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THE CITY

BRIEFLY

Boutique owner kills self

New Delhi: A 42-year-old man allegedly committed suicide by hanging from the ceiling fan of a hotel room in East Delhi's Preet Vihar, police said Friday. Yogesh owned a boutique in Geeta Colony, police said, adding that he was depressed as his business was running into losses.

Godown catches fire, no casualty

New Delhi: A fire broke out at an electric goods godown in West Delhi's Naraina Thursday, Delhi Fire Services said. A total of 30 fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the fire was brought under control at 1.40 pm on Friday, the official said, adding that no casualties or injuries were reported.

Man shoots at father, kills himself

Greater Noida: A 28-year-old man shot at his father and later killed himself Thursday, police said. The father survived and is in the hospital. Police suspect family dispute as cause for the crime. **ENS**

AAP govt spokesperson defence fails to convince EC

RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

FINDING HIS defence unsatisfactory, the Election Commission (EC) has decided that AAP government spokesperson Nagender Sharma should be warned against tweeting on politics till Lok Sabha elections end. The Commission is learnt to have conveyed its decision to the Delhi Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), directing him to warn Sharma.

As first reported by *The Indian Express* on May 9, Sharma, in his defence, had denied any violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) on the ground that his tweets are his personal opinion and are posted from his personal Twitter handle.

To ensure a level-playing field for all parties and candidates, the MCC forbids the use of "government transport including official aircraft, vehicles, machinery and personnel" for furthering the interest of the party in power, which is AAP in Delhi.

Sharma's defence, along with his contractual employment status with the Delhi government, was submitted by the Delhi CEO in a report to the Commission recently. The EC had sought the report after the Delhi BJP lodged a complaint against Sharma's criticism of the party on Twitter.

Sharma, EC felt, is a public servant, despite being employed on contract, as he draws salary from the government and hence his tweets amounted to misuse of official machinery to benefit AAP.



AAP's East Delhi candidate Atishi and Deputy CM Manish Sisodia at a road show on the last day of campaigning, Friday. The capital votes on May 12. *Abhinav Saha*

ATISHI, GAMBHIR ROAD SHOWS ON SAME STRETCH

Bitter campaign ends

SUKRITA BARUAH & ANANYA TIWARI
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

ON THE last day of campaigning before Delhi goes to polls Sunday, the two candidates who crossed swords most aggressively — AAP's Atishi and BJP's Gautam Gambhir — led their last road shows down the same road, an hour apart.

East Delhi's Vikas Marg remained choked for much of Friday afternoon as it was the final stretch of the cricketer-turned-politician's road show, and ground zero for Atishi's campaign.

The campaign in Delhi was hostile throughout the past two months, with complaints and counter-complaints being filed by the three main parties — AAP, Congress and BJP — almost every day. While it started with BJP and Congress both approaching EC over AAP sending personalised letters to voters, newer issues cropped up at regular intervals. The past two weeks saw BJP's South Delhi candidate Ramesh



An AAP vehicle broke down at Jangpura, Friday. *Prem Nath Pandey*

Bidhuri abusing Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, a man slapping the CM during his road show, and finally the derogatory pamphlet against Atishi.

Atishi has approached the DCW, which had written to the police Thursday asking them to file an action taken report. The East Delhi Returning Officer also directed police to file an FIR.

Campaigning in Karkardooma's Jagriti Vihar, Gambhir was flanked by his wife

Natasha and mother Seema. During the day, he tweeted: "Challenge to @ArvindKejriwal and @aap. If he can prove that I have anything to do with this pamphlet filth, then I will hang myself in public. Otherwise @ArvindKejriwal should quit politics. Accepted?"

The bare heat of the day, temperature, traffic congestion and non-existent footpaths did not allow for much of a crowd. With BJP workers chanting PM Narendra

Modi's name and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', a few excited bystanders chanted along as traffic came to a standstill for a few minutes.

Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also joined the road show at Vikas Marg. About an hour later, Atishi's road show commenced down the same road. Heading the procession, she was accompanied by Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and actor Prakash Raj. As bikes with AAP flags and Atishi and Arvind Kejriwal's images cruised down the road, speakers blared that she was the one who transformed Delhi's education system.

There has been bad blood between the two since after nominations — beginning with Atishi alleging technical irregularities in Gambhir's nomination and claiming that he had two voter ID cards.

The last day remained subdued at other constituencies, with most candidates choosing road shows over big rallies.

(Ananya Tiwari is an intern with The Indian Express)

At Gambhir's final road show, it's buy one, get one free

ABHINAV SAHA & SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

A PHOTO of BJP's East Delhi candidate Gautam Gambhir sitting inside a vehicle and a man looking peculiarly similar standing atop the same car during a road show prompted a barb from Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who said the cricketer-turned-politician was using a doppelganger.

The BJP denied that Gambhir had used a "lookalike", and said that he had sat down because he was feeling unwell. Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor told *The Indian Express* that the man who stood atop the vehicle afterwards was Gaurav Arora, a close friend of Gambhir and a BJP worker. "He (Arora) and Gautam ji have been friends since their school days, for around 25 years... his father Manohar Arora is an active party worker in Karol Bagh," he said.

