Rahul's request for domicile cancelled

PTI, *Uttar Pradesh*

The local administration has cancelled application of Congress vice-president and local MP Rahul Gandhi for issuance of domicile certificate.

"The application should have been made by Gandhi himself with his signature, which was not there. The application was made by one Rajendra Singh with is against law," district magistrate, Jagatraj Tripathi told PTI when asked about cancellation of the application.

The papers needed with the application were also not there, he added.

Bank accounts of all the candidates are to be opened on directions of EC and for this domicile certif-

Rakhi Sawant files case against AAP

TNN, *Mumbai*

Item girl and actor Rakhi Sawant filed an NC complaint against Aam Admi Party (AAP) candidate Mayank Gandhi at Oshiwara police station yesterday.

AAP candidate Gandhi allegedly said that, "people will vote Rakhi who seek fun with her". Gandhi and Rakhi are contesting Lok Sabha election from the same parliamentary constituency in Mumbai. Gandhi denied the allegation stating that Rakhi had

PHOTO: AFP/ THE HINDU

From left, Congress President Sonia Gandhi held a rally in Bihar; BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi (3L) greets Ramesh (2R), a former Congress Party member who joined the BJP, during a election rally in Ghaziabad; and supporters of AAP candidate Medha Patkar (C, on jeep) wave brooms - her party symbol - during a rally in Mumbai, yesterday.

INDIAN LOK SABHA POLLS 2014

3 DAYS TO GO

No BJP manifesto yet

AFP, *New Delhi*

India's opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), frontrunner to form the next government, faced criticism yesterday for failing to release its manifesto just days before polls open.

Reports earlier this week claimed the Hindu nationalists' programme would be unveiled on Thursday, but a party source told AFP it was now highly unlikely to be before Saturday -- two days before the first voters cast their ballots.

Some political observers have attributed the delay to internal differences within the party, which is being led by prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi, a hardliner from western Gujarat state.

Modi, the favourite to become prime minister, is running on his credentials as the three-times chief minister of Gujarat where he has built a reputation as a hands-on leader and economic reformer.

"A party and leader which claims great administrative and managerial competence is unable to release its manifesto in time," Priyanka Chaturvedi, spokeswoman for the ruling Congress party, tweeted on Thursday.

"Why is BJP unable to produce even a manifesto on time?" she added.

India's mammoth nine-phase election starts on April 7 and concludes on May 12, with final counting on May 16.

"The main reason (for the delay) is that almost every senior leader who was made part of the manifesto drafting committee is fighting the election, and has been in his or her respective constituency, making it difficult to devote time to the document," a BJP leader told AFP on condition of anonymity on Thursday.

The ruling Congress party released its manifesto on March 26, pledging to create millions of jobs and new social schemes if it is voted back into power for a third consecutive term.

Kejriwal releases AAP manifesto

PTI, *New Delhi*

Aam Aadmi Party yesterday promised an array of initiatives in its manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections such as bringing a strong Jan Lokpal Bill, installing CCTV cameras in court rooms and bringing down the age to contest elections to 21 from 25.

Releasing the manifesto, party chief Arvind Kejriwal said decentralisation of power, citizen's charter to ensure time-bound delivery of services and providing good governance will be some other priority areas for the party.

The AAP leader said his party was "industry friendly" as creation of wealth was essential for overall development of the country but noted that it was against "crony capitalism."

Emphasising on judicial accountability, he also proposed to double the number of judges in courts across the country in the next five years.

On foreign policy, the AAP leader said that his party advocated friendly relations with all the countries, but had "zero tolerance" for cross border terrorism.

"Border areas should be developed as zones of high economic engagements to create a larger constituency for peace on both sides. We will work to enhance the defence capacity to deter the border incursions by China, but will also strive for a greater and more balanced trade with the country," he said.

Polls costs up by 84 times

TNN, *New Delhi*

The expenditure incurred on conducting Lok Sabha polls has gone up nearly 84 times from Rs 10.45 crore in 1952 to approximately Rs 846.67 crore in 2009, according to data put together by the government. The figures for 2009 are provisional, based on duly audited expenditure from 17 states.

As per poll expenditure figures compiled by Press Information Bureau, the first general election in 1952 cost the government more than the subsequent polls in 1957 and 1962. While Rs 5.9 crore was spent on 1957 polls, Rs 7.32 crore was released by the government in 1962 towards electoral offices, preparation and printing of electoral roll etc. The expenditure went up further to Rs 10.79 crore in 1967 and Rs 11.61 crore in 1971 polls. From 1977 onwards, the expenditure on each subsequent election more than doubled, shooting up to Rs 23.04 crore in 1977 and then Rs 54.77 crore in 1980. In 1984, the polls cost the government Rs 81.51 crore. This was the last time the figure stood at under Rs 100 crore.

