

Top BJP leaders meet, discuss Ayodhya verdict

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /- Top BJP leaders today discussed the political and legal implications of the Supreme Court verdict on the Babri mosque demolition. The meeting came as a setback to the party's sidelined veterans including J. K. Advani, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president Amit Shah, union ministers Arun Jaitley, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari and M. Venkaiah Naidu were huddled for two hours at Modi's residence. But a senior party leader played down the meeting's significance, saying it had a number of issues, including the Kashmir crisis, on its agenda. The meeting was held against the backdrop of the apex court verdict allowing the CBI to put Advani, 89, Murlidhar Manohar, Joshi, 83, and Uma Bharti, 57, on trial after restoring the criminal conspiracy charges against them.

A senior leader insisted that it was a pre-scheduled meeting. It is understood that the apex court verdict and its implications - political as well as legal - were also discussed with the leadership exploring various options to deal with it. Bharti, who had earlier in the day said she would go to Ayodhya tonight, cancelled her visit apparently after being advised by the party leadership. Some BJP leaders said the party would not like the message to go out that the "heroes" of its most resonant Hinduva movement, spearheaded by Advani in early 90s, were tried for criminal conspiracy when it was in power at the Centre as well in Uttar Pradesh. For the record, senior leader and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the party will study in detail the court verdict before offering comments.

Prasad asserted that BJP highly respects its leaders like Advani and Joshi. The party has held the position that the demolition of mosque was not planned but a spontaneous act of agitating 'kar sevaks' and there was no conspiracy behind its razing on December 6, 1992 at the disputed site in Ayodhya. The uneasy relationship that Modi and Shah share with Advani and Joshi also does not help the party. Many critics of the BJP leadership have alleged that the verdict suits the party's interest as it gives them a reason not to consider either of two veterans for the post of the President or the Vice-President. Echoing this sentiment, RJD chief Lalu Prasad, who is Bihar Chief Minister, had ordered Advani's arrest during his 'rath yatra', alleged that it was Modi's "well thought out politics" to rule out Advani's name for the President's post. Today's court order that the trial be completed in two years means that a verdict in the case will come around the time of the next Lok Sabha polls due in 2019, and may result in bringing back BJP's core issue of Ram temple construction into limelight. (PTI)

Revolt first success in 'dharma yudh' against Sasikala: OPS

CHENNAI, APRIL 19 /- Rebel AIADMK leader and former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam today described the ministers' revolt against the rival Amma faction leader TTV Dinakaran as the "first success" of his "dharma yudh" against V. K. Sasikala. Panneerselvam said he had launched the 'dharma yudh' with the help of his supporters, including MPs and MLAs, in an effort to ensure that the AIADMK did not go into hands of Sasikala's family. He was reacting to the ministers' decision late last night to keep away Sasikala, Dinakaran and their families from the AIADMK and the affairs of its government. Party founder MG Ramachandran (MGR) and late Chief Minister Jayalalitha had steered the party as a people's movement, he told reporters here. "After Amma's (Jayalalitha) death, the party went into the hands of Sasikala's family and to prevent it we had launched a dharma yudh. And yesterday's (minister's revolt) is the first success in that war," he said. The former chief minister said this struggle, launched "as per the wishes and aspirations of people and party cadre," will continue. Panneerselvam had revolted against AIADMK chief Sasikala on February 7 last alleging he was forced to step down from her elevation as Chief Minister. She had been elected AIADMK Legislature party leader on February 5 for this purpose, but her conviction by Supreme Court in the disproportionate assets case dashed hopes of becoming the Chief Minister. To a question on the possible merger of his faction with that of Chief Minister K Palaniswami, he said talks will be held and conclusions arrived at as per the wishes of the members, he said. Beleaguered AIADMK (Amma) Deputy General Secretary T. V. Dinakaran today said none in the party were against him, asserting that all party MLAs stood behind him. "There is no opposition to me in the party," he said, breaking his silence since influential section of ministers revolted against him last night and decided to keep General Secretary V. K. Sasikala and him out of the party. According to 'Jaya Plus' Tamil TV channel, Dinakaran said a "good decision" will be taken in the interest of the party. (PTI)



AIADMK Puratchi Thalavai Amma (PTA) leader and former Chief Minister O Panneerselvam talking to mediapersons, in Chennai.

