Heir roars before home crowd in Delhi

Trinamul leaders said such buses had come from almost every district of Bengal — which meant that the majority of Abhishek's audience was of Abhishek's audience was from his home state. Which also meant that the young politician, who had done a pro-fessional course in Delhi, had to liberally pepper his Hindi speech with sentences in Ben-

gali.
The upshot: the Trinamul

trunout of at least 2,000. The actual crowd was bigger but some restless supporters chose to loiter around.

That the crowd count was playing on Abhishek's mind was clear when he thundered: "Jo log soch rahe thhe sammelan mein log nahin



Abhishek Banerjee speaks at the rally in Delhi on Thursday Picture by Vasir Jobal

aayenge, unko apne aankh se kaalaa patti hata ke dekhna chahiye (those who thought that there will be no crowd should remove the blinkers

should remove the blinkers and see)."
In an unfortunate coincidence, Trinamul veteran Saugata Roy, sitting on the edge of the stage, was sporting dark glasses.
Although Roy is not known to have made any comments against Abhishek and there was little to suggest that the young political was targeting him, the boast on the turnout was seen as a reply to some him, the boast on the turnout was seen as a reply to some senior leaders who had snig-gered and doubted his ability to carry off the event on the "national" stage. Mukul, who was in charge of the flop Mamata-Anna show, equated Abhishek with

his "son" but largely kept to himself on the stage. Initially, Mukul sat quietly in a corner. India," the heir apparent de Later, Abhishek returned to clared.

brief while.

Many in the audience had left and the venue looked sparse when Mukul spoke at the end.

"Abhishek, who is like my Admister, who is the my son, along with some other youth members, organised this historic youth convention and I thank him from the deep-

est corners of my heart and bless him," Mukul said. The meeting was organ-ised to articulate the anger of Trinamul's youth wing at the manner in which the CBI was conducting investigations into the Saradha scam and central agencies were unilatntral agencies were unilat-ally probing the Burdwan

erally probing ... blast. The 27-year-old Trinamul The 27-year-old Trinamul MP, however, appeared to be using the opportunity to assert his control over party affairs. Abhishek strode on the stage with a wireless microphone and roared intermitently, imitating Mamata, as the seniors sat with an air of nonchalance. "Modifi Some" 1.

"Modiji Swachh Bharat ka "Modiji Swachh Bharat ka nara de rahe hain. Pehle apna party saaf karo aur phir Ma-mata Banerjee ke tarqf dekho (Modiji has given a call for Clean India. He should first clean his own party and then look towards Mamata)," Ab-hishek said.

hishek said.
Neither Abhishek nor the other party MPs referred to the Saradha scandal or the Burdwan blast. The focus was no attacking the Modi government over price rise, communal disharmony and neglect of Bengal.

Mukul was among a couple of MPs who were allowed to speak from the stage. All of them hailed the nephew for staging the successful show.

If anyone was looking hard for undercurrents of competition, a clue came while Abhishek and Mukul referred to Trinamul's national

terred to Trinamul's national ambitions.

Mukul referred to the growth of the party outside Bengal, understandably under him. The Trinamul all-India general secretary said the party had MLAs in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and the northeastern states.

Pradesh, Jname.... northeastern states. Speaking before Mukul, Abhishek announced that he would lead and organise ne wolfid lead and organise such profests across the country, "Without asking any-body, we will organise such profests in different cities of

CROWDED CLUB OF POLITICAL PRINCES

In his classic prescriptions to princes, the Florentine Niccolo Machiavelli had reckoned hereditary rulers faced "far fewer difficulties" running states than first time claimants to power.

or inentru-Gandhi successors, he is also perceived as the most reluctant. As vice-president of the Congress, Rahul has dangled in semi-anointment as leader of a party currently at its nadir. Nobody in the Congress even imagines daring his suzerainty over the party, but Rahul himself has not stepped forward to assert himself with any determination or consistency. His interventions in the party have been subject to correction by the old guard, his own modus operandi have, at best, remained enigmatic.

The fifth in a line of Nehru-Gandhi

His mother and Congress president His motiner and Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, handed him the chalice with the caution power politics could prove a poison. Rahul has been palpably reluctant to embrace it. He appears to have an on-now, off-now relationship with public life; he has been reluctant to assume public responsibility, having declined several times to accept an apprentise; his movemence under apprenticeship in governance under Manmohan Singh. His outings post historic drubbing in the May 2014 general election have done little to inspire public confidence in his leadership abilities or in his party's to serve up a credible alternative.