The road show started around 11:30 am from Mayur Vihar Phase-III paper market, with Gambhir leading the procession atop the vehicle wearing a white kurta and cap. By 11:45 am, as the procession reached Trilokpuri, Arora had taken his place, also wearing a white kurta and cap, with the addition of a waistcoat. Crowds of workers thronged around the vehicle and tried to garland him, and he reached out and took garlands from some of them, occasionally waving and folding his hands.



Gaurav Arora atop Gambhir's vehicle. *Abhinav Saha*

Going by what's available online: AAP man on Hans religion claims

SOURAV ROY BARMAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

AAP CANDIDATE from North West Delhi, Gugan Singh, on his claims against BJP's Hans Raj Hans.

Till now, people talk about how the North West Delhi seat would have gone to Congress had there been an alliance.

So what? Arvind Kejriwal is the boss, the supremo. I would have accepted his decision and continued to work hard for the party.

Which is a bigger factor here? Congress or BJP?

Neither. They are fighting to save their deposits. You will realise that in the coming years these parties will be forced to field local faces. I want to ask, do we have a lack of talent, ed-



AAP's North West Delhi candidate Gugan Singh

ucated people, social workers in this Lok Sabha seat? Where do we lack that they had to hire candidates from outside? By doing so, they have insulted the entire SC community in the city. Only because people are largely poor in this seat, will you insult them? I want to thank Arvind Kejriwal that he fielded someone who served the country for 18 years as part of the ITBP.

No violation of RP Act, BJP tells EC on NaMo TV

ARANYA SHANKAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

THE DELHI Chief Electoral Office (CEO) Friday wrote to the BJP asking them to follow 48-hour election silence, and not telecast "any political ad and content" on the BJP-sponsored NaMo TV. However, the party responded saying the content they were playing was in accordance with rules and provisions of the Representation of People Act, 1951, and the poll code.

Delhi goes to polls on May 12, and the 48-hour election silence period kicked in at 6 pm on Friday. The Delhi CEO office wrote to Neeraj, National Election Committee member of the BJP, citing Section 126 of the Representation of People's Act which says: "No person shall display to the public any election matter by means of cinematograph, telephone or other similar apparatus."

"Accordingly, you are directed to stop the telecast of any political ad and content on NaMo TV/Content TV., during the silence period commencing from 6 pm on May 10 onwards till the conclusion of the polls on May 12 at 6 pm," the letter said.

However, BJP wrote back on Friday saying, "There is no violation of Section 126(i) of the Representation of People Act, 1951 as content that is being aired on NaMo TV/content TV is being telecast in accordance with rules and provisions of the Representation of People Act, 1951 as well as paragraph 8.3 of the manual on Model Code of Conduct Document 21..."

The relevant paragraph of the MCC says that in the 48-hour silence period "what are prohibited are any advertisements or sponsored programmes...with an intention to influence or effect the results of an election".

The BJP stated: "We further assure that in case of live telecast of any ongoing event there shall be no direct reference to a constituency or candidate that is in the silence period of 48 hours."

Officials in the Delhi CEO office said they will decide the next course of action on the response on Saturday.

Why did you switch to AAP?

The BJP never liked me as I always raised voice for my community. In 2013, they had to give me a ticket to avoid sending a wrong message. *Hum BJP ke the hi kab?*

You have alleged BJP's Hans Raj Hans converted to Islam — a claim he has denied. Do you have any evidence?

Levelling allegations is not our work. You can find truth on the internet. We are going by what is available on the internet. If he wants to go to Medina, he can go. Are we stopping him? We are not bothered if he is a Hindu or Muslim. We are just going by what he said.

Is this not politics of religion?

We don't indulge in politics of religion. We do politics of development. Our only religion is humanity.

OVERCROWDED TRAINS

For migrants who want to vote, journey home has many obstacles

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

SURENDRA BHAGAT (30), a painter in Uttam Nagar, Friday boarded a train to his village in Bihar's Siwan district. Unable to get a seat confirmation, he said he was ready to spend nearly 16 hours inside the train's wash-room to reach his destination. All so he could vote.

Bhagat is one of thousands of migrant labourers taking overcrowded trains, often sitting inside or next to bathrooms for hours, just to get to their home state in time.

When *The Indian Express* vis-

ited New Delhi Railway Station on Friday, it found that a majority of commuters — construction workers, rickshaw pullers, street vendors — were heading to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to vote in the sixth and seventh phase of Lok Sabha elections on May 12 and 19 respectively.

"There is very little I can do about not having a seat reserved. The train is packed. But I have a right to vote and it is important that I do. I have to make (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi win," Bhagat said through the window of the toilet, which he would have to share with three other men.

Satender Tiwari (40), head-

ing to Bihar's Gopalganj, also readied to spend a majority of the journey in the restroom. A security guard working in Noida, he said it was difficult to travel in the stench and heat, but it was important for him to cast his vote. "Things will not change according to my liking, but I am satisfied with the government's work... especially the surgical strikes," he said.

Passengers travelling with families were seen quarrelling with ticket checkers after they could not get a seat. The problem seemed to be more acute in general compartments, where women and children were pushing and elbowing their way



Most commuters took trains to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

through a thick crowd to get in.

As per the 2018-19 Economic Survey of Delhi, the estimated population of migrants in the capital has been increasing steadily since 2013. It was estimated to be 1.31 lakh in 2017, the last year for which figures are available, which is an increase of 0.43 lakh from 2014, when the previous general election was held.

