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Farooq Abdullah accuses PM Modi of creating fear among Hindus

Former J&K chief minister and National Conference (NC) President Farooq Abdullah alleged on Tuesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is creating fear among the Hindus...

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Modi orchestrated conspiracy to arrest me : KCR

Hyderabad, May 7 (IANS) : BRS president and former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao on Tuesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had orchestrated a conspiracy to arrest him on corruption charges. However, the attempt failed as no evidence of corruption could be found, he said, adding that now, the Congress government in Telangana was trying to file cases and suppress his party. In an interview with vernacular media channel ETV, Chandrashekhar Rao said Modi's time has come to an end. Stating that people were not ready to tolerate Modi anymore as he was speaking as per his whims and attempting to create a communal divide.



Campaigning reaches its peak ahead of May 13 LS polls in Telangana

Hyderabad, May 7 (IANS) : With just five days left before the state's 17 Lok Sabha seats go to the polls on May 13, campaigning in Telangana has reached its peak in what appears to be a three-cornered contest this time. The top leaders of all three major political parties in the state -- the ruling Congress, the main opposition Bharat Rashtra

Samithi (BRS), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) -- are crisscrossing the state, addressing public meetings, rallies, and holding road shows to woo the electorate. Amid the sweltering heat, the leaders are making all-out efforts to win the support of the voters with multiple promises. The candidates are also travelling to the villages in their respective constituencies, conducting door-to-door canvassing. The Congress is looking to repeat the performance of the Assembly elections held in

2023 when it won 64 of the state's 119 seats to dislodge the BRS led by K. Chandrashekhar Rao from power. The BRS, still reeling under the defeat in the Assembly polls and shaken by the exodus of several key leaders during the last five months.

Continued on pg 02

No relief for CM Kejriwal, SC likely to hear case on May 9



New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : The Supreme Court bench, which initially decided to pronounce its judgement on Tuesday on the interim bail plea of incarcerated Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the excise policy case, will most likely take up the matter again on May 9 or the next week. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta was hearing CM Kejriwal's petition challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the case. CM Kejriwal promised the court to refrain from signing any official documents if granted interim bail in connection with the case.



LS polls : PM Modi casts vote in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad, May 7 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi exercised his franchise in Ahmedabad soon after voting across 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in Gujarat began on Tuesday morning. Donning a saffron jacket over a white kurta, the Prime Minister cast his vote at Nishan Vidhyala in Ranip, Ahmedabad.

Congress chief Kharge casts his vote in Karnataka's Kalaburagi



Kalaburagi (Karnataka), May 7 (IANS) : Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge cast his vote at the polling booth set up at Kannada Higher Primary School in Bramhapura locality in Kalaburagi district. Kharge arrived at the polling booth with his wife Radhabai Kharge and exercised his franchise. Allamprabhu Patil, the Congress MLA from Kalaburagi South, and others accompanied them.



Hyderabad ranks third in high street stores among top Indian cities

Hyderabad, May 7 (IANS) : Hyderabad stands out as one of the top cities in India for high street retail, following closely behind the National

Capital Region (NCR) and Bengaluru, according to the latest 'Think India Think Retail 2024' report by Knight Frank India.

Chiranjeevi appeals to Pithapuram voters to elect brother Pawan Kalyan

Amaravati, May 7 (IANS) : Megastar Chiranjeevi has appealed to the people of the Pithapuram Assembly constituency in Andhra Pradesh to elect his younger brother and Jana Sena Party leader Pawan Kalyan during the May 13 election. Chiranjeevi on Tuesday posted a video on social media, urging people to cast their vote for actor-politician Pawan Kalyan. Chiranjeevi, who has been staying away from politics

for the last decade after merging his Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) with Congress, stated that compared to him, Pawan Kalyan thinks more about people. The megastar re-

vealed that Pawan Kalyan entered films under compulsion but willingly entered into politics.



ED seizes over Rs 35 cr, arrests

Jharkhand Minister's personal secretary & servant

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : After recovering over Rs 35 crore in cash, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Sanjeev Kumar Lal, the personal secretary (PS) of Jharkhand Minister Alamgir Alam and his servant Jahangir Alam on Tuesday morning, an official said. Meanwhile, sources said that the financial probe agency is preparing to question Congress Minister Alamgir Alam about this. He will soon be summoned by the agency. On Monday, the ED conducted

a raid at the residences of Alamgir Alam's PS and other close associates. The counting of seized currency notes continued late at night and a total of Rs 35.23 cr has been recovered so far. According to officials, Jahangir Alam admitted in preliminary questioning that he was a caretaker of "commission and bribe-acquired money", for which he received a salary of around Rs 15,000 per month. "It was Minister Alamgir who had employed Jahangir as a servant at his PS Sanjeev Kumar Lal's residence. Before this, for a few days, he had also worked at the



minister's residence," said the sources. Sanjeev Kumar Lal had rented a flat in Sir Syed Residence Apartments in Ranchi for him. "Sanjeev used to give him a bag or a bundle of money every one or two days, which he used to keep in the cupboards of this flat," said the sources. The ED has also seized Rs 10 lakh from Sanjeev's residence and Rs 2.93 crore from the residence of his wife's construction company partner builder Munna Singh.

Sex videos : Court adjourns bail plea of JD(S) MLA Revanna in victim abduction case

Bengaluru, May 7 : The Special Court for People's Representatives, looking into the sex video victim's abduction case on Tuesday, adjourned the bail plea submitted by former minister and JD(S) MLA HD Revanna, to Wednesday.



HM Amit Shah casts vote, urges people to 'accept voting as duty'

Ahmedabad, May 7 (IANS) : Union Home Minister and BJP candidate from Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat, Amit Shah cast his vote on Tuesday and appealed to voters to "accept voting as a duty towards contributing to nation-building". He was accompanied by his son, Jay Shah, who is the secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and other family members. Before casting his vote, Home Minister Amit Shah paid a visit to the Kameshwar Mahadev temple in Ahmedabad. Earlier, in the morning, the Home Minister posted in several languages, urging people to vote.

Charred body of missing TN Congress district president found in his farmland

Chennai, May 7 (IANS): The charred body of Tirunelveli East district President of the Congress in Tamil Nadu, K.P.K. Jeyakumar Dhanasingh, was retrieved from his farmland on Tuesday. The body of the 60-year-old Congress leader was found in his farmland at Karaichuthupudur near Thisayvanvilai in Tirunelveli district. The deceased's son, Karuthiah Jefin, had filed a missing complaint with the Uvari police station on May 3 after Jeyakumar went missing on the evening of May 2.

The police conducted a detailed search following which the body of the missing Congress leader was retrieved from his farmland located near his home. The body was found with his hands and legs tied with electric cables, and charred beyond recognition.



Campaigning reaches its peak ahead of May 13 LS polls in Telangana

Continued From pg 01 is making every effort to bounce back, while the BJP is confident of improving on its impressive performance in the state polls when it improved its tally to eight from just one in 2018. The leaders of all three parties are busy hurling allegations and throwing challenges at each other. Interestingly, every party is accusing the other two of having a secret understanding. While Congress and BRS are targeting BJP for what they call 'spreading hatred in the name of religion', the latter is accusing both the parties of practising appeasement politics. Highlighting the implementation of some

guarantees promised during the Assembly polls, Congress is seeking votes to fulfil the remaining promises. Its leaders are exhorting Telangana voters to contribute maximum seats from the state to help the Congress and the INDIA bloc to form the government at the Centre. Meanwhile, both BJP and BRS are targeting Congress for 'failing' to implement its guarantees, reminding the party leaders of their promise that all six guarantees will be implemented within 100 days. Leading the BRS campaign is party President and former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, popular as KCR. He is undertaking a bus yatra and addressing roadshows every day, drawing large crowds. KCR's son and BRS Working President K.T. Rama Rao and nephew and key party leader T. Harish Rao are also addressing public meetings and holding roadshows across constituencies. The leaders are projecting the BRS as the only party that can

safeguard the interests of Telangana. Like in the previous elections, K.T. Rama Rao's campaign is focused in and around Hyderabad, covering constituencies like Hyderabad, Secunderabad, Malkajgiri, and Chevella. It was the BJP that first launched the campaign with Vijay Sankalp Yatras in February, much before the announcement of the election schedule, taking to people the various schemes launched and implemented by the Modi government during the last 10 years. The BJP has roped in the entire battery of top leadership for the campaign. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who held a few public meetings even before the announcement of the poll schedule, addressed a rally in Zaheerabad on April 30, and is scheduled to address more election rallies in the state on May 8 and May 10. Union Home Minister Amit Shah has also visited Telangana a

couple of times, addressing roadshows in Hyderabad in support of party candidate Madhavi Latha. He also addressed three public meetings in Adilabad, Nizamabad, and Malkajgiri Lok Sabha constituencies on May 5. This was followed by BJP President J.P. Nadda's public meetings on May 6 in Peddapalli and Yadadri Bhuvanagiri. He also held a roadshow in Malkajgiri last week. Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Anurag Singh Thakur, Piyush Goel, Kiran Rijju, Hardeep Singh Puri, S. Jaishankar and the Chief Ministers of Gujarat, Uttarakhnd and Goa also participated in nomination rallies of BJP candidates. Some of them also addressed public meetings and held roadshows. Tamil Nadu BJP chief Annamalai, Bangalore South BJP MP Tejaswai Surya, and former Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan were also roped in to campaign for the BJP candidates.

SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED. DEMAND NOTICE. Where as the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD. (Formerly known as Shiram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shiram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shiram Transport Company Limited name Changed as Shiram Finance Limited) We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India consequent to the Authorized Officer of SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices on respective dates mentioned herein below under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 calling upon the following borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

NCC cadets will be deployed on poll duties in Himachal

Shimla, May 7 (IANS): The Election Commission of India in a unique initiative will deploy National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets on poll duties for the four Lok Sabha seats and bypolls to six assembly seats on June 1, Chief Electoral Officer Maneesha Garg said here on Tuesday. He said this step would go a long way in educating and inspiring the youth while engaging them in the biggest fes-



tival of democracy. This will instill ideas of selfless service and develop democratic spirit among the young cadets. He said the three cadets per polling booth would be deployed based on availability and deployment will be purely on a voluntary basis in such a manner that their station remains

within their respective beat and district. Donning uniform, the NCC cadets will assist police personnel or Home Guard in non-security related duties like traffic arrangement, queue management, assistance to old and persons with disability voters.

CBI arrests four Kerala Police officials in custodial death case

Kochi, May 7 (IANS): The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday arrested four Kerala Police officials in connection with a custodial death case in Tanur. The case relates to the death of 30-year-old Tamir Jifri on August 1, last year. Jifri was in police custody along with four others on the charges of possessing MDMA.

CAN FIN HOMES LTD. DEMAND NOTICE. Where as the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd., under SARFAESI Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3, issued Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the Borrowers/guarantors listed hereunder (hereinafter referred to as the "said Borrowers"), to repay the amounts mentioned in the Notice, within 60 days from the date of receipt of Notice, as per details given below. The said Notices have been returned undelivered by the postal authorities/ have not been duly acknowledged by the borrowers. Hence the Company by way of abundant caution is effecting this publication of the demand notice (as per the provisions of Rule 3 (1)). The undersigned has, therefore, caused these Notices to be pasted on the premises of the last known addresses of the said Borrowers, as per the said Act. As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to the Company by the respective parties as detailed below.