Though the figures from 1989 onwards are provisional, they reflect the rising trend of poll spending by the government. So, while 1989 polls cost the government over Rs 154 crore, this expenditure shot up to nearly Rs 359 crore in 1991 and to Rs 597 crore and Rs 666 crore in 1996 and 1998 polls respectively. In 1999, poll spending came close to breaching the Rs 1,000-crore mark, with the provisional expenditure incurred on this general election working out to nearly Rs 948 crore.

More recently, in 2004 general election, the government spending touched almost Rs 1,114 crore (based on duly audited expenditure from 23 states), with Rs 679 crore released on provisional basis to 30 states. The cost of 2009 polls is shown at Rs 847 crore, of which Rs 840 crore was released to 35 states and UTs on a provisional basis.

The entire expenditure on conduct of elections to Lok Sabha is borne by the Centre and the expenditure on state polls held independently, by the respective states. If simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assembly are held, such expenditure is shared between Centre and the respective state governments.

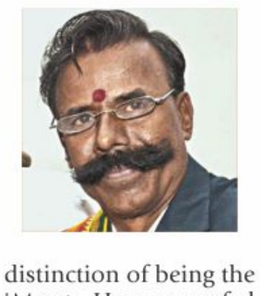
It's not about winning always

Doctor stands against Modi to create world record

TNN, *Vadodara*

BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi may be eyeing to win by a record victory margin from Vadodara, but a Tamil Nadu-based doctor is contesting from Vadodara constituency to create world record.

Modi has got a unique opponent in Dr K Padmarajan, who has



distinction of being the 'Most Unsuccessful Candidate' in Limca Book of Records. He is known to fight against political bigwigs and has contested 158 elections including presidential, parliamentary and assembly polls.

He contests only against famed and prominent politicians and has got entry into Guinness Book of World Records in 2004 for filing most number of nominations.

"My aim is to create world record. There is no political motive to contest against Modi," Padmarajan, 55, told TOI.

He began contesting polls in 1988 to spread awareness about democracy among people apart from

Big announcement expected today

Says officials as Malaysian PM vows to find answers

AGENCIES

Two ships central to the hunt for missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 are due to arrive in the search area in the coming hours amid hope that a new clue to the plane's whereabouts may be imminent.

A British Royal Navy survey ship, HMS Echo, will be conducting a specific search today, a spokesperson for the Australian Defence Force told CNN.

The Ocean Shield, an Australian naval vessel equipped with special US technology designed to detect the pings from the flight recorders, is also due to arrive in the search area overnight Thursday to Friday.

The spokesperson, who is not authorized to speak to the media, told CNN there would be a "big" operational announcement today by retired Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, the head of the Australia's new Joint Agency Coordination Centre, who has been tasked with overseeing the search effort.

It's not yet clear what that announcement might be, but any progress will likely be welcomed by the despairing relatives of the 239 people aboard the plane, which vanished nearly four weeks ago.

The Ocean Shield is equipped with the TPL-25, a giant underwater microphone that will listen for the pings from the flight data recorders and the Bluefin-21, an underwater robot that can scour the ocean bed, looking for signs of wreckage.

But until searchers find a confirmed piece of debris from the plane, which would give them an idea of where the wreckage might be located, the sophisticated listening technology is of little use.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, who is touring Australia, yesterday vowed "we will not rest" until the fate of flight MH370 is known, as Australia called it "the most difficult search in human history".

"We want to find answers. We want to provide comfort to the families and we will not rest until answers are indeed found," Najib said, as he thanked those involved in the eight-nation search.

Despite extensive scouring of the remote southern Indian Ocean, no debris that would indicate a crash site has been found, with time running out to locate the plane's "black box" which only emits a signal for around 30 days.

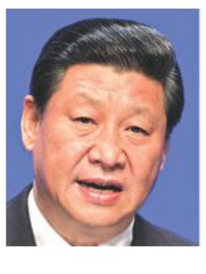
Investigators are yet to provide an explanation of why the plane flew way off course or pinpoint exactly where it ended up. Officials say that an analysis of the available data suggests the jet's journey finished in the southern Indian Ocean.