But this is just the beginning of Rahul's tenure in the political wilderness, a test that is for him to flunk or fly through

When the

When the moment came, Omar was determined enough to snatch leadership, even if it was his own

depriving. Farooq Abdullah had publicly announced himself the future chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir when all results of the 2008 elections had come in. The following morning, Omar had extracted a succession, convincing both the elder Abdullah and the Congres

greater gut for the challenge. But in the years since, he has done little to retain the old Abdullah since, he has done little to retain the old Abdullah charisma in Kashmir, in fact, he may have contributed his bit to the dwindling family hold over mass sentiment. He completes a full term in the chief minister's office at the end of the year, but it has not been a term that has offered any hope to his National Conference of returning to power in the state. Often, Omar has battled crises he had no hand in making — the hanging of Alzal Guru, for instance — but he may also have failed write he could have come to bear. Building, or even retaining, the once-formidable cadre of the National Conference, for instance

He has shown he is adept at in-house power play. He has repulsed determined bids by elder brother Alagiri to claim the DMK crown and eventually had him formally cast aside. He has astutely

in doubt Stalin is his chosen successor. But Stalin may have much more to prove than he has thus far. The DMK remains at the wrong end of public opinion, Jayalalithaa, despite her conviction, opinion, Jayataitinaa, despire ner conviction, remains quite the heroine of the Tamil Nadu street. Stalin is staring at a steep uphill; and if and when he gets there, he will find he must begin to learn what he has never done before: govern a state

AKHILESH YADAV

He was quite the dynamic that drove the Samajwadi Party (SP) to a spectacular victory in the 2012 Assembly polls in UP, and he earned the just reward of chief ministership from other Muleum Sinch Part father Mulayam Singh. But since then, it has been

up and down for Akhilesh, more down than up A key problem: he has not been able to come into his own. Mulayam Singh continues to be perceived, including by the bureaucrapy, to be the real power centre, and Akhilesh dalay contends with too many domineering "elders", Shivpal Yadav and Azam Khan among them. Result. Akhilesh has not been able to deliver his promised gen-next bruch on governance, neither has he succeeded in crafting a new, modern SP that many thought he would up and down for Akhilesh

It is moot yet if Thursday's Jantar Mantar show marked yet another rite of Abhishek Banerjee, nephew to chief minister Mamata Banerjee and Trinai Admission Diamond Harbour, being nudged along the succession altar of the party. If he is, Abhishek is set to join a crowded, though not always successful club. Many of the trajectories of political inheritance unfolding around him are,

> Here's a case of succession denied.

in fact, cautionary tales.

denied.
Jagan was
zealously
keen he be
handed chief
ministership as a matter of right
when father Y. Rajashekhar Reddy died in a chopper crash in 2009. The Congress wouldn't have it, and a split came to pass, Jagan becoming boss of his own enterprise called the YSR Congress. He has the YSR Congress. He has proved a doughty customer, emaciating the Congress, building a base of his own, and rendering himself a contender even as he fought what he alleges to be trumped up corruption charges. Power still eludes Jagan though, and that, should he achieve it, will spring new rballenges.

spring new challenges SUPRIYA SULE She's Sharad Pawar's pet, but nobody

but nobody in the NCP is up to the

challenge of making a go for it when the time comes. Among young parliamentarians, Sule has come to acquire a space and profile quite her own, but she has, in her party, a hard-boiled political rival in cousin Ajit Pawar. Has she done enough on the ground in her father's Maratha pockets to play the Maratha pockets to play the hard game and wrest the mantle? Or does she already belong in a fading political undertaking? Sunday's outcome from Maharashtra may offer some clues

PANKAJA MUNDE
Another
Maharashtra scion
on the rise, BJP MLA
and daughter of the
late Gopinath
Munde, Pankaja has
not shield from
suggestions she
could be in the running for chief
minister should her party win the
state & exembly. She has been on

minister should her party win the state Assembly. She has been one of the provincial stars of the election campaign, and, as daughter of Munde, who died in a freak road Munde, who died in a freak road accident following the BJP's May victory, she believes she has a natural claim. Her leadership man out, though, for it wears an anti-dynasty ticket on its sleeve. Little doubt, however, that Pankaja has displayed a foregrounded ambition for stepping into the space vacated by her father

