



Voter ID more powerful than terrorist's IED, says PM Modi

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Modi's desperation is clearly visible from his campaign tone: Pawar

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North Korean leader Kim to meet Russian President Putin

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Watson finds form as Chennai Super Kings regain top spot

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Wife was with Rohit during 'crucial hours'

NEW DELHI
Murder victim Rohit Shekhar Tiwari's wife Apoorva Shukla allegedly told investigators on Tuesday that she was with him in his room around 12 a.m.-1 a.m. on the night prior to the incident. "She has hinted at an accident at that time, the claims of which are being verified," an investigating officer said.

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Somnath discharged in attempt to murder case

NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Tuesday discharged former Delhi Law Minister Somnath Bharti of attempting to murder his wife and her unborn child in a domestic violence case. The case was filed by his wife Lipika Bharti in 2015.

DELHI METRO ▶ PAGE 1

SC orders transfer of U.P. don to Gujarat prison

NEW DELHI
The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed shifting former MP Ateeq Ahmad to a high-security jail in Gujarat for kidnapping and assaulting a businessman in prison in Uttar Pradesh.

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OPPORTUNITIES ▶ PAGE 15

Sri Lanka links Easter blasts to Christchurch mosque attacks

Reports quote IS as claiming responsibility for the attacks that killed over 320

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

The serial bomb attacks on Easter Sunday, which claimed over 320 lives in Sri Lanka, were meant as retaliation for the Christchurch mosque shootings in New Zealand on March 15, State Minister of Defence Ruwan Wijewardene told Parliament on Tuesday, based on "initial evidence".

Also on Tuesday, over 48 hours after the coordinated blasts, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attacks, media reports said, citing the group's AMAQ news agency. Sri Lanka had on Monday said a local Islamist radical organisation, the National Thowheed Jamath (NTJ), was responsible for the attacks but suspected it had links with international groups.

Even as the country tried to come to terms with the brutal killings, with mass funerals and special prayers, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe indicated that the threat of further attacks remained. The police and military remained on high alert after reports of an unidentified container truck and a van in Colombo, believed to be carrying explosives.

A few more suspects



Shattered world: A man prays at the grave of a blast victim at a cemetery in Negombo, Sri Lanka, on Wednesday. • REUTERS

linked to the attacks, some of whom are believed to possess explosives, were "still on the run," Mr. Wickremesinghe told mediapersons. "We have to anticipate [their moves] and we are working accordingly," he said.

On whether Sri Lanka had evidence to corroborate IS involvement, Mr. Wickremesinghe said the Sri Lankan security apparatus suspected the NTJ had links with international groups, including the IS. "We are looking into it," he added.

Indian hotel escapes Further, *The Hindu* has

learnt that the premises of an Indian hotel chain had also been a target on Sunday. But the suspected bomber who, according to sources familiar with the investigations, was spotted in the vicinity, reportedly left the area, where security had been tightened.

Later, investigators established that the same person had blown himself up at a small hotel in a Colombo suburb. The explosion was identified as the seventh that day, where two persons were reported dead.

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Number of Indian victims touches 10

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Indian High Commission in Colombo on Tuesday confirmed that at least 10 Indians had been killed in Sunday's serial blasts. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had earlier said that officials on the ground were identifying the victims.

Eight of the 10 dead are from Karnataka, including seven members of a JD(S) team, who were on vacation in Colombo.

While six of the JD(S) workers were declared dead on Monday, a seventh member, Puttaraju, 37, was confirmed dead on Tuesday.

Bengaluru-based businessman Nagaraj Reddy, 46, who was critically injured and under treatment, succumbed to his injuries.

The tenth victim has been identified as Vemuri Tulsi Ram, 35, from Hyderabad, who was killed in the Shangri-La hotel blast.

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It's raining votes!

The third phase of the Lok Sabha polls recorded 65.97% voting, 1.4% points lower than the 2014 turnout



Rain or shine: Voters throng a polling booth in Guwahati, Assam. • RITU RAJ KONWAR

List shows States/UTs which had polling in italics; number of seats in brackets; 2019 voting % in bold. The change in turnout compared to 2014 is coloured red if lower and green if higher
Assam (4): **80.73%**, -2.15 | Bihar (5): **59.97%**, -0.16 | Chhattisgarh (7): **68.41%**, -1.26 | Dadra and Nagar Haveli (1): **79.57%**, -4.48 | Daman and Diu (1): **71.82%**, -6.19 | Goa (2): **73.88%**, -3.14 | Gujarat (26): **63.68%**, +0.08 | Karnataka (14): **67.64%**, +1.07 | Kerala (20): **71.96%**, -1.93 | Maharashtra (14): **59.3%**, -2.78 | Odisha (6): **61.51%**, -10.92 | Tripura (1): **79.89%**, -3.52 | Uttar Pradesh (10): **61.4%**, -0.03 | West Bengal (5): **79.77%**, -2.84.