LS polls: Sulking for a week, Congress' Maha unit Working President Naseem Khan bounces back as Star Campaigner

Mumbai, May 7 (IANS): Following intervention by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and AICC General Secretary Ramesh Chennithala, Maharashtra unit Congress Working President Arif Naseem Khan on Tuesday agreed to be a 'Star Campaigner' for the fifth phase of Lok Sabha elections. Last month (on April 26), Khan had abruptly quit the Congress Campaign Committee as well as the post of Star Campaigner to protest against the lack of any Muslim candidate from the party as well as the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance for the Lok Sabha polls. Amid huge speculation over his

future moves, Khan was summoned to Pune on Friday to meet Chennithala and Rahul Gandhi to resolve his grievances, and discussed all aspects with him for nearly two hours. "We had very cordial discussions on various matters concerning the LS elections. I shall abide by the party decision and more shall be revealed on Monday," Khan told IANS on Saturday, without revealing any details. Indicating everything is hunky-dory for now, the Congress late Friday night released its new list of Star Campaigners in which Khan is named prominently and will campaign for the Congress-MVA-INDIA bloc candidates in



the state for the May 20 elections. Earlier, the sudden move by the senior leader of the Muslim community, who is a former state minister, had rattled the state Congress and also party units in other states across the country, with possible implications on the Muslim vote in nearly 20 seats in Maharashtra.

Bank of Baroda. ABRIDGED VEHICLE E-AUCTION NOTICE. In view of the default committed by the Borrowers mentioned below, Bank has repossessed/ seized the Hypothecated Motor Vehicle mentioned below in exercise of the powers conferred under Hypothecation Agreement executed by the parties and same is being auctioned on "AS IS WHERE IS & AS IS WHAT IS BASIS".

BJP working seriously to remove reservations: Bhatti. Hyderabad, May 7(NSS): Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka has alleged that Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) is working seriously to remove the reservations provided in the Constitution for socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Speaking at a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan here on Tuesday, the Deputy Chief Minister said the BJP leaders were asking for 400 Lok Sabha seats with the aim of abolishing reservations in the country.



Orange alert in TN for next two days due to heat wave

Chennai, May 7 (IANS) : The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) on Tuesday issued an orange alert in Tamil Nadu for the next two days due to the heat wave. The weather department in the statement said that the temperature in most of the interior districts of the state would increase by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius.

Mizoram gov't's massive efforts led to record GST collections in April: CM Lalduhoma

Aizawl, May 7 (IANS) : Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma said on Tuesday that due to the state government's massive efforts, the state registered a record 52 per cent jump in Goods & Services Tax (GST) collections in April. The Chief Minister said that the finance, planning, and taxation departments took various steps, leading to a record jump in GST collections in April. "People, trade, and business communities cooperated with the state government's efforts as they are also aware of the importance of paying taxes to augment the revenue of the state," he said. CM Lalduhoma also said that the state government has un-

dertaken various austerity measures and cut unnecessary expenditures, leading to the state's financial condition moving towards stability. "Ministers, legislators, officials, and all other stakeholders are adding to the state government's endeavour," he pointed out. Mizoram recorded its highest proportion of 52 per cent in GST collections in April, while four of the eight northeastern states -- Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Meghalaya -- registered negative growth in the month under review as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. According to the GST data released by the Union Finance Ministry earlier this week, in April, the government collected Rs 108

crore in GST in Mizoram against Rs 71 crore collected in the same month of 2023. Arunachal Pradesh reported the highest percentage of negative growth in GST at 16 per cent, followed by Sikkim (5 per cent), Nagaland (3 per cent), and Meghalaya (2 per cent). Three other northeastern states -- Assam, Tripura, and Manipur -- registered a positive growth in GST collections in April this year as compared to the corresponding period of last year. In April 2023, Assam collected Rs 1,513 crore in

GST which went up to Rs 1,895 crore in April 2024, marking a growth of 25 per cent. Tripura's GST collections in April this year stood at Rs 161 crore against Rs 133 crore collected in April 2023, registering a 20 per cent growth, while Manipur's figures went up by 15 per cent with Rs 104 crore collected in April this year as compared to Rs 91 crore collected in the year-ago period.

Tripura: Election official cautions BJP MLA for misbehaving with poll officer

Agartala, May 7 (IANS) : North Tripura District Election Officer cautioned ruling BJP's sitting MLA Jadab Lal Nath after he apologised for misbehaving with a poll officer, officials said here on Tuesday. Officials said that North Tripura District Election Officer (DEO) earlier served a show-cause notice to BJP MLA Nath for misbehaving with a Booth Level Officer (BLO).



Will kick corruption and land mafia out of Guna, promises Union Minister Scindia

Bhopal, May 7 (IANS) : Making a promise to the people of his constituency in Guna, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Tuesday that he will not allow any wrongdoing to take place in the area. "Together, we will kick corruption and land mafia out of Guna, just like Yogi Adityanath is doing in Uttar Pradesh," Jyotiraditya Scindia said while addressing a public rally in Ashok Nagar that was also attended by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister. Accusing former chief ministers Digvijaya Singh and Kamal Nath of playing a major role in derailing the development of Madhya Pradesh, Scindia said that schemes like 'Ladli Behna Yojana' initiated by the BJP

have transformed lives in the state. "Had the Congress government not been toppled in Madhya Pradesh, Kamal Nath and Digvijaya Singh would have misutilised the public money. Schemes like the Ladli Behna Yojana could not have been a reality," said Jyotiraditya Scindia. Ashok Nagar, which goes to voting on May 7, falls in the Guna Lok Sabha constituency from where Jyotiraditya Scindia is contesting his sixth election. The Union Minister also highlighted the work done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government over the last 10 years.

LS polls: Congress Deepender Hooda files nomination from home turf Rohtak



Rohtak, May 7 (IANS) : Congress' Rajya Sabha member Deepender Singh Hooda on Tuesday filed his nomination papers for Lok Sabha polls from his home turf in Haryana's Rohtak -- a stronghold of the Jat community. After filing the papers, a public meeting was organised that saw a gathering of party activists. Speaking on the occasion, former Haryana chief minister

and Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda said: "This is not just the Lok Sabha election but a fight to save the Constitution. Democracy will survive only if the Constitution survives. That is why Opposition parties have united and formed the INDIA bloc. In Haryana, this alliance is contesting the elections with full strength."

Table with 10 columns: Name of the Borrower, Description of the Secured Asset (Immovable Property), Total Outstanding Dues (Rs.), Date of Possession, Name of the Borrower, Description of the Secured Asset (Immovable Property), Total Outstanding Dues (Rs.), Date of Possession, Name of the Borrower, Description of the Secured Asset (Immovable Property), Total Outstanding Dues (Rs.), Date of Possession.

OPINIONmail



WHY PM NARENDRA MODI IS DELIBERATELY DISTORTING RAHUL GANDHI'S COMMENTS ON TAX ON RICH

It is not surprising that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi is still continuing his vicious campaign against the Congress Party and its senior leader Rahul Gandhi on the issue of robbing the common people, especially Hindus of their gold, real estate and other hard earned wealth through redistribution after coming to power. PM is making allegation on the basis of something which is not in the Congress Party's manifesto. He is consistently bringing the issue of redistribution of wealth in favour of Muslims mischievously distorting a speech by the former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh eighteen years ago. The distortion was pointed out but still, not only he, other senior leaders like Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Anurag Thakur are following their leader with more vengeance. It is apparent now, this sort of communal propaganda will be the main feature of the BJP's poll campaign in the remaining five phases of the present Lok Sabha elections. But why? BJP is a big party containing many members who are highly educated and aware of the contents of the Congress manifesto and also what Rahul Gandhi is saying in his campaign. BJP's 2024 poll manifesto was released on April 14 and normally this should have been the main focus of the BJP's campaign which aims at this baar - 400 paar. But curiously in the last few days after the second phase of elections, the Prime Minister in all his election meetings are not talking of BJP's Sankalp Patra, he is talking of the unwritten part of the Congress manifesto and projecting the Muslims as the future beneficiary of the alleged redistribution of assets to be implemented by the Congress Party in power.

This sudden switch in the campaign tenor by the Prime Minister can be attributable to the fact that PM and his advisers have come to the conclusion that the Modi Guarantees given in Sankalp Patra are not clicking, rather the Rahul Guarantees given in the Congress manifesto are appealing more. Further, the issue of rising inequality in the last ten years of the BJP rule is very much in the minds of the Hindu voters. The Congress manifesto's programmes are more favourable to the non-rich Hindus. By diverting the poll campaign on the alleged communalising redistribution by the Congress or the INDIA bloc, Prime Minister is seeking to divert the debate on inequality issue under his regime to the spectre of alleged appeasement of minorities through redistribution.

Let us call the spade a spade. The BJP may be apprehensive now of the impact of the burning economic issues on the current Lok Sabha elections, but for the Congress and the INDIA bloc, they have to campaign in favour of redistribution of resources in favour of the poor including the minorities more effectively. This programme for persuading the super rich to be ready for tax to contribute to the reduction of inequality in the society is under discussion for long. Even in the World Economic Forum of the global billionaires, this was discussed and endorsed. More importantly, the developing countries have been discussing the possibility of taxing the rich more for providing additional funds for the underprivileged.

Brazil, as the president of G-20 has taken the move to place a proposal for the imposition of a global tax on super-rich in order to bring down the level of inequality between the rich and the poor in the current phase of the global economy. Brazil's finance minister told a G20 meeting in Sao Paulo early this year that countries should implement a global tax on the super-rich in an effort to tackle rampant tax evasion. Speaking to a meeting of finance ministers, Fernando Haddad said that tax evasion could be resolved through international co-operation so that "these few individuals make their contribution to our societies and to the planet's sustainable development."

(By Nitya Chakraborty)

EDITORIAL

the indian mail



RAPE ALLEGATION AGAINST PRAJWAL REVANNA CASTS ITS SHADOW ON THIRD PHASE IN KARNATAKA POLLS

Karnataka has ultimately come under a political storm in the midst of the third phase of Lok Sabha election in the country on account of rape of the "Nari Shakti", a slogan that BJP leadership has been using to attract the women voters of the country. The hypocrisy of the BJP exposed is the latest example of knowingly allying with the rape accused for a perceived political benefit during election. Barring a few BJP leaders, the party's entire political machinery campaigned for the rapist, and when the entire scandal came into light Union Home Minister said that Congress government in Karnataka was answerable to delay in action. However, pertinent question is who is responsible, if he supported such a candidate despite being informed and warned? Prajwal Revanna, the grandson of the JD(S) chief HD Deve Gowda, and the son of HD Revanna, was JD(S) candidate from Hassan Lok Sabha Constituency for which election were held in the second phase on April 16. Though he has been a much-defamed person on account of abduction, kidnapping, and raping women, and also for making videos and blackmailing the victims, he was given ticket by the party.



SPANISH PRIME MINISTER'S DECISION NOT TO RESIGN IS A GOOD NEWS FOR EUROPEAN LEFT

The decision of the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez to remain in his position in the midst of allegations of corruption against his wife and the rightwing pressure to resign, is a relief to the Left coalition in Spain as also the Left in Europe. Spain is the only country among the European Union members which leads a proper coalition of pro-left forces including the Communist Party. PM Sanchez has been fighting the rightwing onslaught against the coalition since he took over in 2020 as the Prime Minister of the newly formed left coalition. Sanchez got a big jolt on April 24, as a Madrid judge accepted the petition from a far-right organization to open a political corruption and graft investigation into his wife, Begoña Gómez. Sánchez released a highly charged public letter in which he announced that he was considering resigning and he would announce his decision the following week. His announcement led to disquiet in the coalition camp and he was persuaded not to resign but fight the battle both in court as also in political arena. Ultimately he understood the game plan of the right and decided to battle it out as the PM.