Bharti dismisses Cong demand for her resignation after court verdict

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /- Union minister and BJP leader Uma Bharti today dismissed the Congress demand for her resignation after the Supreme Court ordered that she be tried for criminal conspiracy in the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition case. There was "no conspiracy" and everything was "in open" in the matter, she told reporters after the apex court verdict. Bharti said she was "proud, unapologetic and unrepentant" for being associated with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and was prepared to get "hanged or be jailed" on the issue of construction of Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya. The firebrand leader said she will leave for Ayodhya tonight to seek Lord Ram's blessings for the construction of a temple. No one can stop its construction, she stressed. "There was no conspiracy, everything was in the open... I was associated with the Ram temple movement with full confidence and pride." The court has said that we be tried for conspiracy. There was no conspiracy. Yes, I was present in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992 (when the disputed structure was demolished). Where does one see any conspiracy? Bharti asked. "I am ready to face whatever punishment it takes for construction of a temple at Ayodhya or be on issue of cleaning of the Ganga, the tricolour or the cow. I have never repented or apologised," she said. Hitting out at the Congress for seeking her resignation, Bharti referred to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and claimed that then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had sought to justify the killings post the assassination of Indira Gandhi. "When thousands of Sikhs died in the riots, Rajiv Gandhi was at the house of her husband, Rajiv was trying to justify the massacre. So, can we say she was part of a conspiracy? The Congress has no moral right to seek my resignation," she said. At the same time, Bharti said she is not the type of a person who wants to stick to any post and recalled she had quit chief ministership in Madhya Pradesh over a decade ago after a court convicted her in a case involving the national flag. "I gave up the chief minister's post after a court convicted me. In this (Ayodhya) case, the trial is yet to begin. The charges are yet to be proved," she said but added, "The post of a minister is too small for me."

EC gets funds for paper trail machines

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /- The Election Commission's plan to go for paper trail machines in the next Lok Sabha polls to add an additional layer of transparency in voting is set to materialise as the government today cleared Rs 3,174 crore for the purpose. A total of 16,15,000 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) machines would be purchased to cover all polling stations. Several parties have been pressing for the use of these machines to dispel doubts that the EVMs are not tampered with. Sixteen parties had recently petitioned the EC to revert to paper ballot system for greater transparency. The BSP, the AAP and the Congress had attacked the EC on the issue of alleged tampering of EVMs. The paper trail machines use a paper trail which helps an elector confirm whether the EVM has faithfully registered the vote has cast to a particular candidate. The funds would be given to the Commission in two instalments - the first of Rs 1,600 crore in this fiscal and the rest in the next fiscal. The clearance was given by the Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi after a brief discussion. The decision was taken in the absence of Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad though the issue relates to his ministry. In a statement, the poll watchdog said it will "closely monitor" the production of VVPATs for timely delivery well before the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. "With this, the Commission will ensure the total compliance of the orders of the Supreme Court (on use of VVPATs) and its commitment to use VVPATs with every EVM at all polling stations in the country in General Elections 2019," it said. Between September, 2013 and March this year, the Commission has written 38 times to the government on

the procurement of VVPATs, according to an affidavit filed by the poll panel in the Supreme Court on the issue. These correspondence include a letter to the Prime Minister by Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi last October and several letters to the law minister. The Supreme Court has asked the Commission to give a tentative timeframe by which it can use VVPAT machines in all polling stations. The EC says two PSUs - ECIL and BEL - need 30 months to produce the over 16 lakh VVPATs. The VVPAT is a machine which dispenses a slip with the symbol of the party for which a person has voted for. The slip drops in a box but the voter cannot take it home. The voters see voter-verifiable paper audit trail slip for seven seconds, which would be an acknowledged receipt for the party they voted for in the election. According to an official

