Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan calls women 'good managers'

CHANDIGARH, AUG 12 /--/ Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan today described women as "good managers" even without management degrees and stressed they have the strength to perform both within and outside their homes. The Speaker emphasised that for the development of the nation, it was important that women realise their strength. "When a woman comes out of her home for work, she has to work double. Though men say they are doing as much, I do not feel a man will say with pride that he also works at home," Mahajan said, addressing a women workers' summit organised by Bharat Vikas Parishad here. "I say you (women) are very good managers without taking any management exam. You do not realise you are a good manager, because women themselves say they do nothing. Being a housewife means I am nothing. You first get this thought out of your mind, because you do a lot," said

Mahajan. She praised women for handling their new families after marriage. "You join a new family after leaving your own and not only blend with them but also consider every member as your own. You also adopt their culture... the way you adopt the new family, it looks like you have been doing it for several years," she said.

The way a woman adjusts in a new family and takes care of each and every member, requires management skills, she said. "And you do it without making anybody realise that you are doing it," she said. Mahajan said a parliamentarian once told her that he managed to complete his studies because of the support of his wife. "It is not that men do not recognise women's contribution, but sensitivity is also essential," she said.

Recalling Swami Vivekananda's observation that a bird needs both wings to fly, she said, "If one wing is strong and the other is not, the bird cannot fly." The Lok Sabha Speaker said, "Women are also part of the society and can also give their opinion (on various matters). Unless the mother in a house is intelligent, the family could not be wise." Mahajan underscored the need of women equipping themselves with knowledge to guide their children in selecting the right career. "A mother knows what her child eats and whenever he or she is hungry, the child goes to the mother. I will consider a woman, a successful mother, if her son or daughter seeks her advice for making the right career choice also," she said. "You have the strength to perform because you have the power to recognise what is to be done. You recognise it and perform. You should have self confidence that yes 'I can'," said the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Talking about pilgrimages, Mahajan said a devotee cannot derive real contentment if he or she reaches the temple or shrine through modern means of transport like helicopters. "I do not consider it 'darshan' when we use helicopters to reach a shrine. When we assume big posts, I feel we do not get real 'darshan' of the deity. In 'VIP darshan', we feel that we see the idol, but it's not 'real darshan'. "Because, it is necessary to go through some hardship to reach the doors of the Almighty... Whenever I am provided the VIP facility to undertake a pilgrimage, I feel I do not get blessings that the pilgrims, standing in a queue for hours for their turns, get," she said. (PTI)

Students of St. Xavier's College, Ranchi wave Tricolour, ahead of 72nd Independence Day celebrations, during a programme in Ranchi, Jharkhand on Saturday.

AAP plans to contest in around 100 seats in 2019 LS polls: Sanjay Singh

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) plans to contest the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in a focused manner, restricting itself to fielding candidates in around 100 seats, primarily in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi among the states in north India. This is in contrast with the 2014 general elections, where the party had fielded over 400 candidates across the country, but managed to win just four seats in Punjab. "The party feels that there is no point fighting in all seats. So, plans are to contest around 80 to 100 seats where we are in a better position to influence the results," said AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, who is also the in-charge of party's Uttar Pradesh and Bihar units. Punjab, Haryana and AAP's home turf Delhi will be where the party would focus to win maximum seats in 2019, he said. The party will also field candidates for some Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In Bihar and Uttar Pradesh too, AAP plans to field candidates in some seats. In Uttar Pradesh, the party is looking to contest in 10 to 15 seats, Singh said.

In Delhi, the AAP has announced in-charges for five of the seven Lok Sabha constituencies. They have already actively engaged with local cadre in organising meetings and campaigns there. The fate of two parliamentary constituencies -- New Delhi and West Delhi – for which no one was named as in-charge amid rumours of a tie up with the Congress, is yet to be decided as AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal, during his visit to Haryana recently, ruled out the party's participation in any alliance.

