

2 JDS workers killed in Sri Lanka blasts, shocked HD Kumaraswamy says knew them personally

Agency
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Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy has announced the deaths of two Janata Dal (Secular) workers in Sunday's serial blasts in Sri Lanka, saying External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had confirmed they were among the hundreds killed. Kumaraswamy said he was

"deeply shocked," and that he had personally known the two men, KG Hanumantharayaappa and M Rangappa. "We stand with their families in this hour of grief," he said in a tweet on Monday. There were reports that seven JD(S) workers from Tumkur and Chikbalapur, who were staying at the Shangri-La hotel in Colombo, had gone missing. Kumaraswamy had

tweeted about them earlier, and said two of them were feared killed. India's High Commission in Sri Lanka reported the deaths of Hanumantharayaappa and Rangappa on Sunday evening. Bombings tore through churches and luxury hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, killing 290 people—including at least six Indians — and

leaving 500 injured. An island-wide curfew imposed by the government was lifted early on Monday. There has been no claim of responsibility yet. "Such senseless violence, aimed at innocent people, has no place in civilised society," President Ram Nath Kovind said on Twitter on Sunday. "We stand in complete solidarity with Sri Lanka."

Now, buzz over Allahabad as Priyanka Gandhi's probable seat

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Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's close aides have advised her to contest from her party's former bastion of Allahabad, which was renamed Prayagraj last year, according to a senior party functionary aware of the developments. Even as there is no clarity on whether Priyanka Gandhi, 47, will fight in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, there has been some speculation of late that she may contest from Varanasi against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On Sunday, she said she will contest from the constituency if her brother, Congress president Rahul Gandhi, asks her to. Priyanka Gandhi's statement during campaigning in Kerala came days after Rahul Gandhi, in an interview to The Hindu on April 18, refused to rule out the option of his sister taking on Modi in Varanasi. "She [Priyanka Gandhi] has been advised to contest from Allahabad. The party has been traditionally stronger there. Her nomination will have a huge impact on the entire Purvanchal region," the senior functionary cited above said on condition of anonymity. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swept eastern UP in the 2014 polls, winning 71 out of 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh. It holds 27 out of the 29 Lok Sabha seats in the region that includes Varanasi. The region will go to the polls in the last three phases of ongoing national elections on May 6, 12 and 19. Polling for the Allahabad Lok Sabha seat will be held on May 12, and April 23 is the last date for filing

nominations for it. Varanasi goes to the polls in the last phase on May 19. The last date of filing nominations for the seat is April 29. The functionary said Rahul Gandhi and United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi will eventually take a decision whether Priyanka Gandhi should contest. Senior leaders, including the country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and V P Singh, have represented the Congress from Allahabad and neighbouring Phulpur in Parliament. This time, the Congress has fielded Pankaj Niranjan Singh Chandel from Phulpur in the 2019 elections. The party's popularity has waned in the region over the past two decades. Actor Amitabh Bachchan was the last Congress candidate to win from Allahabad in 1984. The Samajwadi Party, which is contesting the elections in alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal, has fielded Pandhri Yadav from Phulpur and Rajendra Singh Patel from Allahabad. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has named Rita Bahuguna Joshi, who left the Congress in 2017, as its candidate from Allahabad. The Congress's Allahabad president, Anil Dwivedi, said Priyanka Gandhi has been tasked with forming the government in the state by 2022. "Keeping that in mind, it is important for her to contest Lok Sabha elections," he said. "Since for some time the politics in this region has been in decay and to breathe a new

life into it, we want her to contest from here." According to a senior Congress leader, the chief priest of Sankat Mochan Temple in Varanasi and former Banaras Hindu University (BHU) professor Vishambhar Nath Mishra is being considered as a probable Lok Sabha candidate for the Congress. In 2014, the Congress vote

share reduced to 7% in Varanasi with Ajay Rai winning only around 75,000 votes. He finished third after Aam Aadmi Party leader Arvind Kejriwal and Modi, who won by over 500,000 votes. "The Modi wave has now gone north, there is high unemployment and business have shut down. This will definitely cost them this election," Rai said.

Indian athletes win 5 medals on opening day of Asian Athletics C-ships

Agency
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Indian athletes won five medals on the opening day of the Asian Athletics Championships in Doha. Javelin thrower Annu Rani and 3000-meter steeple chaser

Avinash Sable won the silver medals yesterday. Quartermiler M P Poovamma, 5000-meter runner Parul Choudhary and 10000-meter runner Gavitt Murali Kumar bagged a bronze each on a day which saw sprint sensation Hima Das suffer a

lower back spasm during her 400m heat. Sprinter Dutee Chand qualified for the semi-finals clocking 11.28 seconds to win the heat number four of the women's 100-meter race. She bettered her earlier national record of 11.29 seconds which she set last year in Guwahati. M R Poovamma finished second in her 400-meter heat, clocking 52.46 seconds to qualify for the final round. Other top Indian athletes advanced to the next round of their respective events. They are Jinson Johnson (men's 800 meters), Muhammed Anas and Arokia Rajiv (both men's 400 meters), Praveen Chitravel (men's triple jump) and Gomathi Marimuthu (women's 1500 meter).

