

NEWSIN brief

4 BSF jawans killed in Maoist ambush

AFP, New Delhi

Maoist rebels yesterday ambushed an Indian military patrol and killed four soldiers in a jolt to security measures ahead of a national election that starts next week, officials said. The Border Security Force troops were on a foot patrol in a remote forested district of Chhattisgarh state when attacked. Six BSF troops were also wounded.

UAE confers highest civil honour on Modi

NDTV ONLINE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was awarded Zayed Medal, the UAE's highest civilian award, yesterday as a mark of appreciation for his efforts to boost bilateral ties between the two nations. The Zayed Medal has earlier been awarded to Russian President Vladimir Putin, former US president George W Bush, former France president Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Queen Elizabeth II and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

WWII wreckage of US plane found in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

An Indian Army patrol along with a police representative recovered wreckage of a World War II vintage US Air Force aircraft and other war-like stores buried under piles of snow and thick undergrowth at a remote place in Roing district of Arunachal Pradesh, the Defence Ministry said yesterday. The area had seldom been ventured by anyone in the past.

BITS OF HISTORY (APRIL 4)

- 1949:** The North Atlantic Treaty setting up a mutual defence alliance, Nato, was signed in Washington by the foreign ministers of the 12 participating powers.
- 1968:** The American civil rights leader Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.
- 2006:** Women made history in Kuwait by voting and running for office for the first time in a local by-election.



Rahul Gandhi, president of India's main opposition Congress party, and his sister a leader of Congress party Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, wave to their supporters after Rahul files his nomination papers for the general election, in Wayanad in the southern state of Kerala, India yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

ROW OVER MODI'S ARMY COMMENT

Indian EC serves notice to UP CM

THE HINDU ONLINE

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Wednesday served a show cause notice to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for his remarks, describing the armed forces as "Modi ji Ki Sena".

"The Chief Minister has been asked to furnish his response by Thursday," said an UP election official.

The UP Chief Electoral Officer had earlier sent a report to the EC on the Chief Minister's comment after getting details from the District Magistrate concerned.

At a rally in Ghaziabad on March 31, Adityanath had targeted the Congress saying that it served "biryani" to terrorists, while Mr Modi's forces treated them with bullets and bombs.

He said the Congress leaders used "ji" for terrorists like Masood Azhar, but the BJP-led government was destroying their camps under the Prime Minister's leadership.

Adityanath's remarks triggered a sharp reaction from the Opposition parties. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took to Twitter to express shock.

Terming it as an insult to the defence forces, Mamata said, "We are proud of our Army. They belong to all. They are a great asset of our nation, and not a cassette of the BJP. People of this country must stand up and reject this statement."

The Congress demanded an apology. "This is an insult to our armed forces. They are India's Armed Forces, not the private Army of Prachar Mantri," tweeted Congress leader Priyanka Chaturvedi.

'Modi can't decide who will stay, who will leave'

Mamata attacks Indian PM on citizen register

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee sharpened her attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday and claimed that he will do everything to "defy constitution" if BJP is re-elected.

The Trinamool Congress chief said that Modi has failed to keep his promises. "Chaiwallah, who failed to fulfill promises, has now turned into a chowkidar to fool masses," news agency PTI quoted Mamata as saying at a rally in Bengal's Coochbehar.

On the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Mamata said Bengal will oppose it tooth and nail. "We will never allow NRC in Bengal. Modi is no one to decide who will stay and who will leave," she said.

The National Register of Citizens has been a contentious issue with over 4 million of the 32.9 million people in Assam left out of the NRC draft, released on July 30 last year.

Mamata had lashed out at Centre over the NRC draft and claimed it was a conspir-

acy to evict Bengalis and Biharis from Assam. "We are worried because people are being made refugees in their own country. It's a plan to throw out Bengali speaking people and Biharis. Consequences will be felt in our state also," she had said after the release of the list last year.

The Centre and the Assam government insisted that register is still a draft, and that there is adequate recourse available to those not included.

The NRC, which was first prepared for Assam in 1951, is being updated at the insistence of the Supreme Court, although it has been a longstanding demand of most political organisations in the state.

Modi was well past his best-by date, Mamata said in north Bengal yesterday, terming him "Expiry Babu" and "Expiry Prime Minister", kicking off her poll campaign with her most scathing criticism of him yet.

Accusing Modi of "peddling lies", she challenged him to a direct debate and dared



How brand Modi plays in LS polls

If Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wins this spring's general election, as is widely expected, it will also be another massive victory for the marketing machine created to amplify Brand Modi into every Indian living room.

Opinion polls regularly show Modi is India's most popular politician, and to turn that appeal into votes, his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has pulled out all the stops from the most modern methods of communication to the very traditional.

There is the recently launched "NaMo TV" dedicated to the 68-year-old leader, a Narendra Modi mobile app the party says has been downloaded by 100 million people, and a massive social media following across every major platform in India.

Modi and the BJP have a combined 57.5 million followers on Twitter, four times the total for the main opposition Congress party and its president Rahul Gandhi.

With the campaign now in full swing, the BJP says Modi physically reaches out to more than 250,000 people a day through the many rallies he addresses.

Most of those are then carried live across multiple party platforms and news channels across India, including the nation's public broadcaster.

EARLY START

On Wednesday alone, Modi addressed as many as four rallies, starting early in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh and ending late in a constituency 2,300 km (1429



miles) away in the western state of Maharashtra. Gandhi spoke in three rallies, all in the northeast.

"The opposition is way behind the curve," said a close aide to Modi who declined to be named as he was not authorised to speak with reporters. "Even before the official inauguration of the political campaign on March 28, he completed the first phase of campaigning. Now it's the second phase."

Congress accuses Modi and the BJP of misusing its powers and deep pockets to try and influence voters.