statement, 16,15,000 VVPAT units - at a tentative cost of Rs 9,850 per machine - will come for Rs 3173.47 crore (excluding taxes and freight as applicable). The idea of an additional layer of transparency for the satisfaction of voters in the form of VVPAT was suggested by the panel in its report in October, 2010. Accordingly, introduction of the VVPAT was facilitated by amending the Conduct of Election Rules in August, 2013. Thereafter, 20,000 VVPAT units were purchased by the EC in 2013. Since then, these units are being deployed in elections in select assembly and parliamentary constituencies. Subsequently, order for 67,000 additional units was placed in 2015, out of which 33,500 have been supplied. The Cabinet has so far cleared two tranches of Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 9,200 crore respectively for the Commission to buy new electronic voting machines. (PTI)

Inter-Ministerial Consultations on Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance

19 April 2017, New Delhi



Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, J.P. Nadda unveiling the Delhi Declaration, at the Inter-Ministerial Consultation on Anti-Microbial Resistance Containment, in New Delhi.

India hopeful of Nepal forging consensus on multi-party democracy: Prez

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /- India is hopeful that Nepal will be able to forge consensus through dialogue in its quest for peace, stability and multi-party democracy taking all the sections of its country on board, President Pranab Mukherjee said here in his banquet speech in the honour of visiting Nepalese President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, Mukherjee said India has an abiding interest in the socio-economic development of Nepal. He said, "Nepal is passing through a crucial phase in its quest for peace, stability and multi-party democracy with the aim of consolidating the gains of democracy and achieving economic prosperity." India lauds the enterprise and achievements of the people of Nepal. Their wisdom and resilience will, no doubt, succeed in forging consensus through dialogue and understanding so as to achieve their objectives within a federal and democratic framework, taking all sec-

other countries share. "We believe that the prosperity, security and welfare of our two nations are inter-linked and inter-dependent. India is committed to extending all possible support in accordance with the priorities of the people and Government of Nepal," Mukherjee said in his banquet speech last evening. He said the close bonds of kinship and cooperation between India and Nepal are defined by geography and enriched by common culture and history. The President said age-old fraternal relations between the two nations have been nurtured by successive governments and leaders in both India and Nepal into a dynamic and enriching partnership. "We consider it natural and logical that as neighbours with a unique and exemplary relationship, both nations should continuously build on our many complementary ties, explore all opportunities and pursue new avenues of cooperation to our mutual benefit," he said. The President said both our peoples are opposed to the menace of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. "Development and progress are of utmost importance to us. Towards our common goals, we have been cooperating closely to very successful outcomes," Mukherjee said. He said the visit of Nepal's President has provided an opportunity to reaffirm special relationship between the two countries and to identify ways and means of further enriching multifaceted partnership between them. "She will find one clear and consistent message of India's unequivocal commitment to bilateral cooperation and friendship with Nepal. India also seeks to advance our common interests through regional and sub-regional cooperation based on respect and sensitivity to each other's interests and concerns," he said. (PTI)

200 KVs, 125 Navodaya Vidyalayas running headless: report

NEW DELHI, APR 19 /- At least 200 Kendriya Vidyalayas and 125 Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country have no principals, as per a report submitted to the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD). The report also highlights shortage of over 10,000 teachers, including those for primary classes, in KVs. The revelation comes against the backdrop of demands from aspiring teachers and education stakeholders for filling up vacant positions in various institutions including the prestigious IITs and central universities such as the DU. According to the annual report for the year 2015-16, submitted by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, which manages operations of the KVs across the country, out of total 1,081 posts for principals, 200 of them are vacant while position of Vice-Principals is vacant in 113 schools. "10,039 teaching posts including TGTs, PGTs and PRTs are also vacant in Kendriya

