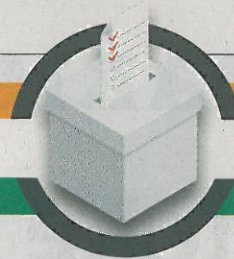


INDIA ELECTIONS 2019



POLL TIDBITS

Cong crying 'me too' on surgical strikes': PM

SIKAR — Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday took a dig at the Congress' claim of six surgical strikes being conducted during the UPA tenure, saying the party is now trying to prove that such military actions were also undertaken during its term, which he dismissed as "strikes carried out on paper while sitting in AC rooms". Addressing a rally in Sikar in Rajasthan, Modi said, "On Thursday, a senior Congress leader claimed that several surgical strikes were carried out during the UPA tenure. "First they (Congress) ridiculed this fact, then people started mocking them, they then protested the facts and people started protesting their claims and now they are saying 'me too, me too', trying to prove surgical strikes were also conducted during their term. "They have also brought out dates of these surgical strikes," he said. — IANS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures as he addresses an election rally ahead of Lok Sabha polls in Bikaner, Rajasthan, on Friday. — PTI

EC relaxes model code of conduct in AP

NEW DELHI — The Election Commission on Friday relaxed the model code of conduct (MCC) in four districts of Andhra Pradesh to facilitate rescue and rehabilitation works in the wake of the extremely severe cyclonic storm, Fani. Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh had requested the EC to relax the provisions of MCC in East Godavari, Visakhapatnam,



SONAKSHI CAMPAIGNS FOR MOTHER: Bollywood actress Sonakshi Sinha (centre) along with Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav (left) during a roadshow in support of her mother Poonam Sinha (right), a Samajwadi Party candidate from Lucknow Lok Sabha seat, in Lucknow. — PTI

Plea in SC seeks direction to debar Rahul from LS polls

NEW DELHI — A petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking direction to the Centre and the Election Commission to debar Congress president Rahul Gandhi from contesting the Lok Sabha election till the issue of his citizenship is decided.

The Home Ministry recently served a notice to Gandhi asking him to clarify within a fortnight his 'factual position' on a complaint questioning his citizenship status.

The plea filed in the apex court has said that the petitioners were 'dissatisfied' with the 'inaction' of the Centre and the poll panel in "deciding the question of volun-



RAHUL PENS LETTER TO AMETHI PEOPLE

Lucknow — Congress President Rahul Gandhi has written an emotional letter to the people of Amethi, asking them to vote for him and promising development of the region as soon as Congress forms government at the Centre.

The letter is addressed to *Mera Amethi Parivar* and says that the BJP has been setting up 'factory of lies' and is distributing 'rivers of cash' to entice voters. He says that the

Pradesh to facilitate rescue and rehabilitation work in the wake of the extremely severe cyclonic storm, Fani. Chief Electoral Officer of Andhra Pradesh had requested the EC to relax the provisions of MCC in East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts. "The Commission has considered the matter and approved the proposal of granting relaxation in the provisions of MCC for all the preventive and relief work associated with the cyclone in the above mentioned districts," it said. Fani, with wind speeds touching nearly 200 kmph, made landfall earlier on Friday on the eastern coast of Odisha, wreaking havoc. It also triggered heavy rains in parts of north coastal Andhra Pradesh, while gusty winds uprooted trees and electricity poles. — IANS

Rahul 'missing' posters appear in Amethi

LUCKNOW — Posters claiming that Congress president Rahul Gandhi was 'missing' from his parliamentary constituency appeared overnight in Amethi, but were pulled down on the orders of the Returning Officer following complaints from the Congress party. The posters carrying photographs of people, apparently from Amethi, asked: "15 years x 365 days = 5,475 days. Where was Amethi MP?" It was not clear who got the posters printed and pasted across the constituency. Interestingly, this was not the first time such posters appeared in Amethi. 'Missing' posters for Rahul Gandhi have appeared several times in his constituency in Uttar Pradesh. — IANS

PM Narendra Modi to release on May 24

MUMBAI — Bollywood biopic *PM Narendra Modi* will hit the theatres on May 24, after the Lok Sabha Election results are announced, the makers said on Friday. The film, on the life of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was stopped just a night before its worldwide release on April 11 when the parliamentary polls kicked off. The Election Commission said that any material which disturbs a level playing field should not be allowed. Producer Sandip Ssingh said: "As a responsible citizen, we respect the law of the country. After a lot of discussions and given the curiosity and excitement about the film, we have decided to release the film immediately after the Lok Sabha Election results (to be announced on May 23). "We will now release our film on May 24." — IANS



Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam resident M K Stalin campaigns for party candidate Saravanan, for the by-election to the Thiruparankundram assembly constituency in Madurai. — PTI

has said that the petitioners were 'dissatisfied' with the 'inaction' of the Centre and the poll panel in "deciding the question of voluntary acquisition of British citizenship" by Gandhi in spite of a November 2015 communication by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy in this regard.