The battle of the Prime Minister and his coalition government with the Spanish judiciary is not new. It has been a major issue for Sánchez's left-leaning coalition since it took office in 2020. Ever since, reactionary elements in the upper echelons of the justice system have operated as an undemocratic parallel power, aiming to discipline and undermine what they see as an "illegitimate" government. The current judicial offensive has been unrelenting since last November when Sánchez's PSOE finalized

a parliamentary alliance with Catalan nationalist parties in exchange for an amnesty law for those involved in the failed 2017 independence push.

The proposed amnesty was denounced in polemical terms by the country's largest association of judges as "the beginning of the end of democracy" in Spain. The right-wing-dominated General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ) characterized it as involving the "erosion, if not the abolition, of the rule of law." At the same time, a series of terrorism investigations were suddenly taken up by the courts against Catalan politicians, journalists, and activists, in an apparent attempt to undermine the amnesty and destabilize the government's fragile parliamentary majority.

Political observers view that the real opposition to the Spanish left coalition is not the rightwing parties but the judiciary and Supreme Court judge Manuel Marchena is the de facto opposition leader.

(IPA Service)

RIFT BETWEEN RSS AND MODI MAY COST THE BJP HEAVILY IN 2024 POLLS

Narendra Modi, who for years boasted of the sobriquet "Hindu Hridaya Samrat", could not have imagined even in his dreams that the RSS would one day distance itself from him and denounce him as its prime ministerial candidate. From the day the Lok Sabha elections were announced, the manner in which Modi has undertaken the poll campaigning had made it obvious that Modi was still the public face of the saffron ecosystem for the third consecutive term.

However, senior RSS leaders at a high level urgent meeting held recently resolved that RSS would not

support Modi for the third term, even in the case the BJP manages to get majority at the polls. The meeting attained importance because almost all the state chiefs of the RSS were present in it, unanimously concluding that Modi had lost the trust of the RSS leaders, cadres and swayamsevaks. It was said that Modi has been behaving in the autocratic manner, which was detrimental to the interest of the organisation.

Some leaders also sought to know from the RSS leadership, especially from chief Mohan Bhagwat, why so far no action has been initiated against him. These members felt that Modi should have been asked to explain his behaviour of projecting himself as the supreme leader of the saffron ecosystem. It was clarified that Modi was in-

deed asked to behave in a more mature manner, but he preferred to ignore the advice. He treated himself as a bigger authority than the RSS.

The state heads complained how leaders close to him were ignoring the local cadres and treating them with contempt.

It was also revealed that Modi has raised a brigade of around 60,000 paid BJP workers, who were acting as the super bosses, while the RSS workers were not even paid for their food and travelling expenses when on tour. The most poignant criticism of Modi was for his treating the RSS workers and leaders as serfs.

AGENCIES STRUGGLING TO CAMOUFLAGE MISCHIEF IN ELECTION-EVE POLITICAL ARRESTS

The Supreme Court's probing questions about the timing of arrests by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) of political figures spotlight growing concerns about the propriety and implications of such actions, especially when juxtaposed with the electoral calendar. The apex court's concerns telescope the potential misuse of central agencies as instruments of political influence, which could undermine the democratic ethos of fair and free elections.

In the case of Hemant Soren, the former Chief Minister of Jharkhand, his arrest by the ED on charges of money laundering came after his resignation, a move that coincided with the election period.

REPORTS FROM AUSTRALIA INDICATE ACTIVITIES OF INDIAN SPIES IN THAT COUNTRY

After official comments made by the US and Canada officials, reports have come from Australian sources about activities of Indian spies in that country. According to a report by ABC News Australia, Australian authorities expelled Indian operatives who were caught trying to obtain classified information on critical defense projects, airport security, and Australia's trade relationships. The for-

eign "nest of spies" uncovered by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in 2020 was alleged to have been monitoring Indian residents in Australia and building relationships with current and former politicians. According to ABC News, in his 2021 annual threat assessment, ASIO Director-General Mike Burgess hinted at the existence of a "spy ring" without naming the country involved, stating that revealing this information would be an "unnecessary distraction" Mr. Burgess mentioned in his

March 2021 speech at ASIO's Canberra headquarters that the spies had established specific connec-

tions with present and past politicians, a foreign embassy, and a state police service.





Conflict in Gaza continues to be 'war on women': UNRWA

Gaza, May 7 (IANS) : The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has said that Israel continues to target women in strikes in the Gaza Strip. "The war in Gaza continues to be a war on women," UNRWA said on Tuesday in a press statement posted on its social media platform X, adding that more than 10,000 women have been killed and 19,000 others injured in the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza, Xinhua news agency reported. On average, 37 children in Gaza lose their mothers every day, it added. Living conditions are particularly "appalling" for more than 155,000 pregnant or lactating women in the enclave, who face extreme difficulty in accessing water and health

facilities, the agency said. Gaza health authorities said on Tuesday that the death toll from the "Israeli incursion" on Gaza has risen to 34,622 and more than 77,867 others injured since its outbreak on October 7, 2023. They added that Israeli forces committed three deadly attacks against families in the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, resulting in 26 killed and 51 injured admitted to hospitals. Israel has been launching a large-scale offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip 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 West is 'waging war' against Moscow using Ukrainians: Russian Foreign Ministry

Moscow, May 7 (IANS) : Western countries are 'waging a war' against Russia in Ukraine with the use of foreign weapons, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova said. The statement comes following British Foreign Secretary David Cameron's recent visit to Kiev, where the official said on Tuesday that Ukraine had the right to use British weapons to strike targets within Russian territory, Xinhua news agency reported. Zakharova said that the Western politician had publicly admitted that "the West is waging an open war against Russia at the hands of Ukrainians".



Risk of famine still present in Gaza: WHO

Geneva, May 7 (IANS/DPA) : The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Tuesday that the threat of famine still hangs over the war-torn Gaza Strip. More food has reached the Gaza Strip in recent weeks, but the WHO's representative to the Palestinian territories, Rik Peeperkorn, said the risk of famine has not yet been averted. The coastal strip has been under attack from the Israeli military for more than six months since Hamas launched bloody attacks on Israel on October 7. The WHO reported that more than 40 severely malnourished

children under the age of five have been brought to hospitals in the Gaza Strip with additional health problems since March. Some 2-year-olds weighed only around 4 kilograms, far under the average weight of 10 to 14 kilograms. Before the outbreak of fighting in October, malnutrition was practically non-existent in the territory. The consequences of childhood malnutrition will be far-ranging, said Peeperkorn. "We will see the effects for years to come," he added. Ahmed Dahir, the WHO's top doctor in Gaza, told reporters in

Geneva via video link that the supply of food was still fragile and that he "cannot say the risk of famine is past." According to Palestinian health authorities, a total of around 25 malnourished children have died in the territory in recent weeks. Peeperkorn emphasised that the children had not starved to death, but that malnutrition had contributed to the complications that ultimately led to their deaths. The information provided by the Palestinian authorities cannot be independently verified, but UN officials have previously considered their estimates to be reliable.



Yemen's Houthis threaten to attack all Israeli-linked commercial ships in Mediterranean

Sanaa, May 7 (IANS) : Yemen's Houthi group has announced the expansion of its ballistic missile attacks to include all Israeli-linked commercial vessels transiting the Mediterranean. "We will attack all ships heading to or having links with Israel in the Mediterranean Sea as well as in any area within our reach," Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said on Tuesday in a televised statement while elaborating on the

group's fourth phase of military escalation in the region, Xinhua news agency reported. "The implementation of this decision begins now," he noted. Moreover, the spokesman warned that if Israel intends to launch an aggressive military operation against Rafah in southern Gaza, the Houthis will target all ships and companies that deal with Israeli ports and prevent "all ships of these companies" from passing through the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, "regardless of their destinations".

"We will not hesitate to persist in military escalation until Israel stops its war and lifts the blockade on the Gaza Strip," Sarea added. Yemen's protracted civil war erupted in 2014 when the Houthi group seized control over much of the country's north, including the capital Sanaa, and the strategic Red Sea port city of Hodeidah.



Israel announces countermeasures against Turkey following trade suspension

Jerusalem, May 7 (IANS) : Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs has announced several measures to be taken against Turkey following the latter's decision to halt all trade activities with Israel due to "non-stop violence" against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The Ministry said on Tuesday in a statement that in a discussion carried out by senior officials from the Foreign and Economy ministries, as well as the Israel Tax Authority, it was decided to work towards reducing any economic connection between Turkey and the West Bank and Gaza, Xinhua news agency reported. Additionally, it was decided to take action in international economic forums to explore

sanctions against Turkey for violating trade agreements, to create an alternative list for the Israeli economy across various sectors and products, and to support affected Israeli export sectors. It noted that Turkey is the Palestinian Authority's largest importing country. According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2023, Israeli exports of goods to Turkey amounted to \$1.57 billion, while Israeli imports from Turkey reached \$4.61 billion. Meanwhile, Israel filed a complaint to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) against Turkey for its decision to suspend trade, said a statement from Israel's Economy Minister Nir Barkat.



Italy's jobless rate falls to 7.2 pc, lowest in over 15 years

Rome, May 7 (IANS/DPA) : Italy's unemployment rate decreased to the lowest level in more than 15 years in March after rising slightly in the previous month, the statistical office ISTAT reported on Tuesday. The jobless rate dropped to 7.2 per cent in March from 7.4 per cent in February. Meanwhile, economists had expected the index to rise to 7.5 per cent. In the corresponding month last year, the rate was 7.9 per cent. Further, the latest jobless rate was the lowest since January 2009, when it was also the same 7.2 per cent. At the same time, the employment rate edged up to 62.1 per cent in March from 61.9 per cent in the previous month. The youth unemployment rate dropped to 20.1 per cent in March from 22.4 per cent a month ago, data showed.

Death toll rises to 39 from heavy rains in Brazil

Sao Paulo, May 7 (IANS) : The death toll from heavy rains in the southern Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul has risen to 39 with nearly 70 people still missing, the Civil Defence agency said. The heavy rain was one of the worst climate tragedies that has so far affected 235 municipalities, including the state capital of Porto Alegre, according to the agency on Friday. The state has seen persisting rainfall since Tuesday, causing rivers to swell, destroying bridges, and putting the city of Porto Alegre, with a popula-

tion of more than 1.4 million, on alert, Xinhua news agency reported. Heavy rains also spread to the neighbouring state of Santa Catarina, where a person was killed in the flooding and landslides. Recognising the calamity, the Brazilian government has sent equipment and financial aid to Rio Grande do Sul. More than 24,000 people were displaced by the disaster, according to the agency. "These will be difficult days. We ask people to leave their homes. Our goal is to save lives. Things will be lost, but we must preserve lives. Our



priority is to rescue people. As for the rest, we'll find the way ahead," Governor Eduardo Leite said.

Leite confirmed that this is "the biggest disaster in the state" and that Rio Grande do Sul is in a "state of war".

Turkey halts trade with Israel to compel ceasefire: President Erdogan

Istanbul, May 7 (IANS) : Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that Turkey's decision to suspend trade with Israel had one singular purpose, which is to compel the Israeli government into a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He made the remarks on Tuesday during a meeting with the board of directors of the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen Association in Istanbul, according to the Presidency's website. The President also noted that the government will coordinate

and consult with the business community to manage the consequences of halting trade with Israel, Xinhua news agency reported. Turkey on Thursday halted all trade activities with Israel due to the latter's "non-stop violence" against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.





