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Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group, on Thursday, met Lindy Cameron, the new British High Commissioner to... 07

## Democracy at risk if Modi wins a third term : Uttam

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): Minister for Civil Supplies and Irrigation N Uttam Kumar Reddy warned that democracy in India could be in peril if Narendra Modi secures a third term as Prime Minister. The Minister made these remarks on Thursday while addressing a series of meetings

in Mothe, Nadigudem, Munagala and Kodad in Suryapet district in favour of Congress candidate K Raghuvveera Reddy from the Nalgonda Lok Sabha constituency. Referring to PM Modi's speech during his recent visit to Sangareddy, Uttam Kumar Reddy said that Modi had failed to specify clearly that the BJP would

not change the Constitution if voted to power. Stating that the BJP and RSS have often indicated that they are against the reservation system, he said there was always a danger that if the BJP came to power again, it would scrap the reservation system. Continued on pg 02



## Home Minister doctored video case : Delhi Police team visits Congress office in Telangana

New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) : In its ongoing probe into Home Minister Amit Shah's doctored video case, a team of Delhi Police's Special Cell on Thursday visited 'Gandhi Bhawan', the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee headquarters in Hyderabad, sources said.



## Postal ballot polling process to be conducted with utmost care'

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): District Election Officer and GHMC Commissioner Ronald Rose advised the officials concerned to conduct postal ballot polling duties with utmost care. In view of the postal ballot polling which will start from May 3, a meeting was held at GHMC headquarters here on Thursday and discussed the issues related to pre-arrangements, postal ballot process, precautions to be taken, etc. at the voter

facilitation center. Speaking on the occasion, Ronald Rose said that regarding the postal ballot, the respective officials should conduct polling very carefully and there should not be any scope for mistakes. During the meeting, he explained the postal ballot process in detail and advised the officials concerned to check the ID card of the voters who come to vote once again.

## Non-bailable warrants cannot be issued in a routine manner : SC

New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) : In the latest judgment, the Supreme Court has said that non-bailable warrants cannot be issued in a routine manner unless the accused is charged with a heinous crime and is likely to evade the process of law or destroy/tamper evidence. A bench presided over by Justice Sanjiv Khanna said that

while there is no comprehensive set of guidelines for the issuance of non-bailable warrants, the apex court has observed on several occasions that non-bailable warrants should not be issued, unless the accused is charged with a heinous crime, and is likely to evade the process of law or tamper/destroy evidence. Quashing the summoning order, the Bench, also comprising Justice SVN Bhatti, said,



"It is a settled position of law that non-bailable warrants cannot be issued in a routine manner and that the liberty of an individual

cannot be curtailed unless necessitated by the larger interest of public and the State." Continued on pg 02

## KCR to resume his bus Yatra from Ramagundam

Hyderabad, May 2 (IANS) : BRS party supremo Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao's road show will continue from Friday. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has banned KCR from campaigning for 48 hours. The order has been issued to make it applicable for 48 hours from 8 pm on Wednesday. Public gatherings, demonstrations, rallies, interviews, road shows and public speaking in the media by KCR during the period of the ban have been prohibited by the EC.

At the same time, no publicity should be conducted through electronic media, social media or print media.



## My phone tapped by KCR govt: Bandi

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): BJP candidate from Karimnagar Bandi Sanjay Kumar today alleged that former CM KCR led State government tapped his phone and his family members' phones illegally. He also alleged that in every instance where he was fighting on people's issues, the Congress and the BRS parties were attacking him as part of their conspiracy and added that just like KCR in the past, CM Revanath Reddy was also continuing the same path now. He alleged that attempts were being made to dilute the case of phone tapping that had corrupted the sys-

tem and attacked personal liberty of people. He said like in the case of drugs, Miyapur lands and TSPSC paper leak in the past, a conspiracy was being hatched to close the phone tapping case. Speaking to media persons at the State party office, Sanjay alleged that the Phone tapping took place in Sircilla. Continued on pg 02



## BJP will shut down Beedi industry if it wins, warns Shabbir

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): Advisor to the Telangana Government and Congress senior leader Mohammed Ali Shabbir has warned that if the BJP returns to power at the Centre, it will lead to the closure of the Beedi industry, af-

fecting the livelihoods of lakhs of workers across the country. Speaking at a Bharosa Sammelan organised by the Congress party at Munnuru Kapu Kalyana Mandapam in Pragati Nagar.

## Work cautiously for victory : Kishan

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): Union Minister G Kishan Reddy has asked his party workers and booth committee representatives to remain vigilant in the last phase of the ongoing election campaigning as the BJP is going to win a majority of the seats in

Telangana. On Thursday, he held a meeting with the party leaders and booth committee representatives at the BJP offices in Musheerabad and Amberpet. A review of the second phase of campaigning and door-to-door campaigning was launched by the party. Kishan Reddy advised

the booth committee representatives to be vigilant as the election campaign has reached the final stage. He said if attempts were made to lure the voters, such incidents should be brought to his notice and also to the EC.





## Promising Start to FY25, NMDC Targets 50 MT

Hyderabad, May 2 (TIM Bureau): National mining company, NMDC produced 3.48 million tonnes and sold 3.53 million tonnes of iron ore in the first month of FY25. On the back of record 45 MT volumes in FY24, NMDC's strong performance continued. While production matched upto to the corresponding period last year, the company achieved close to 3% growth in sales from April 2023.

## Non-bailable warrants cannot be issued in a routine manner : SC

**Continued From pg 01**  
In 2021, the Special Chief Judicial Magistrate, Lucknow issued non-bailable warrants against one Manager Singh noting that there was no provision for granting exemption from personal appearance prior to obtaining bail. Another order recorded that as the accused remained absent despite the issuance of bailable warrants, non-bailable warrants were issued to ensure his personal appearance. "The observation that there is no provision for granting exemption from personal appearance prior to obtaining bail, is not correct, as the power to grant exemption from personal appearance under the Code (of Criminal Procedure) should not be read in a restrictive manner as applicable only after the accused has been granted bail. This Court in Maneka Sanjay Gandhi and Another v. Rani Jethmalani held that the power to grant exemption from personal appearance

should be exercised liberally when facts and circumstances require such exemption," the top court said. It asked the trial court to re-examine the entire matter in terms of the observations made in its judgment and thereupon proceed in accordance with the law. In the exercise of power under Article 142 read with Article 136 of the Constitution of India, the Supreme Court ordered that the accused, Manager Singh, will be released on bail by the arresting officer, investigating officer or trial court on the terms and conditions to be fixed by the trial court.

## British Deputy High Commissioner meets TSRTC MD

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): British Deputy High Commissioner Gareth Winn Owen today met with Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) Managing Director VC Sajjanar and senior officials. The meeting was held at Bus Bhavan in Hyderabad on Thursday. During the meeting, the use of electric buses in TSRTC, technical support, upgrading skills and training were discussed. First, the RTC officials explained about the electric buses that are currently available and the electric buses that will be in use in the future through a Power-Point presentation. Gareth Winn Owen congratulated TSRTC for using eco-friendly electric buses.

He said a meeting was held with RTC officials as part of the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) pilot project. "We are strengthening the financing mechanism of the JEVs as per the agreement reached with the UK, the US and India at the G-20 summit in Goa last year," he said. He also said workshops would be conducted for the RTC staff on the maintenance of electric buses and to empower them. TSRTC Managing Director VC Sajjanar said the electric buses were being introduced in TSRTC to provide a pollution-free travel experience. He said the meeting would help in further expanding the system of the electric buses in the corporation.

## My phone tapped by KCR govt : Bandi

**Continued From pg 01**  
"When all this came out, the KCR family entered into a dark deal with a minister in Karimnagar. The minister is acting in accordance with the advice given by the KCR family. During the interrogation, the phone tapping accused Radhakishan Rao revealed that the phone was tapped at the behest of former CM KCR. I and the present CM Revanth Reddy are the main victims of phone tapping," he added. Sanjay claimed that a police officer came up to him and told him that the phones of his family members and staff were tapped along with him. "The SIM card I used was duped with another SIM card and all my phones were tapped. Vehicles were placed near a petrol

pump if my house and a temple to tap my phone. Even before the assembly elections, Radhakishan Rao and Prabhakar Rao stayed in Karimnagar and tapped our phones. Radhakishan Rao stayed in room no. 314 of Pratima hotel and tapped my phone," Sanjay alleged. He also alleged that the police tapped the phones of the Congress candidates from Peddapalli and Ramagundam along with him and they seized money in raids based on the tapping inputs. This is a conspiracy hatched by a Karimnagar district minister in collusion with KCR," he added. He also alleged that the

original accused in the phone tapping case ran it with the help of his relative. He alleged that Prabhakar Rao's son-in-law Ashok Rao was conducting economic transactions in the parliamentary elections. He claimed that Prabhakar Rao was the main reason behind the ticket for Karimnagar Congress candidate Velichala Rajender. "Rajender has nothing to do with the Congress party. He is not an activist and never participated in movements. Prabhakar Rao brought Rajender Rao to the fore from the assembly elections. Crores of rupees were given to

Congress party candidates contesting in Karimnagar parliamentary constituency in the assembly elections through Rajender Rao. Congress leaders who look after the affairs of the State have also been given crores of rupees," he alleged. He wondered whether the Congress party leadership did not know about these developments? He asked the State government as to why no action was initiated against KCR. Even after Radhakishan Rao's statement that the phone tapping was done on the orders of KCR?

## GRP & RPF team at Kacheguda apprehend notorious robbery gang

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): Kachiguda Railway Police along with RPF staff apprehended a notorious robbery gang of four, who robbed gold chain, two phones, one smart watch and net cash of Rs 700 from CRPF SI, who was travelling in MMTS Train on April 27 between Yakuthpura and Huppuguda Railway Stations. On May 2 at 0530 hours, while R. Yellappa, Inspector of Police, RPS Kachiguda, along with GRP and RPF staff performing checking in Malakpet railway station premises, noticed four persons moving under suspicious manner and on seeing police, they tried to escape from there. But, GRO & RPF team apprehended them, frisked and checked them thoroughly and found them in possession of two knives, broken gold chain, one phone, smart watch.

On questioning, they could not give any satisfying reply and as they were in a mood of confession, IRP, Kachiguda recorded their confession statements and seized gold chain, one mobile phone, TAGG wrist smart watch, under cover of panchanama in the presence of panchas and Inspector RPS Kachiguda effected the arrest. The accused were involved in criminal cases in Hyderabad city and Rachakonda police commissidionerate. From the evidence collected so far, it was revealed that, all the accused hail from same locality, not doing any work and looking for easy earning. All of them formed into a gang. On April 26 night, the accused A1 dropped the accused A2 to A4 at Yakuthpura Railway station. At about 0030 hours, when an MMTS Train came on to the platform, the accused got into the train and found the victim, who is working as Sub-Inspector in CRPF, sitting alone.

## Beware of crypto trading in P2P mode?

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): Are you doing crypto trading in P2P mode? Beware, you might be trading with a cyber-fraudster. Various forms of cyber fraud are increasingly prevalent, leading unsuspecting victims to fall prey to schemes where they unknowingly transfer funds to accounts provided by fraudsters. However, there exists another group of victims, who endure the consequences of cyber fraud without being direct targets or beneficiaries. There are individuals engaged in peer-to-peer (P2P) crypto trading. With law enforcement agencies intensifying efforts through the 1930 online financial fraud

helpline and cyber crime reporting portal, freezing bank accounts linked to fraudulent transactions has become common. Consequently, fraudsters have resorted to using intermediary 'mule' accounts to evade detection. Moreover, these cyber criminals continuously devise new tactics to avoid apprehension and launder illicit proceeds, making it challenging for authorities to intercept and recover stolen funds. As the popularity of crypto currency rises and P2P trading becomes more accessible, cyber fraudsters actively target participants through various communication channels, including Telegram. They exploit unsuspecting individuals by converting criminal proceeds—whether from Indian Rupees (INR) to crypto or

vice versa—under the guise of legitimate trading activities. Unfortunately, individuals eager to profit from P2P crypto trading often remain unaware that they are inadvertently handling illicit funds. Consequently, when these individuals file complaints through the 1930 helpline or cybercrime reporting portal, their transactions become flagged, leading to the freezing of their bank accounts. Initially, the individual bank account is frozen, and if restitution is necessary for the original victim, the bank is obligated to refund the amount from the individual's account.

## Former minister Indrakaran meets CM Revanth

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): Former minister Allola Indrakaran Reddy paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at his residence here on Thursday. AICC Telangana in-charge Deepadas Munshi, Congress MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy, Government Advisor Vem Narender Reddy, Vice Chairman of Telangana State Planning Board G Chinnna Reddy and other Congress leaders were present. Indrakaran Reddy, who joined the Congress on Wednesday, was the Forest Minister during the BRS regime from 2018 to 2023.

## BJP wants to rule the country without reservations: Congress

Hyderabad, May 2 (NSS): Congress leader Gajjala Kantham has alleged that under the direction of Rastriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) wants to rule the country without reservations. Speaking at a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan here on Thursday, Gajjala Kantham along with party leader Satish Madiga said that the BJP had set a target of getting 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections for scrapping the facility of res-

ervations in the country. "The majority of the population in the country belongs to BCs, SCs, STs and minorities, but the BJP has nurtured a grudge against the majority of population and is hatching conspiracies to scrap reservations," Gajjala Kantham said. He alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was deliberately avoiding the census since he wanted to abolish reservations in the country. "We have decided to organise a deeksha for protecting the Constitution on May 4.

