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We need voices of questioning & not voice of power, defiance : KTR

Hyderabad, May 15 (NSS): BRS party working president KTR today said the State needed the voices of questioning and not the voices of power. He said a man like Rakesh Reddy, who is the voice of questioning, should be elected

to the State Legislative Council in the upcoming MLC by-elections. KTR held a meeting with the party leaders on Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduates' MLC by-election. Later, he spoke to the media.

Congress believes in 'destructive idea' of budget allocation based on religion : PM Modi

Kalyan (Maharashtra), May 15 (IANS) : Slamming Congress' 'divisive' agenda, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the party is not only adamant on taking away reservation from SC/ST/OBC and the poor to

give it to Muslims, but also believes in the "destructive idea" of budget allocation based on religion. "They have started this experiment in Karnataka. After coming to power there, they issued an order overnight that all Muslims are OBCs.



Despite objections from Opposition parties, PoK becoming part of India is reality : HM Shah

Kolkata, May 15 (IANS) : Despite opposition from a section of political parties in the country, the event of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) becoming an integral part of India is now a reality.



Sex video scandal: SIT on high alert amid reports of Prajwal Revanna's return from Germany

Bengaluru, May 15 (IANS) : Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the sex video scandal, is on high alert following reports that the prime accused JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna is planning to return to Bengaluru from Germany on Wednesday. Sources said that Prajwal Revanna had booked a Rs 3.5 lakh business class ticket.



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Make it beautiful and pleasant

Rajanna Sirisilla (Vemulawada), May 15 (TIM Bureau) : Rajanna Sirisilla District Vemulawada Sri Rajarajeswara Swamy Temple Pond development works are beautiful and pleasant. Collector Anurag Jayanthi ordered the officials to fix it. Collector Anurag Jayanti and Additional Collector Pujari Gauthami inspected the ongoing constructions in Bund Park under the auspices of the Tourism Department in Vemulawada Sri Rajarajeswaraswamy temple pond premises as part of the temple pond development works. On this occasion, the maps of the park and other construction works were examined

and inspected at the field level. He suggested that the work should be done in a traditional and spiritual manner using modern technology. Children's playgrounds should be made more attractive, play equipment should be arranged and colors should be painted. All the works of walking area, open gym etc. were ordered to be completed by June 15. It is mentioned that the number of workers should be increased and the works should be carried out quickly. Officials said that the work of Nataraja statue has been completed. It is suggested to arrange plants and greenery at Surya Namaskar. Later, the Collector inspected the park being constructed under the auspices of Vemulawada Municipal near the MPDO office and made sev-



■ The work of the temple pond should be completed by June 15
■ District Collector Anurag Jayanthi
■ Inspection of Vemulawada temple development and park works

eral suggestions to the Municipal Commissioner Anvesh. Tourism CE Venkataramana, DE

Vidyasagar, JE Jeevan Reddy, DTCPO Ansari and others participated here.

Security personnel should be alert



District Collector, CP who inspected the security at the strong rooms.

Karimnagar (Siricilla) May 15 (TIM Bureau) : Karimnagar District Collector Pamela Satpathy and Police Commissioner Abhishek Mahanty inspected the police security at the strong rooms of EVMs of seven assembly constituencies kept in Karimnagar SRR College on Wednesday. All separately secured strong rooms were monitored and security reviewed. The District Collector and CP discussed the performance of CC cameras, the performance of duties of police personnel and any additional security issues to be

undertaken. The authorities have been directed to this extent. Similarly monitored around the college. They advised the authorities to make strict arrangements to prevent walkers and other people from entering the college in the morning and evening hours. Collector CP stated that the security personnel and officials should be alert till the counting is completed. He said that they should be careful even at night. "Karimnagar RDO K Maheshwar, Town ACP Narender and others participated in this program.



The speed of grain purchases should be increased : Government Whip Adi Srinivas

Rajanna Sirisilla, May 15 (TIM Bureau) : Government Whip Vemulawada Legislators Adi Srinivas said that the speed of grain procurement should be increased. On Wednesday, Rajanna inspected the paddy procurement center at Rudrangi mandal center of Sirisilla district. On this occasion, he sat down with the farmers and inquired about the problems. He asked the officials to ensure that there is no trouble to

the farmers in Vemulawada Rural and Vemulawada Urban mandals. Later, Civil Supplies Commissioner Chauhan, Jagityala District Collector Yasmin Pasha, Rajanna Sirisilla District Collector Anurag Jayanthi, DCSO Jitender Reddy, DM Jitender Prasad spoke to the concerned officials over the phone to ensure that there is no trouble to the farmers. Keeping in view the coming rains, the authorities have been requested to speed up

the procurement of grain. Demanding that there is no shortage of lorries, the lorry owner association and the members of the van association in Vemulawada town limits have been asked to speak to Nagaraju, the president of District Para Boiled Rice Mill Association, to import sacks of grain as soon as possible. He suggested that farmers should contact him if they face any problems in the purchase centers.

Grand tests for Group-1, UPSC Civil Services (Prelims) candidates.

Rajanna Sirisilla, May 15 (TIM Bureau) : Rajanna Sirisilla District BC Study Circle Director Jella Venkataswamy has informed in a statement on Wednesday that Group-1, UPSC Civil Services (Prelims) Examination 2024 will be conducted offline in the BC Study Circles run by Telangana State Government. For TSPSC Group-1 candidates, Grand Tests will be conducted offline in BC Study Circle on May 18, 20, 22, 25, 27, 29, 31, June 01, 03, 2024 and also on May 23, 26, 2024 for UPSC Civil Services Prelims 2024 candidates. Jella Venkataswamy said that Grand Tests will be held on 28, 30, June 02, 04, 06, 08, 10, 12. Candidates are advised to apply online on the website www.tsbcbstudycircle.cgg.gov.in to appear for these grand tests and for more information they can contact mobile numbers 9381888749, 7702650209.



BRS Dasoju urged Revanth stop useless Chat and focus on good governance

Hyderabad, May 15 (TIM Bureau) : BRS senior leader Dr Dasoju shraavan lambasted TG CM "Mr. Revanth Reddy, irresponsibly and without the decency befitting a Chief Minister, is making baseless, unlawful, and unethical accusations against junior employees of the electricity department, thereby degrading their self-respect and shamelessly covering up his own incompetence. BRS leader alleged that It is wrong for Mr. Revanth Reddy to blame junior employees instead of providing clarity on why power cuts, which were nonexistent during KCR's government, are occurring now. His abuse of power,

where he thinks whatever he says will go unchallenged, is strongly condemnable. Most helpers, linemen, and junior employees in the electricity department come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. It is a social crime for a senior government head like Mr. Revanth Reddy to discriminate against and look down upon junior employees. I request Mr. Revanth Reddy to retract his baseless arrogant remarks and apologize to the junior employees. Within just five months, people have been forced to buy generators and inverters. Why are TVs, refrigerators, and agricultural motors in many households getting damaged?

Andhra: Six charred to death as bus catches fire

Amaravati, May 15 (IANS) : Six persons were charred to death and 20 others injured when a private bus caught fire after colliding with a tipper lorry in Andhra Pradesh's Palnadu district in the early hours of Wednesday. The accident occurred near Pasumarru in Chilkaluripeta Mandal when the bus belonging to private travels collided head-on with a tipper around 1 a.m., police said. The bus was heading to Hyderabad from Nilayapalem in Bapatla district. Injured passengers said they were returning to Hyderabad after casting their votes in Monday's simultaneous elections to the state Assembly and Lok Sabha.



Fight over free ration: Kharge promises 10 kg against NDA's 5kg if INDIA bloc forms govt

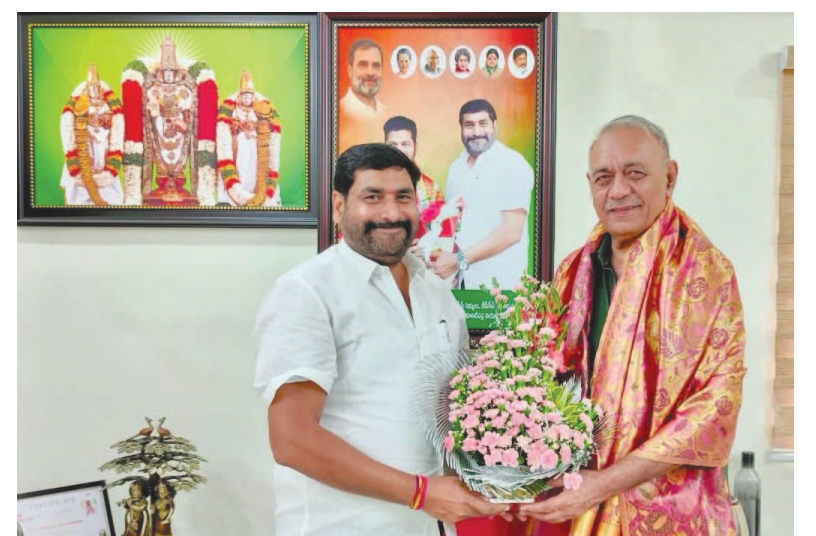
New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Amid the high-decibel campaign and fierce competition between BJP and the INDIA bloc to woo new voters, the free ration to the country's 80 crore citizens has become a new rallying point for the latter. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, addressing a joint press conference with Samajwadi Party (SP) supremo Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday, said that the INDIA bloc will provide 10 kg free ration to people, as against NDA's 5 kg. "You are giving 5 kg ration to poor, we will provide 10 kg free ration," Kharge said while

scoffing at Modi govt's assertions on feeding the poor. Kharge cited the examples of Karnataka and Telangana and said that Congress governments have implemented the same, there. He also accused the Modi government of taking 'undue credit' over free ration and said that this was brought out by the Congress-led UPA government under the Food Security Act. Notably, the Congress manifesto for the 2024 elections didn't mention free ration and now has suddenly popped up after the culmination of the fourth phase of elections.

Dr Srirangam received the appointment documents as the organizing chairman for the Sr National Throwball Championship to be held in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, May 15 (TIM Bureau) : Today National Throwball Association General Secretary Raman Sawhney will be held meeting in Hyderabad in the first week of June as the organizing chairman for the 47th Senior National Throwball Championship with TPCC spokesperson Dr. Satyam srirangam On the occasion of the appointment, presented the appointment papers together in a polite manner at their residence. Telangana State Throwball Association General Secretary Krishna

Reddy, Vice President Krishna Shaikh participated in this programme.



Inter-Services Organisations Act notified through gazette notification

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : The Ministry of Defence on Wednesday said that the Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control and Discipline) Act has been notified through a gazette notification, to be enforced with effect from May 10.

exercise control over service personnel, serving under them, for effective maintenance of discipline and administration, without disturbing the unique service conditions of each individual service," the ministry said.

cases of misdemeanours or indiscipline and saving of public money and time by avoiding multiple proceedings," the ministry said. It said that it would also pave the way for much greater integration and jointness amongst the three services, lay a strong foundation for the creation of joint structures in times to come and further improve the functioning of the Armed Forces.



Idashisha Nongrang becomes first woman police chief of Meghalaya

Shillong, May 15 (IANS) : Idashisha Nongrang, a 1992 batch IPS officer coming from a tribal background, was on Wednesday appointed the first woman Director General of Police (DGP) of Meghalaya.

BJP-JD(S) alliance will continue in Karnataka : Ex CM Yediyurappa



Mysuru, May 15 (IANS) : Former Chief Minister and BJP Parliamentary Board member B. S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday said the BJP-JD(S) alliance will continue in Karnataka.

