



Voters waiting in queue to cast their vote in the fifth phase of Uttar Pradesh Assembly election in Bahraich.

Would've been better had BJP given tickets to Muslims in UP: Naqvi

NEW DELHI, FEB 27 /- After Rajnath Singh and Uma Bhatti, another union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi today said it would have been better had the BJP given tickets to Muslims for the ongoing Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls. Naqvi, however, said the BJP believes in taking along all the sections of the society and that the community will be adequately compensated if the party comes to power in the state. "As far as tickets are concerned, it would have been better (if tickets were given to Muslims).

"We will address their concern by compensating them if we form government in the state," Naqvi said, without elaborating. The minister said the NDA government's performance should not be assessed in the light of the BJP not offering tickets to Muslims in the 11 districts of the state. He believes in taking along all the sections of the society. We formed government at the Centre with cooperation of all. Similarly, we will form government in the state..." he said. The BJP has not fielded even a single Muslim candidate in the politically crucial state, which has sizeable Muslim population. Union home minister and senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh had on Thursday told a TV channel that the BJP should have given tickets to Muslims in the UP polls. Bhatti, who is a water resources minister, has echoed Singh's views. "Yes, I think that Rajnathji has rightly said, we should have given tickets (to Muslims)," she said yesterday. At the same time Bhatti said that when it comes to ticket distribution the winnability factor is its first consideration.

"I am really feeling sorry as we couldn't do that (tickets for Muslims). I will talk to Amit Shahji and Manu Sahab (UP BJP chief) so that we can bring a Muslim candidate in Vidhan Parishad, she said, adding, "Rajnathji has accepted this and I too accept it." (PTI)

SIMI chief, 10 others get life sentence in sedition case

INDORE, FEB 27 /- A special court here today awarded life imprisonment to SIMI chief Safdar Hussain Nagori and 10 other activists of the banned group after convicting them in a 2008 case of sedition. On a plea of 10 of the accused lodged in Ahmedabad's Sabarmati Central Jail, they were informed about the court's judgement through video-conferencing. Special Additional Sessions Judge B K Palodia pronounced all the 11 activists of Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) guilty under IPC sections 124(A) (Sedition) and 153(A) (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion), and also under relevant provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. Besides 45-year-old Nagori (65), the others convicted are Hafiz Hussain (35), Aamil Parvaz (40), Shivhi (38), Qamrudin (42), Shahduli (32), Qamran (40), Ansar (35), Ahmed Baig (32), Yasin (35) and Munroz (40).

Nagori, Parvaz, Qamrudin, Qamran, Shivhi and Ahmed Baig and Hussain were arrested under IPC section 122 (collecting arms, etc., with intention of waging war against the government of India). Government advocate Vimal Mishra told reporters that apart from Munroz, the other 10 accused are lodged in Ahmedabad's Sabarmati jail. During last hearing in the case, they had appealed to the court that they should not be brought to Indore during the pronouncement of the judgement and that they should be informed about the order through video-conferencing facility. Their plea was accepted by the court. Mishra said Munroz was on bail since a long time.

He appeared in the court during the pronouncement of the judgement today. After being pronounced guilty, he was taken to the Indore Centre Jail from the court. The 11 SIMI activists were arrested from Indore on the intervening night of May 26-27, 2008, and pistols, cartridges, revolvers and inflammatory literature were seized from them. On their information, a large cache of explosive material was also recovered. Appealing to the court to award maximum sentence to them, the prosecution argued that the banned SIMI activists have deliberately involved in acts against the government and have spread hatred on the basis of religion. To fulfil their aims, they have distributed objectionable material, collected arms and explosives and imparted terror-training to the youths and also incited them against the country, the prosecution informed the court.

It is stated that during probe their relations with other terror outfits too were established. They don't consider Kashmir as an integral part of India and such literature was also seized from their possession which mentioned about "waging a war" against the country, the prosecution contended. Government advocate Vimal Mishra told reporters that apart from Munroz, the other 10 accused are lodged in Ahmedabad's Sabarmati jail. (PTI)

SP will be put on ventilator after UP polls: Mayawati

KUSHINAGAR (UP), FEB 27 /- BSP chief Mayawati today took a dig at Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and his wife Dimple Yadav and asserted that the Samajwadi Party will have to be put on ventilator after polls. "SP ke babua ko SP ki bhaabhi bhi nahi bacha paayegi (Even the SP's sister-in-law (Dimple), will not be able to save its much-venerated young man (Akhilesh)," she said at a poll meeting here. Mayawati also said after the poll results are out, the SP will require ventilator support to get the much-needed Oxygen. Her retort came a day after SP MP from Kannauj Dimple Yadav said in Jaunpur, "Bua ji (Mayawati) has been waiting with a Raakhi in her hand. But after SP's alliance with Congress, she is feeling the pain.