In Punjab, where the AAP managed to win four Lok Sabha seats in the last Lok Sabha elections and is the main opposition in the state Assembly, efforts will be made to enhance the influence of the party, Singh said. "We would like to increase our footprint in Punjab by winning more than four seats, this time," the AAP leader said, adding the party may also contest in some seats in Gujarat where the organisation is strong. Haryana is another state where the AAP aspires to open its account in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Party leaders believe that voters of Haryana, which is home state of Kejriwal and where local leader Navin Jaihind has been involved in grassroots organisational work, are ready to respond favourably to AAP in the coming general elections. (PTI)

EC makes small changes to prevent VVPAT failures

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ A small hood on top of the contrast sensor and paper roll that does not soak humidity are some of the ingenious measures adopted to prevent failure of paper trail machines in extreme conditions, Chief Election Commissioner O P Rawat has said. After a large-scale failure of the VVPAT machines in the recent bypolls to four Lok Sabha seats, including Kairana and Bhandara Gondiya, and 10 assembly seats, the Election Commission's technical expert committee carried out 'root cause analysis'. The committee, Rawat told PTI, found that direct light falling on the contrast sensor of the paper trail machine led to the malfunction. He said the committee also found that a certain type of paper roll soaked humidity, resulting in the failure of the paper to move properly on the spool of the VVPAT machine while printing the results.

"We made simple changes ... a small hood was installed on the contrast sensor so that even if it is placed under direct light, it would not malfunction ... The electronic voting machine (EVM) is an electronic device which does not have issues with heat and humidity but the paper trail machine has electro-mechanical parts which affect its function," he explained. He said for areas with high humidity, the ECIL -- which manufactures the machines -- suggested that EC should procure paper which does not soak humidity. "We have now procured humidity-resistant paper for humid areas," the CEC said. Voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) or paper trail machine is a device which dispenses a slip with the symbol of the party for which a person has voted for. The slip appears on a small window for seven seconds and then drops in a box. But the voter cannot take it home.

The VVPAT are used in all polling stations. But as of now, results of EVMs and VVPATs are matched in one polling station per constituency. There have been demands to increase the number of polling stations where EVM and VVPAT results are matched to dispel fears about electronic voting machines being 'hacked' to favour a particular political party. Rawat said there have been delays in the delivery of paper trail machines as the Technical Experts Committee appointed by it analyses the technology stabilisation issues in the initial batches and incorporates essential design improvements. "This ensures we don't face the problems later," he said. While all required EVMs -- 13.95 lakh ballot units and 9.3 lakh control units -- will be delivered by September 30, 16.15 lakh VVPATs will also be delivered well before the end of November, he added. Over 11 per cent of the 10,300 VVPAT machines across 10 states had developed faults and had to be replaced during the May 28 by-polls. (PTI)

Bouquet, cake and half-day off for ITBP jawans on birthday

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ The ITBP, which mans India's frontier with China, has decided to grant troopers a half-day off and freedom to remain off uniform on their birthday with cake-cutting as part of a new measure to bolster the morale of the personnel who spend considerable time on duty away from home. A beginning was made recently at a number of formations of the 90,000-strong border guarding force. According an order issued by the commanding officer of the 51st battalion of the force, deployed in Punjab's Patiala, the unit notice board will henceforth mention the name of the birthday boy or girl and the personnel will be greeted with a bouquet by a senior official. The unit will celebrate the occasion with a cake-cutting and snacks treat.

The troopers, who will not be in uniform, will also be allowed to wear their best dress and take a half-day off if there are no pressing assignments, the order said. "Happiness increases when we share it. As our jawans have to live away from their families for long owing to the nature of our task, we have decided to make their birthday special," the order accessed by PTI said. "This will boost their morale and enhance camaraderie in the unit," it said. At the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force's 'animal transport' wing in a forward area of Arunachal Pradesh in Lohit district, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Sudhakar Natrajan has issued directions that no birthday will be missed if the trooper is not on leave or assignment and is present in the unit. It recently celebrated the birthday of constables Roshan and Pankaj who turned 28 on August 10. "The aim of this move is to make sure that the jawans do not miss their families and as a result their morale is kept high," a senior official said. Other units of the force across the country have been asked by the ITBP headquarters to undertake these measures as per their convenience and nature of duties and deployment. Natrajan has also begun sending a 'report card' and a personal thank-you note to the parents of the jawans who sent their wards to serve the paramilitary force. The ITBP guards the 3,488-km long Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China apart from rendering a variety of duties in the country's internal security domain, including anti-Naxal operations.(PTI)

'Godmen' readying to contest Assembly polls in MP

BHOPAL,AUG 12/--/ Religious leaders in Madhya Pradesh are preparing to jump into the political fray and contest the state Assembly polls due later this year. This comes against the backdrop of the state government according the Minister of State (MoS) status to five such 'godmen' in April this year. Some of these religious leaders are ready to contest as Independents, if no political party offers them tickets. Swami Namdev Tyagi, popularly called as 'Computer Baba' by his followers, who was accorded the MoS status in April, says he will fight the polls only if MP Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan asks him to do so. "If Chouhanji asks me to fight the Assembly polls, I am ready for it," he told PTI.