People will teach AAP a lesson, says BJP candidate from Bathinda

Bathinda, May 15 (IANS) : The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which came to power in Punjab promising to end the drugs menace in the state, has failed badly on all fronts, said former IAS officer Parampal Kaur Sidhu, the BJP nominee from the Bathinda Lok Sabha constituency, here on Wednesday.

Assam couple abandons 4-year-old daughter, heads to join ULFA-I: Sources

Guwahati, May 15 (IANS) : A couple in Assam's Tinsukia district reportedly abandoned their ancestral home to join the proscribed outfit United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I), leaving behind their four-year-old daughter, sources said on Wednesday.



TN SIT finds similarity between Cong leader's mysterious death and murder of K.N. Nehru's brother

Chennai, May 15 (IANS) : The Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Tamil Nadu Police probing the mysterious death of Tirunelveli district Congress President K.P.K. Jeyakumar Dhanasingh has found certain similarities between the case and the murder of Ramajayam, the brother of state minister K.N. Nehru.

2012, Ramajayam, the brother of DMK leader K.N. Nehru, was found murdered and his body was recovered from the Tiruchi-Kallannai road.



The police recovered the charred body of Jeyakumar from his farmland near his home on May 4. His body was found with the hands and legs tied and a scrubber stuffed into his mouth.

Bank of Baroda advertisement for Secunderabad Branch, including address and contact information.

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POSSESSION NOTICE advertisement for Can Fin Homes Ltd, detailing property details and legal notices.



Love jihad will be eliminated if NDA wins over 400 seats, says Assam CM

Patna, May 15 (IANS) : Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has claimed that if the NDA secures over 400 seats in the Lok Sabha polls, love jihad will be eliminated from the country.

Modi's government to end whatever wrong things are happening in the country," he said. "Religion and sect have always been an issue in our country.

Table with multiple columns: Name of Borrower, Description of the Secured Asset, Total Outstanding Due (Rs.), Date of Demand, Date of Possession. Contains multiple rows of financial and legal data.

OPINIONmail



BJP HAS DONE WELL IN THE NORTH EASTERN STATES WHERE POLLING IS OVER

General satisfaction prevails among ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) circles that the Lok Sabha 2024 elections ended peacefully in the eight Northeastern states, but for a few minor incidents reported in Manipur. In three phases, altogether 25 seats were contested. Relief was more palpable, according to reports reaching various state capitals, among Delhi-based GOI and Central Election Commission officials. Despite elaborate pre-poll preparations /security arrangements for the region as a whole, there was a lingering concern, especially over the somewhat unsettled situation in Manipur. However, there was hardly any major eruption of poll-related violence anywhere. Voters exercised their rights enthusiastically. Even in Manipur, the overall polling percentage remained well over 70%. In 2019, the BJP had won 21 out of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in NE states. Observers feel there would not be much of a change in the 2024 results either. BJP circles expect a broadly similar outcome, but intriguingly, Assam Chief Minister Mr Himanta Biswa Sarma who spearheaded the BJP poll campaign, is not talking numbers just yet. Somewhat uncharacteristically, Mr Sarma refused to speculate how many seats the BJP would win in his home state, while talking to mediapersons shortly after the third phase of polling ended. Mr Sarma had earlier claimed that his party would win 22 out of the 25 LS seats being contested, while for Assam, he was confident of winning 12 out of 15 seats. His new found restraint has occasioned some media speculation. As reported in a section of the Assam mass media, Mr Sarma was questioned about his energetic campaign in most parts of Assam, not excluding Muslim or Bengali-dominated districts. As per the BJP's standard political narrative, he stressed the theme of economic development in Assam and the NE states as a whole, in his speeches.

A section of the BJP leaders were convinced that the minorities, whether religious or linguistic, responded positively to the party's campaign, with its focus on positivity. The Chief Minister explained that given his constitutional duties, he had to attend to the needs of all sections of people as the leader. As an administrator he could not discriminate /differentiate among various communities in decision-making. He said this in reply to reminders from his questioners that he had earlier announced in unequivocal terms that he did not much care for what he had described as 'Mian' votes in Assam. The BJP could — and would — win without them. For the record in Assam, 'Mian' is a somewhat pejorative term in common parlance, referring to a Muslim of Bangladeshi origin. Thus It would not have been surprising if he had skipped addressing a few rallies in the Barak Valley districts or campaigning in some areas in Barpeta, Dhubri or Nagaon, for instance. The BJP in principle opposes what it denounce as Muslim 'appeasement' as allegedly practised by the Congress, the Left parties or various other regional parties and groups, for the sake of winning votes. In Assam, the electoral battles are heavily and bitterly dominated by vicious allegations of 'vote bank based politics' on part of the BJP, while the parties opposing it accuse it of 'hardline communal Hindutva'. This year has been no exception. Could it be that Mr Sarma was now no longer sure of the BJP doing very well in Assam or the NE region, as he was earlier? Is it a sign that perhaps the party's much publicised target of winning 400 seats or more in the LS polls will not be possible? There has been no clarification from Mr Sarma or the BJP as a whole.

Pro BJP think tanks are still counting on the BJP to do better in 2024 in terms of winning seats in the NE region. They are confident that there are factors other than economic development mainly in the infrastructure sector, that should ensure a BJP sweep. The improvement in the overall NE security scenario has been remarkable. The key to this has been the recent GOI agreements with the strong Manipur-based separatist organisation the UNLF, not to mention the ongoing peace dialogue with the NSCN, ULFA and other insurgent groups.

EDITORIAL
the indian mail

IS SHARAD PAWAR MULLING COMING BACK TO THE CONGRESS?



Sharad Pawar's remark that many regional parties may move closer to Congress post the elections has led to speculations of a possible merger of NCP(SP) with the Congress. However, the statement of Pawar assumes significance in the wake of BJP targeting the regional parties through various means. While Sanjay Nirupam, who left the Congress to join Shiv Sena, said Pawar has been thinking about merging with the Congress for a long time, and even the Congress had given the very same proposal to him. In 1978, Pawar broke away from the Congress to become the youngest Chief Minister of Maharashtra at the head of a coalition government with the Janata party. He returned to the Congress in 1987 and became CM of Maharashtra in 1988, this time as the head of a Congress government. In mid-1999, he parted company with the Congress over Sonia Gandhi's foreign antecedents — and formed the Nationalist Congress Party.



PRESIDENT BIDEN FACING HIS BIGGEST DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGE IN DEALING WITH GAZA WAR

The US President, Joe Biden, is facing political challenges as he attempts to navigate the demands of both the Israel lobby and its critics. This has led to perceptions of his weakness and ineffectiveness. With the election just six months away, Biden is struggling with a significant foreign policy issue. On Monday (6th of May), White House spokesman John Kirby expressed concerns about operations in Rafah that could potentially endanger over a million innocent people. Kirby also highlighted Biden's belief that the

hostage deal offered the best solution to prevent such risks while ensuring the release of the hostages. Several days have passed, and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are still conducting an operation in the southern Gazan city of Rafah, with no visible progress towards reaching a resolution. According to analyst Hasan Unal, this incident reflects the complex relationship between the White House and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Unal argues that President Joe Biden faces the difficult task of trying to satisfy both pro-Palestine factions within his party and the right-wing leader-

ship in Israel. To delve into the strategic and humanitarian consequences of these recent developments, Professor Hasan Unal, an expert in political science and international relations at Bashkent University, participated in a discussion on Sputnik's Fault Lines program on Wednesday (8th May) as reported by Sputnik a Russian Media House. Israel may have preferred if Hamas had rejected the proposed deal, as recent reports indicated that the Palestinian group had accepted a proposal facilitated by the US, Egypt, and Qatar.

IS IT A THIRD NARENDRA MODI TERM OR PAK ATOM BOMB THAT HAS GOT AIYAR IN A TWIST?

It is a Mani Shankar Aiyar habit to startle. The 'Congress veteran' is an amalgam of both politician and diplomat. And "respecting Pakistan" is an Aiyar trait. Now, Aiyar's "respect for Pakistan" is tinged with known fear. Aiyar says "Respect Pakistan or they'll drop atom bomb". When was the last time Pakistan dropped an "atom bomb"? Aiyar is the veteran on the bomb squad, he will know. Question is what got into Mani Shankar Aiyar that fear got the better of him and he spilled the beans on Pakistan? Pakistan can go ahead and drop an atom bomb, it will incinerate, too. And Aiyar's warning to

the Modi government comes on the heels of Kashmiri politician Farooq Abdullah's warning that Pakistan wasn't "wearing bangles". It is an insult to womanhood, but there it was and the Pakistanis are not short on respecting womanhood. That being said, does Abdullah and Mani Shankar Aiyar know something more than the Modi government about Pakistan's intentions vis a vis India? The Congress has distanced itself from Mani Shankar Aiyar's "Respect Pakistan or they'll drop atom bomb" comment. But the Congress and "distances itself" are old friends. It was only the other day that the Congress "distanced" itself from Sam Pitroda's "Indians according to ethnicity" remarks. Pitroda's comment drew

widespread criticism and the Congress distanced itself. Now the Congress has distanced itself from Aiyar's "respect Pakistan or get nuked" warning. At this rate, the Congress will have to distance itself from itself. But then what can the Congress do if Mani Shankar Aiyar succumbs to whatever feelings he has been nursing for Pakistan for years? Aiyar is not joking when he says India "can talk tough to Pakistan if it wants to, but has to respect Pakistan or pay a heavy price". The veteran Congress leader is only echoing the Congress line on dialogue with Pakistan. India has had uneasy relations with Pakistan even when the Congress ruled India and the Congress is no friend of Pakistan in spite and despite of Mani Shankar

Aiyar. In a way, the Congress has done right by distancing itself from Mani Shankar Aiyar on this subject. The Congress cannot let anybody, even vaunted veteran Congress leaders, paint it into a coward's corner, not when the enemy at home talks of "muscular military policy". The Congress leader spoke something about not provoking the "mad man" and it is not clear whether he was referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi? In the melee, the word "Lahore" was also heard. Mani Shankar Aiyar knows something that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh does not.

THE BATTLE OF STARS IS IN FULL SWING IN THE INDUSTRIAL BELT OF BENGAL

Veterans of Trinamool Congress and BJP have locked horns in Burdwan-Durgapur-Asansol industrial belt of Bengal once the most go to place for a job seeking engineer or a manual labourer. A low voter turnout is not unlikely in these constituencies on May 13 -in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections in the state. After years of cohabiting in the neighbourhood of closed Public Sector Units(PSUs) and once blue chip private sector enterprises, many voters feel no matter who is elected, this area once known as "Ruhr of Bengal" is long past its salad days. As the Trinamool Congress and BJP candidates take the electoral battle field at Burdwan-Durgapur Lok Sabha seat, they would appear to be apparently new comers.

THERE IS NO VERSION OF LIBERALISM THAT CAN TAKE ECONOMIES OUT OF PRESENT STAGNATION

Each strand of political praxis is informed by a political philosophy which analyses the world around us, especially, in modern times, its economic characteristics. On the basis of this analysis, the particular political philosophy sets out the objectives which have to be struggled for, and the political praxis informed by it carries out this struggle. The objective may be difficult to achieve, more difficult in certain contexts than in others, and this difficulty may act as a hurdle for political praxis; but this does not constitute a crisis for that political philosophy. The sheer difficulty of achieving an objective does not constitute a crisis. A crisis of a political philosophy arises when it has an internal contradiction, when the



objective it puts forward is logically in conflict with some other feature in which it believes. Many would argue that the objective of socialism that the political philosophy, Marxism, puts forward, has in the present context become somewhat more difficult to achieve; but this, while explaining the present weakening of the Left, does not constitute any crisis for Marxism. (IPA Service)

US 'deliberately' excluded then South Korean Prez Moon Jae-in from 2018 Trump-Kim summit : Ex-official

Washington, May 15 (IANS) : The US "deliberately" excluded then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in from its first-ever summit with North Korea in Singapore in 2018 as he was "too willing" to make concessions, a State Department spokesperson during the former Trump administration said in a book published this week.