She also sought to ridicule SP patron and said, "Mulyam Singh Yadav seems to have been affected by putra-moh (blind love for son), and has gone on to insult brother Shivraj. This will lead to division of votes." The BSP chief claimed that most of the welfare schemes pursued by the SP were meant for their origin to BSP rule. "SP has conveniently changed the names of schemes started by the BSP. The much-hyped Samajwadi Pension Scheme was known as Mahamaya Gareeb Aarthik Madad Yojana," the former UP CM said, adding that BSP would work for a separate Poorvanchal state, if voted to power.

Modified pellet guns to be used in J-K

NEW DELHI, FEB 27 /- With pellet guns leaving hundreds of protesters in Jammu and Kashmir with severe eye injuries, a modified version of the weapon will now be used to ward off any protest ahead of during any anti-militancy operations. CRPF Director General K Durga Prasad, who is retiring tomorrow, said the paramilitary force had taken the decision of modifying the pellet guns to minimise injuries. The modified version of pellet guns will have a "deflector", an attachment on the muzzle end to prevent the pellets from going up. The force has tasked a special BSF workshop to deploy metal 'deflectors' on the muzzle of these guns so that shrapnels in the pellets do not hit above the abdomen region. CRPF troops deployed in Kashmir Val-

ley have been asked to fire the pellets aiming at the feet of the protesters now as against laid down procedure of hitting the abdomen area. Giving a tough message, he said the paramilitary force was now actively coordinating with Jammu and Kashmir Police's Special Operations Group (SOG) and army to undertake counter-militancy operations rather than being only a force rendering law-and-order duties. "The situation is not as naazuk (sensitive) as it was last year... The intensity with which it (stone pelting) happened is no longer there... The situation of stone pelting on security forces is not bad as earlier. The pellet guns are one of the many options that we will use when we operate to control protesters in the coming days. PAVA

(packed with chilli) shells have a long shelf life and they are good in certain situations... But we have made it clear that the CRPF must on ground will use whatever the situation demands," Prasad, who headed the force for a year, said. "We have asked our men to fire at the feet now. By using deflectors, there is only a two per cent chance that the shot fired may hit above the point of aim as compared to the rate of 40 per cent earlier," a CRPF officer said. He added that by improvising the pellet guns, the injuries can be minimised but cannot be brought to a zero. The CRPF chief said the CRPF, with about 50 battalions in the Valley (about 50,000 personnel), is now increasingly training and operating with the SOG and this can be seen as a "great

change" in the working of the force in the recent months in the state. He said the CRPF has excellent coordination with the army and Kashmir Police and the initiative to increase its role in counter-militancy operations, what the force did in 1990s in Kashmir Valley, ensure that operations are launched or undertaken as soon as information comes in and without any delay of time. The DG added the force has come across situations where locals pelted stones on security forces during operations, like stated by Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat sometime ago, but this was in situations where either some local boys had joined militant ranks and were encircled by security forces or the locals were under threat from militants to disrupt the forces in

operations. "These incidents are happening... We have been able to contain it. If militants have local support, it is the responsibility of these platform to ensure that the youth is not diverted to these things. Official data said post the killing of terrorist Burhan Wani on July 10 last year, a total of 2,580 CRPF personnel, with 122 being hit grievously, were injured in various incidents of stone pelting and attacks, 142 incidents of stone pelting on its camps and 43 instances of petrol acid and corrosive bombs thrown by stone pelters on the force were recorded. (PTI)



Delegation of Uttar Pradesh Congress leaders comprising of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Harish Rawat and other senior leaders led by Congress General Secretary Ambica Soni, coming out after meeting with Election Commissioner, in New Delhi.

57.36 pc turnout in ph-V of UP polls

LUCKNOW, FEB 27 /- An estimated 57.36 per cent of 1.81 crore electorate today cast their votes amid tight security during the fifth phase of polling in Uttar Pradesh with Amethi and Faizabad assembly seats remaining the centre of attention. The day-long poll process remained largely peaceful in 51 Assembly constituencies spread over 11 districts of the state. "57.36 per cent polling was recorded till 5 PM and the figure is likely to go up as several voters waited in queues to exercise their franchise," UP Chief Electoral Officer T Venkatesh said.