**SBI STATE BANK OF INDIA**  
HALIYA BRANCH-21245  
HALIYA, NALGONDA DISTRICT.

**POSSESSION NOTICE (SYMBOLIC)**  
Under Rule 8(1) and (2) (For Immovable Property)

WHEREAS, The undersigned being the authorized officer of the STATE BANK OF INDIA, HALIYA BRANCH, HALIYA, NALGONDA DIST, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Sec13(2) of the Act and Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice Dated: 22-02-2024 and calling upon the borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.15,74,983/- (Fifteen lakhs Seventy Four Thousand Nine Hundred And Eighty Three Rupees Only) as on 22-02-2024 + interest & expenses within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

**Borrower: M/s. SRI LATHA VASTRALAYAM, Prop. RAVIRALA Nagaraju,** Main Road, Nidamanoor Vill & Mandal, Nalgonda (D)-508278 & **Sri RAVIRALA NAGARAJU, S/o. Pedda Veeraiiah,** H.No.-1-144, Near Police Station Nidamanoor, Village & Mandal Nalgonda Dist. 508278. A/c.No. 62326922038 (CC), 62304255692 (HL), 62456551855 (Topup).

The borrower/guarantor has Paid an Amount of Rs.2,00,000/- During the Period from 22-02-2024 To 29-04-2024. CC Loan Having failed to repay the entire amount notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on 29-04-2024.

The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the State Bank of India, HALIYA Branch, Nalgonda Dist, for an amount of Rs.15,74,983/-w.e.f 23-04-2024 + interest & expenses thereon.

**DESCRIPTION OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**  
All That Part of Piece Residential House GP Door No 1-135 (Old), 1-144 (New) Sy.No.377 Admeasuring an Extent of 260 sq. yds. (217.36 sq mts) Situated at Nidamanoor Village & Mandal, Nalgonda Dist. Regn.SRO Nidamanoor, Regn.Dist. Nalgonda. Standing in the name of Sri. RAVIRALA NAGARAJU S/o. Pedda Veeraiiah Doc.No.3816/2012 Dated:-22.12.2012. BOUNDED BY: North: CC Road 25 Fts; South: House of Ravirala Yashoda; East: House of Vempati Ashok; West: 20 Fts GP Road.

Date : 29-04-2024  
Place : HALIYA

Sd/- Authorised Officer  
STATE BANK OF INDIA

**OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER - III**  
**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD(DRT I)**  
3rd Floor, Triveni Complex Abids, Hyderabad 500001

**DEMAND NOTICE**  
NOTICE UNDER SECTIONS 25 TO 28 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS & BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993 AND RULE 2 OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961.  
RC/358/2023 14-03-2024

**M/S. UCO BANK**  
Versus  
**Sri. Bhavesh Kumar Gupta**

To:  
(CD 1) Sri. Bhavesh Kumar Gupta, S/o. Shiv Kumar Gupta, Aged 29 Years, Occ: Business, R/o. H.No.14-1-400, New Aghapura, Gosha Mahal, Hyderabad-500001.  
(CD 2) Smt. Sunita Gupta, W/o. Shiv Kumar Gupta, Aged About 53 Years, Occ: Housewife, R/o. H.No.14-1-400, New Aghapura, Gosha Mahal, Hyderabad-500001.

This is to notify that as per the Recovery Certificate issued in pursuance of orders passed by the Presiding Officer, DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD (DRT I) in OA/166/2021 an amount of Rs.37,00,205/- (Rupees Thirty Seven Lakhs Two Hundred Five Only) along with pendente lite and future interest @ 9.60 % Simple Interest Yearly w.e.f. 26/07/2021 till realization and costs Rs.91,120/- (Rupees Ninety One Thousand One Hundred Twenty Only) has become due against you (Jointly and severally/ Fully/Limited).

2. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipts of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Rules there under.

3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of your assets on or before the next date of hearing.

4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 30/05/2024 at 10:30 a.m. for further proceedings.

5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay:  
(a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate / execution proceedings.  
(b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due. Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 14/03/2024

Sd/- Recovery Officer  
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD (DRT-1)

**IN DEBTS RECOVERY APPELLATE TRIBUNAL AT KOLKATA**  
9, Old Post Office Street, 7th Floor, Kolkata - 700001

**Appeal No. 32 of 2024**  
**Arising Out of OA 456 of 2017 in DRT-2 Hyderabad**  
Bank of India ... Appellants  
Versus  
**S.M. Enterprises and Others ... Respondent**

To  
(1) M/s. S.M. Enterprises Having Registered office at Plot No.8 Road No.1, Vivekanandanagar, Kukatpally, Hyderabad-72  
(2) Mr. Maddala Ramesh Reddy, Residing at 8-2-601/B/22, Road No.10, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad-34  
(3) Mrs. Namratha Dayal, Wife of V. Nagesh Dayal, Residing at H.No.14-150, Sriram Nagar Colony, Patancheru, Hyderabad-81  
(4) Mr. N. Sai Prakash Dayal Son of Late V. Nagesh Dayal, Residing at H.No.14-150, Sriram Nagar Colony, patancheru, Hyderabad-81  
(5) Ms. N. Priyanka Dayal, Daughter of Late V. Nagesh Dayal, Residing at H.No.14-150, Sri Ram Nagar Colony, Patancheru, Hyderabad -81  
(6) J. Harikrishna, Residing at Plot No.659, Vivekanandanagar Kukatpally, Hyderabad -72

**SUMMONS**  
1. Whereas the appellant has filed a Memorandum of appeal U/s 20(1) of the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 against the order passed by the Ld. Presiding Officer, DRT-2 Hyderabad, and other reliefs. You are hereby summoned to appear and file Written Statement before this Tribunal at 10.30 a.m. or at such time immediately hereafter according to the convenience of Tribunal on 21st of May, 2024 to answer the claim.

2. If you intend to file any documents, you may file the same with a list along with the written statement.

3. You should file your registered address and a memo of appearance when you enter appearance before the Tribunal either in person or by a pleader / Advocate duly instructed.

4. Take note that, in default of your appearance on the mentioned herein before, the proceeding will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this 19-04-2024  
Signature of the Officer, Authorized to Issue Summons  
REGISTRAR, DEBTS RECOVERY APPELLATE TRIBUNAL KOLKATA

**BJP President Nadda holds roadshow in K'taka for ex-CM Basavaraj Bommai**

**Haveri, May 2 (IANS) :** BJP President J.P. Nadda on Thursday held a mega roadshow in Karnataka's Byadagi for former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, who is the party candidate for the Haveri Lok Sabha seat. Karnataka's Leader of the Opposition R. Ashoka joined the BJP President and the former Chief Minister in the roadshow.

Addressing the gathering, BJP chief Nadda appealed to the people to do not give votes to INDIA bloc leaders, who are on bail or are in prisons. To make the country a developed nation under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, people must vote for the BJP, he added.



**2,387 candidates in fray for Andhra Pradesh Assembly polls**

**Amaravati, May 2 (IANS) :** A total of 2,387 candidates remain in the fray for the elections to the 175-member Andhra Pradesh Assembly while 454 will be testing their electoral fortunes in 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state. According to the Election Commission, 318 candidates withdrew their nominations for Assembly polls while 49 pulled out of the contest in Lok Sabha constituencies. The deadline for withdrawal of nominations ended on Mon-

day but the election authorities released the details late on Thursday. A total of 2,705 nominations were found valid in all Assembly segments while 503 nominations were accepted for Lok Sabha polls. Simultaneous elections to the Assembly and Lok Sabha are scheduled on May 13. The maximum number of candidates (46) are in the fray in the Tirupati Assembly segment followed by 40 in Mangalagiri. Only six candidates remain in the contest in the Chodavaram constituency, while there are seven candi-

dates each in Tekkali, Srikakulam, Narasannapeta, Palakonda (ST), Kurupam (ST), Salur (ST), Cheepurapalle, Rajahmundry Rural, and Nagari. According to the Chief Electoral Officer, 503 nominations were found valid for Lok Sabha elections. A maximum of 33 candidates are in the fray in the Visakhapatnam constituency, followed by 31 in Nandyal and 30 in Guntur. There are only 12 candidates in Rajahmundry, and 13 candidates each are contesting in Araku (ST), Srikakulam, Eluru, and Hindupur. Over 4.08 crore,

more than half of them women, are eligible to cast their votes.

A direct fight is likely in both the Assembly and Lok Sabha polls between the ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the opposition National Democratic Alliance comprising the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Jana Sena Party (JSP), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The Congress, which drew a blank in Assembly and Lok Sabha polls in the state both in 2014 and 2019, is the third biggest player. In 2019, the YSRCP wrested power from the TDP by bagging 151 Assembly seats. The TDP won 23 seats while JSP secured one. The YSRCP had also captured 22 Lok Sabha seats with the TDP bagging the remaining three. The TDP, the JSP, and the BJP have joined hands this time to avoid a split of anti-incumbency votes.

Under the seat-sharing agreement, the TDP is contesting 144 Assembly and 17 Lok Sabha seats. The JSP has fielded candidates in 21 Assembly segments and two Lok Sabha constituencies, and the BJP is contesting 10 Assembly and six Lok Sabha seats.



**CBI opposes bail plea of 8 students arrested for veterinary student's death in Kerala**

**Kochi, May 2 (IANS) :** The CBI probing the death of J.S. Sidharthan, a second-year veterinary student in the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences at Pookode in Kerala's Wayanad district, on Thursday strongly opposed the bail plea filed by the eight students arrested in connection with the case. Of the 18 students placed under judicial custody for over two months in connection with the case, eight approached the Kerala High Court seeking bail.

The CBI said the accused should not be granted bail as the case is serious, as they behaved in a very cruel manner.

The court, on its part, ruled out the demand of the petitioners seeking an urgent hearing of their plea. Listing the case for the next hearing on May 10, the court directed the CBI to file a charge sheet in the case.



**Congress fields Raj Babbar against BJP's Rao Inderjit Singh in Gurugram**

**Gurugram, May 2 (IANS) :** The Congress on Thursday named actor-turned-politician Raj Babbar as its candidate for the Gurgaon Lok Sabha constituency. Raj Babbar, a senior Congress leader, was previously elected to the Lok Sabha twice from Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh. With this, the Congress has announced candidates for all the nine seats it is contesting in Haryana.

**I-T dept raids 2 jeweller groups in Jaipur**

**Jaipur, May 2 (IANS) :** The Income Tax (I-T) Department teams on Thursday raided two jeweller groups in Rajasthan's Jaipur, officials said. The two jeweller groups raided are the JKJ Jewellers and the Joshi Group. Officials added that these groups were reportedly running gold and silver businesses via shell companies in Kolkata and also allegedly involved in tax evasion. The first raid was conducted at the residence of JKJ Jewellers in Shyam Nagar fol-



lowed by a raid at its showroom in three locations. Simultaneous I-T raids are being conducted in Delhi, Kolkata and Jaipur, officials said. Sources said that the raids are also linked to Hawala money and betting.

**Thiruvananthapuram's woman Mayor faces flak for 'misbehaviour' with bus driver**

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 2 (IANS) :** Protests were held by the Congress and the BJP, as well as a section of state roadways employees, in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday against the way Mayor Arya Rajendran, her CPI-M legislator husband Sachin Dev and other family members behaved with a bus driver of the state-owned KSRTC. The protests came after CCTV visuals surfaced showing that the car, in which Rajendran and her family

members were travelling, had intercepted the KSRTC bus in the middle of the main road in the state capital. The incident took place at around 10 p.m. on Thursday. Rajendran on Monday said they reacted against the driver not only because he was driving dangerously and on a few occasions, almost hit their vehicle, but also made an obscene gesture at them. However, she said that they did not intercept the bus at a traffic signal. However, the visuals contra-



dicted her version of the incident, leading to criticism. On the other hand, police took the driver, identified as Yadu, into custody but refused to accept his complaint that Rajendran had obstructed him from his duty and spoke to him rudely.

**Polling in J&K's Anantnag-Rajouri LS constituency deferred to May 25**

**Srinagar/New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** The Election Commission on Thursday decided to defer the polls for the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat in Jammu and Kashmir from the third phase on May 7 to the sixth and penultimate phase on May 25. The decision came at the request of several parties and independent candidates due to the continuous blockade of the Mughal Road that connects the constituency with its voting segments in the Poonch and Rajouri districts of the Jammu division. "Various representations have been received from different political parties of the UT of Jammu & Kashmir for shifting the date of poll of election from 3-Anantnag-Rajouri Parliamentary Constituency (PC) of Jammu & Kashmir, due to various logistic, communication and natural barrier of connectivity turning out as hindrance in campaigning which in turn tantamount to lack of fair opportunities for the contesting candidates in the said Parliamentary Constituency which may affect poll process," the poll panel said in a notification.



**Cong govt set to give quiet burial to Neha Hiremath murder case : K'taka LoP**

**Hubballi, May 2 (IANS) :** Karnataka's Leader of the Opposition (LoP) R. Ashoka claimed on Thursday that the Congress-led state government is set to give a quiet burial to MCA student Neha Hiremath's murder case after three or six months when it vanishes from the public memory. The BJP leader made the remarks while speaking to media after meeting the parents of Neha Hiremath. The LoP was accompanied by former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai. Ashoka said that the ruling Congress thinks its image will be tarnished if it is proven to be a case of 'love jihad', and thus the government is trying to hush it up. "Though it was a special case.