The petitioners -- Jai Bhagwan Goyal and C P Tyagi -- have alleged that since prima facie evidence in this regard has been produced before the Home Ministry and the EC, Gandhi should not have been allowed to contest the ongoing Lok Sabha elections from parliamentary constituencies he has decided to -- Amethi in Uttar Pradesh and Wayanad in Kerala.



Rahul addresses a public meeting ahead of the Lok Sabha polls at Police Ground, in Rewa district, on Friday. — PTI

The plea, filed by advocate Barun Kumar Sinha, also sought a direction to the EC to remove Gandhi's name from "electoral roll till the decision of the question of acquisition of his British citizenship".

The plea was mentioned for urgent listing before a bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi.

The lawyer appearing for the

petitioners told the bench, also comprising Justices Deepak Gupta and Sanjiv Khanna, that the matter be heard next week.

"We will see," the bench said.

In a recent letter to Gandhi, the Home Ministry had said it has received a representation from Swamy in which it has been brought out that a company named Backops Limited was reg-

says that the BJP has been setting up 'factory of lies' and is distributing 'rivers of cash' to entice voters. He says that the strength of Amethi lies in its honesty, integrity and simplicity. — IANS

istered in the United Kingdom in 2003 with Rahul Gandhi as one of its directors.

The Home Ministry had said Swamy's letter mentioned that in the British company's annual returns filed on October 10, 2005 and October 31, 2006, Rahul's date of birth has been given as June 19, 1970 and had declared his nationality as British. — PTI

Nationalism is about loving the people, says Priyanka

RAE BARELI — Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi hit out at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over its poll campaign centred around nationalism, and said that the government needed to love and respect the people of the country.

"What is the biggest form of nationalism? Keeping the country safe from Pakistan is good. But also keep the farmlands of the farmers safe. Nationalism means loving and respecting the people of the country," Gandhi said while interacting with villagers in her

mother Sonia Gandhi's parliamentary constituency here.

She also taunted the BJP government for turning farmers into 'watchmen' (*chowkidars*) and said that it was busy doing advertisements, while the reality was completely different.

"How many problems do you people face due to stray cattle? Have cow sheds been built as promised? When I visited Faizabad last month, our party candidate showed me a small shed that had been built only recently," Gandhi said. — IANS



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi during an election campaign in Raebareilly district of Uttar Pradesh on Friday. — PTI

Bonded workers rescued after voting awareness campaigners raise alarm

CHENNAI — Authorities in south India rescued dozens of bonded labourers from a farm on Friday after a tip-off from awareness campaigners that they had been banned from voting in a national election.

The campaigners said they were trying to raise awareness of the importance of voting when they realised many migrant workers had not returned to their villages to cast their ballots.

After they raised the alarm 39 people who had been enslaved for a year at a plantation in the southern state of Tamil Nadu were rescued, 17 of them children, officials said.

"We were tipped off by activists who were campaigning to ensure that every citizen casts their vote," said Dhandayuthanpani Somasundaram, the senior government official who led the rescue mission.

"In their testimonies, the workers

39 People who had been enslaved for a year at a plantation in Tamil Nadu were rescued

have said that the owner had promised to let them go back to their villages to vote, but later refused."

India outlawed bonded labour in 1976, but it remains one of the most prevalent forms of human trafficking in the country.

Unscrupulous employers and agents still dupe people into working without pay in fields, brick kilns, rice mills, brothels or as domestic workers to pay off debts.

In these elections, some have been allowed to go home and vote, but wives and children have been kept as collateral by employers to ensure the worker returns

Umi Daniel, regional head of Aide et Action International

Campaigners said many had been unable to vote in the staggered general election that began on April 11 and concludes on May 19.

"When we started the poll campaign, the idea was to encourage people in the tribal belts to vote," said Kandasamy Krishnan, secretary of the National Adivasi Solidarity Council, which works on tribal rights.

"It was during this process that

we found many villages had locked doors and realised that people who had migrated to work had not yet returned." The hunt for missing voters led Krishnan and his team to sugarcane and banana plantations where families had been working as bonded labourers.

Somasundaram said each family was working to pay off a debt of Rs25,000 (\$360) and had not been allowed to leave the farm even to cast their vote.

"It has been a challenge to get migrant workers back to their villages to cast their vote," said migrant rights expert Umi Daniel, regional head of Aide et Action International, a Swiss-based charity.

"In these elections, some have been allowed to go home and vote, but wives and kids have been kept as collateral by employers to ensure the worker returns." — Reuters