

BJP to repeat MCD poll strategy for civic elections in UP?

LUCKNOW, APRIL 29 /- Having installed its government in Uttar Pradesh with a thumping victory the BJP is next faced with the daunting task of improving its track record in the state civic polls and realise the resolve of making itself a pan-India party from panchayats to Parliament. Buoyed by its victory in the MCD polls, party insiders say the BJP may partially adopt the strategy of its Delhi unit that emerged victorious in the face of a potential anti-incumbency factor, which may play spoilsport in UP. Civic body polls in UP are due in a couple of months. According to Ashwini K Tiwari, the Delhi unit spokesperson of the BJP, in the MCD elections of 185 corporators, as many as 181 are first timers. The party gave tickets to 262 first timers in the MCD polls out of the 270 seats it contested, Upadhyay said. He said the average age of the newly-elected BJP corporators in Delhi is 39, while the youngest being only 25. A senior UP BJP leader associated with the preparation of the civic elections in the state said the party has started its preparations for the civic polls. "It will give priority to youngsters and may adopt the MCD poll strategy to not only counter the anti-incumbency factor, but also better its tally," the leader said. He went on to say that if the party decides to follow the MCD poll strategy, then many sitting corporators who had been winning in the past few elections may not get tickets this time. Another party leader felt that the "formalities of winning-not-getting proved to be successful to great extent in Delhi, and it should be implemented in UP. "Since UP is bigger than Delhi in terms of seats, the Delhi formula will be implemented along with giving tickets to party workers, who enjoy good rapport in their respective wards," the leader said. The BJP emerged as the clear winner in the MCD elections with 184 seats in its kitty, bettering its existing strength of 138. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) came a distant second with 46 seats in all the three Delhi municipal corporations, while the Congress could just manage to win 30 seats and others got 10 seats. The criteria adopted by the BJP in the MCD elections was that ticket was not given to the wife, children or any of party functionaries' family member. Secondly, party office-bearers were given the ticket on the condition that they will have to forego their organisational post, Upadhyay said.

"The BJP also coined its election slogan 'Naye Chehara, Naye Urjaa, Naye Udaan, Dilli maang kamal nishaan' (new energy, new light, Delhi wants lotus symbol) to highlight the theme pertaining to new faces," he said. In the 2012 civic polls held in UP, elections for post of mayor were held in 12 cities (municipal corporation). The BJP registered wins at 10 places, while two independents won in Allahabad and Bareilly. This year, there are 14 cities, where mayoral elections will be held. According to the State Election Commission of UP (which conducts the urban local bodies' polls), of the total 980 corporators in the state spread across 12 municipal corporations, the BJP has won 304 wards, while independents dominated 558 wards. When contacted, UP BJP spokesperson Manish Shukla said, Urban local bodies elections are an important issue for the party and it would take all necessary steps to ensure victory of its candidates.

At the same time, we will try to better our previous tallies," he said. Dilip Srivastava, a former BJP corporator said the results of the MCD elections would certainly act as a morale booster for the party men.

Absence of timely legal help to poor affects credibility: CJJ

NEW DELHI, APRIL 29 /- The credibility of the legal system and the rule of law have come under "severe strain" in the absence of timely help to poor and illiterate Indians. Chief Justice of India J S Khehar said today. The CJJ made the observations while highlighting the importance of Para Legal Volunteers (PLV) who, according to him, enabled ordinary and helpless people to avail the benefits of the legal system for alleviating their sufferings and injustice. "In the absence of timely help to most Indians, the credibility of the legal system and the rule of law come under severe strain," he said, stressing that the poor and illiterate Indians are the main clients of the justice system. Law and Justice Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who also spoke at the two-day National Meet of Para Legal Volunteers here, emphasised the use of technology

in providing access and administration of justice. Inaugurating two-day National Meet, the CJJ said the service to poor was a "super divine duty" being carried out by the volunteers, which was more than the "divine duty discharged by the judges". The last-mile connectivity for a villager under the PLV scheme was not the lawyers but the PLVs working under the competent legal authorities which impart awareness of laws and legal system to them, he said. When the disputes are such that they are beyond the capacity of these volunteers who have basic training in law, they approach the nearest legal services authority for a dispute settlement mechanism like Lok Adalat, mediation or more formal legal remedies. "These volunteers trained under the 2009 para legal volunteer scheme act as filters relating to the number and nature