**Anti-defection law to be strengthened if Cong is voted to power: Alka Lamba**

**Panaji, May 2 (IANS) :** All India Mahila Congress President Alka Lamba said on Thursday that the anti-defection law will be made stronger to save democracy if the Congress forms the government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections. Addressing a press conference at the Congress House here on Tuesday, Lamba said that the BJP's fake promises have been exposed, adding that the NDA will not cross the 180-seat mark in the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. Speaking about the anti-de-

fection law, Lamba said the BJP-led Central government has weakened the law to usurp power. "Once we form the government, we will make the anti-defection law strong by cancelling the membership of the elected representatives who switch sides. In Goa, the BJP is encouraging defections. Why is the Prime Minister against strengthening the anti-defection law," she asked. The Congress leader also said that the BJP will not be allowed to change the Constitution drafted by B.R. Ambedkar.

**Delhi Police await X's reply on Home Minister's doctored video**

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** The investigators are yet to receive any response from social media giants X (formerly Twitter) and Meta in connection with a doctored video of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, a source in the Delhi Police's Special Cell told IANS on Thursday. Three persons have been arrested by the police for circulating the fake video so far, two in Gujarat and one in Assam. "We are trying to trace the origin of the doctored video. A reply from the social media giants is of utmost importance in the case. X, meanwhile, has deleted all the morphed videos from its platform," said a senior Delhi Police officer privy to the probe. After registering an FIR, the Special Cell's IFSO unit, which has been tasked to crack the case, sent a letter to the X seeking details.

OPINIONmail



INDIA AIMS TO BE IN THE TOP GROUP OF GLOBAL SPACE POWERS BY 2047

India's space programme has been in the spotlight ever since the Chandrayaan-3 mission landed on the Moon's southern hemisphere on August 23, 2023. The mission—costing a meager \$75 million—covered everything, from the rocket launch to the propulsion system and the lunar lander and rover expenses. This cost-effective approach is driving other developing countries eager to establish their own sustainable space programmes. Following this success, India has unveiled plans for the Chandrayaan-4 mission, designed to land on the Moon's far side and return with lunar samples. The upcoming Chandrayaan-5, 6 and 7 missions will focus on further extending lunar exploration. Starting with Chandrayaan-6, India plans to construct lunar habitats, with Chandrayaan-7 dedicated to building lunar infrastructure. India's first solar mission, Aditya L-1, focused on studying the Sun's corona, successfully reached the Lagrange-1 point on January 6 after launch on September 2, 2023, taking 127 days to arrive. India is also working on a human-rated launch vehicle for its Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission. This development includes creating life-support systems, bioastronautics, crew training and obtaining human rating and certification. On December 13, 2023, ISRO's Somanath announced that India is developing its own environmental control and life support system (ECLSS). Additionally, a second Mars mission is planned for 2030 to study the Martian atmosphere, featuring such experiments as the Mars Orbit Dust Experiment (MODEx), a radio occultation (RO) experiment, an energetic ion spectrometer (EIS) and a Langmuir probe and electric field experiment (LPEX). In 2031, India intends to launch Sukhryaan-1 mission. In December 2023, India unveiled its official space policy, 'Space Vision, 2047', which aims to develop and bolster its commercial space sector and identifies the main institutions responsible for regulating its private space industry and clearly states its stance on using, and owning, space resources. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) announced a space roadmap featuring the Chandrayaan-4 mission, planned for a conceptual phase with a targeted launch no earlier than in 2028; building a space station (Bharatiya Space Station), set to be positioned at an altitude of 120-140 kilometres in low-Earth orbit (LEO), by 2035; and sending astronauts to the Moon by 2040. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has proposed changing its name to the 'Indian Air and Space Forces' (IASF). This reflects a shift in India's strategic approach, emphasizing the significance of space in national security. This initiative is part of India's official space policy, which celebrates the 100th anniversary of India's Independence from British rule in 1947. In 2019, India established the Defence Space Agency, which functions similarly to a space force, along with the Defence Space Research Organisation. Also established in 2019, New Space India Ltd is tasked with commercializing space technologies and platforms developed with public funds. The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) serves as a one-stop authorization hub for space activities involving both the public and private sectors. To achieve its aim of developing and bolstering its commercial space sector, India has designated the Department of Space (DoS), which operates under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) as the primary body for space policy-making and implementation. Meanwhile, the ISRO will concentrate on R&D. As part of its broader initiative of transitioning from being 'a potent air power' to becoming 'a credible aerospace power' in years to come, the IAF is looking to collaborate with ISRO, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), IN-SPACe and the private space sector in India. By proposing to change its name to IASF in 2023, the IAF aims to enhance its precision navigation, timing (PNT) and intelligence, as well as surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), capabilities. Additionally, it seeks to develop abilities in space traffic management, space situational awareness and space weather prediction.

(By Girish Linganna)

EDITORIAL  
the indian mail



GOLD PRICES ON A TEAR FORCING DISCOUNTED DOMESTIC PRICES TO KEEP DEMAND GOING

Gold prices have been scaling record levels and the momentum and magnitude of the price rises have been unprecedented. According to World Gold Council sources, while it took nearly a year for domestic prices to rise from Rs 50,000 per 10g to 60,000/10g, the next band of rise from 60,000 to 70,000 took only about five months. Anecdotal evidence cited by the council suggests that the swiftness of the price uptick has affected gold consumption demand, particularly jewellery demand, which makes up around three-quarters of total consumption. Additionally, most jewellery purchases are tied to wedding-related purchases,

Also, consumers are awaiting stabilization in prices for fresh purchases and have been resorting to exchanging or selling old jewellery to benefit from windfall gains. Demand is also likely impacted by election-related restrictions and fewer weddings during the April-May season this year. Gold prices have rallied since mid-February. Prices rose by 3.1 percent in April following an 8 percent surge in March. WGC analysis shows that risk and momentum have been behind the upward move. Domestic landed gold prices in India mirrored the increase of international gold price, owing to the relative stability in the rupee. To date in April, however, the domestic landed price has risen by 4 percent to Rs 72,403

per 10g versus 3 percent in the LBMA price, due to a depreciation in the value of rupee against the dollar. The swiftness of the price uptick has affected gold consumption demand, particularly jewellery demand, which makes up around three-quarters of total consumption. Additionally, most jewellery purchases are tied to wedding-related purchases. Also, consumers are awaiting stabilization in prices for fresh purchases and have been resorting to exchanging or selling old jewellery to benefit from windfall gains. Demand is also likely impacted by election-related restrictions and fewer weddings during the April-May season this year.

LOW TURN OUT OF VOTERS IN KERALA ON FRIDAY FAVOURS LEFT DEMOCRATIC FRONT

It was a bruising battle for the mind of Kerala's voters for 20 Lok Sabha constituencies on April 26. The poll campaign saw no quarters being asked for and none given. But the enthusiasm witnessed in the run-up to polling did not reflect in the voting. That way, Kerala sprang a surprise by recording a low turnout in the Lok Sabha elections held on Friday, which was seven per cent lower than the 2019 LS elections. Polling started on a brisk note with voters turning up in large numbers in the initial hours in almost all constituencies except Ponnani and Malappuram. But the enthusiasm waned by afternoon, and polling slowed down in southern and central districts. However, northern districts saw huge turnouts in the evening with many booths flaunting serpentine queues. The poll percentage is likely to go up as polling continued in over 190 booths in northern Kerala even after 10 p.m. Friday's turnout is lower than that of 2014(74.02%) and 2019(77.67%) Lok Sabha polls. As many as 12 constituencies, 11 of them in the north, recorded a turnout above 70 %.

WHAT IF BJP WINS 370 AND INDI-ALLIANCE LODGES 740 COMPLAINTS.

Supreme Court dismisses all petitions seeking 100% verification of VVPAT slip did not come as a shock. By the time the top court declared the verdict "reserved", the jolt was a spent force. The big news was the Electronic Voting Machine was here to stay and the top court broke the pen on the ballot paper with a hanged till death verdict. All petitions asking for 100 percent verification of votes cast on EVMs via Verifiable Paper Audit Trials were dismissed. The court noted that "blindly distrusting the poll process" was a fool's errand and would lead to "unwar-

ranted suspicion." Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta pronounced judgment even as EVMs did yeoman service in the second phase of polling on April 26 across 88 parliamentary constituencies in 13 states. Should we call this a triumph of democracy? Justice Khanna stood out. Against ballot paper voting. Against complete EVM-VVPAT verification. Against giving VVPAT slips to voters. "We have rejected all of them, after referring to the protocol in place, technical aspects and data which is on record," Justice Khanna said. Justice Dipankar Datta concurred with his fellow Justice-in-arms. Earlier, the bench had reserved an order stating "we cannot control



the Lok Sabha election..." Where do things stand now? The bench ordered that the Symbol Loading Unit should be stored at least for a period of 45 days after the results are declared for complaints to be lodged. On receiving a written complaint, the burnt memory in the microcontroller EVM will be scrutinized by company engi-

neers if 2nd and 3rd ranked candidates demand this within 7 days of the declaration of results. It should be a written request, which shouldn't pose a problem. But problems will surface if losing candidates flood the Election Commission with complaints galore.



CONTROVERSY OVER SAM PITRODA'S INHERITANCE TAX TALK TO HIT THE CONGRESS HAS LITTLE BASIS

The controversy over re-introduction of the inheritance tax, mooted by none other than yesteryears technology buff, Sam Pitroda, has landed the opposition Congress in a big dilemma in the current course of campaign for the Lok Sabha elections. However the furore created by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his latest election speeches is misplaced, because this is not a part of the election manifesto of the Congress and Sam Pitroda is not a senior leader of the Congress party. Sam Pitroda had played a uniquely seminal role in his earlier years as advisor to Rajiv Gandhi.

STAKES FOR PM NARENDRA MODI AND NDA ARE VERY HIGH IN THIRD PHASE OF POLLS

With second phase of Lok Sabha election 2024 held on April 26, the focus of election campaigns has shifted to the third phase election scheduled to be held on May 7. Significance of this phase of election is that a total of 285 out of 543 Lok Sabha seats, ie 52.40 per cent of constituencies, would poll by that time, and the emerging political scenario would present a better insight into the direction of Indian

politics. Out of 95 Lok Sabha constituencies spread in 13 states and UTs scheduled for poll in the third phase, BJP had won 72 Lok Sabha seats in 1019 Lok Sabha election. Another 8 seats were won by NDA allies. Since BJP and NDA allies have not performed well in the first two phases of election.



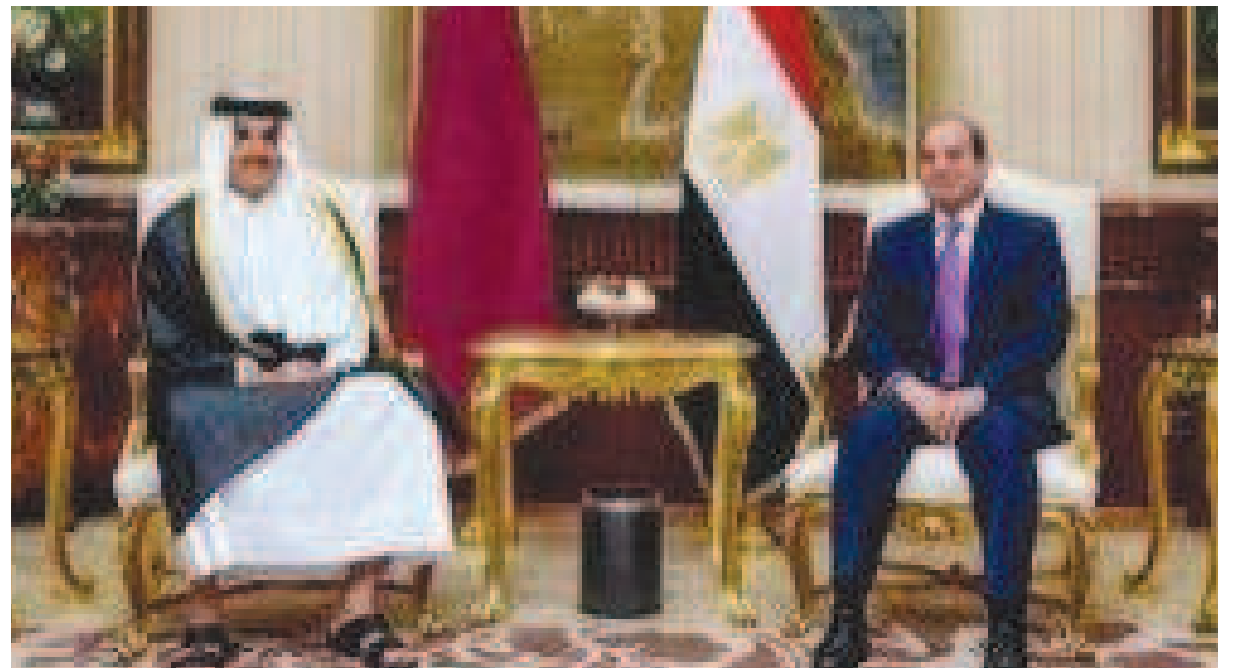
## Leaders of Egypt, Qatar pledge to resume peace efforts in Gaza

**Cairo, May 2 (IANS) :** Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi and the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani have pledged to resume efforts to end the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

During a phone conversation, the two leaders discussed the latest developments and joint efforts to reach a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian Presidency said on Thursday in a statement. They also discussed efforts to ex-

change hostages and detainees and ensure the flow of humanitarian aid and relief in sufficient and adequate quantities into Gaza, Xinhua news agency reported. The two leaders confirmed their commitment to continuing joint efforts and engaging with the various parties to end the war, protect the region from the ramifications of the expansion of the conflict, and restore security and stability in the region. Egypt and Qatar, along with the US, are spearheading regional mediation talks to

end the conflict and expedite humanitarian aid into the war-torn territory via Egypt. Israel launched a large-scale offensive in Gaza to retaliate against a Hamas rampage through the southern Israeli border on October 7, 2023, during which about 1,200 people were killed and more than 200 were taken hostage. The Palestinian death toll from ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza has risen to 34,535, the Hamas-run health authorities said in a press statement on Thursday.