LU allows students to change stream after passing entrance test

Lucknow, May 7 (IANS) : Students seeking admission to post-graduate courses at Lucknow University will now have the option to change their stream from the new academic session 2024-25 if they succeed in the entrance examination. A candidate holding a graduation degree in humanities can pursue commerce or science, and vice versa, under the National Education Policy adopted by the university. Prof. Geetanjali Mishra, Dean of

Academics, said: "A student who has a BA or BCom degree can apply for MSc, and similar will be the case with other streams. Also, if a student has studied humanities at the 10+2 level and graduation, he or she can study science at the PG level. The only eligibility we have set to attain this multidisciplinary education is that a candidate should have a UG degree in any stream and should crack the university's entrance test."

Constituency Watch: The great family divide splits Baramati as 'Bhabhi-Nanad' battle for uncle-nephew supremacy

Pune (Maharashtra), May 7 (IANS) : After ruling the roost for nearly six decades in Baramati, NCP(SP) President, Sharad Pawar is facing the first major challenge to his supremacy in state politics, that too, from within the family, through his nephew Ajit Pawar. The NCP(SP) Working President Supriya Sule (54) is locked in a rare battle with Sunetra A Pawar (61), the wife of her cousin brother and rival NCP President Ajit Pawar. Considered an ideal, close-knit family, with politics always kept at the doorstep, an unusual and bitter fight between the Pawar 'bhabhi-nanad' slugging it out in the summer heat for the Baramati Lok Sabha seat, is spilling onto the streets. The average Baramati voter is torn between loyalty to the

uncle, Sharad Pawar, 83, who founded the (undivided) NCP in 1999, and his nephew Ajit Pawar who split the party in July 2023 to walk out and join the 'enemy', ideologically shunned by almost the entire Pawar clan. There are instances of entire families of the local population living divided in their homes, with an invisible 'Sharad Pawar' or 'Ajit Pawar' looming in the shadows, tugging at their heart-strings for votes, catapulting Baramati among the top 10 most watched and unpredictable Lok Sabha constituencies in the 2024 elections. In fact, the first battle for conquering Baramati started when Ajit Pawar split the (undivided) NCP to join the ruling Mahayuti government of Shiv Sena-BJP as a second Deputy Chief Minister, holding the post for a record 6th time, just a rung below his unabashed ambition to be the Chief Minister. A NCP(SP) leader ex-



plained how Ajit Pawar had joined the two-man regime headed by BJP's Devendra Fadnis in November 2019 and had unceremoniously crashed in barely 80 hours, "but thereafter Pawar Saheb, Supriya tai, the entire family and the party had forgiven him", but warned that this time "there is deep angst against Ajit Pawar and nobody will show mercy." On the other hand, an Ajit Pawar supporter claims that "Dada (elder brother) was wronged many times, the party lost opportunities to make him the CM, and faced humiliation on several occasions", and it's now up to the people of Baramati to give

him justice. Conscious of what is in store in 'the big fight for supremacy', Ajit Pawar has launched a campaign for his wife utilising the age-old ingredients of "saam, daam, dand, bhed (persuade, tempt, punish, secret)." Ajit Pawar gently goaded the people to vote with their heads and not with their hearts and avoid sentiments for Sharad Pawar and his daughter Supriya. Then he made emotional appeals to give an opportunity to a new family member Sunetra, as they had done with Sharad Pawar and Supriya in the past.

India has changed paradigm for addressing terrorism, says former High Commissioner to Pakistan

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : Calling the 2019 Pulwama terror attacks one of the "turning points" in India-Pakistan relationship, former High Commissioner to Pakistan Ajay Bisaria said on Tuesday that India has now changed the paradigm of addressing terrorism, especially that originating from across the border. "There has been a paradigm shift in the way India has dealt with terrorism and, in particular, terrorism from Pakistan. A case in point is the 2016 surgical strikes and the 2019 air strikes in Balakot, which changed the game and set up a credible deterrence against terrorism. "It made it clear that India would be willing to go into hot pursuits of terrorists, either punishing them punitively or preemptively. That is what marks a shift in that policy," Bisaria said during a panel dis-

ussion organised by Usanas Foundation, a geopolitical and security affairs organisation. Having taken over as India's High Commissioner to Pakistan in 2017, Bisaria was asked by Islamabad to leave the country in August 2019 after the abrogation of Article 370. His recent book, 'Anger Management: The Troubled Diplomatic Relationship Between India and Pakistan' not only provides a gripping account of events that unfolded during the period but also looks at the troubled relationship between the two neighbouring countries since 1947. "I have argued (in the book) that, with the benefit of hindsight, India had possibly not used enough force in the 1980s, 90s, 2000s and certainly not in 2008 in the Mumbai terror attacks which deserved a very strong, hard-powered response. "I have also mentioned that if India had used instruments like air strikes and the surgical strikes in

2008, we could have set up a better deterrence against the terrorism that followed," Bisaria told Abhinav Pandya, the founder and CEO of Usanas Foundation. The diplomat notes that the 2016 surgical strikes and 2019 Balakot air strikes were a demonstration of the fact that India was willing to enter into a hot pursuit of terrorists in their territory. "India does not any more conflate its Pakistan and Kashmir policy. A Pakistan policy of a tough posture on terrorism is an external policy. A Jammu and Kashmir policy, which at the moment is adminis-



tering a healing touch and looking at development, is an internal policy. Pakistan has no locus standi in it. In the past, Pakistan wanted to promote a narrative that it is a stakeholder in J&K," he said. He accepts that there were some "positive developments" and a "positive mood" in terms of trying to engage with Pakistan and to assess how the country would be different from the Pakistan of the past once Imran Khan came to power in 2018. "But when in 2019, on February 14, the Pulwama attack took place, that changed the complete equation. It confirmed to India that nothing had changed and that the Pakistani establishment was not willing to rein in terrorism". In his book, the seasoned diplomat argues that it is Pakistan's own 'identity crisis' that is driving the military establishment towards hostility with India. "Pakistan was never a normal country, a normal neighbour defined as a country which perhaps does not have the army determining every little bit of policy and also not using the instrument of terrorism as state policy," he said during the discussion.



Congress' ideology is based on Hinduism : Priyanka Gandhi

Bhopal, May 7 (IANS) : Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday said that the party's ideology is based on Hinduism and follows the path of Mahatma Gandhi.

Addressing a public rally in Madhya Pradesh's Morena, the Congress General Secretary said that Mahatma Gandhi followed the path of 'Satya' (truth) and the Congress followed that "Satya Dharma". She further said that the country has always followed the path of "satya" and "dharma", but the BJP government has "changed those traditions and set their own rules".

Trans-border narcotics network busted in Punjab, 4kg ice seized

Chandigarh, May 7 (IANS) : In an intelligence-led operation against trans-border narcotics smuggling networks, Punjab Police has apprehended one person and seized four kg ice (methamphetamine) and one kg heroin, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said.



He said that drones were used to transport drugs from a Pakistan-based drug smuggler. An FIR under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act has been registered in Amritsar and investigations are going on to establish backward and forward linkages, he added. Earlier, Commissionerate Police Jalandhar busted an international drugs syndicate spread over five countries with the arrest of three persons of a family, while also recovering 48 kg heroin and Rs 21 lakh from their possession. Those arrested have been identi-

fied as Satnam Singh, alias Babbi, a native of Dhandian village in Nawanshahr, his daughter Aman Rozi, and his son-in-law Hardeep Singh. Apart from seizing heroin and drug money, the police also impounded three high-end cars from their possession. DGP Yadav had said that the drugs syndicate, spread across five countries -- Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan and Canada -- was actively involved in trans-border and interstate drug smuggling using their domestic network

spanning two states -- Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir. He had said preliminary investigation has suggested that Gujarat's sea route and Jammu and Kashmir's land route were used to push this heroin consignment into the territory of India.

NEET aspirant who went missing from Kota, found from Ludhiana: Police

Jaipur, May 7 (IANS) : A NEET aspirant from UP, who went missing from Rajasthan's coaching hub Kota after leaving a "suicide note", was found in Ludhiana on Tuesday, police said. A resident of UP's Kaushambi, she was preparing for NEET while staying in a PG accommodation in Kota and reported missing at Anantpura police station on April 23, Station Officer Bhupendra Singh said. She went to her coaching to take the test on April 21 but did not return.



Sanjay Raut questions increase in Maha voting percentage after 11 days

Mumbai, May 7 (IANS) : Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Tuesday questioned the Election Commission of India (ECI) about the increase in the voting percentages of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Lok Sabha elections, and asked how it suddenly shot up after so many days. Speaking to the media here, he said that the hourly and daily voting percentages in all

the Lok Sabha constituencies that have voted so far, provided on the Maharashtra Chief Electoral Officer and ECI websites were the latest current data. "However, after 11 days from the Phase 1 (April 19) and a week after the Phase 2 (April 26) polling, the ECI has released the voting percentages which are much higher than the live data given on the polling dates.

ICICI Bank now lets NRIs use international numbers for UPI payments in India

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : ICICI Bank on Tuesday announced that it has enabled NRI (Non-Resident Indian) customers to use their international mobile number to make UPI payments instantly in India. This will allow the bank's NRI customers to make payments for their utility bills, merchant and e-commerce transactions with their

international mobile number registered with their NRE/NRO bank account held with ICICI Bank in the country.

"This launch reinforces our commitment to provide our NRI customers with innovative solutions, for them to have a safe, secure and hassle-free payment experience," Sidhartha Mishra, Head - Digital Channels and Partnerships,

ICICI Bank, said in a statement. To provide UPI facility to NRI customers, the bank partnered with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The bank will make this service available via its mobile banking app, iMobile Pay.

Earlier, NRIs had to register an Indian mobile number with their banks to make UPI payments.



Indian Bank posts 55% jump in Q4 net profit, declares dividend of Rs 12 per share

Mumbai, May 7 (IANS) : The Indian Bank on Tuesday reported a 55 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 2,247 crore for the January-March quarter of 2023-24, compared to the corresponding figures of Rs 1,447 crore reported in the same period of the previous year.

The public sector bank's board of directors has recommended a dividend of Rs 12

per share for 2023-24.

The total income of the bank increased by 19 per cent to Rs 16,887 crore in the March quarter of FY24, from Rs 14,238 crore in the same period in FY23.

The bank's net interest income (NII) increased by 9 per cent year-on-year to Rs 6,015 crore in the March quarter of FY24, from Rs 5,508 crore in the same quarter of FY23.

Indian Bank's asset quality also

improved during the quarter under review, with its gross non-performing assets (NPA) declining to 3.95 per cent of total advances from 5.95 per cent during the same period of the previous year.

Similarly, net NPA was seen at 0.43 per cent of total advances as of March 31, 2024, compared to 0.90 per cent during the same period in 2022-23.