LACKING HELICOPTERS

Congress also complained in January that it was struggling to find enough helicopters to ferry its leaders because the BJP had reserved most of the available aircraft well in advance.

In 2017/18, the BJP's total income including donations stood at 10.27 billion rupees (\$150 million) compared with 1.9 billion rupees for Congress, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms, a Delhi-based advocacy group that examines political funding and candidate disclosure forms.

"There's a huge gap between our campaign and their (Congress) campaign," BJP spokesman Gopal Krishna Agarwal said. "We're much ahead in our communication, on organisational structure, outreach schemes etc."

SOURCE: REUTERS



This undated picture released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un (C) inspecting Samjiyon County. Kim praised the rapid progress being made at marquee construction project in the county, urging workers to complete the second phase of the town's refurbishment unconditionally. PHOTO: AFP

US move not conducive to peace in South Asia

Says China amid push to blacklist JeM leader

DAWN ONLINE

The United States vowed on Wednesday to utilise "all available avenues" to ensure Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar was held accountable but China warned Washington that this attitude could complicate an already tense situation in South Asia.

"We can confirm that we circulated a draft UNSC resolution with UK and French support," said a US State Department spokesperson when asked how the United States planned to deal with this issue.

On March 27, the US circulated a draft resolution to the 15-nation UN Security Council (UNSC) to blacklist Azhar and subject him to a travel ban, an assets freeze and an arms embargo.

"We hope South Asia could maintain peace and stability and we hope India and Pakistan will engage in dialogue and through dialogue and consultation resolve

outstanding issues," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang.

Last month, India accused JeM group of carrying out the February 14 suicide bombing at Pulwama in Kashmir that killed 40 paramilitary troops and urged Pakistan to hand over Azhar.

Pakistan rejected the Indian claim.

On March 13, China put a technical hold on a French proposal to list Azhar under the Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee and asked for more consultations before bringing the matter to the UNSC for a vote.

The US insisted that Washington also wanted to route its move to brand Azhar a UN-designated terrorist through this committee.

Geng, however, said that the US threat to use "all available avenues" was not helpful particularly when JeM's involvement had not yet been proven.

The US stance on the issue was not conducive to peace and stability in South Asia, he added.



Saudi nuclear reactor work near complete

Reveal new sat images

NDTV ONLINE

Saudi Arabia is nearing completion of its first nuclear reactor, satellite images of the facility show, triggering warnings about the risks of the kingdom using the technology without signing up to the international rules governing the industry.

The research facility is located in the southwest corner of the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology in Riyadh, according to images published by GoogleEarth. They're the first in the public domain to confirm that the program is advancing, showing construction nearing its finish around a columnar vessel that will contain atomic fuel.

The advancement is alarming to arms-control experts because Saudi Arabia has yet to sign up to the international framework of rules other nuclear powers follow to ensure that civilian atomic programs aren't used to build weapons. Nuclear fuel providers won't move to supply the unit until new surveillance arrangements have been sealed with the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

"There's a very high probability these images show the country's first nuclear facility," said Robert Kelley, a former IAEA director who also led the US Department of Energy's remote sensing laboratory. "It means that Saudi Arabia has to get its safeguards in order."

Saudi Arabia's energy ministry said in a statement the facility's purpose is to "engage in strictly peaceful scientific, research, educational and training activities in full compliance with international agreements."

Japanese aren't too happy about extra offs

AFP, Tokyo

For the Emperor's abdication on April 30, Japanese workers will enjoy an unprecedented 10-day holiday as a rash of special days off combine with the traditional "Golden Week" in May. But not everyone is popping the champagne corks in famously workaholic Japan.

"To be honest, I don't know how to spend the time when we are suddenly given 10 days of holidays," said 31-year-old finance worker Seishu Sato. "If you want to go travelling, it's going to be crowded everywhere and tour costs have surged... I might end up staying at my parents' place," he said.

A survey by the Asahi Shimbun daily showed 45% of workaholics of Japanese "felt unhappy" about the long vacation, with only 35% saying they "felt happy". Others who have to work over the period complain about childcare. "For parents in the service sector, the 10 days of holiday is a headache. After-school care, nurseries - everything is closed," tweeted a parent.

Still, if people are curiously indifferent to the idea of extra holidays as a result of the emperor, the imperial family remains as popular as ever. A poll by public broadcaster NHK found almost no one would admit to a "feeling of antipathy" towards the emperor.

Last survivor of US-African slave trade discovered

CNN ONLINE

A woman abducted from Africa as a child has been identified as the last known survivor of the slave ships that took kidnapped West Africans to the United States.

Hannah Durkin, a lecturer at Newcastle University in the UK, was carrying out other research when she came across multiple sources that mentioned a woman called Redoshi, the university said in a press release.

Durkin pieced together Redoshi's life story through a number of archival sources, starting with her kidnapping in what is now Benin at the age of 12 and her passage to Mobile, Alabama on board the "Clotilda," the last slave ship to arrive in the US in 1860, carrying 116 people.

During her research, Durkin discovered that Redoshi was forced to marry on board the ship. She and her husband, known as William

or Billy, were bought by Washington Smith, a founder of the Bank of Selma and owner of the Bogue Chitto plantation in Alabama, where she was enslaved and renamed Sally Smith, working in the house and the fields for almost five years.

After emancipation in 1865, she continued to live on the Smith plantation and came into contact with early civil rights activists such as Amelia Boynton Robinson.

Her life was documented by Boynton Robinson as well as other activists and historians, and Durkin drew on their work.

Redoshi died in Alabama in 1937, two years after Oluele Kossola, or Cudjo Lewis, who was previously thought to have been the last survivor of the US slave trade.

While other people born into slavery would have lived past 1937, Redoshi was the last surviving slave abducted from Africa.