THE MEETING OF THE SOVEREIGNS

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II speaks with Pope Francis (R) during their first meeting at the Vatican, yesterday. Queen Elizabeth II flew to Rome yesterday to meet the popular Pope for the first time on a visit that is also the 87-year-old monarch's first foreign trip since 2011. PHOTO: AFP

Democracy won't suit China: Xi Jinping

THE HINDU ONLINE



China's President Xi Jinping has said that multiparty democracy and development models of other countries "did not suit China" and would "lead to catastrophic consequences" if adopted by Beijing.

Xi, who began a decade-long term as President in March of last year, said the Communist Party of China (CPC) would "never stop" taking forward reforms, but at the same time as far as the ruling party was concerned the one-party political system would not change.

"China cannot copy the political system or development model of other countries because it would not fit us and it might even lead to catastrophic consequences," the State-run Xinhua news agency on Wednesday quoted Mr. Xi as saying, during a speech delivered to students a day earlier in Belgium, the final stop of an on-going four-nation European tour.

"Constitutional monarchy, imperial restoration, parliamentarism, a multi-party system and a presidential system, we considered them, tried them, but none worked," Xi was reported as saying.

He, however, warned that China would not follow the political systems of other countries. Doing so would "lead to catastrophic consequences," he said.

He drew a comparison with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which he attributed to "their idals and beliefs being shaken". "To dismiss the history of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Communist Party, to dismiss Lenin and Stalin, and to dismiss everything else is to engage in historic nihilism, and it confuses our thoughts and undermines the party's organisations on all levels," he warned.

"Some people define reform as changes towards the universal values of the West, the Western political system, or it will not constitute 'real' reform. This is a stealthy tampering of the concept and a misunderstanding of our

Health crisis brewing in Rakhine: UN

AFP, *Yangon*

More than 800,000 people lack adequate healthcare in strife-torn western Myanmar after aid workers fled the region, the UN has warned, with children deprived of life-saving treatment.

A wave of attacks against humanitarian workers in Rakhine state has choked off health, water and food supplies to isolated communities and camps for people displaced by deadly sectarian violence.

International relief groups in Rakhine have come under mounting pressure from local Buddhists who accuse them of bias towards Muslims.

Long-standing animosity between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine erupted into bloodshed in 2012, leaving dozens dead in clashes.

Why Nato troops in eastern Europe?

Asks Russia; Nasa suspends ties with moscow

AGENCIES

Russia yesterday said it wanted answers from Nato on its activities in eastern Europe after the Western military alliance promised to beef up defences for its eastern members.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Western-backed leaders yesterday blamed Russian agents and the country's ousted president of organising two days of bloodshed in February that claimed nearly 90 lives.

Crimea Crisis

Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region last month has caused the deepest crisis in East-West relations since the Cold War, leading the West to impose sanctions and sparking fear President Vladimir Putin has territorial designs beyond the Black Sea peninsula with its Russian-majority population.

Nato has ordered military planners to draft measures to reassure nervous Eastern European countries - which were under Moscow's domination until the 1989 end of the Cold War - but stopped short of calls by Poland to base more forces there.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said any increase in Nato's permanent presence in eastern Europe would violate a 1997 treaty on Nato-Russian cooperation.

Nato military chiefs are concerned that an estimated 40,000 Russian forces near the Ukrainian border may signal plans by Putin to move beyond Crimea into eastern and southern Ukraine, which also have significant Russian-speaking populations.Lavrov Russian troops would return to their permanent bases after military exercises.

Meanwhile, NASA has cut ties with Russia except for cooperation aboard the International Space Station due to the crisis in Ukraine, the US space agency said

'Twitter' controversy

US built secret social media to oust Cuban communist govt

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

In an apparent throwback to the Cold War campaigns of disruption, disinformation and espionage, the US government spent $1.6m building a social media network with the aim of undermining the communist government in Cuba, it has emerged.

Documents obtained during an investigation by the Associated Press show that the project, which lasted more than two years and drew thousands of subscribers, was built with secret shell companies and was financed through foreign banks.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was reportedly behind the project which saw the creation of a 'Cuban Twitter' dubbed "ZunZuneo" - slang for a Cuban hummingbird's tweet.

USAID were primarily responsible for the campaign and there was no involvement of intelligence services, but the details uncovered by the Associated Press would appear to bring into doubt USAID's longstanding claims that it does not conduct covert actions.

Users of "ZunZuneo" were entirely unaware of the involvement of the United States government agency and that American contractors were gathering personal data about them, in the hope that the information might be used someday for political purposes.

The project, which was started in 2009 and ended in 2012, has questionable legality under US law and has prompted concerns over clandestine government funded activity.