Morgan Ortagus, the department's spokesperson from 2019-2021, described the exclusion from the meeting between then President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un as an "America first foreign policy in action," stressing that though the US works with allies, it will sometimes move "independently" when it serves America's interests, Yonhap news agency reported.

She wrote a chapter in the book titled "An America First Approach to US National Security." It was published by the America First Policy Institute (AFPI), a non-profit organisation. Her chapter was titled "America First, NATO,

and US Alliances: Why America First is Not Isolationism." "The United States also deliberately excluded Moon from the Singapore summit because he was too willing to make concessions to North Korea," she wrote.

"This is an America-first foreign policy in action: American strength, presidential leadership, peace through strength, and working with allies with the caveat that the United States will sometimes act independently when it is in our nation's interest," she added.

The Singapore summit took place in June 2018, producing an agreement under which Pyongyang committed to work toward the "complete denuclearisation" of the Korean Peninsula, while both sides agreed to work together to build new relations and foster a lasting, stable peace regime on the peninsula.

Ortagus noted that the US "listened to" Moon but took a much harder line against Pyongyang than Moon wanted. "Although the United States



worked closely with Japan and South Korea in its approach to North Korea, the Trump administration did not give either state a veto over America's North Korea policy," she said. She portrayed Trump's personal diplomacy with the North Korean leader as a "case study" of how an America-first foreign policy can work.

In particular, she recalled Trump's UN address in 2017, in which he said that the US has great strength and patience, but if forced to defend itself and its allies, it would have no choice but to "totally destroy" North Korea.

"Trump's tough rhetoric, sanc-

tions, and policies against North Korea in 2017 led Kim to agree to diplomacy with the United States, including a summit with the president in Singapore in June 2018," she said.

She took a swipe at President Joe Biden's foreign policy, saying his administration has continued along a "dangerous" path.

"North Korea's significant expansion of its missile program since 2021, along with possible preparations for a seventh underground nuclear test, has seen no real policy response from the Biden administration," she said.

"This has been driven by the president naming a part-time North Korean special envoy and a failure of top Biden officials to attempt bilateral diplomacy with their North Korean counterparts." Calling Biden's Asia foreign policy "weak," she said it has led to joint naval and air exercises between Russia and China and a "new Russia-China axis that has been augmented by North Korea and Iran."



Israel war cabinet orders

IDF to secure Sinwar, Mohammed Deif

Tel Aviv, May 15 (IANS) : Israel war cabinet, which met late on Wednesday, has ordered the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to secure Hamas military chief Yahya Sinwar and his deputy, Mohammed Deif and to accelerate the invasion in Rafah region.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant have, according to sources in Israel's Defence Ministry, forcefully pushed for securing the two Hamas leaders considered to be the brain behind the October 7 attack on southern Israel, slaughtering 1,200 people.

Sources in Israel's Defence Min-

istry told IANS that Israeli intelligence agencies have given inputs that Sinwar and Deif are in separate tunnel networks between Khan Younis and Rafah area, at a distance of five kilometres.

The Israeli military intelligence has also reported that both the Hamas military leaders are surrounded by Israeli hostages, and that an attack will be carried out using specific intelligence on the exact locations of Sinwar and Deif.

Israel Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, considered a hawk in the Israeli government, had publicly called for the assassination of Sinwar to bring Gaza under total control of IDF.

CIA chief offers information about Yahya Sinwar to Israel for halting Rafah operation

Tel Aviv, May 15 (IANS) : The chief of the American spy agency, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), William Burns has offered intel on Hamas military head Yahya Sinwar in exchange of Israel halting its ground invasion in the Rafah region.

Sinwar, who has been on Israel's hit list ever since the war broke out on October 7 with Hamas, is reportedly hiding in the tunnel network of the terror outfit between

Khan Younis and the Rafah region. The United States has been pushing the Israeli leadership against a full-scale ground invasion in Rafah, given the huge population density in the area with around 1.3 million people including women and children staying there.

William Burns is a highly respected official of the US who has close links with several senior Middle Eastern leaders. Burns, according to sources in the Israeli Prime Minister's office, has pro-

posed to the Israeli leadership that American intelligence will provide valuable inputs on the movement of Yahya Sinwar who has always been a focus of the Israeli side.

Israel's Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant has publicly stated that they would secure Yahya Sinwar at any cost.

The CIA chief, according to sources, is also in direct talks with Mossad and Shin Bet chiefs, David Barnea and Ronen Bar respectively, regarding this offer.

Burns was involved in the release of Israeli hos-



tages by Hamas during the one-week ceasefire in the last week of November 2023. It, however, remains to be seen how the Israel war

cabinet will respond to this offer as Israel Defense Forces have already commenced the invasion in Rafah.



Biden sees Hamas as responsible for negotiations on hostage deal

Washington, May 15 (IANS/DPA) : US President Joe Biden has emphasised the responsibility of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas about the negotiations in the Gaza war over a ceasefire and the release of hostages.

"You know, there would be a ceasefire tomorrow if ... Hamas released the hostages, women, the elderly, and the wounded," Biden said on Wednesday at a campaign event in Medina in Washington state, according to the press travelling with him.

Israel says it is up to Hamas, Biden added.

The 81-year-old then reportedly went on to continue talking about Israel. In the end, however, he decided against it, it was said.

The Communications Director of the National Security Council, John Kirby, had made it clear on Friday that the negotiations were at an impasse.

US 'doubling down' on boosting trade with 'critical partner' India : Senior trade official

Dallas, May 15 (IANS) : India has emerged as a "critical partner" for the US which is "doubling down" on it for trade and working on further boosting economic ties, according to a senior US trade official.

Assistant Commerce Secretary Arun Venkataraman said, "I genuinely believe that this is very much a heyday of this bilateral economic relationship" between India and the US.

"We are doubling down on India and finding more ways to collaborate and grow that economic integration," he told reporters on Thursday ahead of the World Trade Week in New York.

India "has become an even more critical partner for the US," he said.

"We are amazed by the incredible deepening of the collaboration that's happened in the last few years with India." According to the US International Trade Administration, total trade in goods and services between India and the US topped \$191 billion in 2022, almost doubling from 2014.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) from the US reached \$103 billion during the 2022-23 fiscal year, while Indian FDI flows to the US reached \$14.4 billion in 2021 provid-

ing for more than 72,000 US jobs. Asked by a reporter if the US would consider a free trade agreement with India, Venkataraman did not directly address the possibility, instead pointing to India's participation with the US and 12 other countries in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) launched in 2022.

"Free trade agreements are a fantastic tool and can be very effective, but I think we should also remember the free trade agreements are only one tool in the toolkit," he said.

Right now, he said that the IPEF "is addressing key elements that you don't find in free trade agreements, addressing the urgencies of the day."

"We're focused on getting that (IPEF) implemented" and making sure "that we avoid some of the vulnerabilities that we all learned during the pandemic," he added.

While most of the attention to keeping the Indo-Pacific region free and open has been focused on strategic issues, Venkataraman emphasised the critical role of the IPEF.

"We are proud of the fact that in short order we have managed collectively, with Japan's help and all of our Indo-Pacific partners, to be in a position to move aggressively towards implementing the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework," he said.

The IPEF has made headway in one key aspect, making the sup-



ply chain resilient, he added.

The IPEF Supply Chain Resilience Agreement came into force in February and "we will soon be setting up the institutions to operationalise" it, he said.

"It is really going to be critical to mitigating supply chain disruptions going forward and helping make our economies collectively more resilient to the threats that could occur from supply chain disruptions," Venkataraman added.

He said that substantial progress has been made in negotiations on two other elements of the IPEF, ensuring a clean and fair economy.

These are aimed at "ensuring a transparent environment free of corruption" and efficient tax administration, he added.

At the first IPEF ministerial meeting in Singapore in June, there will also be a "clean investor forum" bringing together entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, government agencies, and others to strategise on increasing investment in sustainable infrastructure, he said.

Renewed protests against 'Russian law' in Georgia

Tbilisi, May 15 (IANS/DPA) : Tens of thousands of people protested again in the Georgian capital Tbilisi against a planned law to control foreign influence.

They were expressing their displeasure at the plans of their pro-Moscow government.

In the eyes of the protesters, the law jeopardises their country's European Union prospects.

In addition to Georgian flags, many therefore also waved EU flags once again.

According to media reports, the protests against the controversial "Russian law" initially took place without any major incidents.

Thousands of people wanted to form a vigil in front of the Parliament building until Wednesday morning.

The law, which is due to pass its third reading in Parliament early next week despite weeks of massive protests, is called

"On Transparency of Foreign Influence" and stipulates that non-governmental organisations that receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad must account for its origin.

Many observers accuse the government of the former Soviet Republic of having modelled the planned law on a Russian "agent" law to hinder the work of critical associations and media.

In Russia, numerous organisations and individuals are branded as "foreign agents," which often causes major problems for those affected.

The measure is seen as a means of political repression to silence critics.

In Georgia, there are fears that the new law could pave the way for an authoritarian approach in the country, which has been a candidate for EU accession for several months.



Wildfire prompts emergency alert for two communities in Canada

Ottawa, May 15 (IANS) : An evacuation alert was issued for two communities in Canada's western province of Alberta due to an out-of-control wildfire.

The two communities were Fort McMurray and Sapræ Creek Estates. The fire is currently 25 km southwest of Fort McMurray, and smoke could impact visibility on Highway 63 south of Fort McMurray, Xinhua news agency reported.

Constituency Watch: Maha's banana capital Jalgaon may prove slippery for BJP

Jalgaon (Maharashtra), May 15 (IANS) : On the eve of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP got a rude jolt when its sitting MP from Jalgaon Unmesh Bhaiyasaheb Patil abruptly hopped onto the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) ally Shiv Sena (UBT) wagon. The development proved to be a boon for the MVA in Jalgaon – the state's 'banana capital' with the highest production of this chipsey fruit – but made the going slippery for the BJP which had dropped Patil in favour of sitting MLC Smita Uday Wagh. Contrary to expectations, the SS(UBT) did not fall over itself to give a ticket to Patil, but fielded his close associate and a former senior district BJP

leader Karan Balasaheb Patil-Pawar. The Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) has nominated Yuvraj Jadhav for the triangular contest that will be witnessed in Jalgaon on May 13. The implications of denying a livid Patil a ticket and replacing him by first-timer Wagh were not lost on the BJP as well as the Opposition. When Patil (52) was fielded from Jalgaon in 2019 by the BJP, he had created a record by winning the constituency with the second-highest votes in the state (713,874 – 65.6 per cent) and the third-highest victory margin of 411,617 votes. Adding to the BJP's discomfiture is the nomination of Patil-Pawar – a close associate of Patil, as the latter assured the SS(UBT) and MVA leaders that he would fully support and ensure



their nominee's victory. The Jalgaon constituency (in its present form since the delimitation of 2008), has been a mixed bastion of Congress and BJP, each bagging it 8 times, besides once by the Janata Party (1977) and once by an Independent (1957), but remains a steady BJP bastion since the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The one solace for the BJP here is that all the six Assembly segments that make up Jalgaon LS constitu-

ency are currently held by the ruling MahaYuti allies – 3 by Shiv Sena, 2 by BJP and one with NCP. They comprise, Shiv Sena's Pachora (MLA Kishor A Patil), Erandol (MLA Chimmanrao Patil) and Jalgaon Rural (MLA Gulabrao Patil); BJP's Jalgaon City (MLA Suresh Bhole) and Chalisgaon (MLA Mangesh Chavan); and NCP's Amalner (MLA Anil B. Patil).