Data updated as of 10 p.m. and does not include Anantnag seat

Third phase sees 66% polling

Highest turnout of 81% in Assam, followed by 79% in Tripura

DEVESH K. PANDEY
NEW DELHI

The third phase of the Lok Sabha election on Tuesday, in 116 constituencies across 13 States and two Union Territories, registered an overall tentative voter turnout of more than 66% compared with 69.3% in 2014.

Eleven people died of natural causes in Kerala and a man was murdered in West Bengal during polling.

Among the prominent candidates were BJP president Amit Shah from Gandhinagar; Congress president Rahul Gandhi from Wayanad in Kerala; Congress leaders

Shashi Tharoor and Mallikarjun Kharge; Alphonso Kannanthanam of the BJP; and Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh.

Assam recorded the highest polling of 80.74% (75.74% in 2014), followed by Tripura with 79.36% (83.03%). Karnataka recorded a small increase in the turnout.

However, the turnout declined sharply in the Anantnag constituency of Jammu and Kashmir, from 39.37% in 2014 to just 12.86%.

The five constituencies of Odisha, where the third phase of the Assembly election was held simultaneous-

ly, had a lower participation of 64% as against 72.45% in 2014. In Kerala too, the tentative figure of 71.47% was a dip from 74.02%.

The biggest phase, with which polling has been completed in more than 303 constituencies, saw an unprecedented one-time deployment of electronic voting machines and VVPATs at 2.11 lakh polling stations. The Election Commission said 0.57% ballot units, 0.58% control units and 2.24% of VVPATs had to be replaced as they malfunctioned.

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Judges' panel to hear charges against CJI

Supreme Court Bench to deal with crisis for judiciary

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A three-member committee of Supreme Court judges led by Justice S.A. Bobde, the number two judge in the apex court, was formed on Tuesday to look into allegations of sexual harassment raised by a former employee against Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi.

The other two members of the committee are Justice N.V. Ramana and Justice Indira Banerjee. Justice Ramana is the number three judge in the apex court.



Justice S.A. Bobde

Justice Bobde has taken a central role in dealing with the crisis, which erupted on April 20 when some websites published the woman's allegations against the CJI.

Earlier in the day, he constituted a Special Bench of

Justices Arun Mishra, Rohinton Nariman and Deepak Gupta to deal with, on the judicial side, the *suo motu* petition titled 'In a matter of great public importance touching upon the independence of the judiciary.'

The meeting on the formation of the committee went on till late on Tuesday.

The morning saw senior judges hold an intense closed-door discussion till noon before beginning their usual court work.

BENCH ISSUES NOTICE TO LAWYER ▶ PAGE 10

Contempt notice issued against Rahul Gandhi

Orders listing of review petitions on April 30

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued a formal criminal contempt notice against Congress president Rahul Gandhi for attributing the comment 'Chowkidar chor hai' (watchman is a thief) to its April 10 judgment, upholding the maintainability of the Rafale review petitions.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi also ordered the Rafale re-

view petitions to be listed along with the criminal contempt petition filed by BJP lawmaker Meenakshi Lekhi for Tuesday next (April 30).

The apex court, however, exempted Mr. Gandhi from personal appearance on April 30.

In contempt cases, the presence of the contemnor is mandatory unless the court waives it.

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India may stop oil imports from Iran

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday said the country plans to increase imports from major oil producing nations other than Iran, indicating that it

will be acceding to the U.S. plan to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero, a move criticised by the Congress.

The U.S. on Monday announced that it would be cancelling the waivers from sanctions it had granted

eight countries, including India, allowing them to import oil from Iran. Following the revocation of this waiver, any country violating the ban would face U.S. sanctions.

'DIPLOMACY FAILED' ▶ PAGE 10

Gujarat told to pay ₹50 lakh to Bilkis Bano

SC gives two weeks to govt. to compensate

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the Gujarat government to pay 2002 Gujarat communal riots victim, Bilkis Yaqoob Rasool, compensation of ₹50 lakh and give her a government job and government housing in the area of her choice.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, gave the State government two weeks to pay the compensation.

The court said she was a witness of the "devastation" of her family. Bilkis was pregnant when she was gangraped by a mob that also killed seven members of her family at Randhikpur village, near Ahmedabad, on March 3, 2002.

The apex court noted how her infant daughter was "smashed" against a wall before her very own eyes.

Chief Justice Gogoi said there was no point looking to the past; the need of the hour is to rehabilitate the victim, who according her lawyer is living a nomadic



Bilkis Bano

hand-to-mouth existence, having lost all.

The Chief Justice said the arguments in the court should focus on the compensation to be paid to her.

"In today's world, money is the best healer. We do not know whether it can heal all, but what else can we do for her... Ask for whatever compensation you want and we will pass orders accordingly," Chief Justice Gogoi said.

When the Gujarat counsel Hemantika Wahni tried to intervene, the Chief Justice turned to her saying, "You are lucky we are not observing anything against you... How many years has this case been pending?"