LALUCIAN

Too many of them vying for what is yet no more than a pie in the sky. There's the eldest daughter Misa, who fought and lost the Lok Sabha elections in May from Pataliputra. There's Teiaswi, failed T20 cricketer with ambitions of becoming the new face of the Rashtriya

face of the Rashtriya
Janata Dal, There's also
the reclusive, but no
less ambitious, Tej
Pratap, about whom
title is known other than
that he is quirky enough to sometimes
believe he is the avatar of Lord
Krishna. None of them displays
anything close to the public connect
or charisma that Lalu Prasad still has.
But all of them are drivine his Put all of them are drivine his. or chansma that Laiu Prasad still has But all of them are driven by the charm of a vacancy at the top in the family—their father is barred from contesting, courtesy his conviction in the fodder case. But all of them must also rely first on their father to turn the sunken fortunes of the party

NATION

Azam **bullets**

■ New Delhi, Oct. 16 (PTI): Uttar Pradesh urban development min-ister Azam Khan was ster Azam Khan was stopped by security offi-cials at the Delhi airport after he was found carry ing four live rounds of bullets in his hand bag-gage before boarding a flight to Lucknow. Khan was intercept-ed by CISF personnel at

eu by CISF personnel at the airport terminal. "The minister has been allowed to travel to Luc-know after he produced his arms license. Howev er, the bullets have been seized," an official said.

Java appeal

■ New Delhi (PTI): A petition has been moved in the Supreme Court seek ing a direction to shift Jayalalithaa to Central Jayaiantnaa to Centrai Prison, Chennai, from a Bangalore jail where she has been lodged since her conviction in an as-sets case. The plea is lik-ely to be heard on Friday

US plane

New Delhi (PTI): A
US-registered aircraft
was grounded by the
DGCA after a surprise
safety check at Delhi
airport on Tuesday. The
eight-seater aircraft, reg
istered in Michigan, did
not have the mandatory
oxygen masks or operations manual on board
and its emercency exit

JINGLE BELLS



Pranab Mukherjee shakes hands with Santa Claus during the first visit by an Indian President to Santa

Indian President to Santa Claus Village in Rovaneimi, Finland, on Thursday. Rovaniemi is situated directly on the Arctic Circle. Santa Claus operates from his office in the village where visitors can meet him

throughout the year and ask him to grant their wishes. The President told Santa: "People in India love you a "People in India love you a lot. By meeting me, you have made my day." Santa replied: "No Excellency, you are the

nation. By coming here you have made my day." (PTI)

Private firms to join US nuke talks

CHARU SUDAN KASTURI New Delhi Oct 16: India and New Delhi, Oct. 16: India and the US are for the first time in-ducting private nuclear firms in diplomatic talks on the con-troversial liability law, offer-ing the clearest hint yet of Delhi's new flexibility on re-solving a dispute critical to bi-lateral ties.

The inclusion of Indian

manufacturers in the talks with the US signals a previous-ly unseen recognition from Delhi that its liability law may need amending because it

need amending because ith hurts not just foreign companies but domestic firms too. Indian firms such as Larsen and Toubro, involved in manufacturing nuclear components, have, like their foreign counterparts, been critical of the country's liability regime, far more stringent on suppliers than any other in-

ternational nuclear safety law. The government has so far refused to even contemplate tweaking India's laws amid fears of allegations of capitulating to overseas pressure. The decision to include private nuclear firms from both countries in the talks was taken during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Washington, said senior officials from both countries. ficials from both countries who independently detailed key elements of the plan to The Telegraph. "We see this as a definite,

law — that effectively expose nuclear suppliers to unlimited damages in the event of an accident. India has quietly skirted this provision with Russia by insuring Moscow's reactors without, in effect, charging any premiums — resulting in Indian taxpayers bearing the entire cost of any potential damages because of the liability law. But while that slichtly unsure that the cost of any potential damages because of the liability law.

ity law.

But while that slightly underhand strategy worked with Russia — where the nuclear agency is publicly owned — finding a similar solution

"We see this as a definite, significant more forward on solving this problem that has basically kept he Indo US miclear deal stillborn," a US official said. "After years, we're possibly finally headed in the right direction."

The dispute revolves around provisions — in India's 2010 nuclear liability on India's provisions — in India's 2010 nuclear liability.

Any move by the govern-ment to agree to amend even widely accepted flaws in the I-ability law is, however, a politi-cal risk. Opposition parties are likely to portray the move as the Modi government buck-ling under US pressure. The new round of talks presents a way out. These will not be called bi-lateral negotiations, but the deliberations of an expert

lateral negotiations, but the deliberations of an expert "group", officials said, a for-mulation that will allow the panel's recommendations to appear bipartisan, raising

appear bipartisan, raising heir political acceptability, especially in India.
Officials from the ministry of external affairs, the state-owned Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited and private Indian firms like L&T will be the Indian members on the panel. The US will be represented by officials from the

and GE.