## Palestinian death toll in Gaza rises to 34,535: Ministry

**Gaza, May 2 (IANS) :** The Palestinian death toll from ongoing Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip has risen to 34,535, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said in a press statement. During the past 24 hours, the Israeli army killed 47 Palestinians and wounded 61 others, bringing the total death toll since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war to 34,535 and injuries to 77,704, Xinhua news agency reported. Some victims remain under the rubble amid heavy bombardment and a lack of rescue crews, said the statement on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Israeli army reported attacking 24 targets in Gaza, including tunnel entrances and a missile launch platform, according to Israeli public radio. The General Directorate of Civil Defence in Gaza estimated that there were more than 10,000 individuals in total still missing beneath the rubble of the demolished buildings in the Strip. Israel launched a large-scale offensive against Hamas in Gaza to retaliate against a Hamas rampage through the southern Israeli border on October 7, 2023, during which about 1,200 people were killed and more than 200 were taken hostage.

## In run-up to plastics treaty in November, 170 nations agree to cut production

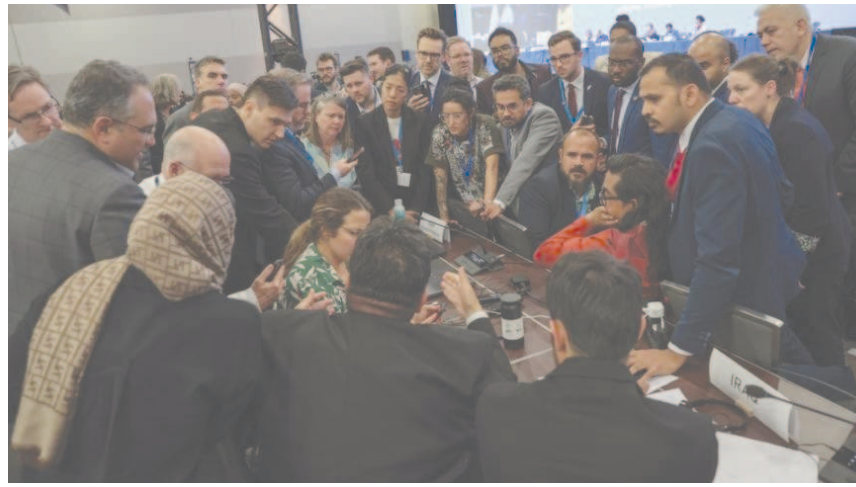
**Ottawa, May 2 (IANS) :** The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (INC-4), concluded in Ottawa with an advanced draft text of the instrument and agreement on intersessional work ahead of the fifth session (INC-5) in November.

More than 2,500 delegates participated in INC-4, representing 170 members and over 480 observer organizations, including non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and UN entities. INC-4 marked the committee's largest and most inclusive gathering to date, with observer participation increasing by almost 50 per cent.

Over the course of INC-4, delegates worked on negotiating the revised draft text of the international legally binding instrument.

Delegates discussed, among other things: emissions and releases; production; product design; waste management; problematic and avoidable plastics; financing, and a just transition.

INC members also agreed on intersessional work -- expert meetings that take place between the official INC sessions -- that is expected to catalyze convergence on key issues.



## Crew of Israeli-linked ship seized by Iran in full health: Iranian official

**Tehran, May 2 (IANS) :** A senior Iranian maritime official has said the entire crew members of an Israeli-linked container ship seized earlier this month by Iran's naval forces near the Strait of Hormuz were safe and in full health. The caretaker for maritime affairs at Iran's Ports and Maritime Organisation (PMO), Ali Akbar Marzban, made the remarks while elaborating on the latest condition of the crew members of the Portuguese-flagged container ship, MSC Aries, which was seized by the Navy of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

on April 13, the PMO's official website reported on Tuesday. Iranian authorities said the vessel, which was operated by London-based Zodiac Maritime, a company owned by Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer, had violated international maritime law and failed to respond to inquiries, Xinhua news agency reported. Marzban said that out of the 25 crew members from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia and Estonia, a female crew member, who was an Indian deck cadet, had been transferred to her home country, while the remaining 24 were all safe and in good health.

## Jordan's king calls for immediate Gaza ceasefire in meeting with Blinken

**Amman, May 2 (IANS) :** King Abdullah II of Jordan has stressed the necessity of an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip during a meeting with visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

At the meeting, the king highlighted the need for urgent action to stop the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and called for protecting innocent civil-

ians, the state-run Petra news agency reported on Thursday. He emphasised the significance of consistently providing sustainable humanitarian, relief, and medical aid to the region through all possible means, Xinhua news agency reported.

Cautioning against any military action in Rafah city in southern Gaza, the king warned that the catastrophic effects of the Gaza

conflict could extend to the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the broader region. Meanwhile, the king stressed the significance of supporting the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, considering it the lifeline for around two million Palestinians in Gaza. The king also called upon the US to play a role in finding a political horizon to achieve a just and com-



prehensive peace based on the two-state solution, viewing the solution as the only way to ensure

the security of Palestinians, Israelis, and the entire region.

## US, UK coalition launches fresh airstrike on Yemen's port city

**Sanaa, May 2 (IANS) :** The US-British coalition in the Red Sea launched a fresh airstrike on Yemen's Houthi-held port city of Hodeidah, media reported. The strike targeted the port of Ras Issa in the north-western district of al-Salif, the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV said on Thursday without providing additional details. Residents described the explosion as powerful, saying the strike hit a Houthi position, Xinhua news agency reported.

The coalition has yet to comment on the alleged strike. Since last November, the Houthis, who control much of northern Yemen, have initiated the launch of anti-ship ballistic missiles and drones targeting Israeli-affiliated vessels passing through the Red Sea, to show support for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. They said their attacks would not stop unless Israel stops its military operation in Gaza.

## Spain PM Pedro Sanchez to remain in office after threatening to resign

**Madrid, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Thursday said that he will carry on in his post after threatening to resign over an inquiry into alleged corruption by his wife, Begona Gomez.

"I have decided to carry on as the head of the government with even more strength, if possible," the Socialist politician said in his speech in Madrid.

The huge solidarity rallies organised by his supporters in Madrid and other cities over the weekend influenced his decision, which he said he had made to-



gether with his wife. Sanchez, 52, unexpectedly announced on Wednesday that he was considering stepping down after nearly six years, owing to what he said were baseless claims made against his wife. The allegations against

Gomez, who does not hold public office, were laid by the right-wing Manos Limpias (Clean Hands) organisation. It accused her of influence peddling and business corruption.



## IAEA chief to visit Iran in coming days: Nuclear official

**Tehran, May 2 (IANS) :** An Iranian nuclear official has said that Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, would visit Iran in the coming days, according to media reports.

Spokesman of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI) Behrouz Kamalvandi said the IAEA Chief is scheduled to attend the International Conference on Nuclear Sciences and Technologies held in the central Iranian province of Isfahan from May 6 to 8 and hold talks with Iranian officials, including AEOI President Mohammad Eslami, Xinhua news agency reported.

## Congress tried to block quota for SCs, STs, OBCs since beginning, say experts

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** Congress leader P. Chidambaram's claim about the grand old party's support for reservation has drawn flak from various quarters on social media, with experts pointing to the perceived inconsistencies between the party's rhetoric and its actions regarding reservation policies.

Even as the former Finance Minister attributes various decisions on reservations to SCs, STs, and OBCs to the erstwhile Congress regimes, experts delved into historical records to provide context and nuance to counter the claim.

The experts claim that the history of Congress is littered with obstructing quotas for SCs, STs, and OBCs. Taking to X (formerly Twitter), experts highlighted instances where Congress' approach to reservation policies may have been

allegedly inconsistent or where reservations were not effectively implemented.

Let's first have a look at what Chidambaram wrote on X.

His post read, "It was a Congress government under Jawaharlal Nehru that in 1951 passed the First Amendment to the Constitution providing reservation for socially and educationally backward classes. It was a Congress government under P.V. Narasimha Rao that in 1994 implemented 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in central government jobs. It was a Congress government under Dr Manmohan Singh that in 2006 implemented 27 per cent reservation for OBCs in central government educational institutions."

"Successor governments in the Centre only followed the Congress' policy on reservation. The cap of 50 per cent on reservation was a judicial verdict. It has been breached in several states. Con-

gress has promised in its Manifesto 2024 that a Congress or Congress-led government will remove the 50 per cent cap," Chidambaram added.

An expert immediately countered the Congress leader, as he posted on X, "It was Nehru who wrote to Chief Ministers explicitly opposing reservations for SCs and STs." The statement attributed to Nehru says, "It is true that we are tied up with certain rules and conventions about helping Scheduled Castes and Tribes. They deserve help, but, even so, I dislike any kind of reservation, more particularly in service. I react strongly against anything which leads to inefficiency and second-rate standards." This was exactly what PM Narendra Modi had quoted while responding to the motion of thanks in the Rajya Sabha in February this year.

The X post further says that it was Congress that kept the Kelkar



Committee recommendation (for Backward Commission) made in 1957 in cold storage until PM Modi gave Constitutional status to the OBC Commission in 2018, that too despite Congress' opposition.

Punching holes in Chidambaram's claim, the expert argued, "It was Congress which did not implement the Mandal Commission recommendations made in 1983. Finally, the BJP-supported government implemented them in 1990. It was Rajiv Gandhi who vehemently opposed the OBC quota in 1990. It was Congress which derailed Dr. Ambedkar and made every attempt to defeat him and pre-

vent his Parliament entry."

The post further pointed out that it was Congress which humiliated a backward leader like Sitaram Kesri at the hands of the Gandhi dynasty.

"It was Rahul Gandhi who abused an entire backward community in a 2019 speech and for which he was even convicted by a court," the expert added.

The post also accused the Congress of trying to defraud OBCs in Andhra Pradesh between 2004 and 2010 as it allegedly gave away a chunk of their quota to Muslims.



## AMMK leader Dhinakaran asks EC to ensure proper security of EVMs

**Chennai, May 2 (IANS) :** AMMK founder leader and NDA candidate for Tamil Nadu's Theni Lok Sabha seat, T.T.V. Dhinakaran on Thursday asked the Election Commission to take proper measures for the safety of EVMs. In a social media post, Dhinakaran referred to media reports on the arrest of a former employee of an engineering college in the Theni district for trying to trespass into the area where EVMs are stored. He also expressed concern about the interruption of CCTV coverage of strong rooms in two separate incidents in Erode and The Nilgiris districts. The AMMK leader also sought uninterrupted CCTV coverage of strong rooms, where EVMs are stored until counting day. He also said that the attempted entry of an individual into the campus guarded by Central and state police personnel and technical issues leading to the interruption of CCTV coverage has led to "suspicions" in the minds of the people.

## Oppn leaders misleading people over reservation: BJP MP Ravi Shankar Prasad

**Patna, May 2 (IANS) :** Former Union Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has accused Opposition leaders of misleading people on the issue of reservation. The BJP MP from Bihar's Patna Sahib on Thursday said, "Congress and RJD leaders are claiming that the BJP will cancel the reservation and change the Constitution if it comes to power again. This shows the disappointment of the opposition parties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that the reservation to

SCs, STs and OBCs will remain as it is in the country and there is no doubt about it." "They are repeatedly saying that if BJP comes to power, the reservation will end. I want to say that there can be no bigger lie than this," he added. "They (Congress leaders) have made Muslim people OBCs in Karnataka and now they will implement the same in Telangana..." he said, adding that B.R. Ambedkar was against the religion-based reservation in the country. Ravi Shankar Prasad also targeted Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over wealth redistribution, saying: "I am also disappointed with the statement of Rahul Gandhi.



## Congress fields Bhushan Patil against BJP's Piyush Goyal in Mumbai North LS seat

**Mumbai, May 2 (IANS) :** The Congress on Thursday fielded senior party leader Bhushan Patil as its candidate from the Mumbai North Lok Sabha seat. Patil will lock horns with BJP candidate and Union Minister Piyush Goyal in this BJP bastion. Having served in various capacities, including as Mumbai Congress treasurer, Patil has been active in the fields of social work, sports, academics, arts, and culture.

With this, the Congress has announced nominees for both the seats it is contesting in the country's commercial capital -- Mumbai North and Mumbai North Central. In both seats, the Congress nominees are pitted against BJP candidates, Piyush Goyal and advocate Ujjwal Nikam, respectively.

## Prajwal Revanna 'sex scandal': NCW urges K'taka Police chief to swiftly apprehend accused

**Bengaluru, May 2 (IANS) :** The National Commission for Women (NCW) on Thursday took cognizance of the sex scandal allegedly involving sitting MP and JD-S candidate from Karnataka's Hassan seat, Prajwal Revanna, who is also the grandson of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda. The commission sought a report within three days from the Karnataka Police in the case.