Indian airlines poised to capture 50% of country's global passenger traffic: CRISIL

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : The airlines in India are poised to capture 50 per cent share of the country's international passenger traffic by 2027-28 with a 7 per cent jump in market share from 43 per cent at present, according to a CRISIL report released on Tuesday. The report points out that Indian airlines, such as Air India and IndiGo, are strategically adding new aircraft to their fleets and launching new international routes which are cutting travel time. According to the CRISIL report, Indian airlines have the advantage of superior domestic connectivity compared to their foreign competitors, which serve only select Indian cities. This enables

Indian carriers to offer end-to-end international connectivity on a single ticket to travellers from tier 2 and tier 3 cities. "Increasing disposable incomes, easing visa requirements, growing number of airports and enhanced air travel connectivity are boosting international travel," said Manish Gupta, Senior Director and Deputy Chief Ratings Officer at CRISIL Ratings. The government's focus on making India a hub for tourism is also expected to provide a fillip to inbound traffic. "To capitalise on the growth in international travel, Indian airlines are investing in widebody and long-range narrowbody aircraft for network expansion, adding new international routes and introducing long-haul non-stop flights to key desti-



nations., said Ankit Kedia, Director, CRISIL Ratings. Thus, international passenger traffic is likely to clock a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10-11 per cent over the next four fiscals, against a mere 5 per cent CAGR in the four years before the pandemic, he added. Indian airlines have added 55 new international

routes over the past 15 months, which takes the total number of flights beyond the 300 mark, the report states. These include direct flights originating from more cities to popular long-haul destinations in the United States, Europe, and Australia, effectively reducing flying time and eliminating layovers, CRISIL said. India's geographic location connections between the Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) and Asia Pacific regions, would facilitate the country emerging as a hub for international travel, the report added.



Marico posts 5.3 pc rise in q4 net profit, declares dividend of Rs 6.50 per share

Mumbai, May 7 (IANS) : Fast moving consumer goods major Marico on Tuesday reported a 5.3 per cent in consolidated net profit rose to Rs 318 crore for the Jan-March quarter compared to the corresponding figure of Rs 302 crore in the same period last year. Marico which owns the Saffola and Parachute brands of packaged oils posted a 2 per cent increase in revenue at Rs 2,278 crore up from Rs 2,240 crore in the same quarter of the previous year. The Board of Directors of Marico Limited declared a second interim dividend of Rs 6.50 per equity share.



Wipro, Microsoft to launch GenAI-powered assistants for financial services

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : Leading technology services and consulting company Wipro on Tuesday announced that it is teaming up with Microsoft to launch a suite of cognitive assistants for financial services powered by generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). According to the company, the cognitive assistants will provide financial professionals with deep market intelligence and appropriate and timely information on investment products and investor behaviour. "This new solution set, powered by Microsoft, will help provide better and faster market and product intelligence to financial advisors and banking professionals, enabling them to deliver more personalised and timely service to clients," Suzanne Dann, CEO of Americas 2 Strategic Market Unit at Wipro Ltd, said in a statement. "These solutions will also reduce the multiple -- often repetitive -- steps needed to onboard new investors or originate loans, cutting down the time spent on paperwork," she added.

Apple's iPhone 15 Pro Max best-selling smartphone in Q1 this year: Report

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : Apple's iPhone 15 Pro Max was the best-selling smartphone of the first quarter (Q1) of 2024, a new report showed on Tuesday. According to Counterpoint Research, Apple and Samsung dominated the top 10 best-selling smartphones list for Q1, each grabbing five positions and leaving no spot for other brands.

"The Pro Max variant achieved the top position for the first time in Apple's non-seasonal quarter, reflecting an increasing trend of consumer preference for high-end smartphones," the analysts said.



Govt's electronics component manufacturing PLI to end dependency on foreign suppliers, create jobs

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : As the government begins the exercise to create benchmarks for electronics component manufacturing, industry stakeholders on Tuesday said the move will contribute significantly to creating an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and building a robust supply chain to further ramp up exports. The IT Ministry has asked various stakeholders for their viewpoints, in order to formulate a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the electronics component sector. The move, said experts, will cut original equipment manufacturers' (OEMs) dependency on countries like China and Vietnam for procuring various components and sub-assemblies for their products.

"Optimus Electronics Ltd is committed to work with the government for development of a complete electronics ecosystem in the country," A. Gururaj, Managing Director, Optimus Electronics, told IANS.

"We welcome the government's proposal to expand the PLI scheme to electronic component manufacturing in the country which will contribute significantly to truly creating an Atmanirbhar Bharat," Gururaj added.

The government's move will also create thousands of direct and indirect jobs. In the last 10 years, ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Make in India' programme, lakhs of new jobs have been created.

In electronics manufacturing alone, nearly 12 lakh new jobs have been created as electronics manufacturing reached more than \$100 billion.

Avneet Singh Marwah, CEO, Super Plastronics Private Limited (SPPL), told IANS that the move promises to foster domestic component manufacturing, a crucial step towards realising the 'Make in India' initiative.

"Currently, we heavily rely on outsourcing key electronic



components from various countries. However, with the introduction of in-house manufacturing, we stand to gain two significant advantages: enhanced competitiveness through more competitive pricing and the bolstering of our supply chain infrastructure," Marwah elaborated.

According to experts, the PLI scheme for electronics is, undeniably, a game changer.

"We have witnessed a major company inaugurate its semiconductor plant, with others swiftly following suit to fortify this burgeoning ecosystem," they added.

Prabhu Ram, Head, Industry Intelligence Group at market intelligence firm CMR, told IANS that expanding the PLI scheme to electronic components manufacturing is a strategic move to address a critical bottleneck in India's domestic electronics ecosystem -- its dependence on foreign suppliers.

"By incentivising local production, the policy will aim to boost domestic manufacturing capabilities and, over time, create a more resilient end-to-end electronics value chain with robust upstream and downstream capabilities within the country," Ram told IANS.



Delhi HC issues notice on plea seeking govt accommodations for judicial officers

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : The Delhi High Court has issued notice on a plea seeking expedited availability of government residential accommodations for judicial officers in the national capital. A division bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P.S. Arora has issued notices to the Government of India through the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Delhi Government, and the Registrar General. The plea, moved by the Judicial Service Association, aims to speed up the availability of accommodations for officers serving in the Delhi Judicial Services and Delhi Higher Judicial Services, in line with Supreme Court judgments. As of April 18, the total working

strength of judicial officers in Delhi stands at 823 against 347 residential accommodations available in the judicial pool. The petition highlights the dire situation, where almost half of the judicial officers in Delhi lack official residential accommodations. Despite the Supreme Court's directives to provide such accommodations, a significant number of judges in Delhi remain without them, relying solely on inadequate HRA and other allowances, the plea stated. The petition also referred to a circular issued by the Haryana government, which hires or requisitions private buildings or houses for residential purposes for judicial officers.

Arvinder Singh Lovely and four others join BJP, days after quitting Congress

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : Arvinder Singh Lovely, former Delhi Congress chief and Rajkumar Chauhan, a former Congress minister, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the party headquarters in the capital on Tuesday. Apart from Arvinder Lovely and Rajkumar, a couple of other known faces of the Delhi Congress unit including Naseeb Singh, Neeraj Basoya and Amit Malik joined the BJP on

Tuesday. Notably, the Delhi Congress unit has been beset with intense turmoil and infighting, as the city leaders are miffed and upset over the alliance with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the high command giving preference to 'outsiders' over local leadership, in ticket allotment for Lok Sabha polls and also for party's affairs. Rajkumar Chauhan, the former Delhi minister and the All India Congress Committee (AICC) member resigned from the party last month after Delhi Congress' disci-



plinary committee objected to his 'dissent' to the party line. Arvinder Singh Lovely's resignation as the Delhi unit chief, last month, came as a big blow to the party. This fol-

lowed a series of exits including couple of well-known names like Naseeb Singh and Neeraj Basoya, both former Delhi legislators.

CM, Dy CM obsessed with 'pen drive', forgotten about guarantees: K'taka BJP chief

Hubballi, (Karnataka), May 7 (IANS) : Commenting on the sex video scandal involving JD-S MP Prajwal Revanna, Karnataka BJP President B.Y. Vijayendra slammed Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday for "forgetting about the guarantees and talking only about a pen drive containing obscene videos". Speaking to reporters here, Vijayendra said the Karnataka government seems to be obsessed with the pen drive. "Our stand on Prajwal Revanna is clear. There is no question of the BJP standing with the accused. No one can escape the clutches of the law. A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed to probe the matter, so there is no question of supporting Prajwal Revanna," Vijayendra said.

"But, the state government seems to have forgotten about its guarantees and that is why it is only talking about the sex scandal. Even the people of the state are saying that the Congress is using the scandal as a political weapon," he added. Last Tuesday, 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 the allegations of sexual abuse against him. Prajwal Revanna is the grandson of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda. Vijayendra also said that the sex scandal episode will not impact the results of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections as people are determined to elect Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister for a third term. "Incidents like this should not occur, it is a shameful matter. Also, allegations that I knew about the case from before are baseless. I had no knowledge about this case," Vijayendra said.



Battleground Bengal: Focus on poll-oriented bonhomie impacts credibility of Cong-Left Front unity

Kolkata, May 7 (IANS) : The Congress-Left Front bonhomie in West Bengal has raised a couple of questions in the corridors of power and among political pundits in the state.

The first question is, how credible is this election-oriented show of unity that has been evident in West Bengal since the 2016 Assembly elections, when for the first time these two forces entered into a seat sharing arrangement. Political observers are wondering if this show of camaraderie is only specific to the personal equations between state Congress President Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and CPI(M)'s state Secretary Mohd Salim (both are contesting from Murshidabad District) or if this percolates to the grassroots workers in the grand old party and the Left Front.



Kunal Ghosh meets Derek O'Brien, remains vague on settlement of 'differences'

Kolkata, May 7 (IANS) : Days after his removal as the state General Secretary of the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, Kunal Ghosh on Tuesday met the party's national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien.

Ghosh was accompanied by the state Education Minister Bratya Basu.

However, what was discussed during the meeting is not known yet as Ghosh remained vague on whether he settled his differences with the Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP who on May 1 issued a statement announcing the removal of Ghosh as the party's state General Secretary. "Some discussions took place,

the details of which I will not disclose to the media. Just wait and watch the next developments," Ghosh told mediapersons after the meeting. On May 1, Ghosh had described O'Brien as a "quiz master" after the latter announced the decision to strip Ghosh of the key post. "I have one question for the quiz mister. What is the justification of such a statement when it was me who wanted to be relieved from the two posts of general secretary and spokesperson much earlier," he had said, adding that no communication regarding his removal was made to him by the party leadership.

Coimbatore police arrest popular TN YouTuber 'Suvakku' Shankar

Chennai, May 7 (IANS) : The Coimbatore City Cyber Wing police, on Tuesday morning, arrested popular Tamil YouTuber 'Suvakku' Shankar. He was arrested from Theni and is being brought to Coimbatore for further questioning. The arrest stems from a complaint against him for making obscene comments

against women police officers in a recent interview. Shankar has been embroiled in various disputes, and on March 18, a single bench judge of the Madras High Court ordered him to provide a detailed explanation in response to a contempt of court petition filed against him by a Tamil Nadu-based real estate firm.



Cracks in the armour : Cong faces serious challenge from NC rebel candidate in Ladakh constituency

Leh, May 7 (IANS) : A little political storm is brewing in the Ladakh Lok Sabha constituency as loyalists, rebels and Independents are joining the electoral fray.

The political turbulence started initially within the BJP when the party high command decided not to repeat its sitting Lok Sabha member, Jamyang Tsering Namgyal for this election. Namgyal took strong exception to the BJP's decision initially and it seemed that factionalism would affect the party's chances of retaining the seat. Thankfully, for the BJP, Namgyal has now accepted the party's decision to give the ticket to Tashi Gyalson.

Tashi Gyalson is the Chairman-cum-CEO of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council. Both Namgyal and Gyalson are Buddhists and their political influence is mostly confined to this community in Leh and Kargil Districts of the UT.