Many of those heading home said they will spend the overnight journey crouched on the train gates. Satender Mathur (30) said it would be a difficult journey to Bihar but he had no other option. "We hope the government does something to ad-

dress this overcrowding, along with improving education and jobs for our children," he said.

Amit Kumar (24), who works at a car garage in Gurgaon, was guarding his space next to the train gate, as were others standing behind him. He occasionally made way as more passengers tried to push through.

He said, "I made a reservation in tatkal but couldn't get a reservation even then. That's okay though." He added that his village in Bihar's Siwan district needs regular electricity and better roads. "We also need to make progress in education, which will help Bihar reach greater heights."

Some travellers had made longer journeys from other parts of the country to get to their home states. Brijesh Kumar Verma (26) was travelling with his family from Pune since Thursday to reach their village in Ballia, Uttar Pradesh. He said, "There is a wedding in our house and because of that we will get to vote as well."

Kapil Dubey (31) from Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh was emphatic that those who don't vote shouldn't complain about the government later. "How will capable ministers get elected, how will the country make progress unless we vote," he said.

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SEAT WATCH JHARGRAM VOTING ON MAY 12

After red corridor, Trinamool’s blue, Jhargram sees a bit of saffron

SANTANU CHOWDHURY
JHARGRAM, MAY 10

LIFE, SAID Dhritiparasad Mahato, 24, has changed in Jhargram since Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress (TMC) ended the 34-year Left Front regime in West Bengal in 2011.

“The bloodshed has stopped. People have accepted the change and are now part of the society - they no longer live in fear; they want development,” said Mahato, who works as a group D staff at a cooperative bank in Lalgarh village in Jhargram.

Mahato may have some idea of the bloodshed he was referring to — he is son of Chhatradhar Mahato, who is lodged in Kolkata’s Presidency Jail, convicted along with five others to life imprisonment after a Midnapore court in May 2015 held them guilty under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for alleged links with Maoists.

Once a hotbed of the Maoist movement in West Bengal, Jhargram has seen a saffron surge since last year’s panchayat elections.

Sitting in the family’s two-storey mud house in Lalgarh, once ‘liberated’ by the area’s tribals, ostensibly including his father, Mahato admitted as much. “The BJP has come into prominence here all of a sudden. It is a new phenomenon for the people here,” he told *The Indian Express*.

The TMC, which in 2014 ended the CPI(M)’s 37-year run in Jhargram Lok Sabha constituency — the Marxist party had won all elections since 1977, the year the Left Front formed the government in the state — is facing a close contest with the BJP in all constituencies in the erstwhile Left Wing Extremism-dominated region, colloquially called Jangalmahal - Bankura, Purulia, Medinipur and Jhargram. But none more so than Jhargram.

Subhankar Mahato, secretary of Shahid Parivaar Mancha, a platform for 455 families that lost members - either dead or missing - in Jhargram, may have the answer to that changed political dynamics. “We have lost faith in the TMC government,” Subhankar, 55, said.

SEAT WATCH EAST CHAMPARAN VOTING ON MAY 12

‘Radha Mohan up against rookie, but can’t take it lightly’

SANTOSH SINGH
EAST CHAMPARAN, MAY 10

SEVERAL WORKERS were digging around Kesaria stupa, among the world’s tallest stupas that is believed to have been constructed between 250 BC and 450 AD. Digging resumed last December after it was stopped in 2004. Local residents believe that if the site is developed, it could be one of the biggest tourist centres in Bihar. However, successive governments at the Centre and local MPs seem to have shown little interest. Current BJP MP Radha Mohan Singh does get credit for renewing digging at the site, but it could be too late to win him some votes.

East Champaran Lok Sabha constituency is witnessing a keen contest between five-time BJP MP and Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh and Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) candidate Aakash Singh, son of former Union minister and Congress’s Rajya Sabha MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh.

Aakash decided to join politics from East Champaran seat, which won by his father in 2004 as an RJD nominee. Radha Mohan, who



Dhritiparasad Mahato, the son of Chhatradhar Mahato, at his house. Partha Paul

JHARGRAM

2014 LS POLLS

TMC’s Uma Soren	54.6% votes
CPI(M)’s Pulin Bihari Baske	26.5%
BJP’s Bikas Mudi	9.74%
Cong’s Anita Hansda	3.22%

2009

CPI(M)’s Pulin Bihari Baske	56.9%
Cong’s Amrit Hansda	26.4%
JKP(N)’s Chunibala Hansda	5%
BJP’s Nabendu Mahali	4.7%

He explained: “We had sought death certificates for 78 people who are still missing, but it was not done. About 120 tribal people were killed in state-sponsored atrocities. The families neither received government jobs nor compensation. The TMC did not raise these issues either in Vidhan Sabha or Lok Sabha. Instead, they gave jobs to the murderers. The CPI(M), too, did not address our problems.”

BJP leaders, he said, “approached” them and promised to address their issues in Parliament. “We have decided to give them

a chance; we are fed up with both TMC and CPI(M).” Subhankar said.

Shahid Parivaar Mancha is known to have nearly 50,000 members in Jhargram district.