7 killed, 10 injured in stampede during local temple festival in Trichy

Agency
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In Tamil Nadu, seven devotees were killed and ten injured in the stampede during a local temple festival near Thuraiyur in Trichy, today, police said. The tragedy occurred when hundreds of people gathered for the 'padikasu', temple coin distribution ceremony, held as part of annual 'Chithira Pournami' festival, at the 'Karuppasamy' temple

in Muthiampalayam village. Expressing anguish over the loss of lives, Chief Minister K Palaniswami ordered a solatium of Rs one lakh each to the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 to the injured.

Congress releases another list of 5 candidates for LS polls in Haryana

Agency
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Congress has released another list of five candidates for Lok Sabha election in Haryana. The party has fielded senior leader and former state Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda from Sonapat and replaced Faridabad candidate Lalit Nagar with Avtar Singh Bhadana. Nirmal Singh has been given ticket from Kurukshetra. Kuldeep Sharma from Karnal and Bhavya Bishnoi from

Hisar Lok Sabha seat. The BJP has also released another list of seven candidates for the Lok Sabha elections yesterday. Union Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan again fielded from Chandni Chowk constituency in the national capital, Delhi BJP unit President Manoj Tiwari will contest from North East Delhi, Praveesh Verma from West Delhi, and Ramesh Bidhuri from South Delhi. The party has fielded Union Minister Hardeep Puri from Amritsar in Punjab.

Sensex cracks over 300 pts; Nifty below 11,700

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The benchmark BSE Sensex cracked over 300 points in early trade Monday tracking losses in index heavyweights RIL, HDFC and ICICI Bank, amid weak global cues, sinking rupee and soaring crude oil prices. The 30-share index was trading 309.56 points or 0.79 per cent lower at 38,830.72. The NSE Nifty too plunged to 101.80 points, or 0.87 per cent, to 11,651. In the previous session Thursday, the BSE bourse settled 135.36 points, or 0.34 per cent, lower at 39,140.28. The broader Nifty slipped 34.35 points, or 0.29 per cent, to 11,752.80. Stock market was closed Friday on account of Good Friday. Yes Bank and Reliance Industries were the biggest losers in the Sensex pack, dropping up to 2.66 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, Kotak Bank, Tata Motors, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC, Maruti, M&M, Bajaj Finance

and SBI, shedding up to 1.72 per cent. Bucking weak market trend, TCS, PowerGrid, HCL Tech, Infosys, HDFC Bank and NTPC rose up to 1.31 per cent. "After a period of significant momentum ahead of the general elections, the market may take a pause in some kind of an interim profit booking," said Joseph Thomas-Head Research, Emkay Wealth Management. The accelerating scenario of a slowdown in global growth as also the definitive prospects of higher fuel prices and a weaker currency may also be working on the minds of the market participants at this juncture, he added. Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) purchased equity worth Rs 1,038.46 crore on Thursday, and domestic institutional investors (DIIs) sold shares to the tune of Rs 337.59 crore, provisional data available with stock exchanges showed. The rupee depreciated

nearly 50 paise to 69.84 against the US dollar in early trade. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, was 2.06 per cent higher at USD 73.84 per barrel. Elsewhere in Asia, benchmark equity indices in Shanghai, Tokyo and Seoul were trading in the red in early trade.

Ghaziabad software engineer murders wife, three children; sends confessional video on family WhatsApp group

Agency
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A 34-year-old software engineer allegedly murdered his wife and three children at their home in Ghaziabad's Indrapuram and sent a video confessing the murders to a family group on WhatsApp, police said Sunday. Police said Sumit Kumar, who fled after the murder, also said

on WhatsApp that he has purchased potassium cyanide to kill himself. Upon seeing the video, Kumar's sister, who also stays in Indrapuram, alerted her brother-in-law, Pankaj Singh, who rushed to the flat. "I found the door locked. I called the police who broke it open. We found the body of my sister and her three children with stab injuries," Pankaj Singh claimed. The police identified the four victims as Kumar's wife Anshu Bala, 32, their five-year-old son Prathmesh and twins Aarav and Aakriti, both aged four. Bala worked as a teacher with a playschool in Indrapuram while Kumar had quit his job in December, relatives of the couple said. They got married in 2011. Prima facie, it appears Kumar killed his family as he was not able to sustain them financially, police said. "Sumit [Kumar] had been going through a financial crisis since he resigned from his job in December last year. My parents also stayed with them, but they had gone to attend a marriage around a week back. Sumit, his wife and three children were alone in the flat," Singh said. The bodies of four victims were sent for post-mortem and the police filed an FIR after the victim's brother filed a complaint, said superintendent of police (city) Shlok Kumar. Sumit Kumar was booked under section 302 (murder) of IPC. In his alleged confession