## BJP's ally MGP blames Congress for closure of mining activities in Goa

**Panaji, May 2 (IANS) :** BJP's ally MGP on Thursday held Congress responsible for the closure of mining activities and the status of Mhadei and "double tracking". MGP's senior leader and Power Minister Sudin Dhavalikar, while addressing a press conference after the meeting of NDA, said that the people of Goa need to examine who has made mistakes in the past.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and BJP State President Sadanand Tanavade were also present.

Dhavalikar was dropped from cabinet in the last term (2017 to 2022) after his two MLAs split from the regional party and joined the BJP then. To retaliate, senior politician Sudin Dhavalikar had supported Congress in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, which helped grand old party's candidate Francisco Sardinha to win from the South Goa seat.



## I don't blackmail people with pen drives & CDs like Kumaraswamy, says Shivakumar

**Bengaluru, May 2 (IANS) :** The political slugfest in Karnataka continues over the alleged sex video scandal involving JD-S leader Prajwal Revanna, the grandson of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, with Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Thursday claiming that he doesn't blackmail others with pen drives and CDs like former Chief Minister and senior JD-S leader H.D. Kumaraswamy.

On Thursday morning, the JD-S suspended Prajwal Revanna, the sitting party MP and Lok Sabha candidate from Hassan, after the Congress government in Karnataka formed a special investigation team (SIT) to probe allegations of sexual abuse against him.

Kumaraswamy had earlier lashed out at Shivakumar and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on the issue involving his nephew Prajwal Revanna, accusing the Congress leader of circulating the videos.

Speaking to reporters here, Shivakumar said, "I fight my fights directly... I don't blackmail people with pen drives and CDs like Kumaraswamy. Taking fights head-on is in my blood."

Asked about Kumaraswamy's allegation that Shivakumar was behind circulating the video clips, the Congress leader said, "Prajwal Revanna himself has admitted that they are all old clips. BJP's Devaraje Gowda had written to the BJP leaders about this case. He also spoke to the media about it. Where is the question of me bringing up the case? As the saying goes, you reap what you sow." "Kumaraswamy and his family members seem to be obsessed with me. During campaigning in Hassan, Kumaraswamy said Prajwal Revanna was like his son, but now he says this issue doesn't concern his family," Shivakumar said.

Asked about Devaraje Gowda's statement that Shivakumar and his brother D.K. Suresh were aware of the pen drive containing alleged clips of Prajwal Revanna, he said, "If we were aware of the issue, we would have released the clips much earlier.

## Shiv Sena fields Eknath Shinde loyalist Yamini Jadhav from Mumbai South

**Mumbai, May 2 (IANS) :** The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena on Thursday named party legislator from Byculla, Yamini Jadhav, as its candidate for the Mumbai South Lok Sabha constituency against Shiv Sena (UBT) nominee and sitting MP Arvind Sawant. The two Shiv Sena factions are now pitted against each other after the BJP left its claim over the South Mumbai seat. In her first reaction, Yamini Jadhav said, "We will fight as MahaYuti and win the seat." Yamini Jadhav's candidature was announced days ahead of the last date



for filing of nomination on May 3, while the polling will take place in Mumbai South on May 20. Names of Rajya Sabha member and former minister Milind Deora and Jadhav's husband and ex-BMC Standing Committee Chairman Yashwant Jadhav were doing the rounds for the South Mumbai seat in the Shiv Sena circles.



## Jindal Global University releases Handbook on rights of transgender & gender-diverse persons

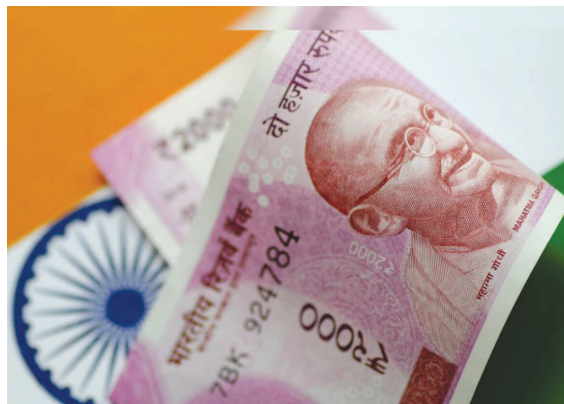
**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** The Handbook on the Rights of Transgender & Gender-Diverse Persons in India was unveiled by Justice A.K. Sikri, a former judge in the Supreme Court, and Prof. (Dr.) C. Raj Kumar, Founding Vice Chancellor, O.P. Jindal Global University, in the presence of stakeholders and activists from the trans justice movement. The Handbook has been prepared by the Law and Marginalisation Clinic, Centre for Justice, Law and Society (CJLS) at Jindal Global Law School under the supervision of Professor Dipika Jain and Natasha Aggarwal as part of the clinical course titled "Trans Justice and the Law Clinic" in collaboration with Transmen Collective, Egale, and Feminist Fu-

ture. Initiative at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Handbook demystifies the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and seeks to empower transgender and gender-diverse persons in asserting their constitutional and statutory rights. In the special address, Justice A.K. Sikri (former judge, Supreme Court) emphasised the importance of the Handbook, and delved into his experiences in writing and delivering the judgment of the Supreme Court in National Legal Services Authority v Union of India in 2014. He stated: "We have come a long way from the judgement, to the Act and now resources like this handbook which will help the community realise their rights and fulfil the promises of the Constitution of India." Justice Sikri also explained the importance of identities, not only from jurisprudential perspectives but also to ensure respect and dignity within society. In the welcome address, Prof. (Dr.) C. Raj Kumar (Founding Vice Chancellor, O.P. Jindal Global University) emphasised JGU's commitment to clinical legal education and remarked that: "It is important for law schools to ensure engagement with social justice movements."



## India's coal output rises 7.4 per cent to 73.26 million tonnes in April

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** India's coal production increased by 7.4 per cent in April to 78.69 million tonnes compared to the corresponding figure of 73.26 million tonnes for the same month last year, the Ministry of Coal said on Thursday. During April 2024, Coal India Limited (CIL) achieved a coal production of 61.78 million tonnes (MT) marking a growth of 7.31 per cent compared to the same period last year when it was 57.57 MT. Additionally, coal production by captive/others in April 2024 stood at 11.43 MT, reflecting a growth of 12.99 per cent compared to the previous year's production of 10.12 MT. India's coal dispatches for April 2024 reached 85.10 MT, up 6.07 per cent compared to the same period last year when it was recorded at 80.23 MT.



## Over 97 per cent of Rs 2,000 banknotes returned: RBI

**Mumbai, May 2 (IANS) :** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its currency update on Thursday that 97.76 per cent of the Rs 2,000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, when their withdrawal was announced, have now been returned. "The total value of Rs 2,000 banknotes in circulation, which was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, when the withdrawal of Rs 2,000 banknotes was announced, has declined to Rs 7,961 crore at the close of business on April 30, 2024," the RBI said. "The value of these Rs 2,000 notes had come down to Rs 8,202 crore at the close of business on March 29, 2024," the RBI had said on April 1 as part of its currency update. The facility for exchange of the Rs 2,000 banknotes has been available at the 19 Issue Offices of the Reserve Bank (RBI Issue Offices) since May 19, 2023.

## Gautam Adani meets new British envoy to India, wishes her to boost bilateral ties

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group, on Thursday, met Lindy Cameron, the new British High Commissioner to India, and wished her the best in continuing to enhance relations between the two countries. In a post on X, Gautam Adani said it was an honour to meet and hear from Cameron on a wide range of subjects. "Fascinating to learn about a wide set of topics ranging from her tenure across the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan, to cybersecurity, the future of nuclear and so much more," the Adani Group Chairman commented. "We wish her the best in her pivotal role to continue to enhance India-UK relations". Appointed as British High Commissioner

to India in succession to Alex Ellis, Cameron is the UK's first woman envoy to the country. In a post on X last month, Cameron said that she is immensely proud to be appointed the next British High Commissioner to



India. "Huge thanks to @AlexWellis for leaving such a great legacy. So looking forward to working with the amazing @UKinIndia team. I can't wait to get started!" she had posted. From 2020 to 2024, she was Chief Executive of the National Cyber Security Centre. She has also served as Director General of the Northern Ireland Office in the UK. Cameron also worked at the UK's aid agency, the Department for International Development (DFID).

## NPCI partners Bank of Namibia to develop UPI-like payment system

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), on Thursday said that it partnered with the Bank of Namibia (BoN) to support them in developing a Unified Payment Interface (UPI)-like instant payment system for the country. The partnership aims to assist Namibia modernise its financial ecosystem by leveraging India's UPI technology and experience. This includes improving accessibility, affordability, connectivity with both domestic and international payment networks, and interoperability. "By enabling this technology, the country will gain sovereignty in the digital payments landscape and stand to benefit from enhanced payment interoperability and im-

proved financial access for underserved populations," Ritesh Shukla, CEO, NPCI International, said in a statement. Moreover, NPCI said that this collaboration aims to improve digital financial services and support real-time Person-to-Person (P2P) and Merchant payment transactions (P2M) in the country. This partnership will also allow BoN to gain access to best-in-class technology and insights from NIPL, enabling the creation of a similar platform in Namibia for the digital welfare of its citizens.



## Coforge acquires Cigniti Technologies, posts Rs 808 crore PAT for FY24

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** Digital services and solutions provider Coforge on Thursday announced the acquisition of Cigniti Technologies that will create three new scaled-up verticals -- retail, technology, and healthcare. Coforge said that the acquisition, for which financial details were not disclosed, will not only help it grow to \$2 billion by FY27 but "equally ensure that Coforge's operating margins improve by 150-200 bps by FY27 itself". According to the company, the acquisition will also help it realise its objective of scaling up its presence across South-West, Midwest and Western US markets.



## India, New Zealand to strengthen links in pharma, agriculture sectors

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** India and New Zealand have decided to strengthen bilateral trade and collaboration in the pharma, agricultural, and processed food sectors, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said on Thursday. A delegation led by Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal visited New Zealand on April 26-27 and held a number of constructive meetings with the Minister for Trade of New Zealand, Todd McClay. The 11th India-New Zealand Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting was also held to work on ways to deepen the existing bilateral relations. Both countries discussed the creation of working groups for sectors like pharmaceuticals, agriculture, food process-

ing, storage and transportation. Collaboration in the pharmaceuticals and medical devices sector was discussed at length, including the adoption of fast-tracking of regulatory processes and quality assessment of manufacturing facilities using, as appropriate, the inspection reports of comparable overseas regulators. Greater sourcing of medicines from India and cooperation in the medical device sector were also discussed, according to a Commerce Ministry statement. The discussions also included co-operation in the horticulture sec-

tor, including cooperation in the kiwi fruit sector (quality & productivity, proper storage in pack houses and their suitable transportation) as well as the dairy sector. Once working groups are established, India and New Zealand will review the progress made by them and the recommendations thereof at regular intervals. The meetings addressed bilateral trade matters of mutual interest, including issues related to market access, non-tariff barriers (NTBs).

## Covaxin has excellent safety record, says Bharat Biotech

**Hyderabad, May 2 (IANS) :** Bharat Biotech on Thursday said that its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin has an excellent safety record without any vaccine-associated incidents of blood clots, thrombocytopenia, TTS, VITT, pericarditis, myocarditis, etc, as it was developed with a single-minded fo-



cus on safety first, followed by efficacy. The Hyderabad-based company issued a statement amid questions being raised in some quarters over the safety of Covid vaccines after global pharmaceutical manufacturer AstraZeneca admitted that its Covid vaccine

Covishield, developed by researchers from Oxford University, can cause a rare side effect of blood clotting.

## Bangladesh agrees to join non-UN international force in Haiti

**United Nations, May 2 (IANS) :** Bangladesh has agreed to join an international force that will operate independently of the UN to help restore order in Haiti, which has spiralled into gang-fuelled chaos, according to a UN Spokesperson. Bangladesh is one of the six countries that have written to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that they will contribute personnel to the Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti (MSSM), Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said on Thursday. Invoking the UN Charter provisions for maintaining peace, the Security Council authorised the creation of the MSSM mission to help ameliorate the situation in Haiti by helping its national political force. Having been burnt by its earlier forays into the Caribbean nation, the UN is taking a hands-off approach this time,

authorising a force that will operate independently and not as a UN peacekeeping mission. The other countries in the Kenya-led force are the Bahamas, Barbados, Benin, Chad, and Jamaica. Bangladesh is taking a bold step in joining the mission after the catastrophic end to the previous UN mission with military peacekeepers ended in 2017 amid accusations that Nepali troops introduced a strain of cholera from South Asia that, according to the World Health Organisation, killed 9,792 Haitians and sickened more than 810,000. The mission, known as MINUSTAH from its French initials, was ineffective in bringing peace to the country contributing to its demise. A smaller mission without the military component that followed ended in 2019. Armed gangs run several parts of the country, including the capital Port-au-Prince, and several thousands have perished in the vio-



lence that has destabilised the country. More than 362,000 Haitians have been displaced by gang activity, according to the UN, and 1.4 of its 11.5 million people are threatened by famine, and four million face "acute food insecurity". There were few takers because of the history of ill-fated international interventions in Haiti. Kenya finally offered to lead the mission but had to overcome court challenges within the country before it could take charge. The latest twist in the tragic saga of Haiti, Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who fled the country in February, resigned last week while in exile in the US. A National Transitional

Council with representatives of political parties and civil society groups was immediately created with Finance Minister Michel Patrick Boisvert as interim Prime Minister to find a more enduring solution. The assassination of President Jovenel Moise in 2021 was one of the milestones in the descent into chaos of Haiti which suffered under decades of brutal dictatorship under the Duvalier family, and after its overthrow in 1986 has gone through a military coup and violence that punctuated feeble attempts at democracy.