Although violence has ended in Jhargram, anger among the affected families remain. And it is here that the BJP has done exactly what the TMC did before coming to power in 2011 - reaching out to the affected people.

“We have tried to understand their problems,” BJP’s district secretary Deep Kumar Bera said. “They have been denied their rights by both the Left Front and the TMC governments. Mamata Banerjee says Jangalmahal is smiling, but the ground reality is different.... People are aligning with us to find an alternative.”

In 2014, TMC’s Uma Soren had bagged a massive 54.6-per cent of the votes. But allegations of corruption against her forced the party to field Birbaha Soren, a young school-teacher with a clean image.

“People misunderstood us in the panchayat polls; that’s why we lost their support,” Birbaha maintained. “They were not happy with the sitting MP due to corruption allegations.... People are now coming back to us. The panchayat result will not have any impact now.”

While TMC leaders point at the Banerjee

EXPLAINED E.

BJP on a high after rural polls

LAST YEAR’S panchayat election results may vindicate the BJP’s expectation at springing a surprise in Jhargram. The saffron party won 35 of 79 gram panchayats and two out of nine panchayat samitis in the district. The party won two seats in the 16-member zilla parishad, making it the BJP’s second-best performance in panchayat polls in the state after Purulia district. Overall, BJP received 39 per cent votes in Jhargram.

government’s many schemes - and the decision to form Jhargram as a separate district in 2017 by bifurcating West Midnapore district as an effort to intensify development — BJP candidate Kunar Hembram, an engineer who studied at IIT-Kharagpur, accused the state administration of denying people benefits of many Central government schemes.

“The state government has constructed several roads here but has not solved the problem of drinking water availability,” he said. “People here have not received benefits from the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana and other schemes. They are not happy with the TMC government and want a change.”

Despite fielding firebrand leader Deblina Hembram, the CPI(M), having seen its support base wane over the years, may play a limited role this time. “It will be a tough fight but we are ready to give our best. Our strength lies in people’s struggle and we are fighting for their rights,” Hembram said.

winning. His father has already visited us. So has Radha Mohan. People are divided.”

At neighbouring Hardia village, some Grand Alliance workers were discussing how Mokama’s Independent MLA Anant Singh, who faces criminal cases, moving in Motihari might not benefit RLSP. “There was no need to call Anant to consolidate Bhumihar votes. Some Bhumihars have taken strong exception to it,” said a Congress worker.

There were signs of a split in Kushwaha votes. Awadhesh Kushwaha from Kobeya village under Harsiddhi Assembly segment said: “Both Central and state governments have done good workers for farmers. Most people are still with NDA, some people could vote on caste lines.”

For Radha Mohan, winning the seat is a matter of prestige. All eight North Bihar seats were won by the NDA in 2014. A senior BJP leader said: “Radha Mohan is up against a rookie, but he cannot afford to take it lightly, more so when he announced this as his last electoral battle.”

While Radha Mohan has been playing up the Modi factor, Aakash has been invoking his father’s association with Motihari.

SEAT WATCH VIDISHA VOTING ON MAY 12



Former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan at a rally for Ramakant Bhargav. Express

BJP faces infighting in stronghold of three decades, Cong upbeat

MILIND GHATWAI
VIDISHA, MAY 10

REPRESENTED BY External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in the last two Lok Sabhas and earlier by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Vidisha parliamentary seat has been a BJP stronghold for three decades irrespective of the party in power in Madhya Pradesh.

Spread over Vidisha, Sehore, Raisen and Dewas districts, Vidisha Lok Sabha constituency includes Budhni, which Chouhan has represented in the Assembly since 2006. After Swaraj opted out of the contest this year on health grounds, there was speculation that the BJP might field Chouhan’s wife Sadhna, but that did not happen.

Considered a high-profile seat in 2014 because of perceived differences between Swaraj and then prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi, Vidisha has now lost its shine. Cooperative sector leader Ramakant Bhargav is contesting his maiden election on a BJP ticket against the Congress’s Shailendra Patel, who lost the recent Assembly election from Ichchawar in Sehore district.

Although the BJP won six of eight seats that make up Vidisha parliamentary constituency in the recent Assembly elections, it suffered a reversal in Vidisha Assembly seat, a citadel it had held for more than four decades.

BJP candidate for Vidisha Assembly seat Mukesh Tandon, who is considered close to Chouhan, blamed his loss on sabotage.

“The parliamentary seat is synonymous with Shivraj Singh Chouhan and nobody can defeat the BJP,” Tandon insisted while overseeing preparations for yet another visit by the former CM to Vidisha town. “I used to look for excuses to transfer money to farmers’ accounts, but this government (Congress) has not only not kept its promise of loan waiver but also taken away the benefits they enjoyed,” he said on Thursday, appealing to the audience not to repeat the “mistakes” of 2018.

Congress MLA from Vidisha Shashank Bhargav said his party was in a better position to win because there was little development when Swaraj was MP.

“Whatever she did was sanctioned during UPA rule,” he claimed, adding that the Congress government in the state fulfilled 83 promises in 76 days.

“Secular people no longer get swayed by

VIDISHA

2014 LS POLLS

BJP’s Sushma Swaraj	66.55% votes
Cong’s Laxman Singh	28.29%

2009

BJP’s Sushma Swaraj	78.80%
SP’s Chaudhary Munawwar Salim	8.70%

emotional issues because they know Narendra Modi diverts attention from real issues,” he said.

