, populism, caste and religious

identities. Researchers also asked respondents what was the single biggest problem facing the country. Almost 20% of those surveyed said unemployment was their biggest concern. Among the youth between 18 and 35 years, that figure shot up to 49%.

Other issues cited include development, growth and poverty (15%) and law, governance and corruption (13%).

Exploring perceptions about religious nationalism, the survey asked whether the government should punish those who eat beef, engage in religious conversion, do not stand for nationalism or refuse to chant 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai'.

Largest support

It found differences across States, with people in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Uttarakhand being mostly likely to support punishment in such cases. Punishment for beef consumption had the largest support; only Nagaland and Jammu and Kashmir had a higher percentage of respondents who opposed punishment rather than supported it in this case.

Why elections are great for some stand-up artistes

Bucking the trend of celebrities and entertainers getting co-opted, comics are packing a punch

NAMRATA JOSHI
MUMBAI

In "The Azadi Tour 2019", the latest edition of the political satire show *Aisi Taisi Democracy* that's currently travelling to various Indian cities, the three performers get introduced to the audience as "Rahul, Varun and Sanjay with none of them sporting that significant surname — Gandhi." The joke sets the tone for an irreverent political evening where the artistes — Indian Ocean musician Rahul Ram, and comics Varun Grover and Sanjay Rajoura — spare no politician or party. The subversive spirit of the show peaks with a song set to the



Sharp barbs: One of the early *Aisi Taisi Democracy* performances in Mumbai.

tune of a popular Hindi film song, *Saawan ka mahina*, from *Milan* (1967): "Chunaav ka mahina, hai mach gaya

shor; phir aaya hai time to choose, who will screw us more".

At a time when large sec-

tions of the mainstream media, film personalities, and entertainers are seen as being co-opted by a majoritarian political establishment, a handful of comics are bucking the trend. What's more, it seems to be working for them, especially in gaining viewership among the youth. So you have Kunal Kamra logging more than 5.9 million views on YouTube for his latest act, *Wah Modiji Wah*, which he kicks off by wondering, "Why can't I directly vote for Ambani? What is Modiji doing between me and Ambaniji?"

Akash Banerjee, who last year quit his job as vice-presi-

dent, Radio Mirchi, to pursue political satire full time, finds that his *The Deshbhakt* is about to touch half-a-million subscribers within a year of its existence. The Indian Election episode of Hasan Minhaj's *Patriot Act* (that, among other things, talked hilariously about a "hand tigger/hugger" parallel between Donald Trump and Narendra Modi) got 2,140,008 views on YouTube at the last count. Meanwhile, "The Azadi Tour 2019" is logging sold-out shows in city after city. It was in the run-up to the 2014 election that political satire first came into its own as a counter-narrative.

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