## Salman Khurshid, niece Maria Alam Khan booked for 'vote jihad' speech in UP election meeting

**Farrukhabad (UP), May 2 (IANS) :** A case has been filed against SP leader Maria Alam Khan and Congress leader Salman Khurshid under Section 188 and Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code and the Representation of the People Act for attempting to create communal polarisation through inflammatory statements. This meeting was organised by Salman Khurshid and videos of the controversial speech have now gone viral on social media.

The Election Commission has taken a serious view of the call for 'vote jihad' given by SP leader Maria Alam Khan, niece of former Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid, at the public meeting held in support of the INDIA bloc candidate in Kayamganj. The FIR has been filed by Flying Squad Magistrate Dr Manoj Kumar Sharma. According to reports, Maria Alam Khan had said in her speech that in the current situation facing the minority community, 'vote jihad' is necessary.



## TN: Shutters of Shenbagathoppu dam opened after request from farmers

**Chennai, May 2 (IANS) :** Tiruvannamalai District Collector Bhaskara Pandian on Thursday opened the sluice gates of the Shenbagathoppu dam near Polur in Tamil Nadu. The move followed requests from the farmers to irrigate 8350.40 acres of paddy fields in the region. Officials in the state Water Resources Department told IANS that water will be released into

the river and distributed in the left and right bank canals from the pick-up dam. Every day, on average, 105 cusecs of water will be released for farming. Bananas, paddy, and groundnut are the major crops grown in the villages around the dam. The Shenbagathoppu dam built in 2007 has a total storage capacity of 287 mcf of water and a height of 62 feet. It will benefit farmers in around 200 villages in Polur

taluk. The officials advised the farmers to utilise the water judiciously, as it is required for drinking purposes in the district as well. Water from Kuppanatham and Sathanur dams was released in March for the irrigation of over 45,000 acres of farmland in the district. At present, the excess water from the dam is discharged into 48 tanks -- Polur (18), Arani (12), Arcot (9), Cheyyar (8), and Vandavasi (1) -- through four

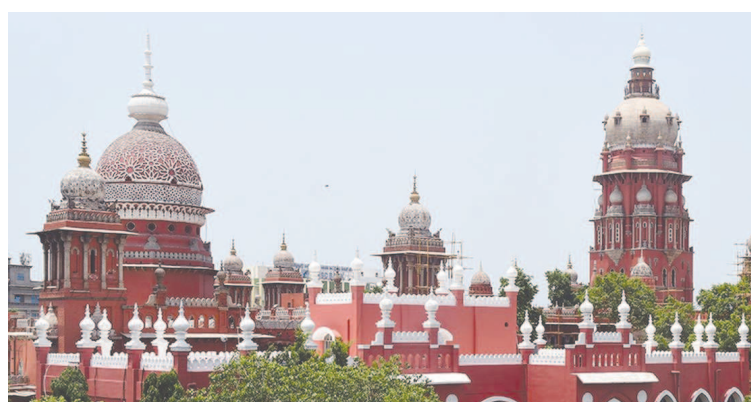
check dams in the district, including Alliyabhad and Karnakur check dams. The officials told IANS that the release of water will recharge the water table in and around these villages. There are 697 PWD tanks in the district with 24 tanks having full capacity of water, 40 tanks having 75 to 100 per cent capacity, 80 tanks having 75 to 50 per cent capacity, while 68 tanks are completely dry.



## Constituency Watch: Fight between former IAS officer and royalty in Raichur

**Bengaluru, May 2 (IANS) :** It's former royalty versus former IAS officer in Raichur parliamentary seat in Karnataka. The BJP has fielded sitting MP and erstwhile royal, Raja Amareshwara Naik who won by a margin of 1.17 lakh votes in the 2019 General Elections. G Kumar Naik, a senior former IAS officer is the Congress' candidate for the seat. Raichur District is one of the aspirational districts of the state and social indicators still remain disappointing. Activists have been protesting continuously for the establishment of an All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for the last 18 months and the agitation still continues. Raja Amareshwara Naik hails from the local erstwhile royal family. He is a law graduate and he was elected to the Assembly twice. On the other hand Kumar Naik is a 1990 Karnataka cadre officer and post retirement, he has joined the Congress party. bThe BJP and the Congress are equally confident of their victory. BJP MLA and Raichur

BJP District President, Shivaraj Patil told IANS that there was no doubt that the party would win this seat as the Congress candidate has done injustice and not done anything for this region. MLA Patil explained, "The Yeramarus Thermal Power Station (YTPS) was constructed and it has made the entire region dusty and hot. The problems of farmers who lost their lands have not been solved. The candidate was incharge of the district for 15 years as a Secretary, but did nothing here. Then he became the District Collector of Raichur and did nothing. His contribution to the district is nil." "There is no doubt about the victory of the BJP candidate and we will win the election with a more handsome margin," he stated. However, sources close to Congress candidate G. Kumar Naik said that everything was going smoothly for the party and two ministers from the district were working day and night for his victory.



## Madras HC rejects PIL seeking special polling for missing names in Coimbatore voters' list

**Chennai, May 2 (IANS) :** of a PIL seeking special polling in the Coimbatore Lok Sabha con-

stituency for those who could not cast their votes on April 19 as their names were rescinded from the voter list. The First Division Bench of Madras High Court comprising Chief Justice Sanjay V. Gangapurwala and Justice G. Chandrasekharan on Thursday disposed of the PIL filed by R. Suthanthira Kanna, an Australia-based doctor. The court observed that no orders could be passed when the petitioner had failed to check the draft and final electoral lists. The standing counsel for the Election Commission, Niranjan Rajagopalan, informed the court that the final electoral list was published in January 2024 but the petitioner had not raised any ob-

jection to his name missing from the electoral list. Niranjan Rajagopalan also told the court that the petitioner's name was removed from the voter list for the 2021 Assembly elections. The judges on hearing the response by the Election Commission rejected the petition. The BJP's Tamil Nadu chief, K. Annamalai, who was also the party candidate for the Coimbatore Lok Sabha seat, had said immediately after the polls that one lakh names were missing from the voters' list and had added that these were voters who regularly exercise their franchise for the BJP.

## SC dismisses plea filed by former IPS officer Debasish Dhar challenging rejection of nomination

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed, as withdrawn, the plea filed by former IPS officer Debasish Dhar, who was fielded by the BJP from West Bengal's Birbhum Lok Sabha constituency, challenging the rejection of his nomination papers. Observing that the returning officer did not act in any mala fide manner, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and K.V. Viswanathan said that entertaining a writ petition filed directly before the apex court would stall the election process. Sensing the disinclination of the Bench to entertain

the plea, senior advocate Nidhesh Gupta, appearing for Dhar, sought permission to withdraw the matter with liberty to approach the Election Commission of India (ECI). In his petition filed under Article 32 of the Constitution, Dhar, who has recently resigned from service to join politics.



## 95.83 lakh metric tons wheat procured in Punjab : Chief Secy

**Chandigarh, May 2 (IANS) :** Out of 100.58 lakh metric tons of wheat that arrived in grain markets in Punjab, 95.83 lakh metric tons, or more than 95 per cent, has been pro-

cured, Chief Secretary Anurag Verma said on Thursday. He said farmers have been paid for the wheat with Rs 17,340.40 crore deposited in their bank accounts.





## G7 ministers agree to phase out coal use by 2035

**Rome, May 2 (IANS) :** Environment Ministers from the G7 nations committed themselves to phase out the use of coal by 2035 as part of a wider effort to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of fossil fuels. Climate, Energy, and Environment Ministers gathered on Thursday in Reggia di Venaria, just outside the northern Italian city of Turin, for the latest working session for the G7, which is headed by Italy this year, Xinhua news agency reported. Ministers agreed to a host of energy and climate-related goals, including encouraging the development of renewable energy sources, increased collaboration on energy from nuclear fusion, a reduction in emissions of methane and other greenhouse gases, and to "break away" from Russian imports of natural gas. The participants of the two-day summit focused on measures to eliminate the use of coal and later

phase out all fossil fuels. These measures are part of the nations' commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. Though the agreement says countries will eliminate coal use by the "first half of the 2030s" - in other words by 2035 -- it did allow for that deadline to be changed if it remained on "a timeline consistent with keeping a limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature rise within reach". That caveat is aimed at giving more flexibility to countries highly reliant on coal power, such as G7 member states Germany and Japan. The 1.5-degree target compared to pre-industrial levels, which the United Nations target has imposed to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change, was again reiterated last year at the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties in Dubai.



## Gunman kills six worshippers in mosque in Afghanistan

**Islamabad, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** At least six civilians were killed and one injured in a shooting attack on a mosque in Afghanistan's western province of Herat, officials confirmed. According to a statement by Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Mateen Qani, an unknown gunman opened fire on worshippers inside the mosque located in the Guzara district on Thursday evening.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) condemned the attack and stressed the urgency of investigations to identify the perpetrators and hold them accountable. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack. Since the Taliban's seized power in August 2021, attacks have significantly reduced in the war-torn country. However, so-called Islamic State offshoots are still considered to be active in the country and also claim attacks from time to time.

## German foreign minister pushes for two-state solution and Gaza aid

**Berlin, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has spoken out in favour of more humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip and a two-state solution, during the talks with counterparts from Western and Arab countries in Riyadh. During the talks, Baerbock emphasised that an independent Palestine state as a part of a comprehensive peace process and a two-state solution remains a clear goal of German policy, according to reports from German delegation circles on Thursday evening. Baerbock took part in a meeting of Arab and European foreign ministers in Riyadh, ini-

tiated by Saudi Arabia and Norway, at which the prospect of a two-state solution and the recognition of Palestine was on the agenda. A two-state solution foresees the peaceful co-existence of Israel and a Palestinian state based on the borders of the Palestinian Territories occupied by Israel since 1967 - the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. However, Israel's government rejects such a two-state solution outright, whereas, the Palestinian militant organisation Hamas has said it wants an independent Palestinian state but will not officially recognise the state of Israel. Baerbock also made



it clear "that there is now an urgent need for improved humanitarian access to Gaza and the release of the hostages," it was reported after the talks. She also held confidential talks with Arab and Western colleagues in Riyadh on the specific steps needed to end the fighting and find a sustainable solution to the conflict. The ministers, including Baerbock's US counterpart Antony Blinken and UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron, met in Riyadh on the fringes of a two-day World Economic Forum (WEF) conference. Israel did not take part in the talks.

## King Charles III returns to public duties after cancer treatment

**London, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** King Charles III is set to return to public duties after the positive effect of his cancer treatment. King Charles has been receiving care as an outpatient since early February, and sources have said that despite the welcome news the king still has cancer and will continue to be treated for the undisclosed form of the disease. Charles and Queen Consort Camilla will visit a cancer treatment centre on Thursday to meet medical specialists and patients.

The event aims to raise awareness of the importance of early diagnosis and to highlight innovative research, supported

by Cancer Research UK, taking place at the hospital. King Charles's diary of events will not be a full summer programme, and attendance will be announced nearer the time and "subject to doctors' advice," with "adaptations made where necessary to minimise risk" to his recovery. It is understood the warmer weather would allow events to be staged outside and lessen the risk posed by other people that many cancer patients face. In January, King Charles spent three nights in hospital for a procedure on an enlarged prostate, during which his cancer - not prostate cancer - was discovered.



## Multiple injured after tornado hits parts of Texas

**Houston, May 2 (IANS) :** Multiple people were injured after a tornado with 100-mph winds touched down parts of Trinity County, US state of Texas, overnight, authorities said. The Conroe Police Department told local media outlet ABC13 that Lt. James Waller, a 22-year police officer, and his wife were at their home when the tornado hit their property, Xinhua news agency reported.

The veteran sustained critical injuries. His wife was also injured and received treatment, according to the police department. Meanwhile, another man was rushed to a hospital after a tree fell on his house, the Trinity County Office of Emergency Services said.

A separate incident involved a couple who were inside their trailer that was tossed by the tornado's strong winds. It was a rough night for many in Southeast Texas with numerous warnings for tornadoes, severe winds, and flash flooding, local media outlet KTRK reported.



## Death toll in Kenya flash floods rises to 169

**Nairobi, May 2 (IANS) :** The death toll due to heavy rains pounding several parts of Kenya and devastating flash floods has mounted to 169 people, a government official said.

Government Spokesman Isaac Mwaura confirmed the death toll on Thursday evening, saying a dam that burst on Monday morning in the western Kenyan town of Mai Mahiu has killed 48 people and affected scores of others, Xinhua news agency reported. "We have lost 169 people since the onset of the rains. The gov-

ernment has also intensified search and rescue operations to find persons who have been reported missing," Mwaura said on national television. The East African nation is currently experiencing El Nino-induced above-average rainfall. The Kenya Meteorological Department has said that heavy rainfall will continue this week, with the potential for flooding and landslides in some areas. The recent heavy rainfall has resulted in major flash floods in Nairobi, Makeni, West Pokot, and Machakos counties, with loss of life and properties. The heavy

rains have also cut off main roads, disrupted business across the country, and forced the postponement of the reopening of schools by a week from Monday.

The newly set up national multi-agency flood emergency team is implementing a series of measures to assist Kenyans in coping with the effects of the floods, including the provision of food, safe drinking water, health supplies, and rescue efforts, said Mwaura.