Namgyal expressed his loyalty to the BJP by going to the party office in Leh town where he publicly announced his support to Gyalson.

This appeared to have put an end to the bickering within the BJP even as the party's worry remained the dissatisfaction among its supporters, who are demanding inclusion of the UT in the 6th Schedule and also statehood.

The demand was spearheaded by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) whose activists include the renowned environmental activist, Sonam Wangchuck.

LAB's agitation appears to have cooled down a bit after the body met Union Home Minister, Amit Shah.

Sonam Wangchuck had also left for an environment conference in Canada in connection with his work, but the innovator is back in Leh now.

The Congress has nominated Tsering Namgyal as its candidate for the seat. As part of the INDIA Bloc, the National Conference (NC) declared its support to the Congress and did not field any candidate from this constituency.



There is a straight contest between the BJP and the Congress with well-defined battle lines. The twist in the tale has now come from the Muslim-majority Kargil District where so-called rebels of the NC have now jumped into the electoral fray. The entire NC leadership in Kargil District has announced support to Haji Hanifa Jan who has filed nomination papers as an Independent candidate. Interestingly, senior NC leaders, Qamar Ali Akhoun and Feroz Khan accompanied Haji Hanifa Jan to the Returning Officer's chamber when he filed his nomination papers. Sajjad Kargili, who finished second in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in Ladakh, has also filed papers as an Independent candidate. The problems for the Congress have got compounded because its UT President, Haji Asgar Ali Karbalaie has announced support to Haji Hanifa Jan, who is the

former Chairman-cum-CEO of the Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council.

Interestingly, NH Munshi, Congress District President Kargil has also announced support to Haji Hanifa Jan. This virtually brings the rebellion within the Congress in Ladakh UT out in the open.

Also, the fact that both the influential religious organisations of Kargil, the Imam Khomeini Memorial Trust and Islamia School are supporting the Independent candidate Haji Hanifa Jan, has sealed the prospects of the Congress in Kargil District.

The Congress is now almost entirely depending on its Buddhist supporters of Leh and Kargil Districts.

The Buddhists in Ladakh region have traditionally voted for the political party in power in Delhi in the past.

Inspiring voices of India's women panchayat leaders resonate at UN meet

New York, May 7 (IANS) : The inspiring stories of India's elected women representatives of the Panchayati Raj institutions resonated in the hallowed halls of the United Nations Headquarters as three iconic grassroots leaders took the centre stage on Tuesday at the Side Event titled 'Localising the SDGs: Women in Local Governance in India Lead the Way'. Supriya Das Datta from Tripura, Kunuku Hema Kumari from Andhra Pradesh, and Neeru Yadav from

Rajasthan shared their experiences and innovations in local governance and advancing the localisation of sustainable development goals (SDGs) in many thematic areas. These ranged from combating child marriages to promoting health, education, livelihood opportunities, and environmental sustainability. The trio exemplified the transformative power of grassroots leadership as they articulated the challenges and struggles they faced and overcame in their journey of

leadership. The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj jointly organised the Side Event in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at the UN Headquarters Secretariat Building in New York. Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj set the tone for the event, highlighting India's unique Panchayati Raj system as a beacon of decentralised power.



Zelensky meets UK Foreign Secretary on military aid to Ukraine

Kiev, May 7 (IANS) : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met with visiting British Foreign Secretary David Cameron to discuss military aid to Ukraine, the Presidential press service said. At the meeting, which took place in Kiev on Tuesday, Zelensky thanked the British government for recently approving the largest-ever military aid package for Ukraine, worth 500 million pounds (\$630 million), Xinhua

news agency reported. "The provision of this package, along with the crucial decision of the US to provide assistance, is of great importance to us at this key moment," the Ukrainian President added on Friday. He briefed Cameron on the situation on the frontlines of the Russia-Ukraine war and urged Britain to promptly deliver the weapons as part of the aid package. Zelensky specifically outlined the

types of weapons Ukraine requires, including armoured vehicles, ammunition, and various missiles. According to the British Parliament, Britain has pledged 12.5 billion pounds (\$15.8 billion) in support to Ukraine since the outbreak of the war in February 2022, of which 7.6 billion pounds (\$9.6 billion) was for military assistance. This includes 3 billion pounds (\$3.8 billion) for military assistance in 2024/25.

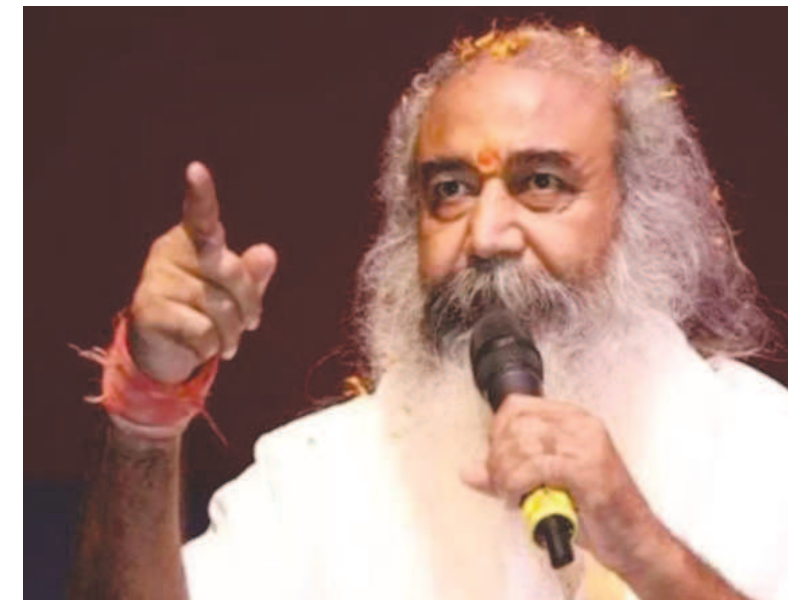
Rahul's Raebareli move will be 'suicidal', says ex-Congman Pramod Krishnam

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : Former Congress leader Acharya Pramod Krishnam, reacted to Rahul Gandhi's Raebareli move on expected lines and said that the Congress leader developed cold feet and hence quit the Amethi Lok Sabha seat. He also added that this move would prove 'suicidal' for the former Congress president as this would send a wrong message to party workers as well as the electorate.

"Rahul Gandhi used to tell others don't fret, don't be afraid, today he himself has panicked and picked Raebareli over Amethi, over the fear of defeat," Krishnam said, speaking to IANS. The Kalki Dham Peethadhiswar further said public perception means a lot in politics. Congress workers were hopeful of Rahul throwing his candidature in Amethi, even at the last minute but that didn't happen. "Never in the history of Congress, the Gandhis gave up their family

bastions. From Sanjay Gandhi to Indira Gandhi, all lost elections but they didn't leave their seat. This is for the first time that Rahul Gandhi has abandoned the Amethi constituency," he said. He further stated that this gives the impression that Rahul Gandhi has got frightened and run away from Amethi. Acharya said that when public perception changes, everything changes. "I think Rahul's decision will prove suicidal. At every public meeting and forum, he asks and

calls upon party workers not to get intimidated in the face of adversity but himself opted out of the electoral race in Amethi," he said. This will send a message that the top Congress leader who should have taken the challenge head-on got intimidated by BJP candidate Smriti Irani and left a crucial family pocket borough. He further said that if Rahul chose to give up Amethi, he should have picked up a fight from Varanasi, the biggest Lok Sabha constituency and given a direct challenge



to PM Modi. When questioned whether this was part of the strategy, as claimed by the party, he said that this was not a strategy but a conspiracy to 'drown' the Gandhi siblings.

BJP confusing Matua voters through CAA notification : Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata, May 7 (IANS) : The BJP and the Central government are trying to confuse the Matua population concentrated mainly in West Bengal by notifying the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed on Tuesday. "The Centre and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are confusing our Matua brothers. The implementation of CAA and applying for it does not mean automatic granting of citizenship. There are many uncertainties even after that," the Chief Minister said during an election meeting at Chakdaha in Nadia district, which has a sizable Matua population. To recall, the Centre on March 11 notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules 2024, thus paving the way for enforcing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which seeks to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians who came to India from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan before December

31, 2014. The news triggered celebrations among the members of the Matua community, a backward-class Hindu group which came to West Bengal as refugees from neighbouring Bangladesh, and form a sizable population in the state. "Five years back, the BJP managed to secure the Matua votes in the name of CAA. The party had then promised to grant citizenship through CAA. But those were all lies. Now they are saying you must apply through the CAA form. Even after that, there is no guarantee of getting citizenship.



Farooq Abdullah accuses PM Modi of creating fear among Hindus

Srinagar, May 7 (IANS) : Former J&K chief minister and National Conference (NC) President Farooq Abdullah alleged on Tuesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is creating fear among the Hindus to remain in power. Addressing an election rally in the old city Khaniyar area of Srinagar in support of his party candidate, Syed Ruhullah Mehdi, Abdullah asked people to stay away from the politics of divide and rule. He said, "Modi is telling Hindus your mangalsutra will be taken away and sold to give money to Muslims. Are we such bad people that we will snatch mangalsutra from our mothers and sisters?" "He tells them that if the INDIA bloc comes to power after the ongoing polls,

their savings will be taxed and if they have two houses one would be taken away and given to Muslims. He does not talk about the issues of the common people who made him the Prime Minister in 2014," Abdullah said. The NC President blamed the government for being in power and doing nothing for the common voter. He said the prices of cooking gas, diesel, edible oil and vegetables have skyrocketed during Modi's 10 years in power. He said all senior officers of police, civil administration and higher bureaucracy in J&K are from outside. He said the voter has to prove through the vote that he does not accept the decision taken on August 5, 2019.

Ex-Haryana CM Khattar faces litmus test ahead of double elections in Karnal

Karnal, May 7 (IANS) : BJP veteran Manohar Lal Khattar, who as the Haryana Chief Minister advocated simultaneous Assembly and general elections in the state, is facing a litmus test in his main support base Karnal, where Assembly bypoll and Lok Sabha elections will be held simultaneously on May 25. Party insiders say that Khattar not only has to ensure the victory of his 'protege' and successor CM Nayab Saini in the bypoll, but also win his maiden Lok Sabha battle to script BJP's hat-trick in Karnal, which is spread over nine Assembly segments. The by-election was necessitated after the resignation of

Khattar as the Chief Minister on March 13. An RSS man with a clean image, Khattar, who believes in the principles of 'Ram Rajya' to run affairs, has been a popular Chief Minister for two terms and belongs to the Punjabi community in a state whose politics is dominated by Jats. A day after resigning as the Chief Minister on March 13, he was nominated by the BJP as its Lok Sabha candidate from Karnal. His Assembly seat fell vacant with his resignation. Now CM Saini is contesting the seat in the bypoll to remain a member of the Assembly for a period of around four months before Haryana goes to the polls.





Missing BSF officer traced in Jammu

Jammu, May 7 (IANS) : Officials said on Tuesday that a missing border security force (BSF) officer was traced in Jammu. Officials said that information was received on Tuesday by Domana police station in Jammu about the disappearance of assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Parmanand Hembram of the 7th Battalion of BSF in the city. "A report was filed and a swift operation was started to trace the officer. "With technical assistance and human intervention, the missing person was traced. "After completing all legal formalities, he has been handed over to his unit," officials said.

Mother charged with murder for throwing newborn to death in Kochi



Kochi, May 7 (IANS) : Twenty-four hours after a newborn was flung out the fifth floor of an apartment in Kochi, the police have registered murder charges against the infant's 23-year-old 'mother', who admitted to killing the child.