However, a source close to Tyagi claimed that he is doing hectic lobbying to contest the election from Indore. Tyagi had announced to take out the 'Narmada Ghotala Rath Yatra' in April this year to expose the alleged scam in planting saplings on the banks of the Narmada river and to demand a ban on illegal sand mining.

But soon after getting the MoS status, he cancelled the campaign, saying the state government had fulfilled his demand to form a committee of saints and seers for protection of the Narmada river. Baba Avdeshpuri (47), who holds a doctorate degree in 'Ram Charit Manas' (an epic poem composed by Tulsidas), is inclined to enter the electoral fray from Ujjain district on the BJP's ticket.

"I am close to the VHP and the Sangh Parivar and have helped the BJP in the past," he claimed. But, Avdeshpuri said he was not going to put pressure on the BJP to give him the ticket. "I am not going to do what some babas did to become MoS. I don't believe in such pressure tactics," he said. He said his followers want him to fight the polls to ensure that encroachments at the site of Simhastha Kumbh Mela held in Ujjain are removed. "So, even if the BJP does not give me a ticket, I am prepared to contest as an Independent candidate," he said. He said the BJP should not forget that its senior leader Uma Bharti (now a Union minister) brought the party to power in Madhya Pradesh in 2003.

"The BJP came to power in MP just because Umaji, the saffron-robed sadhvi, was projected as the chief minister," he said. Religious leader Maharaj Madan Mohan Khadeshwari, 45, also expressed his willingness to contest from Keolari seat in Seoni district as a BJP candidate. "If the BJP doesn't give me a ticket, I am going to fight as an Independent. I am 101 per cent sure of my victory... I have been tirelessly working for the people of Seoni for the last 30 years," he said.

Yogi Ravinath Mahiwale from Raisen district has also started his campaign for the Assembly polls. "Come what may, I am going to contest the election on 'save Narmada' plank as the river is being ruined due to illegal sand mining," the 42-year-old religious leader said. Mahiwale, who is keen to get a ticket from the Udaipura Assembly seat in Raisen, says, "I won't mind contesting from the Congress, if the BJP does not field me." Similarly, Mahant Pratap Giri, 35, also wants to contest from Silwani seat in Raisen. He said if the BJP does not field him, he would contest as an Independent.

"I am running a campaign against pictures of Gods and Goddesses being used forcommercial products. I will fight the election to serve people...serving people is like serving God," he added.

In April, the BJP government in MP had accorded the MoS status to five Hindu religious leaders -- Narmadanand Maharaj, Hariharanand Maharaj, Computer Baba, Bhayyu Maharaj and Pandit Yogendra Mahant. Seeking to downplay the controversy over grant of the MoS status to the 'godmen', the chief minister had then said that his government wanted to rope in people from all walks of life for welfare and development.(PTI)

Ahead of I-Day Day, BJP starts 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign in Jammu

JAMMU, AUG 12 /--/The BJP's Jammu and Kashmir unit today kick-started a campaign to to distribute the country's flags among people in the region ahead of Independence Day celebrations. The 'Har Ghar Tringa' campaign was started from Shivaji chowk here. It was led by BJP state president Ravinder Raina and former deputy chief minister Kavinder Gupta who distributed the tricolour to shopkeepers of the area. Addressing the gathering, Raina said such initiatives should be taken by all so that the "tiranga" (tricolour) reaches every household and is seen fluttering on every rooftop on August 15. "This is the best way to celebrate Independence Day," he said. Gupta advised party activists to expand the campaign and ensure that the national flag is hoisted at every house, village and city on Independence Day. "We can encourage younger generation and make them aware about the sacrifices made by freedom fighters for attaining Independence," he said and suggested the workers to involve school children in the campaign in the future. (PTI)