8 Bangladeshi nationals en route Pune held at Agartala railway station

Agartala, May 15 (IANS) : Eight Bangladeshi nationals headed for Pune, including seven women, were arrested on Wednesday from the Agartala railway station for illegally entering the country, the police said. The Government Railway Police (GRP) and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) in a joint operation arrested the eight Bangladeshi nationals along with an Indian middle-

man who were about to board the Kolkata-bound Kanchanjunga Express. The detainees told the police that from Kolkata, they planned to go to Pune in Maharashtra in search of jobs. Earlier this week, 11 Bangladeshi nationals, including two women and three children, were arrested from a village in Tripura's Dhalai district while on their way back to Bagerhat district in Bangladesh's Khulna Division.

On campaign trail, Bhupinder Hooda says Congress will fulfil all its poll promises

Jind (Haryana), May 15 (IANS) : Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Hooda on Wednesday urged the voters to ensure Congress' victory in the state in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections to be held in the sixth phase on May 25. Addressing public

meetings at Safidon and Juliana towns on Saturday, Hooda, the Leader of Opposition in the Haryana Assembly, said all the workers have to put in their best efforts to ensure the victory of Satpal Brahmachari, the Congress candidate from Sonipat. "Your hard work in the next 14

days will bear fruit and the Congress will form the government at the Centre. The Congress has prepared a revolutionary manifesto for the people, which will ensure the participation of every section of society. It is the responsibility of every Congress worker to take this manifesto to the people.



Oppn leader alleges law & order in Kerala is now under the control of CPI-M offices

Thiruvananthapuram, May 15 (IANS) : Launching a scathing attack over the deteriorating law and order situation in Kerala, Leader of Opposition V. D. Satheesan on Wednesday said the state police has been politicised and is run by the CPI-M district offices and other party committees. Satheesan related this to an increase in violent crimes in the state, after a youth was brutally killed by a group of criminals in the state capital. "The situation now is that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is away on a private tour and even when he was here, things were no different, as now the police is being controlled by the various committees of the CPI-M," alleged Satheesan.

Share special bond with every house in Patiala, says BJP candidate Preet Kaur

Patiala, May 15 (IANS) : Building a rapport with the people, BJP candidate from Punjab's Patiala – former Minister of State for External Affairs Preet Kaur -- on Wednesday said she shared a special relationship with every house in Patiala district. "The love, af-

fection, and the foremost thing, trust, that the people of Patiala have shown in me is my greatest treasure," Kaur said while addressing a public meeting in Samana town. She said: "Serving Patiala and Punjab is a sacred duty for me and my family.



'Whenever his party becomes weak, Sharad Pawar joins Congress', taunts Fadnavis

Pune (Maharashtra), May 15 (IANS) : The Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis, said on Wednesday that whenever Sharad Pawar's party becomes weak, he joins the Congress and later leaves it. Clarifying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not made an 'offer' to NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, but 'advised' him to join the NDA, the senior BJP leader said, "From 1977 till date, we have seen that whenever Sharad Pawar's party weakens, he merges with the Congress and then exits. "Sharad Pawar had said that he

contested the elections on five different symbols. If we look at his political career, whenever his party became weak, he joined Congress, corrected his position, and then left the party," Fadnavis said. He said that PM Modi has advised Pawar not to merge with the Congress, which is a sinking ship, but to join the NDA. "Sharad Pawar has realised that the Ajit Pawar-led NCP nominee will win the Baramati seat. So he made a statement that the regional parties should merge with Congress after June 4. So, he



knows the outcome of the elections. Already you are drowning, and now you are going to a sinking ship," Fadnavis said. On his part, Pawar has ruled out the possibility of joining the BJP-led NDA, saying that there is no question of joining "such people who have no faith in democracy".

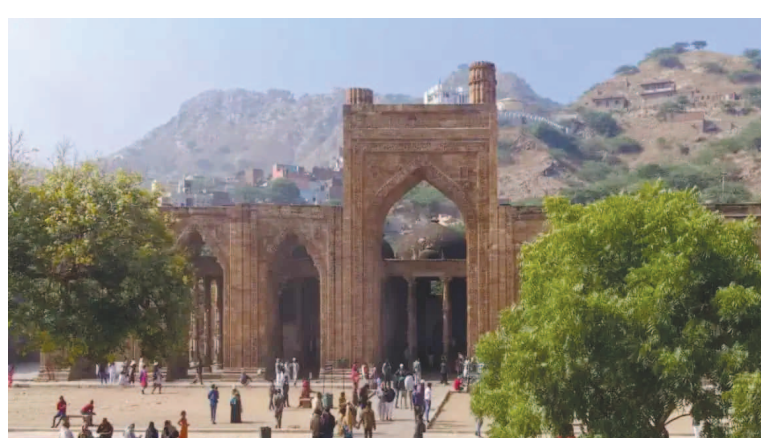
Deputy Mayor adds fuel to demand for ASI survey of Ajmer mosque

Jaipur, May 15 (IANS) : Jain monk seer Acharya Sagar confirmed the fact that there was a Jain temple along with a Sanskrit school at this place. He demanded a survey to be conducted at the place on the pattern of Kashi Vishwanath, Ayodhya and Mathura. "Illegal encroachment should be removed," the Deputy Mayor demanded. Jain said that seer Acharya Sunil Sagar Maharaj during his visit here confirmed that more than a hundred idols were found inside the Parshwanath cave. "There is a need for a survey here too," said Jain. The Jain seers with other activists visited the monument two days back. While talking to the media, Sunil Sagar Maharaj claimed that when he went to the Parshwanath cave, where more than a hundred idols were kept there.

He said that the visit made by

"This means that there must have once been a Jain temple here. These issues should be resolved through mutual understanding. Where there are mosques, they should remain, but where temples etc. have been disturbed, they should be brought back in their ancient form," Sunil Sagar Maharaj said. Soon after the seers' visit, audio of Ajmer Dargah seer

Syed Sarwar Chishti went viral in which he was heard saying, "How people went inside Adhai Din Ka Jhonpra without clothes, there is also a mosque inside." Assembly Speaker Vasudev Devnani has strongly condemned Chishti's statement and said that he will write a letter to ASI for a survey here.



Delhi HC converts PIL into revision petition against POCSO Act judgment

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : In an unprecedented move, the Delhi High Court exercised its suo motu revision powers to transform a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) into a revision plea against a trial court's decision to close a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) involving child pornography. A Division Bench of Acting

Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora intervened due to what they deemed "manifest illegalities" and "miscarriage of justice" in the trial court's order. The court pointed out that the trial court failed to consider the definition of 'child pornography' under Section 2(da) of the POCSO Act while interpreting Section 15(2) of the same law.

WPI to be around 3 per cent in FY 25, say economists

Chennai, May 15 (IANS) : The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) is expected to be in the region of 2-3 per cent over the next two quarters and average at around 3 per cent for FY25, top economists at two credit rating agencies said as the Commerce and Industry Ministry announced the WPI for April 2024 was 1.26 per cent. Reacting to the numbers, Suman Chowdhury, Chief Economist and Head, Research, Acuite Ratings & Research said: "WPI trajectory in India is finally showing signs of a pickup, rising to 1.26 per cent YoY (year-on-year) in April '24 from 0.53 per cent YoY in March '24." He said this is the highest WPI print in the last 13 months and has been driven by a reversal from deflation to inflation at

1.4 per cent YoY in fuel and power inflation; a rise in global crude prices and its derivatives along with rising higher power tariffs are the factors behind the rise in this category. "Expectedly, the wholesale food group inflation has also seen a rise to 5.5 per cent YoY, reflecting higher vegetable and fruit prices," he said. The wholesale inflation for manufactured goods has persisted in the contractionary zone at minus 0.4 per cent YoY, though the extent of deflation has reduced. Since March '23, i.e. for the last 14 months, manufacturing inflation has remained in a deflation mode, implying benign input costs for the industrial segment in the absence of a strong global demand. However, a stronger domestic economy and demand may soon lead to a firm-up in manufacturing inflation, Chowdhury

opined. According to him, with a rising outlook for fuel and power as well as manufacturing inflation in the near term, WPI inflation is set to test higher levels in the current year. Overall, the WPI inflation print will also be shaped by the trend in the food category and is expected to remain between 2.0 per cent-3.0 per cent over the next

two quarters, unless there are major surprises on commodity prices, he said. "This will also make it difficult for headline CPI inflation to moderate towards 4.5 per cent in FY25, thereby making it also difficult for RBI to take a call on rate cut in the first half of the year," Chowdhury said.



SEBI grants LIC 3 more years to achieve 10 pc public shareholding norm

Mumbai, May 15 (IANS) : Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Wednesday announced that markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has granted it a three-year extension to comply with minimum 10 per cent public shareholding norms. "Pursuant to Regulation 30 of Listing Regulations, this is to inform the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) vide its letter dated May 14, 2024, has conveyed its decision, to grant additional time of three years to Life Insur-

ance Corporation of India to achieve 10 per cent public shareholding under Rule 19(2)(b)(iv) of the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Rules, 1957, i.e., within a period of 5 years from the date of listing," LIC stated in a filing with the stock exchanges. The revised timeline for the state-owned insurance giant to achieve 10 per cent public shareholding has been extended till on or before May 16, 2027. As of March 31, 2024, the public shareholding in LIC works out to 3.5 per cent.

Adobe to offer Experience Platform-based applications via data centre in India

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Keeping with India's data localisation norms, software major Adobe on Wednesday said that its Experience Platform-based applications will be available for enterprise customers via an India data centre later in the year. The move, said the company, will deliver on local data residency requirements and improve performance through lower latency. "We've seen increasing demand for Adobe Experience Platform-based applications from customers across banking financial services and insurance, telecom, manufacturing, and retail," said Prativa Mohapatra, Vice President and Managing Director, Adobe India.



Apollo Tyres Q4 net profit dips 14 pc

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Apollo Tyres on Wednesday reported a 13.7 per cent decline in net profit at Rs 354 crore for the Jan-March quarter of 2023-24 compared with the corresponding figure of Rs 410.30 crore for the same period of the previous year. The Apollo Tyres board has "recommended a dividend of Rs 6 per equity share (i.e. 600 per cent) on the face value of Rs 1 each for FY24, subject to the approval of the shareholders at the ensuing AGM of the company, which shall be paid/ dispatched on or before 30 days from the conclusion of the AGM," the company said in a

stock exchange filing. The tyre major posted revenue from operations at Rs 6258.20 crore, marginally up from Rs 6247.33 crore during the same period last year. The company's EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) stood at Rs 1028 crore, up 3 per cent year-on-year.