Modi had hinted at his personal desire to achieve a breakthrough in talks that have stalled over India's liability law in New York, where he met Jeff Immelt, the CEO of GE. "The Prime Minister told he GE CEO that he had a personal interest in breaking the point because one of the nu. sonal interest in breaking the logiam because one of the nu-clear plants is coming up in his home state Gujarat," an of-ficial present at the meeting between Modi and Immelt

between Modi and Immelt said.

Mithi Virdi in Gujarat is one of the sites picked by Westinghouse to set up what would be India's single largest nuclear power plant — if the dispute is resolved.

The panel, officials said, will be set up this month and will meet by early November.

Spotted: signs of 'awareness' in vegetative state

New Delhi, Oct. 16: An Indian engineer turned encorscinist has helped discover signatures of hidden awareness in the brain networks of some unconscious and unresponsive patients in a vegetative state that may be used someday to identify patients aware of their surroundings. The study by Srivas Chennu at the University of Cambridge in the UK and his colleagues has found that some restitents in a vegetative state. New Delhi, Oct. 16: An Indi-an engineer-turned-neurosci-

active, similar to those ob-served in healthy adults. The brain networks they

studied in 32 unconscious and uncommunicative patients are inter-connections linking multiple areas of the cerebral cortex that scientists believe are important in generating

and maintaining consciousness about the external world. Their findings, published today in the journal PLOS Computational Biology, suggest that non-invasive electroence-phalograph (BCG) recordings may be used to identify those patients in a vegetative state who are somewhat aware of their external surroundings. "This is a key step towards developing a beside tool to assess brain function and awareness in such patients," Chennu, who had studied computer science and engineering in

nu, who had studied computer science and engineering in Bangalore before he moved to the UK for a PhD in neuro-science, told The Telegraph. The study boldsters earlier evidence that a small minority of patients in a vegetative state have brain networks that might support some aware-ness of the external world deness of the external world de-spite the patient being uncon-

THE DIFFERENCES How vegetative state differs from coma & brain death

A patient in a A patient in a vegetative state has slightly more brain functions than a person in a deep coma, and may open and may open eyes or even make sounds, while remaining unresponsive to instructions A coma is a deep state of unconsciousness in which patients are alive but unable

A brain dead alive but unable to move or a key region of the respond to the external surroundings. A patient in coma may slip into a dreating or vegetative state of the brain responsible or the capacity for consciousness and the capacity to a vegetative state of the brain stem, a first temperation of the brain stem, and the region of the brain stem, a first temperation of the program of the region of the brain stem, a first temperation of the region of the program of the region of the program of the respond to the responding to the

scious and unable to behavtient to imagine playing tennis.

scious and unable to behav-iourally or verbally respond to requests or queries.

Chennu's Cambridge col-leagues had in a pioneering ex-tivity in specific regions of the periment conducted eight years ago asked a vegetative pa-body movements, just as they



would appear in healthy volun-teers, although this patient was behaviourally unresponsive. The experiment has since been replicated with other patients and produced similar

observations several times.

"The implication is that
the patients understood the
auditory instructions we gave auditory instructions we gave them to play tennis, and chose to do so in a sustained manner for 10 minutes or so," said Chennu, who decided to switch from engineering to brain science research after reading Phantoms in the Brain, writ-ten by Indian-origin neurosci-entist Vilayanur S. Ramachan-dran at the University of Cali-

dran at the University of Cali-fornia, San Diego.

In the new study, the re-searchers have shown that so-me patients in a vegetative sta-te who had shown signs of such hidden awareness when tested through the tennis-im-agery test also have well-pre-served brain networks that lo-ok similar to those of healthy adults.

adults.
Doctors now assess patients in a vegetative state through a standard set of tech-niques that rely on externally observable behaviour. The di-rect measurement of their brain activity, either through MRI or EEG, is not routine clinical practice yet. Studies suggest that only a

minority — up to two in 10 — of patients in a vegetative

state have any covert aware-ness detectable through the tennis-imagery test. But while this test requires MRI scans,

tenins imagery gives Mrd some this test requires Mrd some his test requires Mrd some said, be conveniently ad-dressed at a patient's bedside. A combination of tests could improve the accuracy of predicting likely outcomes for patients. "If a patient's aware-ness networks are intact, then we know that (the patient is) likely to be aware of what is likely to be aware of what is are searcher at the Medical Re-search Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit at the University of Cambridge, said. "But unfortunately, (the

"But unfortunately, (the findings) also suggest that veg-etative patients with severely impaired networks at rest are