The PM had addressed a rally in Vidisha during the Assembly elections, but the BJP lost the seat. Shashank claimed he won even though no big Congress leader addressed a rally there.

However, more than the Congress, it’s the Opposition BJP that is not confident about its leaders putting their differences from Assembly elections behind.

Former finance minister Raghavji, who had been Vidisha MP as well as a legislator, said, “It’s a close contest. The fortress is crumbling. If you deduct the Modi factor, the BJP will find it difficult to retain the seat.”

The BJP veteran, who had sought a ticket for his daughter, accused Chouhan of poor candidate selection. “No one knows him. He was not even a councillor,” said Raghavji about Ramakant, the BJP candidate for Vidisha.

Ramakant was nominated by Chouhan as chairman of the state marketing cooperative federation. Raghavji said Chouhan was going the extra mile because he knew it would be difficult for Ramakant to pull off a win on his own.

The BJP is seeking votes in the PM’s name rather than its candidate. In rural areas, however, it changes the pitch to the alleged failure of farm loan waiver.

BJP district vice-president Ram Raghuvanshi summed up the campaign theme: “When the Congress government could not waive your loans despite promising it before elections, how do you expect the party to transfer Rs 72,000 per year to your account when it won’t come to power?”

The BJP leader, however, admitted that he himself had applied for loan waiver: “What is wrong in applying for a government scheme? Did we pass on benefits only to BJP people when we were in power?”

Azad’s pitch for Dhanbad: 1983 World Cup win, NYAY and ‘maach bhaat’

ABHISHEK ANGAD
DHANBAD, MAY 10

IN THE sweltering heat at a modest gathering in Bokaro’s Mango panchayat, which falls under the Dhanbad Parliamentary constituency, cricketer-turned-politician Kirti Azad exits his SUV and makes his way to the chairs among the lower rung of the Mahagathbandhan functionaries.

Wednesday was the first time the Congress leader addressed the people at this area, and he was dressed in a pink kurta with a stole marked with his party’s symbol.

In his address, the common refrain was that he is a “member of 1983 World Cup winning team” and is the “first Jharkhandi to bring the World Cup” home. He also said that the Congress’s NYAY scheme — the party’s proposed minimum income guarantee scheme — will enable his constituents to eat “maach bhaat (fish curry rice)” and that he should be given a “chance” in this election over the incumbent, BJP’s Pashupati Nath Singh, who he called “inaccessible”.

“Congress ki sarkar apko Nuyantam Ayay Yojna mein apko 72000 salana degi. Aap daal, bhaat, tarkari kha sakege aur thoda sa maach bhaat bhi. Humko khilayenge na, hum rohu, katla, pothia aur jhangli machli bhi khaate hain. Aur humko jhaal khana pasand hai, khilayenge na (Congress’s government will give you Rs



Kirti Azad at a gathering in Bokaro’s Mango panchayat. Abhishek Angad

72,000 under the NYAY scheme. You will eat dal, rice and vegetables and fish curry and rice too. Will you also feed me? I eat rohu, katla, pothia and other wild varieties of fish and I like it spicy... will you feed me?),” said Azad.

Later, in the Sabra market area of the constituency, chairs were arranged and a fresh cloth spread on the table. “Aapka Ashirwad milega na? Hamare number 1 hai (serial number) and uspe vote dijiye, do number aadmi ko mat dijiye (Will I get your blessings this time? I am placed at serial number 1 on the voting day and vote on that. Do not vote for people who are not genuine),” he said.

Around 5.30 pm, Azad reached Pondru

village in Chas block of Dhanbad constituency. He repeated the same thing: the 1983 World Cup, fish curry and rice, Modi’s promise of Rs 15 lakh, and Singh’s inaccessibility, when he was interrupted by a resident.

“Modi ji kiye hain humlog ke liye bahut kuch kiye hain, aur hamare local MP aate hain yahan par. Aap kaise bol rahe hain? (Modi ji has done a lot for us and our local MP has come here many times. How are you saying all this?),” the resident said.

Azad said he hasn’t seen any development in the village and said the man was talking without any logic. Amidst the ruckus he cut short his speech and left for another venue.

‘For BJP workers, country comes first, then party, then self’

With seven seats in Jharkhand set to go to polls over the next two phases, state BJP Lok Sabha elections in-charge **MANGAL PANDEY** speaks to **ABHISHEK ANGAD** on his party’s prospects, rebellion within the BJP over tickets, and key issues of the state missing in the party’s manifesto. Exerpts:

What is your estimate of BJP’s performance this time in Jharkhand?

The BJP and its ally AJSU are working on one front and we will win more seats than the last election (in which they won 12 out of 14 seats). The opposition is scattered everywhere and the JMM, Congress and others were seen fighting. For example, in Chatra they have a mahagathbandhan candidate from Congress and RJD has also fielded its candidate. RJD and Congress did not even share a single platform together. It is evident that there is conflict among them and to fight against the BJP, they have come together, but since all have different ideologies, they cannot form natural gathbandhan. Their issue isn’t development of Jharkhand, but the development of their own families...