of disputes that need to be formally and institutionally dealt with by the legal services. Para legal volunteers save time and money of the poor, the official administration and the courts," Justice Khehar said. Praising NALSA's poverty alleviation scheme, he said it ensured that the benefits of various anti-poverty schemes of the central and the state governments actually reach the intended beneficiaries. Emphasising the need for restructuring its approach and design, the CJJ favoured skill-driven PLVs who can properly research and investigate facts or laws related to a case. "In fact, this will develop para legal volunteer as multi skilled individual and enhance his or her performance as the critical interface between the common litigant and the courts by a process of upgradation that opens more opportunity for them," he

said. The Minister emphasised the need for increasing use of technology in the judicial process. "Time is changing fast and with the changing times, we have to change our technology. Technology is a very important tool in the administration of justice." In a country of 125 crore people, 108 crore people have mobile phones, among whom 35 crore have smart phones, which will very fast reach 50 crore figure," Prasad said. He said 113 crore people have Aadhaar cards but refused to speak on it further saying the matter was sub-judice. Noting that good governance can be delivered with the help of technology, he said with government's scheme of common service centre (CSC), people in villages and in small towns could avail digital services like making of ration cards, PAN cards, Aadhaar cards or booking of railway tickets. "We have de-

cid to link the CSC with the access to justice. Now these centres could help Dalit women, Kashmiri women and people from North East to get access to justice," he said, adding that CSCs were being opened in 600 panchayats in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and soon 800 such centres will be opened in Jammu and Kashmir and the North East. Justice Dipak Misra, the executive chairman of NALSA, said this year has been dedicated as the year of excellence to "access to justice through para-legal volunteers." Through these legal volunteers, the poor people of the country will be able to know about government schemes and seek redressal of their grievances," he said. Several Supreme Court judges, high court judges and judicial officers from various trial courts across the country were also present at the event.(PTT)



Uttar Pradesh Governor Ram Naik presenting awards during 2nd UP FLO Women Awards of FICCI Ladies Organisation, in Lucknow.

Link donations to political parties with Aadhaar: Tewari

CHANDIGARH, APR 29 /- Former Union minister Manish Tewari today favoured linking of donations to political parties with Aadhaar in a bid to bring more transparency in political funding. He also voiced that corporates should not be in the business of funding the political process. "Any donation made by any political party needs to have an addressee. Therefore, you need to link every donation to Aadhaar, whether the person is donating Rs 1 in cash or Rs 5,00,000 in cash." As long as there is Aadhaar linkage whereby the source of funding the bail grant to Prajapati by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). Commenting on the

role of corporates in political funding, the Supreme Court advocate said, "Yes, corporates do not have Aadhaar cards. One possibility which is being explored for a long time is with regard to state funding of elections. It is an idea which is worth exploring, but how will one ensure that no private funding takes place." "Corporates are in the business of earning profits for their shareholders. They should not be in the business of funding the political process," he said. The Congress leader, however, emphasised that transparency in political funding could be achieved if political parties were brought within the ambit of the Right to Information Act (RTI). The former Union Minister also described the electoral bonds and restricting cash donations to political parties to Rs 2,000 as "non-starters" because RDI would know who the purchaser of the bond is, and then the govern-

ment will be able to have information regarding where the bond has gone. "The lowering of threshold from Rs 20,000 to Rs 2,000 is nothing at all. It means that the printer will earn more by printing more money. Both these things are completion starters," he said. Notably, to cleanse the political funding system and check black money, the Central government had proposed to restrict cash donations to political parties from individuals to Rs 2,000, while also introducing an 'electoral bonds' scheme. Addressing the

gathering, Sanjay Kumar, Director of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), expressed displeasure over the removal of cap on corporate funding to political parties. "Earlier, corporate could donate up to 7.5 per cent of its average profit of last three years to political parties. Now this cap has been removed and companies can contribute any amount of money. Unfortunately, now money can be returned to companies as expenditure. There can be a nexus between political parties and business houses," he alleged.(PTT)

Farewell to a 'Bebaak' journalist Remembering columnist Nora Chopra together

IPA SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

An audacious journalist, Nora Chopra, was given a loving farewell by colleagues, family and friends at a memorial meeting held at the Delhi Union of Journalists' office on April 27, 2017.