Defence minister inaugurates strategically important bridge in Hussainiwala

FEROZEPUR (PB), AUG 12 /--/Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman inaugurated today a strategically important bridge in Hussainiwala, which was was blown off during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war to stop advance of enemy force's armoured units. After dedicating the 280-foot-long bridge to the nation, she said it connects Ferozepur with Hussainiwala barrage on the Sutlej river. The bridge is the only lifeline for the residents of more than two dozen villages by connecting Hussainiwala enclave with the rest of the country, the minister said. During the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, four spans of the bridge were demolished on the intervening night of December 3 and 4 to stop advance of enemy force's armoured units. After the war, a bailey bridge was built by the Army to restore road traffic. To replace this temporary

280-foot-long bailey bridge, construction of a permanent 82.40 metre bridge was entrusted to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in 2015.

To enable construction and continuous passage of traffic, a temporary diversion bailey bridge was built by formation engineers in September 2016. On the occasion, Sitharaman said Hussainiwala belongs to freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev who made prime sacrifices for their motherland, which the whole nation can never forget. The minister said the soldiers should consider themselves lucky that God has given them an opportunity to perform their duty in such a sacred place. "I expect that everyone will perform their duties with zeal and courage, and will not allow the enemy to seize even a single inch of the motherland," she said. Sitharaman also appreciated the efforts made by the BRO and the Army personnel who completed this bridge before its stipulated deadline The Defence Minister was accompanied by Punjab Sports Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi and senior army officials including Lt Gen. Harpal Singh, Director General of Border Roads Organisation Lt Gen. Surinder Singh, Army Commander of Western Command Lt Gen Dushyant Singh. She also interacted with various regiments of Western Command. (PTI)

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, leader of the Oppostion in the State Assembly Ramesh Chennithala speaking to the flood-affected people in Eranakalam

Chhattisgarh CM to be elected like Sita's 'swayamvar': Cong leader

NEW DELHI, AUG 12 /--/ Like goddess Sita chose lord Ram, the Chief Minister's face of the Congress will be elected through 'swayamvar' after the Assembly elections, Chhattisgarh Leader of Opposition T S Singh Deo has said. He said the Congress party, which has been out of power in the state for the past 15 years, will form the government in the state in the same way lord Ram ended 'vanvaas' (exile) after 14 long years. In an interview with PTI, Singh Deo said his party was open to alliance with like-minded opposition parties to ensure that the coalition wins and the ruling BJP is out of the power. To a question whether or not the Congress will project somebody as its chief ministerial candidate ahead of the polls due later this year, he made an analogy from Hindu epic Ramayana and said lord Ram did not get married straight on.

"He had the Swayamvar. There are many good people in the party who have done very good work. So there will be Swayamvar after the polls' victory," the senior Congress leader said. He said Raman Singh was not declared the chief ministerial candidate in 2003. "Where was Yogi Adityanath face in UP election? They (BJP) did not have any face. They also did Swayamvar. Yahan bhi ho jayega (It will be here too)," Singh Deo said. He said it is not like that people are not seeing who all are the Congress leaders. "It is not like that it is a sort of hidden thing. There are many good leaders in Congress. A chief minister's face by itself is not guarantee for anything. In Himachal Pradesh, the BJP lost the seat of designated CM candidate," Singh Deo, heir of royal family of Sarguja, said.

Citing instances of corruption in the BJP-ruled government in the state, he said the Congress will definitely win the upcoming elections. "Ram came back (to power) after 14 years. I am sure we will end this Vanvaas," he said, when asked about the outcome of the polls and his party prospects. Raman Singh, who is the longest serving chief minister of the BJP, is ruling Chhattisgarh since 2003. Polls for 90 Assembly constituencies in Chhattisgarh are slated to be held in November-December this year. He said Congress leaders are very happy in Chhattisgarh over Ajit Jogi's exit as he was working as internal saboteur. "While being in the Congress he was working against the Congress. 'Ghar ka bhedi lanka dhaye' wali jo kahawat hai (Internal saboteur causing harm). He was sabotaging and weakening the party from within. So it is good for Congress," Singh Deo said. He said people in Chhattisgarh knew who has been helping Jogi while he was in the Congress. "It is Raman Singh and the BJP that is helping Jogi. I have always been saying that Jogi is B team of the BJP," the Congress leader said.(PTI)