The first four phases of UP polls this time saw voter turnouts of 64 per cent, 65 per cent, 61.16 per cent and 61 per cent respectively. Though the exercise remained slow during the first two hours in morning, it picked up pace gradually with the first voter seen exercising their franchise quite enthusiastically. Prominent contestants in the phase included controversial minister Gayatri Prasad Prajapati from the ruling Samajwadi Party, who is facing Amita Singh from Congress and BJP's Garima Singh in Amethi, the Lok Sabha constituency of

Rahul Gandhi. Prajapati, against whom FIR has been lodged in an alleged rape case, said the people were with him and there was a strong wave in the favour of SP. Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav will become the CM again," he claimed. Amita, wife of Congress leader Sanjay Singh, hoped people would support the best candidate "and I will definitely win." Garima, the first wife of Sanjay, on the other hand said there was no development in the constituency and people were facing problems.

The districts that went to polls in the Vth phase are Bahrampur Gonda, Faizabad, Ambedkar Nagar, Bahraich, Shravasti, Basti, Siddharth Nagar, Sant Kabir Nagar, Amethi and Sultanpur. Faizabad is another hot seat with BJP's Ram Temple issue once again figuring in its election. In this time, Ayodhya Assembly seat, which falls in Faizabad district, used to be a traditional stronghold of BJP since the Ram Temple movement days. But it was snatched by SP in 2012. This time the saffron party is trying to wrest it back. The turnout in these constituencies in 2012 was 57.09 per cent. (PTI)

Madras HC asks for video footage of Assembly proceedings on trust vote day

CHENNAI, FEB 27 /- The Madras High Court today directed the Tamil Nadu Assembly Secretary to produce the video recording of the entire House proceedings on the day of the confidence vote which was adopted amid unruly scenes. The court gave the direction while issuing notice to Assembly Speaker P Dhanapal and Chief Minister K Palaniswami and others on a PIL by opposition DMK seeking to declare the confidence vote adopted on February 18 as null and void.

only if there was an official notice (from the court), he submitted. The Bench then directed the Assembly Secretary to produce the video recordings of the House proceedings and posted the matter to March 10. It also directed the petitioner to delete the name of former chief minister O Panneerselvam as a respondent.

The trust vote was won by Palaniswami by a 122-111 margin in the 234-member Assembly after the eviction of DMK MLAs and a walkout by its allies, amid stormy scenes during which mikes were uprooted, chairs toppled and sheets of papers

to the other respondents - the Assembly Speaker, the Chief Minister, Secretary to the Governor's Secretary, Assembly Secretary and Union Home Secretary.

In the petition, DMK had contended that the party MLAs were "illegally evicted" from the assembly when they sought a secret ballot on the vote of confidence moved by Palaniswami. (PTI)

Have asked Delhi Police to act with caution: HM on Ramjas

VARANASI, FEB 27 /- Union home minister Rajnath Singh today said he has ordered the Delhi Police to act with caution over the Ramjas College issue and ensure the situation is under control. Replying to queries of reporters here over the recent clash in the Ramjas College and the ensuing trouble, Singh said he was keeping a vigil over the issue. The college witnessed widespread violence last week after ABVP objected to a seminar because of invitation to JNU students Umar Khalid and Shehla Rashid, who were involved in a controversy related to alleged anti-national slogans last year. Delhi Police had come under attack from Left-affiliated student groups for its alleged "high handedness" after which three cops were suspended. The Crime Branch has been entrusted with the task of carrying out a thorough probe. The after-effects of last week's violence continue, with various groups including the RSS-backed ABVP, Left-affiliated AISA and JNU teachers planning various marches. Regarding the ISIS threat and the recent arrest of two suspected terrorists of the outfit from Gujarat, the Union Home Minister said, "we won't let the ISIS become a challenge for the country." He said the Narendra Modi led NDA government has emerged as the "most reliable and stable government in the political history of India" and "people across the country for the first time have whole heartedly reposed faith on a particular political party - BJP".

He said the country is the people of delivering a corruption free government and was carrying out rapid development. Singh said, referring to the ongoing Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, he said polling in the last four phases had "confirmed a strong upward trend" in favour of BJP. He said the BJP, if voted to power, will work hard for the development of the state, restore law and order and try to make UP the best state of the country. Attacking UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Singh said, "people should hand over to him his apprenticeship certificate and remove him from here". Taking potshots at Akhilesh for his 'kaam Bolta hai' (I speak for work) remark, Singh said, "the work doesn't speak, it must be visible on the ground." The SP and the BSP governments have "ruined" the state and did not carry out any development work here, he said. Mocking at Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi, the home minister said, "leaders in his own party have now started believing that he is still immature." Singh, who was apparently referring to Sheila Dikshit's comment, said, "If the CM nominee of the Congress party says so, then there must be some truth in it. I don't know whether he is mature or not but a senior leader of his party, who holds a lot of experience has said this then there must be some truth." Earlier, a day before his retirement, Rajendra Prasad, the longest serving principal of the Ramjas College, termed the recent violence on campus "unfortunate" and appealed the students to "confront ideas and not people". "Tomorrow I retire, I wish for nothing to return except that Ramjas remains peaceful, and committed to the glorious future it is destined to set for itself," the principal said in an open letter to students. He said, "My heart bleeds when Ramjas bleeds, because I have put in 22 years of blood, sweat and tears to bring Ramjas to the present state." The appeal from the principal comes after the widespread violence on the Ramjas campus last week.