Four BJP incumbents in Jharkhand have been denied ticket this time, like Giridih



MP Ravindra Pandey who rebelled. What was the rationale behind it?

The distribution of tickets is not my domain, the central election committee is involved in this. I cannot comment on it. However, the Giridih seat has been given to our alliance and naturally it had to be vacated. Our MP Ravindra Pandey is involved in this. He had publicly said that is not a meeting of two parties, but of hearts.

That happened later, initially he had warned the party to revoke its decision of not giving him the ticket...

I am not aware. It could be before the decision to field AJSU candidate. We have to make Narendra Modi our Prime Minister and therefore everyone

is working in unison.

Incumbent Ranchi MP Ramtahal Choudhary had also rebelled openly and ran as an independent. Do you think it will hurt BJP sentiments as Choudhary, a leader of the Kurmi OBC caste, enjoys a huge support base?

Har kisi ka base BJP hai aur kisi ka koi vyaktigat base nahi hota. BJP mein jo kaam karta hai uske liye desh sabse pehle hota hai, tab party aur phir wo swyem. (Everyone’s base is the BJP and there is no personal base. For any BJP member, country comes first, then the party and then oneself). Ramtahal Choudhary’s exit is his individual choice, no one was affected.

The BJP’s manifesto is said to be silent on people’s issues like reported starvation deaths, Aadhaar linkage to the PDS, and pension.

People who say this want to create a (hostile) environment against us and spread negativity. Electricity has reached in villages, gas connection has reached to every colony of villages in Jharkhand; roads are being constructed in every village.... There has been substantial difference under the Raghubar Das government. Please ask them if there was a road five years before... Naxalism has been controlled in which many young people wasted their lives-we gave them confidence. Aren’t these parametres to development?

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Refrain in Azamgarh: Why stoke 'terror tag' at poll times?

In Lalganj seat, locals seek discourse change: real issues, real son Kaifi Azmi

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
AZAMGARH, MAY 10

IT IS only 15 km between the villages of Sanjarpur and Bakshpur-Mijwan in UP's Azamgarh district. This small stretch, however, has got an entire community caught between ignominy and pride.

Sanjarpur is home to five alleged Indian Mujahideen terrorists who were either killed in the 2008 Batla House encounter in Delhi or arrested thereafter. Bakshpur-Mijwan is the native place of renowned poet and lyricist Kaifi Azmi.

Addressing a rally in Azamgarh on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the district was once synonymous with terror but that terror tag has been removed since the BJP came to power in 2014. "You should remember how these people played with the prestige of Azamgarh," Modi said. "Whenever there was a terror attack, agencies used to reach Azamgarh during their investigation. Why did this happen?"

Muslims in the region are unhappy with politicians stoking the "terror tag" every time Azamgarh goes to the polls. They said it has completely drowned out the fact that Azamgarh also produced an intellectual and poet of Kaifi Azmi's calibre.

Fazal Qarim, who runs a hardware store in Sanjarpur, said: "If the boys are guilty, conduct a trial and hang them. Who cares? My point is, don't demonise everyone. What's the point of talking about that (Batla House) incident every time elections come? Isn't there anything else that people of Azamgarh are concerned about?"

Although in Azamgarh district, both Sanjarpur and Bakshpur-Mijwan are part of adjacent Lalganj Lok Sabha constituency.

Imtiaz Ahmed, a farmer from Sanjarpur, pointed at the newly built road leading to the village and said, "It has broken down within a year. So many farmers are suffering due to low prices of produce and delayed payments from sugar mills. But no one is talking about these real issues."

Mohammed Naziruddin added, "They (BJP) are blaming others for maligning Azamgarh but have themselves given ticket



Yogi Adityanath with BJP's Lalganj candidate, Neelam Sonkar, in Azamgarh Thursday. The CM has been focussing on Azamgarh's tryst with terror. PTI

to a terror accused (Pragya Thakur) in Bhopal. So aren't they maligning Bhopal? To be honest, the administration in the present regime is not that bad, but the kind of atmosphere being created for votes is regrettable."

Sanjarpur is a big village with close to 8,000 residents, predominantly Muslims. "These four-five boys (alleged IM terrorists) do not represent Sanjarpur, let alone whole of Azamgarh," Fazal Qarim said. "Why isn't anyone talking about how the business is still reeling under the effects of demonetisation? I have still not recovered. My complaint is not just with the BJP - even Akhilesh Yadav is not talking about real issues."

Akhilesh, the SP chief, is the SP-BSP-RDL alliance's candidate from Azamgarh, where the BJP has fielded Bhojpuri actor Dinesh Yadav 'Nirahua'. In Lalganj, BJP's sitting MP Neelam Sonkar faces the alliance's Sangeeta Azaad and Congress's Pankaj Sonkar.

At Bakshpur-Mijwan, Kaifi Azmi's home 'Fateh Manzil' saw a congregation of villagers from all faiths on Friday morning to pay homage to the poet on his death anniversary.

"We had organised a small function for people to pay their respect to Kaifi-sahib. He is highly respected here. The Azmis have also done a lot for the village," said Gopal, Fateh Manzil's caretaker.

Bilal Ahmed, a youth from the village,

pointed out that much before the Batla House encounter, Kaifi Azmi had made Azamgarh famous. "Shouldn't politicians talk about him when referring to Azamgarh? Thanks to him and his daughter, (actor) Shabana Azmi, Mulayam Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav would regularly come to the village. They also carried out much development work here."