"We always have rains between March, April and May, but now they are above normal because of climate change," he said, adding that all five dams comprising the Seven Forks hydropower project along the Tana River, Kenya's longest, were at total capacity.

The devastating floods are exacerbating the country's humanitarian crisis in the wake of El Nino floods in late 2023 that killed at least 178 people, injured 242, and displaced thousands. Kithure Kindiki, cabinet secretary of the interior and administration of Kenya's national government.

## Chinese ships 'harass' Philippine supply ships with water cannons

**Manila, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** Chinese coastguard ships on Thursday fired water cannons at Filipino vessels bringing supplies to fishermen in waters near a disputed South China Sea shoal that is within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, the Philippine Coastguard said. A Philippine coastguard ship and a vessel from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) were carrying out "a legitimate maritime patrol in the waters near Bajo De Masinloc," the local name of Scarborough Shoal, "to distribute fuel and food supplies" for fishermen.

## Indonesia's Mount Ruang erupts again, evacuation ordered

**Jakarta, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** Indonesia's Mount Ruang volcano erupted on Thursday, prompting authorities to raise the alert level to the highest level and order immediate evacuations within a six-kilometre radius. The eruption at Mount Ruang, located in North Sulawesi province, sent a column of ash and smoke 2,000 metres into the sky, according to Indonesia's geological agency. The agency urged residents in the affected areas to follow evacuation orders and wear masks to protect against ash.

## Israel-Hamas war : Talks in Cairo continue for a six week ceasefire

**Tel Aviv, May 2 (IANS) :** The indirect talks between Hamas and Israel are progressing in Cairo with Egyptian and Qatari mediators taking the lead. The talks that commenced on Monday are continuing on Thursday. According to sources in the Israeli Defence Ministry, the negotiations are on a positive path. After Israel reduced the number of hostages to be released from 40 to 33, the possibility of a six-week ceasefire is high. The Hamas side has demanded the release of around 600 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Some of the Palestinian prisoners whose names figure in the list of prisoners submitted by Hamas are charged with serious offences, including murder. Israel has already publicly stated that if Hamas backs

out of this discussion in Cairo, it would lead to an Israeli ground offensive in the Rafah region of the Gaza Strip. Around 1.3 million Palestinians inhabit the Rafah area. Egypt President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi had expressed his concern about an Israeli military action in Rafah and the possibility of a huge exodus of refugees to the Sinai region that borders Rafah.

Egyptian intelligence head Major General Abbas Kamel during his recent visit to Israel had expressed concern about a Rafah operation. Meanwhile, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is in Saudi Arabia for a two-day visit, is overseeing the mediatory talks between Hamas and Israel.





## Rising STDs a concern for increasing infertility in India: Doctors

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS) :** The spike in the number of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) like chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, and mycoplasma genitalium are contributing to infertility in India, warned doctors on Thursday. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) may pass from one infected person to another via blood, semen, vaginal, and other bodily fluids through sexual contact. While these are usually asymptomatic, they can cause serious complications like infertility, both in men and women, if left untreated. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), almost 1 million people worldwide contract STDs. Each year, about 30 million

people in India alone contract STDs. On the other hand, a recent Lancet study showed that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) -- the average number of children born per woman -- is dipping irreversibly to 1.29, far lower than the replacement rate of 2.1. Explaining the link between the two, gynaecologist Dr. Manisha Singh from Fortis Hospital, Bengaluru, told IANS, "STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, and Mycoplasma genitalium can sneakily mess with fertility. They cause inflammation and scarring in reproductive organs, like the fallopian tubes in women or sperm ducts in men."

## Fratricidal electoral battle in Haryana's Hisar over Devi Lal's legacy

**Hisar (Haryana), May 2 (IANS) :** A fratricidal battle is on within the clan of one of Haryana's tallest Jat leaders and former deputy Prime Minister Chaudhary Devi Lal, whose founded regional party, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), and its offshoot outfit Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) are floundering. Ranjit Singh Chautala, who is Devi Lal's youngest son, and Singh's two daughters-in-law of his eldest brother and five-time chief minister O.P. Chautala face one another in the dynastic supremacy feud from Haryana's Hisar seat that will go to the polls along with nine other state parliamentary seats on May 25. 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 Chautala and wife of Ajay Chautala, who is Devi Lal's grandson, Sunaina is the wife of Ravi Chautala, who is a son of INLD patriarch O.P. 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 INLD's women's wing since 2019.



## Constituency Watch: In Maha farm fields, Hatkanangale set for a 4-Musketeer-style duel

**Kolhapur (Maharashtra), May 2 (IANS) :** Situated in the progressive farming heartland, Hatkanangale Lok Sabha constituency in Kolhapur District of the erstwhile Chhatrapati royal kingdom, has undergone three avatars as a parliamentary seat and will now witness a fierce four-cornered contest. In the fray are the ruling Mahayuti-Shiv Sena sitting MP Dhairyasheel S. Mane, the Maha Vikas Aghadi-Shiv Sena (MVA-UBT)'s Satyajee Patil-Sarudkar, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA)'s Dadgonda C Patil and the two-term veteran Swabhimani Paksha's Raju Shetti, a prominent farmers'

leader. Shetti was the first MP elected in 2009 after the newly-carved Hatkanangale constituency came into being, and later he also pushed back the first BJP-wave of 2014 to sail through. However, in 2019, the VBA entered the scene and the (undivided) Shiv Sena nominee easily won it, while ruining the prospects of Shetti. At present, riding high on his credentials as a farmers' messiah, Shetti is hoping for his third innings from Hatkanangale in 2024. Keen to get the Opposition MVA's nomination or at least outside backing, he held negotiations with its leaders but there were serious differences on the poll symbol, after which he decided to go solo. The current MP Mane shrugs off all

## Congress has a history of strangulating the Constitution : Yogi Adityanath

**Gorakhpur (UP), May 2 (IANS) :** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Thursday that the people of the nation would not accept the Congress, SP, and INDIA bloc's agenda to grant reservation to a specific religious group, thereby jeopardising the constitutional framework and encroaching upon the reservation meant for backward and scheduled castes. Talking to reporters at the Gorakhnath temple complex, the chief minister said, "The Bharatiya Janata Party staunchly opposes any form of reservation based on religion because the common people have suffered the brunt of Partition of India on the basis of religion. The BJP firmly supports reservation benefits for SC-ST and OBC communities."

He remarked that the history of the Congress, Samajwadi Party, and their associates within the INDIA bloc is well-known to all. "The Congress has a track record of undermining Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar's Constitution. Since its adoption in 1950, Congress persistently attempted to manipulate the Constitution for its own ends, often disregarding fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression. Governance is meant for the people, and public sentiments ought to be honoured, a principle the Congress failed to grasp." He highlighted that the populace hasn't forgotten the Emergency period which was like 'strangling the Constitution of the country'. "Along with this, the people of the country also remember the sins that Congress committed during the UPA government. Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party were allies of Congress in the UPA government at



that time," he added. Yogi Adityanath asserted that the Congress had made efforts to deprive the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes of their rights through initiatives like the Justice Ranganath Mishra Committee and Sachar Committee, engaging in actions contrary to the Constitution across the nation. Subsequently, Congress maliciously attempted to introduce reservations based on religion. He further said, "The ulterior motive of the then Congress government was to cut 6 per cent of the 27 per cent reservation meant for OBC and give it to a community as part of its appease-

ment politics. Similarly, through the Sachar Committee, efforts were made to include certain Muslim castes by encroaching upon the reservations allocated for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes." The Chief Minister emphasised that the strong opposition from the Bharatiya Janata Party thwarted the intentions of the then Congress government. Otherwise, within the same UPA government, Congress would have undermined OBC and SC-ST reservations by introducing religion-based reservations nationwide.



## Mamata Banerjee skipped Ram Temple inauguration to 'please illegal infiltrators': Amit Shah

**Kolkata, May 2 (IANS) :** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday claimed that despite being invited, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee refused to attend the Ram Temple inauguration in Ayodhya just to "please the illegal infiltrators" in her state. Addressing a rally at Katwa in East Burdwan district, the Union Home Minister said, "Mamata Banerjee was invited to attend the Ram Mandir inauguration. But she did not attend because she

wanted to please the illegal infiltrators in the state, who are the principal vote bank of her party." He also said that the BJP winning 18 seats from West Bengal became a crucial factor in enabling the inauguration of Ram Temple at Ayodhya. "Uncertainties were prevailing over Ram Mandir for the last 70 years. But the people of Bengal gifted BJP with 18 seats in 2019 and Narendra Modi became the prime minister for the second term. Within five years, Ram Mandir was inaugurated," he said. The union minister also ques-

tioned the rationale behind Mamata Banerjee's opposition to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). "She is opposing CAA just to please her dedicated vote bank among the illegal infiltrators. At Sandeshkhali, a reign of terror was unleashed by such an illegal infiltrator where even the women were subjected to harassment. It is unfortunate such things happened in a state which has a woman Chief Minister," the Union Home Minister said.

## JD(S) suspends ex-PM Deve Gowda's grandson Prajwal Revanna

**Hubballi (Karnataka), May 2 (IANS) :** The JD(S) on Thursday suspended Prajwal Revanna, the NDA candidate from the Hassan Lok Sabha constituency in Karnataka and former Prime Minister Deve Gowda's grandson, over his alleged involvement in a sex scandal. Speaking to reporters here, former Chief Minister and JD(S) state President H.D. Kumaraswamy said that if he is proven guilty in the probe being conducted by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by the state government, Prajwal Revanna would be expelled permanently from the party. The decision was taken in the core committee meeting of the JD(S) held in Hubballi city.



Patil-Sarudkar's nomination came after Shetti's talks with the Uddhav Thackeray-led party failed and there was no response even from the other MVA allies Congress-NCP(SP) offering him support. As far as the VBA's Patil is concerned, this time the party is not in alliance with the All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and is likely to be relegated to the sidelines causing little or no damage to the other three contenders, local leaders opine.

## Odisha Assembly elections : CM Naveen Patnaik files nomination from Hinjili seat

**Bhubaneswar, May 2 (IANS) :** Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday filed his nomination papers at the Chhatrapur sub collector's office for the Hinjili Assembly constituency in Ganjam district. CM Patnaik has represented the Assembly constituency five

times consecutively since 2000. He is eyeing the seat for the sixth time to become the longest-serving chief minister of India. Patnaik's close aide and former bureaucrat V.K. Pandian, the party nominees for Berhampur and Aska Lok Sabha seats, Bhruhu Baxipatra and Ranjita Sahoo.



## UN chief Guterres appeals for international pressure to stop Israel incursion into Rafah

**United Nations, May 2 (IANS) :** As Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood firmly by his determination to send troops into Rafah, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres appealed for international pressure to stop the attack on the area where more than 1.2 million Palestinians are sheltering from Israeli invasion that has rolled across most of Gaza.

"I appeal for all those with influence over Israel to do everything in their power to prevent it," he said on Thursday. "A military assault on Rafah would be an unbearable escalation, killing thousands more civilians and forcing hundreds of thousands to flee" the area where "more than 1.2 million people are now seeking shelter in Rafah governorate, most of them fleeing the Israeli

bombardment that has reportedly killed over 34,000 people", he said at a news conference.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, stated firmly: "We will enter Rafah and we will eliminate Hamas' battalions there, with or without a deal, to achieve the total victory".

The statement came ahead of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Israel where he is expected to reinforce President Joe Biden's opposition to the invasion of Rafah, which, according to the White House, the President reiterated to Netanyahu in a phone call on Thursday.

Guterres warned that an incursion into Rafah would have "serious repercussions on the occupied West Bank, and across the wider region".

The US and its allies have been trying to get Israel and Hamas on a deal that would lead to a ceasefire and the release of some



hostages kidnapped by the terror organisation in an attack on Israel in October. Blinken said in Riyadh on Monday that "Hamas has before it a proposal that is extraordinarily – extraordinarily – generous on the part of Israel".

"And in this moment, the only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire is Hamas. They have to decide, and they have to decide quickly," he said. According to media reports, Israel has lowered the number of hos-

tages it demanded freed to less than 40 in exchange for the release of some Palestinian prisoners and a limited ceasefire. Guterres warned that a famine was looming over Gaza because of limited access to food. He called for the opening of two more crossing points between Israel and northern Gaza to enable the delivery of aid into Gaza from Ashdod port and Jordan.



## South Korea's medical schools to spike admission seats by over 1,500 next year

**Seoul, May 2 (IANS) :** Medical schools in South Korea are expected to push to increase their admission slots by 1,500 to 1,600 next year, as most of them have finalised their academic plans for the year 2025, education and university officials said on Thursday. The government allocated an additional 2,000 medical school admission seats to universities across the nation last month amid protests from both junior and senior doctors, Yonhap news agency reported. National universities in provincial cities were previously considered the biggest beneficiaries of the enrollment quota increase but have decided to reduce their admission seats allocated by the government by up to 50 per cent.

But most private universities have decided to nearly fully accept the government-allotted new slots, rendering the aggregate increase to between 1,500 and 1,600, the officials said. For instance, Kangwon National University's medical school in Chuncheon, 76 kilometres east of Seoul, decided to increase its admission slots by 42, compared with the government's allotment of 83, while Chungbuk National University's medical school in Cheongju, 112 km south of Seoul, settled on an increase of 76 seats, compared with the government's allotment of 151. Over 90 per cent of the country's 13,000 trainee doctors went on strike in late February to protest the planned increase in medical school admissions.