Nora's brother journalist Shahid Abbas described her as a 'bebaak' journalist who set away with the establishment and government officials the most audacious questions. He recalled her early life in Allahabad, her marriage and move to Delhi and her struggles to bring up two children on a freelancer's uncertain income. In the past four years she had developed Parkinson's disease but doggedly carried on her journalism, often typing her pieces on a laptop or dictating them. Nitya Chakraborty recalled her extraordinary

commitment to her work and the discipline with which she sent in her column 'Political Delicacies' to the India Press Agency (IPA) every Thursday. In 15 years, he said, she rarely missed a deadline. He was editing her column on Thursday, April 27 when he first learned of the news that Nora had passed away that day. Journalist Faraz Ahmed, who is Nora's cousin, recalled how they grew up as the children of two brothers, both fiercely nationalist freedom fighters, one of whom joined the Communist Party while the other joined the Congress and then the Socialist Party. Faraz joined journalism and Nora was inspired to take up the profession. He recalled that at different times in their careers they worked together; at one point in 'Meantime' magazine, later with Theleka. "Nora was bubbling with

energy," he said, "she never lost her excitement for journalism, she was always on the ball, for nothing could put her down. Until she was finally laid to rest." Pappi Sriraman said Nora knew the art of conversation and friendship. "She had discussed her plans to write a book but sadly she was unable to finish writing it. DUJ General Secretary Sujata Misra said she would attend meetings, book launches and other events in a wheelchair, undaunted by her illness. She had been invited by S. K. Pandey to read a tribute on behalf of the organisation, saluting Nora Chopra's fighting spirit, her love of the profession, her political savvy, her social commitments, her crusading zeal for the causes that she believed in. She had been a DUJ activist and the organization will miss her contribution, he said. (IPA)

Ganga Cleanliness Pledge Day to be observed on May 2

NEW DELHI, APRIL 29 /- The National Mission for Clean Ganga will observe 'Ganga Cleanliness Pledge Day' on May 2 at various places in the river's basin states to spread awareness and ensure public participation for the programme. The events will be organised in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi, Haridwar, Bithoor and Vidhar, Bihar's Patna and Bhagalpur in Bihar; Sahibganj (Jharkhand) and Kolkata (West Bengal).

Union Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti will attend the events lined up in Vidhar Kuti, Srinagar and Devprayag that day, an official statement said. The pledge day will be organised at 30 other locations later through Ganga Vichar Manch, local NGOs and volunteers in association with the state governments. The government will spread the message also through rallies, shramdaan (labour donation), tree plantation, etc.(PTT)

Need to strengthen global counter-terrorism mechanism: Prez

NEW DELHI, APRIL 29 /- President Pranab Mukherjee has said there is an urgent need to strengthen the global counter-terrorism mechanism so that the menace can be fought jointly by the international community. At a banquet hosted in honour of visiting President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades, Mukherjee said both India and Cyprus suffer from the scourge of terrorism. "This global menace needs to be fought by all civilised societies and countries not just individually, but at a bilateral, regional and global level," he said welcoming the Cypriot president on his first-ever state visit to India. Mukherjee stressed there is an urgent need to strengthen the global counter-terrorism legal framework to combat the scourge of international terrorism. "India seeks to build a broad consensus at the United Nations for finalisation of the draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism that was adopted by the UN Security Council in the United Nations," he said. Mukherjee said India's information technology sector is also the renewable energy, natural gas and hydrocarbons, sustainable tourism, infrastructure and health and wellness sectors are open for partnerships and foreign investment. He said the recent signing of the revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement is a good step in this direction. He expressed confidence that this state visit will result in new initiatives in all these areas of immense potential.(PTT)