Jairam Prajapati, whose nephew Ram Milan is the village pradhan, agreed. "Thanks to Kaifi-sahab, Mijwan today has a college, a computer training centre and all pucca roads. This year we even won Swachh Bharat Award and Mijwan was declared open defecation-free. He (Azmi) always promoted education and encouraged people to achieve bigger things - he went the extra mile to promote communal harmony, organising Ramila in the village, which still continues."

The village has two parts, Mijwan and Bakshpur. Azmi lived, and died, in Mijwan in his later years.

Asked about voting preferences in the village, Prajapati said his loyalties lie with the SP as a mark of gratitude.

Bilal Ahmed only quoted Kaifi Azmi: "Itne baazu itne sar, gin le dushman dhyani se; haarega wo har baazi jab, khelein hum jee jaan se (There are so many arms and heads, count them carefully, Enemy; he will lose every battle if we play our hearts out)."

SEAT WATCH SULTANPUR VOTING, MAY 12



Sitting MP Varun Gandhi campaigns for mother Maneka in Sultanpur. Express

Slain officer's wife skews alliance chances of OBC votes against Maneka

MAULSHREE SETH
SULTANPUR, MAY 10

ABUTTING AMETHI and close to the other Gandhi family bastion, Rae Bareilly, Sultanpur is shaping up as an interesting poll battle.

Union minister Maneka Gandhi, mother of sitting BJP MP Sultanpur Varun Gandhi, is the BJP candidate. Former MLA Chandrabhadra Singh, alias Sonu Singh, known as a *baahubali* (strongman), who is contesting on a BSP ticket as a candidate of the SP-BSP-RDL alliance, is expected to be her main opponent, even as Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra held a roadshow on Thursday to drum up support for her party's candidate, Sanjay Singh, popularly known as "Raja of Amethi" who won the seat in 2009.

But the entry of Kamla Yadav, given a ticket by former SP leader Shivpal Yadav's Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (PSP), has made the contest skewed for Singh.

Singh, along with his brother, was once accused in the murder of revenue inspector Ram Kumar Yadav, Kamla Yadav's husband. That was in 2010, when Mayawati was the CM and Singh was the BSP MLA from Isauli.

While the alliance hopes Singh will give a direct fight to Maneka, consolidating votes of both upper castes, especially Thakurs, and OBC, Dalit and Mulsim communities, Kamla's entry has disturbed the equations. Kamla is telling the people, "Jo hamare samaj ka netritva karte hain unhone beeson crore mein Sultanpur ka ticket gunda-mafia ko de diya... Kyaa gunda-mafia Sultanpur se saansad bagega? (Leaders of our community sold the ticket to a gunda-mafia for Rs 20 crore. Will a gunda become the MP from Sultanpur?)"

The "community leaders" was a reference

SULTANPUR	
2014 LS POLLS	
BJP's Varun Gandhi	42% votes
BSP's Pawan Pandey	23%
SP's Shakeel Ahmed	23%
Cong's Ameeta Singh	4%
2009	
Cong's Sanjay Singh	42%
BSP's Mohd Tahir	28%
SP's Ashok Pandey	15%
BJP's Surya Bhan Singh	6%

to the SP leadership.

While she also takes on Varun Gandhi - "if the son had worked hard he would not have left the seat for his mother," she said at one meeting - her main target is BSP's Singh. Campaigning for her, Shivpal's son Aditya Yadav, general secretary of PSP, also targeted the alliance: "A gathbandhan (alliance) is firmed up on the basis of ideology and issues. Here, the alliance is of greed for government."

At a local tea shop, Jai Singhpur resident Anil Kumar Mishra, who works in the Electricity Department, said, "The fight here is between BJP and the alliance. While Thakurs will largely vote for Sonu Singh, a section of OBCs, mainly Yadavs, are veering towards Kamla Yadav out of sympathy. She may not get a large chunk of votes but will take a share off Sonu's. So he is banking largely on Muslim, Dalit and Thakur votes."

Mishra also said many people in the village have received Rs 2,000 as part of the Centre's farmers' scheme, and are "ready to vote for PM Narendra Modi to continue it".

Panel directs police to arrest Mamata nephew's BJP rival for 'molesting minor'

All a conspiracy by Trinamool, they know they will lose, says BJP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, MAY 10

THE WEST Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights has directed West Bengal Police to arrest the BJP candidate for Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha seat, Nilanjan Roy, for allegedly molesting a minor. It has also written to the Election Commission for action in the matter.

The alleged incident took place on April 26, when the minor had reportedly gone to meet Roy. Her family lodged a complaint with Falta police station. However, as there was no arrest despite starting a case under POCSO Act, the minor's father approached the Commission.

BJP candidate Roy (43) is pitted against sitting Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek



Nilanjan Roy

Banerjee — Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's nephew — from Diamond Harbour seat, which votes on May 19.

Chairperson of the Commission Ananya Chatterjee told *The Indian Express*, "We received a complaint. The victim is a minor. Her father lodged a complaint with the police. Though they registered a case and recorded the statement of the victim under Section 164, the accused was not arrested. We have asked police to immediately arrest the accused."