Colgate-Palmolive Q4 net profit jumps 20 pc to Rs 380 crore

Mumbai May 15 (IANS) : Colgate-Palmolive reported a 20 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 379.82 crore for the Jan-March quarter of 2023-24 compared to the same period last year. The company's total sales rose 10.35 per cent to Rs 1,480.66 during the quarter. EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization) for the quarter grew 17.7 per cent to Rs 532 crore. EBITDA margins increased by 2.2 per cent year-on-year to 35.7 per cent. The Board has announced a second interim dividend of Rs 26 per share, along with a special one-time interim dividend of Rs 10 per share for 2023-24. The total dividend payout to shareholders will work out

to Rs 979.2 crore and will be distributed on or after June 7, 2024, to shareholders listed on the company's register as of May 23, 2024. Overall, the dividend for the year 2023-24 stands at Rs 58 per share. At the end of the last quarter of FY 24 we are pleased with the all-round progress we have made on our strategic priorities. We have continued to invest in superior, science-backed oral care formulations, upgrading the product & packaging quality," said Prabha Narasimhan, Managing Director & CEO. The company improved Colgate Active Salt with a stronger formula, introduced a more affordable 80g pack for Colgate Total and launched new fragrances for Palmolive body wash, she added.



AWS plans to invest \$8.4 bn into its European Sovereign Cloud in Germany

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Amazon Web Services (AWS) on Wednesday announced its plans to invest 7.8 billion euros (\$8.4 billion) in its European Sovereign Cloud in Germany through 2040, which reflects the company's long-term commitment to meeting Europe's digital sovereignty needs. The AWS European Sovereign Cloud intends to build its first AWS Region in Brandenburg, Germany, for all customers by the end of 2025. "This investment reinforces our

commitment to offer customers the most advanced set of sovereignty controls, privacy safeguards, and security features available in the cloud," Max Peterson, VP of Sovereign Cloud at AWS, said in a statement. "We're investing heavily in new local talent and infrastructure, which will help provide the operational sovereignty our customers require," he added. According to the company, AWS's planned investment is estimated to contribute \$17.2 billion (about \$18.6 billion) to Germany's total Gross Domestic Product

(GDP) through 2040 and support an average of 2,800 full-time equivalent jobs in local German businesses each year. "These positions - including construction, facility maintenance, engineering, telecommunications, and other jobs within the broader local economy - are part of the AWS data centre supply chain," the company said. As per Professor Jorg Steinbach, Brandenburg's Minister of Economic Affairs, Labour and Energy.



Power Finance Corporation posts 18 pc rise in Q4

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Government-owned Power Finance Corporation (PFC) on Wednesday reported an 18.4 per cent increase in net profit at Rs 4,135 crore for the Jan-March quarter of 2023-24 compared to the same period of the previous financial year. PFC's revenue went up by 20 per cent to Rs 12,243.7 crore during the quarter, the company stated in a regulatory filing. The financial major declared a final dividend of Rs 2.50 a share for FY24, which comes on top of the interim dividends of Rs 11 that have been paid earlier during the year. PFC also recorded an improvement in its asset quality during the fourth quarter with net non-performing assets (NPAs).

Airtel registers 31 pc decline in Q4 net profit

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Telecom major Bharti Airtel on Wednesday reported a 31 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at Rs 2,072 crore for the Jan-March quarter of 2023-24 compared to the corresponding figure of Rs 3,006 crore in the same period of the previous year.

The Sunil Mittal-led company posted a 4 per cent increase in revenue from operations during the quarter at Rs 37,599 crore from Rs 36,009 crore in the same period last year. The company's board of directors have recommended a dividend of Rs 8 per equity share of Rs 5 face value.





Stage set for tough contest between MahaYuti & MVA in 11 Maha LS seats as campaigning ends

Mumbai, May 15 (IANS) : The high-octane campaigning for voting in 11 Parliamentary constituencies in Maharashtra in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha elections concluded on Wednesday with both MahaYuti and Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) brimming with confidence of emerging victorious. The 11 constituencies which will go for polling on May 13 include Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Raver, Jalna, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (Aurangabad), Beed, Pune,

Shirur, Ahmednagar, Shirdi and Maval. The recent controversy over Maratha and OBC reservations and caste politics dominated the major part of the campaigning narrative of both MahaYuti and MVA. There are a total of 298 candidates in the fray in the 11 Lok Sabha seats while 2,28,01,151 voters will exercise their voting rights. For the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the polls are a crucial test to retain its supremacy in Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Raver, Jalna, Pune, Ahmednagar and Beed constituencies.

In the tribal dominated Nandurbar seat, sitting MP Heena Gavrit hopes to score a hat-trick. She is locked in a direct fight with Congress nominee Goval Padvi. In Jalgaon, the BJP has fielded former legislator Smita Wagh, replacing sitting MP Unmesh Patil, against Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee Karan Pawar. In Raver, incumbent MP Raksha Khadse -- daughter-in-law of veteran leader Eknath Khadse who will soon rejoin BJP -- faces an acid test to win for the third time. She faces a challenge from NCP (SP) nominee, Shriram Patil -- an industrialist. In Jalna, Union Minister Raosaheb Danve, who is expecting a win for the sixth consecutive term, is pitted against Congress' Kalyanrao Kale. In Pune, former mayor Murlidhar Mohol is engaged in a direct fight against Congress legislator Ravindra Dhangekar while the heir of the pioneers of the cooperative movement, Sujay Vikhe Patil is locked in a fight against Covid warrior and NCP (SP) candidate Nilesh Lanke. In Beed, the BJP dropped sitting MP Pritam Munde, who is the daughter of former union minister Gopinath Munde and fielded

her sister -- Gopinath Munde's elder daughter -- Pankaja Munde against NCP (SP) candidate Bajrang Sonawane. Further, BJP ally Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has nominated state Cabinet minister Sandipan Bhumre in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar against Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee Chandrakant Khaire and AIMIM's sitting MP Imtiaz Jaleel. In Maval constituency, Shiv Sena MP Shrirang Barne is pitted against Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee Sanjog Waghere. In Shirdi, there is a triangular contest as Shiv Sena's sitting MP Sadashiv Lokhande faces a tough challenge from Shiv Sena UBT candidate Bhausaheb Wakchare and Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) nominee and former Congress leader Utkarsha Rupawate. In Shirur, the fight is being portrayed between a leader and an actor. NCP has fielded former MP Shivajirao Adhalrao against the NCP (SP) sitting MP Amol Kolhe.



Registration of will no longer compulsory in UP : Allahabad HC

Prayagraj, May 15 (IANS) : In a major judgment, the Allahabad High Court has held that the registration of a will is not necessary in Uttar Pradesh. The state government had made registration of wills mandatory from August 23, 2004. "Wills in Uttar Pradesh are not required to be registered and a will, for its non-registration, will not be void whether before or after the Uttar Pradesh Amendment Act, 2004," the court said. A division bench of Justices Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar held that Section 169(3) of the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act will be void to the extent it provides for the registration of a will.

The High Court made it clear that a will, shall not be considered invalid if it is not registered. The bench pronounced the verdict while disposing of a "reference" sent to it by the Chief Justice in a petition filed by Pramila Tiwari. The High Court held that Section 169(3) of the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1950, in so far as it requires a will to be compulsorily registered, is contrary to the Indian Registration Act, 1908, which makes the registration of a will optional. Hence, the court held that the amendment of Section 169(3) of the 1950 Act to the extent that it requires a will to be compulsorily registered is void and accordingly, struck down the said part.



TN to release draft of State Education Policy after lifting of Model Code of Conduct

Chennai, May 15 (IANS) : The Tamil Nadu government will release the draft of the State Education Policy after the lifting of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), a source said on Wednesday. The MCC will be lifted after the announcement of Lok Sabha election results on June 4. The Tamil Nadu government had announced in the Assembly in 2021 that it would bring out an "exclusive" State Education Policy. A panel was constituted in May 2022 with retired High Court judge, Justice D. Murugesan heading it. The panel comprises educationists and experts from different other fields. Sources in the Tamil Nadu Education Department told IANS that the draft of the State Education Policy was already prepared in November 2023.

Gehlot as Amethi observer, Pilot for 'controversial' Kanhaiya Kumar triggers debate among Cong workers

Jaipur, May 15 (IANS) : The rift between Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot camps in Rajasthan, which started soon after the 2018 Assembly polls, seems far from over even after the completion of Lok Sabha elections in the desert state. Now, there seems to be discontent among a section of party workers over Gehlot's appointment as Congress poll observer for the high-profile Amethi Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh. At the same time, Pilot has been given the charge of the North East Delhi seat being contested by 'controversial' former JNU student leader Kanhaiya Kumar. While the Gehlot camp credits the former Chief Minister's credibility in the Gandhi family as the reason for being appointed as the observer for Amethi, the Pilot camp says his image as a youth icon has landed him the role to mobilise the youth in Kanhaiya Kumar's support. Gehlot loyalists also say that the party trusts his vast political experience. Therefore he has been given the charge of Amethi. In contrast, Pilot loyalists say that he can win the trust of local party leaders who are upset over Kanhaiya Kumar's candidature from North East Delhi and is

being called an "outsider". Congress has fielded Gandhi family loyalist, Kishori Lal Sharma, against BJP's Smriti Irani from the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. Congress leader Varun Purohit says that this indicates a rift is still going on between Pilot and Gehlot. "Gehlot seems to have been given an upper hand as he has been appointed the poll observer for Amethi, which was a crucial Lok Sabha seat held traditionally by the Gandhi family. This seat becomes crucial as Priyanka Gandhi herself has been managing the election campaign in both Raebareli and Amethi, which will give more time to Gehlot to win the trust of the Gandhi family again." "Moreover, Sachin Pilot is being considered as a youth icon and is yet to join the cadre of senior Congress leaders. Therefore, he has been appointed as a poll observer from a Lok Sabha constituency in Delhi where 'controversial' candi-



date Kanhaiya Kumar is contesting on a Congress ticket." "Pilot has been given the task to placate those Congress party workers who are upset with the candidature of Kanhaiya Kumar since they consider him an 'outsider'. Now, one can easily say that Gehlot is still in a better political position than Pilot. Gehlot has again proved that he has vast political experience to win the trust of the Gandhi family," Purohit says. Meanwhile, another Congress worker on condition of anonymity told IANS: "The party is trying to depend on veteran party leaders considering their vast experience in politics. Gehlot is a senior party leader and still has the

political acumen to win Lok Sabha seats. He also knows how to manage party expenses on a prestigious Lok Sabha seat and hence has been sent to Amethi." Sushil Asopa, former Secretary, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee, says it is surprising that such a party leader has been sent to Amethi, who himself has been unable to bring Congress back to power in Rajasthan despite being the Chief Minister thrice. "It's surprising to see a former Chief Minister (Gehlot) addressing a press conference in Amethi, who could not win the elections from Jodhpur, his home district.



TN grape farmers in crisis as sweltering heat will lead to over 80 pc fall in yield

Chennai, May 15 (IANS) : Tamil Nadu is home to two main varieties of grapes: panneer thiratchai (Muscat Hamburg) and Odaipatti seedless grapes. Grape farmers in the region are dejected as high temperatures in the last few weeks will lead to a

huge fall in the yield of grapes. K. Muniyandi, a farmer in Theni who has cultivated panneer thiratchai on around 10 acres of land, told IANS that due to high temperatures, there would be a drastic fall in the crop's yield.



Former student leader shot at in UP's Ballia

Ballia, May 15 (IANS) : A former student leader in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia was shot at and grievously injured when some unidentified youth opened fire at him, the police said. The victim was taken to the hospital by the police and later referred to Varanasi for advanced treatment. The incident took place near Patkhauli village of Sukhpura police station, when Shiprant Singh Gautam, was returning home on his motorbike. When he had reached near Patkhauli village, two youth riding a bike came from behind and fired five rounds at Shiprant, who was hit in the chest and legs.

