

NEARBY



Congress will decide my candidature, seat: Kirti
NEW DELHI
Former cricketer and former BJP MP Kirti Azad, who had joined the Congress in February this year, said on Saturday the party would decide if and which seat he would contest the Lok Sabha election from, amid speculation that he would be fielded from Delhi.

CITY ▶ PAGE 2

MAGAZINE ▶ 36 PAGES (IN TABLOID)
CLASSIFIEDS ▶ PAGE 4 & 6

Nishad Party exits, big blow to SP-BSP

OMAR RASHID
LUCKNOW

The anti-BJP alliance in Uttar Pradesh led by the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party received a setback after a key OBC partner, the Nishad Party, ditched them allegedly for not following "alliance dharma" and within hours moved towards stitching a deal with the BJP.

DETAILS ON ▶ PAGE 10

'Cong. resents everything we are proud of'

Modi hits out at the party while campaigning in Arunachal, Assam

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday came down heavily on the Congress, saying the "dynastic party" resents everything that Indians, in general, are proud of.

He said this in reference to the "surgical strikes" in Pakistan's Balakot, and the Mission Shakti that involved shooting down a live satellite in space, while addressing election rallies in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Both States are ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).
"You saw their [the Congress's] attitude during the surgical strikes and when In-



Modi fan: A woman holds a Modi mask at the Prime Minister's rally at Along in Arunachal Pradesh. ■RITU RAJ KONWAR

dia killed terrorists on their turf. When our scientists impress the world, they mock them. They discredit everything the Indians are proud of. They treat terrorists as their own. They are nowhere in the country but are praised in Pakistan," Mr. Modi said at a rally at Aalo, which falls under the Arunachal West Lok Sabha constituency.
Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju is seeking re-election from this constituency. His main rival is former Chief Minister Nabam Tuki of the Congress.
The Prime Minister said

Govt. was foolish: Chidambaram

SANDEEP PHUKAN
NEW DELHI

Former Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Saturday criticised the Narendra Modi-led NDA government for its announcement of India's anti-satellite (ASAT) missile capabilities, saying only a 'foolish government' could betray national secrets by making them public.
"The capability to shoot

down a satellite has existed for many years. A wise government will keep the capability secret. Only a foolish government will disclose it and betray a defence secret," Mr. Chidambaram said in a series of tweets. He added that the announcement was only aimed to "boost the sagging fortunes of the BJP."

GREEN JOBS ▶ PAGE 10

the focus on service made the BJP different from the "power-hungry" Congress. "We provided five years of service, compared to their 55 years of self-centred, scam-tainted rule... The [Congress] party is geared only for creaming you off," he said.

Claiming that his government was trying to run the "growth engine" of a "new India," Mr. Modi said Arunachal Pradesh got its due during the last five years.

CONTINUED ON ▶ PAGE 10
ONLY ONE PERSON CAN ENSURE SECURITY, SAYS SHAH ▶ PAGE 10

Court frames charges in Muzaffarpur shelter home case

Trial against 21 accused, including Brajesh Thakur, to begin on April 3

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Saturday framed charges against main accused Brajesh Thakur and 20 others in the Muzaffarpur shelter home sexual assault case.

Framing the charges of rape, criminal conspiracy, sexual assault, drugging of minors and criminal intimidation after the accused persons pleaded not guilty, Additional Sessions Judge Saurabh Kulshreshtha said the trial would begin on April 3 with recording of



Brajesh Thakur

prosecution evidence. He said there was prima facie enough evidence against the accused. Thakur, whose NGO Sewa Sankalp Evam Vikas Samiti

managed the shelter home, was charged under the POCSO Act, including Section 6 (aggravated sexual assault).

The offence carries punishment of minimum 10 years in jail and a maximum of life imprisonment.

The CBI had taken over the investigation on July 29 last year on the State government's recommendation.

On February 7, the Supreme Court had transferred the case from Bihar to a POCSO court in Saket District Court complex in Delhi with a direction to conclude

the trial within six months. Several girls were allegedly raped and sexually abused at the shelter home in Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

The issue had come to light following a report by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences.

The case had also claimed a political casualty in the form of Bihar Social Welfare Department Minister Manju Verma, who was forced to quit from her post in August last year over allegations that her husband used to frequent the shelter home.

Indian killed by 'immigrant' in Munich

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI

An Indian died and his wife was injured after they were stabbed by an "immigrant" near Munich in Germany, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said.

"Indian couple Prashant and Smita Basarur were stabbed by an immigrant... We are facilitating the travel of Prashant's brother to Germany," she tweeted.

COUPLE FROM UDUPI ▶ PAGE 8

Opposition alliances will surprise BJP: Naidu

'Our strong campaign in A.P. has ensured BJP is nowhere in the scene'

K. VENKATESHWARLU
AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday asserted that the BJP-led NDA government faces defeat in the general election as the Opposition parties, small and big, stitch 'formidable' alliances among themselves and with the Congress, wherever possible, in various States.

"The BJP may downplay these developments of the last few days and use its usual rhetoric against such alliances but they are all set to pose a big challenge to the saffron party and take it by surprise," he said in a midnight interview.

"Look at Andhra Pradesh, our strong campaign has ensured that the BJP is nowhere in the scene in the State," he asserted.

Regional parties reflect the diversity of the country and represent the feelings and aspirations of

people in a particular State, he said. These sentiments needed to be respected and dovetailed to building a national mood to throw out a regime that had brought all institutions – whether it was the CBI, the ED, the RBI or the Income Tax Department – to a state of collapse, he said.

Alleging that the government was misusing all Central agencies against political adversaries, he said the latest addition was the Election Commission of India.

It was, therefore, crucial that all non-BJP parties come together on the plank of saving the nation at this critical juncture, Mr. Naidu said. "The Congress and all Opposition parties are conscious of this fact, and hence a big coalition of like-minded political parties is the need of the hour and is eminently possible."

Mr. Naidu said that even as he strove hard to put Andhra Pradesh on a fast-track development path, he was facing challenges from the Centre, neighbouring Telangana and the Opposition party in the State, YSRCP.



INTERVIEW ▶ PAGE 11