Vidyalayas besides 14,476 non-teaching posts", the report pointed out. At present 1,142 Kendriya Vidyalayas are functioning under the KVS, including three abroad - Moscow (Russia), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Tehran (Iran) - with an aim to cater to the educational needs of children of transferable central government officials including defence and para-military personnel by providing a common programme of education. The Union Cabinet had last month approved setting up of 50 new Kendriya Vidyalayas and creation of 650 regular posts to provide quality education to around 50,000 students. Similar faculty shortage has been pointed out in the annual report of the Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti which supervises functioning of the Javahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs) in the country. JNVs are government-funded residential schools set up in each district of the country for gifted students. (PTI)

PM to have packed schedule of foreign tours from next month

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19 /- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have a packed schedule of foreign visits from next month till July, starting with a trip to Sri Lanka. Besides Sri Lanka, he is slated to travel to the US, Israel, Russia, Germany, Spain and Kazakhstan, officials told PTI here today. Modi will visit Sri Lanka in the second week of next month, mainly to participate in the celebrations marking the UN Vesak Day, the most important in the Buddhist calendar. The International Day of Vesak Celebrations, to be held in Colombo from May 12 to 14, will include an International Buddhist Conference in which over 400 delegates from more than 100 countries will participate. "The Indian Prime Minister has confirmed his visit," Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice Wejeyadasa Rajapakse told reporters in Colombo today. During the trip, his second to Sri Lanka since becoming the Prime Minister, Modi is also likely to visit Jaffna and Kandy, the officials said. Modi had visited the country earlier in 2015. Vesak, the most important day in the Buddhist calendar, marks commemoration of Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passing away. After Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister will be trav-



elling to St Petersburg in Russia to attend the St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) to be held from June 1-3. Along with that, he is expected to travel to Germany and Spain on bilateral visits, the officials said. Subsequently, Modi will be visiting Kazakhstan to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit to be held in Astana on June 7-8. Significantly, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is also expected to attend the Summit of the SCO, a grouping which includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Thereafter, the Prime Minister is slated to travel to Hamburg in Germany to attend the G-20 Summit scheduled to take place on July 7-8, the officials said. He will also be travelling to the US and Israel, for which dates are being finalised, the officials said. (PTI)

Lalu accuses PM of "crafting" Advani trial

PATNA, APRIL 19 /- RJD chief Lalu Prasad today alleged that the CBI does what the government desires. The RJD chief claimed. Prasad was reacting to the apex court order today allowing the CBI plea and restoring criminal conspiracy charges against Advani, Murlidhar Manohar, Joshi and Uma Bharti. "The BJP makes no difference between itself and others while playing dangerous politics against anyone considered opposed to Modi," he claimed. Speaking to reporters, Prasad also demanded a probe into why BJP veteran A. B. Vaidya had become physically incapacitated? "The RJD chief also sought to turn the tables on the BJP, claiming if Union Minister Rajnath Singh and other NDA leaders did not attend Monday's programme in Patna to honour freedom fighters due to the presence of 'convict' Lalu Prasad, "then how could they make Kalyan Singh a Governor?" The apex court in its order had today noted that Rajasthan Governor Kalyan Singh enjoys Constitutional immunity and can be tried only after he ceases to hold the office. Singh was the chief minister struck out in circulation as a probable for the post of President, Modi through well-thought-out politics struck out by the (Advani's name)," he al-

Dhinkaran questions need for lookout notice

CHENNAI, APRIL 19 /- AIADMK leader TTV Dinakaran today virtually questioned the need for the lookout notice issued by the Delhi Police in a bribery case, saying how could he flee the country after being "in court" for 20 years. "My passport is in court for 20 years. How can I escape from India," he told reporters here. He was apparently referring to the pending FERA cases against him in court where he is connected with which he has surrendered his passport. The Delhi Police issued the lookout notice against Dinakaran in connection with the case registered against him for allegedly attempting to bribe an EC official to get the coveted 'two-leafes' symbol for his faction. The "preventive" action comes in the wake of inputs that Dinakaran was an NRI and could try to flee, police said. The notice was issued at a time when Dinakaran has been virtually ousted as Deputy General Secretary of the V K Sasikala faction of AIADMK following a revolt by senior ministers.