She added, "We have also written a letter to the EC asking it to take action within 24

hours."

Roy could not be contacted. Avijit Das, BJP district president of South 24 Parganas (West), said, "Do you believe that an election candidate will do such a thing? This is all a conspiracy by TMC. They know they will lose. They are using the administration and police against us. They have slapped so many cases against me and other leaders."

BJP national secretary Rahul Sinha said, "I am not aware of the case. Therefore I cannot comment."

According to the police, an FIR was lodged and Roy was booked under POCSO Act for allegedly sexually abusing and outraging the modesty of a minor.

"We have done a medical examination and the statement of the victim has been recorded under Section 164. We are investigating the matter," said a senior police officer.

Bharati Ghosh detained after Rs 1 lakh seized from her car

SANTANU CHOWDHURY
KOLKATA, MAY 10

THE ELECTION Commission (EC) has sought a report from the district magistrate in West Bengal's West Midnapore regarding the detention of former IPS officer and BJP candidate from Ghatal, Bharati Ghosh, for nearly four hours after police seized Rs 1.13 lakh from her vehicle on Thursday.

According to a senior police officer of West Midnapore district, officers seized the cash from Ghosh's vehicle after she failed to give an explanation on why she was carrying such a large sum of cash just days before Ghatal constituency votes.

An EC official said any individual, be it a candidate or a party leader, is permitted to carry Rs 50,000 cash during elections. "If any person carries more than Rs 50,000, he/she will have to declare the source and utilisation of the money. If not, the cash is seized and sent to the income tax department..." the official said.

West Midnapore District Magistrate P Mohangandhi said, "There was a specific complaint on this. We have submitted a re-



Former IPS officer Bharati Ghosh

port to the EC."

Ghosh, however, denied the allegations and also claimed that she was only carrying Rs 50,000. "I was carrying only Rs 50,000. My convenor and driver were in my car. My convenor had around Rs 49,000 with him and the driver was carrying Rs 13,000. I have a bank statement detailing the date and the branch from which the amount was withdrawn. I did not sign on seizure list as I did not feel it was right," she told mediapersons.

"The money was for meeting my personal expenses and the TMC's allegations are false. And the amount I had in my bag did not violate any norm of the Election Commission's model code of conduct," Ghosh claimed.

Sources said the police registered a suo motu case against Ghosh under IPC section 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty).

Mamata says BJP using hawala route to 'give money to voters'

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday accused the BJP of using the 'hawala route' to distribute money among voters.

Addressing an election rally at North 24 Parganas district's Ashoknagar, Banerjee said, "Yesterday you saw that one BJP candidate was caught with crores of rupees. Today I also heard that some leaders who are given protection by CRPF and CISF.... the money is being transported in police vehicles under Z-plus security and is changing hands through the hawala route among the people... This money is being distributed to miscreants who are asked to secure votes and provide drink and meat to poor people. Is this a way to contest an election?"

By 'crores of rupees', Banerjee was referring to BJP's Ghatal candidate Bharati Ghosh. On Thursday, police had seized Rs 1.13 lakh in cash from her car in West Midnapore district.

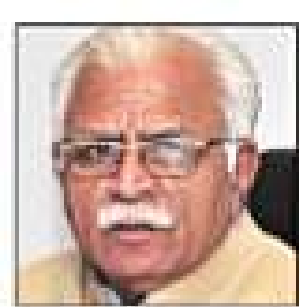
"This operation is being carried out by BJP during the night when campaigning is over. It is surprising that no enforcing agency is taking any action. We need to keep a watch on this," Banerjee said. **ENS**

After chopper trouble, Khattar moves HC to spend night at Jind

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, MAY 10

A PIQUANT situation arose Friday evening, when Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had to knock the Punjab and Haryana High Court's doors to spend the night in Jind after a private helicopter that he took to the district for addressing a rally in Sirsa couldn't take off for Chandigarh because of the inclement weather.

Friday was the last day of campaigning for the May 12 Lok Sabha polls. The model code of conduct mandates that once the campaigning comes to an end at 6 pm, political functionaries who have come from outside the constituency should return immediately.



Manohar Lal Khattar

Khattar proposed to travel back to Chandigarh via road, intending to make a halt at Narwana falling midway between Mandi Dabwali and Chandigarh, but the district election officer-cum-deputy commissioner, Jind said the CM could not halt at any place, including a private place in Narwana, citing provisions of model code of conduct.

Following this, Rajneesh Garg, ADC to CM, through Advocate Deepak Balyan moved Punjab and Haryana High Court in the evening, seeking directions to the EC to allow Khattar to take a halt in Jind district. Allowing CM to stay in Jind, the bench in its order said that it was a fit case where "law does not enforce impossibilities".

EC issues Sidhu with showcause notice

New Delhi: Congress leader and Punjab minister Navjot Singh Sidhu was issued a show-cause notice by the Election Commission (EC) on Friday for his remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a public meeting in Bhopal on April 24.

At the meeting Sidhu, had referred to Modi as "Rafale ka dalaal" and "rashtra drohi", which the EC felt is a prima facie violation of the Model Code of Conduct. He has 24 hours to file his reply.

This is Sidhu's second showcause notice this week. He has also been asked to explain similar remarks he made against Modi at a press conference in Raipur recently. **ENS**

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