## Israel's attacks on Gaza a collective punishment : Egyptian PM

**Cairo, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly said that Palestinian civilians living in Gaza were suffering a "collective punishment" from Israel's retaliatory military campaign for the attacks launched by Hamas on October 7. "What has taken place, all Palestinians in Gaza have to pay for it," Madbouly said. Israel's response to the massacre that left over 1,200 people dead and hundreds more taken hostage "was unbelievable," he said at a conference organised by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Riyadh on Thursday. More than 80 per cent of the health facilities in Gaza have been destroyed, he said.



## South Korea to ensure UN sanctions enforcement on North Korea continues

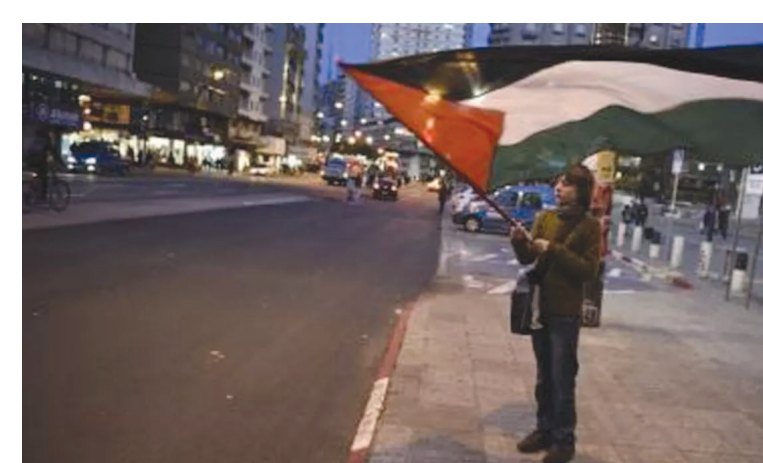
**Seoul, May 2 (IANS) :** South Korea will make efforts to ensure that UN sanctions enforcement on North Korea will continue even though the UN monitoring panel is ending after Russia's veto on extending its mandate, Seoul's foreign ministry said Thursday. The UN Panel of Experts

monitoring sanctions against North Korea's illicit weapons programs is set to end Thursday (New York time), after Moscow rejected a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution meant to renew the mandate for the monitoring panel for another year, Yonhap news agency reported. China, one of the five permanent UNSC members with veto power,

abstained from voting. "Although the UNSC monitoring panel ends, the sanctions committee on North Korea still stands," Lim So-suk, foreign ministry spokesperson, said in a briefing.

"The government will step up efforts to ensure the implementation of the UNSC sanctions resolutions on North Korea, with close coordination with the international community," Lim said. Various alternatives have been under discussion to replace the monitoring panel, Lim said, adding that Seoul will seek ways with like-minded countries to build a more effective mechanism.

During a visit to South Korea earlier this month, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the top US envoy to the United Nations, said the United States will work with South Korea to explore "creative" and "out of the box" ways to find an alternative to the experts' panel, even outside of the UN system.



## Palestinian factions hold talks in Beijing, achieve positive progress: China

**Beijing, May 2 (IANS) :** Representatives of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) recently came to Beijing for in-depth and candid talks on promoting intra-Palestinian reconciliation, and achieved positive progress, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson confirmed on Thursday. Spokesperson Lin Jian told a daily press briefing in response to a related query that the two sides fully expressed their political will to achieve reconcili-

ation through dialogue and consultation, discussed many specific issues, and made positive progress, Xinhua news agency reported. "They agreed to continue this dialogue process and strive for the early realisation of Palestinian unity," Lin said, noting that the two sides highly appreciate China's firm support for the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national rights, and thanked China for its efforts to promote Palestine's internal unity and reached an agreement on the next step of dialogue.

## Farmers' protests intensify in Punjab province as politicians play blame game in Pakistan

**Lahore, May 2 (IANS) :** The provincial government of Punjab, under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif along with the Federal government under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif are faced with a major challenge of farmers, who are fast garnering political support and gaining stronger momentum against what they term as the government's unfair wheat procurement policy. Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI), a party representing the agriculture sector of the country including farmers, has slammed the government for failing to fulfill its commitment to purchase grain and reverse its decision to reduce the provincial procurement quota from over 4 million tonnes to 2.3 tonnes. The issue, under contemplation between PKI and the provincial and federal government for over a month, has not

triggered a massive anti-government protest campaign with a large number of farmers who have decided to not give anymore breathing space to the government and stage strong protests in Punjab.

The farmers insist that they sowed wheat crops to complete the requirement of the government, knowing that their ready wheat grains would be bought as per commitment. However, they say that as their wheat crops are ready, the government is now reluctant to buy them, leaving the crops at the behest of the ongoing rains, which have already destroyed thousands of acres of ready-crop fields.

On the other hand, the Punjab government seems to have no answers to the farmers' demands and seems to have opted to counter the fast-intensifying protests by the deployment of heavy contingents of police and anti-riot squads to stop protesters from blocking main



roads and highways. The government maintains that it already has a stock of at least 2.3 million tonnes of wheat, highlighting that it cannot procure 4 million tonnes this season, putting the blame on the caretaker government.

"The caretaker government imported around 3 million tonnes of wheat, which was more than the requirement of the province. This led to a huge carryover stock, leaving little capacity. This was why the Punjab government decided to slash the procurement target by half," said a senior government official in the Punjab province. "The caretaker government also introduced a mobile application, a new procedure for applying to

sell wheat to the food department. It conveniently ignores the fact that the majority of the farmers in the rural population are now well-versed in technology," he added.

While the current government's blame on the caretaker setup doesn't sit well with the farmers, the government added to its blunders by stating that it would only issue six bags per acre only to those who owned up to six acres of land. "Despite the fact that farmers are now versed with technology, over 400,000 wheat growers applied for gunny bags.

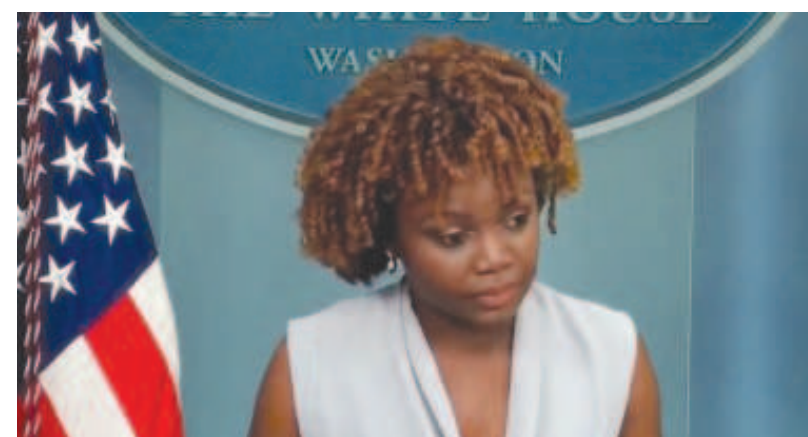
## US rejects International Criminal Court's investigation in Israel's action in Gaza

**Washington, May 2 (IANS/DPA) :** The White House said it opposes the International Criminal Court's (ICC) investigation into Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip.

The White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre on Thursday said Washington did "not sup-

port" the investigations and "we don't believe that they have the jurisdiction."

Jean-Pierre was asked whether potential arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other officials could torpedo the negotiations on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.



**T**he national selectors left out wicketkeeper-batter K.L. Rahul from the 15-member squad for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup because there was no spot for him and he did not fit the combination, said Ajit Agarkar, chairman of the national selection committee on Thursday.

As the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the 15-member squad for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, set to start in the United States and the Caribbean on June 1, the decisions taken by the selection committee raised many questions.

The main question was related to the non-selection of K.L. Rahul, the Lucknow Super Giants captain who is currently among the top five scorers in the Indian Premier League with 406 runs to his name. Rahul is quite experienced and has been a consistent performer in the format as captain of Lucknow Super Giants.



**T20 WC: KL Rahul was ignored because there was no spot, he did not fit the combinations, says Ajit Agarkar**

**Jadumani, Ajay shine as four Indians advance to semis at Asian U-22 & Youth Boxing Championships**

**Astana (Kazakhstan), May 2 (IANS):** Indian boxers Mandengbam Jadumani Singh, Nikhil, Ajay Kumar and Ankush registered impressive victories to move into the men's U-22 semi-finals at the Asian U-22 & Youth Boxing Championships 2024, here on Thursday. Jadumani led India's charge with a convincing 5-0

over Bhutan's Phuntsho Kinley in the 51kg quarter-finals bout. Nikhil (57kg) put up a similar display of dominance, securing a 4-0 win over Uzbekistan's Bakhtiyorov Ayubkhon to continue India's winning momentum. Ajay (63.5kg) and Ankush (71kg) won their respective bouts with a referee stop the contest (RSC) decisions.



**Chess : Gukesh takes a giant leap in World ranking and ratings**

**Chennai, May 2 (IANS):** Teen-aged Grandmaster D Gukesh has entered the top ten chess players' club in the World with an ELO rating of 2,763. Gukesh, now ranked sixth in the open category, is ahead of the seventh-ranked World Chess Champion Chinese GM Ding Liren with a rating of 2,762.

What is further interesting is that another Indian chess sensation GM Arjun Erigaisi is ranked eighth in the world with a rating of 2,761. According to the International Chess Federation (FIDE).



**Haris Rauf returns as Pakistan name T20 squad for Ireland, England tours**

**Lahore, May 2 (IANS):** Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Thursday announced its 18-player squad for the upcoming T20I series against Ireland (from May 10-14) and England (from May 22-30) with the fast bowler Haris Rauf returning to action after recovering from a shoulder injury. The squad will be reduced to 15 players for next month's ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 after the first T20I at Leeds on May 22 to meet the ICC's May 24 deadline, PCB said in a statement. Babar Azam will lead the side after being reinstated as white-ball captain ahead of the five-match T20I series at home against New Zealand, which ended in a 2-2 stalemate after the first game was washed out.

**'I expect him to play like a leader because he is next in command': Pragyan Ojha on Hardik Pandya**

**New Delhi, May 2 (IANS):** Former Indian cricketer Pragyan Ojha wants Hardik Pandya to step up and play the role of a "true leader". Hardik was named as the vice-captain of India's 15-member squad for the T20 World Cup despite the clouds of criticism looming over him. Ojha showed his faith in Hardik's leadership skills and his all-round abilities, emphasising the importance of being mentally prepared to take charge if fate demanded.

"I expect him to play like a leader because he is next in command. If something happens to Rohit, we don't want that, if anything happens, he (Hardik) will be leading the side, so he has to be prepared, he has to take that

responsibility when he is batting," Ojha said to Jio Cinema.

The last time Hardik played for India was in the October 2023 ODI World Cup match against Bangladesh. Before the Indian Premier League 2024, he made a full recovery from an ankle ailment and was named captain of the five-time champions Mumbai Indians, replacing Rohit. This invited a lot of social media criticism, which somewhere damaged



the confidence of the all-rounder. He has managed to score 197 runs at an average of 150.38 in 10 games in the 2024 season so far. Only six wickets have been claimed by the all-rounder at an economy rate of 11.0.



**Shafali & Smriti's 91-run opening stand powers India to unassailable 3-0 series lead over Bangladesh**

**Sylhet, May 2 (IANS):** A blistering 91-run opening stand between Shafali Verma (51) and Smriti Mandhana (47) powered India to a seven-wicket win over Bangladesh in the third women's T20I to take an unassailable 3-0 series lead in the five-match series, here on Thursday. Electing to bowl first, Radha Yadav (2/22), led a clinical Indian bowling show to keep Bangladesh to a below-par 117/

8, with Renuka Singh Thakur, Pooja Vastrakar and Shreyanka Patil taking a wicket each. In reply, Shafali 51 off 38 balls, along with Smriti's 42-ball 47 ensured India completed the chase with nine balls to spare.



**Ratnagiri Jets aim to double championship streak at Maharashtra Premier League**

**Pune, May 2 (IANS):** Ratnagiri Jets snagged a total of seven players at the Maharashtra Premier League Player (MPL) auction to complete their squad. The defending champions went to the auction with the most retained players out of all the teams (15) and had a clear vision of the gaps that they needed to fill for the upcoming season.

The management's auction strategy was simple and focused on the skill set that the team needed.



**IPL 2024: 'Doesn't look good; hoping for a more positive report', says Fleming on Chahar's injury**

**Chennai, May 2 (IANS):** Stephen Fleming, the head coach of Chennai Super Kings, has said fast-bowling all-rounder Deepak Chahar's hamstring injury doesn't look good as the early signs to its extent weren't great. Chahar, who previously missed two matches in the IPL 2024 season due to a niggle, hobbled off the field after bowling just two deliver-

ies, and never returned to the field for the remainder of the game. It meant CSK became a bowler short in dewy conditions at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, where Punjab Kings outclassed them by seven wickets. "The travelogue is pretty busy. There's a lot of ins and outs. So, Deepak Chahar doesn't look good. The initial feeling wasn't great. So, I'm hoping for a more positive report when the physio and the doctor have a look," said Fleming in a post-match press conference.

**Perfect starts for Delhi, Goa in Swami Vivekananda U-20 Men's NFC**

**Narainpur (Chhattisgarh), May 2 (IANS):** Delhi and Goa racked up huge wins in their opening Group B fixtures of the Swami Vivekananda U-20 Men's National Football Championship at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Ground, here on Thursday. While

Delhi beat hosts Chhattisgarh 6-1 in the day's opening game.