The woman, who lives with her parents in the apartment, delivered a child early on Tuesday morning in her bathroom. She confessed that she was jittery and when her mother knocked the door of her room, she packed the newborn in a courier cover and threw it on the road. Shockingly, before throwing the baby, she stuffed cloth in the infant's mouth and strangled the newborn. The police have now registered murder charges against the woman, who is presently under medical attention.



Cong candidate from Puri returns ticket citing lack of funds to fight LS poll

Bhubaneswar, May 7 (IANS) : In a development that has left the cash-strapped Congress red-faced, the party's candidate for Puri Lok Sabha constituency Sucharita Mohanty, has declined to contest the election, citing lack of funding from the party. "It is clear that only a fund crunch is holding us back from a winning campaign in Puri.

Sharad Pawar : Hope Uddhav Thackeray never needs PM Modi's help

Pune (Maharashtra), May 7 (IANS) : NCP(SP) President Sharad Pawar on Tuesday expressed the hope that his ally and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief, Uddhav Thackeray never requires any help from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Pawar said this while answering a mediaperson's question on the PM's remarks in a television interview that he is always there to help former Maharashtra Chief Minister Thackeray if the need arises, while referring to the latter's past health issues.

"Whatever the PM may say, I hope and pray that Uddhav Thackeray never is in a situation where he would be compelled to seek assistance from Modi," said Pawar with a smile. Concurring with the NCP(SP) supremo on the issue, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said, "Pawar has said the right thing." To a question, "if Pawar cannot handle his family, then how can he look after Maharashtra", the senior Pawar hit back saying, "When did (Modi) manage his own family... The situation of his family members is a matter of con-

cern... But I don't want to stoop to make any such personal comments." The senior Pawar accused PM Modi of making many casual statements which never materialised, and which raised doubts in the minds of the public whether the government would be able to deliver or not. "That's why faith in the PM is waning," he said. Sharad Pawar said that earlier too, PM Modi used to attack former PM, Dr. Manmohan Singh's policies, "but today, Modi is implementing the same policies." "The people have un-

derstood these contradictions... The masses compared the 10 years of Dr. Singh with Modi's 10 years. They have realised that Dr. Singh used to work quietly and deliver results, but the outcome of Modi's work is not known though he spends a lot of time in commenting and criticising," Sharad Pawar pointed out.



DMK to anoint Udhayanidhi Stalin as Deputy CM after Lok Sabha poll results

Chennai, May 7 (IANS) : The ruling DMK will appoint state Minister for Youth Welfare and Sports Development, Udhayanidhi Stalin as the Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. A senior leader of the DMK told IANS that the party has already taken the decision to promote Udhayanidhi as the Deputy Chief Minister of the state after the Lok Sabha election results are out on June 4. In the Lok Sabha elections, it was Udhayanidhi who travelled across the length and breadth of Tamil Nadu, campaigning for the DMK and unleashing scathing attacks against the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to DMK state headquarters, of all the DMK leaders, Udhayanidhi covered

the maximum distance of 8,465 kms in the 24-day-long election campaign in the state for the Lok Sabha polls. Udhayanidhi was the only DMK leader to travel to all the 39 constituencies of the state to meet party leaders and cadres and speak on local issues in public meetings during the election campaign. LK Shanmugham, Chennai Central leader of the DMK told IANS, "Udhayanidhi has been the mascot of this election for the DMK. He took the responsibility on his shoulders and crisscrossed Tamil Nadu in the run-up to the elections, thus lifting the morale of our leaders as well as party cadres." Sources said he had endeared himself to the party cadres through his short and crisp



speeches while campaigning for the DMK and its allies. Tamil Nadu Minister for Water Resources, S Duraimurugan told IANS, "Udhayanidhi was our star campaigner and he made a connection with the people through his crisp speeches and one-liners. The party will be taking a call after the Lok Sabha elections regarding his promotion as the Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu." Udhayanidhi, who is the President of the DMK youth wing is also the son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, MK Stalin.



Viksit Bharat Ambassador event: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar heaps praise on PM Modi for Kashi facelift

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the spiritual guru and the Founder of Art of Living Foundation participated in the Viksit Bharat Ambassador event on Tuesday and showered praise on the Sanatan Dharma as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Kashi facelift. He said that Sanatan Dharma maintains a fine blend of ancient practices and modern values and its legacy lies in its respect and recognition for all sections of society. Addressing the Viksit Bharat Ambassador Samvad event in Varanasi, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said that India has taken rapid strides in development and today a leader of the country has emerged as World's 'Vishwamitra'. "He has earned a new name and fame for the country, which in turn has given a new identity to fellow Indians living abroad. One feels proud to see such leader. Today, India's stature in the world is on a consistent rise. We have reached the Moon and Mars and now longing for bigger targets," he said. "We have also retained the old values while breaching new ho-

rizons of growth. And, Kashi presents a shining example of this legacy. Recalling the erstwhile creaking infrastructure of Kashi Nagri, 10 years ago, the spiritual guru said that the city has undergone massive transformation in terms of economy, road infrastructure and facelift of Ganga ghats. He further said that he participated in the inauguration ceremony of Kashi Vishwanath corridor and therefore he was a witness to the city's 'transition' on a personal level. The spiritual guru showered praise on PM Modi for the massive facelift of Kashi temple and lauded him for personally acknowledging and recognising the work of labourers. "I was amazed with the gesture of PM Modi. Before addressing the devotees, he went to the shramiks, washed their feet and got a flower shower done on them. The saints and sages present there, were initially taken aback as it was they who were entitled to such treatment. But the Prime Minister rewrote the rules and gave the workers their due. I was also awestruck over his conduct," said Sri Sri, narrating the incident before the Viksit Bharat audience.

It's Jhansi vs Sribharat in high-profile Visakhapatnam

Visakhapatnam, May 7 (IANS) : A direct close fight is on the cards between two highly-educated leaders from prominent political families in the high-profile Visakhapatnam constituency. Botcha Jhansi Lakshmi of the ruling YSR Congress Party (YRSCP) will take on Sribharat Mathukumilli of the TDP who finished runner-up with the loss by a narrow margin in 2019. Jhansi is the wife of state education minister Botcha Satyanarayana while Sribharat is the grandson of late MVVS Murthi, a former TDP MP. He is also the son-in-law of TDP MLA and Tollywood actor N. Balakrishna and co-brother of TDP General Secretary Nara Lokesh, son of TDP President N Chandrababu Naidu. After keeping a low profile for nearly one decade, Jhansi is looking to politically bounce

back while Sribharat, despite the loss on his debut, is going all out for a win this time. With YSRCP reiterating its commitment to make Visakhapatnam the administrative capital of the state, the poll battle in the coastal city this time has assumed more significance. YSRCP President and Chief Minister, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy chose Jhansi, a two-time MP, in place of sitting MP MVV Satyanarayana. Unfazed by the criticism that the parties are fielding non-locals in Visakhapatnam, the YSRCP fielded the former MP from Bobbili and Vizianagaram. Botcha Satyanarayana, who headed the Congress party in combined Andhra Pradesh and also served as minister in the Cabinet of Jagan Mohan Reddy's father YSR, is a strong leader from north coastal Andhra.



Geniben Thakor reminds Shankar Chaudhary of duties in fight for Banaskantha

Banaskantha, May 7 (IANS) : Geniben Thakor, the Congress' candidate for the Banaskantha Lok Sabha seat, slammed her political counterpart Shankar Chaudhary, the Speaker of Gujarat Legislative Assembly, in a Congress sabha on Tuesday, even as Congress leader, Priyanka Gandhi reached the constituency in her support. Thakor didn't mince words, stating, "The constituency delegate should also consider the responsibility of being a Parliament member. The dignity of the parliamentary position should not be undermined. The delegates of the constituency should fulfil their duties. People will question whose side they are on."



NCPCR asks all states to prevent illegal transportation of children

New Delhi, May 7 (IANS) : The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has asked Chief Secretaries/Administrators of all states and Union Territories to prevent illegal transportation of children. In a letter issued on Tuesday to the Chief Secretaries/Administrators, the NCPCR said that recently 95 children were rescued and it was found that they had been attending unregistered madrasas in the Saharanpur District of Uttar Pradesh. They disclosed that they were coerced into carrying bricks, cleaning toilets, and endured

physical and mental abuse. Instead of attending formal schools, these children were confined to the madrasa. It appears that in the name of religious education, the children were deprived of their Fundamental Rights given under the Constitution and the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009.





Iraqi Shia militia claims attack on Israel

Baghdad, May 7 (IANS): A Shia militia in Iraq has claimed responsibility for an attack on a vital site in Israel. The militia, known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, said in an online statement that its fighters conducted a strike "with appropriate weapons on a vital target within the Dead Sea (area) on Tuesday morning," without providing additional details about the specific location targeted or any resulting casualties. The strike came hours after the militia claimed responsibility for missile attacks with long-range al-

Arqab upgraded cruise missiles on two vital sites in Tel Aviv and one in Be'er Sheva in southern Israel, Xinhua news agency reported. The statements stressed that the attacks were carried out "in solidarity with the people of Gaza" and the militia pledged to persist in targeting "the enemy's strongholds". Since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict on October 7, 2023, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has launched multiple attacks on Israeli and US bases in the region.

UN spokesperson declines to react to Biden's claim that India's economy stalling due to 'xenophobia'

United Nations, May 7 (IANS): A UN spokesperson has declined to react to an assertion by US President Joe Biden that India was "stalling so badly economically" because it was "xenophobic" and not taking in immigrants. "I wouldn't comment on what he said," Farhan Haq, the Deputy Spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said on Friday when he was asked by a Chinese TV reporter about Biden's comment that also covered China, Russia, and Japan. Asked by the reporter about the UN's definition of "xenophobia", Haq said that it "is simply the dictionary defini-

tion". Biden had said on Tuesday, "You know, one of the reasons why our economy is growing is because of you and many others. Why? Because we welcome immigrants. We look to -- the reason -- look, think about it. Why is China stalling so badly economically? Why is Japan having trouble? Why is Russia? Why is India? Because they're xenophobic. They don't want immigrants." However, reports by several international organisations and multinationals tell a different story from that of Biden, who has a record of making fact-challenged statements. According to the International Monetary Fund, the US economy grew by 2.5 per cent last year and is expected to grow this



year by 2.7 per cent, while India, according to Biden, has a "stalling" economy grew three times faster than the US at 7.8 per cent last year and is projected for a two-and-a-half time faster growth at 6.8 per cent this year. China's economy grew by 5.2 per cent last year with a projection of 4.8 per cent this year. White House spokesperson

Karine Jean-Pierre tried to play down Biden's assertion, saying that "he was making a more broad comment, speaking about this country and speaking about how important it is to be a country of immigrants". "Obviously, we have a strong relationship with -- with -- with India, with -- with Japan.