1.23 lakh cases settled in 2nd National Lok Adalat in J&K

Srinagar, May 15 (IANS) : A total of 1.23 lakh cases were settled across Jammu and Kashmir in the second National Lok Adalat of the calendar year 2024 held on Wednesday, an official statement said here. The Lok Adalat was held to boost amicable settlements among the parties in cases, including motor accident claims tribunals, matrimonial disputes, cheque bounce under the Negotiable Instrument Act, money recovery, commercial disputes and criminal cases of compoundable nature, the statement added. The Lok Adalat was organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Legal Services Authority under the patronage of Justice N. Kotiswar Singh, Chief Justice, High Court of J&K and Ladakh (Patron-in-Chief, J&K Legal Services Authority); and mentorship of Jus-



stice Tashi Rabstan, Executive Chairman, J&K Legal Services Authority, as well as under the guidance of Justice Sindhu Sharma, Chairperson, High Court Legal Services Committee. The statement said that as per the information received from various legal services institutions working in different districts of J&K, of the total 1,28,959 cases taken up by 138

benches in the day-long National Lok Adalat across the Union Territory, 1,22,549 cases were amicably settled and disposed of involving an amount of Rs 42,73,80,904 as compensation/settlement amount in cases like motor accident claims, civil, criminal, labour disputes, electricity and water bills, land acquisition, family matters, cheque dishonour, and bank recovery, etc.



UNRWA : 1,50,000 have fled Rafah after Israeli warning

Gaza, May 15 (IANS/DPA) : Some 1,50,000 Gazans have fled from Rafah since the start of the week, fearing an Israeli advance into the city, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) posted on X on Wednesday. However, the Israel Defense Forces say an estimated 3,00,000 people had followed the evacuation orders since the beginning of the week, in a statement that could not be independently verified. Israel has now expanded its calls on residents of Rafah to include those in the centre and other parts of the city, telling

them to move to the town of Al-Mawasi on the Mediterranean coast. The army seems set to expand its operation to eliminate Hamas, though calls are growing louder to desist, including from the UN and the US, Israel's main backer. Families are packing their belongings all over the city, a UNRWA employee wrote on X. "The streets are much emptier." UNRWA says 1,10,000 Palestinians had left the city on the border with Egypt by the previous day. Some 3,00,000 people are affected by Israel's latest evacuation orders, which also cover areas in other parts of the coastal strip.

17 hospitalised after shelling in Russia by Ukrainian forces

Moscow, May 15 (IANS) : Seventeen people, including a child, have been hospitalised following a massive shelling of Russia's border region of Belgorod by the Ukrainian forces, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Wednesday. The shelling took place on Wednesday, he said, adding that two of the injured were in critical condition, Xinhua news agency reported. "After the evening's massive shelling, 29 people were affected, 12 of whom, after receiving outpatient care, are already at home," Gladkov said.



Saudi Crown Prince postpones Islamabad visit yet again amid raging political turmoil in Pakistan

Islamabad, May 15 (IANS) : The much-awaited visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Al Saud to Pakistan on May 19 has been postponed, yet again. While the Pakistan government, which has been preparing for the high-profile visit for weeks, remains tightlipped on the reasons behind its postponement, sources reveal that MBS is quite unhappy with the current situation in the country. They revealed that the Saudi Crown Prince remains quite upset with the political developments in Pakistan, particularly with the recent statements made by some leaders which have been seen as an attempt to drag Saudi Arabia in the country's internal matters. Recently, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sher Afzal Marwat blamed the 'Saudi influence' behind him not being considered for the Chairman's post of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). "Shibli Faraz told Imran Khan in jail that the Saudi Ambassador

does not want me to be appointed as the PAC chairman," Marwat said while speaking to the media outside Adyala jail in Rawalpindi, where he was denied a meeting with the former Prime Minister. Last month, Marwat claimed that Saudi Arabia was a "conduit" for the regime change operation carried out by the United States to oust Imran Khan's government following which PTI removed him from its core and political committee and also issued a show-cause notice on trying to damage relations with Saudi Arabia. "It is certain that Saudi Arabia is unhappy over the remarks made by Marwat that smack of domestic political point-scoring. Marwat has directly accused Saudi Arabia for meddling in Pakistan politics and the Saudis do not tolerate such behaviour," said senior political analyst Javed Siddique while admitting that the cancellation of MBS' visit to Pakistan is a big "setback" for the country. On the other hand, government



sources maintain that there are some points on the economic front which still need to be cleared between both parties before MBS finalises his Pakistan visit. They maintained that Saudi investors and businessmen, who recently toured Pakistan, are interested in some projects but the terms of the agreement have not yet been finalised. After MBS accepted Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif's invitation to visit the country, the government has been working hard to ensure that it is not postponed yet again and eventually leads to more Saudi investment.



Nepal's Kami Rita Sherpa scales Mt. Everest for record 29th time

Kathmandu, May 15 (IANS) : Veteran Nepali climbing guide Kami Rita Sherpa set a new world record on Wednesday by ascending the world's highest Mount Everest (Tibetan name-Mount Qomolangma) for the 29th time. The 54-year-old Sherpa, who was guiding foreign climbers, reached the 8,848-meter-high peak at 7:25 a.m. local time, said Khim Lal Gautam, field office chief of Nepal's Department of Tourism. "Kami Rita Sherpa made history on Sunday morning by climbing the peak 29 times," Gautam told Xinhua from the base camp. Kami first conquered Mount Everest, situated on the border of Nepal and China, in May 1994 and scaled it for the 27th and 28th time within one week in May 2023. Pasang Dawa Sherpa, another Nepali climbing guide, had achieved the feat for the 27th time. By Wednesday, a total of 414 climbers had been permitted to scale Mount Everest from the Nepali side during the spring climbing season, according to the Department of Tourism. Ukrainian climber Valentyn Sypavin, on Wednesday morning,

Vladimir Putin approves structure of Russia's new government

Moscow, May 15 (IANS) : Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the structure of Russia's new government, which will consist of one first deputy prime minister and nine deputy prime ministers. According to the new decree "On the Structure of Federal Executive Bodies," which Putin signed, the new government will see a shift in the distribution of responsibilities among the deputies, one of whom will act as the Russian

Federation and Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Far Eastern Federal District, Xinhua news agency reported. There is also a Deputy Prime Minister, who will assume the role of Chief of Staff of the Government Executive Office. The reappointed Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin is required to submit his deputy candidates for consideration to the State Duma or lower house of parliament. He must also propose candidates for federal ministers, excluding the heads of security agen-



cies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose nominations will be presented by the president for consultation with senators of the Russian Federation. The Russian government resigned in accordance

with the law after the inauguration of the president on May 7. Nevertheless, its members will continue to perform their duties until the formation of a new government.

15 killed, dozens injured in Indonesia's flash floods

Jakarta, May 15 (IANS) : Fifteen people have been killed, with dozens of others injured after flash floods hit Agam Regency in Indonesia's West Sumatra province, according to the national disaster management agency BNPB. "Eleven bodies were found in Candung district and four others in Sungai Pua district," said BNPB spokesperson Abdul Muhari on Wednesday.



Death toll from Afghanistan's floods exceeds 330

Kabul, May 15 (IANS) : More than 330 people have been killed as rainstorms and flash floods hit major parts of the provinces of Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan and Ghor of Afghanistan, according to the Afghanistan office of the World Food Programme and local Afghan officials,

Xinhua news agency reported. The UN agency said Wednesday on social media that more than 300 people have been killed in northern Baghlan province alone, with more than 1,000 houses destroyed. "WFP is now distributing fortified biscuits to the survivors," it said. Local officials said on Wednesday that

at least 160 people have been killed and 117 others injured as rainstorms and flash floods hit major parts of the provinces of Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan and Ghor of war-ravaged Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been experiencing heavy rain and floods in the past month, leading to casualties and property damage.

Alexei Navalny to receive Dresden Peace Prize posthumously

Dresden, Germany, May 15 (IANS/DPA) : Well-known Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny is to be posthumously awarded the first Dresden International Peace Prize on Wednesday. His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, will receive the award, which is endowed with 10,000 euros (\$10,774), at the eastern German city's Schauspielhaus theatre, the organisers said. Former German President Joachim Gauck is expected to deliver the laudatory speech.



North Korea expresses full support for Palestinian UN membership

Seoul, May 15 (IANS) : North Korea supports a United Nations resolution for Palestine's full membership, Pyongyang's foreign ministry said on Wednesday, criticising the United States for vetoing the move. The remark came after the UN General Assembly urged the security council to give "favourable consideration" to full Palestinian membership on Wednesday (US time), Yonhap news agency reported. "The DPRK fully supports it," a spokesperson for the North's foreign ministry said in a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency, noting that the rights of the Palestinians are "mercilessly violated" by the US.



US man who received first-ever modified pig kidney transplant dies

New York, May 15 (IANS/DPA) : The world's first patient with a transplanted pig kidney has died almost two months after the operation. In March, Massachusetts General Hospital transplanted the genetically-edited pig kidney into Rick Slayman, a 62-year-old man

living with end-stage kidney disease. The operation was a milestone in xenotransplantation, the transplantation of organs or tissues from one species to another -- as a potential solution to the worldwide organ shortage, the hospital said at the time. Slayman's death was not linked to the transplant, the hospi-

tal said on Wednesday. "Our family is deeply saddened about the sudden passing of our beloved Rick but take great comfort knowing he inspired so many," his family said. Slayman's family paid tribute to the medical team that cared for him. "Their enormous efforts leading to the xenotransplant gave our family

seven more weeks with Rick, and our memories made during that time will remain in our minds and hearts." The kidney came from a pig that was genetically edited to remove harmful pig genes and add certain human genes to improve its compatibility with humans.



Clout of Haryana's two Lals fades in 2024 parliamentary polls

Chandigarh, May 15 (IANS) : In Haryana, the legacy of the three Lals -- Chaudhary Devi Lal, Bansilal and Bhajan Lal, who ruled the state's dusty and defection-ridden politics for nearly three decades after the state was carved out of Punjab in 1966, mattered in all the previous elections. However, in the parliamentary polls that are underway, the dynasty of four-time Chief Minister and two-time Union Minister Bansilal and three-time Chief Minister Bhajan Lal has lost clout, literally. Their families are out of the electoral battle for the first time after several decades of dominance. However, the legacy of former Deputy Prime Minister and the state's tallest Jat leader, Chaudhary Devi Lal, considered the 'Tau' of Indian politics, is testing political waters even now.