video, Sumit Kumar said he laced the drink of his family with sedatives and thereafter killed them with a sharp object, the SP said. "We are trying to trace Sumit. His mobile phone is switched off," he added. Pankaj Singh said Sumit Kumar had earlier worked with several software companies in Gurugram, Noida and later went to Bengaluru in October, 2018. "He worked there for a couple of months but resigned in December last year. He then stayed with his brother in Bengaluru for two months. Then he came to Ghaziabad. It was only around Holi that we came to know he resigned. We do not know the reason. I spoke to him last on Friday and he was smoking continuously. There were issues due to financial problems and his behaviour had also become erratic," Singh said. In the video, Sumit Kumar also named a medical store owner who allegedly fleeced him when he was buying medicines. In turn, he said, he cheated the store owner of Rs 1 lakh. Police said they are trying to verify his claims. The guard of the housing society in which the family lived said that he saw Kumar leaving the main gate of the society late on Saturday night. "I saw him smoking downstairs around 11.30pm. Later, at around 3 am, I saw him going outside the main entrance by foot... I did not hear any sound from their second floor flat either," said Indrajit Singh, the guard of the housing society.

North Bengal, West UP could boost BJP's national prospects

Agency
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North Bengal and parts of west Uttar Pradesh are emerging as the bellwether regions for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the ongoing parliamentary elections. There are some compelling reasons for this. The BJP never got a foothold in Bengal, and even at the peak of its performance in 2014, it could win just two Lok Sabha seats, even though it got a respectable 17% of the vote share. One of these was won with support from a regional party, the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM). The state remains under the dominant control of Trinamool Congress leader Mamata Banerjee and the BJP is largely dismissed as a party of India's Hindi speaking population. If the BJP has to do well in Bengal, it must perform extremely well in the northern part of the state, where it has its largest support base. Meanwhile, by virtue being India's most populous state that accounts for 80 Lok Sabha seats, Uttar Pradesh is the most crucial because of its sheer size and because of the scale of the BJP's triumph in the state in 2014 and in the 2017 assembly elections. In simple terms, the party's performance in Uttar Pradesh is the single largest factor that will determine its performance in

these elections and whether it can win a majority in the Lok Sabha for the second time in a row. An alliance between the Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) challenges the BJP in Uttar Pradesh this time. This pact is the most lethal in western UP, where the population of Muslim, Jats and Jatavs — the majority of the grand alliance — account for more than 50% of population in most of the parliamentary seats. Yadavs, the other major demographic group backing the alliance are present in a small belt in west UP, and largely in central and east UP. So, how are western UP and north Bengal voting? Travels across the two regions over the last fortnight shows there is a strong "Modi vote" in this election, as it was in 2014. It appears that the Prime Minister has managed to beat his personal anti-incumbency, and those who voted for him

remain loyal to him. In both places, Modi's name continues to evoke hope among BJP supporters. His position on nationalism has several backers, and Modi has managed to convince his supporters there are "achehe din" (good days) ahead, if they have not arrived as yet. The lack of jobs, the initial hiccups in the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax are talking points, but not necessarily determining the voting pattern. In north Bengal, the groundswell of support for Modi is visible, and the inability of the Congress and the Left parties to offer an alternative narrative to the Trinamool Congress adds more power to the BJP's march. It is a repeat of sorts of some north-eastern states, particularly Tripura, where the BJP grew in size and usurped the space of many other regional parties. The "Modi vote" faces its real

test in western Uttar Pradesh belt, which the BJP swept in the previous elections. The coming together of the rival parties and the apparent transfer of votes between them will create trouble for the party. But while a Dalit-Muslim-Yadav-Jat consolidation should mathematically end the BJP's dream run in India's most populous state, the Modi factor may help the party survive the onslaught. The BJP continues to hold sway over the upper castes and lower backward communities of Uttar Pradesh, and even among Jats and non-Jatav Dalits in most parts of western Uttar Pradesh. The rallying of these votes behind the BJP could well spring a surprise in the region on May 23. If the BJP indeed makes substantial gains in Bengal and minimises its losses in UP, it would mean that Modi has managed to change the old caste-dominated equations of Indian electoral politics.

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