bishop Makarios," he said. Mukherjee said India lauds the economic recovery of Cyprus under the leadership of Anastasiades, particularly its return to a positive rate of growth among the fastest in the European Union. In recent years, he said, India has seen rapid economic progress despite the global slowdown and achieved a steady growth rate of about 7 per cent. "We welcome Cyprus to take advantage of our flagship programmes like 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' and join India's growth story," he said. Mukherjee said India's information technology sector is also the renewable energy, natural gas and hydrocarbons, sustainable tourism, infrastructure and health and wellness sectors are open for partnerships and foreign investment. He said the recent signing of the revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement is a good step in this direction. He expressed confidence that this state visit will result in new initiatives in all these areas of immense potential.(PTT)

Judge who granted bail to Prajapati suspended

ALLAHABAD, APRIL 29 /- The judge of a special court who had granted bail to controversial former Uttar Pradesh minister Gayatri Prajapati in a rape and molestation case has been suspended for giving him the relief. The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court had yesterday stayed the bail granted to Prajapati by the Section of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) court judge P Mishra. "Yes, the judge has been suspended and an inquiry ordered," Allahabad High Court registrar D K Singh said. The decision was taken by the Allahabad High Court administration and Mishra would now face departmental inquiry. Prajapati, considered close to SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav, however, failed to walk out of jail as police sought his judicial remand in two other cases. The plea was allowed by the high court.

Prajapati was a minister in the previous Akhilesh Yadav government. The former Samajwadi Party MLA from Amethi had lost the recent election. The POCSO court judge had on Tuesday granted bail to Prajapati and two other co-accused in the rape case and the one related to alleged molestation of the victim woman's minor daughter. However, the grievance proved short-lived as the Yoga Adityanath government moved the high court seeking cancellation of their bail. The order for stay on their bail was passed by Chief Justice Dilip B Bhosale. While seeking cancellation of the former minister's bail application, Advocate General V K Shahi had said Prajapati misled the court as his bail plea claimed no criminal cases were pending against him. The SP leader, he claimed, was facing six criminal cases. The alleged rape of the woman and molestation of her minor daughter had attracted a lot of media attention in the run up to the assembly election. The victim woman from Chitrakoot had approached Gautampalli police station on February 17 alleging that she was raped by Prajapati and his two accomplices for several months. She had alleged that the three also sexually assaulted her minor daughter at Prajapati's residence. Prajapati had gone missing after the election and an FIR was lodged against him on February 27. He was arrested from Ashiyana area of Lucknow on March 15.(PTT)

had been "productive". "Armenia and Poland are friendly countries and we were able to regenerate interest in mutual cooperation," he said. To a question on whether India was exploring the potential of working with Armenian innovative projects, the vice president said, "We need to see where and what the innovation is and where it will fit into our requirements." Armenia has been making a mark in areas such as renewable energy and development of vaccines and drugs. On Poland, Ansari said Warsaw had "done its own homework" in identifying India's

Terrorism is pandemic and affects every country: Ansari

of being a seller, it could become an India-based seller, which would give it additional advantages. The Polish side reacted "very positively" to the suggestion, he said, adding that there would be "substantial progress" in an coming day when the Polish President visited India. Poland had identified some markets in Asia as priority markets, and India was one of them, he said. Reacting to a question on India's image abroad, the vice president said multiple images are a fact of life. In this context, he referred to the Indian mission and launch of satellites

for other countries. "A common man looks at our strengths in information technology. Indian IT professionals are present all over the world... We have to take note what ISRO is doing, what IT is doing and what Indian scientific research is doing," he said. Ansari added that India, on the other hand, had to also deal with poverty and inequality. "But despite all that, we have been able to run a democratic system on a monumental scale," he added. Ansari, who reached Warsaw for the two-day visit, arrived in the Polish capital, on April 24, met the

top leadership of the country, including the president and the prime minister. Three agreements were signed in cultural cooperation, youth affairs and the peaceful use of space. In Warsaw, Poland communicated to India that it supported India's permanent membership at the expanded UN Security Council. Ansari met the Indian community in Poland and said India was looking for more business and investments into India. An MoU was signed in the field of agriculture and he inaugurated a new embassy complex in Warsaw.(PTT)