His four family members are battling it out in the elections slated on May 25. Bansilal's granddaughter, Shruti Choudhry, has been denied the Congress ticket from Bhiwani-Mahendragarh this time, while Kuldeep Bishnoi, the younger son of Bhajan Lal who joined the BJP in 2022, has been denied nomination from Hisar, where a fratricidal battle is on within the clan of Chaudhary Devi Lal, whose founded regional party, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), and its offshoot outfit Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) are floundering. In 2009, Bhajan Lal, a non-Jat leader, was elected from Hisar as a candidate of his own party, Haryana Janhit Congress. Shruti Choudhry was elected the MP from Bhiwani-Mahendragarh in 2009, lost to BJP's Dharambir Singh in the 2014 and 2019 polls. Her father, Surinder Singh, had contested the Bhiwani Lok Sabha seat in 2004 as a Haryana Vikas

Party (HVP) candidate, but lost to then Congress candidate, Kuldeep Bishnoi. Bansilal's daughter-in-law Kiran Choudhry, mother of Shruti Choudhry, is the fourth consecutive term legislator from the family citadel, Tosham. This time, the first, second and third generations of Chaudhary Devi Lal are in the battle to save the sinking ship of the INLD, once a force to reckon with, and of Dushyant Chautala's JJP. After the family feud within the INLD, five-time Chief Minister OP Chautala's grandson Dushyant split the party vertically in 2018 and formed the JJP. In 2019, the JJP extended support to the BJP to form the government in the state. Just ahead of the parliamentary polls, it withdrew its support. Ranjit Singh, who is Chaudhary Devi Lal's youngest son, and two daughters-in-law of his eldest brother face one another in the



dynastic supremacy feud from Hisar. While Ranjit Singh, a Cabinet minister in the state government, is the BJP nominee, his two 'bahus' -- Naina Chautala and Sunaina Chautala are the JJP and the INLD candidates, respectively. While Naina is the mother of former Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant and wife of Ajay Chautala, who is Chaudhary Devi Lal's grandson, Sunaina is the wife of Ravi Chautala, who is a son of INLD patriarch OP Chautala's elder brother Pratap Chautala. Naina, the first woman who took a political plunge in the 80-year-old history of the Chautala family

and is known for 'Hari Chunari ki Chaupal' campaign to mobilise women voters, is a two-time legislator, while Sunaina has been leading the INLD's women's wing since 2019. Another member of Chaudhary Devi Lal's family in the fray this time is Abhay Chautala, the younger son of OP Chautala. He's contesting as an INLD candidate from Kurukshetra against the BJP's Naveen Jindal and INDIA Bloc's Sushil Gupta, who is the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) state chief.



Goa Police registers case against accused for terming ex-CM as 'mining mafia'

Panaji, May 15 (IANS) : Goa Police on Wednesday registered a case against an accused for allegedly mentioning former Chief Minister Digambar Kamat as 'Mining Mafia', police said. Police said that one Sagar Gaste from Margao has lodged a complaint against the accused person who posted a poster with the photograph of former Chief Minister Digambar Kamat, mentioning him as the 'Mining Mafia'. Police said that two persons are involved in the case but so far they have registered the case only against one person, while further investigation is going on. According to police, accused persons have levelled allegations against Kamat over a mining scam and posted posters on the railway flyover bridge and other places in the city causing defacement to public property. The complaint also stated that the accused persons circulated the said poster on WhatsApp and thereby caused defamation to Kamat.

NHAI blacklists firm operating toll plaza for misbehaving with highway users

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : NHAI has taken strict action and debarred toll operator M/s Riddhi Siddhi Associates for an incident of assault and misbehaviour with National Highway users at Sirmandi Toll Plaza on Amritsar-Jamnagar section in Rajasthan, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday. NHAI has blacklisted the toll operator after an incident of assault and misbehaviour by the employees of the toll operating agency with highway users at Sirmandi Toll Plaza. "The Authority has debarred M/s Riddhi Siddhi Associates for a period of three months from the list of pre-qualified bidders," according to an NHAI statement.

NHAI had issued a 'show cause' notice to the firm over the incident and the reply submitted by the toll operating agency was not found to be satisfactory. It was noted that in total violation of contractual provisions and NHAI Standing Operating Procedure, the agency indulged in violence and misbehaved with highway users, the official statement said. NHAI's contract agreement with its toll operators clearly defines that the personnel deployed by the contractor shall not misbehave with the members of the public and shall observe strict discipline and decency in their behaviour, the statement added.



Chirag Paswan knows nothing about reservation : Tejashwi Yadav

Patna May 15 (IANS) : A day after Chirag Paswan claimed that PM Narendra Modi is strengthening reservations in the country, senior Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav asked the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief to study history before commenting on the issue. "There is no need for Chirag Paswan to comment on this issue. He is a prosperous Dalit, why doesn't he give up

reservation? He is not aware of history and that is why he is with people having the mentality of BJP and RSS," Tejashwi Yadav said. Tejashwi Yadav also suggested that Chirag Paswan should listen to the speeches of his father, late Ram Vilas Paswan. "Chirag Paswan neither has complete information on reservation, nor is he aware of history. He should first get some information on the issue, listen to the speeches of his father Ram Vilas Paswan,

only then will he see the real face of BJP," he said. "In his speeches, Ram Vilas Paswan clearly said that the BJP wants to end reservation. Due to this, he even resigned from the Union Cabinet. Everyone knows it," Tejashwi Yadav claimed. "If PM Modi stays in power at the Centre, there will be a threat to democracy and the Constitution," the former Deputy CM said.



Two teenagers stabbed to death in Delhi

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Two teenagers were stabbed to death while another sustained injuries following a quarrel with a group of boys in Delhi's Sangam Vihar area over a minor issue, police said on Wednesday. Two accused have been nabbed while a manhunt has been launched to nab the other, who is on the run, the police said. According to police, on Wednesday, information regarding the crime was received at Tigri police station.



Triangular contest in Buxar with entry of vote-cutter Dadan Pahalwan

Patna, May 15 (IANS) : The contest on Bihar's Buxar Lok Sabha seat is panning out to be triangular after the entry of Dadan Singh Yadav alias Dadan Pahalwan in the fray. Dadan Yadav is considered an influential leader in Dumraon sub-division in Buxar Lok Sabha constituency with a strong hold over the Yadav community. He was considered close to RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav even when he became an MLA for the first time as an Independent candidate. In 2000 he played a big role in the formation of the Rabri Devi government in Bihar and

hence he was also made a minister. However, his relationship with the RJD turned sour and he contested the election one more time as an Independent candidate and won. Now, again Dadan Yadav is contesting from the Buxar seat as an Independent candidate and his presence has changed the equation there. Buxar will now see a triangular contest between Sudhakar Singh of the RJD, Mithilesh Tiwari of the BJP and Dadan Yadav. The Buxar seat first came into the limelight in this election after the BJP cut the ticket of Union Minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey and gave it to his disciple Mithilesh

Tiwari. Then, Dadan Yadav created a stir in Buxar by jumping into the fray. Political observers believe that every time he contests Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, he increases the problems of the NDA and the Grand Alliance. "Dadan Yadav definitely won the 2000, 2005 and 2015 Assembly elections but he did not do well in the 2004, 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha elections and lost each time. Still, he was in the second or third position in those three elections. This shows that Dadan Yadav is a prominent political force in Buxar.



"After being refused tickets by prominent political parties this time, he decided to contest this election as an Independent candidate. With the arrival of Dadan Pahalwan, the equation of the election in Buxar has completely changed and made things difficult for the RJD," said Ram Niwas Singh, a political observer and senior advocate of Buxar District Court. "The RJD and BJP had tactically given tickets to their respective candidates keeping in mind the caste equation of the constituency. "While Sudhakar Singh belongs to the Rajput community, Mithilesh Tiwari is a Brahmin.

Badruddin Ajmal set to lose LS polls in Dhubri, says Assam Congress chief

Guwahati, May 15 (IANS) : Assam Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah on Wednesday claimed that AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal is set to lose the election this time from the Dhubri Lok Sabha seat. Borah told reporters here, "Badruddin Ajmal knows very well that people of Dhubri were not with him. He will definitely lose the polls this time. There is no doubt about that." Congress MLA from Samaguri and former state minister Rakibul Husain contested against Ajmal from the Dhubri parliamentary constituency in the recently concluded polls. Political watchers have predicted a close contest between Husain and Ajmal in Dhubri and it is

widely believed that the AIUDF chief may find it tough to win the seat again. Meanwhile, Borah refused to comment on how many seats Congress may win in Assam in the Lok Sabha polls. He said, "The voters have exercised their voting rights. We are hopeful for a good show; however, in democracy, we must always go with the people's mandate."





Syrian smuggler killed in clash with Lebanese army at border

Beirut, May 15 (IANS) : A Syrian smuggler was killed, and another was injured in a clash with the Lebanese army on the border separating Lebanon and Syria, Lebanese military sources told the media. The sources, who spoke anonymously, said on Wednesday that the Lebanese army's Land Borders Regiments exchanged gunfire with a group of four smugglers, who were spotted trying to smuggle goods from the Lebanese side into Syria through an illegal land crossing in the Deir El Aachayer on the east of Mount Hermon Heights, east of Lebanon. The wounded man was

transferred to Rashaya Governmental Hospital, while the other two escaped, the source said as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. The border separating Lebanon and Syria has witnessed smuggling and infiltration activities through illegal crossings, despite persistent attempts by Lebanese authorities to control and combat smuggling. Smuggling occurs in both directions, but smuggling from Lebanon to Syria has become more common with deteriorating economic conditions in the two countries and the sanctions imposed on Syria.

Locals demand freedom as violent protests break in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

Muzaffarabad, May 15 (IANS) : A two-day holiday has been declared in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) after a violent confrontation between the local police authorities and the protesters, who took to the streets against what they termed unjust taxes levied on electricity bills and towering inflation. The protest, called in by Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee aka People's Action Committee, announced has been met with an aggressive response from the police, which resorted to a crack-down and arrests of protesters and their leaders, further inflaming the already angry protestors. On Wednesday, violent scenes of angry protests were witnessed involving stone pelting and fierce tear gas shelling. On Saturday, a com-

plete wheel-jam shutter-down strike was observed across PoK with a call for a rally towards Muzaffarabad, where the legislative government and its assembly are based. "There is going to be a complete shutter-down and wheel-jam strike observed across PoK and specifically in Muzaffarabad against the police brutality against our peaceful protestors in Dadyal on Friday," said Saukat Nawaz Mir, Chairman Traders Association Muzaffarabad and member of the Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee. "I call on everyone to come out today and raise your voice for your rights," he added as videos of locals demanding freedom from the Pakistani establishment went viral on social media. It is pertinent to mention here that the People's Action Committee of Kashmir has been staging protests against the government's policies of imposing taxes, rising inflation



and electricity outages through shutter-down protests and rallies. The committee staged a similar protest last August as well. "We reject imposition of taxes on electricity bills. Instead, we demand that electricity should be provided to consumers in accordance with the production cost of hydel power in the region," said Shaukat Nawaz Mir. An agreement was reached and a notification on the same was also issued in February by the government but the committee again announced its protest this month against non-fulfillment of the written commitments given by the

government. "Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee's call for protest and a long march towards Muzaffarabad has been responded to actively and positively by the people. All businesses including banks and markets are closed. Traffic and vendors are also off the roads in at least three districts of Muzaffarabad," said a local resident. Shaukat Nawaz Mir said that police resorting to tear gas shelling has badly affected people and the move will not stop the people from demanding their rights.

NIS looking into N. Korea's suspected provision of weapons to Russia

Seoul, May 15 (IANS) : South Korea's spy agency on Wednesday said it is looking into suspicions that North Korean weapons made in the 1970s have been supplied to Russia for its war in Ukraine amid deepening military cooperation between Pyongyang and Moscow. The remark by the National Intelligence Service (NIS) came in response to a recent report by a local media outlet

that 122 mm artillery shells manufactured in the North in the 1970s appeared to be among the weapons that Russia used in its ongoing war against Kyiv, Yonhap news agency reported. "The NIS is analysing the relevant circumstance in detail and also continues to track overall military cooperation between North Korea and Russia," the spy agency said. Photos released by a Ukrainian photographer last year showed Korean letters in-

scribed on rocket shells. Experts said they were likely 122 mm multiple rocket launcher shells. South Korea's Defense Minister Shin Won-sik has also estimated the North to have shipped around 6,700 containers to Russia since a summit between their leaders in September, which are enough to accommodate approximately three million rounds of 152 mm artillery shells or 500,000 rounds of 122 mm artillery shells.



Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM threatens to throw Governor out, turn his residence into museum

Peshawar, May 15 (IANS) : In yet another turmoil in Pakistan's politics, a strong war of words and counter-threats has begun between Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and newly-elected Governor Faisal Karim Kundi in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. While Gandapur has given an "open threat" of taking over the Governor's house, Kundi has warned that he would drag the Chief Minister to the streets if he tries the misadventure. Gandapur, who belongs to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has been very vocal about his opposition to the federal government and has issued strong statements against the possibility of imposing Governor's rule in the province. The Chief Minister recently stated that he would not sit quietly if the federal government tried to impose Governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and threatened to take over the Governor's house. "I will not remain silent and if Governor Raj is imposed, we will take over the Governor's house," said Gandapur. Kundi, who recently took oath as the Governor of the province, responded to the threats with even stronger words, daring Gandapur to take the step and test his strength. "Try taking over the Governor's house, you will be dragged through the streets," the Governor dared. "I know very well how to tackle my political opponents," he



added. Kundi also rejected rumours of a possible Governor's Rule in the province, stating that the political opponents are spreading false news because "they are worried about their own incompetence". Gandapur was quick to respond to Kundi's stern warning, warning him to not go beyond his limits. "You should be very careful. Even the fuel of your car is sanctioned from my budget. This Governor's house is not your property. Don't push me to the level where I am forced to declare the historic Governor's house as a heritage property and throw it open to the public as a museum. I can shift you to an old two-room quarter, so you better stay within your limits," said Gandapur. "You are a Governor and have nothing to do with politics, so don't make political statements against the CM. The CM is an elected representative and not like you, who is the product of Form-47. I have come with a mandate. I am sparing you this

time, but if you don't refrain from making such statements, I will come and throw you out," he added. The war of words is expected to aggravate further in the coming days, as the KP Governor will administer oaths to the members of the provincial assembly on the reserved seats. The election for the senator would be held only after the oath-taking ceremony. Till now, the CM has delayed the oath-taking of the reserved seat members in protest against what he terms a "false mandate" given to the federal government, claiming that majority seats were won by PTI's Independent candidates, who are now part of the political party Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). However, the new Governor can initiate the oath-taking of members of reserved seats in the KP Assembly, a step that would further escalate his ongoing rivalry with the Chief Minister.



UAE lashes out at Netanyahu over joining post-war Gaza administration

Cairo, May 15 (IANS/DPA) : The United Arab Emirates (UAE) lashed out on Wednesday at a suggestion from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to join a potential civil administration in the post-war Gaza Strip. Netanyahu suggested in a recent interview that a civilian administration with Gazans and possibly with the aid of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other countries could run Gaza after the war. On Wednesday, UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed said his country denounced Netanyahu's call, adding that Gaza is currently under Israeli occupation. "The State of Emirates stresses that the Israeli Prime Minister has no legitimate capacity authorising him to take this step," the Emirati official

said in an Arabic post on X. "The [UAE] state rejects being drawn into any plan aimed to provide cover for the Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip," he added. The UAE became the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020. However, the wealthy country has repeatedly criticised Israel's ongoing war in the Gaza Strip. Earlier this week, the UAE condemned Israel's "control" of the Gaza side of the Rafah border crossing, an operation that has halted humanitarian aid deliveries via the facility into the heavily populated strip. Israel has been bombarding Gaza for months since Hamas militants launched unprecedented bloody attacks on Israel in October last year that included civilian massacres.

Israeli army orders evacuation of further parts of Rafah

Tel Aviv, May 15 (IANS/DPA) : The Israeli army told Rafah residents to leave other areas in the east of Gaza's southern city on Wednesday, in a call that suggests it plans to expand its military operation there, despite growing international demands to desist. The areas affected include two refugee camps, according to the message broadcast in Arabic on X and in text messages. People in the listed areas must immediately move to the village of Al-Mawasi on the Mediterranean coast, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said. The order suggests that the IDF intends to expand its operation against positions and combat units of the Palestinian Islamist organisation Hamas in the city on the border with Egypt. Foreign leaders and the United Nations have called on Israel to halt the operation, which began earlier in the week, fearing mass casualties as people have fled to the city to escape fighting in other parts of the Gaza Strip, leading to extreme overcrowding. More than 1 million Palestinians are seeking refuge in Rafah, half of them children.



Thailand Open: Satwik-Chirag pair eases into second round; Prannoy suffers shock loss in opener

Bangkok, May 15 (IANS) : Former champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty eased into the men's doubles second round of the Thailand Open, a BWF Super 500 tournament, beating Malayasian duo Nur Mohd Azriyn Ayub Azriyn and Tan Wee Kiong, here on Wednesday. The world no. 3 Indians registered a 21-13, 21-13 straight games victory over Malaysian counterparts to set up a second round clash with Chinese pair of Zeng Wei Han and Xie Hao Nan.

On the other hand, world no 83 Indian Meiraba Luwang Maisnam pulled off a major upset, beating senior compatriot and world no 9 H S Prannoy 21-19, 21-18 in opening round. Before registering an upset win over Prannoy, the 21-year-old from Manipur, won two qualification matches to enter main draw. Maisnam will next play Mads Christophersen of Denmark, who defeated Kiran George 21-15, 13-21, 21-17 in the opening round of Super 500 tournament. In the women's singles, Ashmita Chaliha defated the higher ranked Indonesian shuttler 19-21, 21-15,

21-14 to sail into the second round while Unnati Hooda suffered a 21-14, 14-21, 9-21 loss at the hands of Belgian opponent Lianne Tan. Malvika Bansod too crashed out in the first after losing 11-21, 10-21 to top seed chinese Han Yue, who will be Chaliha's second round opponent. On Tuesday, world no. 42 mixed doubles pair of SK Karunakaran and Aadya Variath beat world No. 155 Tanakorn Meechai and Fungfa Korphammakit in straight games 21-17, 21-16 to enter round of 16.



Premier League : Haaland's brace puts Man City on brink of title

London, May 15 (IANS) : Erling Haaland's second-half brace saw Manchester City secure a 2-0 victory against Tottenham Hotspurs and ensured Pep Guardiola's side back to the top of the Premier League table. With Haaland's two goals, City are now on 88 points while Spurs' Champions League hopes are over with a loss.

The win sent City two points clear of Arsenal and which means if they beat West Ham on Sunday then Guardiola's men will secure a fourth successive league title, something no English side has ever achieved before. City brought substitute keeper Stefan Ortega Moreno on for Ederson midway through the second half after the Brazilian hurt his head in a collision with Cristian Romero.

The German made his impact immediately felt with a series of outstanding saves, including one stunning block to deny Son Heung-Min - to keep the hosts out. Haaland opened the scoring with a close range 52nd minute opener and then sealed a victory with a 90th-minute penalty which extended City's record unbeaten run across all competitions to 34 games.

IPL 2024 : DC director Ganguly feels Pant will become 'better captain with time'

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Delhi Capitals' (DC) hope to qualify for the IPL 2024 playoffs still hangs in the balance despite culminating their league stage campaign with a 19-run win over Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) on Wednesday but team director Sourav Ganguly is pleased with captain Rishabh Pant's leadership skills in his comeback season and expects it to flourish in

coming years. With 14 points in as many games, Delhi sit in the fifth spot in the points table and are dependent upon different permutations and combinations to qualify for the knockout round. Pant returned to cricketing action in IPL 2024 after more than a year of injury layoff following a fatal car accident in December 2022. "Pant is a young captain, he'll learn with time. The way he returned from injury to play a full season; we had our doubts during the offseason. Indian players are crucial, especially since the IPL shifted to 10 teams.



Adani Sportsline's athletes shine in Gujarat State Jr Basketball Championship

Ahmedabad, May 15 (IANS) Adani Sportsline Academy's players shone in Gujarat State Junior Basketball Championship for Ahmedabad district girl's and boy's teams, clinching gold and silver, respectively. Vanisa helped the girl's team win gold while another trainee Taksh Patel was part of the boys' team that clinched second spot in the same tournament. In less than five years of its launch, the Adani Sportsline Academy has emerged as a cradle of budding sports stars with its trainees making quite a splash. Chief Business Officer of Adani Sportsline Sanjay Adesara said, "I am happy to see students of Adani Sportsline begin to make a name for themselves. This shows how effective our training facilities and coaches are. This will pave the way for more success stories at the highest level.



IPL 2024: Rayudu feels win against PBKS will lift RR's 'confidence' to finish in top-two

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Former India batter Ambati Rayudu feels that a win against Punjab Kings will bolster Rajasthan Royals' (RR) 'confidence' to finish among top-two in the league stage of the IPL 2024 following their three consecutive losses. RR became the second team to qualify for the playoffs after Delhi Capitals (DC) defeated Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) by 19 runs on Tuesday to finish their campaign with 14 points in 14 matches. Sanju Samson-led side lost their last three games and is aiming to return to winning ways before heading to the

knockout stage of the tournament. Royals have a glittering start with four consecutive wins and remained in the top four throughout the season. Despite falling behind in the last three consecutive games, Rajasthan remain in second place in the points table with 16 points in 12 games. "They've played well throughout the season and this is the lucky break they've got at a crucial time when they aren't performing at their best. So this will give them the confidence as they go in for their next 2 games and hopefully they can qualify for the playoffs too," Rayudu told Star Sports.

High jumper Nishad Kumar focuses on 'excellence' at Para Worlds, records can follow!

New Delhi, May 15 (IANS) : Para Asian Games champion Nishad Kumar, who holds an Asian record in the Men's High Jump T47 category, is not mulling over setting a world record. Instead, he aims to give his best at the upcoming World Para Athletics Championships, which will be held from May 17 to 25 in Kobe, Japan. Nishad bagged a gold medal in the Men's High Jump T47 category, a classification for athletes with unilateral upper limb im-



pairment, at the Asian Para Games last year in China. He claimed the gold medal with a best jump of 2.02m. "I haven't given it much thought; time will tell how it turns out. However, my preparation has been excellent. I won the bronze medal at the 2019 World Championship, and in the 2023 World Championship in Paris, I earned the silver.

3rd T20I: Rizwan, Babar, Shaheen Afridi excel as Pakistan beat Ireland, win three-match series 2-1

Dublin (Ireland), May 15 (IANS) : Skipper Babar Azam slammed his 39th half-century and Mohammad Rizwan struck fifty after pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi claimed a three-fer as Pakistan defeated Ireland by six wickets with 18 balls to spare in the third T20I and won the three-match series 2-1 here on Wednesday. Babar struck

a 42-ball 75 while Rizwan blasted a 38-ball 56 as Pakistan reached 181/4 in 17 overs after Shaheen Afridi claimed brilliant figures of 3-14 off four overs and his namesake Abbas Afridi bagged 2-43 after the visitors had won the toss and elected to field first. After Pakistan lost opener Saim Ayub for 14 off 11 balls with the total at 16 runs, Rizwan and Babar a 139-run partnership for the second



wicket. Rizwan was the first to reach his half-century off 30 balls, his knock studded with four boundaries and three sixes. Babar crossed the half-century

mark off 31 balls, hitting five boundaries and two maximums. Rizwan was the next to go, bowled by Mark Adairas he moved way too far across.