The clashes between RSS-backed ABVP and Leftist groups AISA, members of the group over the cancellation of a seminar invite to JNU students Umar Khalid and Shehla Rashid who were slated to speak on "Culture of Protests". Terminating the incidents of the past week "very unfortunate and urge students 'not to get involved in any party which spoils the name and dignity' of Ramjas" which is celebrating its centennial this year. "You are the most affected due to any disturbance and should have the biggest stake in peace, because it is your future, your future. Your exams are going to start in the very near future. "So please focus on your studies and act responsibly through constructive engagement and desist from any form of disruptive action," he said, of the seminar. (PTI)

her a "political pawn". Responding to the critics, Kaur told PTI, "I'm really disappointed with the statements made in invitation and PMT. I immediately registered against the abusers," Malwi said in the letter. "It is highly unfortunate and shameful that a strong and independent young girl is being threatened and abused for taking a stand against hoodlums. It is deeply perturbing that the threats appear to have silent support of some celebrities and leaders as well," she added. Kaur had last week changed her Facebook profile picture to one in which she was holding placard reading "Tamassud" (I am not afraid of ABVP) I am not alone. Every student of India is with me. #EndLadegaABVP. Her classmates and peers started sharing the post, prompting students from various varsities across the country to change their profile pictures with similar placards. However, some criticised the literature student's remarks, including former cricketer Virender Sehwag and Bollywood actor Randeep Hooda who called

Provide security to Kargil martyr's daughter: DCW to top cop

NEW DELHI, FEB 27 /- The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) today wrote to the Police Commissioner demanding security for the Kargil martyr's daughter who complained of receiving "rape threats" allegedly from ABVP members. Gurmehar Kaur (24), a Delhi University student, met DCW chief Swati Malwi and claimed that she has been receiving rape threats on social media allegedly by ABVP members. Kaur, daughter of Kargil martyr Captain Mandeep Singh, started the campaign "I am not afraid of ABVP" following violence at Ramjas college which went viral and received massive support from students across universities. Malwi, who termed the act "shameful," wrote to Police Commissioner Amulya Patnaik demanding that an FIR be registered against the "abusers" and security be provided to the girl and her family. "She (Kaur) has been subjected to extreme abuse and rape threats online. Her complaint is self explanatory and contains relevant screenshots of rape threats and abuse," she said. "Considering the

gravity of the situation and the threats received, it is recommended that the girl and her family be provided protection and an FIR be immediately registered against the abusers," Malwi said in the letter. "It is highly unfortunate and shameful that a strong and independent young girl is being threatened and abused for taking a stand against hoodlums. It is deeply perturbing that the threats appear to have silent support of some celebrities and leaders as well," she added. Kaur had last week changed her Facebook profile picture to one in which she was holding placard reading "Tamassud" (I am not afraid of ABVP) I am not alone. Every student of India is with me. #EndLadegaABVP. Her classmates and peers started sharing the post, prompting students from various varsities across the country to change their profile pictures with similar placards. However, some criticised the literature student's remarks, including former cricketer Virender Sehwag and Bollywood actor Randeep Hooda who called

SC to hear plea of bargirls' body against new Mahalaw

NEW DELHI, FEB 27 /- The Supreme Court today agreed to hear on March 2 a fresh plea challenging the constitutional validity of a 2016 Maharashtra law putting conditions on dance performances by girls and women in bars and hotels of state. "We will hear the petition on March 2 when other related matters are coming up," a bench comprising Justices Dipak Misra, A M Khanwilkar and

Mohan M Shantanagoudar said. The court is already hearing petitions, including one filed by the Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association (IHRA), challenging the constitutional validity of certain provisions of the Maharashtra Prohibition of Obscene Dance in Hotels, Restaurants and Bars Rooms and Protection of Dignity of Women (Working therein) Act, 2016. (PTI)

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Minister of State for Minority Affairs (U/C) and Parliamentary Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi addressing the 75th meeting of Central Working Council, in New Delhi.