UN warns of surge in casualties from potential Gaza escalation

Geneva, May 7 (IANS): An Israeli incursion into the southern city of Rafah in Gaza could lead to a "slaughter" and worsen the humanitarian catastrophe in the region, the United Nations' humanitarian office and health agency warned. The city currently serves as a base for humanitarian operations inside Gaza following months of fierce Israeli bombardment and civilian casualties, Xinhua news agency reported. Earlier this week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said a ground offensive in Rafah would proceed regardless of any potential truce deal with Hamas. With more than 1.2 million people crammed into Rafah, the city's ailing health

system could not withstand potential devastation if Israel launched an incursion into the region. Hundreds of thousands of people in Gaza would be at imminent risk of death in case of an assault, warned Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at a press briefing in Geneva. "It could be a slaughter of civilians and an incredible blow to the humanitarian operation in the entire strip," he said. The border city is a critical entry point for humanitarian aid. Dozens of aid organisations store supplies for civilians across the Gaza Strip such as food, water, health, sanitation, and hygiene items in southern Gaza City. The WHO is making contingency plans to ensure the health system is prepared and can continue pro-

viding care, but these plans would only be a "band-aid", Richard Peeperkorn, Representative in WHO's office for the West Bank and Gaza, told the briefing via video link. An influx of new displacements would worsen overcrowding, increasing pressure on resources like food, water, and health care, the WHO said in a statement. This would trigger more disease outbreaks, aggravate hunger, and result in further loss of life. Only 33 per cent of Gaza's 36 hospitals and 30 per cent of primary health care centres are partially functional amid repeated attacks and shortages of vital medical supplies, fuel, and staff, the Geneva-based health body said.



Palestinian president undergoes routine medical examinations in West Bank

Ramallah, May 7 (IANS): The Palestinian Presidency has said that President Mahmoud Abbas had undergone routine medical examinations in the West Bank city of Ramallah. A statement issued by the Presidency said that Abbas took routine medical examinations at the Arab Consultative Hospital on Tuesday, and the results were reassuring, after which he left the hospital. The statement did not provide further details on the matter, Xinhua news agency reported. Abbas, born in 1935, had previously received medical examinations at the same hospital last February and July 2022. In April 2021, he travelled to Germany for medical examinations. In May 2018, Abbas stayed at a hospital in Ramallah for eight days to receive treatment for pneumonia. Abbas was elected President of the Palestinian Authority in January 2005 following the death of his predecessor Yasser Arafat.

Pakistan saw 77 militant attacks resulting in 70 fatalities in April: Report

Islamabad, May 7 (IANS): Following a brief lull in March, militant attacks in Pakistan surged once again in April with at least 77 verifiable incidents resulting in 70 fatalities, an Islamabad-based think-tank said in a recent report. The fatalities included 35 civilians, 31 security forces personnel and four militants, meanwhile, 67 individuals suffered injuries, the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies said in its monthly assessment report, according to Xinhua news agency. In comparison, March 2024 saw 56 militant attacks, resulting in 77 fatalities

and 67 injuries, said the report. This indicates a 38 per cent increase in the number of militant attacks, although there was a 9 per cent decline in deaths, with no change in the number of injuries, it added. The report also underscored the efforts of Pakistani security forces in thwarting numerous potential attacks during the month, adding that at least 55 suspected militants were killed and 12 others were arrested, marking a 55 per cent increase in militant deaths compared to March.



Indian sailors still on stranded ship off US port city after 35 days

Washington, May 7 (IANS): They would have been in Colombo in Sri Lanka, their destination, a couple of days ago, and would have been on their way home. But they remain on a cargo ship off the coast of the US port city of Baltimore. The 20 Indian members of the crew of Dali remain on board the vessel 35 days after the container ship brought down a bridge in Baltimore on March 26 in an early morning maritime accident that claimed the lives of six men who were working on the bridge at the time. A member of the crew who was

injured received treatment on shore and returned to the ship the day after. If everything had gone right that night, they would be in Colombo by the end. Fluent Cargo, a company that says it plans freight routes for clients across land, air, and sea, says a container ship would take about 33 days and 21 hours to reach Colombo from Baltimore. If everything goes according to schedule, they might have added. Dali hit a pillar of the Key Scott Bridge, a 50-year-old structure that serves thousands of motorists every day, in circumstances that are being investigated by multiple

US agencies. The collision brought the bridge and blocked the passage of all cargo ships waiting to be on their way after Dali. The crew are on the ship which is the scene of investigation by the US authorities. The FBI has launched a criminal inquiry into the incident apart from separate probes underway by the National Transportation Safety Board and the Coast Guard's Marine Board of Investigation. The bridge collapse received nationwide attention and US President Joe Biden has promised all possible help in the construction of the bridge and visited the site. Jim Lawrence, a spokesperson for

the Dali owner Grace Ocean Private Ltd., said the Indian crew members confirmed their presence on board now for 33 days. "Still on board, in good spirits," he added. They are frequently represented by representatives of the company and the Indian embassy and by the Seamen's Church Institute, which serves mariners in education, legal advocacy, and pastoral guidance. The crew "routinely have catered meals and desserts delivered to the ship", Lawrence said, adding, "In addition to performing normal duties on board the ship, they are also assisting with the investigations and with the ongoing salvage



work." A request to interview the crew or get a written statement from any of them was turned down "out of respect for the investigation". The Indian embassy in Washington D.C. declined a re-

quest for the names of the stranded sailors and had not responded till the filing of this report to a request for information about the well-being of the Indian sailors.

Bobby Deol opens up on his 'papa' Dharmendra : Nobody is as romantic

Actor Bobby Deol strongly believes that there is nobody as romantic as his father and veteran star Dharmendra on screen. Bobby appeared on 'The Great Indian Kapil Show', where host Kapil Sharma asked the 'Animal' star, if he had to rate himself, his brother Sunny Deol, and father Dharmendra on a scale of 1 to 100 for being romantic, how much he

would give each of them. "Papa ko toh ek lakh aajayengay. Papa jaisa romantic koi nahi hai (Papa will get one lakh. Nobody is as romantic as him)," Bobby said. When the show started, Kapil read out emails claiming to be from fans. He shared that there is a fan of Bobby, who, just like his character in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's directorial, wanted to marry thrice but couldn't as his wife was not

allowing. Bobby couldn't contain his laughter and said that he has been married to the love of his life, Tanya, for "28 years now," but added that the "Deols are very romantic." Kapil also shared an anecdote about Bobby, revealing that once he returned from a party in the morning, his father Dharmendra got very happy thinking he woke up early to play badminton. Bobby then shared: "When I used to go out, my mother wouldn't sleep.



Popular Malayalam film director Harikumar passes away

Popular Malayalam film director Harikumar passed away at a private hospital here on Monday evening. He was 70. Ailing from cancer, he was under treatment for a while. In a career that began in 1981 when he directed his first film "Ambal Poovu", he rose to huge heights with "Sukurtham" (1994), written by acclaimed author M.T. Vasudevan Nair and starring Mammooty and others. This film won two National awards - for the best Malayalam film and music direction. Harikumar directed 16 films with the last being "Aurick shawkarente Bharya" (2022) written by award-winning author M.Mukundan.

Vishnu Manchu speaks about 'Kannappa' co-star Akshay Kumar: 'Learnt, laughed'

Telugu actor Vishnu Manchu, who is all geared up for upcoming film 'Kannappa', has posted a picture with Akshay Kumar and shared his experience about working with the Bollywood action hero on the project. Taking to Instagram, where he has 6.3 million followers, Vishnu shared a snap, in which he can be seen donning a plain olive t-shirt and black jeans. Akshay was wearing a black and white checkered sleeveless shirt in the picture. The post was captioned: "What a shoot it has been with

@akshaykumar... Learnt. Laughed. And now missing the action. Looking forward for many more.#kannappa." Akshay, who was last seen in action film 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan' was shooting for 'Kannappa' in Hyderabad. Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, the film boasts an impressive cast and crew line-up, including stars like Mohanlal and Prabhas along with renowned Hollywood cinematographer Sheldon Chau, action director Kecha Khamphakdee, and choreographer Prabhu Deva.



Nagarjuna Akkineni amps up curiosity in his look from 'Kubera'

The first look of Telugu superstar Nagarjuna Akkineni from the upcoming Sekhar Kammula-directorial 'Kubera' has been unveiled. The first look made its way to the screens during the IPL match between Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Rajasthan Royals on Thursday. It showcases senior actor

Nagarjuna standing in a downpour with an umbrella and an air of mystery. He is surrounded by trucks of liquid cash, symbolising the film's title 'Kubera'. He is sharply dressed in a blue shirt, pants and wears spectacles in the first look. Before this, Dhanush's first look from the film was unveiled, earning a thrilling response from the audience. 'Kubera' also stars Rashmika

Mandanna and Jim Sarbh. The film, jointly produced by Suniel Narang and Puskur Ram Mohan Rao under the Sri Venkateswara Cinemas LLP and Amigos Creations Private Limited banner, is being shot simultaneously in Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi.

Big B reunites with Rajinikanth for 'Vettaiyan': 'Honoured to be with the Thala'

Bollywood veteran Amitabh Bachchan and Tamil cinema's iconic star Rajinikanth have reunited for the upcoming film 'Vettaiyan'. The shooting of the film is underway in Mumbai. On Saturday, Big B took to his Instagram and shared a picture with Rajini as he expressed his delight in working with him again. In the picture, shared by Big B, both actors can be seen dressed in sleek and stylish suits as they share a warm hug. Big B penned a heartfelt note in the caption as he wrote: "I'm honoured and privileged to be with the Thala the Great Rajni again.



Alaya F: There are some films I chase and some that I get completely by luck

Since her debut in 2020, Alaya F has portrayed diverse characters in several big-budget films. The actress, who describes herself as a "work in progress," spoke about how there are some films that she chases while others come her way by luck. With a filmography boasting of myriad genres, is it a conscious choice to not be pigeon-

holed, Alaya told IANS: "Yeah, it's different, and I do try to do different things, but I think I just get offered all types of films. Then there are some films that I chase, and some films are completely by luck. It's a mixture of everything." "I am very lucky enough to have very varied roles, and I hope that continues," said the actress, who has worked in films as different as chalk and cheese.



Alaya, the daughter of actress Pooja Bedi, made her debut in the Saif Ali Khan-starrer 'Jawaani Jaaneman'. She was then seen in the psychological thriller 'Freddy', followed by 'Almost Pyaar With DJ Mohabbat' and 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'. She will next be seen in 'SRI'. With big films coming her way, does she feel she has made it?



Ravi Kiran Kola to helm Vijay Deverakonda's upcoming untitled film

Telugu star Vijay Deverakonda, who was recently seen in the romantic action drama 'The Family Star', is joining forces with director Ravi Kiran Kola for his upcoming film.

'Mr Perfectionist' Aamir Khan a brilliant visualiser: 'Laapataa Ladies' writer

Laapataa Ladies writer Sneha Desai was all praise for Aamir Khan's power of visualisation at Vartalaap, a forum featuring conversations with screenwriters and lyricists in Mumbai. Aamir Khan is known as 'Mr Perfectionist' in the industry, so the media asked Desai if she felt she was under pres-

sure when she was working with Kiran Rao, the much-acclaimed film's director, or Aamir Khan, the producer. Desai said, "Getting perfection in the writing wasn't a compulsion, It was more of pleasure. Aamir Khan is given this tag of perfection because cinematically his brain is so brilliant that when you take the story to him, which is still on paper, he can visualise the writing being trans-

lated on the screen as he's reading the script, which we might not be able to see." Delving deeper into Aamir's ability to visualise scenes, Desai said, "Whether you call it his experience or craft, or his ability, he can visualise the edits of the scene, and he can visualise how the audience will react to the scene." She added, "The same goes for Kiran Rao. She has done so much work as an assistant and

producer, she has handled so many projects, that she has a ready solution for every problem and if there is something wrong, she can explain logically why it is so." So, how do they transmit their perfection to the others who work with them? "It is not like they try to force their perfection on others," Desai noted, adding, They explain the whole thing very lovingly to you.

